Introduction:

Since the 1990s, there is a growing body of work asserting that climate-related migration is a logical and at times inevitable ramification of global warming. A majority of these studies have attempted to better understand the environmental triggers responsible for population displacement (Laczko & Aghazarm, 2009; Jäger et al., 2009; Foresight, 2011; Gemenne et al., 2013). Some studies have discussed the international legal challenges that it raises (Cournil, 2006; Kälin, 2010; Mayer, 2011), whereas others have estimated the number of environmental migrants globally and made future projections (El-Hinnawi, 1985; Jacobson, 1988; Myers & Kent, 1995; Myers, 2002). Finally, some authors have analysed the varying ways in which climate migrants have been portrayed and understood, and deconstructed some misleading representations in confronting them with empirical observations (Gemenne, 2010; Farbotko & Lazrus, 2012; Bettini, 2013). However, fewer academic works have attempted to assess the role of discourse on climate migration in influencing the policy making process. In other terms, the performative dimension of discourse is still unexamined.

This paper seeks to illustrate how new insights on the social construction of the “climate migrant” problem can be gained through a discourse analytical approach. It aims to demonstrate the relevance of using a lexicometric analysis to decrypt discourses in a social science research, a discipline largely dominated by qualitative methods. This type of analysis allows making sense of reality through word associations and co-occurrences. But it remains a mixed-method approach, as no computer-assisted analysis can replace the interpretative process of a corpus. However, the author argues that generating statistical outputs help to formulate and/or validate research hypothesis.

This paper starts with a discussion of the key theoretical concepts mobilised in this research to analyse the discourses on climate-related migration in Bangladesh. Then it exposes the method chosen, in particular the use of the open-source statistical text analysis software Iramuteq. The two last sections present and discuss some preliminary findings deriving from the software analysis. For the purpose of this paper, we concentrate on the experts’ discourse on climate-related migration, as we assume that they play a crucial role in the formulation of this new public problem. In particular, we will show how Iramuteq analysis highlight the existence of what Lindseth calls a “thinking globally discourse” held by
Bangladeshi experts (Lindseth, 2006). We will conclude with a discussion on how such discourse oriented towards the international level can cause specific political outcomes.

Towards a discourse analysis of public policy

Discourse analysis has become prominent within political science in recent years, especially following the publication of Fisher and Forrester’s (1993) *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. Whereas policy studies lacked before an understanding of how knowledge leads to politics (Fisher, 2003), the study of discourse gives new perspectives on how we understand policy processes and how different policy suggestions are legitimised. Falling within the scope of social constructivism, discourse analysis allows to see how the social construction of knowledge and ‘truths’ have social consequences: depending on the specific conceptualisation of an issue, some problems and solutions will be emphasised, while competing alternatives will be discredited (Bäckstrand & Lövbrand, 2006).

Political scientists paying attention to the role of discourses are primarily interested in understanding how and why particular representations are invoked, how particular discourses come to be hegemonic and what practices and power relations are made intelligible by this dominance (Lindseth, 2006). Therefore, discourse analysis is characterised by two analytic dimensions: the level of content – what is actually said or written – and the level of context – the social situation in which a text is produced and by whom it is produced (van Dijk, 1999). Adopting a discourse approach seems then a promising way to look at how specific representations of climate migration are constructed and mobilised by diverse actors in Bangladesh, with which communicative strategies and which effects on political action.

This research falls then within the set of approaches to public policy analysis that Zittoun and Durnova have grouped under the umbrella term of “discursive” approaches (Zittoun & Durnova, 2013). These discursive studies draw inspiration from Michel Foucault’s work that sees discourses as sites of production of knowledge and power. Foucault argues that discourses not only describe things, but they also do things through the ways they make sense of the world and give meanings to things. They produce a specific kind of truth that supports and justifies the way power is exercised. Thus, discourses can both hindering and enabling action, and are locations of struggles and compromises (Foucault, 1969).

