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Obstacles to Action on ‘Climate Migration’: A Story of Persistent Analytical and Political Ambiguity

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I. Introduction

The academic literature on ‘climate migration’ often assumes that its subject is an issue of widespread interest and concern. As one recent editorial puts it: ‘There is no question that climate change will impact human migration.’¹ Somewhat more carefully, McLeman and colleagues note that ‘there is general agreement that migration is one of a range of outcomes that may emerge as households and communities cope with and adapt to climatic risks and hazards.’² Furthermore, scholars note that some policy-makers – particularly at international organisations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and involved in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations³ – are expressing concern about the potential emergence of new migratory patterns raised in such assessments. These same policy-makers also seek to develop and disseminate expert guidance on how to respond to ‘climate migration’ as a distinct phenomenon. More broadly, Desai and colleagues identify ‘a rapidly growing demand for comprehensive risk assessments that include displacement and its associated costs to inform humanitarian

¹ ‘From Migration to Mobility’ (2019) 9 *Nature Climate Change* 895, available at doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0657-8.

² Robert McLeman and others, ‘Conceptual Framing to Link Climate Risk Assessments and Climate-Migration Scholarship’ (2021) 165 *Climatic Change* 24, available at doi.org/10.1007/s10584-021-03056-6.

³ See Sarah Louise Nash, ‘Knowing Human Mobility in the Context of Climate Change’ (2018) 4 *movements. Journal for Critical Migration and Border Regime Studies*, available at movements-journal.org/issues/06.wissen/04.nash--knowing-human-mobility-in-the-context-of-climate-change-the-self-perpetuating-circle-of-research-policy-and-knowledge-production.html; Marine Denis, ‘IOM and UNHCR Beyond Their Mandates: Legal and Administrative Functions in the Protection of Environmentally Displaced People’ (2018) 16 *Medzinarodne Vzťahy* (Journal of International Relations) 68.

response and national planning and coordination,⁴ while Naser argues that ‘the foundations of a global consensus on climate-related mobility have been built’⁵ and that ‘a slow-moving but dynamic, step-by-step process of international policy development on climate-related mobility’⁶ is ongoing.

Regardless of whether these claims are well founded or not, it is arguable that they nevertheless pass over cases where policy stakeholders have engaged in ‘climate migration’ debates only to subsequently withdraw. In this chapter, I re-evaluate the apparent obviousness and self-evidence of ‘climate migration’, pointing to the many instances where it has been discussed, debated, or studied without this leading to any concrete action. My analysis is rooted in the perspectives of French stakeholders who have attempted to develop policies and projects to tackle ‘climate migration’. I find that, by and large, interviewees have failed to ‘operationalise’ the concept.

Furthermore, I argue that these failures are commonplace. Indeed, one of this chapter’s main contributions is to highlight the many places where the ‘climate migration’ concept and its analogues have not found purchase. The cases I recount from the French context illustrate the real-world workings of well known, persistent, and perhaps insurmountable analytical and political ambiguities that thus appear as inherent features of ‘climate migration’ debates. Ultimately, this chapter raises the question of what *use* these debates serve once their limitations are acknowledged. I therefore conclude by examining one promising ‘use’ of the ambiguous ‘climate migration’ concept. Using France as a case study, I show its potential to serve as an entry point for deeper conversations about who can and should be held responsible for the negative consequences of both climate change and migration, while noting obstacles that need to be overcome for these conversations to happen.

II. Methods and Perspectives

The analysis in this chapter is based on interviews with French stakeholders, triangulated with document analysis and a corpus-driven analysis of ‘climate migration’ media coverage (1,660 articles from a wide range of French national and regional newspapers spanning the years 1986–2020). Between September 2019 and January 2021, I interviewed fifty stakeholders, spanning a range of stakeholder groups. The first major group was civil servants, primarily within the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). The second major group was NGO representatives, many of whom were participants in an NGO network called Des Ponts

⁴Bina Desai and others, ‘Addressing the Human Cost in a Changing Climate’ (2021) 372(6548) *Science* 1284, available at doi.org/10.1126/science.abh4283.

⁵Mostafa M Naser, *The Emerging Global Consensus on Climate Change and Human Mobility* (Abingdon, Routledge 2022) 2.

⁶*ibid* 86.

Pas des Murs (DPPDM, meaning 'Bridges, not Walls') that held working group discussions on the subject of 'environmental migrations' between 2019 and 2022. In addition, I also interviewed small samples of politicians, journalists, and researchers.⁷

This choice of a national level study was motivated by the need to understand how 'climate migration' debates are contextualised and situated in a setting different from the international expert negotiations usually studied. In an article concerned with 'some of the mechanisms by which [discourse on human mobility] has emerged and is being perpetuated', Nash describes a 'self-perpetuating circle of research, policy, and knowledge production'⁸ that dominates academic and policy discussions. The typical perspectives on 'climate migration' within this 'UN bubble', are, she adds, often so self-referential as to deserve the diagnosis of 'knowledge narcissism'.⁹ In this context, it seems worthwhile to explore how 'climate migration' is discussed by other stakeholders. Given that international negotiations have yet to produce any international agreement or initiative for the protection of people displaced specifically by climate change, it also seems worthwhile to ask what potential role there is for stakeholders outside the UN bubble that currently dominates discussions.

The perspectives related in this chapter are therefore those of stakeholders with a potential role to play in primarily French 'climate migration' discourses, projects, and policies: as development practitioners, civil society actors for local and international solidarity, and knowledge producers. For the most part, these stakeholders are outside the UN bubble, though some engage with it in passing. What this chapter does not provide, however, are perspectives from communities and individuals with direct experiential knowledge of why people decide to migrate and what it might mean to be a 'climate migrant'. This may be because they themselves are migrants, or have decided not to migrate, and can therefore speak to their own decision, its causes, and its consequences. This may also be because they have been individually or collectively designated as actual or potential 'climate migrants' by actors in international 'climate migration' discourses – a designation they may embrace or reject.¹⁰ Some stakeholders, NGO representatives in

⁷The analysis proposed here is based on work carried out in the context of my PhD thesis: David Durand-Delacré, 'Epistemic Mobilities of Climate Migration: A French Case Study' (Doctoral thesis, Cambridge University 2022), available at doi.org/10.17863/CAM.93511.

