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Responses to Environmental Change

Lisa Reyes Mason
University of Denver

Susan P. Kemp
University of Washington, University of Auckland

Lawrence A. Palinkas
University of Southern California

Amy Krings
Loyola University Chicago, akrings@luc.edu

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Responses to Environmental Change

Lisa Reyes Mason, Susan P. Kemp, Lawrence A. Palinkas, Amy Krings

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Summary

Communities worldwide are facing environmental crises such as air pollution, water shortages, climate change, and other forms of environmental change and degradation. While technical solutions for environmental change are essential, so too are solutions that consider social acceptability, value cultural relevance, and prioritize equity and social justice. Social work has a critical and urgent role in creating and implementing macrolevel social responses to environmental change. The key concepts of environmental change, environmental and ecological justice, social vulnerability, and social responses are discussed. A description of the roles and skills unique to macro social workers for this effort is given, followed by examples of macrolevel strategies and interventions. Opportunities and directions for future social work responses to a changing environment are identified.

Keywords: climate change, ecological, environment, sustainable development, urbanization, macro social work

Communities worldwide are facing unprecedented environmental degradation. Human activity has led to unhealthy and unsustainable trends in air pollution (World Health Organization, 2016), water shortages (UNESCO, 2019), climate change (*Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, 2018), and other environmental problems that threaten the health and well-being of people and entire ecosystems.

Solving environmental challenges is in part technical. Knowledge from the biological, physical, and engineering sciences is needed to understand environmental phenomena and devise solutions for preventing further change and remedying the damage done. However, solving environmental challenges is also very much social. Solutions that are socially acceptable, culturally relevant, equitable, ethical, and social justice focused are also essential to create an environmentally healthy and sustainable world for all.

Although historically social work did not explicitly prioritize attention to change in the physical (either the natural or built) environment (Kemp, 2011), the profession in the early 21st century has a growing body of scholarship, teaching, and practice related to social responses to such changes. Since the 1970s, numerous conceptual and call to action papers have been published by social work academics (e.g., Coates & Gray, 2012). Since 2010, empirical research in this area has increased (Krings et al., 2018; Mason et al., 2017). The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development endorses "promoting sustainable communities and environmentally sensitive development" as one of its four pillars for the profession's agenda (Truell & Jones, 2012, p. 7). One of the 12 grand challenges of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare is the following: "Create social responses to a changing environment" (Kemp & Palinkas, 2015). In the United States, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) has incorporated environmental justice in its educational competencies for program accreditation (CSWE, 2015). Social work associations in other countries, such as Britain and Australia, have addressed environmental issues in their respective codes of ethics (Boetto & Bell, 2015). In short, the profession increasingly recognizes that it has a critical and urgent role to play in solving the environmental crises in the world and that a suite of macrolevel social responses is vital.

Key Concepts

Environmental Change

Although environmental change results from nonhuman activity, this article is concerned with human-induced change, which has occurred in unprecedented ways since the Industrial Revolution. This human activity has unleashed alarming and unacceptable levels of pollution, climate change, and ecosystem degradation—in short, threatening planetary health and the survival of countless species, including humans, leading many to call this the Anthropocene era in which "The impacts of human activity will probably be observable in the geological stratigraphic record for millions of years into the future" (Lewis & Maslin, 2015, p. 171).

Two of the major human drivers of this changing environment are urbanization and greenhouse gas emissions (Kemp & Palinkas, 2015). By 2050, 68% of the global population will be urban (UNDESA, 2018). While well-managed urban growth can lead to more sustainable living, urbanization instead often leads to urban sprawl, air and water pollution, loss of green space, urban heat islands, and other forms of environmental degradation (Kemp & Palinkas, 2015; UNDESA, 2018). Greenhouse gas emissions, meanwhile, are driving climate change, which has implications for global average temperatures, flooding, drought, agricultural viability, biodiversity, and more (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014a). Average global surface temperature has already increased by 0.85 °C since the Industrial Revolution and, without rapid mitigation, is expected to reach 1.5 °C between 2030 and 2050 (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014b).

