

**NOTE TO READER:**

Apologies for sending this late, and thank you in advance for reading my long paper. This paper is in a moment of transition and indecision; also please excuse the sloppiness associated with a set of hasty revisions (including some back and forth) over the past couple weeks. It was first conceived as a discussion of climate politics that used analogy as a clever and indirect way in. It is now structurally ambivalent and needs to pick an analytic focus, and how to it, before it can be finalized for submission. Help on that front would be appreciated. (Once I've got that narrowed down, I reorganize, deepen where needed, and discard unnecessary discussions.)

I am also interested in hearing whether people find the discussion of analogies at the start of the paper compelling. And I am interested in hearing what people think works, and doesn't work, about third and fourth sections of the paper where I try quickly a) to sketch an alternative structuralist account and b) to insist that there are distinctive and unpredictable options for the future of capitalism.

Thanks!

Daniel

**Frozen analogies: Misreading the past to structure the present politics of climate change**

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The iron curtain was still standing (albeit barely) when climate scientist James Hansen first testified to the US Congress about the dangers of global warming. Then the Cold War was won, the nineties roared, and negotiators crafted a weak, provisional treaty to prevent planetary self-destruction, the Kyoto Protocol. It took nearly a decade to come into force and then it failed. Although evidence has mounted that greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) pose an existential threat to human civilization, no country has managed significantly to reduce its GHG emissions “except through the fortunes of history” (Schroeder 2010: 25). And even to the extent that emissions—calculated by national territory—have stabilized in several developed countries, this is only thanks to antiquated accounting. The rich countries have effectively outsourced emitting activities to the rapidly growing economies whose manufactures the rich countries import more and more (Peters et al, 2011).

In the past few years, interest in the stunning paradox of ever growing understanding of climate change and the ongoing failure to address it has finally started to build in the social sciences (for sociology, see NSF 2009), in the process producing two connected currents in the whitewater rapids of the study of climate politics. The academic current combines attempts from different disciplinary tributaries to explain our failure to achieve real reductions. A public social science (Calhoun 2007) current draws from these waters but also produces frameworks—frequently drawing on prior political victories—for moving forward. These proposals have often

structured themselves according to historical analogies, with two important sets of effects. First, they have helped to shape political and policy projects which have failed to produce the needed results. And second, the analogies' propositions and assumptions have not just internalized, but also contributed to, a pervasive common sense understanding of politics that that gives political-economic structural power and inter- and intra-class conflict short shrift.

I begin by exploring the importance and nature of analogies, in particular the political use of historical analogies. Second, I look at the three main historical analogies that have shaped action and debate in the realm of climate politics. Third, I address the shortcomings of these analogies; despite their striking differences, they turn out to share a common set of assumptions, which I seek to contrast to an alternative explanatory project grounded in structuralist political economy.

### **A chain of analogies**

In a sped-up, apparently liquid, age of flexible accumulation, relationships of “like” and “unlike” are hardly obvious. Despite the pervasive trope that if only people understood climate change better, our politics would be transformed, info-glut is today more apt than information scarcity to induce political paralysis (Norgaard 2011). This is where analogy comes in as a practical method for giving order to chaos. The Oxford American Dictionary defines “analogy” as “a comparison between two things, typically on the basis of their structure and for the purpose of explanation or clarification” (OAD 2011). Analogies, then, are looser forms of comparison that need not be so rigorously constructed. This loose flexibility is part of what makes them useful in politics (Toscano 2010).

They are also useful because by associating an apparently novel and chaotic set of challenges with an already known narrative, they act as implicit theories in two connected ways. First, they resembles theories insofar as these are time machines: they tell us how to prioritize our actions by designating foreground and background, protagonist and supporting actor, crucial connection from incidental contacts. In the case of climate change the metaphor is tragically apt: time is running out. This is true for everyone. We must all prioritize. Thus analogies matter not for the all-encompassing pictures they provide, but the opposite reason. Analogies—as short-cuts—matter because of the consequentially partial pictures they paint. The partiality of what analogies denote is precisely what makes them suitable for informing action. Unger (1998) made this point a little obliquely when he wrote, “The world has been linked by a chain of analogies: analogous problems, opportunities, and solutions” (98).

This action-oriented distinction of foreground from background is theoretical in the second sense that it implies (at times unconsciously) theories of social change—be they “folk” or “scientific”. The explicit part of the analogy resembles what Howard Becker (1998) has called “imagery”—a quick intuitive sketch of a phenomenon and its most important features; or, to return to my time machine metaphor, a prioritized schedule of what to think about and what to do, in order of importance. A case of this in practice was the Russian revolutionaries’ habit of debating their actions in terms of what they had read of the French Revolution and its events and personalities; and of course, now often caricatured, the habit of contemporary socialists of framing their debates in terms of the great dramas of the Russian Revolution.

