
Migration and Climate Change

Bridging the gap between research, policy development and lived experience.



5TH OCT 2022
12:00-2:00 PM
FREE WEBINAR

2022 Seminar Series
by ACH and MMB



ACH

Migration
Mobilities
Bristol

Migration & Climate Change

Bridging the gap between research,
policy development and lived
experience.



2022 Seminar Series
by ACH and MMB



Chaired by Ann Singleton, Reader
in Migration Policy, Migration
Mobilities Research Group,
University of Bristol



Dr Laura DeVito, Senior Research
Fellow in Geography and
Environmental Management at
UWE



Dr Alice Venn, Lecturer in law,
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Policy wrap-up by David Jepson,
Policy Advisor at ACH



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Climate change impacts and migration patterns

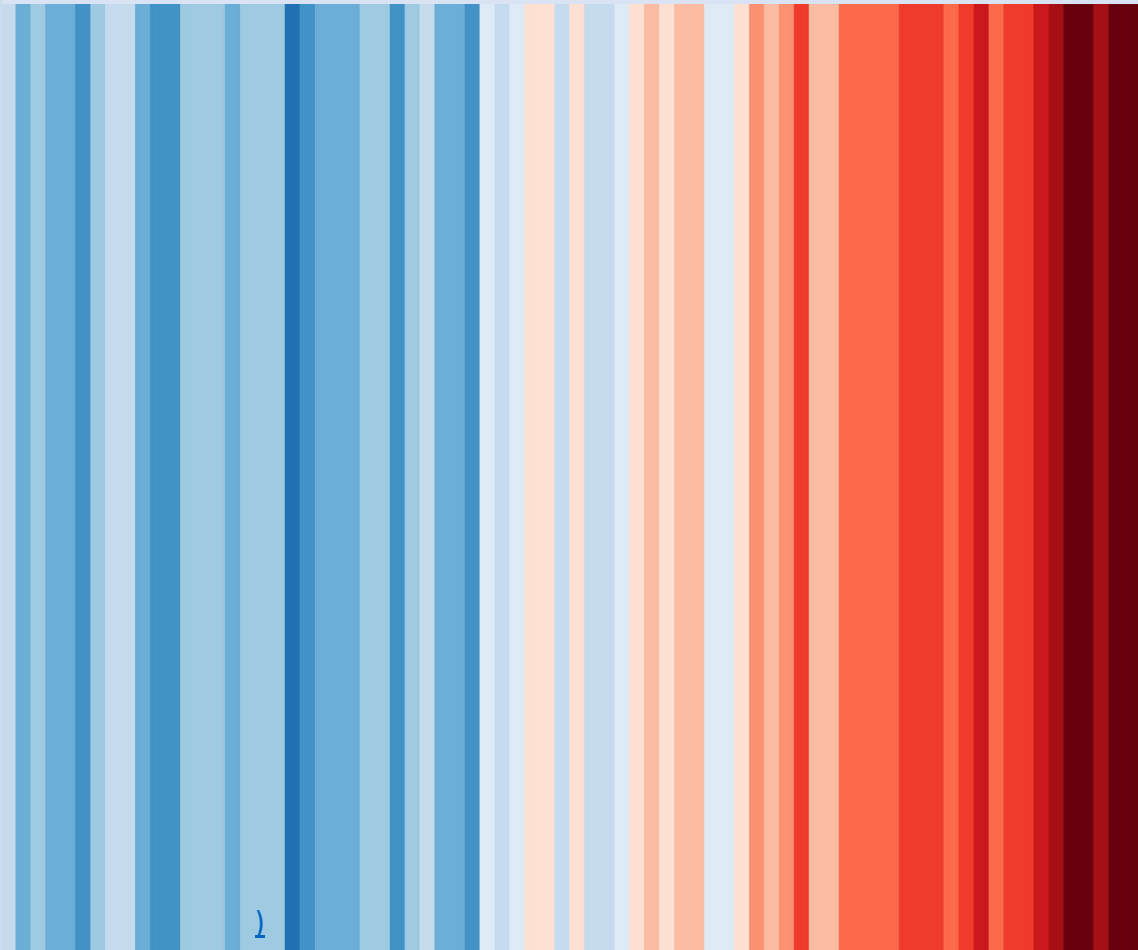
Outline

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Impacts of climate change and pressures on natural resources (e.g. water, land food security)
- Exploring the links between climate change and migration
- Policy implications: adaptation, mitigation or both?
- National regional and local actions and different actors

