Chapter 14
Climate Change, Disasters, Adaptation, Immobility, and Trapped Populations in Türkiye

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the complex effects of climate change on human mobility in Türkiye, a Mediterranean climate hotspot highly vulnerable to floods, droughts, storms, and sea-level rise. Climate impacts act as threat multipliers, exacerbating existing socio-economic and spatial inequalities. Sudden-onset events trigger short-term, local mobility, while slow-onset hazards drive long-term relocation. Migration can serve as adaptation, yet many "trapped" populations remain immobile due to vulnerability and lack of resources. Climate-related counter-urbanization reflects privileged adaptation, deepening inequalities. Policy-induced displacement, arising from conservation-development tensions, further threatens livelihoods. Using social inequality and environmental justice frameworks, the study concludes that climate-induced mobility in Türkiye is a deeply social issue, requiring holistic, equitable, and resilient policy responses.

1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is unequivocally recognized today as one of the most paramount and challenging global issues of our time, a phenomenon that fundamentally tran-

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scends national borders and has firmly positioned itself at the epicenter of both the scientific community's research agenda and high-level political deliberations worldwide. The overwhelming and undisputed body of evidence concerning human-induced global warming, meticulously documented by authoritative bodies such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2014), robustly confirms that our planet is now irreversibly embarked upon a complex and highly dynamic trajectory of profound environmental transformation. This escalating crisis extends far beyond a simple or singular metric, such as merely an average increase in global temperatures. Instead, it ushers in and accelerates a destructive series of unprecedented forms of environmental degradation that fundamentally destabilize the inherent equilibrium of natural ecosystems and, consequently, vital human support systems. The most immediate and tangible manifestations of this new environmental disaster era include a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather and climate events. These encompass phenomena such as severe and prolonged heatwaves, sudden and destructive cold snaps, torrential high precipitation events leading to large-scale flooding, catastrophic wind storms, multi-year droughts that decimate food security, and the persistent, critical threat of accelerating sea-level rise along global coastlines (IPCC, 2021). The cascading effects of these climatic shocks specifically the onset of chronic water scarcity, significant reduction in arable land productivity, and pervasive ecological destruction are progressively rendering critical regions of the world economically unviable for traditional livelihoods or, more critically, physically uninhabitable for large populations. Therefore, the resultant environmental degradation caused by anthropogenic climate change emerges as one of the most pivotal and urgent societal consequences of our generation, directly generating the risk of widespread human mobility and forced displacement, thereby solidifying its urgent place at the very focal point of intensive scientific inquiry and strategic policy formulation (Piguet, 2022; IDMC, 2024).

The linkages between climate change and human mobility constitute a multi-dimensional and highly complex area of debate within the existing literature (Rigaud et al., 2018). Moving away from the early-period predictions of mass, linear migratory flows, the contemporary consensus acknowledges this relationship as a multi-causal, context-specific process deeply intertwined with socio-economic, political, and demographic factors (Black et al., 2011; McLeman, 2013). The current body of literature often struggles to fully articulate the complex dynamics between forced displacement, migration viewed as an adaptation mechanism, and the existence of trapped populations individuals unable to relocate due to severe socio-economic incapacities. Specifically, in a country like Türkiye, which is recognized as a climate change hotspot within the Mediterranean basin and is already exposed to escalating climate risks alongside long-standing rural-to-urban migration trends, there is a critical need for a holistic analysis of how climate impacts transform local