# Climate Change, Relocation,
# and the Distribution of Responsibility:
# In Search for Kiribati's Strongest Connection

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# Abstract

This essay addresses the needs of so called 'climate migrants'. It focuses exclusively on the relocation of the population of Kiribati, a small island nation in the Pacific Ocean whose very existence is threatened by the effects of climate change. With the principles of causality, morality, capacity and community, Miller's Connection Theory provides the study with a framework for discussing the distribution of responsibility. The communitarian principle plays a key role in the essay's attempt to identify a *particular* agent with remedial responsibility. Further, the essay aims to be specific and straight forward, and therefore avoids vague expressions such as "wealthy nations" or "richer countries" when addressing the agents who are responsible. As a result, three specific nations are assigned remedial responsibility. Furthermore, the aim of the study is not only to investigate how responsibility for climate migrants from Kiribati could be distributed, but also to provide insight on the usefulness of Miller's theory. Along the lines of previous research, the essay suggests that the capacity principle should work as a threshold when responsible agents are considered. It further proposes a way of using the Connection Theory by restructuring it to suit particular cases, where several principles could work together as a threshold.

*Key-words:* Kiribati; Small Island Developing States; climate change; migration; relocation; responsibility; the connection theory

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# 1  Introduction

In 2010 a team of journalists released a book consisting of photographs and stories from various places in the world – the United States, Bangladesh, Chad, Maldives, Germany, China, Tuvalu and the Himalayas. What inhabitants of these countries all have in common, is that they are already living with the effects of climate change. Be that an increase in storms, changes in wind patterns, increasing or decreasing rainfall, heat waves, the melting of snow covers or the threatening sea-level rise. Regardless of whether these events are long term or short term, they have great impact on everyday life for the people exposed.[1] As a result, people are forced to either adapt, and if that is not possible, they will have to move away from the most exposed areas. This latter group of people, whom I will refer to as "climate migrants", are forced to migrate in order to avoid these, often life-threatening, situations. At the same time, they are generally not accepted as refugees in the international community.[2] Since the number of climate migrants are only likely to continue to grow, this is an issue that needs to be addressed and planned for.

This is where my curiosity arose from. How does the international community deal with climate migration? How *should* they deal with these migrants? What measures can we *expect* different actors to take? The various effects of climate change, and the unique situation that each country is facing led me to the decision to focus on only one nation and their particular situation.

The choice fell on Kiribati. To give the reader a basis for the reasoning throughout the essay, the next section will give a brief introduction to the country and the problems they are facing due to climate change.

## 1.1 Kiribati and the Impacts of Climate Change

Kiribati is a small South Pacific Island nation consisting of 32 atoll[3] islands, and one raised limestone island, out of which 21 are currently inhabited by the roughly 100 000 citizens.[4] The

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[1] Collectif Argos, *Climate refugees*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2010.

[2] Sweden and Finland are the exceptions, but neither provide a full cover; see Susan Martin, "Climate Change, Migration, and Governance", *Global Governance,* vol. 16, no. 3, 2010, p. 406.

[3] Atoll islands are narrow islands with a base of coral reefs.

[4] Simon D. Donner & Sophie Webber, "Obstacles to climate change adaptation decisions: a case study of sea-level rise and costal protection measures in Kiribati", *Sustainability Science,* vol. 9, no. 3, 2014, s. 333.

islands are located south-west of Hawaii and north-east of Australia and New Zealand. A former British colony, Kiribati gained independence in 1979 and has since been a sovereign state.[5]

As a small island state, Kiribati reaches 3-4 metres above mean sea level, and the islands are generally only a few hundred meters wide, which make Kiribati especially vulnerable to changes in sea-level. [6]

Every fourth year the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases a wide-ranging report on climate change. The latest, the Fifth Assessment Report from 2014, states that it is *"virtually certain that sea level rise will continue beyond the 21st century"*[7], even with aggressive mitigation measures.[8] The actual sea level rise is expected to have large regional differences, and areas in the tropical western Pacific could be facing levels up to four times the average.[9] This will in many cases have a devastating result for small island nations, and adaptation is needed in order for their territories to stay inhabitable for as long as possible. Atoll islands stand out among the marine ecosystem when it comes to vulnerability.[10] Apart from land loss, sea-level rise is also likely to have negative effects on freshwater supplies.[11]

It is generally known that climate change is man-made,[12] but unfair as it may seem, small island nations' greenhouse gas emissions amount to only a tiny fraction of global emissions. Facing the inevitable climate change, these islands are nevertheless some of the most vulnerable of nations.[13] Addressing the emissions from industrialized nations as "eco-terrorism", as Kiribati's president Anote Tong commonly does,[14] might not be the most common description of the (in)action of industrialised countries. It still gives an inclination of the frustration and anger among people who live in a place where the rising sea-level is as visible as it is threatening.

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[5] "About - Kiribati", Government of Kiribati, Official Website, <http://www.climate.gov.ki/about-kiribati/>, accessed 2015-01-11.

[6] Ibid.

[7] *IPCC: 2014*, "Coastal systems and low-lying areas" in *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, Part A: Global and Sectorial Aspects, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (ICCP), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, 2014, p. 369.

[8] Ibid, p. 394.

[9] Ibid, p. 369; *IPCC: 2014*, "Small islands" in *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part B: Regional Aspects*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, 2014, p. 1619;

[10] *ICCP: 2014,* "Coastal systems and low-lying areas", p. 364.

[11] *ICCP: 2014,* "Small islands*"*, p. 1622.

[12] *ICCP: 2014*, *Synthesis Report,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2014, Assessment Report 5, 2014, s. 10.

[13] *ICCP: 2014,* "Small islands", p. 1618.

[14] Jeffrey Goldberg, "Drowning Kiribati", *Bloomberg Businessweek,* 21 November 2013, <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2013-11-21/kiribati-climate-change-destroys-pacific-island-nation> (accessed 2015-01-11)

Although Kiribati, as well as climate migration in general, presents the international community with a unique set of circumstances - that is, being able to predict a likely-to-come stream of migrants years ahead - little is done to prepare for such an event.

Kiribati receives help from several international actors when it comes to adaptation and mitigation. The Kiribati Adaptation Plan is now in its third stage, and builds on previous adaptation measures within the nation.[15] SIDS (Small Island Developing States) Action Platform works as a forum for island nations who are all in similar situations. Here the states can work and plan alongside each other, as well as coming together as a collective voice in the international community.[16]

However, when considering the possibility of climate migration, there are no international agents who are eager to assist. Considering the vulnerability of Kiribati, both as a low lying island nation and as a less developed country, more international involvement is unavoidable in order for these people to be able to migrate with dignity.[17]

The Government of Kiribati has its own plan of action with regard to climate change. It is divided into three steps – *mitigation*, *adaptation* and *relocation*. Although relocation is viewed as an option of last resort, the Government of Kiribati acknowledges that it may well be inevitable. [18] The relocation strategy consists of two key components. Firstly, there must be opportunities for the I-Kiribati (= the Kiribati citizens) to migrate now and in the years to come. Those who already have migrated are likely to play an important role in helping other individuals to do the same. Secondly, the migrants from Kiribati must make sure they live up to the qualification standards in the receiving countries.[19]

There is a special agreement with New Zealand, who grants up to 75 visas each year for people from Kiribati between the ages of 18-45, who meet the health and language requirements and who have job offers in New Zealand that meet certain income requirements.[20] This is of

[15] "Kiribati Adaptation Programme Stage III", The Government of Kiribati Official Website, <http://www.climate.gov.ki/category/action/adaptation/kiribati-adaptation-program/kiribati-adaptation-program-phase-iii/>, accessed 2015-01-11.
[16] "SIDS Action Platform", <http://www.sids2014.org/index.php?menu=14>, accessed 2015-01-11
[17] "Relocation", The Government of Kiribati Official Website, in "Action", <http://www.climate.gov.ki/category/action/relocation/>, accessed 2014-12-04.
[18] "Action", The Government of Kiribati Official Website, <http://www.climate.gov.ki/category/action/>, accessed 2014-12-04.
[19] "Relocation", The Government of Kiribati Official Website, accessed 2014-12-04.
[20] Government Of New Zealand – Immigration, <http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/live/pacificaccess/>, accessed 2015-01-11.

course problematic for anybody who does not live up to these standards. Neither does 75 people a year make much of an impact on a population size that is constantly on the increase.[21]

It is worth mentioning that Kiribati has procured a piece of land in Fiji, but this will first and foremost be used to secure food supply.[22]


# 1.2 Responsibility from Miller's Point of View

The article "Distributing Responsibilities" presents David Miller's initial view of the distribution of responsibility. What he finally comes up with is what he calls "The Connection Theory", which has the purpose is to define which agent has which responsibility for remedying a certain situation. In his examples Miller considers nations, populations, companies as well as individuals as possible candidates for having remedial responsibility.[23] This means that some agent will be "more" responsible than the others, depending on the particular situation. The basis on which he investigates responsibility rests on four principles:

1. *Causal responsibility:* Who caused the situation?

