What happened to justice?

An empirical analysis of normative approaches in the Green Climate Fund

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Abstract

The injustice of the unequal relation between those who have contributed to climate change and those who suffer from it is acknowledged on a global level at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). One of the primary responses to this injustice is climate finance: the transfer of funds from developed to developing countries to assist with their mitigation and adaptation needs. However, despite the rise of references to 'justice' in political discourse on global environmental change, the term itself stands without a common definition. Rather than focusing on how to obtain justice, this study looks at how conceptions of justice differ and what the effects of their coexistence are. To further facilitate an empirical debate on what justice entails, this study analyzes how different conceptualizations are combined in the world's largest climate fund: the Green Climate Fund (GCF). We rely on the 'Planetary Justice' framework, which highlights the opposing positions of five broad normative approaches based on three core concerns: *Subjects of justice, Principles of justice*, and *Mechanisms of justice*. While an initial assessment of GCF policies showed no explicit references to justice, fairness, or equality, we were able to uncover implicit notions of justice through a latent content analysis. The combination of (implicit) justice conceptualizations found in the GCF at times overlaps and at other times contradict each other. We found that progressive notions of justice in *Subjects* and *Principles* were not followed up with matching *Mechanisms*. The lack of clarity on justice ideals and the disconnect between proclaimed values and concrete measures leads to an incoherent impression of the Fund's policies. Since the chances that the Fund will live up to its proclaimed values with mismatched measures are slim, it risks damaging its institutional integrity. We argue that equitable solutions can only be reached when Parties clarify their normative positions and engage in a transparent debate. If the progressive notions of justice are to move beyond mere rhetoric, the international community must be willing to enter into a dialogue about the type of justice we wish to aspire. The findings of this study help articulate how different expectations and assumptions play out in practice by making the implicit explicit. This increases understandings of certain outcomes (or non-outcomes) and provides an opportunity for actors to intervene. Thus, our study facilitates a more tangible discussion of justice in multilateral climate finance by contributing to an empirical rather than normative debate.

Keywords: Planetary Justice, Climate Finance, the Green Climate Fund, Global Climate Change Governance

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1. Introduction

Anthropocentric climate change has long been acknowledged as not only an environmental problem, or an issue of economics or politics, but as a concern of international or global injustice (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020; Vanderheiden, 2013:18; Harris, 2019; Tokar, 2019). The disproportionate relation between contributions to- and burdens of climate change is no longer a question of vast scientific debate, and the acknowledgment of its significance has reached global environmental governance (Tokar, 2019). This arena is said to have seen the beginning of a so-called 'justice turn', with an increase in references to justice in central policy documents, declarations, and science programmes (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:1-2). At the supranational level, the first recognition in this regard was consolidated in 1992 by establishing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Convention states "that the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response" (UNFCCC, 1992:1). It was agreed that Parties should protect the climate system "on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (UNFCCC, 1992:4). However, it has proven difficult to reach more concrete global agreements concerning what such justice should encompass.

In 2007, representatives of communities disproportionately affected by global inaction on climate had grown tired of the inertia and united under the name *Climate Justice Now!* at the UNFCCC's annual climate conference on Bali (Tokar, 2019). They articulated a call for "genuine solutions", including "huge financial transfers from North to South based on historical responsibility and ecological debt for adaptation and mitigation costs" (Tokar, 2019:16-17). In 2009, the UNFCCC conference in Copenhagen almost ended in a deadlock due to disagreements concerning enforceable emissions limits and questions of tied or voluntary national contributions to climate mitigation (Ibid., 19). Since then, the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings have featured systematic interventions from global South delegations and civil society groups, seeking a justice-centered approach to the ongoing climate negotiations (Tokar, 2019:19). In the 2010 Cancún Agreement (COP16), more concrete financial responsibility of the Global North was codified. Here, it was stated that: "developed country Parties commit, in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, to a goal of mobilizing jointly $100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries" (COP16: decision 1/CP.16).

Nevertheless, between Copenhagen (COP15) and Paris (COP21), a polarization still grew between the North- and South delegates (Tokar, 2019:19). In this period, most Northern countries outside of Western Europe officially withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol, and representatives from the Global South protested both inside and outside the proceedings of the COPs (Ibid.). While delegates from the North advocated for retaining the carbon markets and other 'flexible mechanisms' of the Kyoto Protocol and abandoning mandatory emissions targets, many delegates from the South and civil society representatives took the exact opposite position (Ibid.). Nonetheless, a new agreement was finally established in 2015 at the Paris climate conference and adopted by 197 countries (COP21, 2015). In the Paris Agreement, commitments were made from all

countries to reduce their emissions and work together to adapt to the impacts of climate change (UN. n.d.). The UN describes the Agreement as providing "a pathway for developed nations to assist developing nations in their climate mitigation and adaptation efforts while creating a framework for the transparent monitoring and reporting of countries' climate goals" (UN, n.d.). Thus, it rests on acknowledging the necessity of a joint endeavor to limit emissions and the imperative of a mobilization of funds to address the needs of developing countries. In the Paris Agreement, the previous commitment of a joint provision of $100 billion annually was extended through 2025 (Gifford & Knudson, 2020: 244), indicating that climate finance remains one of the global community's primary responses to the injustice in the distribution of benefits and burdens of climate change. We therefore approach climate finance as a concrete manifestation of the acknowledgment of historical and ongoing injustice[1].

1.1 Knowledge gap

Despite the rise in references to 'justice' in political discourses on global environmental change and acknowledging the need for climate finance as a response to historical and ongoing injustice, the term 'justice' still stands without a standard definition. It thus fits the description of what the philosopher W.B. Gallie (1956) termed an 'essentially contested concept': a term that has a generally agreed abstract notion of what it represents but contains endless disagreement about what it might mean in practice. This diversity of understandings is reflected in the academic sphere, where there has been a corresponding increase in the focus and debate about justice in the context of climate change (Tritschoks, 2018:447; Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:1-2; Dirth et al., 2020:1; Harris, 2019:4). Here, multiple understandings and dimensions of justice have been identified, which have led to a vigorous debate about the meaning of justice and how to obtain it (Okereke, 2010:464; Harris, 2019; Khan et al., 2019:252-253). A large part of the literature on conceptions of justice in climate change has focused on the broad areas of distributive and procedural justice, under which many sub-categories exist (Okereke, 2010, Newell et al., 2020: Harris, 2019). Distributive justice includes discussions on how to best distribute the risks, costs, and benefits of greenhouse gas emissions through burden-sharing schemes (Sayegh, 2017; Roser & Seidel, 2016; Cameron, 2020; Moss, 2015; Baskin, 2009). Procedural justice deals with equal participation in decision-making processes, focusing on representing marginalized individuals and groups and addressing North-South power inequities (Klinsky, 2018: Krause, 2020: Harris, 2019). A smaller but growing section of literature concerns itself with rights for nature in the form of ecological justice (Schlosberg, 2007; Thies, 2018). However, these discussions have had far less focus on the empirical implications of the multiplicity of existing approaches (Dirth et al., 2020:1; Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:2; Tritschoks, 2018: 447-448; Harris, 2019:6). Despite the rise in engagement

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[1] Despite the growing attention to the necessity and importance of climate finance, a commonly agreed definition of what it constitutes is yet to be seen. Most disputes concerning this subject, however, regard the distinctions and relations between climate finance and existing international and private financial flows, including official development assistance (ODA) (Tanner & Horn-Phathanothai, 2014: 199-200). Within the UNFCCC, the interpretation of the concept of climate finance has stressed that it must be new and additional to existing international and private financial flows, including ODA (UNFCCC, 2009). While there also in this sphere has been raised concerns about additionally, we, in this study, focus on how or if justice is served with this instrument and have therefore chosen to look closer at the appliance of climate finance, rather than its relation to traditional aid.

with justice, Dirth et al. (2020:2) note that "what justice concretely means stays often ill-defined, and political and normative disagreement regularly remains invisible under the generic support and endorsement of the need for 'justice'".

By approaching climate finance as a concrete manifestation of the acknowledgment of historical and ongoing injustice, we argue that it needs to be interpreted through a justice lens. While a single universally agreed-upon definition of 'justice' seems utopian, we argue that it is essential to address the multiplicity of the conceptualizations used in this field, the implications of their differences, and the effects of their coexistence. Such clarifications might help advance the understanding of what one aims to achieve and the limitations to reaching such aims.

1.2 Research objective

When the pledge to mobilize $100 billion for climate finance was made in 2010, the Green Climate Fund was established to help channel these funds. Today, this Fund stands as the largest climate fund in the world. The size and reach of the GCF and the conditions in which it was founded show the potential to make meaningful change on justice issues.

However, acknowledging that climate finance is an ethical issue does not necessarily clarify how duties should be distributed, how far these duties stretch, what ideal should be strived for, or what action needs to be taken to get there. By taking as a starting point that conceptualizations of justice are socially constructed and contested rather than universally understood, we can make clearer differentiations between ways of claiming justice (Sauls, 2020:312). Instead of advancing or defending one specific vision of justice, this study aims to provide a more nuanced look at how justice is understood and used in the climate finance landscape. We therefore rely on an analytical framework designed by Biermann & Kalfagianni (2020) to promote an empirical debate regarding the conceptualizations of justice in global environmental politics. This framework allows us to find different views on justice, identify inconstancies, and explain overlaps and agreements by including five broad normative approaches. We will apply it in a single-case study to study if and how conflicting positions and inconsistencies occur within one entity. Thereby, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of existing justice conceptualizations in the GCF, which (to the best of our knowledge) existing research has not yet done. The main research question, therefore, is as follows:

How are different conceptualizations of justice combined in the Green Climate Fund
and what are the effects of their coexistence?

Furthermore, this study aims to increase transparency of equity matters in climate finance or climate change governance more broadly. These matters might often be underlying the design of policies and strategies rather than clearly stated. Our findings will help articulate how different expectations and assumptions play out in practice by making the implicit explicit. This can increase understandings of certain outcomes (or non-outcomes) and provide an opportunity for actors to intervene.

1.3 Roadmap

In order to answer our research question, this thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2 will present our theoretical and analytical framework, which is built on a framework of planetary justice developed by Biermann & Kalfagianni (2020) and Dirth et al. (2020), with the purpose of facilitating empirical research on interpretations of justice. This framework includes five main moral ethical theories and how they view the *Subjects*, *Principles*, and *Mechanisms of justice*. This section concludes with an analytical framework that will be used in Chapter 5. Chapter 3 provides insight into our methodological approach. Here, we explain why we chose a case study research design and our case selection. We also reflect on the method of research, data collection, and analytical approach. Chapter 4 serves as a contextualization of the environmental governance arena in which the GCF is positioned. This chapter gives a short background picture of the UNFCCC architecture and the structure of the GCF. Chapter 5 then explores how our theoretical understandings of justice play out in our selected case. The analytical chapter will outline our results on the three dimensions of justice separately before providing a short summary and comparison of the main findings. In Chapter 6, we discuss these findings and try to explain their meaning from a broader perspective. We look at possible explanations for the outcome, obstacles that the GCF may be facing, and further implications. Chapter 7 concludes this study by briefly summing up our key findings before answering the research question and outlying some perspectives for further research.

2. Planetary justice framework

Our theoretical framework is based on the planetary justice framework developed by Frank Biermann & Agni Kalfagianni (2020). The planetary justice framework is aimed at helping researchers analyze conceptualizations of justice. It does not seek to argue for a particular notion of justice but rather to distinguish different conceptualizations to detect conflicting positions or inconsistencies (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:2). Furthermore, the framework purposefully focuses on a planetary scale of assessment, rather than issue-specific, in an ambition to contribute to broader global change research (Ibid.). The planetary justice framework divides the vast field of theoretical approaches to justice into five main ethical strands of theories that apply to global change research: *liberal egalitarianism, cosmopolitanism, capabilities approach, libertarianism*, and *critical perspectives*. The framework is limited to these mainstream Western philosophical traditions because it is designed to assess existing political documents and debates on global change. The authors deemed it less likely to encounter references to non-Western philosophies in these mainstream documents (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). This chapter will start with a discussion of the theoretical approaches in which we explain the most significant characteristics. Then, we provide the analytical framework which will be used to inform our data collection and analysis.

2.1 Theoretical approaches towards justice

The following section elaborates on the five theoretical approaches from the planetary justice framework: *liberal egalitarianism, cosmopolitanism, capabilities approach, libertarianism*, and *critical perspectives*. Here, we do not aim to represent the full nuances or differences within these broad theories but instead highlight each approach's main characteristics that are necessary for our analysis.

2.1.1 Liberal egalitarianism

Liberal egalitarianism is a theory in political philosophy that combines two components equally: a strong defense of individual liberty and substantive equality. Without the former, it would just be egalitarianism, and without the latter, it would be merely liberal (Glaser, 2014:26). These commitments are nestled in moral individualism, which means that the individual is the ultimate object of justice and that all individuals are considered equal (Ibid.).

The most prominent scholar in this approach is Rawls. His two principles of justice are that citizens are guaranteed equal rights and liberties and have equal opportunities for obtaining positions of power. These require that "any inequalities of income and wealth work to the greatest benefit of the worst-off members of society" (known as the *difference principle*) (Wenar, 2006:3). It proposes that people are not rewarded or penalized for aspects outside of their control - like race, gender, or talent - and will only consider inequality fair if it is based on internal factors, like a difference in income based on a level of effort (Wenar, 2006). In this sense, institutions are tasked with assigning fundamental rights and duties as well as economic opportunities in a society "in order to correct for the arbitrariness of one's life expectations due to factors beyond their control" (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:3).

