

Contested Terminology:
Defining Climate Change Displaced Persons Through Mobility Theory

BY

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Abstract

The changing conditions of the world under climate change are estimated to contribute to an increased rate of migration. There is a lack of international legal and prescriptive agreements to support the populations that will experience displacement, primarily due to dispute over how to define the group. Several valuable attempts have been made to address this oversight in the past, but the evolving discussion surrounding climate migration requires a contemporary edition to reflect a multicausal conception of movement. In response to this gap, this thesis aims to provide a definition for those displaced by climate change related causes, herein referred to as Climate Change Displaced Persons (CCDP). It will be formulated through a lens of mobility theory and mobility justice and act in accordance with existing legal instruments. The resulting definition could serve as the basis for policy development on the local, regional, and international level to address the protection of CCDPs. The evident limitation of this definition is the contradiction between pursuing policy tools and the growing segment of mobility theorists that argue against the problematization of migration through policy. In response, it will be argued that the resulting product serves as a middle ground, providing a necessary policy tool to form the basis of problem-solving solutions to mitigate human harm while simultaneously integrating the more radical basis of mobility theory to provide inroads for a critical long-term approach.

Introduction: A Contested Concept

Climate change is a defining problem of the 21st century. It has garnered significant attention, but not sufficient and meaningful engagement in mitigating its harmful impacts. Current research indicates that the changing conditions we currently face will continue to become more severe.¹ According to the Fifth Assessment Report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), extreme weather events, sea level rise and acidification, precipitation increase, and temperature changes are linked to human action, and will affect a vast number of populations in coming years.² Both the frequency and intensity of these impacts has increased since the 1950s, resulting in considerable environmental consequences.³ The latest assessment in 2021 expanded upon these conclusions, utilizing new methodologies to “unequivocally” confirm that human activity is the cause of the manifestations of climate change observed today.⁴

Global surface temperatures progressively rise, having consequences in all geological spheres and regions of the world.⁵ Based on current trends, by the end of this century the temperature will exceed the 2 degree Celsius mark set by the Paris Agreement (2015), a prominent international agreement aiming to address global warming as a transnational issue.⁶ The limit of 2°C was agreed upon as a threshold, beyond which greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere will result in even more intense climatic changes.⁷ However, even with immediate mitigating action, many aspects of

¹ IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)]. IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, 13, https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full.pdf.

² IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*, 7, 62; World Meteorological Organization, “State of Global Climate 2021: Extreme events and major impacts,” 31st October 2021 <https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/state-of-climate-2021-extreme-events-and-major-impacts>.

³ IPCC, 2021: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [MassonDelmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Leitzell, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, 8, 5.

⁴ IPCC, 2021: *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, 4.

⁵ IPCC, 2021: *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, 4, 6.

⁶ UNFCCC, “The Paris Agreement: What is the Paris Agreement,” <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>.

⁷ WMO, “State of Global Climate 2021,”; The Paris Agreement, 2015, 3.

environmental degradation will continue.⁸ Therefore, adapting in response to the ongoing climatic changes and how they affect local and global dynamics is of high priority in the international community.

A majority of the focus on climate change revolves around the physical environment, but as environmental ramifications have affected social, political, and economic realms, attention has shifted to human impacts.⁹ Discovering, predicting, and developing solutions to the negative consequences of environmental degradation on populations is a growing concern. One such human impact is the concept of climate induced displacement, which is predicted to result in an unprecedented flow of migration.¹⁰ The IPCC has substantiated this claim, stating with high confidence that “climate and weather extremes are increasingly driving displacement in all regions, with Small Island States disproportionately affected”.¹¹

Human movement as a result of climate change is identified as resulting in higher rates of displacement than both conflicts and persecution.¹² Climate induced displacement is defined as “the phenomenon whereby individuals and communities are forcibly displaced (within or beyond their nation-state boundaries) by short- and long-term natural disasters that are precipitated or exacerbated by the climate crisis”.¹³ For the purpose of this work, those who are displaced by this phenomenon will be referred to as Climate Change Displaced Persons (CCDPs).

The potential human migration caused by climate change is not a recently articulated concern. The IPCC highlighted it in 1990 as potentially “the greatest single

⁸ IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*, 16.

⁹ Daniel Faber and Christina Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm: Framing the Climate Refugee Crisis in the Context of Neoliberal Capitalism," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 28, no. 3 (2017): 3, DOI: 10.1080/10455752.2017.1356494.

¹⁰ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 3; Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World: Towards a Global Governance System to Protect Climate Refugees," *Global Environmental Politics* 10, no. 1 (2010): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1162/glep.2010.10.1.60>.

¹¹ IPCC, 2022: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösche, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, 13.

¹² Teresita Perez, "Climate Refugees: The Human Toll of Global Warming," *Center for American Progress* (2006), http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2006/12/climate_refugees.html.

¹³ Hossein Ayazi and Elsadig Elsheikh, "Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied," *Others and Belonging Institute* (December 10, 2019): 2, <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/climaterefugees>.

impact of climate change”.¹⁴ In 1995, Norman Meyers, one of the major scholars following climate driven migration, predicted that by the year 2050, 50 to 150 million people could be forced to migrate due to the impacts of climate change.¹⁵ These predictions, while controversial, have been reiterated numerous times by other scholars, and formed the basis and justification of most initial research on the subject. The predication’s continued relevance was highlighted in 2016, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) corroborated the forecast of 50 million by 2050 based on displacement patterns following natural disasters.¹⁶ This trend of predictions continues, as organizations attempt to assess the extent of the anticipated migration. World Bank predictions from 2018 estimate that 143 million people from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia will be displaced by climate change.¹⁷

However, none of these predictions are considered statistically sound since no global data can be collected without reaching a consensus on specific parameters for how to define those displaced by climate change. In particular, Meyers’ predictions are criticized for their inappropriate “empirical referents” since the definition his statistics are based upon has received extensive critique (See *Critique of Existing Definitions*). The data presented are estimates based on population trends and current migration rates to anticipate future numbers, and even the authors who produced them have deemed them exploratory in nature.¹⁸ Rejection of these statistics is common in contemporary climate migration related research.¹⁹ There is a need to formulate an international definition for CCDPs in

¹⁴IPCC, 1990;1992: Climate Change: The IPCC 1990 and 1992 Assessments [J. T. Houghton]. IPCC, Geneva: WMO, 1992, 103,

https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/ipcc_90_92_assessments_far_full_report.pdf. ; Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 21.

¹⁵ Norman Meyers and Jennifer Kent, “Environmental Exodus: An Emergent Crisis in the Global Arena,” *Climate Institute, Washington, D.C.* (1995): 175, <http://climate.org/archive/PDF/Environmental%20Exodus.pdf>.; Norman Meyers, “Environmental Refugees In A Globally Warmed World,” *Bioscience* 43, no. 11 (1993): 758, DOI:10.2307/1312319.

¹⁶ Bayes Ahmed, "Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?" *International Journal of Climate Strategies and Management* 10, no. 1 (2018): 6, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCCSM-10-2016-0149/full/html>.

¹⁷John Podesta, “The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees,” *Brookings Policy Brief* July 25, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-climate-crisis-migration-and-refugees/>.; Kanta Kumari Rigaud et al., *Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration*, (Washington D.C.: World Bank, 2018): 2, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29461> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

¹⁸ Meyers and Kent, “Environmental Exodus,”4; Meyers, “Environmental Refugees In A Globally Warmed World,” 753.

¹⁹ Giovanni Bettini, "And Yet It Moves! (Climate) Migration as a Symptom in the Anthropocene," *Mobilities* 14, no. 3 (2019): 337, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2019.1612613.

order to gather more reliable data and make precise predictions.²⁰ A definition is also essential when developing policy regarding the individuals whose migration is linked to climate change.²¹ Any political response to the issue requires a definition to be consistent internationally.

Even if the current predictions are only estimates, they do not discredit the evidence that migration is already occurring and numbers will continue to rise without tailored strategies.²² Despite many human migrations in the past, there is no tested framework for aiding in the coming process, as the resettlement plans closest in scale to what would be needed have all failed, and “have been so poorly planned, financed, implemented and administered, that they have left local people permanently displaced, disempowered and destitute”.²³

In the current case, failing to develop policy and programs has resulted in the current protection gap, where CCDPs are left out of existing refugee protection regimes due to their lack of status under international law or the perimeters of existing international agencies.²⁴ As a result, people cannot be mobile and face circumstances that endanger their wellbeing, such as “the unavailability of adequate food, drinking water or health services”.²⁵

The issue of climate displacement is addressed in a similar way to climate change by the political sphere - it does not occur suddenly and is therefore not addressed quickly,

²⁰ Betsy Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict: Rhetoric, Reality and the Politics of Policy Discourse,” *Journal of International Development* 22 (2010): 235, DOI: 10.1002/jid.1676.; David Hodgkinson et al., “Towards a Convention for Persons Displaced by Climate Change: Key Issues and Preliminary Responses,” *IOP Conf. Series: Earth and Environmental Science* 6 (2009): 2, doi:10.1088/1755-1307/6/6/562014.

²¹ Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 63; Angela Williams, “Turning the Tide: Recognizing Climate Change Refugees in International Law,” *Law and Policy* 30, no. 4 (2008): 517, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1111/j.1467-9930.2008.00290.x>.

²² Frank and Christine Aghazarm, “Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence,” *International Organization for Migration* (2009): 13, http://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_environment.pdf.

²³ Joanna Apap, “The Concept of ‘Climate Refugee’: Towards a Possible Definition,” *European Parliament Briefing* PE 621.893 (2019): 3, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS_BRI\(2018\)621893_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/621893/EPRS_BRI(2018)621893_EN.pdf).

²⁴ Christian Aid, “Human Tide: The Real Migration Crisis,” (2007): 2, <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/human-tide-real-migration-crisis-christian-aid-report>.; Laczko and Aghazarm, “Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence,” 30.

²⁵ Walter Kälin and Nina Schrepfer, “Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change: Normative Gaps and Possible Approaches,” *UNHCR Legal and Protection Policy Research Series* (February 2012): 32.

severely, or specifically enough.²⁶ Preparing for such an event has garnered attention from political leaders, international governance organizations, academics, and other concerned parties, leading to a wide debate on what can be expected from the impending migration. This debate has in turn sparked discussion on how policymakers should respond. In order to address migration in terms of mitigating the cause and protecting those affected, further research must be done to update statistics and inform international agreements.

I. Climate Displacement: Debates Over Interpretation

While it is evident that climate change has both environmental and human impacts, there is not unanimous acceptance of the existence of “climate migration” as a concept. Early critics point to the lack of evidence that there is a direct link between climate change and migration, most notably scholar Richard Black.²⁷ However, academics continue to develop new ways of approaching the issue, providing support for the idea that Climate Change Displaced Persons do exist and that such terminology is justified.²⁸

Prior to developing policy based on such a disputed concept, it is necessary to engage with this debate. Black proposes that the evidence used in literature up to 2001 was not sufficient to establish a causal link between climate change and migration.²⁹ Black uses case studies of various types of environmental refugee studies and demonstrates how there are additional factors that influence migration, and therefore climate alone cannot be the culprit.³⁰ The intersectional nature of what leads to migration, including individual decisions based on “dynamics of economic, political, demographic, social and environmental factors” mean that climate change is not the only driver of migration.³¹ This is not specific only to climate migration, but migration studies as a whole, as whether or not a single cause can be attributed to any movement is contested claim.³² Therefore,

²⁶ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 516.

²⁷ Richard Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research Working Paper No. 34 (2001): 1, 11, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-1k/3ae6a0d00.pdf>.

²⁸ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 504.

²⁹ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 3.

³⁰ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 4.

³¹ Andrew Baldwin, Christiane Fröhlich and Delf Rothe. “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities: Shifting the Debate.” *Mobilities* 14, no.3 (2019): 291. DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2019.1620510.

³² Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 235; Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291.

depending on context, environmental degradation will have varied societal implications.³³ Current climate change research has elaborated on the impacts of environmental change on the economic realm, but the political and social realms require more research which is under the purview of climate migration studies.³⁴

This is not to say that climate change does not have an impact on migration, but that the impact is difficult to discern from other causes. Environmental factors are not easily traceable to climate change in all cases since it is not the only influence, suggesting that climate-induced migration is a “myth”.³⁵ For instance, a case study of Nepal attempting to test the strength of correlation between environmental degradation and migration found that short distance relocation is more predictable based on environmental degradation, but that long distance moves were not consistently predictable.³⁶ In short, it is difficult to definitively isolate the environment or climate as a cause of migration, and impossible to determine to what extent it has an influence in comparison to other factors.³⁷ Overall, conceptualizing climate migration as mono-causal has “very shaking empirical grounds”.³⁸

Quantitative assessments of climate migration are also critiqued for ignoring the possibility that migration is not the only adaptation strategy, suggesting that migration estimates are overblown.³⁹ When confronted with environmental changes, not all people will choose to relocate. These are the grounds on which Richard Black targets Norman Meyers’ work, since his predictions about the flow of migration are widely cited without being updated or contested, despite being characterized as an unreliable empirical study. Overall, the point that Black and his counterparts make is that the conceptualization of

³³ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 10.

³⁴ Robert Stojanov, Sarah Rosengaertner, Alex De Sherbinin, and Raphael Nawrotzki, "Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation," *Population and Environment* 43, no. 2 (2021): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11111-021-00387-5>.

³⁵ Ingrid Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," *Nature Climate Change* 9 (2019): 902, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-019-0633-3>.

³⁶ Douglas Massey, William Axinn and Dirgha Ghimire, "Environmental Change and Out-Migration: Evidence from Nepal. Report 07-715," *Population Study Center, University of Michigan Institute for Social Research* (January 2007), 22.

³⁷ Ayazi and Elsheikh, "Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied," 27.

³⁸ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337; Edward R. Carr, "Placing the Environment in Migration: Environment, Economy, and Power in Ghana’s Central Region," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37, no. 5 (2005): 925, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3754>.

³⁹ Black, "Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?" 8.

climate migration as a monocausal phenomenon lacks rigor and therefore the conclusions drawn based on it are not viable.⁴⁰

Those who align with this perspective also correspond to a particular media framing narrative designated as the ‘minimalist’ position.⁴¹ By questioning the direct causal link implied by climate migration and therefore the existence of the phenomenon, their narrative mitigates the panic that can surround the issue. There is a tendency for adverse policy reactions to the migration estimates as today’s political climate is hostile to immigrants.⁴² To better understand the ‘minimalist’ position, situating it in contrast to its converse, the ‘maximalist’ position, can provide the broader picture.

Maximalists are those who directly link climate change to migration, such as Norman Meyers, Frank Biermann, and the initial work of Ingrid Boas. Based on this conception, they argue for protections and policy specific to climate migration, which is often accompanied by a “crisis narrative” that attempts to convey the necessity of immediate action and illustrate the severity of the situation.⁴³ This framing intended to draw attention that would encourage mitigation and protections, not to securitize migration.⁴⁴ This alarmist narrative is mostly utilized by the non-governmental realm, to encourage financial support of their efforts.⁴⁵ Similar to other international development initiatives, soliciting pity is used as a strategy to inspire action, a practice that has also been criticized.⁴⁶ An example is the 2007 Christian Aid report “Human Tide: The Real Migration Crisis,” which uses alarmist terminology and anecdotes with the intention of mobilizing action on behalf of displaced persons.⁴⁷ However, the maximalist position is

⁴⁰ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 14.

⁴¹ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 9.

⁴² Podesta, “The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees.”

⁴³ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 239.

⁴⁴ Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire, “Migration and Climate Change: An Overview,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2011): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdr006>.

⁴⁵ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 9.

⁴⁶ Lilie Chouliaraki, “Post-Humanitarianism: Humanitarian Communication beyond a Politics of Pity,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 13, no. 2 (2010): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877909356720>.

⁴⁷ Christian Aid, “Human Tide.”

not limited to NGOs, and was characterized as the dominant climate migration narrative among academic and advocacy fields and the media during the early 2000s.⁴⁸

Despite admirable intention, this narrative has been interpreted in such a way that the impending migration is viewed as a security threat, on the basis that masses of migrants will disrupt the national status quo. In particular, this view is typically associated with conservative factions within industrialized countries that fear “hordes” of people from developing countries arriving at their borders.⁴⁹ These perceptions are based on the problematization of migration, the idea that increased movement will “threaten international security, yield new humanitarian crises, and tax an already overburdened refugee regime”, a harmful view that leads to increased xenophobia and other forms of public pushback against immigrants.⁵⁰

It can also dis-empower and invalidate migrants as it exploits their struggles.⁵¹ Rather than being seen as capable, they are painted as helpless populations without agency.⁵² CCDPs typically reject this narrative due to its defeatist connotation that neglects the decision-making capacity of the individual.⁵³

The crisis narrative has been manipulated, used as justification to enact policy that follows nationalistic agendas that strengthen borders and narrow immigration policy rather than contributing to an effective protection regime for the displaced.⁵⁴ Originally, this securitization was due to a growing academic discussion about links between climate change, migration, and conflict.⁵⁵ These claims have seen been challenged due to a lack of empirical evidence that the migration results in higher rates of conflict or other

⁴⁸ Giovanni Bettini, Sarah Louise Nash and Giovanna Gioli. “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? The Fading Contours of (In)justice in Competing Discourse on Climate Migration.” *The Geographical Journal* 183, no. 4 (2016): 349. <https://rgs-ibg.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/geoj.12192>.

⁴⁹ Giovanni Bettini, “Climate Barbarians at the Gate? A Critique of Apocalyptic Narratives on ‘Climate Refugees’,” *Geoforum* 45 (2013): 68, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256716868_Climate_Barbarians_at_the_Gate_A_critique_of_apocalyptic_narratives_on_'climate_refugees'.

⁵⁰ Bettini, “Climate Barbarians at the Gate?” 68, 70; Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291.

⁵¹ Bettini, “Climate Barbarians at the Gate?” 64.

⁵² Bettini, “And Yet It Moves!” 337.

⁵³ Amy Louise Constable, “Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific: Options for Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands,” *Regional Environmental Change* 17, no. 4 (2017): 1032, Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10113-016-1004-5>.

⁵⁴ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 239; Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 14; Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902.

