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| Institution: University of Oxford |
| Unit of Assessment: UOA 21 |
| Title of case study: Developing ethical principles and frameworks to guide climate change policy (21-06) |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Caney's research addresses a fundamental concern that climate policies should be guided not just by economic considerations but also by ethical considerations. His research on human rights and intergenerational justice identifies ethical principles to guide climate change policy that have influenced major actors in the climate change field ranging from international organisations to governments and NGOs. His work has (i) shaped the acceptance of ethical concerns as a critical consideration of climate change policy, (ii) influenced policy initiatives, and (iii) impacted on the wider public debate.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since joining the University of Oxford in 2007, Professor Simon Caney's research has brought the moral and philosophical principles of justice and human rights to bear on the climate change debate. The response to climate change has conventionally been seen as an economic issue and has been evaluated using cost-benefit analysis. There has, however, been growing concern among international institutions, governments and NGOs that a purely economic approach is insufficient and needs to be complemented by ethical principles. Caney's research meets that concern. It formulates ethical thresholds to provide policy-relevant guidance in a range of non-ideal scenarios.</p> <p>(a) Human rights, intergenerational justice and the ethics of climate change policies</p> <p>A central argument of Caney's research is that climate change is unjust because it jeopardizes core 'human rights thresholds' – such as rights to life, health, food and water [Section 3: R5, R6]. In a related argument, the research defends an account of intergenerational justice and proposes that it is unjust to discount the rights of future generations [R1, R2]. The ethical principle flowing from this work is that climate policies should aim to reduce the prospect of climate change that jeopardizes present and future generations' rights to life, health, food and water.</p> <p>In his research Caney offers a methodological critique of the conventional ways in which the distribution of emissions has been treated in theory and practice (including in emissions trading schemes). He proposes an alternative approach centred on respecting and sustaining people's higher-order interests, arguing that it is wrong to isolate climate change from other serious moral concerns (such as human rights, poverty and health). The work advances an integrated approach that treats emission rights in conjunction with these broader normative concerns [R7, R4].</p> <p>(b) Allocating the burdens of combating climate change</p> <p>Caney's work also engages with the question of how the burdens of combating climate change should be distributed. He argues that they should be carried by those who are most responsible for causing the change and those with the greatest ability to pay. The research advances a distinctive combination of two principles of justice, the <i>Polluter Pays Principle</i> and an <i>Ability to Pay Principle</i> [R3]. Caney integrates these principles into a broader ethical framework to guide climate policies and argues that the <i>Polluter Pays Principle</i> should not be applied in ways which compromise human rights and that it ought to take into account people's ability to pay [R4, R5].</p> <p>Caney's work applies the ethical principles he derives to a range of substantive policy areas including biofuels, emissions trading schemes, and clean technologies [R1 – R7].</p> |
| <p>3. References to the research</p> <p>[R1] Simon Caney 'Human Rights, Climate Change, and Discounting', <i>Environmental Politics</i> vol.17 no.4 (2008), pp.536-555. Reprinted once in an edited volume. (Google Scholar: 53</p> |

Impact case study (REF3b)

citations)

- [R2] Simon Caney 'Climate Change and the Future: Discounting for Time, Wealth and Risk', *Journal of Social Philosophy* vol.40 no.2 (2009), pp.163-186. (Google Scholar: 44 citations).
- [R3] Simon Caney 'Climate Change and the Duties of the Advantaged', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* vol.13 no.1 (2010), pp.203-228. Reprinted twice. (Google Scholar: 59 citations)
- [R4] Simon Caney 'Markets, Morality and Climate Change: What, if anything, is Wrong with Emissions Trading?', *New Political Economy* vol.15 no.2 (2010), pp.197-224.
- [R5] Simon Caney 'Climate Change, Human Rights and Moral Thresholds' in *Human Rights and Climate Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), edited by Stephen Humphreys, pp.69-90. Reprinted once. (Google Scholar: 50 citations)
- [R6] Simon Caney 'Human Rights and Global Climate Change' in *Cosmopolitanism in Context: Perspectives from International Law and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), edited by Roland Pierik and Wouter Werner, pp.19-44.
- [R7] Simon Caney 'Just Emissions', *Philosophy & Public Affairs* vol.40 no.4 (2012), pp.255-300.