According to Rawls, a 'well-ordered' society is "a society in which all citizens accept the *Principles of justice*, know that their fellow citizens also do so, and recognize the basic structure as just" (Dirth et al., 2020:4). Only national institutions can bind citizens together in this way, and such a society is therefore confined to the nation-state's borders (Ibid.). A central feature of the liberal egalitarian tradition is the 'original position,' which assumes that rational individuals in a society are risk-averse. Therefore people would "choose principles of justice that maximize the primary goods of the least advantaged—because they may find themselves among that group, for all they know—rather than gambling on the probability that they might wind up among society's more advantaged" (Vanderheiden, 2008:8). Central to this original position is the 'veil of ignorance,' aimed at avoiding the problem of selfish allocation. Behind the veil of ignorance, a person evaluates principles without any knowledge of one's own race, gender, socioeconomic status, religious beliefs, and most other attributes that make people different in the real world (Ibid.). Rawls argued that deprived of relevant knowledge that serves our particular self-interest, we would choose principles that are "fair for all, since each person in effect takes on the position of all" (Vanderheiden, 2008:8). Liberal egalitarianism is commonly associated with the national welfare state as a core mechanism of advancing justice, where the government is responsible for the economic and social welfare of all citizens (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:5).

A group of theorists now known as cosmopolitans has lifted Rawls' previously mentioned 'difference principle' to a global level (see chapter 2.1.2), where all individuals are seen as part of a global society. Rawls himself, however, had a different view on what justice means on a global scale. He stipulated that parties in a global position represent not individual human beings but an entire domestic society — a 'people' (Wenar, 2006:4). While cosmopolitans are concerned with the well-being of individuals, Rawls is concerned with the justice of societies. Each national society is left to work out the justice of its own institutions, and Rawls sees no justification for interference beyond a minimal 'assistance principle' which would give wealthier peoples a duty to assist 'burdened' societies if they are "not able to sustain minimal conditions of legitimate government" (Wenar, 2006:5). Rawls' theory does not include any principles that would call for a remedy for reduced inequality among states and therefore does not support permanently redistributive international institutions (Ibid.).

2.1.2 Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitan theorists argue for some degree of a global community where people partake with equal moral value, regardless of race, class, or gender. The framework used in this paper focuses on 'relational' cosmopolitan theories that extend the essential points of liberal egalitarianism from the national to the global level (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:3). From this perspective, people are seen as participants in a global society rather than being confined by the boundaries of a nation-state. Key writers like Charles Beitz, Simon Caney, Darrel Moellendorf, and Thomas Pogge focus on what constitutes a fair distribution of benefits and burdens in a globalized world and how institutions generate this distribution (Ibid.). While people can disagree about values, cosmopolitans contend that all humans have a responsibility to each other and should therefore apply the Golden Rule "what you wish done for yourself, do to others" (Bernstein, 2011:712).

As the ideal of justice, cosmopolitans differ in their positions for either a *global difference* principle or a *needs-based minimum floor* principle. Both take departure from Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, but while seeing its faults, they each try to extend his reasoning to a global context. Moellendorf's account of the global difference principle provides an alternative that holds on to Rawls' 'original position'. Globalization has bound citizens of one state together with citizens from another, creating an obligation beyond borders according to which social and economic inequalities are accepted only if they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of global society (Dirth et al. 2020:4). Gillian Brock disagrees that this difference principle would automatically be favored by people and instead argues for a needs-based-minimum floor principle. Rather than assuming that people are altruistic by nature or mutually concerned with one another, Brock attempts to remedy this bias by assuming that persons are self-interested and have 'impaired moral imagination' (Brock, 2009:48). It is not because they are bad, but because there are divisions in national, religious, or cultural groups that make persons not unequal but not homogeneous either. Her idea is then to harness people's limited sympathies in such a way that still results in fair solutions for all people (Ibid.). When a person is put in a decision-making position without knowing specifics but faces with an understanding of the global issues that have to be dealt with by global cooperation, they will try to come to a basic framework of what can reasonably be expected as fair.

This agreement will then result in a *minimum* set of protections and entitlements that we can all agree on (Brock, 2009:50).

By taking liberal egalitarianism to a global context, cosmopolitans' primary mechanism for justice is a global redistribution of wealth that supports the disadvantaged within and among countries. Authors use the term 'political,' 'institutional,' or 'legal' cosmopolitanism to refer to the view that: "there must be global political and legal institutions, whether a world state (which few cosmopolitans have favored) or a system that disperses power and authority among local, state-level, international, and global institutions" (Bernstein, 2011:716). International cooperation and redistribution form an essential tenet of this approach (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). Concrete cosmopolitan proposals of how to achieve this include global taxation and accounting, and restrictions of taxation havens (Ibid.,7).

2.1.3 Capabilities approach

The capabilities approach is a normative framework that evaluates justice according to the effective opportunities people have to do and to be. That is, the capabilities people have to lead and develop free and productive lives they design for themselves (Schlosberg, 2012:252). This position stands in contrast to philosophical approaches that focus on people's happiness or desire-fulfillment, income, expenditures, or consumption (Robeyns, 2005:94).

Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, key authors in this tradition, argue that instead of laying emphasis solely on goods (means), we should rather focus on what those goods do to human beings (ends) (Cohen, 1993:16). It also highlights the difference between substantive freedoms (capabilities) and outcomes (achieved functionings) (Robeyns, 2005:93). Such reasoning is grounded in the belief that people differ in abilities to convert means into opportunities for the kind of life they wish to live (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:3). This is exemplified by the capability of free mobility, which a physically disabled person cannot use in a society that does not cater to special needs. Greater resources are necessary for enabling this person to achieve mobility than for an able-bodied person, "a desideratum to which a metric of stock of wealth is blind" (Cohen, 1993:16). To accommodate these concerns, the capabilities approach focuses on the interpersonal differences among people and emphasizes the multiplicity of dimensions of human life (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). Rather than looking at basic needs, this approach looks at a person's capability to achieve certain 'functionings,' as they are called by Nussbaum and Sen, referring to "the various things a person may value doing or being" (Sen, 1999:75). When it asks whether people are healthy, well-nourished, or have access to a high-quality educational system, it includes asking whether the means or resources necessary for these capabilities are present (such as clean drinking water, access to doctors, sufficient food supplies, political participation) (Robeyns, 2005:95-96). These concerns of capabilities are universal and can be applied across borders (Robeyns, 2005; Nussbaum, 2011:115).

The capabilities approach rejects the contractarian[2] view of cosmopolitanism and liberal egalitarianism and contends instead that the justification of *Principles of justice* lies in the fairness of the procedure that derives these *Principles* (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:6). When it comes to planetary justice, the capabilities approach would argue that this regards enabling all human beings to live a rich life free to develop their capabilities (Ibid.). Capabilities are understood as a kind of freedom to achieve alternative combinations of functionings. Sen has argued that people themselves must, through a democratic deliberative process, have the opportunity to determine the capabilities needed for their functioning (Sen, 1999). Accordingly, the capabilities approach holds that governments and public policies are needed to improve the quality of life for all people as defined by their capabilities (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:7). States and institutions thus obtain a central moral role (Nussbaum, 2011:115). They, however, do not rely solely on state representatives to make international agreements, as liberal egalitarianism does, because these agreements between nation-states do nothing about the nation's internal allocation of duties and opportunities (Drydyk, 2011). Therefore, capability theorists typically support "participatory democracy, expanded agency, and empowerment at grassroots levels" (Drydyk, 2011:105).

2.1.4 Libertarianism

Our fourth philosophical tradition is libertarianism, which strongly emphasizes the rights of individuals to liberty, property, and free exchange without interference from the state (Dirth et al., 2020; Nozick, 1974). We draw primarily on Robert Nozick's (1974) approach to libertarianism. From his perspective, the most important determinant for justice is self-ownership. He asserts that individuals possess pre-political, pre-contractual moral rights against intrusive actions being done to them, and thus negative obligations of each agent not to transgress others' claim-rights[3] (Mack, 2018). Individuals are then morally at liberty to engage in any conduct that does not transgress these rights. Hence, according to Nozick's proclamation of rights, each individual also possesses extensive liberty-rights freeing them from obligations, especially positive obligations (Ibid.). As opposed to liberal egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism, libertarians do not see inequality as unjust per se and see no duty of justice that requires the state to secure people's basic needs (Hassoun, 2011:656). For Nozick, it is not so much the outcome that matters, but rather the process: "if the process of acquiring wealth has been lawful and just, the final distribution of wealth is also just and merits protection by the state" (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). Therefore, the only legitimate state from the libertarian view is a minimal state that is restricted to serve to protect the rights of life, liberty, property, and contract (Mack, 2018).

Individual freedom and ownership are essential to libertarianism. People are seen as connected through free trade in the global market. This is tied to a strong emphasis on the global free market, where libertarians promote a breakdown of barriers to free enterprise (Biermann &

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[2] Contractarianism is a moral theory "which claims that moral norms derive their normative force from the idea of contract or mutual agreement". It holds that "persons are primarily self-interested, and that a rational assessment of the best strategy for attaining the maximization of their self-interest will lead them to act morally." (Cudd & Eftekhari, 2017)

[3] Claim-rights are moral (and enforceable) claims against others to their acting or not acting in certain ways (Mack, 2018). For example, the right not to be harmed.

Kalfagianni, 2020:4). The right to self-ownership does not have any inherent links to a particular society or nation, and national borders are thus essentially unimportant (Ibid.). Libertarians are, due to the emphasis on liberty-rights, fundamentally against global institutions and international organizations, and reject transnational transfers of funds through, for example, development aid (Ibid.). From this perspective, any redistributive justice is practically unjustifiable, especially if this is based on *Mechanisms* such as taxation, which is seen as coercion (Ibid.). Redistribution is only seen as just to the extent that it is initiated by individual choices, such as charity (Dirth et al., 2020:4). It thus has to be done with the consent of the wealthy (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). It has therefore been argued that states illegitimately coerce those who have not autonomously consented to these transgressions (Hassoun, 2011:657). The only way these states can be legitimate is by securing their peoples autonomy to consent to the rules of the state (Ibid.).

Nozick recognizes that certain historical processes that have yielded contemporary holdings were unjust and that rectification in the form of monetary compensation would be just (Mack, 2018). However, while it is easy to rectify a situation in which *A* stole from *B* last week, and so must return the stolen good to *B* today, it requires a much more elaborate theory of rectification to inform us on what measures (if any) are required for injustices done 20, 50 or 200 years ago (Ibid.). Since we often lack the information that a well-developed doctrine of rectification of these long past injustices would require, it is suggested that bygones should be bygones (Ibid.). Hence, libertarians reject global redistributive funding, as it is seen as placing an unjust and intrusive claim on the acquired wealth of people (individuals) in more affluent countries (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:7).

2.1.5 Critical perspectives

Critical perspectives are broad and diverse but generally have some roots in Neo-Marxism, where the Frankfurt School of thought has paved a path for a philosophical understanding of society rather than classic-Marxist economic understanding (Rothe & Ronge, 2016:6). Critical theory rejects the way traditional theory holds on to positivism. Horkheimer's critical theory sees subject and object as intertwined rather than epistemologically separate and argues that it is impossible to gain objective access to the object of knowledge (Ibid.,13). Critical theorists are concerned with "radically improve human existence" by looking for "alternative economic structures that are no longer capitalist" (Rothe & Ronge, 2016:14).

Critical approaches question the structural conditions that create injustice and seek human emancipation from them (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). Critical perspectives are interdisciplinary and include, for example, feminist theory, post-structuralism, and post-colonialism. Critical theory generally places focus on concepts often ignored in other philosophical discussions, like domination and oppression, which lead to issues of decision making, division of labor, culture, and the importance of social group differences (Young, 2011:3). Social justice should explicitly acknowledge and attend to these group differences if it is to undermine oppression (Ibid.). A normative theory of justice must then be historically and socially contextualized not to be abstract and empty (Ibid.). In the example of global environmental politics, Newell (2005:71) suggests that

it is helpful to look at the groups that are benefitting from patterns of destructive resource exploitation and those groups that are suffering from the consequences. An analysis of who is resisting progressive policy change and why, and who is in need of protection, can be a useful point of departure for constructing interventions that are better able to protect the poor and other vulnerable groups (Ibid.).

Rather than differences based on national borders, critical perspectives focus on processes that shape lives across territorial borders (Fraser, 2005:71). Due to increased globalization, decisions made in one state affect the lives of those who live outside of it. Also, transnational forces such as global warming, pandemics, and terrorism have increased the awareness that people and societies are interconnected and dependent on one another (Ibid.). Broad distinctions such as North/ South and global/national maintain a focus on geography. In contrast, a focus on intra- and transnational social and economic divisions can help us to understand how inequalities within societies are related to economic injustices between them (Newell, 2005:70). Here, the debate on justice becomes three-dimensional by expanding beyond distribution (*what*) to matters of recognition (*who*) - which involves considerations of race, class, and gender – and the political dimension of representation (*how*) (Ibid., 72). In other words, from the principle of equal moral worth, all should be permitted to participate as peers in social life, which requires dismantling institutional obstacles that prevent this participation. Critical perspectives reject the view that strong states and elites should always be the ones to decide the *Subjects* and substance of justice based on indisputable 'facts' (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020). It is argued that questions about justice always invite conflict, and to validate and legitimate this contestation, a dialogue is needed as a mechanism for addressing injustices. Dialogue alone, however, is not enough as it does not result in binding resolutions. New democratic institutions – that hold standards or participatory parity - are thus needed to uphold constant dialogue with civil society, while being able to adopt binding decisions (Ibid.).

