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Representations of Climate Change Refugees
in the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*

Abstract: This article analyses the discursive strategies used by the online editions of two leading newspapers, *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, when addressing the issue of climate change refugees from 2005 to 2018. Drawing upon the critical framework provided by the Discourse-Historical Approach, the article shows that certain key lexico-grammatical features in discourse are used by the two newspapers as instruments to contain climate change refugees as a socially subordinate group depending on the help coming from host countries, which have the power to institutionally control the refugees' identity and legal status.

Keywords: *climate change, discourse analysis, The Guardian, The New York Times, refugees*

1. Introduction

The growing attention paid by mass media to climate change is arguably boosting public awareness of a related phenomenon, that of climate change refugees, more commonly known as climate change refugees or, in its shorter version, climate refugees, that is, those communities who are forced to escape from their homes in the face of dangers coming from changed environmental conditions..[1] While the presence of climate refugees is still less pervasive in media than that of other types of migrants or refugees, the attention of news outlets on this issue is rising. Indeed, while climate change affects the livelihood and in many cases, even the territorial integrity mainly of developing countries, news stories on climate refugees from the 'developed' world are also beginning to appear, as the accounts of displaced communities in Alaska and Louisiana testify..[2]

Knowledge about and the evaluation of climate change refugees (henceforth CCR) within the public sphere is largely determined by how they are represented in news media. This is not surprising, given the power exercised by the news media in society: by its own definition, media mediate between the real world and the public, and they do so by constructing events and people through language and images and by making them available to the public. Media, and especially news media, also mediate between power holders and the population, as they both reflect and reproduce power relations within society and are themselves a locus of social power: they continually negotiate the inclusion, marginalisation or exclusion of social subjects, and they do so through choices in discourse. As argued by Fairclough, media discourses have a "cumulative" effect because of "the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader and so forth".[3] For this reason, the language of the news is instrumental in constructing news values: news items reflect

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[1] The naming of the people affected by climate change has been debated extensively and various denominations have been used, including "environmental refugee", "forced environmental migrant", "environmentally motivated migrant", and "eco-refugees". See Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

[2] On the increasing media attention on climate refugees see Victoria Herrmann, "America's First Climate Change Refugees: Victimization, Distancing, and Disempowerment in Journalistic Storytelling", *Energy Research and Social Science*, 31 (December 2017), 205-214; Elida Høeg and Christopher D. Tulloch, "Sinking Strangers: Media Representations of Climate Refugees on the BBC and Al Jazeera", *Journal of Communication Inquiry* (December 2018), 1-24.

[3] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Longman, 1995), 54.

"the (imagined) preferences of the expected audience"[4] but at the same time the semiotic resources used in them to construct newsworthiness and news values also influence social behaviour.[5] Indeed, in news, language reflects certain values – it "fits into these existing frameworks" – but is also constitutive of them, as it can foreground them and reinforce their validity in society.[6]

The article analyses the discursive strategies employed to represent climate refugees in a corpus of articles, including news and scientific articles, interviews, and transcriptions or reports of speeches, published in the webpages of *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* between 2005 and 2018. These two online newspapers constitute a very interesting case study in the way news media address climate change: *The Guardian* is a high-quality, left-of-centre British newspaper which has often discussed the dramatic effects of anthropogenic climate change, while *The New York Times* may be seen as its counterpart in the USA, as it caters to a largely liberal audience with a similar stance on climate change.

The article focuses specifically on climate change refugees because their representation as social actors in news discourse is a key factor in the way climate change is understood and evaluated in public opinion. Accordingly, it will answer two interrelated questions: 1) How are climate change refugees presented as social actors in the online versions of these two leading newspapers? 2) How does the representation of climate change refugees contribute to shaping the discourse on climate change? In order to answer these questions, it will firstly assess the role of *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* in the contemporary scenario of digital news. This analysis will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical and methodological framework on which it is based, that is, a combination of the methods of the Discourse-Historical Approach and Corpus Linguistics.[7] The final part of the article will be devoted to the analysis of the corpora of the two online newspapers, and it will focus in particular on the identification of two discursive strategies used by the two newspapers in their discussion of climate change refugees. This paper is ultimately an attempt to understand the textual mechanisms which constitute what may be called the "discursive texture" of the discourse of climate change refugees. Based on the fundamental premise that texts are strictly related to their production and reception and are part of the wider social and cultural context,[8] the analysis of the representation of climate change refugees in the corpus under exam will offer useful indications on how the social power (or lack thereof) of the participants in discourse is negotiated in news discourse and society.