Environmental and Ecological Justice

The modern environmental justice movement was born from protests by predominately Black residents and organizers in the early 1980s against racist siting of pollution, polluting facilities, and toxic dumpsites—protests and organizing which themselves had roots in the 1960s civil rights era (McGurty, 1997). The movement has since expanded to address numerous environmental injustices that intersect with diverse social inequalities related to race, ethnicity, gender, income, Indigenous peoples, and more (Agyeman et al., 2016).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as ". . .the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies" (U.S. EPA, 2019). With this definition, there is a twofold emphasis on people's equal protection from hazards and equal access to environmental decision making, as well as attention to power dynamics and racial inequities.

The concept of ecological justice extends from a focus on people to include justice for other species and for ecosystems that humans are just one part of. CSWE's (2015, p. 20) definition of environmental justice, for example, gets closer to a concept of ecological justice in its mention of "ecological unity and interdependence of all species":

> Environmental justice occurs when all people equally experience high levels of environmental protection and no group or community is excluded from the environmental policy decision-making process, nor is affected by a disproportionate impact from environmental hazards. Environmental justice affirms the ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, respect for cultural and biological diversity, and the right to be free from ecological destruction. This includes responsible use of ecological resources, including the land, water, air, and food.

While environmental justice is likely still the more recognized term among social workers who are familiar with environmental social work, "ecological justice" can provide a broader way of

conceptualizing social responses to a changing environment. The latter may also resonate more with Indigenous and Native peoples' conceptualizations of interdependence and their wealth of traditional ecological knowledge, from which decolonizing approaches to this work have much to gain (Billiot et al., 2019). With either term, a critical justice analysis, including racial justice, is essential, and different types of justice concerns—distributive (e.g., benefits, harms), procedural (e.g., participation, policymaking), and recognition (e.g., identities, cultural difference)—should be considered and addressed.

Social Vulnerability

The human impacts of environmental change are worse for some groups of people than others. In the 1990s, the concept of social vulnerability emerged from the hazards (e.g., Blaikie et al., 1994) and entitlements (e.g., Drèze & Sen, 1989) literatures to explain such disparities among groups. The concept conveys that who is impacted by environmental change, and why, is often rooted in structural inequalities driven by social, economic, and political forms of discrimination (Mason & Rigg, 2019; Ribot, 2010).

Populations that are more socially vulnerable to the human impacts of environmental change include women, older adults, people from racially or ethnically minoritized groups, and Indigenous peoples. For instance, during a drought in rural Ghana, women's workload increased by one third while men's decreased by one half (Arku & Arku, 2010). During a Chicago heat wave, many older adults isolated themselves in their apartments, with windows closed and inadequate cooling, and lost their lives (Klinenberg, 2002). In the urban United States, discriminatory redlining practices in the housing market, dating to the 1930s, led to the concentration of many Black communities in "urban heat islands" within cities—areas with less green space and hotter temperatures than other parts of cities (Hoffman et al., 2020). For many Indigenous communities in the United States, colonization, forced removal of Native peoples from their lands, and historical trauma are combined forces that adversely and disproportionately affect the health of Indigenous peoples in the context of environmental change (Billiot et al., 2019).

Measures of social vulnerability often take the form of vulnerability assessments at city, county, or regional levels. Typically, these assessments use census or similar data to create maps of how vulnerability indices vary across a geospatial area (e.g., Cutter et al., 2003). While such indices are one component of understanding vulnerability, they fall short in identifying the underlying social, economic, or political forces that have produced the precarity for areas or groups identified as "vulnerable" (Mason, 2015). Social workers, steeped in structural analyses, are charged with not just documenting social vulnerability but understanding its production and working to eliminate it.

Social Responses

The social work profession's focus on social responses to a changing environment is grounded in the recognition that "Social work scholars and practitioners are experts in understanding people's lived experience, studying problems at multiple scales, organizing and mobilizing groups, intervening in social systems, and advancing social policy change" (Mason, 2015, p. 3). While innovative and scalable technologies may be essential to creating an environmentally sustainable and healthy world for all species and ecosystems, social responses are also essential. As Sherraden and colleagues (2014) have noted, social arrangements such as living together peacefully, governing fairly, organizing work, and pursuing social innovation are collaborative endeavors that technical solutions cannot replace.