2.2 Analytical framework

To operationalize the five theoretical approaches, we highlight the opposing positions based on three core concerns from the planetary justice framework. These three core concerns are *Subjects of justice, Principles of justice*, and *Mechanisms of justice*. Texts or discourses can thus be analyzed based on the conceptualization of normative relations among people (*Subjects*), the definition of what 'just' would imply (*Principles*), and the preferred procedures that are emphasized to achieve justice (*Mechanisms*). These dimensions are used to ensure that notions of justice can be operationalized and analyzed without the researcher bringing in their own normative position (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4).

It should again be mentioned here that the intention with this approach is not to cover the entire field of justice theory, but rather to detect the main conflicting positions within the field. Therefore, the five approaches are reduced to their primary positions to show these differences (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:2). Although the framework is intended to reflect the theoretical approaches and their boundaries accurately, it is acknowledged that it may lack the detail of a

philosophical exposition on justice (Dirth et al., 2020:4).

Subjects of justice are defined by liberal egalitarianism on the basis of *membership as shared nationality and citizenship* (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:4). This is the only one of our five theories for which national borders are given importance. On a global level, justice is served by a system of 'just societies' to address injustices that lie in the "deficient internal constitution of burdened societies" (Ibid.). As explained, cosmopolitanism takes Rawls' egalitarianism from the national to the international level and defines *Subjects* on the basis of *global interdependence* (Ibid.). This approach acknowledges global transboundary interactions that can affect individuals, groups or states, who have moral obligations of support and care, making international cooperation and redistribution an essential part of cosmopolitanism (Ibid.). The capabilities approach is primarily concerned with the individual and its multiple capacities to fulfill certain functionings. The *Subjects of justice* are thus defined as *individual personhood*, with an emphasis on human dignity. In libertarianism, *Subjects* are defined on the basis of *individual freedom and self-ownership*. People are considered united across borders but only through a global free market society principle, not on the basis of a global solidaric society (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:5). Lastly, critical perspectives look at *Subjects of justice* based on differences according to *subjection* to particular (global) structures based on gender, class, or race (Ibid.).

As for *Principles* of justice, liberal egalitarianism takes departure from the *difference principle*: when the least advantaged members of society benefit most from national policies and institutions. Cosmopolitanism either turns this into a g*lobal difference principle,* where social and economic inequalities are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of global society, or they focus on a *needs-based minimum floor* when all individuals worldwide can satisfy basic human needs necessary for human survival. Libertarians disagree with liberal egalitarians and cosmopolitans that inequality of wealth is unjust and calls for redistribution. For libertarians, the primary concern is *securing freedom for all* and having a minimal state that protects these freedoms (Hassoun, 2011). The capabilities approach focuses on *quality of life* and removing obstacles, so people have more freedom to live the kind of life they find worth living (Robeyns, 2005:94). Critical theorists look to address *structural conditions* that have led to injustices by a.o. focussing on participatory parity in terms of: "recognition of individuals and collectivities on the basis of their identity and status, participation of such individuals and collectivities in the political and economic sphere, and wealth distribution" (Dirth et al., 2020: 4).

When it comes to *Mechanisms of justice*, liberal egalitarianism is typically associated with the *nation-state welfare system* on a domestic level and a community of nations on a global level (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020). Cosmopolitans argue for *global redistribution* to support the needs of the poorest within and among countries (Ibid.). The capabilities theory looks to democratic politics and deliberation to foster capabilities and freedom, and the establishment of institutions that are *de-centralized, reflexive and adaptable* (Dirth et al., 2020:4). In the libertarian view, *market*

solutions are the main *Mechanisms* to solving global issues, as they are seen to be more effective than government regulation (Murphy, 2016:705). Finally, for critical approaches, injustices are overcome by dismantling oppressive structures "so that all individuals are recognized and able to participate as equals in public life" (Dirth et al., 2020:4).

	Subjects of justice	**Principles of justice**	**Mechanisms of justice**
Liberal egalitarianism	Individuals within the border of a nation-state	Equality of opportunity Difference principle	National welfare state within a system of 'just societies'
Cosmopolitanism	Individuals irrespective of affiliation with a particular nation-state; emphasis on equal moral worth of persons	Needs-based minimum floor Global difference principle	Global redistribution of wealth through global institutions that secure and protect basic needs
Capabilities approach	Individuals and communities; emphasis on dignity	When all individuals can live a life 'worth living', based on a number of basic requirements that fit their capabilities	Globally decentralized support systems to advance the dignity of individuals
Libertarianism	Individuals; emphasis on self-ownership	Securing freedom of choice for all unfettered by governmental intervention	Global free markets Rejection of strong role of government and redistributive policies
Critical approaches	Individuals, communities, classes; emphasis on identity and status	Participatory parity in the economic, cultural and political dimensions of life	Dismantling oppressive institutional structures and establishment of new ones based on parity

Table 1. Framework adapted from Biermann & Kalfagianni (2020:5), Dirth et al. (2020:3), as well as other sources used in this chapter.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, we will describe the rationale used and steps taken to answer our research question. We will discuss the epistemology we ascribe to, our research design, data collection, and coding strategy. We end the chapter by outlining our delimitations.

3.1 Epistemology

Our research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology, following the understanding that our knowledge is socially constructed and that our current ways of understanding the world are determined not by the nature of the world itself, but by social processes - actors' actions, language, interpretations, and discourses (Gill, 2000:3; Bryman, 2004:17). Hence, constructivists take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and a skepticism towards the understanding that observations of the world unproblematically yield its true nature to us (Gill, 2000:3). As a

researcher, it is thus important to explore how knowledges - understood as the social construction of people, phenomena or problems - are linked to actions and practices (Burr, 1995).

Our approach to justice is thus constructivist in the sense that justice is a socially constructed concept, which means different things from different perspectives. As should be clear from our theoretical framework, we are not looking for an objective truth, nor are we valuing one interpretation of reality over another. Our task is to find perceptions of justice in our data, in order to empirically discuss how they are expressed and what the implications are.

3.2 Research design

As indicated in our research question, we have decided on a single case research design. Our main point of interest is not only that justice perceptions can differ between actors but that different conceptualizations can be integrated within a single entity. We, therefore, found a qualitative single-case study best suited to reach a deeper understanding of how justice imperatives are used and combined within an entity. By focusing on a singular case, it becomes possible to conduct an in-depth analysis of the elements of interest.

The climate finance landscape is vast, spans across public and private sectors, and involves many different actors greatly variating in size and shape. As described in the introduction, our main focus lies in the incorporation of justice concerns on the multilateral level of environmental governance. It is in this arena that we most clearly see the recognition of historical responsibilities and the formulation of a reply to the call of justice from civil society and global South representatives. As our case, we have selected the Green Climate Fund as its establishment is the direct and concrete result of North-South equity negotiations on climate finance in the UNFCCC. The Fund is said to be part of a movement within the UN system towards greater inclusion of justice (Vanderheiden, 2015:32). The GCF is now also the largest climate fund in the world and is expected to become the primary channel for international public climate finance over time (Watson & Schalatek, 2020:3), making it a case with a large scope and potential for change.

As with most single case studies, the findings of this study cannot be freely generalized. As opposed to quantitative approaches, qualitative case studies are most often generalizable to theoretical propositions but not to populations (Yin, 2018). The findings of a case study lead to knowledge about how the combination of different conditions leads to a certain outcome. While these configurations only apply to the case under consideration, we use our findings to expand or generalize theories that might apply to similar cases. We argue that while the GCF is an individual entity, it is strongly influenced by the global environmental governance apparatus it is part of. The Fund was established as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism under Article 11 of the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and is accountable to and functions under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties (COP) (GCF, 2020a:25). We, therefore, see it as representative of certain values and processes that reflect directly on the larger system and argue that it is reasonable to expect that the findings of our case can, to some extent, increase insight into the broader landscape of the UNFCCC.

3.2.1 Method

Since the interest of our study concerns the conceptualizations of justice in the GCF, the most appropriate method was deemed to be a content analysis of documents that outline the Fund's mandate and strategies. These documents are the most direct source speaking for the Fund as a whole (as opposed to, for example, individuals as representatives, who most probably are influenced by their own conceptions). A distinct benefit of this research method is that it is an unobtrusive (or nonreactive) approach (Breuning, 2011:3; Babbie et al., 2015:323). It does not require the participation or cooperation of the subject under investigation, and therefore there is no risk that the subject will alter her or his behavior as a result of awareness of being questioned or tested (Breuning, 2011:3).

As the concept of justice is not directly approached or discussed explicitly by the Fund, we found it best suited to use a qualitative latent approach. This approach is used to look for specific themes and underlying meaning in the selected text (as opposed to a manifest analysis, which refers to the surface meaning of the text) (Breuning, 2011:4; Bengtsson, 2016:10). There are, broadly speaking, two types of latent content analyses. With *pattern content,* the researcher focuses on finding objective patterns in the content that any coder can uncover (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999:259). *Projective content* analysis is used, when the coders' judgment is necessary to deduct the deeper meaning of the text. Here the elements in the content are seen as symbols that requires pre-existing knowledge to draw meaning from (Ibid.). We use both types in our coding strategy in different rounds. As the latter of these approaches involves a judgment, this makes it less transparent and replication difficult (Breuning, 2011:4). Therefore, extra precaution must be taken during coding, which will be described in chapter 3.2.3.

3.2.2 Data collection

From our theoretical framework, we work with three overarching categories: *Subjects-*, *Principles-* and *Mechanisms of justice*. When collecting data, we had to make sure that each of these aspects was reflected. All primary Board decisions and related policy frameworks have been collected in the almost 800 pages long *GCF Handbook* for easy navigation (GCF, 2020a). Thus, this document provides the overview needed to get a comprehensive understanding of the different areas that the Fund addresses. When it was deemed necessary to find more elaboration on any of the policies, we looked at original texts and background papers related to the decisions adopted by the Board, which are accessible on the GCF website.

Some of the primary and most relevant sections of the Handbook were the Governing Instrument, the Business Model, and the Funding Windows. The *Governing Instrument* comprises the mandate and working methods approved by the COP to the UNFCCC in 2011. This instrument sets out the Funds overarching objectives and guiding principles and how it is governed, monitored, and evaluated. The *Business Model* contains approved policies and performance indicators. This includes policies on access to funding, resource allocation, the results management framework, gender policy, and the indigenous policy. In the chapter *Funding Windows* we found the Fund's policies on Mitigation and Adaptation funding, as well as the decisions that established the Private Sector Facility. Our data collection further included an updated *Strategic Plan for 2020-2023*,

guidelines for the operation of the Board and Secretariat, and decisions on resource mobilization and replenishment. The selected decisions and frameworks should tell us enough about whom the Fund aims to serve (*Subjects*), what form of justice it is working towards (*Principles*), and how it plans to achieve its goals (*Mechanisms*) - as per our analytical framework. By including a broad range of policies and strategies, we are able to pin down the major themes as they play out in different aspects of the Fund. Combined, we find that these documents give us both the quantity and the relevancy of data that we need to find how justice dimensions are conceptualized and implemented.

3.2.3 Coding strategy

Content analysis is a method that seeks to analyze texts or discourses in a systematic manner that is explicit enough to permit replication (Breuning, 2011:2). It has been described as "essentially a coding operation" (Babbie et al., 2015:328). Through coding of text, the analyst is permitted to ascertain patterns and describe characteristics of the subject in focus (Breuning, 2011:3). To establish validity, it is suggested that the most important step is to develop a coding scheme to guide coders in the analysis of content (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). This coding scheme is considered stronger when guided by theory. In our research, the selected data is analyzed using the analytical framework from chapter 2.2. In order to conduct this strategy, the document needed to be read and re-read in depth. By using the framework, we are able to make implicit references and usage of justice perceptions explicit. We can then unpack to what degree different perceptions co-exist within the same case and if any of them play a more dominant role than others. We used a software called NVivo to help organize and analyze our data.

Our coding strategy included three rounds of coding. First, we did an in-depth reading of the data to uncover references to *Subjects*-, *Principles*- and *Mechanisms of Justice*. We used the descriptions provided by our framework to distinguish between these three dimensions. Next, we reviewed the nodes under the three categories to find specific patterns. We used a pattern latent approach to uncover objective reoccurring themes that were fairly straightforward to recognize. These themes became apparent due to, for example, the number of references to it, the extent to which concepts were explained or elaborated on, and/or the language used to indicate a level of significance. The thematic patterns were used to structure the analysis. Finally, references in the uncovered themes were reviewed for matches with our five theories of justice according to the descriptions and concepts from our analytical framework. This round of coding required a projective approach, by which we mean that while guided by the theory, we were required to interpret the data since references to different understandings of justice were only made implicitly in the text.

