

Climate Migration on the Southern Border: Narrative Fragmentation and Structural Silences in the Press

Sara Parra Ferreras  and Liisa Irene Hänninen 

Department of Theories and Analysis of Communication, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Correspondence: Sara Parra Ferreras (saparra@ucm.es)

Submitted: 24 March 2026 **Accepted:** 11 June 2026 **Published:** 16 July 2026

Issue: This article is part of the issue “Bridging Divides in the Twin Transition: Governance for Equity and Inclusion” edited by Olga Kolotouchkina (Complutense University of Madrid), Paloma Piqueiras (Complutense University of Madrid), and Sara Clavero (Technological University Dublin), fully open access at <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.i520>

Abstract

The intersection between climate change and human migration is emerging as one of the most complex challenges facing humanity in the 21st century. In the current context of increasing extreme weather phenomena, social polarization, and political debate on migration, it is crucial to construct media narratives that promote the “right” social understanding of climate migration. The current research analyses media discourse on the topic at the Southern border of Europe in 2025. Using a methodological approach that combines content analysis with critical discourse analysis, this study examines the prioritisation of information, interpretative frameworks, and strategies employed by six leading newspapers in Spain, namely *El País*, *elDiario.es*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *Canarias7*, and *Diario Sur*. The results show that the press decontextualises climate migration, portraying it in remote scenarios and prioritising the voices of institutions over those of the victims themselves. This narrative generates a “climate paradox,” understood as a contradiction that highlights external vulnerability whilst concealing industrial causes, avoiding delving deeper into the debate on the need for legal and structural reforms. The phenomenon is thus reduced to an isolated biophysical problem or an aesthetic drama, reinforcing a bureaucratic view that sidesteps transnational climate and financial justice.

Keywords

climate migration; discourse analysis; journalistic frameworks; media coverage

1. Introduction

Climate change is having an unstoppable effect on our planet’s ecosystem and living conditions for humans, forcing a growing number of people to leave their homes. International organisations, such as the United

Nations, through the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2024) and the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2024), have raised the global alert level, pointing out that environmental degradation and extreme weather events have become the main drivers of forced displacement. In fact, leading statistical reports, such as the *Global Report on Internal Displacement* (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024), document that, in the last year on record, natural disasters triggered 56% of new internal displacements globally (more than 26.4 million people), surpassing even those caused by armed conflicts. The report highlights the decisive influence of the climate emergency on these figures, as 77% of these disaster-related displacements were directly caused by extreme weather events, such as severe flooding and prolonged droughts. In this scenario, Spain, due to its geographical location as Europe's Southern border and its proximity to the Atlantic, Mediterranean Sea, and Alboran Sea migration routes, stands out as a key territory where climate vulnerability and intensive border management converge.

Media coverage of climate-induced displacement is sporadic and alarmist worldwide, particularly given the proliferation of headlines about “millions of climate refugees” and rushed research seeking to confirm this narrative (Beine & Jeusette, 2021; Hoffmann et al., 2021; Turner et al., 2025). Similarly, general climate communication tends to be geographically biased towards the Global North, theoretically narrow, and methodologically limited. This results in partial views of climate migration (Agin & Karlsson, 2021), reinforced by narratives that depict migrants as threats, passive victims, or proof of climate collapse (Bonneux & Van Praag, 2024; Sakellari, 2021), rarely incorporating climate justice and human rights frameworks (Estok, 2023; Łódzki & Kocierz, 2025).

Therefore, the influence of media representation on public opinion requires further research, as it can reinforce fear and xenophobia or, conversely, empathy and hospitality (Bonneux & Van Praag, 2024; Łódzki & Kocierz, 2025). Furthermore, the effects it has on policies that prioritise border security over mobility rights (Estok, 2023; Sakellari, 2021), and the promotion of invisibility of all the causes of forced migration—which leads to climate being seen as the sole cause and obscures structural inequalities and responsibilities (Beine & Jeusette, 2021; Estok, 2023; Sakellari, 2021; Turner et al., 2025)—deserve closer examination.

Thus, the central purpose of this research is to analyse the discursive construction that the Spanish press, both nationally and regionally, makes of the causal link between the climate emergency and human mobility in the context of Europe's Southern border during the year 2025. To achieve this end, this study is structured around four fundamental axes. First, it evaluates the prominence of the terms “climate migrant” and “climate refugee,” based on the premise that their omission from the media agenda hinders the crystallisation of the concepts in the collective imagination. Secondly, it examines the pieces where both phenomena converge to determine whether the media establishes an explicit causal relationship or, on the contrary, presents them as isolated crises under a structure of thematic silos. Third, this research compares the interpretative frames of the mainstream national press with those of the border territories—specifically the Canary Islands and Andalusia—to detect possible narrative asymmetries. Finally, it scrutinises the anchoring or displacement mechanisms (spatial, temporal, and symbolic) employed by the newspapers to discern whether the issues reported are linked to the immediate territorial reality or if they are projected onto remote geographical and temporal contexts, thus diluting the urgency of the phenomenon in the immediate environment.

To address these questions, the study employs a mixed-methods design combining content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019)—a technique used to systematically, objectively, and quantitatively describe the overt

content of communication—and critical discourse analysis (CDA; Van Dijk, 2009)—which examines how abuse of power and social inequality are reproduced, legitimized, and perpetuated in communication. This allows analytical triangulation between the structural relevance of the texts and their ideological content.

Six newspapers were selected for the analysis, based on the criteria of audience, geographical relevance, and editorial lines. The sample was divided into taxonomic axes to contrast the regional press of the Southern border (*Canarias7* and *Diario Sur*), with the national progressive-leaning (*El País* and *elDiario.es*), and the conservative press (*El Mundo* and *ABC*). In the initial phase, the prominence of the sample ($N = 78$) is quantified and classified by examining information hierarchy variables, namely authorship, section, and scope. In the subsequent phase, the framing (Entman, 1993) is deconstructed, and the strategies of “moral distancing” or invisibility in the face of displacement in the Global South (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2022) are examined.

The core findings reveal a fragmented and asymmetrical narrative characterised by what might be termed “structural silences”—the systematic omission of the underlying political and industrial causes that drive the crisis. Quantitatively, the data show a clear dominance of the national press, which tends to take the phenomenon out of context by projecting it onto remote geographical areas, thereby triggering a strategy of moral distancing—a psychological and discursive mechanism that reduces the audience’s sense of responsibility by framing the suffering of others as distant and unrelated to their own reality. This process effectively dilutes local urgency. Qualitatively, the analysis identifies a “climate paradox”: whilst the media highlight the vulnerability of the Global South (particularly Africa), they systematically omit the industrial and financial responsibilities of the Global North, presenting the crisis as an exogenous disaster rather than a matter of international justice. The findings suggest that the use of high-impact emotional terms, such as “climate refugee,” coexists with a profound legal and political vacuum, where the migrant is frequently portrayed as a passive object of administrative management rather than an individual with the capacity for political action.

2. Climate Migration and the Press: Background and Key Concepts

2.1. Representation of the Phenomenon in the Press

Apocalyptic and catastrophic language predominates in European and Australian newspapers. Water metaphors such as “waves” or “flows” of millions of refugees are frequently used, linking migration with instability and conflict (Hartmann, 2010; Russo, 2017). This approach fuels the securitisation of the phenomenon—by linking climate migrants with risk and border vulnerability, it justifies the reinforcement of militarised responses and indirectly encourages xenophobia (Hartmann, 2010; Sakellari, 2019).

