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Research

New voices in cultural relations

The politics of expendability

Decolonial reflections on the state of climate justice at COP27

Louise Sherry

An abstract graphic design at the bottom of the page consisting of several overlapping, rounded rectangular shapes in shades of orange and red, set against a dark blue background.

Foreword

I am delighted to present the first edition of our new series New voices in cultural relations. In much of the British Council's research portfolio, we focus on the views of young people and bringing to the fore voices that are not often heard in decision making circles. Like the Cultural Relations Collection, from which this new series evolved, the central aim here is to showcase fresh perspectives and innovative thinking, fostering a platform for emerging scholars from the UK and beyond.

I'm especially pleased that we brought this collection to life in partnership with BISA, the British International Studies Association. Given the complex and uncertain times in which we live, the field of international studies is more important than ever, helping us to explore and understand the intricacies of global interactions.

This series of essays was gathered through a competitive process. It asked course leaders in the international relations discipline to put forward outstanding Masters-level dissertations that made an original contribution to their field, either through providing new scholarly insight or offering a new policy direction.

The diversity of the contributors to this series is another aspect we celebrate. Our postgraduate authors come from varied cultural and academic backgrounds, each bringing a distinct perspective to their research. This underscores the idea that international relations is not a monolithic field, but one that thrives on diversity and inclusivity.

I must first congratulate our winner, Louise Sherry, for her dissertation reflecting on the state of climate justice and COP27. The judging panel noted that 'not only does the dissertation tackle a subject of crucial global importance, it has the clear potential to transform thinking on this topic, and, one would hope, policy.' In that regard, it is a worthy winner of our prize.

The remaining essays, each commended by the judging panel, cover topics as varied as the role of information warfare in the global system; the resistance movement in Myanmar; a critique of the 'war on terror'; and an approach to inclusion and anti-discrimination in the EU drawn from interviews with Black politicians in Europe.

I would invite you to engage with the essays with an open mind. The ideas presented here are thought provoking and you may disagree with what you read. But it is in that spirit of engagement and dialogue that we hope that New voices in cultural relations will inspire you. And that it will also inspire not only current scholars and practitioners, but also future generations of international relations students, to continue exploring and contributing to this ever-evolving field.

I would like to thank our partners, BISA, for their constructive and energetic approach to this work. Thanks also to my colleagues Reesha Alvi and Purti Kohli for their excellent project management from start to finish. I'm grateful to my colleagues Amanda Alves, James Carey, Dr Lisdey Espinoza, Michael Peak and Devika Purandare for their thoughtful evaluations of the first round of submissions, and to the academic panel – Dr Nancy Annan, Dr Yoav Galai, Dr Victoria Hudson and chair Prof Kyle Grayson – for making the difficult decision of selecting the winner and commended essays.

Lastly, I extend my thanks to all the students who submitted to the competition, and my congratulations to our winner and to the runners-up. It was a pleasure to read your work, albeit a challenge to make judgments on such a diverse range of scholarship, but it is clear that the future of international relations is in good hands.

Christine Wilson
Director Research and Insight
British Council

Introduction

About New voices in cultural relations prize

The British Council works to support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through a range of cultural relations activities which aim to create greater mutual understanding, deeper relationships, and enhance sustainable dialogue between people and cultures.

In this spirit, the British Council in partnership with BISA (The British International Studies Association) have created the New voices in cultural relations Prize for Master's students writing a dissertation in the area of international relations.

The objective is to provide new scholarly insights or propose new policy directions that contribute significantly to the field of international relations. The prize recognizes and promotes exceptional academic achievements that have the potential to influence attitudes, practices, or policies in international relations.

Universities were invited to put forward the strongest Master's dissertation in the field of international relations. Entries were assessed by an international committee within the British Council and then by a panel of judges convened by BISA.

We are delighted that this essay by Louise Sherry was judged to be the winning entry in the 2024 New voices in cultural relations.

This publication of the essay is part of the prize which included the opportunity to speak at the 2024 BISA conference, 12 month's BISA membership, and an invitation to participate in a British Council organised panel discussion alongside other academics and practitioners in the field of cultural relations.

About the essay

The Politics of Expendability: Decolonial Reflections on the State of Climate Justice at COP27

The panel judged this as the winning essay.

It provides a thought-provoking analysis due to its innovative approach, rigorous methodology, and potential to influence discourse and policy in the field of international climate relations.

The essay provides a clear outline of its focus, methodology, and key arguments. It focuses on the policy outcomes of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the UNFCCC. And specifically investigates whether these outcomes have advanced climate justice and assesses the efficacy of the UNFCCC in responding justly to climate change.

The judging panel noted: 'This dissertation explains the disappointments of 'market environmentalism' and exposes the inadequacies of the current approach to climate justice stemming from an unrecognised politics of expendability. Not only does the dissertation tackle a subject of crucial global importance, it also exposes the scandalous contradictions of the present direction of travel. In doing so, it has the clear potential to transform thinking on this topic, even for those who might be sceptical, and, one would hope, policy. It is well written with a clear structure that presents a fresh argument that needs to be heard more widely!'

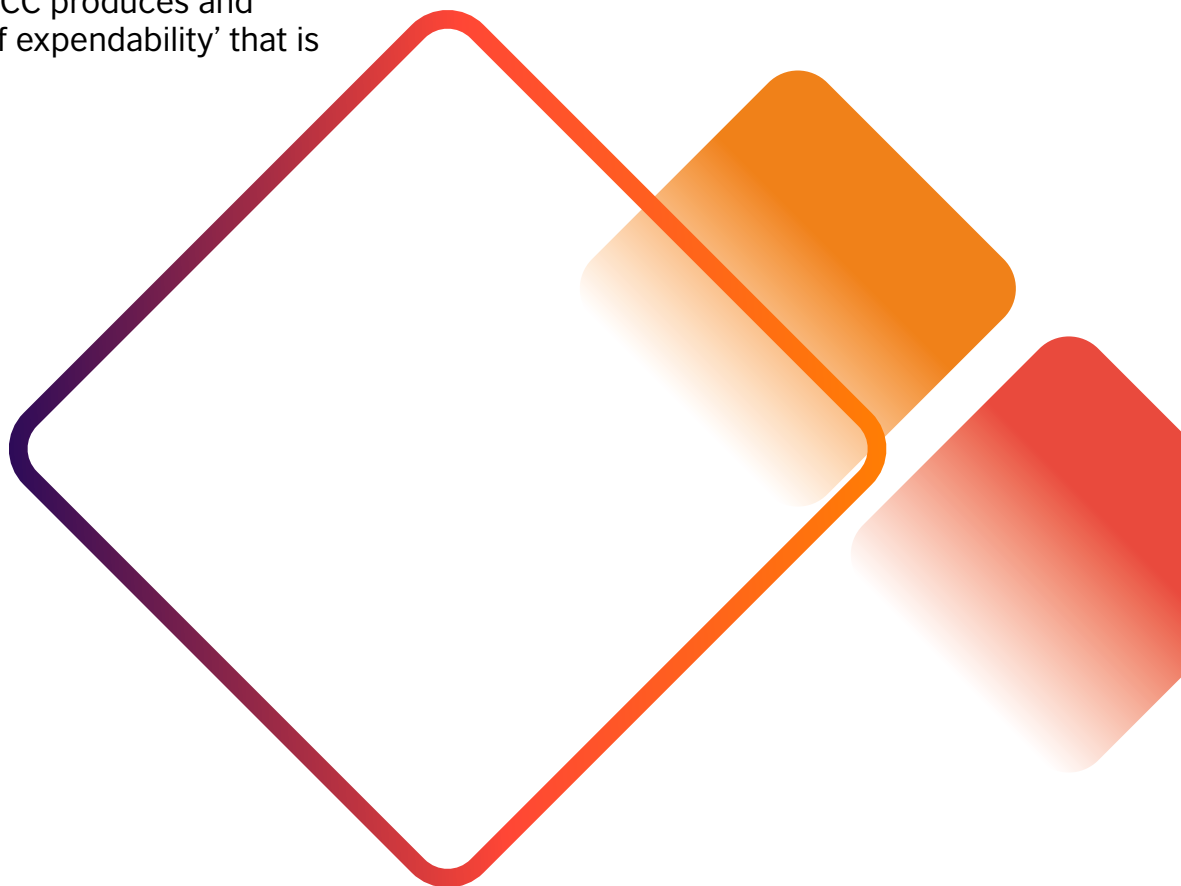
Louise Sherry graduated from the University of Warwick with an MA in International Relations.

Abstract

The twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has been framed as a transformative new era in the implementation of just and effective international climate action. This dissertation accordingly investigates whether the policy outcomes of COP27 have actually contributed to the advancement of climate justice, and what this suggests for the efficacy of the UNFCCC in justly responding to climate change. Although the normative significance that has characterised COP27 is certainly consonant with climate justice, this dissertation conversely advances two core contentions that stand in direct contradistinction to the Conference's dominant framing: (1) The policy outcomes of COP27 have not advanced climate justice because (2) the coloniality of global climate governance means that the UNFCCC produces and operates a 'politics of expendability' that is

entirely irreconcilable with a just response to climate change. This dissertation intends to contribute to the general dearth of decolonial approaches to climate justice through an enactment of a decolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the primary policy outcomes formulated at COP27, in order to interrogate the ways in which the discursive framing of the adopted decisions represents and reinforces the coloniality of power that is embedded within the institutions and modalities of the UNFCCC.

Key words: climate justice, global climate governance, loss and damage, discourse, decolonial theory, coloniality, expendability



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1. Introduction

'Climate injustice' is a constitutive dynamic of climate change. The Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has unequivocally delineated that '[v]ulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected' by its adverse impacts, with the greatest vulnerability 'observed in many locations and/or communities in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, LDCs, Small Islands and the Arctic.'¹ The skewed vulnerability of developing regions stands in direct contrast to the 'unequal historical and ongoing contributions' to the global emissions of greenhouse gases by states predominantly located in the developed regions of the Global North.²

Since the institutionalisation of climate change as a formal international problem under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, recognition of the global asymmetry in responsibility for versus vulnerability to climate change has precipitated an influx of critical dialogues and ameliorative demands from national, scholarly, and grassroots channels under the banner of 'climate justice'. Although the normative imaginaries of climate justice discourses are certainly heterogeneous, the ideal of North-South equity that constitutes the notional crux of climate justice has been most saliently articulated in terms of the principle of 'historical responsibility', in which prominent global polluters are morally required to adopt differentiated duties in the international response to climate change to account for their past emissions.³ In view of the force such demands have constituted globally, then, it is critical to recognise the way in which such normative contestations have been formative to the institution and development of global climate governance since 1992.⁴ The UNFCCC is the foundational international treaty under which global climate action by the Parties to the Convention has been orchestrated.⁵ Circumscribing the institutional beginnings of the Convention, however, were constitutional disagreements relating to the variegated responsibilities, vulnerabilities, and development needs of the assorted Parties. These disputes were foundational in moulding the institutionalisation of the central organising principle of the Convention: the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective

1 IPCC, 'Summary for Policymakers', in, *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contributions of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Geneva: IPCC, 2023), p. 5.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

3 Darrell Moellendorf, 'Climate Change and Global Justice', *WIREs Climate Change*, 3:2 (2012), p. 135.

4 Chukwumerije Okereke, *Global Justice and Neoliberal Environmental Governance: Ethics, Sustainable Development and International Co-operation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 4.

