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Passive Revolution on the World Stage:
The Political Origins of Climate Change

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Michael Burawoy, Chair

Professor Marion Fourcade

Professor Gillian Hart

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Abstract

Passive Revolution on the World Stage: The Political Origins of Climate Change

by Herbert Villalon Docena

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

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This study builds on but challenges conventional theories of climate change by advancing a different way of analyzing climate politics. Starting out from the assumption that climate change can only be addressed by radically reforming or superseding capitalism, it draws from interview data, observation notes, and historical material to investigate why the world's governments have not managed to pass stronger, more effective international agreements and domestic measures in response to what many now consider the greatest threat facing the international community.

Building on Gramsci's concept of "passive revolution" by examining the micro-dynamics of class struggles on the world stage, it argues that our failure to make more progress in addressing climate change has been the consequence of successful "passive revolution" on the world stage: Faced with more organized subaltern groups demanding radical changes to address climate change and other global environmental problems, a particular fraction of the dominant classes came together to push for limited reforms in order to disorganize the subaltern groups, contain the threat of radical change, and reconstruct their hegemony. Faced with this passive revolution, the subaltern groups fragmented instead of becoming even more organized, thus failing to sustain their mobilization for radical change. But, faced with this failed revolution, the dominant classes too splintered instead of consolidating, thus also failing to sustain their mobilization for limited reforms. With both subaltern groups and dominant classes disorganized, the more conservative elites succeeded in blocking reforms, and weak and ineffective neoliberal "solutions" prevailed as global society's dominant response to climate change.

Investigating how "passive revolution" could have failed in the past, the study sheds light on how we could make more progress in addressing climate change and other global problems.

To Antares

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TIMELINE

- 1962:** Carson's *Silent Spring*
Bookchin's *Our Synthetic Environment*
- 1964:** Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*
- 1965:** Bookchin's *Ecology and Revolutionary Thought*
US President Johnson warns of effects of build up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- 1966:** McGeorge Bundy becomes Ford Foundation president
Nader's *Unsafe at any Speed*
- 1967:** founding of Environmental Defense Fund
founding of group that would later be named Greenpace
founding of various radical ecological collectives (late 1960s- no precise dates)
- 1968:** Wave of student uprisings, strikes worldwide
- 1969:** founding of Friends of the Earth
US passes National Environmental Policy Act
- 1970:** founding of Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
first Earth Day in the US
- 1971:** Barry Commoner's *The Closing Circle*
OECD establishes Environment Directorate
activists take over preparatory conference for the first UN conference on environment
Nixon sets wage and price controls, abandons gold standard
- 1972:** first UN conference on the environment
first alternative summits at the UN
establishment of UN Environmental Program (UNEP)
Barbar Ward and Rene Dubos' *Only One Earth*
Meadows et al.'s *Limits to Growth*
Goldsmith et al.'s *Blueprint for Survival*
passage of more environmental laws in the US
first "green" parties founded in Australia, New Zealand and Europe
- 1974:** Cocoyoc Declaration
UN General Assembly calls for "New International Economic Order"
emergence of Chipko movement in India
- 1975:** Chico Mendes and others found Rubber Tappers Union in Brazil

- 1977:** Lovins' *Soft Energy Paths*
- 1979:** First World Climate Conference
founding of Earth First!
- 1980:** Ronald Reagan elected US President
founding of German Green Party
- 1982:** founding of World Resources Institute
Latin American debt crisis
- 1984:** Environmental Defense Fund starts championing "third wave environmentalism"
founding of Third World Network
- 1985:** Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) founded, joined by Al Gore, Bill Clinton, etc.
- 1987:** Brundtland Commission's *Our Common Future*
- 1988:** Wirth and Heinz's *Project 88: Harnessing Market Forces to Protect Our Environment*
George H.W. Bush elected US President
UN establishes Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- 1989:** UN General Assembly calls for negotiations on climate change
UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher supports climate action
founding of Climate Action Network
- 1991:** UN climate negotiations begin
- 1992:** George H.W. Bush threatens to boycott UN summit on environment in Rio
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change approved in Rio
Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance*
Clinton elected US President
- 1995:** UN climate negotiations resume
- 1997:** Clinton agrees to binding climate treaty, conditional on carbon trading
Kyoto Protocol approved, sets binding emissions caps but allows for carbon trading
Asian financial crisis
- 1998:** UNCTAD sponsors establishment of International Emissions Trading Association
- 1999:** Activists shut down World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle
- 2000:** Bush Jr. elected US President announces US will not sign Kyoto Protocol

founding of International Rising Tide Network

2001: first World Social Forum held in Brazil

2005: Kyoto Protocol takes effect
Launching of European Union's Emissions Trading System

2006: Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*
Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change

2007: founding of Climate Justice Now! network
founding of Ecosocialist International Network

2008: Barack Obama elected US President
founding of Philippine Movement for Climate Justice
US financial crisis

2009: cap-and-trade bills defeated in US Congress
UN climate negotiations collapse in Copenhagen

2010: Copenhagen Accord effectively approved in Cancun, does not set binding emissions caps

2013: Activists 'walk out' from climate negotiations in Warsaw
founding of Demand Climate Justice network
founding of Climate Space network

2016: Paris Agreement approved, does not set binding emissions caps

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dissertations are supposed to be as truthful as possible but there is always something only half-truthful about them: the cover page only lists one person as the author and yet that person is herself an ensemble of her relationships with so many other people, and her dissertation is itself a product of those relationships.

This particular dissertation would never have been written if not for Michael Burawoy. Many times throughout this journey I wanted to just walk away, convinced that this project is just way more enormous and more ambitious than I could handle. But Michael always seemed to have more faith in me than myself. I still wonder whether his confidence is not misplaced but I am deeply grateful to him for pushing me, for asking me difficult questions, for believing that I could confront them, and for patiently guiding me as I wrestled with them. Marion Fourcade has been an endless source of insight and encouragement: She made me see things that I never would have seen and she made me ask questions that I never would have asked. It is not an exaggeration to say that she turned me into a different kind of sociologist. Taking Gillian Hart's course and having her in my committee were among the best decisions I made in graduate school. Together, Michael, Marion, and Gill have made me want to be the kind of teacher, mentor, and scholar that they are.

So many other people improved this dissertation in various ways: Peter Evans, Dylan Riley, Cihan Tugal and Neil Fligstein equipped me with the tools I used here and helped me situate my project in the broader sociological enterprise. Zachary Levenson, Fidan Elcioglu, Josh Seim, and Benjamin Shestakofsky gave thoughtful comments on key sections of the dissertation. Inside and outside Barrows, I learned so much from Sunmin Kim, Gowri Vijayakumar, Caitlin Fox-Hodess, Rebecca Elliott, and many other fellow students. Caroline Clark, Anne Meyers, Catherine Norton helped me overcome other hurdles in graduate school. This research was made possible through grants from the Berkeley Graduate Division, the Department of Sociology, the EU Center for Excellence, the Berkeley Social Justice Fellowship, the International Social Science Council, the WZB Berlin Social Center, and the Troy Duster Fellowship.

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Needless to say, though this dissertation is a product of so many people, I alone should be held responsible for its shortcomings or errors.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2014, the strongest typhoon ever recorded at landfall barreled through Samar-Leyte, the islands in the central Philippines where I grew up and where those who helped raise me—my grandmother, aunts, uncles, cousins, other family members, and friends—still live. My parents and I had migrated to Manila decades ago but we still regularly visited and kept in close touch with them. With all means of communication and transportation cut off, however, we—like thousands of others—had no choice but to just watch helplessly as news reports showed scores of dead bodies strewn across familiar streets and as reporters described the overpowering stench of death everywhere. We braced for the worst.

Only after four days will we find out that my aunt’s family somehow managed to avoid being sucked out into the ocean by hanging on to a bamboo pole for hours as the Pacific Ocean rose and swallowed their house. They and the rest of our close relatives survived. But the news was not as good for so many others: At least 6,000 people—including a number of my relatives’ relatives and friends—were killed, thousands of others were injured, and up to two million lost their homes in what is now believed to be the deadliest typhoon to have hit the country.

Typhoon Haiyan, however, was just the most devastating of the increasingly more powerful “super-typhoons” that have been killing thousands in the Philippines and other countries in the past years. Apart from “extreme weather events” like Haiyan, hundreds of thousands in the Philippines and in many other countries are also already experiencing other so-called “slow onset events” such as droughts, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, etc. According to estimates by the United Nations, at least 300,000 people now die from, and up to a third of a billion people are seriously affected by, these climate-change-related phenomena annually.¹ Thousands in small island-states like Kiribati and Vanuatu are already losing their homes to the oceans; some are now even planning to evacuate their entire populations to other countries. Many more—mainly from the poor countries or the poor regions in rich countries—are expected to suffer from increasingly severe heat waves, cold waves, unseasonal rains, droughts, and the food and water shortages, loss of livelihood, or wars that are expected to come with them.

And yet, after nearly five decades of inter-governmental negotiations on “global environmental problems,” greenhouse gas emissions have not just continued to increase, they have increased at ever faster rates: In the 1990s, when governments approved the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, carbon dioxide emissions were already increasing by 1 percent annually; in the last decade, despite governments implementing the Protocol, setting up international carbon markets, and adopting various kinds of domestic measures to address climate change, said emissions have been increasing by 3% annually—or by more than the worst-case scenarios projected by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.² From around 320 parts per million (ppm) in the 1970s, the carbon dioxide concentration, a measure of how much greenhouse gases has been dumped into the atmosphere, had grown to over 380 ppm by 2010 and is projected to reach between 400 to 500 ppm by 2050—far above what is thought to be the “safe” level of 350 ppm. The change in the average global surface temperature too had gone up from less than 0 degrees Centigrade in the 1970s to around 0.5 degree Centigrade in 2010 and is projected to rise to between 0.5 to 1.5 degree Centigrade in 2030 and between 3 to 5 degrees Centigrade in 2100—an increase that is likely to tip the climate

¹ Global Humanitarian Forum 2009; see also World Health Organization 2014.

² Canadell et al. 2007; Friedlingstein et al. 2014; Le Quéré et al. 2009; Peters et al. 2012.

system into runaway warming, bring even stronger typhoons to the Philippines, kill millions of people and other living beings, and render much of the planet uninhabitable.³

LIKE MANY OTHERS IN THE PHILIPPINES who had only recently started hearing and learning about this thing called “climate change,” I was already struggling, even before Haiyan hit, to make sense of why all this has been happening: Why is the climate changing and why we have we not made more progress in stopping or limiting it? Why have we not been able to put in place the domestic measures and international agreements needed to drastically bring down emissions? Or, to put it in more personal terms, why have we failed to do more to prevent stronger typhoons from heading our way?

It is certainly not that it has been impossible for us to do so. As many have argued, we already have the technological, organizational, and financial capacity to drastically reduce the global greenhouse emissions causing climate change. Researchers have even recently suggested that there are sufficient resources as well as the required know-how for the world to completely shift away from fossil fuels, the key source of greenhouse emissions today, and to rely exclusively on renewable energy within the next two to three decades.⁴ So why, instead of beginning to shut them down or phase them out, are we building even more coal and other fossil-fuel power plants and turning to even dirtier sources of energy that will result in even more greenhouse gas emissions in the decades to come?⁵ Why, in other words, are we not using the technological, organizational, and financial capacity we already have to avert what many consider the greatest, most serious threat to life on the planet?

Over the years, I, like many others in the non-profit organization and the climate justice network that I was then working with, had become increasingly dissatisfied with the answers commonly advanced by many developed-country officials, experts from the World Bank, and activists from the “mainstream” environmentalist organizations—the kind of answers put forward in such books as *The Stern Report* or in Al Gore’s movies: i.e., that we have failed to stop or limit climate change because we have failed to put in place the policies or measures that could correct what the Stern Report called “a market failure on the greatest scale the world has seen.” For reasons that I shall detail in the next chapter, I had become more skeptical of their argument that we are now suffering from global warming because the existing rules governing capitalism drives corporations and governments to “externalize” the social and environmental costs of their activities so as to maximize profits or to achieve security. I had come to question their claim that we have failed to address this “market failure” or this “collective action problem” only because we have failed to change the “rules of the game” by reforming capitalism through policies and measures that could compel businesses and governments to “internalize the full costs of production by “putting a price” on carbon or on “eco-system services” through such measures as carbon taxes, cap-and-trade or carbon trading, and so on. And I had become less convinced that we have failed to put in place these measures only because powerful “vested interests” (i.e. the oil industry or particular fossil fuel corporations) have “captured” certain governments or “hegemonic states” funded “climate skeptics,” and mobilized to counter the non-hegemonic states, renewable energy firms, and environmentalist organizations pushing for the policies needed to correct market failure.

³ IPCC 2013.

⁴ Jacobson and Delucchi 2011; Delucchi and Jacobson 2011.

⁵ Malm 2016: 368-371.

Instead of this explanation, I had come to be attracted to another set of explanations—ones put forward by other government officials, experts and activists, typically from the developing countries and the “grassroots” groups: i.e., that we have failed to stop or limit climate change because we have failed to institutionalize the new “ecological” values or norms needed to put in place the policies or international agreements required to address climate change. For reasons that I shall discuss in Chapter 1, I became more persuaded by their argument that global warming is taking place because the prevailing culture or normative environment drives businesses and governments to valorize and prioritize economic growth and political security above environmental and other social goals. I came to accept their claim that we have failed to do more to address this problem because we have failed to change the culture or environment that underpin the rules governing the market and the inter-state system by reforming capitalism through the propagation and institutionalization of new norms that could drive businesses and governments to prioritize conservation or pursue “sustainable development.” And I also became more convinced that we have failed to institutionalize these values because certain officials, scientists, experts, business leaders and other activists who defend the old values—mainly those who represent the developed-country governments, “Big Business,” and the environmentalists who work with them—have mobilized to defeat the other officials, scientists, experts, business leaders and activists pushing for new norms that prioritize sustainability over economic growth.

Adopting this perspective, I came to see climate politics largely as a struggle between those state and “non-state actors” pushing for the stronger international agreements or climate-change policies that embodied new norms and values, on one hand, against those who opposed them and those who collaborated with this opposition, on the other hand: the “developing” against the “developed” countries but also the “clean” against the “dirty” industry and the “grassroots” against the “mainstream” environmentalists.

To make more progress in limiting climate change, I became convinced that we needed to support and work with the developing-country governments, the “green” corporations, and grassroots environmentalists as they stand up to the developed-country governments, the “gray” corporations, and the mainstream green groups. I came to heed others’ admonition for me to hold back on my criticism of the Philippine government and concentrate on fighting the “bigger enemies” in the international arena. So ingrained was this view in me that during some of the first UN conferences I attended, even when I had become more critical of this perspective, I actually still found myself in the closing session—when the audience engage in a kind of “clapping war” to support their ‘teams’—vigorously applauding as the Philippines’ and other developing-country representatives spoke, and booing as the developed-country representatives took their turns to speak.

Even then, however, part of me was also already resisting this explanation. I felt uneasy cheering for a government that defended the expansion of coal-power plants at home and renewable energy companies that, in the Philippines and elsewhere, are typically also owned by the same families that were building coal plants all over the country. And I felt unconvinced by environmentalists’ admonition to rally behind them against those they tagged the “real” or “bigger” enemies.

UNSURE OF MY EXPLANATION—and frustrated with my inability to arrive at a better one—just as an unseasonal parade of super-typhoons pounded the Philippines, I decided after being admitted to graduate school to set aside other research interests to study climate change instead.

Taking advantage of resources I would never have accessed had I remained in the Philippines, I began attending and observing the UN negotiations on climate change as well as the “People’s Summits” held parallel to the negotiations. I knocked on doors that probably would not have opened had those inside not heard I am studying at a prestigious North American university, and started interviewing dozens of high-level government officials and experts as well as activists. I found myself inside the offices of agencies or organizations that I had often read about but never thought I would actually enter: inside the State Department in Washington DC, at the OECD headquarters in Paris, or the office of a member of the House of Lords in London. In addition, I began analyzing an extensive trail of reports, declarations, government submissions, memoirs, biographies—basically anything I could gather on environmental politics. In the process, I effectively began learning a new language—i.e. the arcane and, for all practical purposes, foreign language of climate politics.

At first, much of what I saw, heard, and read only seemed to confirm the explanation I had started to question. I was struck by the inequalities during the negotiations and I saw for myself how the more powerful and the more moneyed developed-country officials, climate skeptics, fossil fuel corporations, and mainstream environmentalists oppose and block the proposals for stronger, legally binding emissions-reductions targets and mandatory resource transfers to poorer countries that many developing-country officials, renewable-energy firms, grassroots environmentalists were pushing for inside and outside the negotiating rooms.⁶ A number of developing-country negotiators complained to me of how they were being “bullied” and “bribed” and pitted against each other by developed-country governments, or how the latter’s officials made calls to their capitals threatening to cut their aid or restrict access to their markets if they continued to block the weaker agreements that they wanted.

But I also began to see, hear, and read about things that again made me increasingly dissatisfied with how I was making sense of what I was observing. I saw how most of the developing-country representatives that I was rooting for constantly fail or refuse to do more to stop progressively weaker agreements from being adopted. I noticed how, after angrily denouncing the developed-country governments, these developing-country governments, together with some grassroots environmentalists, would repeatedly choose not to block—and then even subsequently welcoming—the proposals that they had vehemently opposed.

Why, I asked as I sat through another all-nighter in which developing-country officials and grassroots environmentalists passionately denounced the proposed agreements of developed-country officials only to approve and celebrate their approval later, are our “allies” unable or unwilling to overcome the opposition of our “bigger enemies” to the stronger agreements they were pushing for? Why, I asked as I went home dejected from another conference that produced yet another weak agreement, has it been so difficult to institutionalize the new norms needed to put in place the policies required for us to stop climate change?

PLAGUED WITH THESE QUESTIONS and more dissatisfied with my answers, I began to spend more time outside the UN venues—partly because that was part of my initial research design but also because I was becoming increasingly depressed by the lack of progress inside.

And as I did—as I hung out at the “People’s Summits” and the activist camps, interacted more closely with other activists who refuse to enter the conference venue as a matter of

⁶ For more on these inequalities, see Gupta 2000; Leggett 2001; Roberts & Parks 2006; Yamin & Depledge 2004.

principle and strategy, read more about the history of climate politics, and continued my own education in graduate school, I found myself increasingly torn between competing perspectives.

Dissatisfied with the answers offered by the officials and the environmentalists I had been following inside the UN conference venue, I began to be more open to one explanation that I had heard of earlier but for some reason brushed aside or found inadequate for reasons that I could not then articulate: That we have failed to make more progress in addressing climate change not just because we have failed to change our policies or norms but because we have failed to “change the system,” i.e. we have failed to radically reform or abolish capitalism.

For reasons that I will outline in the Chapter 1, I became more convinced—after years of being engaged in the climate justice movement and after observing the repeated failure of the summits I had been attending—that climate change and other global environmental problems more generally, are ultimately rooted in the “system” by which much of the world now organizes production to satisfy people’s needs: We are now suffering from climate change and we have failed to stop or limit it because capitalism—a mode of production in which land, factories, and other means of production are owned and controlled privately or by individual capitalists—systematically drives capitalists and states to constantly prioritize the accumulation of profits or the pursuit of economic growth over ensuring or improving the well-being of nature.

As the scholars and activists who advance the “political economy” theories of climate change that we shall discuss more in the next chapter have argued, the market competition that results from the private ownership of the means of production prevents, or frustrates efforts to move towards a more rational way of relating to nature. Constantly in fear of losing to their competitors, individual capitalists are forced to seek out the cheapest raw materials, to rely on energy sources that allow them to control labor most efficiently, or to use more resources than would otherwise be used had the means of production been collectively owned and production decisions collectively made. They are driven to constantly pass on or “externalize” the social and environmental costs of production and, thus, to violate or oppose new rules that could force them to “internalize” such costs and to shun or ignore new norms that could force them to consider or prioritize environmental considerations over profit considerations. The “anarchy of the market” constantly results in overproduction and with it, waste and excessive greenhouse gas emissions.

Quick fixes, geo-engineering solutions, or attempts at regulation to address climate change will therefore not suffice, or will be constantly undermined, for as long as ownership and control over the means of production remain in the hands of private individuals. Only by radically transforming or superseding capitalism, or only by significantly reducing or ending private control over the means of production can we make more progress in stopping climate change. But we have failed to do this, they suggest, not just because of the opposition of developed-country governments, the fossil-fuel corporations or the mainstream environmentalist organizations but because of the opposition of all those members of dominant classes opposed to ending private-property relations as well the opposition of certain capitalist fractions opposed to even just restricting those relations.

Adopting this framework, my lens for understanding what I was observing gradually began to change. I started to see climate politics mainly as a struggle between classes or class fractions on the world stage: between the “ruling” or “dominant” classes in both developed and developing countries and the “dominated” or “subordinate” classes or groups in both developed and developing countries, but also between the different fractions or subgroups within both groups. I began to see and hear things that I had not been able to see or hear—or that I had

obscured or silenced—using my previous lens. I started to see a deeper consensus beneath the numerous disagreements among the actors I was observing. I realized what I had earlier sensed but downplayed: that even as they pushed for new rules or values, many developing-country officials, green firms and grassroots environmentalists actually agreed with their developed-country counterparts and the mainstream environmentalists on the most fundamental question—the question of what to do with “the system.” I also consequently began to understand why it has been so difficult for them to overcome the opposition of developed-country officials, the fossil-fuel interests, and the mainstream environmentalists to the stronger agreements they were pushing for: because while they may be opposite sides on other ancillary questions, they were actually on the same side on this most fundamental question.

Much of what I subsequently saw, heard, and read began to confirm my newly-adopted explanation. I saw how state officials, experts, and environmentalists drawn mainly from, or who sided with, the dominant classes—from both developed and developing-country governments, both fossil-fuel and renewable energy industries, and both mainstream and grassroots environmentalists—all oppose and block the kind of “systemic changes” proposed by officials, experts and environmentalists from or with the dominated classes.

But a different set of questions subsequently began to trouble me.

As I continued to go in and out of the UN conference venue, interview more people, and read more about the history of climate politics, I began to notice how both members of the subordinate classes as well as the “progressive” elite fractions, also constantly failed, or refused, to block—and even subsequently support—the progressively weaker compromise agreements. I noticed how, after angrily denouncing these agreements, members of the subordinate classes too were unable to block—and the progressive elites too refused to even criticize—the very agreements they previously railed against.

Why, I asked as I took part in another militant “direct action” that again failed to draw more people to the streets and that again failed to stop the negotiators from gaveling down a toothless climate change deal, are the subordinate classes unable or unwilling to overcome the opposition of the dominant classes to the systemic changes they were pushing for? Why, I asked as I watched the closing of another summit in which progressive elites actually joined in celebrating the signing of another weak agreement they once vigorously opposed, are the ‘enlightened’ elites unable to overcome the opposition of the ‘unenlightened’ to even just the minor reforms they had been promoting? Why, I asked as I flew back to a country devastated by the most powerful typhoon recorded at landfall, has it been so difficult to “change the system”?

THIS DISSERTATION is the product of, and also an intervention in, a continuing global struggle—a struggle among various social groups contending to shape how we should think about and act upon climate change but also a struggle within myself as these various social forces around me struggled to shape how I should think about and act upon climate change.

In the coming pages, I will share how I have so far come to answer the questions that I—like many others in the Philippines and elsewhere—have been wrestling with since I first learned of and started worrying about climate change. Building on while trying to go beyond prevailing explanations, I will adopt and advance a different way of approaching climate change and a different way of making sense of climate politics.

Instead of starting out from the often implicit assumption that it is possible to stop or significantly limit climate change by simply reforming capitalism, as most studies of climate

politics do, I start out from the explicit assumption that the possibility for stopping or significantly limiting climate change could only be opened up by superseding or at least radically transforming capitalism.

I deliberately use and emphasize the word “possibility” here because I do not mean to suggest that ending or drastically restricting private control and ownership over the means of production will necessarily or automatically stop or limit climate change—only that doing so could create conditions that are more conducive for stopping or limiting climate change: By doing away with the social relations and the institutional configurations that drives people to constantly prioritize profit-maximization so as to accumulate capital and survive the competition, it becomes more possible for people to prioritize other goals such as environmental conservation. By doing away with the “anarchy of the market” engendered by capitalist relations, it becomes more possible to plan production or to organize the ways by which we meet our needs in such a manner as to prevent the excessive build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere—something that is extremely difficult if not impossible to do for as long as property is held, and production decisions are made, by only a minority who are constantly forced to profit or perish. In short: once or if production decisions are made collectively (and democratically) rather than privately, it becomes more possible for us to actually *choose* to stop or limit climate change. That does not mean, however, that we will necessarily make that choice: As we have seen in previous attempts to build or move towards socialism, people in control of the means of production may very well choose to pursue “productivism” or the continued expansion of the productive forces without due regard for their effect on the environment. But it does mean, that the conditions are there for us to actually make different choice.

Consequently, instead of approaching climate change from the lens of “dependency,” or in terms of the domination of the “South” by the “North,” or of “corporate capture,” or in terms of the domination of the public by corporations, I shall examine it instead using a revised class perspective, or in terms of the domination of the “dominated” groups by the “dominant” groups in various countries—and investigate why and how the issue has been viewed in terms of Northern or corporate domination rather than of class domination.

By “dominant” groups or classes, I am speaking of all those who own or control the means of production (land, factories, machineries, and so forth), or those typically understood as belonging to the “bourgeoisie,” *in all countries*—both developed and developing. By “subordinate”—or “subaltern” or “dominated”—groups or classes, I refer to all those who do not belong to the dominant classes, or all those who do not own or who have been deprived access to the means of production in *all countries*: those typically understood as belonging to the modern working class or the “proletariat,” those considered as part of the “middle classes,” and those who belong to other oppressed classes or groups (peasants, smallholders, and so on) who, to use Gramsci’s terms, are “subject to the initiatives of the dominant class.”⁷ Thus, using this definition, I do not include as part of the “dominant” groups or classes those professionals or workers in developed countries or in West/North even though it could be argued that they too are “dominant” politically or culturally vis-a-vis the middle-class professionals or workers in

⁷ Thus, unlike scholars such as Spivak (1990, 2010) and others, I take a more expansive definition of “subalternity.” Unlike Spivak, who argued that only unorganized and “unrepresented” oppressed groups as the “women of the urban sub-proletariat” or “unorganized peasant labor”—but not the modern proletariat—constitute the subaltern, I use “subaltern” to include all dominated groups that exist in differing degrees of organization and representation. For more on Gramsci’s notion of “subaltern social groups” or “subaltern classes” and their relation to dominant groups, see Gramsci 1975:2279-94; Green 2002; Thomas 2015.

developing countries or the South. I also do not include as part of the “subordinate” groups those capitalists—or those state officials and experts representing the interests of capital—from the “developing” countries even though it could be argued that they too are “subordinate” to or “dominated” by the capitalists, state officials or experts from the “developed” countries.

Instead of analyzing climate politics as a struggle between the developed and the developing-country government officials, between the “dirty” and the “clean” corporations, and between the mainstream and the grassroots environmentalists, I shall analyze it instead as a struggle among and between these groups and their “sub-groups” over nature and over meaning.

But rather than take the unities of these groups and sub-groups in struggle for granted, I shall examine this struggle as a struggle to forge the very collectives or the actual forces engaged in struggle: a struggle to form (or break) broader “intellectual and moral unities” or “blocs” bringing together and mobilizing individuals from different classes and class fractions from different countries and organizations behind a particular project in the face of climate change.

In so doing, I will not only present a different way of mapping the political and ideological differences among the groups involved in climate politics—differences which numerous studies have tended to ignore or obscure.⁸ I will also highlight and analyze even the internal tensions or contradictions among or within the groups assumed or depicted to be unified, and examine how they emerged, developed or evolved historically *in relation* to other groups — something that many existing taxonomies neglect to do.⁹ I will show that groups typically depicted as one category—the “environmentalists” or even the “radical environmentalists,” or the “reformists” and the “neoliberals”—were actually far more divided on various issues during different periods than they have commonly been portrayed to be, just as groups typically depicted as different categories were also more unified on various issues during different periods. And I will show how the groups analysts have classified into different categories themselves tried to actively shape, complicate, or challenge their categorizations by advocating certain positions that put them in one category while propagating certain views that put them in another category as they tried to draw adherents to their causes, negotiate alliances with others, and form/maintain their cohesion in the course of struggle.

In other words, instead of taking social groups’ unities or cleavages for granted, I will analyze climate politics as a struggle among these different groups to form (or break up) those unities and cleavages by struggling to shape peoples’ “conceptions of the world”: how people make sense of themselves and their relations with others, how they make sense of their conditions, how they think about what to do to address their conditions, and how they think about who to side with or who to fight as enemies to change their conditions. In other words, I will analyze it as a struggle to shape how people answer the very questions I had been struggling with—the central question of this study: Why have we failed to stop or limit climate change?

Drawing from interview data, field notes, and historical sources, I will argue that we have made little progress in stopping climate change not just because we have failed to undertake the institutional modifications needed to correct “market failures,” to cultivate the new norms needed

⁸ Meyer and colleagues’ widely cited studies on the rise of “environmental associations” worldwide, for example, typically neglect to point out and examine the deep ideological and political differences among said associations, let alone to ask whether and how it is valid to characterize all of them as constituting one movement. See Frank et al. 2000; Meyer et al. 1997a; Longhofer and Schofer 2010; Schofer & Hironaka 2005.

⁹ For taxonomies or attempts to classify groups involved in environmental or climate politics, see Alcock 2008; Backstrand and Lovbrand 2006; Clapp & Dauvergne 2005; Dalton 1994; Dalton et al. 2003; Dobson 2000; Dryzek 1997; Hajer 1995; Pepper 1996; Rosenbaum 2008.

to shift us away from “unreflexive” towards a more “reflexive” modernization, and to put in place the new kinds of social relations needed to rationally manage our relationship to nature—but because we have failed to build the global political force needed to carry out all these changes.

This global political force was already emerging starting in the mid-1960s and could have gone on to become stronger during subsequent decades, but it will fail to rise and become stronger, I will argue, because starting in the late 1960s a particular section of the dominant classes waged what I shall conceptualize as a successful “passive revolution” on the world stage: Faced with increasingly more organized subaltern groups as workers, middle-class professionals and other individuals typically belonging to subordinate or disadvantaged groups—those we shall call the “eco-radicals” and “eco-reformists”—rallied behind radical transformations, groups of business leaders, state officials, and other capitalists typically representing larger, internationally-oriented capital from various countries—those we shall call the “conservationists” and “moderate neoliberals”—also became more organized and came together to push for limited reforms in order to disorganize the subaltern groups, contain the threat of radical change, and reconstruct their hegemony. “Passive revolution” refers to this mobilization by dominant groups to secure the active or passive consent of subaltern groups to their rule—and therefore undermine radical forces’ efforts to radically transform or supersede capitalism—by partially restructuring social relations in order to keep those social relations in place. In the face of this mobilization from above, the subaltern groups fragmented instead of remaining or becoming even more organized, thus failing to sustain their mobilization for radical changes. But, having succeeded in disorganizing the subordinate groups, the dominant classes too subsequently splintered instead of consolidating, thus also failing to sustain their mobilization for limited reforms.

As the dominant groups waged a global passive revolution, then, the subordinate groups that could have carried out the radical transformations needed to address climate change were disorganized, thus weakening their ability to overcome the dominant classes opposed to such transformations. But as the subaltern groups failed to sustain their push for revolutionary transformation, the dominant groups that could have carried out even just limited reforms to at least mitigate climate change were also disorganized, thus impairing their own ability to overcome the other, more conservative dominant groups blocking even just limited reforms.

As the dominated were paralyzed, in other words, the dominant were also paralyzed, preventing both from building the social force required to counter the extreme neoliberals opposed to any reforms. And with both disorganized, the other dominant groups succeeded in blocking reforms, and extreme neoliberal “solutions” consequently prevailed as global society’s dominant response to climate change.

TO BUILD THIS ARGUMENT, I will first argue that reforms or transformations to address climate change that are stronger than what were actually carried out were indeed possible. The historical possibility for both limited reforms and radical transformations was opened, I argue, because instead of continuing to defer the fight for more radical transformations and pushing only for limited reforms, many of the eco-radicals and the eco-reformists from the subaltern groups responded to the growing disorganization of the dominant classes during the 1950s and 1960s by reviving and stepping up their fight for more radical change beginning in the mid 1960s. They joined and strengthened those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored competing rather than cooperating with the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals among the dominant groups by rejecting alliances with them, stifling antagonisms towards them, and

effacing the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus enhancing their ability to organize more members of subaltern groups behind their push for radical changes.

With the subaltern groups becoming more organized behind radical change, the possibility for even just limited reforms was also opened because, rather than continuing to push only for ever weaker reforms, more conservationists and the moderate neoliberals began pushing for more ambitious reforms to contain and disorganize the emergent radical forces starting in the late 1960s. They reinforced those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who also favored competing rather than cooperating or accommodating the more conservative elites by rejecting alliances with them, stoking antagonisms towards them, and accentuating the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus enhancing their ability to organize more members of the dominant classes behind them and push for limited reforms.

Then I argue that these alternative historical possibilities for reforming or superseding capitalism were subsequently closed off because instead of continuing to fight for more radical transformations—or instead of building on the progressive elites' apparent willingness to grant concessions to build support for even more concessions and put even more pressure on the progressive elites—many eco-radicals and eco-reformists subsequently responded the growing organization of the dominant classes by deferring the fight for more radical transformations and pushing only for limited reforms starting in the mid 1980s. They began backing those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites for the public's support by favoring alliances with the more progressive elites, dampening antagonisms towards them, and blurring the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus deepening the divisions among the subaltern groups and undermining their collective ability to organize members of the subaltern groups behind their push for radical transformations.

With subaltern groups splintering, the road to even just limited reforms were also consequently blocked off, I will argue, because instead of continuing to fight for limited reforms—or instead of building on the subordinate groups' support for reforms to put pressure on the conservative elites—more and more conservationists and moderate neoliberals began deferring or abandoning the fight for limited reforms starting in the late 1980s. They switched their support to those other conservationists and moderate-neoliberals who argued in favor of cooperating rather than competing with the more conservative elites by allying with them, suppressing antagonisms towards them, and diluting their group boundaries, thus also deepening the divisions among the progressive elites, and impairing their collective capacity to organize members of the dominant classes behind even just limited reforms.

Our failure to stop or limit climate change, I shall stress throughout, was therefore not inevitable. Active revolution was not bound to fail; the radical forces were not just helpless or passive actors doomed to be disorganized as the progressive elites set out to disaggregate them. Neither was passive revolution bound to succeed; the progressive elites were not all-powerful actors who could just disorganize the subaltern groups at their command. Had more eco-radicals and eco-reformists chosen to compete rather than cooperate with the progressive elites as the dominant classes became more organized, the subordinate groups could have remained organized, enabling them to push for the radical transformations needed to address climate change *despite* the passive revolution. And had more progressive elites also chosen to compete rather than cooperate with the more conservative elites, the dominant classes could also have further consolidated their ranks, enabling them to push for the limited transformations needed to address climate change *despite* the collapse of active revolution.

Had both of these happened, neither the dominated nor the dominant would have been paralyzed. And with neither paralyzed, the conservative elites would have had more difficulty obstructing reforms, and more progressive, if not more radical, rather than neoliberal “solutions” might have prevailed as global society’s dominant response to our climate crisis.

THE ARGUMENT I WILL MAKE will therefore challenge— while at the same time account for the dominance of— the widely-held view, especially among many climate scientists and activists, that our failure to stop or limit climate change could just be attributed to the actions of the developed-country governments, the fossil-fuel corporations or the “market fundamentalists” who have been obstructing progress in stopping climate change and who typically been depicted as the “enemies” of climate action. While these actors or groups certainly bear a huge responsibility for our current predicament, I shall try to show how even those typically considered as the champions of climate action—the developing-country governments, the renewable energy industry, and the environmentalist organizations—also paradoxically contributed to creating the very conditions that have enabled the obstructionists or the ultra-conservative elites to successfully block climate action and promote climate denialism.

My goal here, however, is not just to lay the blame on a different group of actors— though this in itself is an important task at a time when there is much disagreement over what we should do and who we should fight against to address our planetary emergency. My larger goal is to develop an alternative approach for thinking about—and acting upon—our climate crisis.

As I will argue in the next chapter, the prevailing theories which inform how most officials, experts, and activists analyze and seek to address the problem—theories which have shaped my own thinking—all give us helpful but still only partial insights into our predicament.

Those we will call the “rationalist” or “microeconomic” theories of climate change— more or less the kind of explanations that, as we shall see, were adopted and propagated by “moderate neoliberals” and “conservationists”—take us forward by highlighting the institutional origins of climate change and showing how our failure to solve the problem has to do with the workings of the market and our failure to change our institutions. Those we will call the “sociological” or “constructivist” theories—the kind of explanations close to those propagated by the “eco-reformists” and some “conservationists”—take us farther by drawing our attention to the cultural origins of climate change and showing how our inability to rebuild our institutions is linked to our normative environment and our inability to change the underlying rationality of modern civilization. But “political economy” theories—the explanations typically advanced by the “eco-radicals” and some “eco-reformists”—take us farthest by pointing out the economic origins of climate change and demonstrating how our failure to transform our culture is itself linked to our economic system and our failure to restructure our social relations.

In different ways, each of these theories has helpfully underscored that the continued rise of the planet’s temperature has *social* rather than just natural or geophysical causes: all variously underscore the point the climate change has to do with our failure to reorganize modern society and, hence, with our failure to restructure or go beyond capitalism. But each still fails to answer the larger question: Why have we failed to reorganize or go beyond capitalism?

I hope to contribute towards addressing this largely neglected question by delving into what existing approaches have so far neglected to examine systematically: *the political origins of climate change*. Seeking to investigate the deeper causes of our failure to correct ‘market failures,’ pursue ‘ecological modernization,’ and transform or go beyond capitalist social

relations, I shall look into the role played by power and domination, resistance to domination, and resistance to resistance in creating the conditions that have made it more or less difficult for us to make more progress in addressing climate change. I will investigate the groups or social forces struggling to reorganize global society and examine the processes by which they amassed or lost the ability to overcome their opponents.

In short, unlike prevailing approaches to climate change, I will make central what other approaches have failed to investigate adequately: the global politics of climate change. I will show how, instead of being just the result of prevailing social structures, our apparent paralysis in the face of our planetary emergency resulted from both these structures and contingent political choices made in the course of struggles *within* and *between* different contending social groups vying to (re)constitute the very political forces engaged in struggle to reshape those structures. I will argue that the institutional, cultural, and systemic failures that existing approaches point to as the causes of climate change are themselves rooted in a deeper failure: in political failure or in our inability to build the political force capable of overcoming the opposition to the institutional, cultural, and systemic changes required to address climate change.

In making this argument, I will also suggest that the very explanations or frameworks which dominate the discussion on climate change—and which I am both building on and reconstructing in this dissertation—must themselves be examined as part of the explanation for why we have failed to make more progress in addressing the problem. In the coming chapters, I will show that these explanations were themselves critical in organizing (or disorganizing) the social forces pushing for the changes needed to stop or limit climate change.

BUT IN PROPOSING THIS APPROACH to making sense of climate change, I hope to do more than just intervene in debates about the specific issue of climate change. How the international community or global society has responded to what many consider the greatest threat we face, after all, can tell us much more about how global society hangs (or fails to hang) together. While focusing on climate change, I also hope to develop and put forward a different approach to studying global politics and to investigating why we have failed in addressing “global social problems” more generally. My larger goal is to contribute to developing our understanding of why attempts to push for the social transformations needed to address hunger, poverty, lack of access to health care, homelessness and so on have stalled or collapsed at the national and global levels in recent decades and why, instead of these transformations, we have been witnessing the global—and seemingly unstoppable—triumph of extreme neoliberalism.

In Chapter 2, I argue that the concept of “passive revolution” advanced by Antonio Gramsci and further developed by a growing number of scholars provides us with the most promising foundation for investigating these questions because it pushes us to analyze how dominant groups seek to disorganize dominated groups struggling for radical change.

But for us to better understand why some paths were taken instead of others, I argue that it is also still necessary to analyze why or how such attempts succeeded (and could have failed) by examining how different sections of the dominated groups react to such attempts to disorganize them, and how different sections of the dominant groups again react to them given the specificities of ‘the global’ as an arena of struggle. To do this, we need to analyze how these groups struggling over class have struggled over nature and, in so doing, also simultaneously struggled over meaning or over how to interpret nature and their struggles over it. We need, in short, to examine what I call the “micro-dynamics” of class struggle on the world stage.

My broader goal in examining the politics of climate change is therefore not just to advance an alternative framework for thinking about climate change but to further develop the sociological theory of global politics by using the “extended case method,”¹⁰ through my own engagement in what I am studying and through my attempt to locate what I am studying within its larger or macro-historical context. By analyzing how the social forces engaged in climate politics are shaped by and in turn shape larger or structural forces, I hope to further develop the concept of “passive revolution,” clarify its relation to and difference from the concept of “hegemony,” and demonstrate how we can use it to elucidate how dominant classes contain radical transformation and weaken their own ability to build a stronger hegemony.

And as I do so, I shall also revisit two opposite assumptions usually taken for granted by many scholars and activists: on the one hand, the assumption that struggles by subordinate groups against dominant groups for reforms or “immediate victories” necessarily strengthens the ability of subordinate groups to fight for radical change and, in so doing, also strengthens the ability of dominant groups to “save” the system from itself; on the other, the assumption that struggles by subordinate groups against dominant groups for reforms does nothing to strengthen the ability of subordinate groups to fight for radical change and, in so doing, also does nothing to strengthen the ability of dominant groups to save the system from itself. I ask instead under what conditions struggles by subaltern groups can result in the enhanced ability of the former to fight for more radical changes and of dominant groups to reorganize capitalism. Put differently, the aim is to shed light on how subaltern groups’ struggles could lead to more progress in dealing with climate change and the other predicaments we face.

MUCH IS AT STAKE in how we understand the reasons behind the failures of past efforts to address climate change and other global problems because it conditions how we strive to overcome that failure.

In the last few years, a growing number of scholars and activists have been arguing that to make more progress in addressing climate change and other global problems, we need to push for what some prominent climate scientists—not known for their radical politics—have called “revolutionary change to the political and economic hegemony.”¹¹ To achieve this, a chorus of voices have been calling for what one group of scholars have called “the greatest social movement the world has ever seen.”¹² Or as Malm has put it, we need “the movement of movements, at the top of the food chain, on a mission to protect the very existence of the terrain on which all others to operate.”¹³ Such a global “movement of movements,” many have argued, should be formed and led by workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, and other “marginalized” groups—all those who, in the words of Naomi Klein, are “getting a rotten deal under our current system”—because those at the top cannot be counted upon to make the changes needed; “any credible source of hope in this crisis will have to come from below.”¹⁴ This movement from below, Klein, Malm, and others have argued, should “amass a social power larger than the enemy’s in the little time that is left.”¹⁵ In Klein’s words, it should build a “determined and diverse enough social force to change the balance of power” so as to “pull off a profound and

¹⁰ Burawoy 1998.

¹¹ quoted in Foran 2015.

¹² IICAT 2014 27; see also Brulle & Dunlap 2015:25; Vlachou & Konstantinidis 2010.

¹³ Malm 2016: 394

¹⁴ Klein 2014: 12, 25.

¹⁵ Malm 2016: 394

radical economic transformation.”¹⁶ To do this, others have suggested, the movement should “fight as hard as possible for reforms that limit environmental damage” but use such a “battle for reforms” to build “a movement that can eventually take us beyond capitalism.”¹⁷ It should engage in “struggles around concrete issues” to create the ground for “a radical, that is, revolutionary, transformation of the world.”¹⁸ But, as Klein has stressed, this also requires putting forward an “alternative worldview to rival the one at the heart of the ecological crisis.”¹⁹

But what exactly must this “greatest movement that the world has ever seen” do to achieve “revolutionary change”? How can it amass a “social power larger than the enemy’s” or build the social force needed to change the “balance of power” in the “little time that is left”? How can it fight for reforms without undermining our ability to go beyond capitalism? And what sort of alternative worldviews must it put out there in order to avoid the defeats of the past?

Much depends on how we understand the causes of our failure to stop climate change to date because if we failed to stop climate change only because the rich countries, the dirty corporations, and the “climate skeptics” have blocked the reforms needed to drastically bring down emissions and provide help for those affected, as dominant explanations suggest, then it seems obvious that the solution would be to rally behind and work with those fighting against these forces, as many in fact have argued.²⁰ But if we have failed to stop or limit climate change because a section of the dominant classes has waged a successful global passive revolution to prevent radical change and in so doing also undermined the fight for even just limited reforms, as I shall argue, then such a solution may paradoxically be counter-productive or self-defeating: it may actually lead to reforms not being passed in the years ahead and, hence, to even more severe climate-change impacts down the line.

Our failure to stop or limit climate change is also, in the final analysis, the consequence of our failure to better understand the causes of our failure. By studying the conditions under which we have failed to make more progress in limiting climate change, I hope to specify the conditions under which we can do better. My goal is to contribute to what sociologists have called a “public sociology of climate change,” one that aims “to open up new perspectives on the nature of the changes necessary for ameliorating and adapting to climate change.”²¹ By examining the political origins of our climate crisis, I hope to provoke more discussions on the inescapably political solutions to our planetary emergency. By analyzing how movements for “revolutionary change” have been weakened in the past, I hope to provoke more debates on the enduring question of how they can be revitalized today and in the future.²² In short, I hope to intervene in the very struggle that I set out to analyze—the very struggle from which this dissertation emerged.

AS WILL BECOME CLEAR in the coming pages, analyzing history and understanding global politics using the approach I advocate presents enormous challenges. Among many challenges, it

¹⁶ Klein 2014:25,453.

¹⁷ Gindin 2014.

¹⁸ Lowy 2015:38.

¹⁹ Klein 2014: 62.

²⁰ See, for example, Ciptet et al. 2015:249; Newell & Paterson 1998:696; Paterson 1996:177.

²¹ Brulle and Dunlap 2015:17.

²² The question of how global social movements could be strengthened or revitalized has been the subject of renewed attention among scholars in recent years. See, among others, Arrighi 2007; Burawoy 2000, 2003, 2010; Burawoy et al. 2000; Evans 2000, 2008, 2010; Hart 2002, 2009; Harvey 2003; Laclau 2005; Wright 2010.

calls for a more sophisticated understanding of how the contingent political choices that, I will argue in this study, were central to determining historical outcomes were themselves shaped or constrained by (and in turn shaped and constrained) by economic or material conditions. In other words, it requires a more developed theory about the relationship between what goes on in what Gramsci called a “higher plane than the immediate world economy” and what goes on in the “immediate world economy” itself. This, in turn, requires a better understanding of the economic basis of the different groups in struggle, of the role of states and of inter-state dynamics in shaping this struggle, and of the specificities of the global arena or of the “world stage” as a locus or terrain of struggle. And it demands paying close attention to the various fronts or arenas where different social groups interact and struggle to forge collectives and pursue their projects.

The explanation I present here only partially achieves such requirements. Though I will situate the struggles I examine in their broader world-economic context, much of my focus here will be on what transpired on the “higher plane than the immediate world economy” rather than on the “immediate world economy” itself, and I fail to take the extra step of investigating how developments in one shaped developments in the other. While I will look into the class backgrounds of the different groups or parties or “party-like” organizations that will be central in my account, I fail to specify their precise locations in the class structure. This is especially true for those I shall call the “eco-radicals” and “eco-reformists.” I also did not manage to take the extra step of investigating the class basis of the different factions that emerged among these groups in the course of struggle. Though I will bring in states in the story and suggest explanations for why states acted in the ways they do on the world stage, I still neglected to delve into the relationship between inter-state and intra-state struggles and the inter-class and intra-class struggles on the world stage. While I go into the specifically “global” divisions and convergences among the groups involved (on the North-South issue, the question of “developing” versus “developed countries,” etc.), I do not go very far in investigating the link between these global divisions and convergences and national or local divisions and convergences. And though I tried my best to gather as much material from as many domestic arenas as possible, the narrative I offer is still ultimately uneven.

Even as my story claims to be “global,” I have much more material on internal struggles inside the US and the Philippines than other countries in part because actors in and from the US and the Philippines certainly played a more visibly central role in climate politics and have therefore been the object of more scholarly attention (and resources)—but also in part because I simply did not have sufficient time, resources, and language skills to dig deeper for material on other countries. In addition, despite my attempt to look at both relations among the subordinate classes and among dominant classes, my discussion of the former is still more textured than my discussion of the latter. This is partly because there have been few scholarly works on the latter but it is also partly because I had much more access to subordinate groups—something which in itself tells us something about the nature of the struggle: the dominated are more easily observed than the dominant. Though I did manage to talk to people in ‘high places,’ I simply could not hang out with billionaire philanthropists the same way I hung out with activists.

Highlighting some conflicts more than others, I recognize that I failed to delve into many other conflicts internal to the groups whose formation and internal dynamics I will be explaining. Trying to summarize very diverse ideas without missing their essence, I may have failed to capture the complexity of people’s arguments or positions.

I therefore make no claims that the account that follows is the definitive account of why

we have failed to stop climate change. Though I tried my best to make sure my account is as comprehensive and as accurate as possible, I can only hope that what I lost in detail, texture, and sophistication will somehow be compensated by what we gain by taking a different perspective. A partial account is not necessarily a false account if it pushes us to look at things we would not have otherwise seen and if it prods us to ask questions we have previously failed to pose.

What I shall set out to do here is merely to draw more attention to, and advance a framework for analyzing, something that has been largely neglected in present discussions on climate change—the role of global politics, understood in a deeper sense—in the hope of deepening our understanding of why we continue to face a planetary emergency. If this dissertation does not advance the most convincing answer, then my hope is that it would at least make more people pursue a different set of questions so as to arrive at an even better answer.

IN THE NEXT CHAPTER, I first discuss the limits of existing explanations of the origins of our climate crisis. Then in Chapter 2, I build on Gramsci's and other scholars' concept of "passive revolution" to propose a framework for analyzing global politics. From Chapters 3 to 6, I proceed to use this framework to show how dominant classes' efforts to wage global passive revolution undermined subordinate groups' ability to transcend capitalism while also undermining their own ability to reform capitalism to limit climate change.

Chapter 3 focuses on the relations among the subordinate groups and examines how, instead of remaining disorganized as progressive elites began splintering, subordinate groups became more organized behind the call for more radical reforms or revolution to address "environmental" and other social problems across countries beginning around the mid-1960s up to the mid-1980s. Chapter 4 focuses on the relations among the dominant classes and examines how, instead of staying fragmented as the subaltern groups became more organized, the dominant groups too became more organized behind limited reforms starting around the late 1960s to the late 1980s. Chapter 5 turns our attention back to the relations among the subordinate groups to discuss how, rather than growing even more solid as the progressive elites came together, the subordinate groups instead began splintering or re-splintering starting around the mid-1980s. Finally, Chapter 6 again shifts our focus back to the relations among the dominant classes and examines how, instead of becoming more cohesive as the subordinate groups fragmented, the dominant groups also unraveled starting around the late 1980s.

In the Conclusion, I draw out my argument's implications for how we should think about and act upon climate change but also about how we should think about other global problems more generally. I then suggest how we might be able to overcome our inability to address the greatest, perhaps most difficult problem we face as a global society today.

CHAPTER 1: The Limits of Prevailing Theories of Climate Change

Beginning in the late 1960s, just as a group of scientists, experts, activists, state officials and even business leaders first began calling for action on “global environmental problems,” including what will later be known as “climate change” or “global warming,” many scientists, state officials, business leaders, and activists also started elaborating and propagating different theories about the causes of these problems and of our failure to solve them.¹

Most of these explanations can essentially be grouped into three: “Rationalist” or “microeconomic” approaches which focus on the *institutional* origins of climate change and suggest that our failure to stop limit climate change is rooted in market dynamics and has been the consequence of a failure to transform the rules governing these dynamics; “sociological” or “constructivist” approaches which highlight the *cultural* origins of climate change and see it as caused by our normative environment and our failure to transform values or attitudes; and “political economy” approaches which focus on the *economic* origins of climate change and view it as a result of the way we organize production and our failure to change property relations.

Though internally-diverse, all explain climate change and our inability to limit it as the consequence of our failure to change aspects of our existing social order and, thus, our failure to “change the system”: Rationalist approaches see it as the product of our inability to change the *rules* that govern capitalism; sociological approaches see it as the product of our inability to change the *values* that underpin capitalism; while political economy approaches see it as the product of our inability to change the *property relations* that define capitalism.

In the subsequent chapters, I will show how different versions of these theories were deployed by various groups and therefore form part of the answer to the very questions they seek to answer. In this chapter, I will first discuss why, though all take us a step forward, each approach offers only partial understandings of the causes of climate change and our inability to stop or limit it. I will argue that the “political economy” theories take us farthest by posing the key question—only to leave it unanswered. I suggest that for us to go farther we need to examine systematically what these theories have so far neglected: the *political* origins of climate change.

Climate change as institutional failure

Possibly the most dominant, or at least most prominent, category of approaches for explaining our failure to address climate change—one advanced by many if not most state officials, climate scientists, experts, and even environmentalists from both developed and developing countries—are what we could call the “rationalist” or “micro-economic” theories of climate change.

Starting out from the assumption that humans behave as “rational actors” pursuing and trying to maximize their given interests, these approaches examine how institutions—or the “rules of the game” that structure how humans produce and exchange goods and services or organize their inter-state relations—foster or inhibit actions that lead to ecological degradation.

Looking at the rules governing markets, these approaches posit that emissions have continued to rise because the world’s governments have failed to put in place the policies and measures that could induce market actors to “internalize” or put a “price” on the social and environmental costs (the “externalities”) of their emissions, i.e. by taxing them, by making them

¹ For good overviews of the early history of how climate change turned from a “scientific” into a “political” issue, see Paterson 2006; Bodansky 1994; Rajan 1997; Rowlands 1995; Agrawala 1999; Andresen and Agrawala 2002; Boehmer-Christiansen 1994; Clark and Dickson 200; Demeritt 1998, 2001; Jasanoff & Wynne 1998; Wynne 1994.

pay for permits to emit, by removing subsidies, and taking other steps that could prevent them from passing on the costs of emitting to others.² For these approaches, climate change is the consequence of the lack of regulation of the market at the global level arising from the absence or weakness of policies, laws, international treaties or other measures that could correct what they call a “market failure,” or the inability of the market to guarantee the provision of “public goods” such as a stable climate without state intervention.

As the influential Stern Review (2007:27) put it, climate change is a “market failure on the greatest scale the world has seen” and it has remained unaddressed because governments have failed to “correct” it through appropriate market interventions at both local and global levels. Having failed to change the rules, the world’s governments have also consequently failed to make firms or consumers take steps to reduce their emissions or switch to renewable energy because it remains more “rational” for them to simply emit more or avoid the costs of switching to renewable energy in order to maximize their interests. Even if they wanted to reduce their own emissions or make the switch to renewable energy, they are constrained by the existing institutions since doing so could harm their ability to pursue their individual interests.

Looking at the rules governing the inter-state system, rationalist approaches similarly suggest that global emissions have continued to increase because state and “non-state” actors such as experts, bureaucrats from international organizations, NGOs, or “epistemic communities” have failed to establish international institutions or arrangements that could induce state and non-state actors to cooperate in bringing down the production of greenhouse gases. For these approaches, climate change is the consequence of the lack of regulation of the inter-state system resulting from the absence of effective “international regimes”³ or collectively-agreed rules, principles, and procedures by which the world’s states can in effect create some kind of “governance without government.”⁴ to solve “collective action problems” such as climate change.⁵ Having failed to establish these regimes, state and non-state actors have consequently failed to induce states to bring down their emissions or transform their energy infrastructures since it also remains more “rational” for them to use up as much of the earth’s resources as they could. Even if they wanted to bring down their pollution or transform their infrastructure, they are prevented by the “anarchy” of the system since doing so could undermine their interests.

In other words, these approaches suggest that climate change is happening and we have failed to stop or limit it because we have failed to carry out reforms that could move us from what we can think of as “extreme laissez faire capitalism,” a form of capitalism devoid of any rules to prevent “market failures” towards a “moderate laissez faire capitalism,” a form of capitalism which, while largely leaving the market undisturbed, also discourages or prevents actors from “externalizing” the environmental costs of their activities or to “free ride.” Only by establishing new rules or modifying institutions can we move towards this system and make more progress in addressing climate change, they argue.

By looking into the institutional origins of climate change, these approaches take us forward in understanding why we have failed to address climate change by helping us see how our failure to change our individual and collective behaviors—our inability to switch from fossil-fuel to renewable energy or our failure to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions—is rooted

² See among others Aldy & Stevens 2007; Berck & Helfand 2011; Fisher et al. 1996; Gore 1992, 2009; Stavins 2005; Stern 2007; Victor 2004; Wirth & Heinz 1998.

³ Krasner 1983.

⁴ Rosenau & Czempiel 1992; Young 1994.

⁵ See among others, Haas 1990; 1992; Haas, Keohane & Levy 1993; Luterbacher & Sprinz 2001; Young, 1991, 1994.

in our failure to modify the institutions or the formal and informal rules that shape our behavior. But they can only take us so far because they fail to adequately answer the one question their explanation poses: Why, instead of transforming our institutions, have we failed to do so? Why, instead of succeeding, have attempts to put in place public policies to correct “market failures” at the global level repeatedly failed or only partially succeeded at best over the past decades? Or why, instead of establishing effective “global environmental regimes,” have states established only weak or ineffectual ones? How, in short, do we explain why another alternative possibility—that we would succeed in transforming institutions—was closed off?

Rationalist theories do suggest that this other road was not taken because certain powerful “vested interests” (i.e., the oil industry or particular fossil fuel corporations) or “hegemonic states” (i.e., the US under the Bush administration) have blocked efforts by other interests, states, or “epistemic communities” to push for institutional reforms. In other words, they suggest that our inability to undertake institutional reforms has to do with certain ‘bad capitalists’ or ‘bad elites’ who have blocked the initiatives of the ‘good capitalists’ or the ‘good elites’ to reconfigure institutions. But they leave unexplained why those other interests pushing for institutional change failed to overcome the opposition of the vested interests—why, for example, the officials, economists or renewable-energy companies proposing to change market rules in the US and elsewhere have not been able to prevail over the oil corporations and other industries resisting such proposals. Why have “non-hegemonic states” failed to resist the obstructionism of “hegemonic states”? How do we explain the inability of developing countries to counter the opposition of the US to stronger international agreements?

Rationalist theories imply that officials or renewable-energy executives have failed to prevail over the oil corporations and other industries resisting institutional corrections, and non-hegemonic states have failed to prevail over the hegemonic states, because many still just do not see an incompatibility between their interests and the interests of the latter. They suggest that the ‘good capitalists’ and the ‘good elites’ have failed to muster the “political will” to counter the ‘bad capitalists’ and the ‘bad elites.’ They are unable, however, to explain why it is that other state officials or non-oil corporate executives see their interests in the ways they do and why it is that they failed to form the “political will” to overturn existing rules. As a result, they also could not suggest how we can overcome our failure beyond just siding with and pushing the ‘good elites’ to confront the ‘bad elites’ opposed to the institutional changes they advocate.

It is not enough to know how existing institutions hinder our ability to address climate change; we also need to know how these institutions persist despite efforts to transform them. This requires understanding not just how those who seek to keep these institutions in place have tried to suppress those who seek to dislodge them but also why the latter failed to defeat them.

Climate change as cultural failure

Taking us a step farther is the other dominant, though perhaps less widely used, set of approaches to understanding climate change adopted by other state officials, experts, and environmentalists: what we could call the “sociological” or “constructivist” theories of climate change.