At the same time, uptake and adoption of new technologies is inherently social. When considering climate change mitigation, for example, social questions arise: Who will have access to the technology and in what priority order? What will lead to a change in business as usual, on the massive scale needed, to avert the worst of the climate crisis? What role can collective action and protest play in pushing new policies, and urgently?

Further, while environmental remediation is pursued, helping communities anticipate, cope with, mitigate harm from, and respond to environmental change is fundamentally social. What resources do people need to cope with, for example, food and water shortages? What resource redistribution policies should be pursued? How can people and communities build stronger capacity for anticipating and responding to forthcoming environmental challenges? Will the voices of community members who are most affected be part of the policymaking process?

Taken together, questions like these point to the urgency of social responses to a changing environment. Such responses, when pursued in particular by social workers, can and must prioritize equity, justice, and larger scale change through macrolevel efforts.

Roles and Skills of Macro Social Workers

Macro social workers across practice settings seek to advance social justice, meaning broad democratic participation and a fair distribution of power, resources, and opportunities (Reisch & Garvin, 2016). Social work's person-in-environment (PIE) perspective holds that all individuals are influenced by their environments and that, under some conditions, people can come together strategically and collaboratively to change their environment (Krings, 2015). In the broader profession, many social work scholars, educators, and practitioners still conceive of the environment as only one's social environment, thus omitting the natural and built environments as dimensions that shape people's lives, are subject to power dynamics and control, and are linked to structural inequalities (Kemp, 2011; Philip & Reisch, 2015). Macro social workers who embrace the natural and built environments as part of PIE, by contrast, see issues such as the degree to which a person can access adequate and safe housing, green space,

water, food, and air as issues relevant for social work practice and for organized, collective structural change (Krings & Schusler, 2020).

In pursuit of such change, many social workers and community organizations have begun to pursue macro interventions and policies that aim to secure healthy and safe environments (natural and built) for all people. For some macro social workers, this means extending roles and skills they already have by applying them to environmental topics such as contamination, waste disposal, or access to green spaces. In other cases, a small but growing number of macro social workers are centering environmental change and ecological justice in their practice and are actively involved in new efforts for organizational, community, and policy change on these issues. Critically, because many groups and communities have been working on environmental protection and justice for generations, macro social workers also have joined with existing efforts to ally with and support them (Bell et al., 2019).

In each of these cases, skills that macro social workers can contribute include the following, as synthesized by Krings and Thomas (2018) and also drawing on Dominelli (2012), Matthies et al. (2020), Reisch (2016), Teixeira and Krings (2015), and Teixeira et al. (2019):

- Asking critical questions to ensure participation and development processes are clear and transparent.
- Conducting assessments to prioritize concerns expressed by community members.
- Employing a suite of community practice methodologies related to community organizing, community development, and participatory planning.
- Using community practice skills including, but not limited to, coalition building, community-based research, and negotiation.
- Translating scientific jargon into accessible language.
- Understanding policies and practices that create sacrifice zones and challenging their existence.
- Advancing alternative visions of development that include paradigms of sustainability and equity.
- Developing new interventions that foreground people who are impacted and in ways that also build leadership and civic engagement skills or opportunities.
- Thinking creatively with communities about how to work across different scales and where points of disruption may lie.
- Practicing across disciplines and sectors, including partnering with urban planners, public health officials, economists, and engineers.
- Partnering with local groups and pressing for change on the root causes of environmental problems, fighting for racial equity, developing institutions that are accountable to marginalized communities, and improving public participation in the design of environmental policy.

Macrolevel Strategies and Interventions

This section highlights four particular areas in which macro social workers can advance equitable social responses to a changing environment: community practice, urban sustainability, transformation of human service organizations, and population displacement. These are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive; rather, they provide examples of the principles, issues, and efforts encompassed by environmentally focused macro social work practice.

