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Settling the Narratives

UN-Habitat's Framing of Migration Challenges and The Limits of Urban Development Solutions

Working Paper No. 170

November 2025

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Working Paper no. 170
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University of Oxford

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Funding / acknowledgement / disclaimer

COMPAS does not have a Centre view and does not aim to present one. All views expressed in the document are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of funders, those providing feedback, COMPAS or the University of Oxford. *Competing interests: The author(s) declare none.*

Abstract

This paper expands the study of international organisations shaping migration governance norms beyond familiar actors such as the UNHCR or IOM to include the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). In the years since the passage of the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat has strategically positioned itself within migration governance by constructing three interconnected narratives: migrants as governance capacity strains on local governments, migrants as vulnerable populations requiring integration support, and migration as a consequence of poor urban development policies. Through frame analysis of 23 UN-Habitat publications from 2016-2025, combined with historical analysis tracing the organization's evolution from spatial planning coordinator to migration governance actor, this research reveals how UN-Habitat leverages its urban expertise to claim authority over the local dimensions of migration management. While UN-Habitat's emphasis on forced displacement, climate migration, and uniquely urban forms of displacement like gentrification distinguishes it from traditional migration agencies, my analysis demonstrates that its proposed solutions, such as particularly participatory informal settlement upgrading, rely on assumptions about migrant temporalities that privilege permanent residence over circular and seasonal migration patterns. Evidence from contexts like Nairobi City County's Korogocho settlement, Bangladesh, and India complicates this picture and illustrates how UN-Habitat's institutional mandate for stable urban development creates blind spots that risk constraining rather than enhancing migrant agency and choice.

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Introduction

International Organizations (IOs) beyond traditional migration agencies are increasingly entering migration governance discourse. The United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) is one such example. In recent guidebooks on "Managing Migration," Un-Habitat asserts "It is important that not only the challenges around urban migration are acknowledged, but also the significant social and economic benefits that can potentially be realized if it is well managed" *(Grant 2023, 12)*. Though mandated to support housing rights and sustainable settlements rather than migration and displacement-related challenges, UN-Habitat has nevertheless made migration central to its 2020-2025 strategy. This is in line with the New Urban Agenda (NUA's) call to support "local authorities in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities and strengthened urban-rural linkages." (United Nations General Assembly 2017, 11). In issuing increasing[1] numbers of publications addressing migration, it joins many other IOs in attempting to shape migration governance through discourse (Geiger and Pécoud 2014).

Discourse and persuasion are powerful tools for influencing norms, i.e. "standard[s] of behaviour considered to be appropriate for a given set of actors" (Gest et al. 2013, 154). IOs can be understood as "norm entrepreneurs," raising issues and promoting knowledge and beliefs to create normative change (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Barnett and Finnemore 1999; Emmerij et al. 2005; McGonagle and Penagos 2021). While research has examined the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as norm entrepreneurs shaping migration governance (Bradley 2017; Pécoud 2018), and discourse (Carrete and Gasper 2011; Geiger and Pécoud 2014; Green and Pécoud 2023), scholarship on UN-Habitat's normative work has focused on informal settlements[2] (Huchzermeyer 2011; Gilbert 2007; Khan et al. 2023; Marcenko 2019), global urban governance (Bridges 2016; Birkenkötter 2018), and trans-local strategic urban planning (Parnreiter 2011) rather than migration. In recent years, some attention has been paid to how UN-Habitat addresses urban refugees and climate migrants (Beier and Fritzsche 2017; Beier and Shewy 2018). Others have assessed the limitations of the NUA and UN-Habitat's rights-based approach to managing

[1] The UN-Habitat "Research and Publications" repository lists 60 documents tagged as relating to Urban Migration," all published between 2005 and 2025 (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). Of these, only three were published prior to 2016, and 13 prior to 2020.

[2] The terms informal settlements and slums used interchangeably in this paper, in alignment with UN-Habitat's usage of both terms, for convenience. The use of the word slum, especially by UN-Habitat, has been contested and critiqued in the academic literature and remains a subject of debate. See Gilbert (2007), Huchzermeyer (2011), Dovey *et al.* (2021), and Khan *et al.* (2023) for further discussion.

migration-induced urban growth and climate migration (Aerni 2016; Serraglio et al. 2019). At present, no one has examined UN Habitat's discourse and normative work as it relates to migration governance.

Taking influence from issue-framing analysis, this paper seeks to deepen the conversation regarding the relationship between UN-Habitat and migration governance norms by providing a brief background on UN-Habitat's engagement with migration, then exploring two questions. First: how does UN-Habitat conceptualize and frame challenges related to migration in their normative discourse? Second: what are some assumptions and limitations embedded in how they propose these challenges should be addressed? My findings reveal that UN-Habitat constructs three primary narratives related to migration's impact on urban development: migrants as a strain on local governments and their capacity to achieve development, migrants as a vulnerable population that risks being left behind, and migration as a consequence of development practices that fail to centre equity and inclusion. Further analysis reveals that these frames prescribe solutions from the realm of urban planning that rely on assumptions related to migrant temporalities, which imply homogenous vulnerability across marginalized communities. In highlighting these assumptions through a migration studies lens, I demonstrate that UN-Habitat's proposed tools for addressing their three problem frames may be contextually limited in their ability to ensure no one is left behind.

Historical Background

Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, UN-Habitat operates across 64 countries as of 2024 (UN-Habitat 2025b, 13) and works to promote "socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities" through normative work, setting agendas, providing technical assistance, and advocating for changes in national development plans (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a). It serves as a "clearinghouse," both listening for and distributing ideas in urban policy, conferring "legitimacy on certain models and cities through reports," and creating normative and "informational infrastructure" (McCann 2011, 114; Parnreiter 2011, 419). This section traces how UN-Habitat has expanded its authority beyond national development planning into migration governance, revealing how UN-Habitat's has long sought to promote development agendas for managing movements of populations, the constructed nature of institutional authority and the persistence of problematizing framings that continue to shape contemporary approaches to migration management.

Spatial Planning Foundations (1975-1996)

UN-Habitat's foundations are rooted in addressing urbanization and population movements. The UN engaged with what international observers had characterized as "chaotic" urban growth (Rudd et al. 2018, 181–82) in the wake of World War II and decolonization by holding the first Habitat Conference in 1976. The resulting Vancouver Declaration described "uncontrolled urbanization," "rural backwardness," and "involuntary migration" as interconnected challenges threatening sustainable development (United Nations 1976, 2–3). This document established a foundational logic that would persist through contemporary frameworks: population movements, while potentially beneficial for development, require spatial management to avoid devolving into social and economic crises. The Vancouver Action Plan primarily focused on national development plans, with recommendations urging national governments to incorporate spatial planning into development strategies.

The establishment of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements in 1976 and its secretariat, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) in 1977 institutionalized these approaches, positioning spatial planning as a tool for managing "uncontrolled" movements and the "overcrowding, pollution, deterioration, and psychological tensions" of urbanization (United Nations 1976, 3).

Rights, Local Engagement, and the Eviction Niche (1996-2012)

The 1996 Habitat II conference in Istanbul marked a watershed moment, introducing both institutional partnerships and rights-based approaches that would later underpin UN-Habitat's migration authority. This conference was the first by a UN entity to formally incorporate local governments and civil society organizations into official proceedings, reflecting a broader shift towards recognizing multi-level governance (Willetts 2000, 196). This integration proved crucial to UN-Habitat's later positioning as a bridge between global migration frameworks and local implementation. The Istanbul Declaration established the right to adequate housing and sustainable settlements, providing new justification for international engagement with mobility-related challenges. The right to housing in particular, created a basis for UN-Habitat's later positioning of forced evictions[3] as an issue of forced displacement requiring specialized spatial expertise.

Building on the momentum of Habitat II, UNCHS evolved into the United Nations Programme on Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) in 2002, gaining its own secretariat and executive director along with a mandate to focus on housing, especially informal settlements in the Global South (Birch 2016, 399). As custodian of the Millennium Development Goal target for improving the living conditions of 100 million slum dwellers (a target that had originally been associated with the UNCHS-World Bank joint initiative known as the Cities Alliance), UN-Habitat led a public campaign for "Cities Without Slums." This wording, however, was interpreted by many national governments as encouraging slum demolition, resulting in widespread forced evictions that displaced millions of urban residents (Huchzermeyer 2011). This crisis created an opening: the 2004 establishment of a UN Advisory Group on Forced Evictions marked UN-Habitat's formal entry into displacement governance, allowing it to develop and leverage expertise in housing rights violations to address forced displacement that fell outside of the traditional mandate of refugee and migration agencies.

[3] Forced eviction, i.e. "the permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection," is considered a violation of human rights (UN-Habitat and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2014, 3). As such, those forcibly evicted qualify as internally displaced persons (IDPs) according to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Not all evictions are considered to be forced. See the fact sheet "Forced Evictions" for further discussion (UN-Habitat and United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2014).

Throughout the 2000s, UN-Habitat participated in several important publications and international dialogues, aligning itself with academic experts and established migration authorities to become a bridge between global migration governance, spatial governance, and urban development (UN-Habitat 2004; Balbo 2005). When UNCHR developed its 2009 urban refugee policy, it explicitly cited UN-Habitat as an important partner for gaining expertise in urban areas. (Crawford 2021, 170), validating UN-Habitat's relevance and complementary authority strategy.