⁵⁵ Pigué, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, “Migration and Climate Change,” 5.

consequences that could pose a threat to potential host countries.⁵⁶ However, the interpretation of migration as a source of insecurity by the media and governments continues despite these developments. This interpretation is dangerous as it undermines the needs of the displaced by focusing the conversation on individual nations' security interests in the face of the "tide" of migrants.⁵⁷ Therefore, the attempts to inspire sympathy have the reverse of the intended effect and are therefore not worth the risk.⁵⁸

Those supporting the maximalist position do not intend for these consequences, but interpretations of the narrative have problematized its use. However, the opposing minimalist narrative is not immune to manipulation either. Most international reports and agreements have tended toward the minimalist position, not supporting the terminology of "refugee" which has maximalist connotations.⁵⁹ This choice is not to avoid the consequences of the crisis narrative, but instead the "financial and political implications" for influential countries as people in need of asylum are perceived as a burden. Powerful countries, typically in "the west", manipulate the minimalist position into a justification to shirk international accountability.⁶⁰

Neither narrative has been successful in moving the world towards an acceptable protection regime for the displaced. As an alternative, either the entire discourse must shift to a different conception of climate migration, such as the one developing in recent years through mobilities studies (See *Applying Mobility Theory to Climate Migration*) or the language of each narrative must be applied with more care. For instance, scholars Walter Kälin and Nina Schrepfer suggest adopting the maximalist position but without the use of crisis framing to ensure that the needs of the displaced are met.⁶¹ Striking such a balance in practice may prove difficult, but it points to a necessary reframing.

There are countless combinations of events and conditions that can intersect and force migration, and accounting for such criteria is necessary in the development of a definition for CCDPs. In sum, the critiques made about how climate migration has been

⁵⁶ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 901.

⁵⁷ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 234; Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 9.

⁵⁸ Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate?" 70.

⁵⁹ Ayazi and Elsheikh, "Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied," 26.

⁶⁰ Ayazi and Elsheikh, "Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied," 26.

⁶¹ Kälin and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change," 13.

conceived should be heeded, as it has implications for the development of policy. However, mounting evidence that displacement is occurring means that the concept as a whole should not be dismissed, but reinterpreted to account for a more complex conception of causal links, including both the environmental impacts of climate change, and how they interact with political, social, and economic factors.

For instance, there are numerous case studies on affected areas that are attempting to identify vulnerability to climate change based on how these various factors interact. Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Southern Asia are the regions commonly associated with climate migration studies.⁶² Within these regions, two groups are widely cited as climate migration targets, including the Pacific Islands and Bangladesh. Tuvalu, a small pacific island, was the first country that was forced to relocate as a result of rising sea levels caused by climate change.⁶³ The Pacific Islands in general have been a focus due to the impossibility of relocation internally, which is the most common practice at this stage in other countries affected by climate change.⁶⁴ Bangladesh is a recurrent case study because of the concentration of natural disasters and sea level rise in a highly populated area, in combination with political and economic unease caused by both historical and contemporary context.⁶⁵ These raise the potential for migration, leading to predictions of high numbers of displaced persons coming from Bangladesh, around 1 in 7 people.⁶⁶ Discussions surrounding climate migration have historically been oriented around a future problem, but in reality displacement is already occurring.⁶⁷

The climate migration discussion has evolved significantly over the last several decades. The initial dominance of the crisis narrative and direct link between environmental/climatic changes and movement has given way to a more complex view of

⁶² Rigaud et al., *Groundswell*, 2.

⁶³ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 515; Derek Bell, "Environmental Refugees: What Rights? Which Duties?," *Dordrecht* 10, no. 2 (2004): 135, <https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.mta.ca/docview/763636741?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=12599>.

⁶⁴ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 515; Bell, "Environmental Refugees," 135.

⁶⁵ Ahmed, "Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?" 7; Mostafa Mahmud Naser, "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation, and Migration: A Complex Nexus," *William and Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review* 36, no. 3 (2012): 725, https://kipdf.com/climate-change-environmental-degradation-and-migration-a-complex-nexus_5ab812431723dd339c81812b.html.

⁶⁶ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 70; Ahmed, "Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?" 7.

⁶⁷ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, "Migration and Climate Change," 5,

movement as awareness of the repercussions of framing has led to a shift in discourse.⁶⁸ Focus transferred from environmental refugees to climate refugees, to climate migration, and now the field has seen an additional shift towards climate mobility. These transitions will be expanded upon in the following chapters, as the evolution of research and series of critiques that have aided in its evolution provide important lessons for moving forward.

II. Gaps, Challenges, and Next Steps

Addressing the conceptualization of climate migration and the use of the maximalist versus minimalist narratives only represents the beginning of the challenges to creating a protection regime for those displaced by climate change related causes. Once it is established that climate migration, when conceptualized in its most current form, is worthy of academic and political attention, how to address it comes into question.

As previously stated, there is no protection framework specific to this type of displaced person. Several propositions have been made that integrate them into existing legal and international frameworks.⁶⁹ These solutions either serve to provide a final solution, or some relief as more permanent solutions are developed, and are encouraged in tandem with alternative adaptation solutions that utilize historical, indigenous, and local knowledge systems.⁷⁰ However, no such alteration has been made. Original frameworks that pertain solely to those displaced by environmental or climate related causes have also been proposed by various scholars, but these too have not transitioned from the theoretical to the tangible.⁷¹

Overall, the responses to CCDPs have been uncoordinated and slow, resulting in ad hoc solutions. The need for a cohesive international strategy remains a priority to make

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ See Ayazi and Elsheikh, 2019; Williams, 2008; Hodgkinson et al., 2009; Apap, 2019; Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group (IASC), 2006; Podesta, 2019.

⁷⁰ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

⁷¹ See Bonnie Docherty and Tyler Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide: A Proposal For A Convention On Climate Change Refugees," *Harvard Environmental Law Review* 33, no. 2 (2009), DOI:10.17645/pag.v8i4.3311.; Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas, "Protecting Climate Refugees: The Case for a Global Protocol," *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 50, no. 6 (2008), DOI: 10.3200/ENVT.50.6.8-17; Kälin and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change."

international policy consistent and ensure protections are carried out.⁷² The failure of these protection proposals is primarily due to their contradiction with existing legal frameworks, the manipulation of the climate change narratives resulting in inaction or increased obstacles to action, and disagreement over what qualifies an individual or group for protections. In order to move forward, policy must address these concerns.

However, before policy can be developed, a definition must be agreed upon to ensure any policy built from it will be accepted and consistent internationally. In order to assign protections, policy requires a referent object. Without a clear conceptualization of those displaced by climate change, it is impossible to know what form of assistance they require. Any policy attempting to address increased flows of migration will need a working definition of the people migrating to operate effectively. For this reason, many scholars argue that developing a definition is essential as a starting point when creating a protection regime or any policy regarding the individuals whose migration is related to climate change.⁷³

It is a necessary step as a definition is a means to outlining the rights of migrants, and therefore the responsibilities of receiving states.⁷⁴ Since there is no single, universally agreed upon definition, there is a tendency for existing definitions to contradict each other, as they call for different levels of protection. This confuses states' roles, leaving a protection gap.⁷⁵ Without a definition, states can deny asylum and aid since the group is not yet categorized as a legitimate vulnerable population under any binding agreement.⁷⁶ This denial exists even though common law and regional sentiments have identified need, illustrating the need for a broader consensus.⁷⁷

⁷² Hodgkinson et al., "Towards a Convention for Persons Displaced by Climate Change," 1.

⁷³ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 63; Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 21; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 517; Constable, "Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific," 1036; Diane Bates, "Environmental Refugees? Classifying Human Migrations Caused by Environmental Change," *Population and Environment* 23 (2002): 468, <https://link-springer-com.libproxy.mta.ca/article/10.1023/A:1015186001919>.

⁷⁴ Constable, "Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific," 1034.

⁷⁵ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 21.

⁷⁶ Nina Hoing, "Unacknowledged and Unwanted? 'Environmental Refugees' in Search of Legal Status." *Journal of Global Ethics* 8, no. 1 (2011): 21, <https://www-tandfonline-com.libproxy.mta.ca/doi/full/10.1080/17449626.2011.635691>.

⁷⁷ Miriam Cullen, "Disaster, Displacement and International Law: Legal Protections in the Context of a Changing Climate," *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 4 (2020): 271, DOI:10.17645/pag.v8i4.3311.

The formulation of an international definition for CCDPs is also necessary in order to gather more reliable data to make accurate predictions about anticipated rates of migration.⁷⁸ A group can only be tracked on an international scale if parameters are set by a definition. Otherwise, predictions vary depending on the definition they employ, resulting in problematic inconsistencies. As priory discussed, this contributes to why the current predictions are conjecture.⁷⁹ Lack of data is detrimental to finding solutions, as studying trends in migration will illustrate the extent of protections needed.⁸⁰ Therefore, developing a definition is a necessary first step in trying to design protections for CCDPs, and to further the study of climate migration as a whole.

Related to determining rates of migration, a definition is also necessary for identifying which regions will be most vulnerable to climate change. There are studies identifying vulnerable populations based on the physical impacts a region may experience and how the environmental changes will interact with local political, social, and economic contexts. Through these considerations and advances in scientific methodology, the IPCC indicates there is increased movement associated with the changing climate.⁸¹ However, without a definition, the criteria for what makes a population vulnerable to migration is complex and lacks consensus. Similar to prediction data, vulnerable places vary between studies.

III. Intentions and Structure

In accordance with the most recent developments in climate change and migration studies, this work aims to contextualize the necessity of a definition in the broader issue of climate migration and propose such a definition. The first chapter will focus on the existing literature surrounding the defining of those displaced by climate change related causes. It

⁷⁸ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 235; Hodgkinson et al., "Towards a Convention for Persons Displaced by Climate Change," 2.

⁷⁹ Meyers, "Environmental Refugees in A Globally Warmed World," 753; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 235.

⁸⁰ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 514.

⁸¹ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 13; Warner, Koko. "Global Environmental Change and Migration: Governance Challenges." *Global Environmental Change* 20, no. 3 (August 2010): 402, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2009.12.001>.

will cover the most salient debates and illustrate them in a critique of the definitions that have been proposed by scholars and international organizations thus far.

The second chapter will build off of the research covered in the literature review and the lessons learned from the progression of definitions over the last four decades in order to formulate an alternative definition. In particular, the centering of mobility studies in the climate migration narrative has become prevalent position. It is argued that international organizations and policy have left out essential pieces of the climate migration debate by ignoring the role of mobility capacity and justice.⁸² As a result, only partial solutions can result from discussions that oversimplify the issue of mobility.⁸³

As Boas et al. succinctly put it, “instead of asking whether climate change causes human mobility, research should focus on whether (and if so, how) climate change will alter existing interconnections and human mobility patterns under different scenarios of global warming and mitigation and adaptation policies, and how these are in turn shaped by existing mobilities”.⁸⁴ Changing the questions that are asked may bring the discourse closer to a definition and a solution. Following this logic, the second chapter attempts to bring the narrative of mobility justice into the development of new definition. A mobility theory lens will be employed to justify responses to existing debates surrounding who should be protected and what descriptive language should be utilized.

To conclude, an assessment of the definition will be provided, including its limitations and its application in future policy development. Overall, this thesis intends to produce a contribution to the pursuit of a protection regime for those who have, and will be, displaced by climate change.

⁸² Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291, 295.

⁸³ Dina Ionesco, “Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees,” UN Migration Agency (IOM), June 6, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2019/06/lets-talk-about-climate-migrants-not-climate-refugees/>.

⁸⁴ Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902.

Chapter 1

Setting the Stage: Challenges and Debates Around the Development of a Definition

In the face of climate migration, policymakers are confronted with the challenge of developing a definition for those displaced by climate change. A definition is a necessary starting point in developing a protection regime or any documentation that aims to address this type of displacement. Over the last several decades, the study of climate migration has gained traction, and with it, a subset of literature has developed that pertains specifically to the development of such a definition.

Within this literary base, there are two primary objectives. The first is to situate a definition in the context of the climate migration nexus, imparting the necessity of a definition. This was accomplished in the introduction, forming the basis of this work and its orientation in the climate migration discussion. The second objective is how to define the displaced, or what a definition should address. There is extensive debate over who should be included in the definition, linked to how the definition would translate into policy. Three main categories arise from the debate: (1) the causes of migration, (2) types of Migration, and (3) choice of terminology. These objectives and the debates that surround them will be explored within this chapter.

Then, a section dedicated to a historical overview of existing definitions that have been proposed up to the present will be provided and analyzed to ground the debates in examples. Studying previous attempts will also serve the purpose of informing a new definition. This chapter will address each of these topics to establish what is required in a definition of climate change displaced persons (CCCDP) for it to provide the necessary protections.

I. Context and Literature Review

The definition of climate change displaced persons is typically developed in tandem with a protection regime. For this reason, how to develop a definition and what it should address varies among authors based on their personal objectives and what degree of protection they assign to CCDPs. This has led to rigorous and protracted debate, with some

scholars and organizations aiming for the highest level of protection for all categories of CCDPs, while others employ a limited designation so only those most severely affected are awarded protections. These normative questions of who should be protected and to what extent are at the heart of the climate migration debate. This literature review serves to present an overview of these debates, simultaneously providing an outline for what to include in a definition.

A. What a Definition Should Address

A definition needs to serve many purposes to be useful in a protection regime. It must be capable of specificity while still pertaining to a wide-ranging group, but not so broad as to be inefficient. A definition should also adhere to international legal standards in order to secure tangible protections.⁸⁵ In terms of what it must accomplish, according to Meyers and Kent a definition must be easy to understand and document and be acceptable to those contributing to protection regimes and research.⁸⁶ In addition to these simple tenants, other authors have suggested that the definition must be capable of providing protections by identifying causes and therefore vulnerability.⁸⁷

A definition must address every aspect of the needs of climate migrants - a circular argument in which the needs are defined by the definition but also needed in order to develop one. In response to the incorporation of needs, Biermann and Boas propose three categories that a definition should contain in order to address the varying situations of those displaced by climate change, including (1) the causes of migration (2) the type of migration, and (3) the choice in terminology.⁸⁸ These categories, individually or in some combination, are a common focus among many studies, but Biermann and Boas provide the clearest aggregation of all necessary elements for a definition.

B. Causes of Migration

The first necessary components are the causes of displacement. Causes of displacement aid in identifying where people are coming from and are necessary for

⁸⁵ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 517.

⁸⁶ Meyers and Kent, "Environmental Exodus," 17.

⁸⁷ Docherty and Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide," 350; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 523.

⁸⁸ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 63.

forming a definition specific to this type of migrant.⁸⁹ Biermann and Boas designate the causes of migration as “the type of environmental harm or climate-change impact” that results in migration.⁹⁰ Impacts range in severity as well as how immediately they lead to relocation. General categories of environmental impacts include (but are not limited to) desertification, sea-level rise, flooding, extreme weather events, deforestation, degradation of natural resources, man-made construction, or industrial spills.⁹¹

Several studies have developed different categories of environmental impacts, each corresponding with a different type of migrant. Diane Bates designed a classification based on three characteristics of environmental events including “origin (natural or technological), its duration (acute or gradual), and whether migration was a planned outcome of the disruption (intentional or not)”, meant to act as a basis for differentiating types of migrants under the broader category of environmental refugees. Various combinations of these characteristics result in three categories of environmental disruption: disasters (natural, acute events), expropriations (man-made acute events), and deterioration (gradual events).⁹² This strategy allows for applying specific case studies to the definition and having clear categorization criteria for a protection regime.⁹³

Engaging a different approach, Angela Williams proposes that environmental subcategories should be divided based on a forced-voluntary dichotomy of movement that is associated with different types of environmental events. By differentiating between types of environmental events in this way, a definition can reflect levels of severity of causes in order to create a scale for a protection regime.⁹⁴ Williams proposes that those displaced forcibly due to inhospitable conditions (acute displacement) would receive the highest level of refugee protections, while those who are seeking a higher quality of life due to gradual degradation of resources (chronic displacement) would receive less protections.⁹⁵ Whether allocating protections based on a scale is the best way to serve CCDPs is up for debate,

⁸⁹ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 523.

⁹⁰ Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 63.

⁹¹ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 507; Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 62; Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 355; Kälin and Schrepfer, “Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change,” 13-14.

⁹² Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 469.

⁹³ Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 475.

⁹⁴ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 522.

⁹⁵ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 522.

however the practice of identifying multiple causes is a good approach for how to classify who fits within a definition.⁹⁶

From an alternative perspective, Walter Kälin and Nina Schrepfer produced a UNHCR report with five potential scenarios that could be causes of displacement, including (1) sudden-onset disasters, (2) slow-onset environmental degradation, (3) slow-onset submersion of small islands states, (4) areas prohibited for human habitation, and (5) unrest seriously disturbing public order, violence or even armed conflict.⁹⁷ These were developed with the idea that climate change is not the sole driver of migration and that it is not easily linked as the cause of individual migration events.⁹⁸

As recognized in Kalin and Schrepfer's scenarios, the causes of migration should go beyond environmental impacts and incorporate some of the newer aspects of the climate migration debate around intersectionality. The state of the environment does impact migration, but it does so as part of a complex web of factors, exacerbating existing problems.⁹⁹ Context changes the impact of climate change, often resulting in a 'multiplier effect'.¹⁰⁰ Events do not happen in a vacuum, and considering all of the factors that contribute to migration has the greatest potential for developing effective solutions. This is the one key addition to Biermann and Boas' characterization of what should be considered under causes of migration. To properly analyze the issue an intersectional approach should be taken where social, economic, and political factors are considered in causes of migration.¹⁰¹

Demographics, socioeconomic status, stability of governance, and physical environmental changes all contribute to movement. These do not even represent an exhaustive list, as context plays a significant role in what leads to migration. Diluting causes to environmental factors can depoliticize the issue, allowing contributors to climate change to ignore their role. In turn, this lessens the perceived duty to participate in the

⁹⁶ Docherty and Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide," 368.

⁹⁷ Kälin and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change," 13-15.

⁹⁸ Apap, "The Concept of 'Climate Refugee'," 5.