Foucaultian discourse analysis of public policy has particularly influenced the study of environmental politics (Hajer, 1995; Hajer & Versteeg, 2005; Feindt & Oels, 2005). Maarten Hajer made an important contribution to this field, relying on Foucault’s perspectives of discourse, while making them more relevant for policy studies. Hajer defines discourse as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that is produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (Hajer, 1995, p. 44) and we use this definition in our discursive approach. Through these ideas, concepts and categories, discourse provides the tools with which problems are constructed. At the same time, discourse forms the context in which phenomena are understood and thus predetermines the definition of the problem (Hajer, 1993). This paper strongly relies on Hajer’s contribution to analyse how the ‘climate migrant’ problem is constructed in Bangladesh, through discourses embedded in a particular context.

In a departure from Foucault’ theory, Hajer develops the concepts of “metaphor”, “story line” and “discourse coalitions”, which give more room for individuals’ strategic action. The political mechanism of metaphors is to focus, simplify, compress and appeal. For
Hajer, ‘greenhouse gas effect’ is for instance a useful metaphor to create political support for action, as it comes with the association of humidity and emphasises how global warming can make people suffocate. In the same way, the frequent use of the term ‘climate refugees’ in Bangladeshi discourses can be seen as a metaphor picturing large-scale flows of helpless victims, while pointing out historical responsibility of developed countries regarding climate change. “Story line” is a condensed statement summarising complex narratives and used by people as ‘short hand’ in discussions (Hajer, 2006). Actors use story line as a discursive strategy to pursue a particular agenda. As we will see in the next sections of this paper, assuring that “climate migration is a global problem requiring global solutions” can be seen as a story line fulfilling particular interests. “Story line” and “metaphor” play a significant role in political processes where policies have to be determined in a group of actors that do not necessary share the same understanding of the issue. If “story line” and “metaphor” can therefore help to reach consensus, they also derive their political effects from the fact that actors can have a different reading of a particular statement. Hajer defines his third concept of “discourse coalitions” as “a group of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time” (Hajer, 2006). Those actors can come from different institutional contexts and pursue different goals and interests, but they have in common to employ the same story lines when engage in political discussion. These three concepts have an heuristic value to study the construction of discourses on climate-related migration and how they are mobilised by some actors to influence political processes.

Analysing discursive practices as an integral part of political struggles to the formulation of a new public problem leads to take into account the performative dimension of speech acts. To paraphrase John Austin’s formula, one can do things with words, meaning that language is not only a description of reality, but also a practice that produces what it names (Austin, 1962). In a critical reading of Austin’s work on performative speech acts, Pierre Bourdieu adds a sociological analysis of what makes a performative utterance successful. Indeed, he stressed the importance of analysing texts in their social context rather than in purely linguistic terms (Bourdieu, 1982). A discourse gets performative within specific social conditions – that Bourdieu calls ‘felicity conditions’ – which include the social position of the speaker, his position within the field of intervention, the context of production and reception of discourse, the form of discourse, and the relation between the speaker and the target audience. We can take on the concept of “performativity” to analyse the concrete effects of discourses on climate-related migration, depending on the social authority of the speaker as well as the social context in which the discourse is held.

**Studying discourse: a mixed-method approach**

It is hard to define discourse analysis as a single method, being conducted within various disciplines, with different research traditions. However, Fisher has summed up the overall aim of discourse analysis as a matter of: “establishing interconnections among the empirical data, normative assumptions that structure our understanding of the social world, the interpretative judgements involved in the data collection process, the particular circumstances of a situational context (in which the findings are generated or the prescriptions applied), and the specific conclusions” (Fisher, 2003, p. 191). Most of constructivist scholars using discourse analysis to understand public policy formation confine themselves to qualitative methods such as document analysis, desk research, and interviews with key players. Except a few exceptions, all previous studies on the construction of discourses about climate migrants or ‘climate refugees’ have used such methods, and even
few of them have claimed to adopt a rigorous discourse analysis approach (McNamara, 2008; Bettini, 2013; Florémont, 2013; Kothari, 2014). In this paper, we argue that even if discourse analysis is mainly qualitative in a social science research, the use of quantitative methods can also bring new insights and be highly complementary with traditional analytical methods. Adopting such a mixed-method approach provides a rigorous way of analysing textual and linguistic properties of a discourse, as well as its complex interplay with society.

