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Understanding Inadequate Climate Change Governance:
A Neo-Gramscian Discourse Analysis

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Contents

Climate Change Governance: A Brief Introduction

"'Brutal news': global carbon emissions jump to all-time high in 2018", so headlined the Guardian on December 5th (Carrington 2018). The 'brutal news' came from a report published by Global Carbon Tracker at outset of the United Nations climate summit in Katowice, Poland, and was intended to reiterate the urgency of adequate climate action. To limit global warming from taking on dangerous dimensions, causing extreme weather events and geological changes that compromise human security, global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions must be drastically reduced (IPCC 2015). The biggest source of GHG emissions lays in the fossil fuel-based energy sector, representing 72 percent of global emissions in 2013 (Friedrich, Ge and Pickens 2017), pointing to a need for an energy transition. In the wake of positivity around climate change action following the signing of the Paris Agreement, the news that global emissions in fact reached an 'all-time high' forced world leaders to face the facts: efforts to mitigate climate change must be accelerated and intensified if they are to truly limit dangerous global warming.

Not only state actors are relevant in the domain of climate change governance and climate action. More and more actors have adopted the issue and have become active in shaping and implementing policies regarding climate change (Chan et al. 2018). What is puzzling is how it is possible that though more governance actors than ever are engaged with mitigating climate change through the reduction of GHG emissions, they seem incapable of realising effective action. There is a lack of adequate governance outcomes to realise the public goal of preventing dangerous climate change, even if state and non-state actors alike have identified it as a pressing policy issue.

Theoretical approaches to climate change governance in International Relations (IR) have focussed on changing dynamics as a result of the multiplicity actors, for example "fragmented governance architecture" (Biermann et al. 2009), "hybrid multilateralism" (Bäckstrand et al. 2017), "regime complex" (Keohane and Victor 2011), "transnational climate governance" (Andonova et al. 2009), "orchestration" (Hale and Roger 2016; Bäckstrand et al. 2017) and "polycentrism" (Dorsch and Flachsland 2017). Not much attention, however, has been paid to how different actors define the problem of climate change and how these problematizations lead governance actors to steer towards particular governance outcomes. Building on the assumption that meaning is constitutive of action, this has led to an interpretive turn in IR approaches to climate governance (e.g. Methmann et al. 2013; Bulkeley 2015). Interpretive methods allow insight in how actors define a governance problem and as such bestow it with meaning, which results in action; and different understandings produce certain types of action. Interpretive approaches to climate governance have focussed for example on the agenda-setting role of Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) (Allan and Hadden 2017); the discursive positions of fossil fuel companies (Nasiritousi 2017) and

discourses in United Nations climate conferences (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2016). What is relatively under explored is a how these different types of climate governance actors engage in meaning making in interaction; how meanings become dominant and are adopted or contested by other actors. This is relevant because dominant meanings ultimately result in governance outcomes – this means that actual policy is approached as the result of a struggle of fixing meaning to a certain problematization.

In this perspective, a neo-Gramscian approach can improve understanding of climate governance. The establishment of meaning is understood in neo-Gramscian terms as hegemony, where political power is based on the generation of social consent so that particular interest comes to be viewed as general interest (Levy and Newell 2002, 87). The most well-known interpretation of hegemony in the neo-Marxist tradition was coined by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). They state that hegemony can only exist when contested; only alternative imaginaries of social reality can demonstrate just how dominant one imaginary has become (Laclau and Mouffe 2001 [1985]). Power, then, becomes a question of maintaining social relations in such a way that meaning is not contested or so that contestation can be dissolved easily. A neo-Gramscian approach has its roots in neo-Marxism and is concerned with the relationship between government, business and civil society (Levy and Newell 2002). As a result of the theoretical framework, the focus of analysis is on the interaction between states, fossil fuel companies and transnational Environmental NGOs (ENGOs) in steering climate change governance. From this flows the following research question:

How do multilateral institutions, fossil fuel companies and environmental nongovernmental organisations attempt to fixate meaning in climate change discourse to steer international climate change governance?

States and the fossil fuel industry occupy a hegemonic position and succeed in steering towards climate governance strategies that can be implemented within existing political and economic structures, even if these are questionable in terms of efficacy. The analysis reveals that governments and the fossil fuel industry problematise climate change as a challenge of decarbonising society, which can be achieved with technological and economic solutions. The climate change challenge is depoliticised, because this strategy enables the root cause of climate change, the fossil fuel-based energy chain, to be left intact. By articulating this strategy in the context of justice and responsibility, social consent is generated and the hegemonic position of states and the fossil fuel industry is safeguarded. ENGOs attempt to re-politicise the climate change problem by articulating it as an opportunity for systemic social change and trying to break social consent for the hegemonic bloc. Their strategies for influencing and steering governance, however, are limited as a result of structural constraints.

This argument will be substantiated in four chapters. The first chapter provides theoretical context for the analysis. It shows how theoretical approaches to climate change governance have evolved from state-centric regime theory, to approaches of transnational governance that define governance as all efforts to steer toward public goals under a normative context. Subsequently, the interpretive methodology of this research is outlined, starting with the introduction of the basic epistemological underpinnings of discourse analysis. The next section specifies the theoretical basis for discourse theory by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). This theory is operationalised in the section thereafter, which states the techniques of analysis and data selection.

The following chapters focus on the development of discourse by state actors, the fossil fuel industry, and ENGOs, respectively. The discursive contestation in climate change governance revolves around three concepts: decarbonisation, justice and responsibility. These concepts form the basis for the structure of each chapter, demonstrating how each actor fixates their meaning and how this meaning informs the way they try to steer climate governance in a particular direction.

A concluding section recapitulates the findings of each chapter and provides an answer the research question. Lastly, it puts forward suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1 – Theory and Methods

Explaining Climate Change Governance: Theoretical Approaches

Climate change governance was initially centred around state actors in a multilateral regime (Bulkeley and Newell 2015, 2), but as the conceptual shift from government to governance gained traction in IR theory (Stoker 1998), approaches to climate change shifted their focus to the multiplicity of governance actors as a result of the changing dynamics in global governance. Theoretical approaches emerged with the aim to overcome the central position of the state and multilateral institutions, but the focus remained on making sense of the new political arena, mapping out the diversity of actors and their relation to state actors. Current theoretical approaches conceptualise governance as all efforts intended to achieve public goals, a process in which actors of all nature use different sources of authority to accomplish those public goals in ways they see fit and thereby acknowledge the independent influence of non-state actors on global climate governance. Academics following this line of argument define climate change governance as "the sum of the formal and informal rule systems and actor networks at all levels of human society that are set up to steer societies toward preventing, mitigating, and adapting to environmental change and earth system transformation" (Bierman 2014, 9). This definition offers an analytical framework that accounts for all levels of society that are actively and consciously steering governance and are working under a normative context. Importantly, normative contexts are always open to interpretation and understood differently by different actors. These approaches offer a theoretical basis for exploring how governance outcomes are produced in interaction.

After the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, which provided a framework for all international action, the theoretical focus was mostly shaped by regime theory and institutional approaches (Okereke et al. 2009, 59). The focus of literature is on the establishment of the climate regime, how it is shaped by power relations as well as domestic interests and how the regime might be effectively implemented. Arguing that a regime approach is too narrow and does not capture the complexity and coexistence of different institutional arrangements on different levels, Keohane and Victor introduced the notion of a 'regime complex': a set of loosely coupled institutions or regimes, which are relatively specific or narrow, and which are not structured as a whole by an overall hierarchy (Keohane and Victor 2011, 8). Still, the idea of a regime complex remains considerably state-centric. In this stream of research, the growing number and power of non-state actors in climate change governance is seen as merely influencing domestic state decision making: "they […] form constituencies that influence the tenure and decisions of elites and thus the calculus of state interests" (Keohane and Victor 2011, 8).

With the broader shift in IR theory from government to governance theories, new

approaches to global climate governance started to shift their focus to the changing dynamics in global governance. Moving away from regime theory, Biermann et al. (2009, 14) introduced an analytical framework built of around the concept 'fragmented governance architecture'. They define this governance architecture as the 'overarching system of public and private institutions that are valid or active in a given issue area of world politics' (Biermann et al. 2009, 15). The term 'fragmentation' is meant to capture the fact that many policy domains are characterized by a patchwork of institutions that differ in character, constituency, spatial scope and specific subject matter – there is no single regulatory framework for governing global issues (Biermann et al. 2009, 18). With regard to climate governance, the UNFCCC is seen as the 'institutional core' of the governance architecture for climate change, to which many other institutions relate. Though this conceptual framework offers some explanation of how international governance has become fragmented and how different parts relate to each other, the analytical focus is still mainly on the state and international cooperation.