Climate change is a long-term shift in global or regional climate patterns

Warming stripes for 1850-2020 using the WMO annual global temperature dataset

[Warming stripes | Climate Lab Book \(climate-lab-book.ac.uk\)](https://climate-lab-book.ac.uk/warming-stripes/)



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

Approved Version

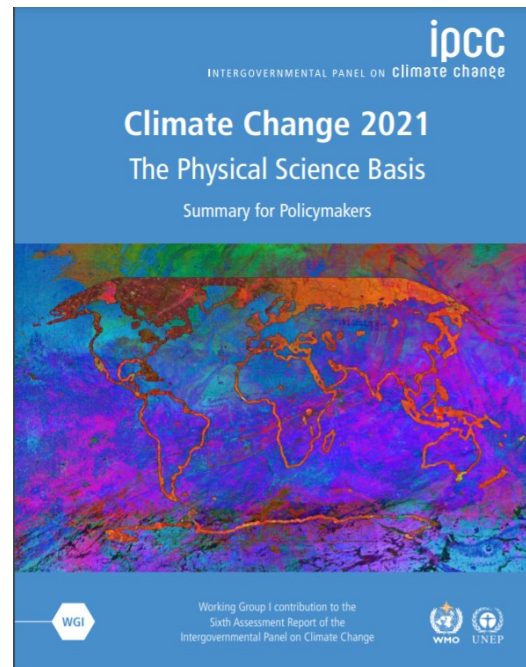
Summary for Policymakers

IPCC AR6 WGI

A. The Current State of the Climate

A.1 It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.

{2.2, 2.3, Cross-Chapter Box 2.3, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8, 5.2, 5.3, 6.4, 7.3, 8.3, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5, 9.6, Cross-Chapter Box 9.1} (Figure SPM.1, Figure SPM.2)



https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM.pdf

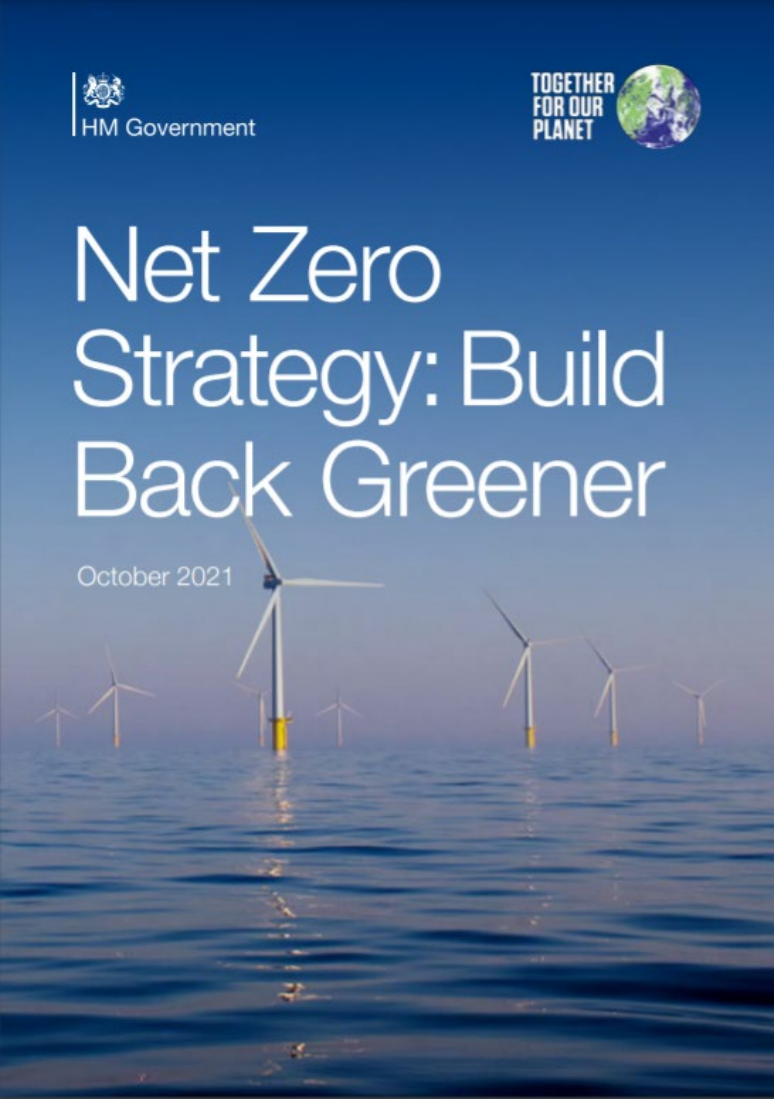
The two faces of climate change action



Mitigation

- **Refers to efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases or to remove these gases from the atmosphere**
- The focus is primarily on reducing the causes of climate change, i.e. GHG emissions, in areas like:
 - Transport (e.g. sustainable transport and active travel)
 - Energy and heating (e.g. renewable energy; domestic heating; energy for manufacturing, construction, etc.)
 - Energy efficiency (e.g. minimizing heat loss)
 - Waste management (e.g. avoiding waste burning through reuse and recycling)
 - ...