Unlike the rationalist theories, which assume that people have given interests and goals, these theories start out from the assumption that human behavior is shaped by mutable “social structures,” “intersubjective understandings,” or “culture” which influence people’s understandings of their goals and interests. They therefore examine how broader cultural

transformations—notably the shift from “traditional” society to “modern” capitalist society—have given rise to institutional configurations that encourage or inhibit ecological degradation.

Thus, looking at the rationality that underpins the rules governing markets, these theories suggest that governments have been unable to correct “market failures” and reduce emissions because scientists, experts, and “environmentalists” have failed to supplant the rationality or the values prioritizing economic growth over conservation and all other social concerns—an orientation or a predisposition peculiar to the market economy that replaced the feudal economy. That is, authorities have failed to change the social rules of the game because those actors that seek to promote a different set of values have failed to “socialize” state and non-state actors into being guided not by “economic rationality” but what they call “ecological rationality,” or by values that put ecological considerations alongside with if not above economic considerations.⁶

From the point of view of these approaches, climate change may indeed be the result of the lack of regulation of the market arising from the absence of policies, laws, treaties or other measures that could correct market failures but this in itself has a deeper root: the absence or weakness of values or norms that could underpin such rules. Having failed to institutionalize these values and socialize people into living by them, scientists, experts, activists and other environmentalists have consequently failed to make state officials or business leaders support the enactment of laws or treaties to correct market failures because they too remain guided or driven by the old values prioritizing growth over conservation.

Examining the prevailing intersubjective understandings that structure the rules governing the interstate system, constructivist theories also similarly argue that states have failed to make more progress in enacting effective international environmental agreements because state and other “non-state actors” have failed to “construct” new intersubjective understandings replacing the prevailing rationality which values maximizing economic growth or stability with a different rationality—one which values conservation and “environmental” security.⁷

From the perspective of these approaches, climate change may indeed be the result of the lack of regulation of the inter-state system resulting from the absence or weakness of effective global environmental regimes but this too has an underlying cause: the absence or weakness of values or norms that could underpin such a regime. The “international community” has not made more progress establishing working environmental regimes because those they call “rationalized others,” “norm entrepreneurs,” or members of “transnational advocacy networks” have failed to institutionalize new “norms,” or new standards of appropriate behavior, that encourage sustainability. Without socializing people in these new norms, existing norms celebrating growth still drive state and non-state actors to prioritize growth to achieve respect or legitimation.

Guided or driven by the old values, these theories argue, both state and “non-state actors” remain trapped in the “iron cage” of what scholars who propose this view call “first modernity,” or in a kind of “unreflexive” modernization in which people are still unaware and uncritical of the problems such a kind of modernization engenders. As such, they continue to promote such goals as profit maximization or economic growth without regard to their environmental and other

⁶ See Beck 1992, 2009, 2010; Beck et al. 1994; Beck et al. 2003; Giddens 1990, 1991, 1994, 2009; Gleeson 2000; Hajer 1995; McCright & Dunlap 2010; Mol 1997, 2000, 2003; Mol & Janicke 2010; Mol, Spaargaren and Sonnenfeld 2009; Spaargaren & Mol 1992.

⁷ See among others Finnemore 1996a, 1996b; Finnemore & Sikkink 1997; Florini 1996; Jepperson et al. 1996; Katzenstein 1996; Kratochwil 1989; Meyer et al. 1997b; Price & Tannenwald 1996; Wendt 1992; Wheeler 2000. For constructivist scholarship that deal specifically with climate change or environmental issues, see Bernstein 2000, 2001, 2002; Busby 2010; Eckersley 2004; Epstein 2006; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Ringius 2001.

social consequences or despite their deleterious impacts on nature and the community. Having been socialized to believe that these values are good or moral, corporations continue to accumulate capital by constantly intensifying their exploitation of nature by using more resources, increasing their emissions and generating more waste. Having also internalized such norms, even state officials too continue to enable or assist these corporations by intensifying their domination of other states. They too are constrained from adopting and institutionalizing rules that could undermine their ability to foster economic expansion. Even if they were convinced by the need to conserve, or even if they wanted to modify the rules governing markets or inter-state relations, they are hard-pressed to pursue conservation measures because if they do, other corporations or other states may acquire more legitimacy and they may suffer from ostracism or fail to secure the respect of others. Under pressure to conform to the prevailing values, all are constrained from enforcing rules which could undermine their ability to secure the respect or acceptance of others.

These theories argue, in other words, that we have not made more progress in modifying our institutions because we have also not made more progress in moving away from *laissez faire* capitalism, or a form of capitalism driven by old norms or rationalities valuing economic growth or development, towards a different kind of capitalism closer to state capitalism: one that is driven or guided by new norms or rationalities emphasizing a balance between sustainability and economic growth—or what will later be popularized as “sustainable development.” To use their terms, we have failed to limit climate change because we have failed to carry out the reforms needed to move from “unreflexive” modernization towards what some call “reflexive modernization”⁸ or “ecological modernization”: or a different kind of modernization which is more aware and more critical of the ecological and other social problems that the first kind of modernization has wrought, one which does not drive market actors and state actors to value growth over conservation and hence, does not constrain them from supporting new institutions favoring conservation. Only by shifting to this kind of modernization, or only by moving from “first modernity” towards a “green modernity,” these theories imply, could state and non-state actors make more headway in defeating the other state and non-state actors opposed to the laws or treaties needed to correct market failures or collective action problems.

By looking into the *cultural* origins of climate change, these theories take us beyond the rationalist theories by enabling us to better understand the underlying cause of our failure to change our institutions and, hence, our failure to change people’s behavior. They help us begin to comprehend why other interests pushing for institutional change have failed to overcome the opposition of “vested interests” or why developing- and developed countries pushing for stronger international climate change agreements have failed to overcome the opposition of the hegemonic states. But they still do not take us far enough because they still fail to consider the origins of our failure to change culture. Why, instead of transforming our normative environment, have we failed to do so? Why, instead of succeeding, have attempts to instill and institutionalize new values and new rationalities at the global level repeatedly failed or only partially succeeded at best? Or why, instead of moving towards a ‘green modernity’ do we seem stuck in ‘gray modernity’? How, in short, do we account for why another alternative possibility—that we would succeed in changing culture—failed to be realized?

Sociological theories do suggest that this historical outcome has been due to the

⁸ For more on the notion of “reflexivity” or “reflexive modernization,” see Giddens 1990, 1991, 1994.

resistance of other norm entrepreneurs who seek to defend existing norms by engaging in what one scholar described as struggle between “competing values and understandings of what is good, desirable and appropriate in our collective life” (Finnemore 1996: 342). More specifically, some scholars have argued that our failure to pursue “reflexive modernization” has been due to the opposition of the forces of “anti-reflexivity” or of an “anti-reflexive movement” constituted by certain state officials, scientists, experts, business leaders and other conservative activists—those from the US or from “the North” but also other countries, the oil industry or fossil fuel corporations but also other industries and corporations, and the right-wing foundations and think-tanks—who attack environmentalism and therefore block the transition towards a “green modernity.”⁹ In other words, like the rationalist theories, they too suggest that we have failed to limit climate change because of the opposition of certain ‘bad capitalists’ or ‘bad elites’ to changes being pushed by certain ‘good capitalists’ and ‘good elites.’ But they are unable to explain how it is that the forces of “reflexivity” have so far failed to overpower the forces of “anti-reflexivity” or under what conditions the norm entrepreneurs or transnational advocacy networks pushing for ecological modernization—the ‘good capitalists’ and the ‘good elites’—failed to defeat the “anti-reflexive” norm entrepreneurs and transnational advocacy networks resisting ecological modernization.

Like the rationalist theories, constructivist approaches suggest that norm entrepreneurs or transnational advocacy networks have not succeeded in overpowering the “anti-reflexive” forces because many also still do not see an antagonism between their interests and the interests of anti-reflexive forces and, hence, have not joined in fighting against the latter. They suggest that, as result, the forces of reflexivity have not mustered the political capacity needed to change the normative environment. But, like the rationalists, they too fail to account for why others conceive of their interests as compatible with the anti-reflexive forces and, thus, why it is that the forces of reflexivity failed to assemble the collective capacity to prevail over the forces of anti-reflexivity. Consequently, they also could not make recommendations as to how we can make more progress in addressing climate change beyond just supporting and pushing the ‘good elites’ to confront the ‘bad elites’ opposed to the normative shift they advocate.

We now know more about how culture inhibits our ability to transform the institutions that in turn constrain our ability to address climate change, but we still do not know enough about why and how attempts to change culture fail. In order to deepen our knowledge, we need to understand not just how those who seek to keep the existing culture in place have tried to subdue those who seek to replace it but also why the latter failed to prevail over them.

Climate change as systemic failure

A more marginal set of approaches advocated by other officials, experts and activists—those we shall call “political economy” or radical theories of climate change—take us farthest by breaking with both rationalist and sociological theories.

Unlike sociological theories, they start out from the assumption that the intersubjective understandings that shape behavior are themselves shaped by the historically-specific ways by which we organize production or structure property relations. Thus, in contrast to sociological theories, they examine how changes in property relations or how systemic transformations—the shift from feudalism to capitalism but also from local/national to global capitalism, from

⁹ For more on this “anti-reflexive movement,” see McCright & Dunlap 2010.

competitive to “monopoly capitalism,” from state to neoliberal capitalism—have given rise to changing social rules and normative environments that promote or inhibit conservation.¹⁰

Investigating the changing material conditions that shape rationality in the market, these approaches suggest that scientists, experts, activists and environmentalists have failed to replace the values or the norms putting economic considerations above ecological considerations because members of the subordinate classes have failed to change the “relations of production” by restricting or ending private or capitalist control over the economy and because even state officials or the “enlightened” or more “far-sighted” (Sweezy 2004:4) sections of the bourgeoisie have failed to at least restrain or limit such control. Put differently, “state” and “non-state actors” have failed to replace the prevailing rationality which values maximizing economic growth also because the world’s dominated classes have failed to put more control over production decisions in the hands of the dominated classes altogether, and because even state officials and other more far-sighted members of the world’s dominant classes have failed to curb or at least take more control over production away from the hands of individual capitalists. For some exponents of this approach, these failures also have to do with the failure to change the relations among states—the relations between core or “imperialist” states and peripheral or dependent states—which underpin these capitalist class relations at the global level, or with the failure of the peripheral or colonized states to challenge or end the relations of dependency by which capitalist control over the economy is kept in place at the level of the world-system.

From the point of view of these approaches, climate change may indeed be the result of the lack of regulation of the market arising from the absence or weakness of values or norms that could underpin the policies, laws, international treaties or other measures that could correct market failures or collective action problems—but this too has an even deeper root: the absence or weakness of social relations that could underpin such values or norms in the inter-state system. With social relations unchanged, scientists, experts or environmentalists—or “norm entrepreneurs,” or members of “transnational advocacy networks”—have consequently failed to socialize firms or governments into valuing conservation or accepting the new “norms” they have been promoting because capitalist control over the economy still drives state and non-state actors to prioritize economic expansion to achieve legitimacy or security.

Forced to profit or perish, capitalists are compelled to accumulate capital by constantly intensifying their exploitation of workers and nature by using more resources, increasing their emissions and generating more waste. Driven to advance the interest of these capitalists, the imperialist, core, or Northern states are consequently also forced to put in place relations of dependency and intensify their subjugation of the colonized, peripheral or Southern states through unequal trading arrangements, through direct or indirect interventions to put in place their favored rulers, or through other “neocolonial” measures. Pressured to foster capitalist accumulation, states too are constrained from adopting and institutionalizing norms that could undermine their ability to achieve maximum economic growth. Even if they were convinced of

¹⁰ Political economy or Marxist theories of climate change or environmental problems differ on how capitalism produces—and inhibits efforts to curb—climate change and other environmental problems, how these problems affect capitalism (whether and how they set limits to capitalism), and whether and how capitalism can be restructured to foster conservation. For “treadmill of production” theories, see Gould, Pellow, Schnaiberg 2004:297; Schnaiberg 1980; Schnaiberg & Gould 1994; for “metabolic rift” theories, see Clark & York 2005, 2008; Foster 1999a, 1999; Foster, Clark and York 2011; for “ecological crisis” theories, see O’Connor 1988, 1994, 1998; for regulation theories, see Koch 2012. See also Bond 2012b; Castree 2000; Burkett 1996, 2001; Magdoff 2002; Magdoff & Foster 2011; Malm 2016; Sweezy 2004 2; Harvey 1996, 2005, 2006; Lowy 2015; Dickens 1998.

the need to conserve or even if they wanted to champion ecological values, they are hard-pressed to set aside part of their profits for conservation, to invest in cleaner but more expensive technologies, or to forego exploiting certain areas because if they do, other firms may be able to sell their products more cheaply, or other states may control more territories. Under pressure to foster accumulation, all are constrained from promoting values which could undermine their ability to survive market or inter-state competition.

These theories argue, in other words, that we have not made more progress in changing the course of modernization because we have also not made more progress in moving from capitalism towards a post-capitalist mode of production: one which does not constantly drive capitalists and states to continually intensify their exploitation of nature in order to pursue endless accumulation and hence, does not constrain them from being “reflexive.” Only by taking control over the economy away from the hands of individual capitalists or away from the hands of the imperialist or metropolitan states, they suggest, could the forces of “reflexivity” be able to make more progress in vanquishing the forces of “anti-reflexivity” opposed to institutionalizing the norms and values needed to change institutions.

By looking into the economic origins of climate change, these approaches take us farther than both rationalist and constructivist theories because they help us begin to understand the underlying causes of our failure to change culture and, thus, our failure to modify our institutions, change people’s behavior, and limit climate change. They help us comprehend why the forces of “reflexivity” have failed to overcome the opposition of the forces of “anti-reflexivity” or why the “norm entrepreneurs” or “transnational advocacy networks” have failed to defeat the “anti-reflexive” norm entrepreneurs and transnational advocacy networks resisting ecological modernization. But they still only take us so far because they still also fail to adequately answer the key question their explanation raises: Why, instead of radically transforming or superseding the economic system, have we failed to do so? Why, instead of taking off, have attempts to alter property relations at the global level collapsed or only partially succeeded at best? Or why, instead of moving towards socialism do we seem stuck in capitalism? How, in short, do we account for our inability to realize other alternative possibilities?

Political economy theories do argue or imply that the failure to reform or abolish the capitalist social relations of production has been due to the opposition of the entire capitalist class to radical change as well as the opposition of individual capitalists opposed to reforms. They too point to how Northern governments, oil corporations, and fossil-fuel executives funded or supported climate skeptics, joined forces with conservative think tanks and worked with “mainstream” environmentalists to block even just the mild or weak regulations proposed by other capitalists and dominated classes, and they draw attention to how even other members of the dominant classes outside the oil industry, such as the financial sector—those others categorize as the ‘good capitalists’ and ‘good elites’—have used their “structural advantage” or “political capital” to block the stronger changes favored by dominated groups and push instead for ‘solutions’ like carbon trading to address capital’s ‘over-accumulation’ crisis.¹¹ They detail the ways by which the dominant propagated “post-political” discourses or frames to obscure the systemic roots of climate change and therefore inhibit attempts to address them.¹² They contend that, blinded by an “arrogant unthinking faith in markets” and “ beholden to powerful business interests,” elites from the North worked with their counterparts in the South to execute their

¹¹ See, for example: Bond 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Bond & Dorsey 2012; Matthews & Paterson 2005.

¹² On the concept of “post-politics” and climate change, see Swyngedouw 2010; Zizek 2011: 327-328.

“preferred” political strategy of “paralysis, procrastination and more pollution,”¹³ took advantage of deteriorating economic conditions, and exploited the reformers’ or the anti-capitalists’ weaknesses and missteps. They show, in other words, how both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ capitalists and elites alike have obstructed more or less radical measures to change social relations.

What political-economy theories are still unable to explain adequately, however, is why the dominated class have failed to overcome all these efforts by the dominant classes and why the “progressive” sections of the dominant classes failed to counter the regressive sections of the dominated classes. They are unable to account for the failure of the former to take advantage of deteriorating conditions to push for their agenda; to counter “post-political” ideologies; and to thwart attempts to take advantage of their missteps. In short, they neglect to account for the conditions under which subaltern groups failed to prevail over the dominant classes and the conditions under which the far-sighted elites failed to prevail over the conservative elites.

Political economy theories do suggest that the bourgeoisie have succeeded in foiling the working classes’ attempts to change the system because members of the working class do not see their interests as antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie and, hence, do not form a “class-for-itself” motivated to topple bourgeois rule. In other words, they imply that workers have failed to bring about radical change because the division of global society into classes has not actually resulted in the organization of global politics in terms of classes and has therefore resulted in the failure of revolution or in the reproduction of prevailing relations of domination—in short: because the proletariat has failed to transform into a political force capable of pushing for particular projects and opening up new historical possibilities. But they neglect to then account for why it is that members of the working class do not see their interests as antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie and why it is that they failed to form a “class for itself” that has the capacity and motivation to overthrow capitalist social relations. They fail, in other words, to explain how it is that that class divisions in the economic arena have not resulted in class divisions in the political arena and how it is that this has amounted to the persistence of capitalist relations. In short, they do not explain why the proletariat has not become a political force capable of creating the conditions for us to make more progress in addressing climate change. The upshot is that they also do not offer much guidance on how we can make more progress in addressing climate change beyond just calling on the working classes to continue organizing for revolution against the entire ruling class while also struggling for reforms against those sections of the elites who oppose them—a prescription that rests on the common assumption that pushing for such reforms will necessarily enhance the capacity of the working-classes and progressive elites to push for reforms or more radical changes down the line.

It is still not enough to grasp how the economic system sets limits to our ability to remold the normative environment that, in turn, circumscribes our ability to modify institutions; it is also necessary to grasp why efforts to change this system have foundered. This requires understanding not just how those driven to keep the system unchanged have tried to vanquish those who seek to change the system but also how the latter failed to successfully fight back.

Toward an integrative theory of climate change

All of the prevailing theories of climate change offer helpful but ultimately only partial understandings of why climate change is happening and why we have so far failed to stop or

¹³ Bond 2012b.

limit it. The rationalist theories take us forward by investigating the institutional failures that have hindered our ability to change market rules. The sociological theories move us beyond the limits of rationalist theories by examining the cultural failures that have inhibited attempts to modify institutions. The political economy theories take us farthest by studying the systemic failures that have constrained attempts to institutionalize new, ecological values and rationalities. But all fail to adequately explain the causes of these institutional, cultural, and systemic failures, and all fail to account for why alternative possibilities were not taken.

As a result, none of these theories also take us very far in suggesting how we can do better or how we can realize those alternative possibilities. The rationalist theories imply that we should rally behind those officials, business leaders, and experts calling for institutional modifications to correct market failures and push them to take on those other officials, business leaders, and experts blocking those modifications. The sociological theories suggest that we should partner with those “reflexive” elites in favor of new norms and push them to struggle against those “anti-reflexive” elites attached to old norms. The political economy theories go farther in suggesting that we push for reforms against the more conservative elites while also pushing for more radical change against the entire ruling class. But all ultimately do not go very far in specifying under what conditions we could overcome the opposition of all those blocking these institutional, cultural, or systemic changes.

In order to go even farther, it is necessary to further develop the rational kernel contained in all these theories while overcoming their limitations. We need, in particular, to build on the approach that takes us farthest, the political economy theories, but go beyond it by explaining what they neglect to explain: the deeper causes of our failure to reform or transcend capitalism. That means our task should be to examine why the world’s dominated classes failed to prevail over the dominant classes opposed to radical change and why even the “progressive” sections of the world’s dominant classes failed to prevail over the regressive sections opposed to limited reforms. Building on the assumption that our ways of organizing production are themselves structured by conflicts and compromises, we must investigate how struggles on the world stage have constrained our ability to change our social relations, remold our values, and reconfigure our institutions. In short, we need to delve into what the political economy approaches still leave unexamined: the political origins of climate change.

In the next chapter, I argue that we need to further develop Gramsci’s concept of “passive revolution” to go about accomplishing this task. Here and in subsequent chapters, I will then show how the theories of climate change we just discussed are themselves very much part of the struggles we need to analyze to better understand why we have failed to limit climate change.

CHAPTER 2: Toward a theory of passive revolution on the world stage

Starting in the late 1960s, many of the same scientists, experts, officials and activists who began calling attention to global environmental problems, including what would later be known as “climate change,” also began pushing for different solutions to address them. As I shall show in the coming chapters, some—mainly those who hailed from dominated groups from various countries—started gaining more support for their demand to radically reform or abolish capitalist social relations altogether; others—mainly those who hailed from the upper classes—also started gaining support for their proposal to at least reform capitalism. And yet, after around five decades, neither appears to have succeeded in carrying out their solutions. Why? How do we account for the failure of subordinate groups to prevail over the dominant classes opposed to radical change as well as the failure of “progressive” elites to prevail over the regressive sections of the dominant classes opposed to even just limited reforms? Why have extreme, neoliberal solutions prevailed over the more progressive or radical solutions that progressive elites and radical forces have been pushing for as global society’s dominant response to climate change? Under what conditions do attempts to reform or transcend capitalism founder and under what conditions might they succeed?

In the previous chapter, I argued that these particular questions raised by the political-economy theories are key to understanding why we have failed to stop climate change but that even the political economy theories do not take us very far in answering them. In this chapter, I propose a framework for pursuing the questions they leave unanswered by further developing the concept of “passive revolution” formulated by Gramsci and deployed by “neo-Gramscians” to analyze global politics. I argue that this concept helps us overcome the limits of the political economy approaches but that for us to go farther, we still need to do what neo-Gramscians neglect to do: examine the micro-dynamics of class struggle on the world stage.

I proceed as follows: First, I will explain how the category of passive revolution allows us to go beyond the limits of political economy theories. Then I proceed to tackle the limits of existing studies of passive revolution. Finally, I discuss how I propose to go beyond those limits so as to better understand the political origins of climate change.

The promise of ‘passive revolution’

The concept of “passive revolution” was initially put forward by Antonio Gramsci to account for how the bourgeoisie in Italy and other countries prevented the outbreak of radical popular challenges during the rise of capitalism in Europe in the nineteenth century, and then to understand the changes in France and other countries over the nineteenth century. But he later extended the concept to shed light on how the bourgeoisie pacify and subdue revolutionary forces to reproduce bourgeois states and maintain hegemony during the global expansion of capitalism in the era of imperialism and later historical periods.¹ In so doing, he developed “passive revolution” as a spatio-historical and comparative concept to explain why an alternative historical possibility—the outbreak of revolution and the transition from capitalism to socialism—was not realized in various countries and across the world.

According to Gramsci, the bourgeoisie had managed to keep a lid on revolution and remain in power not just by repressing, corrupting or defrauding the dominated or “subaltern

¹ For more on Gramsci’s notion of “passive revolution,” see Buci-Glucksmann 1979; Coutinho 2012; Thomas 2009a, 2013.

classes” or “subaltern social groups” but by securing their active or passive consent—or by organizing and achieving what he called “hegemony.” By “subaltern social groups” or “subaltern classes, Gramsci is referring not just to those unorganized or subordinate groups “who cannot speak,” as per Spivak (1999, 2010), but to all who suffer from different kinds and degrees of subordination or oppression and who have achieved varying levels of organization at a specific historical context, including but not limited to the “proletariat” or the working classes.²

For Gramsci, the bourgeoisie first managed to achieve hegemony in France by waging “active revolution” against the pre-capitalist dominant classes and pushing for “revolutionary” or systemic changes that sought to break the power of the pre-capitalist ruling classes, thus enabling them to win the support of the subaltern groups. They then subsequently managed to maintain this hegemony by constructing what he called the “integral state”: that is, they transformed the state from being merely an instrument of coercion or repression forcing all subaltern groups to submit to their rule through the apparatuses of government and other institutions operating in what Gramsci conceptualized as “political society” into a network of social relations pushing, prodding or persuading subaltern groups to passively or actively consent to their rule through the private organizations, associations, and other institutions operating in what Gramsci conceptualized as “civil society”— while still threatening or using violence against them should they refuse to consent. In so doing, they managed to shape the conceptions or the visions of the social world and therefore the subjectivities of subaltern groups, incorporating them as part of a bloc or an “intellectual and moral unity” under their leadership, thereby securing their passive or active cooperation and preventing them from resisting their rule.³

As they worked to reproduce the conditions for the accumulation of capital, ceased to be a revolutionary force and failed to back their claim of advancing universal interests, however, Gramsci argued, the bourgeoisie experienced what he conceptualized as an “organic crises” stemming from capitalism’s structural contradictions. Breaking with other Marxists who tended to reduce the problems that the bourgeoisie face to economic crisis, Gramsci put forward the concept of “organic crisis” to insist that the bourgeoisie tended to face not just economic but also *political* crisis, or what he called a “crisis of hegemony” or a “crisis of authority”: those moments or situations when, in Gramsci’s (1971:275-276) words, “great masses had become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believed what they used to believe previously,” or when the subaltern groups question the categories or visions of the social world propagated or inculcated in them by the bourgeoisie.

Such crises, having to do not just with capitalism’s economic ‘content’ but its political ‘form,’ open up the possibility for subaltern groups to shake off “common sense”⁴ or the conceptions of the world propagated by the bourgeoisie, and achieve ‘catharsis.’ This creates the conditions for subaltern groups to go through that radical emotional or psychological break from what he called the “economic-corporative” phase, in which they perceive and seek to advance only their particular group interests through reforms within the framework of capitalism, towards

² For more on Gramsci’s concept of “subaltern social groups,” see Gramsci 1975:2279-94; Green 2002; Thomas 2015.

³ As a number of commentators have pointed out, Gramsci’s understanding of class struggle has important affinities with—but also important differences from—Bourdieu’s (1984, 1991, 1999) notion of “classificatory struggles” (see Burawoy & von Holdt 2012; de Leon et al 2007, 2015; Tugal 2009) Like Bourdieu, Gramsci also saw social classes as the products and the objects of struggles between dominant and dominated groups seeking to impose their vision of the social world or their “classificatory schemes” on others. In contrast to Bourdieu, however, Gramsci sees the dominated as more active participants in these struggles, more capable of understanding and acting upon their conditions—and, thus, of contesting or resisting the classificatory schemes being instilled in them by the dominant.

⁴ Gramsci 1979:330-331.

the “hegemonic” phase, in which they recognize and seek to advance universal interests through the supersession or transformation of capitalism. In these conditions, revolutionary forces can seize the initiative and build a different or alternative hegemony.

Gramsci argued that, faced with this more all-encompassing and typically more protracted crises, the bourgeoisie did not simply wage counter-revolution or counter-reformation. Instead, certain fractions of the bourgeoisie carried out “passive revolutions” in an attempt to secure not just the economic but also the political preconditions for continued capital accumulation. They did this by waging political and ideological offensive against revolutionary forces on the terrain of what Gramsci called the “incurable structural contradictions” of capitalism but “in the context of a higher plane than the immediate world economy.”⁵ They pushed for limited reforms and concessions to subaltern groups—but in ways that reduced the latter to playing subordinate rather than leading roles and without going so far as to push for even more comprehensive reforms or changes that could be resisted by other fractions of the dominant classes and therefore erode their hegemony over these other dominant-class fractions.

By agreeing to compromises with subordinate groups, Gramsci contended, the dominant classes managed to pacify subaltern groups and ‘absorb’ their leaders and later entire organizations into their side. In so doing, they also succeeded in preventing subordinate groups from experiencing catharsis and breaking with their visions of the social world. They kept them as part of a bloc or an “intellectual and moral unity” under their leadership, stopping them from joining the bloc that the revolutionary proletariat were trying to forge. Consequently, they prevented revolutionary forces from building an alternative hegemony on the terrain of civil society and from taking over the institutions of political society which ultimately back bourgeois hegemony through the use or threat of force.

But, by failing to push for even more reforms and concessions in order to secure their hegemony over the other fractions of the dominant classes, they also only managed to organize a weak, “fractured,” or “minimal hegemony” (Morton 2007:107) over the dominated classes —just ‘enough’ to contain revolution but not to resolve the crisis of authority and construct a new hegemony. Pressed to push for reforms to secure some degree of consent from subordinate groups, they managed to maintain hegemony; but pressed to limit their reforms to secure some degree of consent from other elite fractions, they managed to secure only a limited hegemony.

Thus, Gramsci argued that, confronted with an organic crisis as workers revolted across Europe in 1848 and again in the 1870s, after the Paris Commune was crushed, some capitalist fractions in various countries across Europe carried out passive revolution by introducing certain ‘reforms from above,’ thus breaking the back of the radical workers and staving off the threat of revolutionary transformation but without completely extinguishing it altogether. Then later, confronted with organic crisis again as the Bolsheviks gained power and roused subaltern groups worldwide to wage revolution across countries, capitalists in various countries again carried out passive revolution—what Thomas (2012:155) called a “passive revolution within a passive revolution”—by moving towards state planning and adopting other reforms but without going so far as to resolve the contradictions of capital, thereby containing the spread of communism and again averting radical change from below but without securing more solid consent from subaltern groups. Such was how the bourgeoisie “succeed[ed], even in the historical phase in which it has ceased to be a properly revolutionary class, to produce socio-political

⁵ Gramsci 1971:178, 184.

transformations...conserving securely in its own hands power, initiative and hegemony, and leaving the working classes in their condition of subalternity.”⁶

Building on these insights, other scholars have further developed and extended the concept of passive revolution to explain why attempts to supersede or radically reform capitalism still failed to gain more ground *within* particular countries in subsequent historical periods. Breaking with studies of hegemony that focus largely if not exclusively on “the national” or on local politics, Morton (2007) has emphasized the part played by “the international” or by extra-local forces in shaping how dominant groups have sought to carry out—and how dominant groups have responded to—passive revolution at the national level. Arguing against analyses that proceed from limited understandings of space and that focus exclusively on class, Hart (2014) has stressed the importance of the production of space and articulations of race and gender with class in grasping the character and trajectory of passive revolution in particular countries. Challenging understandings of hegemony as something achieved only or primarily by what Gramsci conceptualized as “civil society,” Tugal (2009) has underscored the central but largely overlooked role played by political parties and other sociopolitical movement organizations that constitute leadership and authority figures—what he re-conceptualizes as “political society”—in absorbing revolutionaries and linking civil society to the state.⁷

Meanwhile, others such as Cox, Gill, Arrighi and Silver and other “neo-Gramscians” grounded in International Relations went beyond Gramsci by examining the “international situation” on its own terms.⁸ They have argued that, as capitalism has expanded globally, the dominant classes have also waged passive revolution not only at the national level but at the global level, or on the world stage, as well.⁹ Arrighi, along with Silver, for example, has argued that the threat of revolution that began to spread worldwide in the early twentieth century failed to gain more ground not just because of the structure of the world-system, as world-system theorists suggest, but because, faced with a crisis of accumulation and a crisis of hegemony, the “most enlightened fractions of the US ruling elite” waged passive revolution: they stepped forward and organized “the leading ‘groups, sectors, and classes’ of world society” as well as members of the subordinate strata to embark on “the most ambitious political project ever conceived in human history: the creation of a world state.”¹⁰ Seeking to modernize social relations within and across countries, these “enlightened fractions” championed the demands of the middle classes, the working classes and the peasantry in advanced and post-colonial countries by laying the ground for a global “warfare-welfare” state that promoted “near full-employment” and “high mass consumption” in the advanced capitalist states and “developmentalism” in the Third World. In so doing, they succeeded in incorporating the subordinate groups, thus containing the threat of global revolution, and keeping the dominated classes in their condition of

⁶ Losurdo 1997, quoted in Thomas 2009a:147

⁷ For other studies that examine passive revolution in various countries, see Bassett 2008; Chatterjee 1986; Hesketh & Morton 2014; Riley & Desai 2007; Satgar 2008.

⁸ This is not to say that Gramsci ignored the “international” or the “global” in his analysis. Indeed, Gramsci always emphasized the international dimensions of social transformations and was especially sensitive to issues of scale and space in his analyses of national politics (see Said 2001; Jessop 2006; Morton 2007). Still, he (and other Gramscians) focused on “how the international situation should be considered in its national aspect” (Gramsci 1971:240)—not how the international situation should be considered in its *international* aspect.

⁹ Arrighi 1983, 1994, 2004, 2007; Arrighi & Silver 1999; Arrighi et al. 1989; Cox 1983, 1987; Gill 1990; Gill & Law 1993; Robinson 2004, 2005, 2007; Silver & Arrighi 2007. For “world-system” theories, see Wallerstein 1974; Chase-Dunn & Grimes 1995.

¹⁰ Arrighi 1994:67; 2007:249; see also Arrighi & Silver 1999; Silver & Arrighi 2007.

subalternity. Others, like Cox, Gill, and Robinson, have, in varying accounts, also similarly proposed that revolution stalled *across* countries because capitalists succeeded in mobilizing other dominant groups and members of dominated classes across countries to “revolutionize” or structure global capitalism in order to entrench rather than overthrow capitalist social relations.

Though none directly address climate change, all these “neo-Gramscian” theories of passive revolution grounded in International Relations take us beyond the limits of political economy approaches to climate change because they begin to help us answer the question the latter leave unanswered: why subaltern groups failed to overcome the opposition of the dominant classes to the radical transformations needed to address climate change at the global level.

Unlike prevailing political economy theories of climate change, they help us understand why alternative historical possibilities were not realized by pushing us not only to pay closer attention to politics, or to add it as another additional variable when explaining historical outcomes, but to analyze it as something that is deeply intertwined with and mutually constitutive of the “economic” or the “base” rather than as a separate sphere that is reducible to or completely dependent on it.¹¹ Instead of simply blaming our failure to address climate change on economic or structural conditions, they compel us to investigate what Gramsci (1971:175-185) called the “relations of forces,” or to examine the degrees of cohesion or organization of different social groups and, thus, their capacity to counter or overcome other groups in the face of climate change. Unlike prevailing political economy approaches to climate change, they lead us to pay attention to space and history to examine why—despite having similar lived experiences or despite having similar interests in the economic arena—the dominated end up not forming, and not acting as, a class-for-itself whose interests impel it to overthrow capitalism in the face of spatio-historical changes that give rise to historically- and geographically particular political and economic configurations. They prod us to investigate why or how, despite the environmental and other problems they faced, members of subaltern groups within and across countries do not see their interests as antagonistic to the interests of the dominant, why they do not see themselves as belonging to a (transnational) collective different from and opposed to the transnational collective of the dominant classes and, thus, why they actively rally instead behind the bourgeoisie and thus, fail to wage an “active revolution” in the face of what many consider to be the greatest or most serious threat to life in the planet.

Passive revolution, they all suggest, is one of the contingent ways by which the dominant classes has responded to organic crisis and sought to secure or reproduce minimal hegemony over subaltern groups on a terrain that has itself been shaped by the outcome of historical struggles for hegemony within and across countries. It is a *process* by which hegemony, or more precisely, a particular kind of hegemony—a fractured hegemony—is organized across time and space. It can be considered “successful” insofar as the subordinate groups end up being disorganized and prevented from waging revolution; it can be considered a “failure” when consent fails to be secured and when subordinate groups continue to grow more organized despite attempts to disaggregate them.

Subaltern groups have failed to carry out the systemic changes required to stop or limit climate change, they all commonly suggest, because the dominant classes chose to wage a successful passive revolution on the world stage, enabling them to secure a fractured hegemony and to prevent the dominant classes from building an alternative hegemony on the global arena,

¹¹ For Gramsci’s conceptualization of these linkages, see Thomas 2009b; Kipfer & Hart 2013.

thus weakening the latter's ability to radically reform or transcend capitalism and therefore carry out the transformations needed to stop or limit climate change.

The limits of 'passive revolution'

But explaining how the dominant attempt to prevent the dominated from transforming into a political force remains only part of the explanation.

In order to go even farther in understanding why certain historical possibilities were taken or not taken, we still need to explain two things: First, why have subaltern groups been unable to counteract these attempts by dominant-class fractions to block more radical change to address climate change on the world stage? Or why have the dominant classes' push for reforms and concessions led to the dissipation rather than the consolidation of revolutionary forces? Why, in the face of 'reformism' from above, have they failed to pursue revolution-through-reforms? Why did they fail to build an alternative hegemony over subaltern groups? Why or how, in short, did passive revolution "succeed"?

Second, why have even the dominant-class fractions pushing for reforms failed to counteract the attempts of the other dominant-class fractions to block the more limited reforms they were proposing? Why, in the face of revolutionary retreat, did they fail to push for even more expansive reforms to address climate change? Put differently: why did their push for reforms led to the dissipation rather than consolidation of reformist forces? Why, in short, did the success of "passive revolution" led to the containment of passive revolution itself?

Answering these two questions in turn is necessary for answering our larger question: Under what conditions can struggles by the dominated foster their own ability to create the conditions for transforming or superseding capitalism—as well as the ability of the dominant to carry out reforms within the framework of capitalism?

We have gone far in understanding the mechanisms or the means by which dominant-class fractions carry out passive revolutions, but we will still need to go farther in understanding why it has the impacts or consequences it had. We know more about why and how dominant class-fractions mobilize to carry out passive revolution, but we still need to know more about why and how subaltern groups mobilize (or fail to mobilize) to counter these efforts to contain and disaggregate them, as well as why the dominant-class fractions themselves mobilize (or fail to mobilize) to counter efforts by other dominant-class fractions to block their efforts to contain and disaggregate subaltern groups.

Existing accounts of passive revolution can only go so far in helping us answer these questions, and thus in understanding why certain historical outcomes prevailed over the alternatives, however, because while they underscore the centrality of global politics and of transnational class struggles in shaping historical outcomes, they have so far neglected to examine how the groups or classes engaged in struggle have struggled to form, organize or maintain (or to break apart, disorganize, or dissolve) the very forces engaged in struggle on the world stage. And in so doing, they also do not analyze how these groups trying to form/break apart, organize/disorganize, or maintain/dissolve the forces engaged in global politics have struggled over nature and, in so doing, also simultaneously struggled over meaning or over how to interpret nature and their struggles over it. In short, they can only take us so far in explaining why we have failed to stop or limit climate change they have so far neglected to examine the "micro-dynamics" of class struggles on the world stage.

While they examine how certain fractions of the dominated classes react to attempts by

subaltern groups to change social relations, they have typically neglected to examine systematically how the subaltern groups react back to passive revolution and how the dominant classes again react back in turn to the subaltern groups' reactions on the world stage. They investigate how dominant-class fractions work to disorganize the dominated classes, but they have so far failed to take the extra step of examining, first, what the dominated classes do in response to these attempts to disorganize them—and then what the dominated classes do in response to the dominated classes' response. In other words, they have neglected to analyze the relational *processes* of struggle within and between different groups fighting over nature—and over how to interpret nature and their struggles over it. As a result, they also only go so far in shedding light on how exactly passive revolution works to absorb challenges to the system and disorganize the subaltern groups while also preventing the resolution of organic crisis and the achievement of a more expansive hegemony.

To be sure, existing accounts of passive revolution do not entirely leave out the actions of subordinate groups in their accounts. Arrighi and Silver—perhaps the most attentive to the role of subordinate groups among the neo-Gramscians—underscores the importance of protest, rebellions, or uprisings by subordinate groups in driving certain fractions of the dominant classes to periodically reorganize the world-system. They show, for example, how the militancy of workers in the North as well as of other subordinate groups in the South in 60s and 70s triggered or exacerbated the economic and political crises that beset the US and other advanced economies starting in the 1970s and 1980s. But they do not go on to discuss how the subordinate groups managed to forge their unity and cohesion, how they struggled with each other, and how they overcame (or failed to overcome) their differences over how to respond to the US' promise of “developmentalism” in the South or “high mass consumption” in the North, to the “Thatcher-Reagan neoliberal counter-revolution” in the 1980s and what they consider to be the crumbling of hegemony and the onset of more dictatorial forms of supremacy after this period.¹² Similarly, Morton criticizes analysts who leave out resistance from below in their accounts and draws attention to how the Zapatistas fought back against the Mexican elites' resort to neoliberalism, but he neglects to examine how other subaltern groups responded to the same developments and how intra-dominated class struggles affected their ability to counter passive revolution.

To my knowledge, no analysis of passive revolution has inquired into how attempts at passive revolution shape relations among the dominated and how different subaltern groups fight back—or fail to fight back—against attempts by certain sections of the dominant classes to wage passive revolution. As a result, we also still have a limited understanding of why, instead of reinforcing their efforts to wage revolution in the face of the apparent willingness of certain fractions of the dominant classes to give concessions, subaltern groups backed off and revolutionary forces stalled.

Apart from not looking into how the dominated reacted to the dominant's moves, none of the existing analysis has also proceeded to look into how the dominant reacted to the dominated's moves. They have much to say about how attempts to change social relations by dominated classes affect intra-dominant class relations. Both Cox and Robinson, for example, point to the emergence of new cleavages among elites as certain dominant-class fractions attempt to construct an “international state” or a “transnational state” to reconfigure the existing “world order.” Along the same lines, Arrighi suggests that other more conservative members of the US

¹² Arrighi 1994; Arrighi & Silver 1999; Silver 2003; Silver & Arrighi 2007.

Congress and “US business” sought to moderate Roosevelt’s “revolutionary idealism” and his attempt to establish a global welfare state by replacing it with a “reformist realism” and pushing for a global “warfare-welfare state.” But neither Cox nor Robinson go into how the passive revolution’s disorganization of the dominated affected the dynamics between dominant groups. Even Arrighi does not tell us much about why and how those he calls the “reformists realists” battled it out with the “revolutionary idealists” in the wake of the demobilization of subordinate groups beginning in the 1980s—let alone about how the “reformists realists” and the “revolutionary idealists” battled it out against the non-reformist realists or the counter-revolutionary idealists. Similarly, though Morton underscores the centrality of Zapatista resistance to neoliberalism, he also neglects to analyze what effect this resistance had on the dominant classes and how it shaped the direction of passive revolution. To my knowledge, no account of passive revolution has looked into how attempts to counter passive revolution affect intra-dominant class relations and how different dominant-class fractions react to subaltern groups attempts or failure to wage active revolution. Consequently, all neglect to explain why, instead of pressing on in their push for reforms in the face of the subaltern groups’ disorganization, the dominant-class fractions waging passive revolution retreated and actually failed to bring about the reforms they sought.

In sum, existing studies of passive revolution do not go far enough in analyzing the “micro-dynamics” of struggle, or on the processes of struggle within and between different groups over nature and over meaning in the course of passive revolution: not just how changes in inter-class relations shape intra-dominated class relations but also how changes in intra-dominated class relations brought about by changes in intra-dominant class relations subsequently shape both inter-class and intra-dominant class relations.

But as a result, they are unable to help us shed more light on how the dominated groups’ attempts to resist hegemony may be “continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups”¹³ but also how the building of alternative hegemony is also constantly restarted, rebuilt, and revised. They neglect to examine how dominated groups repair (or fail to repair) the cohesion of the collectives or blocs they seek to forge in the face of continuing efforts or threats by the dominant groups to break them. More than that, they are also unable to help us shed more light on how attempts by dominant groups at breaking up efforts to build an alternative hegemony are also “continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own” and, thus, how hegemony too is also constantly “renewed, recreated, defended, and modified.”¹⁴ They neglect to examine how the dominant groups too seek to repair the cohesion of the blocs they seek to forge in the face of continuing efforts by the dominated to break away from them. And they are therefore unable to help us explain the crucial questions we need to answer: that is, why the dominated failed to defeat passive revolution and why even elites failed to defeat other elites’ attempts to counter passive revolution on the world stage.

But in not being able to answer these questions, they also cannot take us very far in elucidating the conditions under which struggles by subaltern groups against dominant groups result in the enhanced or diminished ability of the former to fight for more radical changes, on one hand, and in the enhanced or diminished ability of certain dominant-class fractions to reorganize capitalism, on the other. Consequently, they also cannot take us very far in explaining what kinds of political interventions are needed to create the conditions by which we might be

¹³ Gramsci 1971:55.

¹⁴ Williams 1977:112.

able to overcome our failure. They correctly alert us to the dangers of passive revolution and emphasize the need for waging active revolution through the construction of an alternative hegemony, but they fail to shed light on many of the practical dilemmas faced by subaltern groups in their daily struggles: How do we fight for limited reforms without undermining our ability to fight for more radical transformations to address climate change? Or how to, put it differently, can we advance the immediate interests of subaltern groups without also undermining their long-term interests? How do we struggle against the conservative elites who block even just limited reforms and immediate relief without also strengthening the other elites who support limited reforms but block more radical change? How, in short, do we engage—and win—short-term battles without losing the war in the face of our planetary emergency?

Towards an analysis of passive revolution on the world stage

In order for us to go farther in pursuing these questions, we need to build on existing theories of passive revolution by doing what they have neglected to do: We need to analyze not just how dominant groups have mobilized to disorganize dominated groups struggling for radical change but also how different sections of the dominated groups react to such attempts to disorganize them—and then how different sections of the dominant groups again react to them on the world stage. That is, we need to examine how intra-group or intra-class relations among subordinate groups shape intra-class relations among the dominant classes and how both intra-dominated and intra-dominant class relations shape the relations between dominant classes and subordinate groups at the global level.

But in order to do this, we need to examine not just how organized groups have struggled with each other but also how groups or classes engaged (or attempting to engage) in struggle have struggled to form, organize or maintain (or to break apart, disorganize, or dissolve) the very forces engaged (or that seek to be engaged) in struggle on the world stage in the face of other groups' attempts to do so. In other words, we need to analyze class struggles not just as “struggles *among* organized class forces” but as “struggles *about* class formation” as well (Przeworski 1985:79). This in turn requires that we analyze how these groups struggling over class have struggled over nature and, in so doing, also simultaneously struggled over meaning or over how to interpret nature and their struggles over it. In short, we need to examine the “micro-dynamics” of class struggles on the world stage in the face of global climate change—class struggles meaning struggles that are simultaneously struggles over class, nature, and meaning.

In pursuit of this task, we can draw some guidance and inspiration from other scholars who—even as they drew more from Bourdieu than from Gramsci—have, like Gramsci, also emphasized the need to investigate the links between macro-transformations and the micro-dynamics of global politics.¹⁵ Also appreciative of but dissatisfied with the structuralism of the ‘world-system’ tradition, they built on Bourdieu’s concepts to highlight the role of actors’ subjectivities, and the centrality of discourse and meaning, in their groundbreaking studies of state transformations. But unlike these scholars, our interest is in explaining how actors succeed or fail to form transnational coalitions behind specific global projects over how to organize nature. In answering this question, we start out from the view that ‘structural homologies’ or similarities in the social positions or material conditions may incline or predispose different actors from different countries to espouse similar ideas, as these scholars have argued, but they

¹⁵ Dezalay & Garth 2001; see also Guillot 2005.

do not explain why they actually join (or refuse to join) particular coalitions and rally behind particular projects instead of others. Hence, in contrast to these scholars, we still need to investigate what role deliberate organizing work—or what Gramsci called “intellectual and moral leadership”—plays in integrating actors from various countries and mobilizing them behind particular visions and agendas.

Such an analysis of the micro-dynamics of class struggle on the world stage is necessary because organizing (or disorganizing) classes, collectives, blocs or intellectual and moral unities is always a problematic and contradictory process—always prone to failing and to producing unintended results as groups and individuals interact and fight with each other over resources and over how to interpret their fights. As Gramsci underscored, dominated groups are “always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up.”¹⁶ But dominant groups too are also subject to the activity of dominated groups, even when they do not face outright rebellions: their attempts to renew, recreate, defend, and modify hegemony are also continually “interrupted” by the activity of dominated groups, even when they are not necessarily rebelling. Building hegemony or alternative hegemonies should therefore not be conceived of as a finished or settled project but as something that is always “in process.”¹⁷ It is “a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria...”¹⁸

Every move that a group waging or facing a passive revolution makes or fails to make—the demands they advance or fail to advance, the pronouncements they articulate or fail to articulate, the reforms they support or fail to support, the concessions they give/accept or fail to give/accept—opens up different roads or historic possibilities. They can break or solidify their unity and other groups’ unity, disrupt or maintain the equilibrium and therefore change the balance of forces at every turn. As soon as a group has managed to attract others and formed a bloc behind it to pursue a common project, it immediately faces the prospect of that bloc disintegrating as other groups continue to attempt to form their own blocs and entice people to join them. Similarly, as soon as one group has managed to drive others away from an existing bloc and to effectively destroy the unity of that bloc, it also immediately faces the prospect of that bloc reintegrating as others continue to attempt to re-form their bloc or form new ones and entice people to rejoin it. Identities, group loyalties, and political commitments to particular projects are thus always in flux—formed, broken, formed again—in the course of struggle. So, consequently, are people’s combativeness or their willingness to fight for particular projects and against particular enemies. The success of passive revolution is therefore never guaranteed just as the failure of active revolution is never a foregone conclusion. Cohesion can always break down but disorganization can also give way to organization. Hence, the need to pay closer attention to the contingent political choices made by groups waging or reacting to passive revolution as they attempt to form, defend, or reconstruct their cohesion in the face of other groups’ unrelenting attempts to attack or destroy them. Examining these choices is key because as Thomas has stressed:

Passive revolution had not been necessitated by the economic structure of bourgeois society or inscribed in modernity as its telos. Rather, its successful imposition had involved *conscious, political choices*: on the one hand, the choice of the ruling classes to develop strategies to disaggregate those working classes and confine them to an

¹⁶ Gramsci 1971:55.

¹⁷ Hall 1988.

¹⁸ Gramsci 1971:182.

economic-corporative level within the existing society, within determinate regimes of accumulation; on the other, the political choices of the subaltern classes that had resulted in a failure to elaborate their own hegemonic apparatuses capable of resisting the absorptive logic of the passive revolution [*italics mine*]¹⁹

To analyze these choices systematically, we need both a panoramic as well as a more microscopic examination of the struggles—or the battlefields—in which they were made.

First, we must identify the “leading personnel,” the “representatives,” or the “intellectuals” of different groups, investigate how they organized themselves across countries into “collective intellectuals,” “parties,” or “party-like” organizations, and look into who they represented or tried to represent. In doing this, we should bear in mind that “parties” can take many forms: they can be formal organizations but they can also be informal groupings or even charismatic personalities. As Gramsci, citing the examples of the Piedmontese state, the Freemasons, the Rotarians, the diplomats, and the newspapers, noted, very different agencies could act as “international political parties.”²⁰ The Piedmontese state, he observed, actually functioned as a party—but one that had an army, a diplomatic service, and other state apparatuses. Building on this, others have suggested that groups within organizations like the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, research centers and so on, should also be thought of as “parties” today.²¹ Following this, we can also consider as parties those constructivists call “discourse coalitions,” “transnational advocacy networks,” or networks of “norm entrepreneurs.”

What matters more is not what form parties take but what they do (or fail to do): As Gramsci had suggested and as scholars like Tugal, de Leon, and others, building on Bourdieu and others, have recently further elaborated, parties are the ones that attempt to ‘represent’ social groups not just in the sense of passively re-stating what these groups believe, need or aspire for but in the sense of actively shaping those beliefs, needs or aspirations, thereby co-constituting what is ‘presented’ in the course of being *re-presented*.²² Parties or party-like organizations are therefore not only “mechanical and passive expression” of classes, they also “react energetically upon them in order to develop, solidify, and universalize them.”²³ They are the ones who propose ways of making sense of otherwise chaotic reality, putting forward moral frameworks or schemas that are shaped by, but are not necessarily reducible to, their own class position or material conditions of existence. They are the ones who elaborate “conceptions of the world” which enable people to interpret how society works or what “nature” is, make sense of their lot, dream of a better life, and act on those dreams. In short, they are the ones who seek to shape how people see their identities, their interests, their desires and the ends against which they judge what their interests are and, thus, how they should act.

Though these parties do not create identities out of thin air, they are the ones who can make some identities appear more relevant than others. Though they do not form objective social divisions out of nothing, they are the ones who can make some social divisions appear more salient than others. Though they cannot create grievances *de novo*, they are the ones who aim at “arousing the passion of men and directing them towards a particular action,” at persuading them

¹⁹ Thomas 2009a:157

²⁰ Gramsci 1971:106, 182, 227, 336.

²¹ see Augelli and Murphy 1997:31-2; Morton 2007:208.

²² de Leon et al. 2009, 2015; Tugal 2009.

²³ Gramsci 1971:227.

to exert effort or make great sacrifices, at tapping their “reserves of moral strength” and at stirring their “fighting spirit” to keep engaging in struggle despite the difficulties.²⁴

Focused on these parties, “quasi-parties” or “party-like organizations,” we must then investigate the political terrain or plane on which they operated and the alternative historical possibilities they faced on this terrain: How do we characterize their own organization and those of their adversaries? How organized or disorganized were they behind particular goals—and how organized or disorganized were the other forces they were in struggle with? What were the alternative roads that were open given the prevailing relations of forces? What options were available to them as they grappled with these possibilities?

Having examined these options and possibilities, we must then examine how it is that these contending parties tried to forge a “collective will” on the political environment in which they operated: that is, how they strove to forge a broader collective out of the numerous otherwise isolated individuals from various countries and how they mobilized them to pursue their projects and fight against a particular set of antagonists given the organization of global society into different states. How did groups struggling over nature on local and national stages try to build (or break) global collectives or alliances on the world stage given that their interests and others’ interests in the global arena may not necessarily be the same as their interests in the local or national arenas? How, for example, did groups whose interests’ clash with other groups at the national level but whose interests may be compatible with these other groups at the global level form alliances or antagonisms at the global level? We need to reconstruct the manner and the method by which parties, working within the structures of the inter-state system, worked to “weld together with a single aim, on the basis of an equal and common conception of the world” a “multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims” given the possible specificities of the world stage as a terrain of political struggle.²⁵ It is necessary to investigate how they constructed a “cultural-social unity,” enabling different people with very different predispositions to act as a “collective man” and perform historical acts such as revolutions across countries. In short: we need to examine how they tried to transform a social group from “turbulent chaos” into an “organically prepared political army” in the international or transnational arena—a battlefield that is not necessarily just a larger scale-version of national or local arenas.²⁶

To do this, we must inquire into how parties attempted to fashion the ‘individual wills’ of all those they sought to unify through political ideologies that that seek “act on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will.”²⁷ We must investigate how they set out to work with, while also trying to transform, the conceptions of the world, the “understanding of self,” the values, and therefore the moral schemas with which people decide what to fight for, who to fight against and who to fight with. We need to study how they tried to get others to have the “desires” or the aversions they wanted them to have.²⁸ We need to examine how they tried to kindle or dampen particular kinds of antagonisms. We need to look into how they intervened in the “cultural battle to transform the popular ‘mentality’”: how they worked with, while at the same time trying to alter or reshape, people’s inclinations or beliefs, their “spontaneous” languages or interpretive systems, their unconscious or subconscious schemes of classifications or ways of giving order to and making sense of the world—not just their sense of what is logical

²⁴ Gramsci 1971:252, 88, 235.

²⁵ Gramsci 1971:349.

²⁶ Gramsci 1971:191.

²⁷ Gramsci 1971:349,125.

²⁸ Lukes 2005:27.

and illogical or what is realistic and not realistic but also their sense of what is right and wrong, what is just and unjust, what is desirable and undesirable, who are their ‘friends’ and their ‘antagonists.’²⁹ It is imperative that we scrutinize the content of the discourses that different groups articulated and propagated as they tried to work on—while also modifying—the cultural environment and therefore the “selves” or the subjectivities that are shaped by and that in turn shape this environment. In short, we need to examine systematically how they struggled over meaning as they struggled over nature or “the environment.”

That means we need to pay close attention to these parties’ narratives, story-lines, knowledge-claims as well as their non-speech acts, the spaces they occupy and refuse to occupy, their policy proposals, their political technologies, their rituals—even the academic or scientific theories that they articulate or mobilize about “the environment” or about climate change—because as Gramsci emphasized, and as Ives, Hart and others have recently underscored, language and translation—all the ways in which they spoke about climate change and sought to communicate or imprint certain messages and meanings to try to change how people think or feel about the matter—are crucial for understanding how social groups seek to reshape or transform “common sense” and mobilize them towards particular projects.³⁰ This also means treating as objects of our analysis the very explanations which scholars have put forward to explain why we have failed to limit climate change. For as Gramsci emphasized, science itself can be “‘political activity’ and political thought inasmuch as it transforms men, and makes them different from what they were before.”³¹

But it also requires paying close attention to the kinds of claims or discursive interventions made by non-scholars or activists outside the public domain, during their closed meetings or private interactions because, as Gramsci (1991:294) has also underscored, the subaltern groups and classes—with their varying capacities to organize and represent themselves—may sometimes “have no history: there are no traces of their history in the historical documents of the past.” Or, even when they leave traces, “the weak,” Scott has usefully reminded us, are often driven by the powerful to say different things in public and different things in more private settings, to make declarations that are more in accord with the expectations of the strong when the strong can hear and to make declarations that contradict such expectations when only the weak are listening.³² Hence the need to also go to the “back stage” to unearth and examine what Scott calls the “hidden transcript” of discursive struggles.

²⁹ The approach here is very similar to Hajer (1997:59) in that we conceive of climate change politics “as a struggle for discursive hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definition of reality.” Like Hajer, we seek to analyze how “discourse coalitions” form by developing particular ways of talking and thinking about “the environment.” In contrast to Hajer and others, however, we do not isolate this struggle for “discursive hegemony” from the broader struggle for hegemony: we locate this struggle in the context of a “passive revolution” at the global level and we examine efforts to build “discourse coalitions” as part of attempts by certain fractions of particular classes to build coalitions in support of their efforts to stabilize or transcend capitalism.

³⁰ Ives 2004; Hart 2013.

³¹ Gramsci 1971:244. Here it is important to avoid misunderstandings. We are not saying that scientists are simply being instrumentalized by parties or politicians. Like Guilhot (2005:102) and others who build on Bourdieu, we hold that scientific research does not simply follow the dictates of the powerful; scientists are also involved in their own internal struggles—ones which follow their own autonomous or semi-autonomous logic. We do not take this to mean, however, that scientists cannot or do not become involved in broader hegemonic struggles—not as stooges or paid agents of other forces but as actors or intellectuals in their own right. Whether they themselves actively take part in politics, and whether they intend it or not, their ideas are mobilized in complex and contradictory ways by actors seeking to forge collective wills.

³² Scott 1985.

To systematically analyze both open and hidden transcripts, we need to pursue the following particular questions: First, how or in what ways did the warring parties talk to people about their condition or their suffering? What underlying *moral diagnoses* of climate change did they advance in their analyses, policy proposals, laws and other actions? Differences in how parties speak of the causes of climate change can be decisive because it shapes how people act to address it. If parties tell people capitalism has nothing to do with the problem, for example, then people are also unlikely to call for reforming or overthrowing capitalism to address it.

Second, how or in what ways did parties try to motivate people to act on their condition or ease their suffering? How did they define what is ideal and what is possible or what can be most realistically hoped for under present conditions? What “concrete phantasies” or visions of the “good life” or the “good society” did they put forward as alternatives to existing society and what did they say were people required or obliged to do to realize these visions? What antagonisms did they kindle and what antagonisms did they try to dampen? What, in short, were their *moral prescriptions* for addressing climate change? Differences here can be critical because how parties talk about the solutions to the problem shape what solutions people actually espouse. Even if parties tell people climate change is caused by capitalist social relations, they are still unlikely to fight for radical change if the same parties also tell them that climate change can be addressed without immediately transcending capitalist social relations.