The multitude of actors and the existing mix of top-down and bottom-up climate efforts has changed the role of states. This new dynamic has led to the introduction of the concept of "hybrid multilateralism", a term meant to "capture the interplay between state and nonstate actors in the new landscape of international climate cooperation" (Bäckstrand et al. 2017, 562). This approach leaves room for all kinds of actors active in global environmental governance and looks at how the interaction between these actors alters the roles of traditional actors. This interplay between state and nonstate actors has brought about the term "orchestration" (Bäckstrand and Kuyper 2017; Gordon and Johnson 2017; Hale and Roger 2014). Orchestration can be conceptualised as "a process whereby states or intergovernmental organizations initiate, guide, broaden, and strengthen transnational governance by non-state and/or sub-state actors" (Hale and Roger 2014, 60-1). While the UNFCCC used to take on a formal, regulative character, it seems to now have taken on a more facilitative role, where a mix between "bottom-up flexibility" and "top-down monitoring and review" (Bäckstrand et al. 2017, 566) can exist.

These kinds of changed modes of governance by states and multilateral institutions call for a reconsideration of the state and some scholars argue that global governance ought to be reinterpreted as all efforts intended to achieve public goals, meaning that governance can take place "with or without the state" (Andonova et al 2009, 55). Global governance takes place when "networks operating in the transnational sphere authoritatively steer constituents towards public goals" (Andonova et al. 2009, 57). The extent to which different actors actually make up global governance has not yet been subject of enough research. With more and more actors steering towards the public goal of limiting dangerous global warming, resulting in a "growing trend of transnational cooperation on climate change between subnational governments, regions, NGOs,

corporations, and government agencies" (Andonova et al. 2009, 52), it is important to consider the relational nature of power. This means paying attention to the way in which state and nonstate actors impact each other and how roles of governance and responsibilities are ascribed or acquired (Okereke et al. 2009, 73). Any analysis of climate governance ought to go beyond merely looking at who is engaged in transnational governance and instead "research the ways in which transnational networks deploy different sources of authority and mechanisms of steering in order to govern" (Andonova et al. 57).

Climate governance has evolved from being perceived as an international governance issue to being seen as a socio-political issue that is and should be addressed at all levels of government and society. Analysis then becomes a question of identifying which actors are implicated in certain policy domains, which sources of authority they have and how they use them to exert influence.

The 'Ecological Paradox' and the Need for Interpretive Approaches to Climate Governance

Against the backdrop of the variety of governance actors active in the policy domain of climate change, scholars have identified an "ecological paradox" (Blühdorn 2011; Methmann et al. 2013). The paradox is that though there is an acceptance of the necessity to mitigate climate change and there is engagement with this public goal at different socio-political levels, it seems that there is an inability to accomplish that goal (Blühdorn 2011). The high number and variety of different actors results in a proliferation of different meanings and perceptions of climate change: different actors problematize climate change in a different way and therefore emphasize different options for action (Methmann et al. 2013). It is therefore necessary to apply an interpretive approach to climate governance, which "investigates the problematization of climate change: how global warming is rendered as an object and problem to be acted upon, how different meanings of climate change emerge and become dominant, how the different meanings affect the toolkit of feasible political solutions and what the effects of such practices are" (Methmann et al. 2013, 4).

Whereas approaches to climate governance have focussed on who is involved, interpretive methods can complement these approaches by looking at how governance is produced. Rather than seeing climate change as a problem 'out there' that different actors must respond to, it aims to deconstruct how climate change becomes a subject of governance. Regarding climate change, the question is how different actors and stakeholders problematize climate, and, consequently, what kind of solutions they put forward. It is imperative to look at how things become objects to be governed (Bulkeley 2015), by looking at how different actors and agents engage in deploying sources of authority and mechanisms of steering to establish an understanding of the problem that legitimises particular courses of action. Interpretive research is an umbrella term that captures

many different methodological approaches. In this research, the methodological approach is poststructuralist discourse analysis.

Interpretive Methods: Epistemological Premises of Discourse Analysis

Poststructuralist discourse analysis can be understood as the analysis of the interrelationships between language, power and society (Simbürger 2017). It is important to first identify the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the method, which might be perceived as a philosophy more than a method (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002).

Academics in the poststructuralist tradition rejected the sharp distinction between structure and agency proposed by thinkers in the structuralist paradigm (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002, 10). Structuralists argued that there are underlying, fixed social structures that govern the social world, which produce inequality and restrain the possibilities of actors to affect these structures. Poststructuralists adopt this line of reasoning, but criticise structuralism for its inability to account for social change (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002, 139). Instead, poststructuralists emphasise the instability of social structures and argue that the meaning in social structures is constantly renegotiated by the actors inside of these structures through discursive contestation. A discourse can be understood as "groups of statements that structure the way in which a thing is thought, and the way in which we act on the basis of that thinking. Discourse is a particular knowledge about the world that shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it" (Simbürger 2017, 1). Though there are different approaches to discourse analysis as a method, some basic premises underly most of these variations.

Firstly, discourse analysis in the poststructuralist tradition seeks to unpack what is taken for granted or what is accepted as objective reality. The basic premise in discourse analysis is that our access to reality is through language and is therefore always mediated (Bacchi and Bonham 2014, 176). This does not mean that reality does not exist, but that reality is always articulated and interpreted (Rosenau 1990, 86). Secondly, discourse analysis calls for an analytical focus on cultural and historical specificity. Current knowledge is contingent and hence it is imperative to pay attention to how certain understandings have become normalized or accepted as true (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002, 5). Lastly, the most important premise for the research at hand is that discourse analysts assume a link between knowledge and social action. Certain understanding of the world or of a particular problem or domain, makes specific forms of action logical and accepted, whereas other forms of social action are literally unthinkable or are rejected as wrong (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002, 6). This means that the social construction of knowledge and what is true and false lays the foundation for what is an accepted trajectory for social *change* or, for that matter, non-change.

Discourse Theory: A Neo-Gramscian Approach to Social Change

Discourse analysis can help unpack how different actors take positions in climate governance and thereby engage in a discursive struggle that ultimately determines what are proper outcomes of climate governance – and which are not. Of the different variations of discourse analysis, the analysis at hand is based on discourse theory, which draws on post-structuralist and neo-Marxist (Gramscian) concepts and argues that hegemony is based in discourse, rather than material structure (Laclau and Mouffe 2001).

Hegemony refers to "the persistence of specific social and economic structures that systematically advantage certain groups" (Levy and Newell 2002, 85). Importantly, this hierarchy does not rest on coercion or force by an elite, but on the generation of consent which is reached by "building coalitions and compromises that provide a measure of political and material accommodation with other groups, and on ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests" (Levy and Newell 2002, 86). A hegemonic discourse is established when meaning is fixated (temporarily) in a particular domain (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002). The fixation of meaning is established through 'articulations' or linguistic acts which attempt to establish meaning of elements (Methmann et al. 2013, 62). In discourse theory as put forward by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), the whole social field is understood as a web of processes where meaning is constantly created and contested. The notion that the whole social field is understood as discursively produced, means that the material world is part of discourse.

The role of power is important to consider in these kinds of approaches, because "systems of social relations—or discourses—are always political constructions, and, as such, involve the exercise of power in their formation" (Howarth 1998, 275). Power should be perceived as productive: it shapes our social world and the way that we think about this world, including importantly, the ways in which we do *not* think about this world. A discourse is never completely fixed – instead it is open to contestation as one particular discourse, or fixation of meaning, leaves out other possible fixations of meaning in the same domain. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 111) imagine a 'field of discursivity', which is constituted of all the possibilities of meaning which are excluded in the discourse. Discourses are determined relationally: they exist because they are contested and limited by other options of meaning in the field of discursivity (Jørgenssen and Phillips 2001). Hegemony is thus revealed through contestation, or as Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 114) put it: "the specificity of a hegemonic articulatory practice is given by its confrontation with other articulatory practices of an antagonistic character".

Antagonistic social forces can attempt to reveal the contingency of a sedimented hegemonic discourse, thereby causing the dislocation of this discourse and creating possibilities for

social change. Put differently, a challenge to the existing order can cause chaos and from that chaos possibilities for establishing a different order can arise. When a dominant discourse is threatened in this way, its dominancy can be reconstituted through a 'hegemonic intervention': "an articulation which by means of force reconstitutes unambiguity" (Jørgenssen and Phillips 2001, 47). This is what Methmann et al. (2013, 13) define as the depoliticization of social problems: an attempt to "conceal the contingency of social reality, disclose discursive struggle by silencing alternative views or channel dislocations in a way that fundamental social structures remain untouched". Through the accommodation or dissolution of antagonistic discourses, the crisis of discursive dislocation is overcome while sedimented social structures remain in place – this time with social consent, restoring the legitimacy of the hegemonic structure. Politicising a problem, contrarily, involves opening up discursive contestation and questioning sedimented social structures, with the objective of possibly transforming these structures (Methmann et al. 2013, 13). In analysing a discursive struggle, it is therefore imperative to look at how issues are politicised and depoliticised in interaction.

It is important to pay attention to how structural restraints demarcate the options different actors have to re- or depoliticize specific issues. Hegemonic discourses produce specific knowledge and understanding of the social, upon which social structures rely. But, these dominant discourses are per definition unfixed and can therefore be challenged by antagonistic forces. Hence, there is agency located in structure (Okereke et al. 2009, 69), visible in the possibility to re-politicize certain issues and challenge hegemonic discourses. It is important to be attentive to the structural constraints at play here that allow some actors, ideas or policies more agency than others (Okereke et al. 2009, 69). Though structures do not determine behaviour and outcomes, structural constraints define the strategies from which an actor can choose (Okereke et al. 2009, 69). Here surfaces the need to be attentive to relational power, where the question is what kind of power can actors exercise in relation to other actors.

