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# The Climate Justice Community: Theoretical Radicals and Practical Pragmatists?

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to promote a better understanding of the link between normative climate justice claims—originating in Political Theory and Philosophy—and concrete social practices of the climate justice movement active at the international climate negotiations. We argue that the climate justice movement can be understood as a community of practice. Empirically, we zoom into this community of practice and comparatively analyse three case studies on human rights networks, faith-based groups and gender justice advocates. Methodologically, our analysis is based on a review of primary and secondary documents, participatory observations and expert interviews at the climate negotiations in Warsaw (2013), Bonn (2014), and Paris (2015) and via skype/phone (2013–2016). Our analysis reveals that each network within the community of practice—even those with more radical objectives—minimise the demands formulated at the outset in order to successfully cooperate with state negotiators.

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Climate justice; civil society; international organisations; climate practices; human rights

## Introduction

“Climate justice now” was one of the big demands at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015. That year, the international community came together to negotiate a new climate agreement, and the two weeks in France were characterised by strong activism and alliance-building by those who advocated for a robust outcome with an emphasis on climate justice. While some groups of the climate justice movement protested outside the venue, the negotiations themselves saw an inter-constituency alliance comprised of indigenous peoples’ representatives, human rights and environmental activists, faith-based organisations, trade unions, youth and gender groups lobbying for the inclusion of justice as a guiding principle in the future climate agreement. The early days of the UNFCCC had been marked by strong engagement of business and environmental organisations, but the climate justice movement shifted the focus towards societal concerns over the past decade, highlighting that justice had to be recognised as a matter of climate politics.

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At COP21, references to intergenerational equity, gender equality and human rights were institutionalised in the Preamble of the 2015 Paris Agreement. The final text also notes “the importance for some of the concept of ‘climate justice’, when taking action to address climate change” (UNFCCC 2015). Although the initial ambition of the alliance was to secure a commitment to these principles in the operative part, specifically in Article 2 defining the purpose of the agreement, many civil society organisations (CSOs) evaluated this result as a success.<sup>1</sup> They argued that the debate around Article 2 will lead to a consideration of justice concerns in future climate policy-making. In fact, the Paris Agreement is the first binding environmental instrument comprising human rights (Atapattu and Schapper 2019) and referring to climate justice. It has already been used for climate litigation cases and to enforce governmental obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via national courts (Wegener 2020). In addition, human rights have been institutionalised with the finalisation of the Paris implementation guidelines in the 2021 Glasgow Climate Pact (Schapper 2021a). This illustrates that climate justice claims, although they have been mainly debated in normative scholarship, can materialise in concrete justice practices. While scholarship has well established that justice concerns have become part of the climate change agenda (Chatterton, Featherstone, and Routledge 2013; Shue 2014), there is yet little research on the strategic and agentic diversity—e.g. whether they pursue reformist, pragmatic or radical approaches—of advocacy groups within global climate negotiations.

Hence, the objective of this paper is to promote a better understanding of how normative climate justice claims are performed in concrete social practices within the UNFCCC. We build on work that has conceptualised such change agents in international climate negotiations as a transnational community of practice (Wallbott 2019). Thus, we first elaborate that those actors that advocate for climate justice inside the negotiations can be understood as a community of practice, i.e. as a group of practitioners with a shared interest in learning, shaping and applying common practices (Lave and Wenger 1991; Adler 2008) and establishing a “normative and epistemic ground for action” (Adler 2008, 199). We adopt the concept of practices employed in other policy areas like security and diplomacy (Adler 2008; Pouliot 2006) to the field of climate politics and show that there is a community of practice promoting climate justice inside the negotiations, involving non-state groups but also governmental delegates or representatives of international organisations. These actors, despite their differences, share the vision to diminish intrasocietal injustice related to climate change and climate politics.

While research on transnational advocacy networks (e.g. Keck and Sikkink 1998)<sup>2</sup> or transnational social movements (e.g. Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Tarrow 2005) have contributed to our understanding of how non-state actors bring about normative change and transform governmental practices, we argue that the community of practice concept allows us to capture the full range of actors involved in pursuing climate justice practices within the UNFCCC as a forum. This matters as, after all, those who advocate for climate justice inside the UNFCCC negotiations are not only non-governmental actors but also UN Special Mandate holders, like the Special Rapporteur on Human

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<sup>1</sup>Skype Interview UNICEF after COP21, 4 February 2016.

<sup>2</sup>Although Keck and Sikkink (1998) acknowledge that different actors, including IO representatives and state delegates, can be members of TANs, they highlight that these networks are primarily driven by advocacy-oriented NGOs that mobilise collective action (Smith and Jenkins 2011).

Rights and the Environment, representatives of other international organisations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF or the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and single state negotiators or even core groups of states. In other words, climate justice practices are more complex and less actor-specific than often anticipated and, by applying a community of practice approach, we are able to grasp and understand that complexity in a holistic way. We can also demonstrate that the climate justice community of practice focuses much more on intra-societal and intergenerational justice concerns counterbalancing the state-focused climate negotiations.

Second, we add to the existing literature on the climate justice movement in international negotiations by zooming into this community of practice to gain a better and deeper understanding of their climate justice practices and how these relate to normative justice claims. We compare the practices of three different networks that are part of this community: human rights networks, faith-based actors (FBA) and gender advocates. These cases were selected because they have been prominently associated with justice claims at the UNFCCC, and their demands were included in the Paris Agreement. We can expect to learn from a systematic comparison of their performances as they also provide for some variance in their practices (Gerring 2007) and enable us to carve out the varieties that exist among the different groups within the community. By highlighting the shared ground as well as the peculiarities and differences of the networks we pay tribute to the assumption that one community of practice does not necessarily equal a homogenous entity. The community of practice scholarship has emphasised that the implications of such variety is still a research desideratum (Adler 2008, 199) in International Relations (IR) that has not yet been sufficiently addressed in empirical studies. We assert that paying attention to this diversity is relevant as groups within the same community of practice can advocate for different types of change in international politics despite being devoted to the same normative concerns. Our empirical material enables us to disentangle the variety of approaches and performances of actors within the community of practice, also according to their potential to advocate for radical change or moderate reform in climate change politics.

Third, we also demonstrate how this community of practice—despite its heterogeneity—finds common ground in reducing normative demands and in adapting its practices to the institutional framework. This means that even though one network within a community of practice might propose radical policy change at the outset, it can narrow down its own demands in state-society interactions to successfully cooperate within a given institutional setting (see also Béland 2009). In this line of argument, we contribute to the further development of the community of practice literature in IR by explicitly highlighting the role of pragmatism and the relations of the community members with their target institution, in our case the UNFCCC.