Third, how or in what ways did parties try to convince people to think of their selves or their interests in certain ways instead of others? What visions or images of society did they propagate and how did they locate, position, or “interpellate” individuals or groups in relation to other groups in the face of climate change? What identities did they invoke as they called upon people to act, and how did they define their interests in relation to the interests of other groups? In other words, what were the underlying *moral narratives* that they propagated when telling people about why they are suffering from climate change and what they can do about it: Did they portray it as a struggle between “North” and “South,” or a struggle between governments, a struggle between those in favor of “climate action” and fossil fuel interests, or a struggle between antagonistic classes? We need to make these portrayals and categorizations the object of our analyses—rather than simply adopting them to undertake our own analyses, as so many studies of climate politics do—because how parties speak of or describe politics can itself be decisive in shaping the course of politics. Whether parties depict society as classless or class-divided, or whether they try cast members of subordinate groups as “people,” as citizens of a harmonious North or of an internally-unified “Third World” or “One Earth” can determine whether, for example, Filipino workers fight for their interests primarily as “Filipinos”—and therefore also for the interests of Filipino capitalists—or whether they will march on the streets primarily as “workers” against the interests of Filipino capitalists.³³ Even if parties tell people that climate change is caused by capitalism and could only be addressed by changing the system, they are still unlikely to act as a class if the same parties do not mobilize them as workers.

Finally, how or in what ways did parties try to convince people to ally with or to antagonize certain individuals or groups? Who did they cast as “friends” and who did they cast as “foes,” as worthy or unworthy, as deserving or undeserving? Towards whom were they contentious and towards whom were they non-contentious? What, in short, were the underlying *moral categorizations* beneath their articulate or explicit moral diagnoses and prescriptions? We

³³ Przeworski & Sprague 1986:46.

need to ask this question because, as Laclau (1977) and others have emphasized, what matters is not just what identities parties appeal to in order to mobilize people, as Przeworski underlines, but also how they depict those identities in relation to others: whether as harmonious or as antagonistic—or even as harmonious today but as antagonistic tomorrow.³⁴ Even if parties interpellate Filipino workers as workers rather or more than as Filipinos, for example, they are still unlikely to fight the members of the dominant classes if the same parties also cast Filipino capitalists as their friends.

In answering these questions, it is important to pay close attention to the commonalities or convergences beneath the apparent differences in parties' discourse as they tried to organize themselves or disorganize others. As we shall see, for example, different groups advanced very different diagnoses of the causes of climate change so we need to ask: what are the underlying assumptions or categorizations that bind these different diagnoses and what political projects did they link them to? But it is also essential to scrutinize and flesh out the differences beneath apparent convergences as they tried to antagonize/ally with others. Different social groups all called for some kind of "system change" or some kind of "ecological modernization," but what exactly did each mean by "system change" or "ecological modernization" and what larger goals were they intertwined with? What forms of regulation did they prescribe and with what ends in mind? These are questions that existing analyses of climate politics fail to pursue in large part because of their inattention to the ways in which groups seek to re-articulate elements of each other's discourses—at times, deliberately obscuring or highlighting their divisions and unities—in order to build their forces and disorganize others.

Examining how different parties attempted to build up their "collective will" to fight is still not enough, however. We must also proceed to examine how they attempted to build up the "collective means" or the organizational ability by which to mobilize transnational cross-class political coalitions behind their political projects. For just as armies engaged in "wars of maneuver" need resources to buy weapons, feed the troops, and so on, groups seeking to engage in "wars of position" typically need material resources to recruit people and to engage in the day-to-day tasks of struggle—to attend conferences, publish books or reports, rent out offices, pay staff, or simply have time away from work needed to meet their subsistence needs.

Here, the disparities could not be starker and therefore need to be closely examined. As Gramsci who also once made a point of comparing the safe meeting rooms of the industrial and landowning bourgeoisie with the defenselessness of working-class premises, pointed out: "[A] class which has to work fixed hours every day cannot have permanent and specialized assault organizations—as can a class which has ample financial resources and all of whose members are not tied down by fixed work."³⁵ This is why we need to examine how, in the face of these disparities, different groups manage (or fail) to build their organizational capacity to engage in "organized combat," to borrow Hacker & Pierson's suggestive phrase.³⁶ How did they form, infiltrate, and direct local, national or international organizations so as to mobilize their resources? How did they try to capture government power? Or how, given their resources, did they try to build up the resources they need to wage or respond to passive revolution?

Finally, we need to investigate how different parties actually mobilized the collective will and the collective means they sought to forge to fight against their designated "enemies." How,

³⁴ Laclau 1977; Hall 1986; see also Hart 2013

³⁵ Gramsci 1971:232.

³⁶ Hacker & Pierson 2011.

after motivating them and equipping them with the resources they needed to engage in war, did they actually deploy their forces? Just because one designates a particular group as the enemy does not necessarily mean one will also aim all or most of one's limited firepower against them. We still need to ask: Who, given their goals and their assessment of the terrain, did they actually choose to use most of their firepower against and who did they spare? In answering this, it is important to avoid designating only some groups or movements as "contentious" and other groups as "non-contentious" or "conventional" *a priori*, as some studies of climate politics have,³⁷ because, insofar as they are engaged in struggle, all groups may be "contentious" and "non-contentious": they are hostile or confrontational towards some parties while accommodating towards others. The question that must be asked is: Towards whom were they antagonistic and towards whom they were friendly at different periods? And how did they order or persuade their partisans to aim their fire on some fronts instead of others?

What we must set out to do, in sum, is to examine how different forces fought the war on the global battlefields in the face of climate change: how they mobilized both the "collective means" as well as the "collective will" to wage long-drawn out passive/anti-passive revolutions—how they motivated their partisans to fight for certain goals, how they raised the various resources needed to engage in war, and how they actually deployed their forces. We need to analyze the "long ideological and political preparation" that groups carried out in order to "reawaken popular passions and enable them to be concentrated and brought simultaneously to detonation point,"³⁸ and we need to analyze how they actually 'detonated' those passions against their chosen adversaries.

The task, however, still does not end here. After examining how the leading personnel of different social groups attempted to suture different groups together by forging a collective will out of multiple dispersed wills, and by mobilizing the resources needed for them to engage in a struggle, it is still necessary to take the extra step of analyzing what effect their actions had on other groups and how other groups reacted to them, how they reacted back in kind, and how other groups again reacted to them. We need to examine what new possibilities each group opened up and how the other groups reacted to these new possibilities.

To do this, we have to examine the impact of a particular group's attempts to build intellectual and moral unity on intra-class, and inter-class relations. We have to ask: How did different groups react to other groups' attempts to either draw people to them or away from their side? What were the options they faced and how did they respond to these options? What material or symbolic concessions did they promise—or threaten to withhold—to attract people to their groups or to stop them from defecting to other groups? How did they reformulate their own discourses and re-mobilize resources in the face of these adjustments to the equilibrium? Or how, if at all, did they change their moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives, and prescriptions to secure or extend these concessions? Finally, what effect did their own reaction again have on the other groups? What were the choices they could have made and what did they choose to do? What concessions or rewards did they also promise—or threaten to withhold—to stop people from defecting to other groups? How, if at all, did the other groups also revise their projects, modify their discourses, and mobilize their resources? In short: we need to examine the choices they made as they struggled to constitute/reconstitute the very forces engaged in struggle.

³⁷ see, for example, Hadden 2015.

³⁸ Gramsci 1971:110.

In many ways, what we must set out to do is akin to—but different from—what social-movement scholars do when they study “social movements.” Like social-movement scholars, we must pose and answer the question of diagnostic or prognostic “framing,” or how movements define problems and solutions; the question of “resource mobilization,” or how movements create the infrastructure for mobilization by tapping networks, generating funds, etc. to sustain their organizations; the question of “political opportunities,” or how movements respond to changing conditions and possibilities; and the question of tactics, or how movements choose between “contentious” or “non-contentious” strategies to achieve their goals.³⁹

The key difference, however, is that we ask these questions in order to analyze class struggle in the broad sense of how different groups motivate people to fight, raise resources, respond to changing conditions, and frame reality as they struggle over class formation and over nature. This leads to other differences in our approach, among them, 1) our view of movements as class-differentiated entities wracked with internal conflicts rather than as internally unified collectives; 2) our view of “political opportunity structures” as products of historic struggles rather than as a given or as backgrounds; 3) our view of “framing” as attempts to shape people’s subjectivities and to defuse or kindle class antagonisms; and 4) our view of tactics as the result of struggles over how to respond to other groups’ moves rather than of changes in “network structure” or changes in “organizational ecology” or population.⁴⁰

Departing from the questions and assumptions of social-movement accounts, we have to study how groups engaged in historically-specific and historically-conditioned struggles moved (or failed to move) to motivate their troops to endure the tolls of siege warfare, how they tried to prevent them from abandoning their posts in the face of promises of concessions, benefits or other inducements offered by other groups, how they tried or failed to tap their reserves of moral strength to prevent disintegration and defeat in the face of global warming. We have to study how, in the face of setbacks or victories, each group moved (or failed to move) to push their forces to seize the moment, fire up their fighting spirit, and prevail.

Research strategy

To examine these micro-dynamics of class struggle on the world stage, it will not suffice to rely only on historical analysis or on secondary literature, as most neo-Gramscian studies of passive revolution on the world stage have done.

Using historical accounts allows us to identify the key actors involved, follow their actions and reactions, and even reconstruct their ideas and their changing discourses in the course of war, thus enabling us to advance a rich and layered account of how the struggle unfolded and why certain forces triumphed. But there is also much of crucial importance that we may be liable to miss because historical accounts are usually written by—or from the perspective of—the dominant and as Gramsci (1991:294) has also cautioned, subaltern’s views and voices have either been obscured or distorted in historical records. And even when such accounts are written by—or from the perspective of—the dominated and the subaltern write their own history,

³⁹ For a useful overview of how social-movement scholars have studied climate change politics, see Caniglia et al. 2015. On “resource mobilization,” see McCarthy & Zald 1977; on “political opportunity structures,” see Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; on “framing,” see Benford & Snow 2000; Snow 2004; Snow & Benford 1988. On the issue of tactics among climate justice movements, in particular, see Hadden 2015.

⁴⁰ For an excellent critique of the social movement literature’s failure to contextualize movement politics in class struggle, see Hetland & Goodwin 2013. For an example of an analysis that sees movements’ tactics as shaped by changes in network structure or ecology, see Hadden 2015.

we may still overlook two crucial things: On one hand, we may fail to notice the emerging conflicts or differences that groups may precisely be trying to downplay or defuse in order to forge unities—the tensions that they do not want to talk about or that they are trying to suppress both among themselves as well as to ‘outsiders’ in order not to sow internal discord, undermine ongoing attempts at alliance-building, or incur the ire of the strong; on the other hand, we may also miss the emerging convergences among groups as they try to foster antagonisms or distinguish themselves from other groups—the agreements that they would rather downplay or hide so as to prevent those elements opposed to the agreements to break away from their group, to keep the threat of antagonisms alive as possible leverage against adversaries, or so as to appease the strong.

As I realized in the course of my observations, such deeper disagreements-beneath-agreements or agreements-beneath-disagreements are not always immediately evident to historical analysts or observers—and indeed even to many of the participants themselves. This is in part because actors sometimes deliberately downplay them as they negotiate alliances with others in part to avoid incurring the wrath or the disapproval of the powerful, or to avoid losing some of the rewards that come with saying things they do not like to hear, but also in part because ‘outsiders’ need to have some level of understanding of the “subtexts,” the taken-for-granted assumptions, or the implicit meaning systems in these struggles—something that may take years of immersion to acquire.

To enhance our chances of uncovering these subtler conflicts beneath apparent concord or these hidden agreements beneath apparent discord, we need where possible to be there on the ground—not just on the front stage but also in what Scott (1985) calls the “backstage” of global politics, where people may say things different from what they say at the “front stage,” where the “hidden transcript” of interactions between the strong and the weak may often be found. But to better understand this transcript, we also need to learn both the open and “hidden” languages people use both on the front stage and the back stage of world politics.

Seeking to secure these open and hidden transcripts and to learn the language needed to decode them, I set out to attend and observe the official and unofficial or parallel meetings and activities during the UN intergovernmental negotiations on climate change, today one of the most important arenas on which different social groups from around the world regularly converge to push for their respective projects in the face of climate change. Here, in these microcosms of global society, different governments, NGOs, social movements, and other groups put forward their proposals and counter-proposals over how to address climate change and seek to draw support behind their proposals, thus giving us a rare opportunity to observe in one relatively enclosed setting how different “parties” actually engage in struggle on the world stage. As Smith and Wiest have noted, these conferences have become “particularly important sites of contention over competing values and interests”; they create “spaces where activists can come together around a shared agenda and a set of targets or goals.”⁴¹

Attending these negotiations as an accredited “observer” between 2011 and 2015, I observed and followed the official inter-governmental negotiations in the official conference venue and interviewed dozens of government officials, officials of international organizations, and civil society representatives and activists from various countries representing the key groupings in the struggle. At the same time, attending and participating as a “climate justice”

⁴¹ Smith and Wiest 2012:16.

activist, I also observed and participated in the “parallel” meetings and activities of the various other “non-state” actors seeking to influence (or discredit) the official negotiations. To access the “backstage,” however, I also joined these groups’ closed assemblies and activities as well as their informal discussions in the corridors, over dinner, in the trains on the way to their events, or on the streets as they march during demonstrations. In addition to engaging in countless informal conversations, I also supplemented my observations with more structured in-depth interviews.

The negotiations are also usually the moments when the network and its various constituent groups issue their ‘official’ reactions or positions on recent developments in the negotiations. I analyzed the extensive trail of reports, manifestoes, statements, official government submissions to the UN, and other public documents produced by the groups and individuals I was following. I listened to their various speeches and interventions or, in some cases, deciphered their graffiti and slogans as they engaged (or refused to engage) in the negotiations or as they took part in the broader public debates more generally.

In between the negotiations, I continued to closely follow the on-line conversations and debates of the groups I was following in between the negotiations by analyzing the traffic on the list-serves as well as monitoring the other public outlets (activist websites, zines, journals, etc.) where they carried on their debates at a more formal level. I joined and became a member of a workers’ group in the Philippines that was a member of a local climate justice coalition and observed how its members participated in the internal debates over how to respond to external developments or to the actions of other groups. At the same time, I also kept track of what the other forces were up to by relying on groups that specialize in monitoring climate-change related developments involving governments and international organizations.

But to locate the struggles I was witnessing in their larger historical context, or to trace how the cleavages and convergences I observed emerged and evolved prior to my observations, I also complemented and cross-checked my observations and interviews with archival research and historical analysis. I consulted and analyzed primary and secondary sources, such as previous international agreements, conference reports, manifestoes, declarations, memoirs, biographies, and so on.

All in all, I spent more than five years observing climate change politics at the national and global level in addition to all the years I was participating in it as a ‘full-time’ activist. I attended three UNFCCC “Conference of Parties” and “People’s Summits” and other “inter-sessional” meetings; participated in countless activists’ meetings and actions; conducted structured interviews with 70 respondents and informal interviews with dozens more (*See Appendix*); and analyzed several boxful of historical materials. The overarching goal in combining these qualitative methods was to collect relevant data allowing me to analyze how different groups attempted to build the political force needed to carry out their projects.

A note about quotations and attributions: I used people’s real names when citing statements made in the public domain, during the conferences or open meetings I observed or on published works or public documents. I also used the real names of interviewees who granted me explicit permission to identify them. Otherwise, I avoided identifying, or used made-up names for, those who talked to me in confidence, whose statements were made during closed meetings, or who interacted with me presuming privacy. I used quotation marks only when citing statements made in public or when using statements quoted in my transcripts.

Preview

To understand why we have failed to stop or limit climate change, we need to understand why we have failed to reform or transcend capitalism. But in order for us to do so, we need to examine the process by which different social groups built up or lost the “collective will” and the “collective means” to overcome their adversaries at the global level. Only by doing so can we better understand why the world’s subaltern groups failed to prevail over the dominant classes opposed to radically reforming or abolishing capitalism and why the progressive elites failed to prevail over other sections of the dominant classes opposed to reforming capitalism. In the following chapters, I set out to answer these questions by using interview data, field notes, and historical sources to examine the micro-dynamics of class struggle on the world stage. The diagram below summarizes these micro-dynamics:

	Subaltern groups	Dominant classes
Consolidation	<i>Chapter 3: Revolution</i> (mid 1960s to mid 1980s) CON ↔ MNL ↔ ENL	<i>Chapter 4: Passive Revolution</i> (late 1960s to late 1980s) CON + MNL ENL
	<hr/> eco-radicals + eco-reformists	<hr/> eco-radicals + eco-reformists
Disintegration	<i>Chapter 5: Containment of Revolution</i> (mid 1980s to present) CON + MNL ENL	<i>Chapter 6: Containment of Passive Revolution</i> (late 1980s to present) CON → MNL → ENL
	<hr/> eco-radicals ↔ eco-reformists ↔	<hr/> eco-radicals ↔ eco-reformists ↔

In this diagram, the highlighted text indicates the focus of each chapter: in Chapter 3, for example, my discussion will center on the “eco-radicals” and the “eco-reformists”; in Chapter 4, the discussion will shift towards the “conservationists” (CON), the “moderate neoliberals” (MNL), and their relationship with the “extreme neoliberals” (ENL). The arrows with arrowheads pointing to opposite directions signify growing fragmentation while the plus sign (“+”) signify growing cohesion. Arrows with arrowheads pointing to only one direction indicate movement towards a particular group: thus, in Chapter 5, I will discuss how more eco-radicals and eco-reformists moved towards the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals respectively; while in Chapter 6, I will discuss how more conservationists moved towards the moderate-neoliberals and more moderate neoliberals moved towards the extreme neoliberals.

First I focus in the next chapter, Chapter 3, on the relations among the subordinate groups and discuss how, instead of remaining fragmented as divisions among progressive elites deepened, subaltern groups began to be more organized behind the call for more radical changes as more “eco-radicals” and “eco-reformists” joined those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored competing—rather than cooperating with—the progressive elites for public support starting around the mid 1960s up to the mid 1980s.

In Chapter 4, I then analyze how these changes in the relations among the dominated groups shaped the relations among the dominant groups by examining how different sections of the world’s elites reacted to the eco-radicals and eco-reformists’ mobilization. I show how, rather than remaining disorganized as subaltern groups unified behind the eco-radicals and eco-reformists’ call for radical change, the dominant classes also became more organized behind the call for limited reforms as more of those we shall call the “conservationists” and “moderate neoliberals” joined those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored breaking—rather than partnering with—the more conservative elites and waging a global “passive revolution” to suppress subaltern insurgency starting around the late 1960s to the late 1980s.

In Chapter 5, I proceed to analyze how these changes in the relations among the dominated classes again affected the relations among the dominated classes by examining how different subordinate groups reacted to the dominant classes’ attempts to wage passive revolution. I show how, instead of continuing to consolidate as the dominant groups became more organized, the radical forces gradually dissipated as many eco-radicals and eco-reformists began to defect to those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who stood for cooperation rather than competition with the more progressive elites starting around the mid 1980s.

Finally, we turn our attention in Chapter 6 back to the relations among the dominant classes and examine the impact of the disorganization of subordinate groups on the dominant. I show how, rather than continuing to gain strength as the radical forces lost steam, the elite reformists also progressively collapsed as many progressive elites also began to switch their support to those conservationists and moderate neoliberals who argued in favor of compromise rather than confrontation with the more conservative elites starting around the late 1980s.

CHAPTER 3: ‘Active revolution’ on the world stage

From the 1940s to the 1960s, just as public concern over “the environment” began to mount first in the advanced capitalist countries and later even in the developing countries, the political and ideological ground on which members of both dominant and dominated classes began to shift. After more or less unifying behind far-reaching reforms, the dominant classes began to be more divided again within and across many countries as many “progressive” elites began choosing to accommodate rather than compete with the more conservative elites, thus making it more difficult for other progressive elites to build up the social force required to counter the opposition of more conservative elites to more reforms. At the same time, divisions among the dominated classes also deepened as many of those who called for more radical transformation began choosing to cooperate rather than compete with the more progressive elites, thus also making it more difficult for radical forces to accumulate and sustain the social force needed to counter the opposition of the dominant classes to radical transformations.

In this context, at least two roads were opened: With the dominant groups growing more fragmented, it was possible that the subaltern groups too could have remained disorganized, unable to build the social force needed to push for radical transformations by failing or refusing to use the dominant groups’ inability or refusal to grant more concessions in order to rally support for said transformations. In so doing, they could have closed off the possibility for the changes needed to address global environmental problems such as climate change. But it was also possible that the subaltern groups too could overcome their fragmentation, successfully building up the social force required to push for fundamental structural changes by using or taking advantage of the dominant groups’ failure to deliver on their promises to build support for said changes. In so doing, they could have opened up the possibility not just for radical transformations but for limited reforms to deal with the ecological crisis. In short: the disorganization of the dominant classes could have led either to the continued disorganization and passivity of the subaltern groups, i.e., to the continued failure of revolution, or to their stronger organization and activism, to the revival of revolution.

How did it happen that the second of these two roads was taken instead of the first? Why, instead of further splintering, did subaltern groups end up consolidating again behind radical change in many countries? How, in short, was the possibility of structural transformations for addressing climate change opened up?

To answer these questions, we begin by focusing on how changes in the relations among the dominant classes affected intra-subordinate class relations. I will argue that more radical transformations to address global environmental problems became more likely starting around the mid-1960s up to the early 1980s because instead of continuing to defer the fight for more radical transformations and pushing only for limited reforms, many of those we shall call the “eco-radicals” and the “eco-reformists” from the subaltern groups responded to the growing disorganization of the dominant classes during the 1950s and 1960s by reviving and stepping up their fight for more radical change. They chose to switch their support to those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored competing rather than cooperating with the more progressive elites by rejecting alliances with them, stifling antagonisms towards them, and effacing the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus ending these other eco-radicals’ and eco-reformists’ isolation and buttressing their ability to organize subordinate groups behind their push for far-reaching social transformations to address global ecological problems.

The consequences of a failing passive revolution

From the 1920s to the 1940s, the “progressive” sections of the dominant classes—or those we shall call the “conservationists” and the “moderate neoliberals”—succeeded in enjoining fellow members of the dominant classes to push for limited reforms to address “social problems,” including “environmental problems,” in many countries worldwide.¹ The “most enlightened fractions of the US ruling elite” stepped forward and organized “the leading ‘groups, sectors, and classes’ of world society” on “the most ambitious political project ever conceived in human history: the creation of a world state.”² As more and more members of the subordinate classes began to be attracted to the Soviet Union and the threat of global revolution grew, world leaders and experts like Roosevelt, Keynes, Rostow, Prebisch and many others began to champion the demands of the middle classes, the working classes and the peasantry in advanced and post-colonial countries by calling for the creation of a kind of ‘global welfare state’ to promote “full-employment” and “high mass consumption” in the advanced capitalist states, industrial policy in the defeated countries, and “developmentalism” in the Third World. Faced with intensifying labor militancy in the advanced countries and spreading communist revolution in the peripheral and semi-peripheral regions, elites in both developed and developing countries came together to build a more “labor friendly” regime on the world stage.³ At the same time, they also continued or stepped up their attempts to repress all those who continued to challenge capitalism or called for more far-reaching reforms by trying to crush “anti-systemic” movements.⁴ What some have billed the “Golden Age” of capitalism dawned: in many if not most developed and developing countries alike, economic growth increased, employment expanded, and wages rose even as many continued to suffer from unemployment and low incomes.⁵

Faced with this combination of concessions and coercive measures, subaltern groups also began to become more divided again from the 1940s to the 1960s. Many among those members of the dominated groups who have been pushing for far-reaching reforms or revolutionary changes—those we shall call the “eco-reformists” and the “eco-radicals” respectively—began to reevaluate their options and strategies.⁶ Many began to switch sides to support those other eco-reformists and eco-radicals who favored cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites, thus isolating those other radicals who favored continuing to compete with them, thereby undermining their ability to build the collective will and means needed to counter the opposition of the dominant classes to the radical changes they advocated.

But as the subaltern groups began to be more fragmented, more and more of these progressive elites also began to lose their appetite for giving more concessions to subordinate groups around the late 1940s to the late 1960s.

In the advanced capitalist countries, higher wages, greater work security, ballooning social welfare expenditures, plus increasing military spending to fight communist rebels and

¹ See, among others Claude 1956; Hirschman 1989; Ikenberry 1989; Maier 1987; Ruggie 1982; Schurmann 1974.

² Arrighi 1994:67; 2007:249; Silver & Arrighi 2007:329; Silver 2003; see also Moore 2015.

³ Zolberg 1995.

⁴ See also Arrighi & Silver 1999; Barraclough 1967; Cooper 1997; Hays 1999; Mauss 1972:586; Maxfield & Nolt 1990; Packenham 1973; Prashad 2008; Ruggie 1982; Seton-Watson 1967; Silver 2003; van der Pijl 1984.

⁵ Arrighi 2007; Bello et al. 1999; Frieden 2006.

⁶ Few of these “eco-radicals” or “eco-reformists” necessarily already talked about their critiques and projects in terms of the “environment”; nor did they necessarily speak of global warming and advanced solutions to it yet during this period. But insofar as their critiques and projects had implications or consequences on the environment and on global warming, I believe the labels are already warranted.

intimidate other radical-nationalist regimes were starting to take a toll on profits. In many developing countries, the contradictions of attempts at “import-substituting industrialization” were beginning to be felt. At the same time, the US-sponsored post-war rebuilding of the Japanese and European economies, along with the pursuit of developmentalism or industrialization by many “developing” countries, started intensifying competitive pressures in the world market. Growth rates began to taper in all but a few countries and regions. A worldwide “crisis of profitability” loomed large in the horizon.⁷

In this context, a growing number of elites in various countries started to withhold support for attempts of the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals to continue subjecting capital to various restrictions on property rights. In the US, more conservative elites began rallying behind members of the US establishment and “US business” who sought to moderate Roosevelt’s “revolutionary idealism” by replacing it with a “reformist realism.” They shunned and defeated proposals by progressive elites in the South to establish more interventionist international institutions.⁸ Everywhere, more and more elites began to doubt the wisdom of the “social compromise” they had entered to buy social peace and stave off revolution. Many began to defect from those progressive elites who favored continuing to challenge rather than partner with the more conservative elites, thus also isolating those other progressive elites who stood for continuing confrontation and eroding their ability to push for more reforms. Though still quite marginal, those we would call the “extreme neoliberals” would begin to organize and slowly attract a growing number of adherents from the 1950s onward.⁹

With the dominant classes’ flagging support for expanding the welfare state and restricting property rights more generally, the prospects of even more reforms being passed diminished even as social, particularly environmental, “problems” also began mounting during the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁰ The extent to which they suffered from environmental distress—and who among them in particular suffered—varied from country to country but in general, subordinate groups worldwide were threatened or negatively affected by growing pollution and worsening environmental conditions that came with capitalism’s “Golden Age.” As capital expanded across countries, many were dispossessed of access to fresh air, clean water, fertile lands, food sources, recreational facilities or other environmental amenities; exposed to greater risks; or effectively dealt with a kind of intangible ‘wage cut’ as they lived in more squalid neighborhoods, worked in toxic sweatshops, or spent more for health. Greenhouse gas emissions began to soar. Not just in the advanced capitalist states but even in the colonized or newly “independent” countries, members of the subordinate classes consequently grew ever more anxious about pollution, “acid rain,” contamination, and other environmental concerns. There was a “dramatic explosion of concern”¹¹ about the state of the environment worldwide.¹²

⁷ Arrighi 2007; Brenner 2003, 2006; Frieden 2006; Gowan 1999; Krippner 2011; Streeck 2014.

⁸ Arrighi 2007; see also Bello et al. 1999; Blyth 2002:94; Domhoff 1971; Frieden 2006; Gowan 1999; McQuaid 1982, 1994; Vogel 1989.

⁹ See Dezalay and Garth 2002; Mirowski and Plehwe 2009.

¹⁰ For more on these environmental problems worldwide, see Brechin & Kempton 1994; Caldwell & Weiland 1996; Doyle 2005; Egan 2007; Gottlieb 1993; Guha 2000; Hays 1989; Mauss 1975; McCormick 1989; O’Riordan 1981; Worster 1993.

¹¹ Vogel 1986:39, 250.

¹² For indicators of the worldwide explosion of environmental concern in the 60s and 70s, see Brechin & Kempton 1994:265; Buttel & Flinn 1974, 1976; 1978; Carmichael et al. 2012; Doyle 2005:2; Doyle & McGregor 2014; Douglas & Wildavsky 1983:10; Egan 2007:86; Gale 1983:192; Hays 1989:55; Mauss 1975; Mandel 1972:387; McCormick 1989:46-49; O’Riordan 1979:419; Sills 1975:2; Worster 1993:340.

Faced with this changing political terrain, the “eco-reformists” and the “eco-radicals” respectively began to reevaluate their options and strategies.

Unlike the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals, many if not most of these eco-reformists and eco-radicals generally belonged to the ranks of those who owned relatively small or no property at all. None owned or ran large factories, vast tracts of land, or significant shares in any corporation. A significant number, especially among the eco-radicals, hailed from working-class families, received little formal education or graduated from less prestigious universities, worked as blue-collar workers or as professionals in dominated fields, had limited social networks, belonged to stigmatized groups (Jewish, brown, immigrant etc.), and therefore possessed little cultural and social capital.¹³

For example, Murray Bookchin, who was to be one of the most influential radical-environmentalist thinkers of this period and who went on to form or inspire the formation of various radical collectives and organizations, was born to poor Jewish immigrant parents who sometimes could not even afford rent, never finished college and worked as foundry-man before writing books and becoming a teacher at “alternative” universities.¹⁴ Huey Newton, a leader of the Black Panther party who called for environmental issues be highlighted in the party’s program, also eventually earned a PhD but in the relatively dominated field of ‘social philosophy.’ Many others from the South came from similar backgrounds. Perhaps the most well-known was Chico Mendes: a communist party member who went on to found a national rubber tapper’s union and played a key role in the broader Brazilian left, was born to a family of rubber-tappers and who himself started working as rubber tapper at the age of 9.¹⁵ Barry Commoner, who also became among the most famous proponents of radical environmentalism and who went on to found various environmentalist organizations, earned a PhD from Harvard but worked in the field of biology, a relatively dominated field compared to chemistry or nuclear physics, and taught at a second-tier university; he also came from Jewish immigrant families who lived in the inner city. NL, a key leader of a radical group that has played a key role in the anti-dictatorship and other movements in the Philippines, also went to the country’s prestigious state university, but she too hailed from a middle-class professional family. DL, the leader of a national workers’ group in the Philippines which helped form the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice and the Climate Justice Now! coalition came from a solid working-class background, like many other members of his group: he was born in a small rural town in the Philippines and forced to move to Manila eventually found work in a garments factory. Unlike many of the conservationists and moderate neoliberals, very few of the eco-radicals went to Yale or Oxford and studied law, medicine or physics.

Among the “eco-reformists,” many tended to be drawn from the middle- or even upper-middle class families few, if any, owned largely property or had significant stakes in business, let alone in multinational enterprises, like the conservationists or the moderate neoliberals. Many received more formal education (some from prestigious universities), had broader social networks, belonged to culturally-dominant groups (“white” rather than “people of color,” mostly male rather than female), worked as professionals or white-collar workers, and therefore had relatively more cultural and social capital compared to many eco-radicals—though still much less cultural and social capital compared to many “conservationists” and “moderate

¹³ Barry & Doherty 2001; Doherty 1999; Graeber 2004; Lowy 2015; Scarce 1990; interviews.

¹⁴ Biehl 2015.

¹⁵ Hecht & Cockburn 2010.

neoliberals.”¹⁶ Like many of the conservationists and moderate neoliberals, some even managed to go Harvard or their own country’s top educational institutions but they still had relatively much less success entering and occupying the highest positions in government, the largest corporations, the key philanthropic foundations, or the prestigious universities.

For example, David Brower, who would go on to found what was to become one of the largest international federation of environmentalist groups, hailed from a white middle-class family, lived in the middle-class suburbs of San Francisco, and went to a public high school then to UC Berkeley. Fred Krupp, the lawyer who would become president of EDF and who, as we shall see, will play a pivotal role in subsequent splits in the environmental movement, came from a similar background but got his degree from Yale. The famous founder of various “public-interest” organizations, Ralph Nader was a high-achieving student born to Lebanese immigrants but got admitted to Harvard. Victor Yannacone, who co-founded what was to become one of the most influential environmentalist organizations in the world, Environmental Defense Fund, was educated at a less prestigious law school and was born to Italian immigrants.

With the prospect of gaining more concessions diminishing and with the threats posed by environmental degradation increasing, a growing number of these eco-reformists and eco-radicals began to reassess the moral discourses they were diffusing to interpret and respond to environmental problems starting around the mid 1960s. They came to rethink and debate about what they should fight for, who they should fight with and who they should fight against.

The consolidation of eco-radicalism

Faced with increasingly disorganized forces to their right, a growing number of eco-radicals began to challenge the position of other eco-radicals who came to hold that they should first secure at least the limited reforms the conservationists were championing and that doing so required allying with them.¹⁷ Though they did not necessarily oppose limited reforms, they started to take the view that, in the face of the center and the center-right’s fragmentation, they should escalate their mobilizations to bring about more radical transformations. They did not necessarily all take the view that organized or state capitalism should not be defended against those who sought to move towards or establish laissez-faire capitalism, but they did begin to take the view that they should continue aiming for the establishment of socialism or post-capitalism as an immediate goal.¹⁸

The consolidation of eco-radical will

Thus, convinced that other eco-radicals and the broader public should prioritize the fight for

¹⁶ Buttel & Flinn 1976:478; Cotgrove 1982; Dowie 1995:30-31; Hays 1989; Jordan & Maloney 1997; Lazarus 2008:123; Mauss 1972; Mitchell 1989:98; Scarce 1990; Schnaiberg 1980:367; Vogel 1986:231; Weyler 2004:79; interviews. There have been fewer systematic studies on the class backgrounds of eco-reformists in developing countries, but the case of the Philippines and other countries I am more familiar with suggest that there is little reason to think that the over-all pattern would be different; see also Williams 1993; Hurrell 1992.

¹⁷ The “eco-radicals” refers broadly to what McCormick (1989:48) labels the “new environmentalists”; what Pepper (1996) calls “radical greens”; what Dryzek (1997) calls the “green radicals.”

¹⁸ This section draws mainly from my own analysis of the writings, declarations and other pronouncements of key reformist individuals and organizations as well as from interviews with present-day members of some of these organizations. I also drew from Barraclough 1987:226; Bjork 1996; Bond 2012; Bookchin [1965]:30; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005:202; Chatterton et al 2013; Devall 1992; Dobson 2000:175; Egan 2007; Hobsbawm 1996:445; Lowy 2015; McCormick 1989:ix; Mueller and Passadakis 2008; O’Connor 1998:288; Pepper 1996:31,45; Russell 2012; Scarce 1990; Wallerstein 1990:41; Watts 2001:176.

socialism against both neoliberals and conservationists, more eco-radicals joined in fanning the class antagonisms that other eco-radicals had come to defuse in the preceding decades.

Like the conservationists, they countered the neoliberals who would denied or downplayed the threats posed by global environmental problems by playing a leading role in warning people about the existence and severity of these problems. And like the conservationists, they told people they were suffering because of the failure to put in place the stronger institutions or rules needed to enhance the regulation of the market and the inter-state system, thereby allowing the “developed countries” or “big business” to dispossess them of their rightful share of the world’s ecological resources.

Different eco-radicals linked this failure to different other forms of domination. Some, like the “eco-feminists” attributed ecological degradation to “androcentrism” or men’s domination of women. “Deep ecologists” pointed to “anthropocentrism,” or to domination of “nature” by humanity in general.¹⁹ Anarchists placed the problems of bourgeois society as part of the broader problems with “hierarchical society.”²⁰ But all, in different ways, began building on the moral diagnoses that ecological problems were in one way or another rooted in capitalism.

Breaking with the conservationists, they began telling people they were being exposed to more pollution and degradation not just because of the lack of regulation of the market but because of the market system or because of capitalism itself, together with the patriarchal, racial, colonial and other relations of domination that capitalism combines with in its global operation and expansion. People were suffering, or they faced the prospect of suffering, from said problems, they argued, in large part because of a failure to put in place the post-capitalist social relations needed to underpin the kind of institutions or rules required to address climate change. As a group of young activists who disrupted and took over a preparatory youth conference for the first UN summit on the environment in 1972, argued: “[M]ost particular environmental problems are the result of the unequal distribution of wealth and power both nationally and internationally,” which in turn has to do with “the fact that production of economic goods is for the most part organized not with regard to human needs and the imperatives of the human environment, but for the sake of private gain or the achievement of military power.”²¹ Or as another group of activists which organized the first “counter-summits” parallel to the first UN conference on the environment in 1972 put it more bluntly: the “real cause of the problem” is “the profit motivation of the systems of production in the capitalist world.”²²

Under these systems, eco-radicals argued, property owners are constantly driven to prioritize profits over the well-being of nature and workers. Under this system too, they argued, only property owners, especially but not only “big business,” ultimately wielded veto power over the most important decisions affecting production, thus making genuine “participation” by non-property holders unrealizable. Government officials are unable to put in place the needed regulations to curb pollution, they held, not just because governments have been “captured” by a few “corporate interests” or by ‘bad capitalists,’ as conservationists were arguing, but because, under capitalism, entire states come to be “captured” by the bourgeoisie: they too come to have an interest in continued capital accumulation. It is this logic of capital that leads to the “mal-distribution” and the “overconsumption” that conservationists also argued to be the cause of

¹⁹ Dryzek 1997; Dobson 2000:7.

²⁰ Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: 196, 202; Dryzek 1997:175-180; Watts 2001:175; Cotgrove 1982:7.

²¹ Quoted in Bjork 2012.

²² Quoted in Bjork 2012.

environmental problems. Thus, using this diagnosis to intervene in the international environmental negotiations that will be launched in the early 1970s, they will stress that people were experiencing the impacts of global environmental problems such as climate change because of bourgeois control over the means of production and the consequent lack of authoritative international agreements and other measures that could constrain the elites from dispossessing subordinate groups of their rightful share of the world's resources.

In other words, many eco-radicals began to spread moral explanations that directly contradicted the conservationist view that the problem is rooted only in laissez-faire capitalism, or in a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the stronger rules needed to counteract market irrationalities. They did not necessarily all deny that the problem has to do with the lack of regulation of the market, as conservationists argued, but they also stressed that this lack of regulation stemmed from, or is intrinsic, to capitalism itself.

In line with these anti-capitalist moral diagnoses, these eco-radicals started telling people that while they could mitigate environmental problems by fighting for reforms and preventing the entrenchment of laissez faire capitalism, they could only end their suffering by fighting for the establishment of a socialist or post-capitalist society. The solution, according to the group of activists who organized the first “counter-summits” parallel to the first UN conference on the environment in 1972, entails “changing the modes of production” and this “implies a fundamental change in the socio-economic systems governing the means of production.”²³ But they also emphasized more strongly that the abolition of capitalism could only be a precondition for much larger changes. For people to really end their suffering, for them to achieve their broader interests, they also needed to challenge other forms of domination—including bureaucratic, patriarchal, racial and other forms of domination. As a coalition of radical groups stressed in their final declaration at the “People’s Summit” in Stockholm in 1972:

The overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a socialistically planned economy does not in itself imply a solution to environmental problems, but only that the potentials for such a solution are much more favorable.²⁴

Or as one radical student group in the US, Ecology Action East, put it: “[S]ocial institutions of domination and exploitation, from the patriarchal family to the modern nation-state must be dissolved.”²⁵ What is needed, in their view, is therefore not just a more progressive version of what would be later called “ecological modernization” but a different, because post-capitalist, kind of modernization, a new “mode of life” or a new “civilization” altogether, different from even the kind of social-democratic or state-socialist attempts at realizing such a civilization by moving away from these radicals’ commitment to growth or their “productivism” and authoritarianism, towards a commitment towards non-productivist, non-authoritarian values.

Consistent with these prescriptions, many eco-radicals started to highlight calls for new social relations that could underpin stronger, because post-capitalist, forms of regulation which impose maximum economic and symbolic costs on businesses. They generally rejected the minimal institutional modifications for correcting “market failures” that conservationists were promoting, particularly those “economic” or “market instruments” like emissions trading, charges, subsidies, and other similar market interventions that aim to minimize the amount of

²³ Quoted in Bjork 2012.

²⁴ Quoted in Weisberg 1972:37.

²⁵ quoted in Sills 1975:21

carbon or other resources emitted or used by firms by effectively putting a “price” on emissions.²⁶ For them, these instruments were objectionable not just because they were ineffective or unfair as tools for global environmental management and redistribution but because they were *too effective* in reinforcing capitalist relations.

Like many conservationists, they favored more direct or “non-market” regulation which they considered relatively more effective in driving the required capital re-allocations or technological innovations needed to significantly bring down emissions or reduce environmental impacts. But against conservationists, they also pointed out that, unless underlying property relations were changed, these regulations would constantly be undermined by capitalists and states pressed to maximize growth. Unless production decisions were taken out of the hands of capitalists, even these regulations would just constantly be violated and undermined by capitalists, leading to delays in carrying out the drastic actions needed to move away from fossil-fuel energy or dirty production. For them, international regulations that leave property relations undisturbed will only allow elites in all countries to shift the burden of reducing emissions to the poor. To the extent that they supported stronger “command-and-control” regulations, they also generally saw them only as less desirable alternatives. If these regulations were to be relied on at all, they insisted that they be carried out with the highest emission reductions targets possible and that the rules should be as strict as possible. In short, they too tolerated, or reluctantly supported the command-and-control regulations that would be favored by conservationists but only if the strongest restrictions were set and no flexibility were allowed.

Instead of the direct, non-market based and punitive but still comparatively lenient measures such as the imposition of emissions limits or fines and penalties that conservationists preferred, they promoted more direct, non-market based and punitive measures such as “socializing” the energy industry or the means of transportation so as to make rational planning possible. Instead of giving incentives or relying on price signals to redirect capital to cleaner technologies or energy sources, they called for imposing outright prohibitions on certain forms of production. Instead of only opposing specific dirty-energy projects, they opposed the private ownership of and control over energy altogether. Instead of calling only for state-directed efforts to promote renewable energy, they called for the public and democratic ownership and control of energy altogether. In short, instead of stronger regulations within the framework of capitalism, they called for a very different kind of regulation *outside* the framework of capitalism—that is, regulation through democratic, socialized decision-making over what to do with the surplus, where to ‘invest’ it, how to redistribute it, and so on—by forcing all capitalists to relinquish their monopoly over production decisions through social ownership over the means of production.

Like the conservationists, then, they called for more transfers of resources within and across countries. But, going beyond the conservationists, they also started calling for an even more radical form of redistribution—one which could compel dominant classes not just to channel more resources to the South or to the poor in the northern countries but to give up their control over the means of production altogether. Convinced that environmental problems have to do not just with what conservationists would call “mal-distribution,” they called for an even more radical version of the “new international economic order” (NIEO) being advocated by the conservationists, one that will not just revise the rules of trade between countries but that will

²⁶ On these “economic” or “market instruments,” see Andrews 2008:271; Cook 1988:61; Gomez-Baggethun 2010; Gorman & Solomon 2002:314; Hepburn 2007:376; Kelman 1981:133-149; Mackenzie 2009:153; Vlachou & Konstantinidis 2010; Voß 2007:335.

alter the very property relations underpinning said trade relations. They were not necessarily all opposed to the kind of international taxation schemes or other measures that would be advocated by conservationists to relax property rights so as to channel technology, finance, and other resources towards the poorer countries, but they would insist that these measures do not go far enough; what is needed is for bourgeois property rights to be abolished altogether. They did not necessarily thumb down proposals to establish new central international authorities that could impose and collect taxes on the use of the “global commons,” control “overconsumption” by the rich, and direct resources to poorer countries, but they also pushed for altogether new kinds of democratic transnational authorities premised on different property relations.

By repudiating conservationist moral diagnoses and prescriptions, however, they also thereby began to repudiate the conservationist moral narratives and categorizations underpinning these diagnoses and prescriptions. They did not necessarily all refrain from hailing people primarily as members of a global public, of developed and developing countries, of “local communities”—or of non-class collectives that excluded only all those opposed to laissez faire capitalism, as conservationists did. But against the conservationists, they also called on members of subordinate groups as—or *to be*—members of a global collective of the oppressed classes, genders, and other dominated groups whose interests were antagonistic to all those who seek to perpetuate capitalism—including members of dominant classes from their own countries. In other words, they depicted the people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included the “irresponsible” businesses, experts and officials who resisted socialism. They hailed people not just as part of developed or developing countries or of an “international community”—as Indians, as Americans, as employees or as shareholders, as customers or as service providers—but also as part of the oppressed classes—as peasants, as workers, or as middle-classes—united against all those business owners, officials, or other elites who favor capitalism. And instead of morally differentiating between the neoliberals and the conservationists, they began morally aggregating these groups by categorizing both as the enemies.

They did not necessarily suggest that the moral borders distinguishing between those who favor a less extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism and those who want state capitalism are meaningless. But, hoping to stop other non-elites and the broader public from allying with the conservationists, or trying to persuade them to keep antagonizing both conservationists as well as moderate neoliberals, they also chose to highlight the commonalities between those neoliberal elites who resisted even just limited regulation and those conservationist elites who championed them. Though they would not necessarily all say that the former were not more threatening, more aggressive, or more harmful to their interests than others, all pointed to and cast both as the ones who were less virtuous or un-virtuous, who were incapable of moral leadership. The relevant moral division, they argued, is not between the “good capitalists” and “bad capitalists,” or between the “good elites” and “bad elites” or between the elites of the “developed countries” and the elites of the “developing countries, but between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed.”

In other words, these eco-radicals began to contradict not only the moderate neoliberals but even the conservationists in morally classifying all those who opposed radical change rather than only those who opposed limited reforms as the ones that oppressed classes and the broader public should be fighting against, the ones they should be demonstrating or holding civil disobedience actions against, the ones toward whom they ought to be pouring their anger.

They contradicted the conservationists in arguing that the failure to put in place even just minimal regulations is the result of inherent contradictions between the interests of the public and capital—not just of the moral weakness on the part of the ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites.’ But they also contradicted them by designating all those opposed to radical transformation as the enemies. Though they too did not necessarily all see eye to eye on who among different capitalists and elites were most dangerous, all agreed that they should refuse to ally with or accommodate any of them because none could be counted upon to solve the problems.

These categorizations were evident, for example in the declaration put out by a group of young activists who mobilized and protested against the 1972 UN summit in the environment. First, they argued that the domination and exploitation of “people” by “other nations” has “sharpened the conflict of certain classes ruling over others in our respective societies in the underdeveloped as well as the industrialized regions of the world” and that this domination has its root in the “socio-economic system which allows and favors ‘development’ for one part of society at the expense of another.” Then they conclude by saying that:

[W]e do not believe that the United Nations organization will be able to find solutions to the problems of mankind so long as it is directed and controlled by the very powerful expansionist industrial and military states which oppress the peoples of the exploited world. It is absurd to expect the oppressors to initiate and implement the process of liberation of the oppressed. We assert that the problems of this world can only be solved by the people. Therefore we call on all the people of the world to intensify their struggle against the forces that oppress us.²⁷

Another group of activists, explaining the thinking of the groups planning to organize “alternative conferences” to the 1972 UN conference on the environment, explained: “the present environmental crisis is the result of a pattern of resource exploitation for profit for the few to the detriment of the many, and that pattern is an integral part of the social, economic and political structures of the powerful UN member nations” so all UN delegates—even if they support reforms or regulations— “will be unable to entertain the idea of changing economic and political patterns to solve environmental problems.” Or as another group put it: “politicians from all over the world”—meaning even reformists or conservationists from both the developed and developing countries—“will not be able to solve the problems we face.”²⁸

Expressed in all these statements is a rejection of the common interpellations and categorizations propagated by conservationists. They all suggest that there is a group of “oppressors” who include not just the ‘bad elites’ but all those who command the “powerful expansionist and industrial and military states” as well the “classes ruling over others” in both “underdeveloped” and “industrialized” countries.” And they also all suggest that the “people of the world” belong to another group—the “oppressed”— who need to intensify their struggle against all oppressors in all countries.

In blurring the moral boundaries between neoliberals and conservationists that others were trying to highlight, however, eco-radicals also sharpened the moral boundaries between themselves and those other eco-radicals who advocated allying with those they refused to tag as allies. Apart from propagating statements casting even those that these other eco-radicals sought to ally with as the enemies, many other eco-radicals explicitly criticized fellow travelers in the

²⁷ Quoted in Bjork 2012.

²⁸ Quoted in Bjork 2012.

Soviet Union and other “socialist” parties for seeking accommodation with capitalists or with members of the “national bourgeoisie” and for their pursuit of “industrialism.”²⁹ They charged them of “bureaucratic sins: of weakness, of corruption, connivance, neglect and arrogance.”³⁰ In short, they reclassified them as ‘undependable friends’ at best.

The consolidation of eco-radical organization

In line with these moral discourses, many eco-radicals began to draw away and withhold their support from other eco-radicals who favored allying with the conservationists.

Instead, they extended their support to those eco-radicals who were pushing their organizations to break with the conservationists to fight for radical transformations. Driven out from the factories partly by increased repression of communist parties and militant trade unions but also partly by the conservationists’ success in winning over workers in the US and elsewhere, they went instead into the so-called “grassroots”—the communities, the inner cities, schools, offices, and other settings—to spearhead, or become crucial components of, the burgeoning women’s movement, the peace movement, the civil rights movement, the student movement, and the “environmental” movement that arose during the 1960s.³¹ Unlike other eco-radicals, they began to devote more of their time and energies to contesting the leadership of movements that were involved in matters not directly involving the state or production, that spoke more directly to issues and concerns not previously considered as “political” (such as areas of race, sexuality, religion, etc.), and that dealt with non-class forms of domination or exploitation.

Thus, for example, Bookchin and others like him split or walked away from the traditional anti-capitalist parties and formed numerous anarchist or autonomist “affinity groups” or “ecology collectives” that took stronger anti-conservationist positions.³² Commoner, for his part, worked to build links with the labor, civil rights, LGBT, anti-war and other movements, thereby forming the foundations for what would later be called the “environmental justice” movements. “Blacks need the environmental movement, and the movement needs blacks,” he stressed.³³ He also played a key role in the anti-nuclear, anti-toxics movement, helping galvanize hundreds of mostly local workplace- or community-based coalitions not just in the US but also in other countries. Asserting their autonomy from other eco-radicals groups or parties that allied with progressive elites, many others did the same, forming groups like the Clamshell Alliance, Earth First! and so many other similar national and international groups worldwide.³⁴ As one veteran activist put it, what they did was to “‘disappear’ underground” by “working on and through institutions, networks and new organizations” and “building in their polyp-like activity a veritable reef of oppositional practice” starting in the 1960s.³⁵ They formed what a participant described as “a footloose revolutionary vanguard” that travelled across borders, bringing their books to other places, but also taking books back home, generating “something like a radical diaspora unprecedented in the twentieth century.”³⁶

Apart from forming or revitalizing their own autonomous anti-capitalist organizations,

²⁹ Commoner 1971: 281; Dobson 2000:168; McCormick 1989:96.

³⁰ Arrighi et al. 1989:102.

³¹ Arrighi et al 1989; Bjork 1996; Watts 2001.

³² O’Connor 1998:283; Gottlieb 1993:134-139.

³³ quoted in Egan 2007: 14, 178.

³⁴ Anonymous 2003:32; Anonymous 2009; Cunningham 2009; Doherty 1999; Doherty & Doyle 2014:32; Doherty et al. 2007; Mertes 2004; Pusey & Russell 2010; Rawcliffe 1998 91; Schlembach 2012:202; Weyler 2004:521.

³⁵ Watts 2001:177.

³⁶ Watts 2001:167.

many eco-radicals also began penetrating broader or more diverse coalitions and challenging the conservationists and their eco-radical allies who sought to lead or take over them.

Through all these efforts at organizing, eco-radicals started forming the organizational infrastructure that underpinned incipient anti-capitalist national and international networks that refused to ally with, or that insisted on asserting their autonomy vis-a-vis, the progressive elites. international gatherings in the succeeding years.

The consolidation of eco-radical mobilization

Aside from distancing themselves from eco-radicals organizing groups or coalitions in favor of allying with conservationists, many eco-radicals also started defying and countering these other eco-radicals' calls to take more contentious actions against only the neoliberals.

They did not necessarily dissuade people from participating in more confrontational protests directed against all those who opposed even just the limited reforms that the conservationists favored. But, breaking with other eco-radicals, they began joining or supporting more confrontational protests directed also against the conservationists who opposed the more radical changes they favored. In other words, rather than encouraging people to mobilize only against those government officials, business owners and other elites opposed to some form of state capitalism, i.e. against those the conservationists morally categorize as the 'bad capitalists' or the 'bad elites,' they encouraged people to mobilize against all government officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to socialism, i.e. against even those the conservationists classified as the 'good capitalist' or the 'good elites.'

Thus, they began to team up with other eco-radicals in organizing and engaging in hundreds of wildcat strikes and countless pickets and demonstrations, blockades, occupations, sit-ins, "hike ins," acts of sabotage, and other "direct actions" that targeted all capitalists and all elites seeking to perpetuate capitalism and other forms of domination. While other eco-radicals refrained from criticizing or protesting against conservationists, for example, they drenched well-known conservationists like the oil magnate Robert O. Anderson with oil as well as hound other conservationists like Ford director and World Bank head Robert McNamara in the 1960s and 1970s. They were at the forefront of the storied "wave of rebellion" that swept the world in 1968, most famously in France but also in dozens of other places worldwide, with many of them having "no difficulty in recognizing that what happened at the Sorbonne, in Berkeley, in Prague" was "part of the same event in the same global village."³⁷ Not a few were of course, either actively involved in or supported a different kind of "direct action": armed, revolutionary movements engaged in guerrilla or other forms of war against the state. Others did not directly undertake the actions themselves but provided various kinds of support to those who did.

And when progressive elites succeeded in convening the UN-led intergovernmental negotiations to address global environmental problems beginning in the early 1970s, they began trying to discredit or delegitimize these negotiations by engaging in various forms of efforts to disrupt or shut them down. In 1971, for example, young delegates from both developed and developing countries decided to "take over" one of the preparatory events leading up to the first UN conference on the environment, and later participated in the very forums organized by conservationists to denounce the very proposals that these conservationists were pushing.³⁸ Though they did not necessarily all say that nothing good could be gained out of the

³⁷ Hobsbawm 1996:445-447; see also Boltanski & Chiapello 2005:169; Watts 2001

³⁸ Bjork 1996:18-23; 2012:26; Caldwell & Weiland 1996:66-67; Weisberg 1972:37.

negotiations, they went out of their way to attack the process as an attempt to legitimize the existing order and, thus, to avoid taking the steps necessary to effectively solve the problem.

Hence, even as they cooperated with other eco-radicals in calling on people to mobilize locally or internationally during these negotiations, these eco-radicals called on people to mobilize behind a different set of demands and goals. While other eco-radicals organized protests targeting only those ‘dirty’ companies and selected developed-country governments who opposed the limited reforms favored by conservationists, they began organizing or joining sit-ins, die-ins, walk-outs, and other protests inside and outside the conference venue denouncing both “gray” and “green” companies and both developed- and developing-country governments opposed to the more radical international agreements they were demanding.

At the first UN summit on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, for example, they helped organize the first counter-summit or People’s Summit and stage various protest actions to counter not just the official conference but also the parallel “Environment Forums” or “civil society spaces” sponsored or organized by the conservationists to bring together more moderate groups and amplify their voices.³⁹ One group of young activists who articulated eco-radical positions disrupted and effectively took over a conference organized by the UN Secretariat, frustrating the organizers in their attempt “to create an image of the UN conference to have full support from the global youth.”⁴⁰ As we have seen, they argued that the UN could not be counted upon to find solutions to the problems, saying “it is absurd to expect the oppressors to initiate and implement the process of the liberation of the oppressed.”⁴¹

The consolidation of eco-reformism

But as the eco-radicals grew more organized behind the call for abolishing capitalism, the eco-reformists also became more organized behind the call for radically reforming capitalism starting around the mid 1960s. With the forces to their left consolidating, more and more eco-reformists also began to challenge the position of those other eco-reformists who held that they should first fight for and secure at least the minimal reforms the moderate neoliberals were championing and that this required allying with moderate neoliberals. Though they did not necessarily oppose the minimal reforms that these moderate neoliberals supported, they began to take the view that, in the face of the progressive elites’ fragmentation, they should prioritize calling for far-reaching transformations and this, they argued, called for antagonizing the moderate neoliberals. They did not necessarily all take the view that a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism should not be defended against those “extreme neoliberals” who sought to move towards or establish a more extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism,⁴² but they did begin to take the view that—given the progressive elites’ decreased appetite for reforms—they should continue aiming for a more ‘participatory’ form of state capitalism as their proximate goal.⁴³

³⁹ Bjork 2012:4; see also Naraghi 1973; Weisberg 1972; Stone 1973:66,134

⁴⁰ Bjork 2012:26.

⁴¹ Quoted in Bjork 2012.

⁴² Though it would take another decade or so for them to gain ground and move to the center of politics, the extreme neoliberals were already organizing and intervening in public debates in the US and many other countries during the 1960s (Mirowski and Plehwe 2009).

⁴³ The following is based on interviews, observation of meetings and discussions, the various statements of eco-reformist groups. I also draw from Baer 2012; Berry 1999; Bartosiewicz and Miley 2013; Caldwell 2010; Caldwell & Weiland 1996; Carmin & Bast 2009; Doherty & Doyle 2014:60; Egan 2007; Gottlieb 1993; Keck & Sikkink 1998; Mauss 1975; McCloskey 1992; Mitchell 1989; Morrison 1973; Morrison et al. 1971; Schnaiberg 1980; Skocpol 2013; Vogel 1980, 1986.

The consolidation of eco-reformist will

Hence, determined to convince other eco-reformists and the broader public to continue struggling against even the moderate neoliberals, more eco-reformists joined in fanning the non-class antagonisms that other eco-reformists had come to dampen during the 1940s and 1950s.

Like the moderate neoliberals, they backed other eco-reformists in contradicting the extreme neoliberals by diffusing the claim that global environmental problems are real. And like the moderate neoliberals, they also joined in countering extreme neoliberals by propagating the view that people were experiencing these problems because of the failure to put in place the minimal rules needed for the regulation of the market and the inter-state system.

But unlike the moderate neoliberals, they also began propagating the view that people were suffering from climate change because of the failure to instill the norms or values needed to underpin the stronger rules required to regulate the market and the inter-state system. From their perspective, people were suffering from the impacts of pollution and were being dispossessed not just because of the limits of extreme laissez-faire capitalism, as moderate neoliberals held, nor because of the limits of capitalism per se, as eco-radicals argued, but only because of the limits of ‘un-democratic’ or ‘big-business-dominated’ state capitalism.

Under this set-up, they argued, large, multinational corporations and those officials or experts who work for them are constantly driven to weaken or undermine the norms and rules that could protect the well-being of nature and the public, thus making it difficult if not impossible for them to be “responsible.” For under this system too, they contended, big businesses that are driven to maximize profits ultimately dominate the most important decisions affecting production, preventing the “public” from participating in making economic decisions. Other actors, including government officials, experts and activists, for example, find it difficult if not impossible to cultivate the norms and enact the restrictions needed to arrest ecological degradation neither because governments have been captured by overzealous liberals nor by the entire bourgeoisie but only because governments have been captured by ‘corporate interests.’ It is this excessive power or influence of “Big Business,” they argued, that not only prevents these officials from taking the necessary measures to solve the problem but actually pushes them to protect the interests of irresponsible corporations and hurt the public.

