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# Greening Global Egalitarianism?

**Abstract:** In *Justice and Natural Resources: An Egalitarian Theory* (2017), Chris Armstrong proposes a version of global egalitarianism that – contra the default renderings of this approach – takes individual attachment to specific resources into account. By doing this, his theory has the potential for greening global egalitarianism both in terms of procedure and scope. In terms of procedure, its broad account of attachment and its focus on individuals rather than groups connects with participatory governance and management and, ultimately, participatory democracy – an essential ingredient in the toolkit of green politics and policy-making. In terms of scope, because it does not commit itself to any particular moral framework, Armstrong’s theory leaves the door open for non-human animals to become subjects of justice, thus extending the realm of the latter beyond its traditionally anthropocentric borders. I conclude that these greenings are promising, but not trouble-free.

**Keywords:** attachment; global egalitarianism; green politics; justice; natural resources; non-human animals.

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## Introduction

Broadly defined, global egalitarianism is a normative view that holds that certain distributive inequalities at the global level are in need of justification given our equal moral status as individual agents. That is, when we depart from equality in the distribution of certain goods, we need to give moral reasons to justify such departures. For global egalitarians (as for all egalitarians, in fact) equality does not merely have instrumental value, worth being upheld insofar as it promotes other further values like individual or collective well-being, flourishing, and so on and so forth. On the contrary, equality is valued in itself, sometimes monistically (as the only moral principle worth fighting for), but more often pluralistically (as one among other key moral principles that need to be balanced with each other).

One kind of good the distribution of which has been the subject of much thinking and theorizing by global egalitarians are natural resources (see, for example, Beitz, 1979; Steiner, 2005: 28-38). Because we all need them, without having intervened in their making, it is argued that we all have claims over them. Furthermore, the most common position to date has been that we all have *equal* claims to them; in other words, natural resources (or, rather, the benefits and burdens flowing from them) ought to be distributed equally

among everyone. This implies that whoever holds more than what might be symmetrically distributed among all persons ought to compensate others accordingly. This equal-shares view has come under attack on at least two scores by other egalitarians. On the one hand, it is criticized by so-called ‘relationists,’ namely, by those who deny *tout court* that the relevant normative relationships that demand equality exist in our current world order. Relationists reject the idea that natural resources (and the benefits and burdens flowing from them) should be divided with no consideration for the important relationships that are created between them and specific people. Attachment to particular resources, in their view, is an important value that global egalitarians systematically ignore (see, for example, Miller, 2007). On the other hand, there are those who might be sympathetic to global egalitarian ideals in principle, but who nonetheless dismiss this approach on the grounds that it is utterly unrealizable, or realizable only at a very high cost. For, how may we divide equal shares of something when we do not know exactly what there is to be shared (because what counts as a natural resource is contextual – for example, dependent on the available technology); how much there is to be shared, and how many there are to share it among (because these numbers keep shifting every minute); and how to decide on a common currency to measure those shares? Furthermore, even if we had answers to all of the above, wouldn’t the only way to put this into practice be through an authoritarian and top-down decision-making process?

In *Justice and Natural Resources: An Egalitarian Theory* (2017), Chris Armstrong provides a theory of global egalitarian justice in natural resources that addresses these criticisms and proposes an alternative account that purports not only to surmount them, but to reconcile claims that are normally seen as clashing directly against each other.<sup>1</sup>

After briefly summarizing Armstrong’s key ideas, in this article I focus on his account of attachment-based claims and how they apply to natural resources. I suggest that his theory has the potential to green global egalitarianism in two ways. First, his broad account of attachment focuses on individuals rather than groups and acknowledges that there are multiple grounds for being attached to natural resources. By so doing, I suggest that it smoothly connects with ideals of governance and management via participatory democratic processes – key in the toolkit of green politics and policy-making.<sup>2</sup> Second, his theory is able to accommodate the attachments of non-human animals (wild ones most clearly), so that they are no longer considered as mere natural resources, but as proper

1 Hereinafter all references to the book will be in brackets and include the page number only.

2 Participatory democracy is one of the six principles upon which the Charter of the Global Greens is based. See Global Greens, ‘Charter of the Global Greens’, 2012. It also appears as a key element when conceptualizing green politics. See Vachta, 2011.

subjects of justice. Taking their attachments into account could green global egalitarianism by moving it beyond its traditional anthropocentric borders, and by connecting it to a growing strand of liberal political theorizing on animal rights and global justice (see, for example, Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Horta 2013; Pepper, 2016). I conclude that both ‘greenings’ are promising, but not without problems.