Our study benefits from different streams of scholarship, namely the normative literature on climate justice, research on the climate justice movement and literature on practice approaches in global politics. We find that there is hardly any dialogue between these strands of literature that would align assessments of normative claims with an analysis of corresponding politically relevant practices. Thus, systematic empirical evidence on how these claims materialise and in which way the climate justice movement also works as a community of practice is still lacking. Against this background, we argue that it is

important to understand these justice practices and the resonance of societal concerns in a traditionally rather technocratic environment like the UNFCCC (Busch 2009)—to demonstrate how and in what form normative claims become powerful or not.

Methodologically, our analysis is based on comparative case studies (Gerring 2007) of three networks that advocate for climate justice, including human rights advocates, faith-based actors and gender networks. To prepare these case studies, we have conducted 40 expert interviews (Meuser and Nagel 2009) with representatives of the three different networks at the climate negotiations in Warsaw (2013), Bonn (2014), and Paris (2015) and via skype/phone (2013–2016), in addition to participatory observation (Kawulich 2005) at the 2013, 2014 and 2015 UNFCCC COPs. We also assembled a corpus of primary documents and data, comprising policy documents and strategy papers, website content, email exchanges and twitter campaigns (e.g. relating to #Stand4Rights) produced by the human rights, gender and faith-based networks between 2013 and 2015. All documents were evaluated via a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2014) combining deductive strategies using the categories highlighted in the analytical framework on climate justice introduced below with inductive analysis. We concentrate on the time frame 2013–2015 because during these years, human rights and climate justice arguments were prominently raised by the climate justice community and were finally included in the 2015 Paris Agreement (Schapper 2021b; Mayer 2016).

In the following, we will, first, systematize the normative literature on climate justice. Second, we will briefly review research insights on the climate justice movement, situate the climate justice community approach against that literature and introduce the concept of “practice” to capture the deliberate strategies and goals of different climate justice advocates. Furthermore, we will analyse and compare the concrete social practices that human rights networks, faith-based groups and gender justice advocates employ to realise their normative claims.

## **Conceptual approaches to climate justice, the climate justice movement and climate practices**

### ***Dimensions of climate (in)justice***

Normative considerations originating in Green Political Theory and Environmental Philosophy emphasise different dimensions and meanings of climate justice. Commonly shared is the departure from a situation of injustice and the cognition that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities (Vanderheiden 2008; Humphreys 2014). Those who are least responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and have the fewest resources to adapt are often most affected by and most vulnerable to climate change consequences (Robinson 2014). The character of justice relations discussed in the literature varies with respect to scale, temporal dimension and normative political claims and actors concerned. Whereas some authors highlight justice concerns between states (international injustice), others point to injustice between social groups (intrasocietal injustice), or to injustice between today's, past or future generations (intergenerational injustice)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>There is an additional dimension considering questions of climate justice in relation to the non-human world including animals, species and ecosystems referred to as interspecies justice (Nussbaum 2006, 327).

(Schapper 2018). Accordingly, normative claims to enhance climate justice and to shape substantial climate politics also differ considerably.

*International injustice* emphasises the historically grown differences between developing and developed states (Shue 2014). The main concern is that developed countries have utilised carbon-intensive industries to foster growth, whereas developing countries (as well as emerging economies) shall not be able to do the same (Moellendorf 2014). Many developing countries are severely confronted with the consequences of climate change as they face changes in precipitation, extreme weather events, increasing floods and intensified droughts. Hence, there is an imbalance between responsibility for climate change, resulting harm and lacking resources to adapt. This dimension of injustice is historically grown; has its roots in colonial times, has been reinforced through globalisation processes and is reflected in current institutions (Humphreys 2014; Shue 2014). In the UNFCCC, this historic dimension was acknowledged through the principle “common but differentiated responsibilities” (UN 1992). Corresponding claims are that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced, energy use and other consumption patterns need to be altered, adaptation and mitigation costs have to be more equally distributed and fair institutions should be created (Hiskes 2009; Sikor and Newell 2014; Humphreys 2014).

However, a sole focus on the international dimension might fall short of relevant other justice dimensions. Thus, it has been suggested to “[...] open up the traditionally closed box of ‘the state’, [to] see that the real divide is not so much between developed and developing states as it is between affluent and poor people” (Harris, Chow, and Karlsson 2013, 301). *Intrasocietal injustice* concerns the relationship between groups within society that are unequally exposed to the impacts of climate change to which they have contributed to a differing degree. Those who are neglected and excluded from political processes by their governments or on the basis of established societal stratification, including between men and women, often suffer the most, and already existing inequalities between different societal groups are deepened in the face of a changing climate (Newell 2012; Humphreys 2014, 138). A report by the UN Human Rights Council identified women, children, indigenous peoples, the elderly and persons with disabilities in developing countries to be particularly vulnerable (OHCHR 2009, 15–18). Corresponding claims to strengthen societal justice comprise access to information and transparency, participation in decision-making, as well as access to legal remedies and compensation (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Sovacool and Dworkin 2014; Schlosberg 2009). Under pressure of civil society networks such procedural rights were first institutionalised as a prerequisite for the implementation of “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation” (REDD+) measures at COP17 in Cancun (UNFCCC 2010).

Finally, *intergenerational injustice* pertains to the relationship between past, present and future generations. The argument goes that current lifestyles, marked by the consumption of fossil fuels and high greenhouse gas emissions, lead to injustice toward future generations who might not be able to enjoy a healthy environment anymore (Hiskes 2009; Shue 2014). Hence, the current generation needs to be held accountable for not imposing risks and dangers on future generations. Demands in this respect comprise the establishment of environmental rights (Hiskes 2009), energy rights (Caney 2011), a right to ecological space (Hayward 2007) and rights-protecting institutions (Shue 2014).

**Table 1.** Dimensions of climate injustice.

	International injustice	Intrasocietal injustice	Intergenerational injustice
Character of injustice	Imbalance between responsibility for climate change, exposure to its impacts and resources to adapt		
Disadvantaged actors	Developing states	Societal groups, communities, individuals	Present and future generations
Temporal impact	Historically grown, immediately	Immediately	Immediately and in the future
Normative claims	Fair distribution of costs, fair institutions, compensation, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	Procedural rights, e.g. participation, information, access to judicial recourse procedures	Transition to altering energy and consumption patterns, a low-carbon, sustainable economy, environmental rights

Source: Own compilation on the basis of the literature cited.