Techniques of Analysis and Data Selection

The threat of dangerous climate change has functioned as a dislocation to neoliberalist discourse (Methmann et al. 2013, 7). It has laid bare that the dominant model of social development – unlimited growth based on the exploitation of natural resources – is unsustainable. Underlying social structures based on this discourse are problematised because of this dislocation. This has opened up space for imaginaries of a new social order. In the analysis of climate change governance, the focus is on language use in this context: how have different actors responded to the dislocation? A response to a dislocation can be a hegemonic intervention, which aims to dissolve the dislocation, or it might be an attempt to exploit the dislocation, by seizing the opportunity to push for structural

change. Neo-Gramscian analysis is concerned with the relationship between states, business and civil society (Levy and Newell 2002). As such, the analytical focus here is on language use by states, the fossil fuel industry and ENGOs.

It is possible to investigate empirically how discourse is developed and propagated through analysing actual instances of language use (Wesley 2014, 137). Language analysis based on discourse theory involves the analysis of articulations that construct a discourse – acts that either reinforce the meaning of a particular discourse or try to fixate meaning in a different way (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 134). Signs of which the meaning is contested are called 'floating' signifiers: they serve as the site of contestation (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 113). Discourses are ordered by 'nodal points': central or privileged signs around which other signs are ordered. Other signs derive meaning from their relation to the nodal point (Jørgenssen and Philips 2002). From this follows a research design which is concerned with analysing language use by different actors and identifying nodal points therein, in order to see how different discursive positions are developed. An analysis of language use offers insight into which signifiers are subject of contestation and how their meaning is re-articulated or contested by different actors.

The discursive contestation in the field of climate change governance revolves around three floating signifiers: decarbonisation, justice and responsibility. These are also the nodal points in the discursive positions of all agent, as the meaning in other elements is dependent on the way in which these signs are interpreted. Decarbonisation, for example, is interpreted by the fossil fuel industry as making fossil fuels carbon efficient, whereas ENGOs envision decarbonisation as a result of systemic change. Following from these interpretations, then, the fossil fuel industry interprets 'technological innovation' as creating ways for low-carbon or 'clean' natural gas. ENGOs, on the contrary, interpret technological innovation as all innovation going towards large-scale renewable energy provision. In that way, nodal points stabilise a particular discourse by constructing a web of fixed meanings (Montesano Montessori 2014, 175).

Since the issue of climate change has been adopted in many ways and forms by a myriad of actors on different scales, it is impossible to include all actors in an interpretive analysis. However, it is possible to identify certain types of actors that have considerable authority and influence in producing climate change governance. Here it is useful to make a distinction between actors and agents: "agents differ from actors insofar as they have been given authority by others […] Authority here is the legitimacy and capacity to exercise power. Legitimacy is conferred through social consent, given formally or informally" (Biermann 2014, 47). This definition of authority is useful when approaching governance as all efforts to "authoritatively steer constituents towards public goal" (Andonova et al. 2009).

One of the most important agents in climate governance is still the state, as it has authority to govern. State-centrism needs to be overcome in climate governance research, but the state as an important agent shaping climate governance may not be overlooked. Many analyses that have focussed on the broadening array of actors involved in governance have attempted to show that the nation-state is becoming increasingly irrelevant and that other actors are fulfilling functions formally held by the state (Duit et al. 2016). This, however, does not necessarily mean that the state has lost authority. Rather, with multilateral and private actors involved in pursuing public goals, the focus should be on how state governance is transformed or complemented by the involvement of other agents (Okereke et al. 2009).

In terms of authority and legitimacy, the UNFCCC plays an important role in driving climate change governance, but its facilitative character allows states to formulate climate strategies domestically (Bäckstrand et al. 2017). The state will therefore be analysed as it functions in the multilateral context. Official documents published by the UNFCCC, as well as official documents by states will be subject of textual analysis with the aim of identifying and deconstructing discursive articulations and nodal point. Firstly, UNFCCC Decision 1/C.P.21, the adoption of the Paris Agreement. The 2015 Paris Agreement was considered a breakthrough in climate politics, as it was the first time that the parties agreed the limit for temperature rise, necessary for preventing dangerous climate change (Clemençon 2016, 8). The facilitative character of the framework has led to a system in which all signatories to the agreement submit national pledges for climate action, which should ultimately add up to reach the goal formulated in the Agreement. A selection of these (Intended) Nationally Determined Contributions ((I)NDCs) will be analysed. This selection comprises the (I)NDCs submitted by the top ten highest emitters of GHGs: China, United States, European Union, India, Russia, Japan, Brazil, Indonesia, Canada and Mexico (Friedrich, Ge and Pickens 2017).

The second governance agent to include in the analysis is the fossil fuel industry, as their material power allows the industry to set the standard for technological innovation and their position in the global economy offer them access to decision making processes at a high institutional level, resulting in authority in the governance process. In many discussions about their role in climate governance, the fossil fuel industry is portrayed as a big giant, actively opposing climate legislation and blocking progressive action (Nasiritousi 2017). In order to understand the role of fossil fuel companies in climate governance, we need to go beyond this portrayal of being for or against the climate and "instead examine the content of their strategies to better understand how these companies seek to influence instrument choice and policy design" (Nasiritousi 2017, 622). Moreover, as the fossil fuel industry is responsible for the largest part of carbon emissions, effective climate governance is virtually impossible without their engagement (Nasiritousi 2017).

Many corporate actors operate from a privileged position compared to states and other nonstate actors such as NGOs when it comes to setting global environmental standards (Falkner 2012). As they have a central role in directing investment and technological innovation, "companies can set the parameters of what is politically feasible in international environmental protection" (Falkner 2012, 101). In terms of political engagement of big business with the climate change problem, there has been shift over the last decades. Instead of actively lobbying against international regulations and climate change denial (Dunlap and McCright 2011), the fossil fuel industry is now competing over leadership positions in terms of technological innovation to support solutions to climate change (Falkner 2012). Shortly, instead of trying to block climate change regulations, "most firms have taken a more cooperative approach by aiming to push policy makers in the direction of market-based solutions such as emissions trading and voluntary programs" (Kolk and Pinkse 2007, 225). In addition to the material power, it is therefore important to pay attention to the discursive power of large business actors and their role in influencing what is understood as legitimate environmental policy (Levy and Newell 2002, 92-3).

As governance entails efforts to deliberately steer towards certain solutions, the documents under analysis for this group of actors are documents in which fossil fuel companies directly engage with the topic of climate change. This includes sustainability reports by individual companies and strategy documents for climate governance published by joint networks, such as the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI). Documents by the following individual companies have been analysed: ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch Shell, British Petroleum (BP), Chevron, Total, BHP Billiton and Peabody Company. This selection comprises the highest-emitting fossil fuel companies, which are investor-owned as opposed to state-owned (Gustin 2017). Some of the highest emitting fossil fuel companies are state-owned (Gustin 2017); these have not been included in analysis as it is assumed that state- and corporate strategies are aligned it that context.

The last governance agent to include in the analysis is a selection of critical ENGOs, which have been termed "the civil society counterparts of MNEs [multinational enterprises] and government" (Teegen et al. 2004, 464) and as such might be interpreted as the terrain from which antagonist articulations can arise. NGOs have been active players in controlling government policy and challenging corporate power and "value creation and governance around the world" (Teegen et al. 2004, 464). Civil society has often been optimistically perceived as a "counterforce to neoliberal globalization" (Katz 2006, 334). Particularly in the environmental field, "transnational campaigns by activist groups have undermined the legitimacy of multinational firms and induced change in corporate behaviour" (Wapner 1996 *in* Falkner 2012, 120). However, in a neo-Gramscian approach, civil society must be seen as "both a reformist and a conservatist force" (Katz 2006, 334): it is where

counterhegemonic forces can arise and organise, but it is also a site that might be used by hegemonic forces to further consolidate hegemony. An exploration of such an allegedly counterhegemonic discourse therefore needs to pay critical attention to exactly what is being contested and what is reproduced. In other words, it involves a focus on possible signs left outside of the discursive struggle, which are taken for granted by all agents involves. This will reveal the discursive framework that underlies climate governance.

The analysis will focus on organized activism by some of the most well-known ENGOs that engage directly with climate change governance, as their established status in civil society enables them to influence and mobilise the public at a large scale, which offers them considerable authority in the governance realm (Wapner 1995). The selection includes Friends of the Earth International, Greenpeace International, 350.org, Carbon Market Watch, The Climate Reality Project, Carbon Killer and the Carbon Disclosure Project. The analysis is based on website entries policy documents and open letters. Additionally, policy documents which are the results of joint efforts by a multiplicity of NGOs are included, such as those put forward by the Climate Action Network (CAN). CAN is "a worldwide network of over 1300 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in more than 120 countries, working to promote government and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels" (CAN, n.d.), and serves as the focal point for ENGOs in the multilateral context. ENGOs can develop and vocalise statements at UNFCCC conventions through this focal point. In this way, the (mediated) discursive position of more (E)NGOs is represented.