Migrants are often portrayed as anonymous masses or racialised “others,” omitting the context of the economic and political drivers that interact with climate-related causes (Giacomelli & Cappi, 2025; Herrmann, 2017). Western media and even NGOs tend to talk about refugees without giving them space to speak for themselves, as evidenced by the BBC’s coverage. Conversely, media outlets, such as Al Jazeera, which adopt a more personal approach, have been accused of perpetuating the cliché of “strangers sinking” in the Third World (Høeg & Tulloch, 2018).

In the specific case of Spain, research findings differ. Prieto-Andrés et al. (2025) argue that, although the coverage is limited, when it appears in the mainstream press, it tends to be analytical, empathetic, and not particularly focused on danger, which sets the Spanish media framework apart from other European countries. However, other authors identify a greater association between frames of victims and threat/invasion, with an extended use of dehumanising metaphors (waves, avalanches, economic burden, etc.) about refugees (Alcaraz-Mármol & Soto-Almela, 2020; Amores et al., 2019; Ferrández-Ferrer, 2021; Montagut & Moragas-Fernández, 2020). In other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Italy, and Poland, the discourse of catastrophe, crisis, and panic predominates, presenting climate migration as an inevitable and threatening flow towards the Global North (Bonneux & Van Praag, 2024; Estok, 2023; Sakellari, 2019).

2.2. Terminological Tension With the Concept of “Climate Refugee”

The media act as indispensable mediators that not only reflect reality but also construct the interpretative frames through which citizens and institutions understand and legitimise political responses. In this sense, the consolidation of sociological and legal categories such as “climate migrant” or “climate refugee” is essential. Despite the urgency of recognizing the condition of climate-related migration and refuge, a profound terminological tension prevails. While international law, under the 1951 Geneva Convention (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees) and the 1967 Protocol, does not formally recognise the status of “climate refugee,” the term has gained enormous social traction. However, studies such as that by Jiménez-Gómez et al. (2025) support international legal backing for those affected through the concept of “particular social group” mentioned in the 1967 Protocol.

Neither the UNHCR nor the IOM endorses the use of “climate refugee” as a legal category. This resistance is not merely semantic but rather a legal preservation strategy in the face of a vacuum in international law (Kocierz, 2024; Lulić et al., 2023). Under the Geneva Convention, people displaced strictly by climate factors do not meet the requirements of persecution or conflict necessary to obtain refugee status (Eksi, 2023; Sritharan, 2023).

For this reason, UNHCR explicitly rejects the term “climate refugee” and opts for technical circumlocutions such as “people displaced in the context of disasters and climate change” or “environmentally induced persons” (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021; Lulić et al., 2023). Even in its official clarifications, the agency alerts that using “refugee” for this group could dilute the protections afforded to those fleeing violence, creating legal confusion that states could exploit to curtail existing rights (Keyes, 2019; McEldowney & Drolet, 2021).

For its part, the IOM has been instrumental in shifting the language towards the category of “climate migrant.” Its approach is more inclusive but less binding: it defines an “environmental migrant” as someone who is forced or chooses to move due to progressive or sudden environmental changes (Del Álamo Marchena, 2021; Lulić et al., 2023). By adopting the concept of “migrant,” the IOM strips the subject of the political burden of asylum and places it in the realm of mobility management and resilience (Kocierz, 2024).

The fundamental reason why both agencies avoid the term “climate refugee” is the risk of collision with the current asylum regime. Formally recognising this term would imply a renegotiation of international treaties, which, in the current political climate, could result in less protection for all displaced persons (Hiraide, 2022; Sritharan, 2023). Although UNHCR and IOM recognise climate displacement as one of the most serious

protection challenges of the century, they operate under calculated ambiguity. They use the term “climate refugee” in advocacy forums (such as COPs) to generate urgency, but use official terms such as “climate migrants” or “displaced persons” in their technical guidelines so as not to alter the status quo of international law (Eksi, 2023; Kocierz, 2024).

2.3. Spain as the Southern Border of the EU

Despite the scarcity of statistical data on “climate migration,” Spain receives a significant proportion of migratory flows, with climate change being just one of many factors contributing to these movements. The geographical areas under discussion include the Sahel, West Africa, and the Mediterranean (Balsari et al., 2020; Enríquez-de-Salamanca, 2022).

The Canary Islands–Sahel and the Strait of Gibraltar/Ceuta–Melilla routes are described as critical areas where poverty, instability, and environmental degradation converge, and where Spain acts as the EU’s external border (Del Valle Gálvez, 2023; Enríquez-de-Salamanca, 2022). In the Strait of Gibraltar and the Canary Islands, migration policy is conceived as European border control, marked by externalisation policies towards Morocco and other countries and using migration as a “political weapon” in bilateral conflicts (Del Valle Gálvez, 2023). More generally, research shows that tightening borders in rich countries increases climate vulnerability by “trapping” people who could use migration as a means of adaptation in high-risk areas (Benveniste et al., 2020; McLeman, 2019).

As for coverage of specific areas such as Ceuta, Melilla, or the Canary Islands, some studies suggest that many Spanish media outlets follow a security- and bureaucracy-focused script, with emphasis on numbers, expressions such as “jumping the fence,” “waves,” and photos that dehumanise and criminalise migrants (Ali, 2024; Aranguren, 2024). This situation has been denounced by various specialised journalists in Spain, Italy, and Greece, who highlight that current border reporting focuses on conflict, violence, and police control, with little direct input from migrants and a strong political agenda (Arcila-Calderón et al., 2021).

Spain can be considered the EU’s premier migration laboratory due to its unique land borders with Africa and a proactive foreign policy. Unlike Italy or Greece, Spain uses bilateral diplomacy with Morocco and Senegal as a strategic tool. Furthermore, its progressive stance on mass regularisation and mandatory solidarity distinguishes it from its Mediterranean neighbours.

2.4. Climate Migration as a Factor of Vulnerability to Human Trafficking

The nexus between climate change, migration, and trafficking is being increasingly addressed by researchers, as environmental degradation drives people to move, and in the process, the risks of exploitation—including trafficking—increase, especially for women, girls, and young people.

The climate acts as a “threat multiplier”: droughts, crop failures, floods, and natural disasters exacerbate poverty, violence, and institutional collapse, forcing internal and cross-border migration (Balsari et al., 2020; Ferris, 2020; Huber et al., 2023; Kaczan & Orgill-Meyer, 2019; McLeman et al., 2019). When tightened borders and few legal routes are combined, migration becomes more desperate and controlled by criminal organizations, increasing kidnappings, extortion, and trafficking along the routes (Bates-Eamer, 2019;

Doering-White et al., 2024; Mugambiwa & Sibanda, 2025; Oswald, 2023). Examples of this include the Dry Corridor of Central America (Huber et al., 2023; Oswald, 2023), the Sundarbans region of India (Molinari, 2017; Thangavelu, 2025), sub-Saharan Africa (Nagy et al., 2024; Sheu et al., 2021), and rural Cambodia (Phon & Price, 2024).