"Mainstreaming Migration" and Strategic Mandate Expansion (2012-Present)

UN-Habitat's mandate expansion began accelerating dramatically in 2012, when the new Executive director Joan Clos "began to reorient the agency to encompass sustainable urban development more broadly" in order to "overcome UN-Habitat's reputation as a third-world shelter agency and to develop more support for the agency" (Birch 2016, 399). The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and the 2016 New Urban Agenda (NUA) created unprecedented opportunities for UN-Habitat to link spatial planning to global migration governance.

As the custodian of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 on sustainable cities and communities, UN-Habitat gained responsibility for urban dimensions of "leaving no one behind", mandating engagement with migrants and displaced populations. The NUA, resulting from the 2016 Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador, linked migration to the achievement of the SDGs. The agenda maintained that both rural-to-urban and international migration—if "safe, orderly and regular" through "planned and well-managed migration policies"—could bring about "social, economic and cultural contributions to urban life" (United Nations General Assembly 2017, 7).

In the years following, UN-Habitat has leveraged both agendas to justify broadening its operations into the realm of migration governance through three claims. First, the organization positions local governments as on the "front lines" of migration governance (Peter et al. 2024), bearing primary responsibility for managing the impacts of migration while lacking adequate support from national and international actors. Second, the organization claims unique "urban expertise" (UN-Habitat 2023, 7) in spatial planning, partnering with local authorities, and housing, land, and property (HLP) rights that complements other migration agencies' mandates. Third, UN-Habitat has presented itself as essential for implementing global migration commitments, arguing that frameworks such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration

(GCM), cannot succeed without the spatial planning, local capacity building, and land management expertise that UN-Habitat could provide.

The organization's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan formalized migration as a central institutional priority, arguing urbanization trends should ensure "migration works for cities and cities work for migrants" (UN-Habitat 2019c, 27). The flagship "Inclusive Cities: Enhancing the Positive Impacts of Urban Migration" program, launched in 2020, aims to foster social cohesion amongst host and migrant communities, improve living conditions, and promote human rights in countries facing migration and development challenges (UN-Habitat 2019a). The Institutional Plan on Solutions to Internal Displacement (UN-Habitat 2023) positioned the organization as essential to UN systems' responses to the displacement of 59.1 million persons globally, noting most displaced persons seek refuge in cities rather than camps. Throughout, UN-Habitat has positioned itself not as a competitor with IOM or UNHCR in terms of services, but as a complementary agency with spatial expertise that benefits local-level migration management.

Methodology and Corpus

Issue Framing

Frame analysis is a useful tool for understanding how UN-Habitat actively constructs migration as a problem worthy of intervention and promotes its own expertise in relation to migration governance. Entman (1993, 52) defines the act of framing as the act of emphasizing specific aspects of a "perceived reality" through a given text to promote four components: "a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Payne (2001, 39) has drawn connections between norm entrepreneurs and the use of frames, arguing that frames serve as building blocks of norms, and "thereby serve to legitimate normative orders." As such, effective norm entrepreneurs are "those able to 'frame' normative ideas in such a way that they resonate with relevant audiences" (Payne 2001, 39).

The fact that frames are contested by other actors and audiences, however, means this method tells us little about whether those frames actually *succeed* in reshaping governance and discourse. Though UN-Habitat may promote specific perspectives on migration, competing frames from national governments, local organizations, and migrant communities may complicate, challenge, or reinforce those frames promoted by UN-Habitat. As such, this paper will be useful for understanding how UN-Habitat attempts to shape migration governance through strategic meaning making, but it will not go so far as to evaluate whether UN-Habitat is successful as a norm entrepreneur.

Corpus

The corpus of my analysis consists of 23 publicly available documents from the "Research and Publications" repository on the UN-Habitat's website (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a), spanning from 2016 to 2025. As of May 21, 2025, this repository contained 2220 documents, including UN-Habitat publications and commissioned research published under UN-Habitat's sponsorship. Using findings from an exploratory search process described in Appendix A, I conducted web scraping of the repository to construct an archive of documents related to migration published in or after 2016, the year the NUA was formally adopted. I collected results that were tagged as related to "Urban Migration" or which appeared in string searches containing the following terms: *migration, migrant, refugee, displacement, eviction,* and *IDP*. This process produced an archive of 183 unique publications.

To narrow down the archive to a manageable corpus, I manually reviewed each document along three main criteria: First, authorship and publication: documents or relevant extracts had to be primarily authored and published by UN-Habitat and its affiliated staff to ensure content reflects the organization's frames and norms. Second, general applicability: documents should prioritize widely applicable guidance over context-specific analysis to capture overarching frameworks. Third, relevance to migration: documents should substantively engage with migration by defining migration-related terms, relating migration to any of Entman's four frame components, detailing a project that explicitly relates to migration or migration governance, or articulating why UN-Habitat engages with migration. Documents meeting at least two of these relevance indicators were included. This process narrowed the results down to 30 documents, which I further reviewed for redundancy, selecting detailed documents over briefs covering identical programs. The final corpus comprises 23 documents, representing 12.57% of my archive of migration related publications. A detailed breakdown of the corpus can be found in Appendix C.

Though commissioned research often includes a disclaimer that views expressed therein "do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme or its Member States" (Peter et al. 2024), UN-Habitat's decision to publish, distribute, and brand these publications with their institutional identity demonstrates institutional endorsement. These documents therefore remain valuable for understanding the organization's conceptual ecosystem. The corpus includes diverse document types, –flagship reports, toolkits, policy briefs, and technical reports –totalling approximately 2,900 pages and representing both official organizational positions and commissioned research that UN-Habitat chose to publish.

Methodology

My approach to analysing UN-Habitat's migration discourse employed a two-stage method combining category mapping and frame analysis. Taking what Matthes and Kohring (2008, 260) label as "manual holistic approaches" as a baseline, this analysis prioritized understanding how issues are constructed and made prominent over numerical frequency in text.

Stage 1: Category Mapping

The first stage involved systematic analysis of what fell within UN-Habitat's conceptual boundaries for migration. This inductive method involved coding for the usage of terms such as *migrant, refugee, forced displacement,* and others related to human-mobility concepts, identifying both explicit and implicit appearances. For example, a paragraph discussing how rural-to-urban migration should be fluid was coded to the explicit code of "rural-to-urban"

movements, but also to "circular migration," even though the latter term was not explicitly used. I additionally coded for migration/migrants being framed as beneficial or problematic, which supported subsequent frame analysis. This stage revealed patterns of conceptual salience, highlighting which forms of migration UN-Habitat consistently emphasized and which received less attention across the corpus.

Stage 2: Frame Analysis

The second stage leveraged both inductive and deductive approaches to conduct frame analysis. Taking inspiration from Matthes and Kohring's (2008) operationalization of Entman's definition, I coded each document for four frame components. The *problem definition* consists of the central issue at hand. *Causal attribution* describes who or what is deemed responsible for the problem, risks, or benefits. *Treatment recommendation* relates proposed solutions and the justification for these treatments. Finally, *moral evaluation* relates to a moral judgement as to why something should be addressed – e.g., human rights violations, threats to sustainable development, or equitable urban futures. The findings from Stage 1 directly informed the frame identification in Stage 2. Any instances when migration appeared as problematic in Stage I became candidates for *problem definitions* and *causal attributions*, while instances where migration was framed as a benefit were candidates for *treatment recommendations* and *moral evaluations*.

To validate my findings, I conducted a deductive review using Mendelsohn, Budak, and Jurgen's (2021) established codebook[4] for migration discourse on social media, which builds on the work of Boydstun *et al.*'s (2013) policy framing framework. Appendix D contains an outline of those topics. Each frame component was matched to at least one topic such as "Capacity & Resources," "Victim: Discrimination, "Policy Prescription and Evaluation." Any given problem could have more than one *cause*, *treatment*, and *moral evaluation,* and a given element could have more than one codebook topic related to its justification. This validation process helped ensure theoretical grounding while capturing emerging frames specific to UN-Habitat's urban development perspective.

This analysis revealed seventeen distinct frames across the corpus, which are outlined in Appendix E. Upon further review, I identified patterns among frame topics that are summarized by three overarching migration narratives, each constructing migration-related challenges in

[4] These authors build on a generalized political codebook for policy framing developed by Boydstun *et al.* (2013).

ways that aligned with UN-Habitat's mandate and expertise. These narratives – migration as governance capacity challenge, migrants as vulnerable populations needing protection, and migration as consequence of poor urban policy –form the basis of my later analysis.

Category Mapping: UN-Habitat's Conceptualization of Migration

During the first stage of my analysis, I manually reviewed the corpus to discover how UN-Habitat defines and categorizes migrants. Table 1 provides an overview of this coding, noting the number of publications in which the concept appeared and the levels of engagement various publications had with it. Given the varied formats of these publications, which ranged from seven-page briefs on strategic programming efforts to 300-page flagship reports, this analysis prioritized understanding thematic construction over numerical frequency. To offer some method of comparison in terms of salience, Table 1 indicates common levels of engagement with the concepts across document types and lists as key documents those showing the strongest level of engagement.

UN-Habitat conceptualizes migration along the binaries[5] of internal versus international and forced versus voluntary/economic, in line with the IOM's definition of a migrant. Though internal and international movements appear in equal parts, UN-Habitat tends to emphasize "forced migration" more heavily than economic migration, tying the former to urban refugees, IDPs, climate migration, and forced eviction. In departure from other UN actors, UN-Habitat positions gentrification as a form of forced migration, suggesting a unique perspective on forced migration shaped by urban development perspectives.