2. The *Guardian* and *The New York Times*

The choice to analyse the representation of CCR in the online articles of *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* derives from the high status of the two newspapers in the public sphere. According to a recent survey, the online version of *The Guardian* is the UK's most trusted online newspaper and the most read quality news brand.[9] This may also be due to the fact that, among the traditional print

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[4] John. E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), 92.
[5] Monika Bednarek and Helen Caple, *News Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2012).
[6] Martin Conboy, *The Language of the News* (London: Routledge, 2007), 30.
[7] See Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001); Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)", in Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, Third Edition (London: Sage, 2016), 23-61; John Sinclair, *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1991); Sinclair "The Search for Units of Meaning", *Textus*, 9 (1996), 75-106; Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).
[8] See Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Longman, 1995); *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003).
[9] Jim Waterson, "Guardian Most Trusted Newspaper in Britain, Says Industry Report", *The Guardian* (17/12/2018) https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/dec/17/guardian-most-trusted-newspaper-in-britain-says-industry-report.

newspapers, *The Guardian* has been the fastest to adapt to a media scenario dominated by a highly competitive news market, one in which the internet has disrupted existing news business models and traditional newspapers have been forced to develop an "integrated print and web newsroom" to face the challenge of news on the internet, and particularly of social media.[10] In the context of a "hybrid media system", *The Guardian* is a broadsheet into a leading global provider of digital news in the English language.[11] First launched in an indisputable success story, as it "has successfully transformed itself from liberal British 1999 as theguardian.co.uk, the online version of *The Guardian* was rebranded in 2013 as theguardian.com, to reflect the increasingly global outlook of its readers and advertisers. Unlike other print newspapers which have gone online, such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* or the *Independent*, which offer limited access to contents without a subscription fee, the contents of *The Guardian* are all entirely free. Its open-access contents, its presence on multiple platforms (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), its participatory and interactive relationship with the audience, and its liberal-leaning, progressive political values have transformed *The Guardian* into a major global news player, whereby a "triumph of old-school reporting has been accompanied by spectacular success in new media".[12] Given the political orientation of its readership, the online *Guardian* has often focussed on the topic of climate change in its "Environment" section, and it has a "Green Light" email system, through which readers can receive daily updates by email on "the most important environment stories, debate and analysis". From February to May 2017, through the "content funding" of the Skoll Foundation, it also ran a series of pieces on the effects of climate change in the USA and on possible solutions based on clean energy.

The transition of *The New York Times* from printed to digital news has not been as smooth as that of *The Guardian*. In May 2014, a leaked internal report (the so-called "Innovation" report) highlighted the difficulties that *The New York Times* was experiencing in competing with other digital news outlets. Its newsroom strategy has long been affected by a backwards-looking ethos, whereby the business mode of the printed paper has found it difficult to adapt to digital news. Still, since the publication of the report, *The New York Times* has been very successful in the digital news field, launching a "digital first" strategy in 2015 and managing to develop a very effective digital news framework.[13] Just like the *Guardian*, *The New York Times* also tried to develop a more international outlook, looking to expand its readership to non-native English-speaking countries. *The New York Times* has also paid increasing attention to environmental issues: just like *The Guardian*'s "Green Light", it has an email newsletter on environmental news directed to its readers, called "Climate Fwd:"

3. Theoretical framework

The key theoretical basis of this paper is that news discourse may be analysed to understand the currency of certain dominant values in society. The study of the relationship between language and social structure as well as the production and reproduction of discourse in society is the focus of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA). One of the crucial elements of this focus is the analysis of the representation of social groups, and especially marginal out-groups. In this article, the discourse of CCR has been assessed by following a key principle of CDA: the dialogical relationship between ideologies, discourses and texts.[14] This principle will be traced starting from the micro-level of the

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[10] Andrew Chadwick, *The Hybrid Media System*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2017), 204.
[11] Lucy Küng, *Innovators in Digital News* (London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 9.
[12] Tim De Lisle, "Can the Guardian Survive?", *Intelligent Life* (July/August 2012).
[13] Küng, *Innovators in Digital News*, 32-40.
[14] See Norman Fairclough *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis;* Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse;* Majid KhosraviNik "Actor descriptions, action attributions, and argumentation: towards a systematization of CDA analytical categories in the representation of social groups", *Critical Discourse Studies* 7.1

language of the texts on CCR published in the *Guardian* and *The New York Times* and through the analysis of those discursive strategies which have been employed in the representation of CCR and have contextualised the collective identity of CCR within a certain ideological framework.