### **An Attachment-Sensitive Global Egalitarian Theory**

While there are a number of theories of justice in the distribution of territory (understood as a political unit), in his book Armstrong is instead mainly concerned with the distribution of natural resources, defined as ‘raw materials from the natural world, which are (therefore) not produced by humans but which are nevertheless useful to them’ (2017: 11).

Natural resources are extremely important in a global egalitarian theory of justice, Armstrong contends, but they are not the only thing that matters. Natural resources should not be the *equalisandum* of a theory of justice, i.e., the value we seek to give every person equal shares of. This is because different persons have different capacities to transform resources into well-being, and access to well-being is the value we should ultimately care to distribute equally. Nor should natural resources be the sole *distribuenda* of a theory of justice, i.e., the things that ought to be distributed to achieve equality of access to well-being. This is because there are other things the unequal distribution of which should worry egalitarians just as much or even more, like the earning power of different occupations (to a large extent arbitrary), and the cultural and institutional settings into which we are born and that, although unchosen, determine our life prospects significantly (Milanovic, 2011: 120-123).

The default view among global egalitarians has been to count natural resources (or the benefits and burdens flowing from them) as exchangeable *distribuenda*. This has led them to be criticized for not taking attachments into account. Armstrong, on the contrary, recognizes that, in many cases, specific natural resources are important for specific people not merely as means, and that these attachment-based claims ought to count as *pro tanto* reasons in a theory of global distributive justice. What is more, such a theory would be incomplete if it did not take these claims into account.<sup>3</sup>

3 Some might wonder at this point how to square the claim that some natural resources have non-instrumental value (and therefore, presumably, intrinsic value) with the claim that equal access to welfare is the ultimate value we should be aiming at. Armstrong thinks that this is possible if one distinguishes two kinds of welfarism. On the one hand, there is the question of what we are trying to do when we make people more equal (where Armstrong’s answer is equalizing access to welfare). On the other hand, there is the much larger meta-ethical question of what things have value. If one thinks that welfarism is the belief that only welfare matters, then assigning non-instrumental value to natural resources (or any other thing) would be contradictory with the theory. However, Armstrong does not follow this line. For him, being welfarist about equality does not imply denying that many other things can be valuable aside from welfare. I thank the author for this clarification.

What does it mean to take these claims into account? Armstrong proposes that distributive justice in natural resources should not focus only, or even mainly, on full private ownership or full jurisdiction. Many times, it will be enough to grant some first and second-order rights over resources to achieve this goal. For example, rights to access and withdrawal, or rights to manage and exclude.

Armstrong's theory also suggests that improvement-based claims made by specific people over specific natural resources are not as morally relevant as commonly thought.<sup>4</sup> What seems normatively relevant about improvement-based claims is not really the improvement of the resource as such, but rather the way in which agents integrate control over the resource into their life-plans; that is, ultimately, the way in which agents become attached to the resource.

Finally, against those who see global egalitarianism in natural resources as unrealizable (however laudable in principle), Armstrong's book includes examples of many instances where global and supra-national institutions have been established with the mandate to share the benefits derived, for example, from common-pool resources (subtractive and non-excludable).<sup>5</sup> Moreover, he contends, motivating agents to act on global egalitarian principles should be no harder than motivating them to act on purportedly more modest 'accountability' reforms that do not challenge the very institutions that global egalitarianism criticizes – most prominently, in this regard, the internationally accepted Doctrine of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources.