Chapter 2 – Development of Discourse in the Multilateral Framework: Depoliticized Politics

In 2015, delegates of all countries in the UNFCCC decided on a new path for international climate governance in the Paris Agreement, based on voluntary input by states as opposed to top-down rule setting in the institutional framework. The discursive position in the multilateral framework therefore has been investigated by identifying nodal points in the Paris Agreement and the translation of this agreement to national contexts in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by the ten largest emitters. The identified nodal points – decarbonisation, justice and responsibility – allow insight into the way the complex climate change issue is rendered governable in the multilateral context.

The focus on bringing down carbon dioxide emissions as a solution to climate change results in the promotion of policy mechanisms based on technological innovation to achieve low-carbon energy structures or focus on carbon-offsetting. The interpretation of justice on the basis of the Common But Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) principle and the universal right to sustainable development leads to the reproduction of existing international power inequalities and the prioritisation of economic growth over climate change mitigation. Finally, responsibility for climate change is globalized and transferred to other actors, which results in the avoidance of responsibility in the form of taking direct action. The chapter is outlined on the basis of these nodal points and shows the development of these interpretation of in three sections.

Firstly, it is important to state the main goal of the Paris Agreement to provide context for the remainder of the chapter. The Paris Agreement marked a breakthrough in multilateral cooperation on climate change, because parties to the agreement finally agreed on a limit for global temperature rise (Clemençon 2016, 8). The goal of the Agreement is established in Article 2 (UN FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1):

> This Agreement […] aims to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty, including by:
> (a) Holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change;
> (b) Increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development, in a manner that does not threaten food production; and
> (c) Making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.

The objective to limit global warming to 1,5 - 2 °C is to be reached by global reduction of GHG emissions. This is the central topic of the first section of this chapter. The goal is coupled to other global governance goals, such as 'sustainable development' and 'poverty eradication', which will be discussed in the sections on justice and responsibility.

The Carbonification of Climate Governance

The narrow focus on emissions, and especially carbon, transforms the global climate governance challenge into a problem of emissions, rather than socio-economic relations (Bedall 2013, 204). With GHG emissions being quantified in terms of carbon equivalent, this results in a preference for policy mechanisms that either promote low-carbon structures or work to offset carbon. Though six GHGs have been identified and are acknowledged – also known as 'the Kyoto Gases' –, reduction of carbon dioxide emissions has become the main focus of climate action. Other GHGs are quantified in relation to the global warming potential of one tonne of carbon dioxide as a baseline indicator (Bumpus 2011, 614). This has been termed the 'carbonification' of climate policy, which "refers to the process through which other environmental issues are understood in terms of their relation to and interplay with climate change, while every solution to climate change is reduced to and evaluated in terms of carbon emissions" (Mert 2013, 31).

The logic of carbonification dominates the Paris Agreement and trickles down into national strategies communicated in the NDCs. In Article 4.19 (UNFCCC 2016, 24), for example, it is stated that "All Parties should strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies". This reflects the way in which climate change is problematized in the multilateral framework: as a challenge to ensure development while bringing down GHG emissions, effectively bringing the essence of climate governance down to emission reduction. This means that other than emphasising the need for mitigation of GHG emissions, the necessity to conserve natural GHG sinks is underscored, stated in Article 5.1 (UNFCCC 2016, 24): "Parties should take action to conserve and enhance, as appropriate, sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases". The logic of carbonification becomes visible in Article 5.2 (UNFCCC 2016, 24) in the mentioning of "non-carbon benefits" of such conservation programs: the ultimate goal of any policy mechanism must be to lower carbon dioxide emission and any other results are extra. It is important to keep in mind the facilitative character of the Agreement, formalised for example in Article 4.2, where it is emphasised that "Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures" (UNFCCC 2016, 22). Signatories to the Agreement may thus decide domestically how they will achieve any communicated emission reduction goals.

With the analysis of the NDCs it becomes clear that the demand for 'long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies' (Art. 2., UNFCCC 2016, 22) coming from the

framework convention is answered with the formulation of several strategies to bring down GHG emissions, focused on energy efficiency, low-carbon energy provision and the preservation of natural carbon sinks. Though all ten NDCs under analysis promise to invest in renewable energy provision, the prevalence of fossil fuels remains dominant. The focus on the management of emissions allows the production of energy itself to be left untouched (Bedall 2013, 205). This is visible, for example, in China's proposed strategy to "enhance the clean use of coal" and "to expand the use of natural gas" (China 2015, 7). Coal is the most carbon intensive fossil fuel and natural gas is a fossil fuel which is carbon efficient, but does account for huge methane emission (Howarth et al 2011). The Japanese NDC similarly proposes to have arrived at a sustainable energy mix by 2030 in which more than 50% is made up by coal and natural gas (Japan 2015, 8). Furthermore, the European Union explicitly mentions "CO_2 transport and storage" as a strategy in bringing down carbon emission in the energy sector (European Union 2015, 4). The focus on technological innovation and energy efficiency is an indication that ultimately the favourable strategy is to 'decarbonise' fossil fuels by means of technological innovation, rather than transform structures of energy production and provision.

Another result of narrow focus on carbon is the value placed on 'avoided emissions', most notably with the conservation or creation of carbon sinks. Russia (2015, 1) explicitly links its mitigation goals to its carbon sink in articulating the main objective of their NDC: "Limiting anthropogenic greenhouse gases in Russia to 70-75% of 1990 levels by the year 2030 might be a long-term indicator, subject to the maximum possible account of absorbing capacity of forests". So do other countries which are home to large forests, such as Brazil and Indonesia. These countries are responsible for 45% of deforestation emissions (Okereke and Dooley 2010) and can therefore quantifiably state that forest conservation is the most effective emission reduction strategy for them. In addition to forest conservation, the creation of carbon sinks has become a preferred policy. India, for example, includes afforestation as a major policy corner stone, pledging "to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030" (India 2015, 29). China proposes similar action, stating "To vigorously enhance afforestation" and even "promoting voluntary tree planting by all citizens" (China 2015, 10).

Lastly, the focus on cost-efficient carbon reduction leads to a neglect of environmental hazards that cannot be quantified in terms of carbon. Testimony to this, for example, is the mentioning in China's NDC of the intention to "proactively promote the development of hydro power" and "to develop nuclear power in a safe and efficient manner", both types of power generation which have been contested because of their environmental impact (e.g. Sneddon and Fox 2006; Kitschelt 1986).

The logic of carbonification, then, leads to the prioritisation of policy mechanisms that encourage an internal conversion of existing energy structures to be more carbon-efficient by means of technological innovation, that highly value avoided emissions and that allow the use of low-carbon energy that might entail other environmental hazard. Though these policies might lead to carbon-efficiency, it weakens the incentive to make structural changes in the energy sector.

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities: An Interpretation of Justice and Equity

It is important to be reminded here that the Agreement places the central goal of emission reduction in the context of sustainable development, a concept that is framed as a human right and underlies an overall conception of justice. Justice in the multilateral framework is interpreted on the national scale and is shaped through the concept of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). This principle emphasises the unequal historical contribution to the cumulative amount of GHGs by different states and the difference in capabilities to contribute to a solution now. It addresses the gap between developed and developing countries in both the contribution to the cause of and solution to the problem of climate change. This is addressed at the outset of the Agreement and articulated in paragraph two of Article 2 (UNFCCC 2016, 22): "This Agreement will be implemented to reflect equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances". The position in the Agreement is relevant, as it is in the first paragraph of this Article that the climate objective is outlined; respect for the CBDR principle thus seems to be considered conditional for any further course of action.

Several policy mechanisms are proposed to ensure global climate action and international cooperation based on concepts of justice and equity, especially in terms of climate finance. In Article 9 (UNFCCC 2016, 28) this is articulated: "Developed country Parties shall provide financial resources to assist developing country Parties with respect to both mitigation and adaptation in continuation of their existing obligations under the Convention". This is followed by an articulation of responsibility for developed countries for technology advancement and transfer in Article 10 (UNFCCC 2016, 29):

> Support, including financial support, shall be provided to developing country Parties for the implementation of this Article [10], including for strengthening cooperative action on technology development and transfer at different stages of the technology cycle, with a view to achieving a balance between support for mitigation and adaptation.

In this way, the Paris Agreement with its focus on the CBDR principle aims to avoid the climate change problem from further widening the North-South divide, by ensuring that developing countries' right to sustainable development is safeguarded and by suggesting that developed countries ought to bear higher costs for climate action. This stance is adopted and re-articulated in the NDCs communicated by India, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia and China, who all stress their developing status. Mexico and Indonesia provide both unconditional and conditional emission reduction goals, whereby the latter is dependent on the degree of international cooperation and aid. This bears considerable significance for national pledges, as seen in the one by Mexico (Mexico 2015, 2):

> The 25% reduction commitment expressed above could increase up to a 40% in a conditional manner subject to a global agreement addressing important topics including international carbon price, carbon border adjustments, technical cooperation, access to low cost financial resources and technology transfer.