Net Zero goals and strategies



Adaptation

- **Adaptation means anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate actions to prevent or minimize the damage they can cause, or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise**
 - The focus is on reducing the effects of climate change in areas like:
 - Water risks (e.g. floods, water scarcity, sea-level rising, saline intrusion), e.g. through flood barriers
 - More frequent and more extreme weather events (heatwaves, severe storms, etc.) e.g. early warning systems
 - Resilient infrastructure and green spaces (e.g. green infrastructure, GI)

Examples of GI as adaptation measures around the world

Floating Treatment Wetlands, Johannesburg, South Africa



Firs Farm Project, Greater London (UK)



Eco-town, Bicester (UK)



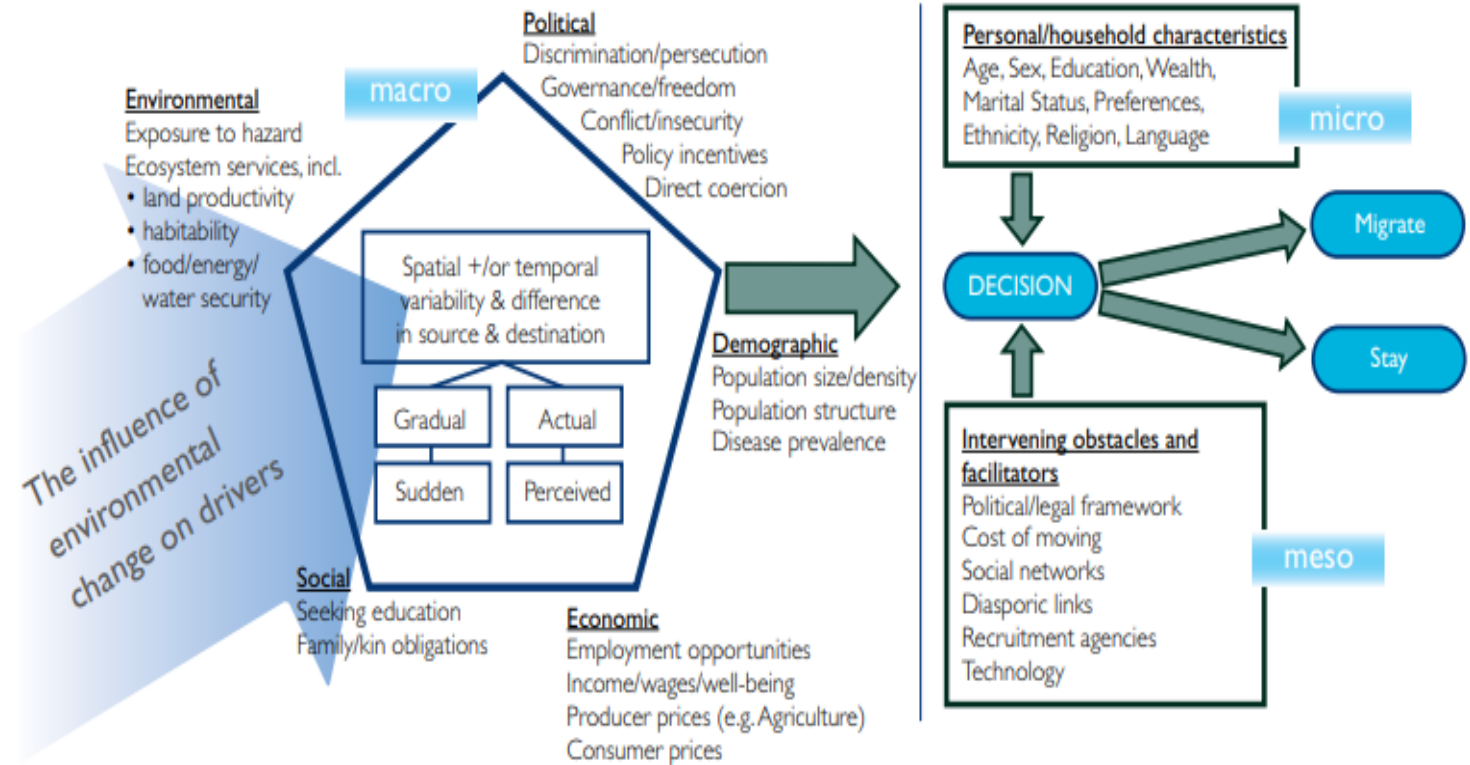
Sponge city, Wuhan, China

Impacts of climate change and pressures on food security

- Warmer temperatures and climate variability have altered growing seasons, reducing crop yields and freshwater availability, increasing tree mortality (Mbow et al. 2019)
- Climate change is affecting food security (availability, access and utilization), particularly in many lower-latitude regions and drylands, as well as mountain regions and low-elevation coastal zones (Mbow et al. 2019)
- This has a strong gender and socioeconomic dimension (see e.g. Agarwal 2018)
- Adaptation interventions need to be context-specific, participatory, appropriate and inclusive to redress climate and environmental injustices (see e.g. De Vito et al. 2022)

Exploring the links between climate change and migration

- Climate change affect and can be coupled with key socioeconomic, political, cultural factors (e.g. agricultural productivity) but this does not necessarily mean that migration will occur (e.g. Ferris 2020)
- Different triggers can lead to different responses in different areas
- It is useful to look at migration in the context of climate change as its role is likely to increase in the future (GO Science, 2011)



Is migration a last resort adaptation response?

- Sudden-onset events vs slow-onset processes (e.g. hurricanes vs coastal erosion) can influence whether migration is temporary or permanent, voluntary or involuntary, internal or international (European Commission, 2013).
- Rural-urban migration is increasing in the context of environmental degradation. Certain population may be also 'trapped' in highly vulnerable situations (Go Science, 2011)
- Governments and local authorities may stop maintaining flood defences against sea-level rising leaving coastal communities at risks of relocation (e.g Fairbourne, Wales)
- Cost/benefits of relocation programmes are difficult to assess and there is the need to monitor the impacts on relocated communities (European Commission, 2013)

Back to climate action and policy:
What should we prioritise?

