The Regime Complex for Climate Migration[*]

Sabrina B. Arias,[†] Christopher W. Blair,[‡] and Meghan M. Garrity [§]

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Abstract

An array of international organizations (IOs) are working to address issues of environmental governance and human migration. Climate migration cross-cuts these unique issue areas, posing a set of distinct challenges for global governance and institutional coordination. We map and explore the international institutional arrangements established to manage climate migration. Some institutions serve clear roles as coordinators or leaders, while others do not play a significant role despite maintaining expertise in adjacent policy areas. To understand these patterns, we explore whether there exists a regime complex on climate migration, and if so, how did such an institutional arrangement come to be? Employing a qualitative analysis of policy documents, conceptual frameworks, and institutional structures, we explore the intersections, duplications, and hierarchies among IOs working to address climate migration. Interviews with policymakers illuminate key points of tension and overlap, and opportunities for progress. Overall, we document a complex web of institutional arrangements, characterized by both cooperation and competition. The current framework is shaped to a significant degree by wrangling over funding, influence, and prestige. Understanding the dynamics of these institutional arrangements is crucial for fostering global governance mechanisms to manage the challenges posed by climate-induced migration.

[†]Assistant Professor, Dept. of International Relations, Lehigh University sarias@lehigh.edu

[‡]Assistant Professor, Dept. of Politics, Princeton University, chris.blair@princeton.edu

[§]Assistant Professor, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, mgarrit2@gmu.edu

Introduction

Climate migration—the movement of people 'who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive changes in the environment that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad" (Brown, 2008)—is a complex and critical issue for global governance.[1] The World Bank estimates that more than 150 million people will be climate-displaced by 2050 (Rigaud et al., 2018). Even more conservative estimates suggest several million people will be uprooted by climate disasters in the next two decades (McLeman, 2013). Given the long-term, diffuse threat posed by climate change and the widespread international impacts of migration, tackling climate migration requires international cooperation. Large literatures consider the international organizational structures established to facilitate global coordination on climate change (Keohane and Victor, 2011) and migration (Betts, 2013) (as well as other crucial transnational issues). However, whether there exists a comparable international regime complex on *climate-related* migration is unclear.

In this paper, we describe the international institutional arrangements established to address climate-related migration, and examine reasons for continuity and change across these institutional structures. We characterize the growing mass of organizations working on climate migration as an emergent regime complex. This complex has only crystallized in the past decade or so, during which time the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has emerged as a central institutional player, although governance is decentralized across a multitude of actors and networks. Using analyses of dozens of policy documents and qualitative interviews with key stakeholders, we unpack how and why the climate migration

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[1]In this paper, we employ the terms 'climate migration' and 'climate displacement' interchangeably. We discuss at length the importance of the debate over definitional issues in the climate migration space in our organizational mapping, as well as in our interview evidence.

regime complex emerged. We find evidence that variation in the international organizational structure reflects a combination of state interests and bureaucratic action. The alignment of these two critical conditions created a policy window (Kingdon, 1984)—a moment in which a problem, solution, and political will align to create an opportunity for policy change—that helped to facilitate the development of a regime complex and forward policy movement in the field of climate migration.

Regime Complexity

A regime complex is "an array of partially overlapping and nonhierarchical institutions governing a particular issue-area," characterized by rule complexity (Raustiala and Victor, 2004; Alter and Meunier, 2009).[2] The institutions that comprise a regime complex can be extremely diverse, including formal and informal institutions, multilateral and bilateral institutions, regulatory networks and non-governmental organizations, all sharing a governance role in a given issue area. Regime complexes are loosely coupled sets of specific regimes rather than a single, overarching international regime. Regime complexes account for the overlapping, fragmented, and often conflicting nature of international governance structures, in which parallel dynamics take place and interact in ways that influence decisions across different institutions (Keohane and Victor, 2011). The overlapping and sequential nature of regimes within a regime complex shape the politics of cooperation and the decisions of actors within and around the regime complex (Alter and Raustiala, 2018, 331).

Expanding on this definition, Alter and Raustiala (2018) outline several key features of a regime complex: for example, multiple institutions can claim to hold authority over governing an issue area, the institutions overlap in membership, mandate, and/or rules, and there is not a pre-defined hierarchy: institutions may be rivals in claiming power over an issue, but

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[2]See also Alter and Raustiala (2018) for a review of the literature on regime complexity, and Henning and Pratt (2023), fn. 6, for a discussion of different definitions of regime complexity.

"the lack of hierarchy means that there is no way to definitively resolve questions about which rules, norms, or decision-making procedures take precedence," (Alter and Raustiala, 2018, 332). Because constructing new institutions can be easier than implementing changes to existing institutions, governance via regime complexes is likely to arise when there is a high density of pre-existing agreements and institutions in an issue area.

How does the existence of a regime complex affect cooperation and policymaking? Previous scholarship has explored a variety of positive and negative impacts. For example, by enabling forum shopping, a regime complex can lead to increased flexibility, adaptability, and innovation in international governance (Alter and Meunier, 2009; Keohane and Victor, 2011; Young, 2011).[3] Regime complexes can also unlock new resources, pool resources, and allow for burden sharing across institutions (Gehring and Faude, 2013; Clark, 2021), and enable policy development in the face of political resistance (Keohane and Victor, 2011; Kelley, 2009). Finally, the existence of many institutions working on an issue area as part of a regime complex can increase legitimacy and political salience (Kelley, 2009). However, regime complexes can also create challenges for coherence and coordination by increasing transaction costs (Alter and Meunier, 2009; Kelley, 2009; Keohane and Victor, 2011; Young, 2011). In a fragmented regime complex, issues can fall through the cracks between institutions with similar mandates: "[I]t is more difficult for any one institution to assert authority with respect to issues that fall under their domain" (Alter and Raustiala, 2018, 339).

Regime complexes can also affect which actors engage in policymaking in an issue area. While more points of entry can increase the number of opportunities for actors—including civil society actors and international bureaucrats—to become involved and develop a stake in governance (Keohane and Victor, 2011; Alter and Meunier, 2009; Johnson, 2014), the existence of a regime complex can benefit wealthier, more powerful states because they are

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[3]Forum shopping can be defined as strategic behavior by states and non-state actors in which they select the most favorable institution within a regime complex to pursue their interests (Busch, 2007; Hafner-Burton, 2009; Alter and Meunier, 2009; Morse and Keohane, 2014).

better positioned to navigate through institutions and meetings, as well as initiate regime shifts to move negotiations from one venue to another that is more favorable to their interests (Drezner, 2009; Hafner-Burton, 2009; Morse and Keohane, 2014).

While early conceptualizations of regime complexes emphasize their non-hierarchical nature, more recent works push back on this assumption (Green, 2022; Henning and Pratt, 2023; Pratt, 2018). Henning and Pratt (2023, 2184), for example, pointing out that regime complexes vary in their relations of authority, defining authority as "the extent to which institutions implicitly or explicitly recognize the right of other institutions to craft definitive rules, organize common projects or otherwise set the terms of inter-institutional cooperation." This is evidenced by the subordinate institutions acknowledging the hierarchy of the authority institution. These authority relations can be informal or formal, accomplished via delegation (Orsini, Morin and Young, 2013), orchestration (Abbott et al., 2015), or deference (Pratt, 2018; Green, 2022). These hierarchical relations can help in resolving conflicts between institutions in a regime complex.[4] Regime complexes may be more likely to be hierarchical in nature if a focal institution exists—or a powerful state desires such an organizational arrangement. Because hierarchy reduces rule conflict, it can limit actors' abilities to forum shop, increasing the likelihood of effective governance, but also potentially reducing adaptability.

In the climate space, the existence of a regime complex is well documented.[5] For example, in early work on the topic, Keohane and Victor (2011) and Zelli and Van Asselt (2013) argue that the regime complex on climate is fragmented and decentralized, and likely to remain as such. This arrangement can facilitate experimentation but also runs a risk of policy incoherence, and the lack of a comprehensive regime reflects "resistance to costly

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[4]Henning and Pratt (2023)'s framework also specifies that regime complexes vary in their degree of institutional differentiation, which can be functional or geographic.

[5]See also Mitchell (1994) on the oil pollution regime; Orsini (2013) on the forestry regime.

policies from both rich countries—including the US—and developing countries." Keohane and Victor (2011, 9-12) identify the UNFCCC and the legal regimes it produced (e.g., Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen Accord) as the most visible institution within the climate change regime complex, complemented by clubs, unilateral and subnational initiatives, and bilateral arrangements that countries created to circumvent gridlock in the universal-membership IOs. Other important participants are other IOs (e.g., the World Bank and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), with other legal regimes (e.g., financial market and trade regimes) playing a supporting, peripheral role. They characterize the climate change regime complex as fully non-hierarchical. Abbott (2012) specifically focuses on transnational governance of climate change, highlighting the role played by non-state actors such as firms, civil society organizations, and local governments. These actors play an important role in bridging gaps between regimes, improving coordination, and push for innovation.