Table 1: Summary of Migration Concepts

Mobility Type	Documents	Engagement Level*	Key Documents
Chain Migration (international)	1	**Passing mention** in one document	(UN-Habitat 2018)
Circular/Seasonal Migration (internal)	4	**Passing mentions** across multiple document types	(UN-Habitat 2022d; 2019a)
Climate Migration (acute, slow onset, internal and international; may not include those labelled IDPs)	14	**Deep Focus** in 2024 Flagship Report and in several Toolkits **Passing mentions** elsewhere	(Tempra and Elaydi 2024; UN-Habitat 2024b)
Forced Eviction	9	**Central Theme** in several toolkits; **Deep Focus** in several Toolkits and	(Polsinelli and Aura 2018;

[5] Many other scholars have offered typologies, justifications, and critiques of these common dichotomies used by governments, IOs, and academics, which often break down in practice. See Abdou and Zardo (2024), Dahinden *et al.* (2021), King (2013), Raghuram (2021), and Talleraas (2022) for further discussion.

		2024 Flagship report; **Passing mentions** elsewhere	Kitchin and Tempra 2024)
Forced Migration†	23	**Central Theme** in many Toolkits, Technical Reports, Briefs, **Deep Focus** in Flagship Reports, **Passing mentions** in Strategy Documents	(Tempra and Elaydi 2024; Hammad et al. 2024)
Gentrification	5	**Deep Focus** in 2 Flagship Reports, 2 Toolkits **Passing Mention** in Technical Report	(UN-Habitat 2022d; 2019b)
Human Trafficking	1	**Passing Mention** in technical report	(UN-Habitat 2020a)
Immobility ("trapped" populations, Indigenous peoples, voluntary stayers in conflict zones)	3	**Passing Mentions** across multiple document types	(UN-Habitat 2020; 2022a; 2024)
Internal Migration‡	21	**Central Theme** across Toolkits, Briefs, and Technical Reports; **Deep Focus** in flagship documents; **Passing Mention** in 1 Policy and Strategy documents	(Grant 2023; Yuka et al. 2023)
Internally Displaced People (IDPs)	18	**Central Theme** across Toolkits, **Deep Focus** in Flagship Documents and Briefs; **Passing Mention** across various document types	(UN-Habitat 2023; 2025)
International Migrations‡	19	**Central Theme** across Toolkits, Briefs, and Technical Reports; **Deep Focus** in flagship documents; **Passing Mention** in 1 Policy and Strategy documents	(UN-Habitat 2019b; Peter et al. 2024)
Irregular/Illegal/Undocumented Migration	7	**Deep Focus** in 2 Flagship Reports; **Passing Mentions** in Toolkits and Briefs	(UN-Habitat 2016; 2020b)
Economic Migration (internal and international)	10	**Deep Focus** in Flagship Reports; **Passing Mentions** in Toolkits, Briefs, and Strategy Docs	(UN-Habitat 2019; 2022b)
Mixed Migration (international)	3	**Passing mentions** in Flagship Report and Toolkits	(Grant 2023; Peter et al. 2024)
Nomadic Mobilities	2	**Deep Focus** in Toolkits	Yuka et al. 2023; Tempra and Elaydi 2024

Onward Migration (internal)	5	**Passing mentions** in Flagship document and Toolkits	(UN-Habitat 2022c; 2016)
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	17	**Central Theme** across Toolkits; **Deep Focus** in Flagship Documents and Briefs; **Passing Mention** across various document types	(Sullivan 2024; Hammad et al. 2024)
Regular/Legal Migration	2	**Passing Mention** in Toolkit and Brief	(UN-Habitat 2019a; Grant 2023)
Return Migration	9	**Deep Focus** in Toolkits; **Passing Mention** in Flagship Report, Strategy Document	(UN-Habitat 2022c; Tempra and Elaydi 2024)
Rural-to-Urban	10	**Deep Focus** in Flagship Reports and Toolkits; **Passing Mentions** in Briefs	(UN-Habitat 2016; Grant 2023)
Students (international)	3	**Passing mentions** in Flagship Report and Toolkits	(UN-Habitat 2022d; Kitchin and Tempra 2024)
Urban-to-Rural	2	**Deep Focus** in Flagship Report; **Passing Mention** in Toolkit	(UN-Habitat 2022d; Grant 2023)
Urban-to-Urban	3	**Passing mentions** in Flagship and Toolkits	(UN-Habitat 2022c; Grant 2023)

**** Passing mentions**: brief sentences referring to this topic, or a definition only. Engagement may be scattered in with descriptions of other forms of mobility*
***Deep Focus**: Extended discussion of this topic, where it appears as the central focus of one or more paragraph(s) or subsection(s). Other topics, related to migration or otherwise, may be the central focus of the document*
***Central Theme**: This form of displacement was central to the contents of the entire document or was the document's central focus*
† Includes refugees, asylums seekers, evicted populations, the gentrified or expelled, human trafficking
‡ Includes relevant forced migrations, economic migrations, mixed migrations, nomadic movements, and onward mobilities

Conceptual Alignment

UN-Habitat's migration terminology largely aligns with established UN frameworks. The IOM's definition of a migrant[6] is routinely cited in the corpus (Grant 2023; Tempra and Elaydi 2024; UN-Habitat 2019, inter alia). Refugees are at times defined using the 1951 and 1967 Refugee Conventions (Kitchin and Tempra 2024; Tempra and Elaydi 2024; Peter et al. 2024, inter alia), but occasionally authors use abbreviated definitions sourced from UNHCR (UN-Habitat 2019; Grant 2023). UNHCR definitions also appear for asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, and returnees, who are among those, UN-Habitat notes, labelled as "People of Concern," by the other organization (Grant 2023; Yuka et al. 2023). In one document on HLP solutions to resolve and prevent displacement, the term "people on the move" is used interchangeably with the term migrant as an "overarching category" to avoid the "negative connotations or preconceptions" that may be associated with other migrant-related terms (Tempra and Elaydi 2024, vii).

Taken together, there seems to be active alignment in UN-Habitat's publications with the language around migration constructed by other UN agencies. Pécoud has documented that international migration discourses require a set of shared terminology and assumptions for international IOs to engage in discourse with a wide range of actors, from varying governments to NGOs (Pécoud 2014, 63). To aid in this, IOM maintains a living glossary of migration related terms, (Sironi, Bauloz, and Emmanuel 2019). which Pécoud dates to at least 2004 (Pécoud 2014, 63). Alignment with this glossary allows UN-Habitat to contribute to the construction of a common vision of the issues at stake.

Distinctive Emphases

Though definitionally aligned, UN-Habitat's selective attention reveals strategic priorities that distinguish it from other migration agencies. While internal and international movements appear across similar numbers of documents within the corpus and with similar levels of engagement, UN-Habitat emphasized forced migration far more than economic migration, with forced migration appearing in all 23 documents, as a central theme or subject of substantial engagement. This pattern reflects UN-Habitat's human rights mandate as it works to ensure the most vulnerable have access to the right to housing and sustainable urban futures. Similarly,

[6] IOM defines a migrant as "any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/ her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay" (International Organization for Migration, n.d.).

climate-related movements tied to livelihood challenges, displacement, and managed retreat are a regular feature of flagship reports and toolkits. This undoubtably reflects how UN-Habitat's views of migration are influenced by their mandate regarding sustainable development and their close historic ties to UNEP. Unlike the ILO's focus on labour migration, UNHCR's emphasis on conflict-driven displacement, or IOM's comprehensive approach, UN-Habitat has carved out authority over urban dimensions of forced movement, particularly those forms of displacement that fall outside of traditional migration frameworks which may benefit from spatial planning solutions.

UN-Habitat's "Compendium on Migration Related Projects" includes a migration definition that is not common within the forced migration discourse: the "gentrified or expelled" (UN-Habitat 2019b, 7). Citing a definition from Sassen (2014), this label includes those displaced from their habitual place of residence "by land-grabbing deals, large infrastructure projects, urban renewal programmes and or market forces [...] and who do not fit under the traditional categories of migrants, refugees, or IDPs" (UN-Habitat 2019b, 7). Forced eviction —which has links to development induced displacement and ties closely to their mandate—is acknowledged in IOM's migration glossary (Sironi et al. 2019, 76). Gentrification and development-induced displacement, by contrast, are not acknowledged, nor do they fall into the mandates of other groups such as the ILO or UNHCR. Yet gentrification and development-induced displacement appear in five documents in this corpus, three of which are flagship *World Cities Reports*.

By including those affected by gentrification, infrastructure projects, and urban development among those considered forcibly displaced, UN-Habitat brings an urban planning lens to its conceptualization of forced migration. While UNHCR focuses on conflict and persecution, and ILO on labour migrations, UN-Habitat has identified a grey zone where market forces and development processes create displacement that is neither voluntary nor captured in current frameworks for IDPs. This renders a development-driven form of urban displacement more salient, suggesting it is worthy of international attention and intervention. That intervention would require tools tied to urban planning, development, and, in the case of "green gentrification" –wherein marginalized groups are pushed out of climate resilient areas because of increases in housing prices and rent after climate adaptation or conservation processes –expertise on "just sustainability" in urban development contexts (UN-Habitat 2024, 111). All of these are tools that UN-Habitat, given its mandates, is uniquely equipped to provide.