⁸Nash (n 3) 69.

⁹ibid 75.

¹⁰See, for example, Carol Farbotko, 'Identifying as a "Climate Migrant": Implications for Law, Policy, and Research', ch 8 in this volume; Alex Arnall and Uma Kothari, 'Challenging Climate Change and Migration Discourse: Different Understandings of Timescale and Temporality in the Maldives' (2015) 31 *Global Environmental Change* 199, available at doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.07.001; Papa Faye, Jesse Ribot, and Matthew Turner, 'Climate change is not the Cause, Migration is not the Problem: Local Representation and Precarious Young Farmers Leaving Senegal' (2019) *Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy Research Report No 14*, available at perma.cc/MZM9-AYYN; Celia McMichael and others, 'Rising Seas, Immobilities, and Translocality in Small Island States: Case Studies from Fiji and Tuvalu' (2021) 43 *Population and Environment* 82, available at doi.org/10.1007/s11111-021-00378-6.

particular, do refer to exchanges they have had with international partners and project beneficiaries. I highlight these wherever possible, but these are second-hand accounts at best. The perspectives relayed in this chapter should therefore be understood to reflect the points of view of French elite professionals working in a specific set of NGOs, international development administrations, and parts of academia and print media.

III. Confronting the Cacophonous Proliferation and Categorical Emptiness of ‘Climate Migration’ Terminologies

‘The field of climate migration,’ Nicholson points out, ‘is most notable for the cacophony of terms and labels, and the essential nebulosity of both its subject and purpose.’¹¹ The list of available terms is long and varied. Newcomers to ‘climate migration’ debates need to choose at least two terms: one referring to the causal driver (eg climate) and another to describe the resulting movement of people (eg migration). The options on both sides of this equation – cause and effect – are many, and the combinations exponentially greater. For example, Nicholson counts seventeen different terms in a single edited book on the subject,¹² which for him is the sign of ‘a semantic uncertainty that suggests a field ill at ease with itself.’¹³ This diversity suggests that terms remain contentious, never consensual. What’s more, this terminological proliferation is compounded by a second challenge. Terms like ‘climate migration,’ ‘environmental displacement,’ or ‘eco-refugees’ are often used in vague and interchangeable ways. In many cases, they lack a precise definition. This is a well-established problem, diagnosed for example by Venturini and colleagues in their study of a corpus of web pages gathered via Google searches. They found that terms like ‘climate refugee’ or ‘environmental migrant’ were often used synonymously, emptying them of their technical meanings. They called this phenomenon ‘categorical emptiness.’¹⁴

Faced with the proliferation of terms and vagueness of definitions, some academics argue for developing common, consensual definitions for terms and typologies as a necessary condition for ‘climate migration’ policy development. Indeed, there is a strong case for (social) scientists to clarify the analytical

¹¹ Calum TM Nicholson, ‘Climate Change and the Politics of Causal Reasoning: The Case of Climate Change and Migration’ (2014) 180(2) *The Geographical Journal* 151, available at doi.org/10.1111/geoj.12062.

¹² Calum TM Nicholson, Review of ‘Climate Change and Displacement: Multidisciplinary Perspectives’, edited by Jane McAdam (2012) 25(4) *Journal of Refugee Studies* 584.

¹³ Nicholson (n 11) 154.

¹⁴ Tommaso Venturini, François Gemenne, and Marta Severo, ‘Des migrants et des mots: Une analyse numérique des débats médiatiques sur les migrations et l’environnement’ (2012) 88 *Cultures & conflits* 133, available at doi.org/10.4000/conflits.18594.

definitions they use, so that their work can be properly evaluated, compared, and generalised.¹⁵ In this vein, Venturini and others deplore 'the absence of a clearly defined typology' because it 'considerably hinders the search for a definition' from which to 'establish quantified estimations and develop adequate public policies'.¹⁶ What's more, as Blake and colleagues argue: 'defining climate migration can be a challenging task but is necessary for policymakers'.¹⁷ The proliferation of terms and the resulting ambiguities are not just obstacles to academic knowledge creation, but also hinder any project or policy development that could rely on such knowledge. Who, for instance, is the target population? What, indeed, should interventions focus on? Ferris also encapsulates this view when she argues that 'it is still too early to deal with the terminology issue ... but the sooner a consensus emerges, the better'¹⁸ for 'climate migration' policy development and project design.

Against this, French stakeholders' perspectives reveal that precise definitions and a consensus on terms are neither likely nor, perhaps, even desirable. Most stakeholders, when first encountering 'climate migration' as a concept, attempt to define the 'right' terms. One NGO representative first decided to join the DPPDM's discussions on 'environmental migration' because 'the words we were using were very vague, it wasn't very clear between climatic, environmental, migrants, refugees, displaced persons, all of that'.¹⁹ They wondered which terms to use. AFD interviewees shared a similar intention. One interviewee in the migration unit was planning a meeting of representatives from several AFD departments, together with other government administrations, academics, and journalists. Their objective was to see if it was possible to overcome 'the cacophony of messages'²⁰ on 'climate migration' and achieve some minimal degree of coordination around the language in use. Ultimately, neither the DPPDM nor the AFD succeeded in overcoming these problems of cacophony and vagueness. As the remainder of this section demonstrates, they were frustrated in their attempts at clarity and consensus because any term chosen will be deeply entangled with legal, ethical, and political considerations. Not only does this lead to significant disagreements between stakeholders about the 'right term', but which term is deemed most appropriate by any stakeholder is also, by extension, liable to vary across contexts and over time, depending on shifting political objectives, ethical values, and communication strategies.

¹⁵Lori M Hunter, Jessie K Luna, and Rachel M Norton, 'Environmental Dimensions of Migration' (2015) 41 *Annual Review of Sociology* 377, 390–91, available at doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112223.

¹⁶Venturini, Gemenne, and Severo (n 14) 151.

¹⁷Jonathan Blake, Aaron Clark-Ginsberg, and Jay Balagna, *Addressing Climate Migration: A Review of National Policy Approaches* (RAND Corporation 2021) 5, available at doi.org/10.7249/PEA1085-1.

¹⁸Elizabeth Ferris, 'Research on Climate Change and Migration Where Are We and Where Are We Going?' (2020) 8(4) *Migration Studies* 612, 619, available at doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnaa028.