To increase reliability in content analysis, it is suggested that we focus on stability, reproducibility, and accuracy (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Reliability thus refers to the degree to which a process can be recreated, for example, by a different coder. Especially in our third round of coding, in which underlying meaning is sought, we face a risk of investigator bias. Thus, our approach required that extra care be taken to make very clear and explicit the criteria for judging a unit of text

(Breuning, 2011:5). We do so by relying heavily on the core concepts of our analytical framework, which reduced the theories to their most basic positions to show the main differences between them, rather than highlighting internal nuances. We, however, still needed to conduct some degree of interpretation since the subject of justice was not explicitly discussed in the data. We made use of our advantage of being two researchers by coding the data separately and cross-referencing our nodes. Although we acknowledge that each of us is likely to make subjective judgments to some extent while coding, a high consistency across judgments establish intercoder reliability (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999:269). The risk of investigator bias has also led researchers to suggest looking for disconfirming evidence in the material under inspection (Breuning, 2011:4; Babbie et al., 2015:332). It is thus recommended to report any elements in the text that are inconsistent with the expected findings to avoid the tendency to focus on elements that confirm the expectations of the investigator (Breuning, 2011:4). We incorporated this in our third round of coding by searching for both 'matches' between our data and our theoretical concepts, as well as disconfirming proof of the existence of the theories. This led us to also code content that any of the theories would explicitly disagree with. Lastly, we paid attention to where influences of our five theories were absent. This way, we were able to detect both the most dominant influences and the lack of influences in our data.

3.3 Delimitations

We spent time both before and during our research to determine the boundaries of our study and deciding on the factors and variables not to include. These boundaries are both based on the space and time we have available, as well as on the best way to narrow our focus to make it more detailed, manageable and relevant. We highlight the main delimitations here, along with short reasonings.

One of the important delimitations is that it is not the aim of this study to evaluate the practices of the GCF. We will not be analyzing the quality of its policies, the achievability of its targets, nor the results that it has or has not been able to reach to date. While our point of departure is that climate finance is rooted in justice concerns, we acknowledge that this is not the only factor of importance in making policies and measuring results. Our in-depth analysis of how justice concerns are integrated and combined in the GCF does therefore not allow us to evaluate the Fund. We will however, in the discussion, approach how both internal and independent assessments of the Fund and its projects relate to the issue of justice.

Another delimitation refers to the use of the Planetary justice framework as created by Biermann & Kalfagianni. As explained, this framework is limited to five broad theoretical approaches to justice. These five are considered to be the most influential in global governance debates and practice. We considered these appropriate because our case in question is part of a mainstream global arena. We acknowledge that there are many other ways that justice can be conceptualized. If we were to have

included non-Western theories - notably those who focus on alternative development, or non-human aspects of justice - it would have guided our attention to different factors than is currently the case[4].

Somewhat related to our previous point is that we have not had an explicit focus on the inclusion of Non-Western authors in our literature search. This is largely due to the use of mainstream theories of justice. Another factor is that the overwhelming majority of the research published within environmental politics comes from North-American and European scholars (Dauvergne & Clapp, 2016:9). The key aspect of our theoretical framework is that it focuses on the main opposing views between theories. If our aim was to highlight debates within theoretical camps, or challenge the relevancy or appropriateness of any of them, the voices of non-Western authors could highlight some very interesting sides of the debate.

4. Contextualization

Before assessing conceptualizations of justice in the Green Climate Fund, we find it useful to shortly outline the institutional framework i which the Fund takes part. Since the Fund functions as an operating entity of the UNFCCC system, it is necessary to be cognizant of the general decisions made in this arena which form a foundation for the Fund and its policies and practices. This background knowledge thus forms a basis for our analysis and discussion.

The UNFCCC was established in 1992 and has near-universal membership with 197 Parties (UNFCCC, n.d.(a)). The ultimate objective of the agreements under the Convention is "to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system, in a time frame which allows ecosystems to adapt naturally and enables sustainable development" (UNFCCC, n.d. (a)). The Convention states that Parties have a responsibility to protect the climate system in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities (UNFCCC, 1992:4). According to this differentiation, developed countries were tasked with taking the lead in climate action. It was furthermore stated that the developed country Parties were to provide new and additional financial resources to help developing country Parties comply with their obligations (Ibid.:8). The UNFCCC is the parent treaty of both 1997 Kyoto Protocol and the 2015 Paris agreement (UNFCCC, n.d. (a)).

Parties to the Convention are categorized into three groups. Annex I is a list of countries that (at the time of establishment) comprised the OECD countries plus additional states with economies in transition (EIT). Annex II Parties are OECD members and the EU, but not EIT countries. This is the group of countries required to provide financial resources to help developing countries undertake emissions reduction and adapt to climate change impacts (UNFCCC, n.d. (b)). Under the Convention, EIT countries have no explicit obligation to provide financial resources to other

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[4] Having some pre-existing knowledge on these themes, however, we were able to keep them in the back of our minds during coding. Here, we did not find any immediate reason to believe that non-Western theories play a significant role, or that we have overlooked important elements that help us understand the Fund by not including these alternative theories.

countries, nor are they intended as recipients of resources provided by Annex II countries. Non-Annex I Parties form the largest and most diverse of the three groups and are referred to as developing countries. Within this last group, there is special attention to groups of countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, countries that rely heavily on income from fossil fuel production and commerce, and least developed countries (LDCs) that have reduced capacity to respond to climate change (Ibid.).

The Green Climate Fund is the youngest financial mechanism of the UNFCCC. It was established in 2010 and has been operational since 2015. The GCF is placed at the center of the climate finance landscape by funding both mitigation and adaptation projects and by making all developing countries eligible. Since 2015, the GCF has been serving the Paris Agreement, and it oversees initiatives like REDD+ (Hirsch, 2018:10). The GCF's first resource mobilization raised over $10 billion, and the first replenishment period has reached pledges of over $9.8 billion (GCF, n.d.(a)). Since the Fund is guided by the principles and provisions of the Convention, it is part of a global institutional system that manages and governs international responses to the climate crisis.

5. Conceptions of justice in the Green Climate Fund

The words of justice, equity, fairness, equality, and inequality are scarcely used in GCF Handbook, and each without a defining description. We, therefore, in this chapter seek to uncover the implicit notions of these concepts. The conceptualizations of justice will be analyzed using the *Planetary justice research framework* to identify the Fund's perceptions of *Subjects, Principles,* and *Mechanisms*, respectively. This will firstly be done in a separated manner by describing core determining aspects of each of the three concerns of justice and relating them to our five theories of justice where fitting, before ending this chapter with a short summary and comparison of our findings. We use our five theoretical approaches not for their explanatory power but as tools to find conceptualizations of justice concerns in our data.

5.1 Subjects of justice

From our planetary justice framework, we analyze *Subjects of justice* as the conceptualization of normative relations among people or entities. Our five theories differ most significantly on the relevance given to national borders and whether the rich have a moral obligation towards the poor.

Regarding the Fund's financial resources, the main distinction between *Subjects* is made between the so-called developed country Parties and developing country Parties. This dichotomous distinction takes root in the division within the Annex grouping under the UNFCCC, as discussed in the previous section. It has been argued that this quite rigid distinction does not reflect the dynamic diversification among developing countries that has emerged since 1992, as seen in, for example, diverging contributions to global emissions and economic growth patterns (Deleuil, 2012; Dubash,

2009; Pauw at al., 2019). As it follows from the demands of the Convention, the Fund receives its financial inputs mainly from developed country Parties.

All developing country Parties to the Convention (non-Annex I) are eligible to receive resources from the Fund (GCF, 2020a:29). In its Governing Instrument, The Fund states that "given the urgency and seriousness of climate change, the purpose of the Fund is to make a significant and ambitious contribution to the global efforts towards attaining the goals set by the international community to combat climate change" (Ibid., 25). It does so by providing support to developing country Parties and taking into account the "urgent and immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, including LDCs, SIDS and African States" (Ibid.,31). These three country groups are given special consideration because "the poorest people and poorest countries may be least able to deal with the impacts of climate change" and because the projected costs of adaptation as share of GDP, as well as the projected loss of life and of GDP, are highest for them (GCF, 2015:6).

This conceptualization of *Subjects* contains both liberal egalitarian and cosmopolitan notions. As we have discussed in chapter 2.1.1., Rawls' *Theory of Justice* applies to a self-contained national society, in which citizens are free and, equal and national institutions distribute resources accordingly (Wenar, 2006). However, on a global level, it is not 'global citizens' that are represented but entire domestic societies, or 'peoples' (Ibid.). In that sense, the way the GCF refers to *Subjects* on a nation-level coincides with this theory: it is States that represent their constituents. In principle, liberal egalitarianism holds that it is up to nations to work on the justice of its institutions as it sees fit. However, wealthier countries do have a duty to assist 'burdened societies' if they are not able to sustain "minimal conditions of legitimate government" (Wenar, 2006:5). Rawls' theory does not include principles that require "a narrowing of inequalities between richer and poorer countries beyond what the principle of assistance requires" (Ibid.). Viewed in this way, we could argue that Rawls would favor assisting the three previously mentioned vulnerable groups. However, he might have an issue with the fact that all non-Annex I countries are eligible for funding since it also includes countries that are significantly less 'burdened,' like Israel, China, Brazil, and Qatar. This is precisely the point where liberal egalitarians and cosmopolitans start to split ways. Where Rawls argues for a 'cut off point' for distributing resources on a global level, cosmopolitans see no issue with extending the egalitarian distribution from a domestic to a global level. By focusing on *global* redistribution, the overall policies of the Fund could seem to match the cosmopolitan understanding of *Subjects*. Yet, it has been argued that the strict focus on countries is a diversion from the cosmopolitan ideal (Jamieson, 2002:306; Harris, 2009:119). From a cosmopolitan perspective, it is warned that when focusing on states, there is a risk that we "forget about people on the ground who are, or who ought to be, the ultimate concern of environmental justice" (Harris, 2009:119). Especially when it comes to climate change, it has been argued that given the nature of the problem and the environmental interests and actions of different individuals and organizations, "rather than thinking about the problem of the global environment as one that involves duties of justice that obtain between states, we should instead think of it as one that

involves actions and responsibilities among individuals and institutions who are related in a variety of different ways" (Jamieson, 2002:306). This argument is especially directed towards the responsibility of affluent people, "including more than a few in the poor countries who have been polluting for generations" (Harris, 2009:113), but does also concern the position of poor people in developed states[5]. Yet, Charles Beitz - who extended Rawls' difference principle to a global level - explains that we need to distinguish moral structures from political ones, meaning that an ideal theory might look differently in a non-ideal world (Beitz, 1999:183). In the GCF, it can be argued that the emphasis in regarding its *Subjects* lies on the interdependency in a global setting and not so much on the entities which the funds go through. Thus, although it rests on an organization of states (in which the notion of sovereignty is very much alive), the *Subjects* here seem to be linked to a cosmopolitan understanding of morally equal and interdependent participants in a global society.

Aside from the principal focus on *Subjects* on a nation-state level, the Fund also acknowledges the importance of the input and participation of subnational stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, women, and indigenous peoples, in how strategies and projects are designed, developed, and implemented (GCF 2020a:33). Especially indigenous peoples and gender parity take up substantial sections in the policies of the Fund. We will come back to this topic when approaching the *Principles* of the Fund. Concerning *Subjects,* the attention given to differences in individuals and communities based on identity and status indicates an influence of critical perspectives and the capabilities approach. For example, regarding indigenous peoples, it is acknowledged that the "economic, social and legal status of indigenous peoples frequently limit their capacity to defend their rights to, and interests in, land, territories and natural and cultural resources, and may restrict their ability to participate in and benefit from development initiatives and climate change actions. In many cases, they do not receive equitable access to project benefits, or benefits are not devised or delivered in a form that is culturally appropriate, and they are not always adequately consulted about the design or implementation of activities that would profoundly affect their lives or communities" (GCF, 2020a:195). This reflects an understanding that different dimensions in individual personhood shape both experiences and capabilities to live a dignified life. It also shows the understanding that, based on class or gender, one might be subjugated to certain structures that form a barrier to equal participation and representation.

Since women and indigenous people are primarily mentioned in terms of goals to promote inclusivity on a project level, we do not consider them here to be the primary *Subjects* for the GCF.

Sub-conclusion

In terms of the overall distribution of funds we have found, both liberal egalitarian and cosmopolitan notions of *Subjects*. While the relevant parties are determined on a national level, which matches a liberal egalitarian understanding, the attention given to these Parties seems to be

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[5] As argued by Paul Harris (2009:115-116), there is a "growing number of affluent people outside developed states who are now contributing greatly (indeed massively) to climate change, and [correspondingly, 'only' focusing on vulnerable people in developing countries] ignores burdens experienced by people in developed states (for example, poor people in Britain not aided by their own government who might suffer the effects of greenhouse gas emissions by people or other actors in the United States, or, for that matter, emissions by wealthy people in Brazil)".

rooted in more cosmopolitan ideas of interdependence between morally equal participants in a global society.

We also found indications of understandings aligning with capability theory and critical theory. However, due to a seemingly limited engagement, in terms of funding, with subjects at this level, these theories were found to be less influential.