5 David Coen, Julia Kreienkamp, and Tom Pogram, *Global Climate Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 25.

capabilities (CBDR-RC).⁶ The CBDR-RC principle is ambiguous by design – the notion of ‘differentiated responsibilities’ conceivably invites interpretations conducive to historical responsibility, yet the inclusion of the ‘respective capabilities’ clause has facilitated the rejection of such arguments in favour of those that foreground developed Party obligations in terms of their superior economic capacities.⁷ The attendant enactment of international climate action over the past three decades has resultantly been rather institutionally varied: from the regulated burden-sharing between Annex I (developed) and non-Annex I (developing) Parties that characterised the Kyoto Protocol (1997), towards its replacement by the voluntary system of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) institutionalised by the Paris Agreement (2015).⁸ The Paris Agreement continues to structure contemporary climate action under the UNFCCC, although its non-binding nature has proved contentious for achieving the sort of equitable action stipulated by climate justice.⁹ Framed in this context, then, this dissertation responds to the following two research questions: (1) Do the policy outcomes of the most recent Conference of the Parties (COP) advance climate justice? (2) What does this suggest for the efficacy of the UNFCCC in justly responding to the global problem of climate change?

The twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties – COP27, held in Sharm el-Sheikh in November 2022 – has comprised the most recent instalment in the formal process of intergovernmental climate negotiations under the UNFCCC. COP27 in particular has been grandiosely narrated as a critical juncture in the advancement of just and effective climate action, related especially to the ‘historic’ breakthrough decision on the establishment of a dedicated fund

for loss and damage within the UNFCCC infrastructure.¹⁰ Although the discursive framing surrounding the Conference is certainly consonant with climate justice, then, this dissertation conversely advances two core contentions in response to the research questions above. (1) The policy outcomes of COP27 have not advanced climate justice because (2) the coloniality of global climate governance means that the UNFCCC produces and operates a ‘politics of expendability’ that is entirely irreconcilable with a just response to climate change. In drawing on decolonial theory, this dissertation intends to contribute to the general dearth of decolonial approaches to climate justice that interpret the normative inadequacies of global climate governance in terms of the coloniality of its institutions. A decolonial Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)



6 UN General Assembly, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 20 January 1994, A/RES/48/189 <<https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>> [accessed 05 September 2023].

7 Chukwumerije Okereke and Philip Coventry, ‘Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris’, WIREs Climate Change, 7:6 (2016), p. 837.

8 Coen, Kreienkamp, and Pegram, Global Climate Governance, pp. 18–20.

9 Okereke and Coventry, ‘Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris’, p. 841.

10 UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’, United Nations Climate Change, 7 November 2022 <<https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-opening-remarks-by-the-un-climate-change-executive-secretary>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

of the primary policy outcomes articulated at COP27 is accordingly employed to interrogate the ways in which the discursive framing of the adopted decisions represents and naturalises the coloniality of power that is embedded within the institutions and actions of the UNFCCC.

To ground the foregoing contentions, chapter two first conducts a comprehensive review of the respective literatures on climate justice and decolonial theory, in which the relevant concepts are thoroughly defined before the decolonial approach to climate justice is elaborated. Chapter three accordingly recapitulates the relevant theoretical gaps in the literature on climate justice before fully overviewing the methodological import of a decolonial CDA. Chapter four proceeds with the substantiation of the two core contentions through an initial deconstruction of the general normative discourse framing the Conference before moving onto a specific interrogation of the discourse adopted to frame the policy outcomes. The discussion is structured according to the three core areas of international climate policy – mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage (L&D).



2. Literature Review

2.1. Climate Justice

Climate change has been understood as a moral problem with a colonial dynamic since the advent of the literature on 'climate justice'. Termed 'environmental colonialism' in 1991, Agarwal and Narain's seminal contention that China and India 'cannot be held responsible' for their emissions on account of the U.S.'s violation of its equal share of the global atmospheric commons constituted the earliest theorisation of the global justice dimensions of international climate action.¹¹ Climate justice, however, did not emerge in a theoretical vacuum. Most prominently traced by Schlosberg and Collins, the conceptual genealogy between climate justice and earlier discussions of socio-environmental inequity articulated under the discourse of 'environmental justice' were formative to the way in which climate injustice was initially conceived.¹² As early as the 1970s, the respective 'anti-toxics' and 'environmental racism' movements in the U.S. had conceptualised the health risks generated by the disproportionate concentration of working class and non-white communities near polluting industrial sites as symptomatic of the broader socio-political inequities structuring U.S. society.¹³ These social movements precipitated the 'first generation' of environmental justice scholarship, with the resultant theorising centred around documenting inequities in the distribution of environmental burdens along racial and class-based lines.¹⁴ Naturally,

such scholarship was firmly couched within the traditional paradigm of distributive justice.¹⁵

Influenced by the antecedent distributive paradigm of environmental justice, then, the subsequent development of climate ethics by political theorists such as Shue led to the proliferation of a distinctly distributive conceptualisation of 'climate justice' that remains paradigmatic within the literature today. Seminal theorising of climate justice was squarely dominated by a throng of normative commentaries on the equitable distribution of the global duties of climate change mitigation. These formative discussions have generally been anchored by the notion of a 'climate debt', or more specifically an 'emissions debt',¹⁶ that refers to the way in which the 'luxury emissions' of rich industrialised countries have cumulated in an inequitable overuse of the global atmospheric absorptive capacity at the expense of the 'subsistence emissions' of the global poor.¹⁷ This core thread – of the distributive inequity of the Global North's historical greenhouse gas emissions – has accordantly anchored the climate justice ideal of historical responsibility in the idea of the 'polluter pays principle', which bases moral obligations on a state's historical responsibility for its past emissions.¹⁸

11 Anil Agarwal and Sunita Narain, *Global Warming in an Unequal World: A Case of Environmental Colonialism* (New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment, 1991)

12 David Schlosberg and Lisette B. Collins, 'From Environmental to Climate Justice: Climate Change and the Discourse of Environmental Justice', *WIREs Climate Change*, 5:3 (2014), p. 359.

13 David Schlosberg, 'Theorising Environmental Justice: The Expanding Sphere of a Discourse', *Environmental Politics*, 22:1 (2013), p. 41.

14 Robert D. Bullard, eds., *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots* (Boston: South End Press, 1993)

15 David Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 12.

16 Rikard Warlenius, 'Decolonising the Atmosphere: The Climate Justice Movement on Climate Debt', *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 27:2 (2018), p. 139.

17 Henry Shue, *Climate Justice: Vulnerability and Protection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

18 Henry Shue, 'Global Environment and International Inequality', *International Affairs*, 75:3 (1999), p. 533.

Distributive equity in international climate action is thus undoubtedly central to climate justice theorising. However, this dissertation nevertheless draws on the multi-faceted taxonomy of climate justice spearheaded by Schlosberg, in which procedural, recognition-, and capabilities-based discourses of justice have been integrated into the broader meaning of climate justice.¹⁹ Owing to this dissertation's core focus on the present reality of the inequity of local vulnerabilities to climate change, the capabilities-based dimension of climate justice is particularly incorporated, serving to shift the locus of climate justice beyond the ideal-theoretic weight attributed to mitigation.²⁰ A capabilities-based approach, too, theoretically grounds the normative significance attributed to loss and damage in this dissertation – an area of climate policy that remains distinctly under-theorised from a climate justice perspective. Indeed, critical and up-to-date assessments of climate justice in terms of loss and damage are sorely lacking: Boyd et al. and Adelman constitute the main exceptions, although both accounts only comprise brief coverages that touch on the necessity of compensatory justice for those facing loss and damage from those that have caused it.²¹

2.2. Decolonial Approaches to Climate Change

To return now to the discourse of environmental justice, it is essential to overview the way in which this field has theoretically developed in order to delineate how decolonial theory relates to climate justice. In the last two decades, the 'Critical Environmental Justice' (CEJ) research agenda has emerged in direct contradistinction to the 'first generation' of environmental justice scholarship, self-reflexively aimed at utilising interdisciplinary critical theory traditions to fill the gaps in earlier works delimited by the mere cursory identification of the race- and class-based contours of maldistribution.²² CEJ, in contrast, is aimed at conducting a deeper, transformative interrogation of the systemic link between environmental injustice and the broader production of structural inequity.²³ The first comprehensive edited volume representing the CEJ research agenda included examinations of environmental justice through the lenses of Marxist political ecology and critical ecofeminism – but most pertinent to this dissertation, its core contribution comprised Kurtz's suggested application of critical race theory to interrogate the racialised dynamics undergirding the structural production of environmental inequity.²⁴ Importantly, a critical race perspective on environmental injustice was in fact first adopted by Mills in 2001, in which his evocative interrogation of Black Americans as 'the racialised refuse, the black trash, of the white body politic' constituted a forceful early articulation of this dissertation's core motif of the expendability of non-white populations.²⁵ Mills' critical race approach, however,

19 Schlosberg, *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*, p. 5.

20 Schlosberg and Collins, 'From Environmental to Climate Justice: Climate Change and the Discourse of Environmental Justice', p. 368.

21 Emily Boyd et al., 'Loss and Damage from Climate Change: A New Climate Justice Agenda', *One Earth*, 4:10 (2021); Sam Adelman, 'Climate Justice, Loss and Damage and Compensation for Small Island Developing States', *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, 7:1 (2016)

22 David N. Pellow and Robert J. Brulle, 'Power, Justice, and the Environment: Toward Critical Environmental Justice Studies', in David N. Pellow and Robert J. Brulle, eds., *Power, Justice, and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2005), p. 4.

23 David Pellow, 'Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge', *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 13:2 (2016), p. 223.

24 Hilda E. Kurtz, 'Acknowledging the Racial State: An Agenda for Environmental Justice Research', in Ryan B. Holifield, Michael Porter, and Gordon P. Walker, eds., *Spaces of Environmental Justice* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 95.

