

Clare Heyward and Dominic Roser (eds)
Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World
New York: Oxford University Press, 2016
ISBN: 978-0-19-874404-7 (HB) \$90.00. 352pp.

There has been an explosion of work on the relationship between climate change and theories of morality and justice over the last twenty years and it is fair to say that there is a distinctive literature on ‘climate justice’. The dominant strand of that literature has made considerable progress in specifying how to share fairly the benefits and burdens of mitigation, adaptation and financing across states and generations by appeal to ideal theories of distributive justice. Theorists hoped this would not just be a theoretical exercise but would help motivate climate action by showing its moral stakes and by providing guidance to the UNFCCC process. The idea was that all parties would be more likely to agree to a treaty that was fair.

This theoretical development stands in a striking tension with the global negotiations’ inability to produce a strong climate treaty and with the overall failure of the international response to approximate principles of justice. One could point to many possible feasibility constraints for this failure, including the assurance problem, climate change’s scope and complexity, unwillingness to embrace lifestyle changes, powerful economic interests in maintaining business-as-usual, internal political realities and ineffective global institutions. But there has been little theoretical work expressly reflecting on the proper relation between these feasibility constraints and ideal theories of justice.

Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World begins to address this gap. It is a wide-ranging collection that shows that theorists are just at the start of thinking through this relationship. An overriding question of the papers is what we should do given a lack of motivation on the part of major emitters and wealthy countries to do what is just. Some of the papers formulate lists of the feasibility constraints on mitigation, adaptation and financing. Others search for methodologies for navigating the trade-offs between different principles of justice in order to maximise just outcomes within existing motivations and institutional structures.

As the editors note, the papers in the collection show that the term ‘non-ideal theory’ is used in many different ways. Some hew closely to Rawls’s distinction between ideal theory, which presents a conception of distributive justice that assumes full compliance and favourable circumstances, and non-ideal theory, which investigates what we should do in situations of partial compliance. Others call for non-ideal theory in response to their dissatisfaction with pure theoretical reflection on justice and its irrelevance for guiding action. On this view, theorists should take account of the actual empirical, political and motivational context and propose particular goals or proposals for reform. This collection is organised into three sections and the first two sections follow these conceptions of non-ideal theory.

The papers in the first section present general analyses of the proper response to non-compliance and unfavourable political circumstances. In their papers, Caney, Maltais and Roser each propose a framework for determining how unjust a particular option is in order to make comparative judgments between non-ideal options. All three also recognise that just options will

have to be traded off against feasible options, but Maltais further emphasises that proposals to address feasibility constraints on climate action may themselves raise distinct normative issues. Finally, given a lack of motivation to achieve just options, these theorists argue we should choose the option that minimises injustice within the bounds of current motivation.

I wonder, however, where the motivation to choose the less unjust option will come from if there is not motivation to choose the just one. I was also struck by the way some of these authors assume that there is a clear answer to what climate justice requires. Caney's focus on non-compliance, for example, takes it as given what compliance would be. What if part of the problem is that there are deep theoretical disagreements both between theorists and reasonable people regarding how burdens should be allocated and why? If that is the case, it is not clear that a non-ideal theory of justice will be any less contentious than an ideal theory. Moellendorf's contribution expresses this concern. Given the urgency of the problem, he argues that instead of appealing to theories of justice we should appeal to the norms internal to the UNFCCC treaty and process. Finally, while Lawford-Smith has contributed a strong piece on individual causal responsibility for climate harms, I found it to be a bit out of place with the rest of the papers in this section.

The papers in the second section engage more directly with the policy context and propose suggestions for concrete reforms. Lawrence argues that while soft law is the best that global negotiations can achieve for now we should keep working for a binding treaty. Light and Taraska argue that a way to minimise continued warming within the bounds of current motivation is to focus on reducing short-lived greenhouse gases. Abeysinghe and Huq present concrete proposals for how the UNFCCC process might better protect the least developed countries. The two most controversial arguments in this section are Aldred's claim that even an optimal, well-designed emission trading scheme is not a step toward justice and Heyward and Odälen's argument that territorially dispossessed people have the right to citizenship in any country they choose.

The papers in the third section represent an interesting perspective on the relation between claims of justice and political reality. They reflect specifically on how agents should communicate about climate change when the deliberative contexts in which this occurs are non-ideal. Lamb and Lane argue that the motivational deficit for climate action can be explained by a widespread lack of trust in scientists. They provide some strong scholarship on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and convincingly show it provides guidance for how to build trust through public communication. Both Pickering and Seidel present provocative reflections on the place moral language should have in climate politics. They both question the received view that '[m]oralizing in global climate governance institutions ... increases the prospects for an effective and just global climate treaty' (p. 279). This is an empirical claim, and both present arguments and evidence that it is false. Finally, Kowarsch and Edenhofer reply by providing a qualified defence of explicit moral theorising in climate policy debates.

Overall I found *Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World* to be a good contribution to a gap in the climate justice literature. The theoretical papers start to make headway on the under-explored question of how ideal theories of climate justice should relate to the 'super-wicked' problem of climate change. A number of papers also argue for interesting or controversial positions on a range of issues in climate policy. My main complaint is that too little attention is given to some

relevant topics – such as the place of norms of procedural justice, or how to achieve coordination between parties with deep disagreements about what justice requires. Even so, no collection or book can cover everything. All of this makes it clear that there is a lot more work to be done on the topic of climate justice in a non-ideal world.

COREY KATZ
Ohio State University