The unspoken part may act like Stephen Lukes’ (2005) third face of power—it excludes from consideration (and hence action) another set of phenomena, which are relegated to a static back-

ground, often in favour of a certain *status quo*. In 1990, Ontario's New Democratic Party won its first ever election because of a tight three-way race. For many of its strategists the key to winning again became mastering the electoral game by reproduce this tricky act of dividing the other parties evenly (as opposed to rewriting the rules of the game by reforming the electoral system and hence the very structure of the province's political system, not to speak of even deeper reforms). Of course, nothing in the structure of analogy as a form of thought is inherently conservative (or radical).

At a micro-level, this power of analogical thinking creatively to illuminate aspect *a* of a given phenomenon on the one hand, while leaving untouched—or even obscuring—aspects *b*, *c*, and *d* of the same phenomenon untouched on the other, is well supported by social psychological and linguistic research (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, Langer 1989, Amabile 1996).

In sum, I define *symbolic analogies* deployed in politics as *action-oriented loose comparisons that are influenced by, and that contribute to reinforcing, implicit theories of social change*. In conjunction with symbolic analogies, I introduce the concept of *practical analogies* to denote *practices of coalition-building on the basis of shared interests, themselves generally established through symbolic analogy*.

Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble* launched theoretical discussion of a critical theory of coalition, landing in the midst of a string of influential arguments in the humanities that in a neo-liberal era we need to see loose coalitions between unstable groupings as the primary (and preferable) form of radical politics (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Ong 2006, Gibson-Graham 2006).

While I am skeptical of claims for the radical novelty of the "neoliberal moment" (as if all prior history had been rigid and stable), I appreciate what appears to be a distinctive degree of social

disorganization, and political fracturing, in North Atlantic working people's consciousness and self-organization (at least in the post-second world war era). By arguing for the concepts of symbolic and practical analogy, I seek to avoid the excesses of a hyper-politicized picture of neo-liberal capitalism while paring back unneeded jargon to address the phenomenon of political bridge-building in simple and straightforward language. I also seek to show the links between intellectual analogy posing and practical politics. The historical analogies I discuss here have all been deployed in conjunction with political projects with particular sets of actors, which themselves influence the choice, and then the filling in of, historical analogies. In practice, then, the two forms of analogy (symbolic and practical) are distinct but dialectically connected.

A final word on why this paper deals in analogies. Although climate politics have been studied from a number of different theoretical perspectives and with a focus on different themes, I found that sorting arguments with a political sociological flavour by historical analogy had two distinct advantages. First, it emphasizes the political implications of a given analytic framework. And second, it makes possible a discussion of a wide variety of perspectives in a common field. Thus, instead of disconnected theories talking past one another, we can compare theories of social change on a shared terrain.

In this paper, I look in particular at a series of arguments diffused in the US (and to a certain extent in Britain) over how to slash GHG emissions, sorted into three historical analogies. They are: a) the analogy to earlier environmental treaties; b) the analogy to human rights and cosmopolitan networks (this is the least coherent of the three), and their achievements in the 1990s; c) the analogy to FDR's "new deal". There are and have been other analogies; I believe the three

explored in this essay are the most important for present policy and political debates. In each case we are talking about an ideal type, whose essential features I will lay out below.

These arguments have connected academic and popular debates, aiming to shape the latter. But because study of the politics of climate change (as distinct from environmental politics more generally) is relatively novel, it lacks disciplinary homes, clear markers of status, and a set of orienting classics. Thus I have relied on my judgement rather than objective measures (like a poll of top journals) to delineate the field I examine and select the works I read closely; I'm confident that readers familiar with this literature will find my typology convincing, if not exhaustive.

I'm not (implicitly) suggesting that the inadequacies of the analogies in question by themselves *explain* the miserable state of climate politics. But, first, they may well have contributed to it by crystallizing an ambient conventional wisdom, performing a common sense which makes different kinds of politics more difficult to articulate and practice. And second, even if the analogies themselves explained nothing because they were merely mediating variables for deeper and/or more shadowy forces, nonetheless they have provided the intellectual vehicles for the key drivers of climate policy. Understanding how these analogies function (and why they fail) as ways of organizing thought and action should contribute to a deeper—if admittedly still very partial—grasp of climate politics today.