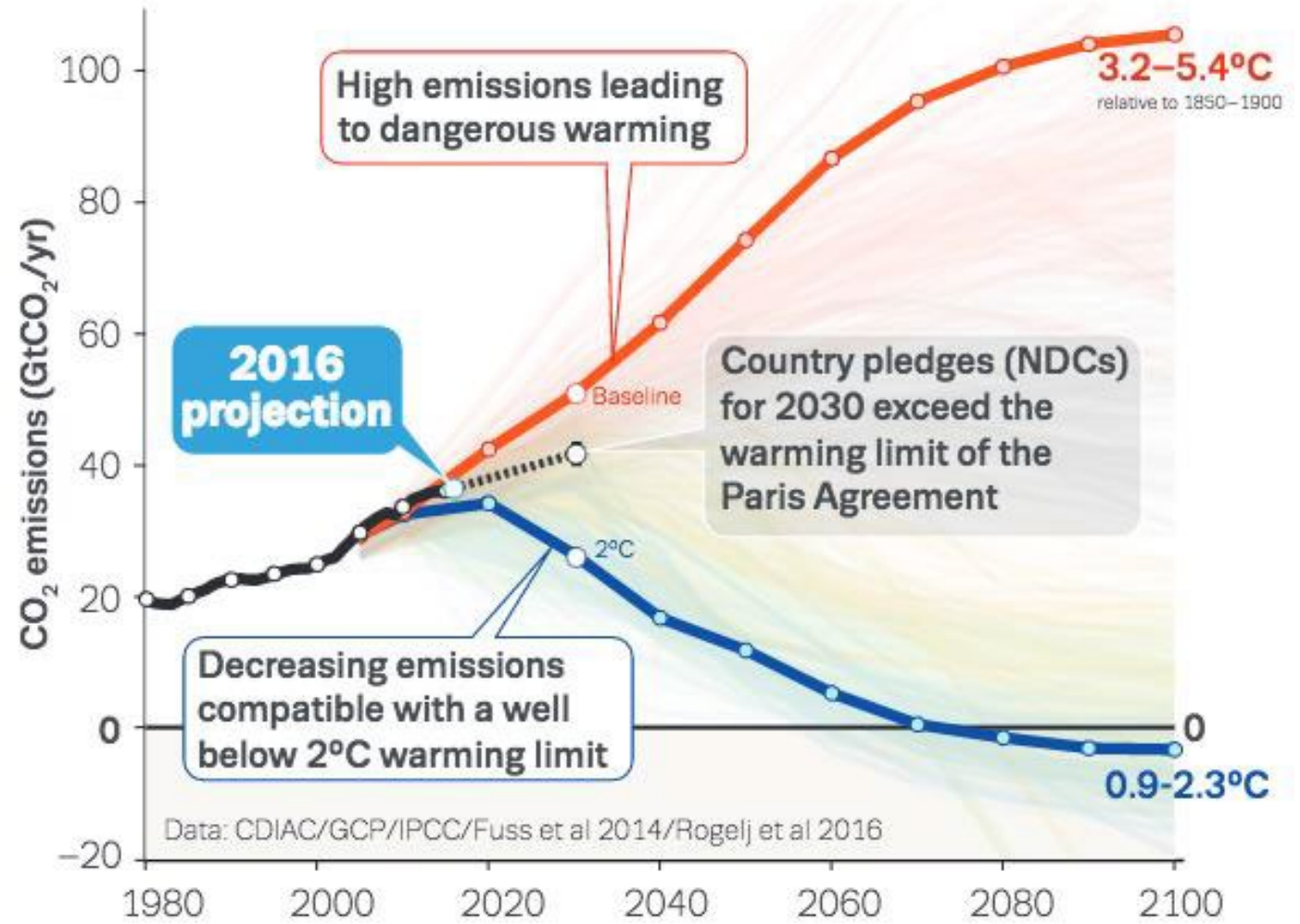
The importance of adaptation

- Adaptation action is crucial for building resilience, protect critical infrastructure and for food and water security
- Adaptation actions can be short term, but they also need to tackle long-term trends and contribute to achieving sustainable development goals and targets
- The UK climate Change Committee (2021) stated:

*'The gap between the level of risk we face and the level of adaptation underway has **widened**... the UK has the capacity and the resources to respond effectively to these risks, yet it has not done so...Government must lead that action' (2021, p. 11)'*

*'The UK is **less** well prepared for climate change now than it was five years ago' (2021, p. 57)*

The importance of mitigation



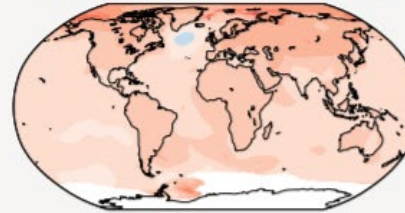
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

With every increment of global warming, changes get larger in regional mean temperature, precipitation and soil moisture

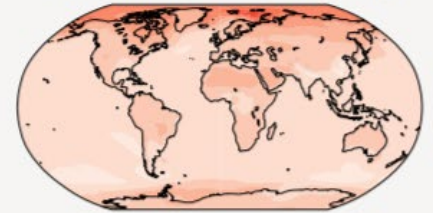
a) Annual mean temperature change (°C) at 1 °C global warming

Warming at 1 °C affects all continents and is generally larger over land than over the oceans in both observations and models. Across most regions, observed and simulated patterns are consistent.