⁹⁹ David Keane, "Environmental Causes and Consequences of Migration: Search for the Meaning of Environmental Refugees," *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* 16 (2004): 222, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/environmental-causes-and-consequences-migration-search-meaning-environmental-refugees>; Piguët, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ Piguët, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 14.

¹⁰¹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291.

protection regime of the displaced since environmental degradation does not qualify under international law as a cause of movement accompanied by obligatory action.¹⁰² It also allows for the continuation of degradation practices after relocation because it ignores the existing structures that are root causes of climate change, such as capitalist exploitation.¹⁰³ Without properly addressing causes in solutions, negative impacts will be perpetuated in the long term.

It is also argued that a definition should recognize the nexus of causes because it is important for understanding the decision-making processes surrounding migration. Structural, contextual, and individual factors influence why, where, how, and for how long people move.¹⁰⁴ These factors influence an individual's capacity to adapt, affecting the need to migrate as movement is typically seen as a last resort. Contextual and individual factors also impact a person's ability to execute relocation, since the access to resources necessary for adaptation is unequal.¹⁰⁵ This refers to the aspects of the decision-making process that individuals cannot control. Individuals' decisions are also influenced by the fact that they have different thresholds for the causes that lead to their migration. Those with lower thresholds will try to migrate early, while others with high thresholds will stay longer.¹⁰⁶

It is becoming increasingly recognized that the relationship between climate change and other factors is essential to understanding causes of displacement. This is evident in both scenarios where adaptation is possible, and those when it is not. Governing bodies' ability to adapt and support populations through resource management, implementing sustainable practices, and aid distribution has mitigated the need for migration, and avoided

¹⁰² Gaim Kibreab, "Environmental Causes and Impact of Refugee Movements: A Critique of the Current Debate," *Disasters* 21, no. 1 (1997): 21, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1111/1467-7717.00042>; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236.

¹⁰³ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 10.

¹⁰⁴ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238.

¹⁰⁵ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291, 292; Vikram Kolmannskog, "Future floods of Refugees: A Comment on Climate Change, Conflict and Forced Migration," *The Norwegian Refugee Council* (2008): 13, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44838871_Future_floods_of_refugees_A_comment_on_climate_change_conflict_and_forced_migration.; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238; Pigué, Péroud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 13.

¹⁰⁶ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902; Koko Warner et al., "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration," *Natural Hazards* 55 (2010): 708, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1007/s11069-009-9419-7>.

outbreak of conflict.¹⁰⁷ The examples of climate violence or unlivable conditions occur where existing structures cannot adapt to the changing environment. This is in part due to colonial pasts, governance, and economic oppression weakening the infrastructure that deals with disasters, which plays a role in making places more vulnerable to climate change.¹⁰⁸ It is also attributed to governing structures being overwhelmed or a general lack of resources.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, the least stable states are the most vulnerable to the multiplier effect of environmental degradation.¹¹⁰

In sum, analysis of the relationship between climate change and other factors allows for a complete picture of vulnerability, and therefore heightened risk of migration. Vulnerability can be described as “likely impacts plus adaptive capacity”.¹¹¹ Context and adaptive capacity¹¹² play a large role in determining migration and ignoring them could result in misunderstanding migration patterns and realities.

C. Type of Migration

Type of migration refers to three subcategories that differentiate the protections that a displaced person may qualify for. These categories include (1) voluntary versus forced, (2) temporary versus permanent, and (3) transnational versus internal movement.¹¹³

The first category is most relevant in discussions of developing definition terminology. Voluntary is typically understood as anticipatory movement in search of a better quality of life, mostly in relation to long term environmental degradation.¹¹⁴ Forced movement is traditionally related to acute events such as natural disasters, or sea-level rise which provide no alternative but to leave.¹¹⁵ However, the line between the two is vague,

¹⁰⁷ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 237; Cynthia Bogard, “A ‘Sensibility of the Commons’ and Climate Change Adaptive Capacity in Haiti,” *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 14, no. 5 (2015): 521, DOI:10.1163/15691497-12341359.

¹⁰⁸ Ahmed, “Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?” 8; Kälin and Schrepfer, “Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change,” 28.

¹⁰⁹ Warner et al., “Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration,” 691.

¹¹⁰ Paramjit S. Jaswal and Stellina Jolly, “Challenges and Opportunities for International Law,” *Journal of the Indian Law Institute* 55, no. 1 (2013): 57, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43953626>.

¹¹¹ Bogard, “A ‘Sensibility of the Commons’ and Climate Change Adaptive Capacity in Haiti,” 519.

¹¹² Adaptive Capacity: ability of systems, institutions, humans, and other organisms to adjust to potential damage, take advantage of opportunities, and respond to consequences of climate impacts. See Rigaud et al., *Groundswell*, vii.

¹¹³ Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 63.

¹¹⁴ Pigué, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

¹¹⁵ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 522.

and often differs based on individual circumstances, as the categorization mainly relies on perception of personal risk and the decision-making process of individuals.¹¹⁶ Voluntary and forced are only two ends of a spectrum, with variations in between.¹¹⁷

Temporary versus permanent relocation refers to whether the migrants are able to return. Some migrants move temporarily during the process of disaster recovery, while others need to relocate permanently when environmental degradation has altered their way of living, such as the impact of desertification on agriculture and therefore access to livelihood and food. This reflects a pattern in which acute events result in temporary displacement, while “slow-onset” events result in permanent displacement. However, this pattern is only true of those capable of, and willing to, relocate.¹¹⁸ Individual factors such as adaptive capacity and preference not only influence if migration is possible, but whether a relocation will be permanent or temporary.¹¹⁹ Status also changes based on context, as temporary displacement can turn into permanent relocation.

Internal and cross border movement is similarly influenced by individual circumstances. Consideration of social and economic factors on the individual level provides insight into where people are going, whether they relocate internally, transnationally, or try to adapt.¹²⁰ Most movement is internal now, but over time this will change.¹²¹

Depending on circumstances, CCDPs can fall under various combinations of typology. Some may be temporarily forced to move internally such as in the event of a hurricane, others may be permanently forced to move internationally if their small island state faces sea-level rise. Factors both endogenous and exogenous to an individual determine the resulting type of movement. A number of possible combinations exists, and a definition must find a place for each type of migrant or justify its absence.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

¹¹⁷ Kälén and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change," 22.

¹¹⁸ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 235.

¹²⁰ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238.

¹²¹ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15; Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

¹²² Andreas Kraemer et al., "Building Global Governance for 'Climate Refugees'," *G20 Insights: Germany 2017* (2017) 1, https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/building-global-governance-climate-refugees/; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 506; Apap, "The Concept of 'Climate Refugee'," 2; Bates, "Environmental Refugees?," 467.

D. Choice of Terminology

Regarding terminology, there are two conceptual questions. The first is whether to use ‘migrants’, ‘refugees’, ‘displaced persons’, or something else entirely. Type of migration plays a role in determining what terminology fits, as terms such as ‘refugee’ and ‘migrant’ currently correspond with one type of migration or another. Refugees are by definition forced, and migrants are typically considered voluntary.¹²³ However, CCDPs can fall under multiple types of migration, so no single term fits.¹²⁴

The debate over which term is most appropriate is highly controversial. Scholars such as Biermann and Boas argue the term climate refugee is most appropriate because it reflects the severity of the situation and the required corresponding level of protection.¹²⁵ This contention is shared by Angela Williams, who argues CCDPs are forced to migrate due to external, uncontrollable factors, meaning that they fit a foundational aspect of the traditional conception of a refugee, which is forced movement.¹²⁶ Astrid Epiney adds the argument that environmental impacts are comparable to the threats faced by other types of refugees, and therefore the terminology can be justified.¹²⁷

This position was primarily held by the non-governmental sector (NGOs) and a subset of scholars but has been avoided by intergovernmental organizations.¹²⁸ In particular, the major conferences and discussions focused on the issue of climate displacement, including the 2011 Nansen Conference and the 2018 UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and regular Migration, both avoided using the term ‘refugee’ in the context of climate or environmental change.¹²⁹ These conferences represent significant advances in the climate migration discussion, and their choice to contradict these scholars who support using the term refugee signal its position as a fringe belief. Whether it is a

¹²³ Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 21; Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 468.

¹²⁴ Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 468.

¹²⁵ Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 67.

¹²⁶ Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 504.

¹²⁷ Astrid Epiney, “‘Environmental Refugees’: Aspects of International State Responsibility,” in *Migration and Climate Change*, ed. Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire. Migration and Climate Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 391.

¹²⁸ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 9; International Organization on Migration, “Definitional Issues,” <https://www.iom.int/definitional-issues>.

¹²⁹ Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 26.

viable challenge to the mainstream is where the debate lies. To decide which perspective provides the best response on the behalf of CCDPs, the rest of the debate over why it should not be used must be considered.

The main obstacle that those who use the term ‘refugee’ face is that ‘climate/environmental refugees’ do not fall under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol (hereinafter referred to as the Refugee Convention), since it does not meet all aspects of the exact definition of a refugee. The Convention states that a refugee is a person who:

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.¹³⁰

Under this definition, any climate displaced person who left voluntarily or anticipatorily is not eligible. The qualification of facing persecution is also not met according to the reasons listed in the definition, as climate change has no direct prosecutor in the sense of those contributing to environmental degradation do not do so with the intent to displace people, and instead displacement is a byproduct of other action.¹³¹

It has been argued that the convention could be more flexible to encompass more categories of displacement. This could be achieved by naming contributors to climate change, governments that allow perpetuation of environmental degradation, or those who refuse to support their populations through adaptation, as prosecutors of harm. Under a different understanding of ‘persecution’, those displaced would qualify for refugee protections.¹³² This is even a possibility recognized by the UNHCR and with enough evidence could lead to certain environmentally affected groups securing asylum under the

¹³⁰ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189 (1951): 14, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/3b66c2aa10>.

¹³¹ I Gede Eka Sarjana, “Climate Change and Human Migration: Towards More Humane Interpretation of Refugee,” *Udayana Journal Law and Culture* 2, no. 2 (2018): 231, <https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/UJLC/article/view/40062>; Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 27, 29.

¹³² Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 2; Jaswal and Jolly, “Challenges and Opportunities for International Law,” 53.

1951 Refugee Convention.¹³³ Others speak to the aspect of “well-founded fear,” which CCDPs have, as environmental degradation poses a threat to their livelihood.¹³⁴ In 2006, an amendment to the Refugee Convention on these grounds was formally proposed by UN delegates to the Maldives, an area recognized for its vulnerability to climate change. However, the proposal was unsuccessful.¹³⁵

Additionally, other interactions between climate migration and existing international law have not led to outcomes that reflect the feasibility of expanding the Convention.¹³⁶ For instance, court cases in Australia and New Zealand that encountered the first applications for refugee status by those displaced by climate change found that the asylum seekers could not meet the legal burden of proof that the reason for their migration was severe enough to meet the convention’s definition of forced movement.¹³⁷ Asylum claims on this basis will “*prima facie* fail”, meaning fail until a new precedent is set.¹³⁸ This is primarily because even with a new conception of what it means to be a ‘persecutor’, it is difficult to determine causality, linking individual actions to climate change and in term migration.¹³⁹

There is also concern that using the term refugee will endanger the status of other refugee categories by undermining the legal regime and allowing for manipulation of asylum seeker eligibility.¹⁴⁰ Undermining refers to dismantling the legal framework that refugee status is founded upon by blurring the lines between voluntary-forced and what

¹³³ UNHCR, *Summary of Deliberations on Climate Change and Displacement*, (2011): 4, <https://www.unhcr.org/4da2b5e19.pdf>.

¹³⁴ Hoing, “Unacknowledged and Unwanted?” 27.

¹³⁵ Biermann and Boas, “Protecting Climate Refugees,” 11; Republic of the Maldives Ministry of Environment, Energy and Water, “Report on the First Meeting on Protocol on Environmental Refugees: Recognition of Environmental Refugees in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,” *UNHCR* (2006): 1, file:///C:/Users/Charlotte/Downloads/UNHCR_UPR22_MDV_E_Main.pdf.

¹³⁶ Jaswal and Jolly, “Challenges and Opportunities for International Law,” 54.

¹³⁷ Sarjana, “Climate Change and Human Migration,” 228.

¹³⁸ Cullen, “Disaster, Displacement and International Law,” 272.

¹³⁹ Ayazi and Elsheikh, “Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied,” 27.

¹⁴⁰ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 238; Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 503, 509; Mike Hulme, Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas, “Climate Refugees: Cause for a New Agreement,” *Environment* 50, no. 6 (2008): 50, <https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.mta.ca/docview/21348601?pq-origsite=primo>; Vikram Kolmannskog and Lisetta Trebbi, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Displacement: A Multi-track Approach to Filling the Protection Gaps,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 879 (2010): 720, DOI:10.1017/S1816383110000500.

persecution means.¹⁴¹ Basically, by expanding the asylum principle, it could make it refutable by receiving states, and asylum could be denied. Therefore, some who already receive aid under broad UN policy may lose their status if a new category of refugee tailored to the environment is recognized.¹⁴² This concern is valid given the historical reluctance of “industrialized countries” to provide asylum.¹⁴³

The list of cautions against using the term ‘refugee’ is ongoing. The UN Migration Agency (IOM) cautions against the use of ‘refugee’ due to concerns that the connotation of the term meaning ‘forced’ implies preventative measures are no longer viable, and distracts from adaptive strategies other than migration.¹⁴⁴ Migration cannot be seen as the sole solution to climate change since it does not address the root causes of environmental degradation.¹⁴⁵ The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) cautions against using such terminology since it contradicts existing international law, suggesting instead that new laws could be built around another definition.¹⁴⁶ In the case of the United Nations,¹⁴⁷ finances are also a factor, as avoiding the term ‘refugee’ is a strategic decision based on the lack of resources to care for an additional large group.¹⁴⁸

The social implications of using the term ‘refugee’ are also relevant, as it can be considered an aspect of the alarmist narrative as using a strong term heightens “widespread fears surrounding uncontrollable waves of poor refugees”, which leads to increased xenophobia and restrictive policy.¹⁴⁹ The use of the terminology by the media and the reactions it causes are evidence of this.¹⁵⁰ The term can be construed as a security threat to

¹⁴¹ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 19.

¹⁴² Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 1.1

¹⁴³ Biermann and Boas, “Protecting Climate Refugees,” 11.

¹⁴⁴ Ionesco, “Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees.”

¹⁴⁵ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?” 354.

¹⁴⁶ Christel Cournil, “The Protection of ‘Environmental Refugees’ in International Law,” in *Migration and Climate Change*, ed. Etienne Piguet, Antoine Pécoud and Paul de Guchteneire. Migration and Climate Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011):360, 364.

¹⁴⁷ Implications of the UN making this decision are considerable. If the UN does not recognize climate refugees as an appropriate terminology, it sets an international standard since the UN is an international norm setting body through its development of what is considered “strong” programs. See Berliner and Prakash, 2012.

¹⁴⁸ Hoing, “Unacknowledged and Unwanted?” 22; Podesta, “The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees.”

¹⁴⁹ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 19.

¹⁵⁰ Constable, “Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific,” 1032.

receiving states in the context of increasing isolationist policies, reinforcing the divide between the global 'south' and 'north'.¹⁵¹

For instance, Betsy Hartmann analyzed the use of the crisis narrative to justify U.S. Department of Defense securitization of 'ungoverned spaces' such as migration and other development initiatives in 2005. The vulnerability of certain populations to climate change was twisted into a threat to security, borne from extrapolation about the potential risk of criminal activity arising within uncontrolled spheres. Refugees are seen as potential agents of terrorism or other threats to national security that would bring conflict within U.S. borders. As a result, the U.S. employed development-as-security narratives which grant supremacy to U.S. government interests over actual humanitarian concerns.¹⁵² The alarmist narrative played into U.S. concerns about terrorism, heightened after the September 11th, 2001, attacks on U.S. soil, allowing them to interpret the climate migration issue in a way that served the broader U.S. foreign policy agenda.

However, the alternative of using 'migrants' downplays the pressure faced by Climate Change Displaced Persons, as it implies that their movement is purely voluntary.¹⁵³ This is due to the traditional uses of the term 'migrant' to describe those who move for economic or personal reasons not related to a threat to livelihood.¹⁵⁴ A byproduct of the use of less severe language is that it suggests these displaced persons require less aid and therefore the international community is less responsible, which is a dangerous loophole when seeking protection for a vulnerable group.¹⁵⁵ Many, such as the United Nations, use 'climate change displaced persons' as a neutral term due to lack of agreement on terminology, but it too lacks the implied severity that 'refugee' holds.¹⁵⁶ These terms do not reflect the fact that CCDPs face the same consequences of displacement as refugees under the Refugee Convention. The exclusion of environmental categories is based on the priorities of the international community in 1945, which have changed with global

¹⁵¹ Cullen, "Disaster, Displacement and International Law," 273.

¹⁵² Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 240; Bettini, "Climate Barbarians at the Gate?" 68.

¹⁵³ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 468.

¹⁵⁴ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*, (2015), <https://emergency.unhcr.org/>.

¹⁵⁵ Biermann and Boas, "Protecting Climate Refugees," 13.

¹⁵⁶ Ionesco, "Let's Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees."

circumstances. Thus, on this basis many argue that new conceptions are necessary, justifying reform and changes to terminology.¹⁵⁷

The second aspect of the terminology debate is what term should proceed migrant/refugee/displaced person, whether that be ‘environmental’, ‘climate’, or another alternative. Some scholars use the terms environmental refugee and climate refugee/migrant/displaced person interchangeably. There has been an effort to differentiate between these options in order to ensure that the definition corresponds with the necessary protections. Biermann and Boas argue that climate refugees can fall under the broader term of environmental refugee but using that definition alone does not sufficiently account for the link to climate change and human contributions, a sentiment also shared by Diane Bates.¹⁵⁸ The term environmental refugee does not cover all of the ramifications of climate change that are not purely environmental, such as economic impacts. However, it provides an avenue for integrating a climate change-oriented terminology into existing frameworks.¹⁵⁹

There is also debate regarding whether ‘environmental’ or ‘climate’ are appropriate at all since it has been determined that migration is not driven by climate change or the environment alone, and such terminology implies “monocausality”.¹⁶⁰ Those who utilize these terms often recognize this shortcoming, but as Biermann and Boas argue, “lack of unequivocal scientific certainty should not delay the establishment of strong international institutions to protect the poorest victims of climate change”.¹⁶¹ These contrary positions reflect the tension between time pressures and developing lasting solutions.