Regarding data sampling, 60 semi-structured interviews have been conducted in Bangladesh from 2011 to 2013. A broad variety of stakeholders have been interviewed, including policymakers, scholars, experts, journalists, non-governmental organisations’ representatives and donors’ representatives. We focus on power elites’ discourse, as we consider that they are those with influence on policy processes, especially regarding the political and social construction of the “climate migrant” in Bangladesh. That is why the community discourse, as well as the local authorities’ one, is excluded from the research sampling. Local people and local government institutions are still poorly engaged in political life of Bangladesh and so are under-represented in the policy-making process. They also lack awareness regarding climate change impacts, not making the link between their deteriorated livelihoods and the changing environment. This empirical observation guided the selection of interviewees, who are highly qualified national actors living in the capital, Dhaka. They have been selected on the basis of their specific knowledge and/or professional position regarding the issue of climate-related migration. In other terms, people were selected depending on their ability to talk about this migratory phenomenon.

Semi-structured interviews have all been recorded. Aware of the bias the recorder device can create in pushing people to only say things in a socially acceptable way, recording remains crucial to capture discourses in their entirety. Interviews have then all been transcribed word-to-word. All interviews have been conducted following the same questionnaire and each interviewee has been subject to the same questions, in order to allow a rigorous comparison of their discourses. Questions have been divided into four categories - “perceptions”, “activities”, “governance” and “relations” – in order to cover all dimensions of discourses. Semi-structured interviews compose the main material of this research, as we consider that they reflect ‘discourse in action’ regarding the issue of climate migration.

To measure this large database – we get more than 600 pages of interview transcripts – we use statistical text analysis software called Iramuteq, which is an open-source reproduction of the software Alceste. The basic idea of this software is to find “lexical worlds” in the speaker’s discourse, through a statistical study of the frequency and distribution of words in the corpus (Reinert, 1983). In other terms, it classifies the content of the corpus into topics. Reinert’s methodology is concerned “not with finding the meaning of a text, but with determining how the elements that make up the text are organised” (Reinert, 1990). Iramuteq requires a short preparation of the corpus, as well as a pre-coding phase. All the transcripts are gathered in a single document with the specific format .txt. Some parameters need to be defined, in order to facilitate interpretation of the results.

In this research we elaborate six variables:

- Name of the speaker
- Professional activity
- Gender
- Scale identified in speaker’s answers (national or international)
- Type of questions (four categories identified above: perceptions, activities, governance, relations)
- Topics (manual identification of key recurrent topics across all the interviews)

Through a descending classification of text segments, Iramuteq identifies different classes that correspond to different lexical worlds, or word clusters. It also detects co-occurrences among words, helping the researcher to see how they are used in relation with each other. For instance, Iramuteq does not only count the number of times the term “security” is repeated in the corpus, but it also shows to which other words “security” is associated. If “security” is more correlated to the term “India” than “human” or “state”, it will have different implications with regard to how actors perceive climate migration as a specific security challenge and how they can deal with it. In addition, a factorial correspondence analysis rounds out the results, giving a graphical representation of the classes and the links they have to each other. As we will see later in this paper, the two lexical worlds related to international climate negotiations (1) and financial options to manage climate-related displacement (2) are closely associated, even if such result remains to be interpreted.

Statistical analysis provides a robust basis on which we can formulate an interpretation of the results. A key feature of Iramuteq is also that it can be used to identify the speakers’ tendency to articulate particular ideas and arguments – ideas and arguments that can be then correlated with speaker’ characteristics. Using Hajer’s vocabulary, Iramuteq is an interesting exploratory tool to identify story lines regarding the issue of climate-related migration. It is also possible to highlight discourse coalitions, if mixing Iramuteq analysis with a classical qualitative content analysis. Indeed, the “who is speaking?” question is removed from Iramuteq analysis, as no distinction is made among the various interviews in the corpus. Separating the corpus into classes does not mean dividing the interview subjects into classes. Thus, a single interview is inevitably scattered among several classes, and each class may contain fragments of several interviews. But, thanks to the determination of the variable “name of the speaker”, it is possible to see actors sharing the same lexical worlds, and so to reconstruct discourse coalitions.