Observed change per 1 °C global warming



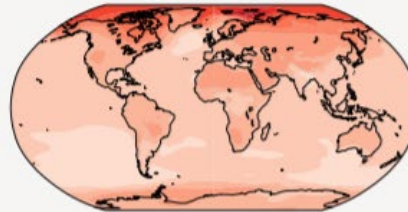
Simulated change at 1 °C global warming



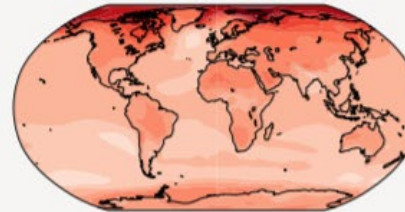
b) Annual mean temperature change (°C) relative to 1850-1900

Across warming levels, land areas warm more than oceans, and the Arctic and Antarctica warm more than the tropics.

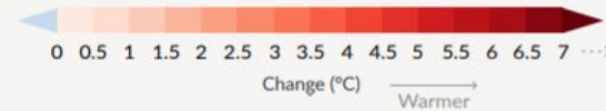
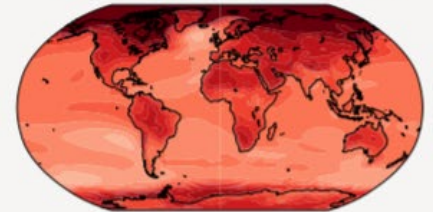
Simulated change at 1.5 °C global warming



Simulated change at 2 °C global warming



Simulated change at 4 °C global warming



To recap

- Climate change is a global problem in terms of emissions but its effects are experienced locally and regionally
- Climate change interacts with other socioeconomic, political and cultural factors that may lead (or force!) people to move (or to stay!) but the relation is not straightforward
- Migration can be seen as a last-resort adaptation action
- However, adaptation should be primarily anticipatory, participatory and aimed at increasing resilience
- Climate change policies *do* work, but we don't implement them enough! Actions can be taken by national governments, local authorities, communities, industries to work towards net zero and adaptation goals.