2. *Moral responsibility:* Was the Agent who caused the situation aware of the consequences? Was it done on purpose?

3. *Capacity*: Who has the capacity to remedy the situation?

4. *Community*: Are there any communal ties that makes one agent more responsible than the other? [24]

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[21] Radio Australia, "Urgent Measures Needed to Curb Population Growth in Kiribati: UN", 4 July 2014, http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/urgent-measures-needed-to-curb-population-growth-in-kiribati-un/1337780 (accessed 2015-01-11)

[22] Laurence Caramel, "Besieged by the rising tides of climate change, Kiribati buys land in Fiji", *The Guardian,* 1 July 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/jul/01/kiribati-climate-change-fiji-vanua-levu (accessed 2015-01-11)

[23] See the example of Iraqi children in David Miller, "Distributing Responsibilities", *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2001, p. 453.

[24] Ibid, 455-464.

# 1.3 Purpose, Problem Statement and Research Questions

In the likely event of destroyed fresh-water recourses or great losses of land, the inhabitants of Kiribati will be forced to move from their home. Since the islands of the nation will become uninhabitable, the relocation will have to be to another state's territory, indicating that the relocation cannot occur without international involvement. Despite this evident need, very little actions is taken towards helping Kiribati in the relocation of its population.

Thus the purpose of this essay will be to identify who can be seen as responsible for remedying this situation. Considering that most recent studies are based on 'climate migration' in general, I will narrow my focus down to climate migration from Kiribati exclusively. This I hope will result in more specific results. I want to identify a *particular* agent with a *particular* responsibility.

In order for this study to be successful I will have to examine several possible aspects of responsibility. My choice of theory has therefore fallen quite naturally on David Miller's Connection Theory, which takes causality, morality, capacity and community into account. Because of Miller's somewhat controversial idea that there is *always* someone who is remedially responsible, the purpose of the essay is also to provide an evaluation of practicality and usefulness of the Connection Theory.

My research question is as follows:

- What agents can, according to Miller, be assigned remedial responsibility for climate migrants from Kiribati, and what conclusions about the connection theory can be drawn from the results?

In order to find an answer to this question I will consider matters such as on what grounds agents can be responsible for climate migration from Kiribati, and what possible agents there are to consider. It also requires a decision why one agent is "more responsible" than the others. Furthermore, I am interested in how specific the results can get just by narrowing my focus from climate migration in general to the relocation of the I-Kiribati. I also hope to highlight both strengths and weaknesses of the Connection Theory.

# 1.4 Structure and Material

Both climate migration from Kiribati and Miller's Connection Theory are in focus of the study. The method used will be a form of case study which provides the basis of a theoretical evaluation. By applying the case of climate migration from Kiribati on the Connection Theory, I will both identify agents who can be seen as remedially responsible, but also evaluate the theory and its usefulness. The first function of the theory will be as a theoretical perspective and methodical base. When the first investigation has been carried out, the theory, along with the results, will be examined and put in relation to the existing research. Thus, the Connection Theory has three functions – theoretical perspective, methodical base, and the subject of investigation.

In the first part of my analysis where I apply the case of Kiribati's climate migrants on Miller's theory, I have looked for material on the basis of Miller's four principles. My choices of material for the analysis will be explained continuously throughout the investigation and the discussion that follows.

Previous literature on the subject of climate related migration and the distribution of responsibility will be further presented in chapter three, *"Previous Research",* which will give a brief outline of common concepts, theories and ideas relevant to my study. This literature was helpful when defining the purpose of this essay, and also functioned as a framework for the discussion and theoretical evaluation.

# 2 The Connection Theory

The article "Distributing responsibilities" is Miller's first introduction of the Connection Theory. Millers's ideas of responsibility distribution are further developed in the book "National Responsibility and Global Justice". [25] The first mentioned article considers all types of agents (nations, industries, organisations, individuals etc.) while the book focuses exclusively on the role of nations, looking at aspects such as nationality, collective responsibility and responsibility for the national past.

Curious of the outcome when more types of agents are considered, I have focused on the version introduced in the article, which I believe to represent the very foundation of the theory.

As previously mentioned, Miller's Connection Theory will be both a theoretical perspective and a methodical base. This section gives a thorough presentation of both the general ideas behind the theory, and a full explanation to each of the four principles on which the method is entirely based.

The problem Miller investigates in his article is the distribution of responsibilities for what he refers to as "bad situations".[26] Against a normative foundation Miller states that the existence of suffering and deprived people calls for a remedy, which in turn calls for someone to be responsible for ending this unwanted situation.[27] To find a way of identifying who is remedially responsible constitutes the foundation on which his theory is built. Thus he has the problem statement "*what connects a particular agent A to a particular patient P in such a way that A is singled out as having remedial responsibility towards P that others, in general, do not have*".[28]

The task of his article is to find a comprehensive theory that can always provide an answer to this question. His aim is also for the theory to gain a wide acceptance in order for the claims to be taken seriously.[29] Miller is not concerned with 'formally assigned responsibilities', such as those that are established by law. He seeks to identify the "underlying principles" that can serve as guidelines in cases where no formal responsibility can be assigned.[30] As has been stated, Miller examines four principles that are commonly associated with distribution of

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[25] Miller, David, *National responsibility and global justice*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.
[26] Miller, 2001, p. 453.
[27] Ibid, p. 453.
[28] Ibid, p. 454.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Miller, 2001, p. 454.

responsibility - *causal responsibility, moral responsibility, capacity and community*. Miller concludes that these principles should not be seen as competing, but that they all fill a function when addressing responsibility, and thus should work together as a "pluralistic approach". This results in what Miller names *The Connection Theory*. [31]

He presents this as a water-proof theory that guarantees that there is "*always some* agent who can be assigned responsibility" for remedying the situation of our concern.[32] This particular responsibility is what he refers to as *remedial responsibility*. [33]

Translating Miller's problems statement to the case that will be examined in this essay, the question would read as follows: *what connects a particular agent to the climate migrants from Kiribati in such a way that this agent is singled out as having remedial responsibility towards these migrants that others, in general, do not have?.[34]* This needs to be answered in order to fulfil the purpose of this essay.

Both real and fictional cases that Miller uses as examples in the development of his theory are often very simple, and the few real examples given are looked at superficially with no conclusions provided. This contributes to my interest in how the theory would perform when tried on a complex case such as the relocation of the I-Kiribati.


## 2.1   The Principles


The first principle Miller introduces is that of *causal responsibility,* which highlights the Agent's (A) causal role. This principle examines if, and to what extent, A was responsible for bringing the unwanted situation about. Consider a case where A is carrying a heavy stone whilst walking down the sidewalk. Because of the rain the stone gets slippery, and A drops it right on the Patient's (P) foot. This is an obvious accident, but it is still caused by A, who accordingly would be seen as causally responsible, even though the action was unintentional (and therefore not immoral).[35]

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[31] Ibid, pp. 468-469.
[32] Ibid, p. 471; my emphasis on *always*.
[33] Ibid, p. 453; Miller's definition or remedial responsibility: "To be remedially responsible for a bad situation means to have a special obligation to put the bad situation right (...) a responsibility towards the deprived or suffering party that is not shared equally among all agents.", p. 454.
[34] Ibid, p. 454.
[35] Miller, 2001, pp. 455-456.