### **Greening the Procedure of Global Egalitarianism**

The Sami, the surfer, the scientist, the Sufi and the birdwatcher: this is a list of different types of individuals who, if I interpret Armstrong correctly, may count as having attachment-based claims to specific natural resources. These attachment-based claims function as *pro tanto* reasons to be granted certain rights over such resources. These rights ought to be upheld so long as their exercise does not violate the fulfillment of the basic rights of others, and they can be rights to more than equal shares of the resource, if this balances inequalities in the distribution of other important goods, with a view towards ultimately achieving equal access to well-being.

In this section, I point to three original aspects of Armstrong's account of attachment and show how they connect to basic principles of green politics, like participatory governance, management, and democracy.

As Armstrong underlines, attachment-based claims have generally been used to defend the jurisdictional rights of people over a certain territory. That is,

4 For the moral relevance of improvement-based claims, see Miller (2012); Nine (2012).

5 For example, The International Seabed Authority, in charge of administering the mineral exploitation of the seabed in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.

attachment has mainly been used as an argument for the defense of territorial rights. Moreover, the agents of these claims have been generally conceptualized as group agents; collectives with some normatively relevant common trait, like belonging to the same culture or nation (Meisels, 2009; Miller, 2007); having a common will for political self-determination (Moore, 2015); or sharing an ethnogeography or conception of the land and its purpose (Kolers, 2009). A third point is that attachment has usually been understood in a narrow way, as a relationship that emerges by virtue of people forming their life-projects and plans around the resource, in such a way that the absence of the latter would cause a major upheaval in their lives.

Armstrong's account of attachment innovates in all three fronts. First, he shifts the object of attachment from land to other natural resources. Second, he takes individuals, rather than groups, to be the proper agents of attachment.<sup>6</sup> And third, he provides a broad definition of what it means to be relevantly attached to a resource. Attachment-based claims, in his version, may or may not go together with improvement-based claims;<sup>7</sup> attachment does not require actual control of the resource in question, or even the will to control it; and one may be attached to certain resources even if these are not fully integrated into one's life-plans and projects. In his own words, it is enough that 'individuals simply love, cherish or identify with particular resources' (2017: 118). Attachment may therefore have different bases. Although Armstrong does not offer a systematic classification, I suggest that his theory incorporates at least the following kinds of attachment to be considered when deciding upon resource rights:

- *Production-based attachment*, when the resource in question is needed for the production of goods that constitute the individual's main source of income or means of subsistence, and when this production is intimately tied to the individual's life-plans and way of life. The 'and' in the previous sentence is important: because the point of special claims from attachment is that they track a value that is not merely instrumental, production-based attachment claims must rely on some account of why it is that resource, and not a different one, that is morally relevant as one's means of subsistence. Armstrong's example is the Sami of northern Scandinavia, who are members of herding

6 Having said this, there is an unresolved ambivalence in Armstrong's account of individual attachments. Sometimes, the attachment is predicated of the individual qua individual; for example, the talented fisherman who needs rights of access to, and withdrawal of, the fish. Other times, the attachment is predicated of the individual qua member of a group; for example, the member of an indigenous community who wishes to conserve the surrounding forest to keep the community's way of life.

7 He thus parts company from theorists who justify resource rights on individual-based claims, but where these claims are exclusively founded on the value that individuals have added to the resource, rather than on the value that the resource as such has for them.

communities whose livelihoods have traditionally depended on their being able to follow the reindeer across their yearly migration.

- *Activity-based attachment*, when the resource in question is needed for the unfolding of certain activities that can be more or less central to the individual's life-plans. Surfers can be said to have an activity-based attachment to the beaches where they practice their sport, and the weightiness of their claim will presumably depend on how important surfing is for their life as a whole: do they make a living out of it, is it their favorite hobby, is it just a sporadic recreational activity that they engage in?
- *Belief-based attachment*, when the resource in question occupies an important place in the individual's belief system, such that its continued existence matters for her psychological well-being. The Sufi pilgrimage routes, for example, include many sacred sites in the mountains of Turkey, sites that it is important for them to preserve and to freely access.
- *Knowledge-based attachment*, when the resource in question is an object of study for the individual, or when the latter is well acquainted with it because of his/her continued coexistence with it. Field scientists are individuals who may develop knowledge-based attachments to the natural sites that they investigate, but here one may also include locals who have acquired knowledge of the place that only time and experience can give.
- *Emotion-based attachment*, when the resource in question triggers particular emotions in the individual, like love, awe, respect, or nostalgia, such that he wishes for its continued existence.
- *Aesthetic-based attachment*, when the resource in question triggers an aesthetic response in the individual, such that she wishes for its continued existence.<sup>8</sup>