There is very little emphasis, by contrast, on emigration. International movements are routinely discussed in terms of "immigrants," and discussions of internal migration similarly emphasize the

perspectives of cities of arrival rather than of departure. Aside from one mention of "brain drain" as an unintended consequence of education-related migration, most discussions of the movements of the working, professional, and "creative class" centre on attracting labour migrants to cities for development benefits (UN-Habitat 2016, 134), or labour migration as a tool for reducing migrants' poverty. Scholars such as Canales *et al.* have critiqued such framings and their impact on decision making policies for neglecting to explore the wholistic impact of migration on countries of origin, migrants, and their families (2010).

Among other topics rendered less salient are urban-to-urban movements, urban-to-rural movements, and movements related to human trafficking. Though there are few acknowledgements of immobility, defined by Schewel as "spatial continuity in an individual's centre of gravity over a period of time" (2020, 329), the term does appear in relation to the valued knowledge of indigenous peoples "that comes from long-term occupancy of a geographic area" (UN-Habitat 2020, 48), those who voluntarily elect to stay in urban crisis contexts (UN-Habitat 2022a, 37), and populations involuntarily "trapped" by climate change (UN-Habitat 2024, 110).

Frame Analysis: Migrants as Strains, Victims, and a Consequence

Frame analysis revealed seventeen frames outlined in Appendix E which coalesced into three overarching migration narratives,[7] each of which constructed migration-related challenges in ways that aligned with UN-Habitat's mandate for work and expertise. While these narratives often overlap in practice, especially those related to resource conflict and service access, they each reflect distinct problems that UN-Habitat can then offer spatial expertise support to address.

Narrative 1: Migration as a Governance Capacity Crisis

The first narrative, "Migration as a Governance Capacity Challenge," positions rapid migration flows as a strain on local governments that reveals fundamental weaknesses in local government systems and resources, which requires capacity-building and institutional reform to address. Table 2 offers a summary of its common frame elements. Appearing in 20 of 23 documents, this is one of the most consistently articulated narratives across UN-Habitat's migration-related publications. It takes its starting point from the idea that cities are on the "front lines" of migration, displacement patterns and migrant integration (Peter et al. 2024). The rapid influx of people into cities, especially when caused by conflict or climate change, comes with challenges for local governments, who often lack the systems, governance structures, and resources to accommodate them. Local governments, by this account, already struggle with existing pressures on administrative and social services, infrastructure, and housing supply (UN-Habitat 2018, 6). Migrant arrivals are seen to exacerbate these problems and create resource competition that threatens social cohesion. Alternatively, the struggle to integrate migrants may come from a lack of jurisdiction and funding, which stems from how migration policy and funding is dictated by national policy or short-term humanitarian responses (Grant 2023, 77). This narrative relates to two common migration scripts identified by de Haas: that of migration as a crisis, and that of migrants as threats (Haas 2024).

Given the association between migrant influxes and underequipped local governments, *treatments* must reduce migration push factors and increase local governments' capacity and agency to act. Proposed solutions include capacity development interventions such as technical advisory and spatial analysis support from UN-Habitat, integrated humanitarian and development funding pipelines, and strengthening rural-urban linkages and rural development

[7] I use the term migration narrative in alignment with de Haas (2024, 10), who describes migration narratives as simplistic storylines that are presented to the public.

to ensure rural residents aren't required to migrate permanently (UN-Habitat 2018). "Whole-of-Government, whole-of-society and multi-stakeholder approaches" along with trans-local knowledge exchange can improve coordination, funding, and policy (UN-Habitat 2020a, 16). In this framing, UN-Habitat's relevance within the broader migration landscape is directly tied to its urban mandate; where other UN agencies and programs focus on border control or humanitarian responses, UN-Habitat has developed expertise in managing migration's impact on local urban governments and mediating multi-scalar and trans-local policy development.

Echoing the GCM, UN-Habitat posits that governments should not view these movements as a threat or crisis, but instead as an opportunity for development when managed well. Migrants offer cultural, economic, and societal value that supports the achievement of SDGs, therefore they "should not be seen as a burden to cities but rather, as an opportunity to be harnessed" (UN-Habitat 2020b, xviii).

Table 2: Summary of Narrative 1 – Migration as a Challenge for Local Communities / Governments

Frame Component	Common Codes	Frame Topic(s)*
Problems	Migrants Overwhelm housing/urban services/local government capacities	Capacity & Resources; Threat: Fiscal
	Migrants contribute to the growth of Informal Settlements	**Threat: Public Order**; Victim: Global Economy
	Conflict Between Migrants and Host Populations over resources, jobs, or due to cultural tensions	Security & Defence; Threat: Fiscal; Threat: National Cohesion
Causal Attributions	Rapid/large-scale population movements, especially those driven by conflict, climate change, and a lack of rural opportunities	**Victim: War;** Victim: Global Economy
	Pre-existing institutional/infrastructure/resource inadequacies at the local level	Capacity & Resources
	Local governments lack the jurisdiction needed to manage migration well due to national jurisdictions	Legality & Jurisdiction
Treatment	Capacity Building for Local Governments	Policy Prescription and Evaluation; Capacity & Resources
	"Whole of Government." "Whole of Society." and Trans-local approaches	**Policy Prescription & Evaluation;** Legality & Jurisdiction, External Regulation & Reputation

	Prevention of Migration through rural/sustainable development	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; External Regulation & Reputation
	Strengthen Spatial Data Collection to support evidence-based planning and fundraising	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Capacity & Resources
Moral Evaluation	Migration, if managed well, enhances economic, social, and cultural value	Economic; Hero: Worker; Hero: Cultural Diversity
	Urbanization itself is not bad and can play a key role in eradicating poverty	Morality & Ethics
	Social conflict threatens the achievement of the SDGs and inclusive cities and should be prevented	External Regulation & Reputation, Morality & Ethics, Quality of Life

Narrative 2: Migrants as a Vulnerable Population

The second narrative, "Migrants as Vulnerable Populations," posits that migrant populations face systematic exclusion that undermines both their human rights and urban development goals, necessitating participatory planning and inclusive governance, and is summarized in Table 3. This narrative appears in 21 of 23 documents, making it the most prevalent of the three migration narratives. UN Habitat defines vulnerable groups as "any identity group, community, or segment of society that is at higher risk of being subjected to discrimination, violence, natural or environmental disasters, or economic hardship, than other groups" and explicitly lists migrants among such groups (Kitchin and Tempra 2024, 8). This framing positions migrant populations in both camps and urban settings as facing "significant challenges and vulnerabilities, including inadequate support systems, unwelcoming local and national policies, high rates of unemployment, poverty, safety and security concerns, health risks, food and housing insecurity, and environmental hazards" (Peter et al. 2024, 3).

Problems within this narrative centre on systematic exclusion, undermining both migrant rights and development goals. Discrimination manifests through social conflict, xenophobia, and political exclusion, with migrants facing limited citizenship rights and exploitation under systems like *kafala* and *hukou* (UN-Habitat 2016). Access to urban services represents another major challenge, as migrants experience inequalities in housing access, social services, and formal livelihood opportunities while often residing in slums and camps that lack basic infrastructure

(UN-Habitat 2022d). HLP rights emerge as particularly problematic for returning migrants in post-conflict settings, who face property confiscation and tenure disputes (Kitchin and Tempra 2024). These vulnerabilities are compounded by climate change, COVID-19, and conflict, creating secondary displacement and health risks through eviction and environmental disasters (UN-Habitat 2022d).

Causal attributions include resource scarcity leading to discrimination, the absence of clear integration policies that position migrants as temporary visitors, and legal limitations such as restricted work and HLP rights (Grant 2023). Limited data collection additionally means that migrant populations remain "unaccounted for, creating a significant shortfall at the city level", while language barriers and lack of documentation often prevent service access (Grant 2023, 73).

Treatment recommendations emphasize UN-Habitat's core competencies: technical advisory services, participatory planning methods, and area-based approaches (ABAs) ensuring benefits reach both migrants and host communities (Grant 2023). Solutions include producing disaggregated data, removing barriers to universal service access, developing comprehensive integration strategies, and implementing durable solutions that bridge humanitarian-development service gaps while supporting migrant self-reliance (Grant 2023; Peter et al. 2024; UN-Habitat 2025).

The *moral evaluation* for this narrative, draws on rights-based justifications aligned with the SDGs and the NUA's "Right to the City" concept, promoting equal access to urban resources. UN-Habitat emphasizes "win-win" outcomes wherein migrant integration enhances economic development and addresses migrant vulnerabilities (Grant 2023). Spatial justice principles are also referenced, which aim to combat structural discrimination that perpetuate intersectional inequalities, and prevent marginalized areas from becoming "breeding grounds for frustration, disenchantment, vulnerability, and even radicalization" (UN-Habitat 2016).