If Iramuteq software is a quantitative mode of inquiry, we argue in this paper that it is useful to mix it with qualitative methods such as interviews, field observations and content analysis. Whereas Iramuteq allows an in-depth analysis of what the discourses on climate migration actually say, it also loses information regarding how discourses interact with its context and how they are influenced by speaker’s characteristics. Thus, it is essential to combine such a deductive analysis with a more inductive one, in order to assess performative impacts of discourses.

What do Bangladeshi experts say about climate migration?

For the purpose of this paper, we concentrate on a detailed analysis of the national experts’ discourse on climate-related migration in Bangladesh. Indeed, we assume that these actors play a particular role in shaping national perceptions and influencing the government’s discourse regarding this issue. Within the label “experts” we gathered scholars and members of think tank, representing a corpus of 13 interviews. We present here key findings resulting from Iramuteq analysis that allow us to highlight major characteristics of their discourse.
Iramuteq identifies five major classes within the corpus, representing five dominant “lexical worlds”. This graph shows a broad division within the corpus, with classes 1 and 2 distant from the three other classes. Classes 3 and 5 are also more intertwined, whereas class 4 seems to operate a connection between the two groups. Classes 3 and 5 are clearly dominant in the corpus, as they cover together 57.5% of text segments. In other terms, 57.5% of the experts’ discourse is located within these two lexical worlds. But what do they say? We present below the 20 first words used within each class, in order to identify what the five major lexical worlds refer to.

Table 1: Class 1 – Lexical world “India-Bangladesh border”
Potential cross-border migration between Bangladesh and India is clearly envisaged when it comes to the question of migrant’s destination countries. Due to the high sensitivity of this issue between the two countries, experts are especially concerned with its security implications and how it could impact regional stability. They recall that migration between Bangladesh and India is not a new phenomenon but is part of South Asia history. Rather than inducing a new type of regional migration, climate change could exacerbate existing flows and resulting border tensions. Some excerpts of interview clearly demonstrate it:

Table 2: Class 2 – Lexical world “Local disaster management”
Another concern among experts is related to disaster management at the local level, and how it impacts livelihoods and migration patterns in vulnerable areas. A majority agrees that southern coast of Bangladesh is particularly affected by climate change, as the frequency of place names such as “Khulna”, “Chittagong” or “Satkhira” proves it. Many of them draw a causal link between disaster management malpractices, loss of livelihoods and increased mobility. In particular, lack of post-disaster rehabilitation measures would cause more permanent migration, with people going to seek alternative livelihood options elsewhere. By pointing out such failures, they indirectly acknowledge that migration is not only due to climate change, but can also be triggered by internal factors.

Table 3: Class 3 – Lexical world “International climate negotiations”
International climate negotiations are clearly identified as the right level of governance to deal with climate-related migration. Recalling the historical responsibility of developed countries in provoking global warming, experts urge the government to raise the issue in the international negotiations. Interestingly, they also draw a parallel between Loss and Damage and climate migration, arguing that the latter implies some non-material losses such as cultural identity or belonging to a territory, which should be internationally acknowledged and compensated.

Table 4: Class 4 – Lexical world “Military implications”
The question of whether the military should be involved in managing internal climate displacement is also addressed. It is interesting to note that this lexical world is completely related to one expert in particular, while others do not invest such vocabulary. Indeed, the role of the military, as well as the securitisation of the issue is mentioned by a former major general who is now heading a think tank on peace and security studies. This expert is also the only one using actively the term of “climate refugees”, which has more security connotations than the more neutral term “migrant”.