The list is not intended to be exhaustive, but to show that understanding resources only as substitutable *distribuenda* in the quest for equal access to well-being is problematic, and fails to capture important ways in which resources matter to individuals. It also intends to show how acknowledging their non-instrumental value helps to construct a version of global egalitarianism that seems much less impersonal and much more bottom-up than its existing

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, what William Godfrey-Smith has labelled as 'the cathedral view' of wilderness, where 'wilderness areas provide a vital opportunity for spiritual revival, moral regeneration, and aesthetic delight' and ought as such to be preserved for posterity (1979: 311).

alternatives. Because of these features, I contend, Armstrong's theory has the potential to green global egalitarianism by allowing for participatory decision-making processes that are central to green politics. Let me explain with an example.

I have suggested elsewhere that the Doctrine of Permanent Sovereignty over Natural Resources (PSNR) proves to be deficient when it comes to the sustainable administration of migratory species that move across two or more states as part of their annual routes (Mancilla, 2016). A clear case is the monarch butterfly that migrates from Canada and the U.S. to Mexico's Michoacán forest to hibernate, and then flies back in spring to breed in the milkweed. In the last decade and a half, the numbers of butterflies have plummeted dramatically, most probably because of the excessive use of glyphosate by the U.S and Canada's big agricultural businesses. This pesticide kills the milkweed, which is the only plant where the monarch breeds, with the consequent loss of habitat. In this context, one could think of creating a joint task force, composed of representatives of the three states (plus other interested parties, like private tour operators, ecologists and educators) to set objectives and make decisions regarding this common resource. The butterflies' biological corridor from southern Canada to central Mexico ought ideally to be put under a shared sovereignty regime, limiting the rights of states and dispersing them among all interested and affected parties. This idea has already been supported by an active group of citizens who see the sustainability of the monarch as tied together with the sustainability of the communities and the well-being of individuals who are attached to them in different ways.<sup>9</sup> For the Purepecha people, for example, the butterflies represent 'the souls of the departed', and are honored because their arrival coincides with the time of the festivals celebrating the dead. To put it in the terminology above, there is a belief-based attachment, and maybe also emotion and aesthetic-based attachments that they want to preserve. Other communities have generated production-based attachments, running eco-companies in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Michoacán. There are also individuals – like scientists, ecologists, nature enthusiasts and educators – who have developed knowledge-based attachments to the butterflies, and who also demand some mechanism of joint management over them.<sup>10</sup>

9 Monarch Butterfly Fund, 2020.

10 One could object at this point that not all of these relationships are non-instrumental. For example, just as they were loggers in the past and are eco-tourist guides in the present, those who make a living out of the Monarch's yearly migration might well turn to a different business in the future without this seriously affecting their life-plans and projects. So, how should we weigh their 'production-based attachment'? For the sake of the argument, I assume here that their attachment is not merely to the revenues produced by the butterfly-business, but also to the way of life they have developed around it. If this were not the case, I concede, their purely economic interest in the resource would still have to be weighed against the other kinds of attachment, and against the also purely economic interest of the Big Ag in keeping their agricultural methods.

Attachment-insensitive global egalitarians could well recommend here that the Big Ag from Canada and the U.S. simply compensate the Purepecha people, tourist-operators, and all other individuals who have some interest in the monarch; recall that the value of natural resources for them is fully exchangeable. Armstrong's attachment-sensitive global egalitarianism, instead, has the tools to defend the creation of such a mechanism of joint management, and to justify integrating into it as many interested and affected actors as possible. By emphasizing that attachment-based claims must be taken into account in all their diversity, and by acknowledging that they are not necessarily or even primarily about full jurisdiction or full private ownership (many times secure access to the specific resource is all that is required), his theory seems to allow for a bottom-up, grassroots approach to the question of dividing up rights over natural resources for the sake of equality.