Research on the existence of a regime complex for migration/displacement has been less well-developed. Betts (2009) examines the refugee regime complex, placing UNHCR in a central role, but noting that its authority is increasingly challenged by institutions focusing on IDPs and international (non-forced) migration and observing an increasingly prominent role for the IOM. The refugee regime is increasingly challenged by institutions in overlapping regimes, including human rights, labor, development, security, travel, and humanitarian assistance, observing that "[w]hile UNHCR has retained a de facto monopoly over refugee protection (the so-called UNHCR footnote), all other protection activities relating to other displaced populations are effectively shared and coordinated with other agencies" (Betts, 2013, 73-4). In the anti-trafficking in persons regime, Gómez-Mera (2016) identify the centrality of the UN Trafficking Protocol, which overlaps constructively with the human rights regime but does not overlap cooperatively with the migration regime complex, which the authors identify principally with the IOM and UNHCR in a mixed "asylum/migration" regime. The authors assert that "in contrast to many other issue-areas in international relations, mi-

gration is characterized by the absence of a formal multilateral regime and by limited and fragmented interstate cooperation" (Gómez-Mera, 2016, 577).

Hall (2013, 2016) is unique in drawing attention to the role of climate in the refugee regime, specifically assessing whether UNHCR moved 'beyond its mandate' on refugees in drawing increased focus to climate-displaced persons. Because of its supervisory authority over international law in the refugee space, Hall (2013) argues that UNHCR was slow to move into the climate space, whereas other IOs with more functional mandates—such as the IOM—can be more nimble in moving into new issue spaces. 'Functional' IOs seek to demonstrate to donor states that they are competent to ensure their survival, and by expanding their ability to execute projects in more areas can further this goal. However, by specifically focusing on how "international development, migration, and humanitarian organizations are responding to climate change," and explicitly excluding responses by climate-facing organizations to *migration*, Hall (2016)'s depiction of the climate migration regime complex paints only part of the picture.

Is there a climate migration regime? Are institutional responses to climate migration situated within either the climate or refugee regimes? Is an emerging regime complex characterized by hierarchy and deference, or non-hierarchical in nature? Are any institutions serving an orchestrating role? What incentives and political dynamics explain the emergence of the particular regime complex (if it exists)? In the remainder of this paper, we outline theoretical explanations of regime complexity and bring to bear observational and interview-based evidence to assess the existence and evolution of these structures in the climate migration space.

Theory

Global regime complexes vary significantly in their design, composition, and depth. We consider multiple sources of this variation, including incentives of states, bureaucrats, leaders, and donors. We explore how each of these various perspectives plays a role in explaining the development of the climate migration regime complex, ultimately aiming to develop a theoretical explanation of the regime complex.

State Interests   State interests offer the most natural starting point for understanding the design of international institutional arrangements. IOs are established with specific functions in mind, and their structures are crafted strategically to accomplish specific aims on behalf of states that form them (Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Koremenos, Lipson and Snidal, 2001). For instance, during the "Uruguay Round" of negotiations over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, state interests played a foremost role in shaping bargaining dynamics over institutional structure (Drake and Nicolaïdis, 1992).

States specifically delegate power and responsibility over certain key issue areas in order to maximize private benefits, including informational (Hawkins et al., 2006) and bargaining advantages (Carnegie, 2014). Specific design features like monitoring and limited institutional control over budgetary and staffing matters (Pollack, 1997; Nielson and Tierney, 2003) are built into IOs from their inception to create formal constraints on bureaucratic agency and to ensure that IO policymaking does not drift from the preferences of state principals. State interests also shape IO functioning through indirect channels. For instance, World Bank policymakers often design policies consistent with US interests because of pervasive US social influence within the organization (Clark and Dolan, 2021).

In the context of climate migration, interest-based theories would suggest that global governance structures should reflect the preferences and priorities of leading states. Par-

ticularly, prospective host countries likely to receive large numbers of climate migrants, or those most affected by climate change that anticipate land loss (i.e., Small Island Development States), should take a key role in organizing and designing institutional arrangements. For instance, major Global North countries on the front lines of South-North climate displacement might play leading roles in orchestrating the climate migration regime complex if interest-based theories are correct. Similarly, we would anticipate that leading sending countries—those states expected to be most severely impacted by climate change and consequently likely to produce large displaced populations—to take active roles in organizing institutional solutions.[6]

Bureaucrats and Leaders Bureaucracies and individuals also play key roles in structuring and designing international institutions (Johnson, 2014). While early work on the design of IOs portrays IO bureaucrats as largely neutral agents (e.g., Abbott and Snidal, 1998; Pollack, 1997; Nielson and Tierney, 2003), more recent focus has shifted to examining bureaucrats as active agents of IO policy design.[7] This scholarly attention coincides with a ballooning number of IO staff as the number and responsibilities of international institutions have proliferated over time.

Increasingly, bureaucrats working on issues related to international governance and cooperation seek to insulate their IOs from state interference and manipulation (Johnson, 2013). In part, this occurs because states need bureaucratic expertise, and hence grant latitude to IO bureaucrats (Johnson and Urpelainen, 2014). This gives the individual employees who comprise IOs growing influence over program design and implementation. For instance, in the context of climate change, individual IO bureaucrats exposed to climate disasters during

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[6]These expectations largely align with other works that document a North-South divide in country preferences over climate policymaking in IOs (e.g., Arias, 2022; Arias, Clark and Kaya, forthcoming).

[7]We specifically mean bureaucrats working for IOs—bureaucrats in governmental agencies would be expected to be actors advocating for state preferences, see previous section.

their tenures in a country learn from these disasters and independently increase organizational climate activism in response (Clark and Zucker, 2023).

One class of bureaucrats—IO executives—wields particular power and influence over institutional design and policymaking. For instance, leaders offer strategic direction and guidance, set institutional priorities, coordinate agreements amongst members, and play a key role in branding, networking, and fundraising (Cox, 1969; Hall and Woods, 2018; Manulak, 2017; Arias and Hulvey, 2023). The ideology of leading diplomats and IO managers also matters for organizational conduct and programming (Copelovitch and Rickard, 2021). During negotiations between institutions, states, and organizations leaders play a key role in agenda-setting, brokerage, and representation (Tallberg, 2010). Through agenda control, leaders influence the likelihood of achieving solutions to bargaining problems, define issues and construct focal points, avoid issue cycling, and shape distributional outcomes (e.g., Pollack, 1997; Tallberg, 2010). Similarly, executive heads set institutional priorities, defining and implementing strategic plans (Schroeder, 2014). For example, Copelovitch and Rickard (2021) note that the autonomy of World Bank Managing Directors allows them to set new agendas through country-level visits, contacts with ministers, and joint collaborations.

IO executives also play a role in institutional design and change through charismatic leadership. Kille and Scully (2003) show, for example, that organizational executives oriented toward expansionism undertake efforts to expand the purview and prestige of their institutions. Finally, IO executives may attempt to utilize IO policymaking and funding mechanisms to serve the interests of their home states (Carnegie and Marinov, 2017; Arias and Hulvey, 2023). These perspectives suggest that entrepreneurial leaders, diplomats, and bureaucrats within IOs should play an outsized role in orchestrating international governance of climate migration. In particular, we might expect staff exposed to past climatic disasters or migration crises to focus more on climate displacement within their institutions. Similarly, executives interested in expanding their institutions' power and resources could

seize upon climate migration as a new, under-institutionalized issue area into which their organizations can expand.

Apart from the ways bureaucrats and leaders might individually or collectively shape the functioning of IOs working on climate migration, group-level and organizational politics are also relevant. In issue areas where multiple organizations hold power and influence, competing and parochial interests often hamper cooperation. In particular, self-interested organizations are likely propose and pursue policies that benefit their agencies at the expense of competitors (Allison, 1969). Budget maximization is a particularly important motive. One way around bureaucratic gridlock and wrangling is top-down enforcement. Powerful actors like states can mandate inter-institutional cooperation in order to overcome parochial struggles (Clark, 2021). Comparative specialization can also facilitate cooperation if different organizations engage in productive divisions-of-labor, cultivating expertise in niche areas (Schub, 2022). Together these perspectives suggest that, absent top-down pressure for cohesion, the climate migration regime complex should be relatively fractious, at least initially, as existing organizations and structures compete for funds and sort-out specializations.