Community Practice

Macro social work practice with community groups can span a range of environmental change issues including the following: contamination and pollution related to land use decisions (Krings et al., 2013; Young et al., 2015); food justice and the availability of fresh food and community gardens (Ohmer et al., 2009; Shephard, 2013); and access to affordable, sufficient, and safe water (Mitchell, 2018; Willett, 2015). While working on these and other environmental change issues, it is essential for macro social workers to acknowledge the many community-based, national and international groups that for years have led the way in advancing environmental and ecological justice. As macro social workers seek to partner with communities, they must first understand the rich history of community organizing in this area and approach new partnerships with humility, self-reflection, and awareness so as to not inadvertently perpetuate injustice by silencing, tokenizing, or objectifying community members (Bell et al., 2019). With that overarching principle in mind, other key principles have been provided to guide macro social workers' efforts on community practice for environmental change (Krings & Copic, 2020; Krings & Schusler, 2020).

Explicit Attention to Social, Economic, and Racial Justice

From an interdisciplinary perspective, as well as within social work, community practice in the environmental change arena frequently invokes sustainable development, which includes imperatives for addressing ecological, social, and economic justice and advancement (Dale & Newman, 2009). Yet, in practice, sustainable development agendas often reflect a neoliberal market logic that prioritizes growth, especially economic growth (Krings & Schusler, 2020). Consequently, to some community residents, sustainable development represents commodification, gentrification, cultural change, the loss of social networks, amenity changes, and possible displacement (Dale & Newman, 2009; Krings & Copic, 2020). Thus, as social work organizations globally call upon practitioners and educators to engage with the nexus of environmental change and sustainability, there is a need for practice models that explicitly attend to social, economic, and racial justice.

In efforts to equitably distribute environmental burdens and benefits, macro social workers should ask critical questions of sustainable development projects about both the planning process (Who participates? Who decides?) as well as its outcomes (Who is burdened? Who

benefits?). Clearly assessing power dynamics embedded within planning efforts is essential for identifying and preventing trade-offs counter to social, economic, and racial equity (Krings & Schusler, 2020).

Inclusion of Those Most Impacted

The people most harmed by environmental change and the decisions that shape the natural and built environments—particularly young people, people of color, and people experiencing poverty—must be included in the process, plans, and actualization of change (Schlosberg, 2007; Schusler et al., 2019). To amplify local voices and remembering that these voices may already have been active before social work involvement, macro social workers can join or develop local organizations to support residents in developing collective efficacy and local power (Krings et al., 2018). This type of intervention matters because low-resourced residents may be less likely to participate in environmental decision making than more privileged residents due to social-psychological and structural barriers (Naiman et al., 2019). Macro social workers who are trained in community organizing can help residents collectively overcome these barriers (e.g., childcare or transportation needs that prevent participation), including skepticism about the value of their participation due to a history of marginalization (Krings & Copic, 2020).

Additionally, macro social workers might facilitate citizen-based scientific research while helping communities build reciprocal alliances with academics (Teixeira et al., 2019). Such was the case in Flint, Michigan wherein community groups and partnering practitioners questioned and pressured officials in public meetings, organized protests, pursued a class action lawsuit, educated neighbors, and sought partnerships with scientists who validated local claims in a way seen as “credible” to external groups, including funders and media (Krings et al., 2018).

Importance of Holistic Macro Interventions

Macro social workers are called upon to view problems with an ecological lens and to address social and environmental change issues holistically, given the deep interconnections among social, economic, political, and environmental injustice (Närhi & Matthies, 2001). For example, residents of sacrifice zones (e.g., places where residents, predominately people of color and poor, live in proximity to toxic sites; Teixeira & Krings, 2015) may experience other social inequities including disinvested infrastructure, deteriorating housing, inadequate public transit, unemployment, and an overloaded health system, all of which can culminate in or exacerbate environmental health impacts (Krings & Thomas, 2018; Krings et al., 2013). While working to reduce contamination and increase access to green spaces within sacrifice zones is an important goal, such efforts are even more powerful when coupled with interventions such as community benefits agreements that include green jobs or investments in public infrastructure such as schools and affordable housing (Krings & Thomas, 2018). Strategically, this approach matters because if macro social workers and their organizations narrowly work to improve or beautify the natural or built environment without attention to broader economic issues, there is a danger that they will increase property values in a way that displaces the very people meant

to benefit. This process is known as environmental or green gentrification and has the potential to exacerbate existing economic and racial inequities (Checker, 2011; Krings & Copic, 2020; Krings & Schusler, 2020).