Therefore, climate change does not generate trafficking on its own, but it intensifies the conditions (poverty, forced displacement, hard borders, and gender-based violence) that make many climate migrants extremely vulnerable to human trafficking, especially on long and militarised routes. Similarly, other dangers encountered during the journey, such as difficulty accessing basic services such as water, sanitation, or medical care (Schwerdtle et al., 2021), are rarely reflected in the media.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Objectives

This research analyses how the Spanish press presents the link between climate change and human mobility in Europe's Southern border in 2025, paying special attention to narrative differences between national newspapers and those in directly affected territories.

First, the explicit presence or absence of the terms “climate migrant” and “climate refugee” in the media agenda is addressed, based on the premise that the lack of use of these terms prevents the concept from gaining traction in the public's understanding. Second, those pieces where the themes of “climate change” and “migration” converge are explored to determine whether the media establishes a causal relationship between the two or, on the contrary, whether they juxtapose them as isolated and compartmentalised crises (thematic silos). Third, the interpretative frames used by the national mainstream press are compared with those used by the regional press in the border territories (Canary Islands and Andalusia). And fourth, the discursive mechanisms of anchoring or displacement (spatial, temporal, and symbolic) are detected. These mechanisms explain how the media situate the phenomenon of climate migration, determining whether the issue is linked to the immediate territorial reality or whether it is projected onto other geographical and temporal contexts.

3.2. Research Design

The mixed methodological design that combines quantitative content analysis and CDA allows, in a first phase, to measure the prominence, frequency, and structural location of the texts in the media ecosystem (quantitative dimension) and, in a second phase, to deconstruct the frames, distancing strategies, and underlying ideological bias in journalistic narratives (qualitative dimension).

For the first structural and quantitative level, content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) is used to quantify the relevance of the sample. Variables of information hierarchy (authorship, section, scope, type of piece) are examined. Next, the interpretative frameworks used by the media to give meaning to the climate-migration nexus are identified in order to examine the framing (Entman, 1993).

To complete the interpretation, this study employs CDA, incorporating recent contributions to the field of mediatisation of borders that highlight the way journalistic discourse establishes regimes of visibility or invisibility, and applies strategies of “moral distancing” or geographical externalisation, in response to displacement from the Global South (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2022).

The design takes on a comparative approach through a double analytical triangulation: on the one hand, it contrasts the territorial axis (hegemonic national press versus regional newspapers from the Southern Border) and, on the other, it examines the editorial axis (progressive versus conservative media). This cross-sectional structure responds to the demands of academic literature on climate mobility (Nash, 2019; Sakellari, 2021), which emphasises that the discursive consolidation of the figure of the “climate refugee” is not homogeneous. Instead, it is strongly conditioned by logistical proximity to the border and by the tactical use of scepticism as a tool of political polarisation.

3.3. Corpus and Sample

The period of analysis ranges from 1 January to 31 December 2025—a key year marked by anticipation surrounding COP30 and continued tension along migration routes to Europe. Another factor that contributed to the choice of 2025 as the period under review was the increased media attention on climate migration and the need for protection measures generated by the Tuvalu case.

To ensure a comprehensive representation that allows for the territorial and ideological comparison of the press, the sample of six Spanish newspapers is divided into three taxonomic axes:

1. Territorial axis (regional press on the Southern border): newspapers located in territories that are simultaneously hotspots for water/climate stress and the main gateway for migration. In this case, the *Canarias*⁷—newspaper of reference on the Canary Islands for the Atlantic Route—and *Diario Sur* (leading newspaper on the Andalusian coast for the Alboran Sea Route);
2. Editorial axis A (progressive national press): *El País* (leading national newspaper in Spain, centre-left leaning) and *ElDiario.es* (native digital media outlet with a marked progressive editorial line and a strong focus on human rights);
3. Editorial axis B (conservative national press): *El Mundo* (leading generalist newspaper on the centre-right spectrum) and *ABC* (traditional conservative newspaper).

3.4. Data Collection Process

The corpus was extracted through the My News portal in two sequential phases:

1. Explicit search based on terminology: Boolean operators were used for exact matches with the terms “climate migrant,” “climate refugee,” “climate migrants,” “climate refugees,” “climate migration,” or “climate displaced persons.”
2. Search for co-occurrence and silos, aimed at locating pieces where both topics converge to observe their degree of relationship or juxtaposition. The Boolean formula was used: “climate change,” “climate crisis,” “COP30,” and “migration,” “migrants,” or “refugees.”

To validate the research, a preliminary test was conducted to refine the original codebook for content analysis, selecting only the categories with significant results. This adjustment involved refining the initial sample, reducing it from 212 pieces to those that strictly met the selected parameters. The reliability of the analysis was ensured through a test–retest process (repeating the analysis at different times).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Quantitative Results of the Content Analysis

Out of the 78 media pieces analysed, the majority correspond to news (44) and opinion (15), whereas the sample only includes 8 interviews and 9 feature stories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Type of information corresponding to the pieces.

Opinion piece	Chronicle	Interview	News	Feature
15	0	8	44	9

Quantitative analysis of the corpus ($N = 78$) reveals an asymmetrical distribution that reflects the diversity of news agendas in the Spanish media ecosystem regarding the climate–migration nexus. As shown in Table 2, the sample is led by the national press (85.9%), with *El País* contributing 37.2% of the total, followed by *ElDiario.es* with 34.6%. Meanwhile, the regional press represents only 14.1%.

Table 2. Number of pieces according to geographical scope and type of media.

National media				Regional media			Total
67 (85.9%)				11 (14.1%)			
<i>ABC</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>El País</i>	<i>ElDiario.es</i>	<i>Canarias 7</i>	<i>Diario Sur</i>	<i>La Voz de Almería</i>	
9 (11.5%)	2 (2.6%)	29 (37.2%)	27 (34.6%)	6 (7.7%)	5 (6.4%)	0	78

Regarding the geographical scope of the coverage, the results show a marked tendency towards the delocalisation of the phenomenon. The corpus is dominated by international articles ($n = 43$), which represent 55.1% of the sample, compared to national articles (26.9%) and regional articles (21.8%). This spatial asymmetry is not neutral; by projecting the narrative onto geographically remote settings (such as Senegal, India, or Tuvalu), the Spanish media activate what Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2022) define as a strategy of “distancing.” This externalisation mechanism allows the recipient to perceive climate mobility as an exogenous crisis, located in an uncontrollable “elsewhere,” which deactivates the urgency in the immediate context.

Regarding the authorship of the articles, as detailed in Table 3, news production falls mainly to in-house editors ($n = 24$) and external contributors ($n = 24$), who together account for 64% of the total corpus. This parity is highly significant: While editors ensure the continuity of the media outlet’s editorial line, the strong presence of contributors—often academics, climate experts, or activists—allows for the introduction of more complex theoretical frameworks and background information that challenge the immediacy of daily reporting. On the other hand, correspondents ($n = 12$) maintain a significant presence, providing coverage from points of origin or transit and adding a layer of ethnographic authenticity to the discourse.

Table 3. Authorship of the pieces studied.