In other words, many eco-reformists began to propagate moral explanations that directly challenged the moral explanations being propagated by the moderate neoliberals: that the problem is rooted only in extreme laissez-faire capitalism, or with a form of disorganized capitalism unrestrained by the minimal rules needed to control market irrationalities. They did not necessarily all deny the moderate neoliberals’ claim that the problem has to do with the defective regulation of the market, but they also stressed that this defective of regulation has merely been the consequence of un-democratic, because big-business dominated, capitalism.

Consistent with this moral diagnosis, they began to tell people that even though they could at least reduce the impacts of environmental problems by struggling for minimal reforms and preventing the entrenchment of extreme laissez faire capitalism, they could only solve the problem by struggling for the establishment of a more democratic state-capitalist society. Thus, closer to the conservationists, they called on people to go beyond the half-hearted regulatory measures and compromises which left the political power of big business unchallenged towards more ambitious measures that would actually erode the dominance of big business over the public—but without going so far as to actually destroy the institution of private property.

Closer to the eco-radicals, they called for more rational planning and management of the environment. But unlike the eco-radicals, they emphasized that more rational planning and management should not go so far as to tamper with private property relations or erode the bourgeoisie's monopoly over production decisions. That said, they did emphasize the need for more public participation in economic decision-making and for increasing the range of interests authorized to craft and carry out regulatory policies so as to counter-balance the power of the large corporations. Put differently, they told people that big-business' freedom to allocate capital must never be completely curtailed or abolished altogether but they did tell them that it may also be necessary to impose certain restrictions on these freedoms. What is required, in their view, is not an entirely post-capitalist version of "ecological modernization" but they did call for a more participatory kind of progressive ecological modernization.

They did not necessarily dismiss the goal of securing minimal regulations as entirely unhelpful for solving the problem, but they also stressed, unlike the moderate neoliberals, that the problem will likely remain unless a more participatory state-capitalism is put in place. Simply taming neoliberalism will not be enough because the corporations that dominate the system will continue to be driven to use their political advantages to undermine or game the regulations. To remain confined to just countering extreme laissez-faire capitalism will therefore not do. The solution for them does not entail changing the "mode of production" but it does entail changing the political institutions that govern production. The solution is also "system change" but system-change meaning the replacement of corporate-dominated state capitalism with a more participatory state capitalism.

They also did not necessarily reject the moderate neoliberals' position that the developed countries should take the lead in cutting their emissions or minimizing pollution, and that they must help transfer resources and technology to developing countries to enable them to shift to greener technologies and to cope with climate change impacts. But unlike, the moderate neoliberals, they also began to give more emphasis on calling for the new norms and values that could ground the stronger regulations they favored. Against the moderate neoliberals, they called for a shift away from prioritizing economic-growth or maximizing profits above all other social values, from old-style "development" which disregard the environmental impacts of growth to a kind of development which put environmental conservation over growth.

In line with this, they called for stronger international agreements that would oblige developed countries to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and to transfer resources to developing countries by more than what the moderate neoliberals called for. They started calling for an even more ambitious form of redistribution—one which could compel large corporations in all countries to channel more resources to the poor in the northern countries and to submit to some level of restrictions on their prerogatives in order for governments to carry out a more rational planning of production and consumption at the global level. Over the years, they would support the creation of all kinds of funds to channel finance and technology to developing countries by increasing taxes on corporations by easing intellectual property rights. Against the moderate neoliberals, they preferred to give more priority to more direct or "command-and-control" forms of regulation because they considered them less likely to be manipulated by large corporations and more effective in promoting the required investments or technological transformations needed to drastically cut emissions. Insofar as they supported market-based regulation, they insisted that they be part of a package of regulations that also included more direct regulations and that they be as free of loopholes as possible. In short, they did not oppose

market solutions—but only on the condition that it was still going to be subject to stringent regulation and only insofar as it was only one element of a regulatory regime that included more direct, non-market-based forms of interventions.

Echoing but refusing to go as far as the eco-radicals, they emphasized that any regulation could only work if the power relations between corporations and the public—rather than between the ruling and working classes—were altered. For unless the political clout of big business were neutralized by the public, they argued, these regulations would only be ignored or gamed by large corporations, resulting in an inability to undertake the sweeping normative and institutional changes needed for the world to transition away from ‘gray capitalism’ to ‘green capitalism.’

In renouncing moderate-neoliberal moral diagnoses and recommendations, however, they also thereby began to renounce the moderate-neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations that came with these diagnoses and recommendations. They did not necessarily all refrain from hailing or portraying people primarily as members of non-class collectives that excluded only all those opposed to extreme laissez faire capitalism, as moderate-neoliberals did. But countering the moderate neoliberals, they also interpellated members of subordinate groups as—or *to be*—“citizens” or “consumers,” or members of a global collective whose interests were not necessarily in conflict with those of the dominant classes as a whole but only with all those elites and capitalists opposed to participatory state capitalism. In other words, they described the people as part of a different national and global “we” counterposed to a different “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included the “irresponsible” businesses, experts and officials who resisted participatory state capitalism. And instead of making moral distinctions between the extreme neoliberals and the moderate neoliberals, they began morally aggregating these groups by categorizing both as the enemies.

They did not necessarily tell people not to heed the moderate neoliberals in classifying those corporate executives, government officials, or experts opposed to minimal reforms as the adversaries. But they chose not to go along with them in categorizing only these actors as the enemies. Instead, they told people that *all* those who represented and sought to advance the interests of big business in opposing reforms needed to be called out and resisted. For them, the ones to blame for environmental problems included all the oil companies or all of industry.⁴⁴ All are “historically responsible” for the problem and were now trying to pass on the burden to those “least responsible,” i.e., all members of the global public suffering from environmental problems.

They did not necessarily claim that the moral boundaries separating the extreme neoliberals and the moderate neoliberals count for nothing. But, seeking to prevent other non-elites and the broader public from allying with the moderate neoliberals, or trying to convince them to keep antagonizing both extreme as well as moderate neoliberals, they also chose to highlight the moral commonalities between the two camps. Though they did not necessarily all say that the latter were not less threatening, more aggressive, or more harmful to their interests than others, they all pointed to both as the ones who, relative to the other elites were more vicious, who were incapable of moral leadership.

In short, against the eco-radicals, they insisted on making moral differentiations among the bourgeoisie, thereby affirming the notion that certain capitalists, bureaucrats and experts—the ‘good capitalists’ or the ‘good elites’—can be on the side of “the public” or the “people” or that they can be the reformists’ ‘friends. But they also began to counter not just the extreme

⁴⁴ Vogel 1986: 250-251.

neoliberals but even the moderate neoliberals in morally designating all those who opposed more sweeping changes as the ones that subordinate groups and the broader public ought to be channeling their dissatisfaction or outrage. For them, the ‘enemies’ include not just those executives or state officials who downplayed or denied environmental problems and rejected even the weaker solutions favored by the conservationists but even those who recognize that climate change is real but blocked the far-reaching international agreements they would propose. They contradicted the extreme neoliberals in contending that the failure to enact even just minimal regulations is the result of inherent contradictions between the interests of the public and big business—not just of the moral weakness on the part of the ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites.’ But they also contradicted the moderate neoliberals in designating all those opposed to more drastic social transformation as the enemies. Though they too still did not necessarily converge on who in particular among the neoliberals were most vicious, all agreed that they should reject any partnerships with them.

In blurring the moral borders between extreme and moderate neoliberals that others were trying to accentuate, however, they also effectively sharpened or highlighted the moral boundaries between themselves and those other eco-reformists who chose to ally with the moderate neoliberals. They accused them of being ‘coopted’ or of ‘selling out’ to corporations. But they also denounced those eco-radicals who advocated antagonizing all capitalists. Thus, at the first UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, for example, an influential publication put out by eco-reformists lambasted radicals like Barry Commoner and others and cast them as either a devious, undemocratic “pseudo-leftist elite who claim to speak for the third world” or as clueless “puppets” manipulated into obstructing what they considered to be the only genuine solutions to environmental problems.⁴⁵

The consolidation of eco-reformist organization

Consistent with these moral discourses, many eco-reformists also stopped providing resources to those eco-reformists who sought to forge partnerships with the moderate neoliberals.

Going with other eco-reformists who wanted their organizations to break with the conservationists to fight for radical transformations, they too also spread out and be involved in organizing the so-called “grassroots.” Unlike other eco-reformists, they too devoted less of their resources on “lobbying” and more on organizing in communities, schools, offices, and other settings, immersing themselves in the women’s movement, the peace movement, the civil rights movement, and the “environmental” movement that surfaced during the 1960s.

Thus, for example, turning away from the other conservationist groups but also trying to change traditional eco-reformist organizing, Brower joined the Sierra Club, fought against its more conservative directors, and transformed it from an otherwise genteel club of well-off hikers into a more ‘confrontational’ organization that would fight the US government’s plan to dam the Grand Canyon and undertake other campaigns that brought it in conflict with government and large business interests. In 1969, after major disagreements that involved, among others, differences over how to relate with business, he resigned from Sierra Club and went on to found the even more militant Friends of the Earth (FOE). From San Francisco, he and others established FOE offices in Paris, London and Sweden and began building contacts with other

⁴⁵ Bjork 1996:21; Hopgood 1998:102; Miller 1995:44; Weisberg 1972:35.

like-minded groups established by other individuals with similar backgrounds and politics.⁴⁶

Also disgruntled or dissatisfied with existing conservationist organizations, a group of journalists, social workers, scientists and others founded Greenpeace in 1971, an organization with similar politics as FOE but will subsequently resort to even more militant “direct actions” against corporations.⁴⁷ Like Brower, they too reached out to other like-minded individuals in other countries and formed their own transnational network of Greenpeace groups.⁴⁸ Victor Yannacone, along with other middle-class residents battling pollution in New York, brought together lawyers and scientists and founded what would become the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) in 1967, an organization that pioneered litigation and lobbying to push for stricter laws against corporations.⁴⁹ In 1970, Gus Speth and fellow law students from Yale founded what would become the Natural Resource Defense Council, a group that also aggressively went after corporate polluters and pushed for stronger direct regulations against them.⁵⁰

Outside the North, in countries like the Philippines and elsewhere, eco-reformist lawyers founded similar legal-advocacy NGOs that will later become part of the Friends of the Earth International federation; others launched groups that would also become part of the Greenpeace global network. Across countries, hundreds if not thousands of individuals with similar backgrounds formed similar organizations.⁵¹

Aside from founding or transforming their own organizations, many eco-reformists also began founding or joining broader coalitions and challenging the other eco-reformists and moderate neoliberals that sought to direct or dominate them. From within these organizations, they subsequently went on to establish larger coalitions. Thanks to these formations, eco-reformists also succeeded in organizing the first alternative summits during the first UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972.

The consolidation of eco-reformist mobilization

In addition to withholding support to other eco-reformists supportive of alliances with moderate neoliberals, many eco-reformists also began flouting these eco-reformists’ appeals to mobilize people to carry out more confrontational actions against only the extreme neoliberals.

They did not necessarily stop people from joining more aggressive protests directed against only those who opposed the reforms that the moderate neoliberals supported. But, going against the other eco-reformists, they also started to push people take part in more aggressive protests directed also against all those who opposed the more sweeping changes they wanted, i.e. against even the moderate neoliberals. In other words, rather than urging people to mobilize only against those officials, business owners and other elites opposed to some form of minimally-managed capitalism, i.e. against those the moderate neoliberals morally designated as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites,’ they urged people to mobilize against all government officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to participatory state capitalism, i.e. against even those the moderate neoliberals classified as the ‘good capitalist’ or the ‘good elites.’

⁴⁶ Kruse 2014; McCormick 1989:144; Dowie 1995:31; Rawcliffe 1998:22; Doherty & Doyle 2014:57; Carmin & Bast 2009:355.

⁴⁷ Carmin & Bast 2009; Weyler 2004.

⁴⁸ Rootes 2004:2.

⁴⁹ Dowie 1995:38.

⁵⁰ Adams 2010.

⁵¹ Layzer 2012:45; Keck & Sikkink 1998:129-131; Vogel 1986 :39.

In line with this, they followed those other eco-reformists who, from the mid 1960s onward, organized hundreds of protests, pickets and demonstrations, blockades, occupations, sit-ins, “hike ins,” acts of sabotage, and other “direct actions” or “militant forms of lobbying” that targeted those corporations they saw as seeking to perpetuate big-business domination as well as those governments and international organizations they had “captured.” They were at the front-lines of the surge in “environmentalist” activism that took place in various countries around the world beginning in the mid-1960s.

As progressive elites joined forces to push governments to engage in negotiations to address global environmental problems under the auspices of the UN beginning in the 1970s, they also engaged in various forms of protests to denounce what they would call the “corporate capture” of these negotiations. During the UN conference on the environment in Stockholm, they helped organize a parallel “Environment Forum” to counter the official and other meetings that they saw as being corrupted and hijacked by corporate influence.⁵² Domestically, many eco-reformists also began to join “direct action” protests targeting or denouncing not just the installations owned or favored by those designated by moderate neoliberals as the ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites,’ i.e. the corporations and governments that opposed or refused to take environmental action, but even those owned or favored by those designated by the moderate neoliberals as the ‘good capitalists’ and the ‘good elites,’ i.e. those who supported taking action but rejected the reforms they proposed.

The resurgence of the dominated classes

Instead of remaining splintered as the dominant classes splintered in the 1950s and 1960s, then, subordinate groups and classes came closer together starting around the mid 1960s.

This happened because, with more and more progressive elites deserting the conservationist and moderate neoliberal camps, more and more eco-radicals and eco-reformists also began to move away from the view that they should first secure limited reforms first towards the view that they should fight for more radical changes. Not all necessarily believed they should no longer seek to win limited or minimal reforms first, but many began taking the position that in order to secure these changes they should break with and antagonize the conservationists or moderate neoliberals who had been championing those limited or moderate reforms—in other words: that that they should compete, rather than cooperate, with the progressive elites to win over more support for their distinctive project. But in competing with and rejecting alliances with these more progressive elites, they also consequently started to rekindle or intensify the social antagonisms and to sharpen the group boundaries that others from their bloc had come to efface. They de-emphasized or even contradicted the moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives and categorizations being propagated by the other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who had moved closer to the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals. They cut ties with them. And they even defied their efforts to direct people’s anger toward fighting only the neoliberals or the extreme neoliberals respectively.

As they did, however, those eco-radicals and eco-reformists who rejected allying with conservationists and the moderate neoliberals respectively also found themselves less isolated beginning around the mid-1960s.

⁵² Bjork 1996; Morphet 1996; Rawcliffe 1998:192.

With more and more eco-radicals joining them in telling people that the problem is capitalism itself, that the only realistic solution is socialism, that even the conservationists should be seen as among the primary enemies, and that eco-radicals who agreed to forge alliances with conservationists were undependable friends at best, these other eco-radicals found it increasingly less rather than more difficult to dissuade people from thinking that the problem is just laissez faire or state capitalism, that the only realistic solution is just a more regulated state capitalism, that only the neoliberals should be seen as the primary enemies, and that eco-radicals who favored forging alliances with conservationists could be counted upon as their friends. In other words: with fewer eco-radicals effectively helping draw people to the conservationist bloc, they found it increasingly less difficult to attract people towards the eco-radical bloc instead.

The same was true with the eco-reformists who rejected allying with the moderate neoliberals: With more and more eco-reformists backing them in telling people that that the problem is big-business-dominated capitalism itself, that the only realistic solution is a more participatory form of state capitalism, that they should fight against all the neoliberals, and that eco-reformists who partnered with moderate neoliberals could not be counted upon, they too found it less rather than more of a struggle to deter people from believing that the problem is just excessive laissez-faire capitalism, that the only realistic solution is a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism, that they should fight against only against the extreme neoliberals, and that the eco-reformists who went along with them could be depended upon as their partners. In other words: with fewer other eco-reformists pushing people towards the moderate-neoliberal bloc, they found it increasingly less hard to draw people towards the eco-reformist bloc instead.

Consequently, in the US but also in other countries, growing numbers of people came to see business as “inherently irresponsible, and too powerful to be effectively regulated by government” during the 1970s.⁵³ Business faced “an avalanche of Congressional, consumer, and blue-collar criticism.”⁵⁴ One study found that corporations came to be seen as the “least trusted” of the major institutions of American society.⁵⁵ “For the first time since the Great Depression,” wrote one historian, “the legitimacy of big business was being called into question by large sectors of the public.”⁵⁶ As one scholar put it, referring to the case of the US, “the American public did not simply become more worried about pollution; it also chose to blame industry for the nation’s environmental problems.”⁵⁷ So pervasive was this moral evaluation during this period that even bureaucrats came to see industry as ‘untrustworthy,’ as unconcerned with public health in its drive for profits, as incapable of resisting “doing bad things, like polluting the air,” and, thus, as people who needed to be “punished.”⁵⁸ The same was true of experts and elites: across the board, there would be unprecedented skepticism, if not hostility, towards bureaucrats and scientists perceived to be in the pockets of capital or big business.⁵⁹ Some thought only certain sections of industry were to blame; others thought all of the ruling class were to blame. But all questioned, if not abandoned, the idea that *all* of the capitalists and elites deserved to be thought of as people’s friends.

Grappling with their living conditions through these moral lens, a growing number of

⁵³ Vogel 1986:250-254; Caldwell & Weiland 1996:62.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Blyth 2002:6.

⁵⁵ Hays 1987:327; McQuaid:1994,145; Silk & Vogel 1976 21; Edsall 1985:113; Blumenthal 1986:77.

⁵⁶cited in Parenti 1986:67

⁵⁷ Vogel 1989:70.

⁵⁸ Cook 1988:109-111.

⁵⁹ Boltanski & Chiapello 2005:169; Hajer 1995; Watts 2001:175.

people also consequently rejected the idea that environmental problems were unrelated to capitalism. Those who joined the eco-reformists and those who joined the eco-radicals differed on their ultimate causes, but both did reject the notion that capitalism had nothing to do with these problems. As one contemporary recalled of the late 1960s: “A complete disaffection with ‘the system’ ... resonated deeply between East and West, North and South.”⁶⁰ Those who were disaffected differed on where they thought the problem lay, but both nonetheless converged in rejecting the notion that they could be solved without fundamentally changing the system. All proposed changes to address environmental problems that, in the words of one historian, posed “a considerably greater challenge to existing patterns of social surplus allocation than at any point in the [environmental] movement’s history.”⁶¹

Supported by other eco-radicals and eco-reformists, those eco-radicals and eco-reformists who rejected allying with the progressive elites consequently found it easier to gain more adherents, and thus to build more resources and mobilize more people to take the fight against those they identified as the enemies. Hence, as people’s anxiety over their deteriorating living conditions, their distrust of if not hostility towards business, and their aspiration of improving their material conditions intensified from the 1960s onwards, both found it less difficult to orient this potent combination of resentments and desires towards a renewed drive for radical reforms or revolution.⁶² Wide sections of the dominated classes suddenly began challenging or casting off the moral schemas with which they were making sense of environmental and other problems. In France but also in other countries, there would an “unprecedented rise in the level of critique” against the existing order.⁶³ Many “challenged the very essence of capitalism.”⁶⁴ There was a “change of mood” on the part of wider swathes of the population, driving some observers to argue that the “spirit of capitalism” was “losing its grip in the minds and imaginations of many.”⁶⁵ So drastic—and so unexpected—were the changes in attitudes and behavior towards business and towards governments during this period, notes one contemporary observer, that they “border[ed] on the amazing.”⁶⁶ “Whatever the cause,” one environmental historian observed, “there had been a revolution in environmental attitudes.”⁶⁷

Social antagonisms would thereby be pushed beyond or outside the preferred boundaries of dominant groups as growing numbers of people from the lower classes ceased fighting *for* and began fighting *against* some or all the world’s elites.⁶⁸ Not all followed the trend, but in general there would be a massive, and accelerating, movement towards the left among the dominated classes in many countries starting around the mid 1960s. The extent and character varied from country to country but across many countries radical protests would re-intensify after having declined during the 1940s and 1950s.

In the US and Western Europe, thousands of people—not just highly-educated professionals, unionized or highly-skilled workers, or people with similar backgrounds as the eco-reformists—signed up for or supported organizations like Brower’s Friends of the Earth or

⁶⁰ Watts 2001:170.

⁶¹ Schnaiberg 1980:421.

⁶² Dunlap 1987; McCormick 1989:137; Hopgood 1998:117; Vogel 1989:6; Agrawal & Andersen 2002 44; Keleman & Vogel 2010:438; Lazarus 2008:117; Rawcliffe 1998:68.

⁶³ Boltanski & Chiapello 2005: xliv.

⁶⁴ McCormick 1989:46; see also Hajer 1995.

⁶⁵ Cotgrove 1982:117.

⁶⁶ Mauss 1972:599.

⁶⁷ McCormick 1990:66.

⁶⁸ Schnaiberg 1980:369-371.

Greenpeace, non-membership organizations like EDF, the “public-interest” groups founded by Nader, and other similar organizations.⁶⁹ Others even formed and joined the first “green” parties established first in Australia and New Zealand, and later in Europe too. And, as the ranks of the professional middle classes also swelled in Asia, Africa, and Latin America also began to expand, thousands more joined their affiliates or other similar homegrown groups in these regions.⁷⁰ Across the world, the number of “environmentalist associations” began to spike and the organizational infrastructure for what would later be called the “environmental movement” emerged.⁷¹ Though statistics showing this massive expansion in environmentalist groups and their memberships tend to lump environmentalists propagating very different discourses and projects together, it is likely that eco-reformists made up a large, if not the largest fraction, of the total. But even eco-radicals also gained ground as many others, previously moderate or even passive, turned to the more militant affinity groups, networks, parties and other associations formed by the eco-radicals.⁷² For the first time since the 1930s, anti-capitalist groups would again attract large numbers of young people worldwide, inspired by the radicals throwing stones at the police on the streets of Paris or engaging in guerrilla warfare in the jungles of the Third World.⁷³ But radicalism of other varieties, such as that propounded by Bookchin and other anarchists, also flourished.⁷⁴ Even if many of these eco-anarchist or eco-socialist groups were not necessarily bigger in size than the eco-reformist groups, their influence was perceived to be greater than their numbers by many.⁷⁵ For some observers, they even began to dominate or exercise more influence in the numerous movements that arose in this period.⁷⁶

In the face of this resurgence, those eco-radicals and the eco-reformists who chose to ally with the more progressive elites continued to organize and promote their respective projects. They would keep trying to direct people’s anger and energies towards fighting against only the neoliberals or only the extreme neoliberals respectively. They would keep giving priority towards building links with the eco-radicals or eco-reformists who preferred to partner with the conservationists or moderate neoliberals. And they too would continue to propagate their moral diagnosis prescriptions, narratives and categorizations. Wounded by their fellow eco-radicals and eco-reformists’ attempts to depict them as undependable friends, they hit back by depicting them as ‘ultra-leftists’, as utopians, or as dreamers who were wittingly or unwittingly advancing the interests of their designated primary enemies—in other words, by also morally re-classifying them as unreliable friends, if not as accomplices of the enemies.

Despite their persistence, however, the other eco-radicals and reformists who refused to go along with them still found it increasingly less difficult to counter the opposition of the dominant classes to the more radical changes or more sweeping reforms they championed.

Buoyed by new recruitments and more capable of mounting more concerted attacks against both conservationists and neoliberals as other eco-radicals stopped aiming their fire only at the neoliberals, the eco-radicals found it less difficult to fight back against the resistance not just of the neoliberals intent on denying them even just minimal concessions but also of the

⁶⁹ Sills 1975:2; O’Riordan 1979:418-419; Hays 1987:304; Mitchell 1980: 356,1989:98; Rootes 2004 2; Vogel 1986:20; Lazarus 2008: 83.

⁷⁰ Doyle & McGregor 2014; Finger 1992.

⁷¹ Longhofer and Schofer 2010

⁷² Arrighi et al. 1989:88; Boltanski & Chiapello 205:169; Egan 2007:3, 130; McCormick 1989:144; Worster 1994:342.

⁷³ Hobsbawm 1996:443-445.

⁷⁴ Gottlieb 1993:127-231.

⁷⁵ Brenton 1994:29.

⁷⁶ Shapley 1993.

conservationists intent on denying them the larger gains they sought. Their renewed dynamism and the threat that they could grow even stronger was to be critical in preventing the extreme neoliberals from obstructing even just the minimal reforms that the conservationists and moderate neoliberals would subsequently settle for. But, as they made strides in forging a broader global anti-capitalist bloc as fewer other eco-radicals concentrated on forging a global anti-neoliberal bloc in tandem with the conservationists, they also began to build the social force for mobilizing for the kind of radical agreements and the post-capitalist forms of regulation that could compel the world's dominant classes—from both developed and developing countries—to drastically cut pollution and transfer significant resources to subordinate groups.

Same with the eco-reformists: Also invigorated by reinforcements and more capable of waging a more unified campaign against all the neoliberals as other eco-reformists desisted from training their fire only at the extreme neoliberals, they too found it less difficult to fight back against the opposition not just of the extreme neoliberals intent on denying them even just small concessions but also the moderate neoliberals intent on denying them the bigger concessions they were demanding. Their newfound confidence also helped prevent the extreme neoliberals from blocking even just the softest reforms that the conservationists and moderate neoliberals would subsequently accept. But, as they too made progress in building a broader global anti-neoliberal bloc as fewer other eco-reformists worked on building a global anti-extreme-neoliberal bloc in cooperation with the moderate neoliberals, they too began to assemble the social force needed for pushing the stronger international agreements and direct, non-market-based regulations that could compel big business or large corporations to significantly cut their emissions and transfer significant resources to subordinate groups.

Neither the eco-radicals nor the eco-reformists would entirely succeed in achieving what many considered the most desirable outcomes. Indeed, they would not entirely succeed in resisting the extreme neoliberals' attempts to weaken or reverse their subsequent successes in pushing for far-reaching environmental regulations. But both did succeed in at least reversing the decline of earlier years and in forging the collective will and the collective means needed to build on their earlier achievements and lay the ground for the new kinds of social relations or new ecological values or norms that they argued are needed to arrest or slow down climate change.

Together, both eco-reformists and eco-radicals began to build a massive movement that was “unique in its scope and intensity,”⁷⁷ forming a large part of what analysts would call the sudden across the board “environmental revolution” at the local and global level during the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁸ Around the world, they helped form part of a “multinational rising tide of conflicts over wages and working conditions” that led to a “pay explosion” that drove down profitability and, in certain countries actually led to significant disruptions in production.⁷⁹ In many if not most places, they did not necessarily attempt to take over state power. But, as Hobsbawm has argued, their actions were still revolutionary “in both the ancient utopian sense of seeking a permanent reversal of values, a new and perfect society, and in the operational sense of seeking to achieve it by action on streets and barricades.”⁸⁰ Or, as one participant has noted of the uprisings he took part in: “the events of ‘68 were revolutionary not because governments

⁷⁷ Mauss 1972:589

⁷⁸ McCormick 1989: vii

⁷⁹ Arrighi 2007:123-130; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005:169; Crouch & Pizzorno 1978; Frieden 2006:367.

⁸⁰ Hobsbawm 1994:446.

were, or might have been, overthrown but because a defining characteristic of revolution is that it abruptly calls into question existing society and presses people into action.”⁸¹

All over the world, a long period of concord gave way to a period of dissensus. Not just individual countries like the US but the entire world seemed to be engulfed by a “wave of rebellion”⁸² and torn apart by what some observers would characterize as nothing less than a “civil war.”⁸³ The threat of sweeping or more radical social transformations that seemed to have been extinguished during the 1940s and 1950s once again spread across borders.⁸⁴ It is unclear whether the world actually teetered on the brink of revolution; but what seems clear is that it moved closer to the edge than it ever did during the preceding two decades.

SUMMARY

This chapter set out to account for how, rather than remaining disorganized, subordinate groups started to overcome their fragmentation beginning around the mid 1960s.

Examining how intra-dominated class relations changed in the face of shifts in intra-dominant class relations, I argued that more radical changes to address global environmental problems became more possible from the mid 1960s as many eco-radicals and eco-reformists chose to realign and back those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who stood for competing rather than affiliating with the progressive elites for the public's support. In so doing, they ended these eco-radicals' and eco-reformists' marginalization and enhanced their ability to unify subordinate groups behind their push for structural changes to deal with climate change.

In the next chapter, we proceed to investigate how this growing organization of the subordinate classes affected intra-dominant class relations to understand how, instead of remaining dispersed as the subordinate groups came together, the dominant classes too began to regroup, opening up the possibility for limited reforms.

⁸¹ Watts 2001:160.

⁸² Hobsbawm 1996:444.

⁸³ Isserman & Kazin 2004; Watts 2001:162; Arrighi et al. 1989:102; Wallerstein 1990:39.

⁸⁴ Arrighi & Silver 1999:210; Frieden 2006:356; Schurmann 1974:76; Vogel 1978:63.

CHAPTER 4: ‘Passive revolution’ on the world stage

By the late 1960s, then, the global political terrain had begun to shift again. Instead of remaining as or more deeply fragmented, subaltern groups were beginning to become more organized again behind the call for more radical transformations. As the progressive elites splintered and began finding it more difficult to sustain the push for reforms within and across countries, the eco-radicals and eco-reformists appeared to be seizing the initiative, making strides in challenging hegemony and in building alternative hegemonies starting around the mid 1960s

With these developments, at least two paths could have been taken: The dominant classes could have remained as or even more divided, incapable of building the social force needed to enact limited structural changes by failing or refusing to ride on the radical forces’ demand for more concessions or gains to push for reforms, thereby blocking the possibility for limited structural changes to be carried out. But they could also have become more organized, more capable of building the social force needed to enact limited structural changes by capitalizing on the radical forces’ struggle for larger gains to push for reforms, thus opening up the possibility for said changes. In other words: the growing organization of the subordinate groups could have led to the dominant classes remaining, or becoming more, fragmented and ineffectual, i.e., to their failure to launch passive revolution—or it could have galvanized them and made them more effective in pushing for at least limited reforms, i.e., to their success in launching passive revolution and the failure of attempts at counter-revolution.

How did it happen that the second of these two paths was taken? Why, instead of further diverging, did the dominant classes end up consolidating again in many countries? How was the possibility for carrying out moderate structural changes to stop or limit climate change revived?

To pursue these questions, we now proceed to investigate how changes in the relations among the subordinate groups reshaped intra-dominant class relations. I shall make the argument that limited structural modifications to deal with global environmental problems became possible starting around the late 1960s because, rather than continuing to back off from fighting for stronger, if still limited reforms, and pushing only for even weaker reforms, many of those we shall call the “conservationists” and the “moderate neoliberals” responded to the growing organization of the dominated classes by pushing for stronger reforms in order to contain emergent radical forces. They began switching their support to those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who also favored competing rather than accommodating the more conservative elites by rejecting alliances with them, stoking antagonisms towards them, and accentuating the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus counteracting these other conservationists’ and moderate-neoliberals’ isolation and enhancing their collective capacity to push for minor reforms.

The consequences of attempts at active revolution

As the eco-radicals and the eco-reformists succeeded in enjoining and mobilizing members of the subordinate classes to demand and fight for larger concessions or gains in the face of environmental degradation, the possibility of even more radical social change again loomed large in the horizon starting around the mid-1960s.

By then, the world economy had begun to enter a long period of protracted and multi-dimensional crisis.¹ Competition intensified. The growth rates not just of most advanced capitalist countries but also of all but a few exceptional “developing countries” continued to decline and to decline at faster rates. Overall profit rates continued to decline. Unlike in the past, however, state officials in the core countries found themselves unable or unwilling to restore or increase profits by cutting wages because workers had become more organized and more militant—or by extracting more tribute from colonies because anti-colonial movements had also become more assertive or even more victorious. Thanks in large part to their refusal or inability to cut wages or reduce social spending and to print more money or to borrow more instead, real wages did not necessarily dive and unemployment did not necessarily increase yet in many countries, and some sections of the subaltern groups even managed to increase their consumption. Indeed, workers in the core countries even saw their wages rise as a result of the “pay explosion” that ensued. In many “developing” countries, wages began declining, unemployment also began rising, and rural poverty deepened as attempts at import-substituting industrialization floundered, but elites also continued to resist giving up on their “developmentalist” projects and to balk at making the poor shoulder their costs.² And yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, more members of subaltern groups seemed to be demanding an even larger share of the pie than ever—or threatening to overturn the table altogether.

It is debatable whether, objectively speaking, revolution was a real possibility during this period, but a number of elites seemed to worry that it was likely if not imminent. In the US, Western Europe as well as in the post-colonial and still-colonized countries, many were gripped by a “genuine sense of crisis”³ and felt more “politically vulnerable”⁴ than they have been since the Great Depression.⁵ To different degrees, many shared one US Supreme Court justice’s view, written in a memo in 1971, that “the American Economic system,” a system that had spread globally, was “under broad attack.”⁶ Another prominent commentator captured the fears of many when he lamented in 1976 how “bourgeois culture has been shattered,” and despaired at how even economic growth—the “raison d’être of capitalism”—was being doubted not just by radicals.⁷ Another commentator warned in 1979 that

[T]he free enterprise idea is losing... the intellectual and moral battle... [T]he steady diffusion of ideas hostile to our free system continues remorselessly. Industrial capitalism, the free market system, is presented as destructive of human happiness, corrupt, immoral, wasteful, inefficient, and above all, doomed.⁸

With members of the dominated classes at least signaling their determination to keep fighting for more radical changes or stronger reforms, with these non-elites threatening to withhold their support to all those elites unwilling to support these changes, and with the other more conservative elites continuing and beginning to escalate their efforts to block those

¹ Arrighi 2007; Brenner 2003, 2006; Gowan 1999; Krippner 2011; Streeck 2014.

² Baer 1972; Frieden 2006; Prashad 2008

³ McQuaid 1994:149.

⁴ Vogel 1986:112.

⁵ Blyth 2002; Boltanski & Chiapello 2005:168; Golub & Townsend 1977:214; Gottlieb 1993:176; Judis 2013:112; McQuaid 1994:145.

⁶ Quoted in Vogel 1989:57.

⁷ Bell 1976:41,80.

⁸ Quoted in Cotgrove 1982:111.

reforms,⁹ a particular section of the elites—those who have been espousing and pushing for limited reforms to avert more radical change—also reassessed the political landscape and reviewed their strategy.

Unlike the more conservative elites, many if not most of these more “progressive” elites generally hailed from or were drawn to the ranks of those who owned relatively larger and more internationally-oriented capital, typically the giant industrial and financial conglomerates with investments in highly-dynamic capital-intensive manufacturing corporations, banks, and other companies operating or invested in different industries and markets around the world.¹⁰ They were typically born to patrician families—those who had accumulated and maintained vast economic capital over the course of several generations, usually through ownership of, or investments in, multinational and typically diversified firms, but also vast cultural and social capital through sustained investments in education and in social and political connections, allowing them to penetrate the highest government offices, the philanthropic foundations, and the prestigious academic institutions. Compared to the more conservative elites, they were also generally the ones who—with their more secure fortunes and with their more ramified interests in various markets—were in a better position to grant relatively more concessions to subordinate groups, were more concerned about ensuring that their competitors abroad are subjected to the same regulations that they are, and were less concerned about gaining entry into elite circles.

Among those who will be most closely involved in global environmental politics were elites like Henry Ford II and Laurence and David Rockefeller, benefactors of two of the richest and most influential progressive foundations, and who owned or sat on the board of the giant automobile, manufacturing, or financial companies operating or investing globally. McGeorge Bundy was born to a Boston Brahmin family, went to Yale, served as Harvard dean, became part of prestigious liberal think-tank Council of Foreign Relations, and was appointed Kennedy’s national security adviser.¹¹ Robert O. Anderson was one of the world’s most successful industrialists: he owned Atlantic Richfield Oil and other mining and manufacturing companies, held stakes at Chase National Bank, possessed vast tracts of land, and sat on the board of the University of Chicago.¹² Bundy’s close associate, Robert McNamara, hailed from middle-class roots but went on to become CEO of Ford Motors and serve as Defense Secretary before heading the World Bank.¹³ McNamara’s and Anderson’s friend Barbara Ward, who penned the bestselling *Only One Earth* in 1972 studied at Sorbonne and Oxford and was later inducted into the House of Lords as Baroness Jackson.¹⁴ Edward Goldsmith, who co-authored the influential *Blueprint for Survival* also in 1972, was the son of a luxury-hotel tycoon born to a prominent German Jewish financial dynasty who studied at Oxford. Indira Gandhi who worked closely with McNamara and Ward was born to an aristocratic family in India, studied at Oxford. Similarly,

⁹ On conservatives in the US, see Arno & Pinede 2007:394; Augelli & Murphy 1988:99; Blumenthal 1986:52-70; Blyth 2002:133; Dezalay & Garth 2002 81,127,277; Ferguson & Rogers 1987; Himmelstein 1992:129-138; Layzer 2012 45-47; Phillips-Fein 2009:281-282; Silk and Silk 1980; Silk & Vogel 1976:51-65; Steiner 2009; Vogel 1978:48. On other countries, Phillips-Fein 2009:283; on conservatives response to environmental problems in particular, see Beder 1998:193; Schnaiberg 1980:372.

¹⁰ For more on the social background of the conservatives, see especially Ascher 1997; Blumenthal 1986:55; Dezalay & Garth 2002; Guilhot 2005:197; Himmelstein 1992:75; Maxfield & Nolt 1992; McQuaid 1994; Phillips-Fein 2009:281; Teles 2007:176; van Horn & Mirowski 2009:141; Zweig 1995.

¹¹ Bird 1998; Dezalay & Garth 2002:65.

¹² Herter & Binder 1993:34; Hyman 1975:125; Martin 2007.

¹³ Goldman 2006; Shapley 1993.

¹⁴ Satterthwaite 2006; Shapley 1993:507.

Mahbub ul-Haq hailed from one of Pakistan's elite families and went to Yale and Cambridge. Haq's ally Gamani Corea, was born to a family of lawyers in Sri Lanka, studied at Oxford.

Faced with the growing threat of radical change during the 1960s and 1970s, they and many other progressive elites worldwide also started reviewing the moral discourses they were propagating for people to make sense of environmental problems. They too began rethinking what they should fight for, who they should fight with and who they should fight against.

The consolidation of conservatism

Confronted with more organized forces to their left, many among those we have called the "conservationists" started to reject the position of those other conservationists who held that they only needed to push for the minimal reforms to avert radical change and that this required allying with rather than antagonizing the moderate neoliberals against the extreme neoliberals. Though they did not necessarily all take the view that these minimal reforms would do nothing to placate subordinate groups, these conservationists reached the conclusion that they should step up their efforts to secure even more ambitious, though still relatively moderate, reforms and this, they held, necessitated continuing or escalating their attacks, and consolidating a united front, against all neoliberals, both extreme and moderate. They did not necessarily all reject the goal of at least establishing a more moderate form of laissez faire capitalism to prevent a more extreme form of laissez faire capitalism from gaining ground, but they did begin to take the view that they should prioritize achieving their goal of establishing or perfecting state capitalism at the global level so as to prevent the establishment of socialism.

The consolidation of conservationist will

Hence, aiming to convince their fellow conservationists and the broader public to fight against all neoliberals, many conservationists began to kindle the non-class antagonisms that other conservationists have come to dampen.

Like the moderate neoliberals, they countered the extreme neoliberals and told people that global environmental problems are not just a communist conspiracy and that these problems were even more serious than some of the extreme neoliberals would acknowledge. Picking up on US President Lyndon Johnson's earlier 1965 warning about how people are changing the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels, Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos, for example, wrote in their widely read book *Only One Earth*, which was commissioned for the first UN summit on the environment, that: "The burning of fossil fuels is increasing, with unforeseeable consequences for the earth's climates and atmosphere..."¹⁵ They told people they were suffering, or they faced the prospect of suffering, from what will later be called "global warming" or "climate change" and other environmental problems because of governments' failure to put in place the minimal rules or institutions need to solve "market failures" or deal with collective action problems. But unlike the moderate neoliberals they told people they are suffering, or are likely to suffer from, the impacts of global ecological degradation because of what the 1974 Cocoyoc declaration drafted in 1974 by prominent conservationists like Ward, Gamani Corea, Mahbub ul-Haq and others called an "excessive reliance on the market system," understood as the refusal to establish stronger restrictions on property rights through more direct government interventions, such as through actual investments in more 'sustainable' energy sources, imposing

¹⁵ Ward and Dubos 1972:46.

technology standards or outright prohibitions on certain practices, establishing global redistributive schemes, and other regulations that neoliberals would later deride as “command-and-control” regulation.

In short, many conservationists chose to spread moral explanations that directly contradicted the moderate-neoliberal view that the problem is only with *extreme* laissez-faire capitalism or with a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the minimal rules needed to ensure that the market does not exhaust its own resource base but with laissez-faire capitalism per se, or with a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the stronger rules needed to counteract market irrationalities. The problem is not just what others would come to call “market fundamentalism,” or the absolute faith in the free market and the complete rejection of even light and ‘business-friendly’ interventions, but the very belief in the “free market” as an ideal, or even just an excessive faith in the free market and partial rejection of policy interventions.

As Barbara Ward and Rene Dubos—expressing a theme that many other conservationists will repeat through the years—put it in *Only One Earth*:

As a decentralized way of satisfying a million different tastes and needs, the market system could hardly be matched... Yet this immensely powerful expansion of the market, which has steadily gathered momentum during the last two centuries, has also had unintended, fragmented and destabilizing side effects... By placing overwhelming emphasis on the sales of goods and the profit to be made from them, the system proved to be deficient in the funds and institutions needed to supply the essential public goods—health, education, decent city design, public safety, environmental improvement...¹⁶

It is because of this excessive reliance on the market at the global level, Ward and others like McNamara and Gandhi argued, that economic growth has not trickled down to the poor thereby resulting in continuing poverty, which they repeatedly argued at home and at the UN is “the greatest polluter.”¹⁷ Echoing Marxist dependency theories, they argued that it is this absence of regulation at the global level that has allowed the “centre” to continue “exploiting a vast periphery.”¹⁸ For them, the ensuing “maldistribution of resources and overconsumption by the wealthy” that results from this lack of regulation lies behind “humanity’s inability to meet the ‘inner limits’ of satisfying fundamental human needs and the ‘outer limits’ of the planet’s resources.”¹⁹ It is this that has allowed the “developed countries” to “over-consume” their fair share of the world’s resources.

Following this reasoning, they chose to tell people they could at least already reduce the impacts or threats posed by global environmental problems by fighting for a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism, as moderate neoliberals urged them to do. But they also went beyond this by telling people they could only end or prevent their suffering by fighting for the establishment or perfection of state capitalism. Moderating extreme laissez-faire capitalism is essential but it will not be sufficient; only by fully replacing laissez-faire capitalism with state capitalism could the problem be solved. Hence, they told people to struggle not just for minor compromise regulations that could at least set constraints on business and move the world away from full “deregulation” but for stronger regulations possible within the framework of state

¹⁶ Ward & Dubos 1972: 55-57.

¹⁷ Quoted in Mathiesen 2014; Haq 1976:156; see also McNamara 1973.

¹⁸ This was part of a broader tendency by Third World liberal elites to selectively appropriate elements of dependency theory—while downplaying their Marxist content: see Krasner 1985:82; Hirschman 1981: 16,85; Brewer 1990:198,

¹⁹ Quoted in Bernstein 2001:54.

capitalism. “The solution of these problems,” the 1974 Cocoyoc Declaration argued, “cannot be left to the automatic operation of market mechanisms.” What is needed is nothing less than what they called “the management of resources and the environment on a global scale” by putting in place “strong international regimes” for the “exploitation of the global commons.”²⁰ What is needed, in short, is a more progressive version of what would later be popularized as “ecological modernization.” They did not necessarily say that minor regulations will do nothing to solve the problem but they did also go out of their way to point out, against the moderate neoliberals, that the problem would likely remain unless state capitalism is reformed and perfected.

Consistent with these prescriptions, they did not necessarily all reject the kinds of minimal institutional changes aimed at correcting “market failures” that moderate neoliberals also supported, specifically those “market instruments” such as carbon trading, charges, subsidies, and similar policy measures that seek to set limits on the amount of carbon or other resources emitted by firms by effectively putting a “price” on carbon emissions and giving firms ‘flexibility’ in how to keep within those limits.²¹ Thus, a conservationist like US President Lyndon Johnson would order his advisers to study the use of “economic incentives as a technique to stimulate pollution prevention and abatement” in 1965.²² Others like Edward Goldsmith and his co-authors also began arguing, in their widely read 1972 book *Blueprint for Survival*, for “monetary incentives and disincentives” so as to “put a premium on durability and a penalty on disposability, thereby reducing the throughput of materials and energy so that resources are conserved and pollution reduced.”²³ But they also generally took the view that, compared to more direct regulation, these instruments were less reliable in spurring the required investment shifts or technological transformations needed to drastically bring down emissions or reduce environmental impacts. They shared the “deep distrust of market mechanisms” that was prevalent among policy and academic circles during this period.²⁴ Instead of these “market mechanisms,” they generally favored more direct non-market based interventions or what would later be derided as “command and control” regulations. Starting in the late 1960s, they issued numerous reports, books and declarations calling for massive state-directed programs—what some would later call a ‘green industrial policy,’ ‘Green neo-Keynesianism,’ or a ‘Marshall Plan’ for the earth—in order to channel capital away from fossil-fuel energy and other carbon-intensive production technologies towards renewable energy and cleaner production technologies.²⁵ They also supported proposals for more direct pollution taxes on corporations and on wealthy individuals and directed subsidies to renewable energy. They even toyed with such proposals as “common property ownership,” “community rights,” and other schemes to establish collective instead of private control over natural resources that were being proposed by some experts.²⁶ At the international level, they supported stronger regulation of multinational corporations.²⁷ And they pushed for binding agreements that would compel developed countries

²⁰ Quoted in Bernstein 2001:54.

²¹ On these instruments, Andrews 2008:271; Bernstein 2001:206; Cook 1988:61; Ellerman 2005; Ellerman, Convery, and de Perthuis 2010; Fisher-Vanden 2000; Gomez-Baggethun 2010; Gorman & Solomon 2002 314; Hepburn 2007:376; Kelman 1981:133-149; Mackenzie 2009:153; Newell and Paterson 2010; Nordhaus 2000; Opschoor, Lohman, and Vos 1994; Stavins 1998, 2000, 2005, 2007; Tietenberg 2006; Van Horn 2009:230; Voß 2007:335; Wirth and Heinz 1988.

²² Johnson:1965.

²³ Goldsmith et al. 1972:39.

²⁴ Bernstein 2001:54.

²⁵ See among others Ward and Dubos 1972; Donella et al. 1972; the Founex Declaration 1971.

²⁶ Bernstein 2001; Weale 1992.

²⁷ Bair 2009:367.

to take the lead in drastically reducing their emissions, relaxing intellectual property rights, or imposing more taxes so as to transfer resources to enable developing countries to shift to cleaner energy and cope with the impacts of global environmental problems.

Going against the extreme neoliberals who would dismiss demands for resource transfers to the South as a “powerful ideological weapon to lure the support of a gullible western intelligentsia for the persistent raids on the wealth of western nations” or as “an instrument for assuaging Western guilt,”²⁸ they called for more redistribution across countries through aid, loans or foreign direct investments, as other moderate neoliberals did. But, going beyond the moderate neoliberals, they also called for even more direct interventions to compel the North to transfer resources to the South. “Development simply cannot succeed,” Robert McNamara told the first UN conference on the environment in 1972, “unless that massively distorted distribution of income—both at the national and international levels—is brought into a more just and reasonable balance.”²⁹ Convinced that environmental problems have to do with “mal-distribution” and “over-consumption,” they specifically joined or supported calls for a “new international economic order” (NIEO) or for more equitable trade rules between developed and developing countries, thereby countering the other more conservative elites who dismissed the NIEO program as ‘New Marxian-Leninist Manifesto.’³⁰ In addition, they also called for some kind of international taxation system or other measures to relax property rules so as to channel technology, finance, and other resources towards the poorer countries—proposals that, by opening up markets for goods and widening access to otherwise expensive technology and capital, could also benefit industrialists or agrarian elites in developing countries while expanding markets for industrialists and investors from the North. McNamara, for example, was vocal in his support for developing-country liberals’ demands for developed countries to open up their markets to developing-country exports.³¹ Along with him, his colleagues from developing countries even went so far as to call for establishing new central international authorities—constituting a kind of de facto global welfare state—that could collect taxes on the use of the “global commons,” control “overconsumption” by the rich, and channel resources to poorer countries or populations to address environmental problems.

At the subsequent UN negotiations during 1970s and 1980s, they threw their weight behind the “top down” international agreements in which pollution reduction targets would be collectively decided according to what the science says is necessary to reduce global temperature change to relatively ‘safe’ levels and then oblige countries to contribute to meeting this target according to their “common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities.” They demanded that the US and other developed countries ‘take the lead’ in cutting down their contribution to ecological degradation as well as in transferring resources and technology to developing countries so as to enable them to transform their energy and other infrastructures and allow them to cope with the damage caused other environmental problems. They pressed the North to provide new funding to “compensate” or provide what some dared to call “reparations” to the South, this time for costs incurred in addressing environmental problems, or compensating them

²⁸ Quote is from Bair 2009:362, 365.

²⁹ McNamara 1972.

³⁰ Krasner 1985; Bair 2009:355-361.

³¹ Shapley 1993:503.

for “adverse impacts” resulting from Northern efforts to do so.³² Among their early proposals to realize this was the creation of various funds to be financed through fines, charges, fees or taxes on emissions, and administered by all countries.

Unless elites worldwide carry out these redistributive measures, conservationists argued, they faced the specter of what McNamara called “One, two, three, many Vietnams!”³³ In his address to the UN conference on the environment in 1972, McNamara argued that if the “massively distorted distribution of income—both at the national and international levels” is brought into “a more just and reasonable balance,” then the penalties of prolonged injustice will be unavoidable. Restlessness will edge toward rebellion, and reason will give way to violence. Not only would that fail to assure development. It would prove to be catastrophically costly to rich and poor alike.³⁴

Ward and Dubos likewise warned of impending social upheaval if they resist “progressive world sharing,” asking rhetorically in their 1972 book:

Can we rationally suppose that they [the poor] will accept a world ‘half slave, half free,’ half plunged in consumptive pleasures, half deprived of the bare decencies of life? Can we hope that the protest of the dispossessed will not erupt into local conflict and widening unrest?³⁵

In calling for these measures, conservationists from both the First and Third World would sometimes sounded like both the eco-radicals as they riled against the “advanced countries,” demanded “reparations” for the “ecological debt” the rich countries supposedly incurred, or called for stronger regulation of multinational corporations. But in fact their message was very different: unlike the eco-radicals, none ever went so far as to call for regulation or redistribution through revolution. Indeed, even the most “radical” of the ideas some of them would champion and help propagate were ideas of those who, like Friends of the Earth’s Amory Lovins, sounded still very much “like Adam Smith reborn as an environmentalist” in that he ultimately upheld the conservationists line that large-scale transformations—such as a complete societal transition to renewable energy—can be achieved by just tinkering with rather than doing away with the market system.³⁶ All subscribed to what the 1971 “Founex report” drafted by Ward, Haq and others—and so many other declarations down the years—claimed: that economic growth or “development”—meaning capitalist development—remains the “cure” for the environmental problems facing developing countries.³⁷ The goal of all the regulations they were proposing, many always took care to emphasize, should therefore never be to attack industry or damage the economy but to enable it to flourish. As Goldsmith and co-authors stressed in their 1972 book:

[I]ndustry will play a leading role in the program to decentralize our economy and society. The discussion of taxes, anti-disamenity legislation, and enforceable targets for

³² Agarwal and Narain 1991; Ashe, Lierop, and Cherian 1999; Bodansky 2001; Dasgupta 1993, 1994; ENB 12-21, 12-24; 12-45; Hyder 1992; Jacobsen 1998; La Viña 1997; Paterson 1996; Porter and Brown 1991; Rajan 1997; Rowlands 1995; Williams 1993; WMO et al. 1989.

³³ Shapley 1993:465, 504.

³⁴ McNamara 1972

³⁵ Shapley 1993: 298,288)

³⁶ Paehlke 1989:138; Lovins 1976.

³⁷ All these suggests that the discourse of sustainable development, though popularized by the Brundtland Commission, was really forged much earlier, contrary to what a number of authors suggest (see for example, Dryzek 1997:126). For more on the Founex and other declarations see Herter & Binder 1993:25; Bernstein 2001.

air, land, and water quality...might lead some to believe that we are willing to bring about the collapse of industry, widespread unemployment and the loss of export markets. It is therefore worth emphasizing that we wish strongly to avoid all three, and we do not see that they are necessary or inevitable consequences of our proposals.³⁸

By choosing to counter moderate-neoliberal moral diagnoses and prescriptions, however, they also countered and contradicted the moderate-neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations underlying these diagnoses and prescriptions. They interpellated people as members of a global non-class collective whose interests were antagonistic to all extreme neoliberals. But, departing from other conservationists, they also highlighted non-class interpellations hailing people primarily as members of non-class collectives whose interests are antagonistic to all neoliberals. That is, they hailed members of subordinate and dominant groups alike not as part of contending classes but as part of nations, of developed or developing countries, of the North or of the South, or of an “international community” united against all those business owners, state officials, or other elites opposed to state capitalism. In other words, they portrayed the people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included the “bad” businesses, experts and officials who opposed the moderate reforms they advocated. And rather than morally differentiating between the extreme and moderate neoliberals, they morally aggregated them by categorizing both as among the enemies.

They did not necessarily say that the moral boundaries separating the extreme neoliberals who favor extreme laissez-faire capitalism and the moderate neoliberals who want a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism are irrelevant. But, trying to persuade other elites and the broader public to keep antagonizing both, they did highlight the moral unities binding both camps. They did not deny that some were more dangerous, more vicious, or more compromised than others, but they did point to and cast both as the ones who, relative to the other elites and capitalists, were less virtuous or un-virtuous, who were incapable of moral leadership. Thus, McNamara, for example, would repeatedly assail the “rich and the powerful” who are failing to fulfill their moral obligation “to assist the poor and the weak,”³⁹ i.e., even the moderate neoliberals who object to the global redistributive schemes they were proposing, in his numerous speeches as World Bank president from 1967 to 1981. Bundy accused them of making the world ‘unsafe’ for capitalism.⁴⁰ Along the same lines, Ward and others blamed the “high-income nations” for having “principal responsibility for the damage done and the risks that had arisen for the planet’s life-support systems”⁴¹ because of their greed, selfishness or plain irresponsibility. Others charged them with being complicit in “plundering” the earth’s resources, in perpetuating “wasteful lifestyles.”⁴²

In other words, they chose to contradict moderate neoliberals in morally classifying all those who opposed moderate reforms rather than only those who opposed minimal reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—the ones that elites and the broader public should be antagonizing, the ones toward whom they ought to be directing their discontent or anger. The

³⁸ Goldsmith et al. 1972:56.

³⁹ Quoted in Shapley 1993:512; Mosley et al. 1995:21-22.

⁴⁰ Bird 1998:393.

⁴¹ Quoted in Satterthwaite 2006:13

⁴² See Hyder 1992:333; Harrison 2009.

enemies for them include even those corporate executives or state officials who would acknowledge that climate change is happening but would oppose the stronger international agreements they would propose—not just those who denied climate change and rejected even the weaker agreements they themselves rejected.

They therefore contradicted the eco-reformists and eco-radicals in arguing that the failure to establish moderate regulations is just the result of moral weakness on the part of these ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites’— not of inherent contradictions between the interests of the public and capital or big business. But they also contradicted the neoliberals in designating only all those opposed to moderate reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites.’ Though they too still did not necessarily all see eye to eye on who in particular among these bad capitalists and bad elites were most dangerous, all agreed that they should struggle against all these elites to rule out more radical transformations.

The consolidation of conservationist organization

Consistent with these moral categorizations, more conservationists also began to withhold their support from the other conservationists inside their organizations, coalitions, or networks who supported the moderate neoliberals.

Among those in the “business community,” they joined forces with conservationists who opposed partnering not just with business leaders and groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, the US Chamber of Commerce, or the National Federation of Independent Business which thought their interests could best advanced by full deregulation but also those business leaders and groups such as the Business Roundtable which thought their interests could be advanced only through the milder regulations favored by moderate neoliberals.⁴³

Outside the ranks of business, they turned their backs on those policy experts, politicians, foundation directors and others who wanted to reach out to and support mostly or only those think-tanks, advocacy groups, and other organizations producing research or organizing campaigns in support of milder market-based regulations. Among the first to do this were elites at the Ford Foundation, then one of the wealthiest and most powerful philanthropic foundations in the world. They joined other conservationists push the foundation’s relatively “timid” president to address the “social problems” that they thought were radicalizing many in the 1960s. And when this president still failed to step up, they moved to replace him in 1966 with McGeorge Bundy, a prominent liberal who made it clear that he planned to use the foundation’s \$3.7 billion assets to ‘experiment in a big way’ and that, under his leadership, Ford’s mission would be the “redress of inequity” or the pursuit of “a juster [sic] distribution of the material and nonmaterial things that society prizes most.”⁴⁴ They supported Bundy as he transformed Ford from a relatively more cautious foundation funding mostly universities, hospitals, cultural institutions, and a few centrist think-tanks to a more aggressive foundation that that would go on to support so many grassroots organizations, many of them espousing eco-reformist views.

Seeking “to advance necessary social change constructively,” Ford under Bundy’s leadership from 1966 to 1979 began to devote proportionally more of its resources towards funding “advocacy” or research-and- advocacy groups relative to just purely research-oriented

⁴³ On the politics of the business groups, see Betsill 2000:218, 248-249; Hacker & Pierson 2011:205. Meckling 2011:81-96, 123-155; Schmidheiny 1992: xix; Hopgood 1998:212; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010:32.

⁴⁴ Bird 1998:378, 390; Judis 2013:96.

groups, and intensified its efforts at promoting the “professionalization of activism.”⁴⁵ Not content to have the “best ideas,” they also sought to produce the best peddler of the best ideas by encouraging the formation of more hybrid environmentalist organizations, bringing together lawyers with economists, scientists, and other highly-educated staff, combining professional, scientific expertise with professional, scientific advocacy—all towards the goal of promoting the well-rounded activist: capable of summoning the relevant scientific data or citing the relevant legal provision but also confident and articulate in the face of hostile interlocutors, skilled in the art of persuasion, and adroit in the science of politics, and well-trained in the task of administration. Along with other philanthropic organizations, Ford would help more of this new breed of organizations get off the ground not just by providing seed funding but also by acting as a kind of “matchmaker” or “broker,” connecting talented, idealistic young men and women with other well-placed potential donors or supporters and pushing them to be more self-sustaining.

Thus, Ford began funding not just for groups like the Conservation Foundation and Resources for the Future, a think-tank which has been studying and proposing market solutions to address environmental problems. It also gave grants to—and in some cases, even helped set up—“public interest” groups like the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), as well as to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Center of Law in the Public Interest, Sierra Club Legal Defense: all adversarial public interest law groups whose stated mission was to prosecute businesses and bureaucrats who violated environmental laws or failed to adequately enforce them. Ford was also at the forefront of efforts to pass or strengthen new environmental laws inside the US beginning in the 1970s and to put climate change on the global agenda throughout the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁶ Indeed, Ford, together with EDF and others, would be instrumental in the establishment of the Climate Action Network, which was to become the largest coalition of “civil society” organizations putting pressure on governments to pass international agreements on climate change.⁴⁷ Others, like Robert O. Anderson, backed Bundy’s initiatives by also expanding and transforming their own competing Ford-like foundations to support groups like the International Institute for Environmental Affairs (IIEA), a group that was founded in 1971 and which, under the leadership of Barbara Ward, campaigned for stronger environmental regulations at the global level. Anderson even reportedly gave funds to David Brower, after he broke with the more moderate Sierra Club and founded Friends of the Earth in 1969.⁴⁸ Other conservationists in other liberal foundations such as the Rockefeller and Mott foundations funded similar other groups.⁴⁹

Inside their political parties, they stood behind those conservationists who favored taking a more antagonistic stance towards the moderate neoliberals, and shunned those who favored taking a more conciliatory stance. Thus, despite various internal differences, the Democratic Party in the US would remain relatively united and continue to occupy the left or center-left as the “New Left” remained ascendant and the “business Democrats” or those who favored taking a less hostile position towards those who opposed new environmental legislation and other

⁴⁵ Dezalay & Garth 2002:69.

