

# A Topography of Climate Change Research

Max Callaghan



July 25, 2018



**Figure:** Portrait of map-makers, Gerard Mercator and Jodocus Hondius (Jodocus Hondius) source:  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hondius\\_Portrait\\_of\\_map-makers.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hondius_Portrait_of_map-makers.jpg)

# Introduction

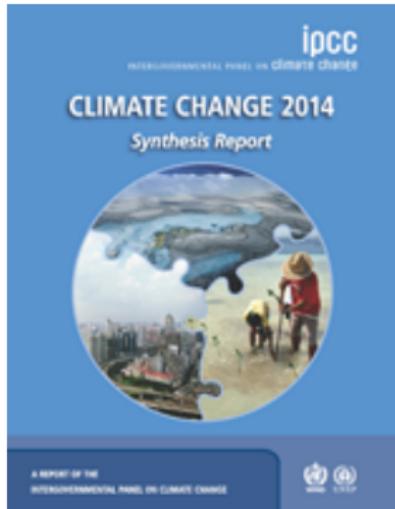


- Topography is a description of a landscape

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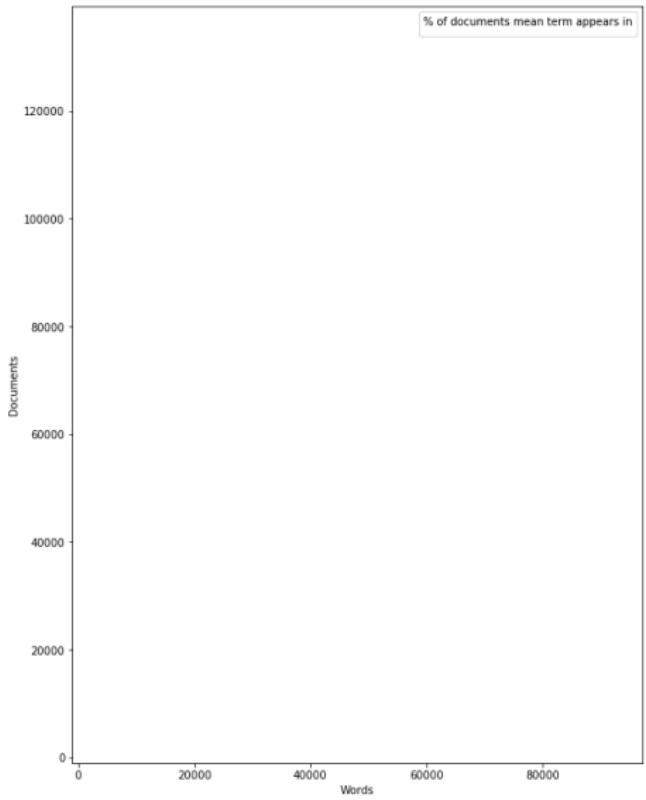


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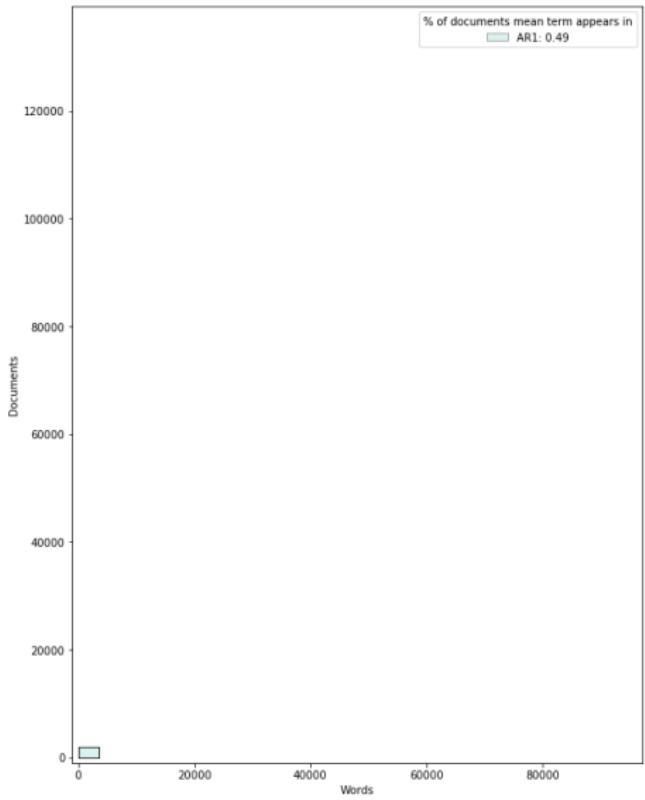
- To contribute evidence-based policy-making on climate change, the IPCC aims to *comprehensively* assess scientific literature on climate change
- These assessments should be aim to balance legitimacy, credibility and relevance (Cash and Clark, 2001)

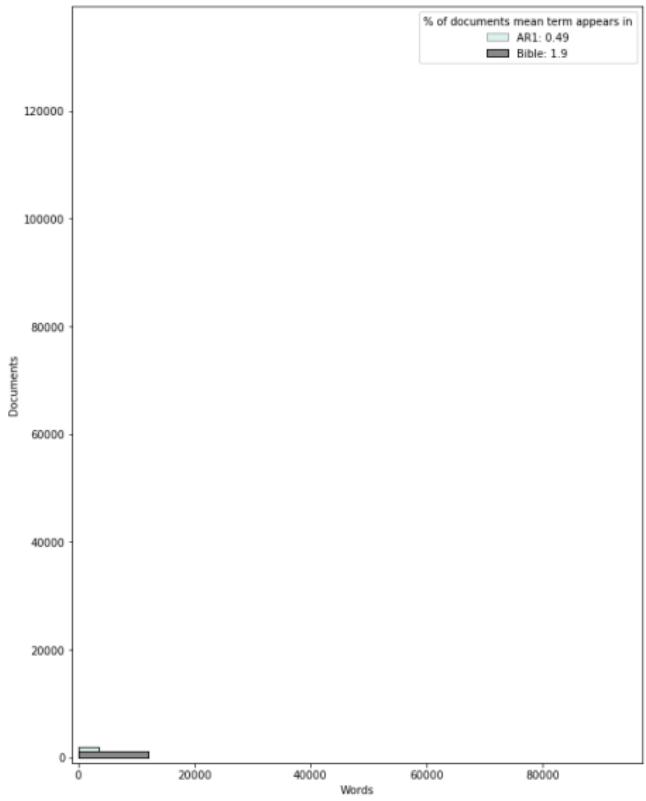
# Motivation - Big Literature



A matrix of documents x words

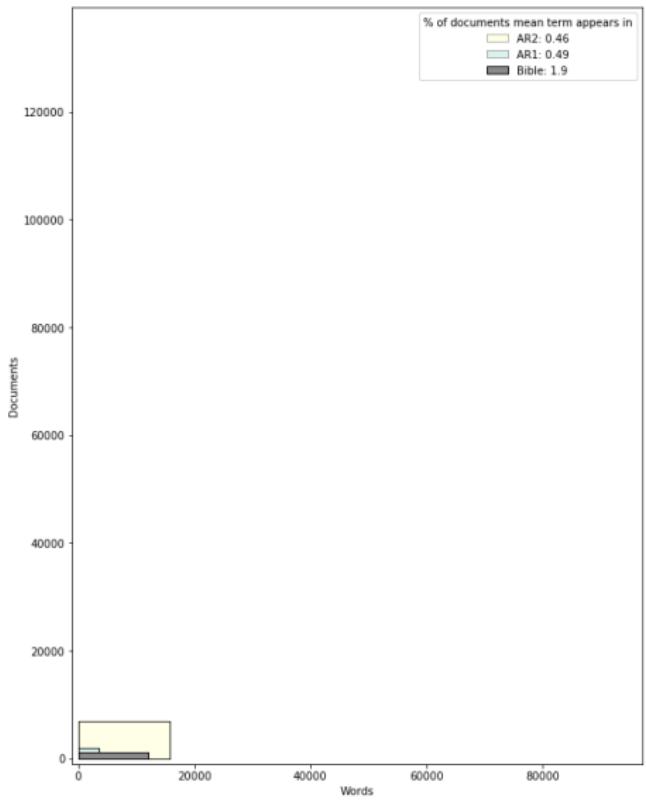
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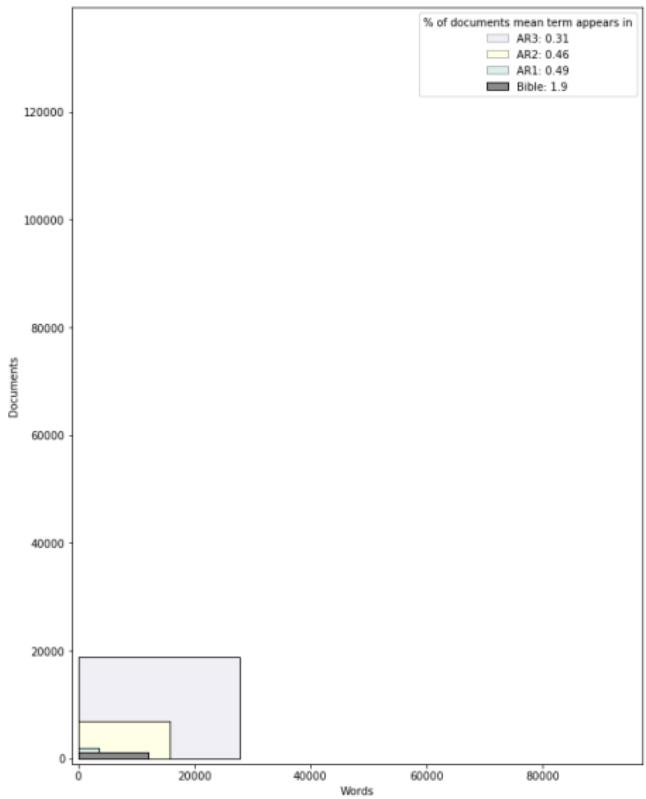