News agency	Media contributor	Media editor	Correspondent	Anonymous	Total
10	24	24	12	5	78

The distribution of the pieces in the different sections of the newspapers reveals a notable narrative fragmentation and a lack of editorial consensus on the nature of the phenomenon. As detailed in Table 4, the most common location corresponds to the category of “local geographical point” ($n = 15$), such as Andalusia or the Canary Islands. This confirms that the climate–migration nexus is primarily perceived as a local or territorial event, depending on the proximity of the landing site or the meteorological impact. Significantly, the “culture and leisure” section ($n = 13$) ranks second in frequency, surpassing strategic sections such as “international” ($n = 6$). This placement, added to the category of “other” ($n = 11$), which includes Sunday supplements and opinion blogs, suggests a tendency to “supplement” the conflict. Instead of being integrated into the *hard news* agenda, climate migration is shifting towards spaces of relaxed consumption or aesthetic analysis, which contributes to the trivialisation detected in the qualitative analysis.

However, the existence of the “climate change” section, which recognises the phenomenon as a first-rate news category ($n = 11$), combined with a high rate of both in-house and collaborative authorship (64%), supports Boykoff’s thesis (2011) that specialisation in environmental journalism is an indispensable requirement for overcoming the “false balance” in news reporting. At the same time, it contributes to establishing a thematic silo, preventing cross-cutting coverage. As Nash (2019) and Sakellari (2021) point out, treating climate refuge as a science or environmental issue strips it of its human and legal urgency, presenting it as an isolated biophysical agent rather than reflecting the reconfiguration of asylum policies and global economic frameworks.

Table 4. Section where the pieces are located.

Section	Number of pieces	Section	Number of pieces
Culture and leisure	13	International	6
Climate change	11	Society	4
Politics	2	Events	1
Local geographical point	15	Other	11
Economy	2	Total	78

Analysis of the sources consulted by journalists reveals a clear institutional and technical citation structure that influences how the phenomenon is framed in terms of administrative management. As detailed in Figure 1, media discourse is built on two main pillars: government sources ($n = 19$) and academic or technical experts ($n = 27$). This hegemony of “official voices” suggests that climate migration is narrated from the centres of power and knowledge of the Global North, prioritising the state’s vision and expert analysis over the lived experience of migrants.

Less frequently used sources include international organisations ($n = 15$) and the third sector ($n = 11$), which operate as mediators of the conflict. However, it is critical to note the marginality of the United Nations ($n = 3$), despite being the body that leads the legal frameworks for protection, and, especially, the scarce presence of victims or migrants ($n = 9$). This underrepresentation of the protagonists of displacement

themselves highlights a process of narrative dehumanisation, where migrants are the object of discourse but rarely the subject of enunciation—an observation shared by authors such as Bevitori and Johnson (2022) and Bonneux and Van Praag (2024). Only 14 articles out of 78 mentioned migrants as people with agency or used their statements. Finally, the minimal mention of the security forces ($n = 1$) suggests that the climate–migration nexus has moved beyond purely police-related events in the 2025 corpus, instead becoming part of institutional and technical debates.

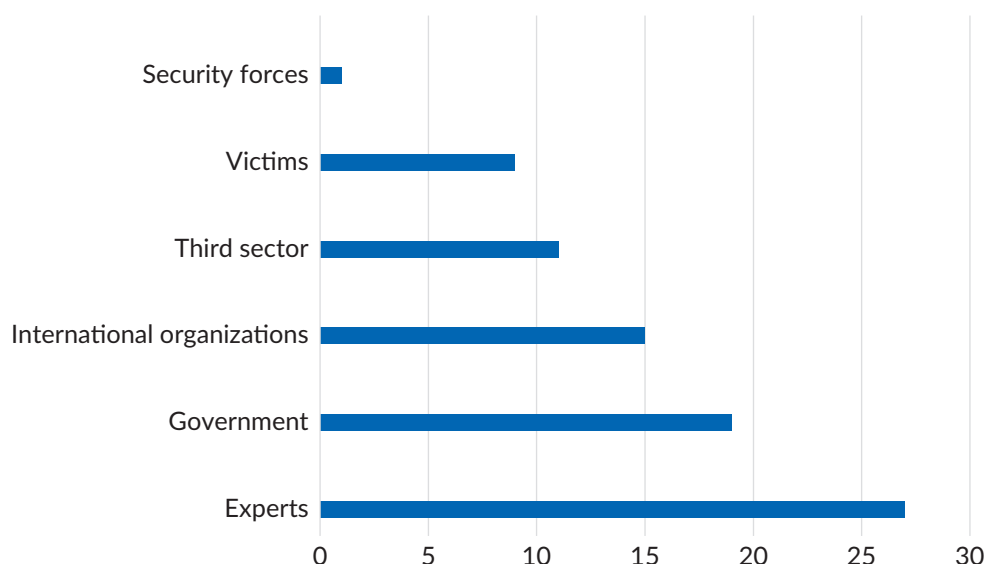


Figure 1. Sources cited in the articles.

As Entman (1993) points out, framing involves defining problems and suggesting solutions. However, as Table 5 shows, the media only fulfil the first function (defining the disaster), with the “impact” frame ($n = 40$) dominating and appearing three times more frequently than pieces focused on the “causes” ($n = 13$) or possible “solutions” ($n = 13$). Thematically, “politics” ($n = 27$) and “human rights” ($n = 21$) frames stand out. This volume contrasts with the low frequency of the “judicial and legislative” frame ($n = 8$). This gap indicates that, although the issue is politicised and appeals to human rights ethics, the discourse does not result in proposals for legal reform or real legal protection status, remaining at the stage of rhetorical denunciation. Finally, the prominence of the “culture, art, and literature” frame ($n = 23$) and its recurring placement in “culture and leisure” sections ($n = 13$) is not a spontaneous phenomenon but rather responds to a high-profile media event—the 39th edition of the Goya Awards, which featured the film *Black Butterflies*, focused on the lives of women climate refugees.

Table 5. Frames used in news items.

Causes of the phenomenon	13	Economy	11
Impact of the phenomenon	40	Politics	27
Solutions to the phenomenon	13	Event	17
Scientific	11	History	2
Culture, art, and literature	23	Judicial and legislative	8
Human rights	21	Security	6

Analysis of the most frequently mentioned specific contexts in the articles reveals a narrative focused on the humanitarian consequences, but strikingly evasive about the industrial causes. As shown in Table 6, the predominant context is that of “risks for migrants” ($n = 16$), which reinforces the perception of the displaced person as a vulnerable subject exposed to physical dangers, shipwrecks, or homelessness. This approach is complemented by the presence of “science” ($n = 12$) and “health” ($n = 9$), placing the phenomenon in a framework of “climate pathology” and academic rigour.

However, the limited weight given to the sectors driving climate change is revealing. The “oil industry” ($n = 4$) and “energy” ($n = 4$) are barely present, which supports the idea of “structural censorship” or “obscurantism” mentioned by experts such as Vaillant in an interview with *eIDiario.es* (Actis, 2025). Similarly, “agriculture” ($n = 3$), which is the primary sector most affected by water stress and the main driver of displacement in the Southern frontier and the Sahel, is virtually invisible. Finally, the mention of “institutional corruption or dishonesty” ($n = 4$) suggests an emerging critical discourse on the management of climate or border funds, although this remains peripheral to the global agenda.

