Racism and Climate (In)Justice

How Racism and Colonialism shape the Climate Crisis and Climate Action

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Introduction

The year 2020 starkly exposed anti-blackness and many other forms of racism in societies of the Global North, leading to increasing recognition of the linkages between racial and climate injustice. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted and exacerbated socio-economic inequalities both within and between countries. Inside the climate movement, calls were made for a just and resilient recovery from COVID-19 so as to address such inequalities. While protesting racist violence and injustice, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement also highlighted how environmental, climate and racial injustice are intertwined. At the same time, the role of racism in international climate policy was the focus of discussion in a number of recent articles and blogs, including by former United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.[1] As 2020 became the hottest year on record,[2] extreme weather events continue to bring devastation in the Global South, while within countries of the Global North they are hitting Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPoC) the hardest. At the same time, developed countries have failed to meet their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement. To fully understand today's systemic risks and converging crises, it is important to look into the root causes of racial and climate injustice.

Decades of research and activism on environmental racism[3] provide a proven framework to analyze the global distribution of the impacts of the climate crisis, as countries and regions which were formerly colonized bear the brunt of current and projected future climate change impacts. In addition, emerging literature increasingly recognizes that the Global North's "developed" status is intrinsically linked not only to their own standards and Western definition of what it *is* to be developed, but also to their shared colonial past. Yet, countries that started the colonial project continue to shape the global development agenda, including development research, financial assistance and climate finance discourses.[4] These realities and research findings have implications for climate policy and action. This framing paper therefore examines the ways in which colonialism and racism have shaped climate change, climate policy, the international agenda for development aid related to climate change, and climate finance interventions, as well as the resulting impacts of climate change on populations. It shares reflections on the key roles colonial continuities and prevailing racist hierarchies continue to play in the international community's failure to effectively respond to the climate crisis. It also provides insights on ways to urgently address institutional racism in climate change policy and action, with a focus on international climate governance.

This paper presents: (I) how colonialism and racism have enabled climate change, (II) how colonialism and racism have shaped climate policy and action, and (III) how racialized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change within countries. It also suggests ways to urgently decolonize movements, institutions and both white and BIPoC physical bodies through a deep cultural change, as well as undertake structural and institutional reforms to address institutional racism at scale (IV). The paper demonstrates that there can be no climate justice without racial justice, and that a clear, deep and empirically grounded understanding of the many links between those two types of

[1] Ban and Verkooijen, 2020.

[2] See: https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/2020-tied-for-warmest-year-on-record-nasa-analysis-shows.

[3] Environmental racism is described by Bullard, (2004) as "systems that produce and perpetuate inequalities in exposure to environmental pollutants" and thus cause disproportionate harm to BIPoC individuals and communities.

[4] Nwajiaku-Dahou and Leon-Himmelstine, 2020; Sierp, 2020.

injustice is essential to addressing both, from their foundations up.

1. How have colonialism and racism contributed to climate change?

The history of how climate change started seldom mentions the colonization, genocide, racism and slavery that paved the way towards industrialization and massive land use changes. Understanding such long-term historical processes, in relation to mindsets and power relations, is essential to grasping and addressing the overlap between racial and climate injustice.

1.1. Racism and anthropogenic climate change are historically linked

Critics of the concept of the "Anthropocene" point to a human-made global climate event that predates the industrial revolution. Known as the "Orbis Spike,"[5] the rapid cooling of the global climate in the late 16th century is a direct consequence of the genocide perpetrated by Iberic invaders in Latin America.[6] The rapid rewilding of huge tracts of land as a direct consequence of this genocide cooled global temperatures rapidly and noticeably. Recasting the first anthropogenic change in global temperatures as a result of the first wave of colonization reveals the interwovenness of racism and climate change.[7] Racism as it operates today has a complex history, in which the context of mass violence during colonization of the Americas was a key phase.[8] According to decolonial perspectives, key impulses for the construction of racism came from theories contributing to the biologization and hierarchization of humans as a means to justify the violent colonial expansion of Spain and Portugal. The related genocides, dispossession and enslavement of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, and soon after Africa, were the building blocks of racist theories and practices.[9] The genocides in the Americas, the mass enslavement and the importation of Africans to the American colonies constituted the largest population replacement in millennia. In addition, the introduction of plants and animals on a large scale led to irreversible ecological transformations.

It is no coincidence that anthropogenic climate change and racism both emerged during the genocidal conquest of the Americas. From a decolonial perspective, the construction of the "conquering ego" to justify and normalize genocidal violence on an unprecedented scale during the first wave of colonization of what was to become Latin America laid the foundation for the "cartesian ego" of modern Western thought.[10] The cartesian ego is characterized by its mind-body dualism, and its view of nature as an object to be dominated. According to this perspective, the transformation of human-nature relationships from embeddedness to domination, and the establishment of the non-white 'other' and women as part of nature, belong to the same dynamic.[11] The cartesian view of the world also underpins the exploitation of natural resources and a disregard for what is called "externalities" in economic discourse. It normalizes an instrumental view of nature and renders climate injustice invisible by obscuring culpability and responsibility for emissions and other climate harms.

Such long-standing hierarchies between white/BIPoC, men/women, and culture/nature, which have been institutionalized globally since the colonial era, also explain why BIPoC women and non-binary people continue to experience heightened vulnerability generally, and in relation to the

[5] Lewis and Maslin, 2015.

[6] Yussof, 2018.

[7] Yussof, 2018.

[8] Appelbaum, 2020; Feros, 2017.

[9] Dussel, 1885, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2015.

[10] Maldonaldo-Torres, 2007.

[11] Dussel, 1985, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2015.

climate crisis more specifically. Such hierarchies have a significant impact on access to resources and various forms of capital, which are a major determinant of socio-economic opportunities for individuals and population groups within a country. In turn, access to socio-economic opportunities plays a critical part in the ability of population groups and individuals to cope with and recover from climate change impacts today. According to Haynes and Kheel, the intersectionality of racism, sexism, and classism are also illustrated in the discourse of "sacrifice," and the reality of "sacrifice zones,"[12] by which contemporary western elites rationalize injustices generated against countries, population groups or communities, as unavoidable to ensure their own livelihood and safety.[13]

1.2. Colonization and racist hierarchies fostered the climate emergency

The colonial era laid the foundation and created a structural opportunity for racist hierarchies to be normalized and institutionalized. Contemporary political, economic, scientific and cultural conditions around the world are shaped by direct and indirect continuities from the colonial era, which are characterized by the violent expansion of European economies.[14] The coloniality of the present global, regional, national and local systems remain the enabler of modernity,[15] including in its institutional, industrial and environmental dimensions.

Practically, colonization has permitted the unfolding of the climate crisis by facilitating and establishing the global overexploitation of natural resources to fuel industrialization in Europe and the United States, as well as concomitant and associated land use changes that would contribute to a steady rise in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. As part of a "New Imperialism" between 1870 and 1914, European countries established formal political, economic and social control over almost all territories of the world.[16] In 1914, Europe nominally controlled 84 percent of the world's land surface, against 35 percent in 1800.[17] The unrivalled profits of enslavement followed by violent colonial expansion fueled the industrial revolution by providing European countries with access to raw material, such as oil, rubber, wood, cotton, copper, gold, iron, and cobalt, which were abundant in Africa, at minimal costs.[18] As a result, industrialization and the tripling of international trade[19] between 1878 and 1918 afforded European countries with the power to successfully take and profitably maintain their numerous colonies overseas.[20] Consequently, the industrial revolution marks the beginning of a steady rise in global GHG emissions, with a sharper turn from the 1910 decade, as documented in various reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Besides, although many colonized countries gained independence after the Second World War, scholars of law, history and politics argue[21] that the Global North's domination of former empires simply became subtle and insidious. Industrialization is one of the main drivers of anthropogenic climate change, which has resulted in an increase in global temperature by over 1°C between 1880 and 2020.[22]

Colonial continuities and institutionalized racist hierarchies also help explain why anthropogenic climate change continues to have such a devastating human impact, particularly in the Global South, and has now reached the alarming status of a climate

[12] Haynes and Kheel, 2008.

[13] Gaard, 2015.

[14] Mahony and Endfield, 2018.