This seems a welcome implication for Armstrong's theory, especially when it comes to conservation. The positive effects of participatory schemes of management, planning and decision-making have been well documented by scholars and practitioners working on biodiversity reserves. Among these positive effects are the greater social acceptance of these hotspots and, therefore, a greater chance of successful conservation: it is more likely that decisions will be implemented if those who are going to be affected by those decisions have helped to formulate them (Stoll-Kleemann and Welp, 2008: 162). Moreover, it is likely that decisions that result from a participatory process will be of better quality than those achieved through routine management, put in the hands of experts and policy-makers without taking into account the perspectives of locals and other concerned citizens (Reed, 2008). Furthermore, as mentioned above, one criticism that is labeled against global egalitarianism is that realizing its principles would likely require the existence of top-down decision-making mechanisms; a global body or bodies to make decisions for everyone in a way that would likely be insufficiently democratic. Armstrong does not shy away from these mechanisms when he discusses the administration by the International Seabed Authority of common-pool resources like the deep seabed in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, or initiatives like the Global Environmental Facility or Green Climate Fund (2017: 238 ff). However, as opposed to the default global egalitarian approach (where a Pantagruelian authority would seem to be required to obtain, sift and manage all the information regarding natural resources, in order to determine what an equal share for everyone would be), his theory seems much more pliable to individual participation, by recognizing the value of each and every attachment as a basis for claiming resource rights.



But the connection to green participatory procedures is not trouble-free. First, it is not obvious that participatory decision-making processes will always lead to the furthering of equal global access to well-being, which is Armstrong's ultimate goal. Is it even conceivable – the worry would go – that through such processes one would ever get to the stage where all individuals in the world agree that they are in fact getting equal shares of that value unit? One way to defend participatory democracy as securing this objective is to say that it allows better decisions for those most attached to the resources in question, increasing their well-being, and thus enhancing well-being overall (as was claimed above). Moreover, especially for marginalized groups whose voices would not otherwise be heard, the possibility of participation itself could arguably be value-enhancing. Yet, the objectors could insist, protecting the claims to natural resources based on attachment of different individuals (especially those belonging in minority groups) might be better secured by taking their claims as constraints over collective decision-making processes. Rather than giving them a right to participate (where they would run the risk of being outvoted), one should ensure that the decisions taken respect those claims. Although this is a sensible observation, it would take quite enlightened legislators to ensure that such decision-making structures are established in the first place. I think this shows that it is an open question what kind of procedure would best guarantee that this kind of claims are respected.

Another worry is whether participatory mechanisms can really guarantee 'green' (in the sense of environmentally friendly) outcomes. This is especially the case when it comes to attachments to resources that do not involve preserving them, but using them. A possible answer here is to recall one of the assumptions over which Armstrong's theory is constructed; namely, that presently we are using resources in a rapacious and destructive way, and that a *desideratum* for any theory of justice over natural resources is to constrain that use. Along these lines, the theory could not just recommend, but demand to double-check attachments that undermine this goal, be they shared by a few or by a majority. Indeed, it seems odd to say that someone is attached to a resource in the morally relevant way while at the same time being ready to overexploit it.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> What about the tragedy of the commons where, even though each individual is not an overexploiter, the overall result is overexploitation? I would say here that, as individuals living in our world today, we can no longer look at our own actions in isolation from their compounded effect with the actions of others. To be attached to a resource in the proper way might thus require not just having that resource incorporated into one's life plans, but also having the willingness to jointly administer the resource with others who are in the same situation, or who potentially could be (i.e., future generations).