These dimensions of injustice can overlap. For example, future generations of certain societal groups in developing countries will be particularly exposed to several forms of injustice. Table 1 summarises the dimensions of climate injustice.

### **The climate justice movement**

Claims for just climate practices, comprising distributional and procedural justice, are central demands of civil society actors engaged in the climate movement (Garrelts and Dietz 2013, 17). The climate movement is a social movement led by non-state actors, i.e. it can be understood as an action system of mobilised networks comprised of groups and organisations that—for a certain period of time and based on a collective identity—aims at initiating, preventing or reversing social change through various means (Rucht 1994, 76–77). The collective identity of the climate movement evolves around pressuring and persuading states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via effective mitigation policies, to improve climate adaptation strategies and to find appropriate solutions for loss and damage. Transnational networks participating in the climate movement are often marked by a complex and decentralised organisational structure. They may bring together groups from diverse countries, which are ideologically motivated and pursue common objectives through collective action. By creating influential dynamics through political and medial pressure, they can decisively contribute to social change (Garrelts and Dietz 2013, 24–26). The network of activists mobilising on climate change has substantially grown in the past decade and is increasingly diversifying (Hadden 2015).

Since the end of the 1990s, the focus of the climate movement has shifted from utilising a *climate change frame* to employing a *climate justice frame* (della Porta and Parks 2013, 45, on framing see Benford and Snow 2020). Common demands for climate justice generate solidarity between different movements and struggles (Chatterton, Featherstone, and Routledge 2013) and can be considered as a unifying frame between movements from the Global North and the Global South (Cassegård et al. 2017). The climate justice movement, which has been influenced by the global justice movement (Hadden 2014), however, does not function homogeneously, nor does it speak with one voice. Instead, it is characterised by a dominant antagonism: it is divided into a more *moderate wing* accepting capitalism and lobbying for change within established climate institutions, and into a *radical wing* viewing the capitalist economic system as

a root cause for climate change that needs to be transformed (della Porta and Parks 2013, 47). This leads to cooperative and conflictive activities of transnational networks and to divides between climate justice activists within and outside the UNFCCC resulting in different understandings of what constitutes climate justice (Brunnengraber 2013, 366). Thew, Middlemiss, and Paavola (2020) argue that self and social recognition of groups and constituencies matters when it comes to articulating concrete justice claims. Many climate justice advocates, for instance, have withdrawn from the institutionalised UNFCCC processes after the disappointing results and exclusion of civil society at the Climate Summit in Copenhagen in 2009 (Chatterton, Featherstone, and Routledge 2013), which has arguably led more “radical” climate justice activists, such as some members of “Climate Justice Now”, to organise more activities outside of institutions.

Within international institutions, the movements’ aim to influence climate policy-making can be realised most effectively through advocacy, campaigning and providing expertise as accredited observers at climate conferences (Brunnengraber 2013, 359–360; Bernauer and Betzold 2012, 63), although they also aim at maintaining pressure for climate action beyond COPs (de Moor 2021). Through close interaction with governments, they may exert pressure for negotiating, ratifying, enforcing and complying with international environmental agreements (Bernauer, Böhmelt, and Koubi 2013; Bolton and Nash 2010). Non-state observers consult informally but are sometimes also granted the opportunity to speak during the official negotiations. In some cases, individuals from these non-state groups also become members of national delegations and therewith, are “formally granted a ‘seat at the table’” (Bernauer and Betzold 2012, 63). This increases their opportunities to influence governmental decisions since it provides them with access to closed sessions, official state documents and the possibility to present own proposals in decision-making circles (Böhmelt, Koubi, and Bernauer 2014, 19) representing new forms of “hybrid multilateralism” (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). Governmental delegations, on the other hand, are interested in including these actors because they receive additional information and expertise (Betsill and Corell 2008) and can enhance the legitimacy of their decisions (Bernauer and Betzold 2012, 63; Nasiritoussi, Hierpe, and Bäckstrand 2016). However, there is still little knowledge on how those “inside” climate justice networks collaborate as a community that works to achieve the inclusion of justice aspects in international climate agreements.

### ***The climate justice movement as a community of practice***

By resorting to the concept of “practices” we can understand how climate justice is given meaning within the UNFCCC through the discursive actions of its practitioners. Scholars from IR and Political Sociology highlight the mutual construction of meaning and action through practices (Neumann 2002; Adler and Pouliot 2011a; Bigo 2011) and emphasise the performative character of everyday politics. Global politics is understood as part of interrelated human practices (Schatzki 2001a, 11) and allows us to think of the UNFCCC as a political and social space, in which various actors contribute to and are part of climate justice practices. Building on (Wallbott 2019), we describe the character of these socio-political practices by highlighting four features: their intentional/non-intentional *quality*; their *standing* as means/ends; their *form* as linguistic/non-linguistic; and their *relation* with meaning.

First, practices encompass deliberate action but also “the unconscious or automatic activities embedded in taken-for-granted routines” (Swidler 2001, 84). We go along with such a dual understanding of practices according to which they can take the form of strategic, intentional, coordinated and targeted action but can also evolve unconsciously and unintended (Hopf 2017). Hence, explicit but also tacit forms of knowledge characterise the actions and statements of state as well as non-state climate practitioners. These “simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world” (Adler and Pouliot 2011b, 6). Thus, climate practices at the UNFCCC reflect a specific institutional logic and mode of rationalisation that leads to a standardisation of social practices of civil society at international institutions (Holzscheiter 2005), and that is not least shaped by the professional background of the negotiators (Wallbott 2014). In the same line of argument, we assume the existence of communities of practice in the climate change realm, who develop as systems of knowledge production and circulation between people with a similar identity that is based on a “shared domain of interest” (Wenger 2011, 1) and that implies shared competences.

A defining feature of communities of practice is that they evolve through sustained and repeated interaction, e.g. joint activities, information dissemination or discussions, that can be formal or informal and that take place in fixed or rather loose time intervals. Such activities include communication about problem-solving options and developments, reusing assets, coordination, mutual visits, the mapping of knowledge and identification of gaps (Wenger 2011). The members of the community build relationships and engage in collective skill-enhancement; they are practitioners who learn from each other and who “develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems” (Wenger 2011, 2). In our case studies, many participants have been following the negotiations for many years and know each other well. The UNFCCC meeting calendars provide opportunities for practitioners to meet repeatedly over time and allow to develop skills through the exchange of knowledge and experience.