[15] Dussel 2012, Grosfoguel, 2015, Mignolo 2011, Ndlovu-Gasheni 2019.

[16] Parvanova, 2017.

[17] Parvanova, 2017.

[18] Parvanova, 2017; Ewout, 2015.

[19] Ewout, 2015.

[20] Parvanova, 2017.

[21] Anghie 2005, Getachew 2019,Go, 2016.

[22] See: https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/world-of-change/global-temperatures

emergency. There is a "perverse paradox"[23] in that resources were expropriated from colonized countries and territories in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to fuel industrialization, which would later contribute to the rise in GHG emissions, and trigger climate change impacts that would critically affect formerly colonized countries and territories. The vulnerability of those countries and territories to climate change impacts is further compounded by the fact that they were pillaged during the colonial era, which left them "underdeveloped,"[24] and with few resources to address climate change impacts.[25] Besides, taking the example of the Caribbean, Sealey-Huggins argues that upon securing their independence, such societies were frequently forced into forms of development that seemed ill-suited in facilitating sustainable economic development, and a flourishing of their population, but which were better suited and/or crafted to maintain or exacerbate inequalities.[26] Consequently, the mapping of the distribution of climate change impacts follows a pattern clearly marked by colonial continuities.[27] Most countries in the formerly colonized Global South can be classified as "climate forced riders," as they bear the brunt of current and future climate impacts, and are particularly vulnerable to such impacts, while having contributed minimally to the climate crisis.[28]

1.3. The 'Anthropocene' posits the white male as the universal human

The concept of Anthropocene, which means the *new age (-cene) of man (anthropos),* does not only mark the geological age in which human beings have been impacting the climate system in ways that are being recorded in sediments. It also brings to the forefront the shared responsibility of all human beings in the current climate crisis. It implies that the human-nature relationship that brought about the crisis is part of the human condition. However, reflecting on the sections above, who is the "*anthropos*"? In other words, who is the *man* of this *new age of man* who is responsible for destabilizing the Earths' climate and its ecosystem, as the agent in this undertaking of terra(de)forming? Only a small group of human beings have historically contributed to climate change, while at the same time largely destroying many different indigenous ways of interacting with nature. The concept of Anthropocene defines the white male as the epitome of the human. It is a case of conceptual overreach which has significant discursive and political consequences.[29] More precisely, the concept of Anthropocene universalizes the polluting behavior of the Global North, and its related system, as being central to a global human condition. The term obscures the fact that a very small percentage of the population is responsible for the anthropogenic emissions while also benefiting from the very conditions that created it.[30] It tends to blur both historically differential responsibility and unevenly distributed impacts of the climate crisis.

Consequently, the Anthropocene would more accurately be called the "racial capitalocene"[31] according to Verges, as a way to expose implied relationships to race, capitalism, imperialism and gender that are part of this specific vision of the "*anthropos.*" Questioning this supposedly universal vision can also give more prominence to different perspectives on the crises we are undergoing and its possible resolution. Critical ecofeminism which has long highlighted the link between the overexploitation of nature, colonial racism, sexism and oppression of In-

[23] Sealey-Huggins, 2017.
[24] Rodney, 1982.
[25] Philips, 2019.
[26] Sealey-Huggins, 2017.
[27] Althor et al., 2016.
[28] Althor et al., 2016.
[29] Wynter, 2003.
[30] Pulido, 2018.
[31] Verges, 2017.

digenous people and their human-nature relations[32] offers such perspectives. So do environmental justice movements with their roots in a Black radical tradition that enables intersectional analysis of racist, sexist, heterosexist and classist dynamics of environmental racism. This offers a perspective that in turn empowers cross-community solidarity and action, while retaining the critique of specific racism as it manifests in disparate environmental and climate impacts.[33] In another register, Afrofuturism and African futurism,[34] introduce ways of looking at possible futures through an African diasporic and/or African cultural lens, blending the future, the past, and the present.[35] Indigenous Peoples around the world continue to uphold values, visions, understandings and specific knowledge that have long been undervalued and misrepresented although they can help foster a deep understanding of the human condition and have empirically been shown to enable a sustainable guardianship of nature.[36]

2. How have colonialism and racism shaped climate policy and action?

2.1. Insufficient and inadequate climate action is a blatant illustration of colonial continuities and racism

The lack and inadequacy of climate action from countries in the Global North is particularly salient when considering: (a) the history of international climate policy, (b) the double standards that exist in climate policy and action applied today by countries of the Global North, and (c) the design and implementation of measures to address the impacts of climate change in a way that aligns with the objectives of developing countries within the Global South. The section below provides evidence as to why this can be seen as a manifestation of racism, or as an attempt by countries in the Global North to maintain their place in the global hierarchy. Such countries continue to deliberately dominate by manipulating countries within the Global South, as well as BIPoC in the Global North, who are being disproportionately hit by climate change impacts.

2.1.1. International climate policy lags in prioritizing the protection of the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

The long history of international climate policy has not resulted in the protection of the most vulnerable from the impacts of climate change. In 1856, American scientist Eunice Foote proposed that variations in the amount of CO_2 could increase the temperature of the atmosphere and lead to changes to the climate.[37] The first global conference on global warming was held in 1988. Shortly afterwards the UN General Assembly declared climate change as a threat to humankind and mandated a multilateral process to address climate change.[38] This led to the UNFCCC being established in 1992, with the objective of stabilizing GHG emissions to levels that would prevent dangerous “anthropogenic interference with the climate system” so that ecosystems would be able to adapt naturally, food production would not be threatened and economic development could proceed sustainably.[39] In recognizing their responsibility, developed countries also committed to supporting vulnerable developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change where adaptation was required.[40]

Even before the UNFCCC was established, small island developing states advocated for

32 Plumwood, 1993; 2001.

33 Pulido and De lara, 2018.

34 Okorafor, 2019.

35 Verges, 2017.

36 Schuster et al., 2019.

37 Jackson, 2019.

38 UN General Assembly, 1988.

39 UN, 1992.

40 UN, 1992.

a mechanism to compensate them for loss and damage incurred as a result of sea level rise.[41] The proposal was not incorporated into the UNFCCC in its final formulation. However, the UNFCCC does recognize the historical responsibility of developed countries for the impacts of climate change.[42] For the first decade of its existence the UNFCCC focused on mitigation efforts with the hope that the most dangerous impacts of climate change would be avoided. However, in 2001 it became clear that more focus on adaptation was needed. The National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) were established to help Least Developed Countries (LDCs) identify their most urgent adaptation priorities.[43] At COP 8 in late 2002, the Delhi Declaration was issued by several developing country Parties to highlight adaptation as a priority and demanded more support to reduce vulnerability and adapt to the impacts of climate change.[44] Notwithstanding, developed countries promoted a global temperature goal of 2℃ at COP 15 even with the knowledge that this magnitude of warming would have catastrophic impacts for many countries in the Global South.[45] As Naomi Klein argues:

> [t]his well-known target, which supposedly represents the "safe" limit of climate change, has always been a highly political choice that has more to do with minimizing economic disruption than protecting the greatest number of people.[46]

In 2010, when it became clear that neither mitigation nor adaptation levels were sufficient to avoid the most dangerous impacts of climate change, a work program was created to better understand approaches to address loss and damage[47]. In 2013 the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage was established to promote approaches to address loss and damage in vulnerable developing countries, building on the work done by the Alliance of Small Island States. It is clear that developing countries have long called for support to address climate change impacts, for which they are both least responsible for and most vulnerable to. Yet, concrete action has been inadequate.

Current global average temperature has already increased by over 1℃ compared to pre-industrial levels,[48] and scientists are projecting the world is moving towards a 3℃ global average warming[49] by the end of the century provided that national pledges and climate policies are implemented. This is occurring despite a commitment in the Paris Agreement to keep warming well below 2℃, and to make a concerted effort to limit warming to 1.5℃. The focus on 2℃, rather than 1.5℃, as the pre-eminent global temperature goal, has been characterized as "carbon capitalism," highlighting that the global community agreed to a global temperature limit that is untenable for many countries in the Global South.[50] Moreover, the Paris Agreement does not provide a roadmap for how to limit warming to 2℃, let alone 1.5℃. Clémençon argued that the Paris Agreement let developed countries "off the hook" for their massive contributions to historical emissions, put increased pressure on developing countries, and left vulnerable developing countries even more exposed to climate change impacts that are increasing in both magnitude and frequency.[51]

[41] Roberts and Huq, 2015.