Private Authorities: Firms, NGOs, and Donors   A third major perspective on global governance and institutional design highlights the role of private authorities like firms, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities, and donor organizations in shaping the structure of regime complexes (Green, 2014). Particularly in environmental governance, these actors play a central role, incubating new ideas and reformulating policy problems (Green and Auld, 2017). Private authorities can also help regimes make progress on contentious issues by bypassing recalcitrant or obstructionist states and enlisting the support of social movements and other sub-state actors, to lobby and engage in activism (Abbott, 2014). In the context of climate migration, important investments made by private foundations and NGOs could help facilitate institutional coordination, for instance at the sidelines of the

annual Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings or through the civil-society based Climate Migration and Displacement Platform.

We draw on these theoretical perspectives to understand the institutional approach to governing climate migration. In particular, we focus on understanding how and why the climate migration regime has evolved over time. We consider the role of states, bureaucracies, and private actors as drivers of institutional structure and design.

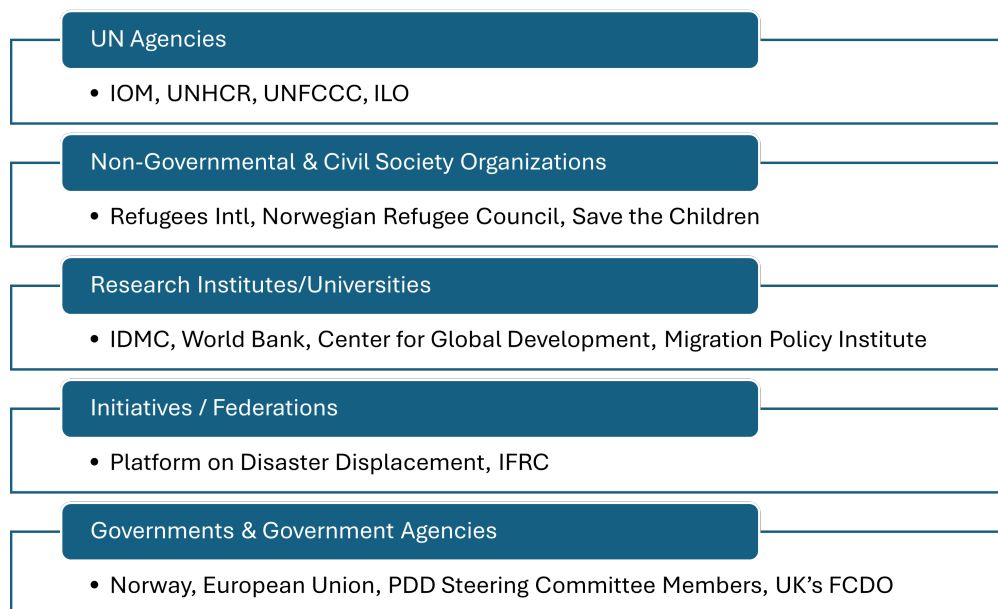## Mapping the Climate Migration Space

As attention and awareness of climate-related migration have grown in the last 15 years, so too has the number of organizations and networks working on this issue. This landscape analysis provides an overview of who is working in this field, when they got involved, and what their focus is within the issue area. The data for this section comes from a review of over 30 organizations and 14 networks working on climate-related migration and displacement (see Appendix for a full list). While this analysis is not exhaustive, it provides a detailed summary of the key players and trends in the field.

Who is working on climate-related migration?

The field of climate-related migration is composed of an array of different actors that can largely be categorized into five distinct groupings: 1) UN agencies; 2) non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs); 3) research institutions; 4) initiatives and federations; and 5) governments and government agencies. Figure 1 provides illustrative examples of the different organizations that fit within each category.

UN agencies are arguably the most prominent in the field with large budgets, authoritative mandates, and close relationships with member states. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are

Figure 1: Type of organizations in the climate-related migration field

UN Agencies
- IOM, UNHCR, UNFCCC, ILO

Non-Governmental & Civil Society Organizations
- Refugees Intl, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children

Research Institutes/Universities
- IDMC, World Bank, Center for Global Development, Migration Policy Institute

Initiatives / Federations
- Platform on Disaster Displacement, IFRC

Governments & Government Agencies
- Norway, European Union, PDD Steering Committee Members, UK's FCDO

two key organizations with specific institutional mandates on migration/human mobility and the protection of refugees, respectively. The UNFCCC also plays an important role when it comes to negotiations at the annual COP conferences and the new Loss and Damage Fund, which is anticipated to fund programming related to migration and climate change.

In addition to UN agencies, NGOs are increasingly getting more involved in the fields of climate change (adaptation and response) as well as climate migration. Many of these organizations have deep expertise in both humanitarian and development programming and are expanding to respond to populations affected by rapid and/or slow-onset disasters. NGOs often work closely with CSOs as local partners in implementing climate change/climate migration programs. CSOs are also instrumental in influencing advocacy strategies as their staff are typically based in communities directly affected climatic events.

Research institutes, including think tanks and universities, also play a prominent role in shaping policy discussions and producing evidence on the magnitude and severity of the situation as well as evidence of best practices. Unlike NGOs that directly implement climate

migration programs, these groups focus on policy and may serve as important conveners in bringing government actors, donors, and NGOs together.

Another category of actors working on these issues are specific initiatives and federations. These include the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), a state-led initiative that plays an influential convening role for UN agencies and individual governments to discuss policy and programming related to persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change. Other organizations such as IFRC—a federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies— work on issues related to migration and displacement and disaster risk reduction (DRR) as auxiliaries to public authorities in the humanitarian field.

Lastly, governments themselves are essential actors in terms of climate and migration and arguably have the most power to shape the field. As with most issues, some governments are more involved than others—engaged governments include Norway, Switzerland, Pacific Island States, the European Union, Kenya, and Costa Rica (the latter two the current Chair and Vice Chair of the PDD Steering Group). Further, some governments have specific agencies or departments working on these issues (i.e., the migration department within the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office).

Beyond differentiating organizations by type, another way of classifying the different actors working in this space is by the organization's central thematic focus. These include: 1) migration, refugees, displacement, and humanitarian affairs; 2) climate change and the environment; 3) international development; and 4) cross-cutting issues (see Figure 2).

Most of the organizations surveyed fall into the first category with their central focus related to migration, refugees, forced displacement, and general humanitarian response. These include actors like IOM, UNHCR, MPI, IDMC, Refugees International, etc. A much smaller group fall into the climate change and the environment category—including UN-FCCC, UNEP, and the World Wildlife Fund. International development actors have often been working on disaster risk reduction and other longer-term responses to climate change

13

Figure 2: Central thematic focus of organizations in the climate and migration field
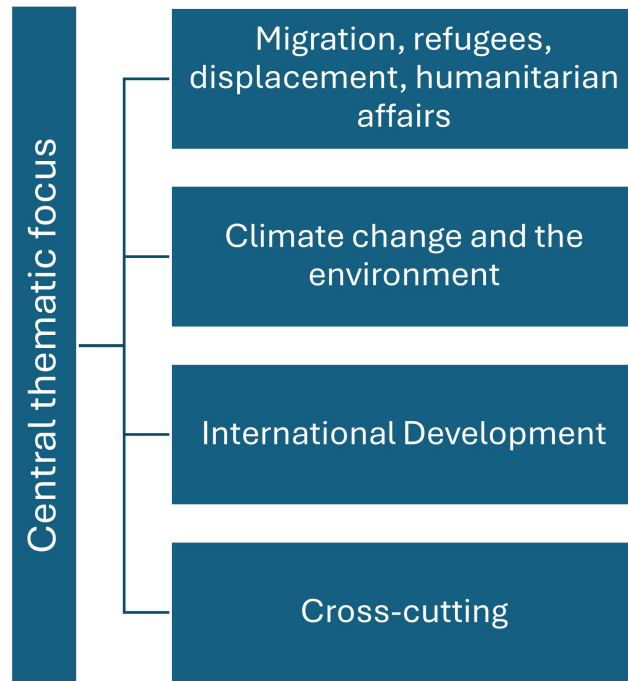

and displacement including UNDP, the World Bank, and ILO. While most organizations in these three categories have cross-cutting programming across migration, climate, and development some are more explicitly so including PDD and government agencies like FCDO.

Networks

Alongside the proliferation of organizations working in this area, in just over a decade there has been a similar rise in the number of dedicated networks of organizations focusing on climate-related migration. Figure 3 depicts a timeline of the evolution of some of the most prominent networks. It begins in 2008 with the creation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) working group on climate change, displacement, and migration and continues through 2022 with the establishment of the Global Centre for Climate Mobility and the regional Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative. Many of the actors discussed above

are members of these networks.