25 Charles Mills, 'Black Trash', in Laura Westraand and Bill E. Lawson, eds., *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), p. 89.

was not again picked up analytically until Pellow's conceptualisation of environmental injustice as a form of state violence in 2016.²⁶ Significantly linking the erasure, discrimination, and violation of Black bodies by state enforcement agents to the same logic of dehumanisation underpinning

state environmental policies, Pellow goes on to explicitly identify '*the largely unexamined question of the expendability of human and non-human populations*' as essential to the theoretical development of critical studies of environmental justice.²⁷ It is this absolutely crucial theme of the structural expendability of non-white bodies that has been essential in galvanising decolonial perspectives within the CEJ research agenda. Before we trace the specific application of decolonial perspectives to climate injustice, though, it will be useful to first sketch the fundamentals of decolonial theory and how it relates to this core theme of expendability.

Decoloniality can be broadly conceived of as an epistemological fracture with what it criticises as the Eurocentric project of modernity structuring the dominant Western canon of knowledge. Whilst decolonial thought does appreciably overlap with the criticisms forwarded by seminal postcolonial figures such as Fanon, Césaire, and Said, decolonial thinking in fact emerged from its own distinct theoretic genealogy, grounded in the Latin American intellectual tradition of the philosophy of liberation and academically spearheaded by Aníbal Quijano.²⁸ As is indicated by the ideational hallmarks of its Latin American intellectual genealogy, then, decoloniality is at its core a radical project of 'delinking.'²⁹ The decolonial project fundamentally aims at a dual process of 'epistemological decolonisation' and 'epistemic reconstitution.'³⁰ Simply put, this denotes an epistemological engagement with the 'geopolitics of knowledge' – that is, a recognition and unveiling of the colonial dynamics of power that naturalise Eurocentric systems of knowledge as universal truths, and an accordant liberation of non-Eurocentred knowledge and subjectivities that have been disavowed by the workings of this totalising

26 Pellow, 'Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge', p. 222.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 223.

28 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Introduction: Coloniality of Power and De-colonial Thinking', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), p. 163.

29 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-coloniality', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), p. 453.

30 Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 121; Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), p. 176.

power.³¹ These invisible epistemologies and subjectivities are made visible through a critical deconstruction of the global structure of power that has produced this invisibility.³² It is the critical deconstruction of this structure of power – referred to as the ‘colonial matrix of power’, the ‘coloniality of power’, or simply ‘modernity/coloniality’ – that constitutes the analytical essence of decolonial theory.³³ Coined by Quijano and theoretically elaborated by Mignolo, the coloniality of power refers to the ‘long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism’ that have since come to structure the interconnected systems of economy, authority, knowledge production, subjectivity, and intersubjective norms and relations that underlie modern Western civilisation.³⁴ Indeed, coloniality is fundamentally conceived of as ‘the darker side of modernity’, in that the rhetoric of modernity – a self-serving Eurocentric narrative of progress, development, growth – is concealed and naturalised as universal by the logic of coloniality that underpins it – the disavowal of non-European knowledges and subjectivities.³⁵ Modernity/coloniality, then, must accordingly be structured by a global hierarchy of difference – the ‘colonial difference’ – that necessarily functions to naturalise its intrinsic relations of domination.³⁶ Modern/colonial epistemology is fundamentally predicated on a subject/object, or self/other, dualism, and as such, is constitutionally organised around racialised social classifications borne of the colonial era between white Europeans and non-white Others.³⁷ The consequent production of the onto-epistemological ‘colonial difference’ resultantly enables

the epistemological construction of a ‘global colour-line’ – also termed the ‘onto-Manichean colonial line’;³⁸ the ‘zones of being’ and ‘non-being’;³⁹ or ‘the abyssal line.’⁴⁰ Regardless of which nomenclature one uses, though, the production of racialised difference fundamentally constitutes the onto-epistemological framework around which the coloniality of power is structured and naturalised. This results in the radical exclusion of the non-white, non-European ‘other’, leading to the attendant production of a specific modern/colonial epistemology and a specific modern/colonial ontology – that is, ‘the coloniality of knowledge’ and ‘the coloniality of being’, respectively.⁴¹ The coloniality of knowledge is less relevant here, but essentially denotes the epistemic denial of ‘particularistic’ non-European systems of knowledge through the universalisation of the ‘rational’ European paradigm of knowledge – ‘modernity/rationality’ – as ‘truth’.⁴² The coloniality of being, however, is fundamental to understanding how the theme of expendability operates in decolonial theory. Elaborated by Maldonado-Torres, the coloniality of being essentially denotes the way the ideal ‘modern’ subjectivity – ego cogito, fashioned after the rational European Man – became naturalised as the universal model of the Human.⁴³ To establish itself as the ideal, however, ego cogito is necessarily predicated on the ‘ontological colonial difference’ between itself and a non-thinking Other.⁴⁴ The coloniality of being hence leads to the devaluation of non-white, non-European subjectivities as less-Human, and as eminently delineated by Mignolo, produces the ontological effect of rendering

31 Walter D. Mignolo, ‘The Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Colonial Difference’, in Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds., *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 227.

32 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept’, *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007), p. 262.

33 Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, p. 4.

34 Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept’, p. 243.

35 Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, pp. 109–110.

36 Anibal Quijano and Michael Ennis, ‘Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America’, *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1:3 (2000), p. 533.

37 Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, p. 172; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), p. 90.

38 Nelson Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Human Rights’, *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 114:1 (2017), p. 117.

39 Ramón Grosfoguel, ‘What is Racism?’, *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 22:1 (2016), p. 11.

40 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 118.

41 Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept’, p. 242.

42 Quijano, ‘Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality’, p. 172.

43 Maldonado-Torres, ‘On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept’, p. 252.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 253–254.

such beings expendable.⁴⁵ Modernity/ coloniality, then, is ultimately sustained by the production of ‘economically disposable’ and ‘legally/politically bare life.’⁴⁶ Particularly relevant for our purposes is the construction of ‘economically disposable’ lives, in which racialised bodies are sacrificed to maintain the global labour hierarchies structuring economic coloniality – or, in other words, what Robinson has seminally termed ‘racial capitalism.’⁴⁷ The structural expendability of non-white bodies, then, constitutes a thematic cornerstone of contemporary decolonial thought. How, though, does this apply to climate change?

Ensuing from the analytical developments of the CEJ research agenda, the last decade has witnessed an influx of decolonial interrogations of climate change – within which the coloniality of being and its role in the operation of racial capitalism have constituted crucial conceptual touchstones. Most saliently, then, has been the deconstruction of the de-historicising and universalising narrative of the ‘Anthropocene’. Coined in 2000, the Anthropocene is the name ascribed to our most recent geological epoch to convey how human activity now dominates the key geological processes on Earth.⁴⁸ Embedded in the notional umbrella of the Anthropocene is the ontological assumption of a singular humanity that has enacted a historically uniform geological impact on our planetary environment.⁴⁹ To decolonial critics, however, this assumption of an undifferentiated Anthropos is predicated on certain epistemological distortions that conceal the way the Anthropocene in fact constitutes

‘a geohistorical event... which cannot be easily decoupled from the histories of race and racism, capitalism, and European imperialism.’⁵⁰ Indeed, represented by the influential rebranding of the Anthropocene as the ‘racial Capitalocene’ by Vergès, a host of recent scholars have focused on instantiating the beginning of the Anthropocene as intimately entwined with the material geographies of European colonialism and its economic system of racial capitalism.⁵¹ Lewis and Maslin were the first to propose the beginning of the seventeenth century as the new start date for the Anthropocene, with their proposal based on the distinct anthropogenic signature left by the colossal levels of depopulation and subsequent reforestation triggered by the colonisation of the Americas.⁵² Several scholars have subsequently interpreted this geological signature as materially emblematic of the global colour-line structuring the Anthropocene.⁵³ Yusoff’s concept of ‘a billion black Anthropocenes’, for instance, was tendered to exemplify how ‘coloniality and anti-Blackness are materially inscribed into the Anthropocene’ through the millions of black and brown bodies that were sacrificed in the colonial project of racial capitalism.⁵⁴ Vergès, too, has criticised the logic of coloniality that undercut the inception of the Anthropocene, in that both Nature and Black labour have been historically commodified as objects of cheap, constant capital by the racial capitalist system.⁵⁵ Gonzalez has since conceptualised these areas of colonial extraction as the ‘sacrifice zones’ of racial capitalism, in which race was deployed as an exclusionary technique by which expendable geographies

45 Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 6.

46 Mignolo, *The Politics of Decolonial Investigations*, p. 127.

47 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000)

48 Françoise Vergès, ‘Racial Capitalocene’, in Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, eds., *Futures of Black Radicalism* (London: Verso, 2017), p. 49.

49 Arun Saldanha, ‘A Date with Destiny: Racial Capitalism and the Beginnings of the Anthropocene’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38:1 (2019), p. 14; Bruce Erickson, ‘Anthropocene Futures: Linking Colonialism and Environmentalism in an Age of Crisis’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38:1 (2019), p. 115.

50 Andrew Baldwin and Bruce Erickson, ‘Introduction: Whiteness, Coloniality, and the Anthropocene’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38:1 (2020), p. 4.

51 Vergès, ‘Racial Capitalocene’, p. 50.

52 Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, ‘Defining the Anthropocene’, *Nature*, 519:1 (2015), p. 175.

53 Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, ‘On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonising the Anthropocene’, *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 16:4 (2017); Nicholas Mirzoeff, ‘It’s Not the Anthropocene, It’s the White Supremacy Scene; or, The Geological Colour Line’, in Richard Grusin, ed., *After Extinction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018)

54 Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), p. 19.

55 Vergès, ‘Racial Capitalocene’, p. 48.

and expendable peoples were produced to maintain the ceaseless accumulation that has now produced the present climate crisis.⁵⁶ The 'Anthropocene' is resultantly understood to constitute a Eurocentric ontological category borne of a 'white', or modern/colonial, epistemology that conceals the coloniality of our global climate footprint.⁵⁷ How, then, does the coloniality of the Anthropocene relate to the present injustices of climate change?