Mobilizing beyond place may also be necessary for some issues. For example, participants in a social and environmental justice youth summit for Native, Latinx, and African American youth from across Chicago found common ground on the importance of self-determination and connection with one's land, even though forced relocation and displacement manifested differently for each group (e.g., Native youth presented on their history of stolen ancestral lands and how their community has actively worked to maintain connections in other ways while African American and Latinx youth identified connections with their own efforts to stay in their homes and neighborhoods in the face of gentrification or deportation) (Schusler et al., 2019). In this way, participants came together to identify colonialism and White supremacy as root causes of their shared struggles and imagined ways to maintain their own group organizing while supporting one another.

Urban Sustainability

Accelerating urbanization poses risks to the planet and to people. At the same time, cities are critical sites for global innovation and transformation. Recognizing these dual realities, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs; United Nations, 2015) underscore the importance of action to develop "resilient, inclusive, sustainable urban environments" (Goal Number 11) in concert with efforts to strengthen adaptive capacity in the face of disasters and climate-related hazards (Goal Number 13). Embedded in these and related efforts is growing recognition that the "beating heart" of sustainability is people (Baldwin & King, 2017): the social networks, interpersonal relationships, and capacity for collaborative action that enable local communities to cope with and recover from environmental challenges and shocks. Flowing from this is an increasing emphasis, across a range of disciplines, on supporting and strengthening the social resilience and adaptive capacity of local communities in tandem with investments in the "hardware" of urban infrastructure (Kulig et al., 2013; National Research Council, 2011).

Active, principled engagement with urban questions and issues by macro social workers is thus increasingly important. Efforts to strengthen urban resilience have frequently been top-down, led by urban planners and other professionals working in regional and city government, policy groups, foundations, and nonprofit organizations to address identified needs (Friend & Moench, 2015; Kaika, 2017; Markus & Krings, 2020). Furthermore, although the discourse of urban sustainability emphasizes the importance of action to address social, economic, and environmental disparities, urban agendas are frequently shaped by neoliberal, pro-development imperatives, leaving questions of equity and justice largely off the table—and opening critically important space for macro social work involvement and impact (Krings & Shusler, 2020).

Social work has a long history of investment in addressing the environmental challenges confronting poor urban communities (Kemp, 2011; Närhi & Matthies, 2016) and a deep inventory of knowledge and skills in urban community organizing, coalition building, community development, and policy advocacy. Although the contemporary profession's engagement with questions of urban sustainability is uneven at best, supporting community empowerment, partnering with communities to build capacity and resources, and advancing equity and social justice at the local level are agendas squarely within the purview of macro social work.

Macro social work's focus on equitable urban sustainability spans the range of community practice roles, including allyship with social movements, grass-roots and community organizing, community development, and policy advocacy (e.g., Cavaye & Ross, 2019). Reflecting social work values and commitments, macro social workers are typically invested in "bottom-up" approaches to urban environmental challenges, grounded in local knowledge and partnerships (Appleby et al., 2017; Bell et al., 2019). The social work Grand Challenge, "Create social responses to a changing environment," also emphasizes the importance of "collaborative capacity building to mobilize and strengthen place-based, community-level resilience, assets, and action, including active involvement in engaging community residents and stakeholders in proactive planning and participatory development" (Kemp & Palinkas, 2015, p. 13).

