



Ethics, the future of energy, and climate policy

Colin Hickey, Future of Energy Seminar

Feb. 13, 2023



Some Representative Ethics and Climate Policy Questions...

Mitigation (e.g.):

- ▶ How should we distribute the remaining emissions budget?
- ▶ How should we distribute costs of decarbonizing?
- ▶ How should we incorporate historical emissions inequality?

Adaptation (e.g.):

- ▶ How should we allocate adaptation funds and who should finance it?

Reparation (e.g.):

- ▶ Who is owed compensation for (now) unavoidable climate harms, how much, in what forms, and from who?



Some Representative Ethics and Climate Policy Questions...

Mitigation (e.g.):

- ▶ Who's in charge of setting emissions reduction targets?
- ▶ Are the voices of those most vulnerable to unambitious policy involved?

Adaptation (e.g.):

- ▶ How are decisions being made about where funding is directed?
- ▶ What mechanisms are in place to prevent co-option by powerful, special interests to protect their assets rather than the broader community?

Reparation (e.g.):

- ▶ Are there avenues for climate victims to make legal claims to the relevant authorities for redress?



A brief tour of some of my work in these directions...

- ▶ Individual Climate Responsibility
 - ▶ Representation for the Climate Vulnerable
 - ▶ Ethics and Adaptation
 - ▶ Climate Activism
- 

Individual Climate Responsibility

Emissions Related

- Skeptics=Deny significant variation in content, demandingness,
- Broome=Net Zero and undergirding justifications
- Baatz=Eliminate wasteful/luxury emissions & use lesser-emitting alternatives when adequate substitute exists
- Fragniere=Eliminate emissions that don't interfere with important personal life-projects

Political Advocacy

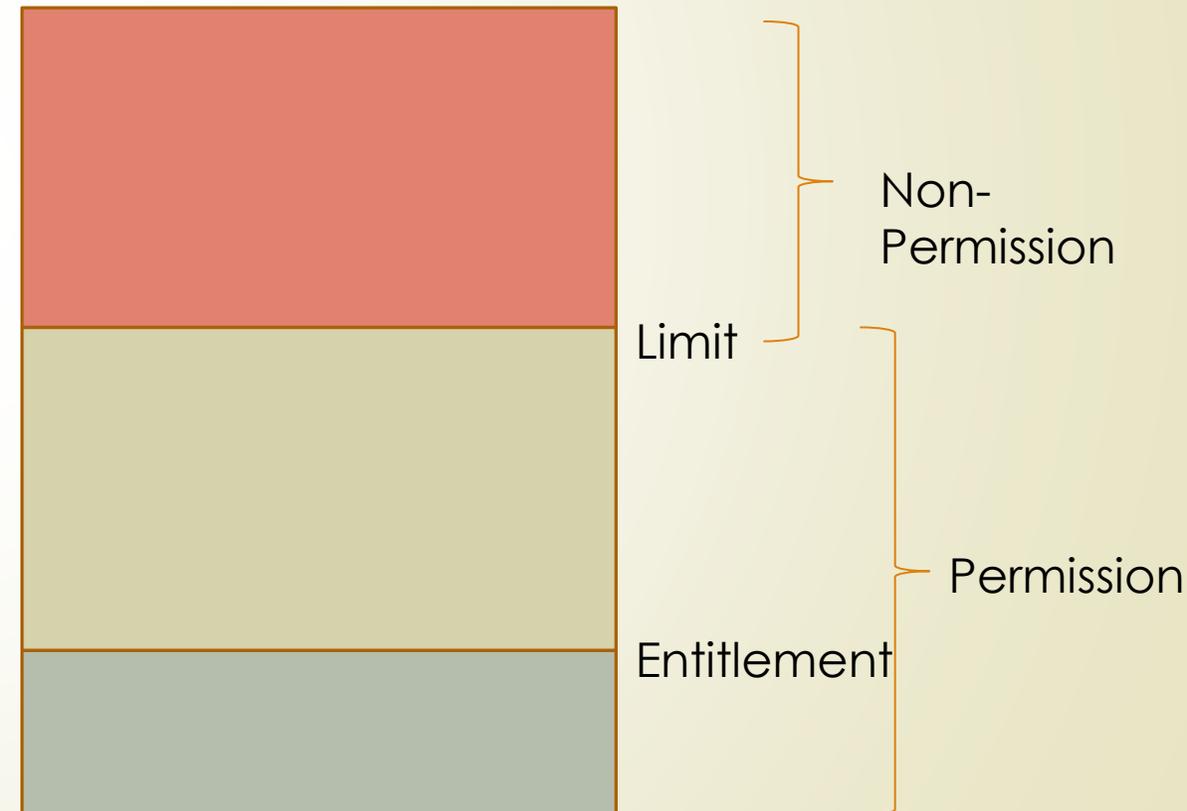


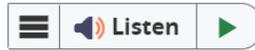
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Climate change, distributive justice, and “pre-institutional” limits on resource appropriation

Colin Hickey

- ▶ I have argued that principles of global distributive justice govern access to/appropriation of global carbon sinks.
- ▶ These generate “fair share” entitlements prior to, e.g., legal requirements.
- ▶ Strong implications for what GHG reductions can be demanded of individuals.