The Luther Bible: 1,189 documents  
(chapters) x 11,973 words

## Motivation - Big Literature

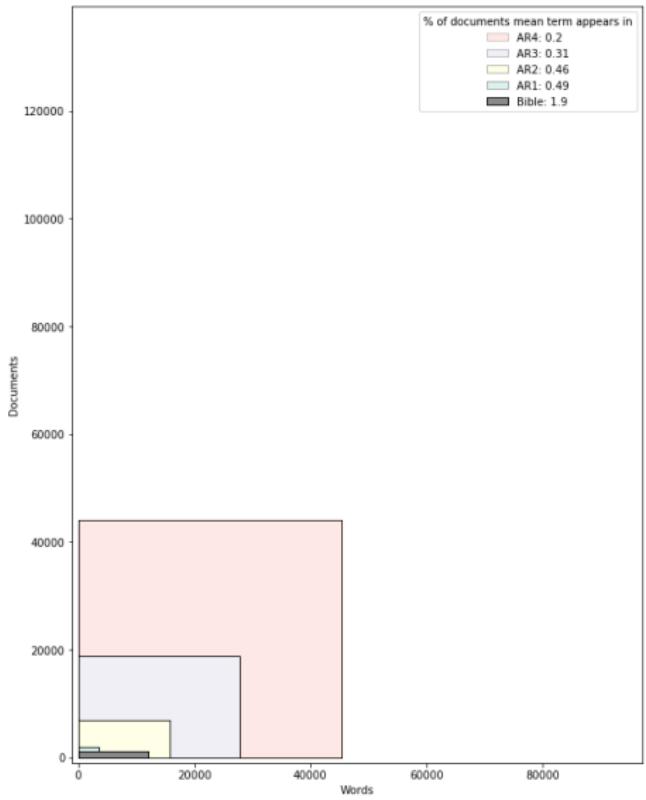


# Motivation - Big Literature



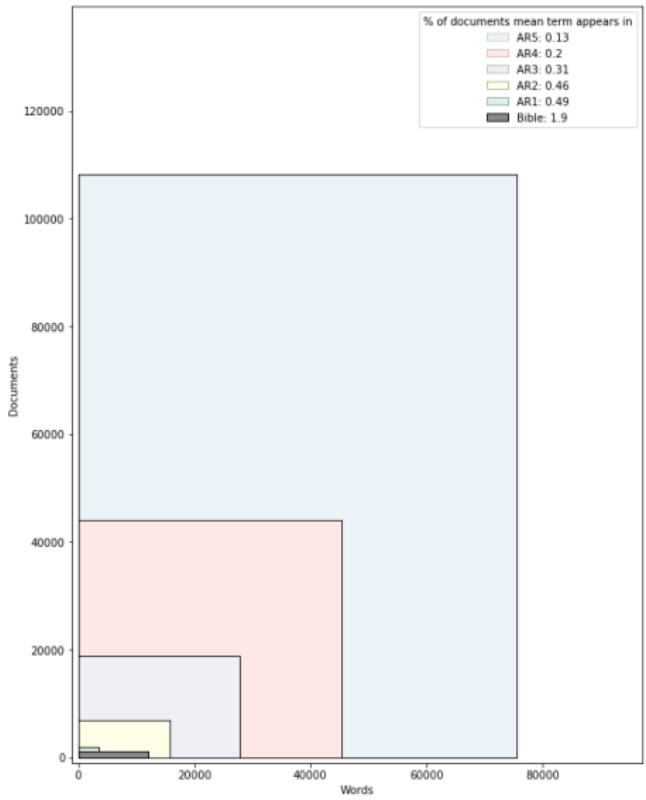
AR3: 18,728 documents x 27,730 words

## Motivation - Big Literature



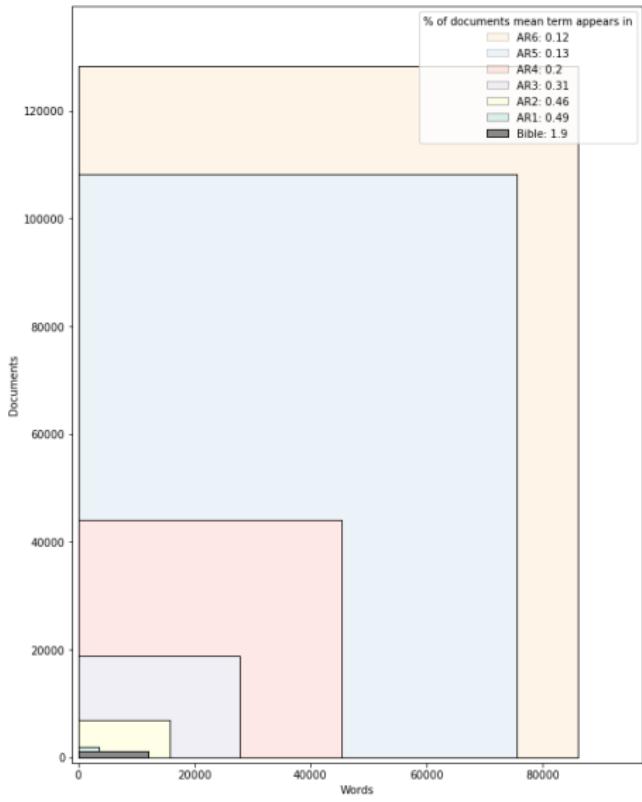
AR4: 44,000 documents x 45,388 words

## Motivation - Big Literature



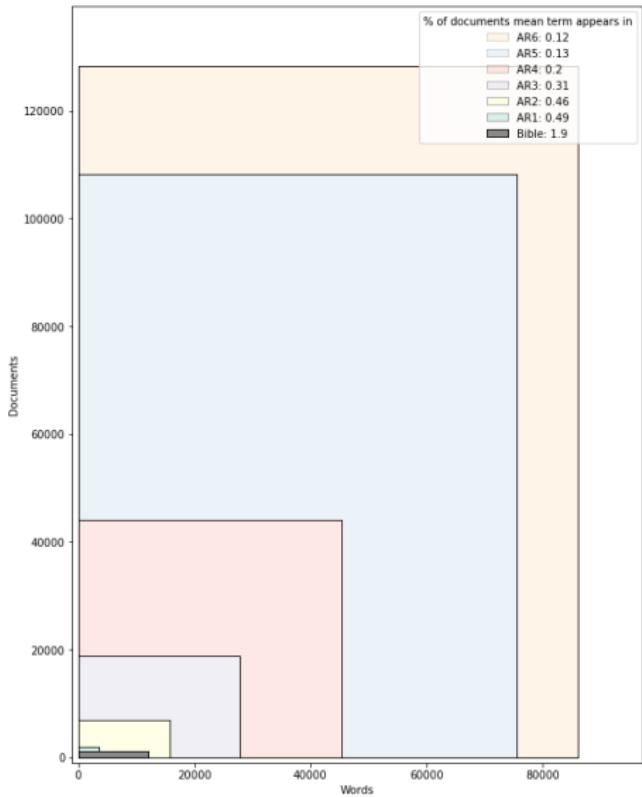
AR5: 108,277 documents  $\times$  75,553 words

# Motivation - Big Literature



AR6: 128,357 documents x 86,149 words

# Motivation - Big Literature

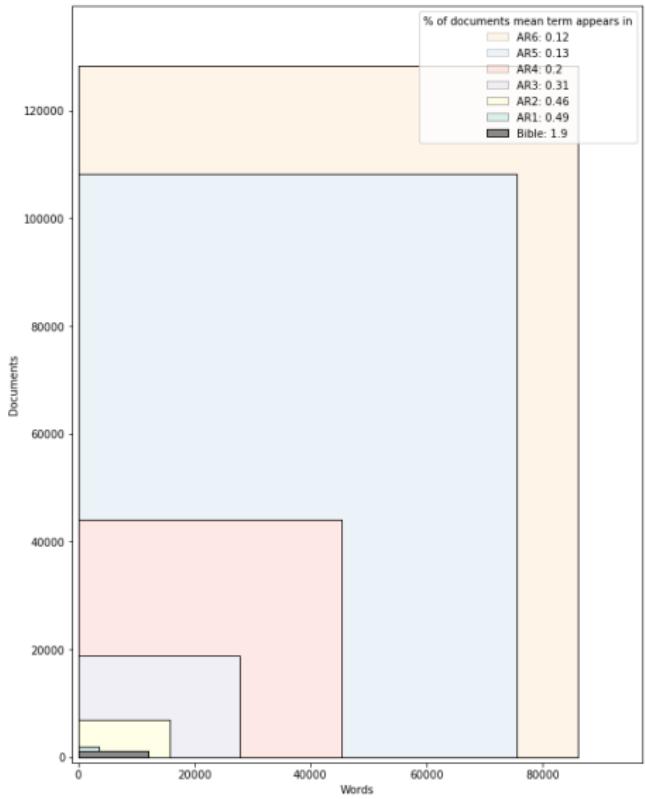


AR6: 128,357 documents  $\times$  86,149 words

- Comprehensive, credible and relevant assessments become more challenging as the literature grows (Minx et al., 2017)

*To understand, and to aid, scientific assessments of climate change, we need to machine read the literature*

# Approach - Words, words, words



## Topic Modelling

- Topic modelling is a way of reducing the dimensionality of a corpus of documents
- A large matrix of documents x words is factorised by a matrix of topics x words and a matrix of topics x documents (Lee and Seung, 1999)
- Topics describe the latent structure of the document corpus (What is the matter?)

$V_{i\mu}$  is a term frequency-inverse document frequency matrix of *stemmed* terms

V: 8769 x 3495

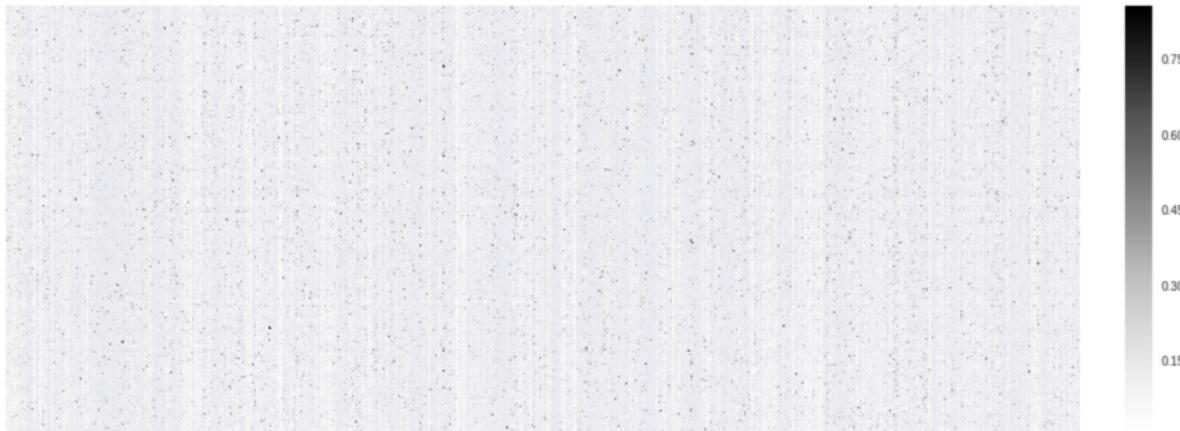


Figure: A topic model of 3495 documents on climate change from the year 2000

## Approach - Words, words, words

$$V_{i\mu} \approx (WH)_{i\mu} = \sum_{a=1}^r W_{ia} H_{a\mu}$$

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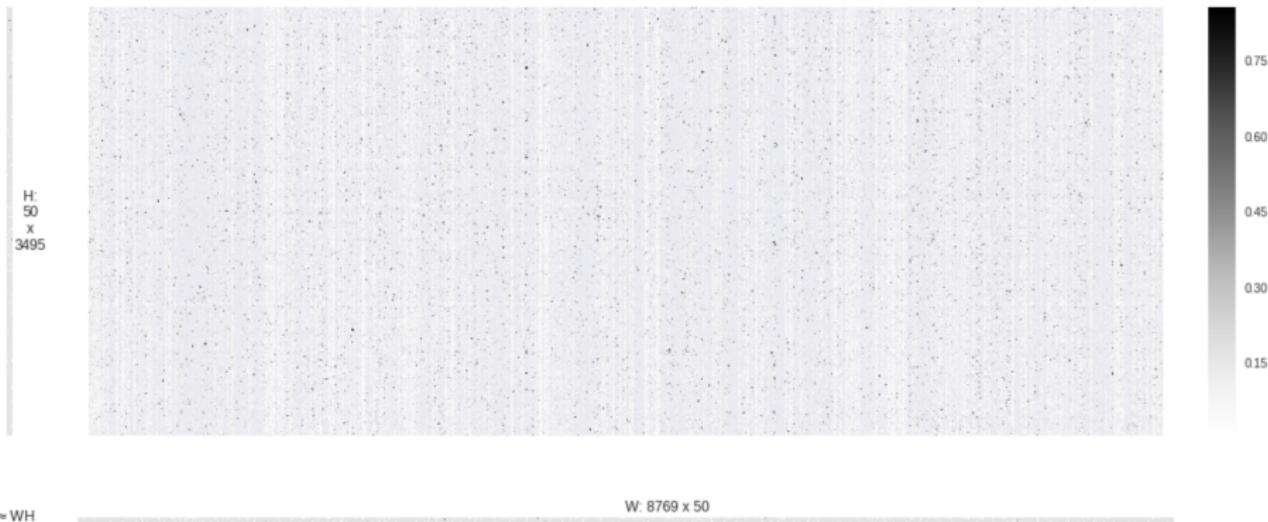