[42] UN, 1992.

[43] UNFCCC, 2002.

[44] UNFCCC, 2003.

[45] Klein, 2014.

[46] Klein, 2014.

[47] UNFCCC, 2011.

[48] IPCC, 2018.

[49] See: http://costs_of_inaction.climateanalytics.org/index.html

[50] Di Muzio, 2015; Sealey-Huggins, 2017.

[51] Clémençon, 2016:4.

2.1.2. The hypocrisy of the Global North on climate policy and action

Since 2016, 1,867 jurisdictions within 33 countries have declared "climate emergencies".[52] Most of these declarations have come from local governments within the Global North including in Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Though several developed countries in the Global North have declared national climate emergencies, the financial commitments they have made and realized are not commensurate with the urgency of the climate crisis. The United Kingdom, for example, declared a national climate emergency in May of 2019, yet reduced Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.5 percent of GDP in late 2020 at a time when vulnerable developing countries need finance more than ever to address some of the determinants of vulnerability to climate change, which include access to healthcare, social protection and economic opportunities.[53]

It was not until the impacts of climate change began to manifest within their own territories that political leaders in developed countries declared "climate emergencies." This recent move can be explained by the fact that privileged white people within those countries were now beginning to feel the impacts of climate change.[54] Sealey-Huggins thus questions whether it would have taken so long to acknowledge the climate emergency, "if the lives of BIPoC mattered as much as those of white people."[55] Despite the fact that the vulnerability of developing countries to climate change is widely acknowledged and backed up by evidence,[56] according to BIPoC climate negotiators and observers, developed countries often emphasize their own vulnerability within the UNFCCC international negotiations to justify the need to dedicate financial resources to their own national adaptation needs.

Lack of data is often blamed for the failure to adequately assess how climate impacts and risks are experienced in developing countries. However, Nightingale and his co-authors argue that the lack of information about how climate change impacts and risks are experienced in the South due to the production of knowledge dominated by perspectives from the Global North and a failure to engage with those experiences.[57] This, coupled with a much higher investment in the Global North, has exacerbated the divide in climate science between Global South and North.[58] A lack of investment in technology and infrastructure in the Global South is also part of a vicious cycle in which a lack of climate data and information on the impacts of climate change in the Global South is used to justify delayed or inadequate climate action.[59]

Despite an urgent need, developed countries have not met their commitments to provide 100 billion USD a year by 2020 to support both mitigation and adaptation and address loss and damage in developing countries as agreed in the international negotiation process under the UNFCCC.[60] A recent OECD report maintained that in 2017-2018, 59.5 billion USD in public finance was provided to developing countries.[61] However, in a shadow report, Oxfam argued that the net support provided to developing countries in 2017/2018 was actually between 19 and 22.5 billion USD.[62] Furthermore, globally, only

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[52] See: https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/.

[53] See: https://www.climatechangenews.com/2020/11/25/uk-aid-budget-cuts-undermine-trust-ahead-cop26-summit-experts-warn/.

[54] Iyas-Jarrett, 2020.

[55] Sealey Huggins, 2017.

[56] IPCC, 2014.

[57] Nightingale et al., 2020.

[58] Nightingale et al., 2020.

[59] Nightingale et al., 2020.

[60] UNFCCC, 2010.

[61] OECD, 2020.

[62] Carty et al., 2020.

about 20 percent of climate finance is dedicated to adaptation, despite a commitment in the Paris Agreement to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation.[63] According to a report released by CARE International in 2021, actual disbursements for adaptation finance tend to be inflated by governments of the Global North.[64] Increasingly adaptation finance is provided in concessional - and increasingly non-concessional - loans.[65]. The poorest and most vulnerable people in the world - who are predominantly BIPoC - are literally paying interest on the adaptation measures their countries are forced to implement. This is despite the fact that the historical responsibility of the global North and its obligations to help developing countries adapt to the impacts of climate change are well laid out in the UNFCCC. When finance for adaptation is available it is often difficult to access. The countries in most need of climate finance often lack the capacity and human resources to access it.[66] These countries also often lack adequate climate information and evidence to support project proposals and make a case for why the projects are urgently needed. In addition, despite longstanding calls from both civil society and developing countries,[67] there is no specific financial mechanism dedicated to supporting efforts to address loss and damage in developing countries. This leaves vulnerable developing countries often forced to finance adaptation with loans from developing countries, thus paying for the cost of addressing loss and damage from domestic resources.

2.1.3. Climate finance and development actors do not meet the actual needs of their BIPoC "beneficiaries"

Developing countries, as well as Indigenous Peoples and other communities particularly vulnerable to climate change within them, have long been articulating what they need to address the impacts of climate change. Yet, the needs of the most vulnerable and presently most affected countries, regions and people remain unaddressed and unmet. This can be explained in part by the fact that development policies of donors are crafted at the headquarters of multilateral and bilateral development agencies, based on what the developed nations' government(s) deem important.[68] As a result, donor interventions, which are often fragmented and sometimes competing, tend to prioritize physical infrastructure over social policy or social protection, for instance.[69] Even when projects are proposed by governments or local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), they are tailored to what donors will fund.[70] Swyngedouw has argued that - despite claims - top down adaptation projects funded by donors to benefit local communities are often neither participatory nor democratic.[71] According to an Indigenous climate activist, Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized groups are ignored at all levels of decision making. The lack of engagement with unequal power relationships in both adaptation research and practice can lead to adaptation interventions that do not benefit the poorest and most marginalized.[72] In some cases, local communities even resort to blocking the implementation of adaptation measures, as one of the very few tools available to those whose voices are not heard in the design of policies and interventions that intimately affect their lives.[73]

[63] Yeo, 2019.

[64] CARE, 2021.

[65] Caraty et al., 2020; CARE, 2021

[66] Tanner et al., 2019.

[67] Hirsch et al., 2018; SoP et al., 2021.

[68] Roberts, 2020.

[69] Pelling et. al, 2018.

[70] Bertzold, 2015.

[71] Swyngedouw, 2010.

[72] Pelling, 2011; Mikulewicz, 2018; Pelling and Garschagen, 2019.

[73] Mikulewicz and Podgórska, 2020.

In the rural community of Ponta Baleia, in Sâo Tome and Príncipe,[74] research on an adaptation project implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in partnership with the national government, found that the objectives of the project were misaligned with the needs of the community. The project was aimed at expanding the options for climate resilient livelihoods in the community. In the planning phase, community members told UNDP that the activities planned in the project did not include additional and adequate housing that the community needed. Without an agreed way forward UNDP and the Ministry of Agriculture decided not to implement the project. The study found that the community had a history of being bypassed for investment, and of having disappointing experiences with outside development actors and failed interventions. This led to a prevailing sense of resignation and abandonment. The short-term nature of the project, like many adaptation interventions, was likely to limit its ability to facilitate long-term change. The project design had also failed to engage with the local authorities. The disparity between the local needs and the national priorities was evident. The study concluded with a set of recommendations which included ensuring that local governments and communities have more decision-making power in adaptation and development projects.[75]

This example illustrates how colonial continuities materialize in the top-down approach adopted by UN organizations. Multilateral and bilateral organizations provide financial support for adaptation interventions, while excluding marginalized groups in the design, planning and implementation of adaptation interventions,[76] and with complete disregard for the local social and political processes that produce specific distributions of vulnerability.[77] A recent report commissioned by the Norwegian Minister for Development Cooperation demonstrates that adaptation interventions often reinforce or redistribute existing inequalities and "vulnerability," as well as introduce new risks and sources of vulnerability.[78]

2.2. Colonialism and racism are embedded in structures, institutions, and organizations confronting the climate crisis

2.2.1. At the structural and institutional levels: a silencing of colonial continuities and racist biases

Articles and blogs published in 2020,[79] as well as interviews and desk research undertaken for this paper, suggest that there is limited engagement in research and practice with the way in which colonialism and racism have influenced climate and development policies. Critical literature on the concept and practice of development has long pointed to historical, conceptual and empirical aspects linking colonialism to development discourse and practice, including in ostensibly more egalitarian development paradigms such as the millennium and sustainable development goals.[80] However, these concepts are largely ignored by mainstream institutions which could be seen as a "colonization of minds" as pointed out by a BIPoC climate negotiator. In their reflections on how racism can be confronted in international development, researchers Kathryn Nwajiaku-Dahou and Carmen Leon-Himmelstine, of the Overseas Development Institute maintain that international development, and by extension climate change projects, implemented by international development actors, have long been criticized for failing to acknowledge

[74] Mikulewicz and Podgórska, 2020.