Figure 3: Timeline of climate-related migration networks
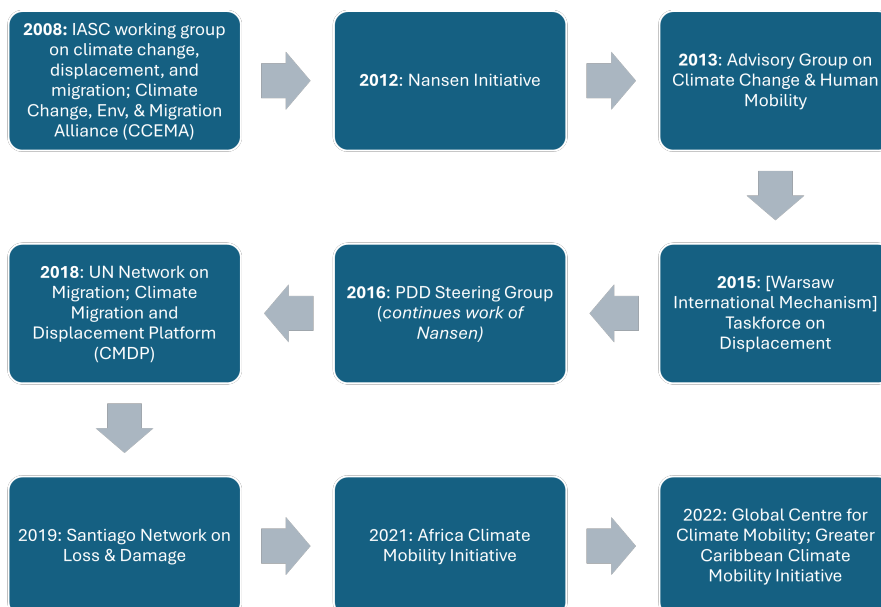
These networks bring together IOs, NGOs, and member states to discuss the challenges of climate change and migration, brainstorm solutions, and share lessons learned. The creation of these networks often followed large international meetings or summits where momentum built to establish dedicated fora to tackle these important issues. The 2015 Paris COP21 led to the creation of the Taskforce on Displacement charged with developing recommendations on "integrated approaches to avert, minimize and address displacement related to the adverse effects of climate change" (UNFCCC – Taskforce on Displacement, 2024). Its members include representatives from a variety of organizations including UNFCCC, IDMC, UNDP, ILO, IOM, UNHCR, and government representatives.

The PDD Steering Group, a state-led initiative focused on protecting people at risk of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change (the successor to the Nansen Initiative), was launched at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. And more recently, after the adoption of the two Global Compacts in 2018, one for Safe, Orderly and Regular

Migration (GCM) and one for Refugees (GCR), two new networks emerged: the UN Network on Migration (UNNM) and the Climate Migration and Displacement Platform (CMDP). UNNM was created to assist member states in fulfilling their commitments under the GCM and the CMDP is a civil society network bringing together experts working on this issue area to align advocacy priorities. These networks all exist at the global level but there are also regional networks including the Africa Climate Mobility Initiative and the Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative.

When did these actors get involved?

Institutions dedicated to migration as well as those dedicated to the environment / climate change are not new. IOM and UNHCR emerged after the Second World War in response to mass displacements across Europe. UNEP was founded in the early 1970s and the UNFCCC entered into force in the early 1990s. However, the intersection of these two issue areas—climate change and migration—is a relatively new focus for the organizations surveyed. Organizations working on climate-related migration can be categorized into two groups: early adopters and recent adopters.

IOM was one of the first, if not the first, organization to look at this issue in detail. In the late 1990s they carved out a specific policy area called 'ecological migration,' with a dedicated Migration, Environment, and Climate Change (MECC) division created in 2015 (Hall, 2023, 220). In 2008 IOM pushed for the first IASC working group on the topic and together with UNEP, launched the Climate Change, Environment, and Migration Alliance (Hall, 2023, 224-5). Shortly thereafter in 2012, UNHCR in tandem with the Norwegian government established the Nansen Initiative to address the protection needs of people displaced across international borders in the context of disasters and the effects of climate change.

More recently research institutes, NGOs, and some governments have added new teams and dedicated positions to look at this issue area. A key catalyst was the first World Bank

Groundswell report, released in March 2018, with the subtitle "preparing for internal climate migration." One topline statistic that "by 2050—if no action is taken—there will be more than 143 million internal climate migrants across three regions" spurred greater involvement by myriad actors. NGOs like Save the Children, International Rescue Committee, and CARE International became more involved after the 2018 Global Compacts were adopted. In 2022 the UK's FCDO created a new position—Climate and Migration Policy Lead—to support the UK's engagement and responsibilities with the Global Compact for Migration. Think tanks like MPI and CGD added new thematic areas focused on climate and migration within the last few years. Nevertheless, experts assert that most governments do not have dedicated climate migration focal points.

What are these actors doing?

Organizations working on climate-related migration are engaged in variety of different activities. This section does not intend to capture all their different work, however, these actors can be categorized by their central operational focus which is either 1) programmatic; 2) policy/research; or 3) both (See Figure 4). Organizations focused more on programming implement specific grant-funded projects in various countries to help communities and individuals adapt, mitigate, or respond to the effects of climate change. Those focused on policy aim to influence the political positions of governments when it comes to the specific needs of persons on the move or those displaced by climate- or disaster-related events. Similarly, organizations focused on research aim to produce knowledge and evidence about how climate change will affect human mobility, where programming is needed, what type of projects are most impactful, and what policies best anticipate or respond to voluntary or forced climate-related movements. Then some organizations conduct a mix of both programmatic and policy work.

Some other key dimensions that differentiate what organizations in the climate-related

Figure 4: Central operational focus of organizations working in the climate-related migration field
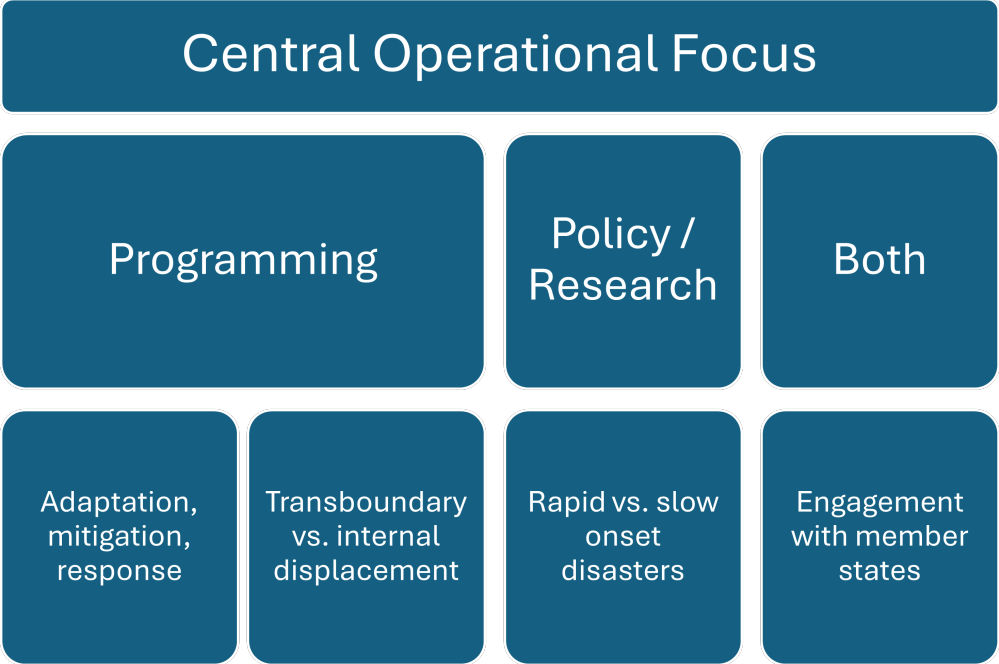
migration space are doing include transboundary vs. internal displacement; rapid versus slow onset disasters; and varying levels of engagement with member states. An important operational distinction among organizations working on climate-related migration that has implications for policy and research is whether they are focused on migration/displacement that occurs within a country (internal) or migration/displacement across a border from one country to another (transboundary). This operational distinction is typically related to the mandate of the respective agency with organizations like UNHCR, PDD, and Refugees International focused on transboundary migration and others like IOM, UNFCCC, and FCDO focused on both cross-border and internal migration/displacement.

Another critical distinction is between rapid versus slow-onset disasters. The former typically falls under humanitarian response programming to typhoons, floods, and earthquakes whereas the latter are often under the purview of development or DRR activities focused on drought, desertification, and sea-level rise. Lastly, some organizations working in this space

like IOM, PDD, and MPI liaise directly with UN member states on these issues—advising them on policy design, programmatic priorities, and reducing displacement risks, while others are grant-based organizations that implement projects in countries to support vulnerable populations without engaging governments directly.

