**Non-Blind Abstract**

**Paper title: Political philosophy and ‘natural’ resources**

**Abstract:**

Natural resources are central topics of debate in political philosophy. However, what we mean by the term ‘natural resource’ is usually taken for granted to mean uncreated and useful objects. Recent theories supplement this with biophysical descriptions of natural systems and processes. Yet as I will show, the connections between these two levels of description are confused and sometimes contradictory. As such, seeking to update older understandings of natural resources with piecemeal scientific insights, in the manner of adding technical words to a natural language, adds to confusion without getting to the roots of the problem.

This paper conducts an ontological examination into conceptions of natural resources in political philosophy, focusing upon three leading theories, namely Avery Kolers ’ ‘intentional’ theory, Tim Hayward’s ‘ecological space’ theory, and Chris Armstrong’s ‘Rohstoff’ theory. In doing so, I explore two neglected topics which are of increasing relevance to contemporary philosophical and policy debate, namely how to draw the distinction between resources as use values, and resources as critical life support systems; and the problem of plural ontologies of reality and of ‘natural’ resources. In response to the first, I argue that philosophers cannot adopt ready-made scientific framings, but must co-determine understandings of ecological limits to resource use. In response to the second, I argue that political philosophers should reassess their dismissal of human nature relationships that do not conform to the view of nature as a stockpile of useful, uncreated objects.

**Keywords:** Global Justice, Natural Resources, Territory, Ontology, Human nature relationship

**Author:** Dominic Lenzi

**Affiliation:** Research Associate, at the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change

**Contact information:** [lenzi@mcc-berlin.net](mailto:lenzi@mcc-berlin.net)

**Biography:** Dr. Dominic Lenzi is a research associate in the working group [Scientific Assessments, Ethics, and Public Policy (SEP)](http://www.mcc-berlin.net/en/research/working-groups/scientific-assessments-ethics-and-public-policy.html). Dominic’s current research focuses upon natural resource justice, deliberative democratic theory, climate justice, and the ethics of geoengineering.