¹⁹Interview, solidarity NGO representative (Bizi!), phone, February 2020.

²⁰Interview, civil servant (AFD migration), Paris, January 2020.

A. Example 1: ‘Climate’ or ‘Environment’?

One good example of this concerns the term designating the cause of migration, which is often posed as a choice between ‘climate’ and ‘environment’.²¹ Over the past three decades, French stakeholders have adopted one or the other for a variety of reasons. When the topic of ‘climate migration’ first took hold in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the preferred terminology tended to be ‘environmental refugees’ or ‘ecological refugees’.²² Though climate change sometimes featured in academic discussions, it was then treated as just one factor among others, including natural disasters, deforestation, pollution, industrial accidents, or displacement caused by large infrastructure developments, such as dams. In the press, the term ‘ecological refugees’ recurred with reference to the Chernobyl catastrophe. It was in the middle to the end of the first decade of this century that ‘climate’ became the preferred causal term. At the time, Donatien Garnier, the co-author of *Réfugiés Climatiques*,²³ thought that ‘environmental refugees ... was too broad, we needed something that was more cutting.’²⁴ Thus the focus on ‘climate’ provided a more focused narrative, in tune with rising and contested concern about climate change at the time. Today, the pendulum is swinging back. If there is one terminological point NGO members of the DPPDM network agree on, it is that ‘to think only in terms of climate change is maybe a bit reductive.’²⁵ Meeting in late 2019 to discuss ‘environmental migrations’, they collectively concluded that identifying environmental change as the causal factor was preferable.²⁶ This is because it allows the DPPDM to touch on causes of migration that do not neatly fit under ‘climate change’ but which are of central concern to the DPPDM: problems like pollution, extractivism, and global economic inequalities.²⁷

B. Example 2: ‘Refugee’, ‘Migrant’, or ‘Displaced Person’?

A second useful example is that of ‘climate refugee’ (*réfugié climatique*). Though much used in the press and by NGOs from the mid-2000s, the term is now widely

²¹ See, for example, Des Ponts Pas des Murs, ‘Les migrations environnementales pour les nul.le.s: Etat des lieux des réflexions sur les migrations environnementales du point de vue de la solidarité internationale’ (Des Ponts Pas des Murs 2019) 7, available at perma.cc/CY9Z-58JA.

²² Christel Cournil, ‘Les réfugiés écologiques: quelle(s) protection(s), quel(s) statut(s)?’ (2006) 4 *Revue du droit public et de la science politique* 1035; Patrick Gonin and Véronique Lassailly-Jacob, ‘Les réfugiés de l’environnement: Une nouvelle catégorie de migrants forcés?’ (2002) 18(2) *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 139, available at doi.org/10/fj2cnv.

²³ Jean Jouzel and others, *Réfugiés climatiques* (Paris, Infolio 2007).

²⁴ Interview, journalist (Donatien Garnier), Skype, October 2019.

²⁵ Interview, migration NGO representative (La Cimade), Skype, April 2020.

²⁶ Interview, DPPDM network coordinator, Paris, January 2020.

²⁷ Elizabeth Lunstrum, Pablo Bose, and Anna Zalik, ‘Environmental Displacement: The Common Ground of Climate Change, Extraction and Conservation’ (2015) 48(2) *Area* 130, available at doi.org/10/gfgnzs.

considered a legal and political impossibility. The reason for this is encapsulated in a refrain, heard in many stakeholder interviews but also in parliamentary debates and auditions: that the Geneva Convention excludes environmental pressures and climate change from the list of valid reasons to seek asylum. Based on this, stakeholders tend to exclude the possibility of officially recognising a status for 'climate refugees'. Some stakeholders note a similar absence of the environment from the criteria for obtaining subsidiary protection (the other main option for obtaining international protection in France). However, calls for including environmental criteria to either status tend to be dismissed or ignored. Many stakeholders worry that attempts to renegotiate the Geneva Convention and other existing protection mechanisms would be counterproductive. They argue it is already hard enough to guarantee the rights of asylum seekers as it is. Opening existing protections for debate only risks creating opportunities for governments to further weaken these protections. The priority, stakeholders repeatedly said, is 'to preserve what has been achieved, because even that isn't straightforward'.²⁸

It is also important to remember that any talk of 'climate migration' is taking place in an already tense, crowded discursive field. French stakeholders have systematically pointed out that they operate in a political context hostile to migrants in general. What's more, this hostility draws on and continually reinforces a ubiquitous distinction between (somewhat welcome) political refugees on the one hand, and (decidedly unwelcome) economic migrants on the other.²⁹ As a result, many hesitate to use the term 'migrant' because of its negative connotations. One NGO interviewee explained that they have entirely 'proscribed' the word 'migration' from their funding pitches because 'it brings up too many things that are fantasised in the collective unconscious'.³⁰ Similarly, Marie Verdier explains how she 'avoids the term "migrant", which has become pejorative and anonymising, to designate an amorphous mass of individuals we can mistreat' even though 'it is a generic term that is hard to do without'.³¹ So while some stakeholders elect to speak of 'environmental migration' or 'climate migration', they often see it as an imperfect solution.

Another alternative, 'displacement', is often considered. However, it is generally used to designate people moving within their own country and not to France. The *Secours Catholique*, for example, draws an explicit distinction between 'environmental migrants', who cross borders, and 'the internal environmentally-displaced',

²⁸ Interview, civil servant (Expertise France), phone, January 2020.

²⁹ cf Karen Akoka, 'Réfugiés ou migrants? Les enjeux politiques d'une distinction juridique' (2018) 1(25) *Nouvelle revue de psychosociologie* 15; Laura Calabrese, 'Faut-il dire migrant ou réfugié? Débat lexico-sémantique autour d'un problème public' (2018) 210(2) *Langages* 105.

³⁰ Interview, environmental NGO representative (Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme), Skype, July 2020.