A community-driven study of the perspectives of residents of low-income urban communities of color on climate change underlines the critical importance of responsiveness to and inclusion of community stakeholders. Participants in the study clearly recognized the potentially negative environmental impacts of climate change on their communities. However, they prioritized action to address social needs such as steady employment, access to healthy food, and community safety, viewing these as the essential foundations for community resilience and thus preparedness for navigating climate change and other environmental threats (Got Green & Puget Sound Sage, 2016). Findings such as these underscore the important role that macro social workers can play in partnering with communities to ensure that action to address social and environmental inequities is centered in urban sustainability programming and policymaking.

Transformation of Human Service Organizations

Creating social responses to a changing environment will require transformations of human services organizations at three specific levels or tiers, which is salient for macro social workers focused on organizational change. Based on research conducted in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Palinkas (2015) proposed a socioecological model of disaster impacts and response that identifies three tiers of impacts of both natural and technological disasters: impacts that are direct consequences of the destruction of the physical environment (Tier I), interpersonal impacts that are both direct consequences of Tier I impacts and mediators of the relationship between Tier I and individual impacts (Tier II), and intrapersonal or behavioral health impacts that are consequences of both Tier I and interpersonal impacts (Tier III). The

model can also be applied to identification of appropriate responses to any form of environmental change.

Tier I efforts would include a number of different macrolevel strategies and intervention efforts, including building communities that are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable; providing access to health care and education; and providing assistance in locating housing and employment opportunities. Service systems would also require modifications that take into consideration the disparities in exposure to climate-related changes in the physical environment as a function of place of residence and socioeconomic status, which determines the extent to which affected populations are capable of adapting to such changes, either through infrastructure innovation and development, transformations in local and regional economic activities, or capacity to migrate elsewhere if necessary (Palinkas, 2020). Such modifications would involve prioritization of resources and services to vulnerable populations. Tier II efforts would address the potential social conflicts arising from climate change itself, as well as the population movement of refugees in general, including cultural and ethnic differences and competition for limited resources and employment opportunities. Climate change is expected to negatively impact social relationships between family and community members and increase the potential for civil conflict and global insecurity. For instance, reduced natural resources may lead to increased competition among community members for food, water, and livelihoods (Gleick, 1989; Levy et al., 2017).

Conflict resolution, team-building activities, and efforts to reduce uncertainty among both migrating populations and host communities would be critical to reducing the potential for conflicts resulting from such impacts. Furthermore "policies and programs that aim to maintain ongoing social ties among migrants and their family and community members may be critically important in efforts to enhance population resilience and adaptation to climate change and to improve mental health outcomes" (Torres & Casey, 2017, p. 1).

Although there is considerable overlap in the Tier III mental health impacts of acute and subacute climate-related environmental changes, both the timing and nature of these events as well as the manifestation of specific associations between an event and its mental health consequences suggest the need for a phased approach to services delivery, with each phase building on the services developed and implemented in earlier phases. In each of these phases, service providers would benefit from training and guidance in assessing and assisting people suffering from climate-related mental health problems. Service providers can also play an important role in climate change mitigation and developing and implementing evidence-based practices to support mental health (Doherty & Clayton, 2011).

Delivery of effective services in the aftermath of extreme weather events and long-term climate-related environmental changes calls for coordinated preparedness, response, and recovery. These efforts include mapping of available resources and locations of at-risk populations (IASC, 2007), development and implementation of effective and sustainable guidelines and interventions for treatment of adverse mental health outcomes and the strengthening of individual and community resilience (Grolnick et al., 2018; Springgate et

al., 2018), and training of non-mental health professionals for services delivery (Nahar et al., 2014).

Population Displacement

The experience of climate-related migration has illustrated the need for policies at all levels that anticipate such displacement and address the needs of both those who are being displaced and those expected to host displaced people. However, despite the numerous policies that have been proposed, relatively few have been implemented (Ferris, 2014). Development of effective and sustainable policies requires research evidence, financial support, allocation of resources, and coordination of different social, economic, and administrative sectors. Above all, it requires public demand for a policy response to climate change displacement and the political will to implement that response. The three-tier model (Palinkas, 2015) can be also be applied to developing macrolevel strategies that address the needs of populations displaced as a consequence of environmental change.