### Greening the Scope of Global Egalitarianism

When delimiting the subjects of a theory of egalitarian justice concerning natural resources, Armstrong claims that they are people, born and not yet born. He acknowledges, at the same time, that morality may demand that we place further constraints on our use of natural resources than those placed by other human beings. Depending on which moral theory we endorse and what status non-human animals have in it, he admits, the range of permissible benefits that we may derive from them will vary significantly. But this, he adds, does not affect any of the main arguments in his theory: once we decide on the question of what it is permissible to do to, and to get from, non-human animals, we can then decide on the question of how to distribute those benefits among present and future people. In his words:

It is certainly plausible that morality requires constraints on our use of resources above and beyond the demands imposed by a theory of distributive justice. We might then envisage a division of labor whereby a moral theory determined which benefits *people* might permissibly derive from *animals*, say (and we could imagine a range of answers to that question), and a theory of distributive justice determined how those permissible benefits should be allocated between *people* now or in the future (2017: 16, *my emphases*).

I think that here Armstrong unnecessarily forecloses the possibility of incorporating non-human animals (especially wild ones) as subjects of attachment-based claims to natural resources and, therefore, as subjects of justice. I suggest, instead, that there is nothing in his theory that precludes this possibility. If they are thus included, furthermore, his theory could green global egalitarianism by extending the boundaries of justice to beings that have so far been left out. It would moreover add to a growing strand of liberal theory that also seeks to extend these boundaries. What is known as the ‘political turn’ in animal ethics is precisely about this: to show that it is insufficient to consider non-human animals merely as moral patients, and to show how already existing theories of justice may accommodate them as subjects (see Cooke, 2017; Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Hadley, 2015; Rowlands, 1997).

When it comes to Armstrong’s own theory, wild non-human animals could be seen as fitting ‘the most compelling instances [of attachment]’ (2017: 119) and, therefore, as being subjects of *pro tanto* claims to natural resources. Take polar bears in Svalbard, or guanacos in Patagonia, or whales in the Southern Ocean. All of them comply with the following list of characteristics mentioned by Armstrong:

- They are members of small-scale groups, and they ‘have formed a close and enduring relationship with resources’ – in this case, their habitats.
- The resources ‘have become key to central and enduring practices’ – in this case, feeding themselves and finding shelter, breeding, and raising their young.
- The relationship to the resource in question is sustainable.
- The resource is non-substitutable in that it is specifically valuable to support individual life-plans (2017: 119).

In fact, it could be argued that wild non-human animals like the ones mentioned above are attached to specific resources to a degree to which humans and their domesticated peers will never be.<sup>12</sup> If there is so much discussion regarding their quality of life in zoos or circuses, after all, one of the reasons is that we realize that their habitats are impossible to substitute, and that removing them from these habitats deeply affects their lives and their well-being.

Of course, this interpretation of Armstrong’s theory has many challenges to confront. On the one hand, there are the common ones faced by any liberal theory that purports to turn non-human animals into subjects of justice. Among them: who are to be their representatives, and how are the latter to be chosen? How to balance the rights of non-humans and humans, the rights of domestic versus non domestic non-humans, and the rights of predator and prey? On the other hand, there are challenges that Armstrong’s theory in particular would have to confront. For one thing, is it possible to make sense of the idea that nonhumans have central and enduring practices and life-plans – that is, in the relevant sense to grant them rights that will protect their continued engagement in those practices, and the fulfillment of those life-plans? If so, would this not require a switch in Armstrong’s theory of well-being? For another thing, what to do about ‘unsustainable’ attachments to resources – for example, those of invasive species that can wreak havoc in an ecosystem, or those of species that, without natural predators to regulate their numbers, become too numerous and end up damaging their own habitats and, ultimately, their own members? And finally, how to deal with the fact that some non-human animals, paradigmatically prey and domesticated animals, can be considered as both subjects and objects of justice: subjects, insofar as they become attached to certain resources in a normatively relevant way; and objects, to be distributed for justice-promoting reasons, insofar as others (to wit, their predators or domesticators) need them to survive?

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<sup>12</sup> I am not suggesting that the attachments of domesticated and liminal non-humans should not be considered, but only that the case of wild animals is the most evident.