Likewise, Indonesia states it is committed unconditionally to "reducing emissions by 29% percent compared to the Business as Usual scenario by 2030", a number that can be increased to 41% "with the support of international cooperation" and "welcomes bilateral, regional and international market mechanisms" for technology transfer and financial support (Indonesia 2015, 5-6). When paying attention to the way in which global powers deploy sources of authority – e.g. exercise their political and material power – and steer towards certain mechanisms to govern climate change, it seems that countries most vulnerable to climate change have little agency compared to major Northern powers. Northern dominance within the multilateral framework is reflected in developing countries' acceptance of market mechanisms like emissions trading and carbon offsets as "credible means of achieving sustainability even though they ultimately serve to reinforce the material dominance of the developed countries" (Okereke et al. 2009, 67).

Additionally, what is telling in the context of sustainable development is the fact that in China and India's intended NDCs, carbon emission reduction is coupled to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Effectively, this means that a difference of one percent in the GDP can lead to an absolute difference in the reduction target of about 2.5 gigaton of CO_2 (Den Elzen et al. 2016, 664). The uncertainty that come with such pledges ultimately seems to suggest that countries are not ready to prioritise mitigation ambitions over ambitions of national economic growth. To justify that position, such major developing countries refer to the CBDR principle: they have historically contributed less to the problem of climate change than developed countries and should not be hindered now on their path towards further development.

Globalization of Responsibility

To be able to simultaneously guarantee the reduction of GHG emissions and grant developing countries their right to development, it seems effective to approach emissions globally as opposed to nationally, resulting in a 'globalization' of responsibility. Emissions are perceived as "global externalities and it does not make a difference where they are being reduced" (Lederer 2011, 1902). The globalisation of responsibility is visible for instance in Article 6.2 and 6.3 of the Agreement, which deal with 'internationally transferred mitigation outcomes' (UNFCCC 2016, 24-5). Internationally transferred mitigation outcomes are achieved when a developed country can lower the cost of achieving their own NDC by supporting less-costly emissions reductions in other, often developing, countries. This means that rather than encouraging mitigation at the source and changing domestic energy provision and consumption structures, countries can reach their reduction goals by directing investment towards projects abroad that either reduce or avoid carbon emissions. Joint emission reduction efforts often involve carbon-market mechanisms, in which avoided carbon emissions are commodified and traded between countries. Developing countries sell their avoided emission credits to developing countries, directing capital towards the developing country and creating the opportunity for emission reduction for the developed country (Lederer 2011). Other than the criticism of market mechanisms expressed above, their effectiveness in terms of emission reduction is questionable (Lederer 2011).

Additionally, the globalization of responsibility results in the encouragement of non-Party – thus nonstate – action in achieving NDCs and worldwide emissions reduction. The Agreement repeatedly mentions the wish

> uphold and promote regional and international cooperation in order to mobilize stronger and more ambitious climate action by all Parties and non-Party stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, cities and other subnational authorities, local communities and indigenous peoples (UNFCCC 2016, 3).

There is a section devoted completely to the engagement of 'non-Party actors' and their importance in achieving global governance goals set by the Parties to the Convention. Here we are reminded of the fluidity of the modern state (Okereke et al. 2009) – where state influence can be traced beyond state institutions and, as it happens, action by non-state actors may count cumulatively towards individual state's global governance goals. In Gramscian terms, this can be interpreted as the "extended state", where civil society complements the potential of the state (Levy and Newell 2002, 87). The UNFCCC's adoption of non-Party stakeholder in a formal multilateral agreement formalises a shift: responsibility for climate change action is transferred

from governments to a shared global responsibility in which civil society has a big part to play. The articulation of climate change as a global problem as opposed to an international problem and the dependency on 'non-Party stakeholders' to achieve the Agreement's goal work to ease the responsibility for its signatories. It offers an opening to explain a failure to meet the intended goals as a consequence of other parties lacking proper engagement: agents can point to the responsibility of other agents to take measures. This interpretation of responsibility is exploited by the fossil fuel industry, but problematised by environmental NGOs and will be elaborated on in subsequent chapters.

The Crystallization of Hegemonic Discourse: Techno-Economic Solutions

The logic of carbonification leads to the legitimisation of strategies to make fossil fuels carbon-efficient and investing in the creation of carbon sinks. Justice involves the right to sustainable development for all; a right which is to be safeguarded by the CBDR principle. This principle urges developed states to take the lead in climate action and provide developing states with financial and technological support to reach their national pledges. The direction of capital from developed to developing countries is partly done through market mechanisms, which serve to reinforce the material dependency of Southern countries and are questionable in terms of environmental integrity. The globalization of responsibility results in a transference of state responsibility for climate action to a shared one for state and non-state actors alike for the achievement of (inter)national climate goals. The incentive to tackle GHG emission at the root by transforming domestic energy structures, consequently, remains weak. The avoidance of proper engagement with structural change, points to depoliticization of climate change governance.

The formation of a hegemonic structure entails the continuous articulation and adoption of a certain discourse. In this context, the question arises whether 'non-Party stakeholders' favour similar policy trajectories to those put forward in the framework convention or if they problematise these policy options. This will be investigated in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 – The Fossil Fuel Industry: Rearticulating Business as Usual

Neo-Gramscian analysis has been subject of critique because it carries a risk of "overstating the alignment of state and business strategies" and an "analytic bias in favour of the structural power of business" (Meckling 2011, 9). A discourse theoretical approach, however, asks how agents engage in either the confirmation or contestation of discursive positions laid out in the political domain and consequently form coalitions. Hence, it does not immediately assume an alignment of strategies, but rather aims to analyse whether articulations of business actors fixate meaning to discursive elements in similar ways. The analysis reveals that the meaning of floating signifiers that orientate the discursive position in the multilateral context seems to be confirmed and adjusted by the fossil fuel industry, pointing to an alignment of strategies. The narrative follows the logic of 'ecological modernization', where "environmental problems come to be framed as issues that are politically, economically and technologically solvable within the context of existing institutions and power structures and continued economic growth" (Bailey et al. 2011, 683).

This chapter again sets out to uncover the development of the discursive position of the industry through an exploration of the three nodal points. The interpretation of decarbonisation, justice and responsibility in the multilateral framework are exploited in such a way that the status quo can be maintained. This points to the formation of a hegemonic coalition where a logic of technologisation and marketization is imposed on the climate change issue to render it governable without structural transformation. Through formally communicating a serious engagement with climate change action and collaborating in that domain with states and multilateral institutions, the industry manages to general social consent and thus preserves their social legitimacy, pointing to a hegemonic intervention.

Climate Change Business – Making Profit from the Problem

The carbonification of climate change governance opens up space for the fossil fuel industry to steer global governance towards policy mechanisms that favour the reinvention of existing structures in a carbon-efficient way and market-based policy mechanisms. In the multilateral framework, a proper response to climate change is articulated as realising a low-carbon global society, a meaning which is adopted and exploited by the fossil fuel industry.

The main strategic objective of the fossil fuel companies under analysis revolves around the 'decarbonisation' of fossil fuels. This is exemplified the branding of fossil fuels as sustainable, particularly natural gas. BP, Shell, Total, Chevron and ExxonMobil explicitly mention natural gas as either a 'sustainable solution' or as a 'bridging fuel'. Total, for example, states "natural gas is the best option currently available for combating global warming while ensuring the world has access

to the energy it needs" (Total 2018, 27). Natural gas is low in terms of carbon dioxide emissions, but contributes massively to methane emissions – another GHG with twice the warming potential compared to carbon (Howarth et al. 2011). This necessity to mitigate methane emissions is acknowledged: "gas won't fulfil its true potential unless we mitigate the methane emissions connected with its production and transportation" (Total 2018, 27). This challenge is to be overcome by further technological innovation (OGCI 2018, 30). The logic of carbonification allows the legitimatisation of these strategies and simultaneously opens up space for new business based on technological innovation and diffusion.

Fossil fuel companies are competing for a pioneering role in offering low-carbon solutions, launching innovative technologies and creating new businesses. Climate change has been reinterpreted from a problem or threat to their business model to an "opportunity for the creation of new business units, the development of new technologies and the optimization of existing processes" (Bach 2019, 88). A terrain for new business which is explored by all companies is that of Carbon Capture, Usage and Storage (CCUS). The Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI), an initiative launched by the CEOs of ten large oil and gas companies and is "a proactive, engaged and diverse group of global oil and gas companies [that] could make a difference to the way we respond to the challenge of climate change" (OGCI Report 2018, 5). The OGCI focuses on three different objectives for transitioning to a 'low-carbon society': reduce methane emissions, reduce carbon dioxide emission and mitigating carbon dioxide, produced during power generation or industrial processes by using it in products or storing it (OGCI 2018, 18). The latter reflects an explicit focus on the development of novel techniques for CCUS. What is striking is that when the Report mentions 'growing recognition' (OGCI 2018, 41) of the necessity to include strategies such as CUSS in climate action, it refers to the Zero Emissions Platform. This platform comprises national think thanks, companies such as Shell and BP – also OGCI members – and research institutions and is sponsored by multiple energy companies. Effectively, then, they are referencing themselves. The Zero Emissions Platform (ZEP) gives a short introduction into the necessity of CUSS, stressing that the world is still dependent on fossil fuels and will continue to be. CCUS is articulated as the best solution to guaranteeing affordable energy access and limiting climate change.

