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### **Climate justice: sufficientarian and democratic**

The global and intergenerational nature of climate change poses some serious challenges to the conventional theories of social justice. To deal with these, an increasing number of climate justice philosophers have appealed to a sufficientarian understanding of justice, the central characteristic of which is that there is a morally relevant threshold and our main moral concern should be in improving the position of the people below the threshold. Firstly, sufficientarianism is purported to avoid some theoretical challenges faced by e.g. egalitarianism and utilitarianism, such as the Non-Identity Problem, the Repugnant Conclusion, and the demandingness objection. Secondly, there are epistemic challenges. For instance, what, in accordance with egalitarianism, is owed to each person, requires measurement of the relative differences among people, which is argued to be highly difficult in a culturally plural world. In the intergenerational level the problems are even more apparent due to uncertainties we have concerning future people's particular way of life and their understanding of important societal values. These will depend on technological and societal development that we can only predict with great difficulty. But these epistemic uncertainties and problems of measurement are far more limited if our concern for justice is restricted to certain fundamental human interests that constitute the relevant threshold.

Despite the strengths, sufficientarianism faces problems of its own. First, there is the question about the relation between intergenerational and intragenerational justice. According to the negative counterpart of the sufficientarian understanding, improving the position of the less well-off people above the threshold is of no particular concern. This has provoked some plausible objections against sufficientarianism when applied among contemporaries. These claim that any specification of the threshold, above which the importance of improving the less well-off person vanishes completely, is arbitrary. Moreover, equalizing relative differences between people also above the threshold is often taken to be necessary in order to guarantee political equality between them. This leads, secondly, to the question about the relation between sufficientarian understanding of global and intergenerational justice and democratic authorisation of climate policies.

In order to address these objections, the paper puts forward an account of democratic sufficientarianism. Based on Elizabeth Anderson's (1999) theory, according to which every citizen should be able function as an equal in society, the paper suggests a threshold of democratic equality and explores its application in the global and intergenerational context of climate change in order to ensure the democratic equality between those who are tied (also globally and intergenerationally) together by shared institutions of authoritative decision-making. The paper contends that democratic sufficientarianism is able to retain the main strengths of sufficientarian account, while allows also variation between societies in terms of where the relevant threshold for democratic equality in their

society is placed and what it requires to sustain it for the future. Yet the further investigation of the global and intergenerational dimensions of the authoritative climate decision-making institutions reveals the actual limits of the variation. Finally, the significance of the democratic equality threshold on addressing issues of climate vulnerability and capacity building is examined.

Keywords: climate justice, sufficientarianism, democratic equality, intergenerational justice, global justice

## **Bio**

Simo Kyllönen works as a university lecturer at the University of Helsinki. His main topics at the moment cover research ethics, open science, philosophy of climate change and intergenerational justice and democracy. He is participant in two projects: *Ethical Expertise* (<https://blogs.helsinki.fi/ethicalexpertise/>) and *Participation in Long-Term Decision Making (PALO)* (<http://paloresearch.fi/participation-in-long-term-decision-making/>). In the first one, he analyses the relationship between ethical expertise and democratic decision-making. Particular attention is paid to climate policy decisions which are loaded with difficult moral choices (not least the ones concerning intergenerational justice). In the second one, central research questions concern the relationship between intergenerational justice and democratic decision-making. Kyllönen has disseminated his research by participating in climate policy processes and by publishing policy papers on several climate policy issues (e.g. The Ministry of Environment of Finland) and by actively writing short newspaper columns and blogs.