CLIMATE JUSTICE AND CAPABILITIES: A FRAMEWORK FOR ADAPTATION POLICY

David Schlosberg
Professor of Environmental Politics
Department of Government and International Relations
INTRO

- Adaptation is essential, climate justice is demanded
- Four arguments:
  - Key weaknesses in current theories of climate justice: could benefit from additional concepts and a shift to adaptation
  - A capabilities approach bridges gap between ideal notion of justice and the reality of policy-making.
  - This approach can address both individual and community-level concerns
  - Amenable to a revised conception of human place in the rest of the natural world
OUTLINE

• Approaches to climate justice and concerns about them
• The importance of recognition
• Capabilities and climate justice
• Human communities and non-human nature
• Using the vulnerability of capabilities as a normative framework for adaptation policy
RECOGNITION AND JUSTICE

• Understanding the reasons for and processes of injustice
• Recognition about political and cultural exclusions that lead to vulnerability
• Fraser - three types of misrecognition:
  • Misrecognition or cultural domination
  • Nonrecognition, or being rendered invisible
  • Disrespect, or being routinely stereotyped or maligned
• Applies to individuals and communities
• Recognition can also apply to non-human nature, and to the relationship between natural and social worlds
CAPABILITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

• Capabilities are qualities necessary to live a fully functioning life.
• Injustice is the limitation of those basic needs
• Human capabilities depend on a stable environment, threatened by climate change:
  • Ability to live a life of normal length/health
  • Mental health
  • Ability to move freely
  • Social affiliations
  • Aesthetic or cultural links to place
• Applies to individuals, communities
• The functioning of the non-human realm
A FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE POLICY

- What is needed to survive and function in a climate-challenged world
- Focus on vulnerability of basic capabilities/needs/rights
- Address the clustering and ‘corrosive disadvantage’ of vulnerability to climate change
- Aim to provide ‘fertile functionings’ or a reversal of clustered vulnerability
- Combining knowledges to map vulnerability
  - Entails community participation, reflection on threats to functioning
- This kind of vulnerability-based assessment of climate change preparation used in adaptation planning in Australia
CONCLUSIONS

• An approach to climate justice that is:
  • Enhanced by recognition and capabilities
  • Focused on adaptation and vulnerability
  • About the injustice of the actual experience of climate change
  • Applicable as a normative framework for applied adaptation policy – either anticipatory or reactive