5.2 Principles of justice

In this section, we seek to uncover how the GCF, implicitly or explicitly, defines what justice would look like. We, therefore, look at the main goals that the GCF sets for itself and for the core values that it holds. We discuss these *Principles* according to the emphasis given by the Fund.

5.2.1 Paradigm shift

The Governing Instrument of the GCF states that the Fund will follow the 'ultimate objective' of the UNFCCC:

> "In the context of sustainable development, the Fund will promote the paradigm shift towards low emission and climate-resilient development pathways by providing support to developing countries to limit or reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, taking into account the needs of those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change"

(GCF 2020a:25).

The term 'paradigm shift' is mentioned more than 80 times in the GCF Handbook and is one of the key goals of the Fund. There is, however, no elaborate definition provided, and we even see some diverging applications. In the above quote, the paradigm shift seems to refer to both the transition of economies away from fossil fuel energy and towards low-carbon energy forms, as well as to a capacity-building exercise that makes vulnerable countries better equipped to deal with the impacts of climate change. Yet, in the Initial Investment Framework, the definition of paradigm shift potential is noted as the "Degree to which the proposed activity can catalyze impact beyond a one-off project or program investment" (GCF, 2020a:36). Proposals for both mitigation and adaptation projects are required to provide a theory of change for "replication and/or scaling up of the project results, including the long-term sustainability of the results, or by a description of the most binding constraint(s) to change and how it/they will be addressed through the project" (Ibid.,35). While these applications of the term do not necessarily exclude each other, they do cause some confusion of what is really meant. A survey done in 2016 indicated that many National Designated Authorities (NDAs) and Accredited Entities (AEs) - those who write and approve proposals before they are sent to the Fund - desired clearer guidance from the GCF on what constitutes 'paradigm shift' potential (E Co, 2016). This issue was acknowledged by the GCF Secretariat and several Board members, but it was eventually argued that the paradigm shift objective was purposely flexible to allow for country-specific characteristics and needs (Bertilsson & Thorn, 2020:11). While this flexibility could give some freedom to those writing a funding proposal, it could also give more freedom to those judging a proposal and possibly reject projects on an unclear basis. However, using a

purposely vaguely defined concept as an investment criterium might also risk turning a core principle into an empty signifier[6].

The choice of the term paradigm shift is interesting, as it alludes to a big - if not transformative or even radical - change. While we do not underestimate the complexity and costs for both developed and developing countries to move away from the use of fossil fuels towards green energy, this is arguably more of a transition than a transformation or paradigm shift. Neither is aiming for 'impact beyond one-off investment'. At least from critical approaches, we can say that transformative climate justice for them will require something quite more radical than substituting energy sources and distributing costs and benefits (Newell et al., 2020:38). Instead, critical theory would call for addressing the root causes of climate change. These are understood as "structures that exacerbate vulnerabilities to the impacts of climate shocks and stressors, as well as those that may result in some social groups carrying an unfair burden of climate policy or hinder them from benefiting from climate responses" (Newell et al., 2020:38). Thus, it is clear, that we can exclude that the GCF's use of 'paradigm shift' in its current form is based on the *Principles of justice* of critical approaches. When trying to uncover what perceptions of justice do underly GCF principles, the paradigm shift objective gives us little insight. We are therefore required to look into other *Principles.*

5.2.2 Needs

We found that a second core principle of the Fund is its strong focus on "the needs of those developing countries particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and African States" (GCF, 2020a:35). The Fund states that resources for adaptation will be allocated based on "(i) the ability of a proposed activity to demonstrate its potential to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the context of promoting sustainable development and a paradigm shift; (ii) the urgent and immediate needs of vulnerable countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS and African States" (Ibid., 39).

The UNFCCC's recognition of the exceptionally vulnerable position of some countries and their need for assistance in adapting to the impacts of climate change is seen as the result of a long struggle from small island states, indigenous activists, and organizations (Schlosberg, 2012:451). This seems to reflect influences from critical perspectives and capability approach advocates. The 'Needs of recipient' criterium in the GCF Investment framework indicates that a country as a whole, but more importantly, specific groups (e.g. women) within a country can experience more exposure to climate change risks than others, and that these risks can impact "social or economic assets or capital" (GCF, 2020a:40). According to the capabilities approach, the acknowledgment that climate change impacts do not spread evenly within society is essential to create policies and solutions which can ensure all individuals can live a life 'worth living' according to their capabilities (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020).

Needs, as they relate to vulnerability, are only referenced in relation to adaptation projects.

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[6] "Variously defined as a signifier with a vague, highly variable, unspecifiable, or non-existent signified. Such signifiers mean different things to different people: they may stand for many or even any signifieds; they may mean whatever their interpreters want them to mean." (Oxford Reference, n.d.)

For mitigation projects, resources are allocated based on "the ability of a proposed activity to demonstrate its potential to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the context of promoting a paradigm shift" (GCF, 2020a:39). Under the 'Needs of recipient' criterium in the Investment Framework, mitigation projects are asked to describe the "economic and social development level of the country and the affected population", the "absence of alternative sources of funding", and/or the "need for strengthening institutions and implementation capacity" (Ibid., 40-41). These references to 'needs' in the GCF seem to refer mainly to matters of the capacity of countries to implement projects. They do not indicate aims of tackling possible national or international structures that have caused vulnerability (as critical perspectives would) or to narrow in on individual differences in abilities to convert means into ends (as capabilities approach would). Indeed, groups or communities are mostly referred to in relation to safeguarding that they are not negatively impacted rather than that they are considered essential to the ideal of justice. For example, the GCF aims to "Give due consideration to vulnerable and marginalized populations, groups, and individuals, local communities, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups of people and individuals that are affected or potentially affected by GCF-financed activities" (GCF, 2020a:212). The 'needs' principle thus aligns more with a cosmopolitan notion of justice that works towards a situation where "all individuals worldwide can satisfy basic human needs necessary for survival" (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:5). It matches a needs-based minimum floor principle, which builds on the guidelines that "everyone should enjoy *some* equal basic liberties and that everyone should be protected from certain real (or highly probable) risks of serious harms" (Brock, 2009:51).

5.2.3 Country ownership

A third core principle of the Fund is 'country ownership,' meaning "that countries will identify their priority result areas in line with their national strategies and plans" (GCF, 2020a:34). Country ownership is a guiding principle of the Business Model, as well as one of the six criteria of the Investment Framework.

The idea of country ownership has been part of international development assistance since the 1980s (Watson et al., 2016:6). When donors implement projects in low- or middle-income countries, they now mostly want recipients to 'own' the donation, play an active role in the long-term maintenance, and carry responsibility for the resources made available to them (Ibid.). While major donors like the World Bank and IMF first attempted to ensure country ownership by relying on external expert opinions on what was best for a country, this was soon acknowledged as one-sided and paternalistic (Ibid.). Country ownership has since then been consolidated in several international agreements. The Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness in 2005 reflected on the experience of many countries with ineffective and/or unsustainable aid due to too much control of donors in choosing, designing, and implementing developing programs. It stated that: "Every 'donor-driven' project not only promotes dependency, but actually undermines the necessary processes of development" (OECD, 2012). A 'country-driven' approach would thus entail that

projects are based on the plans and priorities indicated by a recipient rather than by a donor's impression or agenda. In short, the push for country ownership came from concerns from both donors and recipients. "Providers of aid wanted to be sure that *recipient governments* assumed responsibility for using aid well; recipients of aid wanted to be sure that *provider governments* assumed responsibility for giving aid well. The new emphasis on ownership was a way to bridge these two perspectives" (Carothers, 2015:250). The concept can be said to show a mix of concerns for efficiency and empowerment. Efficiency in the sense that donor money can get 'wasted' if spent on projects with limited connection to the needs or priorities of the country or communities where they are implemented, thus lacking the necessary commitment from the recipient. Empowerment in the sense that developing countries are no longer passive recipients of aid but 'developing partners' and supported in the direction of development they see fit (OECD, 2012).

The reliance on national strategies and plans could seem to match a liberal egalitarian principle of justice. In this approach, the least advantaged people in society are considered best served by strong national policies and institutions (Biermann & Kalfagianni, 2020:5). However, the GCF does not 'blindly' support the national plans of recipient countries. The Fund exercises influence and control over whether country priorities are deemed to match GCF objectives. This can be considered a level of 'interference' that does not sit well with liberal egalitarianism. We also note that the term chosen by the international community was not 'governmental ownership' or 'democratic ownership'. Though this might seem like a mere linguistic choice, it could also indicate a "movement toward viewing developing country *societies* rather than just developing country *governments* as the true partners of international assistance" (Carothers, 2015:249).

The objective of empowerment correlates with critical perspectives of justice by challenging established power structures. In line with this perspective, the recipient countries' push for country ownership came from a frustration with the supply-driven nature of Western aid, agendas determined by donors, competing donor agendas, and poorly designed aid for local contexts (Carothers, 2015:250). The GCF's definition of country ownership indeed goes further than the national government by including the need for multi-stakeholder consultations with relevant national, local, community-level, and private sector actors (GCF, 2020a:54). This consultation process is meant to ensure that projects are carried by the affected people and local communities and not just the government or even donors. This emphasis on engagement could indicate that the Fund shows some support for the empowerment objective. It is, however, still required to demonstrate a level of country ownership and commitment in project proposals, and it is the GCF Board that will evaluate whether this is sufficient or not. This could lead to an outcome that leans more towards assuring that countries take responsibility for using aid well rather than a prioritization of empowerment. The potential of empowerment is thus dependent on the *Mechanisms* put in place to fulfill this *Principle*. These will be discussed in chapter 5.3.3.

5.2.4 Participatory parity

Due to the number of references to participation throughout GCF strategies and policies, we find that this is of major importance to the Fund and can be considered a core *Principle*. Participation is

mentioned at different levels as it forms a goal for both internal purposes as for funded projects. The GCF's Governing Instrument states that "the Board will develop mechanisms to promote the input and participation of stakeholders, including private-sector actors, civil society organizations, vulnerable groups, women and indigenous peoples, in the design, development and implementation of the strategies and activities to be financed by the Fund" (GCF, 2020a:33). Of these mentioned groups, there is particular attention to women and indigenous peoples. As internal values, the Fund makes clear that it aims to be "gender sensitive and culturally aware" (GCF, 2020a:180) and that it "will strive to reach gender parity in all key advisory and decision-making bodies" (GCF, 2020a:182). It also sees the "importance of engaging with indigenous peoples" (GCF, 2020a:194), and wants to "respect and recognize traditional knowledge and livelihood systems" (GCF, 2020a:198).

On a project level, the "GCF requires that women and men be provided with equal opportunity to take an active part in stakeholder consultations and decision-making during project preparation, implementation and evaluation" (GCF, 2020a:180). Gender issues are consistently mainstreamed from the rationale that "gender relations, roles and responsibilities exercise important influences on women's and men's access to and control over decisions, assets and resources, information, and knowledge" (GCF, 2020a:178). The Gender Policy "recognizes that the impacts of climate change can exacerbate existing gender inequalities" (GCF, 2020a:178) and sets the objective of "achieving gender equality and women's empowerment" (GCF, 2020a:179).

We have stated in our theoretical framework that feminist theory is considered part of critical perspectives. It should, however, be noted that critical theory does not have a monopoly on feminism. Also, libertarianism, for example, has its feminist movement. Here the emphasis lies on individual freedom, self-ownership, and equality under the law for all men and women (Boaz, 2015). Where forms of feminism diverge, regard the intended end-goal. From critical perspectives, equality in participation and decision-making is both a means and an end to disrupting structural issues of power that have for centuries before not represented the needs of women or people from different races or classes (Newell, 2005). Participatory parity, in this sense, is thus aimed at establishing new structures based on the inclusion of marginalized social groups. For libertarian feminists, the ultimate goal is freedom of choice. We illustrate the difference with an example. If women chose to be in a traditional 'stay at home wife/mom' role, libertarians would deem this just as long as it is voluntary and there is no law or other government intervention that prevents them from pursuing other goals. Feminists from a critical perspective place emphasis on oppressive power structures that include but are not limited to the role of government. They go a step further than freedom of choice and challenge the social norms - or rather, the patriarchy at large - that have established and sustain traditional gender roles and aim to dismantle them.

Since the GCF emphasizes women's empowerment as an objective of their Gender Policy, it might be read as intensions of establishing structures that truly support participatory parity and recognize gender dimensions that have previously been overlooked, as seen in critical perspectives. These aims reach further that libertarian feminist claims of individual freedom and self-ownership.

Yet, references to inclusion do not automatically imply that oppressive structures will indeed be addressed.