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## Research Questions

What is the thematic structure of the literature on climate change, and how has this changed over the five assessment periods of the IPCC

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## Steps

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- ② Match documents to reference lists from IPCC reports
- ③ Topic model stemmed document abstracts

# Data - Query

(SO=(Climate Alert OR Climate Dynamics OR Climate Policy OR Climatic Change OR Global and Planetary Change OR Global Change Biology OR International Journal of Greenhouse Gas Control OR Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Global Change) OR TS=((CO2 OR "carbon dioxide" OR methane OR CH4 OR "carbon cycle" OR "carbon cycles" OR "carbon cycling" OR "carbon budget\*" OR "carbon flux\*" OR "carbon mitigation") AND (climat\*)) OR ((("carbon cycle" OR "carbon cycles" OR "carbon cycling" OR "carbon budget\*" OR "carbon flux\*" OR "carbon mitigation") AND (atmospher\*))) OR TS=("carbon emission\*" OR "sequestration of carbon" OR "sequester\* carbon" OR "sequestration of CO2" OR "sequester\* CO2" OR "carbon tax\*" OR "CO2 abatement" OR "CO2 capture" OR "CO2 storage" OR "CO2 sequester\*" OR "CO2 sequestration" OR "CO2 sink\*" OR "anthropogenic carbon" OR "captur\*" of carbon dioxide" OR "captur\*" of CO2" OR "climat\* variability" OR "climat\* dynamic\*" OR "chang\* in climat\*" OR "climat\* proxies" OR "climat\* proxy" OR "climat\* sensitivity" OR "climat\* shift\*" OR "coupled ocean-climat\*" OR "early climat\*" OR "future climat\*" OR "past climat\*" OR "shift\* climat\*" OR "shift in climat\*") OR TS=("atmospheric carbon dioxide" OR "atmospheric CH4" OR "atmospheric CO2" OR "atmospheric methane" OR "atmospheric N2O" OR "atmospheric nitrous oxide" OR "carbon dioxide emission\*" OR "carbon sink\*" OR "CH4 emission" OR "climat\* policies" OR "climat\* policy" OR "CO2 emission\*" OR "dendroclimatolog\*" OR ("emission\* of carbon dioxide" NOT nanotube\*) OR "emission\* of CH4" OR "emission\* of CO2" OR "emission\* of methane" OR "emission\* of N2O" OR "emission\* of nitrous oxide" OR "historical climat\*" OR IPCC OR "methane emission\*" OR "N2O emission\*" OR "nitrous oxide emission") OR TS=(("climat\* change\*" OR "global warming" OR "greenhouse effect" OR "greenhouse gas\*" OR "Kyoto Protocol" OR "warming climat\*" OR "cap and trade" OR "carbon capture" OR "carbon footprint\*" OR "carbon neutral" OR "carbon offset" OR "carbon sequestration" OR "carbon storage" OR "carbon trad\*" OR "changing climat\*" OR "climat\* warming") NOT PY=2018)

- (Haunschild et al., 2016)
- 309,697 documents

## Caveats

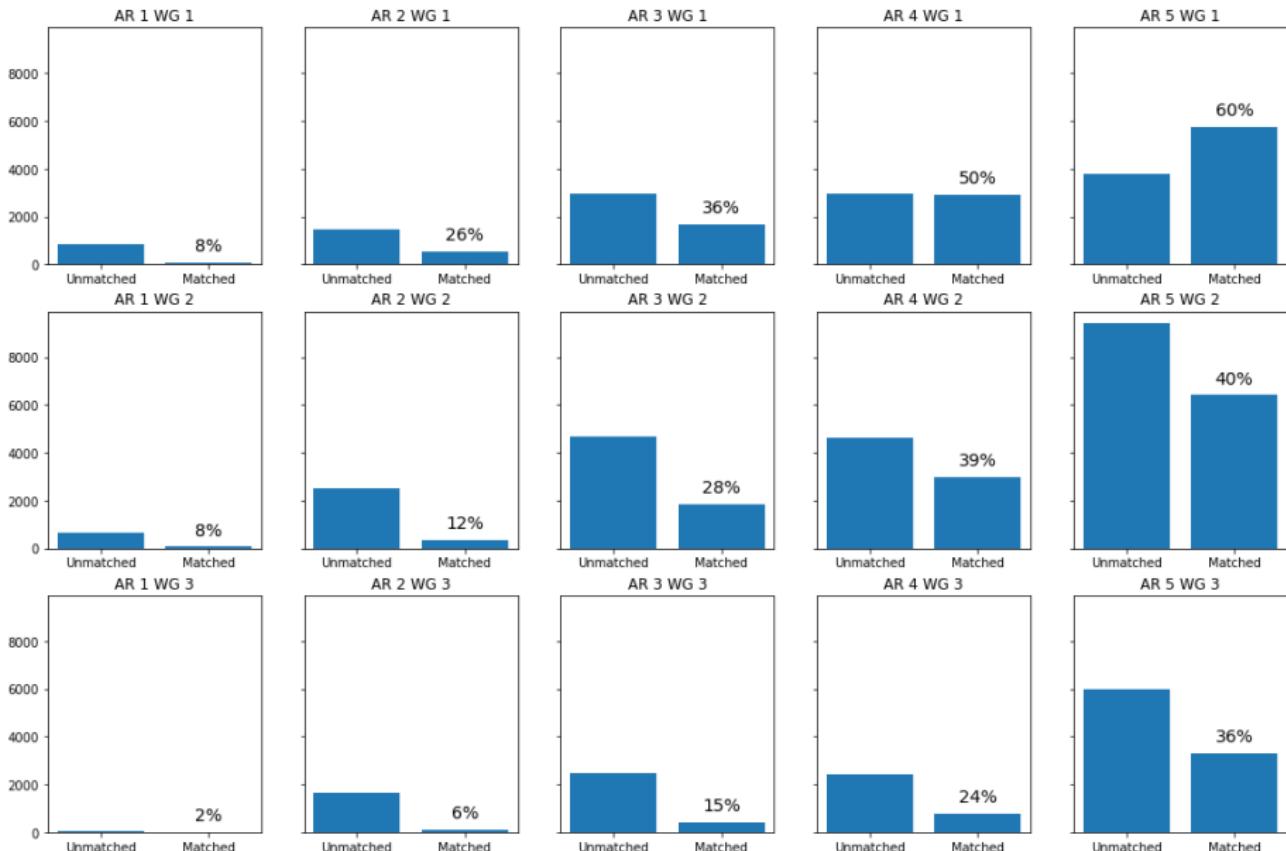
- Not perfect query  
(Expressio Unius Est Exclusio Alterius )
- WoS not all peer-reviewed literature
- Missing grey literature
- Missing relevant literature not directly about climate change

## Matching process

For each Reference:

- Check for case-insensitive title matches
- Calculate the Jaccard similarity score for two word shingles every database document containing the first word and from the same year. Match if the Jaccard score is above 0.45

# Data - IPCC References



# Data - Unmatched IPCC References



AR	WG	text	authors	year
2	2	Landfill gas: working with Gaia. Biodeterioration Extracts no. 4, Energy Technology Support Unit, Harwell Laboratory, Oxfordshire, UK.	Richards, K.M.	1989
1	1	Longwave cloud radiative forcing as determined from Nimbus-7 observations J Cltm , 2, 766 799	Ardanuy, P E , L L Stowe, A Gruber, M Weiss and C S Long	1989
3	2	Climate change: overview and implications for wildlife. In: Wildlife Responses to Climate Change: North American Case Studies [Schneider, S.H. and T.L. Root (eds.)]. Island Press, Washington, DC, USA, (in press).	Root, T.L. and S.H. Schneider	2001
2	3	The impact of global warming on the United States: A survey of recent literature, mimco. Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC (April).	Cline, W.R.	1993
3	2	Population-environment relations at the forested frontier of Nepal. Applied Geography, 20, 221-242.	Conway, D., K. Bhattacharai, and N.R. Shrestha	2000
3	2	The Cities Project. Australian Geological Survey Organisation, Australia. Available online at <a href="http://www.agso.gov.au/geohazards/grm/cities2.html">http://www.agso.gov.au/geohazards/grm/cities2.html</a> .	AGSO	1999
4	1	CLIMBER-2: A climate system model of intermediate complexity. Part I: Model description and performance for present climate.	Petoukhov, V., et al.	2000
5	1	A skill-score based evaluation of simulated Australian climate. Australian Meteorol. Oceanogr	Watterson, I., A. C. Hirst, and L. D. Rotstayn	2013
5	1	Enhanced aerosol backscatter adjacent to tropical trade wind clouds revealed by satellite-based lidar. Geophys. Res	Tackett, J. L., and L. Di Girolamo	2009
5	3	Promoting long-term investments by institutional investors. OECD Journal: Financial Market Trends 1, 145 – 164	Della Croce R, F Stewart, and J Yermo	2011

37% of IPCC References could be matched to the database of climate-relevant documents

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## Observations

- The size of the literature appears to be *much* bigger than our estimate
- WG3 refers to more literature not directly about climate change, or not in peer-reviewed publications, than WG2, which refers to more than WG1

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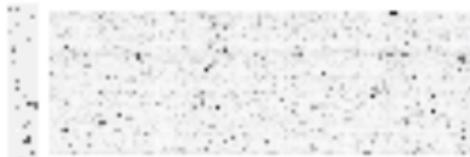
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Where the size and variety of the literature we want to model has increased exponentially, we need an approach that allows for the emergence of new topics.