The analysis of how individuals and their actions are organized lexically and grammatically within clauses provides useful indications about the belief system constituting news discourse. Indeed, the different roles attributed to distinct domains of existence depend on the 'scripts' available in discourse.[15] In this sense, the analysis of the representation of CCR as social actors in this article will be undertaken by looking at how CCR are inscribed in discourse according to the discursive strategies outlined by Reisigl and Wodak, and KhosraviNik.[16] Discursive strategies are "systematic ways of using language" and are used to achieve certain social aims.[17] In their discussion of racist discourse, Reisigl and Wodak identify five discursive strategies: *nomination* (the linguistic identity of the persons involved, or their "discursive construction"), *predication* (the qualities and characteristics attributed to them, that is, "the discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions (positively and negatively)", *argumentation* (the argumentative schemes used to discriminate against the excluded persons), *perspectivization* (the perspective from which such attributions and nominations are expressed) and *intensification* or *mitigation* (that is, of the judgements expressed on them).[18] Nomination and predication cannot entirely be separated as the lexico-grammatical categories used to define "discursive construction" and "discursive qualification" of social actors and events often overlap.

Following Reisigl and Wodak, KhosraviNik proposes a text analysis framework in which the role of social actors in discourse can be analysed according to three categories: 1) Actor description analysis, i.e. what kind of social actors are present (or not present) in the text, and the referential strategies used in addressing them (e.g. naming, pronouns, aggregation, etc.); 2) Actor attribution analysis, i.e. the kind of actions attributed to the actors and how they are attributed to them, for example through transitivity or other processes such as hedging or hyperbole. Through this analysis it will be possible to delve into the contextual significance and effects of the actions; 3) Argumentation analysis, that is, the arguments proposed in the text for or against social actors related to the actors present in the text and how these arguments are "*perspectivized* to cater for certain ideological manipulation".[19] This three-level analysis to a large extent overlaps with Reisigl and Wodak's framework (actor description analysis, actor attribution analysis and argumentation analysis correspond to nomination, predication and perspectivization respectively).

The analysis of the discursive strategies in the texts on CCR published in the *Guardian* and *The New York Times* will be undertaken by evaluating the use of certain discursive devices, including the system of transitivity and metaphors. Transitivity, or process type, is one of the key principles of Systemic Functional Linguistics as theorised by M. A. K. Halliday: it is the set of grammatical choice implied in the clause as representation. Transitivity is that aspect of the structure of language which "provides the lexicogrammatical resources for construing a quantum of change in the flow of events as

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(2010), 55-72; Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination. Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)", in Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, eds., *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies*, third edition (London: Sage, 2016), 23-61.

[15] Veronika Koller, "How to Analyze Collective Identity in Discourse-Textual and Contextual Parameters", *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines,* 5.2 (2012), 23-24.

[16] See Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*; Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach"; KhosraviNik, "Actor Descriptions".

[17] Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 44.

[18] Reisigl and Wodak, "The Discourse-Historical Approach", 33.

[19] KhosraviNik, "Actor Descriptions", 65-66 [emphasis mine].

a figure – as a configuration of elements centred on a process"[20] or "who is doing what to whom when where why and how".[21] The processes which may enter into that structure may be of various kinds, and each of them represents a certain option available to speakers. Each process type (material, mental, verbal, existential, relational, behavioural) appearing in a clause represents its transitivity and describes the grammar of the clause. Furthermore, different process types also imply different participant roles as well as different choices available in terms of the circumstances (e.g. time or place adverbials) connected to the process. Through their choices between different process types, speakers may decide to highlight, background or suppress altogether certain aspects of their representation of reality when they codify them in clauses. Different process types ascribed to social actors are a key factor in determining the kind of collective identity ascribed to social groups. Not surprisingly, the choices at the basis of transitivity are considered particularly crucial in news discourse, especially when dealing with contentious social issues.[22] Metaphors are similarly important in the definition of CCR as social actors. They are powerful instruments to define groups in terms of "sameness and homogeneity"[23] and they often do so through "naturalisation", that is, by ascribing biological, meteorological or geological qualities to people, thus de-individualising them. Metaphors of this kind are used very often in discursive contexts in which an enemy or "other" is identified, for example in the case of migrants, as they serve the function of normalizing their delegitimisation in discourse.