A proper definition would have to detail multiple types of migrants differentiated based on causes of displacement and would need to account for the causes that go beyond environmental degradation. To fit a new world and the migrants it produces, definitions and protection regimes that accompany them will most likely be unprecedented.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 67.

¹⁵⁸ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 62; Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 466.

¹⁵⁹ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 503.

¹⁶⁰ Keane, "Environmental Causes and Consequences of Migration," 222; Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 17.

¹⁶¹ Biermann and Boas, "Protecting Climate Refugees," 51.

¹⁶² Cournil, "The Protection of 'Environmental Refugees' in International Law," 379.

II. Critique of Existing Definitions

Many different definitions have been proposed that pertain either specifically to climate change displaced persons, or to broader environmental migrants. As the conceptualization of climate change, and in turn climate migration, has evolved, definitions have evolved in tandem. Tracking this evolution provides insight into the intricacies of the language used in defining this group and reveals what a new definition should address. The foundation provided by prior attempts stands to inform future attempts based on the aspects of a definition that were successful, versus those that garnered warranted critiques.

Reflecting on these definitions, as well as the historical background they were developed in illuminates the path forward. This section attempts to make a comprehensive list of existing definitions that have been commonly cited in climate migration literature. For each definition, the arguments behind its development and the subsequent reactions within the academic and international community will be provided. These critiques often illustrate the debates covered in this chapter thus far over who should be included in a definition and why. Heeding these assessments will aid in forming an alternative definition.

A. Definitions and Corresponding Critiques

The first attempt to categorize a group of people negatively affected by environmental circumstances was under the umbrella term ‘environmental refugees’ dating back to the 1970s when it was established by Lester Brown.¹⁶³ The term gained traction in 1985 when the United Nations Environment Program published a broad definition by researcher Essam El-Hinnawi, which reads as follows:

Environmental refugees are defined as those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life [sic]. By ‘environmental disruption’ in this definition is meant any physical, chemical, and/or biological changes in the ecosystem (or resource base) that render it, temporarily or permanently, unsuitable to support human life.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 1.

¹⁶⁴ Essam El-Hinnawi, “Environmental Refugees,” *United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)*, UNEP (02)/E52 (1985): 4, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/121267?ln=en> El-Hinnawi.

There are a wide range of limitations to El-Hinnawi's definition, mostly pertaining to its inefficiency since it is too broad and lacks specific criteria.¹⁶⁵ The strictly environmental depiction of causes of migration is also critiqued for its lack of recognition of the nexus of factors that contribute to migration.¹⁶⁶ The use of refugee terminology also results in a legal inconsistency, since this definition is not recognized under the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹⁶⁷ However, it provided a first step, a way to conceptualize the issue, and identified the need to address broader causes in future definitions.¹⁶⁸

A significant second attempt at a definition came in 1995 from Meyers and Kent. Their work further popularized the term 'environmental refugees' among political officials and the media.¹⁶⁹ Meyers and Kent defined environmental refugees as:

Persons who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their traditional homelands because of environmental factors of unusual scope. These factors include drought, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion, and other forms of land degradation; resource deficits such as water shortages; decline of urban habitats through massive over-loading of city systems; emergent problems such as climate change, especially global warming; and natural disasters such as cyclones, storm surges and floods, also earthquakes, with impacts aggravated by human mismanagement. There can be additional factors that exacerbate environmental problems and that often derive in part from environmental problems: population growth, widespread poverty, famine and pandemic disease. Still further factors include deficient development policies and government systems that "marginalize" people in senses economic, political, social and legal. In certain circumstances, a number of factors can serve as "immediate triggers" for migration, e.g., major industrial accidents and construction of outsize dams. Of these manifold factors, several cons operate in combination, often with compounded impacts. In face of environmental problems, people concerned feel they have no alternative but to seek sustenance elsewhere, either within their countries or in other countries, and whether on a semi-permanent or permanent basis.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 466.

¹⁶⁶ Keane, "Environmental Causes and Consequences of Migration," 210.

¹⁶⁷ Sarjana, "Climate Change and Human Migration," 237.

¹⁶⁸ Jodi L. Jacobson, "Environmental Refugees: A Yardstick of Habitability," *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 8, no. 3 (1988): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1177/027046768800800304>; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238.

¹⁶⁹ Kolmannskog, "Future Floods of Refugees," 8.

¹⁷⁰ Meyers and Kent, "Environmental Exodus," 18.

This longer definition departs from the previous one in that it addresses the role of social and economic factors in influencing migration, in combination with environmental factors. Emphasis on voluntary and forced movement in the definition is also an important aspect that distinguishes it from other definitions, as it ties in an individual's decision-making processes. While this does make the definitions broader, it encompasses these two important elements of a definition. Balancing between addressing the variation between types of migrants and expanding beyond the point of being a useful tool is an important aspect of developing a definition for this case.¹⁷¹

The third significant definition of environmental migrants came from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 2007. It states that environmental migrants are:

Persons or groups of persons who, for compelling reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment as a result of climate change that adversely affect their lives or living conditions, are obligated to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad.¹⁷²

Every type of migrant category is accounted for in this definition. It also specifies that migration is a result of climate change despite using the terminology 'environmental migrant'. The main point of contention is the use of the term migrant, which typically implies voluntary movement, although the definition addresses both forced and voluntary scenarios of migration.

Another definition that is often cited is the definition of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) put forward by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).¹⁷³ Unlike the 1951 Refugee Convention, using this definition would not undermine the protections of other migrants because the definition itself includes

¹⁷¹ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 62.

¹⁷² International Organization on Migration, "Discussion Note: Migration and the Environment," 94th Session MC/INF/288 (2007): 1, https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/jahia/webdav/shared/shared/mainsite/about_iom/en/council/94/MC_INF_288.pdf.

¹⁷³ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 512; Jaswal and Jolly, "Challenges and Opportunities for International Law," 55.

environmental displacement. Under the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, IDPs are:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disaster, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.¹⁷⁴

The obvious limiting factor to employing this definition is that it is restricted to those who are internally displaced, while cross border movement is predicted to increase as the issue of climate change progresses.¹⁷⁵ It is also not a legally binding document, and therefore this definition is typically associated with minimal protections.¹⁷⁶

A significant shift in the discourse came in 2007, when conflict in Darfur, Sudan led to increased attention to climate driven violence and the migrations associated with it.¹⁷⁷ What was widely believed to be an ethnic conflict, was also a conflict over limited land resources due to ongoing degradation land by two interested parties - farmers and pastoralists.¹⁷⁸ The case of Darfur sparked fear that climate impacts would result directly in violent conflict, raising concerns of threats to national security.¹⁷⁹

Use of the Homer-Dixon model, a model predicting that scarcity and degradation associated with environmental change will lead to conflict and migration, also contributed to heightened securitization of the issue.¹⁸⁰ While many argue these security concerns are overblown and dangerous, and that Darfur is not even a viable example of climate violence, it did further conversations on climate displacement.¹⁸¹ As a direct result of the situation in

¹⁷⁴ *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), (2004): 1, <https://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 513.

¹⁷⁶ Roberta Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: An Innovation in International Standard Setting," *Global Governance* 10, no. 4 (2004): 459, DOI:10.1163/19426720-01004006.

¹⁷⁷ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236.

¹⁷⁸ Stephan Faris, "The Real Roots of Darfur," *The Atlantic Monthly* 299, no. 3 (2007): 68, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.mta.ca/magazines/real-roots-darfur/docview/223086424/se-2?accountid=12599>.

¹⁷⁹ Faris, "The Real Roots of Darfur," 69; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236.

¹⁸⁰ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236; Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).155.

¹⁸¹ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236; Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 901; Hulme, Biermann and Boas, "Climate Refugees: Cause for a New Agreement," 50.

Darfur, a Christian Aid report and UN discussions on climate migration popularized the term ‘climate refugee’.¹⁸² Securitization led to increased research and focus on the climate migration field, but as it perpetuates the crisis narrative, it should be noted that there is consensus in current literature that such securitization is problematic as migration should not be framed as a threat. Ample research has problematized the use of the crisis narrative in seeking protections as it can undermine the goals of policy by focusing on migration as a threat rather than a neutral concept.¹⁸³

In an effort to craft a more specific definition, Biermann and Boas attempt to classify ‘climate refugees’ as follows:

People who have to leave their habitats, immediately or in the near future, because of sudden or gradual alterations in their natural environment related to at least one of three impacts of climate change: sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and drought and water scarcity.¹⁸⁴

Their definition purposefully does not distinguish between different types of migrants to ensure that protections would be consistent for all who fall under their definition, rather than on a sliding scale.¹⁸⁵ This alludes to a debate within definition development on whether scales are an appropriate tool. Due to this intentional elimination, Biermann and Boas do not explicitly state whether their climate refugees are temporary or permanent, although they stated in a previous proposal for a protocol that climate refugee status should only apply to those who leave permanently.¹⁸⁶ This narrow view excludes those displaced temporarily, which is a large proportion of environmental migrants.¹⁸⁷

In response to Biermann and Boas’ definition, Docherty and Giannini developed an alternative definition that did include differentiation, since in legal frameworks it would be more practical. Based on their framework:

¹⁸² Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 234; Christian Aid, “Human Tide.”

¹⁸³ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 234; Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 9.

¹⁸⁴ Biermann and Boas, “Preparing for a Warmer World,” 67.

¹⁸⁵ Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 368.

¹⁸⁶ Biermann and Boas, “Protecting Climate Refugees,” 12.

¹⁸⁷ Hulme, Biermann and Boas, “Climate Refugees: Cause for a New Agreement,” 50.

A climate refugee [is] an individual who is forced to flee his or her home and to relocate temporarily or permanently across a national boundary as the result of sudden or gradual environmental disruption that is consistent with climate change and to which humans more likely than not contributed.¹⁸⁸

The authors created this definition as part of the development of a legal instrument that would provide protections, assign responsibility to protect to local and international entities, and guarantee that CCDPs will receive assistance.¹⁸⁹ This definition also contains limitations, as it only accounts for those who cross national boundaries, when many climate migrants are typically internally displaced.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, it only accounts for those forced to migrate, and not those leaving voluntarily, which is strategic in the sense that the protections are therefore more selective.¹⁹¹ However, it does address the different temporal onsets of disasters, which will allow both individuals and groups to be categorized under the definition.¹⁹²

Similarly, a definition developed by Michael Prieur as part of a draft convention also utilizes the language of ‘forced’. His definition is for environmentally displaced persons, which are designated as:

individuals, families and populations confronted with a sudden or gradual environmental disaster that inexorably impacts their living conditions and results in their forced displacement, at the outset or throughout, from their habitual residence and requires their relocation and resettlement.¹⁹³

While Prieur’s definition accounts for different temporal types of displacement, it does not explicitly mention how that relates to length of displacement or if it applies to both cross border and internal movement. In addition, the term environmental disaster is

¹⁸⁸ Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 361.

¹⁸⁹ Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 350; Kolmannskog and Trebbi, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Displacement,” 722.

¹⁹⁰ Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 350; Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902.

¹⁹¹ Cournil, “The Protection of ‘Environmental Refugees’ in International Law,” 378.

¹⁹² Kolmannskog and Trebbi, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Displacement,” 722.

¹⁹³ Michel Prieur, “Draft Convention on the International Status of Environmentally-Displaced Persons,” UNFCCC (2013): 8,

https://unfccc.int/files/adaptation/groups_committees/loss_and_damage_executive_committee/application/pdf/prieur-convention_on_the_international_status_of_environmentally.pdf.

perhaps not broad enough to address the people he hopes to protect in the draft, creating contradicting language.¹⁹⁴

Other examples include broad definitions that only serve to state that there is a general vulnerable population, usually for the purpose of investigating other aspects of the climate migration nexus not focused on formulating a definition. For instance, Bayes Ahmed uses the National Geographic Society definition of climate refugees as “people who must leave their homes and communities because of the effects of climate change and global warming”.¹⁹⁵ Diane Bates classifies environmental refugees as “people who migrate from their usual residence due to changes in their ambient non-human environment”.¹⁹⁶ These definitions are nonspecific, and only used due to the lack of an agreed upon definition.

B. Collective Critique

The definitions included here are attempts to conceptualize a complex group that are impacted by a vast number of factors. The defining process faces many challenges concerning practicality, cohesion with existing documents on displacement, and the interpretation of the problem presented by climate change. Each author has aligned with various positions on the debates that arise out of these challenges. As a result, each definition varies, corresponding to the objectives of each author. The result is conflicting frameworks based on how the various definitions envision the protection of CCDPs.¹⁹⁷ In the case of seeking an international definition, this lack of consistency is problematic.

None of these definitions have been adopted in policy, and therefore a protection gap remains. The primary objection towards the majority of these definitions is the use of ‘refugee’ terminology. International organizations, especially UN bodies, have consistently been against such terminology.¹⁹⁸ The shift in academic discussion over the last decade has also reflected a rejection of ‘refugee’ based definitions, even if those

¹⁹⁴ Prieur, “Draft Convention on the International Status of Environmentally-Displaced Persons,” 7.

¹⁹⁵ Ahmed, “Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?” 8.

¹⁹⁶ Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 468.

¹⁹⁷ Epiney, “‘Environmental Refugees’: Aspects of International State Responsibility,” 390.

¹⁹⁸ Ionesco, “Let’s Talk About Climate Migrants, Not Climate Refugees.”

displaced by climate change face refugee-like scenarios.¹⁹⁹ This is primarily attributed to the risks that it poses to the stability of existing refugee frameworks. Movement away from refugee-based definitions and frameworks represent a consensus within the scholarship, however no alternative has gained traction in its place.

Heeding the direction of the consensus building around a definition, this work will seek to define those displaced by climate change without contradicting existing frameworks while also awarding them as great a degree of protection as possible.

¹⁹⁹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 290, 291; Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337.

Chapter 2: The Path to a Mobility Centered Definition

Several scholars have contributed to the climate migration discussion with viable definitions for the displaced populations. However, the research surrounding climate change evolves quickly, often leading to breakthroughs that render existing definitions obsolete. The research that is integral to how the definitions are formed becomes outdated, weakening the arguments they are founded upon. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 1 (See *Critique of Existing Definitions*) and covered further in this chapter (See *Choice in Terminology*), new research directions have revealed that the term ‘environmental refugee’ is a contradictory, vague, and problematic classification for those displaced by climate change.

Some definitions are more adaptable than others, which alludes to one reason why an international definition has yet to be agreed upon - a constant flow of new information ensures that the policy process must also constantly evolve. This reality cannot be used as justification for the lack of policy developed in response to climate displacement, as it is still a necessity for international legal and organizational mechanisms to reflect the most current needs and realities of the displaced. A balance must be struck where policy is developed thoughtfully, but also in a timely manner to serve its purpose.

Thus, this thesis aims to utilize research that has emerged over the last decade to inform a new definition for those displaced by climate change. When events in the early 2000s ignited concern about climate migration, several definitions and protection regimes were proposed.²⁰⁰ The portrayal of those displaced by climate change in this early literature is often criticized for being problematic, as it isolates the environment as the driver of migration and has inadvertently contributed to the crisis narrative which has wrongfully securitized migration. These oversights have led to increased hardening of borders and a lack of climate migration policy that reflects the needs of the people moving, rather than the priorities of destination states.²⁰¹

While there have always been critics that identified these issues, even as early as Richard Black and his work in 2001, the critiques of the language and perspectives of early

²⁰⁰ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 236; Bettini, “And Yet It Moves!” 337.

²⁰¹ Bettini, “And Yet It Moves!” 337; Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902.

scholarship have become more common over the last decade as the climate migration discourse has shifted to focus more on the complex nature of mobility and the intersectional factors that drive migration.²⁰² Scholars have turned to the burgeoning field of mobilities studies, which takes a new perspective on assessing all forms of movement.²⁰³ A definition for those affected by climate migration must reflect this broader understanding of the causes of migration, and seek to avoid playing into alarmist descriptions of the climate situation.²⁰⁴

The evolving dialogue is demonstrated by the work of prominent climate migration scholar Ingrid Boas, who was one of the strongest proponents of a ‘climate refugee’ framework in 2010. However, Boas is now advocating for a shift in research frameworks from ‘climate migration’ to ‘climate mobilities’, a field that problematizes the idea of a ‘climate refugee’, contradicting her past scholarship. This is evidence of the significant influence of mobilities theory on the direction of migrations research, therefore justifying another look at how definitions should address the issue of climate migration. A notable gap exists in the literature on exploration of the policy implications of mobilities theory - one that must be addressed, as translating new findings into policy is a necessary next step.²⁰⁵ Characteristic of this gap, no definitions have been developed to reflect the findings of the intersection of mobilities theory and climate migration. In fact, since 2011, no commonly cited definitions have been proposed.

For these reasons, a new definition will be put forward that reflects current advances in the interpretation of movement. It will be based on the lessons learned from previous definitions, progress in related international policy and governance, as well as the developments in the fields of migration, mobility, and climate change studies. The definition will be conceived in terms of mobility justice, a normative framework that arises from the mobilities paradigm around the unequal capabilities associated with movement.²⁰⁶

²⁰² Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291; Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 235.

²⁰³ Mimi Sheller, “The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology,” *Current Sociology* 62, no. 6 (2014): 790, DOI: 10.1177/0011392114533211.

²⁰⁴ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 238.

²⁰⁵ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?,” 344.

²⁰⁶ Sheller, “The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology,” 790; Mimi Sheller, “Theorizing Mobility Justice,” *Tempo Social: Revista De Sociologia Da USP* 30, no. 2 (2018): 22, DOI: 10.11606/0103-2070.ts.2018.142763.

This lens offers a new approach to addressing the rights of displaced persons in order to ensure protections meet their actual needs as well as being attentive to the intersectional causes that lead to their movement.

To proceed, an overview of the mobilities paradigm will be provided, and then its relevance to climate migration studies. The second section will use mobility theory to settle the debates over defining CCDPs covered in Chapter 1, including (1) choice in terminology, (2) causes of displacement, and (3) types of displacement. Then, the decisions worked through in the second section will be summarized in a final segment, where the actual definition will be outlined.

