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## **Three injustices in financing adaptation to climate change**

Three major injustices arise in the context of providing vulnerable low-income countries (such as small island developing states, particularly exposed to adverse climatic changes like rising sea levels) with adaptation finance, so that they can take measures to adapt to a changing climate. The first, basic injustice lies already in exposing people to risk and harm that make adaptation measures necessary. The second lies in the gap between funds promised by the countries of the Global North and the funds actually provided. The third injustice results from the selection of criteria for distributing scarce adaptation funds. The paper offers a diagnosis and normative analysis of these injustices and outlines measures to address them.

Climate policy generally focuses on two policy options: mitigation and adaptation. Influential climate economists, however, have argued against immediate and aggressive mitigation, based on narrow economic efficiency concerns (Nordhaus 2007, 2008). Yet, causing harm, and failing to prevent future harm from others, where it would be possible to do so at a reasonable cost, constitutes a violation of human rights (Bell 2013) and a first injustice in preferring adaptation over mitigation.

The second injustice of adaptation consists in the “adaptation gap” (UNEP 2021): Over the last decade, the historical polluters in the Global North did not live up to the commitments made at the Copenhagen summit (UNFCCC 2009a), to finance adaptive measures (Roberts et al. 2021). Given the highly unequal distributions of both the contributions to and the burdens of climate change between the Global North and the Global South, the insufficient amount of adaptation finance is unjust (Caney 2010).

The adaptation gap makes prioritisation of scarce adaptation finance between and within states inevitable. Three prima-facie candidate criteria to allocate adaptation finance – namely *efficiency*, *vulnerability*, and *democracy* – have been proposed, but each of them exposes flaws in terms of justice. A first candidate criterion, *efficiency* (Michaelowa and Stadelmann 2018, Stadelmann 2015), is in line with the moral intuition to avoid wastefulness and to optimise adaptation. However, seeking efficiency frequently fails to honour rights-based claims. A second criterion, *vulnerability* (UNFCCC 2009b, 2015), aligns with the moral intuition to prioritise those suffering from greatest need. However, it also creates misguided incentives for countries to present themselves as or even make themselves particularly vulnerable (Ott 2021). A third criterion, *democracy* (Baatz 2016, Baatz and Bourban 2019), proposes that countries with a higher degree of democratisation should receive more adaptation finance. This criterion aligns with the aim to democratise the process of local adaptation (Mikulewicz 2018) and with the ambition to honor all communities' entitlements to adaptation finance (Duus-Otterström 2016). However, in terms of justice, this criterion further disadvantages those already disadvantaged who live in non-democratic countries.

Securing justice thus not only demands increasing efforts of mitigation (injustice 1) and reliable fulfilment of the promises already made to provide adaptation finance (injustice 2). Additionally, the common criteria for distributing scarce adaptation finance (injustice 3) need to be reconsidered, to secure justice as much as possible under non-ideal circumstances. Our primarily diagnostic paper will conclude with an outlook of how to address these injustices.

Keywords:

*Adaptation, climate finance, global justice, efficiency, vulnerability, democracy*

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