2.3. Decolonial Approaches to Climate Justice

Before we answer that question, however, it is pertinent now to delineate precisely how climate justice is theorised in relation to the critical focus of this dissertation: the international institutions of global climate governance. Climate change within International Relations (IR) is conventionally approached from the perspective of liberal institutionalism, in which the global climate crisis is dominantly framed as a collective action problem wherein the efficacy of the international institutions for its governance are accordingly appraised.⁵⁸ Only in the last couple of decades, though, have IR approaches to regime analysis began to turn attention towards the ways in which normative contestations over global justice have been formative in the regime development of global climate governance.⁵⁹ As Okereke has assiduously underscored, seeing that international institutions, at any given time, must function on the basis of a set of norms despite ongoing contestations over which norms these should be, it is crucial to interrogate the structural tensions produced by demands for global equity, how these tensions have been reconciled within institutional boundaries, and thus what particular norms – or which conceptions of justice – have actually been made dominant.⁶⁰ Much of the literature on justice norms in global climate governance has accordingly centred on the normative contestation between the ideal of global distributive equity envisioned by proponents of climate justice and the dominant norm of 'liberal environmentalism' that presently structures global climate governance.⁶¹ In short, (neo) liberal, or market, environmentalism broadly refers to an environmental regime that is structured by welfare-averse libertarian

56 Carmen G. Gonzalez, 'Racial Capitalism, Climate Justice, and Climate Displacement', *Onati Socio-Legal Series*, 11:1 (2021), p. 115.

57 Baldwin and Erickson, 'Introduction: Whiteness, Coloniality, and the Anthropocene', p. 6.

58 Kate O'Neill, *The Environment and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)

59 Okereke and Coventry, 'Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris', p. 834; Okereke, *Global Justice and Neoliberal Environmental Governance: Ethics, Sustainable Development and International Co-operation*, p. 4.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

61 Steven Bernstein, 'Liberal Environmentalism and Global Environmental Governance', *Global Environmental Politics*, 2:3 (2002)

justice principles; market mechanisms; transparency forms of governance; and unilateral decision-making.⁶² Okereke and Coventry constitute the most comprehensive appraisal of the worrying state of climate justice in the UNFCCC regime,⁶³ though it is Ciptet and Roberts who have since expanded on the distinct way in which this dearth of climate justice is at least partly attributable to the neoliberalisation of global climate governance under the Paris Agreement.⁶⁴ The pair's broad commentary builds on formative criticisms of market environmentalism that are generally centred around the claim of an irreconcilable contradiction between the cosmopolitan ideal of North-South equity and the global inequality that is inherently maintained by a growth-oriented free-market system.⁶⁵ Much of the critical literature on the neoliberal climate regime has accordingly advocated structurally transformative approaches against this entrenched system of 'climate capitalism.'⁶⁶ Whilst this form of neoliberal criticism is vital to this dissertation's analytical perspective, then, it is nonetheless

augmented by the decolonial approach delineated below.

Now that we have sketched out the contours of the decolonial approach to climate change as well as the dominant climate justice appraisals of global climate governance, then, we are finally able to overview how decolonial approaches to climate justice presently stand in the literature, and the theoretical gaps into which this dissertation has been couched. Immediately, it is important to highlight that the decolonial literature on climate justice is very recent and very small. Beyond historical evaluations of the coloniality of the Anthropocene, then, the first explicit decolonial appraisal of contemporary climate justice came from Pulido in 2016, in her essential contention that we must 'reposition environmental racism so that it is recognised as fundamental to contemporary racial capitalism.'⁶⁷ Articulating what is essentially the crux of the decolonial approach to climate justice, Pulido's account underscores the importance of examining racial outcomes – that is, the disproportionate vulnerability of non-white bodies to climate change – in terms of the processes of racial production – that is, the way in which the entrenched system of racial capitalism (the system that has precipitated the climate crisis) maintains itself by producing the structural disposability of these non-white geographies and populations.⁶⁸ Klein, Sultana, and Gonzalez have respectively expanded this theorising on how climate injustice is intrinsic to the operation of racial capitalism through an examination of what each terms the 'sacrifice zones' of the entrenched modern/colonial system – in which non-white bodies are rendered expendable to

62 David Ciptet and J. Timmons Roberts, 'Climate Change and the Transition to Neoliberal Environmental Governance', *Global Environmental Change*, 46:1 (2017), pp. 148-151.

63 Okereke and Coventry, 'Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris', p. 834.

64 Ciptet and Roberts, 'Climate Change and the Transition to Neoliberal Environmental Governance', p. 149.

65 Okereke, *Global Justice and Neoliberal Environmental Governance: Ethics, Sustainable Development and International Co-operation*, pp. 177-178; Mizan Khan, Stacy-ann Robinson, Romain Weikmans, David Ciptet, and J. Timmons Roberts, 'Twenty-five Years of Adaptation Finance through a Climate Justice Lens', *Climatic Change*, 161:1 (2020), p. 253.

66 Peter Newell and Matthew Paterson, *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformation of the Global Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* (London: Penguin Books, 2015)

67 Laura Pulido, 'Geographies of Race and Ethnicity II: Environmental Racism, Racial Capitalism and State-sanctioned Violence', *Progress in Human Geography*, 41:4 (2016), p. 525.

68 *Ibid.*, pp. 527-528.

legitimise the structural perpetuation of carbon capitalism, i.e., the present fossil fuel economy.⁶⁹ Attendant applications of these decolonial insights towards an examination of how climate injustice is maintained by the institutions and practices of global climate governance have been evocative, albeit limited in number. Tuana's institution of the term 'climate apartheid' to convey how 'racism contributes to the construction of illegible lives in the domain of climate policies and practices' has been essential in recognising how the expendability of non-white bodies is itself sustained by the coloniality of the current climate regime.⁷⁰ Rice, Long, and Levenda have since expanded the 'climate apartheid' concept to specifically narrate how the globally uneven implementation of adaptation-oriented policies and infrastructures exemplifies an entrenched system of 'adaptation apartheid', in which the vulnerability of poor, non-white populations on the other side of the 'abyssal line' is exacerbated in order to 'secure privileged populations' and 'safeguard economic and socio-political structures' from necessary, yet destabilising, structural transformations.⁷¹ Recognition of the inequity of these specific policies has since prompted a broader perception of the coloniality of knowledge that operates within the institutions and practices of the international climate regime. Terming this the 'coloniality of solutions', Wilkens and Datchoua-Tirvaudey have shed light on the way the coloniality of knowledge constrains the institutional imagination of the international

climate regime, leading to the naturalisation of only particular (technocratic, market-based) policies as 'possible' – that is, neoliberal policies that entrench the logic of racial capitalism.⁷² At the time of writing, however, Gonzalez is the only scholar that has adopted this thinking to interrogate the coloniality of the UNFCCC regime with any specificity, in her critical decolonial appraisal of the way in which the policy terrain of the Paris Agreement fundamentally 'replicates the logic of carbon capitalism... and its attendant abyssal exclusions.'⁷³ As we shall recapitulate in the following chapter, it is this analytical gap that this dissertation intends to fill.



69 Naomi Klein, 'Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World', *London Review of Books*, 38:11 (2016); Farhana Sultana, 'The Unbearable Heaviness of Climate Coloniality', *Political Geography*, 99:1 (2022), p. 4; Carmen G. Gonzalez, 'The Sacrifice Zones of Carbon Capitalism: Race, Expendability, and Loss and Damage', in Meinhard Doelle and Sara Seck, eds., *Research Handbook on Climate Change Law and Loss and Damage* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2021), p. 51.

70 Nancy Tuana, 'Climate Apartheid: The Forgetting of Race in the Anthropocene', *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 7:1 (2019), p. 1.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 6; Jennifer L. Rice, Joshua Long, and Anthony Levenda, 'Against Climate Apartheid: Confronting the Persistent Legacies of Expendability for Climate Justice', *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 5:2 (2021), p. 625.

72 Jan Wilkens and Alvine R.C. Datchoua-Tirvaudey, 'Researching Climate Justice: A Decolonial Approach to Global Climate Governance', *International Affairs*, 98:1 (2022), p. 134.

73 Gonzalez, 'The Sacrifice Zones of Carbon Capitalism: Race, Expendability, and Loss and Damage', p. 58.

3. Methodology

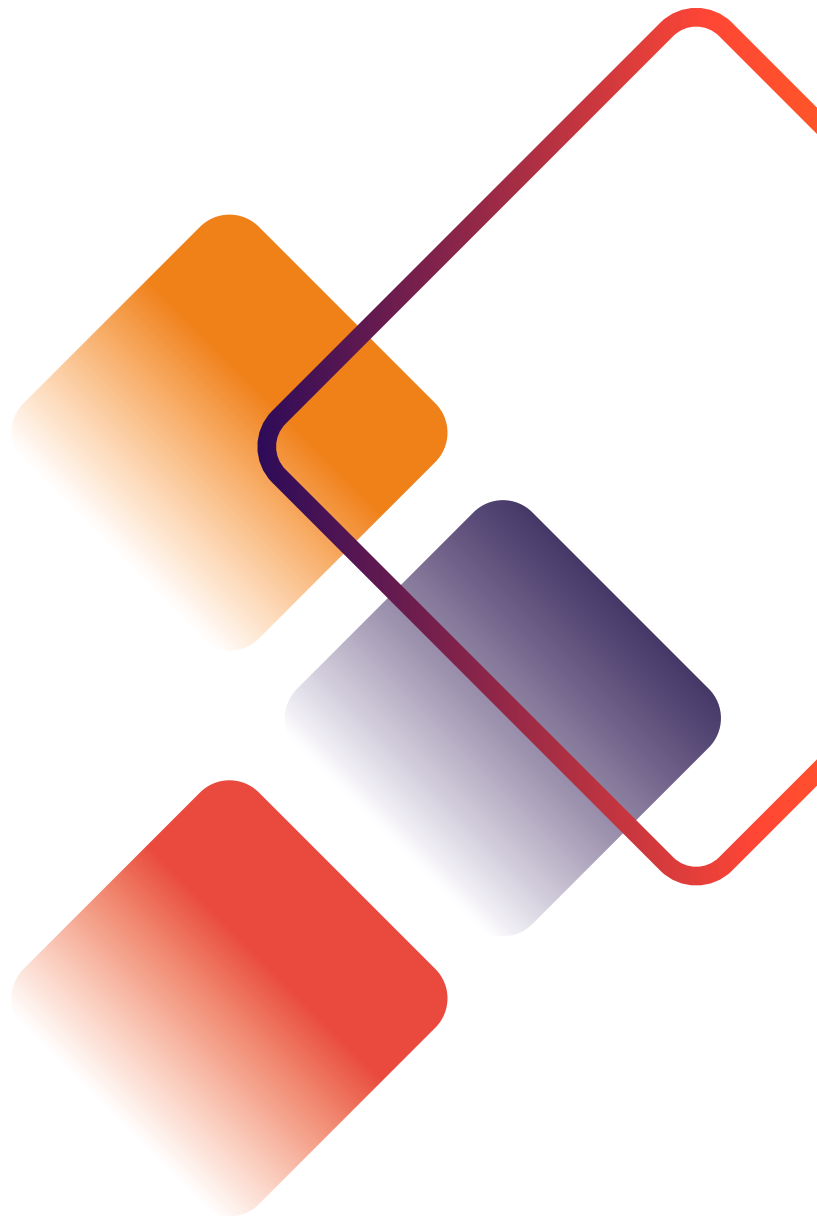
Based on the above review of the literature, we are able to robustly conclude that there exists two primary gaps in the critical literature on climate justice in global climate governance: (a) with the exception of Gonzalez, a general dearth of decolonial analyses of the state of climate justice within the present UNFCCC regime, and (b) a specific lack of up-to-date assessments of how recent policy advancements made under the Paris Agreement relate to climate justice, pertaining especially to the particularly under-theorised area of loss and damage. On the basis of these gaps, this dissertation's research questions are once again as follows: (1) Do the policy outcomes of the most recent COP advance climate justice? (2) What does this suggest for the efficacy of the UNFCCC in justly responding to the global problem of climate change?