[75] This is a call made frequently in the literature including most recently in Nightingale et al., 2020.

[76] Eriksen et al., 2021.

[77] Eriksen et al., 2021.

[78] Eriksen et al., 2021.

[79] See for example: Holthaus, 2020; Thomas and Haynes, 2020; Johnson, 2020; Margolin, 2020; Nwajiaku-Dahou and Leon-Himmelstine, 2020; Roberts, 2020.

[80] Ziai, 2015.

that it is built on norms, practices and ideologies from its colonial past, including racism.[81] This influence persists, in part, because confronting colonialism and racism in international interventions creates discomfort among researchers and practitioners. Hence, racism in the form of silencing discussions on racisms and a failing to confront the issue in climate policy normalizes an environment in which the linkages between international development, climate policy and racism, as a root cause of vulnerability, cannot be addressed.

Not engaging with racism also limits the consideration of critical BIPoC perspectives in climate policy and practice. According to BIPoC climate experts there is an indirect colonization through larger international climate institutions that apply for funding and include BIPoC organizations from the Global South as part of the project consortium. More often than not, the project is led by international institutions headed by white people, that subsequently exert their positions, and solutions on the Global South project partners in a manner that ranks Global North perspectives superior to the Global South contributions. While this is the "norm", it is rarely challenged by organizations from the South, as the requirement to access climate funding or grants from the North is hindered by inadequate resources.

In order to shape a just and equitable world, according to Nwajiaku-Dahou and Leon-Himmelstine, institutions within the Global North will have to recognize and confront the "colonial underpinnings" of contemporary international development.[82] This is not an easy task given that the United Nations, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, and other multilateral organizations are structured in ways that enable and normalize dominance by the Global North in procedures and decision making.[83] According to BIPoC climate negotiators, the global climate policy regime under the UNFCCC fails to engage with racism and to provide adequate avenues for the representation of Indigenous Peoples, which is all the more problematic when recognizing that Indigenous Peoples have long-standing expertise as stewards of ecosystems. International processes, such as international negotiations under the UNFCCC currently function according to representational rules that prevent representation of Indigenous Peoples as autonomous from the nation states they live in. Indigenous People can participate in the UNFCCC process as observers through Indigenous-led organizations for instance, but the avenues for providing direct inputs in the international climate negotiation process through equal representation in decision-making is largely limited to the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform.

Climate activist and chair of the Climate Justice Alliance, Elizabeth Yeampierre also argues that, "the mainstream environmental movement," was "built by people who 'cared' about conservation, who 'cared' about wildlife, who 'cared' about trees and open space… but didn't care about [B]lack people".[84] Many international and non-governmental organizations from the Global North working on climate justice in the Global South also embody the "white savior complex,"[85] in which their actions that are supposed to benefit BIPoC recipients are largely self-serving endeavors. Moreover, climate resilience, from adaptation to addressing loss and damage, is often framed in terms of technological fixes and nature-based "solutions," ignoring the multi-faceted conditions that give rise to vulnerability to climate change, which include racism, marginalization and exclusion.[86] As such, climate policy and action tend to neglect concerns for social justice, and present climate change in

[81] Nwajiaku-Dahou and Leon-Himmelstine, 2020.

[82] Nwajiaku-Dahou and Leon-Himmelstine, 2020.

[83] Grovogui, 2018; Ndlovu-Gathseni, 2013.

[84] Gardiner, 2020.

[85] Aronson, 2017.

[86] Pelling, 2011; Pelling et al., 2015; Roberts and Pelling, 2020.

reductionist technical terms.[87] These technical approaches are proliferated by existing institutions and fail to engage with both the way in which racism shapes vulnerability within countries and the role of racism in the global social order. Unsurprisingly, this technical approach often fails to bring about lasting positive change.[88] As Hoerner and Robinson argue, "racism creates bad climate policy."[89]

The term "green colonialism" has been coined to describe how Global North's companies, international institutions and other organizations implement "sustainable development" policies and actions that take advantage of people and ecosystems in the Global South. As Sealey-Huggins argues: "unequal global power relations allow "carbon-neutral" consumption in the North to continue, at the expense of high social and ecological costs in the South."[90] The batteries of electric cars and of other appliances multiplying in our digital era, which are often presented as reducing the ecological costs of transportation, require rare minerals mined in countries of the Global South with significant impacts on the health of local communities and their ecosystems.[91] The use of biomass and biofuels to produce "clean energy" in the Global North can be at the expense of primary forests, and their inhabitants, including Indigenous Peoples. Meanwhile, countries in the Global North continue to subsidize fossil fuels and GHG producing industries, which highlights that the creation of stranded assets is inherent to the current international economic institutions and takes priority over stranded people both in developed and in developing countries. Lastly, international debt and financial flows are still accounted for without integrating environmental externalities, including GHG emissions. Through those processes, populations and natural ecosystems in the Global South are rendered expendable, and their survival secondary to other priorities defining policy and research on both climate change mitigation, adaptation and addressing loss and damage.

2.2.2. At organizational level: interpersonal and institutional racism leading to tokenization

Both interpersonal and institutional racism are pervasive within organizations working in the climate change field, including within the UN system. A survey of over 688 UN staff members at the UN Human Rights Council and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid in Geneva in August of 2020 revealed that one in every three UN staff:

> have personally experienced racial discrimination and/or have witnessed others facing racial discrimination in the workplace. Moreover two-thirds of those who experienced racism did so on the basis of nationality.

Another survey of UN staff undertaken in New York was equally revealing. According to its findings, 59 percent of the respondents said:

> they don't feel the UN effectively addresses racial justice in the workplace, while every second respondent stated that they do not feel comfortable talking about racial discrimination at work.[92]

In his address in November of 2020, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres subsequently underscored the need to confront racism within the world body.[93]

Moreover, BIPoC engaging in the climate movement within various organizations, especially those in the Global North, tend to be marginalized. For instance, in January 2020,

87 Swyngedouw, 2010; Sealy-Huggins, 2017; Sealy-Huggins, 2018; Nightingale et al., 2020 and Eriksen et al., 2021.

88 Bunce et al., 2010.

89 Hoerner and Robinson, 2009.

90 Sealey-Huggins, 2017.

91 Popp et al., 2014.

92 See: http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/08/staff-surveys-reveal-widespread-racism-united-nations/.

93 UN Secretary General, 2020.

Ugandan youth climate activist Vanessa Nakate was cropped out of photos depicting her and other young climate activists – all of whom are white – at the World Economic Forum.[94] In the summer of 2020, Tonny Nowshin, who was the only BIPoC activist protesting outside a coal plant in Germany among white activists, was removed from photos shared by Greenpeace Germany on its social media,[95] for which Greenpeace later acknowledged an "error" due to "unconscious racism" and "white privilege."[96] Based on her experience, Nowshin argues that BIPoC are accepted if they "fit in"[to] the narrative according to which they are the "victims" of climate change.[97] Hence, BIPoC tend to be marginalized in organizations of the climate movement, while their inclusion is tokenary, and/or cloaked in "victimhood." The cropping of BIPoC activists from photos can be seen as a "metaphorical crop-out" of BIPoC from the mainstream narrative of climate change and its solutions.[98] As a result, the global climate crisis is being addressed without drawing upon the expertise of those most affected by it.[99] This can partly be explained by the fact that in the era of colonization, racist hierarchies constructed an image of Africans and Indigenous Peoples as intellectually inferior and irrational.[100] Wynter further highlights how this systemic stigmatization and related social inferiorization continue to be reflected in the ways in which the knowledge and know-how of BIPoC population groups is assessed. In other words, western knowledge is considered as expertise while the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples acquired over centuries is not. Despite emerging discourse on the need to integrate western science and Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, the two knowledge systems are still very rarely considered on an equal footing. By silencing BIPoC voices from both the Global North and South, white people in the Global North ensure that BIPoC do not contribute to the organizational changes that are needed to ensure climate change is limited and impacts are addressed.