The second principle, *moral responsibility*, is closely linked to *causal responsibility*, and they often go hand in hand. Here is one of Miller's own examples to understand the difference between moral and causal responsibility. Let us say Miller takes his son Jamie and Jamie's friend Nick to the park to play. Say now that while Miller is distracted by the newspaper he is reading, Jamie manages to break Nick's arm. In this situation, who has what responsibility? Arguably Jamie is *causally responsible*, since he *caused* the injury, while Miller is considered *morally responsible* being the adult who took them to the park, which implied having responsibility for both of them. [36] Depending on the specific circumstances, it is of course also possible that Jamie is morally responsible (maybe by intentionally pushing Nick off a swing).

Miller uses words such as *fault* and *blame* to describe unjustifiable conduct.[37] According to Miller's definition of moral responsibility, suitable questions to ask would be "*whether the agent intended the outcome, whether he foresaw it, [and] whether his behaviour violated some standard of reasonable care*".[38]

Consider again the situation where A carries a heavy stone down the street. If A consciously decides to throw the stone at P's foot, A is both morally and causally responsible - A did it on purpose, and knew of the consequences beforehand.[39] A has intentionally caused the pain in P's foot, and is therefore both causally and morally responsible for remedying P.

According to Miller there are two ways for agents to be morally responsible. The first is if the agent acts wrongly; and the second, if an agent fails to act "as duty requires".[40] In the case of Miller, Jamie and Nick in the park, we would assign moral responsibility to Miller because he failed to act as duty requires, being the adult taking to boys to the park. Suppose that Jamie did actually cause the injury intentionally, he would be assigned moral responsibility on the ground of acting wrongly.

A reminder of the goal to find somebody to put "the bad situation" right. Returning again to the situation where A drops/throws a stone at P's foot, and P is unable to walk. Let us presume that A for some reason is unable to help P afterwards. What, then, is the point in assigning remedial responsibility to A? In other words, what happens when an agent is causally or morally responsible, but is incapable of remedying the situation? [41]

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[36] Ibid, p. 456.
[37] Ibid, p. 458.
[38] Ibid, p. 456.
[39] The level of moral responsibility might however differentiate depending on the reasons behind A's actions. If A was doing it to prevent something even worse, then the (supposedly) immoral action caused *to* P might be out-weighed by the (here unknown) moral factor in the situation.
[40] Miller, 2001, p. 458.
[41] Miller, 2001, p. 460.

Contrary to the two previous principles, *the capacity principle* looks exclusively forward, focusing on finding a solution or remedy, rather than analysing the past in the way that the moral and causal principle does. It would not make a difference to P if we assigned remedial responsibility to A, if A was unwilling or unable to do anything about the situation – what matter is that *someone* helps. Miller argues that the agent who has the capacity to remedy a certain situation, should be assigned responsibility.[42] Maybe B, who happened to witness the event, is better capable of helping P than A is.

The final principle Miller discusses is the *communitarian principle.* This principle suggests that responsibility could be assigned on the basis of community connections. Miller refers to a broad definition of community, describing it as "special ties of various kinds such as those that exist within families, collegial groups (...), nations and so forth".[43] As an example we could again use the above named situation of A throwing a stone at P, and where B is a witness. Let's say P is out on a walk with his/her family when this occurs. In this situation Miller would argue that P's family rather than B are the ones who are responsible for making sure P is alright.[44] He claims that communitarian links between people automatically, and justifiably, imply special responsibilities between each other – responsibilities that are stronger than those one generally has toward people outside of one's community.[45]

## 2.2   The Strongest Connection

For each case, all principles should be considered. They have no specific hierarchic order, and are, as mentioned before, not competing with each other. If there is more than one agent who is responsible, and if more than one principle applies, the agent with the strongest connection should be assigned remedial responsibility. It is also possible that the responsibility is distributed between several agents, depending on what serves the particular situation best. Identifying the strongest connection does however rely completely on "shared moral intuitions".[46]

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[42] Ibid, pp. 460-461.
[43] Ibid, p. 462.
[44] Causal responsibility does however create a connection between A and P, and it might still be expected of A to remedy the situation the best he/she could. Perhaps only by apologizing, but maybe one would go so far as to ask A to pay the medical bills.
[45] Miller, 2001, p. 462.
[46] Miller, 2001, pp. 468-471.

Miller divides responsibility into two types: *immediate responsibility* and *final responsibility,* which often means that the agent who is best placed to remedy the situation has short-term responsibility, while an agent ascribed long-term responsibility often has a causal, moral or communitarian ties to the situation.[47]

Miller further hopes that his theory, and the narrower responsibility distribution it generates, will help to avoid inaction. He argues that failure to act stems from situations where responsibility is too widely dispersed - it is a result of everybody waiting for someone else to step in. By using his four principles, Miller believes that we will always be able to identify an agent to whom we can assign responsibility.[48] Ultimately, the theory aims for the agent to *feel* responsible, and *act* accordingly. If the surrounding agents all make the same judgement, the outside pressure might contribute to the actions of the agent with remedial responsibility. [49] It is therefore important that the arguments are solid, so that there is a common agreement on who bares what responsibility.

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[47] Ibid, p. 468.
[48] Ibid, pp. 469, 471.
[49] Ibid, p. 469.

# 3 Previous Research

## 3.1 Climate Change and Migration

One of the most significant discussions in the field of climate change and migration is that of definitions - what is the correct way to refer to so called 'climate migration', and what role does climate change actually play for migration?

Unfortunately existing research has failed to agree on one generally accepted definition of migration in response to climate change. As a result there is a multitude of different terminologies in order to refer to people escaping the effects of climate change, ranging from "climate migrants"[50], "environmental migrants"[51] or "environmental refugees"[52], to the usage of more unspecific terms such as "climate change related movement"[53] and "environmentally displaced people"[54].

Diane C. Bates made an early attempt at classification of what she referred to as "environmental refugees",[55] and although this term is commonly used, it has been criticised for causing confusion since it is both conceptually and legally incorrect.[56] For this reason I use "climate *migrant"*, which is less confusing and excluding - a refugee is per definition someone who migrates, but a migrant is not, as stated, always a refugee. Romain Felli, on the other hand, pays little attention to legal arguments, but suggests that the choice of either 'refugee' or 'migrant' represents two separate discourses. The *climate refugee discourse* associated with

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[50] See e.g. Robert A. McLeman, *Climate and Human Migration – Past Experiences, Future Challenges*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2014, p. 9.

[51] Jane McAdam (red.), *Climate change and displacement: multidisciplinary perspectives*, Hart Publishing Ltd, Oxford, 2010, reprinted in 2012 (2012:b), p. 1.

[52] See e.g. Jörgen Ödalen, "Climate Refugees: Normative Problems and Institutional Solutions" in Yoshihisa Hagiwara (ed.) *Democracy and Governance for Civil Society,* Fukosha Publishing, Tokyo, 2010, pp. 123-142 and Derek R. Bell, "Environmental Refugees: What Rights? Which Duties?", *Res Publica,* vol. 10, no. 2, 2004, pp. 135-152.

[53] See e.g. Jane McAdam, *Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law,* Oxford University Press, New York, 2012:a, p. 52.

[54] Jane McAdam, "Swimming against the Tide: Why a Climate Change Displacement Treaty is Not *the* Answer", *International Journal of Refugee Law,* vol. 23, no. 1, 2011, p. 4.

[55] Diane C. Bates, "Environmental refugees? Classifying Human Migration Caused by Environmental Change", *Population and Environment,* vol. 23, no.5, 2002.