Table 6. Contexts associated with climate migration.

Context	Number of pieces	Context	Number of pieces
Agriculture	3	Oil industry	4
Science	12	Risks for migrants	16
Corruption or institutional dishonesty	4	Health	9
Education	7	Tourism	2
Energy	4	Total	61 frames (in 78 texts)

Finally, the results show a clear preference for terms with high emotional impact over technical categories in terms of conceptual rigour. The concept of “climate refugees” ($n = 29$) significantly predominates over those of “climate migrants” ($n = 9$) and “climate displaced persons” ($n = 8$). This choice of terminology suggests that the media opt for the framework of “international protection” and “refuge” to give the news greater gravity, even though this status is not formally recognised in the Geneva Convention. The most common approach involves articles that simply establish a general link between migration and climate without using specific labels ($n = 34$). This data indicates that, although the Spanish press has internalised the causal link between the two phenomena, it still lacks a consolidated terminological culture, preferring peripheral descriptions or euphemisms rather than anchoring itself in defined concepts. Finally, the “relationship between trafficking and climate migration” ($n = 5$) is confirmed as the weakest link in the information chain, with a marginal presence that obscures the risks of criminal exploitation associated with environmentally forced mobility.

4.2. Integration of CDA Results and Discussion

The combined interpretation of content analysis and CDA results reveals a deep fracture in the representation of the climate–migration nexus in Spain. The information system not only operates as a disseminator of data but also as an ontological hierarchy device that determines which displacements are worthy of protection and which are stripped of their political status through diverse discursive strategies.

On certain occasions, the concept of “climate refugee” is trivialised, particularly in the conservative press. In articles relating to major cultural events, such as *ABC*’s coverage of the Goya Awards, climate migration is

portrayed as just one of many issues, with an ironic and mocking tone (Argudo, 2025; Muñoz, 2025). This disaffection reaches its peak with what could be termed “semantic gentrification”—the expression “climate refugee” is now used to describe tourists fleeing the summer heat, as evidenced by articles analysed from *El Mundo* (Alemany, 2025; Herguedas, 2025). This shift in meaning blurs the framework of structural vulnerability, transforming a humanitarian tragedy into an anecdote of bourgeois consumption.

In one of the pieces of *El Mundo*, the journalist uses the concept of climate refugees in a flippant and ironic way, unrelated to the context of climate change. This kind of “light” use of the term may contribute to numbing the sense of urgency surrounding a crisis that is already affecting millions of people today. Furthermore, in phrases such as “the highly uncertain future of all climate refugees roaming the planet” (Espada, 2025), the use of the verb “roaming,” which is often associated with moving freely from place to place or even with a lack of control, strips the displaced person of their status as a victim of climate injustice. This reinforces the idea of an amorphous and wandering mass, which connects with the frameworks of “threat” or “chaos.”

The utilitarian view that classifies migrants as a “nomadic proletariat” persists, prioritising the narrative of “attraction” (economic benefit for Europe) over that of “expulsion” (climate responsibility), as evidenced in Pérez’s (2025) article in *El País* on December 7. In contrast, the discourse of the Global South, such as the one represented by the Colombian Ombudsman’s Office in an *El País* piece of 20 September (Marín, 2025), links climate to social justice and ethnic survival, demanding comprehensive legal frameworks and employing the standard of “human mobility due to climate crisis,” which overcomes the legal paralysis of the term “refugee.”

In contrast to the technical narrative, the article published in *ElDiario.es* on 9 August (Espejo, 2025) considers the physical dispossession caused by climate change, which leads to “nominalist degradation” within the host society. The author links Bauman’s (1998, as cited in Espejo, 2025) creation of “subclasses” with Schmitt’s (1922, as cited in Espejo, 2025) idea of sovereign power to “exclude and declare who is outside the law.” In this framework, the invisibility of the climate-protection nexus is not an informational oversight, but a functional element of a “bureaucratic ethic” and “obedience” that transforms the displaced into a threat or an internal enemy. Thus, with this media logic, any possibility of climate justice or “ethical hospitality” is nullified. The same newspaper notes that this dehumanisation can lead to physical violence, citing the example of bathers in Granada who knocked down and immobilised migrants who arrived on the beach.

Referring to the alert in the previous article about “obedience” and “sub-humanity,” *ElDiario.es* on 8 August refers to the “toxic climate” of the media and political system, as well as the normalisation of xenophobic discourse that labels migrants as a “threat.” As a result, ordinary citizens feel justified in exercising violence that the publication defines as “social control outside the rule of law” (Clavell Segura, 2025a). Similar circumstances are mentioned in six texts labelled under the “security” frame. Conversely, political scientist Naïr, in an event covered by *Canarias Ahora* (2025), reveals an attempt to shift the media’s focus from the “invasion” narrative towards governance based on co-development and sustainability, using the statistical evidence that only 3% of African mobility is headed towards Europe. Morales (2025) from *ElDiario.es* points out that African migration from Africa to Spain accounts for less than 2% of the total, despite some people using terms such as “invasion.” The study found related humanitarian approaches under the labels of “human rights” ($n = 21$), “solutions” frameworks ($n = 13$), as well as in the context of the risks faced by migrants ($n = 16$).

Although “politics” is a recurring frame in the Spanish media ($n = 27$), it often lacks explanatory force. In reference to political communication, Naïr in *Canarias Ahora* (2025) emphasises that ignorance of the African reality is a structural failure of the media, which not only fails to correct this, but also perpetuates it by omitting the root causes. While the media often use the framework relating to the impact of the phenomenon ($n = 40$) and explain migration using scientific ($n = 11$), economic ($n = 11$), or related events ($n = 17$) perspectives, they still seem to fail to explain what this really means for people who become climate migrants. Naïr therefore proposes a deconstruction of the media’s vision to integrate climate change as a driver of sustainability and co-development, and not as an alien catastrophe. This transformation is essential for the Canary Islands to move from the narrative of a “border wall” to that of a laboratory of social solidarity. As stated in *EIDiario.es* piece from 25 December, the Tenerife Immigration Observatory (Morales, 2025) uses academic evidence to place the phenomenon within a global “climate alarm” and a historical trend of human expansion.

The article in *EIDiario.es* from 12 September highlights the “climate paradox” in Africa, given that “despite contributing less than 4% of global emissions and using only 6% of the world’s energy, it is the region most severely impacted by climate change” (Clavell Segura, 2025b). This argument challenges the notion of “blaming the migrant,” instead presenting a counter-narrative in which migration is viewed as a consequence of “the devastating effects of global warming” (Clavell Segura, 2025b). The text shifts the focus of migration away from the traditional approach of the press, viewing it as an issue of “charity” or “humanitarianism,” and towards the realm of reparation and international justice. This alludes to the idea that African countries have been advocating for years: There will be no climate justice without financial justice.

In Spanish newspapers, the outsourcing of articles to external contributors ($n = 24$) or even in-house production with the involvement of correspondents ($n = 12$), as well as the use of expert sources ($n = 27$), international organisations ($n = 15$), and third sector ($n = 11$), allows for the introduction of technical nuances into the daily news cycle. Examples found in the sample include the piece published by *EIDiario.es* on 10 July, written by experts who argue that climate migration is not universal, but rather a selective and stratified phenomenon which frequently leads to immobility or internal displacement (Boado Cebolla & Vergne, 2025). Using technical models, they challenge the idea of “pure climate cause,” cautioning that depoliticising what are often governance crises and using alarmist headlines about refugees can fuel denialism.