As these groups reach out to influence politics, our attention is drawn to the second feature of practices. The concept of practices encompasses both the means and the ends of politics. Thus, practices can be enacted as a means to reach a specific goal, e.g. encompassing the different strategies and activities of lobby groups in attempting to bridge to decision-makers in international negotiations. In turn, the institutionalisation of a set of policy-specific practices and/or norms can be the declared goal itself. Here, we differentiate three possible targeted outcomes: agents can strive for preserving the status quo, for more reformist or rather revolutionary change (Wallbott 2019). Reformist approaches aim at adaptive change of derivative policy instruments, of targeted actor compositions, etc. without challenging the underlying normative foundation of the respective order. Revolutionary change implies altering the fundamental principles and norms. This is of particular relevance to the climate change negotiations where climate justice activists have long been divided whether to pursue reformist or radical change.

Furthermore, practices are enacted in both linguistic and non-linguistic activities. They comprise all kinds of “bodily doings and sayings and the actions that these doings and sayings constitute” (Schatzki 2001b, 56). Thus, communities of practice are connected through physical encounters but equally through, for example, virtual email lists. Similarly, those who participate in a community of practice “collaborate in

placing themselves as a group with respect to the world around them. This includes the common interpretation of other communities, and of their own practice with respect to those communities” (Eckert 2006, 1–2).

Finally, practices are intrinsically related to the generation of meaning. By repeating traditional patterns and routines, they contribute to the business-as-usual scenario, thereby reinforcing (and stabilising) existing meanings. In other words: sharing experiences over time and aiming to establish a common understanding of political issues may lead to a “conventionalization of meaning” (Eckert 2006, 1). On the other hand, “change tends to come from the borders” (Eckert 2006, 1) and the introduction of new practices can alter the meaning-structure of the respective policy field. Adler describes such an expansion of a community of practice:

When they join communities of practice, new agents not only learn and adopt new identities, they also become able to influence and change the community. Hence practice is part of the mechanism of the cognitive evolution of social reality and not only of its reproduction. (Adler 2008, 202)

In sum, we understand “climate justice practices” as meaning-producing practices of those who are involved in climate change decisions. Although final decisions on just climate policies are ultimately made by state representatives, there is a multitude of climate justice practices applied by climate justice networks encompassing a variety of actors that initiate and influence these decisions. These are the practices we are focusing on in our study. Hence, we are particularly interested in the attribution of meaning in the context of the UNFCCC, where diverse actors try to shape the decision-making process and political outcome.

### **The climate justice community: analysing practices within the UNFCCC**

In the following, we seek to analyse and discuss the empirical side of climate justice: How does the climate justice community mobilise justice discourses? What is their normative approach to justice in the context of climate change? How does the agenda of these advocates materialise in political practices? For this purpose, we focus on climate justice practices of three different groups that have engaged in the negotiations of the UNFCCC: human rights networks, faith-based actors and organisations promoting gender parity.

#### ***“We can’t violate human rights in the name of emissions reductions”<sup>4</sup>: human rights networks***

Human rights networks are cooperative structures, comprising various types of non-state but also state actors operating at different scales. Their main shared interest is in institutionalising human rights in the climate regime to enhance protection for those affected by the consequences of climate change and by climate policies. Thus, their overall objective is to strengthen the link between rights concerns and climate change,<sup>5</sup> and to “[...] fully integrate rights protections in the climate regime” (HRCCWG 2014a). In this case study, we will concentrate on one particular network: the Human Rights and Climate Change

<sup>4</sup>Interview, Women’s Rights Organization, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

<sup>5</sup>Interview, Academic and Activist, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

Working Group (HRCCWG). It brings together international civil society actors, including environmental, human rights, gender and youth groups, indigenous peoples, academics, but also representatives of international organisations (IOs), like UNICEF and the OHCHR, individual state actors or even core groups of states. Several UN Special Mandate Holders, in particular the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment, have previously also engaged in the HRCCWG's activities. This means it comprises a range of different non-governmental and governmental actors that work together as a community of practice advocating for climate justice. Since 2009, the HRCCWG meets and interacts on a regular basis: the network informs and raises awareness about the links between climate change and human rights, disseminates information about local rights effects of climate change and policies, systematizes knowledge on country positions regarding the usage of rights language in climate agreements, and shares stories and case studies about affected communities.<sup>6</sup> In other words: working group members learn from each other how to effectively interact with state negotiators and strategically think about how to use knowledge to bring forward their common interest (Wenger 2011; Adler 2008), namely the institutionalisation of rights in the climate regime.

In their strategy paper, the group explicitly states, which practices (as ends) it promotes: the observance of human rights standards for achieving climate justice (HRCCWG 2014b). Hence, their claims focus on the justice situation for individuals or communities as rights-holders and, therefore, intrasocietal justice demands (and less on states). On the one hand, there is a consensus among network participants that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced, energy transitions are necessary and a low-carbon economy needs to be established. Rights can, today and in the future, only be protected if climate impacts, such as droughts, flooding and extreme weather events, are kept at a minimum. Thus, emissions reductions are considered a human rights obligation and an intergenerational justice concern.

On the other hand, the HRCCWG follows-up on the 2010 Cancún Agreements, which highlighted that “[...] parties should, in all climate-change related actions, fully respect human rights” (UNFCCC 2010). To realise this objective, the network focuses on rights references in climate agreements and on procedural rights in climate policies.<sup>7</sup> These comprise the right to information, to participation and access to judicial recourse procedures. Institutional safeguards are prioritised in the network's claims after increasing evidence on rights infringements could be substantiated in the course of implementing renewable energy projects (e.g. the Clean Development Mechanism, CDM) and forest protection schemes (e.g. REDD+) (Schapper and Lederer 2014). Thus, the HRCCWG concentrates on aspects of intrasocietal justice, and their concrete practices are strongly linked to the normative claims relating to strengthening societal justice discussed in the climate justice literature. These include access to information, participation, legal redress and compensation (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Schlosberg 2009).

To foster these demands, the network reverts to the following practices (as means). With a view to linguistic performances, members write articles, tweet key messages, conduct skype conferences and exchange via a mailing group (HRCCWG 2014a).