Though CCUS might be a necessary addition to global mitigation efforts, these kinds of reports obscure the criticism that has been made against CCUS. Critics have focused on the impact of CCUS on groundwater and environmental safety, as well as the costs of CCUS. Most important, however, is the fear that it will divert attention and investment from mitigation efforts such as renewable energy and energy efficiency, creating the risk of 'carbon lock-in': meaning that societies will still use fossil fuels and the necessary infrastructure, making the transition to other energy systems extremely difficult (Bäckstrand et al. 2011, 275). The extreme focus on CCUS might in fact

be a diversion from the reluctance of the fossil fuel industry to effectively mitigate and alter their practices.

Also resulting from the articulation of climate change as a problem of emissions is the commodification of carbon and the establishment of carbon market and trading systems. These kinds of policy mechanisms epitomise the preference for market-based solutions in climate governance (Meckling 2011), which the fossil fuel industry eagerly steers towards. BP mentions in their report how they have played "a major role in helping governments design their trading system" and "have "been active as a trader in the world's current emissions trading systems since their inception" (BP 2018, 23). Such collaborations bear testimony to the access of the oil- and gas industry to politics at all levels, which is a source of authority and reflects a high degree of agency within social structures. Here it is important to be reminded of the central role of large corporations in directing investment and technological innovation, resulting in their ability to set a standard for what is politically feasible (Falkner 2012, 101). The material power in combination with the high degree of institutional access enables fossil fuel companies to steer towards policy mechanisms that do not threaten their existence.

Articulating Justice: Access to Energy and Continued Dependence on Fossil Fuels

The fossil fuel industry does not engage directly with matters of justice in their articulations, but by highlighting access to energy as a primary condition for human development they imply that justice is served when all people have access to energy. Climate change is without exception defined as a "dual challenge" (BP 2018, 4), where we are facing enormous global population growth resulting in a global rise in energy demand, while having to reduce GHG emissions. Climate change mitigation is placed in the context of sustainable development, as it is in the multilateral framework. Fossil fuel companies are emphasising the need for continuing fossil fuel exploitation in the long-term, while developing new low-carbon technologies to add to the 'energy mix', to guarantee energy access for all. Total, for example, states how "access to energy is shaping the world's future. It spurs progress and plays an essential role in economic and social development and higher living standards" (Total 2018, 5). BHP Billiton similarly states the necessity to achieve the "twin objectives of limiting climate change to the lower end the IPCC emission scenarios in line with current international agreements, while providing access to affordable energy. We do not prioritise one over the other – both are essential to sustainable development" (BHP Billiton 2014). Likewise, Peabody Energy emphasises the abundance of coal and its consequent affordability, stating that their "approach to using the world's coal resources is grounded in the need to achieve the three-part goals of energy security, economic progress and environmental solutions through the application of advanced technologies" (Peabody Energy, n.d.).

The emphasis on the growing energy demand and thus the continued reliance on fossil fuels works to justify continued investments in the industry – it gives fossil fuel companies a green card to continue their practices, as they are merely supplying global demand.

Taking Responsibility or Creating Public Consent?

In 'a post-Paris world' (Bach 2019, 88), avoiding serious engagement with and responsibility for climate action is a strategy that most businesses can no longer afford. With political and public pressure becoming more stringent, corporations are expected to take responsibility for the environmental and social conditions of their business practices. As such, fossil fuel companies are expected to engage with climate change policy in order to maintain their social legitimacy. Though the explicit engagement with climate governance indicates that the fossil fuel industry is taking responsibility for their share in implementing effective solutions to climate change, it might be interpreted instead as a hegemonic intervention where a hegemonic group makes (material) concessions "in an effort to preserve the essential aspects of social structure" (Levy and Egan 2003, 807).

One of the ways in which the fossil fuel industry has formalised their willingness to combat climate change is through the OGCI. Comprising both private and state-owned oil and gas companies and with more and more members joining the initiative since its establishment, the OGCI now represents "around 25% of our global industry by production" and is "active in over 130 countries" (OGCI Report 2018, 5). The group formally presented itself in 2014 at a climate conference in New York, where it was praised as "an example of how the oil and gas industry is positioning itself once again to be the key provider of solutions to global energy challenges" (UN 2014 *in* Bach 2019, 90). Clearly linking itself to the 'institutional core' of climate governance architecture, the OGCI remains tight links with some of the key figures in the UNFCCC: the foreword of their 2018 strategy Report is written by Patricia Espinosa, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC (OGCI 2018, 2). Such linkages offer the industry credibility and legitimacy and once again reflects the high degree of institutional access.

Another manner in which the fossil fuel industry is manifesting their serious engagement with climate change action is by calling upon governments to put more strict regulations into place and thereby create economic incentives to relocate investment towards cleaner energy. Shell for example states that they have "long recognised the importance of government-led carbon pricing systems as an essential tool for reducing emissions" (Royal Dutch Shell 2018, 72). Total also emphasises how they have shared their conviction for carbon pricing as "again and again in our talks with governments, manufacturers and industry associations" (Total 2018, 14). Total, BP and Shell joined forces with three other companies in 2015 and sent an letter to the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Presidency of COP21 calling for the introduction of carbon pricing mechanisms (Total 2018, 15).

Though carbon pricing is a preferred policy mechanism for bringing down emissions by nearly all actors in climate governance, the financial logic imposed on the carbon economy results in it being manipulated to strengthen competitive positions in the new market. This points to a clever use of the carbonification of climate change policy. The signatories to this open letter, for example, are mostly European based oil and gas companies – oil and gas are relatively low-carbon fossil fuels, in comparison to coal. This means that other energy companies who mostly do business in coal will be taxed much higher than these oil- and gas-based companies, thus offering the latter a competitive advantage (Geman 2015). Moreover, the Europeanness of the signatories is relevant, because it means these companies are implicated in the European Union' carbon-market: the European Trading Scheme (Geman 2015). Ultimately then, calls for carbon pricing offer fossil fuel companies a 'green' image and credibility in terms of climate change governance, while they simultaneously safeguard and strengthen their competitive position in the energy market and carbon trading schemes.

Additionally, the industry calls upon governments to create a business environment that will encourage competitiveness. ExxonMobil, for example, states that "free markets, innovation and technology are essential in addressing the risks of climate change. Success in developing and deploying technologies will be highly dependent on governments creating a policy environment that enables innovation and competition" (ExxonMobil 2017, 19). In other words, the fossil fuel is willing to relocate their investments towards sustainable energy solutions, once this becomes competitive. Royal Dutch Shell, for example, states that they will "continue to sell the oil and gas that society needs, while preparing our portfolio to move into lower-carbon energy, when this makes commercial sense" (Royal Dutch Shell, n.d.).

Though the industry is showing formal, serious engagement with climate change action, they do not assume real responsibility: as long as they are not bound to state regulations and fossil fuels are still competitive, they have no incentive to change their business models and thus the status quo remains unchanged.

Using the Hegemonic Discourse: Serving the Survival of Fossil Fuel Companies

The logic of carbonification enables the fossil fuel industry to introduce courses of action that allow them to continue their activities, while still formally contributing to climate action by proposing market-based solutions and investments in high-end technology. Building on an interpretation of 'justice' as the universal right to sustainable development articulated in the multilateral framework, the industry identifies access to energy as the primary condition for sustainable development. In

that way, it frames itself as serving justice by supply growing global energy demand – regardless of climate goals. The industry is formalising their engagement with climate governance in different platforms and in that way show that they are taking responsibility. However, closer scrutiny reveals that responsibility is in fact left to governments. Changing business models is dependent on the profitability of such actions; until there are government regulations, the industry has no incentive to relocate investments towards climate friendly projects. The 'green' image of the fossil fuel industry might therefore be interpreted as a hegemonic intervention: discursive changes work to win public consent and preserve legitimacy. The next chapter explores how critical ENGOs try to delegitimise the industry and articulate strategies for social change.

Chapter 4 – Activist Articulations: Breaking Social Consent

Antagonistic forces can lay bare the contingency of certain discourses and thereby re-politicise sedimented discourses. NGOs are often perceived as such "counterforces" (Katz 2006, 334). Other scholars (Kamat 2004) have contrarily argued that NGOs have become subsumed by neoliberalist logic. The question, then, is whether ENGOs are succeeding in opening up the discursive field and creating possibilities for structural change.

The analysis shows that ENGOs are politicising the technological and economic solutions to climate change that states and the fossil fuel industry try to instate. ENGOs try to educate the public by exposing the flaws of market-based and technologized policy mechanisms and in that way hope to break social consent for these strategies for limiting climate change. Since ENGOs lack the political authority of states and the material power of the fossil fuel industry, their main strategy for steering climate change governance lays with mobilisation of the public. In this way they try to destabilise the hegemonic position of states and the fossil fuel industry by taking away the social consent on which hegemony rests.

"System Change not Climate Change"

Whereas decarbonisation is favoured as a strategy for limiting climate change by governments and the fossil fuel industry as it allows sedimented social structures to remain in place, ENGOs demand systemic transformation to achieve a low-carbon society. Though the logic of carbonification is adopted in the articulations of ENGOs, they contest and hence politicise technologized and market-based policy mechanisms to achieve emission reduction.