I. Mobilities Paradigm

A. *The Tenants of Mobility Theory and the Pursuit of Mobility Justice*

Mobilities research is a field concerned with the myriad of factors that influence the movement of all entities in the world including people, objects, information, and capital.²⁰⁷ It explores the relational dynamics between these factors to examine both positive and normative questions surrounding mobility using a multi-scalar approach consisting of spatial and temporal considerations.²⁰⁸ This paradigm does not seek to provide a “reductive description” of the world, but to propose a different way of approaching problems and explaining social phenomena.²⁰⁹ Through this, it does not claim that mobility is an occurrence specific to the post-globalization age of “hyper mobility”, and instead proposes that it is applicable to both historical and contemporary analyses.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 790; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 20.

²⁰⁸ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19; Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 790, 794.

²⁰⁹ Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 38, no. 2 (2006): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268>.; Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm," *Applied Mobilities* 1, no. 1 (2016): 11, DOI: 10.1080/23800127.2016.1151216.

²¹⁰ Johanna Thomas-Maude, "Advanced Introduction to Mobilities. Mimi Sheller. Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK, 2021. 168 Pp. ISBN 9781788979580," *New Zealand Geographer* 77, no. 2 (2021): 145, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1111/nzg.12296>; Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 795, 794.

The characteristics that differentiate mobilities studies from other fields that examine the same problems, are the theoretical and methodological lenses it employs.²¹¹ From a mobilities perspective, nothing is sedentary, but instead conceived as part of complex mobility systems.²¹² Entities such as people or things are mobile, and so are the spaces that they move between and within.²¹³ In this sense, ‘mobile’ means that all tangible and intangible entities can move, but not that they always are, as everything can also experience a temporary fixed state.²¹⁴ Based on this theoretical view of the world, all things are connected to some degree through spatial or temporal means.²¹⁵

Social processes create these systems of mobility, as social constructions dictate control over mobility (who and what can move). This is considered regime building, where certain “representation, ideologies, and meanings” associated with movement lead to the formation of power hierarchies within mobility systems.²¹⁶ These regimes then reproduce themselves, as mobility dynamics in turn shape social processes, generating the social world.²¹⁷ Social processes are consequently not thought of in terms of territories or fixed space, but as evolving mobility systems.²¹⁸ Therefore, mobility is not simply movement from one place to another, but an understanding of the meaning and practices that relate to spaces and entities.²¹⁹

A significant aspect of this view of social processes in terms of mobility systems is that “uneven mobilities” are created where ability to move, quality of experience, and accessibility are unequal.²²⁰ This is because socially constructed systems of power create barriers to movement through these regimes.²²¹ Based on these theoretical tenants, leading mobilities theorist Mimi Sheller describes the focus of mobilities research as “tracking the

²¹¹ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 789.

²¹² Thomas-Maude, "Advanced Introduction to Mobilities," 145.

²¹³ Thomas-Maude, "Advanced Introduction to Mobilities," 145.

²¹⁴ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 20.

²¹⁵ Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 209.

²¹⁶ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 23; Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 789.

²¹⁷ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 20; Thomas-Maude, "Advanced Introduction to Mobilities," 145.

²¹⁸ Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 209.

²¹⁹ David Chandler, "Forum 2: The Migrant Climate: Resilience, Adaptation and the Ontopolitics of Mobility in the Anthropocene," *Mobilities* 14, no. 3 (2019): 381, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2019.1609194.

²²⁰ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 23.

²²¹ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19.

power of discourses, practices and infrastructures of mobility in creating the effects of both movement and stasis".²²² In other words, it takes into account everything that could impact mobility, or the capability to move. To be mobile is to have the capability to move.²²³

In order to carry out such an analysis, mobilities theorists have developed new methodological approaches to measure time, space, and motion, most of which include immersive observation of cultures (ethnography) and detailed tracking of movement.²²⁴ These methodologies employ a mixed approach that combines empirical and non-empirical procedures and techniques.²²⁵ When following this approach, both material and intangible factors are explored when trying to determine what influences mobility. Considering both objective and subjective influences on movement is necessary because the study of relation within mobility systems "reconfigures the relationship between the observer and the observed" by looking beyond material structures.²²⁶ To assess the social processes that come from mobility regimes, structures and systems are not conceived solely in relation to human agency, but in relation to each other and other entities that constitute them.²²⁷

The mobilities paradigm is intended to bridge the gaps between social science disciplines by taking micro, meso, and macro approaches to how factors relate in complex systems.²²⁸ Through mobilities studies, social processes can help to explain movement, and alternatively, movement can enlighten our understanding of social processes.²²⁹ Through this theoretical and methodological framework, the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *how*, and *why* of movement can be determined.²³⁰

Within the mobilities paradigm, the subfield of 'mobility justice' has emerged in response to uneven mobilities, as the study of the social processes surrounding mobility produces questions of ethics and rights.²³¹ The subfield is dedicated to addressing the structures and circumstances that lead to unequal, forced, unsustainable, and disrupted

²²² Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

²²³ Chandler, "Forum 2: The Migrant Climate," 381.

²²⁴ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 801

²²⁵ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

²²⁶ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 800.

²²⁷ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 800.

²²⁸ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 803.

²²⁹ Sheller and Urry, "Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm," 11.

²³⁰ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19.

²³¹ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 801.

mobility.²³² There is a focus on humans as the referent object in the subfield, rather than the broad look at all global entities. Theorists ask questions about how political, legal, social, physical, and economic forces dictate “who or what can and cannot move”.²³³ Mobility justice is concerned with how these forces influence the right to mobility, which can apply to both the right to move, or the right to stay.²³⁴

The core of mobility justice research is understanding what informs the social structures that are reproduced through mobilities regimes and are responsible for uneven mobilities. Our societal structures are based on “colonial histories and neocolonial presents”, constructed to support a subset of favoured norms of gender, sexual identity, ethnicity, class, race, or physical ability.²³⁵ These are the sources of mobility *injustice*.²³⁶ The systems of power are based on these dynamics, and therefore have embedded inequalities that are manifested in barriers to movement.²³⁷ To address uneven mobility, these social issues must first be confronted. This pursuit is highly necessary as uneven mobility can hinder the abilities of those seeking asylum and better circumstances, or can negatively affect the safety or ease of someone’s movement.²³⁸ Sheller argues that all people have a right to mobility - to choose whether to stay or to move.²³⁹ Therefore, mobility justice theorists critique the structures that hinder mobility rights, and seek to understand “who and what is demobilized and remobilized across many different scales”.²⁴⁰ Beyond identifying the problems, they also devise ways in which “alternative cultures of mobility” that are more ethical can come about.²⁴¹

An important distinction to make about mobility theory is that although normative questions do arise from this research, not all mobilities theorists are making a case for increasing movement, only attempting to assess the impacts it has.²⁴² When making normative arguments, many do argue for increased mobility, but in this sense, mobility

²³² Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 795, 790.

²³³ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 797.

²³⁴ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 798.

²³⁵ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 18.

²³⁶ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 24.

²³⁷ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19.

²³⁸ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 23.

²³⁹ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 28.

²⁴⁰ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

²⁴¹ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 20.

²⁴² Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

refers to both movement and the lack of movement due to the conception that nothing is every truly sedentary. Therefore, mobility theorists are arguing for the right for an individual to determine their own movement, whether that is to be mobile, or to be immobile. Making a case to address the structural forces that create uneven mobilities that prevent movement and stasis alike is a question of justice rather than an argument to increase movement.

B. Applying Mobility Theory to Climate Migration

This paradigm and the field of mobility justice are incredibly applicable to the study of migration due to their focus on movement within complex systems.²⁴³ Therefore, it is unsurprising that mobility has become centered in the climate migration conversation. Whether intentionally or not, critiques of climate migration have focused on the same issues illuminated by mobilities research. The main critique is that movement is not based on any single cause, but a combination of overlapping drivers, and therefore cannot be distinguished as “climate” migration, as that implies that environmental factors are the sole cause.²⁴⁴ Economic, social, political, demographic, environmental, and contextual factors do not exist in a vacuum, so migration studies must consider how they intersect. Even though environmental degradation contributes to mobility, no methodology has been capable of determining the extent to which it is the cause of movement.²⁴⁵ Therefore, it is dangerous to attribute trends in migration directly to nature, as it depoliticizes the issue by detaching it from the societal structures that contribute to environmental change.²⁴⁶ Mobility theory is a proponent of this view that climate change alone (when understood as environmental changes) cannot explain human migrations, and provides a rationale for an intersectional approach to climate migration studies.²⁴⁷

Climate migration scholars expand from this idea and seek to enrich mobility theory scholarship through critiques of climate change as a “distinctive regime of power” which

²⁴³ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 800, 803.

²⁴⁴ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291

²⁴⁵ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

²⁴⁶ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 10.

²⁴⁷ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794, Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19.

centers the environment and nature in mobilities theory.²⁴⁸ Therefore, the environment is a consideration in what influences movement, but only insofar as it interacts with other factors to induce migration. Mobility justice enlightens the climate migration discussion by providing an alternative way of framing the analysis that calls attention to the historical and structural phenomena that have created the conditions of climate change.²⁴⁹ In particular, the post-colonial emphasis Sheller describes as integral to mobility justice theory makes the paradigm not only applicable to climate migration conversations, but necessary, as colonialism's role in shaping global conditions is seen as a more applicable root cause than 'climate' when understood as the environment.²⁵⁰

By viewing climate migration in terms of mobility, the "multiple forms, directions and multiplicities of human movement in the context of climate change" can be assessed in a way that migration theory alone, as a concept cannot achieve, since the spatial-temporal methodologies that are characteristic of mobility theory allow for a more in depth approach.²⁵¹ By grounding our world in systems of mobility that link historical and contemporary trends, mobility theory and mobility justice can confront the causes of climate change and consequently climate migration.²⁵² It is also a more neutral approach, since mobility theory attempts to avoid any potential positive or negative connotations associated with the term.²⁵³ Framing movement as a neutral phenomenon challenges assumptions about how and why people move.²⁵⁴

Scholars have embraced mobility theory as a way to assess climate migration. It has informed much of the latest literature and is a key component to proposed research agendas in coming years. There is still much that can be learned from the paradigm and its applications, meaning that it could continue to reveal important nuances to the climate migration discussion.

²⁴⁸ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 290, 292; Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337.

²⁴⁹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291.

²⁵⁰ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 292.

²⁵¹ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

²⁵² Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291.

²⁵³ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

²⁵⁴ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

II. Assessing the Debates in the Context of Mobility Theory

As seen in the previous chapter, there are three main debates surrounding the necessary components of a definition for those displaced by climate change related causes: choice in terminology, causes of displacement, and type of displacement. We will now re-examine these debates through the lens of mobility justice, analyzing each issue in order to construct an original definition. While mobilities theory has much to offer to this conversation, the primary influence it has on the definition is based on the perception of movement it proposes. Movement is driven by a web of interrelated causes, and therefore a definition cannot be framed by climate change (defined as environmental impacts) as the only driver of the anticipated migration. Additionally, if the definition is framed in terms of mobility justice, it is more likely to provide proper protections while minimizing negative externalities.

A. Choice in Terminology

To reiterate, the debate over terminology revolves around two issues: whether to designate those displaced by climate change as ‘climate’ or ‘environmental’ and if they should be categorized as ‘refugees’, ‘migrants’, or ‘displaced persons’.

In regard to the first question, a mobility theory perspective would assert that both terms are unsuitable because it implies that the migration in question is driven solely by the environment, which we have established is a limited, and even harmful way to view the situation. Based on this reasoning, it is argued that one should avoid the term ‘environmental’ because it does not recognize that the displacement occurring is ultimately a result of human action rather than a natural phenomenon, and is a “false separation” from other drivers of migration.²⁵⁵ It is also a problematic designation due to the broad nature of the term ‘environmental’. It could encompass climate change, as well as other environmental issues, making it vague. Consequently, it is an inadequate term because it

²⁵⁵ IPCC, 2014: *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report*, 7, 62; Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 11; Carr, “Placing the Environment in Migration,” 927.

is difficult to create a protections framework around a vague concept, making it useless as a legal tool.²⁵⁶

Utilizing ‘environmental’ has even been linked to the policy agendas of ‘big emitter’ countries that have contributed considerably to environmental harm, as using unclear terminology enables the depoliticization of the issue, making it less likely to work as a source of accountability.²⁵⁷ It downplays the role of states in contributing to both the climate situation and impeding adaptation strategies in the face of its impacts.²⁵⁸ A term that can align with clearer causes and other situational details is necessary for a definition to have legal applications, which is the underlying rationale for creating a definition in the first place.

Although both terms are inappropriate given that they imply monocausality, the term ‘climate’ can be salvaged when used in combination with other key terms. ‘Climate change’ must be fully included in the nomenclature, due to the fact that unlike the isolated term ‘climate’, ‘climate *change*’ can have a political meaning beyond environmental impacts. Besides biological and geological effects, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recognizes the socioeconomic impacts of climate change and how it hinders the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.²⁵⁹ Their most recent 2022 Climate Change Assessment Report details the economic disruption, infrastructure degradation, humanitarian crisis intensification, health crises, and increase in human insecurity resulting from climate change.²⁶⁰ The Report identifies how intersecting factors such as “socioeconomic development, inequity, [and] marginalization” increase vulnerability to climate change impacts, resulting in outcomes that exacerbate climate change and the consequences it has on ways of life.²⁶¹ Clearly, diluting ‘climate change’ to environmental degradation and alterations would be an outdated understanding of its impact on global dynamics.

Climate change can also be understood in terms of its causes, as it is a process attributed to political, social, and economic historical developments and their perpetuation

²⁵⁶ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 466.; Black, "Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?" 1.

²⁵⁷ Kibreab, "Environmental Causes and Impact of Refugee Movements," 21.

²⁵⁸ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236.

²⁵⁹ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 11.

²⁶⁰ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 11-13.

²⁶¹ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 14.

within current national and international systems. In climate migration discourse, capitalism is identified as a major contributor to climate change, especially when understood as a characteristic of the international system. The structure of the current global order is influenced by principles of neoliberal capitalism, an economic mode of production based on accumulation and the exploitation of the environment and people, resulting in the degradation of both.²⁶² It is accompanied by policies of free trade, liberalization, and privatization to allow for the supremacy of the market in global dynamics.²⁶³ In sum, the core principle of neoliberal capitalism is market fundamentalism, where the market is elevated above all else.²⁶⁴

Global powers that were early sites of the industrial revolution and proponents of capitalist organization spread the doctrine and structure of neoliberal capitalism through manipulation and coercion, providing the economic ideology with its dominant status today.²⁶⁵ Through their influence, advocates for neoliberalism such as the United States organized society to ensure the success of their brand of capitalism and internationalized it through globalization and neo-colonial and neo-imperial practices.²⁶⁶

Neoliberal capitalism has a profound effect on the organization of economies and the interaction between countries on a global scale, even though not all countries are

²⁶² Karl Polanyi, "The Regulating Market and the Fictitious Commodities: Labor, Land, and Money," In *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization: From Classical Political Economy to Contemporary Neoliberalism*, ed. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud (Massachusetts: Blackwell Pub., 2005) 101, 3; Cynthia Morinville and Nicole Van Lier, "One Nature, Degradation, and Life-Making in Late Capitalism," *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 32, no. 4 (2021): 43, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1080/10455752.2021.1900309.3>

²⁶³ Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 20; Jonathan Friedman, "Globalization, Dis-integration, Re-organization: The Transformations of Violence," in *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization: From Classical Political Economy to Contemporary Neoliberalism*, ed. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud (Massachusetts: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 160; Keith Hart, "Karl Polanyi's Legacy," *Development and Change* 39, no. 6 (2008): 1141, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2008.00532.x>.

²⁶⁴ Hart, "Karl Polanyi's Legacy," 1135.

²⁶⁵ Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism," In *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization: From Classical Political Economy to Contemporary Neoliberalism*, ed. Marc Edelman and Angelique Haugerud (Massachusetts: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 178; Sarwat Jahan and Ahmed Saber Mahmud, "What is Capitalism?," *International Monetary Fund*, https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/basics/2_capitalism.htm.; Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism*, 280.

²⁶⁶ Brigitte Aulenbacher, Richard Bärnthaler, and Andreas Novy, "Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation, and Contemporary Capitalism," *Österreichische Zeitschrift Für Soziologie* 44, no. 2 (2019): 106. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11614-019-00341-8>; Hart, "Karl Polanyi's Legacy," 1137; Comaroff and Comaroff, "Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism," 177.

considered capitalist themselves. For these reasons climate mobilities scholar Giovanni Bettini has defined climate change as a “manifestation of capitalism” or a “historically produced structural condition”.²⁶⁷ Scholars Daniel Faber and Christina Schlegel outline mechanisms through which the neoliberal capitalist structure has caused climate change, and in turn climate displacement.²⁶⁸ Capitalism makes “natural disasters more frequent and severe” because the exploitative and accumulative nature of capitalist economic production is at odds with sustainable practices.²⁶⁹ Such unsustainable practices have been identified as causes of climate change and a multiplier of vulnerability to it.²⁷⁰

Climate change also contributes to the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems that communities depend on. These impacts are especially evident in the exploitation of “Global South” countries, where foreign corporations utilize neo-colonial and neo-imperial practices to gain access to resources in such a way that they are less legally accountable for environmental and societal harm.²⁷¹ This second mechanism refers to slower-onset effects than the first described above, which focuses on acute impacts.

Neoliberal capitalist structures also create wealth inequalities that escalate the number of impoverished people globally, as they utilize policy to favour the “Global North”, and specifically the wealthy classes within those developed countries.²⁷² These structures create the impoverished, marginalized, and inequitable communities that disproportionately bear the effects of climate change, while simultaneously having diminished capacity to adapt to the negative effects.²⁷³

This plays into the final mechanism that Faber and Schlegel mention, where climate change is being used as a tool “of social control and appropriation of ecological space by capital”.²⁷⁴ Climate change creates unlivable circumstances, especially for those whose livelihood depends on agriculture, forcing people to move to cities and become labourers

²⁶⁷ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291.

²⁶⁸ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 4.

²⁶⁹ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 4.

²⁷⁰ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 14.

²⁷¹ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 7.

²⁷² Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 5.