The perspective offered by the Discourse-Historical Approach will be implemented through some of the instruments offered by Corpus Linguistics (henceforth CL), which can offer strong evidence of the key discursive features inscribed in texts.[24] By focusing on the patterns of language in a corpus of texts chosen on the basis of topic relevance, it will be possible to uncover discourse structures and to interpret them. In particular, as argued by Baker, recurrent co-occurrences of words may be seen as "evidence for an underlying hegemonic discourse".[25] A key aspect of CL which will be employed in this section is concordance analysis, that is, the analysis of the immediate context in which the keyword under examination occurs. As the cumulative co-occurrence of words is not accidental, concordance analysis may uncover the semantic and discursive patterns determined by the writer's choice.

4. Methodology

The analysis focuses on two corpora compiled to represent CCR in news discourse: the *Guardian* (www.theguardian.com) corpus is constituted by 60 articles and consists of 59521 words and 67158 tokens, while *The New York Times* (www.nytimes.com) corpus includes 46 articles, with 55628 words and 61627 tokens. The texts for both corpora were obtained by collecting the 40 most relevant hits of two searches, "climate change refugee" and "climate refugee", sorted by "Relevance" (as opposed to "Date"), in the *Guardian* and *New York Times* websites. Each sample of texts was then checked in order to remove duplicates or other articles which did not address the topic of CCR. The typology of the articles is quite disparate, as the corpora included mainly news articles or articles appearing in the Environment sections of both newspapers (an area of the "Environment" section of the *Guardian*

[20] M. A. K. Halliday and Cristian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *Introduction to Functional Grammar*, fourth edition (London: Routledge, 2014), 213.

[21] Suzanne Eggins, *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (London: Continuum, 1994), 77.

[22] See Roger Fowler *Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), 70-76, and Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers*, 54-62.

[23] Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 56.

[24] See John Sinclair, *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1991); John Sinclair "The search for units of meaning", *Textus*, 9 (1996), 75-106; Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006).

[25] Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, 16.

website is specifically dedicated to climate change), but also interviews, transcriptions or reports of speeches and, in one case in *The New York Times*, a letter to the editor. While the principle behind the choice of texts may not lead to an exhaustive, all-encompassing view on CCR of the two newspapers, the sample of texts is nevertheless quite representative. The *Guardian* uses *climate change refugee** 24 times, and *climate refugee** 79 times, while the *New York Times* uses *climate change refugee** only 3 times, as opposed to 37 times in which *climate refugee** is used. In other words, the *Guardian* and *The New York Times* have mainly used a definition in which the controversial nature of "climate change" is somehow hidden, as are, by implication, its causes. The chronological distribution of the articles included in the two corpora (Table 1) seems to indicate a growing trend in media attention starting in 2015.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Guardian	2	--	1	2	3	--	--
NYTimes	--	--	2	2	4	2	3

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Guardian	--	6	4	13	6	12	11	60
NYTimes	--	2	1	3	11	11	5	46

Table 1. Chronological distribution of the articles of the corpora

The two corpora were analysed in order to identify the discursive strategies used in the representation of CCR. This was done by looking at the clauses in which the lemma *refugee**, alone or as part of the extended phrase "climate (change) refugee", appears. The function of *refugee** in discourse in the texts of the corpus was identified by the following two methods:

1) the Word Sketch feature of the Sketch Engine software identified *refugee** as a participant in the clauses where it appears.[26] Word Sketch made the search for those linguistic elements constituting nomination and predication very quick. All results were then double-checked as Sketch Engine does not always precisely identify the grammatical functions of words (e.g., *comes* is erroneously identified as the subject of *refugee* in the sentence "So the prospect of becoming a refugee comes with a lot of baggage");

2) Further indications on the discursive strategy used in the two corpora were obtained through the Wordsmith Tools 7.0 software by analysing the concordances of the phrases *climate refugee** and *climate change refugee**.[27]

5. Discursive strategies and climate change refugees

The analysis of the corpus from the *Guardian* website done through Sketch Engine highlights the fact that CCR are actors in material processes (or processes "of doing") in a limited number of cases. The only material action they actually perform as subject is *flee*, indicating movement toward safety:

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[26] Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine", in Geoffrey Williams and Sandra Vessier, eds., *Proceedings of the Eleventh EURALEX International Congress, EURALEX 2004* (Lorient: Université de Bretagne Sud, 2004), 105-116, http://www.sketchengine.eu.
[27] Mike Scott, *WordSmith Tools version 7* (Stroud: Lexical Analysis Software, 2016). https://lexically.net/wordsmith/.