The participation of BIPoC in organizations and activist groups tackling climate change in the Global North can be curtailed by their specific circumstances. BIPoC are more affected by the impacts of climate change, both in the Global North and Global South, and Black Americans are more likely to be concerned about climate change than their white American counterparts.[101] Yet, colonial continuities and institutional racism, which limits access to finance, media and other resources, can derail the efforts of BIPoC in their participation in the climate movement, as well as their due recognition as national or international leaders. In the United States, the mainstream environmental movement is referred to as the "Big Greens" due to their large budget and staff, which gives them center stage. This also contributes to explaining why the participation of BIPoC in the climate movement in the Global North tends to be framed in terms of representation and inclusion, more than in terms of leadership. Sulaiman Ilyas-Jarrett also stresses that it might be "difficult [for BIPoC] to focus on the thing that might hurt you tomorrow when there's something else that might hurt you today," with reference to mass incarceration and the threat of violence from the State.[102] Yet, BIPoC climate activists from both Global North and South highlight that the climate emergency is already upon them, that it builds on an ecological crisis that they have suffered from for decades if not centuries – and that they are actively leading significant efforts and initiatives at local and national levels. The invisibility or invisibilization of those initiatives would be another manifestation of institutional racism, highlighting the extent to which BIPoC voices are silenced in the mainstream narrative.

[94] Evelyn, 2020.

[95] Nowshin, 2020.

[96] See: https://www.greenpeace.de/themen/ueber-uns/ein-vorwurf-der-uns-trifft.

[97] Nowshin, 2020.

[98] Evelyn, 2020.

[99] Kaplan, 2020.

[100] Wynter, 2003.

[101] Johnson, 2020.

[102] Ilyas-Jarrett, 2020.

3. How are Indigenous Peoples and other racialized communities disproportionately impacted by climate change in countries?

It is well documented that vulnerabilities to the impact of climate change are not "natural", and cannot be reduced to environmental or geophysical factors.[103] Rather, as Sealey-Huggins pointed out, vulnerability is "[p]rofoundly patterned by the ways in which we organize our societies so as to suit some people's interests at the direct and indirect expense of others."[104] The resulting inequality, fueled by intersectionality, translates into higher levels of exposure to, and compounded risks of climate change. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black American law professor who coined the term "intersectionality" in 1989, "all inequality is not created equal," and an intersectional lens to inequality shows the way BIPoC social identities overlap and operate together, creating compounding experiences of discrimination based on [the] race, gender, class, sexuality and/or immigrant status.[105] Unfortunately, the voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of these oppressions are still largely ignored in both climate policy processes and research in the Global North and South.

Besides, the environmental challenges and needs of BIPoC in the Global North and BIPoC in the Global South are also vast and differing. These groups, though connected through complex historic and contemporary linkages, are not monoliths. The challenges they face are different and the recommendations to address them need to take into account both linkages and key differences. While both groups faced historic and current environmental racism and climate injustice, their present needs do not fall under a single umbrella, as the intersectionality of the challenges for countries in the Global South adds a further layer of injustice.

3.1. In the Global North, Black, Indigenous and People of Color remain among the hardest hit by climate change impacts

In countries of the Global North, BIPoC communities experience greater pollution, environmental degradation, and climate change impacts than white communities, while having less access to healthcare. This amounts to a starkly racialized differential impact described as environmental racism.[106] For instance, in the United States, BIPoC make up 57 percent of residents in a two-mile radius of hazardous facilities, and make up 60 percent of those living near two polluting facilities.[107] Referring to the North American case, Elizabeth Yeampierre maintains that:

> when people talk about environmental justice they go back to the 1970s or '60s. But I think about the slave quarters. I think about people who got the worst food, the worst healthcare, the worst treatment, and then when freed, were given lands that were eventually surrounded by things like petrochemical industries. The idea of killing Black people or Indigenous people, all of that has a long, long history that is centered on capitalism and the extraction of our land and our labor in this country.[108]

Moreover, institutional racism continues to shape domestic responses to climate change, leaving BIPoC communities both more vulnerable and exposed to the impacts of climate change. In the United States,

[103] Sealey-Huggins, 2017.

[104] Sealey-Huggins, 2017.

[105] UN Women, 2020.

[106] Bullard, 1993.

[107] See: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/20/robert-bullard-interview-environmental-justice-civil-rights-movement

[108] Gardiner, 2020.

racism has been found to influence the delivery of aid to Black households and communities in responses to and in the aftermath of floods, forest fires, hurricanes and other climate-induced disasters.[109]

Communities of Indigenous Peoples in the Global North are among the worst affected by climate change owing to centuries of exclusion and marginalization. Climate change has profound implications for the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and the sense of place as environments change.[110] In some cases, climate change impacts are causing displacement and forcing the relocation of entire communities. In Alaska, for instance, sea level rise and temperature increases are accelerating coastal erosion and permafrost thaw, which are making it difficult for some communities of Indigenous Peoples to remain where they are.[111] Several communities are faced with the need to relocate while a complicated and ambiguous governance framework and the huge cost involved in the undertaking makes planning difficult.[112] In the fall of 2019, Newtok, a village on the Ningliq River, Alaska, relocated to another community over 15 kilometers away.[113] Though the relocation had been planned for over two decades, when members of the community began moving, only one-third of the 60 homes needed had been built and those that had been constructed had electricity but lacked access to public water and sanitation systems.[114] As a result, half of the community remained in the old village while the other half began the process of re-settling in the new village. More importantly, there is an immense sense of loss of history, identity, and traditional knowledge systems, as residents settle into an unfamiliar place which is further from traditional hunting grounds.[115]

Refugees and populations who have migrated to the Global North from the Global South represent racialized population groups that are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts in recipient countries, owing to unequal access to healthcare, social protection and economic opportunities. In Europe, the predominantly violent reception of economic migrants from Africa also raises numerous questions regarding the future vulnerability, including to climate change impacts, of populations displaced by adverse climate change effects who may seek refuge in the Global North. A large number of African migrants are already left to drown in the Mediterranean sea by European governments.[116] The number of people displaced by climate-related disasters was 18.8 million in 2017.[117] Although people displaced by disasters resort largely to intranational migration today, the number of people displaced by climate change impacts is likely to increase substantially in the course of the 21st century, resulting in increased international migration flows.

3.2. In the Global South, Indigenous Peoples and other racialized communities are the most vulnerable to climate change impacts

Largely ignored in mainstream climate change literature is the continued and profound impact of colonial legacy on climate vulnerabilities in the Global South. Research into the root causes of vulnerability in the Global South shows structural factors such as historical patterns of underdevelopment, colonial histories, neo-colonialism, and neo-liberalism as core drivers of vulnerability.[118] According to Go:

> Empire was always a transnational and global process. It sent slaves across colonial and national borders;

109 Hoerner and Robinson, 2009.

110 Adger et al., 2011; Adams, 2016.

111 Bronen, 2015.

112 Bronen, 2015.

113 Welch, 2019.

114 Welch, 2019.

115 Welch, 2019.

116 Wintour, 2017.

117 EU, 2020.

118 Hammer et al., 2019.

> it generated movements of migrant labor from India to Fiji and down to South Africa; it racialized entire continents of peoples and discursively thrust them all into the same biological and dubious categories; it deployed mechanisms of power that went from colony to metropole and back again; and it invented concepts such as "ethnicities" and "race" that colonizers and formerly colonized actors alike continue to deploy.[119]