Table 5: Class 5 – Lexical world “Financial opportunities”

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Last but not least, experts are considering financial opportunities when talking about climate migration. A common assertion is that there is a lack of financial commitments from rich countries in the climate negotiations. They especially point out the particular willingness of the government of Bangladesh in investing its own money in adaptation plans, in contrast
with the low level of international aid. They also argue that money should come in the form of foreign investment rather than aid or loan, in order to boost the economy in a sustainable way. For them, more money will come for adaptation or private investment, the less migration will occur. But paradoxically, experts also defend the idea of using part of the money to give professional skills to potential migrants, with the aim of sending qualified migrants abroad.

Correspondence analysis finally gives a better illustration of how these five lexical worlds are intertwined, or opposed. More classes are closed on the graph, more they are connected in the experts’ discourse. Thus, we observe that lexical world named “Local disaster management” (in grey) seems disconnected from others. Whereas other lexical worlds are more related to the international level - as they are concerned with India-Bangladesh relations, climate negotiations, financial issues and securitisation of climate migration - this is the only one focusing on local practices regarding disaster management, relief and rehabilitation. In other terms, a vast majority of the discourse focuses on international dimension of the issue, either in terms of consequences or solutions. As a result of this finding, we can deduce that experts, when talking about climate migration, are mainly considering this issue as a global problem requiring international action. This statement can be considered as a story line, according to Hajer’s definition, as it comes to simplify a complex causal relationship between climate change and migration, which is not without significance on the policy process. It also confirms an initial hypothesis assuming that Bangladeshi experts intentionally develop a discourse towards the international level, in order to externalise the political responsibility of dealing with climate displacement.
Identifying these five key features of the experts’ discourse allow to highlight what experts actually say about climate-related migration and how they perceive its consequences and the options to deal with it. But by deduction, Iramuteq analysis also allows to detect what is missing in their discourse. For instance, it is notable that vocabulary related to human rights protection is absent. If such finding still need to be interpreted, we can already assume that experts do not attempt to frame climate migration in human rights terms, which has political repercussions. Finally, we cannot assess, at this step, how experts influence the national discourse regarding climate migration. We should compare Iramuteq analysis of experts’ discourse with the same analysis applied to the entire corpus of interviews, to see how these actors contribute to the formulation of the national discourse. It also requires to qualitatively analyse official documents such as national adaptation plans, national climate change strategy or parliamentary reports, to detect how experts contribute to their elaboration. But such analysis still needs to be done and goes beyond the aim of this paper.

Promoting a “thinking globally” discourse: A significant framing effect

The emphasis on the international level that we observed in the experts’ discourse brings us to label this discourse as a “thinking globally” one. We borrow this concept from Lindseth’s thesis, which analyses how a “thinking globally” discourse has been developed in
Norway regarding climate change. According to Lindseth, this discourse argues that climate policy should help to internationally secure the most cost-effective reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. Such an understanding limits the need for domestic reductions, as the local level of governance is excluded from the governing process (Lindseth, 2006).

Similar reasoning suggests that Bangladeshi experts contribute to scale-up the issue of climate migration in designating the international level as the right level of governance. Such discursive strategy can be used to point to the seriousness of the issue and to alert the international community. But it can also have some performative effects in moving attention away from local and national responsibilities to manage climate displacement, especially when they are primarily internal movements. Indeed, this “thinking globally” discourse tends to externalise both causes and solutions by pointing out historical responsibility of polluting countries. But it neglects internal factors such as corruption, lack of urban planning or land mismanagement, as equally important triggering causes of migration. The global level is thus constructed as the scale that fits the best with the problem to solve, this scalar strategy ultimately undermining alternative local actions.