[56] See e.g. Jane McAdam, "Swimming against the Tide: Why a Climate Change Displacement Treaty is Not *the* Answer", *International Journal of Refugee Law,* vol. 23, no. 1, 2011, p. 3.

catastrophe and confusion; and the *climate migrant discourse* focused around adaptation and management.[57]

There is, however, some common agreements in existing literature. For example, most work are in agreement about the complexity of climate change related migration. For instance, it may be long term or short term, national or international, individual or collective, and so forth. There is also agreement in that climate change is never the *single* trigger, but that other factors, such as socio-economic situations, always play an important role when people decide to migrate.[58]

With this in mind, I still believe that the migration from Kiribati that I am investigating can be referred to as "climate migration", since climate change is the key push factor for the relocation by making the islands uninhabitable. This does not imply that no other triggers are involved, but only that I will not address them in this study due to their secondary role. Further, I respect the official opinion of the Government of Kiribati when it comes to addressing these migrants. The president, Anote Tong, is of the opinion that Kiribati's citizens should never have to become "refugees" but that they should be able to "*migrate* with dignity".[59] In this context the use of migrants thus symbolizes a more hopeful outlook on the future.

## 3.2 International Law and Responsibility

The comprehensive work of Jane McAdam presented in the book "Climate Change, Forced Migration, and International Law" was a great help when I defined the purpose of this essay. [60] Covering all legal aspects of climate related migration, the book explained the vulnerability of this particular group of migrants under International Law, and thus emphasises the urgent need of investigation of responsibility assignation. The book addresses Refugee Law, Humanitarian Law, and Environmental Law from both a national and international point of view. McAdam reaches the conclusion that none of these cover cases of climate migration.[61] When considering

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[57] Romain Felli, "Managing Climate Insecurity by Ensuring Continuous Capital Accumulation: 'Climate Refugees' and 'Climate Migrants'", *New Political Economy*, vol. 18, no. 3, 2013.

[58] These issues are usually addressed together. See for example Martin, 2010, p. 400; Bell, 2004, p. 136; McLeman, 2014, p.2; McAdam, 2011,pp. 12-15; McAdam, 2012:a, 18-24.

[59] Goldberg, 2013.

[60] McAdam, 2012:a.

[61] Ibid, Chapter 2, 3, 4. ; McAdam does however acknowledge that article 2-3 of ECHR and article 6 & 7 of ICCPR provides some protection for certain groups of climate migrants, but it is not sufficient.

what should be done about this apparent absence in International Law, there are a few different suggestions from different researchers within the field.

Some argue that a new treaty should be introduced, or that existing treaties/laws should be expanded to cover migration caused by climate change.[62] Alternatively, Geddes and Sommerville argue that inevitable disagreeing among parties will make binding law unlikely, and that focus should instead be on "softer measures", such as policy making.[63] Similarly, McAdam enters the debate by expressing her concern with what she interprets to be the dangerous idea of a new treaty being seen as *the* answer to the issue of climate migration. She argues that a new treaty might not achieve much actual results, since they need to have political support in order to be fully effective. The result might very well end up being too vague due to the generality and universality that applies to international politics. Instead, McAdam argues, bilateral or regional agreements may generate more effective outcomes, as they respond to "particular scenarios in particular geographical areas".[64] Susan Martin simply concludes that since we are in the very beginning of the discussion of policies on climate migration management, the subject needs more investigation when it comes to the solutions for potential migrants.[65]

Dereck Bell's article "Environmental Refugees: What Rights? Which Duties?" from 2004 addressing the issue of responsibility.[66] Bell argues that the rights of climate migrants do not have to rely on historical arguments of injustice, but considers two potential liberal theories of justice instead.[67] Bell reaches the conclusion that neither of the approaches are sufficient, although they both make interesting points.[68]

Just like McAdam argued that a widespread agreement about a treaty might take away from its actual effects by being *too vague* (see above), an idea of finding *one* theory which includes *all* types of climate migrants will inevitably also present *vague* results.

Opposite to Bell, Raphael J. Nawrotzki takes a theoretical approach that argues from a historical point of view. He concludes that none of the arguments he considered for his article

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[62] See e.g Ödalen, 2010; and Nevena Urosevic, "Environmental 'Refugees': Should the UNHCR Enlarge its Mandate to Include Environmental Migrants?" *Undercurrent*, 2009, Vol. 6 Issue 3, p. 27-34.

[63] Andrew Geddes & William Somerville, "Migration and environmental change in international governance: the case of the European Union" *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, vol.* 30, no. 6, 2012, p. 1026.

[64] McAdam, 2011, p. 21; quotation from p. 26.

[65] Martin, 2010, p. 409-410.

[66] Bell, 2004, p. 138.

[67] Ibid, p. 139-140, 146.

[68] Ibid, p. 151.

were stronger than the already existing moral and causal responsibility of the industrialized world towards climate migrants.[69]

Rather than investigating responsibility assignment by looking at the past, Jörgen Ödalen focuses on the present and future, arguing that the problem of climate migration stems from the fact that rich nations impose (present) risks upon poorer nations.[70] In the article "Climate Refugees: Normative Problems and Institutional Solutions" Ödalen addresses the normative issue regarding which legitimate claims climate migrants can make against developed states.[71] He raises many interesting issues and to some extent even questions our very concept of democracy and state borders.[72] Ödalen argues that if in need, climate migrants have "a *right* to be relocated", and he also addresses the issues of group relocation in contrast to individual relocation[73]. Despite raising many original ideas, Ödalen, too, ends up with a *vague* proposal of a new global protocol. In addition, he also fails to recognize the complexity of situations within different groups of climate migrators.[74]

Taking the debate one step further, Mathias Risse completely dismisses arguments of any historical kind. By reconstructing a several hundred years old theory by Hugo Grotius, he initiates a theoretical standpoint which he refers to as "common ownership of the earth". Risse argues that "any two human beings have symmetrical claims to independently existing resources"[75] and that there is a "human right to relocation"[76]. The responsibility is then placed on all of us to share the earth, and for receiving states to assist in whatever way necessary.[77]

Megan Bradley has used Miller's Connection Theory when attempting to examine state obligations and responsibilities toward climate migrants, a project presented in the article "'Migrants in a Feverland': State Obligations Towards The Environmentally Displaced". This article of hers is of particular interest to me, since Bradley has narrowed down the perspective

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[69] Raphael J Nawrotzki, "Climate Migration and Moral Responsibility", *Ethics, Policy & Environment,* vol. 17, no. 1, 2014, pp. 69-87; Nawrotzki uses moral and causal responsibility as if they were one and the same, see for example p. 82.

[70] Ödalen, 2010, p. 124.

[71] Ibid.

[72] E.g. when asking whether "those who are affected by a desicion should have a possibility to influence that decision" he, see Ödalen, 2010, p. 125.

[73] Ibid, pp. 131, 134- 137.

[74] Noteworthy: In "Efter Floden: Klimatmigration och den rika världens skyldigheter", Ödalen presents a forthcoming project in which he will analyse the richer world's responsibilities towards climate migrants. Reading the presentation, it does not, however, seem like he takes much consideration to the complexity of different groups of climate migrants; Ödalen, Jörgen, "Efter Floden: Klimatmigration och den rika världens skyldigheter", *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift,* vol. 113, no. 1, 2011.

[75] Risse, Mathias, "The Right to Relocation: Disappearing Islands Nations and Common Ownership of the Earth", *Ethics & International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 03, 2009, p. 295.

[76] Ibid, p. 293.

[77] Ibid.

from climate migration in general, to look exclusively at small island nations in the danger zone of sea-level rise, and she focuses on Kiribati and Tuvalu.[78]

Bradley reaches the conclusion that remedial responsibility should be distributed between industrialised nations on the basis of the causal and moral principle,[79] where the capacity principle should also be considered for what seems to be a way to narrow down the candidates a little further.[80] However, my interpretation of Miller's theory seems to differ from Bradley's. I have understood Miller as emphasising that even though many agents are responsible, it is of absolute importance that we can single out one agent, or a small group of agents, as remedially responsible.[81] I believe Bradley's conclusions to be diffuse, as no particular agents are pointed out. Considering that it is already a well-known fact that the industrialized world cause climate change, this situation is a perfect example of when (causal) responsibilities are distributed too widely, causing inaction – something which the Connection Theory strives to avoid.[82] In the article Bradley mentions the United States as a fleeting example of a nation that emits a large amount of greenhouse gases.[83] She does not address any other actor directly, but 'tip-toes' around the question, referring to possible candidates as "those wealthy states" or "better off societies".[84]

Something these existing accounts all have in common is that they never reach any actual conclusions about which particular agents are responsible, and seldom addresses specific cases. They speak of "the rich nations", "climate migrants" or "small island states", but never point to specific agents or nations, at least never to both the one responsible *and* the one towards this agent is responsible. These general approaches may be intentional with the aim of reaching some all-including solutions. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion that not until we have identified both parties can we make real evaluations of the theories that are considered. Neither can we expect issues to be solved and action to be taken until we have identified the problem *and* the one we hold responsible for making the situation "right".