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<sup>6</sup>Interview, Coordinator HRCCWG, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

<sup>7</sup>Interview, Environmental Think Tank, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

Moreover, they produce advocacy documents and press releases, and closely interact with local people who are adversely affected by climate policies. On the basis of local testimonies, observer submissions are prepared and fed into the multilateral UNFCCC process as policy recommendations (Schapper 2020). During the negotiations, the HRCCWG meets regularly and suggests (rights-related) revisions to the negotiation text. They send amended text versions to selected negotiators for introduction during closed sessions. Hence, building receptive state-society relations belongs to the most important network strategies with a view to reforming existing practices from inside the UNFCCC process:

So one of the main strategies is [...] to [...] grow the network of CSOs working together on the issue, [...], and then, [...] to use this big network for outreach to many many country delegations.<sup>8</sup>

Through this close interaction with state delegations, they have already successfully contributed to human rights practices entering the climate negotiations:

It's [human rights] becoming more of a mainstream issue for the climate change community and I think that's [...] huge [...] and I'm sure we contributed to that as a group.<sup>9</sup>

With respect to non-linguistic practices, the network financially supports the participation of non-state partners from the Global South at the COPs. By organising side events and bringing to light local experiences, network members create a public space and raise awareness for rights infringements that occur in the context of climate change and policy implementation:

[We] organize side events, bringing high-level people and negotiators to the side events and outing them on the spot, so that they do not dismiss what is happening on the ground.<sup>10</sup>

These strategies cannot be separated from linguistic practices as they involve communication processes at various levels. Here the network rather serves as a facilitator, whereas affected people take the role of the communicators. Other relevant strategies, in which linguistic and non-linguistic practices overlap, are alliance-building and outreach to other networks and international institutions, such as the UN Human Rights Council.

In sum, human rights networks pursue a reformist approach. They engage within the UNFCCC process and re-produce its order and meanings by making submissions, interventions and by directly engaging with governmental delegates. They accept the established policy instruments but want to improve them. Furthermore, they accept institutional limits to realising their justice claims. Whereas the community in the beginning of its activities tried to install new legally binding human rights obligations to reduce emissions in the final text documents, they have become more pragmatic over time. Today, they mainly concentrate on securing rights language in the agreement, in particular procedural rights, like access to information and participation (including free prior and informed consent) and commitment to those rights instruments individual states have already ratified.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Interview, Human Rights Organization, December 2015, COP21, Paris.

<sup>9</sup>Skype Interview UNICEF after COP21, February 2016.

<sup>10</sup>Interview, Coordinator HRCCWG, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

<sup>11</sup>Interview, Coordinator HRCCWG, November 2013, COP19, Warsaw.

Unintended effects the network has to face are its hybridity and its informal structure. This leads to a situation, in which members are present at one meeting but may not be able to participate in another. This is especially the case for local community groups who might have sponsors to join one meeting but lack funding to participate in the next international climate conference. As a consequence, part of their work may not always be continuously pursued and new alliances with state actors have to be built at the next COP. The structure of the HRCCWG has also changed with the big human rights players, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International (AI), and IOs, like UNICEF and the OHCHR, coming on board in 2014 and 2015. In Paris, the inter-constituency alliance comprising various networks, such as human rights advocates, environmental groups, trade unions and others, worked together at an international climate conference for the first time. While being entrenched in a tension between increased outreach and fluctuation of local partners, the HRCCWG managed to establish a solid basis for action to institutionalise human rights in the climate regime.

### ***“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves”<sup>12</sup>: network of faith-based actors***

FBA comprise those actors whose actions are based on religious or spiritual values, such as faith-based humanitarian aid and development organisations, church associations, the Holy See and even states with a state religion. As part of a community of practice, this network is run mostly by non-state faith groups and individuals who work with other civil society actors, UNFCCC bureaucrats, and individual negotiators from different states. The activities of FBAs have only recently become more visible within the UNFCCC. Especially the widely recognised encyclical on the environment, published by Pope Francis I. in 2015, before the Paris Climate Summit, in which he called for integrating justice in environmental debates drew attention to the potential contribution of FBAs to climate change politics.<sup>13</sup> Faith groups do not represent an official constituency at the UN, and for a long time they did not work together as a network. Despite differences in faith and forms of organisation, FBAs started to organise within the UNFCCC by creating an Interfaith Liaison Committee (ILC)—an informal network of faith organisations admitted to the UNFCCC—and organising events like the inter-faith climate summit in preparation of the Paris conference. The Committee was established at COP19 in Warsaw following an invitation of the UNFCCC Secretariat in order to facilitate regular communication between faith groups and the Secretariat.<sup>14</sup> This relates to broader global and national initiatives encouraging faith actors to become more active in climate politics as the call to assist in raising awareness among faith communities by then-Secretary General of the UNFCCC, Christina Figueres, exemplifies.<sup>15</sup> The ILC engages in furthering internal collaboration among FBAs, communication with the Secretariat, sharing of information between other civil society members at the UNFCCC,

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.christianaid.org.uk/ActNow/climate-justice/act-now-for-climate-justice/> (accessed 10 August 2017).

<sup>13</sup>[http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) (accessed 16 June 2021).

<sup>14</sup>Interview, July 2014, representative of the UNFCCC secretariat.

<sup>15</sup>[http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/07/faith-leaders-voice-climate-change?CMP=tw\\_t\\_gu](http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/may/07/faith-leaders-voice-climate-change?CMP=tw_t_gu) (accessed 16 June 2021).

and more general strengthening of faith-based advocacy. Despite this increasing professionalisation, they do not see themselves as a decision-making body or aim at establishing a common strategy on behalf of all FBAs (Baumgart-Ochse et al. 2017).

Unlike human rights or women's groups, FBAs are not united by a common thematic focus, but through their faith-based background. While religion characterises and unites this network, FBAs do not simply represent the issue "religion" at the UNFCCC, but stand for broader normative claims, among others, climate justice. A common concern of this network is the focus on international justice as reflected in the debate on obligations between developed and developing countries. Most of the interviewed FBAs emphasise that justice is not a matter of country concerns but starts with equal rights of individuals. Churches, in particular, are in a unique position to mediate between the global political level and individual experiences of climate change in local faith communities, which they are able to bring as knowledge to the climate negotiations.

This normative presumption on human equality shows in two main foci in their work at the UNFCCC: firstly, FBAs emphasise intrasocietal justice, i.e. the rights of every human being, especially the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged that are affected by climate change (Glaab 2017). Secondly, they stress that climate change is a matter of intergenerational justice, i.e. the responsibility to secure the rights of future generations (Glaab 2017). Within the network, there is, however, awareness that understandings of justice may vary.<sup>16</sup> Being aware that "equity means different things to different people" and that it is based on different normative claims, one FBA representative points out that this may result in "negotiating groups talking past each other despite using the same word".<sup>17</sup> This diversity in understandings also shows in different thematic foci in their advocacy work; while some FBAs are concerned with introducing an equity framework to shape and steer overall UNFCCC politics, others focus more on specific policy issues, such as fair finance or engage in discussions on loss and damage mechanisms (Glaab 2017). These practices are strongly linked to normative demands to strengthen societal justice discussed in normative climate justice scholarship, in particular tying it to debates on fair compensation and redress in climate politics (Sovacool and Dworkin 2014).