Table 3: Summary of Frame 2 – Migrants as a Vulnerable Population

Frame Component	Sample Components	Frame Topic(s)
Problems	Migrants face discrimination, lack of access to rights, and social, economic, and political exclusion	Victim: Discrimination; Fairness & Inequality
	Migrants lack access to key resources (affordable housing, services, public space, livelihoods)	Victim: Humanitarian; Fairness & Inequality
	Crises (climate, COVID-19, conflict) and intersectional inequalities compound migrant vulnerabilities; migrants extremely vulnerable to environmental disasters, health risks	Victim: Humanitarian; Health & Safety

	Migrants, especially returnees in post-conflict settings, face serious challenges to land acquisition and housing, land and property (HLP) rights	Victim: War; Legality, Constitutionality, & Jurisdiction
Causal Attributions	Resource scarcity and competition lead to migrants needs not being met	Capacity & Resources
	Xenophobia, negative public perceptions, right-wing populism leads to discrimination	Victim: Discrimination; Public Sentiment
	Legal/policy shortcomings (absence of clear integration policies, inclusive urban resilience strategies, language services, gender-inclusive housing, land, and property systems, or work permits)	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Legality, Constitutionality, & Jurisdiction
	Humanitarian approaches overlook urban migrants or focus on short-term needs over long-term integration; migrants' needs are not accounted for in urban planning	Policy Prescription & Evaluation
	Limited data on migrant communities creates funding shortfalls at city level	Capacity & Resources
Treatments	Capacity Building for Local Governments (technical advisory services from UN-Habitat on inclusive planning, tenure provision, conflict resolution, and migrant service delivery)	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Capacity & Resources
	Participatory Approaches to Urban Planning interventions (slum upgrading, data collection efforts, spatial mapping, and policy planning)	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Cultural Identity
	Area-based approaches that ensure benefits reach both migrants and host communities without creating competition	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Fairness & Equality
	Durable Solutions that bridge the humanitarian-development funding/service gap, encourage migrant self-reliance, and coordinate government and humanitarian responses	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; External Regulation & Reputation
	Data and Evidence Solutions (spatial profiling, vulnerability assessments, surveys)	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Capacity & Resources
Moral Evaluations	SDGs, NUA, and human rights agreements support development with "no one left behind"	External Regulation & Reputation; Morality & Ethics
	"Right to the City" from NUA justifies equal access to urban resources and political inclusion for all inhabitants	Morality & Ethics; Fairness & Equality
	Double Development wins (migrant integration enhancing economic development; area-based approaches that help migrants benefit other vulnerable populations)	Economic; Hero: Worker
	Inclusion prevents marginalized areas from remaining in cycles of poverty which create "breeding grounds" for social fragmentation and "radicalization"	Security & Defence; Quality of Life
	Just Sustainability as a best practice	Morality & Ethics; External Regulation & Reputation

Narrative 3: Migration as a Consequence of Poor or Unjust Development

The final narrative, “Displacement as a Consequence of Urban Policy,” constructs displacement itself –not just its effects, or displaced populations –as a problem resulting from inadequate spatial planning and land governance, which demand preventative technical interventions and inclusive development to correct. Summarized in Table 4 and appearing in 21 of 23 documents, this framing differs from the previous two by focusing on how urban policy and planning failures create forced migration, positioning UN-Habitat's spatial expertise as essential for addressing root causes rather than merely managing consequences.

Problems within this narrative centre on various forms of development-induced displacement that better spatial planning could prevent. Gentrification emerges as a key concern, including market-driven housing shortages from short-term vacation rentals and "green gentrification," where marginalized groups are displaced from climate-resilient areas due to rising costs after adaptation projects (UN-Habitat 2020b). Development-induced displacement describes when after "protective disaster infrastructure is constructed in cities, poor households, and those living in informal settlements and slums may find themselves evicted or more exposed if such communities are not factored into the design" (UN-Habitat 2024b). Forced evictions represent perhaps the most direct policy failure, with "two million people forcibly evicted" annually, leading to violations of rights to "adequate housing, food, health, education, work, security and freedom of movement" (UN-Habitat 2022b).

Causal attributions identify multiple systemic failures in urban governance. Inadequate spatial planning includes weak land administration systems with "inaccurate property registry and *cadastre*, discriminatory access to land and housing, unenforced building codes, and unplanned urban expansion" (Sullivan 2024). Discriminatory development processes prioritize "existing centres of global investment and infrastructure, not towards broader environmental and social justice goals" (UN-Habitat 2024b), while "aesthetic governmentality" tolerates illegal occupation by affluent residents while evicting the poor from registered settlements (UN-Habitat 2022d). Economic pressures include global tourism creating a "rapid rise in short-term lets, cutting down on housing stock and displacing local populations" (UN-Habitat 2022d), alongside the official "invisibility" of marginalized communities in planning processes.

Treatment recommendations emphasize proactive spatial interventions. These include locally led slum upgrading projects, green infrastructure development, and forward planning that incorporates "future demographic change and displacement into urban development plans"

(UN-Habitat 2023; Grant 2023). HLP rights solutions focus on security of tenure through community-based land titles and de-facto tenure recognition, while alternatives to displacement include planned relocation only as a last resort with compensation (UN-Habitat 2016; Polsinelli and Aura 2018; Kitchin and Tempra 2024). Participatory methods ensure community involvement in all displacement-related interventions, supported by UN-Habitat's technical assistance in spatial analysis and capacity building for local governments.

UN-Habitat's *moral evaluation* draws heavily on human rights frameworks, positioning adequate housing as a fundamental right while arguing that forced evictions "violate international standards and harm city prosperity" (Polsinelli and Aura 2018). Spatial justice arguments contend that displacement creates "spatial fragmentation and increases risk of other human rights being compromised" (Polsinelli and Aura 2018), while green gentrification creates "climate apartheid" rather than "unlocking environmental value of urbanization for all" (UN-Habitat 2020b). Development justifications emphasize that security of tenure enables communities to "improve living conditions and use land as asset to lift themselves out of poverty" (UN-Habitat 2019c), linking prevention strategies to broader SDG and New Urban Agenda commitments.

Table 4: Summary of Narrative 3 – Displacement as a Consequence of Unjust Urban Development

Frame Component	Sample Components	Frame Topic(s)
Problems	Gentrification (marginalized groups pushed out of areas due to rising expenses that come with development), including "Green" Gentrification	Victim: Discrimination; Economic
	Forced Eviction	Victim: Discrimination; Morality & Ethics
	Residents in informal settlements, which are not prioritized in adaptation responses, are likely to be displaced by environmental disasters	Victim: Humanitarian; Health & Safety
	Infrastructure Projects directly displace residents	Victim: Humanitarian; Capacity & Resources
Causal Attributions	Marginalized and poor communities are not factored into the design of protective infrastructure or adaptation interventions. Climate action at present is designed to "protect existing centres of global investment and infrastructure, not towards broader environmental and social justice goals"	Victim: Discrimination; Fairness & Equality
	Aesthetic Governmentality (illegal occupation by affluent residents tolerated while poor evicted from registered settlements)	Victim: Discrimination; Fairness & Equality
	Development and infrastructure processes fail to explore alternatives to forced evictions or provide adequate housing	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Capacity & Resources

	Global tourism increases demand for short term rentals and cuts down housing availability	Economic; Quality of Life
	High cost of formal housing forces residents into informal settlements	Economic; Capacity & Resources
Treatments	Locally led land use and infrastructure planning	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Cultural Identity
	Forward planning in urban development for future demographic change and displacement	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Capacity & Resources
	Security of tenure (achieved through arrangements such as community-based land titles or de-facto tenure recognition)	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Legality, Constitutionality, & Jurisdiction
	Incorporation of human rights and inclusion principles in climate adaptation frameworks	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Morality & Ethics
	Formalization of informal settlements	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Economic
	Planned Relocation (with compensation) only used as last resort	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Morality & Ethics
	Participatory displacement-related interventions	Policy Prescription & Evaluation; Cultural Identity
Moral Evaluations	Right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right	Morality & Ethics; External Regulation & Reputation
	Displacement increases risk of other human rights being compromised	Morality & Ethics; Health & Safety
	Security of tenure enables communities to "improve living conditions"	Economic; Quality of Life
	Unequal access to infrastructure perpetuates poverty	Fairness & Equality; Economic
	UN-Habitat's displacement work requires inclusive access to housing and urban benefits	External Regulation & Reputation; Morality & Ethics

Implications for Mandate Expansion

These three overarching frameworks extend UN-Habitat's relevance into migration governance, beyond their typical mandate of urban planning and housing. Narrative 1 positions UN-Habitat as a key partner to migration governance actors by arguing that urban-level capacity impacts successful migration management. Narrative 2 connects migrant rights to spatial planning through norms like the "Right to the City," participatory governance, and the idea that no population should be left behind in the process of sustainable development. Narrative 3 represents perhaps the most ambitious expansion, arguing that proper spatial management can

prevent displacement before it occurs. This strategy reflects mandate expansion, whereby an organization might extend their authority into new domains by framing problems in ways that require their specific expertise (Hall 2015). In these documents, migration is not constructed as a border security issue or a labour market concern, but rather a local governance challenge that requires UN-Habitat's expertise on urban sustainable development.

Critical Discussion

XUN-Habitat posits urban policy and planning *treatments* can reduce migration strains, support integration, and prevent forced displacement. I argue these interventions are limited by assumptions about migrant populations that are challenged by evidence from migration studies. To illustrate these limitations, I examine how assumptions about migrant temporalities shape the potential of participatory informal settlement upgrading (PISU), an approach UN habitat has promoted in over 40 countries since 2008 (UN-Habitat, n.d.-b), to meet these goals.