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[78] Megan Bradley, "'Migrants in a Feverland': State Obligations Towards The Environmentally Displaced", *Journal of International Political Theory,* vol. 8, no. 1-2, 2012, pp. 147-158.
[79] Ibid, p. 149, 155.
[80] Ibid, p. 154 - 155.
[81] See for example Miller, 2001, p. 469, the second paragraph.
[82] Ibid, p.469.
[83] Ibid, p. 153.
[84] Ibid, see e.g. pp. 155, 156.

# 3.3 The Connection Theory

Having addressed Miller's theory when practically used, this section will focus on theoretical approaches to the Connection Theory.

Thom Brooks has written a few theoretical responses to the theory. His article "Cosmopolitanism and Distributing Responsibilities" is a reaction to the article in which Millers develops the Connection Theory.[85] One of the main aspects Brooks problematizes is that states may not be assigned remedial responsibility, even though they *are* causally and morally responsible, something which can happen for instance when another connection is stronger.[86] The theory, he argues, also promotes unequal relations between states, since they will have greater responsibilities to some than to others.[87] Brooks questions the basic opinion of Miller that remedies *must* exist, which can make for unjustifiable solutions where one state can be assigned responsibility for a situation caused by another,[88] and furthermore asks relevant questions such as "how much suffering is necessary to create remedial responsibility to cure it? (…) What should be done if [causally and morally responsible states] remain unable to compensate those who acted on their behalf?" etc.[89]

Brooks argues that Miller has not paid enough attention to the political implications of the theory, for example that it makes it possible for states to neglect their duties, as long as they are not able to remedy the situation after.[90] Brooks also criticises the fact that there is no mechanism in place that controls the situation and ensures that states act according to their responsibilities.[91] Miller does admits this himself, and argues that if the theory commands widespread agreement, an institutional mechanism may be an additional outcome to the theory.[92] Brooks' criticism does therefore not undermine the purpose of Miller's article. Given Kiribati's situation, we have an obvious case where inaction inevitable would cause too much suffering, considering that the land will be uninhabitable. In this particular study I will therefore not address this issue much further. Other of Brook's criticism may be looked at in relation to the results, in chapter 5.

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[85] Thom Brooks, "Cosmopolitanism and Distributing Responsibilities", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2002, pp. 92-97.
[86] Brooks, 2002, p. 92-93.
[87] Ibid, p. 93.
[88] Ibid, p. 94.
[89] Ibid, p. 95.
[90] Ibid, p. 96.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Miller, 2001, p. 454.

"Rethinking remedial responsibilities" is another article written by Brooks, this time as a response to Millers book "National Responsibilities and Global Justice".[93] The critique is however still relevant when considering Millers original theory. Brooks raises one main problem in this article, namely that of the equality between the principles. He argues that capacity is always more important than the other principles, and should serve as a threshold for nations, before any other principles are considered.[94] In other words, no nation should ever be assigned responsibility if it does not have the capacity to remedy the situation. This article by Brooks is not as critical as the first one, and could be seen as an expansion of Miller's theory. I will take Brook's criticism into consideration when discussing what the strongest connection is in the Kiribati case.

A similar idea is also expressed, but not fully explained, by Bradley. She is also of the opinion that the capacity principle should work as a sort of threshold criteria that helps narrow down the agents who are possibly remedially responsible.[95]

Like Brooks, Bradley also points out the lack of institutional instruments to guarantee that agents live up to their responsibilities.[96] She also highlight the important and all too often forgotten problem of harm that migrants can be exposed to if they are forced to leave their homes, countries and former lifestyles. She argues that those who risk relocation should be presented with a wide range of choices of where to migrate to, so that the individual's choice is promoted.[97]

# 3.4 "Disappearing States"

Finally, I would like to give a brief description of one major issue for small island states in relation to climate change - the possibility of "disappearance".

Several small island nations face the same threat from the rising sea-level; eventually the states might be "lost" underneath the sea, or in some other way become uninhabitable. This is not only a problem in matters of relocation, migration and land loss, but a threat to statehood

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[93] Thom Brooks, "Rethinking remedial responsibilities", *Ethics & Global Politics*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2011, pp. 195-202.
[94] Ibid, pp. 199, 201.
[95] Ibid, pp. 149, 155.
[96] Ibid, p.156.
[97] Bradley, 2012, p. 156.

itself. This is very likely to have complications for whatever actions that are taken in regards to climate migration and relocation.

In an attempt to bring clarity to the issue, McAdam analyses the idea of statehood and proposes possible outcomes for islands at risk. In short, she reaches the conclusion that there is no simple 'legal solution' to the problem, and also that there are Human Rights implications to be considered (e.g. statelessness). She emphasises the importance of recognition by other states as a way to ensure at least some sort of state-functionality.[98]

Ödalen suggest a solution where states continue to exercise sovereign control over their abandoned territory and territorial waters, despite that the population lives elsewhere. This proposal should be considered, although it might not be ideal since it may have negative consequences in regards to people's self-determination.[99]

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[98] McAdam, 2012:a, pp. 119-160.
[99] Jörgen Ödalen, "Underwater Self-determination: Sea-level Rise and Deterritorialized Small Island States", *Ethics, Policy & Environment,* vol.17, no. 2, 2014, pp. 225-237.

# 4 Kiribati's Connections

The fourth chapter examines possible ways to distribute responsibility for climate migrants from Kiribati. For each of Miller's four principles I present various agents with connections to the situation facing these migrants, with the ultimate aim of identifying one agent, or a few, as remedially responsible. The result is presented below and will thereafter be further discussed in chapter five, *Discussion, Conclusions and Theoretical Evaluation*.

## 4.1 The Causal Responsibility Principle

The first principle to be attended will be that of causal responsibility, that is, a historical principle where I look at past actions to find out who caused the situation in the first place. Given that climate change is caused by the emissions of greenhouse gases, there are direct causal links between the actions of agents (greenhouse-gas emissions) and the negative situation (sea-level rise, and ultimately migration from Kiribati).[100]

So, to begin with there is a clear causality between greenhouse gas emissions and climate migration from Kiribati. Unfortunately a causality alone is not enough. Problems arise in the next stage where we try to identify the *particular* agent who is causally responsible. Industries are the ones who emit the gases, and so the majority of all companies could be held responsible for their emissions. April 2014 the Climate Mitigation Services (CMS) released the report "Carbon Majors: Accounting for Carbon and Methane Emissions 1854 – 2010"[101]. The first of its kind to report such comprehensive research on greenhouse gas emissions expanding over a long historical period. It has examined both companies and countries. The three top investor-owned companies are Chevron (USA), ExxonMobil (USA), and BP (UK).[102] But is it fair to assign responsibilities to only some of the companies? Are the nations 'hosting' these companies also responsible? And what about other companies and individuals who indirectly benefit from the companies above, in one way or another? Because of these uncertainties,

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[100] *Synthesis Report,* Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Climate Change 2014, Assessment Report 5, 2014, s. 10.
[101] "*Carbon Majors: Accounting for Carbon and Methane Emissions 1854 – 2010, Methods And Results Report*", Richard Heede for Climate Mitigation Services, Snowmass, U.S.A, 7 April 2014.
[102] Ibid, p. 29, table 1.

companies cannot not be the agents that present the strongest connection. It seems too difficult to assign particular responsibilities to only a few agents.