While climate justice constitutes a shared practice as means among network members, there is not one single strategy to pursue that goal. Climate justice manifests as practices as ends and is promoted through lobbying of national delegations, cooperation with other networks, organisation of side events, official press releases and interventions of religious leaders, broad campaigning, or mediation among different parties. FBAs represent an increasingly well-organised network with email-lists and focal points, which enable them to coordinate activities within the UNFCCC process and exchange knowledge and their views on these issues. But it is only the Holy See, as an observer to the UNFCCC, that can make formal interventions. Thus, for example, in 2014, during one of its formal interventions at a plenary session—at that time still a rare event—the representative of the Holy See spoke about climate change as an issue of moral concern and justice, highlighting the duty not to repeat the mistakes of previous generations.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Interview, Representative of Church Network, October 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>17</sup>Interview, Church Representative, November 2013, COP19 Warsaw.

<sup>18</sup>Personal observation, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

Since other FBAs do not have the status of an official constituency, they cannot articulate their views in the plenary in the same way. Instead, they rely on cooperation with other civil society actors, one example being the cooperation of many FBAs with the Climate Action Network.

The activities at the climate conferences are supported by various public campaigns that were initiated by individual FBAs. In preparation of COP21 in Paris, they aimed at raising public awareness on the issue of climate justice. While the “act now for climate justice” campaign intended to make visible the impact of climate change by giving witnesses a platform to speak and communicate with a broader public, the “pilgrimage of climate justice” encouraged awareness raising and expression of solidarity with those affected by climate change (Glaab 2017). The “fast for the climate” campaign, which started in Warsaw after the emotional speech of Filipino delegate Yeb Saño in reaction to the devastations that typhoon Haiyan had caused, similarly appealed to duty and responsibility of the individual. His pledge to fast until parties delivered binding action was picked up by the faith community and was quickly joined by non-religious CSOs and political leaders who fasted once a month to show solidarity with those affected by climate change.<sup>19</sup>

In many ways, FBAs at the UNFCCC apply standard networking and advocacy strategies just like other civil society actors. At the same time, they employ more specific faith-based elements in their campaigns. Their normative stance and their approach to climate justice seems to be more radical than other groups, particularly as they highlight the individual dimensions of climate justice, and, in some cases, apply practices motivated by their faith traditions. However, the way these issues are promoted within the UNFCCC also indicates an adaptation to the practices of the institutional setting. For instance, FBAs decided not to take part in the “walk-out” of civil society at COP19 to show their ongoing support of the political process. This also relates to the ILC’s aim to build better ties with the UNFCCC Secretariat, to take a mediating role between states and society and to build trust among different partners. This “quiet diplomacy”<sup>20</sup> that aims at reforming the content of an agreement and overall decision-making processes has reportedly led to a situation, in which “[...] many governments are critical of NGOs, but churches or a bishop are always welcome”.<sup>21</sup>

### ***“Gender Justice is Climate Justice”<sup>22</sup>: gender justice advocates***

In the UNFCCC, two groups of advocates have worked specifically to raise attention for “gender climate injustice”, the unproportionally strong exposure of women to the impacts of climate change and their underrepresentation in the negotiations: “GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice” and the “Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA)”. GenderCC was launched in 2003 (COP9) when organisations like LIFE and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) informally discussed “whether the issue ‘gender’ should be given more attention at climate negotiations” (also GenderCC 2016).<sup>23</sup> Today,

<sup>19</sup><https://www.lutheranworld.org/climate-justice/fast-for-climate> (accessed 20 June 2021).

<sup>20</sup>Interview, Climate Representative of a Church, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>21</sup>Interview, Representative of Church Alliance, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>22</sup><https://350.org/gender-justice-is-climate-justice/> (accessed 23 June 2021).

<sup>23</sup><https://www.gendercc.net/who-are-we.html> (accessed 23 June 2021).

membership to GenderCC is open to individual experts and activists, groups and organisations. At COP13, GenderCC was officially mandated by the informal women's caucus to submit the application for a women and gender constituency to the UNFCCC Secretariat that was approved in 2011.<sup>24</sup>

But the gender justice movement is—reflecting the characteristics of a community of practice—not a pure matter of non-state actors. GGCA came into existence in 2007 through the coming-together of four global development, environmental and women's institutions (UNDP, IUCN, WEDO, UNEP). The initial goal was “to ensure that climate change policies, decision-making, and initiatives at the global, regional and national levels are gender-responsive”.<sup>25</sup> As of January 2015, GGCA (not itself a member of the Gender constituency) included more than 90 UN agencies, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations.<sup>26</sup>

While their specific understanding of gender justice in climate politics differs, both networks share the conviction that climate justice must be realised not merely between states but transcend to the individual level, linking up with intrasocietal and intergenerational aspects. Thus, GenderCC focuses on bottom-up approaches towards gender justice and “feels obliged [to work for] grassroots-women”.<sup>27</sup> GGCA, instead, has a more “pragmatic-administrative” approach that aims at establishing formal equity among the sexes within the institutionalised frame of the UNFCCC (Schalatek 2011, 153). GenderCC engages more in a fundamental critique of the overall system structure and has favoured “a shift from dominant, market-based mechanisms to people-centred ones” (Hemmati and Röhr 2009, 26). An interviewee characterised the approach of GenderCC as truly “feminist” in the sense that climate politics should not only aim at responding to existing gender roles but should instead challenge these roles and historically grown “patriarchal” structures.<sup>28</sup> This pertains to the social construction of gender images and (in)justice perceptions at global scales. With a view to climate politics, this understanding implies that existing mechanisms should be reformed to include, for instance, grievance and safeguards systems (e.g. for the CDM). These practices relate very strongly to normative demands for intrasocietal justice emphasised in climate justice scholarship and highlighting the need to guarantee access to information, enable participation in decision-making and to provide compensation (Stevenson and Dryzek 2014; Schlosberg 2009). More fundamentally and in the sense of “transformative justice”,<sup>29</sup> GenderCC strives for a new course of the global economy and the rejection of offsetting and market-based instruments and risk technologies<sup>30</sup>; for “we can see that the same causes exist more or less for gender disparities and gender discrimination and the climate problem”.<sup>31</sup> Correspondingly, the network criticised that the Paris Agreement “fails to address the structures of injustice and inequality which have caused the climate crisis” and that, indeed, operational language on gender equality “alongside other fundamental rights”

<sup>24</sup><http://womengenderclimate.org/> (accessed 23 June 2021).