Along these lines, another article from *EIDiario.es*, dated 16 October, proposes the concept of “neither myth nor avalanche,” presenting the intention to migrate as a key variable (Pañeda & Meierrieks, 2025). Their study in Gambia and Senegal shows that migration aspirations increase in the face of irreversible climate effects. This challenges catastrophic narratives of a mass migration to the North and highlights the need for accounts that recognise the multiple causes and diversity of contexts.

The Spanish media’s silence regarding the industries responsible for global warming, such as the oil industry ($n = 4$), is almost total. In the interview with Vaillant, published in *EIDiario.es* on 14 January (Actis, 2025), soon those displaced by fires in Los Angeles sheds light on structural censorship imposed by media ownership and the hegemony of fossil capital. Vaillant highlights how corporate pressures from the oil industry prevent the link between human mobility and energy dependence from being recognized. This coercion explains why the hegemonic narrative prefers to frame migration as a “humanitarian drama” or a “public order” issue, sidestepping its origin in the collapse of civilisation resulting from the fossil fuel model.

The link between climate and trafficking, present only in 5 pieces, emerges tangentially in ABC, alerting that the lack of foresight in the face of mass displacement strengthens criminal networks (Sánchez, 2025). This vulnerability is exacerbated in contexts of statelessness, such as the Rohingya crisis referred to in a special analysis of *El País* published on 24 August, where environmental collapse acts as a catalyst for transnational crime and child exploitation (Aunión, 2025). The invisibility of this link in the agendas of the Global North may give rise to interpretations suggesting that governance is shifted towards armed groups, and an underfunded humanitarian system withdraws. Even in the regional press, in articles analysed from *Canarias7*, specialised discourse is absorbed by the crisis management framework, prioritising logistics and resource distribution narratives over climate causes and trafficking risks. Information saturation in border territories obscures structural vulnerability, confirming that proximity to a phenomenon does not necessarily lead to a more in-depth analysis.

Finally, discursive homogenisation is linked to the ownership structure. The duplication of content between *Diario Sur* and *Canarias7* is evidence of centralized production by the Vocento Group, which favours generic and security-oriented frameworks. This dynamic oversimplifies the phenomenon, displacing localised coverage and subordinating the territorial reality to centralised editorial guidelines.

5. Conclusions

The research shows that the media treatment of the climate–migration nexus in the Spanish press in 2025 is based on a structural paradox: While the phenomenon is becoming quantitatively relevant, its representation suffers from profound narrative fragmentation and an elision of responsibilities.

The hegemony of international coverage (55.1%) over national and regional coverage reveals a strategy of delocalising the issue. By projecting climate refuge onto geographically remote scenarios (such as Tuvalu or the Sahel), the media often activate a mechanism of “distancing” (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2022). This exogenous projection deactivates the political urgency on the Southern border, transforming an immediate structural challenge into a distant humanitarian spectacle. Despite the focus on “climate change” sections, a tendency to shift the debate towards more light-hearted or aesthetic contexts (“culture and leisure”) remains; whilst this may bring the issue to a wider audience, it can also lead to trivialisation if approached through the lens of science fiction, utopia, or humour. The texts show a systematic evasion of corporate responsibilities; mention of the sectors driving global warming (oil and energy) is minimal ($n = 8$), obscuring the “climate paradox” whereby regions with lower emissions suffer the most severe impacts. The link between the environmental crisis and human trafficking networks is the weakest link in the agenda ($n = 5$), which leaves the most vulnerable groups unprotected and limits migration governance to a purely logistical or security-based approach. In short, results suggest that the Spanish press might operate under a “bureaucratic ethic” that treats the climate as an isolated biophysical agent, sidestepping a profound debate on historical reparations, financial justice, and the reform of international protection frameworks.

By reviving concepts such as “historical reparation” and “humanism,” academia and media have the potential to dismantle the “bureaucratic ethic” that seems to dominate border management, proposing a narrative in which mobility is not a disruption but an inherent response to a planet undergoing ecological and social transformation. Nevertheless, this kind of approach is seldom found in the press.

Our research has several limitations. For example, it has a non-generalizability limitation of rather small-N studies. Amplifying the sample by including other national newspapers and regional press from non-border regions would enrich the results and show if the patterns found hold on a larger scale. Though the methodology was appropriate to address the research objectives, the inter-rater reliability of results could have been improved if several analysts were employed, avoiding the interpretative bias of a two-person team. Also, the results call for future research in terms of a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings and implications of media narratives. Despite these limitations, the findings of this research have normative implications for public policy design. Narrative fragmentation suggests that the public receives incomplete information, hindering the construction of a social consensus for the creation of specific legal frameworks. It is imperative that the Spanish political agenda shift from managing the “emergency” to preventive legislation, leading the way in proposing climate visas or temporary protection mechanisms that recognize environmental degradation as a legitimate driver of forced displacement.

The current discourse, by depoliticizing the problem and presenting it as a biophysical phenomenon, often misses the opportunity to push for reform in global governance. Therefore, migration governance policies should address “climate justice” not merely as a theoretical concept, but as an integral part of development aid and global migration pacts.

Acknowledgments

Our appreciation to the editors and two anonymous reviewers whose insightful comments helped us focus and improve our argument.

Funding

This research was carried out as part of the FITTER-EU project, which has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no 101132546. Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

LLMs Disclosure

DeepL has been used to assist with part of the translation.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors.

References

- Actis, A. (2025, January 14). John Vaillant: “Los Ángeles tiene ya 150.000 refugiados climáticos y seguimos quemando más petróleo que nunca.” *elDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/ballenablanca/crisis_climatica/john-valliant-angeles-150-000-refugiados-climaticos-seguimos-quemando-petroleo_128_11963080.html
- Agin, S., & Karlsson, M. (2021). Mapping the field of climate change communication 1993–2018: Geographically biased, theoretically narrow, and methodologically limited. *Environmental Communication*, 15(4), 431–446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2021.1902363>