The GCF's Indigenous Peoples policy draws from the attention that the COP, UNFCCC, and the Paris Agreement have paid to this group. The latter "acknowledges that Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on, inter alia, the rights of indigenous people" (GCF, 2020a:194). The COP decision that adopted the Paris Agreement re-stated the need to assist local communities and indigenous peoples in responding to climate change. It requested the GCF to consider its recommendation "to enhance [its] consideration of local, indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices and their integration into adaptation planning and practices, as well as procedures for monitoring, evaluation and reporting" (GCF, 2020a:194). Here, we find an influence from capabilities theory in the sense that it shows a direction away from purely economic concerns towards the protection of social and cultural practices, traditions and habits, for individuals or communities to maintain a certain quality of life (Robeyns, 2005:96). The Indigenous Peoples Policy objectives include references to supporting the "welfare, positive contributions and leadership of indigenous peoples to climate change mitigation and adaptation, based on their traditional knowledge systems, livelihoods, sustainable resource management systems and practices, in a manner that is accessible, rights-based, gender-responsive, culturally appropriate and inclusive" (GCF, 2020a:196). It also states to pay "particular attention to the different challenges faced by women and girls and other groups within indigenous communities, and to promote the participation and leadership of women in GCF activities, given their role as traditional knowledge holders and custodians of cultural and spiritual heritage and values" (GCF, 2020a:196). However, as part of *Principles of justice* from a capabilities approach, GCF's references to well-being are on the weak side. The GCF does not go so far as to highlight that individual freedom is dependent on both personal conditions and social arrangements and that policies should be directed towards helping individuals strengthen their capabilities to towards a life 'worth living'. The difference between a 'do no harm' approach and the objective of securing quality of life "to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings" (Sen, 1993:31) then becomes quite big.

Sub-conclusion
Since GCF's overarching goal of a 'paradigm-shift' did not lead to any clear indication of the ideal of justice, we looked further to uncover what primary *Principles of justice* we could detect. We found that the references to 'Needs' were mostly aligned with the cosmopolitan *Principle* of a needs-based minimum floor. In the formulation of 'country ownership,' we found some alignment with liberal egalitarianism, but mostly connotations of critical perspectives. The focus on 'participatory parity' shows influences of critical perspectives and capabilities approach.

5.3 Mechanisms of justice
In this section, we look at what *Mechanisms* are used to deliver on what is considered just and who is considered responsible for addressing injustices. We first discuss how the Fund gets its financial

resources and then how it decides to spend these resources to obtain the paradigm shift and meet the needs that we discussed under *Principles*. Next, we look at what *Mechanisms* are in place in relation to country ownership and, finally, how it follows up on its commitments to participatory parity.

5.3.1 Contributions to the Fund

As a climate fund, the overall *Mechanism* used to achieve the goals is obviously the redistribution of financial resources. This global redistribution to support the needs of the poorest within and among countries in itself reflects a cosmopolitan-style *Mechanism*. As we have seen under *Subjects*, this transfer of resources flows from a select group of developed countries towards a diverse group of developing countries. At the establishment of the Fund, there were no strict agreements made on how contributions should follow. There is no minimum contribution threshold for Parties to the Convention (or Non-Parties to the Convention for that matter) (GCF, 2020a:635). In fact, Parties have no legal obligations towards providing resources to the Fund. The language used in reference to these contributions is therefore quite mild: the Fund *encouraged* countries to make pledges during the replenishment period (Ibid., 635) and also *encouraged* contributing countries to "confirm their pledges to the GCF in the form of fully executed contribution agreements/arrangements *as soon as possible"* (GCF, 2020a:635)*.* There is no fixed installment schedule in the replenishment period, so contributors "are *strongly encouraged* to fulfill their payments and deposits, as early as possible, and at least one year prior to the end of the respective replenishment period, to build up sufficient funding levels available for predictable funding decisions/commitments and programming by the Board" (GCF, 2020a:638). Indeed, in the absence of binding agreements on contributions - and since "predictable funding is essential for the GCF to achieve its objectives" (GCF, 2020a:155) - the Fund takes necessary action to diversify sources of contributions across a range of contributor countries. As mentioned, in addition to developed country Parties to the UNFCCC, the Fund may also receive contributions from other sources like Non-Parties to the Convention, Public and private entities, and Philanthropic foundations (Ibid., 636)[7]. The Fund further states that its communication strategy "should identify levers for attracting funds, and address how external communications could generate stakeholder interest in this regard" (Ibid., 627). The Fund accepts contributions in the form of grants from public and private sources, paid-in capital contributions from public sources, and concessional loans from public sources (Ibid., 636).

The way responsibility for providing financial resources for the GCF is operationalized is interesting considering that *Subjects* and *Principles* showed such a significant influence of cosmopolitanism. If this conception of justice were to be applied in *Mechanisms,* we would expect to see much stronger redistributive proposals or at least clearer accounting policies that ensure the functioning and stability of the Fund. In this regard, we can detect libertarian influence in the current arrangement. Libertarians reject a strong role of government and institutions, and view financial assistance between countries as 'just' only when this is purely voluntary. They would thus

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[7] To date, the aim of diversifying the contributions to the GCF has not yet materialized. Both the initial resource mobilization and the first replenishment period included only contribution from UNFCCC Parties.

strongly reject any binding measures that would dictate who, how, and how much rich countries should contribute to the Fund. We can assume that the current arrangement of voluntary contributions thus forms some sort of compromise to still get to a functioning international agreement.

5.3.2 Disbursement of funds

We have seen under *Principles* that the overarching goal of the Fund is to promote the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways, while taking into account the needs of certain highly vulnerable societies. In order to get a better grasp of this goal, we will in this section look into the *Mechanism* used to obtain it, which is the allocation strategy.

The Fund has set up six overarching guidelines for the allocation of resources. Firstly, the Fund has set an aim for a 50:50 balance of resources between adaptation and mitigation activities. Secondly, it aims for a floor of fifty percent of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing States (SIDS), and African States. Thirdly, it has set out to "manage access to resources with a view to seeking geographic balance and a reasonable and fair allocation across a broad range of countries, while maximizing the scale and transformational impact of the mitigation and adaptation activities of the Fund". Fourthly, it has decided to maximize its engagement with the private sector. Fifthly, it is to provide sufficient resources for readiness and preparatory support. Lastly, it has adopted a decision to determine all allocation parameters in grant equivalents (GCF, 2020a:38). This last guideline mainly concerns the relative weight given between mitigation and adaptation since most loans are given to mitigation projects and most grants to adaptation projects (GCF, 2020b). Thus, when counting in grant equivalents, more money ends up going to loans and thereby mitigation in the end. We, however, in this context, see this more as a practical concern and less of a concern of justice. In the following, the focus will therefore be put on the remaining five guidelines in brief.

The guideline of a 50:50 balance between adaptation and mitigation relates directly to the primary principle of the Fund to promote the paradigm shift towards low emission (funds for mitigation) and climate-resilient (funds for adaptation) development pathways. Concerning mitigation, the Fund has decided to allocate resources "based on the ability of a proposed activity to demonstrate its potential to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the context of promoting a paradigm shift" (GCF, 2020a:39). In relation to adaptation, the Fund is allocating resources based on two parameters. Firstly: "the ability of a proposed activity to demonstrate it's potential to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the context of promoting sustainable development and a paradigm shift" (GCF, 2020a:39). Secondly, as stated in the second overarching guideline for allocation: "the urgent and immediate needs of vulnerable countries, in particular LDCs, SIDS and African States" (GCF, 2020a:39). The fifty percent minimum floor of adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries seems to relate to the understanding of justice seen in the *needs-based minimum floor Principle* of cosmopolitanism, as seen in section 5.2.2. Considering the fact that the Fund has a

limited budget compared to the projected costs of adaptation and also wants to ensure a geographically balanced allocation, there is some concern that this is insufficient for solving the current problem of the ad hoc and inadequate flow of climate finance into most vulnerable countries (Samuwai & Hills, 2019:159). Moreover, the Fund only has a minimum floor concerning the funding for adaptation, not for mitigation. We do not see any other measure to ensure that, out of the wide group of eligible countries, those with the greatest Needs are in some way prioritized when allocating funds for mitigation. From a cosmopolitan perspective, this might be deemed unsatisfactory in regard to reaching a needs-based minimum floor.

On a quite different note, the breadth of the scope Fund's scope in terms of aiming for both adaptation and mitigation could be a point of critique in terms of justice implications. From a libertarian perspective, the funding of projects for adaptation might be accepted as a form of rectification of damages (done by developed countries, or rather, the polluters). Following Nozick's principle of freedom of action, the developed countries could be said to have caused nuisance on developing countries through heavy emissions and use of natural resources (Dawson, 2011:19). However, it is questionable how much this rectification should account for since libertarians generally state that it is difficult to calculate the debts of prior generations (Mack, 2018)[8]. When it comes to projects done for mitigation, libertarianism associates such deeds even less with justice. In this regard, it is argued that the work should be left for legislation and forces of the market. like any other economic activity, the use of fossil fuels should thus be subject to legal constraints designed to avoid the infringement of other people's rights (Dawson, 2011:26).

Despite the incompatibility of libertarianism concerning the allocation to both mitigation and adaptation, the theoretical approach does seem to be strongly reflected in the fourth guideline concerning engagement with the private sector. The Fund has emphasized a necessity to mobilize funds at scale through the private sector by addressing barriers to private sector investment in adaptation and mitigation activities (GCF, 2020a:398). This comes from the acknowledgment that the available public funds are insufficient in relation to the global investments needed in a 2°C scenario (GCF, 2013:2). The GCF has created the Private Sector Facility (PSF) with the purpose of funding and mobilizing private sector actors, including institutional investors, such as pension funds and sovereign wealth funds (GCF, 2020a:398). The Facility has also set the goal of encouraging corporates to co-invest with the Fund (GCF, 2019:4). Concerning to the PSF, resources are allocated based on the contribution a proposed activity makes towards promoting a paradigm shift to limiting and reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the impacts of climate change activities (GCF, 2020a:39). The GCF follows in the footsteps of other multilateral actors that have tried to leverage the private sector for additional finance. Critique on this move is based on the idea that private finance is a poor fit for adaptation in particular. The private sector is seen as mainly focused on mitigation projects in middle-income countries, making adaptation decisions based on revenue

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[8] We find it necessary here to acknowledge that there is a distinct group of libertarians that are skeptical of the scientific basis of belief in anthropogenic climate change, especially of the consensus as promoted by the IPCC. Without this foundation, they naturally believe it to be unjust to enforce taxes, subsidies, or regulations of any kind that are aimed to cut emissions and might put limits on the freedom of people or markets (Dawson, 2011; Murphy, 2016). While this group has received quite some attention in recent years, we will, for the purpose of this thesis, not consider them representative for the libertarian position at large.

projections, and not prioritizing the most vulnerable developing countries (Reyes, 2013; Pauw, 2017). Per June 2020, 36% of all approved GCF funding for projects went to the private sector. The majority of these projects are mitigation-focussed or cross-cutting, and two of them are adaptation projects (GCF, 2020c:1). This indicates that the PSF is indeed making a bigger impact on lowering emissions but not (yet) on meeting the adaptation needs of SIDS and LDCs.

The use of the private sector engagement to mobilize funding, and thus furthering the the Fund's goals, reflects an understanding of the market as an arena that is necessary to accelerate and create development. This perception becomes more directly apparent in relation to the 'market impact' of the Fund, where it is stated that the Fund seeks to "minimize market distortion for private sources of finance, minimize market distortion from use of public resources, maximize positive market externalities and maximize predictability" (GCF, 2020a:101). In terms of justice, this perception thus resembles a libertarian view that emphasizes the free market as the core *Mechanism* to advance just societies. If the cosmopolitan influence that we found in section 5.2.2. was followed up consistently, we would expect less of a focus on the private sector and a stronger role of public finance and institutions in reaching and assisting people with their adaptation and mitigation needs. Considering the fact that contributions to the Fund are not obligated, and there is a lack of sufficient finances, this libertarian-style solution does not seem entirely out of place. It does, however, pose a limitation to reach 'Needs' as we found them in the *Principles*.

5.3.3 Country-driven approach

The GCF's core *Principle* of country ownership, as discussed in chapter 5.2.3, is supported by a "country-driven approach" and a commitment that the Fund will "promote and strengthen engagement at the country level through effective involvement of relevant institutions and stakeholders" (GCF, 2020a:25). While country ownership is at the foundation of the Funds functioning, it is also seen as a criterium for being eligible for funding.

The indicative assessment factors for country ownership in the Investment Framework indicate an emphasis on institutional capacity and technical know-how. Project proposals are requested to show that the proposed activity contributes to national climate strategies and plans, that the country has an enabling policy and institutional framework, and that the proponent can demonstrate a consistent track record and relevant experience and expertise (GCF, 2020a:41). The GCF has established the Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme to help countries meet these requirements. Countries are encouraged to access this program "for a range of activities through which country ownership can be strengthened" (GCF, 2020a:56). These include the preparation of country programs, building in-country institutional capacities for stakeholder consultations, developing the capacities of implementing entities and intermediaries, and building the capacity of NDAs/FPs to perform their role in coordinating and overseeing GCF activities (Ibid.).
          We have previously discussed that country ownership shows a mix of concerns for empowerment and efficiency. While these do not exclude each other, they could lead to some tension. The use of local stakeholder engagement seems to show some support for the

empowerment objective. However, the Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme is to be used by countries to "to address identified gaps to *enable them to meet the GCF standards* and to *build their capacity to engage with the GCF*" (GCF, 2020a:56) and that it "may help countries to *meet the Fund's objectives*" (GCF, 2020a:407 - emphasis added). Readiness support serves to "provide resources for strengthening the institutional capacities of NDAs or focal points and direct access entities *to efficiently engage with the Fund*" (GCF, 2020a:407 - emphasis added). Capacity-building support can definitely be a welcome and much-needed assistance that recipient countries can benefit from both short- and long-term. Yet, the way country ownership is currently operationalized by the Readiness program signals that the technical quality of project proposals might be what is truly being prioritized. From the perspective of critical theory, this indicates that the Fund still holds on to some Western-driven development logics.