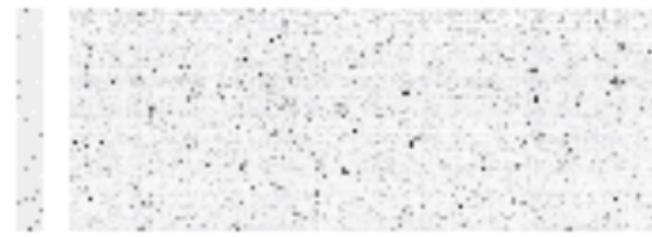
## Window Topics: 1991



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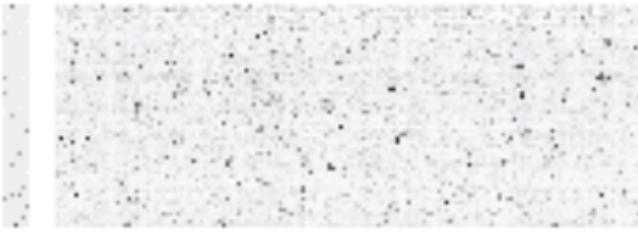


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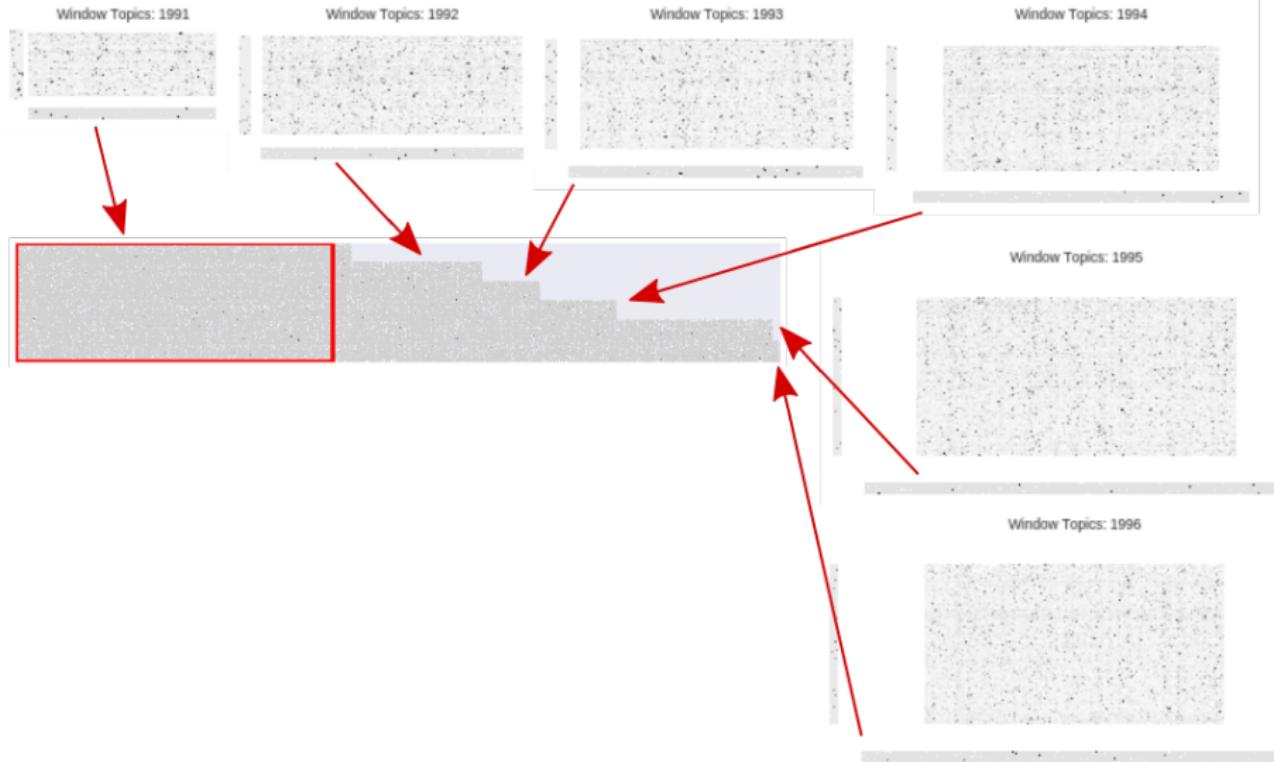
Window Topics: 1993



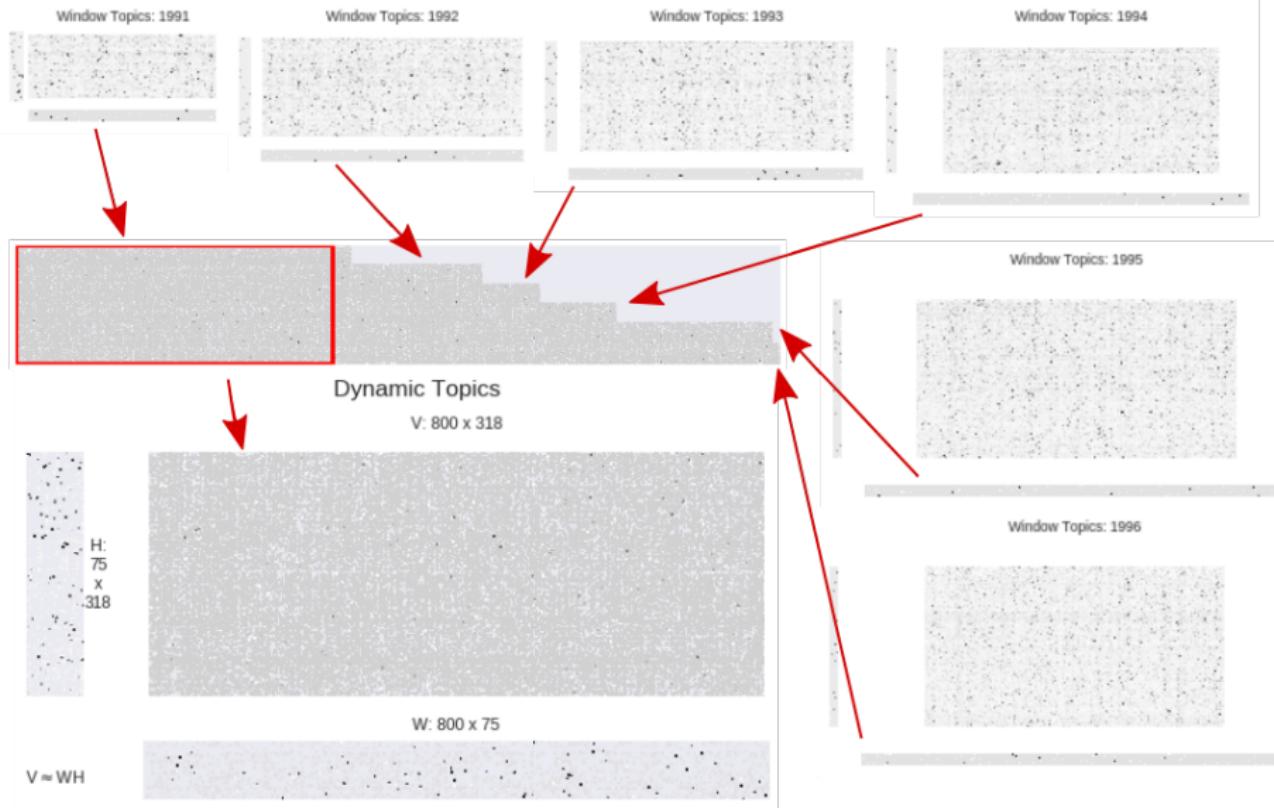
## Dynamic NMF

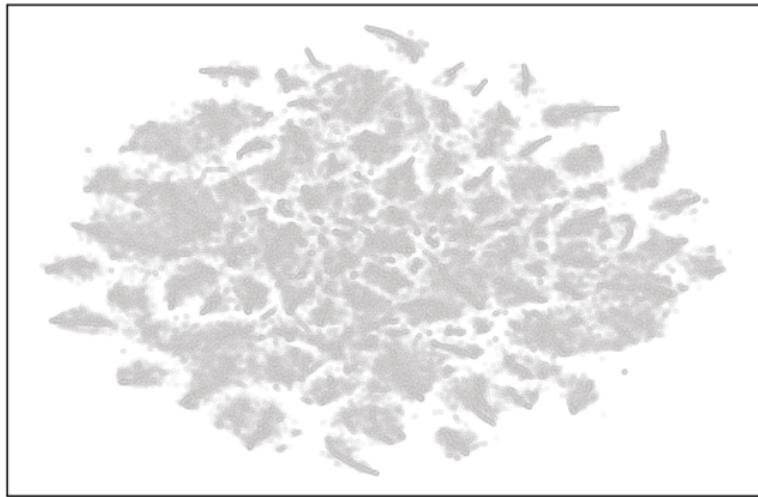


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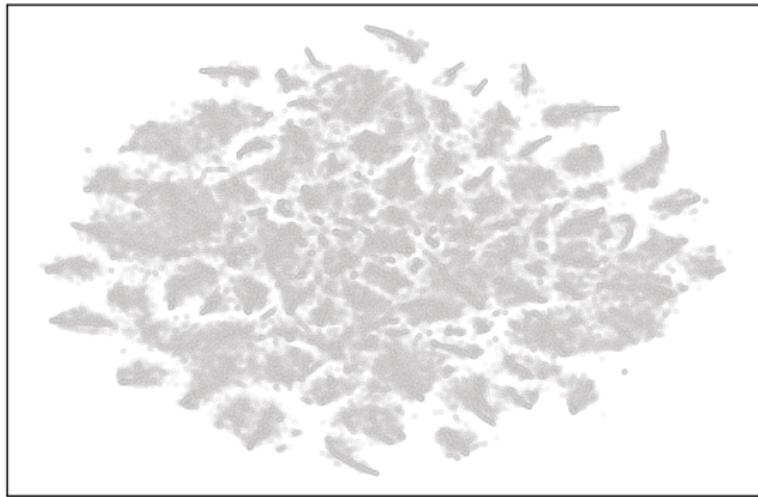




