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Chapter One

Climate Change and the Moral Significance of Historical Injustice in Natural Resource Governance¹

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In discussions about responsibility for climate change, it is often suggested that the historical use of natural resources is in some way relevant to our current attempts to address this problem fairly. In particular, both theorists and actors in the public realm have argued that historical high emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs)—or the beneficiaries of those emissions—are in possession of some form of debt, deriving from their overuse of a natural resource that should have been shared more equitably. These accounts of what might be termed ‘natural debt’ generally focus on one particular natural resource (global GHG sink capacity); invoke a principle of justice by which rights to consume this resource should have been allocated (most commonly, equal per capita shares); and then argue that historical violations of this principle give rise to certain rectificatory duties in the present (generally, duties on the part of those who have historically consumed an excessive amount of the world’s GHG sink capacity, or who have benefitted from such excess consumption, to offer some form of compensation to those who have not—such compensation usually taking the form of emission credits or cash).²

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Though many seem to find it intuitively plausible that historical high emissions have incurred some form of debt, significant challenges arise in rendering the concept of natural debt both coherent and defensible.³ Such problems will not, however, be my focus in this chapter. Instead, I here suggest that discussions about historical responsibility for climate change commonly fail to recognise certain other past injustices concerning natural resources that appear to hold contemporary relevance. In particular, I argue that



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it is not just the unequal consumption of global GHG sink capacity that may be of moral significance here, but also the way in which the world's resources have more generally been governed.

In order to address the matter of historical responsibility for climate change, it is first important to be clear about the nature of the problem that climate change presents. It is this task that I take up in the first section of the chapter. Highlighting the issue of unequal risk, I explain how climate change as a problem of global justice has both physical and social contributors. Accounts of natural debt attempt to determine responsibility for the physical component of the problem, overlooking the question of who should be held responsible for the inequalities that make climate change such a challenging problem of global justice.

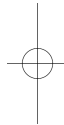
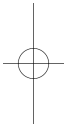
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As I explain in the second part of the chapter, this latter question is more difficult to answer, because a plethora of historical injustices appear to be causally implicated in the fact that some communities are significantly more vulnerable to climate events than others. And in any case, even where we can conclude that certain historical injustices have causally contributed to the problem of climate change, using this conclusion to determine who should bear the costs of climate action remains far from straightforward. When current situations ought to be rectified due to historical injustice, the demand for rectification holds independently of whether or not those situations are now contributing to the problem of climate change. And if socio-economic circumstances place communities at risk of disaster or undermine our attempts to deal with climate change fairly, this problem must be dealt with regardless of the historical provenance of those circumstances.

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In the final sections of this chapter I argue that attention to historical injustice is nevertheless necessary if we are to deal with climate change fairly. Using colonialism as an example, I argue that the causal links between climate vulnerability and historical wrongs suggest that in some respects, the problem of climate change is actually part of an on-going, or enduring, injustice. It is only when an injustice is on-going in this way that we are confronted with the question of why it endures;⁴ and when this question arises, we are given reason to search for persisting structures—whether practices, institutions, processes, systems or rules—that perpetuate injustices and prevent their rectification. In the case of climate change, I suggest, enduring systems of unjust natural resource governance appear to be one of the reasons why many historical wrongs of this kind have a continuing legacy of injustice in the present. If we do not address these problematic structures of resource governance, then there is good reason to fear that even well intentioned efforts to find a just solution to the problem of climate change will be undermined. Historical injustices of natural resource governance thus have contemporary moral significance because they are part of an enduring injus-

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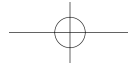
justice that persists to the present day, and which now threatens to prevent us from dealing with climate change fairly.

[1.5] CLIMATE CHANGE AS A PROBLEM OF GLOBAL JUSTICE

[1.6] Though climate change is widely understood to be a problem of global justice, it is not always made precisely clear why this is. Climate change can easily be recognised as an ethical problem, because it is an anthropogenic phenomenon that threatens significant harm to human beings. From this one can derive a moral obligation to reduce the risk of such harm by doing something to address climate change. The question of how to discharge this obligation then raises questions of both intergenerational and global justice: specifically, how to distribute the burdens of dealing with climate change between different generations and—within any given generation—between contemporaries who vary greatly in their capabilities and responsibilities.⁵

[1.7] However, duties to address climate change can be derived not only from an imperative to protect (or refrain from harming) human beings, but also on grounds of global justice. As many have observed, climate change not only threatens important human interests, but also appears to do so in a way that is distinctly unfair. This is because climate change does not pose the same level of risk to all human beings. It is the global poor, both now and in the future, who tend to be most at risk from climate change—including poor communities that are located within affluent countries (IPCC 2007b, 19). Poor communities are especially at risk due to ‘limited adaptive capacities’ and greater dependence on ‘climate-sensitive resources such as local water and food supplies’. Africa in particular is ‘one of the most vulnerable continents’; and in Latin America the effectiveness of adaptation efforts is being ‘outweighed’ by the lack of ‘appropriate political, institutional and technological frameworks [and] low income’ (IPCC 2007a, 12–14).