Along the same lines, all industrialized nations could be held responsible for not regulating laws to restrict the emissions. Historically, the report from CMS presents China and the Former Soviet Union as the top emitters among nations.[103] Similarly to the problems that arose when considering companies as remedially responsible, it is problematic to assign responsibility to nations on the grounds of historical emissions. We would have to answer to questions such as if one can assign responsibility to a nation for the acts of past generations and if a few nations alone can stand responsible for the emissions. Any conclusions drawn from this option will be easily questioned, and in addition have too many possible agents with remedial responsibilities.

Individuals do, of course also play a role. They contribute partly due to consumption, but one could also argue that since they have political power, they can influence political decisions. However, in this case it is impossible to consider individuals – there are way too many people who contribute to climate change in some way. Moreover, the emissions per person will not vary that much between the people in the top, and it would be unmanageable too even try to single out one (or a few).

The report I have used is so far one of a kind. Perhaps it would be a little hastily to use this as the only source on which we make our decisions? But so far, this one report is what helps us being a little more specific in our search, rather than holding all industrialized nations responsible.

We must remember that the goal is to find an agent with *particular* responsibility. Since all emissions have global effects, it is impossible to trace causality directly to *one* agent, be that a nation, a company, or an individual. Many different actions and choices will have led to the outcome of certain countries emitting more than others. Finding one agent to hold responsible here is next to, impossible, considering how countries interact and effect each other, and therefore are not the only agent liable for their own emissions. Miller argues that the causal principle cannot define remedial responsibilities in cases where no agent can be identified, or when too many agents are causally responsible.[104] Ultimately, the causal responsibility principle has not presented us with a particularly strong connection between particular agents who contributes to climate change, and climate migration from Kiribati.

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[103] "Carbon Majors: Accounting for carbon and methane emissions 1854-2010 - Methods & Result Report", 2014.
[104] Miller, 2001, p. 457.

## 4.2 The Moral Responsibility Principle

Closely linked to causal responsibility is that of moral responsibility. In contrast to causal responsibility, moral responsibility investigates whether the agents conduct is justifiable or not. According to Miller there are two options when agents are morally responsible. Firstly, if the agent acts wrongly; and the secondly, if an agent fails to act "as duty requires".[105]

Let us start with the first. Did the agents act immorally, as in 'wrong'? Returning here to Miller's initial questions: was the sea-level rise intentional, in order so that Kiribati would become uninhabitable? Did the agent foresee the consequences? Did the agent's behaviour violate some "standard of reasonable care"? [106]

To the first question the answer is unsurprisingly *no.* There is no evidence that industrialized countries, companies or individuals intended for Kiribati to become uninhabitable.

In regards to whether the consequences were foreseeable, one could argue that ever since science established that there is a link between greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, we can apply the moral responsibility. Early on there might not have been any exact predictions of Kiribati's situation, but because climate change causes sea-level rise, any sort of analysis would find that Kiribati is at risk. In addition, we could also argue that the emissions also violated the "standards of reasonable care". Continuing these emissions when knowing that there might or will be harmful consequences cannot be considered careful.

But before going into a deeper analysis of different actors and their emissions from a certain point in the history of science, I can simply state that such an action will only provide me with similar results as those I got from the causality principle. The difference would be focus on present emissions rather than historical. It would not provide the particular agent/agents that I am looking for.

Instead I move on to Miller's second option, which takes into account is if agents have acted as duty requires. As mentioned in chapter 3 *Literature and Previous Research,* climate migration is not covered by International Law. The types of duties that could be addressed instead are both national and international protocols, treaties, laws and regulations related to greenhouse-gas emissions and climate change. Going through all of these document to see where an agent has failed to live up to its commitments would be a huge task for a study like

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[105] Miller, 2001, p. 458.
[106] Based on the questions in Miller, 2001, p. 456.

mine. Apart from the large scope of documents to be analysed, it would also require the evaluation of the goals set by each document, and reliable statistics of how well each goal was reached. On top of that it would inevitably result in several candidates. Again it would be difficult to single out one or a few of them to have stronger connections than the others – there would be too many agents, and the large scope of documents would provide for too many interpretations.

In the end, it seems like the moral responsibility principle was no able to find a particularly strong connection between one or a few agents and the climate migrants from Kiribati.


## 4.3   The Principle of Capacity


The aim of section 4.3 is to identify what agent is best placed to assist Kiribati in the relocation of its people. Taking the two steps of Kiribati's relocation strategy into consideration, two basic needs can easily be identified - namely the capacity to relocate (i.e. both financial support ant land to relocate to), and the need education and adaptation when relocated.

Beginning with the need of land and economic support, we once again have to consider very complex matters. On what grounds does one decide who has the capacity to do this? Could e.g. companies and individuals be considered? Could answers be found in analysing nations' population densities, their size, their inhabitable land, or perhaps their economic situations?

I would argue that would be unrewarding to consider both individuals and companies. Neither of these agents have land to offer, and their economy in entwined with the economy nations. Therefore nations will be considered.

The nations topping the list of most densely populated countries is Greenland, Mongolia, Namibia, Australia and Iceland.[107] According to the World Bank the countries with the largest

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[107] World Bank Data, Population Density (people per sq. km of land area),
http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.POP.DNST?order=wbapi_data_value_2013+wbapi_data_value+wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc (accessed 2015-01-02); To define developed countries I have used UN's following list:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#developed (accessed 2015-01-02)

economies are China and the United States,[108] while Luxembourg and Norway are the first two candidates when it comes to GDP per capita.[109]

However, what does this say about these nations' actual capacity for admitting a group of I-Kiribati? Does a densely populated country make for a country good at integration? Does it even mean that they have land that can or should be inhabited? Does a rich nation ensure that the I-Kiribati get the education they need?

Moreover, the statistics I presented above are only some statistics, and only from one source, the World Bank. There are several ways to decide which nation is the richest, and also which nation has the land most appropriate for the I-Kiribati to be relocated to. Greenland may be densely populated, but then the actual habitable land may not be enough.

Similarly to previous principles, a full investigation of capacity would present us with too many possible agents with responsibility. There would also be too much room for disagreement, due to the various ways in which the concept of 'capacity' could be interpreted. This is yet another principle which cannot identify a *particular agent* with *particular responsibility*.

## 4.4 The Communitarian Principle

I have now reached the last principle, that of *community*. The loose definitions which Miller presents,[110] make it possible to look at many different types of communitarian bonds. I have limited myself to the community within the nation itself, including The Government of Kiribati, as well as community ties relating to geography, language and international relations between certain states.

To begin with, the Government of Kiribati could be seen as having a special responsibility towards the I-Kiribati simply by being their representative government. In the relocation strategy by the Government of Kiribati, it is already proposed that the I-Kiribati have special responsibilities towards each other, which is in agreement with the communitarian principle.

Furthermore, Kiribati has strong connections to other island nations, being part of the community of the Small Island Developing States Network.

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[108] World Bank Data, in order of GDP, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries/all?order=wbapi_data_value_2013%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc&display=default (accessed 2015-01-03)

[109] World Bank Data, GDP per capita, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD/countries?order=wbapi_data_value_2013%20wbapi_data_value%20wbapi_data_value-last&sort=asc&display=default (accessed 2015-01-03)

[110] See Chapter 2, "The Connection Theory"

Language wise the I-Kiribati also have special ties with other English-speaking nations, as English is one of Kiribati's official language, along with the native 'I-Kiribati Language'.[111]

New Zealand and Australia are two close English-speaking neighbours. In addition, New Zealand has already established a type of community bond with Kiribati, in regards to the Pacific Access Visa (see *1.1 Kiribati and the Impacts of Climate Change*). Because of the migration laws between New Zealand and Australia, one could argue that there is also a slight second community connection between Kiribati and Australia, on the basis of the connection with New Zealand.[112]

The United States and the United Kingdom also has special community ties due to the shared language. The United Kingdom also because of their colonial past,[113] and the United States has an arguable connection on the basis of geographical distance, which is remarkably farther than that between e.g. New Zealand and Australia.

So far the communitarian principle seems to best present us with *particular* agents.


## 4.5    The Strongest Connection


The time has come to decide which principle that presented us with the strongest connection. In other words, I will now make out who, according to Miller, should be assigned remedial responsibility towards the relocation of the I-Kiribati.

