

THE TRANSNATIONAL POLITICS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OF
C L I M A T E J U S T I C E
RESEARCH CLUSTER

SHAPING THE NEXT UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE TREATY THROUGH PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS GATHERING IN WARSAW 2013, LIMA 2014, AND PARIS 2015 (AT WHICH THE TREATY DETERMINING GLOBAL CLIMATE GOVERNANCE IN THE POST-2020 PERIOD WILL BE ADOPTED).



:SUMMARY:

The Orfalea Center for Global & International Studies Research Cluster for the Study of Transnational Politics and Social Movements of Climate Justice researches, participates in, and audio-visually documents the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conferences of the Parties (COPs) and the manifold social movements from across the horizon of globalization that increasingly see the UN climate talks and the next treaty they are preparing for adoption in 2015 as the crucial juncture of struggles to ensure that emergent global climate governance and law both fully acknowledges the scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change and ensures the rights of indigenous peoples, poor peoples, workers, and communities everywhere who are seeking protection of the environments and species on which they depend for vital cultural and economic sustenance. In the 2013-14 academic year we will send an ethnographic field research team of scholars and students (graduate and undergraduate) to COP 19 in Warsaw, Poland (November 11 – 21, 2013); produce two films using footage taken in Warsaw and previously at COPs 18 in Doha, Qatar and 17 in Durban, South Africa; publish two co-authored e-books on global youth climate activism and a co-edited volume on the uncertain possible futures to be determined by insurgent climate change; convene a two-day conference in May 2014, “Reimagining Climate Justice”; and, building forward, prepare to send the ethnographic field research team to COP 20 in Lima, Peru (November 2014), the last big conference and gathering of social movements before adoption of the new treaty at COP 20 in Paris 2015. Pursuant to our mission of public scholarship, the activities of the Climate Justice Research Cluster will be archived in full detail at the new [website](#) of The International Institute of Climate Action and Theory, co-directed by John Foran and Richard Widick.

:PARTICIPANTS:

John Foran (Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies), facilitator
Kum-Kum Bhavnani (Professor of Sociology)
Grace Chang (Associate Professor of Feminist Studies)
Hilal Elver (Research Fellow, Orfalea Center)
Richard Falk (Emeritus Professor of Global and International Studies)
Janet Walker (Professor of Film and Media Studies)
Richard Widick (Research Scholar, Orfalea Center)

The Social Logic of Climate Change Activism

It is increasingly evident that humanity finds itself in a race against time, up against very powerful corporations (fossil fuels, military contractors, mass media, and the culture industry) and the governments whose policies they shape. The recent history of the UN Congress of the Parties annual summit process offers little hope that the climate treaty negotiations can deliver a just, binding, and scientifically-informed treaty at the level of ambition in cutting greenhouse gas emissions that we need to stabilize global sea and land temperatures below critical thresholds for a livable planet (see Foran and Widick 2013 and forthcoming). The clash between the science of climate change and state and global action on the problem becomes more acute with each passing year (IPCC 2007, IPCC 2013, Anderson 2012, McKibben 2012, World Bank 2012).

The intractable core issues that have been at the heart of the negotiations, and were skillfully avoided at Durban, are now coming front and center. The U.S. and other wealthy countries had thought they could put off confrontation with the developing world until 2014, having agreed to negotiate a treaty by 2015 (to go into effect only in 2020). But as the Philippine ambassador put it, the developed countries are “blockers and deniers who are refusing to show commitments and [are] push[ing] obligations onto developing countries” (field notes from Doha, quoted in Foran 2012). The two sides – the rich countries and the majority of the world – are *fundamentally opposed* on all the key issues – who should make (what kinds of) binding emissions cuts and what all others should do, how to fund the needed moneys for adaptation and clean development, and whether to adhere to the long-standing principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” of the world’s nations. This is why, as things stand, the COP process seems at a stalemate. The snail’s pace of the treaty process isn’t the real problem. The main problem is that none of the big emitters – the U.S., China, Russia, Japan, Canada, Brazil, India, and South Africa among them – want (or seem able) to move away from fossil fuels toward the sustainable, low-carbon future that could reverse our descent into chaos.