[1.8] Duties to address climate change can therefore also be understood as duties of global justice: as duties to prevent the impacts of climate events from causing our global circumstances to migrate ever further away from what justice demands. Proponents of the idea of natural debt and the closely related Beneficiary Pays Principle (BPP) then highlight what appears to be an added complexity to the ethical problem of climate change.⁶ This is that, generally speaking, the world’s poor are not only most at risk of harm, but in addition are the least responsible for—and have benefitted the least from—the GHG emissions that cause climate change. The world’s rich, conversely, tend not only to be the least at risk, but also to be most responsible for—and the most benefitted by—GHG emissions. A number of theorists have suggested that this creates a further layer of injustice to climate change, because the benefits and burdens of a particular activity—namely, the emission of



GHGs—are being distributed very unevenly;⁷ and because the countries most at risk of harmful climate impacts are the least responsible for contributing, causally, to the physical phenomenon of climate change.

One might also, however, look more closely at why it is that climate change places some human beings at greater risk of disaster than others.⁸ As the IPCC's Special Report on Extreme Events explains, disaster risk can be better understood once we recognise that it emerges not from the threat of climate events alone, but from 'the interaction of weather or climate events, the physical contributors to disaster risk, with exposure and vulnerability, the contributors to risk from the human side' (IPCC 2012, ix). The first human determinant of disaster risk—exposure—describes the extent to which a given element (e.g., a population, its livelihood or other assets) is present in a place that could be adversely affected by climate events. The second—vulnerability—'refers to the propensity of exposed elements... to suffer adverse effects when impacted by hazard events'. Exposure is a necessary determinant of disaster risk; if a population or system is not exposed to climate events, then it is not vulnerable to, or at risk of, climate disaster. Exposure is not, however, a sufficient determinant of disaster risk. This is because it is possible to be exposed to climate events but not vulnerable—for example, by being located in a flood plain but having the capacity to employ defences that will prevent a climate change-induced flood from creating significant losses (IPCC 2012, 69).

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Vulnerability is thus a very important driver of disaster risk, but one that is commonly overlooked in discussions about climate change and historical responsibility. When theorists focus only on determining who can be taken to have emitted (or benefitted from) more than their fair share of GHGs, they effectively restrict their concern to the question of who should be held responsible for the physical determinant of disaster risk (the physical determinant, recall, being the climate events to which GHG emissions have causally contributed). But as the IPCC explains, 'climate change is not a risk per se'. Rather, the risk to which communities are subject arises from the interaction of climate changes with vulnerability and exposure (IPCC 2014a, 1050). So why not also consider historical responsibility for these necessary social determinants of disaster risk—and in particular, for vulnerability?

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Perhaps one of the reasons that some theorists do not direct their attention to the question of who should be held responsible for the vulnerability component of disaster risk is that this propensity to suffer adverse affects derives from a very complex set of factors. Whilst the anthropogenic drivers of climate events are quite easy to identify—namely human activities, like deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels, which lead to increased atmospheric concentrations of GHGs—vulnerability is 'a result of diverse historical, social, economic, political, cultural, institutional, natural resource, and environmental conditions and processes' (IPCC 2012, 32). A number of

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factors can, however, be singled out as major contributors to vulnerability. High vulnerability, the IPCC suggests, is ‘mainly an outcome of skewed development processes, including those associated with environmental mismanagement, demographic changes, rapid and unplanned urbanization, and the scarcity of livelihood options for the poor’. Other contributing factors identified are ‘poverty, and the lack of social networks and social support mechanisms’; and ‘global processes’ such as ‘international financial pressures, increases in socioeconomic inequalities, trends and failures in governance (e.g., corruption, mismanagement), and environmental degradation’ (IPCC 2012, 70-71). Vulnerability can also result from land tenure arrangements that create insecurity, or that leave certain groups marginalised (IPCC 2012, 306; see also IPCC 2014a, 1051).

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It will be impossible to explain precisely why any given human community is beset by factors that render it more or less vulnerable in the face of climate events; or—therefore—to determine exactly who should be held responsible for the fact that climate change poses much greater risk to some communities than others. Nonetheless, in the next section I argue that any adequate explanation of the social inequalities that engender the uneven distribution of vulnerability to climate change must acknowledge that numerous historical injustices appear to have played a role in creating this state of affairs. I then discuss how such historical injustice could hold moral significance for our current attempts to govern the climate change problem fairly.

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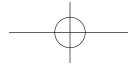
CLIMATE CHANGE AND HISTORICAL INJUSTICE

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In order to figure out who should be held responsible for the fact that some human populations are particularly at risk from climate change, it seems that we must explain why it is that some communities are burdened by problems of underdevelopment; environmental degradation and mismanagement; poverty, inequality and scarcity of livelihood options; institutional weakness and failed governance; vulnerability to international financial pressures; or land tenure arrangements that engender insecurity and marginalisation. Such explanations will be difficult to provide and will necessarily differ for each community. But one thing of which we can be sure is that various historical injustices will be causally implicated in the fact that certain communities are afflicted by factors that render them particularly vulnerable to climate events.