## Outline

Figure: A topographical representation of 100,000 documents on climate change

# Results

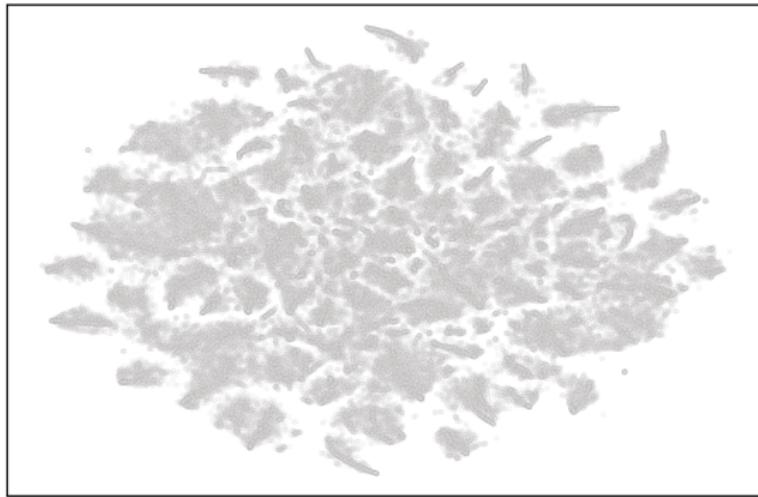


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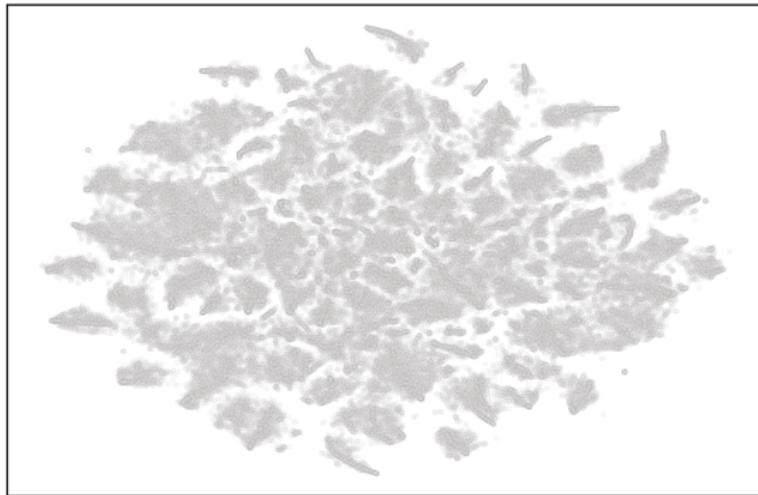


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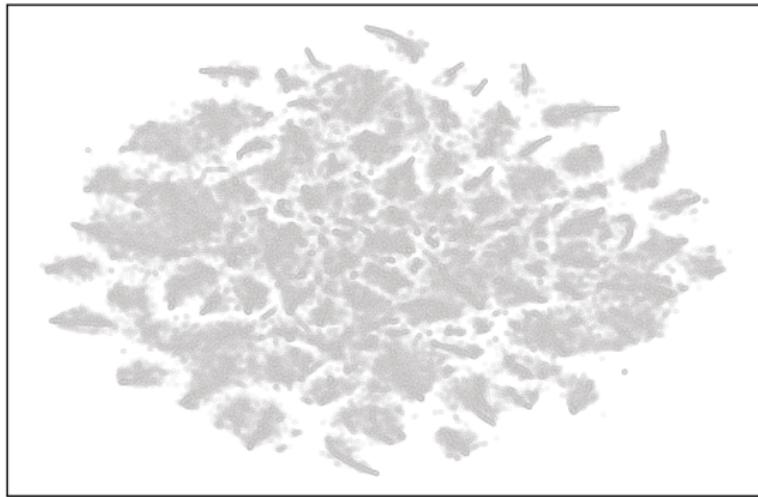
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## Outline

- Topography
- Development

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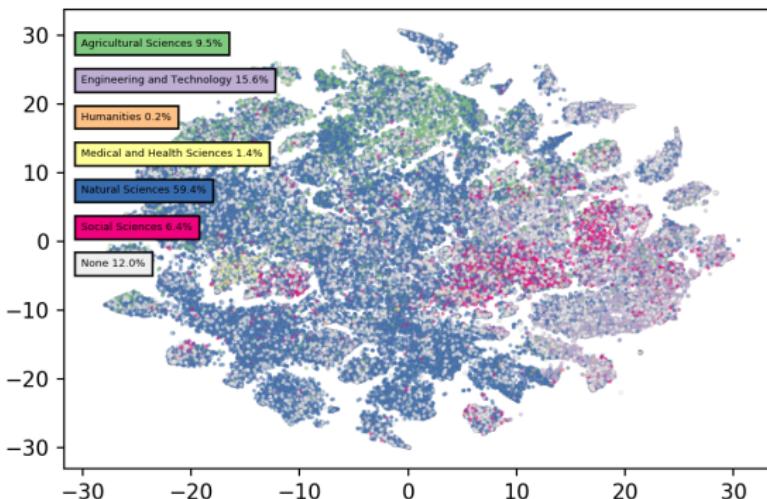


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- Topography
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- Representation in IPCC reports

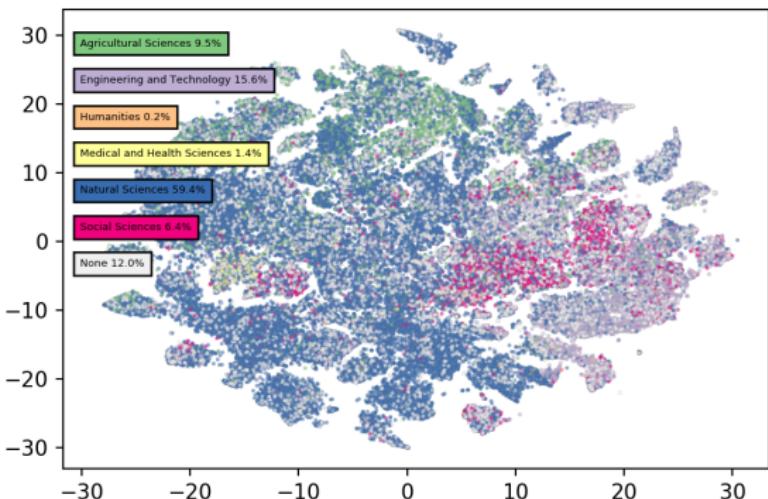
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## Results - Topography



**Figure:** A topographical representation of 100,000 documents on climate change. Document positions are dictated by topic scores, reduced to two dimensions through t-SNE

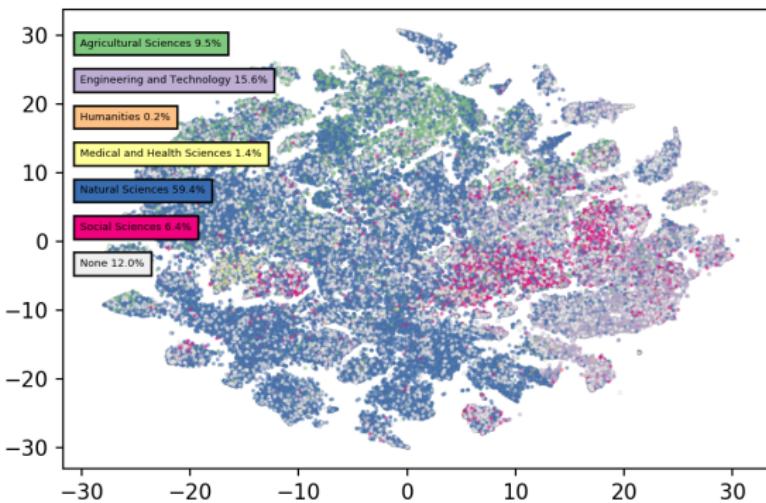
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- This *projects* the 100-dimensional topic scores onto a conventional 2-dimensional topographical map

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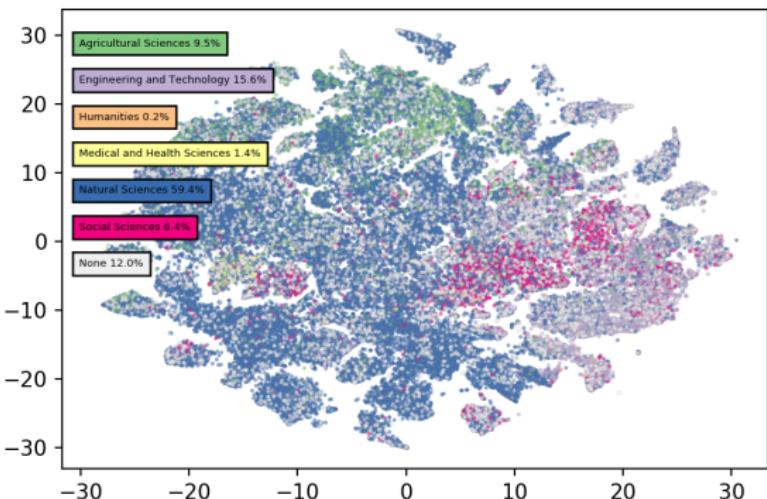
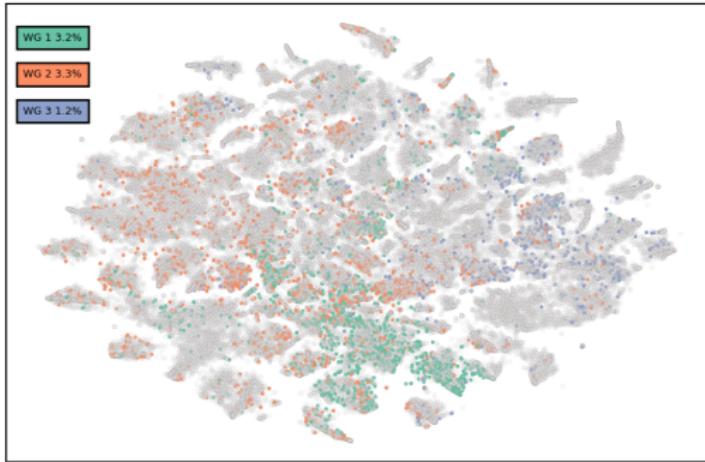


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- Topics cut across journal disciplinary categories, but the disciplinary structure remains visible

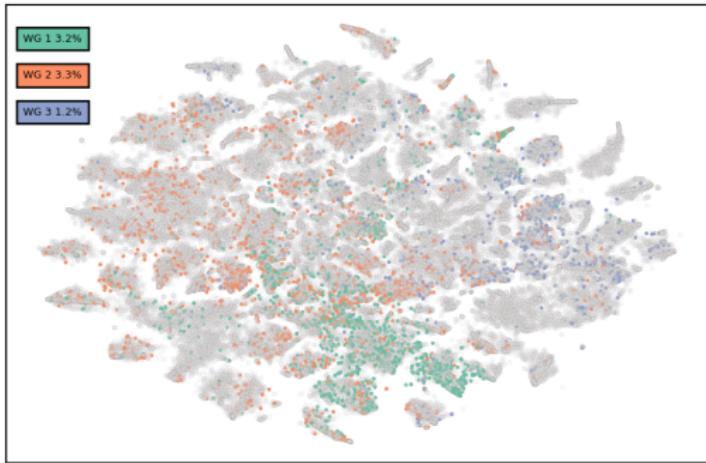
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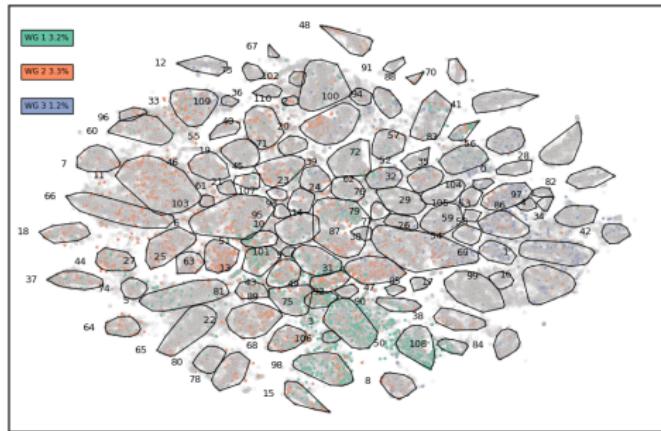
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- Citations by IPCC reports are densest in WGI/Natural science topical areas.