³¹ Marie Verdier, 'Sur les migrations, on n'avance ni politiquement ni médiatiquement' in Barbara Joannon and others (eds), *Les migrations dans l'œil des médias: Infos, influence et opinion* (Paris, De facto 2022) 27.

who do not.³² For this reason, the term ‘displacement’ is only potentially appealing or useful to stakeholders whose work has an international aid or development component. NGOs working with asylum seekers already in France see little value in it where their day-to-day activities are concerned. While stakeholders tend to agree, in line with the academic literature,³³ that most human movement associated with climate change will be within countries, this conclusion leads to a spatial distancing effect, making it *less* relevant to French migration policy.³⁴

One consequence of all this is the continued use of ‘climate refugee’ terminology. The term still dominates in the French press today because journalists seem to consider it clearer and more attention-grabbing than the alternatives (migration, displacement).³⁵ Some scholars, once critical of ‘climate refugee’ terminology, are reconsidering their position. François Gemenne, for example, has argued that ‘contrary to what I might have thought (and written) in the past, and despite the legal difficulties, I think this is a very strong reason to use the term again: because it recognises that these migrations are first and foremost the result of a persecution that we are inflicting on the most vulnerable.’³⁶ In a similar vein, a report by the *Conseil Économique, Social et Environnemental* recently recommended that France propose a new status for ‘climate refugees’ at COP22.³⁷ This despite experts making the case against the term in hearings leading to the report.³⁸ The documentary filmmaker Michael P Nash, interviewed for another project,³⁹ persisted in calling his film *Climate Refugees* (2009)⁴⁰ even in the face of criticism. He told me: ‘you know, I’m not writing policy, I’m actually making a film, I want to bring this to people’s attention.’ The point is that stakeholders have conscious, valid reasons to use the term ‘climate refugees’, despite everything. That they persist in using it is not simply a matter of not knowing that the term ‘climate migration’ comes with a raft of complications. The examples above show that consensus on

³² Secours Catholique, ‘Migrations environnementales: Note d’analyse et de positionnement’ (Caritas France 2020) 4.

³³ See, for example, Roman Hoffmann, Barbora Sedova, and Kira Vinke, ‘Improving the Evidence Base: A Methodological Review of the Quantitative Climate Migration Literature’ (2021) 71 *Global Environmental Change* 4, available at doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2021.102367; Ingrid Boas and others, ‘Climate Migration Myths’ (2019) 9 *Nature Climate Change* 901, available at doi.org/10.1038/s41558-019-0633-3.

³⁴ Durand-Delacré (n 7) 147–50.

³⁵ *ibid* at 114 (Figure 9). There is similar evidence for the Anglophone press in the special issue introduced by Katherine Russo and Ruth Wodak, ‘Introduction: The Representation of “Exceptional Migrants” in Media Discourse: The Case of Climate-Induced Migration’ (2019) 21(2) *Anglistica*, available at doi.org/10/gg8qvj.

³⁶ François Gemenne, ‘One Good Reason to Speak of “Climate Refugees”’ (2015) 49 *Forced Migration Review* 70, 71.

³⁷ Jean Jouzel and Agnès Michelot, ‘La justice climatique: Enjeux et perspectives pour la France’ (Conseil Économique, Social et Environnemental 2016), available at perma.cc/DY6S-W25Y.

³⁸ *ibid*.

³⁹ David Durand-Delacré, ‘(Mis)Representing Climate Mobilities: Lessons from Documentary Filmmaking’ (2022) 48(14) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 3397, available at doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2066260.

⁴⁰ Michael Nash, ‘Climate Refugees: The Global Human Impact of Climate Change’ (*The Video Project*, 29 January 2010), available at perma.cc/SH43-2264.

'climate migration' terminology will always remain elusive because context matters hugely for stakeholders' choice of words. The cacophonous proliferation of terms, and the inherent ambiguity of their definitions, thus appear as inherent features of 'climate migration' debates that stakeholders must contend with if they wish to instrumentalise the concept.

IV. Rejecting the Terminological Debate Altogether

So far, I have reviewed arguments put forward under the assumption that establishing the cause of migration is important and, more generally, that identifying clear terms to designate people on the move is desirable. But to stop the analysis here would be to miss a key consideration of the 'climate migration' debates in France: the causal question is regarded by many stakeholders as practically unnecessary, politically regressive, and morally untenable, and is thus rejected on that basis.

These stakeholders – who tend to have expertise on migration as researchers or practitioners in academia, NGOs, or the AFD – reject the causal question so central to 'climate migration' debates first on practical grounds. They argue that to act on migration, it is unnecessary to disentangle its causes. This argument always begins with a recognition of migration's multi-causality. One AFD civil servant summarised it thus: 'If we start with a logic of analysing the drivers, the factors of migration, well we'd be hard put – everyone recognises this – to dissociate economic, political, cultural or social factors.'⁴¹ Knowing this, stakeholders who work with (potential) migrants, whether in their countries of origin or in France, tend to focus on their needs first. The job is to deliver assistance: food, shelter, physical and mental healthcare, language lessons, job opportunities. To do this, many stakeholders insisted, one does not really need to ask why people are where they are.

In practice, of course, Western governments constantly sort migrants into categories, only some of which are granted special rights – for example, to work, settle, or be joined by their families – as well as financial assistance. In some cases, the process of categorising migrants is used as a tool to deny migrants' basic rights, such as the right to asylum guaranteed by the Geneva Convention (itself founded on the fundamental principle of non-refoulement). Stakeholders note how xenophobic, anti-immigration actors categorise people who cross the French border as unwelcome *economic* migrants to justify illegal turn-backs at the border, arbitrary detention and deportation practices, and the criminalisation of irregular migration.⁴²

⁴¹ Interview, civil servant (AFD Migrations), Paris, January 2020.