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As Thomas Nagel famously says, that ‘we do not live in a just world . . . may be the least controversial claim one could make in political theory’ (2005, 113). Such injustice becomes even more apparent when we look back through history to consider how wrongs including unjust war, colonialism and slavery have helped to bring us to our current state of affairs. Each of these forms of injustice will have played a role in rendering some commu-

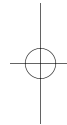
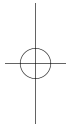


nities particularly vulnerable to climate events; for example, through legacies of environmental degradation, failed governance or poverty and inequality. In what follows, however, I will be focussed on the example of colonialism due to the extremely significant role that colonialism played in the history of global resource governance.

The suggestion that the legacies of colonialism could be relevant to our current attempts to deal with climate change fairly is not a novel one. Henry Shue long ago suggested that ‘colonial exploitation’ could have contributed to what he terms the ‘background injustice’ of the climate negotiations. As Shue notes, poverty can make countries vulnerable both to climate events and to manipulation in the climate negotiations. Many poor countries do not have the resources to cope with unmitigated climate change, leaving them in such desperate need of some international agreement on climate action that they ‘might have no better alternative’ than to concede to ‘unconscionable terms’ (Shue 1992, 387–88). Insofar as colonial exploitation has engendered such poverty—and, thus, climate vulnerability—it has therefore also helped to place certain parties to the UNFCCC at an unfair disadvantage in the climate negotiations. Stephen Gardiner—referencing Shue—similarly suggests that ‘the history of colonialism’ has contributed to the serious injustice of the ‘existing world system’, injustice that will undermine fair climate governance by enabling ‘powerful countries’ to take ‘further advantage of those already exploited under the current structure’ (Gardiner 2011, 119).⁹

Another theorist who suggests that colonialism has contributed to the problem of climate change is Robert Melchior Figueroa. Focussing on indigenous peoples in particular, Figueroa argues that factors including ‘colonial practices of resource exploitation, relocation, land appropriation [and] persistent economic exploitation’—and their ongoing legacies of struggles for self-determination, under-representation in environmental decision-making and distributive inequities—‘capture the causal roots of precisely why indigenous groups are the most vulnerable and impacted by climate change’ (2011, 235–36). Some support for Figueroa’s claim can be found in the latest IPCC report, where it is noted that indigenous peoples in North America are vulnerable in part because ‘the legacy of their colonial history . . . has stripped Indigenous communities of land and many sources of social and human capital’ (IPCC 2014b, 1471).

Despite these suggestions, the causal contribution of colonialism to the problem of climate change—and the present moral significance of such contribution—remains underexplored in the philosophical literature on climate justice and responsibility. Shue provides some explanation of this lacuna when he offers his own reasons for not pursuing the matter further. Though the vulnerability of some parties to the climate negotiations is clearly enhanced by their poverty, the extent to which such poverty results from colonialism depends on what Shue takes to be ‘important but intractable debates



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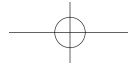
about causal mechanisms' (1992, 391). The causal mechanism in the case of GHG emissions, on the other hand, is much harder to dispute: historical contributions to increased atmospheric concentration of GHGs—and, therefore, to the physical phenomenon of climate change—can be identified and quantified relatively easily. Plausibly, this is the reason why most accounts of historical responsibility for the problem of climate change have focussed on the contribution of past emissions rather than historical injustices.

[1.19] Nevertheless, as Shue also points out, 'causal responsibility does not translate smoothly into moral responsibility' (1992, 391, fn. 11). It could therefore be the case, as far as climate change is concerned, that though the case for causal responsibility may be made more easily with respect to past emissions, a case for some form of moral responsibility could be on stronger ground in instances where it can be shown that clear historical wrongs are causally implicated in present vulnerability. In what follows, I start by attempting to show that colonialism plausibly is causally implicated in many cases of absolute and relative vulnerability to climate change. I then discuss the moral significance of such causal responsibility.

[1.20] HOW COLONIALISM IS CAUSALLY IMPLICATED IN CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

[1.21] As Daniel Butt states, it is 'a truism to say that we live in a world that has been deeply shaped by imperialism. The history of humanity is, in many ways, a story of the attempted and achieved subjugation of one people by another, and it is unsurprising that such interaction has had profound effects on the contemporary world' (2012, 227–28). In this section, I draw on the work of Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James Robinson to provide reasons to think that colonial subjugation in particular has made a significant contribution to current levels of vulnerability to climate change.