Key references

- Mbow, C., C. Rosenzweig, L.G. Barioni, T.G. Benton, M. Herrero, M. Krishnapillai, E. Liwenga, P. Pradhan, M.G. Rivera-Ferre, T. Sapkota, F.N. Tubiello, Y. Xu, 2019: Food Security. In: *Climate Change and Land: an IPCC special report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems* [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, E. Calvo Buendia, V. Masson-Delmotte, H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, P. Zhai, R. Slade, S. Connors, R. van Diemen, M. Ferrat, E. Haughey, S. Luz, S. Neogi, M. Pathak, J. Petzold, J. Portugal Pereira, P. Vyas, E. Huntley, K. Kissick, M. Belkacemi, J. Malley, (eds.)]. In press. [Retrieved at: [Chapter 5 : Food Security — Special Report on Climate Change and Land \(ipcc.ch\)](#)]
- Agarwal, B. (2018). Gender equality, food security and the sustainable development goals. *Current opinion in environmental sustainability*, 34, 26-32.
- De Vito, L., Staddon, C., Zuniga-Teran, A. A., Gerlak, A. K., Schoeman, Y., Hart, A., & Booth, G. (2022). Aligning green infrastructure to sustainable development: A geographical contribution to an ongoing debate. *Area*, 54(2), 242-251.
- Ferris, E. (2020) Research on climate change and migration where are we and where are we going? *Migration Studies*. Volume 8, Issue 4, pp. 612–625
- Government Office for Science (2011), *Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change*, Final Project Report, London [retrieved at: [Migration and global environmental change: future challenges and opportunities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)]



How international law can respond to climate-induced displacement

Dr. Kathryn Allinson and Dr. Alice Venn
University of Bristol Law School





Are climate
refugees really
refugees?

Article 1A refugee Convention

Persecution

For a Convention reason


Temporality



Do we need a Climate-Change Displacement Treaty?

