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Just restoration: justice perspectives in the implementation of restoration

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When you hear “justice” and “restoration”, what do you think of?

Elements of justice

Distributional justice

- Distribution of benefits and burdens between different groups of people
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Procedural justice

- Extent of inclusivity and fair representation in the institutions, procedures and practices of decision-making
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Recognitional justice

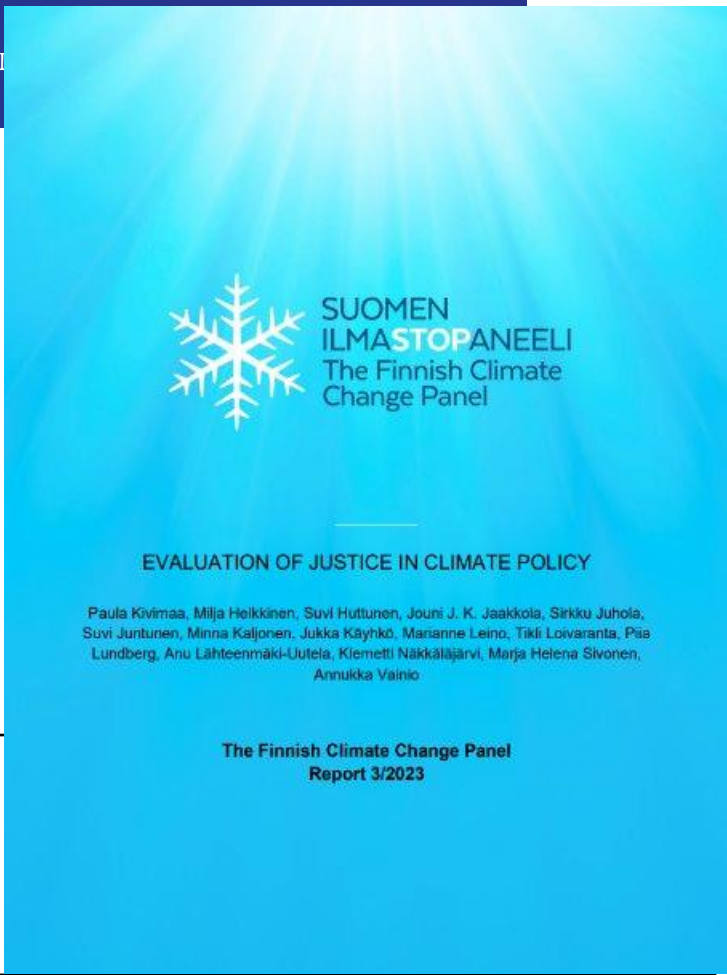
- Recognition of human dignity, values, identities and capacities of people as individuals and as distinct social groups

Applied to nature restoration

- Who has benefited/suffered from nature degradation & who benefits from/pays for nature restoration?
- Who decides if, what, where, and how much nature is restored, and who is heard?
- How are different values related to (restored) nature recognized?

Example: Tool for assessing justice in policy

Evaluation of justice in Finnish climate policy



Distributional justice	Recognitional justice	Procedural justice
Does it increase/decrease the livelihoods of certain people?	Are people placed in different positions due to their background, culture, wealth, age, residence, education, or profession?	Do citizens have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making?
Does it increase/decrease opportunities for employment for certain people?	Accounting for different sociocultural values and positions as well as specific needs and vulnerabilities ?	Is decision-making fact-based ?
Does it increase/decrease health benefits/disadvantages for certain people?	Does it improve/weaken the realization of the rights of the Indigenous peoples?	Are citizens able to hold decision-makers accountable ?
Does it increase the disadvantages/benefits incurred over national borders and globally?	Children & future generations recognized? Non-human species ?	Participation of Indigenous peoples?

Nature restoration and restorative justice = correcting past wrongs

"A specific type of justice focusing on **past and present** harm to people, species and ecosystems" (EEA)

"a justice paradigm that prioritises ... **the reparation of the harm and damage done**" (European Forum for Restorative Justice)

- **Distribution:** should those pay for restoration who benefited from degradation?
- **Recognition:** should those be recognized who were not recognized in the past?
- **Procedures:** should those be enabled to participate who could not participate in the past?
- Nature that was handed over for **our generation**, and nature we will hand over for the **next generation**?
- Re-centering **non-humans** that were ignored in the past?

Just restoration in Europe through the (proposed) EU Nature Restoration Law?

EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL)

- The law would make **nature goals binding**, implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the EU Biodiversity Strategy
- Preamble 83:
"Member States should promote **a fair and cross-society approach** ... national restoration plans ... engage authorities, landowners... land users... civil society... business... research and education... farmers, fishers, foresters, investors... general public... foster **dialogue** and the diffusion of **science-based information** about biodiversity and the benefits of restoration."



NRL debate in Finland through the justice lens

- **Landowners** (or their Union), **food industry**, **forest industry** worried about the economic value of farmlands and forests & income, livelihoods, and business:
- "the law threatens possibilities to continue **food, feed, and timber production** in peatlands with good yields"
- "duties not fairly divided between sectors and groups: **farming and forestry** vs. others, **landowners** vs. others"
- "benefits [of nature restoration] are **indirect, in the future, and mainly for others**"

Distributive justice

Recognitive
(inter-generational)
/ restorative justice

NRL debate in Finland through the justice lens

- Benefits for some societal actors valued over benefits for others (justified by self-sufficiency, food security, employment, export value?)
 - Lack of understanding / uncertainty of the economic benefits of nature ?
 - Immediate benefits (profits, cost-savings) are valued over longer-term benefits
 - Absent: attention to the values of ecosystems in the 26 other EU member states, global impacts
- **Attention to distributive justice issues overshadows aspects of recognitive justice (diverse values) and restorative justice**



Directions for (further) research:

- **HORIZON-CL6-2025-01-BIODIV-XX: Socio-economic impacts of nature restoration:** "sector-specific assessments to measure the **comprehensive economic and social impact of nature restoration** ... both the financial effect of economic activities and the non-market benefits derived from ecosystem services ... a multidisciplinary approach combining ... economics, ecology, sociology, and environmental science to capture the full range of impacts"

Directions for (further) research:

- Attention needed to the **multiple dimensions of justice beyond distributive issues**
- The benefits of restoration are realized over long-term, how to account for **inter-generational justice?**
- **National, European and global goals** vs. accounting for **local contexts** and supporting **local solutions**
- **Recognitive justice within research itself** to support restoration

Thank you!



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