²⁷³ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 14; Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 6; Comaroff and Comaroff, “Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism,” 184.

²⁷⁴ Faber and Schlegel, “Give Me Shelter from the Storm,” 7.

in the service of capitalism.²⁷⁵ Capitalist production relies on the exploitation of labour, and therefore can capitalize on these circumstances. In sum, capitalism contributes to the creation of communities that have difficulty adapting to climate change, which leads to relocation, and in turn creates a larger labour force to the benefit of capitalists. While this does not directly cause climate change, it contributes to its perpetuation as it serves capitalist mechanisms of accumulation by dispossession.

Therefore, capitalism can be seen as both a cause of climate change, and a significant reason for the lack of meaningful engagement in working towards a climate secure future. Any environmentalist policies adopted within a neoliberal capitalist framework become co-opted in such a way that the market still takes precedence. When ecological concerns and the market are at odds with one another, a capitalist framework can justify inaction, or mitigations that are not conducive to the level of change necessary to combat climate change.²⁷⁶ Since the majority of global society is embedded in neoliberal capitalism, climate change cannot be seen as a process separate from social, political, and economic structures.²⁷⁷ Rather than being an isolated entity, climate change and all of its impacts are symptoms of a global hegemonic system that perpetuates unsustainable and problematic practices. These conclusions are drawn by climate migration scholars and mobility theorists alike, since conceptualizing climate change in this way requires looking at how the world can be conceived in terms of systems.²⁷⁸

For these reasons, the term ‘climate change’ can be thought of as both implicitly and explicitly relating to impacts beyond the environment alone, implying multicausality. When understood in terms of its political and social significance, the term ‘climate change’ can accomplish linking movement to the nexus of causes that mobility theory proposes, as it refers to a combination of impacts.²⁷⁹ It is therefore a designation that describes displacement in a way that avoids incorrectly minimizing the complexity of movement.

The other aspect of terminology revolves around the categorization of the movement occurring. Existing definitions classify people displaced by climate change as

²⁷⁵ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 8.

²⁷⁶ Steven Bernstein, "Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance," *Global Environmental Politics* 2, no. 3 (2002): 12, 14.

²⁷⁷ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 4.

²⁷⁸ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 340, 341.

²⁷⁹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 289.

‘refugees’, ‘migrants’, or ‘displaced persons’. The use of the first two terms has been criticized due to the connotations and current legal frameworks associated with them. ‘Refugee’ is already connected to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and any attempts to expand the Convention to include those impacted by climate change has been unsuccessful, evidenced by the failure of asylum claims on this basis in judicial processes thus far.²⁸⁰

While there are several repercussions to using the term ‘refugee’ outside of the Convention discussed in Chapter 1, the main concern through the lens of mobilities theory is how using that term could impact other people’s mobility. Using ‘refugee’ could undermine the legal regime of the Refugee Convention by confusing the obligations host countries have to provide asylum.²⁸¹ This is because using the term outside of the convention is a legal contradiction, rendering it meaningless.²⁸² If there is no legal reason to protect a climate change ‘refugee’ outside of the Convention, why would another refugee within the Convention be granted shelter? On this basis, host countries could deny asylum for those currently protected.²⁸³

In terms of mobility justice, this is a highly problematic potential risk, as Mimi Sheller posits that that “each individual’s mobility shall be constrained by the rule of mutuality: i.e., not trampling, endangering, or depriving others of their capability for mobility”.²⁸⁴ Weakening the Refugee Convention would endanger other refugee’s right to asylum, and in turn their ability to move. If they are not granted a place to relocate, they could be forced to stay in conditions antithetical to sustaining life.

Beyond the legal implications of the term ‘refugee’, it can also contribute to immobility by playing into the crisis narrative, which has been shown to result in the securitization of borders and xenophobic policy.²⁸⁵ It is a manipulation of the problem, typically by right leaning people and governments, which create additional barriers to

²⁸⁰ Jaswal and Jolly, “Challenges and Opportunities for International Law,” 54; Sarjana, “Climate Change and Human Migration,” 228; Cullen, “Disaster, Displacement and International Law,” 272.

²⁸¹ Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 238; Williams, “Turning the Tide,” 503, 509; UNHCR, *Summary of Deliberations on Climate Change and Displacement*, 9; Hulme, Biermann and Boas, “Climate Refugees: Cause for a New Agreement,” 50; Kolmannskog and Trebbi, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Displacement,” 720.

²⁸² Cournil, “The Protection of ‘Environmental Refugees’ in International Law,” 360, 364.

²⁸³ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 11.

²⁸⁴ Sheller, “Theorizing Mobility Justice,” 28.

²⁸⁵ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 19; Constable, “Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific,” 1032; Cullen, “Disaster, Displacement and International Law,” 273.

movement.²⁸⁶ While the intentions behind using the term refugee are to imply severity to encourage protections, it has not had the desired effect, leading to harm on multiple levels.²⁸⁷ Therefore, one should not employ the term ‘refugee’ when constructing a definition that aims to align with mobility justice.

As an alternative, the term ‘migrants’ is commonly used. The main critique is that this term does not reflect the severity of the situation faced by displaced people since it is typically associated with voluntary movement.²⁸⁸ It is also associated with shorter (internal) movement.²⁸⁹ From a mobility theory perspective, this limits the term as it applies to only two types of movement (voluntary and internal) out of the broader spectrum that is associated with climate displacement. As Ingrid Boas argues, the term is therefore not appropriate because it “does not capture the diverse way in which people do or do not become mobile in response to a changing climate”.²⁹⁰ To avoid associating with any preexisting notions, or limiting what type of migration it can apply to, this definition will not employ ‘migrant’ in its terminology.

Instead, ‘displaced persons’ will be used as it provides the most neutral option. Displacement is also associated with the definition for Internally Displaced Persons, but its use in this definition would not result in contradiction in the way that ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’ would. The definition for Internally Displaced Persons includes those affected by “natural or human-made disasters”, and therefore shares some content with the group under review, but only applies to people who resettle within their original territory.²⁹¹ It is also not associated with a legally binding document, and therefore any other definition utilizing the same terminology would not be at risk of undermining its framework.

The only objection towards the term ‘displaced persons’ is similar to those directed at the use of ‘migrants’ surrounding a lack of implied severity. However, unlike ‘migrants’ since it does not contradict existing connotations and meanings, and instead aligns with

²⁸⁶ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 9.

²⁸⁷ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 67; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 504.

²⁸⁸ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 468; UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*.

²⁸⁹ Richard Black et al., "Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change," *The Government Office for Science, London* (2011):71,

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287717/1-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf.

²⁹⁰ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

²⁹¹ UNHCR, *Handbook for Emergencies*.

them, ‘displaced persons’ has the potential to signify severity when connected to ‘climate change’ and when the definition itself dictates that it pertains to severe cases.

For the purposes of this definition, the description of ‘displaced persons’ adapted from the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* will be used. The UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN Commission on Human Rights (UNHCR), define displaced persons as:

Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, either across an international border or within a State, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.²⁹²

This description covers both internal and cross-border movement, and therefore applies well to the task at hand, which hopes to prioritize international movement (See *Type of Displacement*). The definition will build off the language from this description, altering it to match the causes and circumstances surrounding climate change.

Scholar Andrew Baldwin has summarized this debate on terminology and how it relates to the junction between climate migration and mobilities studies, “re-characteriz[ing] those displaced by ‘climate change’ not as ‘climate refugees’, but as the displaced of a globalized network of intersecting mobility regimes”.²⁹³ He brings together the suitability of using ‘displaced’ as well as its relation to this specific category of movement. When climate change is understood in terms of intersecting causes and impacts beyond physical environmental changes, and therefore a historical process produced through systems of mobility, it more appropriately frames the climate migration discussion in terms of the most recent developments in the field. In accordance with this position which aligns with existing international agreements and the tenants of mobility theory, this definition will designate those displaced by climate change as ‘Climate Change Displaced Persons’ (CCDP).

²⁹² International Organization on Migration, "Glossary on Migration," International Migration Law No. 34 (2019), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf.

²⁹³ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291.

B. Causes of Displacement

The core theme of this chapter is the necessity for a definition and the policy that accompanies it to incorporate the multi-causal nature of climate change and the types of displacement it contributes to. It has been established that climate change itself is embedded in political, social, and economic structures, and therefore displacement caused by it is also linked to these factors. These structures cause displacement by contributing to environmental changes, and also create inequalities in resiliency against the physical manifestations of climate change, ensuring that certain groups will be more vulnerable.²⁹⁴

The environment is a definite contributing factor to displacement, but determining the degree to which it alone influences movement is not an attainable prospect.²⁹⁵ This is supported by mobilities theory, which dictates that movement is part of systems, not a result of isolated direct linkages.²⁹⁶ A nexus of factors come together to influence movement, and in this case the environmental changes act as a catalyst or multiplier, heightening existing issues such as inequality, poor governance, and poverty until there is a perceived need to move.²⁹⁷ This perspective reflects the world in terms of mobility theory - intersecting systems of mobility dictating who and what can move.²⁹⁸

Identifying the proper causes is necessary for being able to assign protections.²⁹⁹ In terms of the language of the definition, it would be impractical and impossible to list every contributing factor to movement since they differ based on context, but by situating environmental impacts as a manifestation of socio-economic structures and historical processes, it avoids glazing over the complexity of the issue. It is important for root causes to factor into a definition, otherwise it will not properly hold those who have contributed to climate change responsible, which could risk lessening the obligation to provide protection.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 1.

²⁹⁵ Black, "Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?" 3.

²⁹⁶ Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 209.

²⁹⁷ Keane, "Environmental Causes and Consequences of Migration," 222; Pigué, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 12.

²⁹⁸ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

²⁹⁹ Docherty and Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide," 350; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 523.

³⁰⁰ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236; Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 10.

For the definition to be a viable tool, these causes must be laid out in a way that categorizes the reasons for displacement, which is why previous definitions utilize categories of environmental causes.³⁰¹ Building from one such categorization put forward by Diane Bates, this definition will relate environmental causes to their non-environmental counterparts.

Bates developed a definition for environmental refugees, and therefore most of her arguments are in opposition to what has been presented here. However, her division of environmental events provides a comprehensive overview of the ways in which climate change can be expressed in the natural world. Her classification is based on environmental categories rather than the types of migration they produce (temporary, permanent, voluntary, forced). She deduces three categories: (1) disasters that occur from natural, unintentional acute events, (2) expropriations which result from human-made, intentional acute events, and (3) deterioration as a result of gradual, unintentional events.³⁰²

For the purposes of a Climate Change Displaced Persons definition, the first and third categories will be utilized. The second pertains to human-made events such as dam building, based on Bates' use of criteria that separate natural and technological origins of events. However, in translating these categories from the broader 'environmental' classification to 'climate change', all events are essentially human made, rendering the distinction unnecessary. Her differentiation between intentional and unintentional occurrences will also be disregarded, as it refers to whether or not migration was planned as part of a construction or development project.³⁰³ By disregarding the human-made distinction, the differentiation of intentions is also unnecessary.

The two categories that will be used are distinguished based on duration, as movement is either in response to an acute or gradual event. An acute event is typically understood as a "natural" disaster such as hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, wild fires, or other quick-onset geological events.³⁰⁴ Gradual or chronic events such as sea-level rise, erosion, drought, water scarcity, rising temperatures, desertification,

³⁰¹ See El-Hannawi 1985, Meyers and Kent 1995, Williams, 2008; Bates, 2002; Biermann and Boas, 2010, Docherty and Giannini, 2009; Prieur, 2013.

³⁰² Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 469.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

and deforestation degrade the environment over time, jeopardizing ways of life.³⁰⁵ Some gradual events could be seen as transitioning into acute events when a critical point is reached, such as sea level rise in island states - they face an increasing need to move over time, but eventually reach a juncture that necessitates immediate relocation. Acute and gradual categories are also the basis on which Bonnie Docherty and Tyler Giannini, Frank Bierman and Ingrid Boas, and Michael Prieur identify causes in their definitions for climate refugees and environmentally displaced persons, making it a commonly accepted way of approaching environmental categorization.³⁰⁶

In the definition, both categories must be preceded by a recognition that all environmental impacts are a result of historical processes, aligning with the mobilities theory of multicausality and temporal dimension of movement.³⁰⁷ Then, when addressing the categories themselves, how they relate to non-environmental causes based on context must be included. Those who are displaced due to acute events have less choice in how to adapt to their situation than those who face gradual deterioration due to time constraints, resulting more frequently in movement.³⁰⁸ Non environmental factors such as emergency preparedness, building codes, and lack of governance can exacerbate acute events, prolonging or speeding up movement.³⁰⁹

Non-environmental factors have an even greater influence on whether or not gradual events will result in movement. Political, social, and economic factors increase vulnerability to climate change events because they reduce an individual's or community's ability to adapt. Adaptation strategies such as "disaster risk management, early warning systems, climate services and risk spreading and sharing" can allow people to stay in their territory and have had considerable success so far.³¹⁰ However, the capacity to adapt in this way is unequal both across individual and community lines. An individual's adaptive capacity is affected by their gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and economic status due to

³⁰⁵ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 522; Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 67; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 235.

³⁰⁶ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 67; Docherty and Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide," 361.

³⁰⁷ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291; Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794.

³⁰⁸ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 473.

³⁰⁹ Susan F. Martin, "Forced Migration and Refugee Policy," *Demography of Refugee and Forced Migration* 13 (2017): 274, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-67147-5_14.

³¹⁰ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, 28.

the construction of “mobilities of power”, structures that reproduce environmental injustice, privileging some individuals over others.³¹¹

On a societal level, the infrastructure necessary to undertake these strategies is also not guaranteed, as governance structures that have been weakened by foreign interference, economic oppression, colonial pasts, violent conflict, and lack of resources do not have the capacity to implement adaptive measures.³¹² These factors make populations more vulnerable to all environmental manifestations of climate change, but are most relevant to gradual forms as those affected have relatively more choice in when they will move. Their decision process considers their adaptive capacity, as well as perception of the threat to their livelihood that the causes of displacement pose.³¹³ This will factor into whether people will move, but also if they will stay. Some people will be unable to move due to resource access or other constraints even if they desire to, and others will not perceive enough of a threat to their livelihood to justify movement.³¹⁴

There is also debate over whether migration itself is a viable adaptation strategy to climate change. The shift away from climate refugee discourse has in part been a reflection of viewing the displaced not as “passive victims” but arbiters of their own migration, using it as an adaptation strategy, whether or not other options have been exhausted.³¹⁵ Encouraging movement as an adaptive strategy is framed as a way to address the injustice of immobility many experience when infrastructure fails and those who want or need to move, cannot.³¹⁶ From a contrary position, scholar Betsy Hartmann warns against viewing it as a solution as it may increase the securitization around climate migration, and risk perpetuating the original circumstances that led to displacement as it does not require

³¹¹ Lisa Sun-Hee Park and David Naguib Pellow, "Forum 4: The Environmental Privilege of Borders in the Anthropocene," *Mobilities* 14, no. 3 (2019): 396, DOI: 10.1080/17450101.2019.1601397; Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291.

³¹² Ahmed, "Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?" 8; Kälin and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change," 28; Warner et al., "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration," 691.

³¹³ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902; Warner et al., "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration," 708.

³¹⁴ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291, 292; Kolmannskog, "Future Floods of Refugees," 13; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238; Pigué, Pécout and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 13; Richard Black et al., "Migration as Adaptation," *Nature* 478 (2011): 448, <https://doi.org/10.1038/478477a>.

³¹⁵ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?," 352.

³¹⁶ Black et al., "Migration as Adaptation," 448.

confronting the causes of climate change.³¹⁷ Bettini et al. share this conviction, as ignoring the root of the problem means that not only would climate change adaptation strategies receive less attention, but also policy relating to the inequalities and structural problems that contribute to it.³¹⁸ Within this debate, mobility justice would align with those problematizing migration as an adaptation strategy since it has negative implications for general policy that focuses on justice.³¹⁹

The debate over the viability of mobility as an adaptation strategy represents a debate within mobility studies rather than in contrast to other approaches to climate migration.³²⁰ Migration as adaptation remains a relevant part of the current climate migration narrative, and therefore this choice is likely the most controversial choice within this defining process.³²¹ It would also be problematic because the practices that led to environmental degradation can continue if migrations as adaptation is employed without additional measures to address the original practices that led to environmental change.³²²

In sum, displacement occurs when political, social, and economic context make an individual or community vulnerable to the environmental manifestations of climate change. In the acute category, the event is so extreme that it requires immediate relocation, and in the gradual classification, the nexus of movement drivers influence the decision-making processes around movement, leading to different timelines and forms of movement. Neither category perceives their movement as a choice, but the gradual classification leaves more control over when movement occurs.³²³ The language of the definition must account for the non-environmental factors that created these categories of environmental manifestations, as well as those that lead to movement following their onset.

C. Type of Displacement

The type of displacement categorizes the form that movement may take in response to climate change. Like mobility theory methodology, these cover both temporal and

³¹⁷ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 236.

³¹⁸ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?" 354.

³¹⁹ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?" 354.

³²⁰ See McNamara and Gibson, 2009; Barnett and Campbell, 2010; Gray, 2011; Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012; Smith and McNamara, 2014; Adams, 2016; Ahmed et al., 2019; Kelman et al., 2019.

³²¹ Stojanov et al., "Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation," 210.

³²² Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 10.

³²³ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 523.

spatial considerations to properly account for all the ways people may become mobile under these circumstances.³²⁴ This includes internal versus cross-border, voluntary versus forced, and temporary versus permanent movement (See *Type of Migration*). From a mobility justice standpoint, all of these categories should be recognized under a definition as the concept is hinged on the belief that “all people have a right to freedom of bodily movement”.³²⁵ Therefore, all forms of mobility would need to be equally protected.

However, that would hinder the definition's potential as a tool within a legal framework by making it too broad.³²⁶ Some degree of selectivity is necessary in the interest of practicality. As is discussed in the debate on using the term ‘refugee’, if too many people are considered part of a group, destination states will be less likely to provide asylum, as the unfortunate challenge is that states require reasons to justify their provision of protection, and selectivity based on severity supplies such a justification. That is why refugees are considered as needing protection while migrants are not.³²⁷ The definition determines the boundaries of a protection policy with selectivity in mind, and therefore not all types of displacement can feasibly be included in this definition.