In response to the two research questions and based on the decolonial approaches to climate justice sketched above, two main contentions are advanced. (1) The policy outcomes of COP27 have not advanced climate justice because (2) the coloniality of global climate governance means that the UNFCCC produces and operates a 'politics of expendability' that is entirely irreconcilable with a just response to climate change. To evaluate these contentions, this dissertation has selected two forms of empirical source from which the relevant data has been collected. The official report relating to action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-seventh session, hereafter referred to as the COP27 decision report, constitutes the formal document from which data on the policy outcomes of COP27 has been collected. Three transcripts of the opening and closing remarks to COP27 by UN Climate Change Executive Secretary Simon Stiell and UN Secretary-General António Guterres have also been consulted as sources of the normative rhetoric that has prominently framed the policy outcomes of COP27.

To obtain and analyse the data, this dissertation has employed a decolonial Critical Discourse Analysis of the relevant documents. Proposed as an 'analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects [of the social process]', such as power or ideology, by Fairclough, CDA goes beyond conventional discourse analysis through the incorporation of a fundamentally normative element into its analyses that is centred on interrogating how societies or institutions produce and perpetuate social 'wrongs', such as injustice.⁷⁴ Such analyses are generally enacted through a 'denaturalisation' of the dominant 'ideological-discursive formation' of a given institution – that is, the dominant

74 Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 4-7.

norms, discourse, or strategies that have become naturalised by the dominant 'speech' or 'ideological community' within the institution.⁷⁵ CDA is correspondingly a natural technique for unveiling the ways in which climate injustice is imbricated in the institutions and modalities of the UNFCCC, through the denaturalisation of how the discourse of climate policy is produced by and accordingly reinforces the coloniality of global climate governance.⁷⁶ This dissertation will now proceed with a deconstruction of the general normative discourse framing the Conference before moving onto a specific interrogation of the discourse chosen to present the COP27 policy outcomes as they relate to mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage.



⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁶ Yunana Ahmed, 'Political Discourse Analysis: A Decolonial Approach', *Critical Discourse Studies*, 18:1 (2021), p. 139.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Normative Framing of COP27

Dubbed the ‘Implementation COP’ by its adherents, the formal epithet of COP27 is decidedly emblematic of the normative significance attributed to this latest Conference, in which the discourse of ‘a new era’ in which ‘we begin to do things differently’ has constituted its dominant framing in the opening remarks of UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, Simon Stiell.⁷⁷ Narrated as part of a progressive evolution from the agreement stage of Paris and the planning stage of Katowice and Glasgow to, now, ‘this transformational shift to implementation’, the narrative of transformation that has marked the negotiations at Sharm el-Sheikh has portrayed COP27 as a critical watershed in the direction of international climate action.⁷⁸ In particular, the ‘historic’ decision to establish a dedicated fund for loss and damage within the UNFCCC infrastructure has represented the most salient embodiment of this ‘transformational’ framing,⁷⁹ with action on L&D having been hailed ‘a moral imperative... a fundamental question of international solidarity – and climate justice’ by the UN Secretary-General himself, António Guterres.⁸⁰ The outcome of the new fund, then, has correspondingly been lauded as a landmark in the institutional recognition and progression of climate justice.

The normative framing surrounding COP27, then, certainly serves to establish the Conference as propitious to the advancement of climate justice. However, a closer interrogation of the effect to

which this discourse functions when it is appraised in relation to the actual policy terrain of COP27 leads us to a consideration of the extent to which this narrative of transformation has actually been employed to veil and legitimise the continued status-quo of the dominant ‘ideological-discursive formation’ structuring the UNFCCC – the coloniality of power, of which neoliberal environmentalism constitutes its most prominent ideological expression.⁸¹ As shall be thoroughly dissected in the following sub-chapters, the couching of the Conference’s policy outcomes within a discourse of transformation enables counter-hegemonic climate justice demands for structural transformation to be ostensibly incorporated into the dominant ideological-discursive formation of the UNFCCC, regardless of the extent to which the associated policy outcomes actually function to advance structural transformation. ‘Transformative’ assertions from Stiell that ‘the phase down of all fossil fuels is happening’ and that ‘our global financial system must be pushed’, as shall be seen, are articulated in a certain way so as to produce particular strategies that do not actually challenge the inadequacies of the entrenched system. Stiell’s broader framing of the nature of international climate action reinforces this effect. Repeated in a sloganistic manner throughout his opening and closing remarks, Stiell’s core statement is that ‘[t]he heart of implementation is: everybody, everywhere in the world, every single day, doing everything they possibly can to address the climate crisis.’⁸² Although this cosmopolitan framing of a universal response ostensibly appears in tune with equity, a decolonial deconstruction of

77 UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 UN, ‘Secretary-General’s Remarks to High-Level Opening of COP27’, United Nations, 7 November 2022 <<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2022-11-07/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-opening-of-cop27>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

81 Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, p. 30.

82 UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’; UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Closing Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’, United Nations Climate Change, 20 November 2022 <<https://unfccc.int/news/cop27-closing-remarks-by-the-un-climate-change-executive-secretary>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

such discourse reveals how an emphasis on collective action by ‘everybody, everywhere’ in fact enables a narrative of an undifferentiated humanity that is entirely irreconcilable with the differentiated moral responsibility advocated by climate justice. This narrative specifically functions to disguise the post-Paris shift away from CBDR-RC, resultantly serving to conceal the historical responsibility of the industrialised agents of racial capitalism. The framing of international climate action as in service of ‘our collective future’, with 2030 as ‘our horizon’ for change, too, serves to exemplify the coloniality of being that permeates institutional understandings of the climate change threat.⁸³ Rendering climate action as still yet involving a future margin minimises how the critical climate vulnerabilities experienced in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a present reality, leading to the privileging of complacent neoliberal policies that, in their lack of urgency, perpetuate a ‘politics of expendability’ that effectively renders the displacement or death of these populations permissible. The discursive effect produced by the interaction of this broader narrative with the actual policy outcomes of the Conference shall first be explored in terms of mitigation.

4.2. Mitigation

Owing to the dominance of theorising on mitigation burden-sharing in the climate ethics literature, the definition of mitigation justice has been clearly articulated through the general principles of historical responsibility and polluter pays. Understandings of mitigation justice should also go beyond equitable burden-sharing, however, to further recognise the way immediate and effective mitigation action is itself central to climate justice for those most vulnerable communities whose basic needs are threatened by climate change now. It is this capabilities-based approach to mitigation justice that the following analysis brings to the fore.

4.2.1. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the 1.5°C Target

In the context of significant scientific and civil society protestations against the 2°C target of the Paris Agreement – incited by formal warnings from the IPCC that even a rise of 2°C above pre-industrial levels would begin to inundate many SIDS and low-lying regions in south-east Asia –⁸⁴ the explicit affirmation of the Parties to ‘[resolve] to pursue further efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C’ outwardly appears in line with capabilities-based requirements of mitigation justice.⁸⁵ The report does, however, go on to acknowledge the substantial ‘emissions gap’ between the emissions reductions required to achieve the 1.5°C goal and the actual predicted warming of approximately 2.8°C if only present aggregated NDCs are implemented.⁸⁶ It is accordingly noted that ‘current policies and measures are insufficient’, and thus ‘immediate, rapid, deep and sustained reductions’ are required.⁸⁷ In recognising

83 Ibid.

84 IPCC, ‘Summary for Policymakers’, in, *Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty* (Geneva: IPCC, 2018)

85 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP), Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 1/CP.27, FCCC/CP/2022/10/Add.1, 17 March 2023 <<https://unfccc.int/documents/626561>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

86 UNEP, ‘Emissions Gap Report 2022’, UN Environment Programme, 27 October 2022 <<https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022>> [accessed 02 September 2023].

87 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties (COP), Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 21/CP.27, FCCC/CP/2022/10/Add.2, 17 March 2023 <<https://unfccc.int/documents/626563>> [accessed 25 August 2023].

the necessity of ‘immediate’ and ‘deep’ emissions reductions, then, the discourse of the decision report is firmly emblematic of the broader narrative of transformation framing the Conference, to the discursive effect of indicating that mitigation policy following COP27 shall necessarily involve ‘deep’ – read: structural – transformations in order to secure sufficient reductions. This policy direction is consistent with the carbon-zero structural reform envisioned by even the most moderate of climate justice perspectives.⁸⁸

The accordant strategy recommended for emissions reductions at COP27, however, is entirely antithetical to this transformative vision. Following the delineation of the ‘emissions gap’, the report goes on to ‘[acknowledge] that, in order to shift to... a pathway to achieving the long-term global goal, Parties must enhance their efforts under the Convention.’⁸⁹ In other words, in consideration of the extensive inadequacies of the current policy, the proposed response is to maintain the current policy – albeit with a non-punitive encouragement for Parties to voluntarily ‘enhance’ their NDCs. In view of the acknowledged inadequacies of the pledge-and-review formula in catalysing effective mitigation action, then, the justice implications of further entrenching this kind of neoliberal ‘transparency governance’ as the pathway for securing ‘immediate’ and ‘deep’ reductions is disquieting.⁹⁰ Aside from the evident inability of the prevailing system of voluntary pledges to drive cohesive, ambitious mitigation, Okereke and Coventry further underscore the total absence of any binding guarantee that the existing patchwork of NDCs will even be equitable, in the sense that respective commitments will be legally structured to reflect the differentiated burdens of developed Parties under CBDR-RC.⁹¹ Beyond this, though, is the

way in which the intrinsic non-urgency of the voluntarist approach to mitigation effectively serves to render expendable the populations and geographies of those LDCs and SIDS whose territories are already doomed to inundation by the warming-related sea-level rise already guaranteed by three decades of near-inaction. By enshrining the continuance of the voluntary pledge-and-review strategy, the policy terrain at COP27 reveals the way in which the international climate regime is structured by a logic of ‘climate apartheid’ in which the suitability of its policies is determined through an implicit grading of which populations are threatened by the consequences of a status-quo approach.⁹² The maintenance of the status-quo at COP27 thus serves to reinforce and naturalise a culture of inadequate NDCs that, as stated by Klein, ‘places so little value on black and brown lives that it is willing to let human beings disappear beneath the waves’ rather than increase commitments to save them.⁹³ This concretely denaturalises the ‘neutral’ understanding of climate change that informs institutional policy: despite framing as a universal human threat, the climate change addressed by the UNFCCC is exclusively treated as a ‘white, or at least European, ontological crisis.’⁹⁴ As such, the ‘politics of expendability’ that is maintained by this (in)action on emissions reductions is entirely irreconcilable with climate justice.