ENGOs are problematising the decarbonisation of fossil fuels, arguing instead that a systemic energy transition must take place in which all fossil fuels are phased out and replaced by renewables. In a policy document published by the Climate Action Network (CAN), the focal point for ENGOs in the UNFCCC framework, it is insisted that this is adopted in the multilateral framework: "the core agreement should include a commitment to phasing out all fossil fuel emissions and phasing in 100% renewable energy with sustainable energy access for all" (CAN 2015, 3). The path to decarbonisation is articulated as a rapid transition to fully renewable energy, rather than a technological challenge to make existing energy structures carbon efficient. In the CAN, which functions in the UNFCCC context, this is articulated quite diplomatically. Individual member organisations sharpen this view in their articulations. The Climate Reality Project (n.d.) urgently states "The Earth is facing a climate crisis, driven by fossil fuels" to which the solution is a "shift from dirty fossil fuels to affordable clean energy sources". Similarly, Friends of the Earth International (n.d.) consistently speaks of a "climate crisis" and states that a "transformation of the

energy system is fundamental to system change and to tackling climate change. It entails democratic answers to the fundamental questions: for whom and what is energy produced? It means a total departure from fossil fuel reliance and corporate control". 350.org, a transnational grassroots movement that extends over 188 countries, state it their mission to "help build a new, more equitable zero-carbon economy" by "promot[ing] investment in community-based sustainability solutions" (350.org, n.d). It is thus not merely about emission reduction, but also about the nature of the decision-making process regarding sustainable solutions. It becomes evident from such articulations that the energy transition envisioned by ENGOs goes beyond a transition to climate friendly energy productions; it entails a social transformation as well that reconfigures power relations dominating the energy chain. This will be explored further in the sections on justice and responsibility below.

Decarbonisation of fossil fuels as a legitimate strategy is further challenged by ENGOs as they are engaged in exposing negative non-carbon related results of fossil fuel production, ranging from land grabbing to pollution. Friends of the Earth takes a "holistic approach" to combatting "dirty energy" (Friends of the Earth International 2016):

> we include coal, oil, gas, nuclear power, industrial agrofuels and biomass, mega hydroelectric dams, and waste-to-energy incineration in our definition of dirty energy. These destructive energy sources and technologies are driving climate change and have a deplorable track record, ranging from air and water pollution causing serious health impacts, through to massive land grabbing for new dirty energy mines, plants and infrastructure.

Similarly, the CAN emphasises the necessity for multilateral decisions to acknowledge the environmental consequences of low-carbon energy sources such as hydro- and nuclear power, included as legitimate strategies in NDCs communicated by for example China and Japan. They too take a holistic approach to environmental integrity and demand an assessment of "large power production, including fossil fuel power, hydro, nuclear, as well as N2O from adipic acid production and HFC-23 destruction" (CAN 2015, 15). The necessity to "revoke the social license of the fossil fuel industry" and "fight iconic battles against fossil fuel infrastructure" (350.org, n.d.) is a result of both their uneven contribution to GHG emissions, as well as the harm inflicted the on environment and powerless communities as a result of fossil fuel exploitation.

With regard to market-based policy mechanisms, ENGOs argue for more transparency and regulatory measures to ensure that such policies lead to actual emissions reductions. They want regulations that guarantee such policies cannot be abused and turned into another source of profit

for big corporations while not leading to effective climate action. Policy resulting from the carbonification of climate governance, such as carbon markets, has spurred the establishment of new NGOs whose primary concern is to act as 'watchdogs' of the market (e.g. Carbon Market Watch), or which aim to disturb the carbon market by destroying trading permits, encouraging people to help 'buy out the bubble' (Carbon Killer, n.d.). In 2018, 99 organisations combined forces and wrote an open letter to the UNFCCC, in which they urgently request to put an end to the 'Clean Development Mechanism', the carbon offset mechanism that has been in place since the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The letter outlined three reasons to stop the mechanism: it "undermines domestic climate action", it has "increased global greenhouse gas emissions" and it has "violated human rights". It is not so much the intention, but the implementation of the policy mechanism that is criticised. This is true specially for the way emission reductions are credited: "an overwhelming majority of CDM projects essentially issue 'junk' credits that do not lead to real-world emission reductions. Only 2% of CDM projects are likely to have environmental integrity" (Open Letter, accessed via Carbon Market Watch 2018). Environmental integrity in this context has to do with the degree to which such policy mechanism lead to actual emission reduction. For ENGOs concerned specifically with carbon markets and carbon offsetting, the safeguarding of environmental integrity is a central objective. Carbon Market Watch (n.d.) for example, state it their mission to "promote environmental integrity and human rights and empower communities to participate in decision making processes related to climate policies". The establishment of such 'carbon NGOs' points to the re-politicization of policy mechanisms based on the commodification and marketization of carbon.

Climate Justice: Realising a Just Transition

The foundation for all articulations by ENGOS is the theme of justice and democracy, in which the challenge posed by climate change is articulated as an opportunity for social change which entails a global redistribution of power and responsibility. The path to decarbonisation is envisioned as a quest and opportunity for achieving energy equity and democracy. The physical *and* social infrastructure for energy provision must be altered, which means that not only the source of energy ought to be changed, but also the power relations that dominate the energy chain.

Similar to the interpretation of justice in the multilateral framework, climate justice for ENGOs is concerned with "coming together to assert the rights of people who have the least responsibility for climate change, yet suffer the greatest consequences" (Greenpeace International, n.d.). In the multilateral framework, this injustice is addressed by making developed countries responsible for directing climate finance towards developing countries and by adhering to the CBDR principle. Along a similar line, ENGOs employ the 'polluter pays' rhetoric. Those who polluted the

most, or contributed most to the cumulative amount of emission up until now, ought to pay most towards the solution. Fair carbon pricing is a central theme in campaigns by several ENGOs. Carbon pricing is articulated as a fair solution to climate change, because "pricing pollution isn't just about making companies pay. It's also about encouraging them to make better energy choices and choose cleaner alternatives" (Climate Reality Project, n.d.). Carbon Market Watch, for example, demands that "the cost of climate mitigation is fairly distributed in line with the benefits that have accrued to large polluters", thereby arguing that the largest polluters have made enormous profits but are not willing to contribute to ratio to the solution.

In addition to making the polluter pay, ENGOs strive for a more deliberative decision-making structure in climate change governance. Though it is acknowledged that those who are being hit the hardest by climate change have often contributed the least to the problem, these communities have been not actually brought to the forefront of decision making. Therefore, ENGOs argues that it is imperative that we listen to those who are experiencing the effects of climate change first-hand. This is exemplified, for example, by 350.org which state that climate justice means "means listening to the communities who are getting hit the hardest, and following the leadership of those who are on the frontlines of the crisis" (350.org, n.d.).

Another principle of a just transition is centred around the necessity for a relocation of power from governments and business to the people. This manifests itself for example in the call for 'energy democracy', where control over energy sources, infrastructure and provision is in the hands of communities. Whereas the UNFCCC approach to justice is mostly framed in terms of a North-South divide, ENGOs take a less geography-based and more human rights-based approach to justice. Similar to the fossil fuel industry, ENGOs place access to energy into a context of justice. However, they point to the present structure of the energy chain as the as the main cause for current injustice. Friends of the Earth International, for example, speaks of an 'energy crisis' when they point out that billions of people do not have access to energy and state that the distribution of power in the energy chain is the cause of this.

> This […] energy crisis forces a corporate model of dirty energy on communities who need access to safe, clean, community-owned energy. […] Unsustainable economic and development models, based on fossil fuels and other destructive energy sources, and the concentration of power over energy goods and services in the hands of the wealthy few, drive these [climate and energy] crises.

With the urgency of climate change trickling down to almost all layers of politics and society, many ENGOs have sharpened their strategies from putting climate change onto the (inter)national

political agenda to demanding a just transition. Schlosberg and Collins (2014, 361) outlines how advocates for environmental justice and climate justice have been concerned with "the construction of injustice", showing how injustice is produced historically and how certain structures perpetually disadvantage the same groups. In the context of climate change, ENGOs attempt to show how the current structure of the energy chain has produced a situation of injustice, both in terms of causing dangerous climate change, as well as inflicting socio-environmental damage on communities. Decarbonisation, so argue ENGOs, must therefore include a transformation of this structure so that this injustice is not reproduced.

Responsibility: Holding the Hegemonic Bloc Accountable

Whereas responsibility is globalised in the multilateral framework and the fossil fuel industry calls for formal regulations by state actors and takes responsibility only when this becomes profitable, ENGOs demand state and corporate actors to accept their responsibility and ask the public to help force accountability if it is not taken voluntarily. Hence, responsibility is politicised by ENGOs. They expose the intertwinement of state and corporate interests in maintaining sedimented structures and lay bare the workings of the hegemonic bloc, all the while explicitly positioning themselves as a counterforce.

