

“JUSTICE, RESPONSIBILITY,
AND
CLIMATE CHANGE”

PRESENTATION TO GERMAN ETHICS COUNCIL

PROFESSOR SIMON CANEY

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I: CLIMATE CHANGE & GLOBAL JUSTICE

The Question: “What do you consider to be the most important aspects of international justice in climate ethics?”

Answers

Aspect 1: Climate Impacts and Responsibility

Many (especially the poorest and most vulnerable) are harmed by climate change. They have generally emitted very little and yet bear the brunt.

Aspect 2: Climate Impacts, Wealth, and Responsibility

At the same time others enjoy great wealth because they and their predecessors engaged in activities that cause climate change and they benefited from this process (Caney 2010). See Althor, Watson & Fuller (2016); Frame et al (2019).

Inequality and the contribution of the most affluent: Chancel (2020, pp.96 & 107), Chancel et al (2022, ch 6), & Piketty (2020, pp.666-667).

I: CLIMATE CHANGE & GLOBAL JUSTICE

Answers

Aspect 3: Impeding Development

Some have used up a majority of the earth's "greenhouse gas budget". As a result of these actions, others (the global poor) are unable to develop using their fossil fuel reserves without causing disastrous climatic change. The disproportionate use by *some* has blocked the capacities of *others*.

Aspect 4: Mitigation, Decarbonizing the Economy, and the Just Transition

It is imperative to decarbonize the economy. This requires increased electrification, energy storage (batteries) and renewables. It is essential as a matter of justice that the clean energy transition (for example the extraction of critical minerals) occurs in a fair and equitable way. It is essential, that is, that there be a just transition.

II: THE NATURE AND ROLE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The Question: “Is there a need for global governance to address climate change and, if so, what could it look like?”

Answers

§1. **Some Role for Global Governance** There is a need for *some* global coordination for just (i) mitigation, (ii) adaptation and (iii) “loss and damage” (compensation for climate harms).

§2. **Limits of Global Governance** At the same time, the annual negotiations of the parties to the UNFCCC are ill-equipped to realize climate justice and there are real limits on what they achieve and can achieve.

II: THE NATURE AND ROLE OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

§3. *States*. For mitigation much of the key action is within states.

(Aklin & Mildenberger 2020; Beiser-McGrath & Bernauer 2019; Colgan, Green & Hale 2021; Mildenberger 2020; Stokes 2020; Tingley & Tomz 2014).

§4. *Reforming the Status Quo*. The existing Global Governance of Climate Change could be improved – in particular, it could be made more inclusive and politically legitimate and more responsive to the needs of future as well as current generations. Caney (2002)

III: THE PROSPECTS OF CONFLICT

The Question: What are the prospects of conflict over climate change?

Responses

§1. This is outside my area of expertise.

§2. Some political scientists (Colgan, Green & Hale 2021) argue that we should understand climate politics as involving a conflict between those with “climate-forcing assets” and those with “climate-vulnerable assets” (Colgan, Green & Hale 2021, p.587). “Our basic contention is that as distributional conflicts expand and intensify, climate politics will become existential” (Colgan, Green & Hale 2021, p.592). Note, we already see societal conflicts across the world (Scheidel et al 2020).

§3. the necessity of forging “climate coalitions” (Naikwad, Genovese & Tingley 2022).

THANK YOU!

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