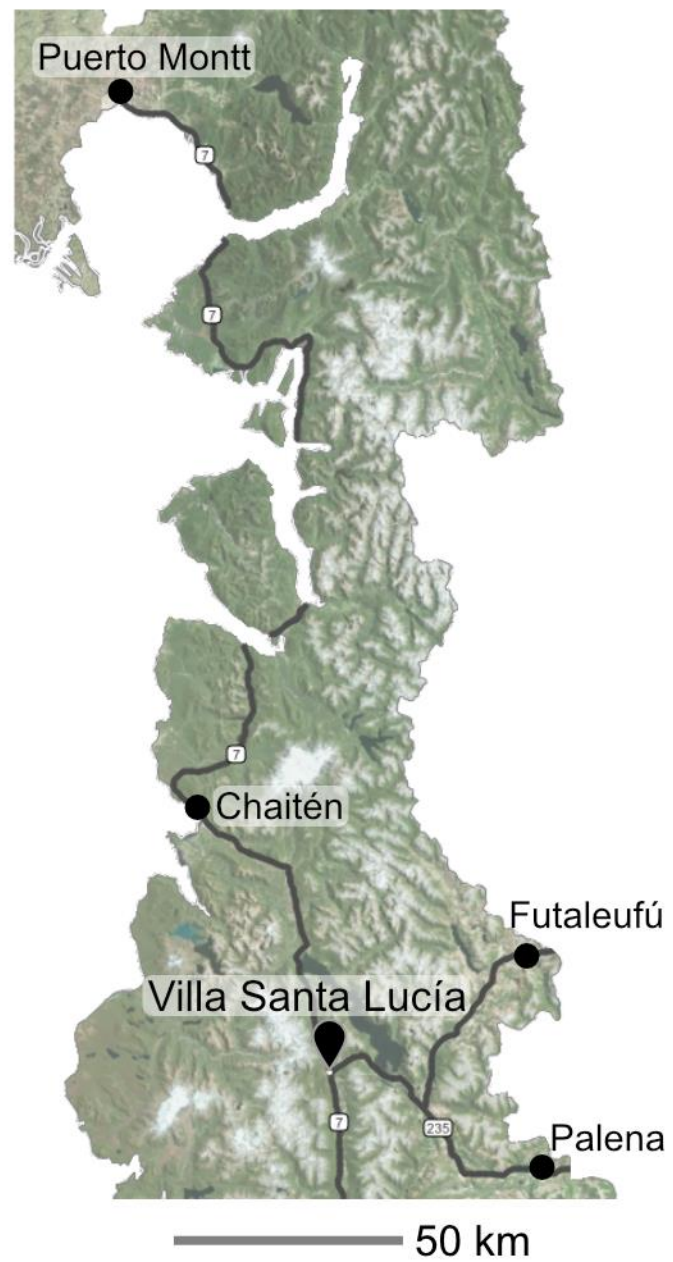# Safe from what? Understanding resistance to relocation in the context of climate change*

By Hanne Wiegel

Wageningen University (NL)

Why do populations persist in localities considered by experts to be at risk of potentially dangerous climate change impacts?

Santiago

Los Lagos
Region

N

500 km

Puerto Montt

Chaitén

Futaleufú

Villa Santa Lucía

Palena

50 km

Villa Santa Lucía

Understanding resistance to relocation

- Zoom in on *perceived risk* of staying in place, and the *perceived need* to relocate

"[S]ocial responses to climate change are fundamentally mediated by perceptions of the problem and of the benefits and costs of responses, which themselves are contextualised by the larger social milieu. People filter information, shaped by their multiple experiences, values and observations, and respond in ways that reflect their diverse experiences and circumstances."

(Mortreux & Barnett, 2009:111)

Understanding resistance to relocation

- People do not want to *be safe*, they want to *feel safe*

- Maintaining feeling of 'existential safety' (*ontological security,* or confidence in continuity of self-identity and surrounding) (Harries 2008; 2017)

Understanding resistance to relocation in Villa Santa Lucía

- Specific local risk perceptions
  - nature as inherently 'risky'
  - human-nature relationships
  - prior experiences with authorities as risk managers

Understanding resistance to relocation in Villa Santa Lucía

- Specific local risk perceptions
  - nature as inherently 'risky'
  - human-nature relationships
  - prior experiences with authorities as risk managers

This made both outmigration and relocation unnecessary to the local population – while mobilities and migration for work and education are very common

Understanding resistance to relocation

- Ontological security lens: focus on the reason for migration/relocation, and how it fits with context-specific understandings of risks and relocation needs

- Understand the importance of continuity in community (and) identity

Key references

- Adams, H. (2016). Why populations persist: mobility, place attachment and climate change. *Population and Environment*, *37*(4), 429–448. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-015-0246-3

- Ayeb-Karlsson, S., Kniveton, D., Cannon, T., van der Geest, K., Ahmed, I., Derrington, E. M., Florano, E., & Opondo, D. O. (2019). I will not go, I cannot go: cultural and social limitations of disaster preparedness in Asia, Africa, and Oceania. *Disasters*, *43*(4), 752–770. https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12404

- Carling, J., & Schewel, K. (2018). Revisiting aspiration and ability in international migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(6), 945–963. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384146

- Farbotko, C., & McMichael, C. (2019). Voluntary immobility and existential security in a changing climate in the Pacific. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *60*(2), 148–162. https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12231

- Harries, T. (2008). Feeling secure or being secure? Why it can seem better not to protect yourself against a natural hazard. *Health, Risk and Society*, *10*(5), 479–490. https://doi.org/10.1080/13698570802381162

- Harries, T. (2017). Ontological Security and Natural Hazards. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Natural Hazard Science*, 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389407.013.279

- Mortreux, C., & Barnett, J. (2009). Climate change, migration and adaptation in Funafuti, Tuvalu. *Global Environmental Change*, *19*(1), 105–112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2008.09.006

- Schewel, K. (2019). Understanding Immobility: Moving Beyond the Mobility Bias in Migration Studies. *International Migration Review*, *54*(2), 328–355. https://doi.org/10.1177/0197918319831952

- Zickgraf, C. (2018a). Immobility. In R. McLeman & F. Gemenne (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Displacement and Migration* (pp. 71–84). London and New York: Routledge.