



Adaptation Futures 2025

Equity in Climate Adaptation: Advancing Justice and Inclusivity Across Scales

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INDIGENOUS, ETHNIC, AND RACIAL DIVERSITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE: GAPS IN NEW ZEALAND’S ADAPTATION POLICIES

Presented By Iresh Jayawardena



Lecturer in Urban Planning

Domain Lead: Future Cities Research Center

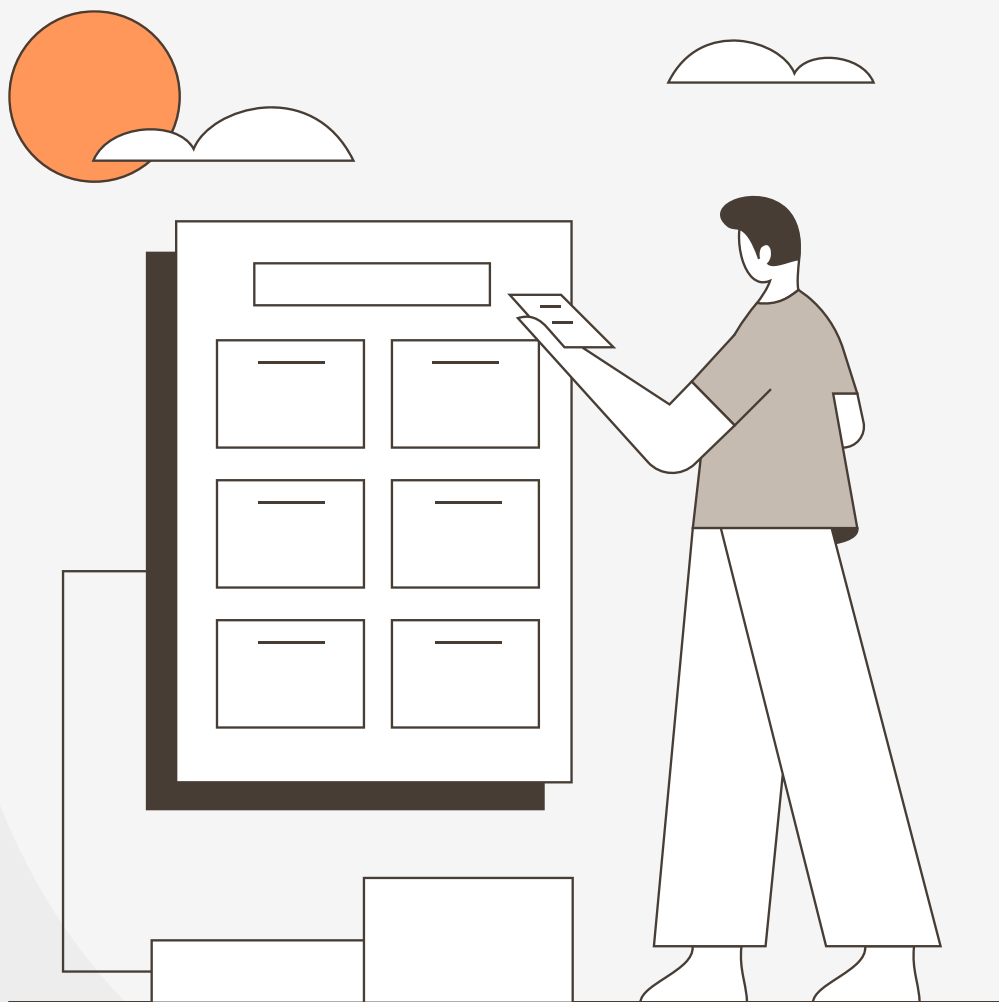
Te Pare | School of Architecture and Planning

Te Herenga Auaha | Faculty of Engineering and Design

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Overview



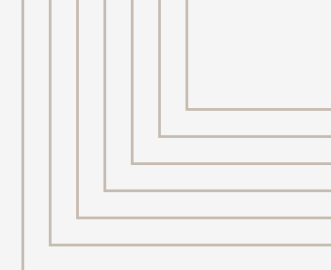
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Introduction

