

Introduction: Representing Vulnerable Communities and Future Generations in the Face of Climate Change

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In its Sixth Assessment Report, published in three parts across 2021 and 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) presents its most dire warning yet: Unless we make rapid changes to our production and consumption patterns, within decades we will face a severe breakdown of the global climate. Although the impacts will be felt globally, the most severe consequences will befall socioeconomically vulnerable communities, especially in the Global South. In many low- and middle-income countries, the impacts of climate change already constitute a reality that vulnerable communities are learning to manage in their daily lives.

Even though climate change will most severely impact poorer countries and more vulnerable communities, these groups are significantly underrepresented within climate policy and practice. Likewise, while the worst effects will be felt in the future, future generations are unable to represent themselves in current negotiations. At the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) held in Glasgow in 2021, representatives of the most climate vulnerable communities expressed disillusion with the continued disregard of their interests, values, knowledge, and experiences with regard to climate change. This

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marginalization applies not only to mitigation but also extends to financing, prioritization, and detailed planning for adaptation to climate impacts.

This roundtable collection is motivated by the following question: How can the voices of vulnerable communities and future generations be adequately and fairly represented within climate change policy and practice? The contributions address this question from several perspectives. Simon Caney focuses on global governance institutions to protect the interests of future generations, considering specific proposals and asking what criteria should be used to evaluate them. Stephen Gardiner's essay builds on his previous work calling for a global constitutional convention, elaborating on the proposal and addressing objections to it. Colin Hickey argues that it is necessary to consider more informal modes of representing vulnerable communities and future generations, such as through grassroots organizations. In our contribution, we argue that the interests of future generations are best represented in deliberations around climate policy and practice by those already most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Marco Grix and Krushil Watene's essay argues that the representation of climate-vulnerable communities and future generations—in particular, Indigenous peoples—must ensure the protection of the complex network of social practices that guide how vulnerable communities respond to climate change.

Overall, the essays in this roundtable seek to advance discussions of how to ensure that climate-vulnerable communities and future generations are best protected from the adverse consequences of climate change by focusing on proper representation. In the process, the essays consider different criteria for just and fair representation; they evaluate several proposals for local and global, and formal and informal, representative institutions and arrangements; and they highlight the most pressing tasks of just representation within climate policy and practice. The key message of the roundtable is that climate justice is not just a matter of distributive fairness but also a matter of representative fairness, concerning how decisions are made and who gets to make them.