(1) The two governments would prefer a slow outward flow resulting from voluntary migration and do not wish their peoples to be treated as 'refugees' *fleeing* a hopeless economic and environmental situation.[28]

(2) The problem is that *other refugees fleeing war* qualify for that status, while you don't.[29]

Refugees are also subjects of *need*, a mental process which refers to their precarious status:

(3) *This new category of refugee needs* to find a place in international agreements.[30]

Refugees are frequently mentioned in clauses in which they are affected participants of actions. This happens in processes where their legal status is defined (or *not* defined) by national or international law, as in *protect* and *recognise*:

(4) The refugee convention, written in the aftermath of the massive displacement caused by the second world war, only *recognises refugees* displaced from their home countries, and suffering a well-founded fear of persecution on the grounds of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.[31]

(5) The study published on Thursday calls on governments to agree *a new legal framework to protect climate refugees*.[32]

(6) By taking strong ambitious steps now to phase out greenhouse gas emissions and building an international legal mechanism.[33]

Refugees are characterised in discourse as entities subjected to being named by other people or institutions:

(7) *We are called climate refugees* but I hate that term, said Chantal Comardelle, who grew up in the Isle de Jean Charles community.[34]

or by circumstances determined by the changed environment:

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[28] Ben Doherty and Eleanor Ainge Roy, "World Bank: Let Climate-threatened Pacific Islanders Migrate to Australia or NZ", *Guardian* (8 May 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/may/08/australia-and-nz-should-allow-open-migration-for-pacific-islanders-threatened-by-climate-says-report. Accessed 20 October 2018. Emphasis in all quoted examples is mine.

[29] Oliver Milman, Emily Holden and David Agren, "The Unseen Driver behind the Migrant Caravan: Climate Change", *Guardian* (30 October 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/migrant-caravan-causes-climate-change-central-america. Accessed 22 December 2018.

[30] David Adam, "50m Environmental Refugees by End of Decade, UN warns", *Guardian* (12 October 2005), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2005/oct/12/naturaldisasters.climatechange1. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[31] Ben Doherty, "'Disaster alley': Australia Could Be Set to Receive New Wave of Climate Refugees", *Guardian* (4 April 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/apr/05/disaster-alley-australia-could-be-set-to-receive-new-wave-of-climate-refugees. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[32] Matthew Taylor, "Climate Change 'Will Create World's Biggest Refugee Crisis'", *Guardian* (2 November 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/02/climate-change-will-create-worlds-biggest-refugee-crisis. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Oliver Milman, "'We're Moving to Higher Ground': America's Era of Climate Mass Migration is Here", *Guardian* (24 September 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/sep/24/americas-era-of-climate-mass-migration-is-here. Accessed 20 October 2018.

(8) With no ice to protect their coastal villages from storm-tossed waves, Native American communities in Alaska are also *becoming climate refugees*.[35]

(9) By 2050, the World Bank says more than 140 million *will become climate refugees*.[36]

In the *New York Times*, refugees are also characterised by their being actors almost exclusively of material actions denoting movement, such as *flee* and *stream*:

(10) *Thousands of climate refugees have already fled Kutubdia* and formed their own neighborhood in the mainland Bangladeshi city of Cox's Bazaar.[37]

(11) Their parents are *climate refugees who fled their village* to try to find a way to survive.[38]

(12) An exercise last December at the National Defense University, an educational institute that is overseen by the military, explored the potential impact of a destructive flood in Bangladesh that sent *hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into neighboring India*.[39]

(13) You don't want to wait until people have lost their homes, *until they flee and become refugees*.[40]

Refugees are again also referred to in discourse as those subjects who are the recipients of help from other nations through material processes such as *accommodate*, *relocate* and *support*:

(14) Mass migration also could put immense strain on regions like northern Europe or North America *if they seek to accommodate the refugees or to rebuff them*.[41]

(15) Bangladesh's government has said it is preparing *to relocate the most vulnerable refugees* to an island in the Bay of Bengal, itself vulnerable to the rising sea.[42]

(16) It has proposed draconian budget cuts for humanitarian and development assistance, diplomacy and the United Nations – whose agencies *play a key role in supporting refugees and their host communities*.[43]

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[35] Vicki Arroyo, "The Coming Refugee Crisis: When Home Leaves Us", *Guardian* (8 May 2016), https://www.theguardian.com/global/commentisfree/2016/may/08/climate-change-refugees-louisiana-rising-seas-vicki-arroyo. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[36] Robin McKie, "Portrait of a Planet on the Verge of Climate Catastrophe", *Guardian* (2 December 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/dec/02/world-verge-climate-catastrophe. Accessed 21 December 2018.