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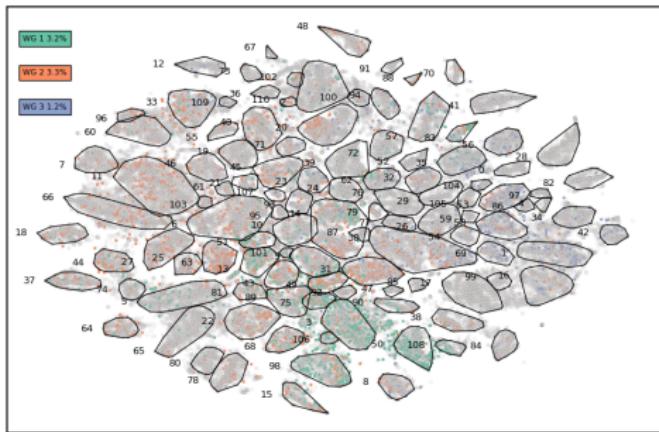
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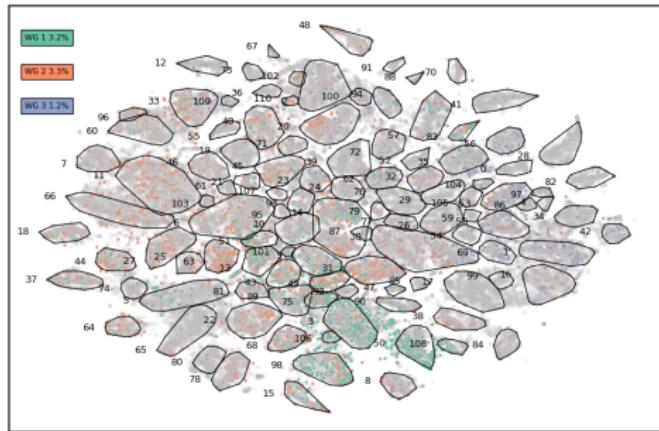
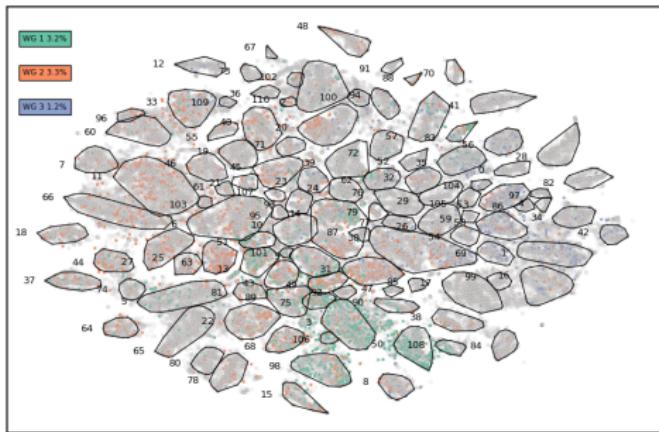


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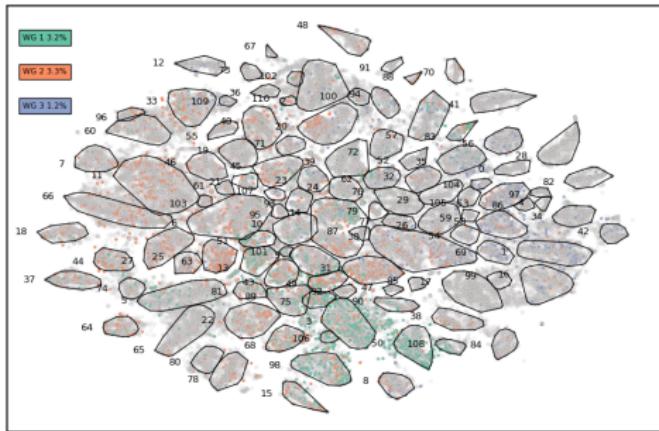
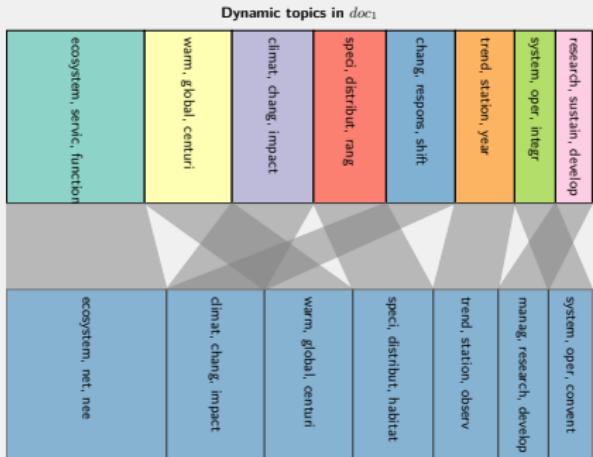


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- 11 is on species and habitats
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# Results - Topography



$doc_3$

$doc_2$

$doc_1$

**Ecological responses to recent climate change**

There is now ample evidence of the ecological impacts of recent climate change, from polar terrestrial to tropical marine environments. The responses of both flora and fauna span an array of ecosystems and organizational hierarchies, from the species to the community levels. Despite continued uncertainty as to community and ecosystem trajectories under global change, our review exposes a coherent pattern of ecological change across systems. Although we are only at an early stage in the projected trends of global warming, ecological responses to recent climate change are already clearly visible.

Topic Doc	ecosystem net nee	climat chang impact	warm global centuri	speci distribut habitat
$doc_1$	0.034	0.021	0.019	0.017
$doc_2$	...	...	...	...
$doc_3$	...	...	...	...

Doc Topic Matrix

Term Topic	chang	ecolog	global	recent
ecosystem net nee	0.18	0.39	0.01	0.03
climat chang impact	6.33	0	0.22	0.19
warm global centuri	0	0	3.72	0.31

Topic Term Matrix

Term Doc	chang	ecolog	global	recent
$doc_1$	4	3	2	2
$doc_2$	...	...	...	...
$doc_3$	...	...	...	...
$doc_4$	...	...	...	...