⁴² Eg Jérôme Valluy, 'De l'asile aux répulsions: La radicalisation des frontières' (2012) *Le sujet dans la cité* 84, available at doi.org/10.3917/lstdc.hs01.0084; Mary Bosworth and Marion Vannier, 'Blurred Lines: Detaining Asylum Seekers in Britain and France' 56 *Journal of Sociology* 53, available at doi.org/10.1177/1440783319882534; Pauline Doyen, Annaëlle Piva, and Oriane Sebillotte, 'Les oubliés

Stakeholders who report witnessing the negative impacts on migrants' lives of such practices also reject the debate about 'climate migration' terminology for ethical reasons. They assert that categorising migrants according to the cause of their migration creates fertile ground for arbitrary discrimination, and that focusing on climate change or the environment changes little to this point. As one journalist specialising on migration contended, 'for now, climate refugees are [considered] economic migrants. And they will be discredited as such'.⁴³ Others argued more broadly that, even if this was not the case, 'from the moment you emphasise *climate* refugee or *climate* migrant, even more than environmental, well what you're saying is "this person has the right, the greater legitimacy to migrate, to come here, than this other person", thereby creating a distinction that is "a little dangerous" and therefore best avoided'.⁴⁴

This rejection of categorisation among French migrant solidarity NGOs echoes a widespread concern among critical migration scholars. Crawley and Skleparis, for instance, are sceptical of dominant categories like 'refugee' or 'migrant' because they have come to be associated with oversimplified causal explanations ('political persecution' or 'economic reasons' as the two possible and distinct drivers of migration) and so 'fail to capture adequately the complex relationship between political, social and economic drivers of migration, or their shifting significance for individuals'.⁴⁵ Moreover, such categories have contextual meanings that shift over time and space, and they are often used to actively discriminate against the very people whom they were or could be intended to protect.⁴⁶ Categories like 'climate migrant' or 'climate refugee' are not exempt from these problems.⁴⁷

The rejection of the causal question ('why do people migrate?') for practical and moral reasons is significant because it means that conversations starting from an ostensibly straightforward question about the causal role of climate change ('should we speak of climate or the environment as a driver of migration?') often reach a point where participants must contend with the fact that categorising people might be counter-productive. This realisation undermines the very basis

du droit d'asile: Enquête sur les conditions de vie et d'accès aux droits des exilés fréquentant 5 structures d'accueil à Paris' (2021), available at perma.cc/744B-NS28; Matilde Rosina, 'France: Instrumentalisation, Courts, and Marginalisation' in Matilde Rosina (ed), *The Criminalisation of Irregular Migration in Europe: Globalisation, Deterrence, and Vicious Cycles* (Basel, Springer 2022), available at doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-90347-3_5.

⁴³ Interview, journalist (Politis), Skype, October 2020.

⁴⁴ Interview, solidarity NGO representative (Bizi!), phone, February 2020.

⁴⁵ Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, 'Refugees, Migrants, Neither, Both: Categorical Fetishism and the Politics of Bounding in Europe's "Migration Crisis"' (2018) 44 *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, available at doi.org/10/gfkrm.

⁴⁶ Tazreena Sajjad, 'What's in a Name? "Refugees", "Migrants" and the Politics of Labelling' (2018) 60(2) *Race & Class* 40, available at doi.org/10.1177/0306396818793582; Karen Akoka, *L'asile et l'exil: Une histoire de la distinction réfugiés-migrants* (Paris, La Découverte 2020); Karin Scherschel, 'Who Is a Refugee? Reflections on Social Classifications and Individual Consequences' (2011) 8 *Migration Letters* 67.

⁴⁷ Augustine Yelfaanibe and Roger Zetter, 'Policies and Labels for Negotiating Rights Protection for the Environmentally Displaced in Ghana: The Dagara Farmer in Perspective' (2017) 37(2) *African Geographical Review* 83, available at doi.org/10.1080/19376812.2017.1350988.

of the initial conversation; the cause of migration ceases to matter as a guide to action. In some cases, it even led to a breakdown in discussions among stakeholders. One interviewee reported that making environmental migration a central subject of discussion 'cost DPPDM the participation of several organisations that assist migrants ... because they didn't agree with categorising migrations' and because even talking about 'international environmental migrations implies that there are some migrations that are more legitimate than others' – a position many migrant-solidarity NGOs reject.

Again, when one steps back from efforts to find the 'right' way to speak about 'climate migration', it rapidly becomes clear that there is no such thing. The appropriate term will only ever be appropriate for a specific context, to achieve specific objectives, when facing a specific audience. This leads to an inherent ambiguity in 'climate migration' debates because stakeholders often operate in several different contexts. They have diverse objectives, and multiple audiences to cater to. Sometimes, this means the subject is simply deemed too complicated or confusing to develop a communication strategy, project, or policy around.

Some stakeholders, discouraged, just stop talking about 'climate migration' altogether. The NGO coordinating the DPPDM network, for instance, dropped the theme of environmental migrations after two years of debates. Their latest multi-annual strategy makes no mention of it.⁴⁸ In November 2021, my AFD interlocutors reported no change since our interviews in late 2019/early 2020. Stakeholders explained this by contrasting the 'climate migration' concept – so ambiguous and vague – to other pressing issues that they felt could more easily be resolved. Many added that when working with limited financial and human resources, it was inevitable that a subject as complex and time-consuming to discuss as 'climate migration' would lose traction or be abandoned altogether.

V. 'Climate Migration' is Not an Operational Concept

Ultimately, French stakeholders emerge from 'climate migration' debates with a largely inoperative set of concepts; 'climate migration' and its analogues are not terms they can use to articulate clear policies or projects. Stakeholders can talk about 'climate migration', but do not know what to do about it. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this is the case of the NGO named *Care*. It stands out because many of its employees have, over the years, been involved in various research projects about 'climate migration'.⁴⁹ Yet, project managers at *Care* struggle

⁴⁸ Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement, 'CRID: Orientations pluriannuelles 2021–2024: validées à l'AGE 29 mars 2021' (CRID, 2021).

⁴⁹ Koko Warner and others, 'In Search of Shelter: Mapping the Effects of Climate Change on Human Migration and Displacement' (United Nations University 2009); Center for International Earth Science Information Network at the Earth Institute (Columbia University, 2009); Samantha Boardley, 'Where the Rain Falls Phase III' (2020) CARE France Final Evaluation Report, available at perma.cc/8VQ3-JUM5.

to apply lessons learned from this work. They still wonder: ‘these research results, how do we transcribe them into our adaptation projects?’⁵⁰ Their participation in research projects has had no operational implications.

This seems to be typical of a much broader pattern of ‘climate migration’ research failing to find clear applications. A recent review of projects in the AidDATA database (pulled out with the search ‘climate AND migration’) found, for instance, that ‘the majority of the projects are research related, designed to generate knowledge on the links between climate and migration in regions thought to be particularly susceptible to climate change impacts.’⁵¹ Although ‘climate migration’ is a subject that lends itself well to research, it rarely seems to translate to practical projects. It is possible to object to this assessment, pointing to relocation projects around the world⁵² or initiatives for labour migration targeted at people designated as potential ‘climate migrants.’⁵³ However, the criticism stands because, in each case, one finds significant disagreement about the actual cause of migration, what shape ‘it’ might take, and how desirable it is. It remains exceedingly hard to claim with any confidence what is meant by ‘climate migration’ when considering any of these projects.