[1.22] Historically, colonialism took a variety of forms. In some cases the indigenous population was exterminated completely, in others it was displaced and dispossessed, or exploited as a source of labour. In North America, Australia and New Zealand, colonisers settled in the territory and set up political institutions resembling those of Europe; in other places, very little settlement occurred and colonies were essentially exploited as a source of income, wealth, and natural resources. This latter form of economic colonialism took place across 'much of Africa, Central America, the Caribbean, and South Asia' (Acemoglu 2003, 27), where colonial powers set up or took over what Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson term 'extractive institutions'. Extractive institutions are 'bad and dysfunctional institutions' designed to support 'the extraction of resources by one group at the expense of the rest of society' (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2006, 21). In extractive colonial states,



the main purpose of such institutions was of course ‘to transfer as much of the resources of the colony to the colonizer’ as possible (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001, 1370); the ‘resources’ in question including precious minerals such as gold and diamonds; the products of plantation agriculture; human beings; and other sources of income and wealth.

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There are a number of reasons to think that historical practices of colonialism continue to have pernicious effects in the present day, long after the UN’s 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Powers of self-determination, once destroyed or obstructed, are not easily realised even when formally protected by international law, and various colonial policies will have made the exercise of this collective capacity even more difficult. The institutions established by colonial authorities are likely to possess elements of path-dependence that make it hard for previously colonised peoples to alter their developmental trajectory. Thus, even long after independence, the choices faced by such collectives may be ‘constrained by decisions that colonial masters made on their behalf’ (Ypi, Goodin and C. Barry 2009, 127–29, 132).

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Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson suggest that path-dependence may have been particularly strong in countries where colonisers set up or took over extractive institutions. In general, very few constraints were placed on political power in these extractive colonies. Rather, colonisers intentionally created ‘authoritarian and absolutist states with the purpose of solidifying their control and facilitating the extraction of resources’ (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2001, 1375), placing ‘a high concentration of political power in the hands of a few who extracted resources from the rest of the population’ (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2002, 1264). Such institutions ‘have a lot of staying power’ because even after independence, the elites of extractive societies—‘who benefit from using the power of the state to expropriate others’—will have much to lose from reform, and are therefore likely to ‘resist and attempt to block any move toward better institutions’. As a result, many extractive institutions originally established in colonial times persist into the present day and continue to have adverse economic effects on the countries in which they are located (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2006, 31). Quoting Crawford Young, Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson conclude that the supposedly ‘new states’ that emerged from independence were often really ‘successors to the colonial regime, inheriting its structures, its quotidian routines and practices, and its more hidden normative theories of governance’ (2006, 31; quoting C. Young 1994, 283).

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Interestingly in the context of climate change, Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson claim that the most significant long-term economic effects of extractive colonial institutions are a result of the role that they played during the Industrial Revolution. Elites in extractive states had reason to block industrialisation due to fears that it would undermine their position of power by



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benefiting and strengthening entrepreneurial and skilled members of the non-elite, and giving rise to political disruption (Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson 2002, 1273). So while colonial authorities ‘sowed the seeds of underdevelopment in many diverse corners of the world by imposing, or further strengthening existing, extractive institutions’ (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 250); they also—through those same institutions—created current global inequality by ensuring that ‘during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries some nations were able to take advantage of the Industrial Revolution while others were unable to do so’ (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 271). Colonialism thus ‘not only explains why industrialization passed by large parts of the world but also encapsulates how economic development may sometimes feed on, and even create, the underdevelopment in some other part of the domestic or the world economy’ (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 273).

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The material effects of colonial injustice would have been difficult to counter after independence since, as Butt points out, ‘it is hard to acquire alternative entitlements once one has been unjustly deprived of large quantities of one’s natural resources and/or is at a competitive trading disadvantage relative to other nations’ (2009a, 113). Such disadvantage at the international level seems likely to have been further reinforced by the global order that emerged from imperialism, an order dominated by rich and powerful agents, where unjust inequalities could be sustained and enhanced. As Mathias Risse points out, the current ‘global political and economic order’ . . . ‘emerged from the spread of European control since the fifteenth century’; where ‘even systems that escaped Western imperialism had to follow legal and diplomatic practices imposed by Europeans’ (2005, 9). Today, this global order is shaped by ‘economically powerful states’ and institutions like the World Bank, IMF, and WTO (Risse 2005, 9); and the same Western powers that were responsible for colonialism have been able to mould international law ‘so as to secure and legitimate their own advantages—advantages which were often improperly obtained’ (Butt 2009b, 163–64).

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In the face of widespread historical injustice, ‘the relative prominence and bargaining power of precisely those countries most responsible for the commission of said injustice in the development of international law’ (Butt 2009b, 171)—and in the development of the world economy—suggests that such injustice has significant lasting effects; that the global order continues to be governed by structures that were ‘developed on the terms of the affluent states, and shaped in their interests’ (Butt 2009b, 171). All of these factors may help to explain why it remains the case that ‘some of the poorest countries in the world are former colonies of some of the richest’ (Butt 2012, 230).