⁴⁶ On Ford in general, see Armove 1980; Armove & Pinede 2007; Berman 1983; Berry 1999:26; Bosso 2005:112; Dezalay & Garth 2002; Guilhot 2005; Judis 2013:96-101,160; Parmar 2012; Skocpol 2007:53. On Ford’s work on environmental issues, Adams et al. 2010:16; Barkley & Weissman 1970:48; Dowie 1995:35; Lazarus 2008; McCormick 1989:155; Mitchell 1989; Newell 2000:128; Pooley 2010:74; Robinson 1993.

⁴⁷ Rahman & Roncerel 1994:241; Newell 2000:128.

⁴⁸ Bjork 1996:7; Barkley & Weissman 1970; Herter & Binder 1993 34; Hyman 1975:267-276; Satterwaite 2006.

⁴⁹ Adams et al. 2010:29; Barkley & Weissman 1970; Bosso 2005:113; Dowie 1995:35; Judis 2013:100; Morphet 1996:131.

measures, remained marginal through the 1970s.⁵⁰ This would be more or less true too in other similar left or left-of-center parties in other countries where early advocates of the “Third Way” enjoyed little support from conservationists.

Within the government offices that these conservationists occupied, they lined up behind the other conservationists in their struggles over whether to carry out more direct market interventions and channel government resources to groups supportive of such interventions.⁵¹ Thus, conservationists like US President Johnson and others continued to side with the other conservationists as they countered neoliberals in pushing for a raft of unprecedented environmental legislation in the US and other countries, as they convened international conferences to deal with global environmental problems, and as they opened up spaces for environmentalist groups to participate in these processes during the early 1970s.⁵² They even appointed known eco-reformists as part of their administrations: US President Carter, for example, installed as adviser a known eco-reformist such as Gus Speth, founder of NRDC, a group which aggressively prosecuted corporations, in 1977.⁵³ In many developing countries, conservationists like Indira Gandhi of India and other like-minded leaders supported other conservationists in government who launched the push for the “New International Economic Order,” backed the call for international conferences on global environmental problems, and pushed for working together with other conservationists in developing countries to demand “top-down” climate agreements that oblige the developed-country governments to take the lead in cutting back their pollution and channel “reparations” or “compensation” to the developing countries for their “historical responsibility” in contributing to global environmental problems.

Inside the international organizations which they also headed or ran, many conservationists supported other conservationists as they struggled with other officials who did not want said organizations to help put in place stronger environmental regulations at the global level. At the World Bank, for example, conservationists like Lyndon Johnson backed Anderson’s friend and Bundy’s colleague in the cabinet and at the Ford Foundation, McNamara, as he countered anti-reform forces at the World Bank and transformed it into a kind of “knowledge bank” pushing for “sustainable development” during his decade-long presidency from 1968 to 1981.⁵⁴ They also supported his subordinate at the World Bank, Haq, as he worked with other conservationists from developing countries such as UNCTAD director Gamani Corea and others to fight against neoliberals vying for leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement or the Group of 77 (G-77).⁵⁵ They also assisted McNamara’s collaborators, Ward, Gandhi and others as they tussled with conservative officials to push for the establishment of such new organizations as UN Environment Program (UNEP) in 1972. Under Corea’s leadership from 1974 to 1984, UNCTAD came to serve as key sources of policy guidance for developing-country officials and NGOs engaged in environmental negotiations. Along with the World Bank, the UNEP came to be one of the key initiators of research on global environmental problems like the ozone hole, biodiversity loss, and climate change. Collaborating with other Ford-supported organizations such as the ICSU, IUCN, WWF, UNESCO, and others, it played a central role in kick-starting the process that would lead to the convening in 1988 of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change

⁵⁰ Hacker & Pierson 2011:18,224; 2012: 66-78; Layzer 2012:43-54.

⁵¹ Rootes 2003:3; Bosso 2005:112.

⁵² Hajer 1995:24; Skocpol 2013:61.

⁵³ WRI 2012.

⁵⁴ Goldman 2006:98; McCormick 1989:155-156; Mosley et al. 1995:21-22; Shapley 1993:577; Wade 1997:612.

⁵⁵ Prashad 2008; Krasner 1985:68-69; Williams 1993.

(IPCC), which was to become the largest global collaborative scientific undertaking in history. All played key roles in pushing governments to commence negotiations to pass agreements on climate change, soon to become the largest, most complex inter-governmental talks in history.⁵⁶

The consolidation of conservationist mobilization

In addition to extending their support to other conservationists opposed to allying with moderate neoliberals, more conservationists also chose to heed other conservationists in mobilizing the broader public against all those who opposed the moderate reforms they were advocating.

Not only did they continue to endorse or fund more confrontational actions directed against the extreme neoliberals, they also chose to endorse or stage more confrontational actions directed against the moderate neoliberals as well. That is, instead of encouraging people to engage in more confrontational actions against only those government officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism, they encouraged people to engage instead in confrontational actions against all those officials, business owners and other elites opposed to state capitalism.

Thus, conservationists funding liberal foundations became closely involved in bankrolling the first “Earth Day” in 1970 to increase awareness of environmental problems and drumming up support for a raft of environmental regulations opposed by neoliberals in the US. But over the next decades, their grants also enabled hundreds of other organizations to call for, publicize, and bring out people for large public demonstrations and many other protests aimed at all neoliberals blocking the stronger regulations they were pushing for.⁵⁷ They did not only push the UN to convene international conferences on climate change starting in 1972, they even actively created spaces and provided resources for many of the environmentalist groups they supported to take part in the conferences and provide a counterweight to the businesses and governments opposed to the kinds of international agreements they favored.

At the first ever UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, for example, conservationists like Barbara Ward worked closely with other conservationists in pushing the UN to officially co-organize a parallel “Environment Forum” open to “civil society” groups. They even raised funds for groups like Friends of the Earth and other NGOs to fly in and be represented.⁵⁸ This innovation—the first time that non-government representatives were to be officially given a platform and allowed some access to intergovernmental meetings—will be eventually institutionalized and become a kind of permanent event at practically all big UN gatherings on the environment. Apart from this, Ford officials funded the “People’s Summits” and other parallel alternative NGO gatherings in which environmentalists and other activists routinely denounced not just the ultra-conservative state officials or corporate leaders who denied climate change but even those more moderate state officials or corporate leaders who acknowledged climate change but opposed the stronger regulations they wanted. In addition, they also pushed for “civil society” to have an official “voice” in the negotiations not just by allowing them to participate as “observers” but by actually giving them a reserved slot during certain sessions to deliver their speeches, thus giving them a platform by which to constantly criticize the neoliberals opposed to their proposed reforms.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Morphet 1996:129; Andresen & Agrawala 2002 43; Boehmer-Christiansen 1994:185-186.

⁵⁷ Keck & Sikkink 1998; Rich 1994; Goldman 2006:94.

⁵⁸ Willets 1996:70; Herter & Binder 1993:34.

⁵⁹ Brenton 1999:225; Morphet 1996:138; Stone 1973.

Instead of organizing or financing protest actions that put pressure only on the US under Reagan or the “dirty” corporations that funded the “climate skeptics,” many conservationists supported actions that put pressure on all their designated “bad elites”: not just the extreme right Republicans like William F. Buckley, Barry Goldwater, the businessmen that belonged to the National Association of Manufacturers in the US, economists like Milton Friedman but even the moderate-right Republicans like Nixon or Rockefeller, the businessmen who belonged to the International Chamber of Commerce or the Business Roundtable, and so on.

The consolidation of moderate neoliberalism

As the conservationists became even more cohesive against the moderate neoliberals, however, so did the moderate neoliberals against the extreme neoliberals. Also confronted with more solid forces to their left, many of these moderate neoliberals also began to move away from those other moderate neoliberals who have come to take position that they should first push for only the weakest reforms and that this required antagonizing only the ‘most extreme’ among the extreme neoliberals and allying with the ‘less extreme’ among the extreme neoliberals. Though they did not necessarily all take the view that reforms weaker than what they advocated would be useless in placating subordinate groups, many moderate conservationists began to take the view that, given the left’s strength among subordinate groups, they should escalate their attempts—to enact even more ambitious, though still relatively more conservative reforms compared to those being pushed by the conservationists and this, they thought, required keeping up or ratcheting up their attacks against all the extreme neoliberals. They did not necessarily all reject the goal of at least securing a ‘less extreme’ form of laissez faire capitalism as an ideal, but they did take the position that, given the threat they faced, they should first prioritize achieving their goal of at least preventing the establishment of a full-fledged state capitalism.

The consolidation of moderate-neoliberal will

Thus, seeking to persuade fellow moderate-neoliberals and the broader public to keep fighting against all extreme neoliberals, many moderate neoliberals began to revive the non-class antagonisms that other moderate neoliberals have come to dampen.

Like the extreme neoliberals, they also warned people against those who were exaggerating the severity of the impacts of global environmental problems. But against the extreme neoliberals, they told people that these problems are not just a hoax or a communist conspiracy to scare the public into supporting stronger regulations.

Like the less extreme neoliberals, they propagated the moral diagnosis that people were suffering, or they faced the prospect of suffering, from global environmental problems because of governments’ propensity to put in place excessive rules or institutions intended to address “market failures” or mitigate collective action problems. But against the extreme neoliberals, they also propagated the moral diagnosis that people were suffering, or they faced the prospect of suffering, from global environmental problems because of governments’ failure to put in place even just the minimal rules or institutions needed to address “market failures” or mitigate collective action problems. They told people they are being subjected to, or they are likely to be subjected to, the impacts of climate change because of an extreme reliance on the market system understood only as the refusal to establish minimal restrictions on property rights through very limited government interventions that could induce market players and states to ‘internalize’ the environmental and other social costs of production.

In short, many moderate neoliberals diffused moral explanations that directly contradicted two views: that the problem has to do with *laissez faire* capitalism per se, as conservationists argued, on one hand, and that the problem has to do with any moves toward state capitalism, as extreme neoliberals argued, on the other hand. For them the problem only has to do only with attempts to establish *extreme* *laissez-faire* capitalism or a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the minimal regulations needed to counteract market irrationalities. From their perspective, the problem is not with all regulations or with weak regulations but with what they considered to be defective kind of regulation—one that relies on the use of costly and inflexible regulatory measures that unduly burden businesses, reduce their profitability and impair their ability to innovate and generate more wealth for environmental protection. The problem is not with the free market per se, as conservationists held, nor any departure from the free market, as extreme neoliberals held, but with what others would come to call “market fundamentalism,” or with the complete faith in the free market and rejection of even light and ‘business-friendly’ interventions.

In line with this, they told their fellow elites they could prevent radical change by fighting not for state capitalism nor extreme *laissez faire* capitalism but for a moderate form of *laissez-faire* capitalism. They too therefore called for what a group of institutions dominated by moderate neoliberals would later call “a transformation of the world’s entire economic system”⁶⁰—but by this they meant only placing some minimal restraints on market operations. Thus, they told people to struggle only against excessive regulations or complete deregulation—not against minor regulations possible within the framework of *laissez faire* capitalism. They did not necessarily claim that regulations weaker than what they favored would do nothing to solve the problem but they also stressed, unlike the extreme neoliberals, that the problem would persist unless a moderate *laissez-faire* capitalism is attained. What is needed, in short, is a more conservative version of what would later be popularized as “ecological modernization.”

Like the extreme neoliberals, they generally remained skeptical of, if not opposed to, what they would denigrate as “command and control regulations.” For them, these more direct regulations constituted excessive interference in the market and could actually retard the required investment shifts or technological transformations required for reducing environmental impacts.⁶¹ But against the extreme neoliberals, who called for the “courage to do nothing” or who argued that “the key to cleaning up our environment is unfettered free enterprise,” they did also argue against efforts not to put in place any regulations at all.⁶² “We should always remember,” British Prime Minister Thatcher, a moderate neoliberal who helped push for intergovernmental negotiations on climate change, for example, argued in 1989, that:

[F]ree markets are a means to an end. They would defeat their object if by their output they did more damage to the quality of life through pollution than the well-being they achieve by the production of goods and services.⁶³

In contrast to both conservationists and extreme neoliberals, then, they championed weaker institutional changes aimed only at mitigating “market failures.” They called for schemes to “put

⁶⁰ Quoted in Katz:2015.

⁶¹ Layzer 2012:60.

⁶² Quotes are from Frontline 2012; 2012:194.

⁶³ Thatcher 1989.

a price on nature” but they also insisted that the state intervenes by setting and enforcing those prices without unduly restricting economic expansion.

Thus, compared to both conservationists and extreme neoliberals, they took a more favorable view of “economic instruments” such as carbon trading or carbon taxes. These, rather than punitive “command-and-control” measures, was the way to secure reforms, they argued, because they “harness” the “profit motive” and “give businesspeople a reason to want to be part of the solution” by promising them more control over their production decisions and more ‘autonomy’ in how they want to address climate change. But in contrast to the extreme neoliberals, who would see environmental “externalities” not as “market failures” but as “a failure to permit markets and create markets where they do not yet—or no longer—exist,”⁶⁴ they thought addressing these ‘externalities’ indispensable for solving climate change.

While they endorsed some market-based regulation, they generally viewed with disfavor the even more interventionist state-directed programs or ‘green industrial policy’ proposals intended to divert capital towards renewable energy and cleaner production technologies away from carbon-intensive energy and processes. Instead, they generally favored minimal, direct pollution or carbon taxes on corporations and on wealthy individuals and opposed subsidies to renewable energy. They rejected stronger international regulation of multinational corporations. And while they supported holding inter-governmental negotiations on climate change they generally rejected proposals to compel developed countries to drastically reduce their emissions and relax “intellectual property rights” or impose pollution taxes so as to transfer finance and technology to developing-country governments.⁶⁵ In general, they favored what would later be called “bottom-up” or “pledge-and-review” international agreements in which an overall emissions reductions target may be set but each country decides by how much it wants to contribute to reaching such a target. Against other conservationists, they insisted that, while certain minimal interventions were necessary, the market itself should ultimately be counted upon to deal with environmental problems because, as Thatcher would later argue:

The market itself acts as a corrective: the new products sell and those which caused environmental damage are disappearing from the shelves. And by making these new products widely available, industry will make it possible for developing countries to avoid many of the mistakes which we older industrialized countries have made.

Unlike the extreme neoliberals, they did not necessarily all oppose any redistributive schemes within and across countries. Even Thatcher would say: “We have to recognize the widely differing circumstances facing individual countries, with the better-off assisting the poorer ones...”⁶⁶ Indeed, they agreed to call on developed countries to specify aspirational targets for transferring technology and resources to developing countries but, refusing to go as far as the conservationists, only for as long as much of those transfers were done without increasing taxes or suspending IPR, and on the condition that receiving countries create the “enabling conditions” to open up their markets and attract investments.⁶⁷

More generally, they resisted more direct interventions that would force the North to transfer resources to the South. Though they would not go so far as the extreme neoliberals to

⁶⁴ Quoted in Layzer 2012:196; see also Anderson & Leal 1991.

⁶⁵ Layzer 2012:266-79; 45-247; Thatcher 1989. On Canada, see Harrison 2010 177; Toner 2002 100-101; on Germany, Weidner 2002:161.

⁶⁶ Thatcher 1990.

⁶⁷ Hopgood 1998:150; Anderson and Aldhous 1991; Paterson 1996; Porter and Brown 1991; Rajan 1997.

dismiss it as a ‘New Marxian-Leninist Manifesto,’ they generally opposed the “New International Economic Order” (NIEO) or the more equitable trade rules between developed and developing countries advocated by conservationists.⁶⁸ In addition, they put their foot down on international taxation schemes or measures to relax property rules aimed at channelling technology, finance, and other resources towards the poorer countries. Hence, they resisted Ward, Haq and other liberals’ proposals to establish new central international authorities that could impose and collect taxes on the use of the “global commons,” restrict “overconsumption” by the rich, and give poorer countries more resources to address environmental problems.

During subsequent UN negotiations, they opposed the conservationists’ proposals to compel developed countries to do more to cut their contribution to ecological degradation as well as to divert resources and technology to developing countries, but they did not oppose increasing aid or transferring resources altogether. They spurned demands for “compensation” or “reparations” and any schemes that would force them to impose increased taxes on the wealthy in the North and hand over those revenues to the South. They rejected proposals for a “Green Fund” or a “Climate Protection Fund,” to be financed by the developed governments through fines, charges, fees or taxes on greenhouse gas emissions and administered democratically by all countries.⁶⁹ But they did not block international agreements that would “invite” developed countries to transfer some resources to developing countries.

By opposing certain conservationist measures, then, moderate neoliberals from both the First and Third World sometimes sounded indistinguishable from the extreme neoliberals but their message was also very different: unlike the extreme neoliberals, none ever went so far as to reject any attempts at regulation or redistribution. All refused to go as far as the conservationists but all also took the view that some form of minimal regulations and wealth-transfers were necessary. In short, they moved close to but never went as far as to endorse the prescriptions of the conservationists—even as they also moved close to but also stayed away from the prescriptions of the extreme neoliberals.

In diffusing moderate-neoliberal moral diagnoses and prescriptions, however, they also propagated the moderate-neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations behind these diagnoses and prescriptions. Like the extreme neoliberals, they too went on to interpellate people as members of a global non-class collective whose interests were antagonistic to the conservationists. But, departing from the extreme neoliberals, they also highlighted non-class interpellations hailing people as members of non-class collectives whose interests are antagonistic also to all extreme neoliberals. That is, they called upon members of subordinate groups not as part of contending classes but as part of nations, of developed or developing countries, of the North or of the South, or of an “international community” all on one side against all those business owners, officials, or other elites opposed to moderate *laissez faire* capitalism. Put differently, they continued to appeal to people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included the “bad” businesses, experts and officials who opposed minimal reforms.

This is not to say that they refused to acknowledge any moral boundaries separating those who favor a less extreme form of *laissez-faire* capitalism and those who favor a more extreme form of *laissez-faire* capitalism. But, hoping to prevent other elites and the broader public from working not just with the ‘most extreme’ but also with the ‘less extreme’ neoliberals, they also

⁶⁸ Banuri 1993; Nitze et al. 1992:344; Ricupero 1993.

⁶⁹ Hopgood 1998:103-108; interview with Reinstein,

chose to continue highlighting the moral unities between both camps. They did not claim that they were all equally dangerous or compromised, but they all pointed to and portrayed both as the ones who—together with the conservationists—were less righteous, or who were incapable of moral leadership. Thus, Thatcher and others would assail the conservationists for “indulg[ing] in self-righteous point-scoring for the benefit of audiences and voters at home” or for being “more concerned with short-range respectability than with long-range survival.”⁷⁰ George Bush Sr. would accuse them of putting ‘owls ahead of people.’⁷¹ But they also distanced themselves from all those extreme neoliberals who opposed weak or no environmental regulations.

In other words, they went against both the conservationists and the extreme neoliberals in morally categorizing all those who opposed minimal reforms rather than only those who opposed moderate reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—or as the ones among their ranks that elites and the broader public should be fighting against, the ones toward whom they ought to be directing their discontent or anger. The ‘enemies’ for them include not just those corporate executives or state officials who denied climate change and opposed any climate agreement but also those who downplayed climate change and opposed even the milder international agreements they would propose. Only these bad capitalists and not all businessmen, or not all industry, were the enemies, for as Thatcher would argue:

[W]e must resist the simplistic tendency to blame modern multinational industry for the damage which is being done to the environment. Far from being the villains, it is on them that we rely to do the research and find the solutions.⁷²

More moderate neoliberals therefore contradicted the eco-reformists and eco-radicals by arguing that the failure to establish minimal regulations is not necessarily the result of contradictions between the interests of the public and capital or big business; it is just the result of moral weakness on the part of these ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites.’ But they also contradicted both conservationists and extreme neoliberals by designating all those opposed to minimal reforms they championed as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites.’ Though they too did not necessarily all agree on who among them were most problematic, all agreed that they should antagonize all these elites to foil the threat of more radical transformations.

The consolidation of moderate neoliberal organization

Guided by these moral categorizations, many moderate neoliberals also consequently chose to withdraw their support from the other moderate neoliberals inside their organizations, coalitions, or networks who favored allying with the moderate neoliberals.

Within business circles, they clashed against those business leaders who advocated partnering with business leaders and business groups which thought their interests could be better advanced through the stronger regulations favored by conservationists but also with those business leaders and business groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, as the American Energy Alliance and, later, the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) which thought their interests could be hurt by any regulation and could be best advanced by full deregulation.⁷³ They

⁷⁰ Thatcher 1990.

⁷¹ Hopgood 1998:130.

⁷² Thatcher 1989.

⁷³ Betsill 2000; Pulver 2000:218,248-249, 2007; Meckling 2011:81-96, 123-155; Schmidheiny 1992: xix; Hopgood 1998 212; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010 32; Hacker & Pierson 2011:205; Lazarus 2008 :161; interviews with KN, MJ, VP, PR, and market player.

instead backed those moderate-neoliberals who advocated working with businesses and business groups such as the Business Roundtable which thought their interests could be hurt by non-regulation and could be best advanced by milder, less ‘coercive’ or more ‘business-friendly’ regulations at the domestic and global levels.

Outside these circles, they began to withhold financial, political and other forms of assistance to other moderate neoliberals who favored reaching out to and supporting only those think-tanks, advocacy groups, and other organizations producing research or organizing campaigns against all regulations. Instead, they supported those who wanted to reach out to and support think-tanks, advocacy groups, and other organizations producing research or organizing campaigns in favor of milder regulations. Thus, at the Ford Foundation, for example, they linked up with other moderate-neoliberals as they struggled against, or at least tried to temper, the conservationists like Bundy who, as foundation president from 1966 to 1979, were pushing the foundation to support more progressive grassroots organizations and public-interest groups espousing eco-reformist or conservationist views. Against Bundy and his supporters, they insisted that Ford at least continue to support not just groups like EDF or NRDC that Bundy and his camp favored but also the more centrist or more moderate think-tanks or groups such as the Conservation Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, and Resources for the Future.⁷⁴ These, in turn, served to counterbalance think-tanks like the Cato Institute or the Heartland Institute in the US, the Center for Policy Studies in the UK, the Foundation for Economic Freedom in the Philippines, or advocacy groups like Americans for Prosperity which would propagate climate denialism or mobilize against stronger environmental regulations worldwide.⁷⁵ While Bundy and others pushed for Ford to back eco-reformist groups, they pressed Ford to devote resources to ‘less political’ scientists’ groups, experts, or “policy entrepreneurs” working on climate change.

Within political parties, they refused to extend support to those moderate-neoliberals who favored taking a less antagonistic stance against both conservationists and extreme neoliberals and instead lined up behind those who sought a less conciliatory stance towards both groups. Despite challenges from extreme right-wing forces represented by Barry Goldwater, for example the Republican Party in the US would remain relatively cohesive and continue to occupy the right or the center-right as the Establishment or moderate—and predominantly East Coast-based—wing of the GOP gained more support from party members while its insurgent anti-Establishment or extreme-right—and predominantly Sunbelt-based—wing remained relatively isolated during the 1970s.⁷⁶ The same was, with very important differences, also true for many other more conservative parties in Western Europe and elsewhere.

Inside government offices, they refused to stand behind the other moderate neoliberals who favored alliances with the less extreme neoliberals in their struggles over whether to carry out more direct market interventions and channel government resources or access to groups demanding such interventions.⁷⁷ Thus, they sided with moderate Republicans like Richard Nixon or Nelson Rockefeller as they fought off the extreme neoliberals’ opposition to expanded

⁷⁴ Dowie 1995:55-56; Hays 1989; Barkley & Wessman 1970.

⁷⁵ Arnove & Pinede 2007:394; Blumenthal 1986:53; Blyth 2002:156; Cushman 2001; Dezalay & Garth 2002:127, 277, 276; Edsall 1985:15-21, 92-120; Guilhot 2005:197; Hacker & Pierson 2011:123; Himmelstein 1992:145-154; Judis 2013:124; McQuaid 1994:154-159; Teles 2007:163-177. On climate change in particular, see Agarwal et al 2001:51; Austin 2002:88; Beder 1998; Brulle 2000:128-130; Chinoy & Kaiser 1999; Dowie 1995:84; Dunlap & McCright 2015:301-319; Layzer 2012:143,234-241; Oreskes & Conway 2010; van Horn 2009:230. For Canada, Toner 2002:101.

⁷⁶ Bosso 2005:127; Blumenthal 1986; Hacker & Pierson 2011:189, 199, 264-265,293; Layzer 2012:xiv; Skocpol 2013:61-63; Skocpol & Williamson 2012:139.

⁷⁷ Bosso 2005:112; Rootes 2004:3.

environmental legislation in the US and other countries, as they went along with calls to convene international conferences to address global environmental problems, and as they gave access and resources to environmentalist groups in 1970s.⁷⁸ In many developing countries, moderate neoliberals supported other moderate neoliberals in governments who would try to temper but not completely reject conservationists' push for a "new international economic order" and for international conferences on global environmental problems. They backed efforts to work together with other moderate neoliberals in other developing countries to demand the kind of binding but not overly-onerous international agreements that oblige the developed countries to take the lead in cutting back their pollution and channelling resources to developing countries.⁷⁹

Within international organizations, they distanced themselves from moderate neoliberals who rejected mobilizing said organizations to help put in place environmental regulations that were weaker than what they favored. At the World Bank, for example, they joined forces with other moderate neoliberals in blocking or slowing down McNamara, Haq and other conservationists as they attempted to mobilize the financial organization towards conservationist agenda, on one hand, as well as the extreme neoliberals working to prevent the bank from supporting any regulations.⁸⁰ They also supported those who blocked McNamara's close collaborator, Ward, Gandhi and others as they tried to establish and mobilize new international organizations as UN Environment Program (UNEP) towards campaigning for stronger regulations at the global level, as well as against the extreme neoliberals calling for the dissolution of the UN and its agencies, especially UNCTAD and the UNCTC. In addition, they joined forces with other moderate neoliberals in turning the OECD, long a stronghold of moderate neoliberalism, into one of the most aggressive and consistent proponents of moderate-neoliberal prescriptions on the world stage, countering the influence of other international organizations in international foras, from the 1970s onward.⁸¹ Together with others, they also played a role in neutralizing or moderating conservationists in organizations such as the ICSU, IUCN, WWF, UNESCO, and others as they initiated the process that would lead to the convening of the IPCC and the subsequent climate negotiations—even as they also tried to neutralize those who tried to abort these efforts. Unlike the extreme neoliberals, who rejected even just participating in the climate change negotiations at the UN,⁸² they went along with conservationists in pushing for international negotiations on climate change to commence, but they would also counter the conservationists seeking to ensure that stronger international agreements come out of the negotiations as well as the extreme neoliberals seeking to ensure that nothing comes out of them.

The consolidation of neoliberal mobilization

Aside from continuing to provide various forms of support to other moderate-neoliberals in their organizations, many moderate neoliberals also began to defy other moderate-neoliberals' appeals to organize the broader public only against all those who opposed any reforms.

That is, instead of supporting more contentious actions only against the most extreme neoliberals, they endorsed, supported, or tolerated more contentious actions directed against all

⁷⁸ Hacker & Pierson 2011:145; Hajer 1995:24; Skocpol 2013:61; interview with VP.

⁷⁹ Harris 1990:182; Hurrell 1992:417; Prashad 2008: xviii, 211-214; Williams 1993:8.

⁸⁰ Goldman 2006:91-98; McCormick 1989:155-156; Shapley 1993:577; Wade 1997:612; Wood 1986:226.

⁸¹ On the OECD's environmental work, see Eckersely 1995:21; Bernstein 2001:51-52; Long 200; OECD 2011; interviews with CJ and WP.

⁸² Hopgood 1998:156; interview with Reinstein.

extreme neoliberals. This meant pushing people to fight not only against those officials, business owners, and other elites espousing the need for state capitalism but also against those officials, business owners and other elites espousing extreme laissez faire capitalism.

Hence, unlike the extreme neoliberals who rejected doing anything about environmental problems at all, they bankrolled or became closely involved in organizing the “Earth Day” and other protests in the 1970s which raised the public profile of environmental problems and galvanized support for a raft of milder environmental regulations viewed with disfavor by extreme neoliberals. Over the next decades, their financial assistance would also allow many other organizations to call for and bring out people for demonstrations and protests aimed at the extreme neoliberals blocking the minimal regulations they championed.⁸³ They did not only go along with other conservationists in pushing for the UN to convene conferences on climate change, they also went along with them in actively opening up spaces and providing resources for many of the moderate business and environmentalist groups they supported provide a counterweight to both businesses and governments pushing for the international agreements favored by conservationists as well as those who wanted no agreements to be reached at all.

At the first ever UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, for example, moderate neoliberals pushed the UN to also organize preparatory meetings to encourage business groups such as the International Chamber of Commerce not to block the conference and oppose its recommendation. These meetings would also eventually be institutionalized and become a kind of permanent event at practically all big UN gatherings on the environment. Apart from this, they held other parallel NGO and business gatherings in which executives, environmentalists, and other activists would criticize not just those progressive officials or corporate leaders who acknowledged climate change and pushed for stronger regulations but also the ultra-conservative state officials or corporate leaders who denied climate change and opposed even mild regulations they wanted. In addition, they also pushed for business to officially participate as one of the “Major Groups” allowed to speak during certain designated sessions, thereby giving them a platform by which to constantly criticize both the conservationists and the extreme neoliberals.

In other words, instead of mobilizing to direct people to channel their anger only towards those who denied the severity of global warming and resisted all regulations, they mobilized to push people to also direct their anger towards all those who denied that climate change was happening at all or downplayed its severity and opposed even less onerous regulations”: not just the most extreme Republicans like Barry Goldwater but even the less extreme Republicans, not just the corporate executives which deny climate change altogether but even those executives which acknowledge climate change but reject any climate action.

The advance of the progressive sections of the dominant classes

As the subordinate classes became less fragmented starting around the mid 1960s to the 1980s, then, the dominant classes also became less fragmented starting around the late 1960s.

As threats to existing property relations escalated, more and more conservationists and moderate neoliberals came to think that they should step up their efforts to push for even stronger reforms instead of the relatively weaker reforms they had come to advocate around the 1950s and 1960s. Not all necessarily thought that they should not clinch even just these weaker reforms, but many began to take the view that they needed to keep struggling against, rather than

⁸³ Keck & Sikkink 1998; Rich 1994; Goldman 2006:94.

accommodating or allying with, their more conservative fellow elites to their right who favored only these weaker reforms or who opposed all reforms altogether. Put differently, they began to take the position that that they should also engage in competition, rather than cooperation, with the more conservative elites for public support. In continuing to refuse to ally with these forces, however, they rekindled the antagonisms and to accentuate the moral boundaries that others from within their bloc had come to obscure. They too played down or even start contradicting the moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives and categorizations being propagated by the other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who had moved closer to the moderate neoliberals and extreme neoliberals respectively. They severed their ties with them and asserted their autonomy. And they paid no heed to— or even defied—their efforts to direct people’s anger, anxieties and energies toward fighting only the neoliberals or the extreme neoliberals respectively.

As a result, those conservationists and moderate neoliberals who continued to antagonize the moderate neoliberals and the extreme neoliberals respectively also found themselves even less isolated, or even more central, among elites.

With few other conservationists propagating the view that climate change is rooted only in extreme laissez-faire capitalism, that the remedy is just a more moderate laissez-faire capitalism, that only the extreme neoliberals count among the enemies, and that conservationists who insist on antagonizing the extreme neoliberals are untrustworthy friends at best, those conservationists who refused to ally with the neoliberals found it less difficult to persuade people that the problem is laissez-faire capitalism itself, that the solution is state capitalism, that they should fight against even the moderate neoliberals, and that they could be relied on as their friends. In other words: with few other conservationists attracting people to the moderate-neoliberal bloc, they found it less difficult to draw them towards the conservationist bloc instead.

The same was true for the moderate neoliberals who refuse to accommodate the extreme neoliberals: With few other moderate neoliberals diffusing the discourse that climate change is caused only by state capitalism, that the only realistic solution is extreme laissez-faire capitalism, that the ‘enemies’ are just the conservationists, and that moderate neoliberals who reject working with the extreme neoliberals are undependable allies at best, they too found it less difficult to convince other elites that the problem is extreme laissez-faire capitalism, that the solution is a more moderate laissez-faire capitalism, that they should fight even the less extreme among the extremist neoliberals, and that they could be counted upon as dependable friends. In short: with few other moderate neoliberals in effect recruiting people to the extreme neoliberal bloc, they found it less difficult to draw them towards the moderate-neoliberal bloc instead.

Still supported by fellow conservationists and moderate neoliberals, both therefore also found it less difficult to gain more supporters and, thus, obtain more resources and rally more people to struggle against their identified enemies from among the ranks of the elites. So as elites’ concern over the dominated classes’ radicalism or potential for radicalism persisted or heightened during the 1960s and 1970s, both conservationists and moderate neoliberals found it less difficult to direct these anxieties towards a united push for moderate or minimal reforms. There were many exceptions and the extent by which they did so varied from country to country, but in general elites moved to, or stayed in, the center-left or center-right in many countries.⁸⁴

Despite this, the conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored allying with the conservative elites also kept mobilizing towards their respective goals. They continued to try to

⁸⁴ Blumenthal 1986; Hacker & Pierson 2005; Layzer 2012:49; McQuaid 1994; Skocpol 2007.

channel people's anxieties and energies towards fighting against only the extreme or most extreme neoliberals respectively. They continued to build ties with other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored taking a more conciliatory stance towards the latter. And they too continued to diffuse their moral diagnosis prescriptions, narratives and categorizations. Countering attempts to portray them as unreliable friends by other fellow conservationists or moderate neoliberals who favored allying with those to their right, they too lashed back by also morally re-categorizing them as undependable friends, if not as complicit with the enemies.

Despite this resistance, however, the other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who refused to back them still gathered steam and found it increasingly less difficult to counter the opposition of the more conservative sections—an opposition that, compared with what is to come, still remained largely unorganized during this period.

With other conservationists refusing to desert them and, thus, able to mount a unified offensive against all the conservatives as few other conservationists aimed their fire only at the extreme neoliberals, the conservationists reinforced their capacity to overcome the resistance not just of the extreme neoliberals intent on blocking all reforms but also the moderate neoliberals intent on blocking the more ambitious reforms they supported. Their continuing push for moderate reforms helped prevent the extreme neoliberals from blocking any reform from being implemented altogether and from rolling back existing regulations. But, more than that, by succeeding in forging a broader anti-neoliberal bloc as other conservationists refrained from forging a global anti-extreme-neoliberal bloc instead, they themselves began to lay the ground for the moderate domestic and global regulations they advocated.

The same held true for the moderate neoliberals: Without being weakened by desertions and, thus, able to wage a unified assault against all extreme neoliberals as few other moderate neoliberals aimed their fire only at the most extreme neoliberals, they too enhanced their capacity to overcome the resistance not just of the most extreme neoliberals blocking all reforms but also the less extreme neoliberals intent on blocking the weak reforms they supported. Their continuing mobilizations also contributed to preventing the most extreme neoliberals from blocking any reforms. But, by succeeding in forging a global bloc against extreme neoliberals as other moderate neoliberals refrained from forging a global bloc only against the most extreme neoliberals, they too began to lay the ground for the weak regulations they favored.

Pushed by members of the subordinate classes who sought more than just moderate concessions, both the conservationists and the moderate neoliberals therefore began to prevent the complete absence of any reforms at all in the face of climate change. But, supported as well by many elites who sought to avert more the more radical changes demanded by the subordinate classes, both also succeeded in building up the collective will and means needed to carry out the limited transformations that they argued are needed to address the problem.

Thanks in large part to their efforts to publicize environmental problems and to provide financial and other support to “environmentalist” groups, more and more people—including more state officials, professionals, and business leaders—became involved in the “environmental movement” starting in the late 1960s. More and more environmental organizations were founded and the membership rolls of these organizations expanded worldwide.⁸⁵ Though statistics tend to aggregate all environmental groups regardless of their discourse, it is likely that a sizeable fraction of them advanced or supported conservationist or moderate neoliberal views.

⁸⁵ Longhofer & Schofer 2010.

Backed or pushed by their expanding ranks of supporters, conservationists and moderate neoliberals subsequently succeeded in enacting tougher environmental regulations that would begin to at least prevent pollution from deteriorating and improve the material conditions of some groups, along with other pro-labor regulations that would at least mitigate the effects of the deepening economic crises.⁸⁶ In the US, they managed to push more environmental reforms and establish more regulatory agencies than in the entire past history of the American federal government—an unprecedented feat of legislation and institutional formation that targeted not just specific industries, as in the past, but a wider range of industries than ever.⁸⁷ Despite having Republican presidents in office, they succeeded in passing a “blizzard” of environmental laws that diverged from previous regulations because they “ultimately challenge rather than embrace the kind of absolutist notions of property rights that underlie the claims of property owners...”⁸⁸ They were then “the world’s most ambitious domestic environmental regulations.”⁸⁹ Though their regulatory “styles” differed, the same more or less happened in Canada, the UK, Germany, Japan and elsewhere. Around the world, governments pass tougher environmental laws or established agencies specifically dedicated to “environmental protection.”⁹⁰

But they did not just stop at the national level: Starting with the first UN conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, then the biggest UN conference ever held, and at the many inter-governmental conferences that they continued to convene after, conservationists and moderate neoliberals also succeeded in securing international agreements that set new norms and expectations prescribing the need for what would later be called “sustainable development” or a more environmentally-conscious capitalist expansion. They managed to set up new international organizations such as UNEP and the UN Center on Transnational Corporations intended to push for stricter constraints on the actions of business. And as research undertaken by some of the very scientific organizations they funded supported claims that global warming, and other ecological problems such as the ozone hole, biodiversity loss, desertification, etc. were indeed happening, they also began laying the ground for more international agreements prescribing global regulatory interventions to address these problems later.⁹¹

As the 1970s wore on, they would come under increasing challenge from the more conservative elites who stepped up their efforts to attack or at least neutralize the reforms they had carried out and wanted to extend. But they would remain relatively united and continued to resist and at least slow down their counter-offensive. Even Republican Presidents such as Nixon and Ford continued to implement much the main tenets of Johnson and Kennedy’s regulatory policies during the 70s. Carter continued to promote Keynesian measures despite the growing power of the monetarists pre-Reagan. Al Gore and other Democrats in Congress impeded Reagan’s and Bush Sr.’s attempts to gut environmental regulations in the US and obstruct international environmental negotiations; and conservationists and moderate neoliberals in the

⁸⁶ On the US, Andrews 2008:253; Dowie1995: x, 39; Hacker & Pierson 2011:99; Keleman and Vogel 2010; Pooley 2012; Skocpol 2012; Vogel 1989:294. On Germany: Weidner 2002; on Europe, Meckling 2011:78,119; on Japan, Broadbent 2001; see also Frieden 2006:367

⁸⁷ Andrews 2008:255; Blyth 2002:133; Edsall 1985:13; Judis 2013:101; Robinson 1993:39; Vogel 1986:251; 1989:13.

⁸⁸ Hacker & Pierson 2011:96; Layzer 2012:8, 31–47; Pierson 2007:19-24; Pierson & Skocpol 2007:4. Quote is from Lazarus 2008:51.

⁸⁹ Keleman & Vogel 2010:432.

⁹⁰ Keleman & Vogel 2010:442; Meyer et al. 1997; Rootes 2004:234; Vogel 1986 :39;. For Canada, see Toner 2002:76; for the UK, Rawcliffe 1998:2; McCormick 2002:125; for Germany; Weidner 2002:150-151; for Japan, Broadbent 2002; Tiberghien & Schreurs 2010.

⁹¹ Bernstein 2001:48, 120; Stone 1973:72.

international organizations such as the World Bank continued to fight against the Reaganites' drive to dismantle the environmental and other regulations they championed.⁹²

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I put forward an explanation for how, instead of staying disunited, the dominant classes also began to overcome their divisions starting around the late 1960s, building up the social force needed to neutralize internal opposition thereby improving the prospects for the social changes needed to mitigate climate change.

Analyzing how the relations among the dominated classes were transformed in the wake of changes in the relations among the dominant classes, I proposed that the possibility for limited transformations to be carried out increased starting around the late 1960s as many conservationists and moderate neoliberals decided to switch sides to support those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who stood for competing rather than affiliating with the more conservative elites. As they did, they broke these conservationists' and moderate-neoliberals' isolation, repairing their ability to push for minor structural changes to manage climate change.

In the next chapter, we turn to examine how these changes in intra-dominant class relations affected intra-dominated class relations to investigate how, rather than further consolidating as the dominant classes became more organized, the subaltern groups would begin to disintegrate again starting in the mid 1980s, dimming the prospects for the radical changes needed to address climate change.

⁹² See among others Bello et al. 1999; Gowan 1999; Hacker & Pierson 2005; Layzer 2012; Pierson 1994.

CHAPTER 5: The containment of active revolution

By the early 1980s, then, the political and ideological terrain had again transformed. Rather than splintering further over the call for limited reforms, the dominant classes had managed to prevent disintegration and even appeared to have consolidated again behind limited reforms across countries. As the eco-reformists and eco-radicals made strides gaining more support from subordinate groups and as they consequently began finding it less difficult to build up the social force required to counter the dominant classes opposed to radical transformations starting around the mid 1960s, the progressive elites began reclaiming the initiative, waging a “passive revolution” to reconstruct hegemony and foil the radical forces’ attempts to build alternative hegemonies starting around the late 1960s.

In this juncture, two possibilities opened up: The subaltern groups could have remained as or even more organized, creating the social force needed to counter the dominant groups opposed to radical transformations by riding on the elites’ apparent willingness to grant concessions in order to keep building the ground for more radical transformations. In so doing, they kept open the possibility for the sweeping structural changes needed to stop or limit global environmental problems to be carried out. But they could also have started fragmenting again, faltering in their attempts to construct the social force needed to neutralize the dominant classes by failing to take advantage of elites’ push for reforms in order to make the case for even more radical changes, thus closing off the possibility for said changes. In short: the growing organization of the progressive elites could have led to the continuing integration and dynamism of the subaltern groups, i.e. to the failure of passive revolution, or it could have led to their dissolution and passivity yet again, i.e. to the success of passive revolution.

How did it happen that it was this second possibility that actually transpired? Why, instead of further consolidating, did subaltern groups end up splintering again in many countries? How was the possibility for carrying out more radical changes to address climate change closed?

For us to answer these questions, we now go on to analyze the impacts of changes in the relations among the dominant classes on intra-dominated class relations. I will contend that structural modifications to address climate change became less likely starting in the mid-1980s because instead of continuing to fight for more radical transformations—or instead of building on the progressive elites’ apparent willingness to grant concessions to build support for even more concessions and put even more pressure on the progressive elites—many eco-radicals and eco-reformists reacted to the growing organization of the dominant classes by deferring the fight for more radical transformations and pushing only for limited reforms. They backed and supported those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites by favoring alliances with the more progressive elites, dampening antagonisms towards them, and blurring the group boundaries that set them apart from them, thus deepening the divisions among the subaltern groups and undermining their collective ability to organize members of the subaltern groups behind their push for more radical transformations.

The consequences of passive revolution

As members of the dominant classes rallied behind the conservationists and moderate neoliberals pushing for reforms to address environmental problems, the prospect of subordinate groups gaining more concessions expanded anew beginning around the late 1960s.

Economic stagnation persisted or even worsened. Instead of cutting back on social

spending or cutting wages, many had sought to resolve the multiple crises they faced, or at least to “buy time,” by resorting to just printing even more money and later, by borrowing more and pushing private credit to households, thereby raising inflation and expanding debt but enabling at least some sections of the subaltern groups to retain if not gain more concessions and to engage in increased consumption. In some post-colonial or developing countries too, attempts at industrialization failed to improve the wages of many others and reduce poverty but, buoyed by continuously increasing consumption in the core countries and by subsidies financed through debts pushed by developed-country governments or by the World Bank, they also maintained or even raised the wages of select groups, particularly urban workers, public-sector employees, and other sections of the middle- and lower classes.¹

Starting around the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the consequences of these attempts to “buy time” to overcome stagnation began to be felt more acutely: profitability continued to decline, budget deficits began to grow, and the “stagflation” that resulted began to erode real wages and unemployment began to increase in the core countries. In many postcolonial or developing countries, the income of wide segments of the population continued to remain stagnant or to decline as the limits of import-substitution industrialization were reached, competition intensified, and the debt crisis wreaked havoc on economies. Across the world, growth slowed and a “crisis of profitability” intensified. Faced with these developments, the more conservative elites in many developed countries began pushing to tighten money supply, cut back on public spending, and loosen domestic and international regulations on business in an attempt to dampen inflation, mitigate the effects of global competition, and restore profits; they also stepped up their efforts to discipline and even to wage military interventions against nationalist, state-oriented reformist elements in the South; in many developing countries, their counterparts also began to embrace anti-regulation positions and to work with northern elites in rolling back state interventionist projects and attempts at building “national capitalisms.” In short, they began pushing for nothing less than the complete dismantlement of the relatively more “labor friendly” regimes, or the Keynesian/social-democratic compromise, that was put in place during the 1940s.²

And yet, many progressive elites in both developed and developing countries still for the most part seemed unwilling to accommodate or support the extreme neoliberals and give up on pushing for limited reforms and concessions to subordinate groups. They also continued to promise and extend financial, political, and other forms of support—grants, access to and representation in government conferences and elite networks—to all those members of subordinate groups supportive of, and organizing others to support, the reforms they favored and to mobilize against their designated ‘enemies.’

But with progressive elites signaling their continuing openness or their willingness to fight for some limited reforms and concessions despite worsening economic difficulties and the growing power of the extreme neoliberals, and with these progressive elites offering and providing concrete resources and opportunities to all those willing to join them as they fought for these limited reforms against the more conservative elites, members of the dominated classes again started reevaluating their options. Many began to reconsider the kinds of moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives, and categorizations they were diffusing to understand and act upon global environmental problems. Operating on new political terrain, they started rethinking what

¹ See Bello et al. 1999; Canak 1989; Frieden 2006; Mosley et al. 1995; Prashad 2007.

² Arrighi 2007; Bello et al. 1999; Frieden 2006; Hart 2009; Prashad 2007; Streeck 2012, 2014.

they should struggle for, who they should struggle with and who they should struggle against.

The disintegration of eco-reformism

Arrayed against increasingly more organized forces to their right, more and more eco-reformists began to question whether they should continue pushing for stronger reforms and whether they should continue antagonizing all the neoliberals in light of the transformed political terrain. Though they did not necessarily all take the view that far-reaching reforms were no longer necessary, many did begin taking the position that they should first secure the minimal reforms the moderate neoliberals supported and this, they argued, necessitated using the resources and opportunities the moderate neoliberals offered and forging a kind of “united front” not against all neoliberals but only against the extreme neoliberals. They did not necessarily all stop believing in a more democratic state capitalism as the ideal society, but they did start to posit that eco-reformists should aim first for the kind of moderate neoliberal capitalism favored by the moderate neoliberals.

The disintegration of eco-reformist will

Thus, trying to sway other eco-reformists and the broader public to prioritize the fight for this goal against the extreme neoliberals, many eco-reformists also started trying, from around the mid-1980s onward, to defuse or defer the non-class antagonisms that other eco-reformists had been trying to kindle.

They did not necessarily abandon the eco-reformist diagnoses that people were suffering from climate change because of an absence or weakness of ecological norms that result in the deficient regulation of the market and the inter-state system. They did not necessarily repudiate the notion that people were being dispossessed of the world’s ecological resources by large transnational corporations which have “captured” the world’s governments. They did not necessarily disagree that the problem has to do with “corporate democracy” and the “voracious development process” pursued by the “industrial civilization,” as mainly eco-reformist groups that gathered in a parallel meeting put it in a declaration during the UN summit in Rio in 1992.³

But, moving closer to the moderate neoliberals, these eco-reformists did give relatively more emphasis on the moral diagnosis that people were suffering from climate change only because of an absence or weakness of even just the minimum rules needed to enhance the regulation of the market and the inter-state system. That is, they told people they were facing climate change because of the international community’s failure to institutionalize business-friendly measures or policies that “harness the power of the market” to “incentivize” or induce large corporations and the more powerful states to reduce their emissions and channel resources and technology to developing countries or to the poor.

In other words, they did not necessarily deny that the problem has to do with corporate-dominated laissez-faire capitalism per se, as other eco-reformists underscored, but which also tended to suggest that the problem primarily has to do with ‘extreme’ laissez-faire capitalism, or with a form of capitalism that lacks the minimal rules needed to promote conservation.

In line with this moral diagnosis, many eco-reformists also diffused a revised moral prescription. Not only did they choose to de-emphasize the eco-reformist point that the prevalence of anti-ecological institutions is rooted in the logic of Big-Business dominated

³ Agenda Ya Wananchi 1991:22.

laissez-faire capitalism and that changing institutions require counterbalancing corporate power, they also put forward a different project: that of a better-regulated but still laissez-faire capitalist society. Though they did not necessarily begin telling people they had nothing to gain by creating a more participatory state capitalism, as other eco-reformists continued to stress, the overall direction of their messages was towards pushing people to mobilize more of their energy and resources towards first struggling against extreme laissez-faire capitalism and putting in place the kind of moderate or slightly-fettered laissez-faire capitalism supported even by the moderate neoliberals—though one that had stronger rules or more ambitious redistributive schemes than what the moderate neoliberals favored. “Working only within the system will, in the end, not succeed when what is needed is transformative change in the system itself,”⁴ one prominent eco-reformist continued to argue, but by “transformative change in the system” he and others no longer necessarily meant the replacement of laissez faire capitalism with a more participatory form of state capitalism, just with a more moderate form of laissez faire-capitalism.

Replacing unfettered capitalism with a more participatory state capitalism may still be necessary if they are to completely end their suffering, they suggested. They did not necessarily disagree other eco-reformists who, in a pre-Earth Summit gathering in Paris in 1992, called for an “expansion of our role in the control and management of our environment” by giving the public “equal voice” in decision-making as governments and corporations, not necessarily in place of but *along with* corporations and governments.⁵ But they also began to argue that, for now at least, they need to first prevent the emergence and expansion of extreme laissez-faire capitalism—and indeed, that their attempts to establish participatory state capitalism would be undermined if they do not do so. Hence, they must focus first on securing even just minor compromise regulations that may not necessarily erode corporate domination but which could at least set constraints on business and move the world away from extreme laissez-faire capitalism. They did not necessarily all say that securing these minimal reforms alone will be sufficient for solving the problem but they did also refrain from driving home the point that even if such reforms were carried out the problem would likely persist until a more participatory state capitalism is put in place. ‘The perfect should not be the enemy of the good,’ they repeatedly reminded people.

Consistent with this, many eco-reformists began to moderate their push for new values or norms that call for stronger forms of regulation which threaten to impose severe economic and symbolic costs on businesses, such as greater controls on the energy industry or closer regulation of the means of transportation. They did not necessarily oppose measures to increase pollution or other taxes imposed on large corporations to fund programs to promote research and expand the production of “cleaner” technologies. But they did begin to withdraw their support for the direct, non-market based and punitive measures such as outright prohibitions or the imposition of fines and penalties that eco-reformists had traditionally supported—what the neoliberals derided as “command-and-control” regulations. Instead, they began to embrace the more indirect, market-based, and non-punitive measures such as the cap-and-trade schemes and other “economic instruments” that the moderate neoliberals preferred.⁶

⁴ Quoted in Layzer 2012:366.

⁵ Agenda Ya Wananchi 1991: 22.

⁶ Betsill 2008; M. Braun 2009; Bryner 2008; Carpenter 2001; Chatterjee and Finger 1994; Dubash and Oppenheimer 1992; Eckersley 1995; Faber 2008; Finger 1994; Goodell 2006; Krupp 1986; Layzer 2012:347; Levy and Egan 1998; Meckling 2011; Mitchell 1989; Newell 2000; Princen 1994; Raymond 2003; Raustiala 2001; Rosenbaum 2008; Royden 2002; Svendsen 1999.

In short, they supported what Fredd Krupp, the lawyer who became EDF's new president in 1984, would call "third wave environmentalism": one which departs from the earlier waves of environmentalism by "shouldering the burden of helping to find flexible and effective solutions, rather than just blaming others for the problems." Thus Krupp himself, once a staunch believer in hauling corporations to court for violating command-and-control regulations, became what one policymaker described as "apostle of emissions trading," turning EDF, once a strong proponent of non-market regulations, into perhaps the most active proponent of market-based regulation "that give companies the incentive to do the right thing--to harness greed" from 1984 onwards.⁷

At the international level, Krupp and others from NRDC and other environmentalist groups started rejecting the international agreements advocated by other eco-reformists—one which imposed high emissions caps, barred carbon trading, and called for significant redistribution from developed to developing countries. Instead, they supported the kind of international agreements advocated by the moderate neoliberals: one which set lower emissions caps, allowed for carbon trading with permissive rules (i.e. with permits given away for free rather than auctioned, among others), and called for minimal redistribution from developed to developing countries.⁸

Thus, to the consternation of many other eco-reformists in the Climate Action Network, many of whom vigorously opposed giving developed-country governments and corporations more flexibility in achieving their proposed emissions-reduction targets, they began insisting that the coalition recommend carbon trading and other economic instruments to be part of any new international agreement and to hold back on calling for more significant transfers to developing countries, thereby triggering intense conflicts within the network and pushing some eco-reformists to eventually withdraw from the coalition altogether. Through their efforts, a declaration expressing the network's consensus positions in 1992, issued just as the UNFCCC was being finalized, included a line saying that "market incentives, possibly including emissions trading, will need to be developed" but—likely reflecting the opposition of other eco-reformists—only "in the longer-term."⁹ Then after successfully pushing CAN to espouse emissions trading in the mid-1990s, they again went against other eco-reformists by pushing the coalition to support more permissive trading rules to give more flexibility to governments and corporations. They opposed setting extremely high caps, restricting their coverage, tightening their rules or taking any steps that could make them more onerous to businesses even as they also opposed setting extremely low caps, expanding their coverage unduly or taking steps that could make them too lenient on businesses.¹⁰

In line with this, they also later broke with other eco-reformists in throwing their support behind, or at least not actively opposing, the voluntary "bottom-up" agreements that would later be adopted as the Copenhagen Accord in 2009 and the Paris Agreement in 2015—agreements that, instead of imposing mandatory emissions-reductions or resource-transfer targets on countries, required them only to "pledge" as much or as little cuts or transfers as they want. Though they did push for stronger reporting measures or for "ratcheting up" mechanisms that could put pressure on countries to raise their pledges, they also argued that these agreements

⁷ quoted in Verini 2007

⁸ Betsill 2000:259; Braun 2009:478; Krupp 2008; Gomez-Baggethun 2010:1214; Meckling 2011:81,119; Pulver 2004:129; Dowie 1996:109; Raustiala 2001:106; Newell & Paterson 2010:79; Verini 2007; interviews with HB, MJ, PJ, PR.

⁹ Eco February 5, 1992.

¹⁰ Betsill 2000:259; Braun 2009:478; Busby 2010:129; Dowie 1996:109; Newell & Paterson 2010:79; Pulver 2004:129; Raustiala 2001:106; Meckling 2011:10; Hadden 2015:101. Interviews with HW, MJ, US, YM.

were the only way by which to secure some support from business and that they were only the “first steps” towards better agreements. So unlike other eco-reformists who would later denounce the Paris Agreement as a step backward, they would welcome it despite what they themselves point to as its shortcoming and hail its approval as “progress.”¹¹

Though not entirely unsympathetic to the idea that developed countries must do more, they became dismissive of proposals for redistribution based on the argument that the developed countries bore “historic responsibility” for causing the problem and must therefore be subjected to more onerous measures than the developing countries. They rejected other eco-reformists proposals to divide up the “atmospheric space” equally among countries by population and by their past emissions so as to distribute equal “emissions rights” or “fair shares” to countries and oblige those who have used up more of their fair share to compensate those who have not.¹² For them, the priority should be to secure the highest emissions reductions commitments possible; redistribution is not necessarily bad if it brings down emissions, but it should not be prioritized if it means taking measures—such as increasing taxes or suspending intellectual property rights—that may drive business to walk out of the table. The climate negotiations is simply not the place to try to correct all the world’s injustices, many repeatedly told me. As one CAN member told me: “Justice is important but we can’t keep playing the *blame game*.”¹³ Or as another told me: “We have to try and mix the pursuit of justice and the pursuit of efficiency at the same time.”¹⁴

Outside the climate negotiations, they refused to go along with other eco-reformists in pushing for treaties to regulate transnational corporations.¹⁵ And, unlike other eco-reformists, they generally embraced free-trade agreements such as NAFTA which did not impose the kind of stronger environmental regulations other eco-reformists favored.¹⁶

But in diffusing these moderate-neoliberal diagnoses and prescriptions, these eco-reformists also effectively began propagating moderate-neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations. They did not necessarily all quit telling members of subordinate groups that they were members of a global collective of the dominated whose interests were antagonistic to all those who opposed participatory state capitalism, as other eco-reformists continued to do. Indeed, they continued to recognize and occasionally pointed to social inequalities within countries and pointed to differences in interests between the public and “Big Business.” But, breaking with other eco-reformists, they did begin to put more emphasis on non-class interpellations calling upon people primarily as members of non-class collectives that excluded only all those representatives or agents of big business opposed to a more moderate laissez faire capitalism—as members of a global public, of nations, of “local communities,” and so on, whose interests are antagonistic only to the extreme neoliberals. Put differently, they portrayed the people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included only the “irresponsible” businesses, experts and officials who insisted on all-out deregulation. And instead of morally aggregating both the extreme and moderate neoliberals as the enemies that the eco-reformists and the broader public needed to struggle against, they began morally distinguishing these groups by categorizing only the extreme neoliberals but not the moderate neoliberals as the enemies today.

¹¹ Quoted in Germanos 2015.

¹² Agarwal & Narain 1991; South Center 2002; Rajan 1997:124.

¹³ Interviews with HW2.

¹⁴ Interviews with DD.

¹⁵ Agenda Ya Wananchi 1992; Ling 2012:17; Chatterjee & Finger 1994:40; Greer & Bruno 1996:241.

¹⁶ Doherty & Doyle 2014: 69.

They did not necessarily pronounce as irrelevant or non-existent the moral distinctions between those who seek to achieve participatory state capitalism and those who oppose it. But, hoping to convince people to partner with the moderate neoliberals, they did give more prominence to the moral boundaries between those elites who opposed even just moderate regulation—in the present case, the fossil fuel companies like Exxon or other corporations like GM, the ultra-conservative Republicans like Dick Cheney or Sarah Palin, Canada’s Prime Minister Harper, the ultra-right think-tanks, business lobbies like the Global Climate Coalition, the Koch family, and those who favored them, i.e. fossil fuel companies like Shell or BP, the “regular establishment Republicans” like John McCain or Mitt Romney, Canada’s PM Chretien, the moderate think-tanks such as the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, moderate business associations such as the International Climate Change Partnership, etc. While they also did not necessarily all agree on who were more dangerous than others, they all pointed to and cast the former but not the latter as the “climate criminals” or the ones who were guilty of “crime against humanity”¹⁷—as the ones who were more lacking in virtue and who were therefore more incapable of moral leadership. In other words, many eco-reformists also effectively began echoing moderate neoliberals in morally categorizing those who opposed even just minimal reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—the ones that the public should be protesting against, the ones toward whom they ought to be channeling their anger and hostility *now*. They also diverged on who exactly among the moderate neoliberals to ally with but all converged in the view that only by becoming “friends,” or engaging in “non-adversarial dialogues” with these moderate neoliberals could eco-reformists prevail over the extreme neoliberals.