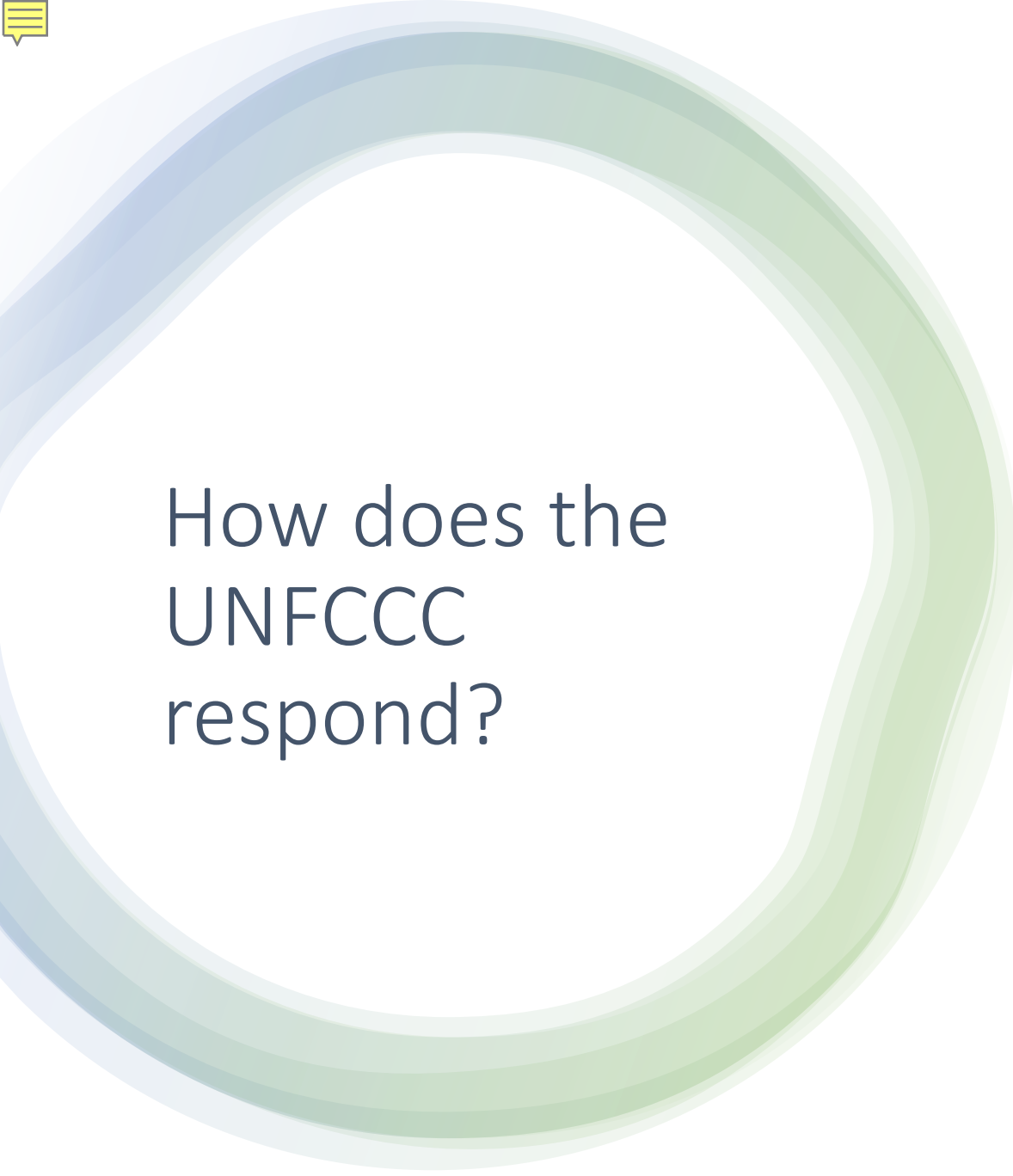

Challenges:

- Causation – must link harm (displacement) with climate change
- Restricts who is protected – only ‘climate’ refugees – exacerbates inequalities
- It will not fix the problem
- Political will and appetite
- Movement will be gradual and localized – regional, rather than international responses
- Focusses attention away from where it is needed:
 - local and regional arrangements
 - legal pathways for labour migration
 - Adaptation and resilience building




How can we protect climate migrants?

- Increase legal pathways to migration: visa liberalisation, bilateral and multilateral free movement and labour mobility agreements, humanitarian visas
- Existing binding obligations:
 - Human Rights Law – right to private and family life, adequate standard of living, right to life, dignity
 - Complementary protection – non-refoulement obligations
- Soft law instruments for international cooperation
 - Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants
 - The Guiding Principles on Internally Displaced Persons
 - The Nansen Initiative
 - The Sendai Framework
- Legal accountability?
- Responsibility sharing... the greatest emitters are not those that will face the greatest impacts



How does the UNFCCC respond?

- Focus primarily on mitigation and adaptation
- Shift with the establishment of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage at COP19 in 2013.
- COP21 saw the Task Force on Displacement established under auspices of the WIM.
- Task Force focused on facilitating cooperation on climate migration and displacement, developing recommendations.
- No binding provisions for climate migration within the treaties.
- Only reference appears in Paris Agreement preamble.



What role can International Human Rights Law play?

- Procedural & substantive rights
- Capacity building e.g. OHCHR activities
- Specialist reporting & monitoring e.g. UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change
- UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies – Committees contributing to development of legal doctrine
- Influence the development of regional & national responses to climate displacement



How can UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies respond?

- Monitoring & reporting
- Inter-state complaints
- Individual complaints
- UN Human Rights Committee: *Ioane Teitiota v New Zealand* – UN Human Rights Committee Communication 2020 No. 2728/2016
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: *Sachi et al v Argentina et al* - Communication Nos. 104/2019, 105/2019, 106/2019, 107/2019, 108/2019
- UN Human Rights Committee: *Daniel Billy et al. v Australia* – Communication No. 3624/2019



Conclusions

- People displaced by climate change may not qualify for refugee status
- Development of a climate change displacement treaty faces a number of challenges and could divert attention away from where it is needed
- Focus on increased legal pathways underpinned by human rights protections
- Potential of international human rights law to plug gaps in protection for climate displaced people.
- International responses e.g. by UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies can influence the development of law and policy responses at the regional & national levels.

