

# The role of 'positive sacrifice' in climate justice

**Dr. Clare Saunders**

RCUK Academic Fellow in Climate and Energy Politics

University of Southampton

[c.e.saunders@soton.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.saunders@soton.ac.uk)



# Today I will talk about the ...

- Need for climate justice
- Dilemmas in achieving climate justice / deadlock in debate and policy
- Level of responsibility for climate justice: individuals, corporations or government?
- The deadlock of a carbon consensus
- Role of positive sacrifice in achieving justice
- Practices of environmental activists as exemplars of positive sacrifice

# The need for justice: the climate change chair game



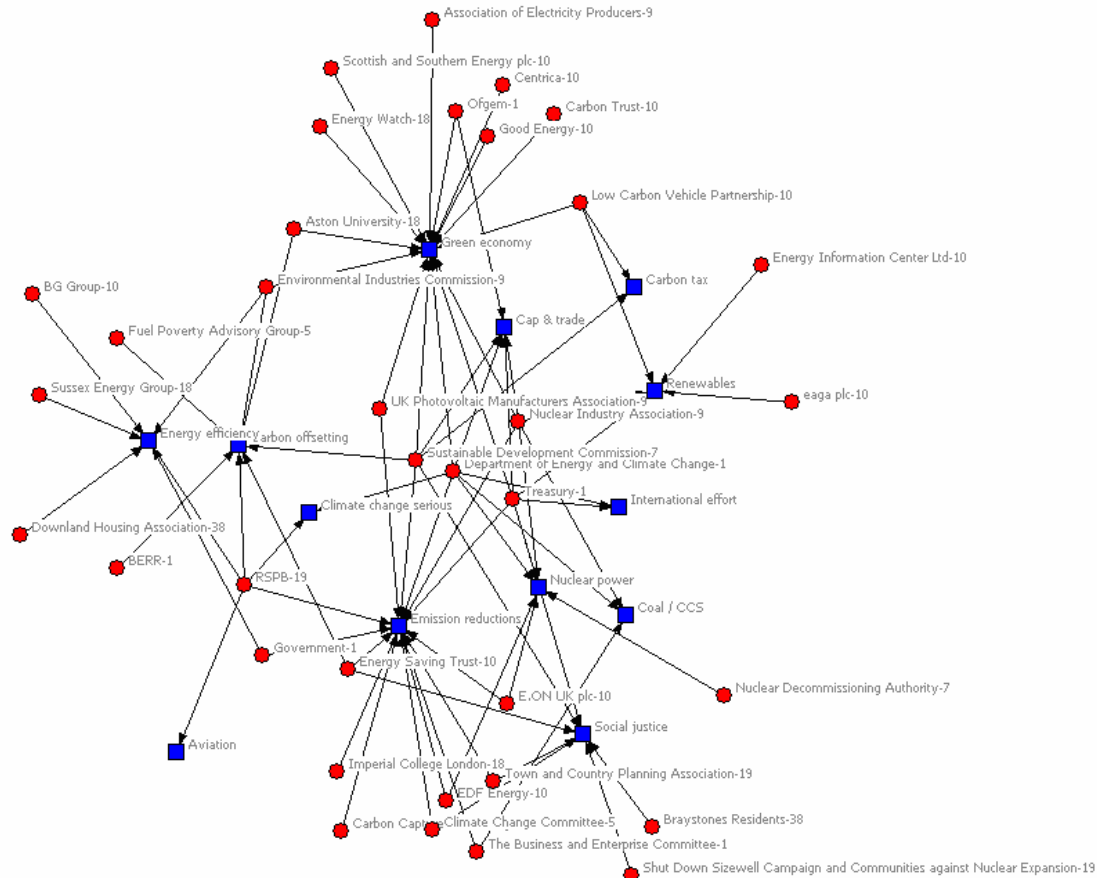
# The deadlock over justice

- Historical emissions / negative emission territory
- Development vs. adaptation
- Adaptation vs. mitigation
- Mistrust
- Uncompromising lifestyles
- Economic growth prioritised
- Lack of political will

# Whose responsibility?

- Individuals: lifestyles
- Corporations: change practices
- Governments: institute legislation
- This has led to a 'governance trap' and carbon consensus

# The carbon consensus (carry on as usual)



# Positive sacrifice (from Thomas Princen)

- Move beyond tinkering with a fundamentally flawed system
- Understanding ‘dangerous climate change’ with new positive metaphors
- Wilfully giving things up for a higher value – examples, the artist, the parent, the environmentalist
- There are social benefits to sacrifice – cycling, taking the train

# Environmental activists engaging in positive sacrifice

Why don't people get out and ride their bikes more? Look at all the fat people around here that have all got really bad diets and, like, just sitting in front of the TV couch potatoes. And if they want something around the corner shop they jump in the bloody car and go around there. I've seen me old man do it, it's disgusting. When you can ride, or just walk around the corner and jump on your bike and go up the road, like I do. (*"Bob", Climate Camper*)

Well I don't fly, I don't drive a car, I don't really take trains very far if I can possibly help it. I grow my own food, I buy off a whole food, bulk company. So I don't go to supermarkets. I have a water meter, so I use less water. I get my energy from Eco- what's-it-called. I try to not use much. I don't have a television which is probably the best thing I could do [laughs]. I don't get indoctrinated by that. What else do I do? I do my recycling and I try not to get too many plastic bags. (*"Jake", Climate Camper*)

# How can this help achieve climate justice?

- Re-evaluating the economy: is it worth sacrificing the lives of people in poor countries?
- Understanding that sacrifice can be virtuous and positive
- Recognising the potential for a spiral effect on corporations and government
- A means of pushing beyond the current policy deadlock?