To address Tier I impacts, several national and international initiatives are designed to minimize the damage associated with extreme weather events. For instance, at the regional level, governments across the Pacific have been collaborating to strengthen resilience to climate change and improve disaster management through frameworks such as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2017). At the national level, countries have been integrating disaster risk reduction into sustainable development policies and programs. Such programs are intended to reduce the need for displacement because populations typically adapt by accommodating to changes in the environment or preventing the occurrence of such changes (Palinkas, 2020).

Policies that facilitate and regulate displacement also have the potential to reduce Tier II impacts that relate to the disruption of social relations and the emergence of social tension and civil conflict. Migration was first recognized as an adaptation strategy in 2010 through the Cancun Adaptation Framework, the aim of which is to provide a global guiding framework for climate-related cross-border displacement. International recognition that displacement is a major impact of disasters and that migrants experience certain types of vulnerability during disasters was further articulated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2015). The Nansen Initiative offered a toolbox of practices to address displacement at various stages (preparedness for displacement, protection during displacement, and durable solutions following displacement) (Nansen Initiative, 2015). In addition, the Nansen Initiative recognizes the links between internal and international migration, recommends planned relocation for people living in disaster-prone areas only when it cannot be avoided, requires measures to protect people from impoverishment risks associated with relocation, and encourages use of traditional knowledge- and community-based approaches in mapping disaster risks and identifying suitable evacuation and planned relocation options (Nansen Initiative, 2015).

Addressing individual needs also requires policies that attempt to prevent adverse health effects associated with displacement as well as climate change itself. Such policies are designed to mitigate the health impacts of displacement, including access to quality health care and protection of migrant workers from exploitation. These policies address Tier III impacts. For instance, national legal and policy frameworks of several nations in Africa include nondiscrimination provisions, providing a base for refugees and migrants to assert their rights to access health services that are available to citizens of their countries of residence (WHO AR, 2018). As many migrant workers come from countries in Southeast Asia, several policies prioritizing the protection of migrant workers have been implemented by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (UNESCAP, 2017).

Implications and Opportunities for Macro Social Work

The complexity and growing intensity of contemporary environmental challenges demands fresh thinking about macro social work and the forms it should take. As a rapidly evolving practice context, environmentally focused social work necessarily encompasses a mix of capacities and skills, from the ability to respond effectively to fast-moving disasters to expertise in partnering with communities over the longer haul in order to reduce sociostructural vulnerabilities and build capacity for responding effectively to slow-moving threats. Meaningful impact in this domain also entails close working partnerships with disciplines and professions not typically included in social work's array of professional relationships—partnerships that may or may not be comfortable on either side, and which frequently require openness by all, including social workers, to roles and practices beyond those typically included in their professional repertoires. The following section briefly reviews the implications of these opportunities for professional "stretch" and underscores the vital role of macro social work as a close ally of socially vulnerable communities.

Complex, multifaceted socioenvironmental challenges require equally complex responses, drawing on expertise and input from multiple disciplines working in close collaboration with local communities and public and private stakeholders. Practice in this arena thus brings macro social workers into working relationships with an increasingly diverse range of disciplines and professions, including urban planning, landscape architecture, architecture, engineering, geography, marine and environmental sciences, public health, and data science (Costello & Raxworthy, 2016; Kemp, 2011; Williams, 2019).

Partnerships such as these take macro social workers into new-old practice arenas (Kemp, 2011), from urban planning and policymaking to alliances with grass-roots coalitions and movements for environmental, climate, and food justice. Social workers bring to these efforts a deep portfolio of relevant expertise, a sustained focus on social justice and equity, and a disciplinary commitment to addressing the social and structural dimensions of environmental challenges. Social workers also bring a critical stance toward approaches to community resilience and environmental sustainability that implicitly encourage poor and marginalized

communities to adapt to intolerable environmental conditions (Mason & Rigg, 2019). In addition, they bring resistance to tendencies to privilege expert-driven agendas over local perspectives and priorities (Krings & Schusler, 2020). Social work researchers are also increasingly illuminating the sociostructural dimensions of environmental challenges, adding evidentiary heft to calls for greater attention to the social, economic, and environmental injustices that increase social vulnerability and undermine community resilience (Mason et al., 2017).