Thus, for example, while eco-reformists like Bill McKibben denounced all oil and fossil fuel companies as “a rogue industry, reckless like no other force on Earth” and as “Public Enemy Number One to the survival of our planetary civilization,”¹⁸ Krupp and others like him promoted certain oil and fossil fuel companies as “partners” in ensuring the survival of the civilization. While other eco-reformists tagged the US and other developed-country government officials as “obstructionists” in the negotiations, Krupp and others like him touted, and worked with, some US and other developed-country officials as champions of global environmental regulations.

But in making these moral distinctions, these eco-reformists also effectively morally re-designated those who persisted in antagonizing those they had reclassified as allies or potential allies. Thus, for example, EDF’s Krupp, tagged those who rejected going along with him in his partnerships with business as just “complainers” who are “reflexive opponents to industry” and who believe they can solve climate change if they just keep “yelling” at others.¹⁹ At the UN negotiations, I heard many others dismiss their fellow eco-reformists as utopians, at best, or as obstructionists who were slowing down or sabotaging the climate negotiations by trying to correct all injustices of the world using the issue, at worst. For them, these other eco-reformists are just ‘highly romanticized’ dreamers engaging in the wrong battles by constantly ‘making the perfect the enemy of the good.’ Without necessarily putting them in the same moral category as those they considered the enemies, they effectively moved them from the ‘dependable friends’ category to the ‘undependable friends’ category. With varying degrees of rancor, they classified them as among those who—while not necessarily foes—also could not be relied upon to help them as they fight against those they considered the real or principal enemies.

¹⁷ Leggett 2001:285.

¹⁸ McKibben 2012.

¹⁹ Krupp 2008. See also McCloskey 1992:79; interviews with MJ, BA.

The disintegration of eco-reformist organization

In line with these new moral categorizations, many eco-reformists also consequently started giving more importance to cultivating their relationships with, and gaining the support of, the other eco-reformists who favored partnering with the moderate neoliberals.

Inside the “civil society” organizations they had formed or penetrated, they distanced themselves from, if not altogether opposed, other eco-reformists who continued to push these organizations or coalitions behind the call for stronger reforms against all neoliberals. Some went on to found new organizations that would push for moderate-neoliberal prescriptions: In 1982, for example, Gus Speth, the lawyer who founded NRDC, an organization that initially aggressively prosecuted corporations and supported direct regulations, founded World Resources Institute, an organization that, against the wishes of some of its own staff, would subsequently play a key role in promoting carbon trading and other “market solutions” at the international climate change negotiations and partner with numerous corporations.²⁰ Others tried to transform existing organizations from within: At EDF in beginning in 1984, for example, the new president, Fred Krupp, and other like-minded EDF staff waged battle with—and ultimately pushed out—the remaining co-reformists in the organization who sought to continue aggressively prosecuting rather than partnering with corporations and who opposed Krupp’s promotion of carbon trading.²¹ According to an insiders’ account: “War broke out among the factions—some litigators didn’t want to see the focus shift from ‘suing the bastards’ to creating markets for the bastards; some of them left.”²² So did other donors and supporters.²³ Over at FOEI, members who wanted the federation to support the kind of market mechanisms and the corporate “dialogues” EDF was championing also clashed with other eco-reformists and eco-radicals in the federation during this period.²⁴ Meanwhile, at Greenpeace in the early 1990s, members who also wanted the organization to shed its confrontational, radical image mounted a kind of organizational coup against other eco-reformists in the organization by installing as “Chief Executive Officer” a complete outsider who had previously worked as an economist at a metal-working firm and at the World Bank and who went on to push Greenpeace to become more “solutions”-oriented by engaging in more collaborative projects with selected businesses.²⁵

The same thing happened in the broader coalitions they had joined. Inside the “Group of 10,” the informal network of the largest environmental organizations in the US, for example, Krupp and other eco-reformists at EDF, NRDC and other “light green” environmentalists’ broke with and counter other eco-reformists’ opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993.²⁶ It was “the nastiest internecine squabble in the movement’s hundred-year history,” according to one observer. Over at the Climate Action Network, the largest international network of NGOs and other organizations working on climate change since its founding in 1989,²⁷ rifts widened as EDF and others went against other eco-reformists in pushing the coalition to support their proposal to include carbon trading and other “flexibility” mechanisms in the Kyoto Protocol

²⁰ WRI 2012.

²¹ Conniff 2009; Gottlieb 1993:192; Krupp 2008; Mitchell 1989:90.

²² Pooley 2010:69.

²³ Krupp 2008.

²⁴ Doherty & Doyle 2014:71, 90,172; Rawcliffe 1998:22.

²⁵ Beder 1998:262-264; Doherty & Doyle 2014:60; Jackson & Block 1996; Rawcliffe 1998:90.

²⁶ Dowie 1995: 187.

²⁷ For more on CAN see Betsill 2000:152; McGregor 2008; Newell 2000:128; Pulver 2004; Rahman & Roncerel 1994:240; Rowlands 1995:239.

and subsequent agreements.²⁸ Similar struggles over essentially the same questions played out at the national level: in the Philippines, for example, eco-reformists inside CAN's local affiliate, Aksyon Klima, went against other eco-reformists and eco-radicals in pushing for the subsequent expansion of carbon trading.

While other eco-reformists concentrated on forging ties with the “grassroots” and persisted in shunning business, these other eco-reformists concentrated on forging or deepening their links with corporations or wealthy families who tended to be resistant to eco-reformist but not necessarily to moderate-neoliberal forms of regulations starting in the 1980s.

Thus, for example, during the mid-80s, eco-reformists who rejected allying with the moderate neoliberals deepened their links with other eco-reformists and spearheaded the formation of international networks Third World Network (TWN), an advocacy NGO that was founded in 1984 and became one of the foremost critics of the US and developed-country governments in the negotiations. In contrast, eco-reformists who favored allying with moderate neoliberals concentrated on reaching out to some of the US' wealthiest and more conservative families and officials. Krupp, for example, linked up with heirs of the conservative Walton family which owns Walmart, enabling them to turn EDF from a small marginal organization into a \$70-million-per-year advocacy group staffed by platoon of lawyers of and scientists, with offices and programs in Europe and China.²⁹ Together with groups such as the WRI, they built numerous partnerships with different corporations not just in the US but also in Europe and China, and they were instrumental in forming the U.S. Climate Action Partnership (USCAP) in 2007, binding both environmental groups and about 20 CEOs of large corporations to push for cap-and-trade legislation in the US.³⁰ At the international level, they partnered with the moderate business group International Climate Change Partnership when it was established during the mid-1990s. And they fostered close ties with members of the US negotiating team—and indeed was even part of the official US delegation at various periods during the 1990s onward—and with other developed- and developing-country government officials, mainly from the US, EU, the AOSIS group, and the AILAC group, which favored market mechanisms in the international agreements.³¹ Though few went as far as the EDF, others at Greenpeace similarly advocated forging closer ties with corporations, especially with the insurance and other financial corporations starting in the 1990s.³²

And as some eco-reformists succeeded in securing government positions in a number of countries, rifts between eco-reformists also widened as some eco-reformists began refusing to join other eco-reformists striving to mobilize state power to push for more radical measures at the global level. Inside the US government under Clinton, for example, eco-reformists appointed by Clinton to the EPA or to be part of the US negotiating team after he assumed office in 1992 repudiated other eco-reformists who advocated moving closer to the eco-reformists and conservationists in the European and developing-country governments and pushing the developed-country governments in the negotiations to take a more confrontational stance towards the neoliberals. They instead chose to back other eco-reformists who were arguing in favor of continuing to ally with the moderate neoliberals who dominated other governments, such as Canada or Australia. Similarly, in the Philippines, eco-reformists such as the founder of

²⁸ Pulver 2004:254; interview with MJ, RA.

²⁹ Dowie 1995:118; Schroeder 2014; Verini 2007.

³⁰ Layzer 2012:49; Meckling 2011:96, 152-155; Skocpol 2013:30; WRI 2012.

³¹ Braun 2009: 478; Ciple et al 2015:141; Layzer 2012:138, 325; Macdonald 2008: xv; Pulver 2004; Verini 2007.

³² Ghazi 1996; Leggett 2001.

one prominent eco-reformist group who was appointed head of the Philippine delegation in 1997 broke with other eco-reformists in rallying support for carbon-trading among Filipino and other developing-country negotiators. Rather than support another prominent eco-reformist official who rejected and strongly criticized the weaker international agreement proposed by moderate neoliberals, he and others distanced themselves from him and refused to rally behind him as other officials in government lobbied to have him sacked in subsequent years.

The disintegration of eco-reformist mobilization

Also in line with the new moral categorizations they were advancing, many eco-reformists likewise began countering other eco-reformists' efforts to rally the broader public to take more contentious actions against all those blocking their push for participatory state capitalism starting in the early 1980s.

They did not necessarily all start discouraging people from joining or supporting militant actions directed against all neoliberals, extreme or moderate, opposed to the stronger reforms that other eco-reformists continued to promote. But, breaking with other eco-radicals, they did encourage people to join militant actions directed only against the extreme neoliberals opposed to the minimal reforms that the moderate neoliberals favored. That is, instead of encouraging people to take part in more confrontational actions against all officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to participatory state capitalism, they encouraged people to engage instead in confrontational actions only against those officials, business owners and other elites opposed to moderate laissez-faire capitalism, i.e., against those the moderate neoliberals morally categorize as the “bad capitalists” or the “bad elites.”

Thus, while other eco-reformists organized numerous direct action protests against dirty energy corporations or fossil-fuels based power plants worldwide from the 1980s onward, they began to protest only against those officials or corporate executives who refused to support their proposals for business-friendly cap-and-trade schemes or international agreements. Eco-reformists with the EDF, for example, continued to call on people to put pressure on corporations like GM, which they tagged “Global Warmer Number One,” even as they worked with corporations like McDonalds to change their production processes starting in the late 1980s.³³ During the 1990s, they took Duke Energy to court even as they worked with BP to develop their own internal carbon-trading scheme and, later, with other energy companies which joined USCAP as they pushed for a watered-down climate legislation in the US Congress during the 2000s. Krupp himself staged a kind of daring ‘direct action’ against then US President Bush Sr. when, after being invited to a White House ceremony, he took unauthorized control of the microphone and denounced the latter’s freezing of environmental regulations in 1992—even as he subsequently worked closely with other Republicans who also opposed the freeze.³⁴

While other eco-reformists tried to shut down coal power plants or other dirty-energy enterprises, these other eco-reformists asked their CEOs to join their board of directors or invite them over for luncheons. In 1996, for example, officers of Greenpeace UK went against other members by hosting a 375 pound-per-plate conference attended by both environmentalists and by executives from Shell and other erstwhile Greenpeace targets. Since then, Greenpeace has been hosting an annual Greenpeace Business Conference to provide a ‘vital channel of communication between environmentalists and industry.’ Lord Melchett, director of Greenpeace

³³ Bosso 2005:65.

³⁴ Mackenzie 2009:153; Shaiko 1999; Verini 2007.

UK, described all these efforts as “solutions enforcement”—no different from trespassing oil rigs and other daring stunts that Greenpeace has been known for. For him, lunching with corporate executives was an “effective new form of direct action.”³⁵

At the UN climate change negotiations, which commenced in the late 1980s and continued through to the 1990s up to the present, they began to refuse going along with other eco-reformists who, from the outset, had been assailing the UN process as a process that is dominated or “captured” by big business and that is only meant to protect big business’ interests. They too said they recognized the limits of the negotiations but they also generally refrained from criticizing the climate negotiations for fear that doing so could only favor the most intransigent business interests determined to prevent even just a weak climate regime from emerging at all. What people need to do in order to avoid this, they argued, was also to identify and elevate certain business and state officials, i.e., those at least amenable to the weak reforms that the moderate neoliberals favored, as the champions of ‘climate action’ while they continue to vilify those officials who obstructed action.

In other words, instead of continuing to draw attention to how big business has captured the talks, as other eco-reformists continued to do, they called on people to continue trying to push the negotiations towards better outcomes instead. Rather than antagonize all elites, they called on people to engage in what one would call “responsible militancy,” that is, to continue “lobbying” the “good elites” so as to encourage them to fight against the “bad elites” and advocate for at least minimal reforms and material and symbolic concessions for the dominated. Hence, their constant appeals for them “to be *saviors* of the earth” in their speeches during the negotiations. The idea is also to keep pushing those engaged in the process to take a less conservative, if not more reformist, position than the extreme neoliberals. As limited as the UN process is, they argued, they need to intervene in order to prevent worse outcomes. To the extent that they criticized the process at all, they also articulated their criticisms in ways that put the blame on those they considered the enemies: the UN process was not delivering only because the ‘bad elites,’ i.e. the extreme neoliberals, rather than all of big business or even just all of the fossil fuel industry—were obstructing “progress.”

So though they continued to collaborate with other eco-reformists in organizing demonstrations and other actions on the national and world stages during and in-between the UN intergovernmental climate change negotiations, these eco-reformists also began to mobilize people behind calls and aims different from the other eco-reformists. While other eco-reformists with Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, 350.org and members of the Climate Justice Network staged sit-ins, die-ins, walk-outs, pickets and other protests on the sidelines of the meetings inside and outside the conference venue denouncing fossil fuel companies, carbon traders, and developed-country (and some developing-country) governments opposed to the Kyoto Protocol that some conservationists wanted to extend after it lapses, for example, other eco-reformists, primarily those with EDF, NRDC, and others, mainly belonging to the Climate Action Network, stayed away from them during the negotiations leading towards the Copenhagen Accord (2009) and the Paris Agreement (2015). They did occasionally also join protests or take more aggressive actions but they did so in such a way as to put the focus on fossil fuel companies and government officials who opposed the kind of even more moderate and more pro-business international agreements that moderate neoliberals would come to endorse.

³⁵ Beder 1998:264; Ghazi 1996.

At the 2009 UN summit in Copenhagen, for example, they worked with other eco-reformists in organizing a joint demonstration but refused to back them in staging various militant actions targeting all corporations and governments opposed to the stronger international agreements opposed by the moderate neoliberals. Unlike other eco-reformists, they stayed away from even a “compromise” action proposed precisely to draw in eco-reformists, one which called on protesters to march into the perimeter fence of the conference venue to join government negotiators, NGOs, experts, etc. who were challenged, to walk out of the negotiations and hold a “People’s Assembly for Climate Justice” just outside the conference building but still inside the perimeter fence.

At the UN summit in Durban in 2010, they refused to join eco-reformists with Greenpeace and 350.org in organizing a sit-in inside the conference venue to demand that that negotiators extend and ratify another Kyoto-Protocol like-deal. While other eco-reformists chanted “save the Kyoto Protocol,” they chanted “pass a real deal now.”

A few months before the summit in Warsaw in 2013, they decided to join a “walk-out” organized by other eco-reformists but they refused to go along with them in projecting it as an action against all those pushing for the weaker “bottom-up” agreement they favor. While other eco-reformists wanted to walk back in with a statement calling on negotiators to “Stand with Us,” they wanted to walk back in with a statement calling on negotiators to “Lead us.”

At the special summit in New York in 2014, they collaborated with other eco-reformists in organizing a broad demonstration, but they again refused to project it as an action against all those opposed to stronger international agreements that the other eco-reformists favored. While other eco-reformists like Bill McKibben endorsed and called upon people to join the “Flood Wall Street” action after the big demonstration, even though they themselves did not actively organize it, they refused to have anything to do with the action and they called instead for “hipsters” to unite with the “bankers” or the other financial companies being targeted by the Flood Wall Street organizers. While other eco-reformists denounced and refused to cooperate with corporate associations who also mobilized or sponsored many events during this summit, they associated themselves with the Climate Group, a “campaign” financed by financial and industrial behemoths like Duke Energy, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, and others.

During the UN summit in Paris in 2015, many eco-reformists again joined with other eco-reformists (and eco-radicals) in organizing broad street demonstrations, but they refused to go along with other eco-reformists in calling for and organizing more confrontational actions targeting all neoliberals. While other eco-reformists staged authorized pickets inside the conference venue denouncing the US and other developed-country governments blocking the proposals for a stronger international agreement, they staged authorized actions that denounced only those governments blocking proposals for the weaker international agreement favored by moderate neoliberals. Other eco-reformists held placards with messages such as “Rich countries: do your fair share!”; they held placards saying “Pass the deal!” And while other eco-reformists defied the government’s ban on demonstrations to stage actions that denounce oil companies and rejected the weak agreement that would be subsequently signed, they refused to defy the ban and went on to celebrate the signing of the new agreement.

The disintegration of eco-radicalism

But as the ranks of the eco-reformists splintered, so did the ranks of the eco-radicals.

Faced with increasingly disorganized forces to their left, more and more eco-radicals also started to question whether they should continue pushing for radical changes and whether they should continue antagonizing even the conservationists in light of the transformed political terrain. Breaking with other eco-radicals who thought that eco-radicals should continue to struggle for long-term gains outside the framework of capitalism and who refused to ally with the progressive elites in trying to secure immediate concessions, they took the view that, while winning long-term gains remains necessary, eco-radicals should prioritize winning at least the limited concessions being offered by the conservationists. and this, they argued, necessitated using the resources and opportunities they offered, entering into “tactical alliances” with them, and forging a “united front” not against all capitalists but just against all the neoliberals opposed to limited reforms.³⁶ NL, one prominent activist who took this widely held view and who played a key role in founding a “climate justice” coalition later, captured the logic behind this kind of reasoning when she said in one teach-in that I attended:

We can't have 'system-change' that will only be won forty years down the road with nothing happening along the way. So we need system-change and to win concrete advances along the way.

The same line was reflected in a subsequent statement of the new coalition that NL and others would found after the 2009 Copenhagen UN summit:

While we are fighting to transform the system, we urgently need to win *immediate and concrete victories* that will enable our people to deal with current as well as future inevitable impacts of climate change.”³⁷

These eco-radicals did not necessarily all renounce socialism or post-capitalism as the good society they should aspire to create, but they did begin to believe that they should first aim for the kind of organized capitalism favored even by the more progressive elites.

The disintegration of eco-radical will

Hence, seeking to convince other eco-radicals and the larger public to prioritize the fight for this goal against the neoliberals, many eco-radicals started dampening or temporally and spatially *deferring* the class antagonisms that other eco-radicals have been trying to intensify.

They did not necessarily reject the eco-radical diagnoses that people were suffering, or faced the prospect of suffering from climate change, because of the absence or weakness of non- or post-capitalist social relations resulting in the deficient regulation of the market and the inter-state system. They did not necessarily deny that people were being dispossessed as members of exploited classes of their “fair share” of the world’s resources or of the “atmospheric space” by the exploiting classes. They did not necessarily dispute other eco-radicals’ argument that capital’s drive for endless accumulation not only prevents state and other officials from taking measures to solve the problem but pushes them to “cravenly protect predatory corporations and reinforce a destructive and patriarchal model”³⁸ and impose “false solutions,” “corrupt” agreements, or “new

³⁶ The following synthesis is based on interviews, observation of meetings and discussions, the various statements and manifestoes of anti-capitalist groups, the speeches of Evo Morales, etc; as well as the published works of known radicals. I also drew from Mueller and Passadakis 2008; Russell 2012; Chatterton et al 2013; Bond 2012; Lowy 2015.

³⁷ DCJ 2014.

³⁸ Accion Ecological et al. 2014.

forms of colonization” that exacerbate the problem.³⁹

Thus, echoing groups like Rising Tide which argued that the “roots of the climate crisis, lie in the current global economic system and its endless pursuit of economic growth at all costs,” the eco-radicals who later helped form the Demand Climate Justice (DCJ) coalition, for example, continued to put out statements blaming climate change on “profit-driven and growth-oriented systems of extraction, production, distribution and consumption that sacrifice the needs of the many and the well-being of the planet to the interests of a few” or on “unequal and exploitative economic and social structures that abuse the environment and breed even more inequality across countries, classes, gender, race and communities.”⁴⁰ Other prominent eco-radicals like Evo Morales repeatedly named “capitalism” as the root of the problem during the climate negotiations from 2009 onward

But, moving closer to the conservationists, these anti-capitalists also began to give relatively more prominence to the moral diagnosis that people were suffering from climate change only or largely because of the absence of stronger institutions or rules that result in the lack of regulation of the market and the inter-state system. That is, they told people they were suffering, or they faced the prospect of suffering from climate change because of the international community’s failure to institutionalize measures or policies needed to compel the developed countries or the wealthy in the rich countries to significantly reduce their emissions and agree to significant resource and technology transfers to developing countries or to the poor.

Thus, translating this diagnosis to make sense of the climate negotiations, they would stress that people continued to suffer from climate change because of the “over-reliance on the market system” or the dominance of neoliberalism at the global level and the consequent lack of international agreements and other measures that could constrain the “developed countries” from dispossessing “developing countries” of their “fair share” of the world’s “atmospheric space.” As one “Climate Justice Brief” later put out by groups associated with the DCJ states:

The causes of climate change are clear. Developed countries have appropriated the Earth’s atmospheric space by emitting the vast majority of historical greenhouse gas emissions, while *they* only represent 20% of the world’s population.”⁴¹

They echoed the conservationist line that, because of the absence of global regulation, the “developed countries,” who had been “historically responsible” for climate change were now passing on the burden to those “least responsible,” i.e. the “developing countries.” And they repeated the conservationist discourse that people were suffering because the former had “over-consumed” their “fair share” of the atmospheric space and refused to pay their “climate debt.”

In other words, even as they continued telling people that they are suffering because of the “profit-driven and growth-oriented systems of extraction, production, distribution and consumption,” they also started saying that people are suffering because there has been no global authority with the power to intervene in, or to manage, the global market so as to restrain them from over-consuming more than their fair share of the “emissions budget” and to compel the developed countries to pay their “climate debt.” And there has been no such global authority, they argued, because the developed countries and their “dirty corporations,” have ‘captured’ or ‘sabotaged’ the UN negotiating process—not because all elites in general had ‘captured’ the

³⁹ Mueller & Passadakis 2008; Vlachou & Konstantinidis 2010

⁴⁰ Klimaforum 2009.

⁴¹ DCJ 2011:9.

talks, as other eco-radicals stressed. It is this domination by the North of the world's political authorities, they argued, that leads to the "excessive reliance on the market system" that promotes the "mal-distribution" and the "overconsumption" decried by conservationists.

In other words, they began to spread explanations that do not necessarily deny that the problem has to do with capitalism per se but which also tended to suggest that the problem primarily or only has to do with global laissez-faire capitalism, or with a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the rules needed to promote conservation at the global level. They did not entirely refrain from linking the weakness of regulation to the logic of capitalism and other forms of domination, but neither did they go out of their way to highlight those links.

Indeed, while other eco-radicals would insist on using the word "capitalism"—rather than "neoliberal capitalism" or "corporate-dominated capitalism"—in their statements, many of these other eco-radicals largely refrained from using the word in their statements. Thus, British anarchists continued to call for "a more open and explicit critique of capitalism and how it is the root cause of climate change," warning that refusing to do so "out of fear of a mainstream media backlash" may end up with them "reduced to being another NGO."⁴² Along the same lines, another activist with *Accion Ecologica* argued:

People use the slogan 'System change not climate change'...but they don't say which system we are talking about...and they avoid to mention the word "capitalism"... We specifically mention "capitalism" because nobody mentions it... We have to say that if we want to fight climate change, you have to talk about capitalism.⁴³

In contrast, the other eco-radicals generally shied away from using the term "capitalism," saying that references to "capitalism" or talking about "economic systems" might repel possible allies.

One incident I observed illustrates these discursive choices: When Pope Francis, who had begun issuing numerous statements connecting climate change to capitalism, visited the Philippines in 2015, for example, environmentalist group Greenpeace tried to capitalize on his popularity by quoting and circulating his statement that "an economic system centered on the god of money also needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic nature of consumption inherent to it" to draw attention to their anti-coal campaign. While they too tried to take advantage of the visit to popularize their anti-coal campaign, eco-radicals within the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice (PM CJ)—many of whom were active in constituting the DCJ—simply disregarded the Pope's anti-capitalist critique altogether. The problem, they implied in their statements, is rooted largely in the power of the coal corporations and the state's inability to counteract them because of its neoliberal orientation.

Consistent with this moral diagnosis, many eco-radicals also began propagating a different moral prescription. Not only did they choose to de-emphasize the eco-radical proposition that the prevalence of anti-ecological values and institutions is ultimately grounded in capitalism per se and that replacing them requires abolishing private property relations altogether, they also put forward a different project: that of a better regulated because state capitalist society now and a post-capitalist society at some unspecified point in the future.

They did not all start saying that establishing socialism would do nothing to ease people's suffering. Indeed, many of them would even sign on to one widely-circulated declaration in time for the UN summit in Copenhagen in 2009 which calls for "democratic ownership and control of

⁴² Anonymous 2010.

⁴³ Interview with Yanez.

the economy.” The DCJ explicitly proposed “a rapid, just transition to energy systems, modes of production, and consumption practices that are compatible with the limits of the planet and are aimed at meeting the needs of peoples rather than the relentless pursuit of profit.”⁴⁴ Evo Morales called on people to “put the brakes to capitalist accumulation” and create “another civilization” built on “living well with Mother Earth.”⁴⁵

But, even though they did not call on people to oppose more radical changes, the overall thrust of their public interventions would be to push people to devote more of their energy towards first fighting unfettered or laissez-faire capitalism and establishing or restoring the kind of state capitalism supported even by the conservationists—albeit one that had even stronger rules or more ambitious redistributive schemes than what the conservationists favored. Overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with socialism is necessary if they are to end their suffering, they suggested, but for now they first need to prevent the rise and consolidation of laissez-faire capitalism—and indeed, that their attempts to establish socialism will be undermined if they do not do so. Thus, they must keep their eyes first on clinching even just limited compromise regulations that may not necessarily abolish capitalism but which could at least set constraints on business and move the world away from laissez-faire capitalism. They did not necessarily say that clinching these limited reforms alone will be sufficient for solving the problem but they also rarely pointed out, unlike other eco-radicals, that even if such regulations were put in place—even if developed countries were to agree to agreements that oblige them to drastically reduce their emissions or channel significant resources to developing countries—the problem would likely remain unless socialism is established. Eco-radicals belonging to the international peasant group Via Campesina continued to argue that, though certain reforms within capitalism were necessary, “[t]he capitalist economy, based on the over-exploitation of natural resources and human beings, will never become green.”⁴⁶ Few such pronouncements emanated from the other eco-radicals who favored allying with the conservationists.

In line with this orientation, many eco-radicals began to play down calls for new social relations that could ground the stronger, because post-capitalist, forms of regulation advocated by other eco-radicals. Like the other eco-radicals, they too continued to call for redistribution. But while other eco-radicals continued to highlight calls for redistribution within countries, they began to highlight calls for redistribution *between* countries instead. Thus, other eco-radicals adopted but also subverted the concept of “historical responsibility” or “climate debt” articulated by some conservationists, or the notion that climate change is being caused by the over-consuming North or the “developed countries” appropriating more than their “fair share” of the world’s resources and therefore dispossessing the South or the developing countries of theirs. They rejected the view that the problem could be solved by making the North pay the South for this debt. As one eco-radical put it:

[T]he problematic of capitalism cannot be addressed through a reductive suggestion that the North owes a debt to the South but rather that capital and those who have accumulated it is indebted to the labor which produces all wealth.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ DCJ 2014.

⁴⁵ Fidler 2014.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Russell 2012: 156.

⁴⁷ Russell 2012:183; see also Doherty & Doyle 2014:88; Byrd 2012:81.

In contrast, these other eco-radicals largely adopted without subverting the notion of “climate debt. Though they did not necessarily disagree with other eco-radicals claims that climate change is being caused by the “over-consuming” dominant classes, they chose to highlight the argument that the developed countries owe the developing countries a historical debt and that the solution entails making the latter “compensate” the former for this debt.

They also began to hold back on calling for the direct, non-market based and punitive measures such as socializing the energy industry or imposing outright prohibitions on certain forms of production that eco-radicals had traditionally supported. Instead, they highlighted calls for the direct, non-market based and punitive measures such as the imposition of emissions limits or fines and penalties that conservationists preferred. Like other eco-radicals, they continued to oppose those “economic” or “market instruments” like carbon trading, charges, subsidies, and other similar market interventions that seek to correct so-called “market failures. But unlike other eco-radicals, the reasons they invoked for doing so would have less to do with this scheme’s effectiveness in reinforcing capitalism and more with their ineffectiveness in reducing the inequalities between countries within capitalism: i.e. because they “allow developed countries to shift the burden of mitigation to poor countries”—not because they allow elites in *all* countries to shift the burden of mitigation to the poor in all countries; because they allow the developed countries “to use an even bigger portion of atmospheric space”—not because they allow dominant groups in all countries to do so .

At the international arena, they joined other eco-radicals in opposing the watered-down, “bottom-up,” voluntary agreements that the moderate neoliberals favored; but unlike other eco-radicals, the reasons they cited for doing so had to do with their ineffectiveness or unfairness in clipping the power of large corporations and the developed countries—not with their ineffectiveness in undermining capitalist relations. They were objectionable because they “make the legal and moral and political responsibility of developed countries on finance and technology much more tenuous”⁴⁸—not because they gave dominant classes *even in developing countries* too much slack and failed to push them to give more than just concessions to the dominated everywhere. They also backed off from the radical international agreements advocated by other eco-radicals—one which imposed extremely high emissions caps, allowed no flexibility by barring carbon trading, and called for massive redistribution from developed and developing countries. Instead, they threw their weight behind the kind of international agreements advocated by the conservationists: one which set high but still relatively moderate emissions caps, allowed for some degree of flexibility through carbon trading with strict rules, and called for moderate redistribution from developed and developing countries.

Thus, at the international negotiations on climate change during the 2000s and 2010s, they broke with other eco-radicals who continued to reject agreements such as the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol because it only set low emissions targets and allowed for carbon trading. Instead, they spearheaded the campaign to “save” the Kyoto Protocol on the grounds that, as imperfect as the Kyoto Protocol and other agreements may be, they were still much better than the voluntary “bottom-up” agreements being favored by the neoliberals and so it needed to be defended.⁴⁹ Some even went so far as to subsequently throw their weight behind such compromises by endorsing the Paris Agreement—a deal roundly lambasted by other eco-radicals—saying, “it is difficult now to do away with this global consensus. It will mean going back to

⁴⁸ Interview with RA.

⁴⁹ Bond & Dorsey 2010:295; Byrd 2012:84; CJ Briefs.

several decades of climate negotiations with very little time left before climate catastrophe.”⁵⁰

They remained with other eco-radicals in opposing carbon trading but, in line with their view that agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol should be defended, they called only for a moratorium on trading schemes instead of calling for the termination of existing carbon market schemes. Thus, for example, while other eco-radicals opposed the Kyoto Protocol and called for the carbon markets it in place to be closed down because they constituted “a new form of ‘colonization’” that “converts nature into a slave of capital,” they went along with statements demanding only that existing market mechanisms in the Kyoto Protocol be “reviewed, rolled back and restricted” and that their “current loopholes” be “closed,” but they did not necessarily call for them to be shut down. Similarly, eco-radicals in the Bolivian government proposed non-market schemes for assisting developing countries in addressing deforestation starting around 2009, but they came to accept—or at least to stop opposing—the continuation of market-based anti-deforestation schemes like REDD.⁵¹

In some spaces or networks, some eco-radicals even refrained from insisting on articulating their opposition carbon markets altogether—even though they were personally opposed to carbon markets themselves.⁵² As one activist recounted to me

We were trying to make alliances with several groups here [in Latin America], and although I have radical positions on a lot of issues, I try to make alliances with people like CAN [Climate Action Network]... We went, trying to push a more radical document against carbon markets and debt, and we started to discuss that with CAN-Latin America members, and they said, ‘Clearly, we are not going to sign this statement because while we agree with some of objections to carbon market approaches and carbon market mechanisms, we think we must use these sorts of approaches to have a more proper conservation, etc.’ And at that time we tried to debate with them a little more, but I realized that these kinds of big alliances are not going to be possible unless each one could step aside and step backward from their positions, and try to preserve this larger movement, if you will, so the strategy is, and the decision was, that we are going to make a very ‘yellow’ statement.

Similarly, even as they called for “a swift global transformation away from the use of dirty fossil fuel and destructive energy systems driving the crisis, towards a carbon-free and renewable energy economy that... is decentralized, community controlled, affordable, accessible to all people for their basic needs and well-being,” the DCJ stopped short of calling for that renewable energy economy to be publicly owned and controlled altogether: it could be decentralized, community-controlled, affordable and accessible—and yet be privately owned and controlled. In other words: even as they opposed dirty-energy projects, they generally refrained from calling for transformations in the ownership and control of energy sources, as other eco-radicals did. In one of the “Global Day of Action” against dirty energy that the DCJ helped organize in 2015, for example, the central banner they used in their events in the Philippines called on the public to “Hold *Big Polluters* Accountable”—not to stop them from polluting at all by changing property relations. At a subsequent action targeting a coal power plant, their central banner was “Break Free from Fossil Fuels”; not even a single small banner expressed the radical

⁵⁰ Personal correspondence.

⁵¹ CJ Briefs November 2010 16; Fidler 2014.

⁵² Interview with PJ.

if still ambiguous slogan that other eco-radicals used: “System change, not climate change!” When I asked why, one of the activists involved in organizing the action, answered that this was merely an “oversight,” then went on to defend the “oversight,” saying:

Propagating a political line should be based on the concrete conditions of a place and level of struggle reached by the masses. The campaign materials had to be limited in what they were saying because of the broadness of the alliances we were trying to form.

But in propagating these conservationist diagnoses and prescriptions to forge the alliances they were trying to form, they also effectively began advancing or diffusing conservationist moral narratives and categorizations. They did not necessarily all stop telling members of subordinate groups that they were members of a global collective of the oppressed classes whose interests were antagonistic to all those opposed to socialism, including members of dominant classes from their own countries, as other eco-radicals would continue to do. Indeed, they recognized and occasionally even pointed to internal class contradictions within countries. But, departing from other radicals, they began to put more emphasis on non-class interpellations hailing people primarily as members of non-class collectives that excluded only all those opposed to a organized or regulated capitalism—as members of a global public, of developed and developing countries, of “local communities,” and so on, whose interests are antagonistic only to the neoliberals. Stated differently, they depicted the people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included only the “irresponsible” businesses, experts and officials who resisted state capitalism. And instead of morally aggregating both conservationists and neoliberals, they began morally distinguishing these groups by categorizing only the neoliberals but not the conservationists as among the enemies—or “primary enemies”—today.

These non-class interpellations and moral differentiations became evident in their interventions during the climate change negotiations. Bolivian President Evo Morales, for example, said at the UN in 2014:

If a developing country...emits greenhouse gases, *they* [developed countries] begin to point accusing fingers at *us*. Yes, they want to sanction and punish those who take a little to eat and feed their people, but not to punish *themselves*.⁵³

With this use of the pronoun “they,” he in effect put the white American billionaire banker in the same category together as the black American minimum-wage worker; with this “us,” he in effect put the brown Bolivian *cocalero* in the same category with the white Bolivian *hacendero* or *comprador*. Similarly, NL, giving a briefing about the negotiations to a group of social movement activists in the Philippines, said:

Developed countries contributed the most to climate change but even *we* will also be contributing to climate change... *We* are not even the *ones* who are at fault and yet even *we* will have to shoulder their responsibility.”

Explaining what needs to be done to solve the problem, she went on to say:

Because *they* have already consumed their share, and because *they* have already consumed even *our* share, *they* should reduce their share of what’s left.

⁵³ Fidler 2014.

Who are included in this “they” and “we”? In the rest of the talk, the speaker made it clear that this “they” refers to members of both dominant and subordinate groups in developed countries while this “we” includes both the subordinates and the elites in developing countries.

They did not necessarily declare that moral boundaries between those who seek to achieve socialism and those who stand in their way do not exist. On the contrary: the speaker just cited signed statements stating that people should counter the “the networks of individuals, corporations and financial institutions that dominate decisions about investment, production and distribution and who hold senior positions in corporations, academia, media and government” from both the North and South.⁵⁴ Similarly, Morales denounced developing-country officials “that are pursuing the same commercialist and consumerist road, with patterns of consumption and production based on predatory and insatiable capitalism, accumulating and concentrating wealth in the hands of a few, with a fondness for opulence.”

But, seeking to enjoin people to join forces with the conservationists, they also highlighted moral boundaries between those elites who opposed stronger regulation—in the present case, mainly the US, or the developed-country governments more generally, particularly their officials, the fossil fuel companies, the Republicans, the “free-market environmentalists,” and so on—and those who favored them—i.e. the developing-country governments, the renewable energy companies, the conservationist NGOs, and so on. Though they also did not necessarily all agree on who were more dangerous, more vicious, or more compromised than others, they all pointed to and cast the former as the ones who were more lacking in virtue and who were therefore more incapable of moral leadership.

Thus, other eco-radicals continued to echo the view of one activist I spoke with that “elites in both North and South are to blame” for the climate crisis. They continued to lambast even developing-country government officials, saying “in reality those who go up there and give speeches are fighting for the right to development of these mega projects, very political projects that benefit Big Business [and that] involve corporations from the North, from Annex 1 countries...” They told people these officials are not just ‘not taking action’ to fight climate change or ‘not doing enough’ to regulate and constrain the ‘bad capitalists’ and the ‘bad elites,’ as conservationists portray them; they are actually doing *more than enough* to secure the interests of all capitalists and elites. They are not just forging “weak” agreements, one eco-radical belonging to Climate Space argued; they are actually forging “strong” agreements *for capital*. In other words, they are not just the innocent, passive actors ‘lacking in courage’ that the more generous depictions of conservationists take them to be; they are complicit, active subjects aggressively protecting the interests of capital and therefore hurting subordinate groups. The real moral division is ultimately “between those who wanted to further expand capitalist accumulation and state control and those fighting for a more egalitarian world based on respect and a shared life with each other and the planet we live on,” as one anarchist put it.⁵⁵

In contrast, these other eco-radicals who favored allying with the conservationists typically defended the conservationists from developing countries. The “real climate criminals,” they constantly argued, are the “Northern countries with historic responsibility, and major fossil fuel interests and industries.” They are the ones who needed to be fought *now*. Or as Bolivia’s Evo Morales argued in 2014:

⁵⁴ CJ Briefs June 2011.

⁵⁵ Russell 2012b.

We can achieve a climate agreement based on the protection of life and Mother Earth, and not on the market, profit and capitalism... But there are some *greedy countries* that want to consume by themselves what remains of the atmospheric space. Those countries have been stealing from us since colonial times and they want to continue stealing. They are stealing our future, the future of our children and grandchildren, and they are robbing us of the possibility that we can develop in a sustainable way.⁵⁶

In other words, they also effectively began echoing the conservationists in morally categorizing those who opposed even just moderate reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—the ones that the public should be protesting against, the ones toward whom they ought to be channeling their anger and hostility *now*. Where they tended to have differences was more on the question of who exactly among the conservationists to ally with, but all agreed that only by working with these conservationists from among the dominant classes could eco-radicals defeat the neoliberals. One eco-radical activist who worked closely with Southern elites who held conservationist positions, for example, captured the reasoning of many when he said:

I accept that there’s an argument that... our elites in the south who are now part and parcel of the elites of the north as well, and our multinationals, our corporations in the global south are wreaking as much damage on our southern countries and our neighboring countries as the Western countries. Those are all true... [I]n developing countries, it also means we have to fight our elites... But those for me are fights *at a local and national level*, and we of course have got to critique our governments, but... I always want to be fair and balanced and say that those with the greater responsibilities should be in the firing line first. So in this fight we should be targeting the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, the European Union before we critique Bolivia for exploiting its gas...⁵⁷

Elites in developing countries should be denounced, they told people, but ‘later’ and ‘back home.’ As one DCJ member from a developing country, repeating a common refrain, said at an open meeting I observed in Lima in 2014: “At international spaces, I will defend that my country has no ‘historical responsibility’ whatsoever. But at home I’ll fight them when they do bad things.” Right now, their reasoning goes, we first have to beat the principal enemies on the world stage and in that arena, developing-country governments happen to be our ‘allies.’ So, unlike other eco-radicals, they generally refrained from publicly accusing developing-country officials of selling out the interests of subordinate groups in their countries, of actively misrepresenting them, and of fighting instead for the interests of the dominant classes in their own countries, or of dominant classes everywhere.

So even as they castigated the Philippine government for supporting coal power projects, for example, some of the PMCJ members I followed generally insisted on avoiding criticizing the Philippine governments’ stance and actions in the negotiations despite the latter’s support for carbon trading and other so-called ‘false solutions.’ Indeed, they even later defended the Philippine President when he threatened not to ratify the Paris Agreement in 2016, saying he is right to stand up to the rich countries and invoke the “historical responsibility” argument blaming the “rich countries” for the problem even though he approved of building more coal plants and allowing developing countries to emit more. And when, in 2015, DL and other eco-radicals

⁵⁶ Fidler 2014.

⁵⁷ Interview with RA.

belonging to a workers' group that helped form the PMCI began criticizing what they called the "obscuring" of class antagonisms they feared was happening as a result of the coalition's stance towards developing-country governments, these other eco-radicals admonished them, saying that taking a "nationalist" position is crucial for "exacerbating conflicts" among the "enemies" and is part of trying to win the "tactical battles" that need to be waged *before* the socialist revolution is won "forty years down the road."

Related to this, eco-radicals who advocated allying with conservationists also chose to single out or to focus largely on the fossil-fuel industry or on the "dirty capitalists" in their denunciations and to either support or at least stay silent on the renewable-energy industry or the "green capitalists." Other eco-radicals insisted that even these "green capitalists" belong to what one activist-writer called a "predatory and greedy ruling class" that is "indifferent to the degradation of living conditions for the majority of human beings and blind to the seriousness to the seriousness of the biosphere's poisoning." For them, "the fossil fuel industry is just the tip of the iceberg of the economic system that is hardwired to produce climate change, [that is] bad for democracy, bad for community."⁵⁸ Hence, "it is not a matter of contrasting 'bad eco-cidal capitalists' to 'good' green capitalists,' it is the system itself, based on ruthless competition, the demands of profitability and the race for rapid profit, which is the destroyer of nature's balance."⁵⁹ But the eco-radicals who favored allying with the conservationists insisted on highlighting these contrasts.

In addition, these other eco-radicals also avoided criticizing other individuals or organizations who eschewed radical politics and were funded by conservationists. Thus, other eco-radicals castigated "sell out NGOs" which are "compromised and ideologically corrupted"⁶⁰ and which have been "lying to the people" in saying that the international climate change negotiations under the UN could solve the problem. They warned about these groups acting as "managers of protest" or as "safety valves to make sure that...our collective rage remain within the boundaries set by the needs of capital and governments."⁶¹ And they denounced them for conniving with capital to impose their "false solutions"—in short, for being complicit with the transnational collective of oppressors. Speaking of the "mainstream environmentalists" funded largely by progressive elites in the US, one eco-socialist, for example, wrote:

The Beltway-based green groups adhere to a politics of compromise which in fact depoliticizes real resistance by co-opting its momentum and isolating everyone...as a marginalized radical fringe. Its goal is to turn confrontation into a negotiation that they cannot win because they aren't invested in building an alternative sustained power base. In reality, they achieve an ultimate goal of protecting the existing political order by setting movements up for failure.⁶²

Other eco-radicals like Barry Commoner specifically castigated EDF for serving as "lobbyists for commercial corporations in their dealings with environmental issues";⁶³ autonomists attacked groups like WWF or Greenpeace for their partnerships with corporations during the 2010s. In contrast, the other eco-radicals generally either refused to say anything negative about said

⁵⁸ Lowy 2015:viii.

⁵⁹ Lowy 2015:8.

⁶⁰ Byrd 2012; McCloskey 1992:79; Doherty & Doyle 2014:49.

⁶¹ Mueller & Passadakis 2008.

⁶² Parkin 2014.

⁶³ Verini 2007

groups or even commended them implicitly by inviting them to the same platforms.

But in accentuating the moral boundaries between those who oppose and those who support conservationism, they also effectively accentuated the moral boundaries between themselves and those who reject working with those they had re-designated as allies or potential allies. Perhaps the best example of this was when Bolivia's president Evo Morales, and other anti-capitalists in the left-wing governments in Latin America, in effect decided to cooperate with elites inside and outside their countries not just by pushing through with controversial extractive projects and investor-friendly policies but also by going along with other developing-country governments in refusing to block the adoption of weak international agreements in the early 2010s—while making anti-capitalist speeches and convening an “anti-capitalist” world conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia in 2010. Criticized by other eco-radicals as ‘hypocritical’ at best, Morales shot back by tagging those who protested against their policies as forces against ‘development’ and ‘against modernization’ and therefore as enemies of all those who stand to reap immediate gains from ‘development’ or ‘modernization.’⁶⁴

Other eco-radicals were more diplomatic or less aggressive but they too began to re-categorize fellow eco-radicals who insisted on assailing the conservationists. Often muted out of a general reluctance to talk openly about more fundamental disagreements with people they work closely with, these criticisms nonetheless occasionally surfaced in private conversations among activists. For example, when a workers’ group that belonged to the PMCJ—the same one that had been critical of the PMCJ’s conciliatory stance towards the Philippine government—issued its own statement attacking the Philippine government’s “pledge” to fight climate change in the run-up to the Paris talks in 2016, one that contrasted sharply with the PMCJ’s own relatively favorable, ‘official’ reaction—an eco-radical in the coalition accused the group of “posturing” and questioned the workers’ group’s contribution to the fight for climate justice, thus implicitly sowing doubts on the groups’ claim to be fighting for working people.

In many public forums as well as private conversations, I heard others like him explicitly or implicitly say that, by refusing to ally with the conservationists, their fellow eco-radicals were at best, not helping the people they claim to be helping by failing to fight for their interests—or, worse, of actually hurting their interests. Though they did not necessarily place them in the same moral category as those they considered the enemies, they in effect also shifted them from the ‘dependable friends’ category to the ‘undependable friends’ category. In varying degrees of hostility, they designated them as among those who—while not necessarily foes—also could not be counted upon in the fight against those they considered the real or principal adversaries.

The disintegration of eco-radical organization

Consistent with these moral discourses, many anti-capitalists also consequently began to move away from the other eco-radicals opposed to working in tandem with the conservationists.

Within the organizations or coalitions they had formed, they distanced themselves from, if not altogether oppose, other eco-radicals who were trying to push these organizations or coalitions to call for more radical change outside the framework of capitalism. Inside the Friends of the Earth International, a federation composed largely of eco-radicals and eco-reformists, for example, they refused to back and join other eco-radicals who criticized the overall dominance of eco-reformist perspectives in the federation, rejected what they thought to be the FOEI’s

⁶⁴ Interview with MN.

inordinate focus on “corporate accountability,” and subsequently bolted out of the federation altogether after 1997.⁶⁵ Inside the Climate Justice Now! (CJN) network, the international coalition which many eco-radicals helped found to counter the more moderate and more dominant Climate Action Network in 2007, divisions came to a boil as many eco-radicals declined to go along with, or even actively opposed, other eco-radicals’ efforts to prevent the network from cooperating with, or admitting, environmentalist groups that were allied with conservationists. They refused to support other eco-radicals’ proposal to make membership to CJN conditional on opposition to carbon trading, and they decided not to be active in the formation of Climate Space, a new network established in 2013 by groups, many of them also belonging to CJN, which took more explicit anti-capitalist and anti-conservationist positions.⁶⁶ Similarly, at the national level within the PMCJ, they opposed and overruled other eco-radicals who expressed misgivings, if not outright opposition to, some kind of ‘nationalist’ alliance with conservationists in the Philippine government or NGOs. At one meeting in 2014, one of them even ridiculed what they called these eco-radicals’ attempts to turn the coalition into a “revolutionary party.”

Instead of supporting eco-radicals who were pushing their organizations or coalitions to take a more antagonistic stance toward the conservationists, they instead backed those eco-radicals who were pushing their organizations or coalitions to reach out to the conservationists. Indeed, they even went so far as to form new spaces or coalitions that cooperated with, or admitted, environmentalist groups that were allied with conservationists. Thus, while other eco-radicals within CJN called for keeping the network closed to eco-reformist or conservationist groups, other eco-radicals within CJN formed new groups like the “Equity and Ambition Group” and later the DCJ, which deliberately reached out to said eco-reformist or conservationist groups. In addition to these more formal links, they built various kinds of informal relationships with different sets of actors. At the UN, for example, DCJ members regularly held meetings with officials espousing conservationist positions grouped under the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) negotiating bloc.

Outside the negotiations, other eco-radicals tried to deepen their links with other eco-radicals by forming such groups and networks as the Reclaim the Streets! and the Camp for Climate Action in the UK, KlimaX in Denmark, the Climate Justice Alliance, the System Change not Climate Change coalition in the US, and many other local groups in various countries, as well as transnational networks such as the People’s Global Action, the International Rising Tide Network, the Eco-socialist International Network.⁶⁷ In contrast, the eco-radicals who favored allying with the conservationists refused to join these networks and formed links with eco-reformists allied with conservationists instead: NL, for example, joined the board of 350.org, a group founded in 2008 by an author who has been denounced by other CJN members for his view that overthrowing capitalism should not even be a goal to begin with and for his support for carbon trading.⁶⁸ At the national level, they created new spaces for working with members of CAN’s local chapter. In the Philippines, for example, eco-radicals with PMCJ estranged other

⁶⁵ Doherty & Doyle 2014.

⁶⁶ On CJN, see Bullard & Mueller 2012:56; Russell 2012; Tokar 2014; Byrd 2012. On the Climate Space, see their website. Interviews with SP, PJ, NL, MT

⁶⁷ See Aguiton 2003; Anonymous 2003:24-27; Baer 2012; Evans 2010; Graeber 2004:204-5; Hadden 2015; Kingsnorth 2012; Lowy 2015:xii; Mertes 2004; Plows 2008; Pleyers 2010; Russell 2012; Tokar 2014:255; Waterman 2004:58; interviews

⁶⁸ On McKibben’s views on capitalism, see Steinberg 2012; Tokar 2014b. for criticisms of McKibben’s/350.org’s positions, see Petermann 2014.

eco-radicals pushing the coalition to articulate more explicitly anti-capitalist positions while cultivating relationships with groups like Aksyon Klima (Climate Action), a coalition promoting conservationist, if not moderate-neoliberal, solutions to climate change. While other eco-radicals concentrated on trying to raise resources from more radical foundations, they concentrated on fostering ties with a liberal European foundation which gave them grants that enabled them to hire more staff, fly to the negotiations, and carry out their anti-fossil fuel campaigns.

And as eco-radicals succeeded in winning governmental power in a number of countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, and so on in the 2000s, rifts also deepened among eco-radicals in governments as some eco-radicals began refusing to join other eco-radicals striving to push for more radical measures at the global level. Inside the Bolivian government after 2009, for example, Evo Morales and others isolated other eco-radicals who were arguing in favor of carving more autonomous spaces within the G-77 group of developing-country governments in the negotiations so as to distance themselves from the conservationists. They instead chose to back other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who were arguing in favor of continuing to ally with the conservationists in other developing and developed-country governments. Like the eco-radicals outside governments, they too joined new informal groupings such as the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDC) group, a negotiating bloc that brought together eco-radicals from the left- or left-leaning governments of Latin America together with conservationist and moderate neoliberal elites representing the governments of the Philippines, Malaysia, India, Algeria, and others.

The disintegration of eco-radical mobilization

Apart from withholding their support for other eco-radicals in their organizations or coalitions, many eco-radicals also started to go against other eco-radicals' attempts to rally the broader public to take more contentious actions against all those who were blocking their push for more radical changes outside the framework of capitalism.

They did not necessarily all start telling people not to join or support militant actions directed against all progressive elites. But, breaking with other eco-radicals, they did devote more of their time and energy organizing or militant actions directed only against the neoliberals. That is, instead of encouraging people to take part in more confrontational actions against all officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to socialism, they began to encourage people to focus more on confrontational actions only against those officials, business owners and other elites opposed to some form of state capitalism, i.e., against those the conservationists morally categorize as the “bad capitalists” or the “bad elites.”

In line with this, they refused to go along with other eco-radicals who, from the outset, had been seeking to delegitimize the UN negotiations as a process that is dominated by the dominant classes and that is only meant to prop up the existing system. These other eco-radicals continued to call on people to move past “lobbying” inside the UN towards trying to shut down the negotiations altogether because “[t]he powers that be are deaf, dumb and deadly, and we will waste no further time trying to pressure or persuade them.”⁶⁹ Or as one eco-radical would later put it, “the kind of ‘inside space’ is pretty bankrupt and ultimately really not much is going to come out.”⁷⁰ Another activist, responding to calls to mobilize around the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris in 2015, would be more pointed:

⁶⁹ Saul 2014.

⁷⁰ Interview with WC.

Is anyone else tired of hearing about the COPs' failure year after year after year? Yawn. Some of us feel it is a waste of time going to the COPs, demanding this and that, and then getting same stupid corporate rhetoric thrown back at us. And then more rhetoric about the failure of the COPs by NGOs happens every year...Any deal reached in Paris next year by the purveyors of the corporate elite is sure to be bad—selling the Earth and all her inhabitants to the highest bidders.

Echoing the criticisms eco-radicals made of the first UN summit on the environment in 1972, these other eco-radicals have typically argued that the UN climate change negotiations are bound to fail because the process itself is “part of a capitalist, Western, white and masculine regime of global resource management” that is only “legitimizing a destructive and unjust economic and regulatory system by channeling the attention of potentially critical environmental groups into meaningless negotiations; and projecting the impression that ‘something is being done’ about climate change, thus blunting the potential for mass movements for climate justice to emerge.”⁷¹ More confrontational actions are needed, a group of anarchists at the UK's Camp for Climate Action stressed, because lobbying is incapable of making an impact in such “biased and undemocratic organizations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.”⁷²

The other eco-radicals, in contrast refused to call on people to take this view. They said they had “no illusions about how far the process can go,” but they generally abstained from attacking the climate negotiations for fear that this “plays into the hands of Northern countries who are attempting to move the climate regime towards an inequitable and unambitious outcome.” As a “strategy paper” argued in the run up to the 2016 Paris summit:

The campaign must not weaken the UNFCCC process itself any further due to its unique character; undermine the wider fight for equity and ambition by undermining Southern champions in an international space, thereby playing into the hands of the real climate criminals, Northern countries with historic responsibility and major fossil fuel interests and industries; be used as a campaign against Southern governments with fossil fuel interests, but rather empower all governments to increase their political control over said interests rather than allowing them to set policy...

What people need to do in order to avoid “attacking the UN process itself,” the strategy paper goes on to say, is to single out and hold up particular officials involved in the negotiations as “the guardians of the integrity of the process and of climate policymaking” while they “name, shame and toxify the dirty energy lobby (climate criminals), expose/scandalize their close association with our political leaders and climate policymaking, demand an end to the relationship.”

In other words, instead of continuing to denounce and try to shut down the UN talks, as other eco-radicals did, they called on people to continue trying to push the negotiations towards more “equitable” and “ambitious” outcomes. Instead of antagonizing all elites by shutting down the meetings, they called on people to continue appealing to—in effect to continue “lobbying”—the ‘good elites’ or the ‘lesser evils’ so as to encourage them to fight against the ‘bad elites’ or the ‘greater evils’ and advocate for even bolder reforms and material and symbolic concessions for the dominated. As one of DCJ's leaders told me: “What we are trying to do is to keep pushing those engaged in the process to take a more radical position”—but a more radical position vis-à-

⁷¹ Mueller & Passadakis 2009; Russell et al 2012:23.

⁷² Anonymous 2010.

vis the neoliberals rather than vis-à-vis all of the dominant classes. As imperfect as the UN process is, they argued, eco-radicals need to remain “inside the UN process” in order “to make things less bad than they would otherwise be.” Insofar as they criticized the negotiations and the conservationists involved in it, they generally formulated their criticisms in ways that still put the blame on the ‘real enemies’: the UN process was failing, they argued, because the powerful or the ‘bad elites,’ i.e. the neoliberals, which dominated most developed-country governments and most corporations, rather than the elites of all countries, were ‘capturing’ or ‘sabotaging’ it.

Thus, even though they continued to work with other eco-radicals in mobilizing people on the national and world stages during and in-between the UN intergovernmental climate change negotiations, these eco-radicals would mobilize people behind very different calls and immediate aims. While other eco-radicals belonging to groups like Climate Justice Action or Climate Space, along with eco-radicals occupying the radical wings of Friends of the Earth, Climate Justice Network, 350.org and so on, organized sit-ins, die-ins, walk-outs, pickets and other protests on the sidelines of the meetings inside and outside the conference venue denouncing all developed- and developing-country governments and corporations opposed to the more radical international solutions they were demanding, other eco-reformists, primarily those with the Demand Climate Justice action campaign, the moderate wing of Friends of the Earth, the Climate Justice Network, or 350.org, organized sit-ins, die-ins, walk-outs, pickets and other protests largely inside the conference denouncing only the developed-country governments and corporations opposed to the more moderate international agreements supported by conservationists during the 2000s and early 2010s. They did occasionally also organize or join protests with other eco-radicals outside—but only those targeting the fossil fuel companies and government officials who opposed the international agreements that conservationists favor.

In 2009, preparing for the UN summit in Copenhagen, for example, they refused to join other eco-radicals aiming for “‘Seattling’ Copenhagen” or for shutting down the climate change talks as the WTO talks in Seattle were shut down the decade before. During the summit itself, they broke with other eco-radicals opposed to accepting an invitation from CAN, Oxfam and others to join them in a big ‘family-friendly’ march and desist from taking more radical actions that could potentially scare away people. In contrast to other eco-radicals, they refused to hold banners saying “Shut down capitalism now!” or “FckFckFck the System.” They did decide to join a “compromise” action meant precisely to involve eco-radicals like them who refused to shut down the negotiations: i.e. to march into or push their way through the perimeter fence of the conference venue not to shut down or shut in the negotiations but to join those inside—government negotiators, NGOs, experts, etc.—who were planning, or who were challenged, to walk out of the negotiations and hold a “People’s Assembly for Climate Justice” just outside the conference building but still inside the perimeter fence. But they still tried to direct this compromise action towards their designated enemies by asking others to join the action because “we have heard a string of excuses from northern countries to make adequate reparations for the ecological crisis that they have caused”—not because they also heard a string of excuses from the conservationists representing southern countries—and by refusing to join other eco-radicals in ‘walking out’ from the talks altogether.

Meanwhile, inside the conference venue, eco-radicals in the ALBA member-countries governments joined other eco-radicals in the Bolivian government in blocking consensus to prevent the proposed Copenhagen Accord from being passed—something which no other developing-country government was prepared to do. But they too refused to join other eco-

radicals who wanted to block the adoption of the Cancun agreement the following year even if said agreement essentially still contained the same provisions of the Copenhagen agreement.