The causal and moral principles can both be disregarded on the basis of not being able to identify a *particular* agent with a *particular* responsibility. Examining them both presented with too large a number of possible candidates, and I questioned if these countries could be held causally responsible on their own, since it is hard to be precise when defining the actual causality.

It was stated that the capacity principle was too complex and open for various different interpretations of the concept of 'capacity'. The U.S, China, Luxembourg and Norway were in the top from an economical point of view, while Australia, Greenland and Iceland were

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[111] "Practical Information", Government of Kiribati, Official Tourist Website, *Language, Culture* <http://www.kiribatitourism.gov.ki/index.php/practicalinformation/languageculture accessed> 2015-01-12.
[112] "Factsheet 17 – New Zealanders in Australia", Department of Immigration and Border Protection, Australian Government, Last modified: Friday 07 November 2014, available at <https://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/17nz.htm> accessed 2015-01-11.
[113] See section *1.1 Kiribati and the Impacts of Climate Change*.

mentioned as the most densely populated nations in the world.[114] Ultimately, even if it was possible to narrow the principle down to some more specific actors, the result proved too questionable. A country ranking high in population density, or for instance GDP, does not with certainty imply that the agent has the best capacity to deal with the situation.

The communitarian principle provided the most specific connections. As representatives of the people, The Government of Kiribati have an obvious communitarian connection; the same applies to individual I-Kiribati towards each other (including the ones who have already moved abroad).

Other Small Island Developing States in the area have special communitarian bonds to Kiribati, partly because of the community they share, such as the SIDS Network. Many small island nations also have community ties to Kiribati in form of language and geography. Further connection were made between Kiribati and the UK, the US, New Zealand and Australia.

It seems like the communitarian principle provided the most specific connections. But once again, the goal is to find a *particular* agent. Assigning responsibilities to all of the agents that came out as the result from this principle does not seem specific enough.

Even if we take Miller's ideas of *immediate* (short term) and *final* (long term) responsibility into account, the problem still remains. One could argue that the Government of Kiribati has long term responsibility for their population, being their official representatives, and that other agents has immediate responsibility for the relocation and to make sure the I-Kiribati get back on their feet. However, since the future of Kiribati as a state is unsure, it is yet impossible to make a distinction between *immediate* and *final* responsibility.

Narrowing down the extent of possible candidates purely by the usage of Miller's theory seems difficult, and I would therefore like to bring attention to the purpose of Miller's theory. In his own words: *"[the] overriding interest is to identify an agent who can remedy the deprivation or suffering that concerns us"*.[115] Bearing in mind especially that Miller wants to find an agent who *"can"*, in other words, who *is able to,* remedy the situation, I would like to introduce the threshold proposal made by Brooks.[116] As mentioned, Brooks suggested that 'capacity' should be seen as more important than the other three principles – the agents who are remedially responsible must have the capacity to remedy the situation.

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[114] See section *4.3 The Principle of Capacity.*
[115] Miller, 2001, p. 471.
[116] See section *3.3 The Connection Theory.*

Since my candidates almost exclusively ended up being nations, I will use United Nations classification of developed and non-developed countries to make the division easier.[117] Least developed countries as well as developing countries will be seen as more unfit to be remedially responsible than developed countries. This distinction rules out Small Island Developing States, and also Kiribati, being one of the so called "least developed countries", according to the UN.

The agents left now are the UK, the US, New Zealand and Australia. Basing this purely on the communitarian principle, the connection between Kiribati and the US is noticeably weaker, since both New Zealand and Australia are closer geographically, plus they already have an exchange. I argue that remedial responsibility should therefore be distributed between the UK, New Zealand and Australia. According to the Connection Theory, it is not a problem to divide responsibility between different agents according to relative strength of connection. Also, the distribution may depend on what will remedy the situation in the best way, which might mean that several agents work together.[118] Here other connections could work as guidelines. Australia and New Zealand could, for example, have a greater responsibility to admit migrants than the UK, considering the fact that the first two hosts 3 respectively 17 people per $km^2$, while the UK has 265.[119] Exactly what action that should be taken by each country is something which should be agreed among the involved parties.

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[117] <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#developed> (accessed 2015-01-02)
[118] Miller, 2001, p. 469.
[119] World Bank Data, Population Density, 2013.

# 5     Discussion, Conclusions and Theoretical Evaluation

This chapter begins by discussing the strongest connections that were identified previously. The discussion puts these findings and possible solutions in relation to other existing research within the field (as presented in chapter 3). The discussion on my conclusions and ideas about possible ways forward is followed by an evaluation of, and a response to, Miller's connection theory and previous criticism of it.

## 5.1     Discussion and Conclusions

Perhaps not unexpectedly, neither the moral, causal or capacity principle were on their own successful in identifying a particular agent with remedial responsibility. Investigating the communitarian principle, I concluded that this was the principle that presented the most specific connections. The three agents to whom the essay assigned remedial responsibility were *the UK, New Zealand* and *Australia.* These links might not have been the most obvious ones, and many writers have previously argued for responsibility distribution based on the causal and moral links should be the ones on which to make a decision. My essay does, however, oppose this idea by proposing that more attention is paid to the ultimate goal of Miller's theory – namely to identify *particular* agents. On this basis, causality, moral and capacity present too many connections with similar strengths. They are also open for various interpretations, resulting only in vague and diffuse conclusions. The theory states that it is not so much a question of *who* is appointed remedially responsible, but that someone *is* held responsible. This approach intends to yield more action than would be the case if too many agents were held responsible. For these reasons I argue that the communitarian principle presents the strongest connections between Kiribati and particular agents.

As a response to McAdam's critique of treaties as "*the* answer", a four-party agreement between Kiribati, the UK, New Zealand and Australia might be preferred and yield the best results. In order for agreements to be as effective and accurate as possible, these types of options should be considered more often when investigating climate migration is investigated - issues that are never easily tackled.

Generally, to say that certain agents are responsible to remedy a situation, does not suggest that the people who are to be remedied should not be involved in the decision making. I agree with Bradley[120], that individual wishes should be of high priority. Assigning responsibilities to other nations simply mean that other nations have better economical and territorial capacity, not that their wishes are superior.

Assigning responsibility to the Government of Kiribati, does not in any way imply that they are not responsible for their people. As a Government they have other (often formally assigned) responsibilities. That said, they should not have to bear the costs of this particular situation which has occurred as a result of climate change.

It is important to bear in mind the plausible problems of statehood and statelessness. In the end, the type of action that is needed to remedy the situation does completely rely on the future of Kiribati as a state. The idea of Kiribati as a "disappearing state", will inevitably present the agents with a full responsibility for the future lives of the relocated I-Kiribati. However, if Kiribati continues to function as a state even without its territory, the action that is required from the agents will be concentrated to the actual relocation and adaption of the I-Kiribati. As mentioned before, *immediate* and *final* responsibility cannot be established until the issue of statehood is solved. Research and discussions on the possibilities for Kiribati to remain a sovereign state is therefore essential. Along the same lines, issues regarding aspects such as cultural losses and the loss of language need to be addressed further.

 A limitation of the study I have conducted is that it was carried out on the presumption of climate change as the only trigger for migration. Had I taken other triggers into account, such as socio-economical ones, the outcome might have been the more complex. As an example, historical factors that have affected Kiribati's economic situation would have been interesting to examine as a part of the causal principle, e.g. the UK's role as a former coloniser, in relation to theories of world poverty, or the current global economic system. Considering my argument that particular agents are harder to identify within the causal and moral principles, it is uncertain whether this type of investigation would have provided any connections of the same strength as those I have already identified.

In contrast to previous research, I have focused on a single approach to a particular case rather than searching for one approach that is capable of dealing with all types of climate migration. While I personally find Risse's and Ödalen's more controversial ideas regarding democratic functioning, the right to relocation as well as common ownership of the earth utterly

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[120] See section 3.3 The Connection Theory

interesting, I believe my approach could have the advantage of being relatively non-controversial, and it not requiring any large-scale institutional changes before it could be put to practice.[121] We are in need of a general, international, acceptance of the conclusions that are drawn. I do not claim that distributing responsibility on the grounds of Miller's theory would be easily accomplished, but it is nevertheless something worth considering.