The social logic of getting to the treaty the world needs therefore requires something *more*: massive outside pressure coming to bear on the major emitting nations, and this can only be produced, we think, by massive social movements, informed by the recognized consensus on climate science (IPCC 2013), and all willing parties and governments, wherever they are found. This, in turn, points to the urgency of a major push for public awareness and action on the issue, especially here in the U.S. where the politics of climate change are playing out in the public drama over fracking and the XL pipeline.

Globally, only the biggest social movement the world has ever seen appears likely strong enough to pressure governments reign in the fossil fuel industry, which must leave large percentages of known fossil fuel reserves safely underground to avoid climate catastrophe (CITE). Those of us who live in the rich nations also face the abandonment of “high carbon-lives” (Urry 2011) we lead. These are two daunting tasks, and the global climate justice movement needs to scale up its effectiveness in the near-term

The Climate Justice Research Cluster aims to produce policy analysis and ethnographic, cultural understanding of how climate governance is being produced, with the purpose of contributing to the effort of social movements intent on both shaping the next climate treaty— The Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP)— into the most progressive possible international treaty and responding each on their own home turf to local challenges and emission point sources (i.e., the XL Pipeline, Canadian tar sands, new Chinese coal plants under construction now, etc.) (CITE the ADP from our “Utopia”)

Purpose and Objectives of the Cluster

As a way to grapple with the intertwined causes of the complex climate dilemma our new research cluster convenes an interdisciplinary group that aims to promote research, teaching, and public outreach focused on Climate Justice in climate policy (local to global), economic development, and social movement strategies. “Climate justice” can mean many things (see Bond 2013 for a history and organizational analysis): for us it mean action shaping the next climate treaty— The Durban Platform—into a progressive pillar of global environmental governance based on recognized science that protects the rights of all to equally share in the planets wealth of carbon carrying capacity and thus the rights to future development. Only such a treaty can lead us toward the necessary low-carbon, sustainable, egalitarian, secure and deeply democratic future for the current and coming generations.

The cluster’s goals for the 2013-14 academic year are ambitious: we will work together in various combinations, and with specific graduate and undergraduate students, as well as our first international collaborators, to help each other undertake a set of intertwined projects that will culminate in a two-day conference on “Reimagining Climate Justice,” to be held in May 2014 and prepare us to bring our analyses and films and essays and books to bear in the shaping of the Durban Platform up through COP 20 in Lima 2014 and ultimately in Paris 2015 at COP 21

Along the way we will engage in creative work, scholarship, and significant public engagement that will take a variety of forms – two co-authored book e-books, a co-edited volume, a documentary film for general circulation (release in 2015, before the Paris talks), a 45-minute educational film, and building toward sending the ethnographic field research team to COP 20 in Lima 2014. The methods we bring to this work range from comparative-historical sociological analysis to critical global ethnography, film and media analysis, feminist methods, and the arts of future studies

Our cluster is organized into five streams to do the work, as follows:

Stream One: Climate Change, Emergent Global Climate Governance, Democracy, and Human Security

Michael Dorsey, Hillal Elver, Richard Falk, John Foran, Richard Widick

All the work envisioned by the Climate Justice Research Cluster begins in the better understanding of the relationships between climate change, climate science, the emergent architecture of climate/environmental law produced by the international climate talks and adopted by the nations (including the input of civil society and the powerful corporations), and the combined effects these will have on human security and democracy. Using methods of historiography, political economics, and critical ethnography, this foundational work stream will analyze the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action—the treaty under negotiation now for adoption in 2015, which will go into effect in 2020 and set the conditions of global climate governance over the crucial decades 2020 -2040, by which latter date it will have been determined by ongoing emissions precisely how much temperature rise to expect over the course of the present and the coming century. This policy will largely decide if the world must adapt to a plus two, four, or even six degree Celsius future.

Stream Two: *The Climate Justice Movement* (two film projects)

John Foran, Richard Widick

In the 2013-14 academic year, this stream will be working on two film projects intended to bring the work of the cluster in general, and of stream one in particular, to the widest possible academic and popular audiences. With the help of our student participants, our ethnographic field research team will interview activists, policymakers, and others attending the COP 19 U.N.-sponsored climate talks in Warsaw, Poland (November 11-26, 2013). Because the UN professes to embody the ideals of liberal democratic self-governance, full of promise for a sustainable future, but so far has failed to produce an adequate response, our films and research ask the questions: why, how, and to what ends do the corporations and social movements differently pursue those democratic ideals through engagement in the UN climate change process, and how does this encounter shape the outcomes?