One episode at a subsequent UN summit in Durban in 2011 illustrates how, unlike other eco-radicals, the eco-radicals who favored alliances with conservationists pushed people to participate in—without subverting—the militant ‘appeal-to-power-within-acceptable-boundaries’ actions staged by reformists.⁷³ When activists from Greenpeace and 350.org called for a ‘sit-in’ just outside one of the session rooms inside the conference venue and shouted conservationists demands, they refused to go along with other eco-radicals in chanting—and urging the crowd to chant—more radical demands such as “No carbon markets!,” “World Bank out of climate finance!,” “No to REDD!” and other messages that were either against the stated positions of Greenpeace and 350.org—or they expressed positions on issues that Greenpeace and 350.org refused to take positions on. And after Greenpeace’s top official effectively told the crowd to demobilize by telling them to heed the security officers’ call to move outside the conference venue, they refused to go with other eco-radicals in denouncing said move as a “de-escalation tactic,” in urging the participants to continue their protest, and in pushing them not to participate in what they called Greenpeace’s “meticulously controlled spectacle” to reduce people to “choreographed cheerleaders.” Not once did I witness or learn of eco-radicals seeking alliances with conservationists defying protests staged by eco-reformist or conservationists.

At the next UN summit in Warsaw in 2013, eco-radicals who wanted to partner with conservationists moved towards the direction of the other eco-radicals by spearheading a mass “walk out” to dramatize their objections to how the talks were going. But they refused to go as far as the other eco-radicals who insisted on staying “outside” after the walk-out. Instead, they chose to walk right back in again with eco-reformist and conservationist groups at the very next UN meeting in June 2014. And they walked back in after posing in front of a giant banner, strategically erected right beside the entrance to the hotel where negotiators were streaming in, that said: “We choose: Renewable energy. People’s power. Now!”: a message which, by highlighting a demand that even their conservationist allies inside the conference venue have been supporting, served to ritually affirm the alliance they were seeking to forge. The message “Shut down capitalism!” or even “System change not climate change!”—which were preferred by other eco-radicals— were ruled out of the question. There were chants such as “Our climate, not your business!,” but unlike at the Greenpeace-initiated action in Durban we recounted earlier, no one tried to chant anti-carbon trading, let alone anti-capitalist slogans, and no one tried to push the protesters to defy the authorities by staying on longer than they were authorized.

Similarly, during the joint march during the UN summit in New York in 2014, many eco-radicals refused to heed other eco-radicals’ call for more militant, Seattle-like actions to counter what they perceived to be efforts by conservationists to blunt their radical messages. In contrast to other eco-radicals, they refrained from calling on people defy more conservative groups’ attempts to “corral them into cattle pens on a police escorted parade”⁷⁴ by engaging, after the big demonstration, in a direct action protest to “Flood Wall Street” or to shut down the operations of the so-called “good capitalists” (insurance companies, banks, and other financial firms).

At the next UN conference in Lima in 2015 (COP20), these other eco-radicals chose not to take part in various actions organized by other eco-radicals largely outside the conference the venue, such as an “International Tribunal” seeking to “prosecute” and “condemn” various

⁷³ Cipler et al. 2015; Petermann 2011; Tokar 2014.

⁷⁴ Saul 2014.

corporations, governments—including developing-country governments—the UN, the World Bank, and even the “capitalist system” itself, for contaminating rivers in Cajamarca, Peru, for killing marine and wildlife in the Gulf of Mexico, for harming the Great Barrier Reef, for polluting the Amazon, and for other “crimes against humanity and nature,” along with numerous other demonstrations and protest actions directed against both developed and developing country governments and elites. Instead, they again focused much of their actions inside the conference venue, targeting the ‘bad capitalists’ and the ‘bad elites’ like the developed-country government officials, the fossil-fuel company executives and the carbon traders taking part in the talks. During the big public demonstration participated in by both eco-radicals and eco-reformists in downtown Lima, they held placards berating the developed countries while other eco-radicals held placards saying “Capitalists: Murderers!” or “COP20: Nest of Predators.”

Then, during the final hours of the negotiations, when it seemed clear that even their allies in developing-country governments would again refuse to block another weak agreement favored by the US and supported by the EU and other more moderate developing-country governments, I observed how eco-radicals within the DCJ and the EAG stood up to and clashed with eco-reformists who were arguing against their coalition issuing a statement rejecting the agreement in favor of echoing their allied governments’ criticism of the “process.” But they still ended up approving a statement that still focused much of the blame on developed countries and refused to criticize developing countries for caving in to the agreement.

Then, in the run up to the UN summit in Paris in 2015, many eco-radicals again opted not to back other eco-radicals seeking to again create what the Climate Space described as “a situation more like Seattle, so that the UNFCCC and governments will finally learn that there is a mass movement that will not accept business as usual.”⁷⁵ At one preparatory meeting involving a broad range of organizations, including representatives from CAN and other eco-reformist and conservationist groups, for example, they largely kept their distance from the eco-radicals who called for more “threatening” actions and who rejected the existing proposals for actions tabled by eco-reformists as “too optimistic, too ambiguous and not very powerful.” They were lukewarm towards the latter’s efforts to counter eco-reformists’ proposals to hold the traditional big demonstration before the start of the conference instead of the last day so as to prevent the conservationists and neoliberals from having the “last word” and declaring the conference a “success.”⁷⁶ And they were generally indifferent if not altogether opposed to these other eco-radicals’ call for “escalation,” specifically their proposals for thousands of people to form layers of human “red lines,” or to hold hands so as to completely encircle the conference center as the summit ends, giving the negotiators no other choice if they want to leave but to “walk over the bodies of the very people they claim to represent.”

During the summit itself, after initial agreements were thrown into disarray after the French government declared a “state of emergency” and banned all demonstrations during the summit following a spate of terrorist attacks in Paris, they refused to back other eco-radicals who insisted on defying or circumventing the ban. While other eco-radicals occupied a plaza on the first day of the summit, carried out various acts of civil disobedience during the two weeks that the negotiations were held, and blocked a major avenue on the last day so as to confront “states” and “capital,” they concentrated on organizing direct actions organized with the permission of UN authorities inside the heavily barricaded conference area. While radical anti-capitalists

⁷⁵ Interview with AD.

⁷⁶ Combes 2014.

downtown put up banners saying “System change not climate change!” or “End capitalism now!”, they held placards inside the conference venue with messages such as “Rich countries: do your fair share!” and “What are we going to do about the United States?”

Outside these annual UN summits, these eco-radicals also refused to go along with other eco-radicals who organized countless direct action protests in hundreds if not thousands of localities worldwide against dirty energy corporations or fossil-fuels based power plants but also against banks in Wall Street or the City of London, carbon traders, renewable energy companies, and others categorized by conservationists as among the ‘good’ or ‘less evil’ capitalists or elites.⁷⁷ Instead, they joined eco-reformists and conservationists hold direct actions only against those designated by conservationists as the ‘bad’ or ‘worse capitalists’ and elites. Eco-radicals with the DCJ, for example, invited people to join them in their global “Reclaim Power” actions, a global campaign in which they linked up with the likes of Greenpeace and others to target “points of emission” targets such as coal power plants or fossil-fuel companies—but not banks, carbon traders or renewable energy companies, let alone conservationist organizations. Members of Rising Tide, for example, organized an unusual protest action against environmentalist group EDF which, as we have seen, had become among the most active proponents of “market solutions” to environmental problems. Other eco-radicals, in contrast, steered clear of any confrontations with these environmentalist groups.

The defeat of the dominated classes

As the dominant classes became more organized beginning around the late 1960s, then, the subordinate classes subsequently became more splintered again starting around the mid-1980s.

More and more eco-radicals and eco-reformists began to gravitate towards the view that they should first secure limited concessions first. Not all necessarily thought that it was no longer necessary to fight for more radical or more sweeping changes, but many began taking the view that in order to *later* secure these changes it was necessary to first ally with, or at least ease up on antagonizing, the conservationists or moderate neoliberals who were pushing for the limited reforms—in other words: that they should now first cooperate rather than compete with the progressive elites to attract more support for their distinctive project. But in cooperating and forging alliances with the progressive elites, they also consequently began to dampen the social antagonisms and to efface the group boundaries that others from their bloc were struggling to keep salient. They played down or even started countering the moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives and categorizations being propagated by the other eco-radicals and eco-reformists. They distanced themselves from them and reached out instead to the conservationists or moderate neoliberals. And they ignored or even countered their attempts to channel people’s anger, anxieties and energies toward fighting against all elites or all neoliberals respectively.

But as they did, those eco-reformists and eco-radicals who rejected allying with the moderate neoliberals and the conservationists respectively found themselves more marginalized.

With more and more eco-reformists telling people that that the problem is largely extreme laissez-faire capitalism, that the realistic solution is a more regulated laissez-faire capitalism, that the primary enemies now are the extreme neoliberals among the elites, and that eco-reformists who refused to work with moderate neoliberals were unreliable partners at best, they too struggled to convince more people that the problem is corporate-dominated laissez-faire

⁷⁷ Russell 2012; Saunders & Price 2009.

capitalism itself, that the solution is a more participatory form of state capitalism, that they should fight against all the neoliberal elites of all countries, and that they could be counted upon as partners. In other words: with other eco-reformists pushing people towards the moderate-neoliberal bloc, they found it increasingly difficult to keep them in or draw them towards the eco-reformist bloc instead.

Same with the eco-radicals who rejected allying with the conservationists: With more and more eco-radicals telling people that the problem is mainly *laissez-faire* capitalism, that the realistic solution is a more regulated capitalism, that the primary enemies today are just the neoliberals among the elites, and that eco-radicals who refused to ally with conservationists were undependable friends at best, they struggled to convince more people that the problem is in fact capitalism, that the realistic solution is socialism, that they should counter the elites of all countries, and that they could be depended upon as their friends. In other words: with other eco-radicals effectively drawing people to the conservationist bloc, they found it increasingly difficult to keep them in, or draw them towards, the eco-radical bloc instead.

Membership in the organizations founded or initiated by eco-reformists and eco-radicals did not necessarily decline—indeed, they fluctuated and sometimes even rose for certain groups. Protests also did not necessarily decline—indeed, they also even became more frequent at certain periods and in certain places. But new recruits did not necessarily share the kinds of beliefs or projects that previous recruits did, and recent protests did not necessarily have the same targets and aims, so it is difficult to draw conclusions based on numbers.⁷⁸ But an examination of the mobilizations that various groups held and the kind of statements that they put out during this period does suggest that, effectively abandoned by their fellow eco-reformists and eco-radicals, eco-radicals and eco-reformists who rejected allying with the progressive elites began finding it harder to gain more adherents, raise more resources, mobilize more people to struggle against their designated enemies. People's concern over their conditions did not necessarily abate from the 70s onwards, but both found it more difficult to channel these resentments and desires towards a concerted push for radical change.⁷⁹

Despite all this, the other eco-reformists and eco-radicals who refused to ally with the more progressive elites continued to mobilize behind their respective projects. They continued to channel people's anger, anxieties and energies towards fighting against all neoliberals or against all capitalists respectively. They continued prioritizing cultivating ties with other eco-reformists or eco-radicals rather than with moderate neoliberals or conservationists—or with the eco-reformists or eco-radicals who preferred to partner with them. And they continued to propagate their moral diagnosis prescriptions, narratives and categorizations.⁸⁰

Stung by and hoping to counter their fellow eco-radicals and eco-reformists' attempts to portray them as undependable friends at best, they shot back by also morally re-categorizing them as undependable friends, if not as complicit with the enemies.⁸¹ Eco-reformists who rejected allying with moderate neoliberals went on to form new coalitions but began shunning

⁷⁸ See, for example, on the US: Berry 1999; Bosso 2005; Gould et al. 1996; Hacker & Pierson 2011; Meckling 2011; Layzer 2012; Skocpol 2007; Skocpol & Williamson 2012; on the Netherlands Spaargaren & Mol 1992:340; on Western Europe, Rootes 2004; on Japan Broadbent 2002; across countries, Hajer 1995.

⁷⁹ Andersen & Agrawala 2002:44; Dunlap 1987; Hopgood 1998:117; Keleman & Vogel 2010:438; Lazarus 2008:117; McCormick 1989:137; Vogel 1989:6; Rawcliffe 1998:68.

⁸⁰ See also among others Layzer 2012:139; Rawcliffe 1998:91; Rootes 2004:5-6.

⁸¹ Caldwell 2010; Dowie 1996:117; Hopgood 1998:138; Jackson & Block 1996; Layzer 2012:139; McKibben 2012. See also Betsill 200:267. Various interviews.

groups like EDF, accusing them of effectively engaging in “greenwashing” and betraying the “grassroots” to cozy up to the elites in Washington. Greenpeace members accused those who wanted to turn Greenpeace into something more like EDF of turning their organization into their own ‘Frankenstein’—a “big monster that has gone out of control.” Similarly, after the defeat of the climate bill in the US Congress, one scholar echoed the criticism of many eco-reformists when she tagged EDF and others as out-of-touch “honchos” whose heads are in the clouds because they have become too cozy with power and have become too used to “friendly Congressional offices, comfy board rooms, and posh retreats.” Playing on his name, others began calling EDF’s Fred Krupp “Fred Corrupt.”⁸² Speaking of many eco-reformist groups more generally, one NGO leader I interviewed accused them of being “handmaidens” of the US and European governments who “believe they’re the only ones who understand climate change because it uses such complicated terms, and we natives can’t in any case read English.”⁸³ Similarly, when the eco-radical members of CJN who refused to go with the conservationists, for example, organized a new network to bring together eco-radicals in 2013, they quietly refused to invite eco-radicals who wanted to work with eco-reformists and conservationists to their meetings and other activities. Though they refrained from saying so in public, they in effect tagged them as no longer worthy or deserving of their continuing trust and confidence.

But, despite their persistence, these other eco-reformists and eco-radicals still lost ground and found it increasingly more difficult to counter the opposition of the dominant classes to the more radical change or stronger reforms they continued to push for.

Unable to mount a concerted campaign against all the neoliberals as other eco-reformists insisted on aiming their fire only at the extreme neoliberals, they too were unable to counter the opposition not just of the extreme neoliberals determined to deny them immediate concessions but also the moderate neoliberals determined to deny them the larger concessions they were demanding. Their continuing mobilizations contributed to preventing the extreme neoliberals from blocking even just the weakest reforms that the conservationists and moderate neoliberals would subsequently champion. But, unable to forge a broader global anti-neoliberal bloc as other eco-reformists concentrated on forging a global anti-extreme-neoliberal bloc in tandem with the moderate neoliberals, they too failed to construct the social force required to push for the stronger international agreements and direct, non-market-based regulations that could compel big business or large corporations to significantly cut their emissions and transfer significant resources to subordinate groups. In one prominent scholar’s assessment, they became just a “defensive light air force, not a massed infantry for change.”⁸⁴

The same was true for the eco-reformists: Rent by defections and unable to wage concerted attacks against both conservationists and neoliberals as other eco-radicals insisted on aiming their fire only at the neoliberals, the eco-radicals were unable to counter the opposition not just of the neoliberals determined to deny them immediate concessions but also the conservationists determined to deny them the broader gains they were seeking. Their continuing mobilizations was crucial in preventing the extreme neoliberals from defeating even just the weakest reforms that the conservationists and moderate neoliberals would subsequently settle for. But, unable to forge a broader global anti-capitalist bloc as other eco-radicals concentrated on forging a global anti-neoliberal bloc in tandem with the conservationists, they themselves failed

⁸² Caldwell 2010; Jackson & Block 1996; Layzer 2011:330; McKibben 2012; Scarce 1990; Skocpol 2013; Verini 2007.

⁸³ interview with NS.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Bosso 2005:136.

to assemble the social force needed to push for the kind of radical international agreements and the post-capitalist forms of regulation that could compel the world's dominant classes—from both developed and developing countries—to drastically cut their emissions and transfer more resources to the dominated classes.

Neither the eco-reformists nor the eco-radicals entirely failed in preventing what many considered the worst possible outcomes: the total lack of response to, or the complete absence of reforms, in the face of the problem. Indeed, they even managed to successfully resist the extreme neoliberals attempts to restrict or reverse their earlier successes in putting in place environmental regulations in some countries and on the world stage during the 1970s and 1980s. There were even moments—such as during the late 1990s and early 2000s—when they seemed to be on the ascendant again and attracting more adherents to their projects. As evidenced by the eruption of protests and campaigns spearheaded or organized by eco-radicals and eco-reformists worldwide, most spectacularly the so-called ‘Battle of Seattle’ in 1999, the holding of the World Social Forums starting in 2001, and the coming to power of avowedly “socialist” parties in Latin America throughout the 2000s, it was not the case that the eco-radicals and eco-reformists simply faded away, and that it was all downhill from the mid 1980s onward.

But overall, neither the eco-reformists overcame what one scholar-activist called the “crisis of the movements”⁸⁵ and succeed in building on the momentum of the 1960s to forge the collective will and the collective means needed to build on their achievements and put in place the new kinds of social relations or new ecological values or norms that they argued are needed to stop climate change. As Barry Commoner, one of the leading lights of radical environmentalism has himself lamented: “The environmental effort has largely failed.”⁸⁶

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented an account of how, rather than staying as or becoming even more organized, the subaltern groups began to disperse again despite continuing and at times successful efforts to repair their cohesion, thereby diminishing the possibility that the radical social changes needed to limit climate change would be carried out starting in the mid 1980s.

Analyzing how the relations among the dominated classes were transformed in the wake of changes in the relations among the dominant classes, I proposed that the prospects for radical transformations dimmed beginning in the mid 1980s as many eco-reformists and eco-radicals decided to switch sides, away from those other eco-reformists and eco-radicals who stood for rivaling rather than supporting the progressive elites. As they did, these other eco-reformists and eco-radicals were again pushed to the margins, undermining their ability to organize the subordinate groups behind them to push for structural changes to stop climate change.

Next, we examine how this growing disorganization of the subordinate classes affected intra-dominant class relations so as to comprehend how, instead of remaining or becoming more solid as the subordinate groups fractured, the dominant classes too disintegrated beginning around the late 1980s, thus also dimming the prospects for limited transformations to deal with the ecological crisis.

⁸⁵ Wallerstein 1990:45.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Brulle 2000:1.

CHAPTER 6: The containment of passive revolution

By the late 1980s, the ground on which various social groups were struggling had become very different from what it was during the previous decades. As we saw in the previous chapter, instead of staying more or less unified behind the call for more radical transformations, the subaltern groups had begun to become more fragmented again across countries beginning around the mid 1980s. After the progressive elites gained ground in garnering the backing of other elites and in building up the social force required to counter the conservative elites opposed to limited reforms starting around the late 1960s, the radical subaltern forces appeared to be losing the initiative, unable to sustain their momentum in building alternative hegemonies.

At least two things could have happened then: Faced with increasingly fragmented radical forces from below, the progressive elites could have remained as or even more solid, building up the social force required to overcome the conservative elites' opposition by banking on the subaltern groups' mobilization for larger concessions or gains in order to push for limited reforms. In so doing, they could have sustained the possibility of at least some minor adjustments needed to address climate change and other global environmental problems being made. But they could also have started splintering too, failing in their attempts to construct the social force needed to overcome internal opposition by refusing to ride on the subordinate groups' push for more significant concessions in order to build support for limited reforms, thus closing the possibility for said reforms. In other words: the growing disorganization of the subordinate groups could have led to the continuing integration and dynamism of the dominant groups, i.e., to the continuation or escalation of passive revolution—or it could have led to their dissolution and passivity yet again, i.e., to the containment of passive revolution itself.

How did it happen that it was the latter rather than the former that ensued? Why, instead of further consolidating, did dominant groups end up disintegrating again? How was the possibility for implementing even just limited reforms to deal with climate change shut down?

To address these questions, we proceed to examine how the changes in the relations among the dominated groups that we examined in the previous chapter affected intra-dominant class relations. I will argue that, as the prospect of carrying out more radical transformations diminished, the prospect of passing and enforcing limited reforms to deal with climate change also diminished starting in the late 1980s because rather than persisting in their fight for limited reforms—or instead of building on the subordinate groups' support for reforms to put pressure on the conservative elites—many moderate neoliberals and conservationists also began deferring or abandoning the fight for limited reforms and pushing only for even weaker reforms. They switched sides and lined up behind those other conservationists and moderate-neoliberals who argued in favor of cooperating rather than competing with the more conservative elites by allying with them, suppressing antagonisms towards them, and diluting their group boundaries, thus also widening the divisions among the dominant classes, and eroding their collective capacity to organize members of the dominant classes behind their push for limited reforms.

The consequences of the containment of active revolution

As the eco-radicals' and eco-reformists' foundered in their attempts to enjoin members of the subordinate class to struggle for radical change to address global environmental problems, the possibility or threat of radical social transformation, seemingly so imminent in the late 60s and 70s began receding starting around the mid 80s.

Despite trying out various ‘fixes,’ state officials in the advanced capitalist countries’ attempts to bring back growth rates to the level of the 1950s and 1960s were not succeeding.¹ By printing more money, and later, by borrowing more or pushing private credit, state officials did succeed in enabling certain sections of the subordinate groups to continue increasing their purchasing power and engaging in consumption and consumerism. Certain sectors, particularly the financial sector, also began to recover, or even enjoy periods of increased growth. The US and other developed countries enjoyed a “belle époque” during the 1990s and as they did, the sectors of the developing countries that took part in this recovery, were also pulled along. Countries like China which supplied the US and the North with cheap goods (and credit) boomed and boomed spectacularly. Enclaves in Manila, Mumbai, and Bangkok, etc., flourished.

As a result of all these attempts to “buy time” to overcome stagnation, however, real wages also continued shrinking or stagnating, and high unemployment also persisted or worsened in many core countries. In many developing countries too, real wages shrank or stagnated, and already limited social spending going towards subordinate groups was gutted further. Debts continued to pile up. A series of financial crisis—one centered in Asia in the late 1990s, another centered in the US in the late 2000s—wrought havoc on economies. As is now well-documented for many countries, inequality within countries began to deepen to levels unseen since the Great Depression; the gap between North and South remained as wide or grew even wider than ever.² And yet, as we saw in the previous chapter, more and more sections of the subaltern groups were now becoming even less willing to continue demanding a larger share of the pie—or threatening to overturn the table.

With members of the dominated classes expressing growing reluctance or refusal to keep fighting for more radical changes, with these non-elites even offering to provide their political and other support to all those elites willing to support them as they try to first secure limited reforms, and with the other more conservative elites continuing—and even escalating—their efforts to block those reforms,³ the progressive elites also reassessed the balance of forces and reviewed their options. They too again reconsidered the kinds of moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives, and categorizations they were using and propagating to make sense of environmental problems. In light of the changing political landscape, they too began rethinking what they should fight for, who they should fight with and who they should fight against.

The disintegration of ‘moderate’ neoliberalism

Faced with more fragmented forces to their left, more and more moderate neoliberals began to question whether they should keep pushing for minimal reforms and whether they should continue going against all the extreme neoliberals starting in the late 1980s. Though they did not all necessarily conclude that reforms were no longer needed to contain subaltern discontent, they took the view that they could now support even weaker reforms and this, they held, entailed forming common fronts only against the ‘most extreme’ among the extreme neoliberals. They did not necessarily all stop aspiring for a more moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism, but they did hold that they should just aim first for a less extreme laissez-faire capitalism.

¹ Arrighi 2007; Brenner 2006; Gowan 1999; Krippner 2011; Streeck 2012, 2014.

² Arrighi et al. 2003; Bello et al. 1999; Piketty 2014; Streeck 2014; in the US, Noah 2012.

³ On conservative elites escalating mobilizations in the US, Bosso 2005:133; Harrison 2010b:68; Layzer 2012:136-192, 211-246, 315-355; Meckling 2011:101-148; Skocpol 2013; Skocpol & Williamson 2012; for Canada, Harrison 2010:177-184; Toner 2002:101; for Australia, see Walker 2002; Crowley 2010.

The disintegration of moderate-neoliberal will

Thus, seeking to sway their fellow elites and the broader public to work with the ‘less extreme’ neoliberals and fight only the ‘most extreme’ neoliberals, these moderate neoliberals also began defusing the antagonisms that other moderate neoliberals had been trying to stoke.

Unlike the less extreme neoliberals, they acknowledged that climate change was happening. But like the less extreme neoliberals, however, they too began to suggest that others were exaggerating the certainty of its consequences. In contrast to the less extreme neoliberals, they did not necessarily reject the moral diagnosis that people were experiencing distress from climate change because of the absence or weakness of the minimal rules or institutions resulting in the lack of regulation of the market and the inter-state system. But like the less extreme neoliberals, they also began to highlight the moral diagnosis that people were suffering only because of the absence of the weakest rules or institutions necessary to regulate the market and the inter-state system. They argued that even the market-based measures championed by moderate neoliberals still interfered too much in the market and created problems that increase costs and reduce profits, constraining firms’ ability to innovate and create the wealth required to bankroll climate protection.

In short, they began to blame the problem not on excessive laissez-faire capitalism, as other moderate neoliberals did, but only on the most extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism, or to a form of completely unfettered capitalism that lacks what they redefined as the minimal rules needed to ensure fair competition and keep the market from collapsing.

In line with this moral explanation, they started diffusing a different moral recommendation. Though they did not necessarily start telling people they could not stop the threat of radical change by fighting for the establishment of a more moderate form of laissez faire capitalism, as other moderate neoliberals continued to do, they started telling people they could already diminish this threat by first fighting for an even more “moderate” or less-regulated form of laissez-faire capitalism. Establishing or perfecting moderate laissez-faire capitalism is still imperative if elites are to rule out the prospect of revolutionary change altogether, they suggested, but for now taming extreme laissez-faire capitalism will be sufficient—and indeed, that their attempts to moderate extreme laissez-faire capitalism is a condition for the kind of moderate laissez-faire capitalism they favored. Hence, they should just aim to secure minimal compromise regulations that may not necessarily amount to moderate laissez-faire capitalism but which could at least set constraints on business and move the world away from the prospect of the most extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism altogether. They did not necessarily say that preventing the most extreme form of neoliberalism will be sufficient for solving the problem but they also rarely pointed out, unlike other moderate neoliberals, that even if the most extreme form of neoliberalism were prevented, the problem would likely remain until more moderate laissez-faire capitalism is established.

Consistent with this, they de-emphasized or altogether refrained from issuing calls for moderate institutional changes or rules that impose minor economic and symbolic costs on businesses. Instead, they gave more prominence to calls for the weakest changes or rules that the less-extreme neoliberals seemed open to supporting, ones which aim to further bring down the costs of regulation. They refused to support or altogether blocked proposals for even some market-based regulations such as carbon trading even if they imposed only moderate emissions caps and permissive trading rules. They withheld their endorsement of even the “bottom-up”

voluntary agreements that some moderate neoliberals favored, ones in which each country basically sets its own “pledges” or targets for reducing emissions or transferring resources while still being subject to periodic reviews.

Instead, they started pushing for the weakest cap-and-trade schemes that imposed the lowest emissions caps and set the most permissive rules. And they started backing the even weaker “bottom-up” voluntary agreements favored by the less extreme neoliberals, ones in which each country is free to ‘pledge’ to reduce its emissions by as little as it wants, without any mechanism for ensuring that the pledges add up to meet scientifically required targets.

By propagating these ‘less moderate’ neoliberal moral diagnoses and prescriptions, however, they also began propagating ‘less moderate’ neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations behind these diagnoses and prescriptions. They too did not necessarily all stop telling people that they were members of a global collective whose interests were antagonistic only to all those who opposed moderate laissez-faire capitalism. But, in contrast to other moderate neoliberals, they gave more prominence to non-class interpellations calling upon people primarily as members of non-class collectives that excluded only all those opposed to a more moderate laissez faire capitalism—as members of a global public, of developed and developing countries, of “local communities,” and so on, whose interests are antagonistic only to the most extreme neoliberals. In other words, they represented the people as part of a different national and global “us” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included those businesses, experts and officials who insisted on absolute deregulation. And instead of morally aggregating both less extreme and the most extreme among the extreme neoliberals as among the enemies that the eco-reformists and the broader public needed to struggle against, they began morally distinguishing these groups by categorizing only the most extreme but not the less extreme neoliberals as the enemies today.

They too did not necessarily all declare that the less extreme and most extreme neoliberals have nothing in common. But, trying to move their fellow elites and the public to build bridges with the less extreme neoliberals, they also tried to draw attention to the moral distinctions between those elites who opposed even just the weakest, most minimal regulation—in the present case, the ultra-right think-tanks, the Koch family, the climate skeptic fringe, and other “market fundamentalists”—and those who favored them—i.e. Bush Jr., the non-Tea Party Republicans, etc. They also did not necessarily all agree on who were more dangerous or more extreme than others, but they all categorized the former but not the latter as the ones who, relative to the other elites and capitalists, had questionable moral credentials and who were therefore more incapable of moral leadership.

In other words, they began to desist from contradicting the less extreme neoliberals in morally classifying only those who opposed even those reforms weaker than the minimal reforms they had been advocating rather than all those who opposed those minimal reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—as the ones among their ranks that the public should be fighting against, the ones toward whom they ought to be directing their discontent or anger. The ‘enemies’ for them now included only those executives or state officials who denied climate change and rejected any climate agreement at all—but not those who acknowledge that climate change is happening but still opposed the weak international agreements moderate neoliberals had been proposing. Though they too still did not necessarily all agree on who exactly among these bad capitalists and bad elites were most problematic, all agreed that they should antagonize only these elites to foil the threat of radical transformations.

The disintegration of moderate-neoliberal organization

Consistent with this, many moderate neoliberals who moved farther to the right also began to move away from the moderate neoliberals inside their organizations, coalitions, or networks who rejected allying with any of the extreme neoliberals.

Among businesses, they prioritized appealing to and fostering relationships with the relatively smaller, domestically oriented corporations which generally opposed even mild restrictions on their property rights and with the few large, internationally oriented corporations which favored only the most flexible and least stringent global level regulations. While other moderate neoliberals linked up with groups such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) or the International Climate Change Partnership (ICCP), all of which opposed stronger non-market based regulations and supported weaker market-based regulations, they instead cooperated with more conservative business groups such as the National Federation of Independent Business or the National Association of Manufacturers.⁴

Outside these business associations, many also discontinued support for those seeking to steer conservative think-tanks, advocacy groups and other organizations towards using their capacities and influence to rally support for moderate-neoliberal climate legislation. Rather than continuing to fund only groups like EDF or WRI which champion market-friendly rather than “command-and-control” regulations, they also began to support the “counter-intelligentsia” that produced a stream of books and publications questioning the severity of climate change as well as for the “grassroots” organizations which mobilized against even market-friendly climate regulation.⁵ Or, as part of their “risk management strategy” of supporting both kinds of groups, they began to alter the weight they gave to each, i.e. continuing to support both kinds of groups but giving more to some neoliberals. So while some corporate executives showered groups like EDF with funds, they also began to give more support to groups which rejected even the “third wave environmentalism” EDF championed. In addition, they also began contributing more to conservative parties such as the Republicans; or they continued to contribute to several parties at once but provide qualitatively different forms of support to the latter, i.e. money for organizational development rather than just election campaigns, etc.⁶

Inside the political parties traditionally dominated by the moderate neoliberals, many stopped throwing their weight behind fellow party-members trying to push these parties to mobilize in support of weak climate regulation. Inside the Republican Party in the US, for instance, there would be a “dramatic rightward movement” as many Republicans deserted the party’s “liberal wing,” joined the “conservative wing,” and moved closer to the right-wing “hard-liners” who brought in even more campaign funds from ultra-conservative rich families and businesses beginning in the late 80s.⁷ As two scholars have observed, “the modern GOP became astonishingly conservative—not just far more conservative than the party of Nixon or Ford but far more conservative than the party of Ronald Reagan.”⁸

When they did win elections and took office, they gave less support to those seeking to push governments to campaign for, adopt, and enforce the limited market-friendly regulations

⁴ Hacker & Pierson 2011:205; interview with CMJ, VP, KN.

⁵ Dunlap & McCright 2015:310-319; Skocpol 2013:65-67.

⁶ Hacker & Pierson 2011.

⁷ Bosso 2005:127; Grunwald 2012:143; Hacker & Pierson 2011:148, 180, 264-265; Skocpol 2013:63; Skocpol & Williamson 2012 13,246-267; Layzer 2012:57, 348.

⁸ Hacker & Pierson 2011:199.

that the moderate neoliberals were pushing for at the global level. Thus, when other moderate Republicans refused to back him in his attempt to push for market-based environmental regulations against the wishes of more right-wing Republicans in Congress, President George Bush Sr. abandoned other moderate neoliberals like State Secretary James Baker and his EPA administrator William Reilly in their clashes with more extreme neoliberal Republicans (and climate skeptics) like Chief of Staff John Sununu and budget director Richard Darman inside the White House from 1988 to 1992. The former were pushing the US to support a new international agreement with binding emissions reductions targets and timetables, financial commitments and carbon trading schemes in Rio in 1992 but the latter vehemently opposed this, going so far as to urge Bush Sr. to boycott the talks altogether. While Bush Sr. did decide to attend the talks and to go along with other neoliberals like the UK's John Major to support the signing of an international agreement, Bush Sr. and others still sided with the latter and ordered US negotiators to block any agreement with binding reduction targets and provisions compelling developed countries to transfer funds to developing countries.⁹ In subsequent presidential campaigns, few moderate neoliberal Republicans put their necks out for fellow moderate neoliberals like John McCain or Mitt Romney when the latter championed or supported the climate legislation backed by conservationists and environmentalists under the Bush Jr. and Obama administrations. Indeed, like Bush Sr., Romney distanced himself from other moderate neoliberals like him by suddenly opposing carbon capping, even with cap-and-trade during the 2012 presidential elections.¹⁰

We have more limited information about internal struggles inside the inter-governmental organizations that the free-marketeers commanded, such as the World Bank or the IMF. But it is likely that there too, moderate neoliberals began to go against those pushing these organizations to use their resources to promote weak regulations at the global level.¹¹

The disintegration of moderate-neoliberal mobilization

In addition to withdrawing their support from other moderate neoliberals in their organizations or coalitions, many also began to disregard or defy their appeals to take confrontational actions against all those who were opposed to their push for a more moderate laissez-faire capitalism to respond to climate change.

Hence, rather than joining other moderate conservationists in encouraging people to participate in, or at least not oppose, more hostile or confrontational actions against all state officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to minimal reforms, as other moderate neoliberals did, they encouraged people to take more confrontational actions against only those government officials, business owners and others opposed to the even weaker reforms acceptable to the 'less moderate' neoliberals. In other words, they pushed people to target only all those they had re-designated as the "bad capitalists" or the "bad elites."

Thus, at the UN negotiations during the 2000s and early 2010s, they called on people to help them put pressure only on those governments and organizations that took more conservationist positions—typically India, the LMDCs, and the ALBA countries such as Bolivia—and those that took more ultra-conservative or extreme neoliberal-positions, such as the US

⁹ Andresen and Agrawala 2002; Betsill 2000:272; Bodansky 1994, 2001; Clark and Dickson 2001; N. E. Harrison 2000; Hopgood 1998; Keleman & Vogel 2010; Layzer 2012; Levy 2004; Nitze 1994; Meckling 2011; on Europe- Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010:50. Interviews with RW, PJ, KM, RD, DD.

¹⁰ Meckling 2011:138; Skocpol 2013:3-4, 63, 90.

¹¹ But see Bello et al. 1999:26; Hart 2001:652-653; Mosley et al. 1995:22-24; Wade 1997:730-734; Wood 1986:226.

under Bush Jr. or Canada under its Conservative governments as well as the oil-corporations that funded climate-skeptic outfits.

One “citizen’s diplomacy” workshop a pro-carbon trading group organized that I attended during the People’s Summit in Lima in 2014 showcased how different their mobilizing approach was to other elites. During the workshop, the “trainer” begins by explaining that his group was funded by a philanthropist who made money in the oil industry but who ‘saw the light’ and decided to push for environmental regulation using markets. He argues that to solve the climate change, we need to realize that government officials and executives only adopt bad policies because we, the people, fail to “communicate properly” with them: we shout at them and fail to show them respect. He cited as an example the activists who had just disrupted a carbon-traders’ event inside the UN conference venue, lamenting how they failed to realize that the speakers they were disrupting (i.e., carbon traders and an oil executive in favor of permissive carbon trading) were actually environmentalists’ “best friends.” Echoing Thatcher and other moderate neoliberals in constantly referring to capitalists as “the job creators,” he then proceeds to give us tips on how to lobby in favor of their proposed carbon trading scheme. Then he asks each of us to take turns playing play-acting the role of a lobbyist while he pretended to play the role of the oil executive. Correcting our ways, he tells us to always be polite and to show gratitude and admiration to those we were lobbying. Never ever shout or raise your voice, he tells us. You need to “communicate through hearts,” he says, quoting the radical leftist writer Eduardo Galeano. Taking more aggressive actions may be necessary—but only against those who could no longer be reasoned with (i.e., the climate skeptics and the obstructors of even just the weakest reforms).

Many other moderate neoliberals urged people to follow essentially the same instructions: Instead of calling on people to direct their anger towards all opponents of the weak climate legislation that other moderate neoliberals promoted, they began calling on people to be friendly towards those “good elites” and “good capitalists” who were open to supporting climate action and focus their ire only on those climate skeptics and opponents of climate legislation who rejected even just the weakest reforms on the table, i.e. only on their designated “bad elites” and “bad capitalists”: Sarah Palin, Dick Cheney, or the “Tea Party Republicans” but not John McCain or the centrist Republicans, the Koch brothers or the Coors family but not the Bush family, the oil corporations like Exxon which bankroll climate denialism but not those oil corporations like Shell which acknowledge climate change and support carbon trading.

The collapse of conservatism

But as the conservationists splintered, so too did the moderate neoliberals. Also faced with disorganized forces to their left and their right, many of those who had been drawn to conservatism also began to question whether they should continue pushing for the limited reforms they had been championing and whether they should continue antagonizing all the neoliberals opposed to these limited reforms starting in the mid-1980s. Though they did not necessarily all believe that relatively more far-reaching reforms were no longer necessary to avert radical change, many began to take the view that they could now secure even weaker reforms than they previously championed and this, they argued, called only for a united front not against all neoliberals but only against the extreme neoliberals who opposed minimal reforms. They did not necessarily all start disavowing the aim of restoring and perfecting state capitalism, but they did begin to hold the view that they should now just aim to secure a more moderate laissez faire capitalism.

The disintegration of conservationist will

Hence, hoping to persuade their fellow conservationists and the broader public to ally with the moderate neoliberals, these conservationists also began trying to douse the non-class antagonisms that the other conservationists had been trying to kindle.

They did not necessarily stop telling people they were experiencing distress from climate change because of governments' failure to put in place the stronger rules or institutions need to solve "market failures" or deal with collective action problems. Like other conservationists, many continued to tell people they are suffering, or they are likely to suffer from, the impacts of climate change because of an "excessive reliance on market," understood as the refusal to establish stronger restrictions on property rights through more direct government interventions that moderate neoliberals derided as "command-and-control" regulation. Then US Senator and later 1996 presidential candidate Al Gore, one of the most prominent of these conservationists during this period, for example, continued to describe global warming not just as "the greatest market failure" but also the "biggest failure of democratic governance in history"—a failure which could not be corrected by "market forces" alone since markets "fail to get the right outcome in the presence of externalities."¹²

But going against other conservationists, they did begin to give more emphasis on the moral diagnosis that people were experiencing environmental distress largely if not exclusively because of governments' failure to put in place only the *minimal* rules or institutions necessary to correct "market failures" or solve collective action problems. Unlike other conservationists, they stressed that people are suffering, or are likely to suffer from, the impacts of climate change because of an "excessive reliance on market," now understood only as the refusal to put in place mild restrictions on property rights, such as pollution taxes, cap-and-trade schemes, and so on that could induce market players and states to 'internalize' the environmental and other social costs of production. Thus, US President Obama for example, would later say

There are those who will suggest that moving toward clean energy will destroy our economy when it's *the system we currently have* that endangers our prosperity and prevents us from creating millions of new jobs.¹³

But by the "system we currently have," he and others largely meant not laissez-faire capitalism per se but the kind of weakly-regulated capitalism without the kinds of flexible market-based regulations moderate neoliberals had come to advocate.

In short, conservationists began to diffuse accounts that reinforced the view that the problem only lies with *extreme* laissez-faire capitalism, or with a form of disorganized capitalism that lacks what they considered the minimal rules needed to ensure that the market does not exhaust its own resource base, rather than with laissez-faire capitalism per se, or with form of disorganized capitalism that lacks the stronger rules needed to counteract market irrationalities. The problem is not the "free market" per se, as other conservationists held; the problem is only what Gore and others would call "market fundamentalism," or the complete rejection of all sorts of "policy interventions"—even light and 'business-friendly' interventions.¹⁴

¹² Gore 2009:303, 325.

¹³ Layzer 2011:337.

¹⁴ Gore 2009: 327.

Consistent with this causal explanation, they started diffusing a different moral recommendation. They did not necessarily start telling people they could not ease or end the threat of radical change by fighting for the establishment of state capitalism. Gore, for example, would continue calling for “a more long-term and responsible form of capitalism,” a “sustainable capitalism” in his 2009 book.¹⁵ But they did tell people they could already reduce the impacts or threats posed by climate change by first fighting for a moderate form of laissez-faire capitalism. Establishing or perfecting state capitalism is still imperative if elites are to rule out radical threats altogether, they suggested, but for now moderating excessive laissez-faire capitalism will be sufficient—and indeed, that their attempts to moderate excessive laissez-faire capitalism is a step towards perfecting the state capitalism they favored.

Hence, these conservationists told people they should first aim to secure minor compromise regulations that may not necessarily amount to state capitalism but which could at least set constraints on business and move the world away from complete deregulation. They did not necessarily object to the goal of having “free markets” though they did say that what are needed, in Gore’s phrase, are “modified free markets”—modified in the sense that the free market would be “free” but still subjected to a light touch of regulation.¹⁶ What is needed, in short, is a more moderate version of what came to be termed “ecological modernization.” They did not necessarily say that lighter regulation will be sufficient for solving the problem but they also rarely pointed out, unlike other conservationists, that even if extreme neoliberalism were restrained the problem would likely remain unless state capitalism is established or perfected.

In line with this, they continued to call for the kinds of aggressive institutional changes to correct “market failures” that other conservationists also supported. Gore, for example, advocated a kind of neo-Keynesian “global stimulus” to create “green jobs” and transform entire energy infrastructures worldwide.¹⁷ Like other conservationists, many of them continued to push for more direct regulations as well as market-based regulations that could force firms to “internalize” the environmental costs of their production and put a “price on nature.”¹⁸ Gore argued that only by putting a “price on carbon” could “the negative externality that was invisible and not tracked by the market” become “visible” and “included in the decisions of the market participants.”¹⁹

But, against other conservationists, they also began to favor more market-based regulations such as carbon trading schemes that imposed higher emissions caps or more stringent trading rules. They began subscribing to the view of the Business Council for Sustainable Development that what is needed is an “optimal mix of command and control, self-regulation, and economic instruments” that does not curtail economic growth.²⁰ They refused to back, or to reject, the binding, “top-down” but flexible international agreements with stringent cap-and-trade schemes that other conservationists favored. Instead, they began to amplify calls for the weaker institutional changes or rules that the moderate neoliberals were championing. They started pushing for even weaker cap-and-trade schemes that imposed low caps and set permissive rules. And they started backing the proposed “bottom-up” voluntary agreements favored by moderate neoliberals, ones in which each country basically sets its own “pledges” or targets for reducing

¹⁵ Gore 2009:346.

¹⁶ Gore 1992:298.

¹⁷ Gore 2009:18.

¹⁸ La Viña 1997; interview with LA; interview with KM, FC, YF, WP, ML, DL, KB, GS.

¹⁹ Gore 2009:32.

²⁰ Schmidheiny 1992:16-23.

emissions or transferring resources while still being subject to periodic reviews.²¹ As Gore put it: [W]e must negotiate international agreements that establish global constraints on acceptable behavior but that are entered into voluntarily—albeit with the understanding that they will contain both incentives and legally valid penalties for non-compliance.²²

Thus, though Democrats such as former President Jimmy had long supported market-based regulatory instruments such as carbon trading, Gore and other Democrats like Clinton stepped up their efforts to promote them from the late 1980s onward.²³ Under Carter, the EPA had started characterizing ‘command-and-control’ regulation as ‘rigid, wasteful, and sometimes simply illogical’ and calling for cap-and-trade. Then, in the run up to the 1988 presidential elections and after, US Senator, EDF trustee, “Third Way” Democrat and later lead climate negotiator Timothy Wirth, together with other like-minded officials from the US, Canada and other developed countries, led the way in convincing other Democrats like Bill Clinton and Al Gore as well as Republicans to push for these mechanisms to be part of any climate change agreement.²⁴ Echoing moderate neoliberals, Gore propagated the view that “market forces will drive us quickly toward the answers we need” to solve climate change, if “the reality of the need to sharply reduce CO2 emissions is integrated into all market calculations,”²⁵ i.e. if “carbon pricing schemes” of the kind groups like EDF favored would be implemented. In Europe, Tony Blair and other “Third Way” exponents worked with Clinton, Gore and Wirth to push the European Commission to abandon its proposal for “harmonized policies” across countries and agree to carbon trading in the run-up to the 1997 UN climate summit in Kyoto. Across the world, conservationists in groups such as WRI, TERI in India, the South Center pushed their governments and the G-77 to agree to the compromise.

Wirth told me that, by the mid-1980s, he and other Democratic officials had concluded that they were not going to succeed in passing any reforms unless they use “the sort of language and the framework of the Reagan administration,” i.e. the language and framework of neoliberalism.²⁶ Echoing Wirth, one economist from a developing country told me of how she embraced carbon trading in the mid 1990s after she became convinced that they would only be able push for any regulations at all if they give businesses the ‘flexibility’ they were demanding. Another official, capturing the reasoning of many others, told me that if carbon-trading and all these other schemes were the only way by which to make the conservatives in the US and other developed countries agree to emissions caps or to transfer resources at all, then so be it. The alternative, he and others said, would be even less desirable, i.e. for there to be no reductions and transfers at all because there could be no agreement at all: precisely what the more extreme neoliberals wanted.²⁷ So though some still questioned the relative efficacy of carbon trading compared to more direct forms of regulation, they concluded by the mid-1990s that they should just go ahead and adopt it, because, as one official from the EU explained to me, capturing the attitude of many:

²¹ Busby 2010:129; Layzer 2012:266-79; 45-247. On Canada, see Harrison 2010b 177; Toner 2002 100-101; on Germany, Weidner 2002:161.

²² Gore 1992:302.

²³ Layzer 2012:77; Royden 2002.

²⁴ Wirth & Heinz 1988; interview with Wirth.

²⁵ Gore 2009:147.

²⁶ Interview with Wirth.

²⁷ Interview with FJ, GJ; WP.

The question was not [whether we should] keep questioning all the time this policy tool—its applicability, its pertinence, or the fact of whether or not it’s an optimal tool. It probably isn’t. But rather than doing that, let’s make it work.²⁸

They did not necessarily stop calling for reforms that could facilitate global redistribution across countries. Gore, for example, continued to say that “the new global economy must be an inclusive system that does not leave entire regions behind” and that “wealthy nations can no longer insist that Third World countries pay huge sums of interest on old debts even when the sacrifices necessary to pay them increase the pressure on their suffering populations.” But they did distance themselves from what one official disdainfully called the “Robin Hood approach” to climate change: “you take from the rich – the rich in this case are the big emitters – and you help the poor – the low emitters – to follow the right path.”²⁹ What they wanted, another official told me, was to avoid taxes and a “heavy regulatory regime” given the free-marketeers hostility to these two things.³⁰ Taxes, she lamented, had simply become “toxic” in the US during the 1990s: “no one can talk about them and no one can propose them.”

Other conservationists who rejected allying with the moderate neoliberals continued to propose more direct obligatory transfers of resources from developed to developing countries by invoking the “historical responsibility” argument. Thus, one official I spoke with, echoing the justification made by other conservationists since the 1970s, told me that such transfers are necessary because

[t]hey polluted; we never polluted. Look: my mother, she lives with less than 1,000 kilograms of [per capita emissions of greenhouse gases] a year... But in America, that is 20,000 kilograms a year. So what responsibility does my mother or my father, my uncle, or my children have for polluting the air? You Americans, you have that...”

In contrast, the conservationists who favored accommodating the moderate neoliberals began to repudiate and to refrain from using these arguments altogether, saying they were just so much unhelpful “rhetorical noise.”³¹ Developed countries, or the rich more generally, are under no obligation to do or give more, one negotiator told me, because: “We don’t have any guilt. We didn’t know what we were doing was a problem....” Or as another said:

You can try to blame us for things that happened in the 1850s and 60s... But in fact, there was no animus involved. In other words, no one had any idea, until a certain time in recent memory, that emissions of greenhouses gases... was creating any kind of a problem. People just had no idea. So that to hold us responsible for things that they did before we had any idea that there was any problem is really not quite, you know, fair.³²

They did not necessarily call on people to oppose calls for rich countries to transfer resources to developing countries, and they would not go so far as to dismiss them as a “socialist scheme to suck money out of wealth-producing nations,” as the neoliberals did.³³ They did not necessarily oppose the Green Fund or Climate Protection Funds that others were proposing. But

²⁸ Interview with WP.

²⁹ Interview with GJ, RL, MJ.

³⁰ Interview with MK.

³¹ Goldemberg 1994; Goldemberg et al. 1996.

³² Reifsnyder 2008.

³³ Quoted in Harrison 2010:184.

they refused to support proposals constantly tabled by other conservationists to make such transfers or the creation of such funds binding or obligatory on the part of any country. Instead they supported the view that most, if not all, those funds should be financed through the private sector: that is, by borrowing loans from banks or by creating the “enabling environment”—or by passing favorable investor-friendly laws and so on—to attract investments in green technology to their countries and foster “public-private partnerships.” Refraining from characterizing these funds or investments ‘compensation’ for damages caused to ‘victims’ and thus, as money that should be handled largely by the ‘victims,’ they also pulled back from proposals to give developing country-governments more control over these funds and called instead for compromise solutions in which they would be handled by both developed and developing countries, though with donors still having final say.³⁴ Distancing themselves from the “New International Economic Order” which other conservationists embraced in the 70s and 80s, they also refrained from resuscitating demands for improved market access, better terms of trade, favorable commodity prices, cheaper technology transfers, debt relief, stronger controls on multinational corporations and other key demands of the South. Many stayed away from proposals advanced by other conservationists to push for treaties regulating the activities of transnational corporations.

In spreading, or refusing to contradict, moderate-neoliberal moral diagnoses and prescriptions, however, they also began spreading the moderate-neoliberal moral narratives and categorizations that came with these diagnoses and prescriptions. They too did not necessarily all stop hailing people as members of a global collective whose interests were antagonistic to all the neoliberals, as other conservationists continued to do. But, departing from other conservationists, they highlighted non-class interpellations calling upon people primarily as members of non-class collectives whose interests were primarily if not exclusively antagonistic only to the extreme neoliberals. That is, they hailed members of subordinate and dominant groups not as part of classes but as part of nations, of developed or developing countries, of the North or of the South, or of an “international community”—as Indians, as Americans, as employees or as shareholders, as customers or as service providers—united only against all those business owners, state officials, or other elites opposed to moderate *laissez faire* capitalism. In other words, they began to portray the people as part of a different national and global “we” opposed to a different national and global “them,” i.e. the national and global collective that included only the “bad” businesses, experts and officials who opposed the minimal reforms they favored. And instead of morally aggregating all the neoliberals as the enemies that public needed to struggle against, they began morally distinguishing these groups by categorizing only the extreme neoliberals but not the moderate neoliberals as among the enemies today.

They did not necessarily dissolve the moral lines dividing those who seek to perfect moderate *laissez-faire* capitalism and those who oppose it. But, seeking to sway other elites and the broader public to accommodate the moderate neoliberals, they did accentuate the moral divisions between those elites who opposed even just moderate regulation—in the present case, the fossil fuel companies like Exxon, the ultra-conservative Republicans like Dick Cheney or Sarah Palin, the ultra-right think-tanks, the Koch family—and those who favored them—i.e., fossil fuel companies like Shell or BP, the centrist Republicans like John McCain or Mitt

³⁴ Ashe, Lierop, and Cherian 1999; Dasgupta 1994; Dowdeswell and Kinley 1994; Harris 2000; Hyder 1992, 1994; Jacobsen 1998; Jaitly 1993; La Viña 1997; Nitze 1994; Oberthür and Ott 1999; Paterson 1996; Porter, Brown, and Chasek 2000; Rajan 1997; Ricupero 1993; Rowlands 1995; Serrano 1992; Yamin and Depledge 2004.

Romney, the Pew Center etc. They did not necessarily all agree on who were more threatening than others, but they all pointed to and cast the former rather than the latter as the ones who were more lacking in virtue and who were therefore more incapable of moral leadership. Thus, in his 1992 book, for example, Gore designated as morally un-virtuous not all polluters who oppose strong reforms but only those “powerful industries affected by proposed climate crisis solutions” that “lavishly fund” a “massive and well-organized campaign of disinformation” by “pseudo-scientists” and “self-interested corporate advocates” in order “to confuse people into thinking that this crisis isn’t real” and therefore prevent them from supporting “climate action”:

[T]he largest polluters close their ears and spend millions of dollars a year trying to intentionally confuse people into thinking [global warming] isn’t real, the same way that tobacco companies spent millions of dollars to try to convince people that the doctors weren’t really saying that smoking causes lung disease. And that was really unethical what they did. And what these polluters are doing now is also *unethical*.³⁵

In other words, Gore and others also effectively began to desist from contradicting moderate neoliberals in morally classifying only those who opposed minimal reforms rather than all those who opposed moderate reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites’—as the ones among their ranks that elites and the broader public should be antagonizing, the ones they should be protesting against, the ones toward whom they ought to be directing their discontent or anger. The bad eggs for them now included only those corporate executives or state officials who denied climate change and rejected even the weaker agreements they themselves rejected—but not those who acknowledged that climate change is happening but opposed the stronger international agreements they would propose. They therefore continued to contradict the eco-reformists and eco-radicals in maintaining that the failure to establish minimal regulations is just the result of moral weakness on the part of these ‘bad capitalists’ and ‘bad elites’—not of inherent contradictions between the interests of the public and capital or big business. But they now also contradicted only the extreme neoliberals and not the moderate neoliberals in designating only those opposed to minimum reforms as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites.’ Though they too still did not necessarily all see eye to eye on who exactly among these bad capitalists and bad elites were most dangerous, all agreed that they should struggle only against these elites to quash the threat of more radical transformations.

The disintegration of conservationist organization

In line with these moral discourses, many conservationists also started to turn away from the other conservationists inside their organizations, coalitions, or networks who continued to fight against all those who opposed stronger reforms.

Within the “business community,” they distanced themselves from those conservationists who favored reaching out to and partnering with firms and business groups like the Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future and other groups, which thought their interests could be best advanced by stronger regulations domestically and globally, even as they closed ranks with those who favored working with business groups such the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBSCD), the International Climate Change Partnership (ICCP), the US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), the Climate Group, and other groups which thought

³⁵ Gore 1992:27,360; 2007:24, 39, 51; 2009:352.

their interests could be better advanced by the kind market-based climate regulations favored by the moderate neoliberals.³⁶

Outside the ranks of business, they backed policy experts, politicians, foundation directors and others who wanted to reach out to and support think-tanks, advocacy groups, and other organizations producing research or organizing campaigns in support of more indirect, market-based regulations while they moved away from those who wanted to reach out to and support think-tanks, advocacy groups, and other organizations producing research or organizing campaigns in support of stronger regulations.

Conservationists at the Ford Foundation were again at the frontlines of these changes. After Henry Ford II resigned in protest from the Ford board in 1977, saying the foundation he headed “is a creature of capitalism” but that it has become difficult “to discern recognition of this fact in anything the Foundation does,”³⁷ trustees opposed to McGeorge Bundy’s progressive mounted a kind of internal coup and replaced him with a new president who stopped or reversed many of Bundy’s initiatives during the 1980s.³⁸ Fearing that eco-reformist groups they supported, such the EDF, was becoming too adversarial towards businesses, they eventually helped oust EDF’s president in 1984, and championed eco-reformists who took more moderate-neoliberal positions, thereby helping them in their intra-organizational struggles against eco-reformists who refused to ally with the moderate neoliberals in the years after.³⁹ Ford subsequently continued funding more progressive civil society organizations and initiatives, such as the World Social Forum and many of the environmentalist organizations which spearheaded the formation of the ‘climate justice movement’ we discussed in the previous chapters after the mid-1980s. But it also began channeling funds towards more moderate free-market-oriented organizations, such as NGOs whose staff would help push for carbon trading in the climate change negotiations.⁴⁰ Apart from Ford, the trustees of other liberal foundations caved in to, or went along with, conservative activists’ demand for them to quit funding what one businessman called the “bright, long-haired, arrogant young lawyers right out of Harvard Law School whose main goal in life is to harass us.”⁴¹

Using funds from liberal foundations supportive of the conservationist agenda, such as the Pew Charitable Trusts or the MacArthur Foundation, others supported or pushed existing organizations to champion exactly the kind of solutions favored by the moderate neoliberals and to counter the new even more extremist think-tanks, such as the Citizens for a Sound Economy or the Center for New Europe set up by the extreme neoliberals as well as the think-tanks spearheaded by the conservationists.⁴² One of the most notable among these would be the World Resources Institute, an organization that was co-founded in 1982 by a noted eco-reformist who had earlier founded the Ford-funded NRDC and which began to play a central role in mobilizing

³⁶ Betsill 2000:218,248-249; Hopgood 1998:212; Meckling 2011:81-96, 123-155; Royden 2002; Schmidheiny 1992:xix; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010:32.

³⁷ Quoted in Bird 1998:392.

³⁸ Bird 1998:392; Bosso 2005:112; Judis 2013: 163-164; Lazarus 2008:97.

³⁹ Dowie 1996:38; Gottlieb 1993:190-192; Pooley 2010:66.

⁴⁰ Judis 2013: 163; on Ford’s funding of the WSF, see Parmar 2012:258; on funding for moderate groups, Ford, for example, funded an NGO whose staff provided legal advise to small-island states and played central roles in the design and promotion of the emissions trading under the Kyoto Protocol (interview with YF); see also Robinson 1993; Braun 2009; 478.

⁴¹ Quote is from Silk & Vogel 1976:46; Lazarus 2008:97; Judis 2013:164.

⁴² For more on the newer foundations, see Parmar 2012; on their support for moderate environmentalists, Bosso 2005:113; Cipler et al. 2015:160; ; Dowie 1995:50; Meckling 2011:95; Skocpol 2013:32,44. On the ultra-conservative think-tanks and orgs, see Beder 1998; Dunlap & McCright 2015 301-319; Jacques et al. 2008; Oreskes & Conway 2015; Skocpol 2013:4,65-68; Skocpol and Williamson 2012; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010:32; Teles 2007:163.

a global network of conservationists and moderate neoliberals in governments and international organizations to push for carbon trading and other “market solutions” during the 1990s and after.⁴³ Apart from joining the board of groups such as the WRI, Gore and others also formed new coalitions, such as the Alliance for Climate Protection or the Citizens’ Climate Lobby to rally ‘grassroots’ support behind moderate-neoliberal recommendations and counter anti-regulatory groups like Americans for Prosperity or Freedom Works, which were founded and funded by the extreme neoliberals in the US, Europe and other countries, but also those groups which supported conservationist positions.⁴⁴ Others helped start up new organizations such as the Mary Robinson Climate Justice Foundation or the European Climate Foundation.

Within their political parties, many also broke off or drew down their support for conservationists seeking to mobilize said parties behind the conservationist agenda in their struggles with those seeking to mobilize said parties behind the moderate-neoliberal agenda. Instead, they began to join fellow party members who wanted to take a more conciliatory stance towards the moderate neoliberals and supported their bid for party dominance.