Definitions/Terminology

How do these organizations conceptualize climate migration? How do they characterize the issue space that they work on? The answers to such questions are non-obvious and reflect different perspectives of the many organizations operating in the space. The organizations analyzed use a variety of different terms and definitions to describe their work and who they are supporting (See Figure 5). Over 15 distinct terms are used by these actors ranging from: human mobility and people on the move to climate-related migration, environmental migration, and displacement across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. The multiplicy of terms reflects disagreements and debates within the field that are long-standing. For example, in 2008 UNHCR "had a debate with IOM over terminology for people displaced due to climate change. Their primary position was that climate change could not produce 'refugees' in the legal or official sense and the working group was reportedly mired in definitional debates," (Hall, 2013, 99).

The most common terms used by practitioners (Table 1) are climate displacement and climate migration, which are relatively similar in the degree of specificity that they imply (i.e., compared to human mobility). However, the looseness of the terminology and absence of consensus on what to call the field is notable. Also of note, the language used is distinct from what is captured in organizational materials, which were more likely to align around the terminology of displacement. This may imply that while formal coordination exists around the usage of "climate displacement" as the relevant term, there is a clear lack of shared understanding among practitioners and negotiators in relevant settings, as well as

contestation over the specifics of what "climate displacement" entails as a concept.

Table 1: Most commonly used terms in climate and migration respondent interviews

Word	Frequency
migration	9
change	6
displacement	5
context	4
mobility	4
climaterelated	3
climateaffected	2
people	2
related	2
disasters	2

Table 2: Most commonly used terms in climate and migration organizational materials

Word	Frequency
displacement	8
mobility	6
migration	5
human	5
people	5
environmental	3
displaced	3
disasters	3
mecc	2
context	2
disaster	2
move	2
effects	2
related	2

Interviews

Our mapping exercise illuminates the current constellation of organizations in the climate migration space, highlighting the relevant actors, their approaches to the issue, and their

Figure 5: Most commonly used terms in climate and migration organizational materials (left panel) and respondent interviews (right panel)
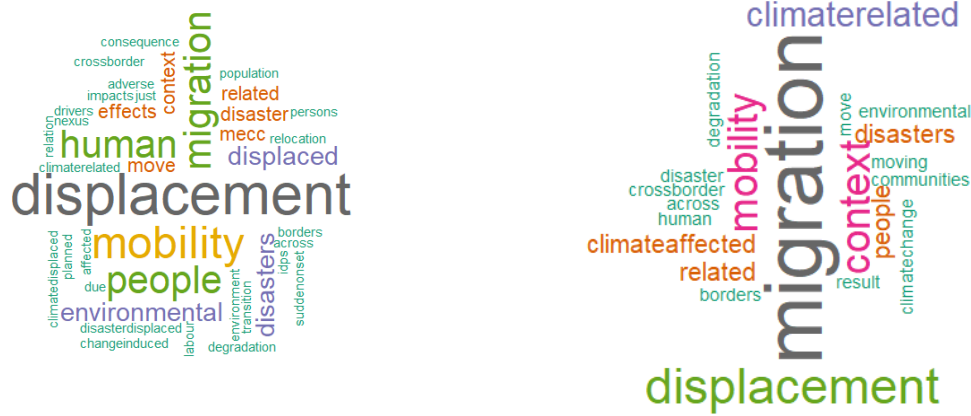
institutional histories. However, it cannot illuminate the institutional evolutions that led to this particular regime complex— how did this institutional arrangement come to be, and why does it exist as such, rather than an alternative arrangement? How do experts within and around the regime complex understand it? What is it likely to look like going forward?

To shed light on such questions, we conduct expert interviews with policymakers, academics, staff, and experts in key organizations related to the question of climate migration.[8] As with any research method, there are strengths and drawbacks to elite interviewing. Elite interviews provide insight into events and contexts that one cannot otherwise observe. Interviews can illuminate causal mechanisms in unique ways compared to other research strategies (Mosley, 2013, 5). Elite interviews, in particular, can illuminate the beliefs and perceptions of key actors participating in the phenomena of interest, and can help to interpret how patterns in this evidence arise.

To develop our sampling frame, we drew on our organizational mapping to identify key organizations, agencies, and networks—including IOM, PDD, IDMC, and other NGOs—and then leveraged personal networks and snowball sampling to connect with individuals in these

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[8]Interview protocol was reviewed by the Princeton University Institutional Review Board and granted exempted status (IRB # 17009).

spaces. We also spoke with country negotiators at UNFCCC, as well as academic experts on climate migration. Interviews ranged in length from approximately 30-70 minutes. Our questionnaire is included in the appendix. To date, we have conducted 17 interviews between June 4, 2024 and August 21, 2024. The interviews followed a semi-structured format. That is, we generally followed a prescribed questionnaire, but made adjustments in individual interviews to allow for follow-up or clarification questions, to change the order of questions to facilitate conversational flow, and to omit questions that the respondent addressed in the course of responding to an earlier question. Interviews were conducted over Zoom. All interviews were conducted in English. Respondents were informed that the interview would be conducted on background, and specifically, that they would not be identified as individuals or by their organization. Conducting our interviews on background increases the likelihood that the responses would be candid (Mosley, 2013).[9] Below, we identify and elaborate on four key themes from our interviews.

Organizational Leaders

In assessing the degree of hierarchy (Green, 2022; Henning and Pratt, 2023; Pratt, 2018) in the climate migration regime complex, a key question to understand is whether there is consensus around an organizational leader. Overall, our interviews suggest that there is a moderate degree of consensus that IOM plays a leading role in the climate migration space—but also emphasize that this outcome was not foreordained, and rather arose out of an evolving and competitive landscape. As one respondent explicitly noted, "...the question of who are the main actors is evolving."

In general, while IOM is seen as more of a lead in terms of obtaining topically earmarked funds from donors, developing concepts, and executing policy, the PDD is also seen as playing an important convener role. As an orchestrator of other relevant actors, this serves

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[9]Additional interviews continue to be conducted, and we expect this section to evolve as more data is collected.

a core function within the regime complex (Abbott et al., 2015). However, we also observe a difference in perceptions of organizational leadership between individuals operating in the climate space and those coming from a migration background in identifying the key convener. While those from migration spaces were more likely to identify PDD as the orchestrator of relevant actors, those from a climate background coalesced around an understanding of UNFCCC as the most important convener. This role has also become more notable over time, as the language of climate migration is included more commonly in COP outcome documents, and particularly with the central role that climate migration was given in the construction of the Loss and Damage Fund.

What drives this difference in assessment by migration experts and climate experts? One potential pathway comes to light. Individuals in these different institutional spaces have different backgrounds and different understandings of the issue space. These divergent conceptualizations of who is a climate migrant imply different issue scopes, which changes the organization best positioned to take the lead.

Other organizations were mentioned as important actors—for example, UNHCR. Notably, few respondents specifically pointed to NGOs playing a leadership role relative to the number of respondents who centered leadership in IOs. Only two respondents—notably, both country negotiators at the UNFCCC—argued that *states* rather than organizations were the leaders.

An important dynamic that respondents highlighted in terms of issue leadership was the historical evolution and the importance of institutional speed in 'getting to the table.' A clear narrative generally unfolded: UNHCR was originally the key organization in the issue space, led by advocacy efforts on behalf of the Director-General around 2010. These efforts coincided with the definitional debate over whether climate migrants should be legally defined as refugees. However, as it became clear that this legal framework was not going to emerge, UNHCR's role faded into the background. IOM took on a much more active

role, first becoming an equal partner to UNHCR, and eventually "positioning itself as *the* climate mobility agency." Its flexible mandate allowed IOM to move quickly, while other UN agencies with more cumbersome bureaucracies were not able to respond as fast.

Bureaucratic Politics

The field of climate migration has grown from a small sub-area into a prominent focus of many organizations. Individual bureaucrats within different agencies have been instrumental in raising the profile of this issue, lobbying and cajoling key decision-makers. As has been documented by other scholars (Hall, 2013, 2016, 2023), senior leaders at key NGOs—including IOM and UNHCR—have advocated within their organizations to move climate migration up the political agenda. Our interviews indicated that this trend is continuing within key organizations, although the internal barriers to doing so have eased as the issue has gained attention and funding. Analogous to a norm entrepreneur (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998), interviewees described pseudo "climate migration entrepreneurs" who have navigated internal organizational politics to create a larger space for climate migration work. One former government official described the creation of her role—the first dedicated to climate migration within the agency—"[my] predecessor was working on the GCM generally and was interested in climate and wanted to work more on climate migration."

Perhaps the most prominent climate migration entrepreneur is IOM's new Director General, Amy Pope. Multiple interviewees pointed to her importance in steering the organizations' strategy towards a greater focus on climate migration and expanding IOM's organizational mandate in this area. One NGO official stated, "[Pope] identifying climate as one of her top three priorities gave an organization-wide mandate that we care about this and are going to put resources behind this." This was corroborated by a think tank researcher, and former IOM official, who said "IOM pushed this [climate migration] issue from the beginning. They've been working on this on and off for a couple of decades now, and made a

big shift institutionally to create internal capacity on this...and then with the new Director General, it's one of her top priorities."