<sup>25</sup><http://www.wedo.org/library/global-gender-climate-alliance-ggca> (accessed 19 January 2016).

<sup>26</sup><http://gender-climate.org/who-we-are/> (accessed 19 January 2016).

<sup>27</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn (authors' translations).

<sup>28</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>29</sup><http://womengenderclimate.org/member/> (accessed 23 June 2021).

<sup>30</sup><http://gendercc.net/genderunfccc/topics/market-based-mechanisms.html> (accessed January 19, 2016).

<sup>31</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

would have been needed to be included in Article 2 of the outcome.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, GGCA has the goal to improve the contemporary climate process and its outcomes within the existing meta-governance structure and institutional set-up to achieve “gender-sensitive” practices.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it favours gender mainstreaming, that is: “engendering” existing and future climate policies by incorporating gender language in UNFCCC decisions, corresponding standards, indicators and gender-sensitive distribution of benefits (Aguilar 2009; Schalatek 2011, 154).<sup>34</sup> Correspondingly, GGCA declares as its working areas “policy, advocacy, capacity-building, women’s leadership, climate finance, and knowledge-generation”.<sup>35</sup> Thus, GGCA’s practices are also linked to normative claims in the climate justice literature emphasising the need to strengthen intrasocietal climate justice via equal access to information, participation and by installing compensation mechanisms (Schlosberg 2009; Sovacool and Dworkin 2014). In comparison, the climate practices (as ends), which GenderCC strives for, can be characterised as being more radical and revolutionary, ultimately aiming at the transformation of the dominant economic and cultural practices that determine different levels of vulnerability, inequality and injustice. GGCA, instead, opts for more pragmatic adjustments to the UNFCCC.

However, these different goals come with relatively similar climate justice practices (as means). Generally, the formation of both networks can be regarded as a (non-linguistic) practice. By establishing official organisational platforms, the gender advocates have restructured the field of actors in the climate process. The formal recognition of the Women and Gender constituency improved visibility of the issue, a factor that was emphasised by one interviewee as a distinguishing and beneficial feature as compared to other stakeholders, e.g. FBAs, who do not have this formal status and are not able to make autonomous interventions during negotiations. Furthermore, GenderCC and GGCA have both developed web presences, host side events, network meetings and engage in trainings at local and national levels. Here linguistic and non-linguistic practices overlap since the intermediate goal is to develop shared understandings and knowledge concerning the options and challenges for gender climate justice.

Particularly GenderCC emphasises the relevance of advocacy outside the formal negotiations. One of its focal points highlighted the importance of keeping separate the individual role as advocate for gender justice from any possible affiliation with state parties.<sup>36</sup> This means that the network must rely largely on volunteering work and that its individual members are not allowed into closed party meetings. In this sense, GenderCC practices a traditional watchdog role, and has participated in the walk-out of civil society at COP19. However, it also implies that GenderCC faces bigger trade-offs as voluntary commitments can overburden the resources of its members. GGCA pursues a different practice in this regard and does not display a comparable distance to the negotiations; some of its individual members are even party delegates. Thus, one important and explicit

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<sup>32</sup><http://womengenderclimate.org/a-reality-check-on-the-paris-agreement-women-demand-climate-justice/> (accessed 7 August 2017).

<sup>33</sup><http://www.wedo.org/category/themes/sustainable-development-themes/climatechange/ggca> (accessed 19 January 2016).

<sup>34</sup>See also <http://www.wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/global-gender-and-climate-alliance.pdf> (accessed 23 June 2021).

<sup>35</sup><http://gender-climate.org/what-we-do/> (accessed 19 January 2016).

<sup>36</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

element of GGCA's approach is to increase the share of women in state delegations through financial support via the Women Delegates Fund.

Finally, with a view to linguistic practices, both networks develop position papers and input for submissions. Whereas this activity can be regarded as playing by the rules, for GenderCC, these written statements are also the possibility to introduce more far-reaching ideas and aspirations on the relation between climate politics and gender justice:

When I am here, in the process, it does not make much sense to stand up every five minutes and to spread radical statements, because people here cannot really handle it. But you can write a paper so that those who are interested can read about it. If I want to engage in the process I have to give in to the rules of the game to a certain extent and I can only trigger marginal changes.<sup>37</sup>

Quite contrary, the GGCA Secretariat focuses rather on policy-specific recommendations that do not challenge the overall appropriateness of contemporary climate politics.

Finally—and possibly as an unintended and contrary effect with a view to the politicisation of gender climate justice—it has turned out to be a useful strategy for GenderCC to invoke stereotype images to get their concerns on the agenda. Such linguistic manoeuvre has been justified by one interviewee as follows: “I cannot come to the process and talk about ‘intersectionality’. Everybody will ask: ‘What is that?’”<sup>38</sup> Hence, being faced with the challenge to reduce the complexity of perceived problems and solutions, GenderCC relied on simple stories in the early days of its advocacy, notably on “vulnerable and poor women from the Global South who carry water”.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the network tries to substantiate its claims by defining gender justice as a crucial element to increase the efficiency of any climate action (IISD 2016, 2).

In sum, whereas GGCA, from the beginning, has focused on moderate demands pertinent to gender-responsive climate policies, gender-sensitive language in UNFCCC decisions and equal distribution of benefits, GenderCC purported more radical, revolutionary and transformative justice demands challenging patriarchal roles and structures, and critiquing the existing climate system and institutions. Still, GenderCC also operates within the international institutional frame and (re-)produces existing practices. Hence, in the end, a certain strategic pragmatism characterised the relation of both networks towards the UNFCCC.