Underpinning the macrolevel strategies described and future directions proposed here is an essential call for social workers to be viewed as political actors working toward social change (Närhi & Matthies, 2016). Policy intervention—from the local through global scales—as an area for macro social work practice on environmental change is vital, and many social workers are still underprepared or underexperienced in this area. Moving forward, macro social workers must actively seek to better understand policy instruments and be engaged in policymaking processes addressing interconnected social, economic, and environmental injustices.

The complex challenges and diverse partnerships at the core of environmental and sustainability practice create opportunities (and pressures) for social work to expand and revitalize its macro practice portfolio, including by engaging with and incorporating practice models, methods, and theories from other disciplines. Methods and strategies that warrant broader purchase in the profession include spatial tools such as Global Information Systems (GIS), mapping, arts-based and visual methods, and a range of qualitative methods more common in the spatial disciplines, such as "go-along" and walking interviews and qualitative GIS (Kemp, 2010). Participatory sociospatial methods strengthen citizen engagement and expertise, bring forward local perspectives and knowledges, and add dimensionality to quantitative data on environmental challenges and impacts. As Williams (2016) noted: "Creative practices—implying strong and transparent participatory efforts and models. . .enhance social citizenship and social sustainability" (p. 94). Although social workers are beginning to embrace these strategies, they remain on the margins of the profession's mainstream.

Nor has social work education fully stepped up to the task of preparing social workers for participation in environmentally oriented practice (Powers et al., 2019; Teixeira & Krings, 2015), with resulting gaps in the confidence and readiness of social work graduates to participate in environmental change efforts. In the United States, the addition of environmental justice into CSWE's Educational Policy and Accreditation Statement (EPAS) is an important step toward strengthening curriculum content in this area. However, more needs to be done to ensure that macro practitioners are well prepared for environmental and sustainability practice. Disciplines such as sustainability science and the design professions offer valuable models for place-based and inquiry-oriented education, including scenario-based learning, interdisciplinary community studios, and experiential pedagogies (e.g., Papadoupolos, 2019). There is also a need for greater emphasis in professional degree programs on preparing students for effective participation in broadly collaborative interprofessional and interdisciplinary teams (Nurius et al., 2017). Macro social workers are typically well prepared for—and accustomed to—working collaboratively with communities and a range of other stakeholders. Like social workers in

general, however, they are significantly less prepared for the complexities entailed in interdisciplinary and interprofessional practice, including tensions over disciplinary hierarchies, miscommunications related to differing professional perspectives and lexicons, and inadequate skills in cooperative problem-solving and conflict resolution, all of which get in the way of effective collaborative practice.

In general, despite social work's long-standing person-environment focus and obvious relevance in efforts to address the social dimensions of global environmental change and injustice, the profession remains, paradoxically, an "obvious presence and a curious absence" (Bulkeley, 2019) in wider global environmental change efforts. This paradox is mirrored in the mainstream of social work practice: Despite high levels of verbal commitment to environmentalism, in their everyday practice social workers still evidence relatively low engagement with environmental issues.

Despite the profession's lack of visibility and ambivalent engagement with environmental issues, it is clear that macro social work can make important contributions to the vital task of "building jetties into the future" (Facer, 2019) in a rapidly changing, increasingly uncertain, environmentally turbulent world. In this context, the social is indeed fundamental. A creative, committed group of contemporary macro social work practitioners and scholars are increasingly active in the environmental domain. As awareness grows regarding the limitations of technoscientific market-driven solutions to issues that are as much social and structural as they are environmental and technical (Kaika, 2017), it is hoped that the profession will actively build on these efforts and play a critical role in amplifying the "emerging practices of dissensus" (Kaika, 2017, p. 7) that hold promise of carving out more transformative, equitable, and locally relevant responses to environmental threats.

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