This footage will serve as the basis for a 45-minute video with the working title *Not yet the End of the World: The Global Youth Climate Justice Movement*, that focuses on the actions and visions of the young activists of the movement for use in schools, community settings, and in movement organizations, to be ready in the spring of 2014. It will also contribute to a larger full-length feature documentary with the working title *Climate Justice*, directed and produced by Richard Widick on the battle for climate justice, to premiere in 2015 ahead of the fateful Paris deadline for the treaty.

Together, these documentaries will offer an innovative perspective on climate justice issues by showing how they are contested at the international negotiations. Other participants on these projects include Jenna Liddie (undergraduate in Sociology), Natasha Weidner (undergraduate in Environmental Studies and Sociology), Summer Gray (graduate student in Sociology), Corrie Ellis (graduate student in Sociology), and Emily Williams (recent B.A. in Environmental Studies) [TBA: and we hope, Janet Walker (Professor of Film Studies)].

Stream Three: *At the Cop* (two e-books)

John Foran, Corrie Ellis, Summer Gray, Emily Williams

This stream will produce an e-book, with the working title *At the COP: Global Climate Justice Youth Speak Out*. The first of these two books will be based on interviews, blog posts, and other materials gathered at COP17 in Durban, South Africa in 2011 and COP18 in Doha, Qatar in 2012, and will be ready in the spring of 2014. The second will focus on the materials we will gather in Poland at COP19, and will be out before COP15 in Lima, Peru in November 2014. TEXT TBA> Other participants: TBA.

Stream Four: Conference – Reimagining Climate Justice

Stream Five: *ClimateFutures* (working group)

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Grace Change, Priya Kurian, Janet Walker

Our second project in this stream is a volume to be co-edited by Kum-Kum Bhavnani and John Foran with colleagues Priya Kurian (Department of Political Science and Environmental Studies, University of Waikato, New Zealand) and Debashish Munshi (Department of Management Communication, University of Waikato, New Zealand). The volume is titled *Climate Futures....* TBA

Further Cluster participants in this volume may include Summer Gray, Corrie Ellis, and others.

Possible plan: This stream will develop a research and teaching project on feminist climate justice. It will develop a stream in the conference and could lead to contributions and participation in the edited volume with Priya and Debashish and the e-book and film projects...

Other participants in this working group: John Foran? Carly Thompson? Summer Gray? Corrie Ellis?

Conclusion

The Orfalea Center Climate Justice Research Cluster aims not just to understand, but also to *produce climate justice*—defined as local to global policy, economic development, and social movement *action* for a livable future. In a context where too many global leaders seem at best unable to resist powerful economic forces intent on maintaining the carbon-fueled industrial status quo, and at worst willing to commit national suicide, planetary ecocide, and global genocide rather than do what the science, common sense, and agreeable standards of democracy and security mandate, the time is now to support the kind of committed public scholar-activism we are proposing.

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Budget

We are asking for \$10,000 to be spent as follows.

Conference: \$8,000

The May 2014 conference, "Reimagining Climate Justice" will have expenses as follows:

For the venue and A/V equipment rental of Corwin Pavilion (approximately \$1,000; MultiCultural Center, gratis)

Publicity (\$200)

Conference organizing work (\$4,000 to hire two undergraduate students and two graduate students)

Reception, refreshments, coffee/tea for participants (\$800)

Airfare and housing for two speakers (\$2,000)

Film project: \$2,000

\$2,000 for the 45-minute video, *Not yet the End of the World: The Global Youth Climate Justice Movement*, to be used to pay students for interviewing at the COP19, and helping transcribe and edit the materials for the film.

Funds raised so far

We are very fortunate that John Foran has been chosen as UCSB's 2013-14 Sustainability Champion, and the grant of \$25,000 is being used to bring a seven-person research group to the COP19 climate summit in Warsaw, Poland, from November 6-25, 2013.

John Foran and Richard Widick also have an \$8,120 general research grant from the UCSB Academic Senate for work on the feature film.

Finally, John Foran, was granted a \$4,000 research stipend for his 2012-13 service as Chair of the Committee and Planning and Budget, which is also being used to fund travel and student research stipends for the e-books, short film, and conference.

Two-Page CV's of Senior Participants

Kum-Kum Bhavnani

Hilal Elver

Richard Falk

Grace Chang

Janet Walker

Richard Widick