[37] Nicholas Kristof. "Swallowed by the Sea", *New York Times* (19 January 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/19/opinion/sunday/climate-change-bangladesh.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[38] Nicholas Kristof, "As Donald Trump Denies Climate Change, These Kids Die of It", *New York Times* (6 January 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/06/opinion/sunday/as-donald-trump-denies-climate-change-these-kids-die-of-it.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[39] John M. Broder, "Climate Change Seen as Threat to U.S. Security", *New York Times* (8 August 2009), https://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/science/earth/09climate.html?_r=2&pagewanted=1&hp. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[40] Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson, "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees'", *New York Times* (2 May 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/03/us/resettling-the-first-american-climate-refugees.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[41] James Kanter, "Human Rights, Refugees and Climate Change", *New York Times* (12 February 2008), https://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/02/12/human-rights-refugees-and-climate-change/. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[42] Somini Sengupta, "Biggest Threat to Humanity? Climate Change, U.N. Chief Says", *New York Times* (29 March 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/climate/united-nations-climate-change.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[43] Antony J. Blinken, "What We Lose by Barring Refugees", *New York Times* (5 June 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/opinion/what-we-lose-by-barring-refugees.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

The examples discussed above indicate that there is no clearly discernible difference between the *Guardian* and *The New York Times* in defining the actions that refugees perform or are subjected to. In fact, it may be argued that there is a common repository of 'scripts' available in discourse which both newspapers use in their characterisation of CCR.

A close analysis of the texts from the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* and the concordances of *climate (change) refugee** reveal an even more comprehensive picture of the discursive strategies which have been used to describe CCR. There are four prevailing realisations of the discursive strategies used by both online newspapers, which will be described in the following sections.

5.1 Humanisation and victimisation

CCR are represented in terms of what Reisigl and Wodak call social problematisation,[44] and specifically in terms of their *humanisation* and *victimisation*, which are often used in conjunction.[45] Humanisation implies the representation of CCR in discourse as social actors as individuals, reporting their names and personal stories. Their everyday lives are often presented in detail, also with the help of images, which often portray women and children. Victimisation also makes the narrative of CCR in the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* somehow more palpable and real, as information on the dramatic conditions they experience as refugees escaping from climate-induced catastrophes and their day-by-day activities are described with very familiar and often intimate overtones, often by quoting the accounts of CCR themselves. The two newspapers present such stories very often especially in those pieces reporting directly from the areas affected by climate change. A piece which appeared in the *Guardian* titled "Meet the 'climate refugees' who already had to leave their homes" (24 September 2018) is dedicated to first-hand, first-person accounts of people displaced by climate change in the USA and one of them, Stephen Lipp, writes:

> (17) I grew up in New Orleans. When you're brought up there you realize you're below sea level: you see boats beyond the levee that are actually higher than you on the street.[46]

A tendency to humanisation and victimisation can be seen also in the newspapers' reports of victims of climate change from third-world countries. A 2017 article featured in *The New York Times* about Bangladesh from 2017 gives details personal details of a couple affected by floods:

> (18) Shafiqul Islam, an acquaintance from the northern district of Dinajpur, told me that his father had never seen water rise so fast or so high in their village. Monira Parvin, his wife, sought refuge with their 5-year-old daughter at her parents' village in a dry area. Ms. Parvin is studying for an undergraduate degree, and her husband, who never made it to a college, proudly supports her. She represents a new generation of educated Bangladeshis, who are more aware of emergency practices such as timely flight to safety.[47]

Reporting again from Bangladesh the *Guardian* writes:

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[44] Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 52.

[45] Majid KhosraviNik, "The Representation of Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Immigrants in the British Press", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 9.1 (2010), 19-20.

[46] Oliver Milman, "Meet the 'Climate Refugees' Who Already Had to Leave their Homes", *Guardian* (24 September 2018), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/sep/24/climate-refugees-new-orleans-houston-hurricane-katrina-hurricane-harvey. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[47] K. Anis Ahmed, "In Bangladesh, a Flood and an Efficient Response", *New York Times* (1 September 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/01/opinion/bangladesh-floods.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

(19) "We have lost our farmland and more than 50 people have already lost their homes to the rising sea. The drinking water is salty and there are no fish in the river. We all want to leave but where? We have no money, " said Hayaun Nesa Khatong.[48]