PISU centres on upgrading physical services (roads, drainage, clean water supply) and housing to encourage poverty alleviation (Polsinelli and Aura 2018, 62) while emphasizing best practices like participation, secure tenure, and formal economic integration. UN-Habitat positions PISU as a means of addressing all three migration narratives in the corpus, as migrants tend to be overrepresented in informal settlement populations (Grant 2023, 93). For "local authorities lacking the capacity to implement tailored outreach," ABAs like PISU which targets specific neighbourhoods and settlements offer an efficient way to reach migrants (Grant 2023, 93) through an "inclusive process" which can enhance "equitable governance and accountability" (UN-Habitat 2022b, 235). However, embedded in PISU are assumptions that don't consider migrants' experiences, such as the assumption that migrants should be treated as long term residents.

In seeking to ensure migrants have access to housing and urban services, UN-Habitat routinely recommends cities leverage participatory approaches to ensure migrants are represented in urban planning and policy. In PISU, participation may come in a variety of forms, ranging from residents merely being informed of planned interventions with no level of input, to surveys and censuses, to full-partnership, initiation, and decision-making power (Terdoo 2024). UN-Habitat acknowledges that involving stakeholders "such as hosts and migrant communities, local authorities, community-based organizations (CBOs), and NGOs throughout this planning process is crucial" to ensure buy-in within communities (Hammad et al. 2024, 39).

Several UN-Habitat publications suggest problems of migrant underrepresentation in these projects originate because migrants are wrongly perceived as impermanent residents. One *World Cities Report* suggests IDPs and migrants are omitted in urban sustainability planning "because they are regarded as being temporary or transitory residents" (UN-Habitat 2020b, 284). Another document posits that this temporary perception prevents cities from "pro-actively" recruiting displaced people to participate in participatory urban planning (Peter et al. 2024, 80).

The shift towards acknowledging migrants as long term residents has come about from a desire for justice, as "imposing or implying people's chronic transience is a mark of otherness and marginality" that can serve as a "technology of governance" and exclusion from political processes (Griffiths 2021, 321).

The problem with denying transience, however, is that for many migrants in areas where UN-Habitat operates, urban residence *is* temporary. Here I refer not just to IDPs, but those whose movement in and out of cities is cyclical, rhythmic, "tied perhaps to agricultural seasons, financial cycles, political terms, academic semesters, family dynamics or weather conditions at border crossings" (Griffiths 2021, 318). Migrants might return to rural villages to see family or have extended patterns of seasonal migration to diversify household income sources and risk, in line with the new economics of labour migration models (Massey et al. 1993). Data from the Rangpur region of Bangladesh shows that one third of poor households experiencing pre-harvest "lean seasons" send a family member to internal labour markets elsewhere for weeks or months at a time (Mobarak and Reimão 2020, 17–18), while research from Nairobi's informal settlements indicates circulatory migration patterns, with high levels of turnover among those aged 20-24 (Beguy et al. 2010). Seasonal workers in India often relocate to large cities for short-term employment tied to wedding seasons or festivals (Agarwal 2016). The assertion that migrants are essentially permanent residents ignores the rhythms of many migrants' lives.

While UN-Habitat's discourse emphasizes forced displacement, the distinction between forced and seasonal economic migration becomes less meaningful in practice. The line between voluntary and forced migration is often blurry: those facing poverty may have little choice but to relocate seasonally. Moreover, informal settlements serve as sites of arrival and cheap housing for all sorts of migrants, from IDPs and refugees to economic migrants seeking a low-profile and cheap housing (Djomo and Epo 2023), meaning diverse migrant groups live side by side with long term residents. Planning interventions that assume permanent residence may fail to account for temporal patterns affecting migrants across categories, potentially excluding not just economic migrants but also forcibly displaced populations who maintain connections elsewhere or hope for return.

These temporal patterns reflect not just physical absence at times, but strategic resource allocation. Migrants maintaining connections to places of origin may deprioritize local engagement if lengthy urban planning processes don't align with their migration strategies. If someone is sending remittances home, investing in rural property, or plans to move elsewhere, spending months engaged in PISU community consultation – which UN-Habitat notes at times

requires large time commitments over months or even years (UN-Habitat 2016, 83) – that they may not benefit from appears like a poor use of time and energy. Similarly, point-in-time surveys for PISU projects could suffer a selection bias if delivered during seasons where migrants return home. Further, if PISU relies on engagement with CBOs rather than individuals, migrants who have a more consistent presence (and likely a higher level of engagement with local organizations) may be more likely to have their concerns represented than those with higher levels of circulation, or those who prioritize engagement with communities in other locations

This participation gap matters because seasonal and temporary migrants face greater disparities: seasonal workers living in Indore's slums, for instance, experience worse access to sanitation facilities, secure tenure, and housing made of permanent materials compared to migrants residing in the area for less than a year, and both of these groups face worse access compared to migrants who have lived there for five or more years (Agarwal 2016). While direct evidence of CBO engagement patterns is limited, it is reasonable to assume that those with shorter-term residence have fewer opportunities to build relationships with local organizations. Thus, standard data collection methods may systematically exclude precisely those migrants who face the greatest vulnerabilities.

Temporalities also shape residents' priorities. Infrastructure upgrades and formal land titling are associated with significant increases in rent. As such, poorer groups may prefer de-facto security of tenure over costly formalization processes (Briggs 2011). In the Korogocho settlement in Nairobi City County, rural-urban migrants consistently cite affordable rent as their reason for living in that neighbourhood, as resulting savings allow them to invest in education, nourishment, and homes in their rural areas of origin (Rigon 2022). Ethnographic research revealed "a large section of the residents had less interest in slum upgrading programmes, and did not want to be involved [...] if it involved investing their savings and time," which they would prefer to direct elsewhere (Rigon 2022, 5). Long-term residents and non-migrants, by contrast, may have a vested interest in infrastructure upgrades, gaining land titles, and individual ownership. An upgrading project in Korogocho that prioritized tenure and transport infrastructure was found to significantly increase rent, with benefits largely going to absentee structure owners who owned 55% of the structures (Rigon 2014). These investments pushed those who were unwilling or unable to pay out of the settlement, resulting in lost social relations, disrupted livelihoods, and reduced "prospect of any benefit from the upgrading programme" (Rigon 2022, 10). If participatory planning processes are designed around the assumptions of and prioritization of permanent residence, they may systematically miss divergent needs of those whose presence is temporary or cyclic.

UN-Habitat's encourages planners to "enable safe, voluntary and fluid migration between rural and urban areas, including the possibility of circular migration as an adaptive strategy to climate change and other pressures" (Grant 2023, x). However, when proposing interventions like PISUs to support migrants, this recognition of circular migration disappears in favour of approaches that benefit sedentary populations. This disconnect suggests that while UN-Habitat intellectually acknowledges diverse migration temporalities, their practical toolkit retains temporal assumptions that limit the effectiveness of interventions in benefitting certain migrants.

UN-Habitat's emphasis on participatory planning and rights-based approaches offers important tools for supporting migrant populations. Nonetheless, as an organization mandated to support sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat has institutional interests in promoting migrant settlement and integration. Successful urban development requires stable populations that invest in local infrastructure and participate in local governance. This institutional goal creates a structural blind spot: when migrants prioritize temporary residence, remittances, or informal arrangements, UN-Habitat's framework can only recognize these strategies as vulnerabilities or challenges for local development plans requiring intervention rather than rational choices reflecting different priorities. UN-Habitat itself acknowledges that "the very forms and types of participation matter as much as participatory decision-making" (UN-Habitat 2016, 83). Yet their framework provides little guidance on adapting participation methods to accommodate temporal diversity. Standard participatory mechanisms, which are designed around expectations of sustained local engagement, may fail to capture the perspectives of those whose time and resources are strategically directed elsewhere. When formalization or tenure security then becomes the measure of success or inclusion, temporary residents who prefer affordable rent and mobility become a problem to solve rather than a perspective to accommodate. Recognizing these limitations creates space for more contextually responsive approaches which centre migrant agency and support diverse strategies for navigating urban life.

Conclusion

This paper makes the case that scholars and policy researchers should expand the constellation of organizations recognized as influential in shaping migration norms beyond the IOM, ILO, and UNHCR to include UN-Habitat, especially given UN-Habitat's direct relationships with local governments and increased interest in the local turn of migration governance.[8] UN-Habitat's migration discourse revolves around three primary narratives—migrants as governance strains, vulnerable populations, and displacement as a consequences of poor urban policy—while centring distinctly urban forms of displacement that fall outside traditional migration governance frameworks yet significantly impact urban populations. In viewing migration through an institutional urban development lens, UN-Habitat's approaches to addressing migration related challenges risk obscuring diversity in migrant temporalities, privileging the perspectives of those who settle and engage in long-term processes over those engaging in circulation in pursuit of their priorities. This blind spot reveals a need for renewed attention to migrants' own voices, strategies, and place-making practices within urban migration governance.

Several promising directions emerge for future research building on these findings. Scholars could examine how UN-Habitat's migration governance ideas cascade down to local implementation and whether they become internalized by municipal governments and urban planning practitioners. Future research should examine whether the expansion into migration management could be part of an effort to secure more funding and continued relevance by working on topics government donors and other IOs are willing to fund, especially given one third of the documents in my corpus were sponsored by governments while 54 of 183 documents in my archive were developed in collaboration with other UN organizations or the OECD. Research exploring "onward precarities" (Chung et al. 2022), eviction, and gentrification shape migrants' mobility options would provide valuable insights into the externalities of well-intentioned urban development. Such research would deepen our understanding of how international organizations construct and maintain institutional boundaries around overlapping forms of displacement and vulnerability.

[8] See Jorgensen (2012), Zapata Barrero et al. (2017), and Ahouga (2018).