Since the decision to exclude certain types of movement, and therefore certain groups from the definition, is not based on a desire to discriminate or bar anyone from pursuing mobility, types will only be omitted if they are already covered by another protection regime. It will take into account mobility justice in determining what to include so as to prevent creating unequal mobilities, but only insofar as it strikes a balance that enables it to also be a workable definition.

(a) *Internal vs Cross-Border*

Depending on the circumstances that caused their movement, an individual may be displaced within their home country, or forced to cross international borders. Currently, most movement associated with climate change has resulted in internal relocation, as the

³²⁴ Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902; Sheller, “The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology,” 801

³²⁵ Sheller, “Theorizing Mobility Justice,” 28.

³²⁶ Black, “Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?” 1; Biermann and Boas, “Protecting Climate Refugees,” 11.

³²⁷ Marta Bivand Erdal and Ceri Oeppen, “Forced to Leave? The Discursive and Analytical Significance of Describing Migration as Forced and Voluntary,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 6 (2018): 993, 984, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1384149>.

effects of acute events has increased, but the slow-onset degradation that will give rise to displacement across further distances has yet to be fully realized.³²⁸ International movement will increase as the impacts of climate change progress.³²⁹

For the purposes of this definition, only cross-border movement will be included as it is an easily identified criteria that narrows the application of the definition to a workable breadth. International movement is also the category that receives fewer and more ambiguous protections in this context than internal movement.³³⁰ Internally, the displaced are still under the purview of the origin state, since anyone displaced within its borders is theoretically protected by rights through citizenship.³³¹ The prominent gap in policy lies in those who have no protections. An international agreement, which is the intended application of this definition, would seek to fill this gap and address circumstances when displacement requires other countries to admit culpability in the creation of climate change, and be held accountable for providing asylum.

However, relying on origin states which may also be experiencing other sources of instability beyond climate change, does not provide a compelling enough justification for excluding internal movement. It would counteract the tenants of mobility justice by creating barriers for those who need to be mobile to ensure their survival. Instead, the exclusion of internal displacement from this definition is justified because internal movement caused by environmental events also receives protection indirectly through *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* sponsored by the United Nations, which outlines how internally displaced persons should be assisted.³³² When local governments fail to protect the internally displaced, the international community in accordance with the principles can pressure the home state.³³³ The definition for internally displaced persons

³²⁸ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15; Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

³²⁹ Williams, "Turning the Tide," 513.

³³⁰ Ayazi and Elsheikh, "Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied," 22.

³³¹ UNHCR, "IDP Definition," *Emergency Handbook*, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/250553/idp-definition.>; *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, Foreword.

³³² Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 465; *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, 1.

³³³ Michael Werz and Laura Conley, "Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict," *Center for American Progress and the Heinrich Böll Foundation* (2012): 15, https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2012/01/pdf/climate_migration.pdf.

(IDP) the document is based on includes those who are forced to move because of “natural or human-made disasters” (See *Critique of Existing Definitions*).

The internal displacement standards outlined in the *Guiding Principles* is not a flawless framework. It has its limitations, like most policies attempting to defend human rights concerns in an international system characterized by sovereignty.³³⁴ However, they have been successful in improving protections and programming by emphasizing the needs of IDPs.³³⁵ The *Guiding Principles* have aided humanitarian organizations by promoting “the development of national laws and policies, durable solutions frameworks, and peace agreements” which have in turn strengthened the entire IDP framework.³³⁶ National governments and international organizations have adopted the principles into their own policies which are legally binding, translating the ‘soft’ law document into ‘hard’ law.³³⁷ Scholar Simon Russell documented cases in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine, Uganda, Sudan, Honduras, and at least ten other countries where the *Guiding Principles* have played a role in policy development to the benefit of IDPs.³³⁸ The principles ensure that the needs of IDPs are addressed at every stage of movement through consultation with the displaced.³³⁹

Three main components and characteristics of the *Guiding Principles* have led to their success. First, the definition of IDPs has provided consistency for policy, and has “stood the test of time” over the last twenty-four years.³⁴⁰ In many ways, it sets an aspirational standard for this development of the definition of Climate Change Displaced Persons. The principles have also been successful because they are based on “sovereignty as responsibility” to hold states accountable for those within their borders. No government

³³⁴ Roberta Cohen and Francis M Deng, "Reflections from Former Mandate Holders: Developing the Normative Framework for IDPs," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30, no. 2 (2018): 311, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeey025>.

³³⁵ Jane McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement: 20 Years On," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30, no. 2 (2018): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeey024>.

³³⁶ McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 189; Simon Russell, "The Operational Relevance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30, no. 2 (2018): 307, 308, DOI: 10.1093/ijrl/eeey022.

³³⁷ Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 467.

³³⁸ Russell, "The Operational Relevance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 307-309.

³³⁹ McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 189.

³⁴⁰ Russell, "The Operational Relevance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 308; McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 189; Cohen and Deng, "Reflections from Former Mandate Holders," 312.

wants to challenge this principle, as it would require making the disgraceful argument that “sovereignty allows a state to deny life-sustaining support to its citizens”.³⁴¹ Finally, they align with international humanitarian law, so refusal by states to cooperate with most policies coordinated with the principles would break other commitments, providing incentives to comply. They do not provide additional legal protection for IDPs, but they uphold general humanitarian precedents such as the duty to protect life.³⁴²

There is a lack of enforcement mechanisms for the guiding principles - as they are just that - a ‘guiding’ tool. But their guidance has been taken seriously, and over time has become a significant standard, on its way to establishing itself as an international protection norm.³⁴³ Scholars and United Nations officials affiliated with displacement and human rights continue to reinterpret and strengthen the document, assuring that it remains relevant.³⁴⁴ For instance, the *Guiding Principles* is not a legally binding document, but the need for stronger programs assisting and advocating for IDPs has led to a shift where the principles become more than ‘soft’ law influencing the actions of states, towards ‘hard’ law by acquiring legitimacy as customary international law, otherwise understood as precedents that create an obligation to protect.³⁴⁵ In this sense, it is not only some of the principles that become ‘hard’ law within certain national or organizational policies, as the entire document gains credibility at an international level.

It is even argued that IDPs require specific frameworks that pertain to their unique circumstances, justifying a separation from protection regimes for cross-border movement, including one pertaining to climate change impacts.³⁴⁶ Overall, they are a celebrated international humanitarian achievement.³⁴⁷ Therefore, this definition will only pertain to those who cross-borders, while maintaining its commitment to mobility justice by ensuring that anyone left out of the definition is properly protected.

³⁴¹ Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 466.

³⁴² Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 467.

³⁴³ Cohen and Deng, "Reflections from Former Mandate Holders," 313.

³⁴⁴ McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 189.

³⁴⁵ David James Cantor, ‘The IDP in International Law’? Developments, Debates, Prospects," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30, no. 2 (2018): 199, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijrl/eeey031>; McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 188.

³⁴⁶ McAdam, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 190; Cohen and Deng, "Reflections from Former Mandate Holders," 312.

³⁴⁷ Cohen, "The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 469; Russell, "The Operational Relevance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement," 308.

(b) Voluntary vs Forced

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the debate on who should be included in this definition is over the forced-voluntary dichotomy. Voluntary movement is typically associated with those affected by gradual environmental events, as they have relatively more control over their movement than those who are displaced by acute events and have no choice but to leave immediately.³⁴⁸ It has already been established that the definition will cover both acute and gradual events, and therefore both voluntary and forced movement must also be included when understood based on these divisions.

However, most existing definitions exclude voluntary movement on the basis of selectivity, arguing that it should not receive the same protections, as ‘voluntary’ represents less severe cases.³⁴⁹ In contrast, scholars such as Diane Bates and Angela Williams have included voluntary movement in their definitions, but rank it below forced movement within sliding scale frameworks.³⁵⁰ ‘Voluntary’ and ‘forced’ represent the ends of a spectrum, since there is no clear boundary between the two concepts.³⁵¹ Sliding scales are employed to account for the intermediary steps between voluntary and forced movement, which translate to different levels of protection, where those who are forced receive priority in protection over those who move ‘voluntarily’.³⁵² While this provides what appears to be a viable solution to including voluntary movement while maintaining selectivity, the use of scales goes against a mobility justice perspective as protections should be consistent for anyone the definition pertains to, otherwise the definition itself creates barriers to movement.³⁵³

Thus, the two most evident possibilities for how to define the boundary of the definition in terms of voluntary and forced have been eliminated - the use of one, and the use of both. The answer in how to proceed lies in how the concepts themselves are perceived. This definition will propose that instead of a dichotomy, voluntary and forced will be conceptualized as different levels of involuntariness, existing in a continuum. Any

³⁴⁸ Martin, "Forced Migration and Refugee Policy," 275; Werz and Conley, "Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict," 15; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 522.

³⁴⁹ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

³⁵⁰ Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 470; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 522.

³⁵¹ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 982; Kälin and Schrepfer, "Protecting People Crossing Borders in the Context of Climate Change," 22; Bates, "Environmental Refugees?" 468.

³⁵² Williams, "Turning the Tide," 522.

³⁵³ Docherty and Giannini, "Confronting A Rising Tide," 368; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 28.

case made for the division of migration between a voluntary versus forced dichotomy is problematic as the idea that any movement in this context is ‘voluntary’ ignores the root causes of the issue. Some people may have more choice in planning their movement, but ultimately the decision to move is a result of circumstances that fail to support their way of life. Classification as ‘voluntary’ in this context ignores the impossibility of separating the two concepts.³⁵⁴ Even if movement is in anticipation of an event such as sea level rise, it is nonetheless forced by circumstances ultimately out of the displaced control. Within the context of climate change, the choice to move is a matter of *when* not *if*. While some may stay for longer in an affected area, or be forced to stay due to uneven mobility, those that do move should be awarded the same protections as others who would typically be considered “forced”.³⁵⁵

Movement does not occur on a scale from voluntary to forced, but instead a scale of “involuntariness”.³⁵⁶ Within this spectrum, the decision to migrate is “more reflective of the complexity of individual experiences, agency and contextual circumstances than a binary labeling of forced or not”.³⁵⁷ Based on personal perceptions and thresholds, people make the difficult decision to migrate as it presents the most viable avenue for survival.³⁵⁸ The rhetoric that people are moving voluntarily to seek resources or economic gain is a narrative typically employed by destination states in the ‘Global North’ based on fear of the “masses” they will have to absorb.³⁵⁹ Labeling movement in this context as voluntary is therefore a tool of reluctant destination states, and a misrepresentation of the pressures on those facing the broad spectrum of climate change impacts.³⁶⁰ Therefore, all movements associated with climate change should be considered forced.

This poses its own problem. Selectivity is still a necessary component of the definition to justify the necessity of protections. An alternative method for selectivity must

³⁵⁴ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 982.

³⁵⁵ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902; Warner et al., "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration," 708; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 19; Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 801

³⁵⁶ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 291.

³⁵⁷ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 993.

³⁵⁸ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

³⁵⁹ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 984; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 234; Faber and Schlegel, "Give Me Shelter from the Storm," 9;

³⁶⁰ Black, "Environmental Refugees: Myth or Reality?" 14; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 239.

be provided in place of a distinction between voluntary and forced movement, that ensures the most severe cases are accounted for. Severity of cases is a key component of this, as otherwise states will not be convinced to provide protections. If destination states believe the displaced have other options, they will not feel obligated to provide asylum.³⁶¹

Instead, adaptive capacity could serve as a measure of selectivity. It can be used to evaluate the “range and quality of alternatives available” as a starting point for assessing the degree to which movement is forced.³⁶² If a CCDP has exhausted all available adaptation strategies that they deem acceptable, their movement is forced. In acute cases, adaptive capacity would typically be lower as they have fewer strategies available.³⁶³ In gradual categories, the potential for adaptation has historically been the reason movement associated with it is classified as voluntary.³⁶⁴ However, adaptation is only an option for those who have the infrastructure and resources to do so.³⁶⁵ If adaptive strategies are being employed as a precursor to movement, migration itself cannot be seen as an adaptation strategy. This potential contradiction is discarded since migration as an adaptation strategy has been rejected on the basis of mobility justice.³⁶⁶ The boundary of the definition is therefore assessed in terms of capacity to adapt. Lack of adaptive capacity will qualify CCDPs for protections.

Based on adaptive capacity, those who are excluded are seen as having options that are “acceptable alternatives” to movement, based on an individual’s own perception of “acceptable”.³⁶⁷ This is based on the assumption that those who have *acceptable* adaptation strategies available to them would not want to move. Anyone who chooses to move despite alternatives would fall under a different category of movement. Those who are leaving despite what they themselves deem acceptable alternatives may be pursuing movement due to causes beyond the purview of this definition.

³⁶¹ Sarjana, “Climate Change and Human Migration,” 228.

³⁶² Erdal and Oeppen, “Forced to Leave?” 985.

³⁶³ Bates, “Environmental Refugees?” 473.

³⁶⁴ Werz and Conley, “Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict,” 15.

³⁶⁵ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291, 292; Kolmannskog, “Future Floods of Refugees,” 13; Hartmann, “Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict,” 238; Pigué, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 13.

³⁶⁶ Bettini, Nash and Gioli, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back?,” 354.

³⁶⁷ Erdal and Oeppen, “Forced to Leave?” 986, 987.

Then the question becomes how to determine if adaptation strategies have been exhausted. Have they been utilized but unsuccessful against climate change? Or are strategies not accessible on the basis of demographics or other political, social, and economic constraints? However, answering these questions moves beyond the purview of this thesis and therefore only a few recommendations will be included as a starting point for further research. It would require an exhaustive list of adaptation strategies, which is unattainable since they take many forms depending on context. In place of a list, it would be most appropriate for judgements to be made through court procedures, similar to the hearing of asylum cases for refugees.³⁶⁸ Courts are capable of assessing particulars in a way that a definition cannot, and should not, because it is meant to be universalizable. Under this definition, anyone who perceives themselves as having exhausted their options should be granted an opportunity to appear in court, in line with the mobility justice application of habeas corpus, the right to make a case to a judge.³⁶⁹

Courts could assess adaptive capacity on the basis of individual thresholds for dealing with the impacts of climate change and how those thresholds are informed by structural and contextual factors that influence risk perception.³⁷⁰ These subjective measures can aid in assessing the degree to which people have access to a “reasonable” quality of life without migration, positioning them within the spectrum of involuntariness.³⁷¹ This research would attempt to illustrate the point at which adaptation ceases to have a beneficial effect, and therefore fails.³⁷² The development of methodological approaches to assess vulnerability and adaptation to climate change make up another avenue of climate migration research that could fit well in future developments of a protection framework for this definition that would inform legal proceedings.³⁷³ After

³⁶⁸ UNHCR, "Refugee Status Determination," <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-status-determination.html>.

³⁶⁹ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 28.

³⁷⁰ Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 238; Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902; Warner et al., "Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Migration," 708; Bogard, "A 'Sensibility of the Commons' and Climate Change Adaptive Capacity in Haiti," 519; Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?," 986; Allan M. Williams and Vladimir Baláž, "Migration, Risk, and Uncertainty: Theoretical Perspectives," *Population Space and Place* 18, no. 2 (2012): 167, DOI: 10.1002/psp.663.

³⁷¹ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 985.

³⁷² Robert McLeman, "Thresholds in Climate Migration," *Population and Environment* 39, no. 4 (2018): 322, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1007/s11111-017-0290-2>.

³⁷³ See Signh et al., 2019; Van den Linden, 2015; Grothmann and Patt 2005; Nielsen and Reenberg 2010; Granderson 2014; Singh et al. 2016b; Burnham and Ma 2017.

the development of a legal framework to accompany this definition, particular circumstances that apply to individuals may be explored in practice. Additionally, in the interest of mobility justice, a provision should be made in the protection framework, recommending that if denied protections in court on the basis that adaptation strategies have not been explored when possible, the applicant should be aided in seeking out those adaptation strategies.

Therefore, the definition will not differentiate between voluntary and forced movement, as they are not separate concepts, but a part of a “continuum of experience”, especially in the context of climate change.³⁷⁴ Instead, movement will be understood in degrees of ‘forced’. Those who lack acceptable alternatives to movement will be considered the most severe cases, and therefore under the purview of this definition. The selectivity of the definition ensures it will be compatible with a legal framework, the development of which should expand upon what is discussed here.

(c) Temporary vs Permanent

Some Climate Change Displaced People will be able to return to their country or community after acute events or the development of adaptation strategies. For others, their ways of living have been altered in such a way that their displacement is permanent.³⁷⁵ These differences can be based on the nature of environmental events and how they intersect with capability to move and perception of the mover.³⁷⁶

The sole reservation present in the debate on this spatial aspect of the definition is inconsequential based on the other components of the definition previously laid out. In 2008, Frank Biermann and Ingrid Boas proposed permanent migration as the only category to include, as they were relating their framework to a refugee framework, and refugees are seen as being unable to return.³⁷⁷ Since this definition does not utilize ‘refugee’ it is not a shared concern. However, part of the rationale behind Biermann and Boas argument is

³⁷⁴ Erdal and Oeppen, "Forced to Leave?" 981.

³⁷⁵ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15; Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 63; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 506.

³⁷⁶ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15.

³⁷⁷ Biermann and Boas, "Protecting Climate Refugees," 12.

worth considering, as they are attempting to be selective in their protections to provide a definition capable of translating to policy.

In the context of the debate between including temporary or permanent displacement, it is illogical to be selective in this way. The types of climatic events that lead to permanent displacement such as desertification can be just as extreme as those that typically result in temporary movement such as acute natural disasters. Choosing one to protect would require definitive evidence that one is more severe than the other, evidence which is impossible to conclusively determine since severity is based on personal perception.³⁷⁸ However, an important takeaway from Biermann and Boas' argument is the need to balance selectivity and inclusiveness. The tension between creating realistic, practical protections without excluding groups that have signaled their need for mobility is a common theme throughout this definition development process.

Additional evidence that both temporary and permanent movement should be included comes from a mobility justice standpoint, as protecting a right mobility means both a right to continue being mobile (temporary) and the right to stay (permanent).³⁷⁹ Both categories represent a type of mobility, just different lengths of 'spatial fix' or temporary embedding in a mobility system.³⁸⁰ Ultimately, they are both temporary states and therefore the categories should not be differentiated, either on the basis of severity or temporal significance.