5.2 Aggregation

An opposite tendency to humanisation in the discourse of CCR is that of *aggregation*, that is, the quantification of participants as groups through figures or indefinite quantifiers. Presenting CCR as figures has the double effect of dehumanizing them (they are seen as statistics) and communicating a sense of danger because of their massive number.[49] Looking at the concordances of *climate (change) refugee*,* this happens in 18 lines (out of 103) in the *Guardian* corpus, making it a very distinctive discursive feature of CCR. Refugees are quantified in the *Guardian* as "150 million" (three times), "300 million" (twice), "millions more" (twice) and as "a lot of", "large numbers", "substantial number", "crowds" and even "billions". Similarly, in *The New York Times*, refugees are (or will be) "thousands", "200 million, "700 million" and even "hundreds of millions". Therefore, CCR are realised in discourse as a collective entity characterised by their (mainly very high) numbers or as a large but quantitatively undefined group of people.
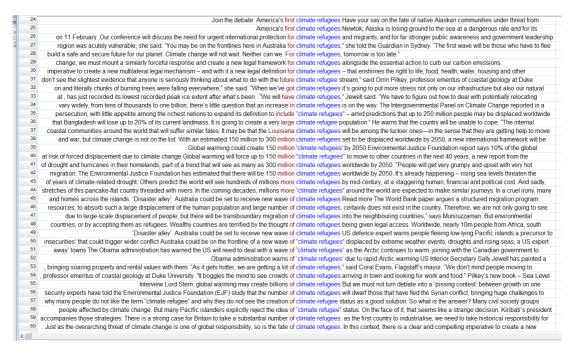

Fig. 1 Some concordances of *climate refugee** in *The Guardian* corpus.

[48] John Vidal, "Migration is the only escape from rising tides of climate change in Bangladesh", *Guardian* (4 December 2009), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/04/bangladesh-climate-refugees. Accessed 20 October 2018.
[49] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice. New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008), 37-38.

Fig. 2. Combined concordances of *climate change refugee** and *climate refugee** in *The New York Times* corpus.

5.3 Metaphors

The actions of CCR are also represented through certain metaphorical expressions, as in "a new wave of climate migrants", "a wave of migrants", "the future climate refugee stream", "a flow of climate migrants" and, as shown in example (12), "hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into neighboring India". CCR are seen as a liquid, a metaphor that is also used in the representation of migrants very often: they are seen as part of a movement scenario, a mass movement that is typical of how media and politicians portray migrants in general as participants in discourse.[50] The two corpora include such movement metaphors as:

> (20) We are in the midst of *the largest wave of human displacement since World War II*. Around the world, 65 million people — including 21 million refugees — are on the move, forced from home by war, violence, economic deprivation and climate change.[51]

> (21) Land is becoming scarce as *waves of migrants pour in* from nearby Bangladesh.[52]

> (22) Longer term, if emissions rise unchecked, scientists fear climate effects so severe that they might destabilize governments, *produce waves of refugees*, precipitate the sixth mass extinction of plants

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[50] Andreas Musoff, *Political Metaphor Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 83.

[51] Antony J. Blinken, "What we Lose by Barring Refugees", *New York Times* (5 June 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/05/opinion/what-we-lose-by-barring-refugees.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[52] Brian Orland, "Climate Change and Population Growth Meet Along the Brahmaputra River", *New York Times* (22 January 2013), https://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/22/in-northeast-india-studying-climate-change-along-the-brahmaputra-river/. Accessed 20 October 2018.

and animals in the Earth's history, and melt the polar ice caps, causing the seas to rise high enough to flood most of the world's coastal cities.[53]

The wave metaphor implies the association of migrants with natural disasters and is a negative predicational qualification in that it leads to the dehumanization of CCR, who now implicitly require control. The use of metaphors induces the *intensification* of certain qualities attributed to CCR in their representation in discourse.

5.4 Politicisation

CCR are constantly characterised as being in need of legal recognition of their status. The frequent use of "first climate (change) refugee(s)" highlights CCR as an unprecedented phenomenon, which host countries have the power to manage:

(23) An i-Kiribati man, Ioane Teitiota, failed to have his claim [to be recognised as climate refugee] accepted by New Zealand courts as the world's first climate change refugee and he was deported last month.[54]

Both newspapers highlight the power disparity between wealthy countries and those countries affected by climate change, a disparity which is wielded by the wealthy countries in their reluctance or failure to put in place those legal mechanisms granting rights to CCR.