When it comes to moving from theory to practice, that is to make the agents *feel* responsible and to *act* accordingly, a joint effort from the scientific community, non-governmental organisations and media could be a rewarding strategy, rather than focusing on the cooperation and treaties in the international community. Pressure from these types of non-governmental actors might be an option that could avoid pressure and conflicts between states. For a sustainable and long-term distribution, international agreements could nevertheless be useful.

This particular case study confirms the complexity of Kiribati's situation, but also that of climate migrants generally. The result from my investigation could contribute to future studies, by highlighting possible challenges for cases where climate change is a main trigger for migration. If the aim is to identify particular agents, studies of similar cases will also have difficulties when examining actors on the basis of moral and causal principles. Problems with these historical approaches is also in agreement with both Bell and Risse's work.[122] If "capacity" is of interest, it is likely that they will face similar problems to mine, when it comes to identifying the concept of capacity. Having reached the conclusion that nations are remedially responsible, I believe that a similar study that focuses on only national responsibility would be rewarding. This essay has nevertheless highlighted some issues in assigning responsibility on the basis of four of Miller's principles, both specifically in the case of Kiribati, but also criticism of the generality of the principles.

What remains a major issue in the field of climate migration is still the confusion of definitions. Kiribati and other small island states, where climate change induced sea-level-rise functions as the major trigger, and where the population of a whole nation needs to be relocated, classifications may not be very troublesome. Categorising migrants might be trickier in cases where people escape drought or storms as individuals rather than groups or populations. A study that covers a large spectra of climate change and migration, with the intention of clarifying

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[121] See chapter 3.2 International Law and Responsibility for a brief presentation of their ideas; coming studies that build upon Risse's and Ödalen's work would nevertheless be very interesting, and could perhaps have more of a long-term impact in the field of migration as a whole.

[122] See Chapter 3 "Existing Research on Climate Migration and Responsibility.

these definitions would be welcomed. Bates' classification might not have gained widespread acceptance, but could still work as a basis for a more comprehensive study that takes existing laws and regulations into account.[123]

## 5.2 Theoretical Evaluation

The Connection Theory succeeded in identifying some agents as 'more responsible' than others when examining climate migration from Kiribati. I must admit that my initial expectation was that either the causal responsibility principle or the moral responsibility principle would present the strongest connection. If they had not my next guess would have been the capacity principle. These three principle are common bases for distributing responsibility. To start with I did therefore not have high expectations when I considered the communitarian principle. Nevertheless, this was the principle that did not break when I realised the complications and complexities of responsibility based on historical events, as well as the trouble in identifying an agent *in particular.*

Miller argues that "although the connection theory is internally complex, this complexity may simply mirror the complexity of real-world cases in which remedial responsibility has to be assigned".[124] In other words, the various interpretations of the principles, as well as the moral decision of which is the strongest connection might make up just what we need in order to analyse the challenging cases we will inevitably meet in this world.

Despite this all-including nature of the theory, this I also a limitation of Miller's theoretical approach. One could argue that the theory's complexity is actually limiting.

Let us consider the case of Kiribati. While the historical principles did provide a wide range of possible agents, that was also the factor that brought them both down. If a more comprehensive examination of possible moral and causal agents had been carried out, it might have been possible to identify one of them as having a stronger connection than the others. However, due to the extensive number of agents to be considered, it is very likely that for every case there would be too many possible answers, and that leaving the decision up to "shared moral intuition" would come close to leaving it to chance.

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[123] For a brief presentation of Bates see section 3.1 Climate Change and Migration.
[124] Miller, 2001, p. 471.

*Capacity* is another wide definition which also lead to a wide range of possible agents. What type of capacity are we looking for? There are so many ways of measuring capacity that it is not possible to draw any clear conclusions. Thus, because of the complexity of the principles, the theory presents too many possible ways of identifying agents, and is therefore also limiting. Furthermore, this complicates the distribution of responsibility, in the sense that "shared *moral* institutions" might not agree with the principle in which we were able to identify a particular agent. We might for example have to abandon the very principle that takes morality into account.

To fully support an argument of who is responsible for remedying a situation, it is essential to be able to explain the reasons behind our decision. In order for reasons and arguments to have the desired effect, we need to be able to scrutinize them on all possible levels, or they may be exposed to criticism that they cannot withstand and so lose their authority. If there are too many options available, all with their own complex connections to the situation, and if the conclusions are based on "shared moral values" even though the moral principle might not even apply, it seems as though the comprehensiveness of the theory could be its weakness. The large scope of candidates that can be considered, do nevertheless highlight the complexity of the cases that are investigated. Thus the theory at least offers great insight when examining the possibilities for the distribution of responsibility.

Moreover, returning to the very basis of Miller's theory, one could also criticise him for assuming that remedial responsibility *has* to be assigned without providing any basis for such an idealistic statement. It could be expected that to find no *'has to'* but rather a *'should be'*. I will, however, not go any further into these moral and ideological questions, since Miller does not present his theory as a fixed and perfected model for responsibility distribution, but as a "way of thinking" in order to highlight the complexity of a case.[125]

In my case, the strongest connection was presented when the communitarian principle was investigated. The strongest connection was based on language, geographical location and already existing communitarian bonds. It may seem a bit extreme to argue that because New Zealand speak the same language, are closely situated and to some extent already have an exchange, they are responsible for the entire population of Kiribati. Especially the connection based on existing relations between nations could have a negative impact on the willingness of already developed countries to initiate bilateral or other types of agreements with countries where large groups are (or are at risk of) suffering. To aim at always finding somebody

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[125] Ibid.

responsible, on the basis of connections such as language, culture, geography and so on, may also cause insecurities internationally - an issue further addressed by Brooks.[126] However, I previously suggested that actors who are not tied specifically to nations, such as NGOs, media and the scientific community, could play a key role in assigning responsibility and to put pressure on agents to act. This might have a somewhat lesser impact on the political climate.

Furthermore by identifying only *particular* agents, with *particular* responsibility, there is a risk that other agents whom are somewhat still responsible, be that causally or morally, are left out of the picture. That could possibly work as an incentive for these agents not to contribute in solving the issue, even though they too have capacity, or perhaps are liable to moral or causal blame.

What I also identified as a major problem with Miller's theory is his claim that all principles are equal. Just like Brooks explicitly argues, and like Bradley implicitly suggests, capacity should be the basic principle and work as a threshold. If an agent is unable to contribute to the remedy, somebody else should be assign remedial responsibility. Otherwise the purpose of the theory – to remedy a situation – is lost.

In certain cases, where it is well known that there are several agents with different connections, other principles could also work as thresholds rather than aim at individually present identify particular agents. Take climate migration as an example. By having causal and/or moral responsibility as a criteria, rather than looking only at the individual principles, it would be easier to narrow down the number of possible candidates and, that way, make it easier to identify *particular* agents. For instance, most industrialized countries are causally and morally responsible. Most of them could probably be seen as having "the capacity" to also remedy the situation to some extent. To create a model for investigations regarding climate migration, we could have certain criteria for causal and moral responsibility, as well as a threshold for capacity. This way the determining principle would be community, a principle that has gained little attention so far when examining responsibility for climate migrants. This would make the theory a little narrower, and that way a little more useful.

Finally, I feel the need to address the extended version of the theory that Miller presents in his book "National Responsibilities and Global Justice". The investigation I carried out ended up focusing almost exclusively around nation states. The difficulties involved in investigating the responsibilities of organisations, institutions, individuals and companies unfortunately proved to beyond the scope of this essay. With this in mind, perhaps the extended version of

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[126] See section 3.3 The Connection Theory.

Miller's Connection Theory could bring other dimensions to a similar study. Still, proposals such as that of "thresholds" and the development of more specific models, as well as criticism of individual principles, can still apply to the extended version of the theory.

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To define developed countries I have used UN's following list:
http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#developed (accessed 2015-01-02)


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