The success of active entrepreneurship by the IOM executive in expanding the agency's role this area is further demonstrated by its establishment, in coordination with the GCCM, of the "climate mobility pavilion" at the last two COP meetings. The pavilion is a central meeting place for climate mobility discussions at COP, and daily meetings are held with key officials around messaging and influencing climate negotiators at the conference—thus cementing IOM's role as a key convener of other relevant actors. One NGO official described IOM as "flooding the zone at COP with people tasked with supporting IOM's agenda" but also noted that some of these people "didn't have the experience" needed.

IOM's expanded position in the climate migration space is universally recognized, particularly because its more flexible mandate and project-based funding model; but it is not universally welcomed. As will be further discussed below, conflicting organizational mandates, "turf wars," and different conceptualizations of the problem leads to inter-agency bureaucratic conflicts. However, this is not unique to climate migration. One individual in the climate space described this situation, "UN agencies fight like cats in a sack, always have, always will."

Our interviews identified an additional layer of bureaucratic politics as it relates to climate migration, not only within but across organizations. While IOM and UNHCR were lobbying their boards and leadership to internally allocate more time and resources to climate migration, they were also working with other institutions like the Nansen Initiative and UN-FCCC to raise awareness of climate mobility externally, particularly in climate change and disaster risk reduction fora. One interviewee described efforts at the 2009 COP in Copenhagen where the heads of IOM and UNHCR, as well as the UNSG on human rights of IDPs, "lobbied climate negotiators to take up the issue of human mobility in the context of climate change and its adverse effects." Their efforts were then codified in the adoption of a cru-

cial text— paragraph 14(f) in the Cancun Climate Change Adaptation Framework— which encouraged efforts to "enhance understanding, coordination and cooperation with regard to climate change induced displacement, migration and planned relocation, where appropriate, at the national, region and international levels" (UNFCC, 2010). A small, but important, step.

Key bureaucrats at these agencies further advocated for institutional anchoring of climate mobility in high-level fora across climate change, disaster risk reduction, and migration. The Nansen Initiative and its government Steering Group members, as well as key bureaucrats within UNFCCC, were instrumental in lobbying delegates at the 2015 Paris COP to further address human mobility. This resulted in the creation of the WIM Taskforce on Displacement and the inclusion of displacement as part of Loss and Damage (Article 8) in the Paris Agreement. The same year, they worked to integrate human mobility into the Sendai Framework for DRR, adopted in March 2015. One key official recounted these negotiations, "It was very contested...last-minute negotiations at midnight [and] human mobility was included." With the creation of the Global Compact for Migration, the PDD (the successor to the Nansen Initiative) and PDD Steering Group Member government bureaucrats lobbied for institutional anchoring within the Global Migration Review Forum, which takes place every four years.

As the climate migration space continues to evolve and expand the role of individual bureaucrats, particularly senior leaders, to influence the direction of the field is a key aspect to closely observe.

Definitions and Terminology

Largely aligning with our findings in the organizational materials and in the relevant literatures (see previous discussion), our interviews point to ongoing contestation and a lack of agreed-upon definitions when it comes to climate migration.

Just as the institutional landscape with respect to climate migration has evolved over time, so too has the contours and the salience of the debate over terminology, and in particular, the salience of this debate rises when the stakes of the outcomes are raised. Many respondents pointed to the early debates over climate refugees as a high water mark of the salience of definitional debates. As one respondent noted, the legal implications of this decision justified everyone's attention. However, once it became clear that a legal framework for climate refugees was not forthcoming, respondents noted that the importance of agreeing upon a consensus definition seemed to diminish. Simultaneously, the emergence of the broad human mobility framework seemed to provide a path forward: within this broad tent, "we don't need to get caught up on 'who is this' and 'who is that' but can stick to the consensus." Efforts to continue debating over terminology were seen as impeding action rather than generating the clarity needed to coordinate.

However, with the proposed establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund as part of the COP negotiations, the stakes of the definitional debate were raised once again, though this time, the central question was one of resources rather than legality. The specifics of the definition employed in this context determine who qualifies for loss and damage funding, and by raising the financial stakes, once again added fuel to the definitional debate.

In addition to these direct implications, definitional choices create organizational winners and losers. Framing climate migration in particular ways situates within a specific organizational mandate, and excludes it from others. It unlocks funding streams, but blocks others. As one respondent stated, the root of the issue over terminology is really a battle over mandates: "[i]f [terminology] is a tension point, it is often because people are feeling defensive about their mandates." For example, if the human mobility conceptualization is adopted—the broadest definitions—organizations from UNICEF to ILO to FAO all have viable interests and opportunities to appeal to funders. However, under a more narrow definition, for example, cross-border climate-displaced populations, a smaller set of organizations

are positioned to take on more dominant roles, potentially alienating excluded groups.

What are the implications of these definitional debates? Does a lack of clarity impede coordination? In the following section, we describe how a lack of agreement upon a definition of climate migration creates barriers to coordination, and how it creates difficulty in assessing which institutional mandates are most relevant to address the issues. On the other hand, a lack of a precise definition creates space for many organizations to be involved, and allows for flexibility in negotiation tactics. Ambiguous definitions may more accurately capture the complexity of climate migration as an issue, which varies tremendously across different contexts—this could spur creative rather than cookie-cutter solutions.

Clearly, there are a number of different positions when it comes to the conflict over definitions. Some think that this debate is unproductive and that efforts should move on to other topics—that this is not a matter of importance ("In most cases I think the field has realized we have spent too long talking about terminology and we just want to get something done"). Others think that the definition question needs to be resolved to move forward—and within this camp, preferences diverge over whether such a definition should be narrow or broad, and that the question of agreeing upon a definition is a critical one for the climate migration regime complex to resolve.

Challenges / Barriers to Coordination

With any new or emerging field, particularly those with an influx of new actors, there are bound to be a variety of challenges when it comes to coordinating both across and within organizations. Climate migration is no different. Four key barriers to coordination surfaced in conversation with our interviewees: 1) competing organizational mandates; 2) the cross-cutting nature of the issue; 3) the field as a new issue area; and 4) domestic politics and a lack of political will.

The first key challenge is different organizational mandates across the various organi-

zations working on climate mobility issues. Some mandates are complementary (i.e., both IOM and MPI have broad migration mandates) and others are in tension (i.e., PDD and Refugees International focus on cross-border disaster displacement and IDMC focuses exclusively on internal displacement). The conflicting nature of the mandates affects broader coherence around advocacy messaging, terminology, and general coordination. This can, in some cases, lead to "turf wars," particularly in a tight financial environment, and tension between organizations, reducing the incentives to cooperate. A lack of an agreed-upon definition can serve as a stumbling block for coordination in it of itself, separately from the question of the mandates that different definitions imply. Definitional disagreement inhibits putting forward a unified messaging strategy, complicates the aggregation of research, and can make it difficult for the scholarly community to contribute evidence to negotiations. Further, competing frames around climate migration can create opportunities for terms to be weaponized or used at cross purposes to stymie negotiations.

More broadly, a fundamental challenge one senior migration and displacement official raised is answering the question "what is the problem we're trying to solve?...And having the same kind of starting point." Unlike other cross-cutting thematic areas like gender or protection where organizations may have different approaches but their stance on the issue—gender equality, protection mainstreaming—is cohesive, within the climate migration space there are fundamental differences in conceptualizing the problem and the goal. Is the problem responding to people displaced across borders, increasing resilience and durable solutions for people to remain in their local communities, responding to a sudden-onset natural disaster, "greening" refugee camps, or facilitating migration as an adaptation strategy? The answer to these questions depends on the organization's agenda and mandate which limits more unified coordination. As an NGO Program Manager noted regarding the difficulty coordinating around advocacy messaging, but that is synonymous with the challenge for the field more broadly: "[there is] no single ask regarding climate displacement, [which makes

it] difficult for a unified advocacy effort."

The cross-cutting nature of the issue is not unique to climate migration but further complicates coordination efforts. Climate mobility transcends the fields of climate change, migration, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) as well as development and humanitarian programming. Individual organizations may have technical expertise in one or more of those specific fields but few, if any, have expertise in all. Further, the institutions surveyed in this paper were not created to handle big systematic risks like climate mobility and thus, they must coordinate across these various issue areas to address the problem. However, the three main fields are largely organized in silos with minimal overlap between them. Large-scale global meetings can be an opportunity to raise attention on the issue of climate mobility but these are also dispersed, another barrier to integrated, coherent coordination. Climate change conversations take place at the annual Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings, global migration conversations take place at the Global Migration Review Forum, and Disaster Risk Reduction conversations occur at the Global Forum for DRR. As one senior official stated, "Here you have so many different norms, you have so many different institutions, you have so many different processes, and that's a challenge when you're talking about a regime and about coordination." Governments themselves struggle to coordinate internally across thematic bureaucratic silos. As the same official stated, "one ministry is going to COP, the other going to Geneva. . . [both] engaging in different fora, and not working together."