Research Article

The Social Cost of Carbon, Abatement Costs, and Individual Climate Duties

Colin Hickey  

Published online: 17 Oct 2022

 Download citation

 <https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2022.2133939>



- ▶ Can we use social cost of carbon estimates to inform the content of individual climate duties?
- ▶ SCC = Monetized estimate of the total damages incurred from the emission of an additional ton of CO₂
- ▶ Contested, variable, uncertain

Methodological Strategies:

- ▶ Minimalist
- ▶ Precautionary
- ▶ Averaging
- ▶ Sufficiency-bounded



Climate Justice and Informal Representation

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Colin Hickey 

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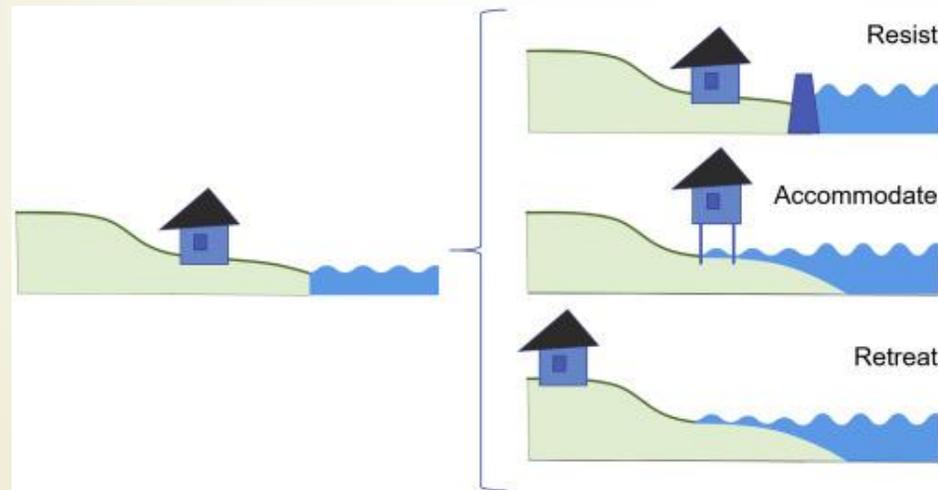
- What would adequate representation for the climate vulnerable consist in?
- I argue it requires moving beyond a standard focus on “formal” modes of representation (i.e., having a seat at the table”) to include/emphasize “informal” modes of representation
- In, e.g., media, education, non-profits, local activism, business

Informal modes of representation serve important functions:

- Epistemic function
- Norm-shifting function
- Trust-building function

Ethics and Adaptation: “Managed Retreat”

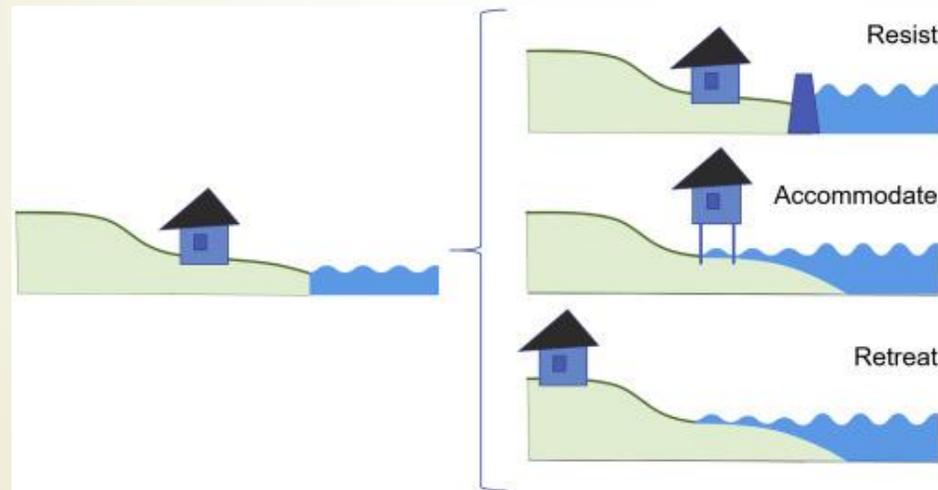
- “The purposeful, coordinated movement of people and assets out of harm's way.” – Siders (2019)



- How do we ensure that retreat decisions are meaningfully voluntary?
- And what does voluntariness amount to in tragic contexts where viable options sets are extremely limited, given climate exposure?
- The institutional mechanisms and governance structures of MR are complex, value-laden, and often particularly fraught...

Ethics and Adaptation: “Managed Retreat”

- “The purposeful, coordinated movement of people and assets out of harm's way.” – Siders (2019)



- Difficult and evolving science,
- Coordination among wide-ranging governing bodies,
- Widescale community engagement across diverse stakeholders,
- Specific finance and funding apparatuses,
- Insurance policy,
- Zoning decisions (e.g., downzoning, setbacks, prohibited land uses, no-build zones),
- Property acquisitions and buyouts,
- Other kinds of financial or regulatory incentives,
- Provision of services in receiving communities,
- Physical removal and relocation of properties,
- Design decisions for land rehabilitation or repurposing,

Individual Climate Responsibility

Emissions Related

- ▶ One could vote and campaign for the right candidates
- ▶ Donate to the right organizations
- ▶ Invest in the right companies
- ▶ Sign petitions
- ▶ Organize or join marches, protests, or other grassroots efforts

Political Advocacy

- What forms?
- How demanding?

- ▶ Lobby one's local officials
- ▶ Write articles, open letters, or op-eds
- ▶ Produce related media
- ▶ Teach students
- ▶ Persuade or nudge one's social network to do the same...



Climate Disobedience



- ▶ What moral permissions and/or duties do individuals have to engage in lawbreaking protest against climate injustices?
- ▶ How might one go about trying to determine this?

Potential Justifiers & Defeaters

1. Effectiveness
2. Opportunity
cost/alternatives/last resort
3. Risk of harm, rights violations,
and relation to other values
4. Expressive/Communicative
value
5. Considerations of standing
6. Coordination
7. Magnitude/Urgency
8. Cost to self
9. Legal/Political Landscape



Many Thanks!

Looking forward to discussion...