- Globally, the climate justice discourse highlights a core paradox: climate change **strikes hardest those who are least responsible** for its emergence. This injustice is deepened when vulnerable populations are marginalised from decision-making processes
 - In Aotearoa New Zealand, the integration of climate justice principles into national adaptation strategies is still evolving. While there is a stated focus on Indigenous perspectives, significant gaps remain, hindering the development of truly equitable climate resilience frameworks.
 - This policy deficit creates an urgent need to scrutinise New Zealand's climate adaptation frameworks to identify these gaps and ensure that strategies are inclusive, equitable, and just for all communities.
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Research Problem

Key Research Problem and Aim:



Key Research Problem:

The central problem this research addresses is that the inclusion of marginalised Indigenous, ethnic, and racialised communities **remains elusive in policy discussions**. These communities are often disproportionately affected due to historical injustices, socioeconomic factors, and limited resources.



Aim:

The aim is to inform the formulation of inclusive policies that integrate the diverse perspectives of all communities.



Understanding Climate Justice



- Climate justice is a multidimensional concept encompassing social, political, and community-oriented aspects beyond purely environmental issues.
- To analyse policy, this research employs a framework built on five key, interdependent dimensions of justice

Procedural Justice: Fairness and inclusion in decision-making processes.

Transformative Justice: Addressing the root causes of climate injustice and power imbalances

Distributional Justice: Equitable distribution of the resources, costs, and benefits of climate action.

Intergenerational Justice: Ethical responsibilities to ensure the well-being of future generations.

Recognition Justice: Acknowledging and rectifying historical injustices and valuing diverse knowledge systems.