Another indication that the country-driven approach and Readiness support have not in practice had the empowering effect on recipients that may have been intended is related to the access modalities. There are three access modalities: Direct National, Direct Regional, and International (Ibid., 30). International entities could include, for example, "United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, international financial institutions and regional institutions" (GCF, 2020a:31). The Governing Instrument stated back in 2011 that: "The Board will consider additional modalities that further enhance direct access, including through funding entities with a view to enhancing country ownership of projects and programmes" (GCF, 2020a:31). Arrangements for Readiness and Preparatory Support started in 2013. As of February 2019, 245 readiness requests have been approved in 122 countries, including 157 requests approved from LDCs, SIDS, and African States (GCF, n.d.(b)). To date, however, only 19 of the 143 approved projects have gone through the national access modality. Twelve approved projects have gone through regional entities, which are always multi-country projects. The remaining projects have gone through international entities[9]. The fact that the International access modality is used so much more than the Direct National modality seems to be a mismatch with a country-driven approach.

       One could think that countries prefer to hand over the time-consuming task of going through the accreditation and project application processes to larger, established entities. It could, however, also be that countries feel that the threshold to comply with all the standards that the GCF has set is so high that they have no other choice but to outsource projects to external entities. A 2019 report from the GCF's International Evaluation Unit (IEU) seems to provide evidence for the latter. This report shows that the impact of inefficiencies and delays in the accreditation process for Direct Access Entities has been perceived as negatively affecting country ownership (Soloman et al., 2019: xxvi)[10]. The report further expressed critique on GCF's policies regarding stakeholder engagement for not adequately supporting a definition of country ownership that extends beyond the national

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[9] The international entities that have channeled the largest volume of funds are the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the UNDP, World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank.

[10] A 2020 report of the International Evaluation Unit focused on the Fund's accreditation function. It stated: "The accreditation process is widely perceived as being long. The median number of days that 95 entities took from submission of application to Board approval for accreditation was 506 days (as of March 2020). Accreditation takes longer in the case of entities with high risk levels and for international entities." (Ansgar et al., 2020:55)

government (Ibid: xxiii). As indicated in the *Principles*, the focus on country ownership aligns with notions of justice from critical perspectives. From these perspectives, however, the high rate of international entities implementing GCF projects is far from ideal. Established multilateral entities are seen as less able to represent the interests of the most marginalized people in society. Instead, critical perspectives urge that subnational, local, and civil society actors can best reach the most vulnerable people and redress power imbalances that have fueled inequality and exclusion (Colenbrander, 2018:3). There is some recognition of engaging with subnational actors in the sense that project proposals do need to be developed "in consultation with civil society groups and other relevant stakeholders" (GCF, 2020a:41). However, the previously mentioned IEU report showed that multi-stakeholder engagement was insufficiently demonstrated in funding proposals and that annual performance reports were not always made public which limits transparency and accountability (Soloman et al., 2019: xxiv). It has been suggested that the continued focus on international institutions and the State risk that climate finance "will continue to support top-down, centralized activities that may struggle to address the needs of vulnerable communities" (Fenton et al., 2014:389). Therefore, critical perspectives would argue that the GCF's direct access modality has not lived up to the potential of letting local organizations plan and manage projects (Colenbrander, 2018:8)[11]. All in all, the *Mechanisms* put in place to ensure country ownership are not aligned with the critical perspective influence we found in the *Principles*.

5.3.4 Participation

In section 5.2.4. we discussed how the GCF places particular attention on participatory equity and inclusivity. This is seen both internally and on a project level. Internal measures are most visible in the composition of the Board. The Fund has a Board of 24 members, composed of equal parts from developed and developing countries Parties (GCF, 2020a:26). Board meetings can be attended by active observers, consisting of two civil society representatives, one each from a developing and developed country; and two private sector representatives, one each from a developing and a developed country (Ibid., 485). The GCF states that it will "strive to reach gender parity in all key advisory and decision-making bodies, including the Accreditation Panel, the independent Technical Advisory Panel and the Secretariat" (GCF, 2020a:182). While this is not paired with strict quotas, the Fund did achieve a gender balance in Secretariat, and the Board has seven female members. Decisions by the Board are made by consensus: "If at least a four-fifths majority of Board members present and voting vote in favor of the draft decision, the draft decision shall be considered adopted, unless four or more developed country Board members or four or more developing country Board members vote against it" (GCF, 2020a:494).

These internal measures reflect the vision of a universally balanced outlook on international cooperation in line with cosmopolitanism. It also reflects a liberal egalitarian vision where representatives from 'just societies' come together to form agreements based on mutual advantage. From a post-colonial perspective, this suggestion of a level playing field does not quite fly. Giving a

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[11] The Board has evidently taken note of this issue, because an Enhanced Direct Access pilot will be launched in 2021 through which small-scale community projects can get access to funding (GCF, n.d.(c)).

small group of rich countries the same decision power and representation as a big and diverse group of developing countries does little to correct historical wrongdoing. Paired with the procedures in place to vote against decisions, there is a severe limitation towards creating meaningful change and challenging the status quo.

On a project level, special considerations for gender concerns and indigenous peoples are directly translated into a Gender Policy and Indigenous Peoples' policy that all project proposals and relevant actors need to comply with. The Indigenous Peoples Policy has been developed with the participation and support of indigenous peoples organizations. However, it has not been paired with a designated observer role for the Board, which would strengthen the impact of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making on a Fund level. The overall objective of this policy is to "provide a structure for ensuring that activities of GCF are developed and implemented in such a way that fosters full respect, promotion, and safeguarding of indigenous peoples so that they (a) benefit from GCF activities and projects in a culturally appropriate manner; and (b) do not suffer harm or adverse effects from the design and implementation of GCF-financed activities" (GCF, 2020a:196).

The Gender Policy aims to promote climate investments that "advance gender equality through climate change mitigation and adaptation actions; and minimize social, gender-related and climate-related risks in all climate change actions" (GCF, 2020a:179). It does so by mainstreaming gender equality issues in all its policies and investments (Ibid.). The Fund undertakes periodic gender mainstreaming performance assessments at the project level (Ibid., 184), and it provides resources for internal learning for GCF personnel in relation to gender equality and climate change (Ibid., 183). All AEs are required to do a gender assessment for each project, submit a project-level gender action plan with each funding proposal, and include progress made in implementing project-level gender action plans in their annual performance report (Ibid., 181).

In both the Gender and Indigenous Peoples Policy, we note that the primary aim is on inclusive consultation processes. Critical perspectives and capabilities theory converge in the importance they place on procedural justice to reach their objectives. Laura Aileen Sauls (2020) distinguishes four types of rights that marginalized groups might seek: *recognition, representation, capability*, and *extended rights* (Ibid., 311). *Recognition* is the formalization of rights to identity (such as being acknowledged as a stakeholder); *representation* means the rights to participation in decision-making; *capacity* refers to the capacity to participate; and *extended rights* refer to the degree in which the previous three rights types "translate beyond inclusion and participation at the international level" (Sauls, 2020:311). From critical perspectives such as postcolonialism, one would argue that it takes more than recognition and participation to reach justice and should involve insight into how injustice is caused (Ibid.). The references that regard participation in GCF policies are primarily aimed at the requirement of AEs to perform some form of consultation with vulnerable groups, which indicates a level of *recognition* and *representation*. However, we do not find any indication of *capacity* or *extended rights*, as there are no measures that reveal what influence consulted individuals or communities have in actual decision-making.

For critical perspectives, conceptions of justice begin with the concepts of domination and oppression (Young, 2011:3). Basic structures for stakeholder consultations are, in this sense,

necessary but not sufficient to address whatever is considered to be an oppressive force. GCF policies do not ask why people got into the position of being marginalized or who benefits from this system. It uses a universal approach towards respecting differences and assuming equal worth,rather than looking at historical circumstances. From a critical perspective, this kind of normative reflection is abstract, empty, and unable to guide towards emancipation (Ibid., 5).

Sub-conclusion

The fact that the GCF is a global institution that redistributes wealth is aligned with cosmopolitan *Mechanisms*. However, the arrangement of how the GCF should receive contributions is restricted by libertarian influences. The broad allocation strategy shows an indication of cosmopolitan influences. Although the disbursement strategy has a specific guideline to meet the adaptation needs of vulnerable countries, this *Mechanism* might not be strong enough to reach the needs-based minimum floor. The inclusion of allocation to the private sector is another *Mechanism* that matches libertarian influences. Likewise, the measures put in place to reach country ownership and participatory parity do not match the logics of critical perspectives or capabilities theory.

5.4 Summary of findings

Having analyzed the GCF's policies and strategies, we found a combination of different conceptualizations of justice.

In *Subjects of justice,* we found a universal aim of helping all developing country Parties with climate action while paying special attention to the needs and vulnerability of those least well-off: people in LDCs, SIDS, and African States. Broadly speaking, the consideration for the global interdependence of individuals, groups, or states aligns best with cosmopolitan views (albeit through the nation-state). A secondary focus on gender dimensions and the position of indigenous people revealed the added influences from critical perspectives and capabilities approach.

Under *Principles of justice,* we sought to uncover how the Fund, implicitly or explicitly, defines the ideal of justice. We first identified that the Fund stresses the aim for a *paradigm shift* as its ultimate objective but that the lack of definition or consistent application made it hard to determine an underlying understanding of 'justice'. Secondly, we found that the Fund emphasizes the needs of those Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change or those who would have to bear a disproportionate or abnormal burden. We found that this priority matches the cosmopolitan *Principle* of a needs-based minimum floor. Thirdly, we found critical influence in the *Principle* of country ownership, which aims to align projects with nationally determined goals and plans, steering away from a donor-driven structure. We also found the influence of critical perspectives and capabilities approach in the values of participatory parity and protecting indigenous communities.

However, when we looked at the *Mechanisms of justice*, we saw that visions of justice are not fully met with measures that fit cosmopolitanism, critical perspectives, or capabilities approach. The global redistribution of wealth —which forms the foundation of the Fund— clearly has cosmopolitan notions. Yet, the *Mechanisms* for this allocation seem to be restricted in relation to the cosmopolitan ideal of powerful institutions.

When comparing the *Subjects, Principles,* and *Mechanisms*, we saw that ambitions described with cosmopolitan or critical notions of justice were approached with either somewhat libertarian *Mechanisms* or with *Mechanisms* devoid of any sentiments of justice. Where a full expression of cosmopolitanism would yield quite strong redistributive instruments, we found no binding agreements in the Mechanisms on how the GCF should receive financial contributions. It was explained that the Fund instead relies on voluntary contributions, which seems to reflect a libertarian emphasis on liberty. The uncertain financial stability of the Fund results in an attempt to incentive the private sector to make investments in climate projects. This reinforces the libertarian emphasis on market structures rather than tied responsibilities. In terms of disbursement, we found *Mechanisms* that partially correspond to cosmopolitan ideas of justice by implementing allocation guidelines such as a minimum floor that secures funds to the most vulnerable. However, we also found that this minimum floor alone might not be sufficient to meet the cosmopolitan ideal due to the broad allocation strategy. With regard to the concern of country ownership, we once again found that the chosen *Mechanisms* are less progressive than what might have expected from the somewhat critical sentiments of the *Principles*. Likewise, in the *Mechanisms* related to the concern of participation, we found that the Fund opts to use less radical instruments than what might be indicated through the *Principles*. From a comparison of the three dimensions of justice, we thus found that the *Mechanisms* generally don not match the progressiveness of the *Subjects* and *Principles*.

6. Discussion

While references to justice were not found explicitly in the data, our analytical framework made it possible to uncover the implicit presence of justice norms. Our analysis has shown that the GCF applies different justice logics inconsistently. The reason this discrepancy is interesting and important to discuss relates to what has been called institutional integrity: the question of whether an actor actually lives up to the values and goals it has publicly proclaimed (Bécault & Marx, 2016:93). This is relevant because climate finance is a pressing issue for international cooperation and because it involves trade-offs between different objectives and values (Ibid.). Our discussion therefore focuses on some explanations for our findings and on factors that might constrain or challenge the capacity of the GCF to achieve or improve on this institutional integrity. We end by discussing the possible implications of our findings.

6.1 Collaboration in global governance

To better understand the discrepancies between GCF's approaches to *Subjects-, Principles-* and *Mechanisms of justice*, we take a brief look at the system of which the Fund is part. As mentioned, the Fund is designed as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC and is accountable to and functions under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties. The *Subjects, Principles,* and *Mechanisms* found in the Fund thus reflect the decisions made on this level of negotiations. David Held (2014a:475) argues that we are facing the 'paradox of our times' in the global governance arena. This paradox refers to the fact that "the collective issues we must grapple with are of growing cross-border extensity and intensity, yet the means for addressing these are

weak and incomplete" (Ibid.). The global and interconnected character of the issues means that they call for collaborative and collective action. However, collaboration is hindered by the institutional fragmentation and competition between states with distinctive sets of geopolitical interests (Ibid.). In the UN specifically, the influence of and the financial dependency on a small group of powerful states, lack of ownership, and power imbalances are all seen as playing a role in the disjuncture between universal aspirations and a partial or one-sided application (Held, 2014b:19). In this sense, the global structure of individual nation-states - with individual (and sometimes grouped) interests and preferences - is seen as limiting the achievement of coherent global action.