88 Newell and Paterson, *Climate Capitalism: Global Warming and the Transformation of the Global Economy*.

89 UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 21/CP.27.

90 Cipler and Roberts, ‘Climate Change and the Transition to Neoliberal Environmental Governance’, p. 148.

91 Okereke and Coventry, ‘Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris’, p. 841.

92 Tuana, ‘Climate Apartheid: The Forgetting of Race in the Anthropocene’, p. 1.

93 Klein, ‘Let Them Drown: The Violence of Othering in a Warming World.’

94 Baldwin and Erickson, ‘Introduction: Whiteness, Coloniality, and the Anthropocene’, p. 6.

4.2.2. Pathways for Emissions Reductions: The Global Energy Transition

In spite of the inequities of the pledge-and-review framework, then, it is essential to evaluate what actual policy pathways have been identified for securing the aforementioned ‘immediate’ and ‘deep’ emissions reductions. As might be expected, then, the fundamental energy transition away from fossil fuels constituted a major theme at COP27. Stiell’s framing narrative of ‘transformative action’ and his attendant claim that the policy direction of the Conference shall ‘break the mindset that for decades has kept us from moving beyond business as usual’ was articulated in explicit relation to the recognised ‘urgency to rapidly transform energy systems’ noted in the decision report.⁹⁵ This ‘transformation’ of the global energy sector was delineated as involving ‘ambitious, just, equitable, and inclusive transitions’ to a ‘clean energy mix’ of ‘low-emission and renewable energy’, with the decision report directly ‘[calling] upon Parties to accelerate... efforts towards the phasedown of unabated coal power and phase-out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies.’⁹⁶

On the face of it, this explicit stipulation to reform national energy systems away from coal seems congruent with the structural transformation away from carbon-based industrial capitalism that is mandated by climate justice. Contentiously, the Paris Agreement made zero reference to the need to terminate fossil fuel usage in order to effectively curb emissions, with the terms ‘fossil fuel subsidies’ and ‘unabated coal’ only explicitly included for the first time in the Glasgow Climate Pact at COP26.⁹⁷ Reaffirmation of this targeted rhetoric a year on thereby appears outwardly in line with the rhetoric of ‘transformative’ implementation at the centre of the COP27 policy direction. A deeper interrogation of the precise nomenclature used to delimit this policy pathway, however, in fact incites us to challenge the extent to which this transformative shift in the global energy system is actually instigated at COP27. During the Conference’s negotiations, the Indian delegation crucially proposed extending the rhetoric of a total ‘phasedown’ to all fossil fuels.⁹⁸ The delegations of eighty Parties supported the proposal yet core oil-producing Parties resisted, with only the constrained discourse of a ‘phasedown’ of coal – rather than a ‘phase-out’ of all fossil fuels – making it into the final decision at COP27.⁹⁹ The discursive choice of ‘low emission and renewable energy’ rather than ‘net zero emissions’ is, too, particularly charged, considering that the formal EU taxonomy on ‘renewable’ or ‘clean’ energy actually includes natural gas – a major fossil fuel.¹⁰⁰ Fundamentally, then, the purposive choices of the terms ‘phasedown’ and ‘low emissions’ essentially embed a discursive loophole into the COP27 agreement that plainly denotes the basic lack of ambition of the main polluting Parties to rapidly transition to a carbon-zero economy.

95 UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Closing Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’; UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 1/CP.27.

96 Ibid.

97 Harjeet Singh, ‘COP27 Tackled the Consequences of Climate Change, But Not the Cause—Fossil Fuels’, BQ Prime, 24 November 2022 <<https://www.bqprime.com/business/cop27-tackled-the-consequences-of-climate-change-but-not-the-causefossil-fuels>> [accessed 03 September 2023].

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

The reluctance intrinsic to such rhetoric exemplifies what Gonzalez terms the ‘epistemological complicity’ of international climate governance institutions in the project of fossil-fuelled racial capitalism – that is, the desire to preserve the carbon-heavy capitalist structures that comprise the economic framework of the coloniality of power, at the expense of those who are most vulnerable to a status-quo approach.¹⁰¹

Moreover, even if this discursive loophole is put aside, further examination reveals a comprehensive absence of any specification pertaining to how this ‘global transformation to a low-carbon economy’ is to be technically enacted.¹⁰² The decision report merely contains the daunting assessment that such a transition ‘is expected to require investment of at least USD 4–6 trillion per year’, and that ‘delivering such funding will require a transformation of the financial system and its structures and processes’ – though with no delineated pathway for how this global financial transformation might pragmatically be enacted.¹⁰³ Although this absence of a specific roadmap outlining how these transformations are to be delivered may easily be construed as empty posturing or simple avoidance on the part of the developed Parties, a closer reading of the discursive effect to which this omission functions critically enables us to denaturalise which particular ideological norms and practices are actually entrenched as ‘common-sense’ through such silence. As has been delineated, the dominant ideological-discursive formation permeating the institutions for global climate governance is market environmentalism. Market environmentalism, needless to say, naturalises market-based mechanisms such as carbon markets or emissions trading as the most effective strategies for securing

emissions reductions. Carbon capitalist policies are institutionalised under the UNFCCC through the Clean Development Mechanism that allows Parties to offset their emissions by financing emissions-reduction projects in a developing country in return for emission reduction credits.¹⁰⁴ With this in mind, then, we are able to discern that the silence on how to achieve the ‘global transformation to a low-carbon economy’ does not simply function as a mere aversion to any solution but in fact serves to skilfully naturalise carbon capitalist strategies as the only solution. Indeed, as reflected in the continual references to ‘sustainable development’ and ‘climate-resilient development’ embedded within the decision report, the institutional imagination of the UNFCCC is constrained within the bounds of the neoliberal logic of economic growth.¹⁰⁵ This occurs to the effect of discursively restricting what policies, strategies, and solutions are legitimate and even conceivable within the international climate institution, thus omitting the capacity for actually transformative policies antagonistic to the entrenched structures of power. Wilkens and Datchoua-Tirvaudey term this the ‘coloniality of solutions’, in which the operation of the coloniality of knowledge in the institutions of global climate governance produces certain imagined solutions that safeguard existing modern/colonial structures to the consequence of further marginalising the most climate-vulnerable.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the technocratic and growth-driven capitalist strategies naturalised by liberal environmentalism entirely ignore the way in which historical forms of (racial) capitalism have produced ‘sacrifice zones’ of expendable peoples and geographies through the dual commodification of nature and non-white labour – practices that, in fact, led to the

101 Gonzalez, ‘Racial Capitalism, Climate Justice, and Climate Displacement’, p. 120.

102 UN Climate Change, ‘COP27 Closing Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary’, UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 1/CP.27.

103 Ibid.

104 Okereke and Coventry, ‘Climate Justice and the International Regime: Before, During, and After Paris’, p. 838.

105 UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 1/CP.27.

106 Wilkens and Datchoua-Tirvaudey, ‘Researching Climate Justice: A Decolonial Approach to Global Climate Governance’, p. 134.

industrialised capitalism that generated the climate crisis in the first place.¹⁰⁷ Market-based strategies that commodify carbon thus continue to perpetuate this ‘politics of expendability’, through both increasing the global inequality that is inherently produced by global markets and by normalising ‘profit from climate change at the expense of the world’s most climate-vulnerable people.’¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, then, the discursive loophole constructed by the terms ‘phasedown’ and ‘low emissions’ signifies the fundamental lack of ambition of the developed Parties to commit to a structural transformation away from fossil fuel capitalism, with the market-based strategies that are naturalised by the silence on a specific energy transition roadmap accordingly validating an exploitative carbon capitalism that is entirely irreconcilable with climate justice.

4.3. Adaptation

Adaptation justice is a particular imperative in view of the insufficient regard paid to adaptation in contrast to mitigation throughout the UNFCCC process. Despite sustained protestation from the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) since the 1990s that adaptation should be afforded the same urgency as mitigation, adaptation was not institutionalised as an equal policy priority until its recognition as one of the four central pillars of climate action in the Bali Action Plan in 2007.¹⁰⁹ However, although the capabilities-based justice of aiding communities vulnerable to climate change now is blatant, the global dynamic of climate vulnerability is nevertheless charged with a host of moral tensions that complicates the enactment of distributive justice in relation to the global financing of adaptation. Discussions of adaptation justice have naturally been anchored by the notion of the ‘adaptation debt’, that is critical of the way in which many developing countries that have contributed least to the problem are nevertheless projected to bear the highest costs for adaptation by virtue of their heightened vulnerability and lack of structural capacity to adapt effectively.¹¹⁰ The converse fact of the disproportionate contribution of the Global North in causing these adverse effects of climate change has thus precipitated weighty normative claims of distributive justice along North-South lines.¹¹¹ However, the reality that vulnerability is locally experienced has complicated adaptation justice claims: unlike mitigation, adaptation is not conceived of as a global public good, enabling a shirking of responsibility by less-vulnerable developed polluters.¹¹² Resultantly, several scholars have delineated explicit taxonomies of justice principles for adaptation finance; the following have been emphasised as

107 Gonzalez, ‘The Sacrifice Zones of Carbon Capitalism: Race, Expendability, and Loss and Damage’, pp. 57-58.

108 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

109 Khan, Robinson, Cipler, and Roberts, ‘Twenty-five Years of Adaptation Finance through a Climate Justice Lens’, p. 256.

110 Warlenius, ‘Decolonising the Atmosphere: The Climate Justice Movement on Climate Debt’, p. 139.

111 David Cipler, J. Timmons Roberts, and Mizan R. Khan, *Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2015), p. 104.