Thus, divisions within the Democratic Party in the US, already apparent since Carter began distancing his administration from the New Deal, further widened in the late-1980s as many members “tilted increasingly to the moderate right.”⁴⁵ A group of leading members—including individuals that would later play central roles in pushing for market-based international climate change agreements such as Clinton, Gore, Wirth—formed the Democratic Leadership Council in 1985 to counter the remaining adherents of the “New Left” in the party and to push for what would later be popularized as the “Third Way”: a more pro-business program which, on environmental issues, would push for moderate-neoliberal prescriptions. Unlike the New Left faction, which had been more reluctant to ask for funds from business, these self-identified “business Democrats” aggressively solicited funds from corporate donors and—thanks in part to the resources they brought in to the party—subsequently succeeded in capturing the Party.⁴⁶ Even Obama, who initially refused to identify as a DLC member and distanced himself from their policies, subsequently surrounded himself with DLC members after he assumed office in 2008 and, as we shall see, ultimately championed Third Way positions on climate change.⁴⁷ Across the Atlantic, Tony Blair and others also formed “New Labor,” championed the Third Way, and mobilized the Labor Party in support of moderate-neoliberal climate interventions during the 1990s and after.⁴⁸ Similarly, in many other countries, such as Canada or Germany, disagreements within parties that previously advocated conservationists positions also deepened as Third Way advocates won leadership positions.

And as these ‘Third Way’ exponents gained power and won elections in the 1990s and 2000s, struggles between conservationists also intensified inside many governments as conservationists discontinued backing other conservationist officials in their conflicts with other officials over whether to put in place stronger climate regulations at the global level and provide government resources and give access to groups pushing for such regulations.⁴⁹

⁴³ WRI 2012.

⁴⁴ Ciple et al 2015:160,176; Gore 2007:58; Skocpol 2013 46-49; Skocpol & Williamson 2012; WRI 2012.

⁴⁵ On Carter’s early overtures to the neoliberals, see Layzer 2012: 66-78; Hacker & Pierson 2011:184, 224.

⁴⁶ Hacker & Pierson 2011:177-182.

⁴⁷ Grunwald 2012; Layzer 2012; Reed 2014.

⁴⁸ Meckling 2011.

⁴⁹ Bosso 2005:112.

Thus, opposed even by fellow Democrats when he pushed for carbon taxes, Clinton, together with Gore, began to side with conservationists and moderate neoliberals who were pushing for more market-based, flexible regulations such as carbon trading after assuming office in 1992.⁵⁰ Both supported fellow DLC members like Wirth when the latter pushed for the US to agree to binding emissions reductions with permissive carbon trading schemes under the Kyoto Protocol against the objections of other Democrats and environmentalists inside and outside the Clinton administration in the mid-1990s.⁵¹ Similarly, backing away from other Labor Party members who still opposed carbon trading, the UK government under Tony Blair became the most ardent advocate of carbon trading in Europe. They led the way in pushing European governments—which, along with many developing-country governments, had been among the most skeptical of carbon trading—to reverse their stance and actually roll out what would turn out to be the world’s largest carbon trading scheme.⁵² In Brazil, conservationists who supported the kind of compromise Clinton and Blair proposed battled it out with other conservationists for the ability to shape the Brazilian negotiating position during the Kyoto negotiations.⁵³ The latter worked closely with Wirth and others in turning an otherwise ‘punitive’ funding scheme proposed by other Brazilian conservationists, the Clean Development Fund, into a carbon offset scheme—what would become the Clean Development Mechanism—that would become an essential part of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.⁵⁴ Similarly, in the Philippines, for example, exponents of conservationism had long articulated the government’s position in the international negotiations; in recent years, however, many of them have either been fired or eased out of office in favor of moderate neoliberals.⁵⁵

Instead of going along with other conservationists in forming the Like-Minded Developing Countries Group, these conservationists favored staying out of such negotiating groups and forming new negotiating groups such as the Most Vulnerable Countries Forum or the Cartagena Dialogue: new spaces which brought together those officials from many developing-countries who had come to reject the top-down, inflexible climate agreements with no or only very strict cap-and-trade schemes favored by other conservationists.⁵⁶

Similar struggles also appear to have taken place inside intergovernmental organizations. In the 1970s, for example, conservationists like Lyndon Johnson helped install and supported individuals like McNamara as he fought against neoliberals in transforming the World Bank into one of the most active proponents of stronger international environmental regulations. By the 1990s, however, Clinton would appoint World Bank Presidents that backed off from antagonizing neoliberals, opposed stronger regulations, and partnered with groups like WRI to push for “economic instruments” as solutions to climate change. Similarly, in the 1970s and 1980s, conservationists turned the UN Conference on Trade and Development into the most vigorous champion of the “new international economic order” being pushed by environmentalists and conservationists from developing and developed countries.⁵⁷ Under the leadership of staunch conservationists like Gamani Corea and other NIEO-champions, UNCTAD

⁵⁰ Meckling 2011:79; Royden 2002.

⁵¹ Betsill 2000:259, 265; Layzer 2012:244-245; interviews with WT, PR, KM.

⁵² McCormick 2002; Meckling 2011:105-109; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010 51.

⁵³ Interviews with GJ; ML, RL; etc.

⁵⁴ From interviews with PR, WT, KM, ML, RL, DC, LA. See also Eizenstat 1998; Lecocq and Ambrosi 2007; Matsuo 2003.

⁵⁵ On Canada, see Harrison 2010b; on Germany, see Weidner 2002.

⁵⁶ Interview with WP, BA; Meckling 2011:79.

⁵⁷ Krasner 1985.

pushed for stronger international regulation of global trade and supported measures to curb the power of transnational corporations. It was one of the most outspoken critics of neoliberal economics. By the 1990s, however, Corea had been replaced with officials advocating more moderate neoliberal positions. UNCTAD became one of the most active proponents of carbon trading among international organizations, even playing a key role in the formation of International Emissions Trading Association (IETA), a lobby group that would take the lead in advocating for expanded carbon trading in the climate negotiations.⁵⁸ Similarly, the UN Center on Transnational Corporations, established in the 1973 after a successful push by environmentalists, began in the 1990s to move away from its more confrontational stance towards transnational corporations. Its director actively distanced the Center from the NIEO project, criticizing it as a mistaken attempt to ‘introduce socialist concepts on the global scale.’⁵⁹ Similarly, the UNEP became among the most aggressive champions of “carbon pricing” or “payments for ecosystem services.”⁶⁰ In 1999, various UN agencies even launched a “Global Compact” or a “new partnership between UN and international business.”⁶¹

The disintegration of conservationist mobilization

Aside from withholding or reducing their support for other conservationists in their organizations or coalitions, many conservationists also began to ignore or flout other conservationists’ calls to mobilize the broader public to take confrontational actions against all those who were blocking their push for moderate reforms to manage climate change.

They did not necessarily all tell people not to join or endorse more militant actions directed against both moderate neoliberals and extreme neoliberals. But, going against other conservationists, they did begin staging or supporting militant actions directed only against the extreme neoliberals. That is, instead of pushing people to engage in more confrontational actions against *all* government officials, business owners, and other elites opposed to some form of state capitalism, they pushed people to engage instead in confrontational actions only against those officials, business owners and other elites opposed to moderate neoliberalism, i.e., those the moderate neoliberals designate as the ‘bad capitalists’ or the ‘bad elites.’ Instead of calling on people to antagonize all elites resistant to reforms, they urged them to reach out to those whom a former negotiator called the “enlightened economic actors who accept legitimate societal aims but ask for freedom to choose the best means of achieving them.” “Preaching and exhortation,” the same negotiator argued, “will not bring the heavyweight outsiders on board. Their specific concerns will have to be understood, addressed, and to some extent accommodated.”⁶²

Hence, at the UN negotiations from the 1990s through the 2010s, many conservationists did not necessarily try to stop people from joining the more aggressive protests that other conservationists supported, targeting both moderate and extremist neoliberals alike. But they also began trying to encourage people to join only those actions and protests that the moderate neoliberals supported, attacking only the extreme neoliberals. So even though they continued to work with other conservationists in mobilizing people on the national and world stages during and in-between the UN climate change negotiations, they refused to go along with other

⁵⁸ Arda 1996; Bernstein 2001; M. Braun 2009; Dadzie 1992; Houlder 1999; Meckling 2011:95; Michaelowa 2000:30; Oberthür and H. Ott 1999; UNCTAD 1992, 1994; Voß 2007.

⁵⁹ Bair 2009:369.

⁶⁰ Hopgood 1998:138.

⁶¹ Bair 2009:237; Prashad 2007:240-241.

⁶² Cutajar 2004.

conservationists in endorsing rallies, demonstrations, or protest actions which denounce the developed-country governments, banks or other groups which support weak agreements.

In the run up to and during the UN summit in New York in 2014, for example, they called for, sponsored, and even joined the big demonstration organized by a coalition of environmentalist groups, but they refused to have anything to do with the “Flood Wall Street” protests organized by radical anti-capitalists the following day.⁶³

In 2007, Gore, the DLC pioneer who embraced conservationist views, called for more militant actions against fossil-fuel installations, saying: “I can’t understand why there aren’t rings of young people blocking bulldozers and preventing them from constructing coal-fired power plants.”⁶⁴ He would even quote the Marxist philosopher Theodor Adorno and use pictures of protests organized by anti-capitalists in the section of his 2009 book in which he calls for “grassroots activism” to overcome the “well-funded opposition” to “climate action.”⁶⁵ But he has not, as far as we know, expressed disappointment that young people have not been blocking bankers and carbon traders from selling carbon credits allowing industry to use more energy from coal-fired power plants.

Rather than organize or fund actions that put pressure on the US, developed countries, or the transnational corporations that conservationists have traditionally targeted, many conservationists began supporting only actions that put pressure only on their designated “bad elites” and “bad capitalists” starting in the mid-1980s: typically the US under Bush Sr. and Bush Jr. but not the US under Clinton or Obama, Saudi Arabia but not the EU, the “dirty” but not the “green” corporations.

The defeat of the progressive sections of the dominant classes

As the subordinate classes splintered, then, the dominant classes also splintered.

With the threat of radical transformations abating, more and more moderate neoliberals and conservationists began to take the view that they could now just secure even weaker reforms first instead of continuing to fight for the relatively more ambitious reforms they had been advocating. Not all necessarily thought that they should abandon their push for these relatively more ambitious reforms altogether, but many began moving away from the view that they needed to continue going against their more moderate or more conservative fellow elites to their right who favored only the weakest reforms; instead they began taking the view that they no longer needed to antagonize them to pass the smaller concessions they favored. Put differently, they began embracing the position that they should now cooperate rather than compete with the conservative elites to win over more support for their goals. In collaborating with these forces, however, they too also began to suppress the social antagonisms and to blur the group boundaries that others from their bloc—and from the eco-radical and eco-radical blocs who were trying to ally with them—were struggling to keep salient. They too de-emphasized or repudiated the moral diagnoses, prescriptions, narratives and categorizations being propagated by the other conservationists and moderate neoliberals. They too started withholding providing political, financial, and other resources from them. And they too began to defy their efforts to direct people’s anger, anxieties and energies toward all neoliberals or extreme neoliberals respectively.

⁶³ Petermann 2014.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Kristof 2007.

⁶⁵ Gore 2009: 24, 368, 403.

But as a consequence, those moderate neoliberals and conservationists who rejected allying with the extreme neoliberals and the moderate neoliberals respectively also found themselves increasingly isolated.

With more and more moderate neoliberals diffusing the discourse that that the problem is just the ‘most extreme’ form of laissez-faire capitalism, that the realistic solution is just a less extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism, and that the ‘enemies’ are just the most extreme among the extremist neoliberals, and that moderate neoliberals who reject working with the ‘less extreme neoliberals’ are undependable allies at best, they too found it increasingly difficult to sway other elites that the problem is extreme laissez-faire capitalism, the solution is a more moderate laissez-faire capitalism, that they should fight even the less extreme among the extremist neoliberals, and that they could be counted upon as allies. In short: with other moderate neoliberals in effect recruiting people to join the ‘less extreme’ neoliberal bloc, they found it increasingly difficult to draw them towards the moderate-neoliberal bloc instead.

The same was true for the conservationists who refused to accommodate the extreme neoliberals: With more and more conservationists spreading the view that the problem is largely extreme laissez-faire capitalism, that the remedy is a more regulated laissez-faire capitalism, that only the extreme neoliberals count among the enemies, and that conservationists who refused to ally with the moderate neoliberals are untrustworthy friends at best, those conservationists who rejected allying with the moderate neoliberals also found it increasingly difficult to persuade other elites that the problem is laissez-faire capitalism itself, the solution is state capitalism, that they should fight against even the moderate neoliberals, and that they could be relied on as their friends. In other words: with other conservationists attracting people to the moderate-neoliberal bloc, they found it increasingly difficult to draw them towards the conservationist bloc instead.

Also abandoned and denigrated by fellow moderate neoliberals and conservationists, both therefore also found it increasingly difficult to gain more supporters and, thus, obtain more resources and rally more people to struggle against their identified enemies from among the ranks of the elites. So even though elites’ concern over the dominated classes’ radicalism or potential for radicalism may not necessarily have abated from the 1980s onward, both moderate neoliberals and conservationists found it more difficult to channel these anxieties or fears towards a concerted push for more limited or moderate reforms. Many went against the trend, but in general, there was a widespread defection from the center-left or from the center-right among members of the dominant classes in many countries.⁶⁶

In spite of all this, the moderate neoliberals and conservationists who refused to ally with the more conservative elites also continued to mobilize and pursue their respective goals. They too persisted in trying to channel people’s anxieties and energies towards fighting against all neoliberals or against all extreme neoliberals respectively. They too continued to reach out to other conservationists and moderate neoliberals rather than those to their right. And they too continued to diffuse their moral diagnosis prescriptions, narratives and categorizations. Provoked by and hoping to counter their fellow conservationists’ or moderate neoliberals’ attempts to portray them as unreliable friends at best, they too hit back also morally re-categorizing them as undependable friends, if not as complicit with the enemies. Thus, the moderate neoliberals who refused to go along with the extreme neoliberals distanced themselves from the centrist Republicans who chose to align with the Tea Party or the ultra-conservative think-tanks and

⁶⁶ Fourcade & Babb 2002; Harvey 2005; Hacker & Pierson 2011; Layzer 2012:49; Prashad 2008; Skocpol 2007.

began to depict them as hijacking their party and therefore also of turning their backs on their constituents. They accused them of being ‘irresponsible’ corporate citizens tarnishing the image of all businesses among the public, of being ‘un-constructive’ and of hindering their efforts to be seen as responsible “partners” or as the ‘good guys’ in the discussions, and therefore of undermining the interests of business more generally.⁶⁷ Similarly, conservationists who refused to ally with the neoliberals also began to shun those Democrats or Labor Party members who opted to join the “Third Way” and to portray them as agents destroying the party and therefore of betraying those their party had traditionally represented.

In spite of their persistence—and in spite of the support of the eco-radicals and eco-reformists who allied with them—however, these other conservationists and moderate neoliberals still found it increasingly harder to counter the opposition of the more conservative sections of the dominant classes to the limited changes they continued to favor—an opposition that, instead of dissipating, only became even more organized and more aggressive despite the other conservationists and moderate neoliberals’ efforts to accommodate their demands.⁶⁸

Weakened by desertions and unable to carry out a unified move against all extreme neoliberals as other moderate neoliberals aimed their fire only at the most extreme neoliberals, they too were unable to overcome the resistance not just of the most extreme neoliberals blocking all reforms but also the less extreme neoliberals intent on blocking weak reforms they supported. Their continuing mobilizations, fueled in part by the eco-reformists who pushed them to secure weak reforms, also contributed to preventing the most extreme neoliberals from blocking all reforms. But, unable to forge a global bloc against extreme neoliberals as other moderate neoliberals prioritized forging a global bloc only against the most extreme neoliberals, they too failed to pass even just the minimal domestic and international regulations they favored.

The same held for the moderate neoliberals: Also wracked by desertions and unable to mount a unified offensive against all the conservative sections of the dominant classes as other conservatives aimed their fire only at the extreme neoliberals, the conservationists were unable to overcome the resistance not just the extreme neoliberals intent on blocking the more ambitious reforms they supported but even of the moderate neoliberals intent on blocking minimal reforms. Their continuing push for these limited reforms, propelled in part by the eco-radicals who sought to secure them, helped stop the extreme neoliberals from preventing any reform from being implemented altogether and from rolling back existing regulations.⁶⁹ But, unable to forge a broader global anti-neoliberal bloc as other conservationists prioritized forging a global anti-extreme-neoliberal bloc instead, they failed to pass or carry out the moderate domestic and international regulations they wanted.

Thus, everywhere moderate neoliberals and conservationists found themselves thwarted in their attempts to build on reforms passed in the 1970s. They failed to enact and implementing new and tougher domestic climate regulation such as carbon taxes, tougher penalties on

⁶⁷ Dowie 1995:52; Layzer 2012:339; Meckling 2011:95, 138 83; interviews with RW, KN.

⁶⁸ For more on neoliberal organization and mobilization during this period in the US, see; Hacker & Pierson 2011; Pierson 1994; Pierson & Skocpol 2007; Plehwe 2009; Skocpol 2007, 2013; Skocpol & Williamson 2012; Teles 2007. For Canada, see Harrison 2010:170; Toner 2002: 101; Harvey 2005. For various countries, Arnove & Pinede 2007:394; Dezalay & Garth 2002:127,277; Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb 2002; Harvey 2005; Harris 1990:182; Hurrell 1992:417; Guilhot 2005:197; Prashad 2008:xviii, 211-214; Williams 1993:8. On climate change in particular, see Dunlap & McCright 2015; Farrell 2016; Layzer 2012; McCright & Dunlap 2010. Interview with NK, VP, PR.

⁶⁹ on the US, see Layzer 2012:3.

pollution, or other regulatory initiatives.⁷⁰ In the US, despite having moderate neoliberals like Bush Sr. and conservationists like Clinton as President, they not only found it harder to pass new, more ambitious regulations; they even failed to prevent extreme neoliberals from gutting down what the ultraconservative Cato Institute called “the morass of centralized command-and-control environmental regulation” that reformists had put in place for a decade.”⁷¹ They failed to stop them from slashing the budgets and staff of the environmental agencies, purging the bureaucracy (and the international organizations they dominated) of as many conservationists as they could, then installing militant extreme neoliberals—many of them from the conservative think-tanks—in their place.⁷² They even failed to have the Kyoto Protocol ratified and they failed to pass all cap-and-trade bills they filed during this period.⁷³

The same thing more or less happened outside the US. Though the extreme neoliberals’ counter-offensives in their respective countries were precipitated by different initial conditions, were waged with different rationales and objectives, were justified in different languages, and were pushed forward by different combinations of social groups, conservationists and moderate neoliberals in these countries also failed to prevent these extreme neoliberals from blocking, tearing down, or weakening the ambitious and far-reaching environmental regulatory measures that they had put, or were trying to put, in place.⁷⁴ In Canada and Australia, they failed to counter the neoliberals blocking the Protocol’s ratification and domestic climate legislation despite giving various concessions weakening their proposals⁷⁵ In Europe, where the neoliberals were relatively weaker and less organized compared to the US, they succeeded in establishing a carbon trading scheme, but even they failed to put in place the stronger rules they wanted to enhance the scheme’s efficacy.⁷⁶ Across the world, they failed to prevent governments from clipping the powers of the environmental ministries and gutting the state’s role in managing capitalism’s impact on the environment.

On the world stage, moderate neoliberals and conservationists ended up conceding to even weaker rules and regulations fleshing out the Kyoto Protocol and the global carbon trading scheme it put in place for the countries that did choose to ratify the agreement. And later, unable or unwilling to counter the extreme neoliberals who threatened to kill another agreement that obliged governments to cut down their emissions, they ended up just championing yet another compromise, the Paris Agreement of 2016: a voluntary “bottom-up” agreement that unlike the Kyoto Protocol, does not even subject governments to legally binding emissions-reductions and resource-transfer targets and, hence, does not even put in place a global cap-and-trade scheme that would give flexibility to businesses while still subjecting them to some form of regulation, let alone punitive mechanisms to ensure that the pledges made are significant enough to meet the reductions scientists say are needed to avert catastrophic climate change. In short: an agreement that is much weaker than what conservationists and moderate neoliberals had been calling for—and had in fact already rejected when something like it was first proposed in 1991.

⁷⁰ Keleman and Vogel 2010; Hacker & Pierson 2011:99; Skocpol 2012; Pierson & Skocpol 2007:12; Pooley 2012. On Germany: Weidner 2002. On Europe, Meckling 2011:78,119; on Australia, Bailey et al. 2012; on Japan, Broadbent 2002, Takao 2012.

⁷¹ Dowie 1996:67; Hopgood 1998:124; McCormick 1989:136. Quote from Cato is from Beder 1998.

⁷² Andrews 2008:257; Blyth 2002 183-184; McQuaid 1994:177-179.

⁷³ Layzer 2011:10, 323, 346; Meckling 2011:101-138.

⁷⁴ On cross-national differences in the resurgence of free-market regimes, see Dezalay & Garth 2002; Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb 2002; Vogel 1986.

⁷⁵ Bailey et al. 2012; Crowley 2010; Harrison 2010b:170; Toner 2002:101.

⁷⁶ Schreurs 2004:23-224; Schreurs & Tiberghien 2010:33.

Neither the conservationists nor the moderate neoliberals were completely defeated in preventing what many regarded possible outcomes: the total lack of response to, or the complete absence of even just limited reforms, in the face of the problem.⁷⁷ Backed or pushed by members of the subordinate classes who sought minimal concessions, they foiled the most extreme neoliberals' drive to attack and roll back their success in putting place institutional changes during the 1970s and 1980s.⁷⁸ There were also moments—such as during the late 1990s and early 2000s—when they seemed to be on the offensive again and again drawing more adherents to their projects. As evidenced by the emergence of opposition to all-out liberalization in the Democratic Party, the World Bank, and various governments, the growing popularity of reformists like Joseph Stiglitz or Jeffrey Sachs, the promotion of “adjustment with a human face,” “good governance,” and other ameliorative policies by the World Bank and various governments, and the assumption to power of reformist parties during this period, it was also not the case that the conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored stronger reforms simply threw the towel, and that they just continuously declined in strength from late 1980s onward.

But, spurned by members of their own class, neither also succeeded in building on the momentum of the late 1960s and early 1970s and in forging the collective will and means needed to build on these successes and carry out the limited transformations that they argued are needed to address the problem. As one of the most prominent conservationists, Al Gore, had concluded: “The hard truth for the rest of us is that the maximum that seems politically feasible still falls far short of the minimum that would be effective in solving the crisis.”⁷⁹

SUMMARY

In this chapter, I explained how, rather than further consolidating, the dominant classes also started splintering from the mid-1980s to the present, defusing the social force needed to counter internal opposition, thus diminishing the possibility of even just minor changes needed to limit climate change would be carried out.

Examining how intra-dominant class relations changed following changes in intra-dominant class relations, I contended that the prospects for limited transformations dimmed starting in the mid-1980s as many conservationists and moderate neoliberals decided to defect from those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who stood for competing rather than partnering with the more conservative elites for the public's support. In so doing, they isolated these conservationists and moderate-neoliberals, impairing their ability to to push for minor structural changes to manage climate change.

In the concluding chapter, I summarize the argument and draw out its implications not just for how we should think about climate change but also for how we should think about and act upon global politics. I will suggest that the category of “passive revolution” and the examination of the micro-dynamics of class relations on the world stage may also help us account for the global ascendancy of extreme neoliberalism and make sense of why we have failed to make more progress addressing other “global problems.”

⁷⁷ Bosso 2005 132; Hacker & Pierson 2011:188; Hopgood 1998:125-128; Keleman & Vogel 2012:438; Layzer 2012 8, 93, 115-133; Pierson & Skocpol 2007:5.

⁷⁸ Dowie 1995:x; Lazarus 2008:247; Rawcliffe 1998:101; Vogel 1986:174.

⁷⁹ Gore 2007.

CONCLUSION

*“Proletarian revolutions...criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to recommence it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weakness, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again more gigantic before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible...”*¹

- Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte

*“The question becomes ever more complex and difficult in wars of position, fought by huge masses who are only able to endure the immense muscular, nervous, and psychic strain with the aid of great reserves of moral strength. Only a very skillful political leadership, capable of taking into account the deepest aspirations and feelings of those human masses can prevent disintegration and defeat”*²

– Antonio Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks

BY DECEMBER 2015, around two years after typhoon Haiyan hit the Philippines, I found myself together with around five thousand people in one broad avenue in Paris, defying the French government’s “state of emergency”-prohibition against any mass demonstration during the latest UN climate change summit then being held in the city just weeks after a spate of terror attacks.

Only a few miles away, representatives from nearly 200 governments from around the world were about to celebrate the approval of the “Paris Agreement,” a new international climate change treaty that—with its non-binding emissions-reductions and resource-transfer commitments—was actually very similar to, if not even weaker than, the proposed agreement that governments had earlier in the 1990s rejected precisely because it was seen as too weak to bring about the drastic changes needed to arrest runaway warming. Not a few shed tears or even jumped with joy.

The mood in the streets was very different: While a few welcomed the agreement as “progress” that could be built on, many if not most angrily rejected it as a “genocidal agreement” that effectively “condemn[s] humanity to a slow and painful death.”³ Environmentalists inside the conference venue thanked the “world leaders” in the summit for setting “a landmark goal that can save everything we love!”⁴; in contrast, many on the streets denounced the same “world leaders” as “murderers” and “climate criminals” and some even slammed those activists who praised them for their “fawning, self-congratulatory bullsh*t” or their “dangerous, disgusting drivel.”

Carrying giant inflatable cobblestones to evoke the 1968 Paris uprisings, many—including myself—had wanted to push through with the original plan, approved after long difficult debates among activists, to blockade the conference venue on its closing day and allow officials to leave only by stepping on our bodies. At the very least, many of us wanted—after this original plan was

¹ Marx [1869]:19.

² Gramsci 1971:88.

³ Adler 2015; Grassroots Global Justice 2015/

⁴ Avaaz email Dec 13, 2015.

shelved in response to fears that the security forces will use the protest to crack down on immigrants who lived near the conference—to march on towards Paris’ central business district just around a kilometer or two in front of us: a symbol, organizers had earlier said, of the system that we needed to change if we are to stop climate change.

But despite the organizers’ determined efforts to persuade more people to join us, and despite the summit being held in a city known for its strong, radical movements, there were still just a few thousand of us on the streets—not enough to actually blockade the conference venue or to disrupt business-as-usual. As angry and as defiant as we were, we still lacked the numbers to prevent governments from passing yet another weak agreement, let alone threaten them into passing the kind of agreement that could start steering the world away from catastrophic climate change. So we just stayed in place, lobbed our harmless “cobblestones” in the air, and turned back.

OUR FAILURE TO LIMIT OR STOP climate change has to do in large part, I have argued in this dissertation, with this paralysis—with the failure of subordinate groups to draw more people to their side and demand the radical changes needed to address climate change, a failure that in turn resulted from progressive elites’ waging of a successful passive revolution on the world stage, and a failure that in turn also led to the failure of the progressive elites to counter the more conservative elites and push for even just limited reforms.

Building on while also going beyond prevailing theories of climate change by examining the micro-dynamics of class struggle at the global level, I have argued that we have failed to stop or limit climate change not just because we have failed to undertake the institutional modifications needed to correct “market failures,” as rationalist theories posit; not just because we have failed to cultivate the new norms needed to shift us away from “unreflexive” towards a more “ecological modernization,” as sociological approaches hold; and not just because we have failed to put in place the new kinds of social relations needed to rationally manage our relationship to nature, as political economy theories contend. We have failed to make more progress in addressing the climate crisis, I argued, because we have failed to assemble a global social force that could push for these institutional modifications, normative shifts, and radical social transformations against the all those who oppose them.

This global political force to push for the changes needed to address climate change—a force which was already being born starting in the mid-1960s and could have gone on to become stronger during subsequent decades—failed to emerge and dissipated in subsequent decades, I argued, because the dominant classes carried out what we have conceptualized as a successful “passive revolution” on the world stage: Faced with increasingly organized subaltern groups push for radical changes, the dominant classes overcame their growing divisions instead of further fragmenting because, starting around the late 1960s, conservationists and moderate neoliberals began to switch their support to those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored competing rather than cooperating with the more conservative elites in order to push for limited reforms so as to disorganize the subaltern groups and construct a new hegemony. Faced with these attempts at ‘reformism from above’ by increasingly more organized elites, the subaltern groups subsequently fragmented instead of becoming even more organized because, instead of continuing to fight for radical changes, many eco-radicals and eco-reformists responded to the dominant classes’ growing organization by defecting to those eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites beginning around the mid 1980s, thereby isolating and enfeebling those other eco-radicals and

eco-reformists who favored continuing to compete rather than to cooperate with the progressive elites to secure more than just limited reforms. But, faced with the collapse of the radical forces, the dominant classes also dispersed instead of consolidating because instead of building on the subordinate groups' support for reforms to push for limited reforms, many conservationists and moderate neoliberals responded to the disintegration of the subordinate groups by defecting to those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who stood for accommodating rather than competing with the more conservative elites starting around the late 1980s, thereby isolating those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who stood for competing rather cooperating with the more conservative elites to secure stronger if still limited reforms.

The passive revolution therefore “succeeded”: the subaltern groups, the political force that could have pushed for the radical transformations needed to address climate change, became more deeply divided again, prevented from amassing the ability needed to overcome the dominant classes opposed to radical change. The revolutionary forces were contained and the threat of revolution was defused; attempts to build alternative hegemonies were nipped in the bud and a minimal or fractured bourgeois hegemony was secured. But, as the subaltern groups dispersed and the threat of radical change receded, the dominant classes—the force that could have pushed for limited reforms to mitigate climate change—also splintered, prevented from building the pressure needed to overcome the more conservative elites blocking even just the limited reforms intended to secure a stronger hegemony. But with both subaltern groups and the dominant classes disorganized, the more conservative elites consequently found it increasingly less difficult to prevent even just limited reforms from being carried out.

The result is that, instead of securing even just the limited reforms that they had sought to gain by cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites and the more conservative elites respectively, those radical forces who allied with the progressive elites and those progressive elites who allied with the more conservative elites witnessed the triumph of reforms that were even weaker than what they had been willing to settle for. Rather than the more radical or progressive solutions championed by subordinate groups and the progressive elites, the extreme-neoliberal solutions championed by the most conservative elites—as institutionalized in such international treaties as the Paris Agreement and the domestic policies of governments across the world— have prevailed as the dominant response to our planetary emergency.

NOT JUST THE MORE CONSERVATIVE ELITES' obstructionism but progressive elites' attempts to disorganize the subaltern classes to frustrate their efforts to build an alternative hegemony, combined with the radical forces' failure to overcome these attempts to disorganize them, therefore accounts in large part for why we have failed to make more progress in addressing the specific threat of climate change.

But the same underlying dynamics that have hindered our ability to address climate change may also help us explain why we have failed to make more progress in addressing other global concerns such as poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, or homelessness.

Examining how different groups have struggled over how to deal with these problems, it is possible that we have also made limited progress in addressing these problems also because of a failure to build the global social force required to counter all those who block the institutional modifications, normative shifts, and radical transformations needed to address them. Apart from some notable differences, such as the nature of interests at play, the story is very similar—and with more or less the same cast of characters involved.

Just as on the issue of climate change, a global political force to push for the changes needed to address other global social problems also began to emerge starting in the late 1960s. This happened as more and more members of the subordinate groups—many of them also involved on “environmental issues”—also began pushing for more radical or more sweeping changes to address hunger, poverty, lack of access to health care and other social problems. They too joined other radicals and reformists who favored competing rather than affiliating with the more progressive elites by rejecting any alliances with them, rekindling antagonisms towards them, and sharpening the group boundaries that set them apart from them. To mobilize more people behind their projects, radical or reformist experts, writers, and other activists like Barry Commoner, Murray Bookchin, Chico Mendes and many others from less privileged middle-class or working-class backgrounds in various countries also began to put forward moral diagnoses blaming said social problems on capitalism or on corporate-captured state capitalism. They too advanced moral prescriptions calling for socialism or more participatory state capitalism to address them. And they also diffused moral categorizations designating progressive elites as among the enemies that needed to be fought against. They too organized and formed various local and global networks to mobilize against all those elites opposed to the radical or sweeping reforms they demanded. As a result, instead of remaining fragmented, subordinate groups also became more organized, enabling them to begin building the social force needed to counter the dominant classes, and opening up the possibility for more radical transformations to address hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and other global concerns.

And just as with climate change, more progressive elites—many of them also active in global environmental politics—also began advocating for limited reforms to address said problems. They too rallied behind those conservationists and moderate neoliberals who rejected continuing to ally with or accommodate the more conservative elites, who opposed stifling antagonisms towards them, and who rejected blurring the group boundaries that set them apart from them. They too began attempting to disaggregate the subordinate groups by enticing the radical forces into de-prioritizing their struggle for larger gains, into forging alliances with them and into defusing antagonisms towards them. To draw people behind their goals, state officials, experts and other elite activists such as Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Mahmoud ul-Haq, Indira Gandhi and many others from more privileged upper middle-class or upper class backgrounds in various countries also began competing rather than cooperating with the more conservative elites. They too countered the moral diagnoses offered by the extreme neoliberals by putting forward moral diagnoses blaming poverty, hunger, homelessness, and other social problems on laissez-faire or extreme-laissez faire capitalism. They countered their moral prescriptions by calling for state capitalism or a less extreme form of laissez-faire capitalism. And they countered their moral categorizations by designating only the ‘bad capitalists’ and the ‘bad elites’ as among the enemies that needed to be fought against. Consequently, rather than further splintering, the dominant classes too also became more organized, allowing them to also begin building the social force needed to counter the more conservative elites, thereby improving the prospects for limited reforms to address global problems to be carried out.

But as they did, these progressive elites also drove many radicals and reformists, seeking to secure immediate relief, to also line up behind those other radicals and reformists who favored forging alliances with the progressive elites, dampening antagonisms towards them, and deemphasizing rather than sharpening the group boundaries that distinguished them from them. As a result, instead of further consolidating, the subordinate classes began to be more divided

again, preventing them from building the social force needed to counter the dominant classes, and minimising the possibility for more radical transformations.

And with the subordinate classes fragmenting and the threat of radical change subsiding, many elites also subsequently turned their backs on the moderate or minimal reforms other elites championed, and instead joined those progressive elites who called for accommodation rather than confrontation vis-a-vis the more conservative elites, for extinguishing rather than kindling antagonisms towards them, and for blurring rather than accentuating the group boundaries that distinguished them from them. Consequently, the dominant classes splintered also instead of unifying behind limited reforms, preventing the progressive elites from building the social force needed to counter the more conservative elites, and dimming the prospects for even just limited reforms to deal with other global concerns.

Just as on the issue of climate change, then, both the subaltern groups and the dominant classes were disaggregated, constrained from constructing the social force required to counter the extreme neoliberals opposed to any reforms. Effectively unopposed as the other forces that could have stood in their way collapsed, the more conservative elites also marched on to prevent even just limited reforms from being carried out. As a result, the more radical or progressive solutions championed by subordinate groups and the progressive elites were swept away while the weak, extreme-neoliberal solutions championed by the most conservative elites—as institutionalized in the free trade agreements under the World Trade Organization, the policies of the World Bank, and so on—prevailed as the dominant response to poverty, hunger, malnutrition or homelessness in recent years.

THE GLOBAL TRIUMPH OF NEOLIBERALISM and our consequent inability or failure to address climate change and other global problems, is therefore not just the result of inexorable structural forces— of market dynamics, cultural constraints, or the imperatives of accumulation—but of both these structural forces and contingent political choices made in the course of struggles *within* and *between* different contending social groups struggling to (re)constitute the very groups engaged in struggle—to form broader “intellectual and moral unities” or “blocs” on what Gramsci called a “higher plane than the immediate world economy.”

As a result of a specific combination of choices made by the different “parties” who were trying to forge unities behind their projects, I have argued, the “international community” has failed to carry out the structural changes, the cultural transformations, and institutional modifications needed to drastically bring down global greenhouse gas emissions. And in large part because of this failure, global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase—and to increase at increasing rates since the 1960s and 1970s, when the world’s governments first began discussing the issue. Consequently, instead of stabilizing, the global average temperature has increased by over 0.5 degrees Centigrade since the 1960s, and it is now on track to increase by another 3 to 5 degrees Centigrade in the next 100 years—a level of warming that, among other impacts, will generate more super-typhoons like Haiyan, sink low-lying islands, melt glaciers, wreak havoc on entire ecosystems, and cause millions to suffer.

Contingent political choices at certain spatio-historical junctures, I have argued, determined whether struggles by dominated groups against dominant groups strengthened or impaired the ability of either or both dominated groups and progressive sections of the dominant groups to push for the more radical change or reforms needed to stop or limit climate change.

Because many eco-radicals and eco-reformists responded to the progressive elites’ push

for limited reforms by switching sides and refusing to support those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored cooperating rather than competing with the progressive elites, passive revolution succeeded in disorganizing the subordinate classes: The other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favored competing rather than cooperating with the more progressive elites became more isolated, unable to build the collective will and means needed to counter the dominant classes opposed to radical transformations. The subordinate groups consequently fragmented instead of consolidating, preventing them from pushing for the radical transformations needed to address climate change.

And because conservationists and moderate neoliberals responded to the subaltern groups' inability to push for radical transformations in the wake of the passive revolution by also switching sides and lining up behind those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who stood for cooperating rather than competing with the more conservative elites for the public's support, the failure of active revolution or of subordinate groups' inability to sustain the fight for radical changes resulted in the disorganization of the dominant classes themselves: The other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favored competing rather than partnering with the more conservative elites became more marginalized, unable to build the collective will and means needed to counter the conservative elites opposed to limited reforms. The dominant classes consequently splintered too instead of consolidating, preventing them from pushing for the limited reforms needed to mitigate climate change.

Had different choices been made at certain junctures, I have suggested, then the outcome might have been very different.

Had more eco-radicals and eco-reformists responded to the progressive elites' push for limited reforms by choosing to continue competing rather than cooperating with the progressive elites to push for reforms—or had they chosen to seize the progressive elites' apparent willingness to grant concessions to rally more support for more radical changes, then passive revolution could very well have failed to disorganize the subordinate groups: The eco-radicals and eco-reformists who rejected cooperating with the progressive elites could have avoided becoming more isolated and they could have enhanced rather than impaired their ability to build the collective will and means needed to counter the dominant classes opposed to radical transformation. The subordinate groups could have remained organized, enabling them to push for the radical transformations needed to address climate change *despite* the progressive elites' efforts to wage passive revolution.

Had more conservationists and moderate neoliberals reacted to the subaltern groups' inability to sustain revolutionary mobilization in the wake of the passive revolution by choosing to continue competing rather than cooperating with the more conservative elites—or had they chosen to build on the eco-radicals' and eco-reformists' demands for more concessions or larger gains to push the more conservative elites to agree to minor changes, then even the subordinate groups' inability to sustain the fight for radical changes might not also have resulted in the disorganization of the dominant classes themselves: the other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who opposed cooperating with the conservative elites could have avoided marginalization and they could have reinforced rather than eroded their ability to build the collective will and means needed to counter the conservative elites opposed to limited reforms. The dominant classes could have remained organized, enabling them to push for the limited reforms needed to mitigate climate change *despite* the subordinate groups' failure to sustain the struggle for radical changes.

And had either or both the dominated groups nor the dominant classes remained organized and mobilized, the more conservative elites might have had more difficulty obstructing reforms. More progressive, if not more radical, solutions to climate change, rather than weak neoliberal “solutions” championed by the extreme neoliberals might have prevailed as global society’s dominant response to our climate crisis. The possibility for reorganizing the ways by which we meet our needs in such a manner as to prevent the excessive build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere would have been opened up. Assuming this possibility was also realized, global greenhouse emissions might have consequently already started declining, thus moving the world away from catastrophic climate change and preventing more super-typhoons like Haiyan from coming our way.

THIS ACCOUNT OF WHY WE HAVE SO FAR FAILED to stop or limit climate change gives us more reason to be more pessimistic about the future because it challenges the optimistic view, common among both activists and scholars, that challenges from ‘below’ necessarily improve the capacity of those ‘below’ and those who can see farther ‘at the top’ to change the system so that all we have to do is to keep supporting or joining these struggles. But it actually also gives reason to be optimistic because it also challenges the opposite and extremely pessimistic view, also prevalent among many, that struggles from below does nothing to enhance the capacity of those ‘below’ and those who can see farther ‘at the top’ to reorganize or supersede capitalism so that the best we can do is to try to ‘enlighten’ or ‘lobby’ elites to correct “market failures” or adopt and propagate environmental norms.

As I have tried to show by analyzing how the micro-dynamics of class struggle on the world stage altered the very conditions in which such struggles unfolded, certain ways of waging struggles can actually weaken rather than buttress both subordinate and dominant groups’ ability to change the system. Pursuing “immediate victories” does not lead to larger or more long-term victories; indeed winning some short-term victories may actually lead to long-term losses.

For as long as many eco-radicals and eco-reformists continue choosing to cooperate rather than compete with the progressive elites and defer the fight for more radical transformations in response to passive revolution—something that is indeed likely to happen as progressive elites become weaker and as the prospects for even just limited reforms grow dimmer—then passive revolution could continue to succeed in disorganizing the subaltern groups. And for as long as many conservationists and moderate-neoliberals continue choosing to accommodate rather than confront the more conservative elites and hesitate to push for even just limited reforms in response to the collapse of revolutionary forces—something that is indeed likely to happen as the more conservative elites grow stronger and as the prospects for limited reforms diminish—then the failure of active revolution could continue to result in the disorganization of the dominant classes.

And with both dominated and dominant groups remaining fragmented, the more conservative elites could continue to find it easy to obstruct reforms. The weak neoliberal “solutions” championed by the extreme neoliberals, rather than the more progressive, if not more radical, solutions to climate change championed by the radical and progressive forces, could continue to prevail as global society’s dominant response to our climate crisis. The possibility for radically reorganizing production or changing the way we relate to nature could remain closed. Global greenhouse emissions could consequently continue to increase—or to decrease only insignificantly—thus moving the world towards catastrophic climate change.

But, as I have also tried to show by paying close attention to how intra-class struggles shape inter-class struggles and vice versa, other ways of waging struggles could yet strengthen rather than erode both subordinate and dominant groups' ability to change the system. Campaigns for "immediate victories" could lead to larger or more long-term victories; indeed winning some short-term victories may actually lead to long-term victories.

If more eco-radicals and eco-reformists choose to switch their support those other eco-radicals and eco-reformists who favor competing rather than partnering with the more progressive elites—something that could also happen as progressive elites become weaker and as the prospects for even just weaker reforms grow dimmer, then progressive elites' attempts to wage passive revolution could fail to disorganize the subaltern groups in the future.

If more conservationists and moderate neoliberals choose to also shift their support to those other conservationists and moderate neoliberals who favor confronting rather than joining forces with the more conservative elites—something that could happen as the more conservative elites consolidate and as the prospects for limited reforms grow bleaker, then even the continued failure of attempts to push for radical change could still fail to disorganize the dominant classes.

And with both dominated and dominant groups avoiding fragmentation, the more conservative elites could begin to find it more difficult to impede reforms. The more progressive, if not more radical, solutions to climate change rather than the weak neoliberal "solutions" championed by the extreme neoliberals, could then have a fighting chance of becoming global society's dominant response to our climate crisis. The possibility for radically reorganizing production and transforming our relationship to nature could then be opened up and, if seized, global greenhouse emissions could then begin to decrease, and fewer super-typhoons could come to our shores.

What seems to have mattered, and what will likely continue to matter, in determining historical outcomes is not just whether subaltern groups mobilized but also *how* they mobilized—what kinds of moral discourses they propagated, what identities they invoked in calling upon people, who they tagged as enemies and friends—in response to the progressive elites' moves and the historic possibilities that were opened.

Because they chose to cooperate rather than compete with the progressive elites in the hope of securing even limited reforms, the radical forces ended up unable to amplify their own alternative and propagate their own moral discourses and conceptions of the world; instead they ended up building support for the progressive elites' projects, propagating their moral discourses and conceptions of the world, and therefore drawing people to the side of the progressive elites rather than to their side. But in so doing, they also paradoxically ended up weakening the forces they cooperated with to secure reforms: Faced with little competition to their left, and hence under little pressure to offer better alternatives or to provide more concessions in order to win subordinate groups to their side since the radical forces were no longer competing with them anyway, the progressive elites also found little reason to stand their ground and to keep competing with the more conservative elites. They too ended up supporting the conservative elites' projects, cultivating their moral discourses, and recruiting people for the conservative rather than the progressive cause.

If they choose to compete rather than cooperate with the progressive elites to secure even just limited reforms, the radical forces could pose an alternative and propagate their own moral discourses and conceptions of the world; they could end up building more support for their own radical projects, propagating their own moral discourses and conceptions of the world, and

therefore attract people to their own side rather than that of the progressive elites. And in so doing, they could also paradoxically end up strengthening the very forces they compete with: Faced with more competition to their left, and hence under more pressure to offer better alternatives or to provide more concessions in order to win subordinate groups to their side, the progressive elites could also find more reason to stand their ground and to keep competing with the more conservative elites. They too could end up building more supporting for their own rather than the conservative elites' projects, cultivating their moral discourses, and recruiting people for the progressive rather than the conservative cause.

In short, if they choose to antagonize rather than continue to ally with the progressive elites, the radical forces could open up the possibility of making a different choice that is all but closed today: the choice to stop or limit climate change.

THE LARGER QUESTION I STILL LEAVE UNANSWERED, however, is *why* did more eco-radicals and eco-reformists choose to cooperate rather than compete with the progressive elites beginning in the mid-1980s—and what would it take for them to choose to compete rather than cooperate with the progressive elites in the coming years and decades? Why did more conservationists and moderate neoliberals decide to join forces with rather than provide an alternative to the more conservative elites then—and would it take for them to provide an alternative to rather than join forces with the more conservative elites in the years ahead? Under what conditions were they driven to make the political choices they made in the past—and under what conditions might they make a different choice in the future?

To pursue these questions further and to deepen our understanding of why we have failed to make more progress in stopping or limiting climate change, we need to do what I have so far neglected to do: We need to pay closer attention not just to what transpired in the “higher plane than the immediate world economy” but also to what happened in the immediate world economy itself and investigate how what happened there shaped or circumscribed what happened on the “higher plane” and vice versa. I did not entirely leave out the broader economic context in which groups mobilized. I pointed out that the processes we examined happened at a time when market competition intensified, the world economy began to stagnate, unemployment grew and persisted, and state officials in the advanced capitalist countries, faced with a series of crises, turned to various fixes—printing more money, borrowing more and pushing private credit—that temporarily ‘resolved’ the crises and allowed certain sections of the subaltern groups to continue enjoying concessions and increasing consumption. But for us to understand why particular groups made the choices they did, we still need to have a more systematic investigation of how these changes in the “economic” conditions affected or altered “political-ideological” conditions on the world stage and how political-ideological conditions in turn affected or altered economic conditions—something that this study did not adequately do. How, for example, did the collapse of Keynesian or state-capitalist strategies in the core countries and of import-substitution industrialization in peripheral countries, the global debt crisis, or the turn to “financialization” across countries in the 70s and 80s affect particular subaltern groups' willingness to fight for larger concessions or more radical transformations as well as on dominant classes' openness to give more concessions or agree to reforms in the international arena? In what ways did the “globalization” or “transnationalization” of production shape the political terrain and affected dominated-class as well as dominant-class mobilization?

And to answer these questions, we also need to delve deeper into what this study has only partially revealed: the economic “basis” of the different parties or political forces, especially of the eco-reformists and the eco-radicals. Though I have cited data suggesting that the progressive elites tended to represent larger, internationally-oriented capital and that the radical forces tended to come from lower middle-class or working-class backgrounds, we need to have a more precise understanding of how their specific class position and how these shaped (and were shaped by) their political outlooks and their contingent political choices during the course of struggle. What were the particular class or sectoral interests of those conservationists and the moderate neoliberals who favored detente or confrontation with the extreme neoliberals or of those eco-reformists or eco-radicals who advocated allying or breaking with the progressive elites, for example? And how, to tie it up with the previous questions, did changes in the immediate world economy affect their relationships or their interactions with the other conservationists and moderate-neoliberals or with the other eco-radicals and eco-reformists?

In line with this, we need to further develop a better understanding of what this study has largely abstracted from: the role of inter-state competition in shaping the intra-class and inter-class struggles on the world stage. We still need a more adequate theorization and investigation of the ways by which the relationships or the dynamics among states shape the relationships or the dynamics within and between classes. What role did different states, located in different places in the world economy and constituted as the result of different combinations of class forces, play in blocking or supporting the projects of the different groups we examined? How, if at all, did inter-state conflict affect both subaltern groups’ and dominant classes’ support or resistance to radical transformations or reforms on the world stage?

Finally, we need to generate more sophisticated understandings of the specificities of the “world stage” or of the global arena as terrains of political struggle? What is the relationship between the “national” and the “global” arenas as spaces of mobilization and contention? How did local or national economic and political conditions affect their actions on the world stage and how did global or international conditions affect their actions on the local stage? In what ways were the political strategies and the contingent political choices of the different groups shaped by the particular terrain they struggled on? What impact, if any, did the stage on which they struggled affect the eco-radicals’ or eco-reformists’ ability or willingness to compete or cooperate with the progressive elites as well as the conservationists’ or the moderate neoliberals’ ability or willingness to cooperate or compete with the more conservative elites?

It might be possible here to speculate that high unemployment and the threat of losing the concessions they had gained deterred certain members of the subaltern groups to hold back on demanding even more radical changes or antagonizing the progressive elites, or that intensifying inter-firm and inter-state competition in the context of persistent stagnation discouraged particular progressive elites from insisting on reforms that could further erode their their own firms’ or their economies’ competitiveness. But for us to examine these possibilities, we need a more textured analysis of the linkages or the relationships between ‘economic’ changes ‘political’ changes—although also one that recognizes that there are always different possibilities opened up by the same material conditions and that individuals faced with the same material conditions can opt to choose or open up different possibilities.

Our failure to make more progress in dealing with climate change and other global problems is itself a result of our failure to understand the deeper causes of our failure. What this study has tried to do to help address this failure is to draw attention to the centrality of politics—

and with it, of intellectuals or collective intellectuals or parties and party-like organizations and the kinds of discourse or the conceptions of the world they elaborate and advance—in grasping the origins of our predicament. This has meant underscoring the role of contingent political choices in determining historical outcomes—choices that were ultimately not merely mechanically determined by structural forces. But so as to avoid lapsing into either the Scylla of voluntarism or the Charybdis of determinism, we also need to a more sophisticated understanding of how these choices were shaped by structural forces, or how structural forces made some choices more likely to be made—or more likely to prevail—than others, even as those very choices shaped the structural forces: in short, of how we made history—and thus also of how we can change the future—not in any way we *please* but still in a way that we still ultimately *choose*.

What this study has suggested is that, contrary to the prescriptions of many scholars and activists, it may not be enough—and indeed it may even be counterproductive—to try to support, “enlighten,” or “lobby” the “progressive” elites to carry out the institutional modifications needed to correct “market failures” or “collective action problems” or to adopt and propagate the environmental “norms” needed to bring about those institutional modifications. What we need to do is to build a global political force capable of pushing for and bringing about the changes in social relations needed to underpin the institutional and cultural transformations required to address climate change—a global political force that is both autonomous from and that is willing to compete rather than cooperate with “progressive” elites who may be willing to push for institutional and cultural transformations but not for the changes in property relations needed to underpin those transformations. What we need to study further are the conditions that could foster the emergence of such an autonomous and antagonistic global political force.

Only if we have we have a better understanding of why we have so far failed to make more progress in addressing climate change can we make more progress in addressing our planetary emergency and preventing more super-typhoons from coming our way.

MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN SAMAR-LEYTE, the region in the central Philippines which was hit by one of the deadliest super-typhoons in history, have since buried their dead and struggled to rebuild their lives. Tens of thousands of others have slowly repaired their houses, moved to new ones, or left the region altogether. My aunt and her family—they who survived only by hanging on to a bamboo pole as the ocean rose—have decided to stay on, unwilling to live in the same village where so many of their neighbors and friends died, but determined to start anew in a different part of the city. But like many others in places that have been ravaged by ‘extreme-weather events,’ they too continue live in fear that even more super-typhoons will once again destroy everything they have tried to rebuild—if not this year then in the years to come.

Meanwhile, millions of others worldwide are now struggling with what scientists call the ‘slow onset events’ that come with climate change—with rising sea levels that are already beginning to result in the submergence of entire island-states, with the ocean acidification that are already reducing fish yields, with melting glaciers that threaten water sources, and with prolonged droughts that affect harvests. They too continue to live in fear that these slow onset events will only intensify in the coming years and make life more unbearable than it already is.

This dissertation has argued that the suffering my family and friends and many other have experienced, and that millions of others are likely to experience, has its roots in global politics—in the contingent political choices members of dominant and subaltern groups made at certain

spatio-historical conjunctures in the course of struggle over the past several decades. Whether or not we are able to end or at least alleviate this suffering—whether we are able to stop more super-typhoons from coming our way, whether we are able to avert catastrophic climate change—will also therefore be decided in large part through the choices we make as this struggle continues: whether we are able to break free from our paralysis and march forward until, to use Marx’s words, “the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible.”⁵

⁵ Marx [1869]:19.

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APPENDIX: List of Interviewees

In addition to participant observant and informal conversations, I conducted more structured interviews with the following respondents from April 2011 to November 2016, in various cities. The short biographical lines below are meant only to give a sense of how the interviewees were involved in climate politics. Some moved from organization to organization; many were engaged in different, sometimes multiple, capacities. The listing of organizational affiliations does not imply that the views they shared during the interviews represented their organizations.

Christophe Aguiton, member of Climate Justice Now! network, closely involved in organizing the World Social Forum and other “anti-globalization” networks

Athena Ballesteros, former Greenpeace member and one of the founders of Climate Action Network-South (CAN-South); later adviser to the Philippine negotiating team and part of the World Resources Institute

Federica Bietta, adviser and negotiator for the Coalition of Rainforest Nations

Pamela Brubaker, climate justice activist, participated in the People’s Summit

Pamela Chasek, professor and editor of the Earth Negotiations Bulletin.

Graciela Chichilnisky, economist and former lead author with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; former adviser to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on the climate change negotiations

Michel Colombier, researcher with and adviser to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Maxime Combes, member of ATTAC and Climate Justice Now! network

Jan Corfee-Morlot, researcher with and adviser to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Chandrashekhara Dasgupta, former Indian ambassador and chief negotiator of India;

David Doniger, director of Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), served on the White House Council on Environmental Quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Michael Dorsey, former NGO representative in the US delegation to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992); member of Climate Justice Now! network

Christiana Figueres, former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and negotiator for Costa Rica; one of key proponents of carbon trading among developing country-governments

Jose Goldemberg, scientist and former adviser/negotiator for Brazil; also formerly with the World Resources Institute

Lord John Selwyn Gummer (Baron Deben), member of the United Kingdom’s House of Lords, former minister and former lead negotiator

Sujata Gupta, former NGO observer in the negotiations and former adviser to the Indian government; also one of the authors of the IPCC and former member of the methodology panel of the CDM

William Hare, scientist formerly with Greenpeace and the Climate Action Network

Wael Hmaidan, executive director of Climate Action Network International

Jean-Charles Hourcade, economist with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), adviser to the French delegation in the negotiations

Norine Kennedy, coordinator for “business and industry NGOs” in the negotiations; representative of the US Council for International Business; involved in the International Chamber of Commerce

Melinda Kimble, former United States Acting Assistant Secretary of State; former head of the United States delegation in the negotiations

Richard Kinley, former negotiator for Canada and former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Bo Kjellén, former head of the Swedish delegation and former representative of the European Union presidency to the negotiations

Antonio La Viña, former undersecretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (Philippines) and chief negotiator of the Philippines; also formerly with the World Resources Institute

Souparna Lahiri, activist with the National Forum of Forest People & Forest Workers, member of the Climate Justice Now! network

Nele Marien, former negotiator for Bolivia; worked for Friends of the Earth International

Luiz Gylvan Meira, scientist and former negotiator for Brazil

Helen Mendoza, former NGO observer; member of the Philippine Network on Climate Change and the Durban Group for Climate Justice

Bert Metz, former negotiator for the Netherlands/European Union

Jose Domingos Miguez, negotiator for Brazil, former chair of the Clean Development Mechanism Executive Board

Andres Mogro, diplomat and negotiator for Ecuador/Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America (ALBA) group

Jennifer Morgan, formerly with the Climate Action Network (CAN) International and the World Resources Institute

Trinto Mugangu, negotiator from the Democratic Republic of Congo/Africa Group delegation; a former coordinator for the Global Environment Facility under the United Nations Development Programme (1996 to 2003)

Bernarditas Muller, former lead negotiator and facilitator for the Group of 77 and China

Tadzio Muller, activist with the Climate Justice Action and Climate Justice Now! network

Raul Estrada-Oyuela, former negotiator for Argentina and chair of the Kyoto Protocol negotiations

Sunita Narain, director of the Center for Science and Environment (India) and former member of Climate Action Network International

Diego Pacheco, professor and negotiator for Bolivia/Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America (ALBA) group

Sergio Pastrana, professor and negotiator for Cuba

Suphavit Piamphongsant, former chief inspector general of Thailand's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; former principal negotiator for Thailand; also a member of the IPCC

Jonathan Pershing, head of the United States delegation to the negotiations; former lead author for the IPCC; former head of energy and environment division of the International Energy Agency

Rafe Pomerance, former President, Friends of the Earth-United States; former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; former head of the US delegation in the negotiations

Joseph Purugganan, coordinator of Focus on the Global South; member of the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, Climate Justice Now! network, and Climate Space

Alex Rafalowicz, member of Climate Justice Now! network, Demand Climate Justice, and Climate Action network

Asad Rehman, member of Friends of the Earth International, Climate Justice Now! network, and Demand Climate Justice network

Robert Reinstein, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; former chief negotiator of the United States

Anabella Rosemberg, representative of the International Trade Union Confederation

Luiz Pinguelli Rosa, professor and adviser to the Brazilian government

Jose Sandoval, negotiator for Chile

Naderev Sano, former chief negotiator for the Philippines; now executive director of Greenpeace-Southeast Asia

S. Jacob Scherr, lawyer with the Natural Resources Defense Council

Isagani Serrano, NGO representative from the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement

Gurmit Singh, formerly with the Climate Action Network

Pablo Solon, former lead negotiator for Bolivia; member of Climate Justice Now! and Climate Space networks

Saifuddin Soz, Member of Parliament of India; former Minister of Environment and Forests of India; former head of the Indian delegation to the climate change negotiations

Nathan Thanki, member of Earth in Brackets, Climate Justice Now! and Demand Climate Justice network

Saleem ul-Huq, formerly with Climate Action Network and now with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Martin Vilela, member of the Bolivian Platform on Climate Change

Pier Vellinga, scientist and formerly involved in the IPCC; also worked with the World Bank, UNEP, UNDP and others on climate change

Paul Watkinson, formerly with the OECD and now negotiator for France/European Union

Cindy Weisner, member of the Grassroots Global Justice coalition, Climate Justice Now! and Climate Space

Timothy Wirth, former United States Senator and former undersecretary, Department of State; former chief negotiator of the United States

Farhana Yamin, lawyer and adviser to the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS)/European Union; closely involved in developing Kyoto carbon market mechanisms

Yvonne Yanez, founder of Accion Ecologica in Ecuador; formerly with Friends of the Earth International and now with Oil Watch International

The following interviewees requested not to be identified by name:

A participant in the People's Summit in Paris

A member of the Demand Climate Justice coalition

A member of the Climate Justice Network

A former member of the Chinese delegation to the negotiations

An economist involved the carbon market

A former NGO observer in the negotiations