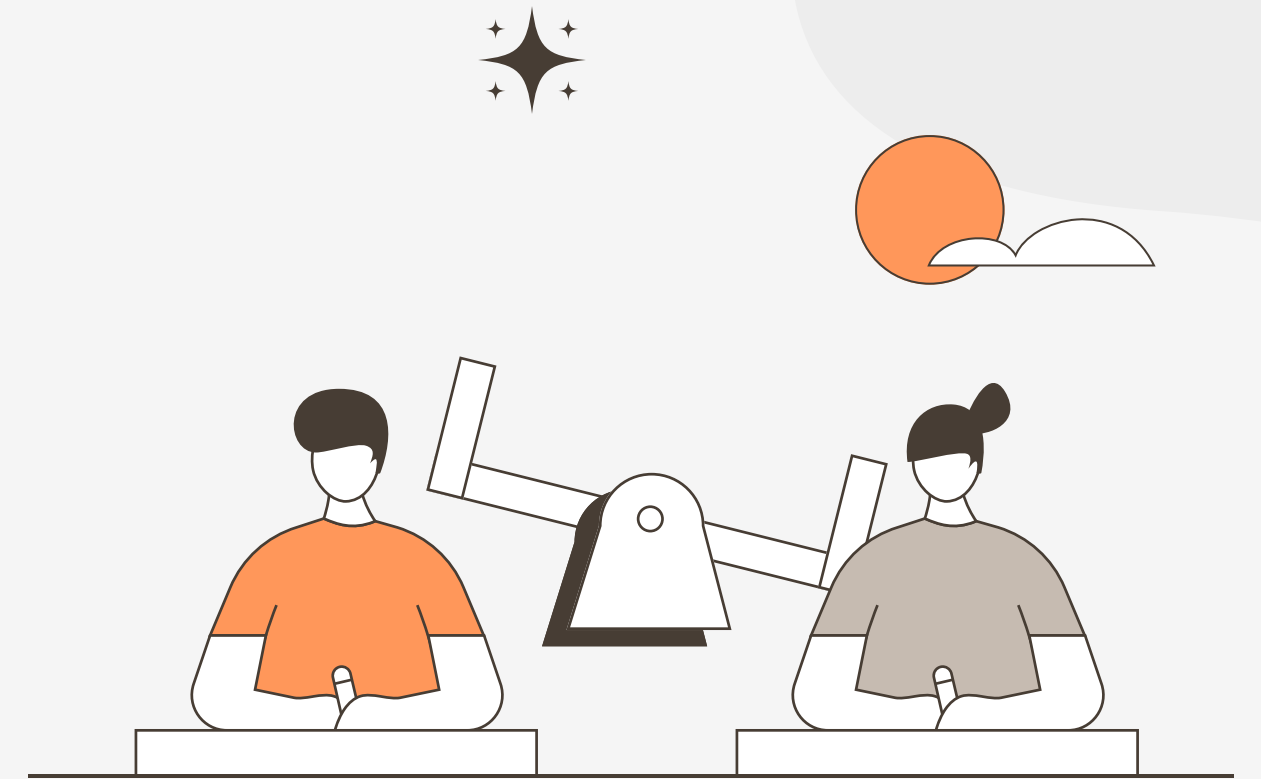


The Local Context: Policy & Challenges

In New Zealand, the integration of climate justice into adaptation strategies is still an evolving process.

Despite progress in acknowledging Indigenous perspectives, the inclusion of marginalised, Indigenous, and ethnically diverse communities remains "*elusive in policy discussions*"

Progress towards procedural justice is often hindered by the historical legacies of colonialism and structural racism. This creates a critical need for policy reforms that move beyond "tokenistic inclusion" and begin to reconfigure entrenched power dynamics within climate governance



The landscape is further complicated by compounding issues that magnify inequities:

- Climate-induced mobility from Pacific Island nations presents profound challenges for distributional and procedural justice.
- Intersectional vulnerabilities are pronounced, with Indigenous women and gender-diverse individuals facing compounded risks that are often overlooked in policy.



An Analytical Approach to Policy



Research Design: A qualitative research methodology was employed.

Primary Method: Documentary analysis of key New Zealand climate adaptation policies from agencies

Analytical Tool:

Summative content analysis was used to systematically analyse and summarise policy documents.

- This involved using predefined keywords linked to the five dimensions of climate justice to identify the presence and frequency of key concepts.
- The goal was to assess the extent to which policies embody climate justice by facilitating equitable participation for Indigenous Māori and non-indigenous ethnic minority groups



Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

- Sixth Assessment Report Working Group II Chapter 11: Australasia

Ministry for the Environment

- National Adaptation Plan
- Climate Change Response Act 2002
- National Climate Change Risk Assessment for New Zealand

Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment

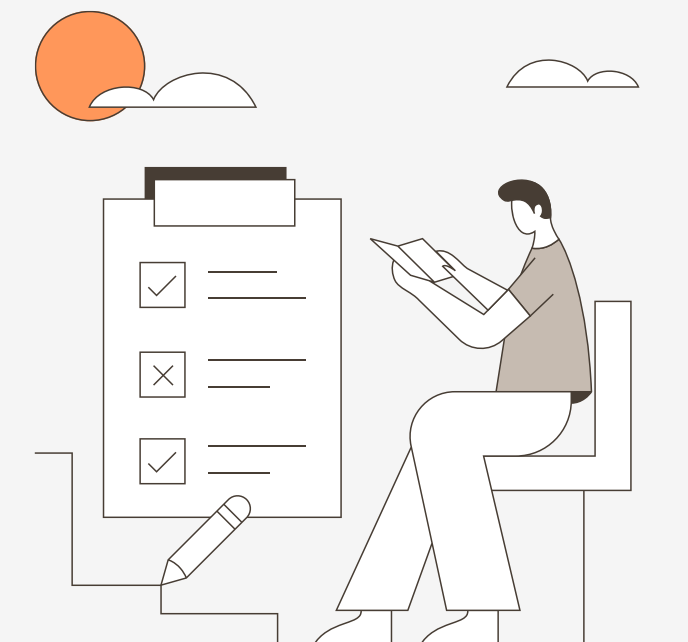
- Draft Equitable Transition Strategy for Aotearoa, New Zealand
- A Guide to Just Transitions for Communities in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Department of Conservation

- Department of Conservation Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan- Action Tables 2022-2025 (updated May 2023)

Productivity Commission

- A Fair Chance for All



A 5x4 grid of dots, representing a 20-sided die. The dots are arranged in 5 rows and 4 columns, totaling 20 dots.