Stakeholders working directly with communities abroad report that the ‘climate migration’ concept is of little practical relevance for their adaptation and resilience projects. A *Care* employee, for instance, reported that as ‘our mandate as an international solidarity NGO ... is really to work as closely as possible with vulnerable populations and to give them the most decent living conditions possible. We don’t judge the fact that people move or not.’⁵⁴ Their priority is to help and empower communities to overcome the vulnerabilities they face, so they added that they ‘haven’t prioritised this question [of causality] because it’s not all that important to us, in the end.’⁵⁵ They were not alone in adopting this stance. Other NGO representatives and AFD employees involved with projects outside France similarly concluded that whether ‘climate migration’ can be said to occur is irrelevant to the success of climate adaptation projects. With all these tensions running through ‘climate migration’ debates, it could be tempting to write the ‘climate migration’ concept off as irredeemably flawed and intractable – an interesting object of inquiry with no practical applications. However, the fact is the debate is unlikely to end, nor will attempts to make the concept useful. For all their scepticism, each

⁵⁰ Interview, international solidarity NGO representative (Care), Skype, September 2020.

⁵¹ Robert Stojanov and others, ‘Climate Mobility and Development Cooperation’ (2021) 43(2) *Population and Environment* 209, 218, available at doi.org/10.1007/s11111-021-00387-5.

⁵² Erica Bower and Sanjula Weerasinghe, ‘Leaving Place, Restoring Home: Enhancing the Evidence Base on Planned Relocation Cases in the Context of Hazards, Disasters, and Climate Change’ (2021) Platform on Disaster Displacement, available at perma.cc/T2C5-ZR3T.

⁵³ Carol Farbotko and others, ‘A Climate Justice Perspective on International Labour Migration and Climate Change Adaptation among Tuvaluan Workers’ (2022) 2 *Oxford Open Climate Change* 1, available at doi.org/10.1093/oxfclm/kgac002.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

and every interviewee noted that 'everybody seems to be speaking about it' and 'it is hard to miss' – even if they themselves had concluded they can do nothing about it, and had thus withdrawn from the arena. We are stuck, for better or worse, with 'climate migration' as a category that one interviewee strikingly described as 'here without being here'.

VI. Learning to Live with the Inherent Conceptual Ambiguity of 'Climate Migration'

Ultimately, stakeholders experience terminological uncertainty and ambiguity as an inherent feature of 'climate migration' debates. If a consensus on definitions is out of the picture, perhaps the only option left is to accept these ambiguities as inevitable and learn to live with them. What accepting this might mean, however, depends on who is speaking. For some civil servants, an acceptable solution might simply be to keep the conversation superficial: 'I would say, in a pragmatic sense, that we simply have to accommodate the ambiguity', one said, adding: 'this political category, [the 'climate migrant'], everybody has an interest in it remaining vague, at least for now'.⁵⁶ Why? Simply because to create the category would be to entertain the possibility of creating a new set of protective measures which could give more migrants the right to enter and remain in France. This is a political non-starter that was not, for them, worth confronting.

But such 'pragmatic' resignation is unacceptable to most interviewees. Another approach prevails among NGO representatives in particular. The *Secours Catholique*, for instance, offers a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, they make an explicit case for developing new legal categories and 'specific measures to address the situation of environmental migrants'.⁵⁷ This case, expressed in a position statement targeted at international policy-makers, was developed largely as part of their lobbying efforts to influence the formulation of the Global Compact on Migration.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the *Secours Catholique* representative also acknowledged a 'paradox' because they 'don't want to fall into over-categorisation of people ... we need to look at, instead of categories, the needs of people, and not applying yet another label, which is a fiction because migrations are multi-causal'.⁵⁹ In such cases, my interlocutors attempt to make the ambiguity inherent to 'climate migration' productive. It allows them to pursue two contradictory strategies, at two different scales (international and national), with different audiences.

⁵⁶ Interview, civil servant, Skype, June 2020.

⁵⁷ *Secours Catholique* (n 32) 20.

⁵⁸ Interview, international solidarity NGO representative (*Secours Catholique*), Paris, January 2020.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

Among French stakeholders, a third attitude to ambiguity is evident. It is the approach that would have the ambiguities and definitional trouble that surrounds the topic of ‘climate migration’ serve as an entry point for the dissemination of more nuanced, sophisticated knowledge about climate change, migration, and their intersection in all its context-dependent complexity. As argued above, the reality of ‘climate migration’ discussions is that stakeholders deploy different terms in different contexts, depending on what aspects of the issue they want to underline in the moment. Different terms carry different political messages and can therefore be directed at different audiences. One NGO interviewee, who had spent a long time thinking about these issues, had exactly this attitude. They hoped that ‘by introducing several words [like displacement], you can complexify the person’s thinking’ since it would allow them to show that ‘[climate] migration isn’t just one thing’.⁶⁰

The hope here is that discussing ‘climate migration’ can still be useful, not in spite of but perhaps *because* of its ambiguous nature. In this view, the concept’s inherent ambiguity is used as an educational tool, steering the audience – other NGOs, policy-makers, passers-by at the local fair – away from the usual interrogations (‘how many ‘climate migrants’?’) towards more complex and necessary questions. The diversity of terms available, and their debated definitions, serve as so many entry points for more extensive, nuanced conversations about the multi-causality of migration, the complex patterns of human movement, and the appropriate moral and political responses to migrants’ plights. In contrast, focusing on clearing up ambiguity and pursuing a single terminology poses the risk of oversimplification, thus constraining policy options to a narrow set of often problematic and likely counterproductive measures.⁶¹

VII. ‘Climate Migration’ for ‘Climate Justice’? A Difficult Convergence

The third attitude to ambiguity described above opens the door to a more political understanding of the ‘climate migration’ concept’s potential usefulness. The hope harboured by French stakeholders who persist in discussing ‘climate migration’ was that it could help draw attention to questions of justice and responsibility in climate action. In this, they share in a hope cautiously expressed by many academics and activists who call for a climate justice approach to ‘climate migration’. For example, Klepp and Herbeck argue that ‘the inclusion of post-colonial perspectives in the debates on environmental migration can render visible the political

⁶⁰ Interview, volunteer in NGO project on environmental migrations (Youth on the Move), Paris, October 2019.