## Comparison of practices as means and as ends

All networks emphasise intrasocietal injustice concerns, yet this concern comes in different shades. FBAs and human rights groups advocate for safeguarding vulnerable groups and local communities, including indigenous peoples. At the same time, they highlight responsibility for future generations (inter-generational justice). The HRCCWG, for instance, lobbies for an institutionalisation of human rights to protect rights in the future. FBAs explicitly criticise the dominant focus on international (state-based) justice approaches and point out the need to pay stronger attention to individuals and societal groups, today and in the future. Gender groups accentuate the situation of women at the grassroots' level (GenderCC) and in state delegations (GGCA) concentrating on working against

<sup>37</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>38</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

<sup>39</sup>Interview, GenderCC Representative, June 2014, Intersessional Bonn.

aspects of societal inequality. GenderCC also rejects certain instruments of contemporary climate politics, such as market-based instruments. This means, that GenderCC (at least partly) makes somewhat revolutionary claims that challenge the underlying normative and practical presumptions of the current climate regime.

However, with a view to the practices applied, all networks—even the more radical GenderCC—operate as accredited observers within the UNFCCC process. All groups take part in international climate conferences, they prepare submissions, lobby, interact, and work with state delegations, organise side events and reach out to other networks. Hence, their practices are very much adapted to the institutional framework in which they operate.

While there are many similarities, we also found that the cases display specific lobbying practices related to respective actor characteristics and identities. FBAs, for instance, often present themselves as a non-political group and use this special position to mediate between states and society, and to make individual voices affected by climate change heard. They pursue “unconventional” practices, such as fasting, to raise attention to the livelihood-eroding impacts of climate change. Moreover, they engage in “quiet diplomacy” in the background to build trust among negotiators and convince decision-makers of their objectives. Human rights groups rather emphasise the necessity to provide an opportunity for locals to be present at the negotiations and to initiate a communication process in which the experiences of those affected can inform further policy-development. Additionally, they foster relations with specialised institutions such as the Human Rights Council. GenderCC belongs to one of the recognised official constituencies of the UNFCCC and is in a relatively privileged position compared to the other networks when it comes to the possibility to take the stage during sessions.

In sum, we highlight the following findings: *first*, climate justice networks at UNFCCC conferences articulate and practice plural understandings of justice but particularly emphasise intrasocietal justice claims as opposed to international justice claims. This may not come as a big surprise since these injustices are visible and can be immediately addressed. In addition, many of these groups have a long tradition of advocating human-centered approaches of policy-making based on local experiences. However, there is an interesting variety within those practices. Although there is one common goal, i.e. intra-societal justice, there are altered ways of striving for its achievement. *Second*, most practices employed—at least those analysed here—are reformist instead of revolutionary. It could be argued that this result was due to a selection bias, given that we conducted our research at the UNFCCC negotiations and not outside this space, e.g. at an alternative climate summit. However, we would argue that instead of presupposing a strategic goal-orientation of the climate justice community *a priori*, this is *de facto* contingent and any conclusion should be based on empirical assessment. Still, in the UNFCCC, the climate justice movement is a community of practice that is characterised by close and receptive relationships between non-state actors and state delegations. Networks become active within the process as accredited observers and re-produce the established practices. Even if they brought in revolutionary aims in the beginning of their activities, demands were minimised by institutional boundaries. In the end, these actors seem to be convinced that reformist proposals have a greater chance to be taken up in the negotiations—and to be implemented later on—as compared to more radical approaches. Thus, one very important empirical result is that all our cases display actor pragmatism

in the sense that they minimise their demands as they adapt to the institutional and procedural setting. They strategically focus on what is achievable within the bounded institutional framework.

Finally, as regards the relation between practices and meaning, the assumptions of what constitutes appropriate climate justice practices differ according to the characteristics and identity of the respective group. The climate justice community is united in the perception that climate change is a political issue, a question of justice and that its handling entails socially relevant consequences. Through their claims and specific activities, its members contribute to a politicisation of the climate change issue—as opposed to handling it as a purely technical matter. Thus, they put a counterweight to the UNFCCC tradition that continues to be predominantly shaped by state delegates who have a background in environmental and technocratic disciplines (Wallbott 2014, 753–754). Through routinised linguistic and non-linguistic practices, they alter the frame within which problems and possible solutions to the climate issue are conceived. By staying within the realm of UNFCCC’s institutional boundaries, however, the groups continue to legitimize the process as the main forum for international climate politics leading to rather pragmatic reforms.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have empirically investigated the nature of climate justice practices employed by three networks operating within the UNFCCC. We have systematized normative claims of climate justice and zoomed into the specific advocating practices of human rights networks, gender groups and faith-based actors, which we have conceptualised as (part of) a community of practice. We argue that understanding climate justice networks active within the institutional setting of the UNFCCC as a community of practice is relevant because their activities are not necessarily only driven by non-state actors but include a broad range of actor types which come together around the core issue of climate justice. We also argue that normative justice claims shape the activities of actors engaging in the field of climate politics. The means as well as the ends of these politics are captured through the concept of “practices”, which furthermore specifies as linguistic and non-linguistic strategies and goals.

As our research has shown, these actors—diverse as they may be with regards to their characteristics, identities and core values—are aware that radical ideas are not likely to be taken up in state agreements. Some of their claims relate to more radical ideas of climate justice, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as a human rights obligation, the explicit focus on justice for individuals (as opposed to states) or the abolishment of market-based mechanisms. However, their practices are rather reform-oriented and have been adapted to the standard procedures within the UNFCCC’s institutional framework.

Our research makes a threefold contribution to IR scholarship. First, we have employed the concept of practices in the field of climate politics and we have shown how the climate justice movement acts as a community of practice at the UNFCCC. Second, we have zoomed into this community of practice to gain a better and deeper understanding of the variety of climate justice practices, including differences in claims and performances, applied. We also show how these relate to normative justice claims based in Green Political Theory and Environmental Philosophy. Third, we have

demonstrated how each network within the community of practice—even those with more radical objectives—minimised the demands formulated at the outset in order to successfully cooperate with state actors in the given institutional setting. Thus, we can conclude that the climate justice movement operating within the UNFCCC has discursively established strong links to theoretical justice claims but applies pragmatic practices in its everyday interactions with decision-makers at the COPs. As a community of practice which includes a variety of groups this non-confrontational approach can also be interpreted as a reflection of this diverse setting of actors. This means that, even though rights and justice claims have become more prominent or even mainstreamed in the UNFCCC negotiations, we cannot expect any radical changes in inter-governmental climate decisions aimed at realising climate justice for individuals, societal groups or future generations.

Furthermore, we have observed that non-state actors who seek to influence the actual language of climate politics actively aim for official recognition and formal status not only as accredited observers but also as constituency of the UNFCCC. Against this background, one avenue for further research would be to contrast our findings with an analysis of the climate justice practices of those non-state actors that deliberately decide to stay *outside* the multilateral process.

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