

**Name and title:**

Mr. Michael Mikulewicz

Doctoral researcher in Human Geography

**Institutional affiliation:**

School of Environment, Education and Development

University of Manchester, United Kingdom

**E-mail address:**

[michal.mikulewicz@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:michal.mikulewicz@manchester.ac.uk)

**Proposed research agenda:**

The Politics of Local Climate Justice

Climate justice can be analyzed at many different scales (global, regional, national, local, individual) and using different dimensions of climate policy (mitigation and adaptation). Dilemmas of justice are present at various intersections of both (see Table 1 for examples).

		<i>Scale</i>	
		<b>Global</b>	<b>Local</b>
<i>Dimension of Climate Policy</i>	<b>Mitigation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing countries hardly responsible for climate change yet required to participate in GHG emissions reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>afforestation (e.g. REDD+) and conservation can undermine the livelihoods of populations that are not responsible for climate change</li> </ul>
	<b>Adaptation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing countries will be affected more yet they have less resources to adapt and contributed less to the problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>marginalized communities and/or community members will be affected more yet they have less resources to adapt (focus of this paper)</li> </ul>

Table 1. Dilemmas of climate justice implications at various scales and policy dimensions.

Historically, it can be argued that climate justice scholarship has been predominantly focused on the global dimensions of climate justice, particularly in the context of mitigation where issues related to nation-states' GHG emissions have been at the center of scholarly attention (Bulkeley et al. 2013; Sovacool et al. 2012). However, the issue of climate justice is not constrained to the international arena or climate summits (Adger 2001; Grasso 2010; Paavola 2008). Climate impacts and the related adaptation- or mitigation-based interventions will take place at the local level, seen by some observers as a more appropriate scale of climate governance than the global commons (Adger 2001).

This is why I could like to propose that the local scale receive special attention of critical climate scholars. Importantly, climate justice scholarship must recognize that it is not just biophysical climate impacts such as droughts, floods or sea-level rise that can contribute to growing inequality at the local level. Crucially, the *way* we respond to these impacts – either through reactive or preventive measures – also poses important questions of justice (Mikulewicz, forthcoming). Examples include localized initiatives such as REDD+ programs aiming to preserve carbon sinks (see: Nuesiri 2015; Marfo 2015; Ruta 2015) or GEF-funded interventions focused on local adaptation (see: UNFCCC 2013). The limited evidence to-date shows that those who are able to steer their livelihoods towards a more “climate-proof” future are also those who are privileged in terms of material or discursive power,

while those who find themselves on the social margins may be simply left behind (Taylor 2014; McCarthy 2014; Thomas and Twyman 2005; Adger 2006; Ribot 2009).

Even more specifically, above and beyond a concerted focus on the local justice implications of climate change and responses to it, what is proposed here is a political understanding of vulnerability of groups and individuals considered at the highest risk of being marginalized in the planning and distribution of benefits of climate policies (such as women, the landless, the unemployed, the disabled, the sick, or the poor). Merely diagnosing the symptoms of such groups' vulnerabilities through socio-economic indicators (such as poverty or unemployment rates) should not be considered sufficient, and a more political approach should instead be adopted to critically interrogate the inequalities in how local people participate in and benefit from climate-related interventions in their immediate environments (Eriksen, Nightingale, and Eakin 2015; Mikulewicz, forthcoming; Nightingale 2015; Ribot 2014). Therefore, I would like to propose a research agenda committed to focusing on the local level and which pays particular attention to issues of political inequality in the context of climate change policies and interventions. This could be done through partnerships with international donors, governments, development agencies, and civil society groups that are locally involved in advancing policies, programs and projects focused on mitigation and adaptation alike.

#### Sources:

- Adger, W. Neil. 2001. "Scales of Governance and Environmental Justice for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change." *Journal of International Development* 13 (7): 921–31. doi:10.1002/jid.833.
- ed. 2006. *Fairness in Adaptation to Climate Change*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Bulkeley, Harriet, JoAnn Carmin, Vanesa Castán Broto, Gareth A.S. Edwards, and Sara Fuller. 2013. "Climate Justice and Global Cities: Mapping the Emerging Discourses." *Global Environmental Change* 23 (5): 914–25. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2013.05.010.
- Eriksen, Siri H., Andrea J. Nightingale, and Hallie Eakin. 2015. "Reframing Adaptation: The Political Nature of Climate Change Adaptation." *Global Environmental Change* 35 (November): 523–33. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.09.014.
- Grasso, Marco. 2010. *Justice in Funding Adaptation under the International Climate Change Regime*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-90-481-3439-7>.
- Marfo, Emmanuel. 2015. *The Illusion of Democratic Representation in the REDD Readiness Consultation Process in Ghana*. RFGI Working Paper, no. 15. Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA.
- McCarthy, John F. 2014. "Using Community Led Development Approaches to Address Vulnerability after Disaster: Caught in a Sad Romance." *Global Environmental Change* 27 (July): 144–55. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2014.05.004.
- Mikulewicz, Michael. Forthcoming. "Politicizing vulnerability and adaptation: on the need to democratize local responses to climate impacts in developing countries." *Climate and Development*. doi: 10.1080/17565529.2017.130488
- Nightingale, Andrea. 2015. "A Socionature Approach to Adaptation: Political Transition, Intersectionality, and Climate Change Programmes in Nepal." In *Climate Change Adaptation and Development: Transforming Paradigms and Practices*, edited by Tor Håkon Inderberg, Siri H. Eriksen, Karen L. O'Brien, and Linda Sygna, 219–34. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

- Nuesiri, Emmanuel O. 2015. *Representation in REDD: NGOs and Chiefs Privileged over Elected Local Government in Cross River State, Nigeria*. RFGI Working Paper, no. 11. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Paavola, Jouni. 2008. "Science and Social Justice in the Governance of Adaptation to Climate Change." *Environmental Politics* 17 (4): 644–59. doi:10.1080/09644010802193609.
- Ribot, Jesse C. 2009. "Vulnerability Does Not Just Fall from the Sky: Toward Multi-Scale Pro-Poor Climate Policy." In *The Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World*, edited by Robin Mearns and Andrew Norton. The World Bank. <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-0-8213-7887-8>.
- . 2014. "Cause and Response: Vulnerability and Climate in the Anthropocene." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 41 (5): 667–705. doi:10.1080/03066150.2014.894911.
- Ruta, Doreen. 2015. *Assuming Women's Representation in Carbon Forestry Projects*. RFGI Working Paper, no. 25. Dakar: CODESRIA. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/RFGI-WP-028.pdf>.
- Sovacool, Benjamin K., Anthony Louis D'Agostino, Amireeta Rawlani, and Harsha Meenawat. 2012. "Improving Climate Change Adaptation in Least Developed Asia." *Environmental Science & Policy* 21 (August): 112–25. doi:10.1016/j.envsci.2012.04.009.
- Taylor, Marcus. 2014. *The Political Ecology of Climate Change Adaptation: Livelihoods, Agrarian Change and the Conflicts of Development*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Thomas, David S.G., and Chasca Twyman. 2005. "Equity and Justice in Climate Change Adaptation amongst Natural-Resource-Dependent Societies." *Global Environmental Change* 15 (2): 115–24. doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2004.10.001.
- UNFCCC. 2013. "Index of NAPA Projects by Sector." Retrieved from: [https://unfccc.int/files/cooperation\\_support/least\\_developed\\_countries\\_portal/napa\\_priorities\\_database/application/pdf/napa\\_index\\_by\\_sector.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/napa_priorities_database/application/pdf/napa_index_by_sector.pdf)