The ingrained stigmatization and marginalization of populations along lines of "ethnicity," gender, and socioeconomic status have also produced historically-rooted inequalities that further exacerbate the intersectionality of climate vulnerability. In Mozambique for example, the exclusion of "ethnic" minorities and communities in the design, development and implementation of international climate adaptation finance and interventions have inadvertently supported the relocations of its most politically and economically marginalized groups, through government threatening military force, and withdrawal of basic services for villagers that refuse to relocate.[120] However, the manner in which these socio-political effects of colonial legacy have shaped and continue to shape current vulnerability in the Global South tend to be silenced and ignored in UNFCCC negotiation dynamics, international climate change research and policy. A 2018 systematic review and evaluation of 587 climate change vulnerability research articles reveals that existing publications (1) privilege climatic factors over the social context, (2) neglect to analyze how vulnerability is produced and evolves over time, (3) ignores the existence of multiple perspectives, (4) downplay the understanding of cross-scale interactions, risking potential policy irrelevance and/or promotion of maladaptive practices, and (5) how community-level response to change impacts other communities, regions, or ecosystems, directly or through feedback with larger level processes is largely absent.[121]

Another legacy of colonialism is the persistence of elites in the Global South who retain the outlook of their colonizers. The formation of the elites under colonial rule resulted in the indoctrination and acculturation into the customs of the colonizers. In the French colonies in Africa, for instance, where the colonial policy was assimilation, the goal was to turn "locals" into French citizens who would adopt French customs and cultures. This system was replicated in virtually every colonized community, where education in the tradition of the colonizers (most often Western colonizers) was the ticket to access. The larger effect is that generations of elites have created systems built on the models of the colonialists, systems that do not take into account the realities of the knowledge systems and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples. Such systems and the elite that produce them – and are produced by them – perpetuate colonial practices.

There is already an ongoing movement around decolonization of knowledge and practices in the Global South. This work of decolonization needs to be connected to the discourse on climate change, with connections drawn between climate change and the hierarchies of power that are legacies of colonialism, and that produce varying levels of vulnerability in societies of the Global South. Such research could then come up with different adaptation measures that would take account of these differing levels of vulnerabilities, and that allow the specific needs of the most vulnerable to be met.

[119] Go, 2018.

[120] Eriksen et al., 2021.

[121] Ford, et al 2018.

4. How can racism in climate policy and action be urgently addressed?

Addressing racism in climate policy and actions requires confronting the racialized dimensions of the "socially structured nature of climate change."[122] In other words, and as presented above, global climate governance continues to be steered by former colonial powers, which are neither actively pursuing the 1.5°C target nor meeting their financial commitments to support adaptation, resilience building and efforts to address loss and damage from the impacts of climate change. Meanwhile, BIPoC communities in the Global North, as well as Indigenous Peoples and other racialized communities in the Global South are more affected by the climate crisis than other national communities. The dominance of the Global North is tangible in interpersonal relations, multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as in the climate movement through the design and financing of data-driven, technology-focused climate change projects to be implemented in the Global South. It is further seen through the limited representation, marginalization and tokenization of BIPoC in organizations tackling climate change. Institutional racism also materializes in the silencing or denial of racism by white people working "for" BIPoC communities, both in the Global North and the Global South.

Eliminating racism in climate policy and action requires individual and institutional coordination of multilevel response that would entail: (4.1) acknowledging the history and legacy of colonialism in climate policy and action, (4.2) fostering a deep cultural change within institutions and organizations based in the Global North by: (4.2.1) questioning current inclusion practices in order to foster the actual participation and engagement of diverse BIPoC, (4.2.2) enforcing human rights obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as well as under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and (4.2.3) addressing collective trauma related to climate and racial injustice, and (4.3) fostering solidarity and accountability through structural and institutional reforms with a focus on ending the Global North's dominance in the global climate regime. This means taking up the issues, perspective and diverse world views into account and accepting multiple realities and ways of solving the climate crisis beyond the Global North's perspectives.

The urgency in addressing racial and climate injustice jointly cannot be overstated. The Global South and BIPoC people in general are not a monolith and face challenges based on regional and context-specific power imbalances. Nevertheless, these groups cannot wait for the process of overhauling the architecture of international organizations to unfold in a slow manner, while they continue to be tragically affected by climate change. If there was ever a time for an expedited process of transformation, it is now.

4.1. Acknowledging the history and legacy of colonialism in climate policy and action

The subconscious and hidden racism of modern societies cannot be addressed without individuals, particularly white people, confronting their historical domination and the continued legacy of colonialism. The UN Secretary-General António Guterres has underscored the need to confront racism within the world body, adding that "racism is a complex cultural phenomenon, deeply entrenched in centuries of colonialism and slavery."[123] In addition, history, including the history of international relations, needs to be taught differently by including race-critical perspectives and giving more recognition and space to the work of BIPoC scholars. According to Duncan Bell, University of Cambridge: "The BLM movement demonstrates

[122] Johnson and al., 2018.

[123] UN Secretary General, 2020.

[...] the possibilities for rethinking history in the service of a more equitable future. If mainstream International Relations is to play a part in this vital endeavor it needs to address questions of imperial and racial domination, past and present, far more seriously than it has done in recent years."[124]

The UN must play a more active part in acknowledging the history and legacy of colonialism in its structure, processes and interventions. In 2019, Tendayi Achiume, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, highlighted that steps have yet to be taken to implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action to end racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.[125] She recommended the formation of a global body to acknowledge and address the legacy of transatlantic slavery and colonialism to ensure they are accurately reflected and addressed.[126] The UN General Assembly and the Secretary General have accepted the report and endorsed its recommendations, which must now be actively taken forward post 2020.

In 2019, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights used the term "climate apartheid" to describe the divide between the affluent (who possess the resources to protect themselves from climate-related heat waves, food shortages, and conflict) and the rest of humankind (who will be left to suffer).[127] Yet, experience and literature presented in the sections above suggest that this climate apartheid is also a racial apartheid. This situation raises a number of questions: should a new apartheid resulting from the conjunction of racial and climate injustice be denounced? Could it lead to a more coordinated response in addressing racial and climate injustice? Can we confront and address this history and legacy of colonialism in service of a more equitable future, and in ways that would neither replicate nor strengthen the divide between white and BIPoC, through more tensions and polarization?

An Indigenous climate activist suggested that reverting to the customary and traditional governance system and distinct world views of Indigenous Peoples, which are often grounded in collective ownership and shared responsibility, could both support this process of acknowledgement and offer a way forward.[128]

4.2. Fostering a deep cultural change within institutions and organizations based in the global North

4.2.1. Questioning current inclusion practices to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of diverse BIPoC

Institutional racism cannot be addressed by the mere recruitment of more BIPoC within organizations working at the international level. Neither can it be addressed by the participation of all countries in the international climate negotiations, or by the inclusion of BIPoC in panels at side events on the margins of the UNFCCC climate negotiations. In fact, one should not even speak of "diversity" and "inclusion," as it inherently assumes that the discussion belongs to a set of people who are now working to include other groups. This can only result in "inclusion" and "diversity" as performance.

Additionally, BIPoC working for UN and other multilateral and bilateral organizations, or other organizations in the field of climate change, may be either unprepared and conflicted, or may not have meaningful op-

[124] See: https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/03/why-is-mainstream-international-relations-ir-blind-to-racism-colonialism/.

[125] UN, 2002.

[126] UN General Assembly, 2019.

[127] UNHRC, 2019, p. 14, para., 50 in: Gonzalez, 2020.

[128] These insights are from a contributor to this paper.

tions for recourse, redress and a reset of proceedings when confronted with racism within the very organizations that promote the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. According to the findings of the UN survey mentioned above, a large number of UN staff who experienced or witnessed racial discrimination, harassment or abuse of authority indicated that they did not take any action, owing in most cases to a lack of trust in the organization's recourse mechanisms. Many also stated that they feared retaliation.

According to some climate negotiators, BIPoC climate negotiators who have taken strong stands against racist practices during international climate negotiations processes have also received reprimand, been removed from delegations or even lost jobs when their countries or groups of countries were confronted by developed countries.[129] The fact that some BIPoC contributors and reviewers of this paper wished to stay anonymous is telling of the risks that BIPoC staff members of the international community are still facing today when denouncing racism. United Nations respondents to the survey on institutional racism expressed a need for "accountability and zero tolerance, training and sensitization, greater transparency in hiring, broader diversity, and a more open dialogue on the issue".[130] Can these measures facilitate the denunciation of racist practices of white people against BIPoC staff working in climate change-related organizations, so that they do not have to choose between a career and whistleblowing?