Doc Term Matrix

Figure: How topics describe documents

# Results - Development

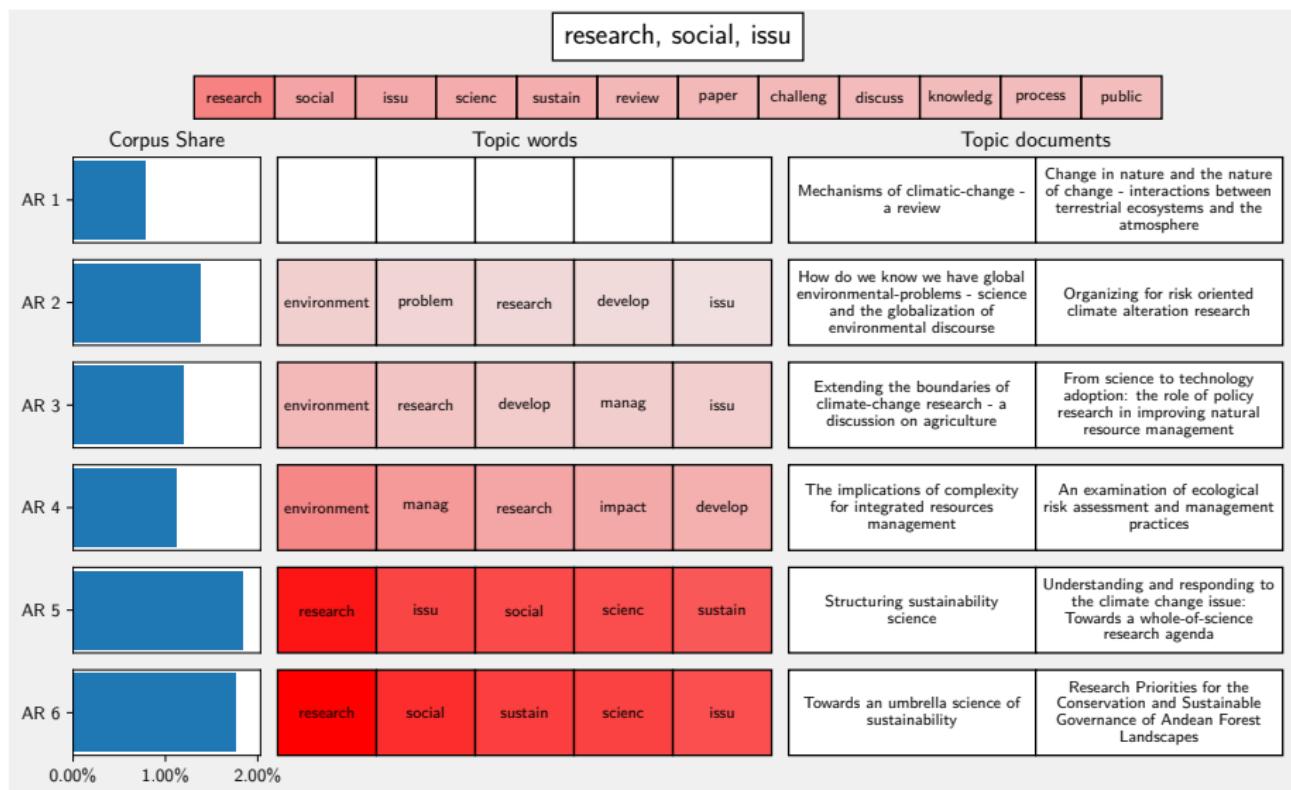


Figure: The evolution of topics

# Results - Development

biochar, amend, applic

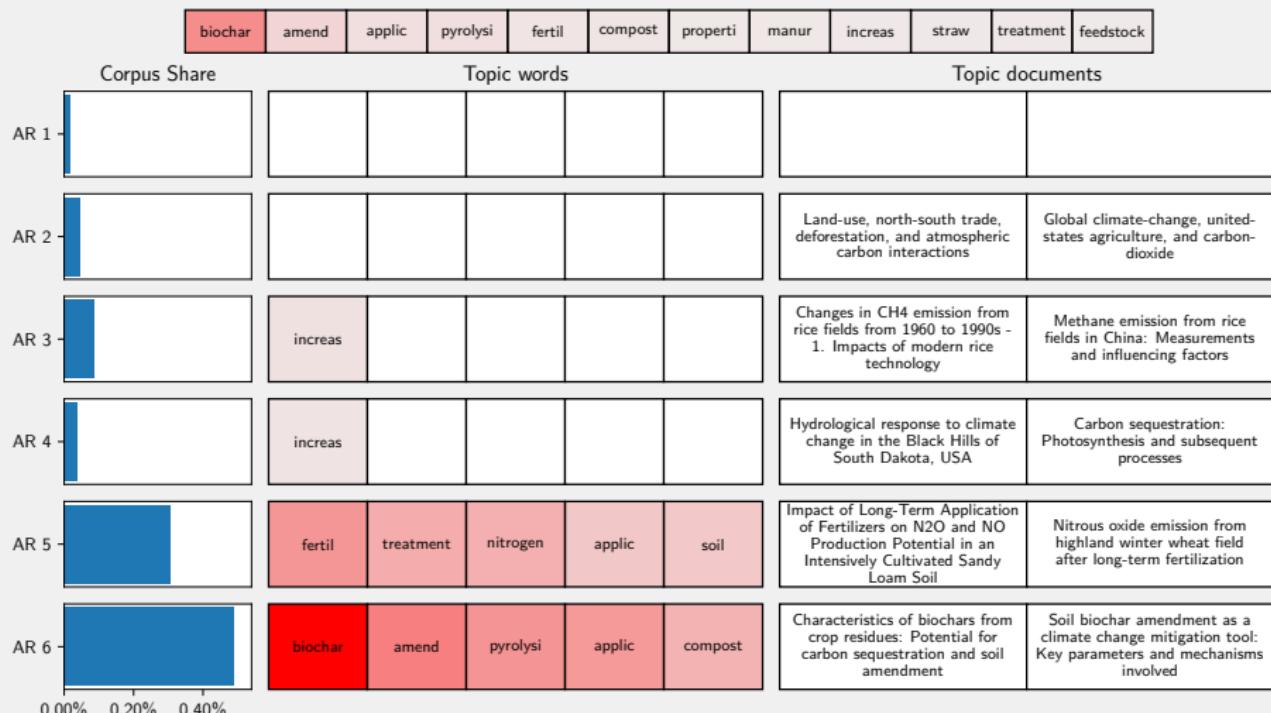
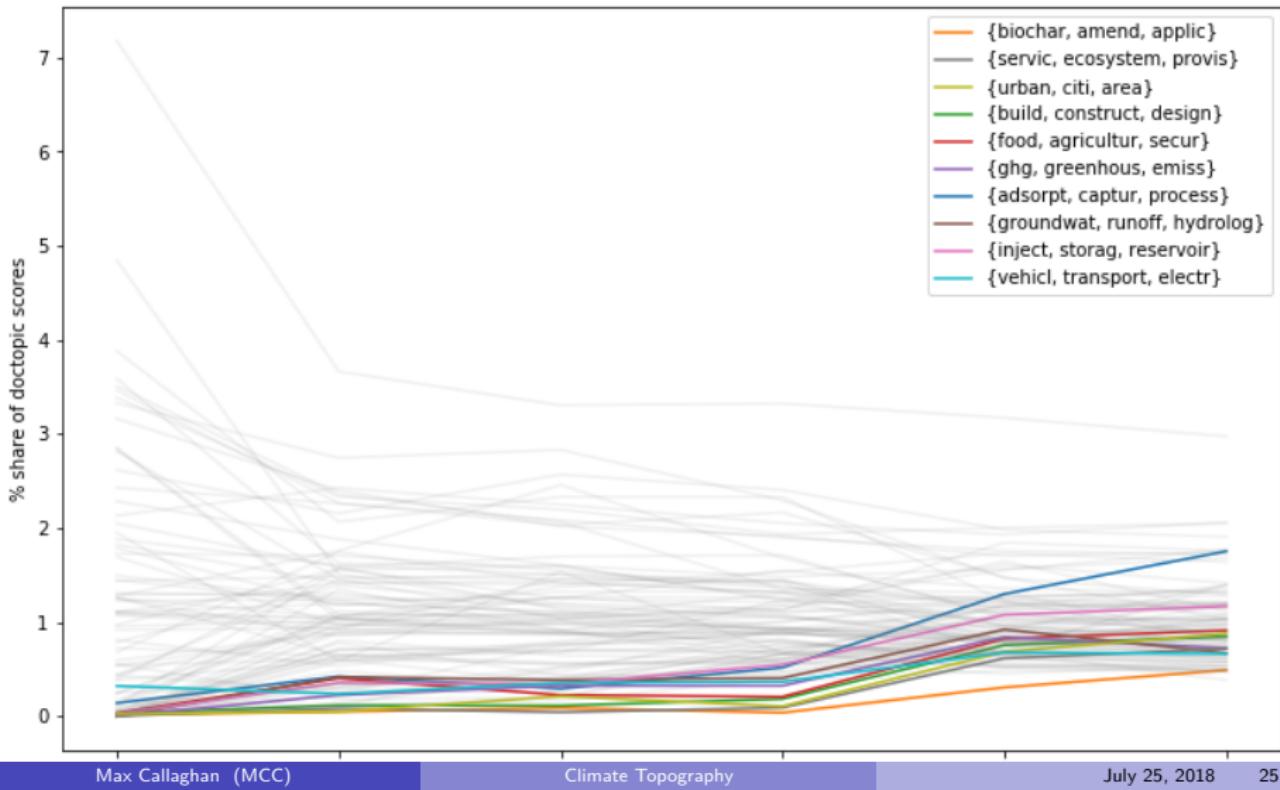


Figure: The emergence of new topics ▶ ▷ ▷ ▷ ▷ ▷ ▷ ▷ ▷

## Results - Development

### Fast growing topics in AR5



- How can we get a sense of which topics are better covered in IPCC reports?

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- This and other measures come from literature on the proportionality of electoral systems (e.g Karpov, 2008)

# Results - IPCC Representation

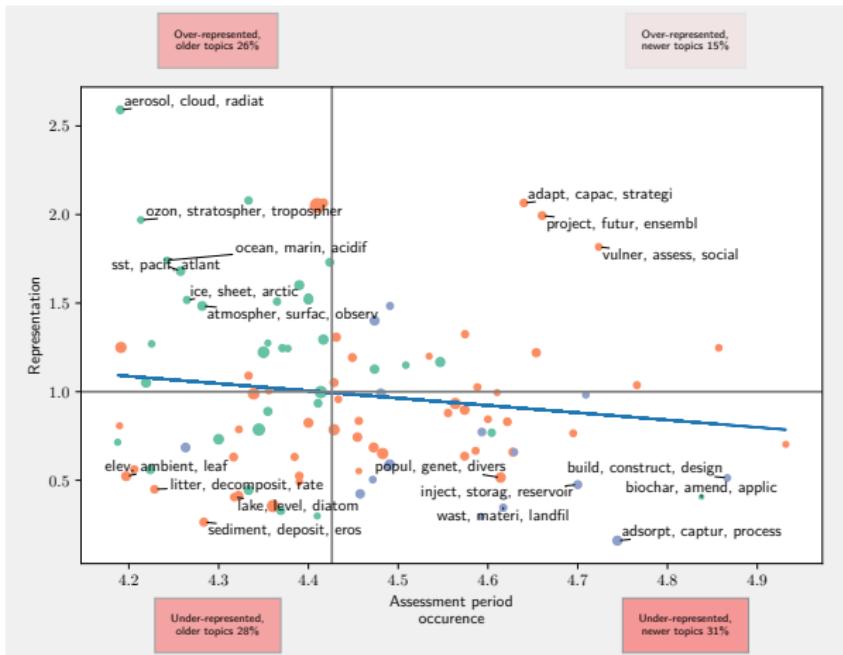


Figure: New and old, better and less well represented topics

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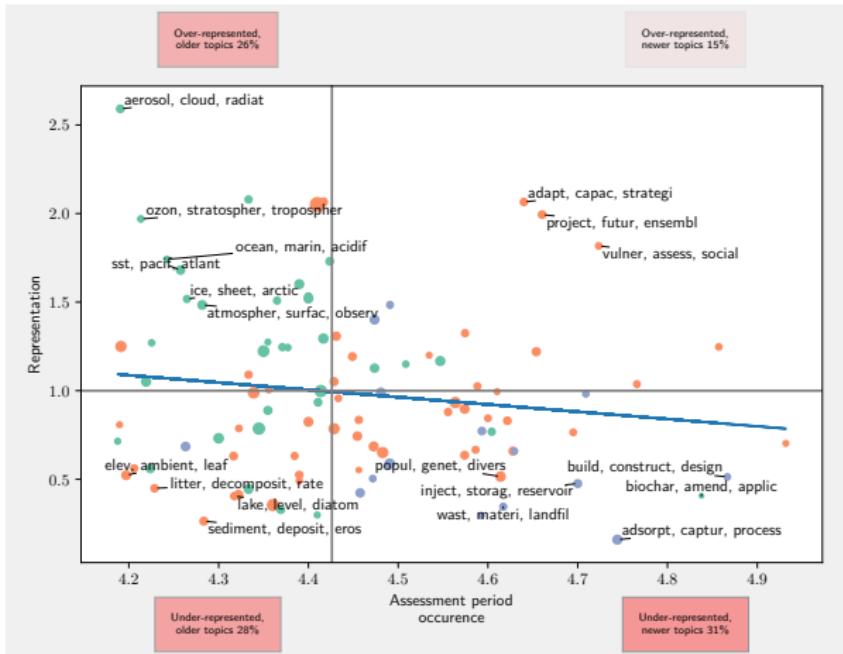


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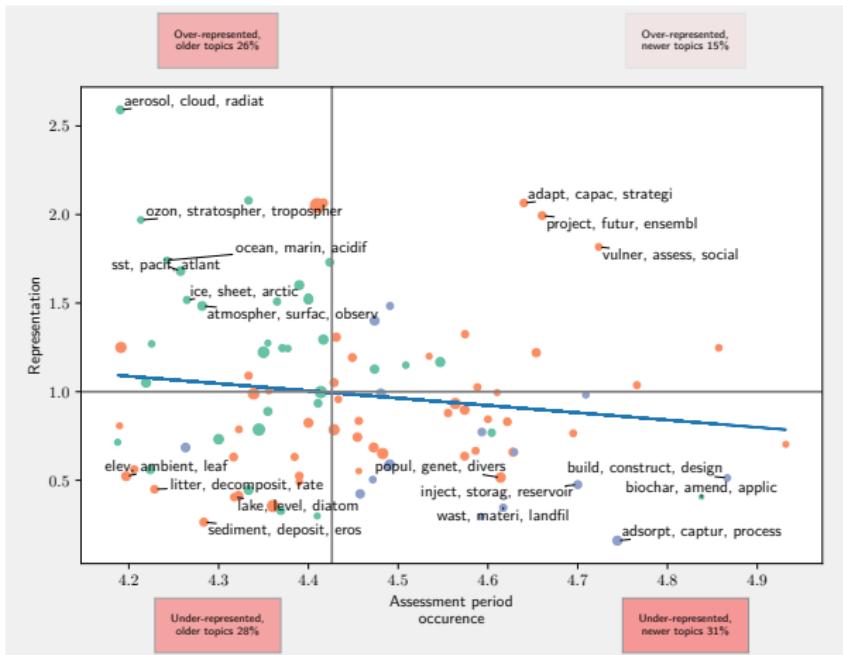