A third challenge is that climate migration is a relatively new issue area. Many organizations have joined the field within the last 5-6 years. As one interviewee stated, "This is still a really nascent issue." One element of this reported by multiple interviewees is that in many agencies "folks who work on this issue are relatively junior." Thus, their ability to influence the conversation internally, as well as their ability to assert external influence, is more limited. A former government bureaucrat working on climate migration lamented, "we were

trying to influence but we did not have enough power or seniority." This was corroborated by a think tank researcher who suggested that "more senior-level buy-in" was necessary to elevate the prominence of this issue on the political agenda. Another aspect of climate migration as a new issue area is that not all governments have a climate migration focal point, or the person who is the focal point is wearing multiple hats which limits their bandwidth to focus on this issue. It can also be difficult for area experts to find their counterparts within governments or other agencies as they may sit in different departments or ministries, and may not attend the same conferences/meetings.

Additionally, the absence of a single coordination structure, means there is no central place for new actors to get up to speed on the history of the issue before contributing to the conversation. One official suggested that the influx of new organizations, and their lack of historical knowledge on the evolution of the field was leading to a reopening of previously resolved debates and overlooking existing best practices that are well understood by older actors with more experience. Without a means for new actors to coordinate with others to catch up on the history of the issue, the official suggested "there is a risk that you are not building on your gains." Last, given the novelty of the issue area, multiple interviewees stated there is a lack of evidence on what works. Donors, in particular, are hungry for more research and data on what type of programs and projects they should fund related to climate migration. The complexity, nuance, and context-specific nature of the issue complicates the cumulation of research and evidence. Nevertheless, as one official recounted in a conversation with a donor government, in the absence of evidence on best practices they, "just keep funding IOM projects in the Pacific."

Perhaps the elephant in the room when it comes to climate migration is the political sensitivity surrounding the issue. Domestic politics significantly impact government funding, political positions, and prioritization of this issue. This leads to important disagreements about financing, Global North vs. South preferences, and immigration policies. In addition

to domestic national-level politics, inter-agency politics is another barrier. One former government official described, "[It was] difficult because the climate people didn't want to talk about [migration]... because migration in ["x"] is so highly politicized. They didn't want what they were working on [i.e., climate] to be linked to the domestic migration agenda." Not only is there a lack of desire domestically among states to take on the issue of climate change, this lack of political will "trickles up" to the level of IO executives: IO leaders are wary of wasting political capital taking a strong stance on an issue that they perceive as unlikely to be supported by their principals.

While there are significant barriers to coordinating within the broad field of climate migration—competing organizational mandates, cross-cutting themes, the newness of the issue, and the lack of political will—most interviewees did not see these challenges as insurmountable. As will be further elaborated in the discussion section below, they instead serve as a launching point for innovative ideas for improved and enhanced coordination.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have aimed to provide a current snapshot of the climate migration field—who is working where, when they got involved, and what they are doing—to unpack how and why this regime complex came to be and to identify some of the key issues facing actors in this growing, complex arena. The following discussion reviews some of the architectural challenges facing this field and delves into its evolution over the past two decades demonstrating a dynamic and evolving regime complex.

To fully understand climate migration governance, one must understand and unpack its links to related concepts. As one senior official stated in an interview, "Climate [change] and migration/forced displacement are two of the defining megatrends of our time." Climate mobility sits squarely at the intersection of these two main arenas (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Climate mobility intersections
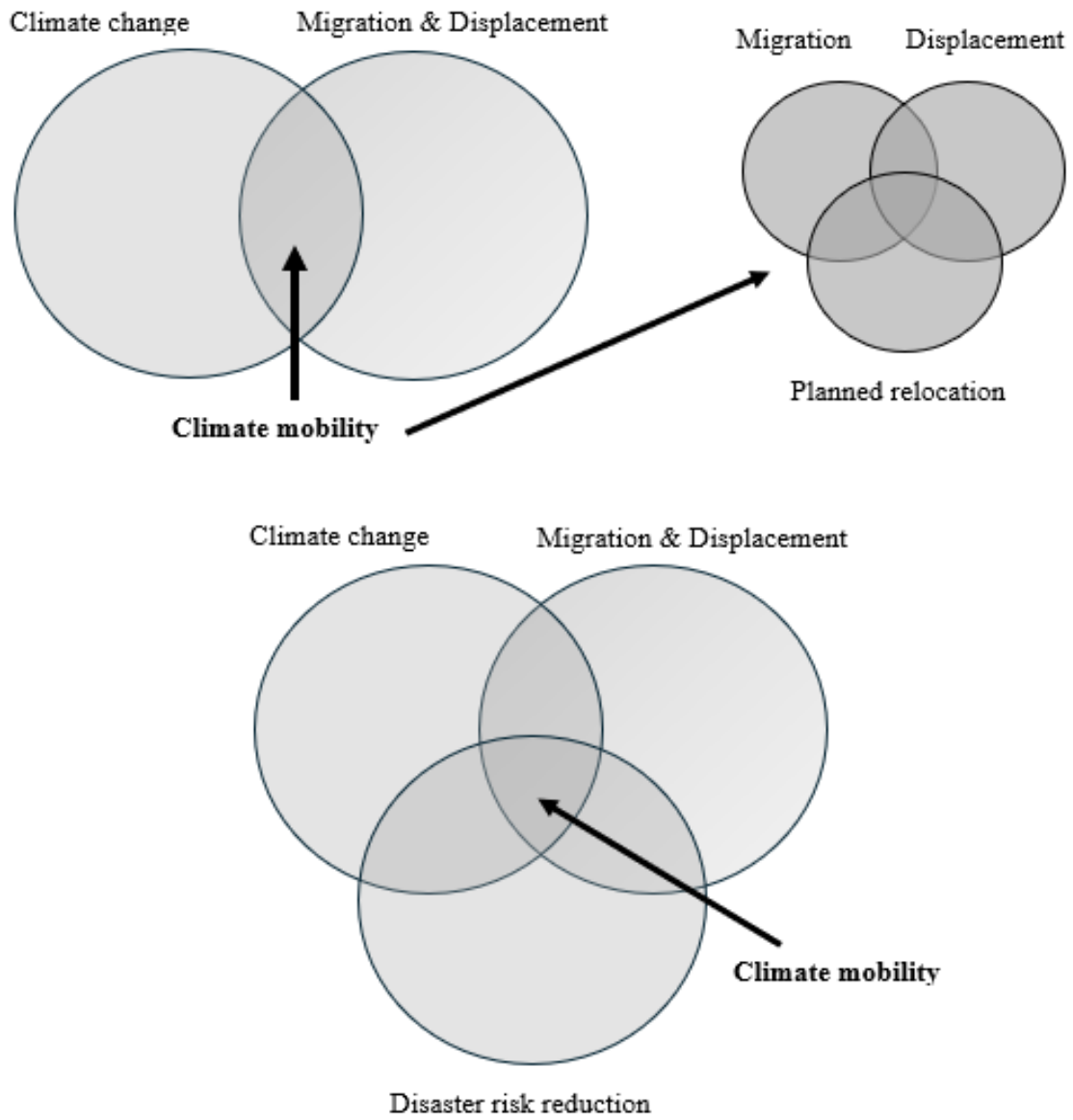
Yet within climate mobility is a further nested Venn diagram (see Figure 6, right) with migration, forced displacement, and planned relocation as three critical components but with their own actors, definitions, and priorities. Then an often a forgotten third layer of intersection is the field of disaster risk reduction (Figure 6, bottom) which plays a key role in climate change adaptation and mitigation and has some overlap with climate migration and displacement activities. Overarching all these fields are the arenas of development and humanitarian programming that are often in tension but that have in recent years, particularly as conflicts have become more protracted, grown closer together (See Figure 7).