The quality of Caney's research is demonstrated by:

- (i) The nomination of 'Climate Change and the Future' [R2] as best article in 2010 and 2011 for the *American Philosophical Association's Gregory Kavka/UCI Prize for Political Philosophy*.
- (ii) The large volume of citations (especially R1, R2, R3, and R5, see citation information above).
- (iii) The large, competitively awarded research grants funding the work. These include: an ESRC Climate Change Leadership Fellowship (Oct 2008 - Mar 2012) on 'Equity and Climate Change', £184,636.25; an internal, peer reviewed grant by the Oxford Martin School for a three year interdisciplinary research programme on 'Human Rights for Future Generations', £350,000, for which Caney is one of three Principal Investigators (with Professor Sandra Fredman, Law and Dapo Akande, Law) (2012 – 2015); a grant by the ESRC's Strategic Investment Fund ('The Climate Crunch', £163,664) to Caney and other ESRC Climate Change Fellows (led by Roger Street, Environmental Change Institute) for the dissemination of the research findings from the ESRC Fellowship (2013-).

4. Details of the impact

Although it has been clear for some time that climate change can have harmful effects, it is only recently that the protection of human rights and equity concerns have been accepted as legitimate considerations in guiding and targeting climate change policy. Professor Caney's research has made a significant contribution to this development. His application of ethical frames - such as human rights thresholds and intergenerational justice - to climate change policy is now used by major actors in the climate change field ranging from international organisations, to governments and NGOs.

Caney was an Advisor to the *International Council on Human Rights Policy* (ICHRP) – an independent policy body – on the inclusion of human rights concerns in their 2008 report *Climate Change and Human Rights*. [C1] The report is acknowledged as a critical moment in establishing the centrality of ethical considerations in the climate policy debate [C2]. It drew on Caney's research and gave particular prominence to his concept of *human rights thresholds*, which made it possible to connect the ethical concerns raised by climate change to the legal apparatus of human rights. This was one of the first policy reports to clarify how human rights can be considered as an essential dimension of climate change policy. It had a powerful framing effect on the wider debate and shaped the policy positions of major actors such as the UN - the Human Rights Council and the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (see below)[C2].

(1) Shaping the adoption of human rights and equity concerns as legitimate considerations in guiding and targeting climate change policy

Caney's research has informed the positions adopted by a range of UN bodies, the World Bank and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on human rights and climate change.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC): Caney's work has contributed to the explicit

concern for human rights and equity reflected in the latest Assessment Report (AR5) issued by the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC). The IPCC works under the auspices of the United Nations and is the leading intergovernmental scientific body for the assessment of climate change. It provides rigorous scientific information on climate change and its potential environmental and socio-economic impacts to decision makers. Its reports are the authoritative source of information in international climate change negotiations and have a critical impact on policy responses. Caney was a member of the working group that drafted the report's chapter on 'Social, Economic and Ethical Concepts and Methods'. Other chapters on 'Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability' and 'Mitigation of Climate Change' also cite his research [R1, R3, R5, R7]. In all, Caney's arguments that climate change has substantial effects on human rights, intergenerational justice and distributive justice are cited in six chapters of the report. The IPCC's fifth assessment report will shape worldwide responses to climate change from 2014 onwards.

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): Caney's research and the ICHRP report in turn shaped the thinking of the OHCHR on the relationship between climate change and human rights. Both Caney's work [R1] and the ICHRP report are cited in OHCHR's analysis [C3]. The OHCHR report refers to Caney's argument that a moral concern for intergenerational justice imposes a duty on current generations to mitigate climate change in order to safeguard the rights of future generations.

UNICEF: Caney's work on intergenerational justice has shaped UNICEF's position on climate change. Following Caney, UNICEF argues in its report 'A brighter tomorrow: climate change, child rights and intergenerational justice' that the rights of future generations must be a key consideration in policy making on climate change and cites Caney's work [R1,R4] [C4].

The World Bank: Caney's work has also influenced the World Bank Group's approach to climate policy. Caney contributed a commissioned background paper on 'Ethics and Climate Change 2009' to the Bank's *World Development Report 2010* which included the argument (referencing Caney) that climate change policies should take account of fairness in the distribution of responsibilities and costs, human rights, and intergenerational equity [R1-4] [C5]. The report sets the framework for the Bank's climate change policy.

International Trade Union Congress (ITUC): Caney's research [R5] and contributions to an ITUC seminar on climate change had considerable influence in shaping the ITUC's view of climate change as jeopardizing not just labour but also human rights. The ITUC represents 174 million workers in 156 countries and its call for climate change policies that protect both sets of rights is enshrined in the ITUC report 'Making Common Cause: Human Rights, Labour Rights and Climate Change' [C6], which formed the basis for the ITUC's contributions to the UN climate change negotiations in Cancún (2010) and Doha (2012).