These are big questions for anyone interested in incorporating non-humans into a theory of justice, and within the limits of this article I can only briefly hint towards answers that need to be developed in much more detail. When it comes to delimiting the subjects of justice, plausible arguments have been given that highlight the arbitrariness of counting humans only, and underline the advantages of extending the scope; among them, a greater normative coherence, and presumably better prospects environmentally speaking (Pepper, 2016). If the inclusion of non-humans as subjects of justice is taken as a starting point that frames the discussion, the question of how to find proper guardians for them, who would ensure their participation in the decision-making process, may be further explored along the lines of what some theorists have already suggested (see, for example, Donoso, 2017; Stone, 1972). As for how to balance conflicting rights, this would of course present challenges, but it is not obvious that these challenges would be qualitatively harder to resolve than those between the conflicting rights of humans only. Here it might also be helpful to recall how in the past the same kind of argument was used against granting civil rights to women and slaves. That extending the scope of justice complicates things cannot in itself be a defense for excluding those who should be its subjects.

As for the special challenges for Armstrong's theory: do non-human animals have life-plans in the relevant way to ground a *pro tanto* claim of justice? I think the answer is no, if we follow an overly narrow definition of a life-plan. However, if we take this path we will end up with many humans who do not fulfill this criterion either. Instead, I think we should understand life-plans in a broader way, as signaling those habitual activities and practices that contribute to individual well-being, regardless of whether the individual has reflected upon them and chosen them purposefully or not. This might require Armstrong to switch from what seems like an objective list theory of well-being to a hedonistic approach, and this might have consequences for other aspects of his theory. Rather than as damning, however, one could take this as a positive implication, if the result is a more sensitive theory towards non-humans. When it comes to the 'unsustainable' attachments of invasive or over-numerous species, one might answer that these should not give grounds for rights over the endangered resources (just like in the case of humans), but may give grounds for finding alternative ways in which the individuals of the problematic species are allowed access to well-being. Moreover, instead of granting non-human animals full sovereignty over the territories they inhabit and the resources they require, it might be enough for the purposes of egalitarian justice to give them rights to access, free movement and limited withdrawal, while granting their guardians rights of management and exclusion. The dual status of prey

and domesticated animals as potential subjects and objects of justice is more puzzling, and the views among animal rights theorists are divided. There are, on the one hand, those who claim that we should leave wild communities alone, thus allowing for predator-prey relationships to continue; and, on the other hand, those who aim at abolishing predator-prey relationships altogether (Cf., respectively, Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Horta, 2013). A similar split occurs when it comes to domesticated and semi-domesticated animals: while some think that the relationships established between them and humans can be valuable, others object in principle to the idea of nonhumans being owned by humans (Cf., respectively, Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Francione, 2004). Depending on the line one takes, the answer to how to balance the interests of the Sami in keeping their traditional way of life based on reindeer herding and the interests of the reindeer in roaming freely across the Northern *Vidda* – to take Armstrong’s example – might be quite different. Rather than considering this lack of agreement as damning for the theory, however, one should see it as an opportunity to start reflecting upon many conflicting situations that have so far been invisible behind our standard anthropocentric lenses.

### **Concluding Remarks**

I have suggested that, without explicitly intending it, Chris Armstrong’s global egalitarianism concerning natural resources may surmount two weaknesses commonly attributed to this normative position. First, by being attachment-sensitive and by defining attachment broadly, it allows for the promotion of a horizontal dispersion of resource rights in a way that calls for the participation of multiple agents in bottom-up decision-making processes. It therefore defies the idea that global egalitarians see all resources as exchangeable, ignoring the special relationships that we can have with them, and it also defies the idea that the realization of global egalitarianism concerning natural resources must be undemocratic at worst or insufficiently democratic at best. Second, by letting the door open for non-humans to be the subjects of relevant attachments to natural resources, Armstrong’s global egalitarianism allows for extending the scope of justice to include them.

But, is Armstrong willing to embrace more participatory decision-making procedures and a larger scope of subjects of justice within his theory? The answers to these two questions will affect, in my view, the prospects that global egalitarianism has for being relevant not just for a small group of scholars discussing what the universal *equalisandum* should be and how it should

be measured, but for a wider public in search of action-guiding principles of distributive justice in a depleted planet.<sup>13</sup>

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