- Alcaraz-Mármol, G., & Soto-Almela, J. (2020). Refugees' dehumanization in the Spanish media: A corpus-assisted study within the semantic preference framework. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 13(5), 791–817. <https://doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2019-0069>
- Aleman, L. (2025, August 16). Glosario de casas, zulos y fantasías domésticas veraniegas. *El Mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/papel/historias/2025/08/16/689f683de4d4d8ba068b456f.html>
- Ali, F. (2024). Discursive and photographic representations of migrants in the media: The case of Ceuta and Melilla. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 30(2), 232–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2024.2345874>
- Amores, J., Calderón, C., & Stanek, M. (2019). Visual frames of migrants and refugees in the main Western European media. *Economics & Sociology*, 12(3), 147–161. <https://doi.org/10.14254/2071-789x.2019/12-3/10>
- Aranguren, M. (2024). Producción de noticias sobre la llegada de personas migrantes por mar a costas españolas. *Estudios Sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 30(3), 601–612. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9757896>
- Arcila-Calderón, C., Blanco-Herrero, D., Matsiola, M., Oller-Alonso, M., Saridou, T., Splendore, S., & Veglis, A. (2021). Framing migration in Southern European media: Perceptions of Spanish, Italian, and Greek specialized journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 17(1), 24–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.2014347>
- Argudo, R. (2025, February 9). Los Goya son los Velázquez. *ABC*. <https://www.abc.es/cultura/cine/articulo-rebeca-argudo-70230621649-20250208184457-nt.html>
- Aunión, J. A. (2025, August 24). Un millón de refugiados Rohinyá al límite. *El País*. <https://elpais.com/eps/2025-08-24/el-exilio-interminable-de-los-rohinyas.html>
- Balsari, S., Dresser, C., & Leaning, J. (2020). Climate change, migration, and civil strife. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 7, 404–414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-020-00291-4>
- Bates-Eamer, N. (2019). Border and migration controls and migrant precarity in the context of climate change. *Social Sciences*, 8(7), Article 198. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8070198>
- Beine, M., & Jeusette, L. (2021). A meta-analysis of the literature on climate change and migration. *Journal of Demographic Economics*, 87(3), 293–344. <https://doi.org/10.1017/dem.2019.22>
- Benveniste, H., Oppenheimer, M., & Fleurbaey, M. (2020). Effect of border policy on exposure and vulnerability to climate change. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 117(43), 26692–26702. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2007597117>
- Bevitori, C., & Johnson, J. (2022). Risk and resilience in a changing climate: A diachronic analysis in the press across the globe. *Text & Talk*, 42(4), 547–569. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text-2020-0076>
- Boado Cebolla, H., & Vergne Suárez, Á. (2025, July 10). El mito de los refugiados climáticos. *elDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/piedrasdepapel/mito-refugiados-climaticos_132_12449811.html
- Bonneux, I., & Van Praag, L. (2024). Millions of climate refugees are coming! A critical media discourse analysis on climate change-induced migrants in Flemish press. *Environmental Sociology*, 10(4), 486–498. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2024.2369738>
- Boykoff, M. T. (2011). *Who speaks for the climate? Making sense of media reporting on climate change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Canarias Ahora. (2025, July 11). Sami Naïr desmonta los mitos de la migración y destaca el papel de Canarias para construir una sociedad euroafricana humanista y solidaria. *ElDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/canariasahora/sociedad/sami-nair-desmonta-mitos-migracion-destaca-papel-canarias-construir-sociedad-euroafricana-humanista-solidaria_1_12478337.html

- Chouliaraki, L., & Georgiou, M. (2022). *The digital border: Migration, technology, power*. NYU Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.13944167>
- Clavell Segura, J. (2025a, August 11). Elogio a la empatía. *Diario de Avisos*. <https://diariodeavisos.elespanol.com/2025/08/elogio-a-la-empatia>
- Clavell Segura, J. (2025b, September 12). La paradoja climática africana. *ElDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/canariasahora/opinion/paradoja-climatica-africana_132_12599009.html
- Del Álamo Marchena, E. (2021). Migration and human displacement in the context of climate change: Reflections on the category of climate refugees. *Paix et Securite Internationales*, 2021(9), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.25267/paix_secur_int.2021.i9.1708
- Del Valle Gálvez, A. (2023). Ad Portas Europae. Singularity of migrations in the Strait of Gibraltar area. Southern external borders, European narratives and values. *Paix et Securite Internationales*, 2023(11), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.25267/paix_secur_int.2023.i11.1001
- Doering-White, J., De León, A., Batista, C., & Flynn, K. (2024). Humanitarian aid and the everyday invisibility of climate-related migration from Central America. *Climate and Development*, 17(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2024.2312829>
- Eksi, N. (2023). No way out for climate refugees' asylum applications in court decisions and conventions. *Medicine, Law & Society*, 16(1), 55–86. <https://doi.org/10.18690/mls.16.1.55-86.2023>
- Enríquez-de-Salamanca, Á. (2022). Influence of climate change, overfishing and COVID19 on irregular migration in West Africa. *Climate and Development*, 15(3), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2022.2076644>
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Espada, A. (2025, September 1). Sobre el bádminton. *El Mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/opinion/blogs/el-mundo-por-dentro/2025/09/01/68b60d90fdddf84f8b4573.html>
- Espejo, D. (2025, August 9). No nos bastan las palabras, son los cuerpos los que hablan al moverse. *ElDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/murcia/murcia-y-aparte/no-bastan-palabras-son-cuerpos-hablan-moverse_132_12524729.html
- Estok, S. (2023). Climate change and migration. *Neohelicon*, 50, 239–251. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11059-023-00686-w>
- Ferrández-Ferrer, A. (2021). Refugees, coronavirus and the politics of representation in the Spanish press. *Studies in Communication Sciences*, 21(2), 291–307. <https://doi.org/10.24434/j.scoms.2021.02.012>
- Ferris, E. (2020). Research on climate change and migration where are we and where are we going? *Migration Studies*, 8(4), 612–625. <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnaa028>
- Giacomelli, E., & Cappi, V. (2025). 'Othering' in the Panicocene: Intergovernmental and non-governmental awareness campaigns on climate change induced-migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 51(13), 3341–3359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2468287>
- Hartmann, B. (2010). Rethinking climate refugees and climate conflict: Rhetoric, reality and the politics of policy discourse. *Journal of International Development*, 22, 233–246. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1676>
- Herguedas, M. A. (2025, April 5). La indescriptible luz de Laredo y un delirio bajo la sombra del volcán. *El Mundo*. <https://www.elmundo.es/la-lectura/2025/04/05/67effd85fdddf5b258b45bb.html>
- Herrmann, V. (2017). America's first climate change refugees: Victimization, distancing, and disempowerment in journalistic storytelling. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 31, 205–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2017.05.033>
- Hiraide, L. (2022). Climate refugees: A useful concept? Towards an alternative vocabulary of ecological displacement. *Politics*, 43(2), 267–282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02633957221077257>