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The above hopefully makes clear that there are a number of ways in which colonialism will be causally implicated in the current vulnerability of some human communities to climate change. This historical injustice plau-



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sibly has continuing legacies that include self-determination struggles; institutional weakness, authoritarian governance and elite capture; persisting land-tenure arrangements that breed marginalisation and insecurity; underdevelopment and lack of industrialisation; enduring problems of poverty, social inequality and lack of diversity in livelihood options; environmental degradation and mismanagement resulting from the overexploitation of land and natural resources; and vulnerability to global economic and political pressures in an international order structured by rich and powerful (and often imperial) states. Against this historical background, climate change can be seen as a phenomenon that is exacerbating pre-existing, unrectified injustices, many of which derive from the same historical process that created such unequal rates of industrialisation—and, thus, GHG emissions—in the first place.

Drawing on empirical data, J. T. Roberts and Bradley Parks reach a similar conclusion. Referring in particular to cases where imperial powers structured colonial economies around the ‘extraction of raw materials’,¹⁰ they argue that ‘many of the most important causal forces driving hydro-meteorological risk—from declining terms of trade and deteriorating infrastructure to degraded natural environments and weak and corrupted political institutions—are a direct consequence of extractive colonial legacies’ (2007, 104–105; emphasis added).¹¹ Jon Barnett and John Campbell likewise conclude that colonialism served to increase vulnerability in Pacific Island communities by reducing agricultural diversity, introducing less resistant crops, and replacing land that was used for local food production with plantations and commercial agriculture. In this case, furthermore, colonial authorities (and missionaries) also helped to increase climate exposure, by encouraging communities—traditionally situated inland, on higher ground—to move to coastal regions, and establishing urban administrative centres on the coast (Barnett and Campbell 2010, 34–35). And Emilie Cameron argues that it is a failing for research that ‘identifies rapid social, cultural, political, and economic change over the past decades as an important component of Inuit vulnerability to climatic change’, not to ‘explicitly name these changes as tied to colonialism’ (2012, 109).

Thus, it would appear that whilst historical GHG emissions are indeed relevant to climate change (being, as they are, a major contributor to the physical phenomenon), colonialism is also causally implicated in this problem. Colonialism has helped to create a world characterised by severe inequalities in vulnerability to climate events (and, thus, disaster risk), and in doing so it has also helped to make climate change a particularly challenging problem of global justice. In cases where the risks to which colonial practices have contributed ripen into actual disasters, both historical emissions and colonial practices will have some share of causal responsibility for the resulting harms.

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THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF COLONIALISM'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM

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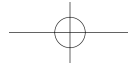
The picture of causal responsibility for climate disasters that emerges from the previous section is a complicated one. We find that when communities are subject to climate impacts, causal responsibility for this harm will be shared not only between those who engaged in activities (such as deforestation and the burning of fossil fuels) that enhanced atmospheric concentrations of GHGs, but also those who contributed to that community's vulnerability and exposure to climate events. This latter category will include both domestic and international agents and, in many cases (as I argued in the previous section), former colonial powers.

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The moral significance of such causal responsibility nevertheless remains to be determined. It is certainly important that the link between colonialism and vulnerability is acknowledged—both because recognition of historical injustice and its legacies is vital for securing just relations in the future, and because our efforts to reduce vulnerability may backfire if its underlying causes are misidentified. As Cameron states in the case of the Inuit, 'if the very factors cited as undermining . . . capacities to adapt to climatic change are themselves a legacy of colonial intervention, then reframing . . . vulnerability as a matter of enhancing local capacities, rather than attending to the structural and systemic processes by which those capacities are continually undermined, must be challenged' (Cameron 2012, 110). Richard Howitt et al.—who describe colonization and marginalization as slower, underlying, 'unnatural disasters' that wreak havoc in indigenous communities—similarly argue that a just and sustainable response to climate disasters, which will support indigenous rights and resilience, 'requires acknowledgement that the outcome of natural disasters is often mediated by the unnatural disaster of colonial and post-colonial state policies and practices' (2012, 48). If we fail to acknowledge this, we appear to 'blame the victim' by suggesting that 'the problem rests in the inherent vulnerabilities and lack of capacity of indigenous people and their culture' (Howitt et al. 2012, 57).

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The link between historical injustice and present-day liability to bear the costs of climate change is, however, harder to make out. For a start, the relative causal efficacy of any given factor that has contributed to climate risk will be difficult to determine. Then, as Shue points out, 'causal responsibility does not translate smoothly into moral responsibility' (Shue 1992, 391, fn. 11); some of those causally implicated in climate risk may not be morally culpable (e.g., individuals and collectives that have contributed to exposure through blameless decisions to form settlements in coastal areas). And finally, to add further complication, both causal and moral responsibility for climate risk may fail to ground any present liabilities to bear the costs of climate adaptation or compensation for loss and damage. Those whom we



judge to be morally or causally responsible may turn out to no longer be alive, or there may be reasons to excuse them from bearing the costs (because they are impoverished, for example). The problem of dead emitters is sometimes addressed by appealing to a beneficiary pays principle, but on the current—more complex—picture it is not clear which beneficiaries we should assign liability to: how should we share costs between the beneficiaries of GHG emissions, deforestation, fossil fuel extraction and sale,¹² or colonial and other practices that have contributed to vulnerability and exposure?