Appendices

Appendix A: Exploratory Analysis of UN-Habitat Research and Publication Repository

These "Research and Publications" repository on UN-Habitat's website allows users to search by year of publication, type of publication, author, language, and a tag called "topic," one such topic being "Urban Migration." The repository also features a search bar where users can search documents for strings of text. In my exploratory analysis, I assessed the results of various searches, making use of the filters and string search feature. I discovered the following:

- An initial filtering using the "Urban Migration" tag returned 60 results.
- A string search for "migration" returned 67 results.
- A string search for "displacement" returned 91 results.
- A string search for "immobility" returned 0 results.
- A string search for "trapped" (relevant to climate mobilities & trapped populations) returned 0 results.
- A string search for "mobility" revealed 82 results, all related to transportation rather than what migration scholars would recognize as content related to mobility and immobility in light of Urry and Sheller's (2004) mobility turn. It should be noted that mobility was used within my final corpus documents in ways that at times connoted transportation and at other times human mobility.
- Trial and error revealed no difference between plurals for these terms, or words sharing stems such as "displacement," "displace," and "displaced." There *was* a difference between "migrant" and "migration," but searching for their common stem "migra" revealed 0 results. This finding held for other stems; thus, I took that to mean that stems of words would not prove useful.

Appendix B: Corpus Description

The document corpus comprises 23 Un-Habitat publications spanning 2016 to 2025. This corpus includes one brief, two documents, four flagship reports, one paper, five policies and strategies, three technical reports, and seven toolkits, manuals, and guides. The corpus totals approximately 2,900 pages and represents both official organization positions and commissioned research within UN-Habitat's network. Table A1 provides entails and classifications for each document. Unless otherwise noted under sponsorship, UN-Habitat was listed as the sole publisher for each document.

Year	Full Title	Type*	Pages	Sponsorship	Frames	Citation
2016	"World Cities Report 2016 Urbanization and Development: Emerging Futures"	Flagship Report	262	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2, 3	(UN-Habitat 2016)
2018	"Human Rights in Cities: Alternative Solutions to Forced Evictions and Slum Demolitions – Case Studies from Africa, Asia, Central and South America"	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	69	Official UN-Habitat Publication	2, 3	(Polsinelli and Aura 2018)
2018	"UN-Habitat Brief on Migration to Cities"	Brief	6	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1	(UN-Habitat 2018)
2019	"Inclusive cities: Enhancing the positive impacts of urban migration"	Document	5	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2019a)
2019	"UN-Habitat Compendium: Migration Related Projects"	Technical Report	17	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2019b)
2019	"UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023"	Policy and Strategy	76	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2, 3	(UN-Habitat 2019c)
2020	"Urban and Territorial Planning for Inclusive Cities: Enhancing Quality of Life for Migrant and Host Communities in Urban Areas"	Technical Report	7	Joint Publication† with chapter written by UN-Habitat	1, 2, 3	(UN-Habitat 2020a)
2020	"World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization"	Flagship Report	418	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2020b)
2022	"Executive Director's Report 2022" (UN-Habitat 2022a)	Policy and Strategy	48	Official UN-Habitat Publication	2	(UN-Habitat 2022a)

2022	"UN-Habitat 2022 Catalogue of Services"	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	188	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2022b)
2022	"Urban Recovery Framework: An enabling institutional and policy framework to support resilient urban recovery at scale and the renewal of the social contract in urban crisis contexts"	Policy and Strategy	40	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2022c)
2022	"World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities"	Flagship Report	422	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2022d)
2023	"Designing for Displacement: A Spatial Guide for Planning Along Seasonal Rivers in Drylands"	Technical Report	182	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2, 3	(Yuka et al. 2023)
2023	"Mainstreaming Migration and Displacement into Urban Policy: A Guide" (Grant 2023)	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	155	Funded by Republic of Korea; Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)	1,2, 3	(Grant 2023)
2023	"UN-Habitat's Global Institutional Plan on Solutions to Internal Displacement"	Policy and Strategy	17	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(UN-Habitat 2023)
2024	"Durable Housing, Land and Property Solutions for Customary Displacement Contexts"	Paper	120	Funded by: SIDA; Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of the Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ)	1, 2, 3	(Kitchin and Tempra 2024)
2024	"Housing, Land and Property (HLP)-Sensitive Urban Law: Enhancing urban law to protect HLP across the conflict cycle"	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	123	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2	(Sullivan 2024)
2024	"Mainstreaming Migration and Displacement in Urban Planning and Public Space Development: A Survey of Best Practices and Future Recommendations" (Peter et al. 2024)	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	164	Funded by SIDA	1, 2, 3	(Peter et al. 2024)

2024	"Migration-Informed Urban Planning – A 3 Step Guidebook from the Urban Planning and Infrastructure in Migration Contexts (UPI1) Programme in Cameroon, Egypt, and Jordan"	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	70	Funded by Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs	1, 2	(Hammad et al. 2024)
2024	"Policy Directions: Housing, Land and Property Solutions to Resolve and Prevent Displacement"	Policy and Strategy	74	Funded by SIDA, BMZ	1, 2, 3	(Tempra and Elaydi 2024)
2024	"Sustainable Urbanization and Forced Displacement"	Document	11	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 3	(UN-Habitat 2024a)
2024	"World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action"	Flagship Report	373	Official UN-Habitat Publication	1, 2, 3	(UN-Habitat 2024b)
2025	"Towards inclusive solutions to urban internal displacement: A global framework for Governments, UN agencies, the Resident Coordinator System and partners"	Toolkits, Manuals, and Guides	52	Funded by SIDA	1, 2, 3	(UN-Habitat 2025)

***** *As listed in the UN-Habitat Research and Publications Repository (UN-Habitat, n.d.-a)*
† *Participating Organizations: Centre for Mediterranean Integration (CMI), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mayor's Mechanism of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), Mayor's Migration Council (MMC), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Human Settlement Program (UN-Habitat), World Health Organization (WHO).*

Appendix C: Migration Frame Topics

Frame Type	Frame Topic	Description
Issue – Generic Policy	Economic	Financial implications of an issue
	Capacity & Resources	Availability or lack of time, physical, human, or financial resources
	Morality & Ethics	Perspectives compelled by religion or secular sense of ethics or social responsibility
	Fairness and Equality	The (in)equality with which laws, punishments, rewards, resources are distributed
	Legality, Constitutionality, & Jurisdiction	Court cases and existing laws that regulate policies; constitutional interpretation; legal processes such as seeking asylum or obtaining citizenship; jurisdiction
	Crime & Punishment	The violation of policies in practice and the consequences of those violations
	Security & Defence	Any threat to a person, group, or nation and defences taken to avoid that threat

	Health & Safety	Health and safety outcomes of a policy issue, discussions of health care
	Quality of Life	Effects on people's wealth, mobility, daily routines, community life, happiness, etc.
	Cultural Identity	Social norms, trends, values, and customs; integration/assimilation efforts
	Public Sentiment	General social attitudes, protests, polling, interest groups, public passage of laws
	Political Factors & Implications	Focus on politicians, political parties, governing bodies, political campaigns and debates; discussions of elections and voting
	Policy Prescription & Evaluation	Discussions of existing or proposed policies and their effectiveness
	External Regulation & Reputation	Relations between nations or states/provinces; agreements between governments; perceptions of one nation/state by another
Migration Specific	Victim: Global Economy	Migrants are victims of global poverty, underdevelopment and inequality
	Victim: Humanitarian	Immigrants experience economic, social, and political suffering and hardships
	Victim: War	Focus on war and violent conflict as reason for migration
	Victim: Discrimination	Migrants are victims of racism, xenophobia, and religion-based discrimination
	Hero: Cultural Diversity	Highlights positive aspects of differences that migrants bring to society
	Hero: Integration	Migrants successfully adapt and fit into their host society
	Hero: Worker	Migrants contribute to economic prosperity and are an important source of labour
	Threat: Jobs	Migrants take non-immigrants' jobs or lower their wages
	Threat: Public Order	Migrants threaten public safety by being breaking the law or spreading disease
	Threat: Fiscal	Migrants abuse social service programs and are a burden on resources
	Threat: National Cohesion	Migrants' cultural differences are a threat to national unity and social harmony

***Source**: Adapted from (Mendelsohn et al. 2021, 2221). Modifications include updating the column name "Frame" to "Frame Topic" to avoid confusion with my use of the term frame, changing the terms "immigration" and immigrants to "migration" and "migrants" to account for those moving within borders, and the omission of two additional rows relating to whether subjects were related to an event or general, which were irrelevant to my topic.*