112 Sverker C. Jagers and Göran Duus-Otterström, ‘Dual Climate Change Responsibility: On Moral Divergences between Mitigation and Adaptation’, *Environmental Politics*, 17:4 (2008), p. 578.

most relevant to the ensuing analysis: a balance in the financing afforded to mitigation and adaptation; equitable burden-sharing, structured according to historical responsibility and the subsequent duty to assist; and predictable and adequate levels of funding to aid the most vulnerable.¹¹³

4.3.1. Adaptation Finance

Although very little reference is made specifically to adaptation in the normative framing surrounding the Conference, the negotiations pertaining to adaptation at COP27 are nevertheless couched in the normative architecture established by the Paris Agreement, in which recognition of the ‘specific needs and special circumstances of developing country Parties’ has framed the subsequent call on developed country Parties to ‘provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties.’¹¹⁴ Surprisingly, however, the explicit discourse on adaptation policy at COP27 is almost entirely devoid of any normative corroboration of the realisation of such justice principles at the Conference. Instead, the inadequacies of adaptation finance are candidly relayed: recognition of the ‘adaptation gap... between current levels of adaptation and levels needed to respond to the adverse effects of climate change’ remains frankly unembellished in its narration, with the ‘little evidence of transformative adaptation’ openly attributed to ‘the challenges, complexities and delays experienced by developing country Parties in accessing funding and support from the Green Climate Fund.’¹¹⁵ It is resultantly reported that since 2010 only seventeen out of forty-six LDCs have submitted National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).¹¹⁶ In this context, then, although the recent financial pledges made to the Adaptation Fund, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and

the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) – totalling approximately USD 317 million – are celebrated in the report, it is nevertheless recognised that ‘global climate finance flows are small relative to the overall needs of developing countries’, and that these present pledges are substantially weakened in consideration of the broader financial failure of developed country Parties to meet their overall climate finance goal of USD 100 billion per year by 2020.¹¹⁷



113 Marco Grasso, ‘An Ethical Approach to Climate Adaptation Finance’, *Global Environmental Change*, 20:1 (2010); Khan, Robinson, Cipler, and Roberts, ‘Twenty-five Years of Adaptation Finance through a Climate Justice Lens’; Cipler, Roberts, and Khan, *Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*.

114 UNFCCC, *The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 12 December 2015, FCCC/CP/2015/L.9/Rev.1 <<https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/109r01.pdf>> [accessed 30 August 2023].

115 UNFCCC COP, *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session*, 1/CP.27.; *Ibid.*, 9/CP.27.

116 *Ibid.*, 10/CP.27.

117 *Ibid.*, 13/CP.27; *Ibid.*, 14/CP.27.

In view of the unmediated candour of the decision report, then, there are substantially fewer nuances in the adaptation discourse of COP27 to dissect and criticise; the inadequacies of adaptation finance plainly do not advance climate justice. However, the very effect produced by such discursive silence on how to respond to the existing inadequacies of adaptation finance is nevertheless revealing, dually in terms of what sort of policy direction is enabled by the silence and accordingly what dominant attitude is naturalised by such legitimisation of inaction. Despite the exhaustive reporting on the deficits of adaptation finance, then, no comprehensive policy pathway is articulated in response: developed country Parties are merely encouraged to ‘urgently and significantly scale up their provision of climate finance’ via ‘increased voluntary contributions’ to the various Funds.¹¹⁸ Although ostensibly equitable, this stipulation for a scale up of ‘voluntary’ contributions in fact functions to tacitly portray the prevailing financial inadequacies as rooted in

a discrete lack of ambition from developed country Parties rather than an inherent structural consequence of the entrenched ‘transparency governance’ system of non-binding and discretionary financial pledges.¹¹⁹ Indeed, as exemplified by the broader failure to meet the USD 100 billion goal, an essentially voluntary system in which financial flows are channelled through a myriad of fragmented financial mechanisms is structurally unable to effectively mobilise adequate and predictable levels of funding, let alone enforce such financial action in a way that equitably ensures differentiated burden-sharing according to CBDR-RC.¹²⁰ Such a system has conversely resulted in an imbalance between mitigation and adaptation funding – 57 per cent of climate finance flows between 2019–2020 were directed towards mitigation, compared to only 28 per cent towards adaptation;¹²¹ an inconsistency between pledges made and actual funding delivered;¹²² and a broader disparity between pledges made and projections of actual funds required to protect vulnerable communities.¹²³ In view of the structural inadequacies of the entrenched neoliberal system of voluntary contributions, then, the consequent policy prescription to merely ‘increase voluntary contributions’ firmly reflects the way in which the ‘coloniality of solutions’ in the UNFCCC infrastructure has functioned to constrain the discursive articulation of what solutions are possible at COP27, naturalising action – or, rather, inaction – within the existing system as the only legitimate strategy.¹²⁴ The logic undergirding this response can be evocatively understood as an institutionalisation of what Rice, Long, and Levenda have termed ‘adaptation apartheid’, in which ‘privileged’, rich, Western populations are secured against climate vulnerability through the devaluation

118 Ibid., 1/CP.27; Ibid., 17/CP.27.

119 Ciple and Roberts, ‘Climate Change and the Transition to Neoliberal Environmental Governance’, p. 148.

120 Ciple, Roberts, and Khan, *Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*, p. 114.

121 UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 14/CP.27.

122 Ciple, Roberts, and Khan, *Power in a Warming World: The New Global Politics of Climate Change and the Remaking of Environmental Inequality*, p. 114.

123 Ibid.

124 Wilkens and Datchoua-Tirvaudey, ‘Researching Climate Justice: A Decolonial Approach to Global Climate Governance’, p. 134.

and abandonment of ‘precarious’, poor, non-Western populations to the harm of inadequate adaptation, in order to safeguard entrenched (and inequitable) financial structures from the necessary reform and redistribution.¹²⁵ Beyond the evident inequity of the inadequacies in global financial flows, then, the discursive silence on the need for the structural transformation of the entrenched system of voluntary contributions is fundamentally illustrative of the ‘politics of expendability’ that structures UNFCCC climate policy. Ultimately, Okereke’s sombre conclusion is particularly apposite here: ‘[u]nfortunately, it seems that even the threat of the complete extermination of societies and cultures has not provided enough impetus for an ideological shift away from the neoliberal political economic philosophy.’¹²⁶

4.4. Loss and Damage

Whilst the normative issues posed by mitigation – and to a lesser extent, adaptation – have predominated discussions of climate justice, the last decade of climate negotiations has importantly seen the issue of loss and damage launched to the forefront of climate justice demands emanating from the Global South.¹²⁷ Compared even to mitigation and adaptation, L&D in particular has constituted an especially charged domain of international climate policy. Beyond the purely operational complexities of monetising non-economic losses and the harm caused by slow-onset events such as sea-level rise,¹²⁸ the fundamental dynamic of L&D – that of the disproportionate experience of harm in the Global South due to a problem primarily caused by the Global North – is intrinsically loaded with moral tension, and has naturally precipitated

claims of compensatory, corrective, and/or reparative justice from those most presently vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change.¹²⁹ It is unsurprising, then, that the issue was not institutionalised as a formal policy priority in the international climate regime until the last decade. Once again, despite sustained proposals from AOSIS for an international insurance pool to compensate SIDS for the adverse effects of sea-level rise as early as 1991, it was not until 2013 that L&D was officially incorporated into the UNFCCC infrastructure in the form of the Warsaw Mechanism on Loss and Damage (WIM).¹³⁰ Such inclusion was undeniably limited, however, considering the merely consultative function of the WIM.¹³¹ The Paris Agreement did indeed strengthen the status of L&D as a discrete policy priority, yet pivotally developed country Parties only agreed to its formal inclusion with the attendant clause that L&D ‘does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation.’¹³² Instead, L&D was framed as merely involving ‘risk management strategies’, ‘emergency preparedness’, and ‘insurance solutions.’¹³³ This ‘frame contestation’ between these contrasting ‘liability and compensation’ and ‘risk and insurance’ discourses has fundamentally shaped the institutionalisation of L&D within the UNFCCC regime.¹³⁴

125 Rice, Long, and Levenda, ‘Against Climate Apartheid: Confronting the Persistent Legacies of Expendability for Climate Justice’, p. 625.

126 Okereke, *Global Justice and Neoliberal Environmental Governance: Ethics, Sustainable Development and International Co-operation*, p. 121.

127 Karen E. McNamara and Guy Jackson, ‘Loss and Damage: A Review of the Literature and Directions for Future Research’, *WIREs Climate Change*, 10:2 (2019), p. 1.

128 Emily Boyd et al., ‘Loss and Damage from Climate Change: A New Climate Justice Agenda’, p. 1367.

129 Sam Adelman, ‘Climate Justice, Loss and Damage and Compensation for Small Island Developing States’, p. 38.

130 McNamara and Jackson, ‘Loss and Damage: A Review of the Literature and Directions for Future Research’, p. 1.

131 Coen, Kreienkamp, and Pegram, *Global Climate Governance*, p. 15.

132 UNFCCC, *The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

133 *Ibid.*

134 Lisa Vanhala and Cecilie Hestbaek, ‘Framing Climate Change Loss and Damage in UNFCCC Negotiations’, *Global Environmental Politics*, 16:4 (2016), p. 111.

4.4.1. Loss and Damage Finance

It is seemingly assured, then, that the singularly momentous potential for L&D policy to centre climate justice in the international climate regime has been entirely eradicated on account of the discursive gutting of the concept's compensatory dimensions by the Paris Agreement. Since the WIM was established, too, no concrete advancements were even made regarding the practical operationalisation of L&D policy, regardless of framing. In this sombre context, then, the ostensible breakthrough on L&D at COP27 has entertained potentially momentous implications for the advancement of climate justice. Harkening back to Guterres' hailing of L&D as 'a fundamental question of... climate justice', it outwardly seems as if the landmark decision on the dedicated L&D fund at COP27 has provided the crucial groundwork for introducing the climate justice dimensions of loss and damage into the UNFCCC.¹³⁵ Considering the vehement rejection of any rhetoric of liability or compensation in the Paris Agreement, the justice implications of this discursive framing of the new L&D fund are absolutely monumental – and thoroughly corroborative of the normative rhetoric of 'a new era' of 'transformative action' that has boldly shaped the self-avowed import of this latest COP.¹³⁶

Whilst this normative framing of the new L&D fund is certainly propitious for the advancement of climate justice, a closer interrogation of the discursive effect produced by the specific nomenclature chosen to present the decision in the report leads us to question whether the fund's purported significance for climate justice actually rings true. To begin with, it is necessary to note that the decision 'to establish new funding arrangements for assisting developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, in responding to loss and damage' is very new.¹³⁷ The large majority of policy precisions relating to the operationalisation of the fund are yet to be finalised, with the decision report consequently establishing a transitional committee 'to make recommendations based on, inter alia, elements for operationalisation' for consideration at COP28.¹³⁸ Whilst we are presently unable to dissect any concrete resolutions pertaining to which agents will be stipulated to pay into the fund or by what normative principle, then, we can nevertheless analyse what the initial discursive framing of the preliminary decision on the fund suggests for what sort of policy formulations can be expected at COP28 – and accordingly, whether the actual operationalisation of the fund will foreseeably advance climate justice. An indication on these two areas is given in the complementary decision regarding the organisation of the institutional arrangements necessary to fully operationalise the Santiago network for averting, minimising, and addressing loss and damage. Whilst the Santiago network is not itself a specific funding mechanism for L&D, its bureaucratic infrastructure was established with the intention of organising the implementation of L&D finance – phrased specifically in terms of 'catalys[ing] the technical assistance of relevant organisations, bodies, networks

135 UN, 'Secretary-General's Remarks to High-Level Opening of COP27'.

136 UN Climate Change, 'COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary'.

137 UNFCCC COP, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Twenty-seventh Session, Held in Sharm el-Sheikh from 6 to 20 November 2022. Addendum. Part Two: Action Taken by the Conference of the Parties at its Twenty-seventh Session, 2/CP.27.