Thus, even where we can conclude that certain historical injustices have causally contributed to climate vulnerability, it will be difficult to use this conclusion to determine precisely who should bear the costs of preventing or responding to any resulting climate harms. Furthermore, it is important to be clear about what this link between climate change and historical injustice does not show. I certainly do not intend to imply that the legacies of historical injustice should only be rectified if they are now contributing to the problem of climate change; nor do I intend to suggest that socio-economic circumstances that place communities at risk, or undermine our attempts to deal with climate change fairly, should only be addressed if they are the result of historical injustice.

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Given the urgent nature of the problem, the best that we may be able to do currently is assign the costs of dealing with climate change on the basis of ability to pay. A more principled allocation of costs appears to depend on difficult determinations of causal responsibility and moral culpability, making the ability to pay approach a good pragmatic alternative. One may then wonder what exactly is gained from the attention to history that I have been advocating. Isolationists about climate justice (who treat climate change as an issue that can be dealt with independently of other matters of global justice)¹³ are already likely to hold that past wrongs should simply be ignored in our theorising about climate justice for reasons of simplicity and feasibility. Axel Gosseries, for example, chooses to proceed on the assumption that ‘the allocation of territories and natural resources among countries was a fair one (although we know that it is not)’ (2005, 283). Eric Posner and David Weisbach—who concede that ‘some of the world’s most serious problems’ include an unfair global distribution of wealth and ‘the lingering harms of the legacy of colonialism’—similarly suggest that treating the climate negotiations as ‘an opportunity’ to solve these problems will only be counterproductive, and argue that we should therefore ignore such matters in the formulation of a climate treaty (Posner and Weisbach 2010, 5). By highlighting how difficult it is to determine present-day climate liabilities in a way that takes past wrongs into account, my discussion may simply seem to succeed in offering further support for such pragmatic disregard of history.

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The problem with failing to attend to history, however, is that we will then also fail to recognise how climate change is actually part of an on-going, or enduring, injustice. Our present circumstances may be notable in that the threats resulting from global natural resource use have become, fairly quickly, unprecedented in scope and magnitude. However, many of the underlying vulnerabilities that the physical phenomenon of climate change interacts with in producing harm have been present for far longer, and derive from similar practices of exploiting natural resources at the expense of important human interests. Only when an injustice is on-going in this way are we confronted with the question of why it endures; and when this question arises, we are given reason to search for persisting structures that perpetuate injustices and prevent their rectification. Thus, as Iris Marion Young says, ‘an account of the continuities of present with past injustices’ can be important ‘for understanding how the present conditions are structural, how those structures have evolved, and where intervention to change them may be most effective’ (2011, 181–82).¹⁴

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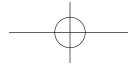
Following Young, we can understand a structural injustice to exist ‘when social processes put large groups of persons under systematic threat of domination or deprivation of the means to develop and exercise their capacities, at the same time that these processes enable others to dominate or to have a wide range of opportunities for developing and exercising capacities available to them’ (2011, 52). One such social process that appears to have persisted beyond the colonial period to our current circumstances of climate change results from the global system of natural resource governance; a system in which the benefits of natural resources tend to accrue disproportionately to the wealthy and powerful, putting large numbers of resource-dependent people at systematic threat of domination and deprivation.

[1.39]

One important aspect of the wrong of colonialism was the widespread and long-standing practice, by colonial authorities, of governing and exploiting natural resources in ways that dominated and deprived the local population. Though colonialism is now supposed to be a thing of the past—with international law affirming ‘the right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources’ (UN 1962, Art.1)—many collectives worldwide continue to find their jurisdiction over territorial resources undermined by forces beyond their control. A major example of this continuing social process of expropriation is the international resource privilege.¹⁵ This global market rule—upheld by (generally wealthy) importing states—effectively hands the legal right to sell off the resources of a given territory to whoever can maintain coercive control over the local population and, as Wenar suggests, can plausibly be seen ‘as a holdover from an earlier era of expansive sovereignty and colonial rule’ (2008, 14).

[1.40]

The resource privilege can have a severe impact on the domestic arrangements of resource-rich countries. In a phenomenon known as the ‘resource



curse', the problematic incentive and power structures created by this privilege undermine democracy and economic growth and support authoritarian rule and civil conflict, thus preventing the people of a resource cursed country from exercising any meaningful form of collective self-determination. The international actors that uphold the system engendering the resource curse—whether by endorsing the resource privilege, trading with unjust regimes, or even installing and propping up authoritarian rulers that are willing to sell off local resources at acceptable prices—are thereby implicated in a severe injustice of global resource governance.¹⁶

The resource privilege is perhaps the most obvious example of the way in which the global system of natural resource governance remains—to a large extent—a system of might makes right, reminiscent of the colonial period. This is a system in which various structures (including laws, incentives and markets) serve to ensure that the rich and powerful can access and control the resources that they want, whilst poor and vulnerable collectives are often unable to make decisions about the resources on which they live and depend—or to resist displacement, extraction and expropriation.¹⁷