(2) Shaping policy: biofuels, human rights and the equitable allocation of burdens

The research on normative principles to guide climate change policy [R5, R6] has been particularly influential in shaping policy initiatives with respect to biofuels. As a result of his work Caney was invited to join the working party on biofuels of the *Nuffield Council on Bioethics* and had a central influence in developing the six ethical principles advocated by the Council as a guide for biofuels policy [C7]. The principles - which include respect for people's essential rights and the equitable distribution of benefits and costs from biofuels policies - were published in the Council's report *Biofuels: Ethical Issues* (2011) of which Caney is a co-author. These principles have shaped the frameworks applied to biofuels policy in the UK and at the European level.

- The principles influenced the criteria applied in the first voluntary schemes to certify the sustainability of biofuels approved by the *European Commission* [C7].
- The *UK Bioenergy Strategy*, published by the government in April 2012, reflected the Nuffield Council's six ethical principles [C7], and the Chair of the *House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Select Committee* (Tim Yeo MP) endorsed the report's six principles as "completely beyond argument", [C8].
- In October 2012, the *UK's Technology Strategy Board* employed the six principles in its 'Responsible Innovation Framework' to guide innovation in the area of synthetic biology.

In all, the six principles have been among the most influential outputs of the Nuffield Council. Since publication, the main page for the report (www.nuffieldbioethics.org/biofuels) has been viewed more than 25,000 times and the report PDF has been downloaded 2,700 times.

(3) Shaping the public debate about climate change

The research has generated wide public interest: Caney was invited to speak on how principles of justice and human rights should inform climate change policy by UNESCO, Policy Network, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, the E3 Foundation, and in the Oxford Amnesty Lectures. His work was recommended by Mary Robinson in her 5 essential readings on climate justice [R5, C9]. His proposals for safeguarding the rights of future generations in democratic political processes that address climate change were quoted by the Rt Hon Ed Miliband (then Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change) in his speech 'The Road to Copenhagen' at the LSE on 17 November 2009 [C10].

In sum, by demonstrating the effects of climate change on human rights and equity, and charting how these concerns can be considered in policy, Caney's research has had important impact in framing ethical considerations in the debate about climate change policies. The work has had significant reach enabling major stakeholders from UN bodies, the World Bank and the ITUC to the European Commission and the UK government to formulate positions that take account of the ethical issues raised by climate change and to develop policy frameworks that address them.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [C1] International Council on Human Rights Policy *Climate Change and Human Rights: A Rough Guide* (Geneva, ICHRP, 2008). On human rights thresholds see ref. 14 Caney, 2005, 2006 and 2008, p.6 http://www.ichrp.org/files/reports/45/136_report.pdf
- [C2] Former Research Director (and report author), International Council on Human Rights Policy on the ICHRP report as a significant early framing moment and its impact on other actors.
- [C3] *Report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the relationship between climate change and human rights (A/HRC/10/61)* 15 January 2009. Footnote 128, p.29 cites [R1]. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/498811532.html>
- [C4] UNICEF *A brighter tomorrow: climate change, child rights and intergenerational justice* (London: UNICEF, 2009). [R1] is cited on p. 6 and 8, [R5] on p.19. <http://www.unicef.org.uk/Documents/Publications/intergenerationaljustice.pdf>
- [C5] World Bank *World Development Report 2010: Development and Climate Change* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2010). Background paper for the WDR 2010. P.53 Box 1.4 Ethics & Climate Change and p.350 Caney, S. 2009. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2010/Resources/5287678-1226014527953/WDR10-Full-Text.pdf>
- [C6] ITUC report '*Making Common Cause: Human Rights, Labour Rights and Climate Change*' references R5. (Copy held on file)
- [C7] Former Assistant Director of the Nuffield Council and director of the 'biofuels - ethical issues' project, confirms Caney's contribution to the six principles.
- [C8] Transcript of Oral Evidence taken before the Energy and Climate Change Committee, bioenergy, for Tuesday 21 Feb 2012. The statement appears in Q11. HC 1850-i, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmenergy/c1850-i/c185001.htm>
- [C9] Mary Robinson (President of the *Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice*) and observer of climate change debates, refers to Caney [R5] in her five key readings on climate change. <http://old.thebrowser.com/interviews/mary-robinson-on-climate-justice>
- [C10] Rt Hon Ed Miliband '*The Road to Copenhagen: A Global Deal on Climate Change*', given at the LSE on 17/11/2009. This is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRsJwQZ1-q0> Reference to Professor Caney's proposal 27 minutes and 29 seconds in.