- Høeg, E., & Tulloch, C. (2018). Sinking strangers: Media representations of climate refugees on the BBC and Al Jazeera. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(3), 225–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0196859918809486>
- Hoffmann, R., Šedová, B., & Vinke, K. (2021). Improving the evidence base: A methodological review of the quantitative climate migration literature. *Global Environmental Change*, 71, Article 102367. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102367>
- Huber, J., Madurga-Lopez, I., Murray, U., McKeown, P., Pacillo, G., Laderach, P., & Spillane, C. (2023). Climate-related migration and the climate-security-migration nexus in the Central American Dry Corridor. *Climatic Change*, 176, Article 79. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-023-03549-6>
- Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. (2024). *Global report on internal displacement 2024*. <https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2024>
- International Organization for Migration. (2024). *World migration report 2024*. <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>
- Jiménez-Gómez, I., Martín-Sosa, S., Villaseñor Goyzueta, A., & Garcés Prieto, J. (2025). La paradoja mediática del refugiado climático: Diez años de migración climática en la prensa en español. *Cuadernos. info*, 61, 94–116. <http://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.61.87178>
- Kaczan, D., & Orgill-Meyer, J. (2019). The impact of climate change on migration: A synthesis of recent empirical insights. *Climatic Change*, 158, 281–300. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02560-0>
- Keyes, E. (2019). Environmental refugees? Rethinking what's in a name. *North Carolina Journal of International Law*, 44(3), 461–513. https://scholarworks.law.ubalt.edu/all_fac/1082
- Kocierz, M. (2024). Adaptation to climate change: IOM and UNHCR approaches to communication on climate migration. *Media Biznes Kultura*, 2(17), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.4467/25442554.mbk.24.015.20889>
- Krippendorff, K. (2019). *Content analysis*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071878781>
- Lódzki, B., & Kocierz, M. (2025). Polish online media coverage of climate refugees. *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych*, 53(1), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.18290/rns2025.0012>
- Lulić, M., Muhvić, D., & Čulo, I. (2023). In support of the debate on the terminology related to the terms climate refugees, climate migrants, environmentally displaced persons and similar terms. *EU and Comparative Law Issues and Challenges Series (ECLIC)*, 7, 3–32. <https://doi.org/10.25234/eclic/27441>
- Marín, I. (2025, September 20). La defensa de la paz, la igualdad y la naturaleza. *El País*. <https://elpais.com/america-colombia/2025-09-20/la-defensa-de-la-paz-la-igualdad-y-la-naturaleza.html>
- McEldowney, J., & Drolet, J. (2021). Climate change and refugees. In T. M. Letcher (Ed.), *Reference module in earth systems and environmental sciences* (pp. 537–545). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-822373-4.00010-0>
- McLeman, R. (2019). International migration and climate adaptation in an era of hardening borders. *Nature Climate Change*, 9, 911–918. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0634-2>
- Molinari, N. (2017). Intensifying insecurities: The impact of climate change on vulnerability to human trafficking in the Indian Sundarbans. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 8, 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121784>
- Montagut, M., & Moragas-Fernández, C. (2020). The European refugee crisis discourse in the Spanish press: Mapping humanization and dehumanization frames through metaphors. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 69–91. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/10626>
- Morales, Á. (2025, December 25). Una exposición permite una mirada con perspectiva, pausa y conciencia sobre el fenómeno de la migración en Tenerife. *ElDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/canariasahora/migraciones/exposicion-permite-mirada-perspectiva-pausa-conciencia-fenomeno-migracion-tenerife_1_12870506.html

- Mugambiwa, S., & Sibanda, P. (2025). Climate change, migration, and displacement: Advancing a risk-informed approach for sustainable solutions. *International Journal of Population Studies*, 11(4), 7–14. <https://doi.org/10.36922/ijps.5165>
- Muñoz, F. (2025, February 9). Los Goya de las sorpresas premian 'ex aequo' a 'El 47' y 'La infiltrada.' ABC. <https://www.abc.es/play/cine/noticias/goja-sorpresas-premian-aequo-infiltrada-20250209015422-nt.html>
- Nagy, R., Bérczi, L., Sáfár, B., & Kállai, K. (2024). The relationship of environmental migration and human trafficking concerning natural hazards at the affected regions of Africa. *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*, 3(1), 17–46. <https://doi.org/10.59569/jceas.2023.3.1.209>
- Nash, S. L. (2019). A spotlight on negotiating mobility in Paris: Ushering in another new era for the migration and climate change nexus. In S. L. Nash (Ed.), *Negotiating migration in the context of climate change* (pp. 65–84). Bristol University Press. <https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529201277.ch003>
- Oswald, Ú. (2023). Migración climática y fronteras militarizadas: Seguridad humana, de género y ambiental. *Frontera Norte*, 35, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.2292>
- Pañeda, I., & Meierrieks, D. (2025, October 23). Ni mito ni avalancha: cuándo el cambio climático impulsa a migrar. *elDiario.es*. https://www.eldiario.es/piedrasdepapel/mito-avalancha-cambio-climatico-impulsa-migrar_132_12686287.html
- Pérez, C. (2025, December 7). La migración suma: Los datos demuestran que el efecto económico es netamente positivo. *El País*. <https://elpais.com/ideas/2025-12-07/la-migracion-suma-los-datos-demuestran-que-el-efecto-economico-es-netamente-positivo.html>
- Phon, P., & Price, R. (2024). Climate change, forced migration and trafficking in persons: Risk of young women in rural Cambodia. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 10(2), 361–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2024.2303263>
- Prieto-Andrés, A., Fernández-Romero, C., & Agualeles, M. (2025). The portrayal in the Spanish press of migration caused by climate change: A moral framework analysis. *Frontiers in Communication*, 10, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1546804>
- Russo, K. (2017). Floating signifiers, transnational affect flows: Climate-induced migrants in Australian news discourse. In A. Baldwin & G. Bettina (Eds.), *Life adrift: Climate change, migration, critique* (pp. 195–210). Rowland & Littlefield. <https://www.torrossa.com/en/resources/an/6086174#page=202>
- Sakellari, M. (2019). Climate change and migration in the UK news media: How the story is told. *International Communication Gazette*, 83(1), 63–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048519883518>
- Sakellari, M. (2021). Media coverage of climate change induced migration: Implications for meaningful media discourse. *Global Media and Communication*, 18(1), 67–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427665211064974>
- Sánchez, R. (2025, September 6). El lado oscuro de Alemania una década después de las 'puertas abiertas' de Merkel a los refugiados. ABC. <https://www.abc.es/internacional/lado-oscuro-alemania-decada-despues-puertas-abiertas-20250905123657-nt.html>
- Schwerdtle, P., Bärnighausen, K., Karim, S., Raihan, T., Selim, S., Baernighausen, T., & Danquah, I. (2021). A risk exchange: Health and mobility in the context of climate and environmental change in Bangladesh—A qualitative study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), Article 2629. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18052629>
- Sheu, J., Torres, M., Gordon, M., Nguyen, P., & Coverdale, J. (2021). Potential impact of climate change on human trafficking: A narrative review. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 209(5), 324–329. <https://doi.org/10.1097/nmd.0000000000001312>

- Sritharan, E. S. (2023). Climate change-related displacement and the determination of refugee status under the 1951 Refugee Convention. *LeXonomica*, 15(1), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.18690/lexonomica.15.1.1-32.2023>
- Thangavelu, D. (2025). *The overlooked nexus between climate migration and human trafficking*. GlobalDev. <https://globaldev.blog/the-overlooked-nexus-between-climate-migration-and-human-trafficking>
- Turner, M., Rice, A., Fornof, E., & Ribot, J. (2025). Putting migration in context: A review of how theory and methods shape climate-induced migration research findings. *Frontiers in Climate*, 7, Article 1549686. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fclim.2025.1549686>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2024). *SIN ESCAPE: En la primera línea del cambio climático, los conflictos y el desplazamiento forzado*. https://www.acnur.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/Sin_escape_2024.pdf

About the Authors



Sara Parra Ferreras is a predoctoral researcher at the Complutense University of Madrid. Based at the School of Media and Communication Studies, her research focuses on the intersection of media, human rights, and global displacement, specifically examining the coverage of human trafficking and vulnerable collectives.



Liisa Irene Hänninen is an associate professor at the Complutense University of Madrid and a fellow researcher of the Institute of Knowledge Technology. She teaches responsible research and innovation, and leadership and organizational communication at the School of Media and Communication Studies. Her research focuses on migration, vulnerable groups, and educational innovation.