Refugees and Climate Change

The impact of climate change on refugees living in the UK

Tom Dixon

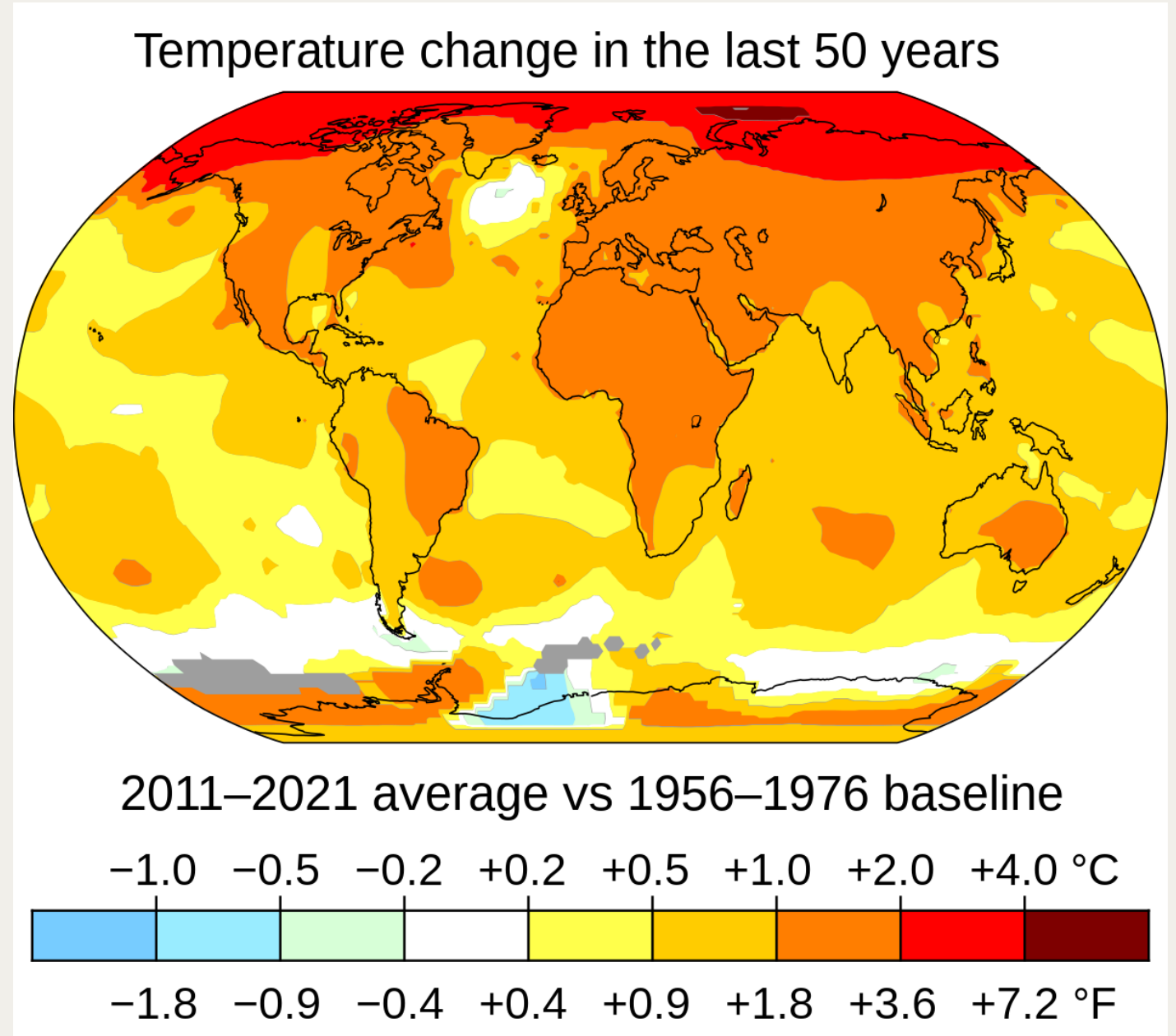
Research and Project Lead

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ACH

Climate change is reality!

- The impacts of climate change can be abstract for UK majority
- For our refugee service users climate change is an immediate reality
- It has and continues to impact peoples lives



Current climate change impacts

- Increased food competition
- Difficulty accessing clean water
- Desertification
- Famine
- Land degradation

All of the above create and exacerbate violence and conflict, which ultimately forces people to flee their homes.

Additionally, friends and family of our refugee service users remaining in their country of origin are being impacted.

Response(s) to climate change in the UK

- Tendency to place responsibility on individual (in)action.
- Carbon footprint of ACH residents 70% lower than that of the Bristol average (according to Centre for Sustainable Energy report).
- Those who are contributing the least to climate change are suffering most from its impacts (both in the UK and countries of origin!)
- Is it fair to ask these individuals to give up more?

Our approach

- Working with partners as part of £2.1 million Community Climate Action project.
- Empowering refugees to share their stories.
- Equitable access to the benefits of the green economy.
- Supporting refugee and migrant-led small business to consider their climate impact.





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