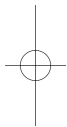
It is important to recognise this structural injustice because if we do not address these problematic structures of resource governance, then there is good reason to fear that even well intentioned efforts to find a fair solution to the problem of climate change will be undermined. As W. Neil Adger states, though 'climate change is a significant challenge to structures of governance at all temporal and spatial scales', this is particularly so 'in the area of managing natural resources' (2001: 921). One thing that the international climate negotiations will do, in effect, is create new patterns of control over the world's resources: in particular the global GHG sink, but also fossil fuels, forests, land, water, and various other natural resources that can be used in offsetting schemes or the production of renewable energy. If persisting structures of injustice in global resource governance are not addressed, the climate regime threatens to become another way by which problematic inequalities can be perpetuated and even enhanced, with parties that occupy a position of dominance further expanding their control over the Earth's resources at the expense of the globally disadvantaged.

Thus, to take a more integrated approach to climate justice—considering the role that historical wrongs have played in bringing it about—is not to use the climate negotiations as 'an opportunity' to solve these problems (Posner and Weisbach 2010, 5; emphasis added). Rather, it is to adopt a perspective that enables us to identify persisting structural injustices—such as those regarding the way that the Earth's resources are used, shared and controlled—and to recognise how certain forms of climate governance may serve to perpetuate such problems.

[1.41]

[1.42]

[1.43]



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[1.44]

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CLIMATE GOVERNANCE?

[1.45]

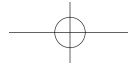
The problem of structural injustice identified in the previous section should create concerns about what Matthew Paterson has described as ‘the marketization of climate governance’ (2011, 617). Paterson here refers to Peter Newell’s discussion of the marketization of environmental governance more generally (see Newell 2008), what Newell refers to as ‘an ensemble of strategies of market governance including practices of privatisation and commodification of natural resources which derive from a common belief in the ability of markets to provide the public good of environmental protection in the most efficient way’ (2005: 189). In the climate change case, Paterson suggests, such marketization can be observed in the ‘major trend in the international climate regime . . . towards the organization of climate governance through the creation of markets in rights to emit GHGs’ (2011, 615) and can be explained by the ability of such markets to ‘create concentrated, immediate benefits for powerful actors’ (Paterson 2011, 620).

[1.46]

The main worry regarding such marketization is that market solutions are likely to favour parties that are already unjustly advantaged if not designed carefully. As Simon Caney and Cameron Hepburn note: ‘In general, market systems have a tendency at best to perpetuate existing distributions of wealth, and at worst to exacerbate wealth differences between rich and poor’ (2011, 223). Creating new, economic value in the natural resources on which communities depend will not necessarily benefit those communities in a world where access to natural resources tends to be determined by wealth and power, and where many poor people still struggle to realise their resource rights due, for example, to insecure land tenure arrangements and exclusion from environmental decision-making. Instead, it could just create new vulnerabilities: to exploitation by outside agents—or agents of the state—who may then seek to seize those resources in order to obtain the economic benefits for themselves.

[1.47]

‘Global carbon pricing’, for example, threatens to exacerbate existing inequalities of control over the global GHG sink, creating a system of governance in which ‘rich and poor states could not possibly participate on fair and equal terms since the former could draw on their superior financial resources to emit far more greenhouse gas than the latter’ (Page 2013, 243). Similar concerns are raised by market measures like the Clean Development Mechanism and the UN’s REDD and REDD+ mitigation schemes, which ‘act on the principle of industrialized countries (or those who can pay) offsetting their effluents by investing in the developing world’ (Marino and Ribot 2012, 324). These measures are designed to place climate mitigation projects in some of the poorest regions globally, and thus threaten to expose already vulnerable communities to any potentially harmful side effects of such developments. REDD and REDD+, for example, offer financial rewards for devel-



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oping countries that reduce deforestation and forest degradation (see UN 2009). Some worry that this new form of forest governance may restrict local access to resources, impinge on local livelihoods and dispossess resident communities (Cotula and Mayers 2009, 3; Larson 2011, 547). Such schemes also threaten to recentralise governance by placing forests under state control, potentially undermining the participation of local communities in decision-making about their environment (Phelps et al. 2010).

Historical injustices of natural resource governance thus have present moral significance because they are part of an enduring injustice in global resource governance that persists to the present day, and which now threatens to prevent us from dealing with climate change fairly. Instead of allowing market processes to determine access to and control over the world’s resources, we should be ensuring that climate governance recognises the agency of vulnerable communities, directly strengthens their decision-making power, and protects their ability to control the land and natural resources on which they depend.