The language requirements of national or international climate change work, as well as the need to access digital technology on a regular basis can be challenging among marginalized groups in general, including in some communities of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous Peoples are likely to only be included in activities in relation to specific niches where their needs will be accommodated (e.g. in the work of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform). This raises the following questions: what does it take to ensure that inclusion results in actual anti-racist[131] multicultural organizations and climate negotiation processes? Which steps would be needed to first implement "structures, policies and practices that foster inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing at all levels of the institutions life and work," while also building "clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities?"

4.2.2. Enforcing human rights obligations under the International Conventions to Eliminate Racial Discrimination

The International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) was ratified on 21 December 1965. ICERD is the key human rights convention against racial discrimination; it provides a comprehensive definition of racial discrimination in Article I:

> In this Convention, the term "racial discrimination" shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.

Crucially, through the wording "purpose or effect," this definition accepted by 182 State parties includes unintentional, institutional and structural racial discrimination. It there-

[129] This is based on the experiences of contributors to this paper.

[130] See: http://www.ipsnews.net/2020/08/staff-surveys-reveal-widespread-racism-united-nations/.

[131] Jackson et al., 2020.

fore encompasses both purposeful discrimination as well as conduct with discriminatory impact. The treaty prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights, including the rights to housing, public health, education, and employment and "any other field of public life." In 2002, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the UN body monitoring States' compliance with the convention, recognized that environmental racism undermines the rights guaranteed under the CERD, including "the rights to freedom, equality and adequate access to basic needs such as clean water, food, shelter, energy, health, and social care." In 2013, CERD issued the special report "Mapping Human Rights Obligations Relating to the Enjoyment of a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment - Individual Report on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination." This report summarizes key Committee decisions on the matter, stressing that "the Committee has acknowledged that environmental harm can compromise the enjoyment of human rights protected by CERD, particularly the rights of Indigenous Peoples. The human rights that have been implicated and addressed by the Committee when considering the impact of environmental harm include the right not to be discriminated against in the enjoyment of: (a) the right to property; and (b) the right to health. (...)The Committee has also explicitly stated that the right to health may be infringed by activities threatening the environment of Indigenous Peoples or by disregarding the spiritual and cultural significance they give to their ancestral lands." According to the CERD/C/56/Misc.21/Rev.3, the Committee recognized that certain types of racial discrimination have specific impact on women that differ from men. Beyond a mere additive dynamic the intersection of racism and sexism creates highly divergent negative impacts on the fundamental human rights of women migrant, immigrant, indigenous, minority and other marginalized women around the world.[132]

As climate injustice is increasingly attacked in courts of law, ICERD offers a specific opportunity to address environmental and climate racism as a human rights issue – and expand the notion of racial discrimination to include environmental and climate racism as they are perpetrated and experienced today. Furthermore, the implementation of ICERD should be done in combination and simultaneously with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) that entered into force in 1981. In recognizing that extensive discrimination against women still exist, the Convention works to eliminate all forms and manifestations of discrimination against women. In its Article I, discrimination is understood as:

> any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex [...] in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

In acknowledging that continued extensive discrimination of women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, the Convention required States parties in its Article 3 to take all appropriate measures to ensure women are allowed the opportunity to enjoy and exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms on the basis of equality with men.[133] As intersectional analysis of differential impact, vulnerability and exclusion makes abundantly clear, the unique and consequential impacts of racial and gender discrimination on BIPoC women both in the Global North and Global South need to be highlighted. Compared to their white counterparts, the potentialities of BIPoC women to fully and equally benefit from political, social, economic and cultural opportunities around the world is significantly

[132] Patel, 2000.

[133] See: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx

hindered by the cascading impacts of climate change, gender discrimination and systemic racism.

The UN's renewed post-2020 urgency to address gender equality within member States should also consider the intersectionality approach. Thus, the UN Body, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) established in 1946, as the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC),[134] should be guided by ICERD and CEDAW to apply an intersectionality approach to its multi-year programme of work to address the interlocking impacts of climate change, racism and gender discrimination. State governments should be required to include analysis of this specific intersectional dynamic in their human rights reporting to CERD, CEDAW and CESCR and should include this in their UNHRC Universal Periodic Review queries.

4.2.3. Healing collective trauma related to racial and climate injustice

As highlighted by the BLM movement, on the one hand, facing racism on a daily basis is traumatic. On the other hand, denouncing and fighting against racism can lead to retraumatization if done without proper care and support. Acknowledging collective and intergenerational trauma related to racism and climate injustice could help identify and avoid further patterns of oppression and suppression. However, if left unchallenged, these patterns will continue in perpetuity. It is critical that the UN and other international actors and institutions in the Global North acknowledge and address such historical and intergenerational trauma.

Looking into collective mental health effects related to climate change could also help open discussions to enhance understanding of historical trauma related to both racism and climate change. In turn, this could raise questions regarding how healing justice practices and related restorative actions could help address institutional and structural barriers to racial and climate justice.

There are lessons that could be learned from the experience of the South-African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with its Amnesty Committee, its Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee and its Human Rights Violations Committee.[135] Lessons from those experiences could be complemented by other local experiences, including the truth and healing circles organized by groups such as the Native Americans in Philanthropy,[136] or "trauma-informed care"[137] recommendations from Maoris in New Zealand.

4.3. Undertaking institutional and structural reforms in the global climate governance system, with a focus on financial solidarity and accountability

4.3.1. Transforming international development

The need to address international development research, policy and practice in the context of climate (in)justice cannot be overstated, as development agencies and organizations are often central in designing and implementing climate policy and action. In the power structure of international development assistance, the Global North, as well as the institutions, organizations and initiatives based there, hold the purses and determine what projects and actions get

[134] See: https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw#:~:text=The%20Commission%20on%20the%20Status,II)%20of%2021%20June%201946.

[135] See: https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/.

[136] See: https://nativephilanthropy.org/truthandhealing/.

[137] See: https://www.tepou.co.nz/uploads/files/resource-assets/Trauma-informed%20Care%20Literature%20Scan%20Final.pdf

funded. The work of addressing racism within international development must be done at both the conceptual and practical levels.

At the conceptual level, the core idea of development is itself a legacy of colonization. The idea of economic development and how it is achieved conveniently writes away the exploitation of countries in the Global South by countries in the Global North. Intrinsic to the whole endeavor is the idea of an inferior Global South that is only waiting to be cast in the shape of countries in the Global North. This misconception has been challenged by several scholars.[138] It has also been addressed as part of the discussions spurred by the BLM movement.[139] Here, we would add that a rethink of the idea of development, what it has meant so far and how its research and practice have been steeped in racism and colonization, needs to be connected to any action that seeks to address the climate crisis. For, as Rutazibiwa noted:

> the entire notion of aid is obscene—and racist. International relations that do not reproduce the logic of colonialism must instead engage with ideas of repair, dignity, and even retreat.[140]

This approach of "repair, dignity and retreat" also raises the question of how this can be achieved in relation to racialized communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts in countries, whether in the Global South or in the Global North.

At the practical level, this means that the practice of prioritizing and designing climate-related development projects in the headquarters of development agencies, almost exclusively based in the capital cities of the Global North, needs to change. Those who design these policies need to cede the stage – and direct financial access – to the so-called beneficiaries of the projects. At the very minimum, projects, programs and initiatives to address the climate crisis should not perpetuate racism. They should instead be designed in a way that BIPoC are part of the decision-making process at both the design and implementation phases, and not just "consulted" after the projects have already been designed. Development policymakers need to listen to BIPoC not only in terms of their history and lived experiences, but on the future they envision, as well as the approaches and methods required to arrive at such a future. This also includes taking account of the ongoing discussion regarding everyday racism in development agencies and international organizations and processes, some of which have been discussed above.

One way forward might be to consider placing the headquarters of development organizations in the Global South or hiring a BIPoC to lead an organization. Yet, this would just be window-dressing, unless the conceptual work is done. If the same thinking that underlies the current practice of international development is still in place, the logic of project prioritization, project design and implementation will remain the same, no matter where the initiative is based or who heads it. The power structure of development financing means that the agendas are still set in ministries of countries in the Global North.