D. Putting It All Together

This definition aims to reflect the complex nature of climate change and how it relates to mobility. It will cover people who have been displaced from their territory of origin due to how environmental impacts of climate change intersect with the political, social, and economic factors that contribute to vulnerability. To determine who falls within this group, three spatial and temporal categorizations have been considered. Eligibility will be determined based on having (1) crossed international borders, (2) adaptive capacity and

³⁷⁸ Piguet, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 15; Williams and Baláž, "Migration, Risk, and Uncertainty," 172.

³⁷⁹ Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 28.

³⁸⁰ Sheller, "The New Mobilities Paradigm for a Live Sociology," 794, 796; Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 20.

risk assessment of the movers that determines their perceived need to move (a continuum of involuntariness), and (3) will include the need for both temporary and permanent relocation.

III. A Definition Centered on Mobility Justice

Therefore, based on existing legal frameworks and a lens of mobility justice the definition for Climate Change Displaced Persons (CCDP) is as follows:

People or persons, obligated to cross a national boundary when leaving their places of origin or habitual residence due to a lack of acceptable adaptive strategies to combat the impacts of acute or gradual environmental manifestations of the human-induced historical process of climate change due to interactions with political, social, economic, or technological factors. The intersection of these factors creates an environment unsuitable for supporting human life, posing an immediate or perceived threat to their livelihood, requiring them to leave on a temporary or permanent basis.

A legal framework specific to Climate Change Displaced Persons (CCDP) can be developed based on this definition to ensure that CCDPs receive protection when they decide to become mobile. By employing a lens of mobility justice, this definition attempts to minimize any extraneous harm to the pursuit of mobility by others. It also addresses the complexity of climate change, avoiding diluting its causes and impacts in such a way that depoliticizes the issue. Most importantly, it balances the selectivity and workability of a definition in such a way that respects the right of all to be mobile. It represents the juncture between mobilities, climate change, and migration studies. As such, it provides a starting point for a protection regime in accordance with current research.

Conclusion: Assessments and Takeaways

At the outset, the intentions of this thesis were to formulate a new definition capable of addressing advances in climate migration studies. This endeavor was contextualized within the major debates that have historically contributed to the climate migration dialogue, as well as the most current aspects of the conversation. By centering the definition within mobilities studies, it was possible to navigate these debates, coming to conclusions about how to proceed, resulting in a definition that contrasts its earlier counterparts.

I. Themes and Findings

The historical shifts in the field of climate migration illustrate its fast evolution, and the necessity of further research. Significant changes in framing and advances in approaches have occurred within the last forty years, and this evolutionary trajectory is expected to continue as many questions remain unanswered.

Through this work, only one question has been addressed - the creation of a defining mechanism. In developing this definition, one theme stands out: how to establish protections that are a selective and therefore a practical tool, while simultaneously avoiding the exclusion of populations that face harmful circumstances. In short, where is it most appropriate to draw the line? One approach to answering this question has been proposed that attempts to weave considerations of justice into the conversation. The crisis narrative historically associated with this conversation has been criticized for decentering concern for “structures of justice” in favour of immediate action.³⁸¹ A justice-oriented approach is one possible way to address the issue of balancing normative and practical questions.

The contribution of this work is minute in the broad scheme of climate migration. However, if accepted, such a definition would make it possible to set in motion policy to address circumstances created by climate displacement in a tangible manner.

³⁸¹ Chouliaraki, “Post-Humanitarianism,” 108.

II. Assessment of the definition

Just as existing definitions were critiqued for their limitations and application, the proposed definition will also be evaluated based on three points. First, how it compares to its predecessors, as this illustrates why a new definition is viable. Second, looking back on the necessity of a definition, the viability of utilizing this definition for policy and data collection will be assessed. Then finally, the limitations of the definition itself must also be confronted, as they have implications for the broader study of climate migration.

A. Comparison to Predecessors

This definition intends to contrast its predecessors, building off the aspects of definitions that worked, and coming up with alternatives for the pieces that have attracted appropriate criticism. As such, it conceptualizes climate migration as the result of a nexus of causes that recognize the global power dynamics that contribute to this issue, a nod to mobility theory. It also refrains from using language that interferes with existing international agreements, instead creating avenues for separate legislation to be developed. These distinctions set this definition apart.

However, the final result closely resembles the definition for climate refugees put forward by Bonnie Docherty and Tyler Giannini (See *Critique of Existing Definitions*). Namely the parameters of cross-border movement, acute and gradual environmental categorization, and the conceptualization of climate change as a human driven process.³⁸² While this work comes to some of the same conclusions as Docherty and Giannini, the path to arriving at those conclusions was entirely different. The main basis of differentiation is that their definition is based on climate refugees. The use of ‘refugee’ signifies an attachment to the period of climate migration research when the crisis narrative was prevalent, and considerations of mobility and the complexity of migration had yet to gain traction in face of securitization of the issue. Therefore, while it is important to recognize the similarities between the two definitions and therefore the potential workability of Docherty and Giannini’s contribution even after shifts away from their discourse, the definition presented here is wholly different.

³⁸² Docherty and Giannini, “Confronting A Rising Tide,” 361.

B. Criteria for a Definition

The necessity of a definition is based on the need for a referent object in policy and data collection.³⁸³ In theory, this definition can be utilized in both of those pursuits. For the definition to be practical, it would need to be selective enough that countries would sign on. By limiting the boundaries of the definition to those who cross borders, and lack acceptable alternative adaptive strategies, the requirement of selectivity is met. The definition can also be a valuable tool by outlining specific parameters such as type of environmental categorizations (acute vs gradual) that will help identify those who fit within the definition.

From the legal dimension, it also coincides with existing legal documents through the choice in terminology. However, since it does not rely on existing legal agreements such as the Refugee Convention, an original statute specific to CCDPs would be necessary. Due to the practicality of the definition covered above, going forward, this definition can serve as a basis for such policy development if it were to be accepted by a governmental body with considerable sway such as the United Nations.

In the development of a legal framework, the framing through mobility justice aids in establishing responsibility for the situations that create displacement. In the discussion of the multicausality of movement, the non-environmental causes and impacts of climate change can be attributed to countries who perpetuate climate change and create socioeconomic circumstances that increase vulnerability. Many of the states implicated in creating the conditions that produce displacement in their roles as ‘big emitters’ and through their pursuit of capitalist accumulation have created insecurity in the ‘Global South’ making those states more vulnerable to climate change. The idea that these countries have a right to deny others economic opportunities, or that migrants are a drain on resources is paradoxical, as in most cases the resources they are protecting were, and continue to be, amassed through the exploitation of many of the populations who will be seeking refuge.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Biermann and Boas, "Preparing for a Warmer World," 63; Pigué, Pécoud and de Guchteneire, *Migration and Climate Change*, 21; Williams, "Turning the Tide," 517; Constable, "Climate Change and Migration in the Pacific," 1036; Bates, "Environmental Refugees?," 468; Hartmann, "Rethinking Climate Refugees and Climate Conflict," 235; Hodgkinson et al., "Towards a Convention for Persons Displaced by Climate Change," 2.

³⁸⁴ Rinaldo Walcott, "In the Face of Climate Unpredictability: Coming Migrations, Political Community, and the Values that Underpin a New Commons," Frank McKenna School of Philosophy, Politics, & Economics, Mount Allison University, February 1, 2022.

Mobility framing shifts focus from vulnerable areas to destination states by showing that climate migration is not unidirectional.³⁸⁵ Assessing causes in this way establishes blame, which can in turn be used to establish culpability and responsibility to participate in the protection regime. Bayes Ahmed has proposed a structure that could be employed based on the principles of blame, where countries would take responsibility for hosting groups of CCDPs (in his work he used the term climate refugees) based on their contributions to CO2 emissions. Those who contributed the most are not necessarily the ones facing the most imminent danger.³⁸⁶ Therefore, Australia, the United States, and Canada, the top three emitters at the time of the study in 2018, would each take on around 10% of those displaced.³⁸⁷ This structure aligns perfectly with mobility justice, as Mimi Sheller states that “people displaced by climate change shall have a right to resettlement in other countries, especially in those countries that contributed most to climate change”.³⁸⁸ With the use of mobility theory’s multicausal complex mobility system view of the world, there is a feasible way forward for a protection regime.

C. Limitations and Critiques

While this definition is proposed based on grounded argument, one would not want to give the impression that it is infallible. As neither a mobility theory nor climate migration expert, the readings of the texts have been interpreted with the best of intentions, but as scholar Andrew Baldwin put it, as a newcomer this is done to “stimulate dialogue”.³⁸⁹ However, if such a contribution proves to be workable, it has the potential to translate into something more tangible.

In this stimulation of dialogue, there is one significant argument against the development of policy aimed at those displaced by climate change, that is a current and contested subject. Climate mobility scholars (the intersection of mobility and climate migration studies) argue against the problematization of migration, which the development of policy can contribute to. Calls for research and policy “reify” climate migration as a

³⁸⁵ Boas et al., “Climate Migration Myths,” 902.

³⁸⁶ Ahmed, “Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?” 7.

³⁸⁷ Ahmed, “Who Takes Responsibility for the Climate Refugees?” 5.

³⁸⁸ Sheller, “Theorizing Mobility Justice,” 28.

³⁸⁹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, “From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities,” 291.

problem.³⁹⁰ This alludes back to the debate over migration as an adaptation strategy, which attempts to reframe movement as a potential solution rather than a problem.³⁹¹ If it is viewed as a problem, it can perpetuate the narrative of migration as “harmful and dysfunctional”.³⁹² This is contextualized within what Giovanni Bettini rightly called “the Western modern (and colonial) biopolitical nexus of mobility-territory-sovereignty” that characterizes much of international global governance today.³⁹³ While a transition away from global dynamics is the ultimate goal, waiting for such a reorganization of thought and practice towards mobility as neutral takes time. During that process, there are still people who require protections and assistance in their mobility, which incentivizes the use of policy.

From Bettini and his counterparts’ perspectives, policy development around “climate migrant/refugees” contributes to the perpetuation of securitization and hinders the future of mobility. It dilutes complex systems of mobility into simplistic narratives that ignore movement as an adaptation strategy.³⁹⁴ Therefore, the formulation of a definition for policy appears counterintuitive, employing mobility justice and theory to create a tool that hinders such endeavors in the long run. However, it is the use of mobility centering in the definition that perhaps avoids the concerns presented by Bettini.

Within the existing system, policy can serve as a problem-solving tool, but it should not negate the pursuit of longer-term solutions or other mobility narratives. By utilizing mobility justice and mobility theory, this definition aims to provide room for these discussions to continue alongside policy development. This perspective ensures that future questions about mobility are not overlooked through the oversimplification of migration, instead accounting for the multidirectional nature of movement, providing a platform for mobility to be explored. In contrast, the securitization narrative is based on linear assumptions of movement that lead to incorrect interpretations of what migration will bring.³⁹⁵ Including the complexity and multicausal nature of movement as this definition

³⁹⁰ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337.

³⁹¹ Black et al., "Migration as Adaptation," 448.

³⁹² Stephen Castles, "Understanding Global Migration: A Social Transformation Perspective," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 10 (2010): 1567, <https://doi-org.libproxy.mta.ca/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489381>.

³⁹³ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337.

³⁹⁴ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337.

³⁹⁵ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

seeks to do can avoid the problematic interpretations of climate displaced persons and what their movement means. Bettini's critique is aimed at a very specific type of policy, so a policy centered on conceptualizations of climate migration that align with mobility may not attract the same critique.

Bettini argues for a future with the "ontological framings of life itself as mobility", where movement would not be problematized.³⁹⁶ However, if mobility is viewed this way, it means we cannot use it in policy or other "ontic" political solutions,³⁹⁷ which means that in the meantime as the systemic changes progress, a protection gap remains.³⁹⁸ The critique of developing climate migration policy ignores the need for problem solving in the interim. Therefore, despite what is a valuable critique, the use of mobility framing in a policy pursuit aims to straddle the need for immediate change and the potential for grand redirections of ontology. Once study of the Anthropocene and mobility's relationship to it progresses, this definition may also become obsolete like those that came before it, but in the meantime, it serves a purpose.

Similar to broader debates on the environment and climate change policy as a whole, it is difficult to balance immediate solutions and long-term systemic change. Drastic changes in global economic, political, and social dynamics will be necessary to combat climate change.³⁹⁹ However, such a transition takes time, and the symptom of displacement is already occurring. Therefore, in the meantime, problem solving solutions are necessary.⁴⁰⁰ Developing short-term solutions with mobility framing in mind attempts to ensure that problem solving measures do not contradict the pursuit of broader mobility justice.

It is also important to note that these interpretations of mobility theory and justice that form the basis of Bettini's critique are separate from those of Mimi Sheller. The proposed definition is based on Sheller's conception of mobility justice due to her

³⁹⁶ Bettini, "And Yet It Moves!" 337; Stojanov et al., "Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation," 210; Chandler, "Forum 2: The Migrant Climate," 386.

³⁹⁷ "ontic" refers to a physical existence and within this context, a tangible solution. See Chandler, "Forum 2," and Ainsworth, "What is Ontic Structural Realism?"

³⁹⁸ Chandler, "Forum 2: The Migrant Climate," 386.

³⁹⁹ Paul Wapner, "The Importance of Critical Environmental Studies in the New Environmentalism," *Global Environmental Politics* 8, no. 1 (2008): 7, DOI: 10.1162/glep.2008.8.1.6.

⁴⁰⁰ Wapner, "The Importance of Critical Environmental Studies in the New Environmentalism," 9, 10.

distinction in the field and role in its establishment.⁴⁰¹ She does not problematize the development of policy in the pursuit of mobility justice.⁴⁰² Bettini's critique is therefore based on an alternate reading of mobility theory. Consequently, Bettini's critique does not apply to this definition. However, it does introduce important considerations about the future of mobilities research and how it aligns with climate migration studies, and therefore it would be foolish to completely disregard his concerns.

III. Concluding Remarks

A. *Where We Stand and Where to Go Next*

So where does the international agenda currently stand in terms of the most recent action and policy surrounding climate migration? There are several moves in the last decade that signal a potential shift in international discourse.

In 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, with recognition that new global compacts were necessary to address migration, and that the prevalence of environmentally induced migration meant that "climate action must be part of any meaningful agreement on refugees or migrants".⁴⁰³ The ruling led to the recognition of climate migrants as a legitimate group in the 2018 *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* under Objective 2 which is to "minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin".⁴⁰⁴ The compact urges signatories to enact preventative measures to mitigate migration and to support those who will have to migrate regardless of adaptation strategies.⁴⁰⁵

The UN Sustainable Development Goals provide an outline for how to address climate migration, but without a legally binding framework, the Brookings Institute

⁴⁰¹ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 290.

⁴⁰² Sheller, "Theorizing Mobility Justice," 27.

⁴⁰³ Apap, "The Concept of 'Climate Refugee,'" 2; UN General Assembly, *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, A/RES/71/1 (October 3, 2016), https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_1.pdf.

⁴⁰⁴ UN General Assembly, *Draft Outcome Document of the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*, A/CONF.231/3 (July 30, 2018), A/CONF.231/3 - E - A/CONF.231/3 -Desktop (undocs.org).

⁴⁰⁵ Podesta, "The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees."

proposes that the United States' taking a leadership role in multilateral agreements would lead to progress on climate migration policy.⁴⁰⁶ In February of 2021, the presidential administration of Joe Biden recognized climate migration in the "Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration," suggesting that the U.S. may fill that role, and at the very least will contribute to creating a framework for international policy.⁴⁰⁷ These policy developments could be the foundation of the next tangible steps in the climate migration narrative.

In terms of the theoretical progressions of the climate migration narrative, mobility theory provides an important perspective for future discussions. By engaging with the global dynamics that have contributed to climate change, the climate migration narrative can move away from being primarily a Eurocentric concept. Instead, it is in the best interest of the discourse to move towards Indigenous and post-colonial contributions as the best suited for achieving mobility justice in the context of climate change.⁴⁰⁸ Indigenous and local knowledge systems provide important resources that scholars and policymakers alike should defer to. Involvement and consultation with affected populations through these knowledge systems will enrich the discussion and provide invaluable perspectives.⁴⁰⁹ Policy should not be formulated at a distance from those who it seeks to benefit. Future research directions and the next steps of policy development require taking on these perspectives.

B. Concluding Remarks

The definition proposed in this project is only a first step, albeit a version of a first step that many have attempted before. It proposes a way to categorize those displaced by climate change related causes to serve as the basis for future policy and solution building. As populations are displaced, it has the potential to contribute to their protection.

⁴⁰⁶ Podesta, "The Climate Crisis, Migration, and Refugees."

⁴⁰⁷ Executive Order 14013, "Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration," Code of Federal Regulations (February 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/executive-order-on-rebuilding-and-enhancing-programs-to-resettle-refugees-and-planning-for-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-migration/>.

⁴⁰⁸ Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe, "From Climate Migration to Anthropocene Mobilities," 292.

⁴⁰⁹ Boas et al., "Climate Migration Myths," 902.

The importance of intersectionality and multicausality have been highlighted in this pursuit through the use of a mobility theory lens. This use of mobilities studies is only one application of a broad and ontologically rich field. Going forward, mobility justice can and should be used in the study of migration. Based on current discussions, coming from Giovanni Bettini, Andrew Baldwin, and other innovative scholars, there is vast potential for the application of mobility to both climate migration and all human movement.

To reiterate, Climate Change Displaced Persons refers to those impacted by climate change-related causes that also lack the capacity to adapt. Without acceptable adaptive strategies, they must leave their homes to seek alternative means of survival. The number of people who will fall under this category of movement will likely increase in the coming years as climate change impacts manifest fully. This definition can be used to better understand the numerical scale of such movement and, in the interim, also serve as a tool to protect CCDPs. This definition provides an avenue for further research, a necessary pursuit to continue improving international responses to climate change and its human impacts. New approaches, new perspectives, and learning from the past will be essential to confronting one of the defining problems of this generation and many to come.

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