Figure: New and old, better and less well represented topics

- Topics on the scientific basis of climate change are well represented in IPCC reports and have been around longer than average
- Topics on impacts have seen lots of recent growth, and are well represented in IPCC reports
- Topics on “solutions”, or on new technologies or contexts for mitigation have seen lots of recent growth, but are under-represented in IPCC reports

## Robustness

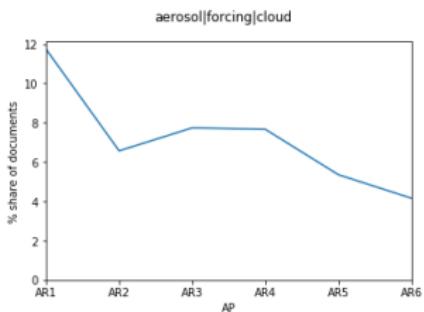
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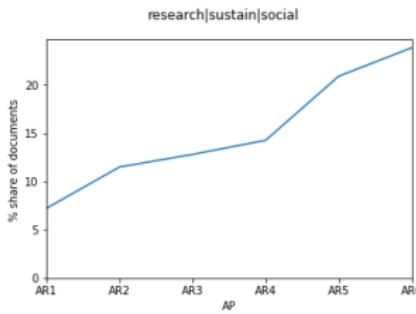
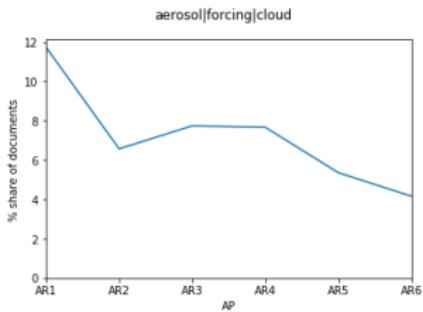
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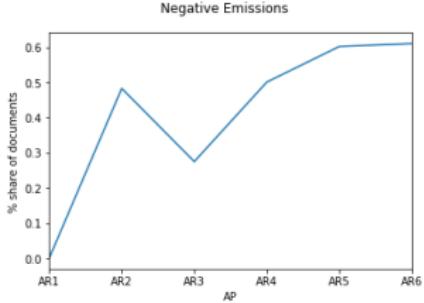
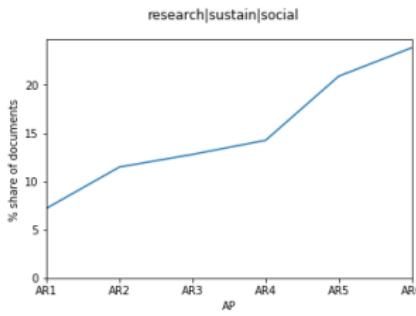
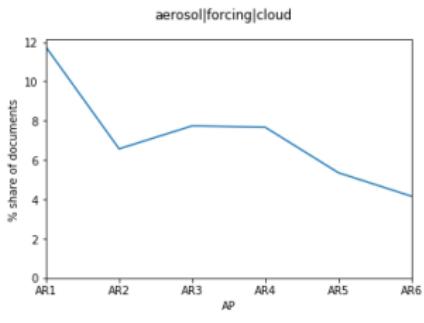


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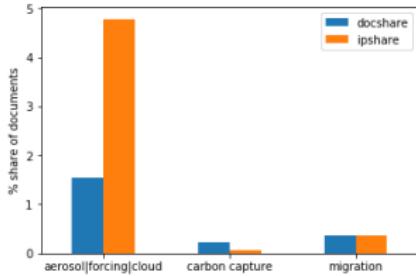
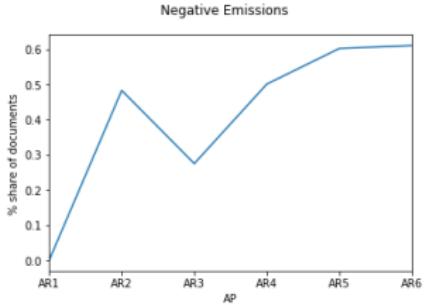
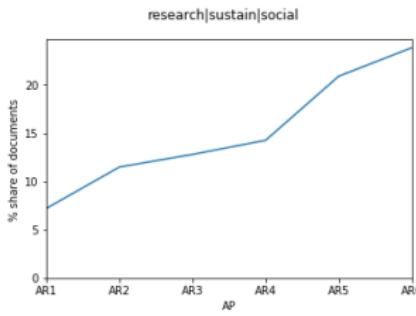
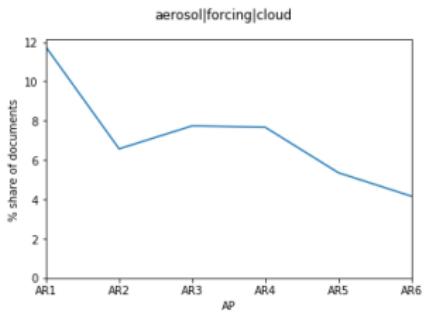


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## Conclusions

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- Topic modelling discovers over-arching topics such as that on sustainability and research priorities, as well as specific, fast growing topics such those on negative emissions
- Some quantitative evidence is found to support policy makers' dissatisfaction with a lack of 'solution orientation' in IPCC reports (Kowarsch et al., 2017)

## Discussion

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- The IPCC are best placed to decide which aspects of the literature to emphasise
- A topography of the literature helps to address issues of emphasis from a point of understanding, and to make decisions clear and transparent
- More generally, maps like this present exciting opportunities to aid the process of literature selection, and to understand the science policy process

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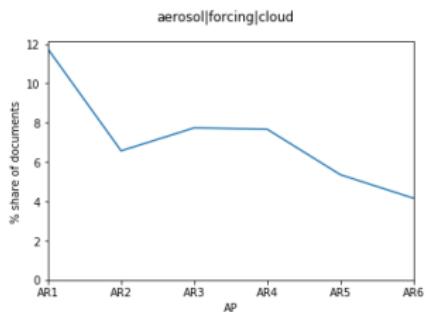
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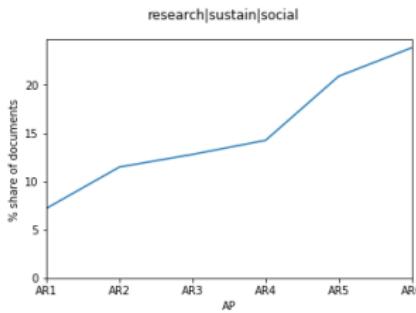
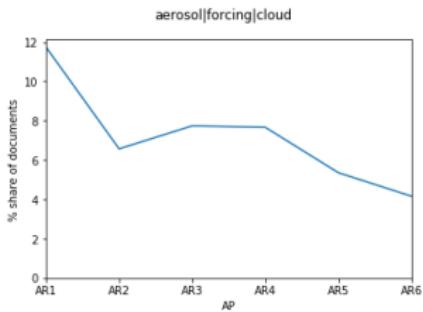
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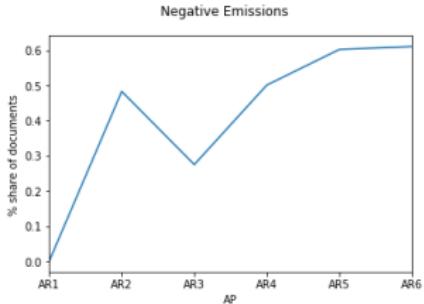
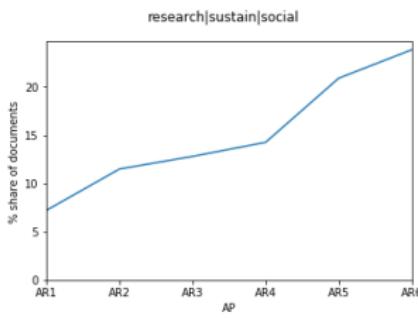
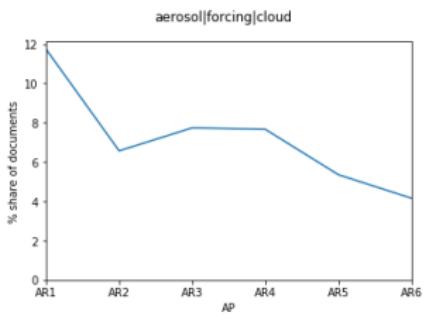


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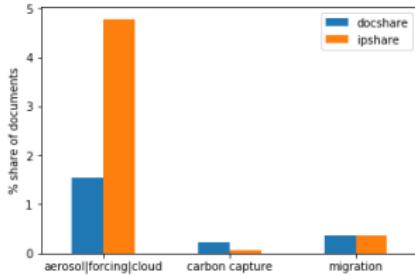
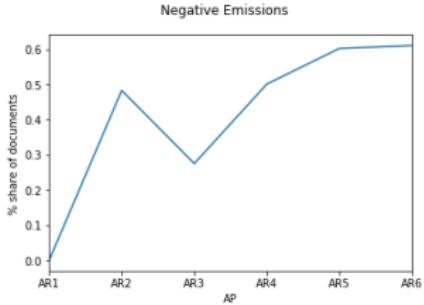
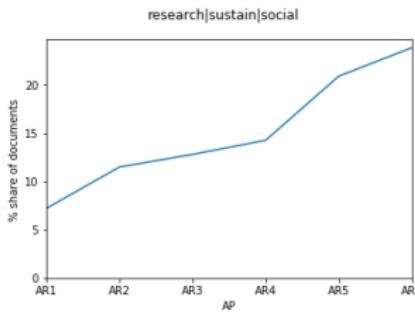
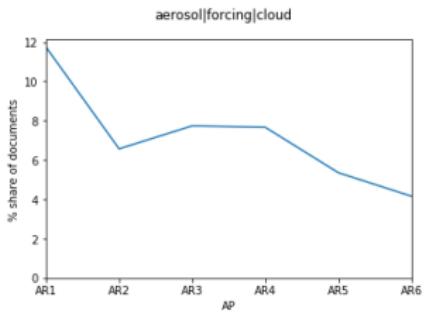


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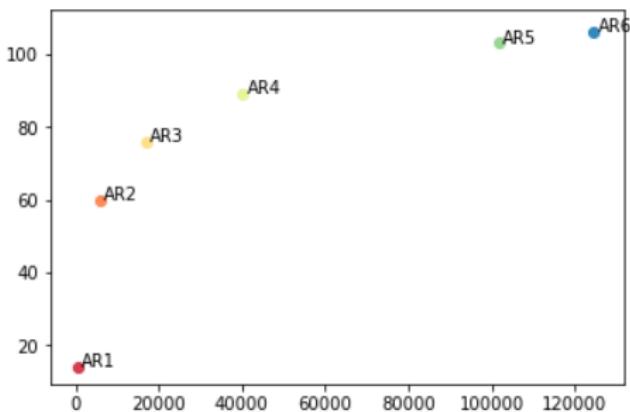
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- Starting from a logarithmic relationship between the number of documents and the ideal topic number, I compare 5 runs with varying numbers of topics for each window



# Dynamic NMF - number of topics

## Human topic number criteria

- Intelligibility

## Data-driven topic number criteria

- Reconstruction accuracy
- Predictive capacity

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