Figure 7: Programming intersections
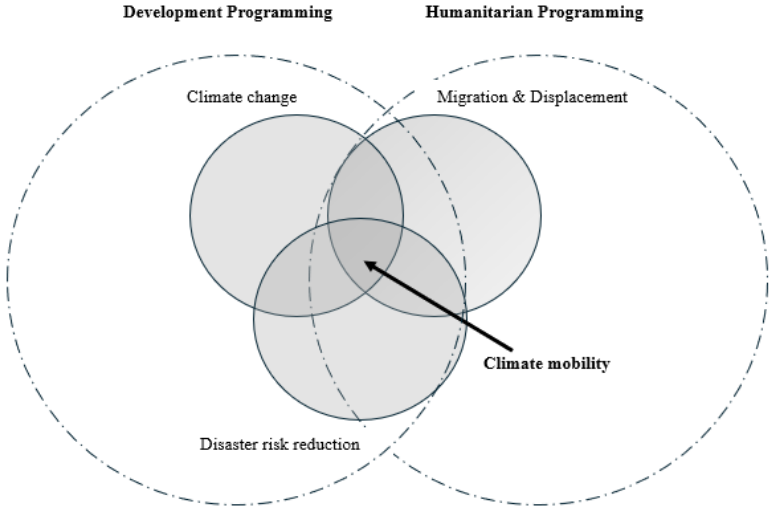
However, development experts focused on long-term programming and humanitarian experts focused on shorter-term emergency programming, are often distinct; and while some organizations implement both types of programs, others specialize in one or the other. Climate mobility lies at the intersection of both development and humanitarianism further complicating the terrain of this issue area. The Russian doll-esque layering of different fields, with different actors, in different arenas illustrates the challenge of coordinating and developing a unified approach. As one UN official described, "it is a messy mosaic of initiatives,

processes. . . with lots of overlap."

This "messy mosaic" has evolved considerably since the late 1990s in a sort of punctuated equilibrium (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993)—with growing speed since 2018 with the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees—and the conversation has shifted accordingly. Efforts to place climate migration on the international agenda built momentum in the late 2000s. Multiple interviewees pointed to the 2011 Cancun Climate Change Adaptation Framework as a key juncture leading to a "flurry of activity" in this space, particularly related to cross-border displacement. This inevitably led to questions of legal protection gaps: should "climate refugees" be recognized as a 'social group' under the 1951 Refugee Convention; should new legal frameworks be created for the admission of climate-displaced populations; does this population merit protection from non-refoulement? Debate over these questions led to tense discussions between various actors, with different organizational mandates, and different ideas of expanding (or not) the Refugee Convention. These discussions occurred simultaneously with predictions by various actors that millions of people could be "on the move," crossing borders because of climate change, creating an urgency to resolve these definitional debates and legal protection gaps.

However, it soon became clear that there was no appetite for expanding legal protections for people crossing borders as a result of climate change (from both governments and international organizations, particularly UNHCR) and further research revealed that most climate-related migration/displacement would be internal and not cross-border. This shift in the conversation occurred in tandem with the reconceptualization of climate migration as not only an adaptation issue but as a loss and damage issue. And the 2015 Paris Agreement asserted that people forced to flee their homes because of climate change or climate-related events (albeit currently undefined), is a form of loss and damage.

The development of the organizational space and tensions over institutional mandates unfolded hand-in-hand with contestation over the definitions and concepts that would be

employed in the climate migration space. These were deeply interrelated developments, as the adoption of particular definitions would situate climate migration within particular institutional mandates (and outside of others). Coupled with this contest surrounding which institutions would be empowered to address the issue of climate migration, definitional debates also rose and fell with the associated stakes of the issue: as the legal implications of a potential "climate refugee" category rose, so too did the importance of this discussion. Similarly, as the financial implications of climate migration as part of loss and damage become institutionalized, once again the parameters of a definition became important for institutional stakeholders. Throughout, these debates have reflected different ideologies about the utility of broad versus narrow definitions, as well as inter-organizational competition and bureaucratic politics between institutions like IOM and UNHCR.

Currently, the discourse around climate migration is evolving again, with many actors beginning to view the issue with less of a humanitarian focus and more of a development focus with attention on long-term, locally-driven durable solutions, to help people increase resiliency to remain within their countries. Yet, if this shift in the conversation sticks it necessitates a different group of actors, with different skill sets, than those involved in the initial conversations more than a decade ago.

This leads to a perhaps unsatisfying, but current preliminary conclusion that climate migration is an evolving regime complex. We have documented a fragmented, decentralized set of institutions and networks with different perspectives on climate migration, and different means of being involved in the issue space. There are areas of overlap between climate organizations and migration organizations, between humanitarian approaches and developmental approaches. Though there appears to be some degree of hierarchy, with IOM as the central actor, organizational leadership is in tension and has shifted over time. Different institutions, including UNFCCC and PDD, are pointed to as orchestrators of broader efforts. The layering of formal and informal networks, as well as engagement from civil society and

state actors, creates a high level of complexity to navigate and establishes high barriers to coordination. In all of these ways, the climate migration space is characteristic of a regime complex.

In conclusion, this study explored three theoretical arguments to explain the formation or evolution of regime complexes: state preferences, organizational and bureaucratic leadership, and the interests of donors. Our findings suggest that neither strong institutional leadership nor state support alone is sufficient to drive significant policy change. Instead, it is the interaction of these two factors that creates critical policy windows, particularly during major conferences. For instance, while senior leader's efforts at the UNHCR initially struggled due to insufficient state support, a subsequent wave of progress occurred when strong state interests—such as those from Germany, Switzerland, and the United States—aligned with institutional leadership at IOM during the 2015 Paris Conference and the Sendai Framework. This confluence allowed bureaucrats to capitalize on the opportunity, leading to more substantial advancements within the regime complex. This evidence underscores the importance of both state support and institutional leadership working in tandem to achieve forward momentum in international policy arenas.

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Appendix

Table 3: Organizations and Networks Surveyed in Literature Review

	Organizations		Networks
1	IOM	1	Global Forum on Migration & Development
2	UNFCCC	2	CCEMA (Climate Change, Env, and Migration Alliance
3	UNHCR	3	Nansen Initiative
4	ILO	4	Advisory Group on Climate Change & Human Mobility
5	UNDP	5	(WIM) Taskforce on Displacement
6	FAO	6	PDD Steering Group
7	UNEP	7	UN Network on Migration
8	OCHA	8	Global Centre for Climate Mobility
9	Refugees Intl	9	Africa Climate Mobility Initiative
10	NRC	10	Greater Caribbean Climate Mobility Initiative
11	Save the Children	11	Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)
12	World Wildlife Fund	12	Climate Mobility Pavilion (COP)
13	PDD	13	Santiago Network on Loss and Damage
14	IFRC	14	Climate Migration, and Displacement Platform
15	CGD		
16	MPI		
17	IDMC		
18	UNOPS		
19	UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)		
20	NYU - Zolberg Institute on Migration & Mobility		
21	FCDO		
22	BPRM		
23	World Bank		
24	Univ of Sussex - Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation, and Poverty (DRC)		
25	Munich Re Foundation (MRF)		
26	Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)		
27	University of Liège		
28	YOUNGO		
29	OHCHR		
30	WHO		
31	UNDOC		

Interview Questionnaire

1. What organizations are taking a lead on this issue?

2. How did this institutional arrangement come to be?

   (a) How would you describe the governance structure when it comes to this issue? (Is it more of a macro governance structure or more decentralized?)

   (b) Was there any competition between organizations over who would take the lead on this issue?

   (c) Would you say that the international system treats climate migration as more of a "climate" issue or a "migration" issue?

       i. How did this happen? Do you think it has had implications for how climate migration is being addressed? How?

       ii. Do you see climate migration/displacement as an issue to be "mainstreamed" across sectors, similar to protection/gender? Or should it be (or is it?) a standalone

3. What is the role of the various migration networks? (i.e., Advisory Group on Climate Change & Human Mobility; Taskforce on Displacement; PDD Steering Group; UN Network on Migration)

   (a) Is your org part of any of these?

   (b) Are these networks productive / effective?

   (c) Do these networks work together? Overlap? How?

4. How are countries (e.g., U.S., EU, Germany, SIDS) shaping the governance structure?

5. How does your organization define climate migration? Is the specific definition of the term important to your work?

   (a) Do the concepts used matter? Why or why not?

   (b) Is there tension across organizations in how to define or conceptualize climate migration? (How has this evolved?)

6. How does your organization approach the issue of climate migration?

   (a) a. Does your organization mainstream climate migration/displacement across sectors, similar to protection/gender? Or is it a standalone focus?

       i. Does climate migration/displacement slip through the cracks between the broader climate change and migration/refugee issue areas?

   (b) Did your organization fight to have climate migration as part of its focus? To keep it out of scope?

(c) Who are your main donors for this type of programming?

7. What barriers to coordination do you face in working on this issue?

8. What are the most important problems when it comes to climate displacement right now?

9. Where do you get your data on climate displacement? Is this a reliable source? What are some of the limitations to this data and/or challenges to collecting this data?

10. Are you more focused on rapid or slow onset climate displacement? Are the existing fora effectively addressing both contexts or is there a prioritization of rapid onset displacement?