Findings 2: The Gap Between Principle and Practice



Procedural Justice:

- Many policies emphasise partnership with Māori and community-led planning in principle.
- *the analysis shows that mechanisms for sustained and meaningful engagement are often weak or unspecified. There is a need for a more stringent framework for genuine participatory decision-making*

Recognition Justice:

- There is a strong emphasis on integrating Mātauranga Māori, aligning with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- *this recognition is rarely extended to the knowledge systems and unique vulnerabilities of other marginalised ethnic and racial groups, pointing to a significant gap in inclusivity.*

Distributional Justice:

- Policies identify that risks disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.
- *they frequently lack detailed strategies for how resources, benefits, and costs will be equitably distributed to mitigate these risks*

Transformative Justice:

- Policy often focuses on incremental adaptation rather than transformative change.
- *There is a lack of specific measures that address the systemic root causes of inequity and vulnerability, such as socioeconomic disparities and institutional racism. The focus remains on managing climate impacts rather than transforming the conditions that create vulnerability*

Synthesis of Findings

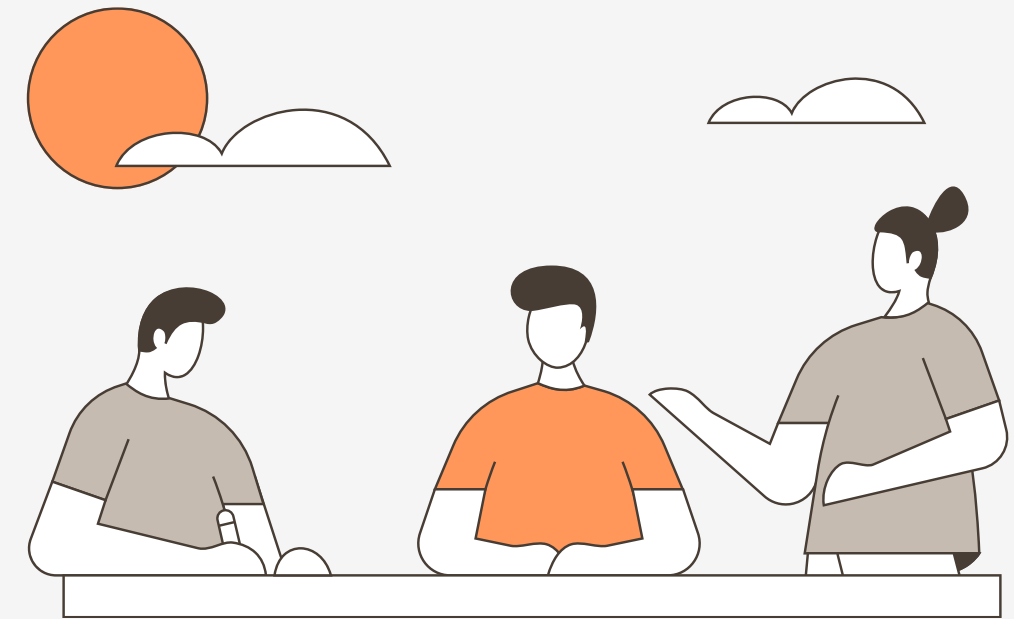


- The analysis reveals an "uneven incorporation" of the multifaceted dimensions of climate justice across New Zealand's policy landscape.
- While recognition of Māori as treaty partners is a consistent theme (a strength), this often serves as a proxy for all equity considerations, leaving other ethnic and racialised communities marginalised.
- There is a clear gap between the rhetoric of inclusivity and the operationalisation of mechanisms that would ensure genuine procedural, distributional, and transformative justice for all vulnerable groups.
- This aligns with existing literature on the exclusion of Indigenous voices but provides new empirical evidence on the specific challenges faced by a wider array of ethnic minorities in New Zealand.

Conclusion & Recommendations

To achieve climate justice, New Zealand's policies must evolve towards more holistically inclusive frameworks. This study advocates for a policy re-evaluation with three key reforms:

- **Move Beyond Tokenism to Empowerment:** Policies must operationalise Māori knowledge as a cornerstone of strategy, not just a point of consultation, and ensure genuine participatory processes.
- **Develop Explicit Frameworks for All Minorities:** There is an urgent need for robust frameworks that ensure the participation and address the specific vulnerabilities of all ethnic and racially diverse communities.
- **Mandate Equity Assessments:** Introduce mandatory equity assessments across all climate-related policies to ensure the principles of distributional justice are practically applied and monitored.





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THANK YOU



<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2752-5295/ad50fd>



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