[1.48]

CONCLUSION

[1.49]

Though the history of natural resource use is often claimed to be relevant to our attempts to deal with climate change fairly, few theorists concerned with historical use of the climate sink have, thus far, expanded their attention to consider the way in which broader historical methods of natural resource governance—the unjust governance that took place during periods of colonialism, for example—could also possess contemporary moral significance. The problem of historical injustice in the use of the Earth’s resources is much broader than the problem of climate change; but it is relevant insofar as it has made climate change a particularly challenging problem of global justice, in which communities are differentially vulnerable to climate events and persisting injustices of control over and access to natural resources threaten to undermine fair climate governance. Acknowledging and addressing this problem is vital and urgent if we are to ensure that the climate negotiations—and the new systems of resource governance that they are now in the process of creating—do not perpetuate such injustice.

[1.50]

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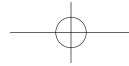
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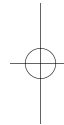
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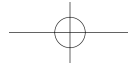
NOTES

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1. Early versions of this argument were presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops 2014 and the ALSP Annual Conference 2014, and I am grateful to the organisers and attendees of those events for their helpful feedback. Thanks are also due to Bevan Richardson, for many discussions on this topic that helped me to straighten my thoughts; Chris Bertram, Joanna Burch-Brown, Simon Caney, Fabian Schuppert and participants of the Stanford postdoc seminar for their comments on previous written versions; and Catriona McKinnon and Aaron Maltai for helping me to significantly improve the chapter.

[1n2]

2. The 'natural debt' terminology is used in Grubb et al. 1992, 312; Meyer and Roser 2006, 238; Neumayer 2000, 186; and Smith 1991. Alternative terms that are commonly invoked during discussions of climate change and historical responsibility include 'ecological debt', 'climate debt', 'carbon debt', and—more rarely—'atmospheric debt'. See the discussions in: Athanasiou and Baer 2002, 121; Duus-Otterström 2014, 450; Halme 2007; Kartha 2011, 508-9;



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Martinez-Alier and Naron 2004, 19; Pickering and Barry 2012; Risse 2012, 394, fn.16; and Sinden 2010.

3. For critiques of the historical emissions debt view see Beckerman and Pasek 1995, 410; Caney 2006; Miller 2008, 133–37; and my paper titled ‘Historical Use of the Climate Sink’.

[1n3]

4. See Spinner-Halev’s discussion of what he terms ‘enduring injustice’ (2012, 329).

[1n4]

5. One obvious example of such burdens being the duty to restrict GHG emissions.

[1n5]

6. The BPP—defended by Bell (2010, 437–38) and Page (2012), among others—assigns the costs of dealing with climate change to those who have benefitted from excessive emissions of GHGs.

[1n6]

7. Page, for example, argues that the benefits and burdens of historical use of GHG sinks should be distributed in a compensatory manner because they ‘share common origins’ (Page 2012, 313). I criticise this position in my paper titled ‘Historical Use of the Climate Sink’.

[1n7]

8. Roughly speaking, the IPCC understands a disaster to be an adverse impact which ‘produce[s] widespread damage and cause[s] severe alterations in the normal functioning of communities or societies’ (IPCC 2012, 4).

[1n8]

9. Gardiner claims that our present circumstances of global injustice are also a result of ‘currently pronounced global poverty and inequality, and the role of rich nations in structuring existing transnational institutions’ (2011, 119). Later on, I will suggest that colonialism in fact played a significant role in creating such poverty and inequality, and in ensuring that transnational institutions were set up according to the interests of the richer nations.

[1n9]

10. Such as ‘mining and lumbering resources as well as ranching and plantation agriculture’ (Roberts and Parks 2007, 112).

[1n10]

11. In another paper, Roberts and Parks draw on three case studies to argue that ‘the “root causes” of climate disasters lie in colonial histories and current relations with the global economy that keep these nations vulnerable’ (2006, 351).

[1n11]

12. In many instances, the case for deeming the beneficiaries of fossil fuel extraction and sale both culpable and liable for the costs of climate change has been enhanced by their efforts to undermine climate mitigation efforts.

[1n12]

13. For more on the distinction between isolationism and integrationism about climate justice, see Caney 2012, 258–59.

[1n13]

14. As Catherine Lu points out in her own discussion of the lasting effects of colonialism: ‘there is a distinction between acts of injustice being past and structural injustice being a thing of the past. Even if unjust acts or policies end . . . unjust structural processes and conditions may persist’ (2011, 278).

[1n14]

15. This privilege has received a fair amount of attention in the philosophical literature. See Pogge 2002, 112–14, 162–66; Wenar 2008.

[1n15]

16. Furthermore, this injustice appears to have additional relevance to the problem of climate change. Fair global governance of fossil fuels will be essential for dealing with climate change justly; but oil is one of the major natural assets associated with the resource curse. By encouraging authoritarian rule in oil-rich regions, the international resource privilege has thereby created a significant stumbling block to effective global action on climate change—a stumbling block for which we may wish to hold certain international actors responsible.

[1n16]

17. Cameron similarly identifies ‘lack of control over resource development’ as a persisting difficulty faced by the Inuit that is generally understood ‘in relation to colonization’ (2012, 106).

[1n17]