Such themes and questions would also need to be raised in relation to providing support to BIPoC communities in the Global North, and to targeting racialized communities in the Global South.

To lessen the disparate impacts of climate and/or development interventions, the accountability mechanisms of development and climate finance institutions must be strengthened in ways that afford affected and/or targeted communities real veto and redress powers. This requires an immediate strengthening of International Grievance Mechanisms deployed by multilateral devel-

[138] Kothari, 2006; Escobar, 2011; Bonsu, 2019; Rist, 2002, Ziai 2015.

[139] Monga, 2020; Hickel n.d.; Lemonaid-charitea-ev 2020.

[140] Rutazibwa, 2020.

opment banks and climate finance institutions such as the World Bank's Inspection Panel to also address potential harm, and not just harm incurred, and their ability to act as pro-actively as is the case with the Independent Redress Mechanism of the Green Climate Fund and the roll-out of adequate grievance mechanisms for all national development and climate implementation agencies.

Such mechanisms need to be accessible, independent and empowered to halt projects. In particular, communities affected need to be actively informed about these redress mechanisms before projects begin – claims filed need to lead to a halt of the project for the duration of the proceedings. The burden of ensuring effective participation of communities in such mechanisms must be borne by the financial contributors and the funding mechanisms they support and often control, who must make disbursement of funds conditional on project planners having demonstrated that they have enabled affected communities to know their rights and have enabled them to in fact access such mechanisms. This highlights the need for a generalization of the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) principle and process to all projects. The lack of such mechanisms in current development and climate and/or environmental project practice illustrates the above-mentioned double standard in development cooperation and climate policy.

In addition, environmental and climate impact assessments of all projects claiming a climate benefit must actively demonstrate that they do not in fact, directly or indirectly lead to, contribute to or sustain racial discrimination as defined in Article I of ICERD. This definition, which 182 State parties have accepted as part of the human rights obligations they want to uphold, includes unintentional, institutional and structural racial discrimination. As outlined above, CERD while financial contributors and sustainability investors often cite the centrality of human rights, such impact assessment is sorely lacking in the reality and practice of climate governance and project design.

4.3.2. Rethinking knowledge production and technical expertise

Related to racism and international development is the need for the decolonization of knowledge production and the exchange of technical expertise. The award of the 2019 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences to proponents of randomized control trials in the social sciences has inadvertently shone a spotlight on the ethically-suspect, ideologically loaded experiments being conducted on citizens of countries in the Global South by researchers based in the Global North.[141] Such an exercise in soul-searching and reflection on knowledge production on the climate crisis needs to be part of any efforts to address racism and climate change. The knowledge and experiences of BIPoC, particularly from the Global South, must be reflected in the science of climate change. For instance, there is a need for more BIPoC authors in particular, Indigenous authors[142] and views in reports of the IPCC. There is a need to address the bias of the peer-review process that favors the gaze of the white male – not just in what gets published, but in the sorts of questions that are asked, which currently does not actually signal what is of importance to the scientific community at large, but to a segment of that community.

Questions such as: How can knowledge production and research on climate-related topics from the Global South not be marginalized both in their respective regions and at the international level, including in peer-reviewed literature? How can knowledge that is steeped in experiences of Indigenous Peoples and that has existed for so long feed into the global system of knowledge regarding approaches to the climate crisis? How can non-Western knowledge on nature and the climate be advanced and strengthened among communities that have produced

[141] See the contributions to this CODESRIA Bulletin: https://codesria.org/spip.php?article3105&lang=en.

[142] Ford et al., 2016.

them, and as global alternatives? need to be posed and answered. Regarding technical expertise and project design, the use of the "Theory of Change" model to prioritize and define climate actions to be financed would need to be questioned as it follows a Global North (and particularly Western) hierarchical and vertical way of thinking that some communities may not relate to. This model, as well as the requirement of providing scientific-data at the onset of the project, is likely to prevent the prioritization and design of projects according to self-identified community approaches. In turn, supporting self-identified community approaches requires the design and implementation of new work set-ups and frameworks on the part of financial contributors.

Decolonizing the design of climate projects and initiatives would require a form of unlearning of the approaches and tools developed in international organizations and used today. For example, a climate vulnerability research conducted with Indigenous Peoples, noted that the labeling of populations or regions as being "vulnerable" and ignoring underlying drivers of exclusion, marginalization, disempowerment, and inequality may hinder efforts to gain greater autonomy, result in victimization, and promotes external interventions that reflect non-Indigenous worldviews and notions of progress.[143] Decolonizing would also include unlearning by countries of the Global South, and by BIPoC professionals worldwide. It also appears that unless such frameworks are deconstructed, alternative local and Indigenous approaches to climate action will neither be properly understood, nor implemented. Yet, such approaches offer some of the most tangible opportunities to move away from the exploitation of nature and the hierarchization of people when addressing the climate crisis and its impacts. This raises the question of a fair compensation for the use of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge by non-Indigenous people, and of the conditions that need to be maintained so that this knowledge that stems from experience in a healthy ecosystem and from collective community practices can continue to exist and develop.

Conclusion

This paper presents a broad framing of the complex historical and empirical realities that show that colonialism and racism have played an integral part in shaping, and continue to shape, climate change and climate policy to this day. Racism and climate change have been intertwined since their inception, and both colonial continuities and hierarchies have determined climate policy and action. International climate governance continues to be steered by countries in the Global North and marked by the continuation of colonialism. These countries fail to acknowledge their historical climate and development debts and the fact that most countries of the Global South are "climate forced riders"[144] in an escalating climate crisis. Global North countries are not actively pursuing the 1.5°C target nor are they meeting their financial commitments to developing countries to support adaptation, as well as efforts to address loss and damage from the impacts of climate change and to ensure access to quality and affordable energy for all. Meanwhile, the climate crisis disproportionately affects BIPoC communities worldwide, with Indigenous Peoples, migrant communities and other racialized communities, particularly women, being the hardest hit. The dominance of the Global North is tangible in UN, multilateral and bilateral organizations, as well as in the climate movement through the prioritization, design, and coordination of climate change projects implemented in the Global South. It is also evident in the tokenization of BIPoC, and in the constraints they face in assuming leadership positions, particularly on the international

[143] Ford, et al 2018.

[144] This is a term used in Althor et al., 2016 to describe those who bear the brunt of current and future climate impact while having contributed the least to the climate crisis and having reaped comparatively fewer if any benefits of exploitative economic systems historically centered in Europe and its settler colonies.

scene. Mainstream representation of BIPoC as "victims of climate change," or as beneficiaries of projects, also negates their roles as knowledge holders, innovators and leaders. Institutional racism materializes in the silencing or denial of racism by those who are working with or "for" BIPoC communities, both in the Global North and the Global South, which can be related both to vested interests and collective trauma.

Addressing racism and intersectional oppressions such as on the basis of gender in climate policy and action requires a widespread, coordinated and multilevel effort, but ultimately will benefit those in both the Global North and South through better climate policy and action. Possible approaches to tackle both racial and climate injustice would benefit from further research, but would need to entail:

1) individually and institutionally acknowledging the history and legacy of colonialism in climate policy and action,

2) facilitating research into the specific dynamics, manifestations and disparate impacts of racism, resistance and pathways to empowerment in environmental and climate policy, the global climate regime and climate activism that centers BIPoC perspectives, and is informed by BIPoC epistemologies and methodologies (or: ways of knowing and doing research),

3) facilitating a deep cultural change within institutions and organizations based in the Global North, by questioning current inclusion practices in order to ensure the actual participation, leadership and engagement of diverse BIPoC, strengthening accountability mechanisms, enforcing human rights obligations under the ICERD and other relevant related human rights instruments, and addressing collective trauma related to climate and racial injustice, and

4) undertaking institutional and structural reforms in the global climate governance system, with a focus on solidarity and accountability.

The ideas developed and the questions raised in this paper aim to tackle the dual and related challenges of racial and climate justice, and will require further research, including through collaboration and inclusive dialogues. Other organizations and individuals in the field are encouraged to take up, discuss, and expand those ideas and questions, as well as share their stories, visions and demands.

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