The UN structure as an organization of independent states reflects the liberal egalitarian idea of a system of 'just societies'. In the absence of a global cohesive society or a global state, it is considered up to each national society to work out the justice of its domestic institutions as it sees fit (Wenar, 2006:5). It is argued that the unwavering support for nation-states as sovereign entities maintains the power relations between states (Munck af Rosenschöld et al., 2014:643). Hence, institutions need to find a way to reconcile claims of sovereignty with the assignment of responsibilities and burden-sharing in multilateral negotiations (Ibid.). The sovereignty that is concentrated on the level of the state is connected to the protection of individual liberty and equality, which is an ideal that libertarianism shares. For libertarianism, the upside of the global nation-state structure is that it divides power and recognizes a diversity of claims of political authority (Kukathas, 2006:6). Although libertarianism has different reasonings for protecting liberties than liberal egalitarianism, it too seeks to ensure non-interference. Libertarianism sees the liberal character of the global system as an advantage by rejecting coercive policies enacted by governments and by advancing on the ideal of global free markets by introducing and prioritizing market solutions for global issues. The values of state sovereignty and non-intervention at the base of the UN system thus form an obstacle for the global redistribution of wealth according to the cosmopolitan ideal. This obstacle is even greater for the achievement of ideals from critical perspectives and capabilities approach. If we were to place the theories on a spectrum from less to more progressive in relation to our current global structures, we would find liberal egalitarians and libertarians to be the most conform. In the center of this spectrum, we would find the cosmopolitan notion of justice, while the capabilities approach and especially critical perspectives are rooting for more radical changes. We thus see that the *Subjects* and *Principles* of the GCF lean towards the progressive end of the spectrum, while the *Mechanisms* lean towards the other side of the spectrum.

Our analytical framework shows that by separating the three dimensions of justice from each other, we more clearly see where our five theories differ. When we look at the broad descriptions of *Subjects*- and *Principles of justice*, we see that all theories on the spectrum are in some way or another concerned with people's rights and wellbeing. It does not require too much concession from any of these sides to acknowledge climate change impacts as unjust and settle on an agreement aimed at providing some form of assistance to people at the bottom to meet basic needs. However, references to justice were only found implicitly in the GCF, which might imply that subscribing to broad *Principles* is without consequences. After all, *Principles of Justice* only express an ideal

situation and not the concrete steps of how to get there. Liability is limited when one has not explicitly stated collective ideals of justice. This could explain the outcome of how COP negotiations have led to a broadly progressive conceptualization of *Subjects* and *Principles*. When it comes down to *Mechanisms* that move towards tackling the issue, we see that different perspectives on justice were harder to reconcile. The fact that we found *Mechanisms* that maintain the status quo of our current global governance system might not mean that these are specifically agreed on, but rather that the lack of agreement leads to courses of action that are already deemed acceptable and suitable by global institutions. If there is limited support for policy action that concretely moves towards more progressive forms of global change, we resort to measures that are conventional to our current global governance system (Munck af Rosenschöld et al., 2014:643). A notion of path dependency thus seems to become apparent. By this, we refer to the understanding that the institutions' embeddedness in choices and decisions made in the past makes them unable to change paths of development (Ibid., 642). The combination of a struggle in finding agreements regarding necessary measures and a global governance system that is not well designed to handle collective action problems has seemingly resulted in institutional inertia. In this sense, institutional inertia refers to the "inability of institutions to formulate timely responses to anthropogenic climate change" (Ibid., 640). Hence, a reluctance to change has led to action that barely strays beyond 'business as usual'.

A somewhat cynical but nonetheless relevant view regarding the lack of follow-up on *Principles* would hold that the Fund's progressive rhetoric was never truly meant to materialize in correlating action. The (mere implicit) inclusion of progressive notions of justice could be seen as a minimal but necessary step to get developing countries 'on board' with international agreements. As mentioned in the introduction to this study, it has been a struggle for the global South to get the global North to acknowledge and act on the inequality of climate change impacts in the UNFCCC negotiations. After historical responsibilities were finally recognized, there was little chance of reaching agreements that did not set ambitious goals for addressing this issue. The progressive formulations of *Subjects* and *Principles* could thus be understood as a compromise between the geopolitical interests of the global North and the global South. While the global South is pushing for changes, the North can be seen as more hesitant or maybe even obstructionist. The matter that the notions of justice reflected in the *Mechanisms* did not match the progressiveness of the *Principles* might therefore be understood as mere sentiments posed to please the demands of the South, without intentions to follow up on it. This can be said to reflect a form of *Realpolitik* where policies are designed based on pragmatism rather than explicit ideological notions or moral premises.

6.2 Implications for justice

Regardless of the intentions, the notions of justice found in the *Mechanisms* lean towards maintaining the status quo rather than moving towards progressive ideals found in the *Principles*. One of the main implications of these discrepancies regards the assessments of the Fund's results. Since GCF projects are approved and planned based on the *Mechanisms*, the results are measured

according to these policies. Due to these discrepancies, it thus fails to review whether it upholds the progressiveness of the *Principles*. This is, for example, seen in the latest annual performance report, where the Fund presents a review and analysis of the progress and performance achieved by its' portfolio of funded activities under implementation (GCF, 2020d:1). The report focuses on whether the funded projects follow the given guidelines regarding concerns such as mitigation and adaptation targets, geographical and sectoral spread and financing instruments. It does not, however, focus on whether this approach lives up to the *Principles* of the fund. Yet, it is important to mention here that GCF's Independent Evaluation Unit (IEU) has been set up to assure accountability and thus critically review the Fund's activities (GCF, n.d. (d)). As mentioned, this entity has, for example, posed critique regarding the Funds' country ownership approach, stating that the policies put in place for this purpose "are only partially sufficient for realizing country ownership" (Soloman et al., 2019: xxiii). They thus indirectly approach discrepancies between *Mechanisms* and *Principles* of the Fund. They do not, however, make more explicit connections to justice or question its ability to reach more progressive forms of justice. Since the *Principles* of the Fund are not explicitly stated, such questions are not within the purpose of the IEU, and it is not possible to point to commitments that have not been honored. By not explicitly defining its *Principles of justice*, the Fund thus avoids direct accountability towards these questions. As long as the GCF continues to show that its project portfolio makes an impact on emissions reduction, food security, avoidance of loss of life, etc., and that it keeps making its processes more efficient while maintaining high standards, then it will most likely go on existing and even be perceived a successful entity in the UNFCCC framework. However, if this is the direction it keeps going, it will not make any progressions towards the forms of justice found in the *Principles*. So while we do not question whether climate action is being taken (nor the effectiveness of these actions), we do doubt whether these actions are fit for reaching the intended form of justice.

The current course of action could have negative repercussions on future global cooperation. As a legal framework, the UNFCCC does not make obligations time-bound or quantifiable, nor does it have an institutional compliance policy (Elges, 2016:199). The foundation of the partnership is thus based on some form of mutual trust. This trust-base could be negatively impacted if the Fund continues to fall short of living up to its proclaimed values. In the absence of strict enforcement measures, accountability can only be maintained through transparency and reliability. As mentioned, the mere implicit inclusion of justice values and the inconsistent application of these logics make it hard to hold the Fund accountable. At some point, the delegation of developing countries, NGOs, and CSOs that fought for the inclusion of justice in climate policies might again grow tired of the limited commitments to progressive action by the GCF and the Paris Agreement that it serves. The chances that these groups will once more compromise on a climate agreement that has flexible mechanisms, voluntary contributions, and rhetorical promises grow slimmer. This means that future treaties on the scale of the Paris Agreement are in jeopardy if the basis of trust is not re-established and maintained. Since actions from all countries are needed to deal with the climate change problem, this possible threat would be detrimental. The call for 'genuine solutions' shows that it is not deemed sufficient to handle the issue as if it was a mere technical error.

Demands for climate justice are intrinsically connected to questions of power and inequality, but any explicit discussion of these issues seems to be skillfully avoided in UNFCCC negotiations.

The disconnect between proclaimed values and concrete measures creates an incohesive impression of GCF policies. If the intentions are to uphold the system we have, the current policies might suffice. However, if the intention with an entity such as the GCF is to reach more progressive forms of justice, as indicated in the Fund's *Principles*, then the ongoing course of action is unlikely to meet the challenge. At the core of the explanations and implications that we have discussed is the issue that clear expressions on justice are wanting. In what seems like an attempt to minimize normative contestation and conflict, key issues of justice have been avoided in the formulation of policies. So while climate finance is rooted in intentions of justice, we see in the case of the GCF that ethical considerations have so far been downplayed in favor of pragmatic solutions and political consensus. While it is still possible that the Fund will change to more progressive forms of action, this seems extremely unlikely without a debate on the subject. Although it is undeniably a challenge for actors with diverse perspectives to agree on new courses of action, the current narrative can only be challenged if parties clarify their normative positions. We, therefore, argue that the first step towards such agreements is more transparent discussions about what type of just world we want to live in and aspire for. Our findings facilitate this conversation by highlighting the conceptualizations of justice in GCF policies and where their coexistence causes friction.

7. Conclusion

This study set out to find what different conceptions of justice are present in the policies and strategies of the Green Climate Fund, how they are combined, and what the effects of their coexistence are. We have explained that the concept of climate finance is rooted in an acknowledgment of inequity in the burdens and benefits of climate change. For this reason, focusing on justice notions is essential to understand environmental governance and to evaluate climate action. Our findings show that while the conceptualizations of both the *Subjects*- and *Principles of justice* predominantly disclose progressive sentiments, the *Mechanisms* used are more conform to the current global governance system. A consequence of the implicit and inconsistent use of justice logics is that the *Mechanisms* put in place cannot be used to hold the Fund accountable to its proclaimed values. The GCF thereby risks damaging its institutional integrity and - while it is likely that the Fund's position in the UNFCCC architecture will be maintained - a breach of trust could have negative repercussions on future global cooperation.

While these findings are not very encouraging, we do acknowledge that the inclusion of progressive *Principles* could be an important first step towards global change. However, if these progressive notions of justice are to move beyond mere rhetoric, the international community must be willing to enter into a dialogue about the type of justice we aspire for. Although it is challenging for actors with different perspectives and interests to tackle collective action problems, we argue that equitable solutions can only be reached when parties clarify their normative positions and

engage in a transparent debate. Not before then will it be possible to come up with a coherent and effective response. Considering our discussion of structural limitations and institutional inertia, it seems doubtful that this change will be a top-down process. Instead, it will most likely require an increased and sustained amount of pressure from below. Developing countries, grassroots campaigns, and networks like *Climate Justice Now!* have celebrated small victories before, and their ability to raise awareness and influence agenda setting will play a crucial role in the creation of change in the global governance arena.

The findings of this study help articulate how different expectations and assumptions play out in practice by making the implicit explicit. This increases understandings of certain outcomes (or non-outcomes) and provides an opportunity for actors to intervene. Our study thus facilitates a more tangible discussion of justice in multilateral climate finance by contributing to an empirical rather than normative debate.

7.1 Suggestions for further research

If we indeed consider that the inclusion of progressive ideals of justice is the first step in a gradual shift, then future research could take a more longitude approach towards the institutionalization of these justice norms. Since the GCF describes itself as a learning institution, it would be interesting to see if and how they incorporate more and/or different justice norms in their policies over the next few years. This angle could also be approached with a comparative case study to find whether there is a noticeable difference in how climate funds institutionalize norms.

While this study's outcomes are based on a content analysis on GCF documents, future research could corroborate our results by interviewing relevant stakeholders. It would be interesting to see how GCF staff, recipient and donor countries, Accredited Entities, and/or civil society perceive GCF's management of justice issues, such as empowerment and inclusivity. In addition, such interviews could disclose how perceptions of justice differ within and between these groups, especially donors and recipients. Can we indeed speak of a rough North-South divide, or is there more nuance and multiplicity to be found? And what does this mean for the possibility of fostering a debate on justice in this arena?

Related to the previous suggestion is that it could turn out that stakeholders have perceptions of justice that were not included in our Planetary justice framework. We mentioned that this framework includes five broad Western normative approaches, as these are most likely to have influenced a UN-related entity. However, scholars have spoken about a 'justice turn' in environmental governance discourse, and our findings show some inclusion of progressive values. As this might well be a gradual process, it would be interesting to see if there is already some room opening up for non-Western ideals of justice in the arena of global governance that relate to nature rights and de-growth. Future research could look at how these perceptions 'from below' could gain visibility and legitimacy in the multilateral negotiations.

Our last suggestion relates to the recent discussion of climate change and Covid-19. The coronavirus pandemic has placed public budgets under huge pressure, including budgets for climate finance. This has brought concerns about how climate action will compete with the resources needed to respond to the pandemic and revive economies. Since the GCF relies on voluntary contributions by States, they are highly susceptible to this competition for resources. However, talks of 'green recovery plans' and 'building back better' open the door for addressing the linkages between social and economic inequalities, the way we treat our environment, and global health threats. Governments now have an opportunity to make the recovery sustainable, following a progressive line of justice. Future research might explore if and how the impact of Covid-19 changes perceptions of climate justice and if this results in any change of course for the GCF.

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