138 Ibid.

and experts’, ‘managing the process of responding to requests from developing countries’, and ‘directing the disbursement of funds.’¹³⁹ Indeed, ‘technical assistance’ is undoubtedly the purposive essence of the network; the phrase is invoked twenty-nine times alone throughout Decision 11/CP.27.¹⁴⁰ At this stage, however, the particulars of what such ‘technical assistance’ shall look like is relatively unclear – although the decision does stipulate that ‘assistance’ will be provided in ‘a demand-driven manner’ and ‘developed through [a]... country-driven process’, with the overall ‘technical’ method framed by reference to ‘comprehensive risk management approaches.’¹⁴¹ As well, whilst the financial benefactors of this assistance are not specified, developed country Parties are nevertheless ‘urge[d]... to provide funds... for the provision of technical assistance’, indicating that funding for L&D shall indeed be institutionalised along developed/developing country lines.¹⁴²

Ostensibly, then, the recurrent discourse of ‘technical assistance’ invoked to frame the institutional dimensions of the Santiago network denotes a financial infrastructure that, crucially, is grant-based and non-lending – an impression that is reinforced through the total absence of the discourse of ‘insurance’ that has dominated institutional visions of L&D since Warsaw.¹⁴³ The unjust debt-related inequities of an insurance-based framing of L&D have been distinctly highlighted by Gonzalez, who has lambasted the proposed management of L&D through insurance-based financial tools as prioritising the enrichment of Northern corporations to the effect of entrenching the inequality of the most vulnerable.¹⁴⁴ The abandonment of this discourse of insurance at COP27 thus outwardly appears propitious to climate justice in that the alternative nomenclature of ‘technical assistance’ signifies a financial infrastructure that is at least in principle

more procedurally just; a grant- over insurance-based system does not increase the pre-existing debt burdens of the Global South nor tacitly require local communities to bear the costs of their own vulnerability.¹⁴⁵ Undiscussed, however, is the discursive effect that this organising frame of ‘technical assistance’ has on the naturalisation of which normative principle is invoked to structure the obligations by which developed country Parties will be urged to pay into the new fund.

139 Ibid., 11/CP.27.

140 Ibid.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid.

143 Ibid.

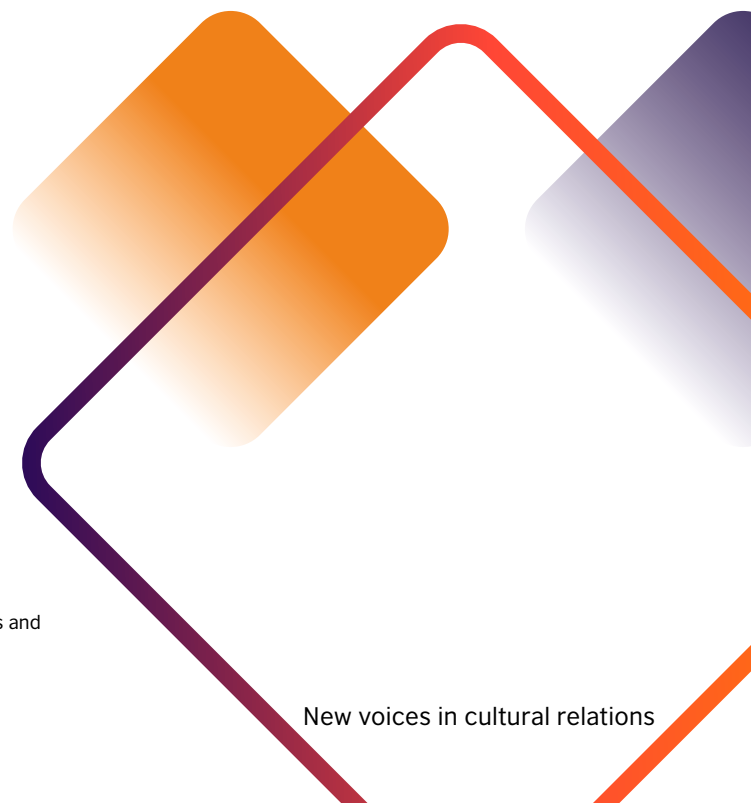
144 Gonzalez, ‘The Sacrifice Zones of Carbon Capitalism: Race, Expendability, and Loss and Damage’, p. 58.

145 Ibid.



Although the differentiated responsibility of the developed country Parties is alluded to, then, the discourse of ‘technical assistance’ dually functions to embed and naturalise a move away from any rhetoric of liability or compensation that would legitimise a framing of these duties in terms of historical responsibility. The discourse of ‘technical assistance’ and ‘risk management’ conversely narrates the dynamic between developed/developing countries as that of benevolent benefactor and helpless beneficiary, in which the developed graciously ‘assist’ the developing in adjusting to their vulnerability. Omission of any rhetoric of liability or compensation in favour of this detached, paternalistic discourse of ‘management’ of, or ‘assistance’ against, pre-constituted ‘risk’, then, foundationally excludes recognition of the constitutional fact that vulnerability to the experience of loss and damage has been historically produced. The disproportionate experience of loss and damage in the developing world constitutes a discrete extension of the ontological legacies of racial capitalism, in which non-white bodies on the other side of the ‘abyssal line’ have been historically inscribed as expendable to the ecological externalities of the extractive system of carbon capitalism.¹⁴⁶ Contrary narratives of ‘assistance’ and ‘management’ instead function to veil the coloniality of climate change by ascribing vulnerability to an incidental, geographical susceptibility to pre-constituted ‘risk’ rather than to the entrenched coloniality of power that creates contemporary ‘sacrifice zones.’¹⁴⁷ This particular portrayal of loss and damage thus serves to naturalise particular interventions – i.e., ‘technical assistance’ – that entrench inequitable global power dynamics rather than enact a transformation of the responsible structures of power. The framing discourse of ‘management’, too, is fundamentally unsuitable for dealing with the non-economic and slow-onset dimensions of L&D: ‘technical assistance’ pertaining to

the ‘management’ of ‘risk’ represents the problem of loss and damage as one that can be neatly ‘solved’ through the modality of ‘technical’ financial intervention. This fails to recognise the existential threat that climate change poses to the homeland and culture of a vulnerable community – losses that cannot be simply ‘solved’ by financial grants, but rather, require fundamental structural accommodation. Although the decision on the new fund for loss and damage, then, ostensibly appears to tackle the expendability of developing world populations, the discursive silence on historical liability and compensation produced by the rhetoric of ‘technical assistance’ in fact contrarily serves to reinforce this expendability through the failure to critically engage with the entrenched modern/colonial structures of power that have produced loss and damage in the first place. Although the justice-based framing surrounding the normative imaginaries of the fund at COP27 appears propitious to climate justice, such framing has in fact been counter-hegemonically incorporated into the dominant ideological-discursive formation of the UNFCCC in order to veil the ‘politics of expendability’ enacted by the entrenched modern/colonial system that is entirely irreconcilable with climate justice.



¹⁴⁶ Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*, p. 118.

¹⁴⁷ Gonzalez, 'The Sacrifice Zones of Carbon Capitalism: Race, Expendability, and Loss and Damage', p. 51.

5. Conclusion

Following the analytical conclusions that this dissertation has drawn, it is accordingly rather striking to now hearken back to the normative discourse that has framed the Conference's overall significance. Even when contrasted with previous COPs, COP27 in particular has been saliently framed as a critical juncture in the advancement of just and effective climate action – in which the Conference's 'transformational shift to implementation' has been grandiosely narrated as emblematic of 'a new era' of international climate action.¹⁴⁸ The narrative of transformation that has marked the Conference has been especially invoked in relation to the 'historic' breakthrough decision on the dedicated fund for L&D within the UNFCCC infrastructure, which has been lauded by many adherents as a watershed in the institutional advancement of climate justice.¹⁴⁹ Framed by the normative significance attributed to COP27, then, and in response to the two research questions delineated in chapter one, this dissertation has in fact advanced two contentions that stand in direct contradistinction to the dominant framing of COP27: (1) The policy outcomes of COP27 have not advanced climate justice because (2) the coloniality of global climate governance means that the UNFCCC produces and operates a 'politics of expendability' that is entirely irreconcilable with a just response to climate change. These contentions have been instantiated through a decolonial Critical Discourse Analysis of the primary policy outcomes articulated at COP27, in which the dominant 'ideological-discursive formation' of the UNFCCC – defined as neoliberal environmentalism – has been denaturalised through a critical interrogation of the way in which the discursive prescriptions or discursive silences in the adopted decisions at COP27

reinforce certain operations of power within global climate governance.¹⁵⁰ The attendant deconstruction of the discursive framing of the COP27 policy outcomes has thus unveiled the way in which the coloniality of power is embedded in the institutions and actions of the UNFCCC, manifesting in the operation of a 'politics of expendability' that is entirely irreconcilable with climate justice.

The foregoing discussion of the present state of climate justice within the UNFCCC regime has intended to contribute to and precipitate further research on decolonial approaches to climate justice that interpret the normative inadequacies of global climate governance in terms of the coloniality of its structures, institutions, and modalities. Indeed, the general dearth of decolonial analyses on the state of climate justice within the present regime of global climate governance constitutes a relatively untapped area of insight for treatments of climate change in the field of IR – especially in view of the broader growth of consciousness of the racialised dynamics of climate change, in terms of both its historical beginnings and present manifestations. Connecting the under-theorised domain of loss and damage to these sorts of analyses, too, will be crucial in the subsequent development of critical climate justice theorising. As such, it has been the intention of this assessment of the most recent policy advancements made under the Paris Agreement to provide the groundwork for further critical and up-to-date treatments of the state of climate justice in the current regime of global climate governance.

¹⁴⁸ UN Climate Change, 'COP27 Opening Remarks by the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary'.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, p. 30.

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