⁶¹ See James Morrissey, ‘How Should we Talk about Climate Change and Migration?’ (2021) 9 *Migration Studies* 150, available at doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnaa031.

nature of climate adaptation choices and reconnect global negotiations to questions of fair burden sharing in adaptation.⁶² This concluding section explores how French migrant-solidarity NGOs have attempted to do this in practice, and the obstacles they face.

To illustrate the difficulty of using the 'climate migration' concept to support calls for climate justice, it is worth returning to the case of the DPPDM, starting with the network members' initial motivations for discussing environmental migrations. Employees in French migrant-solidarity and international-solidarity NGOs, of which the network is largely composed, increasingly feel marginalised from mainstream political discourse. Migration experts, whether academics or practitioners, report that they are forced to argue about the most basic facts of migration. Things that are well established in migration research and practice – the dangers of securitising and criminalising migration, the ineffectiveness of European detention-for-deportation regimes, the availability of excellent migration statistics⁶³ – are constantly, exhaustingly challenged if not outright ignored by politicians, on social networks, and in the media. The case for solidarity with migrants appears, in this context, as far from given.

By contrast, migrant-solidarity NGOs perceive 'the climate movement' as relatively powerful and well accepted.⁶⁴ At least, the basic facts of climate change – that it is anthropogenic, and that mitigation and adaptation measures are required – do not appear to be greatly contested by French policy-makers and the general public. Evidence of this varies widely from study to study and depends on the exact survey question considered. While studies are consistent in finding that 80 to 90 per cent of the surveyed population acknowledges that climate change is happening, beliefs regarding its anthropogenic nature and the scale of the required response appear harder to assess, with some reporting levels of climate scepticism as low as 2.5 per cent,⁶⁵ while others find only 57 per cent of respondents agree that climate

⁶² Silja Klepp and Johannes Herbeck, 'The Politics of Environmental Migration and Climate Justice in the Pacific Region' (2016) 7 *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment* 54, available at doi.org/10/gf4j4q. See also Giovanni Bettini, Sarah L Nash, and Giovanna Gioli, 'One Step Forward, Two Steps Back? The Fading Contours of (In)Justice in Competing Discourses on Climate Migration' (2017) 183(4) *The Geographical Journal* 348, available at doi.org/10/gckb89; Rebecca Buxton, 'Reparative Justice for Climate Refugees' (2019) 94(2) *Philosophy* 193, available at doi.org/10/gf88nj; Kyle Whyte, Jared L Talley, and Julia D Gibson, 'Indigenous Mobility Traditions, Colonialism, and the Anthropocene' (2019) 14(3) *Mobilities* 319, available at doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2019.1611015; Farbotko and others (n 53).

⁶³ See François Héran, 'La recherche produit des données de qualité sur les migrations et les migrants: Utilisons-les pour un débat réellement informé!' in François Héran (ed), *Chiffrer les migrations: À quelles fins?* (De Facto 2020) 20, available at perma.cc/K3RN-LY6D; Barak Kalir and Céline Cantat, 'Fund but Disregard: The EU's Relationship to Academic Research on Mobility' (*Crisis Magazine*, 9 May 2020) available at perma.cc/XH3V-3QC3.

⁶⁴ At the AFD, the migration department felt this contrast keenly too, telling me: 'We have a climate department that is extremely strong, that intervenes in a lot of areas.' Interview, civil servant (AFD Migration), Paris, January 2020.

⁶⁵ Zakaria Babutsidze and Lionel Nesta, 'Le changement climatique en France: Croyances, comportements, responsabilités' (*Sciences Po*, 10 December 2018) 43 OFCE Policy Brief, available at perma.cc/8B5C-Y7LS.

change is anthropogenic.⁶⁶ Additionally, denialist viewpoints circulate primarily online and in right-wing conservative media outlets seeking controversy⁶⁷ and are given little to no space in other outlets.⁶⁸ What is certain, however, is that the French government has committed – in words if not in deeds – to climate action.

With this in mind, DPPDM network members felt they needed to ‘go looking for allies in the cause of migrants among climate activists’⁶⁹ and ‘to give migration questions a place in the climate movement.’⁷⁰ These interviewees expressed the hope that since ‘speaking about migration only, about the right to asylum, about the refugee status, its application, its protection ... dialogue can become a little tense’, perhaps ‘speaking about climate migration could be another entry to speak about migration once again.’⁷¹ Perhaps they could ‘legitimise the fight for migration by connecting to the climate question’⁷² and make migrant solidarity a feature of climate action in the process. In short: their intention was to at once benefit by association from the climate movement’s relative prominence, acceptability, and authority in public/political debates – a strategy known as ‘climate bandwagoning’⁷³ – while centring principles of justice in climate action, including migrant justice *in general*.

Some migrant solidarity NGOs, however, are sceptical of bandwagoning. They fear that any discussion of ‘climate migration’ within the climate movement would inevitably fall back on familiar expedients: once again recasting ‘climate migration’ as a threat to the stability of western Nations.⁷⁴ My interlocutors often justified these concerns by pointing to the climate movement’s reliance on emergency rhetoric: ‘You just can’t speak about migration as a crisis.’ Nor can you speak, by extension, about a ‘climate migration’ crisis. Even as some interviewees took tentative steps towards the climate movement, others held back for fear of being led down a dangerous path, either antithetical to (migrant) justice, or undermining important relationships with other and more sceptical migrant solidarity organisations.

All the environment/climate NGO representatives spoken to were well aware of the need to avoid alarmist claims about ‘climate migration’. They had no desire to repeat problematic ‘climate refugee’ narratives. Moreover, many called ‘climate justice’ their priority. Nonetheless, they hesitated to engage in ‘climate migration’ debates for several reasons. First, many felt ill-equipped to speak about migration

⁶⁶ Antoine Dechezleprêtre and others, ‘Fighting Climate Change: International Attitudes toward Climate Policies’ (*VOX EU*, 14 October 2022), available at doi.org/10.1787/3406f29a-en.

⁶⁷ Such as CNews, Le Point, and Valeurs Actuelles.