(24) Wealthy countries are terrified by the thought of climate refugees being given legal access.[55]

(25) The initiative has held consultations in four particularly vulnerable regions — Central America, the Horn of Africa, Southeast Asia and the islands of the South Pacific — and *plans to recommend a "protection agenda"* that may include standards of treatment.[56]

The above are all examples of politicisation in discourse, and more specifically of the "ascription of being or not being in need of political support":[57] through politicisation, issues which may be treated as outside the political realm can become part of the public debate through politics and media, and in this sense may become the locus for the exercise of power relations as politicisation implies "the weakening of individual agency in social reality and makes both individuals and groups strongly reliant on political action".[58] In the case of CCR, the acknowledgement (or lack thereof) of their status as refugees is wholly dependent on the political will of the host countries. Legal discourse becomes, in the media narrative of CCR, an instrument of power. This situation is often codified in discourse with verbs in which CCR are the stated or implicit goals of material actions:

[53] Justin Gillis, "Climate Change is Complex. We've Got Answers to Your Questions", *New York Times* (10 September 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/climate/what-is-climate-change.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[54] Ben Doherty, "Labor Champions Plan to Resettle Pacific Climate Change Migrants", *Guardian* (10 November 2015), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/nov/11/labor-champions-plan-to-resettle-pacific-climate-change-migrants. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[55] John Vidal, "Migration is the only escape from rising tides of climate change in Bangladesh", *Guardian* (4 December 2009), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/dec/04/bangladesh-climate-refugees. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[56] Sewell Chan, "*Paris Accord Considers Climate Change as a Factor in Mass Migration", New York Times* (12 December 2015), https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/world/europe/paris-accord-considers-climate-change-as-a-factor-in-mass-migration.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.

[57] Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 51.

[58] Michał Krzyżanowski, Anna Triandafyllidou and Ruth Wodak, "The Mediatization and the Politicization of the "Refugee Crisis" in Europe", *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 16.1-2 (2018): 5.

(26) By taking strong ambitious steps now to phase out greenhouse gas emissions and building *an international legal mechanism to protect climate refugees* we will protect the poorest and most vulnerable in our global society.[59]

(27) Another novel response gaining attention lately is *the idea of applying international refugee law —* largely drafted after World War II to protect people fleeing political, religious or racial persecution — *to those forced from their homes because of climate change*.[60]

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the discursive strategies used by the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* in the representation of CCR has revealed a power imbalance between CCR and host countries: host countries provide CCR with shelter and legal recognition, while at the same time the characterisation of CCR in terms of figures or metaphors of natural disasters communicates the idea of a dangerous phenomenon which somehow should be controlled. The only actions performed by CCR imply their escaping from the areas affected by environmental disaster (e.g. *flee*) and indeed define their identity, or, as in the case of *need*, their being affected by a precarious status. The high frequency of occurrences of *refugee** with verbs related to the refugees' uncertain legal status and the material aid they need to receive from safer countries indicate that CCR are "contained" in discourse as victims and placed in a marginal and subordinate condition: they depend on the benevolent help of outside agents (i.e. almost always the West) to have their status recognised and their livelihood restored to a minimum of decency.

   The discourses evoked by the representation of CCR in the *Guardian* used in this corpus localise the discourse of CCR within a narrow social profile: CCR appear at the crossroads of the discourse of science (their precarious livelihood is a consequence of climate change) and that of law (their legal status is managed by the host countries), but they are always *defined* by these discourses and never appear as active protagonists defining themselves. What is largely absent in the corpus of articles on CCR is the attribution of responsibility for the human causes of climate change and, as a consequence, of CCR. The human cost borne by climate change is clearly spelled out in the representation of CCR, and Western, developed countries (such as the USA or Australia) are indicated as the destinations of refugees and as the benevolent helpers who take care of the livelihood of CCR. However, the fact that the industrialized nations themselves are largely responsible for climate change is largely ignored in the texts. The emphasis on the refugees' status as victims is linked to their need for shelter and help and the recognition of their legal status from developed countries, which have the power to institutionally control the refugees' status and even identity. The simplification of the discourse of CCR is instrumental (often implicitly) to the portrayal of Western governments as having the power of wielding and bestowing legal authority to CCR and represents CCR in discourse as a marginal and hegemonized group.

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[59] Matthew Taylor, "Climate change 'will create world's biggest refugee crisis'", *Guardian* (2 November 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/nov/02/climate-change-will-create-worlds-biggest-refugee-crisis. Accessed 20 October 2018.
[60] Mike Ives, "A Remote Pacific Nation, Threatened by Rising Seas", *New York Times* (2 July 2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/world/asia/climate-change-kiribati.html. Accessed 20 October 2018.