In addition, this “thinking globally” discourse is forceful as it reunites strong economic interests of Bangladesh, with environmental concerns. Highlighted by the Iramuteq factorial correspondence analysis, the interconnection between the two lexical worlds “International climate negotiations” and “Financial opportunities” supports this idea. Forecasting large-scale migration flows from vulnerable countries like Bangladesh can encourage polluting states to further reduce their emissions and support adaptation initiatives. But in parallel, promoting international migration in the context of climate change can also bring some benefits to sending countries. Remittances constitute a crucial contribution to the Bangladesh’s gross domestic product and thus sending workers abroad has long been part of its migration diplomacy. We can assume that in the context of climate change, human mobility is both the problem and a solution. If it can exacerbate some existing internal problems such as demographic pressure, ethnic tensions or uncontrolled slum expansion, promoting international migration can help to reduce those risks. Sending people abroad is seen by most of Bangladeshi experts as a “win-win solution” for both sending and receiving countries. It can increase the amount of remittances for Bangladesh, while filling job shortages in developed countries. Referring to the “polluter pays” principle and the idea of a “win-win solution”, experts mobilise both environmental and economic arguments to make international migration a rationale policy in the context of climate change. A Bangladeshi professor teaching migration studies at Dhaka University sums up this common position:

“In America, they don’t have any servants at their home now. England, they don’t have any servant too. So these are the people that can supply from Bangladesh, India, to some extent Pakistan or Philippines, lots of girls are sent. Coming to climate change induced migration, this is one of the ways. If the world agrees the main cause of climate change is global warming, which is definitely and definitely done by the developed countries, undoubtedly, they are also part of the responsibility to compensate the people who are victims because of their activities. From that and around that line, they should do develop some necessary policies to bring some people, to select people from affected areas” (AQM Mahmud, 2013).

However, if this “thinking globally” discourse can be integrated within both the climate diplomacy – as a way to raise awareness about climate change impacts – and
migration diplomacy – in justifying increased labour mobility from Bangladesh -, it also has another performative effect. Indeed, it is a severe challenge to local and national actors that aim to take responsibility for managing migration, since they can use the argument that what really matters are the international commitment of developed countries to reduce their emissions and facilitate cross-border migration. In other terms, the current lack of policy development at the national level to manage migration can be seen as a result of this discourse that overshadows the role of local and national initiatives. Paradoxically, numerous actions exist at the ground level, as Bangladesh is well known for being a pioneer in disaster management and adaptation measures (Ayers and Huq, 2008). If this gap between discourse and practices need to be further investigated, we can assume that it is partly because internal migration is still not framed as an adaptation strategy in Bangladesh.

**Concluding remarks**

In this paper, we aimed to contribute to a better understanding of how discourse can be used in policy analysis. From a theoretical perspective, we primarily adopt a discursive approach to public policy and we attempt to apply Maarten Hajer’s concepts to the experts’ discourse on climate migration. We also argued that computer-assisted discourse analysis provides interesting insights, if combined with other qualitative research methods. Indeed, Iramuteq generates classifications that are free from preconceptions, as it is based on statistics. However, to be relevant in a social science research, a statistical analysis needs to be completed by an interpretation of the meaning of the classes, which is not free from researchers’ preconceptions.

We have highlighted key features of the Bangladeshi experts’ discourse, through the identification of five major lexical worlds within it. A detailed analysis of these classes suggests that, when talking about climate migration, experts are primarily concerned with its financial implications and are designating international climate negotiations as the right place to tackle it. We have also showed that a vast majority of the topics addressed in the discourse have an international dimension, leading us to label it “thinking globally” discourse. Thus, experts focused their attention on the international level that they consider as the best scale to address the problem of climate migration. But this “thinking globally” discourse might also work to distract attention from how local and national actors can contribute to solve the problem, leading to a lack of political action.

Such finding brings us to recognise scale as socially constructed (Bulkeley, 2005; Young, 2002). Bangladeshi experts upscale the issue of climate migration whereas we assume that national and regional levels can better fit the problem. Indeed, most of the existing literature on climate and migration now recognise that such movements will be mostly internal, with local and regional impacts. Thus, it will first require local and regional initiatives in order to take into account specific geopolitical context in which population movements will occur. Finally, the ways in which actors relate to and use scales in their political argumentation has consequences on the policy process, and need to be further investigated in this research.
References:


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