⁶⁸ Renaud Hourcade and Albin Wagener, ‘Le climatocépticisme: Une approche interdiscursive’ (2021) 127 *Mots: Les langages du politique* 9.

⁶⁹ Interview, international solidarity NGO representative (Ritimo), Skype, October 2020.

⁷⁰ Interview, DPPDM network coordinator (CRID), Paris, January 2020.

⁷¹ Interview, international solidarity NGO representative (Secours Catholique), Paris, January 2020.

⁷² Interview, international solidarity NGO representative (Ritimo), Skype, October 2020.

⁷³ Sikina Jinnah, ‘Climate Change Bandwagoning: The Impacts of Strategic Linkages on Regime Design, Maintenance, and Death’ (2011) 11(3) *Global Environmental Politics*, available at doi.org/10.1162/GLEP_a_00065.

⁷⁴ The problems with this are well established, cf Boas and others (n 33).

in a sufficiently informed manner. Second, they feared that the hyper-politicised topic of migration is too polarising. So much so that they fear raising the topic is to run the risk of their message being drowned in a hostile public debate about migration, or to see their voices dismissed by government politicians and mainstream news editors if they espouse so-called 'pro-migrant' views. One of them explained that the mere mention of migration unleashed negative comments on their organisation's social media – to a degree they did not experience with any other topic. Another was reluctant to embrace the 'climate migration' concept, feeling it was too risky a strategy that could lose them funding from governmental and corporate sources: 'we don't have a discourse on migration ... I've taken everything out because it creates division.'⁷⁵ And third, the two previous reasons combined to place migrants among the most difficult climate-vulnerable populations to defend. Commenting on the work of *Notre Affaire à Tous* (an organisation suing the French State for climate inaction) and on climate litigation in general, one interviewee explained that 'the migrant is quote-unquote "competing" with other forms of vulnerability in litigation.'⁷⁶ Many of the conventional litigation strategies focused on 'demanding justice, holding to account, etc, *that* helps the climate justice narrative move forward, whereas litigation around migration? There's no possibility of developing *that*.'⁷⁷ Thus, for many in the climate movement today, the concept of 'climate migration' appears of little help in pursuing climate justice.

In short, while (some) French migrant solidarity NGOs hope to legitimise their cause by association with the climate movement, (many) environmental NGOs fear it might delegitimise their own cause, ultimately diminishing their access and influence. Having accepted that past discourses on 'climate refugees' were problematic, many environmental NGOs now prefer not to speak about migration at all. This problem is not new, of course. There is a precedent from 2009, during COP15, when environmental and humanitarian NGOs rallied around the concept of 'climate refugee' to call for climate action.⁷⁸ But as Sylvie Ollitrault noted then, their alliance was short-lived.⁷⁹ Despite the obvious value of an alliance, NGOs felt it was 'at the risk of diluting in part their specificities' and 'being confined to a role of agitators ... without influencing state positions' on climate change.⁸⁰ This is a major challenge for anyone seeking a convergence between 'climate migration' and

⁷⁵ Interview, environmental NGO representative (Fondation pour la Nature et l'Homme), Skype, July 2020.

⁷⁶ Interview, academic researcher, Paris, December 2019.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ See WWF France and others, 'L'ultimatum Climatique, l'appel Pour La Conférence de Copenhague', 29 May 2009, available at web.archive.org/web/20090529194554/http://copenhagen-2009.com:80/appel.

⁷⁹ Sylvie Ollitrault, 'De la sauvegarde de la planète à celle des réfugiés climatiques: L'activisme des ONG' (2010) 4 *Revue Tiers Monde* 19, available at doi.org/10.3917/rtm.204.0019.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* (page 33, my translation).

'climate justice' discourses, a challenge which has no obvious resolution. It is clear, however, that the challenge needs to be acknowledged and addressed if the 'climate migration' concept is ever to strengthen 'climate justice' agendas in this context.

VIII. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the development of policies and projects to address 'climate migration' face some major obstacles which far too often go unremarked. Identifying these obstacles require 'climate migration' to be treated as an issue that is neither obvious, self-evident, or even natural. Such a stance allows for a more refined analysis of exactly how and why the concept fails to translate to policy and practice. The perspectives of French policy stakeholders suggest efforts to design policies and projects specifically targeting 'climate migrants' appear inherently flawed. In the French context at least, potential stakeholders find the concept inherently ambiguous. Any attempt to define terms and typologies is always contested, because the 'right' term to use is highly context-dependent and liable to vary over time depending on stakeholders' shifting political objectives, ethical values, and communication strategies. Consequently, French stakeholders find the 'climate migration' concept and its analogues to be too unstable to operationalise. That is, the subject is not clear-cut and operable enough to expend the time, money, and effort necessary to develop policies and projects around it.

These insights are valuable because they go against much received wisdom behind calls for better 'climate migration' policies. One of the admonitions of this chapter is that calls for more and better data on 'climate migration' – while of obvious value to further academic research aims – fail to address fundamental obstacles to 'climate migration' policy-making and project development. Developing 'climate migration' policies and projects is less about acquiring new knowledge, and more about accounting for the context-dependent political, moral, and pragmatic considerations of stakeholders involved in these processes.

The 'climate migration' concept's inherent ambiguity and apparent inoperability does not mean, however, that all stakeholders have entirely given up on it – although many have – not least because the concept is 'continuously returning to the scene'.⁸¹ Indeed, 'climate migration' debates constantly attract newcomers seeking to understand the relationship between climate change and migration. Acknowledging this, many stakeholders are seeking ways to live with the concept's ambiguities and practical limitations. In line with trends in critical 'climate migration' scholarship, many hope that any new discussions about 'climate migration' can be made to focus less on turning the concept into a tool for project development,

⁸¹ Giovanni Bettini, 'And yet it Moves! (Climate) Migration as a Symptom in the Anthropocene' (2019) 14(3) *Mobilities* 336, 339, available at [doi.org/10/gf7fbx](https://doi.org/10.1080/17513758.2019.1611111).

and more on introducing new stakeholders to the political and moral issues raised by both climate change and migration, especially as they relate to questions of responsibility. In this way, they hope that newcomers in debates about the 'climate migration' concept can be introduced to climate justice agendas. However, as the example of the *Des Ponts pas des Murs* NGO network shows, there remain significant obstacles to any such convergence.