Appendix D: Frames by Narrative

Narrative 1: Migration as a Challenge for Local Governments	
Problem	**Example from Corpus**
1. Surge in migration strains capacity of local governance and services	"However, the rapid influx of people to cities, especially when caused by crisis, comes with challenges for governments, particularly local governments and those authorities with weak systems, governance structures, lack of financial means and capacities. Local governments often struggle with pressure on basic, administrative and social services, infrastructure, housing supply,

	health and education services and to facilitate decent livelihood." (UN-Habitat 2018, 5).
2. Local Governments cannot lack funding or agency needed to address displacement	"Increasingly, financial assistance is being channelled towards housing, education, livelihoods, and other areas to support the integration of migrant populations and the development of urban areas hosting them. However, many potential opportunities are being missed due to the continued barriers that local governments face in accessing funding opportunities. [...] In some political contexts, where migration and displacement are regarded as falling under the exclusive authority of national governments, cities may also feel that they lack the mandate to respond to these issues themselves." (Grant 2023, 82)
3. Migrants contribute to the proliferation of slums	"Today, the wave of migrants from conflict-ridden countries highlighted in Chapter 1 poses challenges to receiving countries in terms of housing, even on a temporary basis. This has given rise to informal encampments like those outside Calais, France." (UN-Habitat 2016, 132)
4. Outmigration from Cities leading to urban decline	"Nearly half of the cities in developed regions are shrinking. Most of the 52 cities globally that have experienced population decline since 2000 are in Europe and North America (Figure 1.2). These cities were home to 59 million people in 2018, down from more than 62 million in 2000. Shrinking cities are the outcome of a decline in the regional economy or cities' economic base with the population migrating elsewhere. In the US, more than 40 per cent of cities with at least 10,000 residents have lost population between 1980 and 2010.58 These cities are located mostly in the deindustrialized region known as the Rust Belt, where population loss has led to high rates of unemployment, blight and violent crime" (UN-Habitat 2022d, 12)
5. Rural-to-urban migration not effectively managed	"In development discussions today, there is a growing acceptance that the rigid distinctions between rural and urban can no longer be applied. As the boundaries and functions separating city and countryside have become increasingly blurred, more attention is being paid to the "urban-rural continuum" – the intricate networks of trade, information and mobility connecting the two. Migration plays a crucial role within this and can bring significant benefits to both rural areas and cities in the right conditions, boosting urban productivity while providing a vital flow of remittances to villages of origin. However, when poorly managed and driven by acute economic pressures that undermine voluntary decision making, the impact on urban areas can be very different. Rural communities may be drained of essential labour, threatening local agriculture and food supply, with households separated and children left behind while their parents eke a precarious existence in the city's slums." (Grant 2023, 50)
Narrative 2: Migrants as a Vulnerable Population	
6. Migrants are a vulnerable population	"Vulnerable groups include 'any identity group, community, or segment of society that is at higher risk of being subjected to discrimination, violence, natural or environmental disasters, or economic hardship, than other groups. Such groups may include women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, or migrants and often experience higher risk in periods of conflict and crisis'" (Tempra and Elaydi 2024, viii)
7. Migrants' needs are not met	"Living conditions in IDP camps varied, but generally were overcrowded, with poor sanitary conditions, with high-security risks and little support for accessible durable displacement solutions. They slowly took the features of slums. IDPs households had minimal accessibility to all basic services

	including water (16.6%), housing (10.5%), latrines (8.6%), educations (6.5%), and health (4.1%). Only 8% of camps had water provided in the premises, not even half of them had latrines and only 4% of the camps had a waste management service. By September 2014, 45,030 people were still living in 35 camps considered at risk in the event of natural disaster" (Polsinelli and Aura 2018, 31)
8. Migrants lack rights	"International migrants often lack even the most basic civil rights in their host countries and face various forms of social and economic exclusion, including from the democratic process" (UN-Habitat 2022d, 156).
9. Migrants lack representation and visibility in decision making processes	"However, vulnerable, minority, and disadvantaged communities typically face less representation in leadership and decision-making structures, and nearly always possess and exercise less political, social, and economic power and agency compared to the host community members. This lack of agency often impacts the results of spatial planning and urban development initiatives and can be particularly evident in public spaces, which serve as essential platforms for social interaction, integration, and community building." (Peter et al. 2024, 74)
10. Conflict between migrants and community members	"During the dry season, nomadic pastoralists travel over the border between Sudan and South Sudan to find water and grazing land for their livestock, before crossing back over to Sudan when the rains return. During this annual migration, various communities and tribes come into contact, often competing over the same limited land and water resources. Unfortunately, this can often lead to conflict and violence between these communities. Nomadic movement is, however, a critical part of the regional economy, especially for the many living in the borderlands of both countries whose livelihoods depend on pastoralism. This all occurs in the context of long and ongoing conflict in South Sudan, which contributes further to the challenges faced by nomadic pastoralists. It is well understood, as well, that disputes over land, resources, boundaries, and migration are major contributors to broader conflict and have often resulted in escalating violence" (Yuka et al. 2023, 140)
11. Migrants are not integrated into formal economic/development structures	"7.3 SUPPORT THE LIVELIHOODS AND WELL-BEING OF MIGRANTS: In the Global South, the informal sector is estimated to provide around a third of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and employ three-quarters of the workforce.13 However, this issue is further exacerbated in unstable and conflict-affected areas, where a considerable portion of the population has no other option but to enter the informal sector. Leading global agreements increasingly recognise the need to better integrate the marginalised workers, including migrants and displaced populations, working in informal economic sectors into a broader understanding of local development which can be used to inform best practices in urban and territorial planning. They also emphasise the need to support workers' livelihoods and encourage their progressive transition into the formal economy by providing incentives and compliance measures" (Peter et al. 2024, 91).
12. Migrants populations disproportionately lack climate resilience	"One of the issues most relevant to migration, displacement and the urban-rural continuum is climate resilience. The impact of natural disasters and shocks can destroy crops, devastate food security and uproot rural communities, with most migrating internally to towns and cities. This often means in practice that environmental risk is simply urbanized: rural

	residents, having been exposed to the worst effects of flooding, drought or storms, then often relocate to informal settlements in the most vulnerable areas next to landfills, riverbanks and other hazardous settings. Furthermore, the frequent absence of basic services such as sanitation or waste management can result in the use of harmful practices such as fly-tipping and incineration, further degrading the local environment. "This is especially evident in Somalia, where a succession of drought-induced famines has led to the protracted displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians from rural areas. The majority are now living precariously in camps and settlements in peri-urban areas with limited access to basic services, livelihoods and other necessities" (Grant 2023, 57).
Narrative 3: Migration Challenges as a Consequence of Poor Urban Planning	
13. Forced evictions lead to displacement	"Forced evictions are widespread in Kenyan cities. In most cases bulldozers destroy overnight the shacks of the communities, without any notice or provision of either relocation or compensation. Most often, even schools, shops and health clinics are destroyed. Evictions in Kenya usually appear to be caused by enforcement of municipal planning and government orders regarding urban development plans. Slums were initially built in peripheral or marginal land when the town or city was small; subsequent city growth has engulfed such land resulting in a substantial appreciation of their value and the government needs to clear the land for urban development plans, such as railways construction or ring road bypass. "More fundamentally, the problem of forced evictions in Kenya is ingrained in the inequitable structure of land ownership. Evictions in Kenya are primarily caused by structural factors embedded in the political economy, which preclude many poor people to have access to land and to decent shelter in cities" (Polsinelli and Aura 2018, 44).
14. Lack of Housing, Land, and Property governance extends displacement/ prevents return migration	"Complex challenges affecting HLP rights arise in the post-conflict context of displacement and return. Specific HLP issues which contribute to tenure insecurity and homelessness or landlessness in these circumstances include property confiscation; unauthorized property sales or transfers; secondary occupation; HLP disputes; loss of HLP and civil documentation, damage to property records and land information systems, fragmented de facto land administration, demographic change, and damage to and inadequate information on housing stock. Weak legal frameworks and incapacitated HLP institutions compound these challenges and hinder recovery processes such as property restitution and reconstruction, consequently inhibiting the establishment of resilient, cohesive communities" (UN-Habitat 2022b, 47).
15. Gentrification leads to displacement	"Measures aimed at general economic recovery should not worsen the living conditions of vulnerable groups. For example, recovery from the 2008 global financial crisis resulted in unprecedented growth in international urban tourism and led to the displacement of low-income residents from central neighbourhoods to peripheral urban areas as property owners converted housing into short-term holiday rentals. Housing advocates fear that returning to pre-pandemic patterns will result in gentrification by displacing the original residents that can no longer afford higher rents and further exacerbate the existing socio-economic and spatial inequalities in cities. However, some municipal authorities took advantage of the pandemic pause

	in short-term rentals to plan for a better regulated, more equitable future" (UN-Habitat 2022d, 188).
16. "Green" gentrification leads to displacement	"Well-intended climate-responsive land use planning has been documented to produce maladaptive outcomes for historically marginalized residents. "Green" development agendas have been implicated in many forms of displacement and gentrification around the world, and world-class city-making is increasingly aligned with a form of "bourgeois environmentalism" where upper and middleclass residents frame informal settlements as encroachers on green spaces with ecological functions. The eviction of residents from these environments is a form of "eco-cleansing" or "accumulation by green dispossession". These harmful forms of environmentalism extend to approaches to disaster risk management that are premised on the eviction of slum residents as a means to protect "legitimate" residents. Large-scale green infrastructure interventions aimed at generating environmental privileges for upper-class residents often (re) produce inequitable displacement or relocation, threatening informal settlements and livelihoods, weakening social networks, and erasing traditional practices and uses of nature" (UN-Habitat 2024b, 22).
17. Lack of action/planning for environmental disasters/climate change leads to displacement	"It is also important that urban planners engage with specialists in other sectors, such as environmental disaster risk and human security, to model and prepare for future migration and displacement through the development of early warning systems, zoning and other measures. Recent projections suggest that by 2050, urban areas in Central America and Mexico will have received more than 10 million climate-induced migrants unless effective actions are taken: cities in the region therefore need to invest in forecasting the impacts of this movement and plan accordingly to ensure the best outcomes" (Grant 2023, 36)

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