Strategies to expose and untangle the intertwined interests of public institutions and fossil fuel corporations have become a campaigning tactic for ENGOs. In what can be interpreted as an effort to expose the hegemonic formation, Carbon Market Watch (2018) argues for a fair adherence to the "polluter pays principle" to be achieved by "avoiding excessive protections such as free allocation of permits and high caps in emissions trading systems, the use of carbon offsets, and the continued distribution of fossil fuel subsidies". They aim to expose the intertwinement of government and fossil fuel industry and thereby indicate an awareness of their position vis à vis a hegemonic bloc. Government subsidies to fossil fuel industry (Van Asselt and Kulovesi 2017) and governments' shareholder positions in fossil fuel industries illustrate an intertwinement of interest and show how alliances with state actors are a source of corporate power (Meckling 2011). 350.org's strategy is aimed at breaking any public-private alliances with the fossil fuel industry, asking public institutions such as national banks, universities and national museums to 'divest' (cutting all ties with the fossil fuel industry). Their antagonist position is exemplified in the formulation of the strategic objective to "counter industry/government narratives", articulated by 350.org (n.d.). Similarly, Greenpeace International (n.d.) state that "climate denial is no longer an option, and the fossil fuel industry and governments need to be held accountable".

Additionally, NGOs have taken to directly confronting corporations, regardless of any public-private relations, understanding that the "economic realm, while not the centre of

traditional notions of politics, nevertheless furnishes channels for effecting widespread changes in behaviour" (Wapner 1995, 329). NGOs engage in multiple strategies, ranging from protest, research, exposes, orchestrating public outcry (Wapner 1995, 329) and lately more and more cases of climate litigation (see Osofsky 2010; Preston 2011) to ultimately force corporations to take social and environmental responsibility. Launching huge campaigns, featuring social media triggers such as #ExxonKnew, a combined initiative by several ENGOs such as Greenpeace, 350.org and the Centre for International Environmental Law, and #ShellKnew (Friends of the Earth Netherlands), they aim to shame the fossil fuel industry into policy changes. The tactic is to reveal how these corporations have known for decades that their business is causing climate change and have taken no sufficient action, but have instead opted to keep investing large sums of money into fossil fuel exploitation and production. They put to question the 'green' strategies proposed by fossil fuel companies now, accusing them of 'greenwashing' – promising climate friendly solutions, while continuing their pollutive business (Ramus and Montiel 2005).

Additionally, ENGOs frame individual responsibility as taking action to hold governments and fossil fuel corporations accountable. Stating that "People have rights. States have duties. Companies have responsibilities" (Greenpeace International, n.d.), ENGOs are asking the public to assert their rights, by forcing governments to do their duty and hold companies responsible. Responsibility is assumed at an individual level when people raise awareness about the nonaction of government and fossil fuel corporations and help 'propel our movement forward' (Climate Reality Project n.d.). Movement building is a cornerstone of the ENGO strategy, preferably by transnational linking of missions. Friends of the Earth International expresses this ambition: "to engage in vibrant campaigns, raise awareness, mobilize people and build alliances with diverse movements, linking grassroots, national and global struggles". Mobilizing people and making their voices heard in the realm of international governance is the main source of authority for these ENGOs and it is this strategy that allows them to express discontent with the present order. This is expressed most eloquently by 350.org:

> [...] building diverse coalitions that are strong enough to put pressure on governments and stand up to the fossil fuel industry. By now, it's obvious that world leaders are incapable of solving this problem on their own. We need to get out in the streets and make our voices heard — that is how we demonstrate our power as a movement, and that is how we force our governments to make the right decisions.

Lacking the political authority of states and the material and innovative power of the big fossil fuel companies, NGOs have to deploy different sources of authority and mechanisms of steering

governance. By putting to question the legitimacy of the politics of climate change and 'revoking the social license of the fossil fuel industry' (350.org, n.d.), they try to influence the governance process. As hegemony is based not only on organizational and material power, but on the generation of social consent (Levy and Egan 2002), NGOs campaign to break social consent and in that way try to destabilize the hegemonic position of governments and corporations.

Agency in Structure: Challenging the Hegemonic Discourse

ENGOs problematize climate change not as a problem of emissions, but as a problem of the underlying structure of human consumption processes. Decarbonisation, they argue, ought to be realised by completely phasing out of fossil fuels and a radical restructuring of the power architecture in the energy chain. ENGOs refuse to accept the decarbonisation of fossil fuels as a legitimate strategy, pointing to the non-carbon damages of fossil fuel production. Like states and the fossil fuel industry, ENGOs adopt the notion of sustainable development as a universal human right and fight for improved energy access, but highly politicise this topic. Arguing that poor energy access is a result of the power structures in the energy chain, dominated by state and corporate interest, they advocate for energy democracy and community-based ownership of energy infrastructure. ENGOs main strategy with regard to responsibility is exposing the inadequacy of state- and corporate action, the intertwinement of their interests and their deception of the public. States and the fossil fuel industry must be held accountable and individual responsibility for climate change action can be assumed by taking part a movement meant to force state- and corporations to change their ways.

States and the fossil fuel industry seem to have responded to the politicisation of climate change by engaging discursively with interpretations of climate justice, equity and responsibility from the antagonist discourse articulated by ENGOs. ENGOs have relatively little power in steering governance compared to states and the fossil fuel industry. Their political authority is rooted in their strategy delegitimise the political authority of other governance agents by demonstrating that the public disapproves the existing order. With states and the fossil fuel industry explicitly articulating climate change in the context of justice and responsibility, it seems that they succeed in dissolving public contestation before it leads to more radical structural change. This illustrates that the hegemonic bloc maintains their legitimacy by articulating "ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests" (Levy and Newell 2002, 86).

Conclusions – A Neo-Gramscian Explanation of Inadequate Climate Action

This thesis set out to investigate how it is possible that efforts to mitigate climate change by means of GHG emissions reduction are not adding up to sufficient numbers, even though actors at all socio-political levels are committed to this public goal. This investigation was based on an interpretive approach and departed from the assumption that meaning constitutes action. The shortcomings in climate action might be explained as a of discursive contestation: a competition for establishing dominant meaning that informs action.

The analysis shows that the interpretation of meaning of three discursive nodal points – decarbonisation, justice and responsibility – explains the preference for technological and market-based policy mechanisms by states and the fossil fuel industry, though these mechanisms are flawed in terms of environmental integrity. Climate changed is rendered governable by articulating it as a problem that can be fixed by encouraging technological innovation and creating economic incentive for emission reductions and accelerated implementation of climate friendly solutions. By adopting particular narratives of justice and responsibility and placing these at the centre of their articulations on climate change governance, states and the fossil fuel industry succeed in winning social consent for such policies while avoiding serious engagement with structural change. This exemplifies a successful hegemonic intervention in neo-Gramscian terms: the discursive location posed by climate change is dissolved and political legitimacy is safeguarded.

ENGOs are trying to break social consent for such policy mechanisms by exposing the entanglement of state- and corporate strategies and their responsibility for constructing climate injustice, which not only involves dangerous climate change but also the systemic damage inflicted on communities as a result of the 'dirty' energy chain. They re-politicise climate change governance and advocate for systemic change, but have relatively little influence in steering climate change governance as a result of structural constraints. Without the political authority of the state and the material power and institutional access of the fossil fuel industry, ENGOs' main strategy for steering governance lays with mass mobilisation of the public. Their interpretation of decarbonisation, justice and responsibility ultimately results in a re-articulation from climate change as a problem, to climate change as an opportunity. An opportunity for systemic change, where a transition to a low-carbon world comes down to a transition to a more just world. ENGOs try to exploit the dislocation of climate change by articulating a new social imaginary – thereby at once showing the hegemonic position of states and corporations.

A hegemonic position is only real when challenged; when an antagonist articulation shows just how sedimented the hegemonic discourse has become. In the case of climate change governance, it becomes evident that technological and market-based policy mechanisms are the

go-to solution. That these are not necessarily proper solutions for every problem seems confirmed in the face of the inefficacy of climate change governance. The root causes of climate change are not tackled, rather its symptoms are fought. To limit climate change from actually taking on dangerous dimensions, it seems that technological and economic solutions have to be complemented with policy that explicitly formalises the phasing out of fossil fuels, without leaving room for other interpretations.

The analysis in this thesis is limited by several aspects. Though not limited to these limitations, the following insights are listed here as they might provide a basis for further research.

Firstly, the scope of this analysis resulted in limited data selection. Interpretive research based on a more elaborate data collection might lead to other or additional insights that can improve understanding of climate governance.

Secondly, the analysis, though focussed on instances of language use by individual actors, treats governance agents as rather homogenous groups. Attention to relational power and discursive contestation *within* groups of governance agents can deepen understanding of climate governance. Academic research could focus on the in-depth analysis of relational power in the multilateral framework; the relations between fossil fuel companies, including state-owned corporations, and how the heterogeneity in business models and corporate social strategies spurs climate action; and the influence of ENGOs from developing countries, with explicit attention for how the relational power imbalances between ENGOs from different regions influences transnational activism.

Lastly, though the globalisation of responsibility has been approached rather critically here, research into the actual, quantifiable contributions to emission reduction by various actors is necessary. In such research, it is important to look at how best-practice examples might inspire other actors to change their strategies and how this contributes to meaningful climate action.

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