Sorting out how to think through climate politics is an urgent problem. Hansen, the US's pre-eminent climate scientist and the man whose 1988 congressional testimony first put climate change on the American political map, now argues that to avoid catastrophic runaway climate change we must stabilize the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and its equivalents in the atmosphere at 350 parts per million (PPM)—a goal now shared by the US's most prominent single-

issue climate campaign group, [350.org](http://350.org), led by Bill McKibben. We're currently at 387 ppm. Most scientists now agree that rich countries (and those about to become rich) need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 20% to 30% by 2020 and 80% to 90% by 2050 to prevent devastating positive feedbacks, like the melting of the methane-rich arctic permafrost.

All of this is well known in public policy circles—including the world's largest militaries. These are now ploughing significant energy and resources into modelling the impacts of climate change, predicting the wars and non-state violence most likely to ensue and preparing to intervene to protect their countries' citizens (Dyer 2010, Parenti 2011). Even before sea levels rise to threaten the heavily populated coastal cities or deserts sprawl over present bread-baskets, bombs and bullets could end millions of lives, and ruin hundreds of millions more.

### **Three analogies for climate politics**

#### *Green treaty-making: the perfect mechanism*

The green treaty analogies were produced early in the history of climate politics, and with important consequences, by organic intellectuals of the world's technocracies. Policy-minded social scientists looked in particular to the success of two connected environmental endeavours of the 1980s. Michael Grubb is one of several key figures who in the late 1980s and early 1990s was a researcher at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London and looked to the combined experiences of the successful Montreal Protocol to slash emissions of ozone-thinning chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) and the European and American experiences regulating sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions to reduce acid rain. From their experiences, and in particular American pollution permit schemes, he deduced that country-specific targets and country-specific tradeoffs

wouldn't work; but he did find the germ of a distinct but kindred approach based on emissions trading, a so-called market mechanism (Grubb 1990, Newell and Paterson 2010).

Grubb's (1990) proposal was interesting for it recognized prophetically that the challenge of climate change was intrinsically political:

“The technical obstacles to an agreement on carbon dioxide are minor... carbon dioxide emissions are easy to measure and verify from national fuel consumption statistics, and the effect of many policy measures can be reasonably judged. The obstacles are the political ones.” (1990: 71)

The problem was that even over the course of his early and influential essay, he also prophetically (and apparently un-self-consciously) introduced a slippage into his account of politics. Early on he recognizes that political resistance would come from “major institutional and economic interests associated with energy provision” (71). But by the essay's end he assigns principal agency—and political reluctance—to “industrialized nations” (86). The focus thus narrows considerably from the *institutional expression of structurally embedded interests*—which may take a variety of forms, from states to corporations to various third sector actors—to *just state actors* on the international stage.

Grubb's notion of emissions-trading as a market mechanism resonated powerfully in contemporary policy circles (see Pearce et al 1989, Lunde 1991) and picked up first by the US, and eventually the EU. The idea was that flexibility in emissions reductions timing and strategy, combined with automated modest resource transfers to the global south, elaborated in an international treaty negotiated by states, would over time become hegemonic in the really existing climate politics of the 1990s and early 2000s (for reviews, see e.g. Schneider and Mastrandrea

2010, Okereke 2008, Okereke 2010). At first this seemed improbable, for the European Union initially supported a carbon tax. But it faced fierce political resistance from its own corporate sector and from the US government, which in the 1990s preferred a cap-and-trade system. In 1996 the EU opted finally to announce its support for emissions trading, and soon thereafter to set up markets for this very purpose, although it remains unclear whether any of the structures set up so far will succeed, or even provide the foundation for future efforts (Newell and Paterson 2010).

A quick digression: we should note this crucial distinction between two apparently equivalent market mechanisms, a tax and a trading scheme. While a carbon tax influences prices through the market, it does not in any obvious way create new markets; emissions trading on the other hand immediately generates markets in financial derivatives, from which financial companies with no emissions profile can expect to profit. It should therefore come as no surprise that the EU's corporate sector lobbied hard to emissions trading and we should remember, when facing simplistic critiques of any "market mechanism" that puts a price on nature, that the nature of market mechanisms, as it were, may actually vary enormously and consequentially. What the methods do share, on the other hand, and it is central to the green treaty analogy, is the black-boxing of the actual transformations of the economy, as they focus solely on a technical adjustment to incentives which is thought to be decisive move from which the rest will follow.

I characterize the analogy to prior environmental treaties with three key features: a) it views global warming as fundamentally an *environmental* topic, and hence gets its lessons more or less exclusively from the ups and downs of environmental treaties of yore; b) the protagonists are considered to be interstate negotiators and to a lesser extent the experts with whom they mix

(scientists and economists, primarily, as well as the representatives of the major green NGOs), on the assumption that once the international rules are set, states will meet their obligations; c) the assumption is that negotiations will succeed when they produce an agreement on steep emissions cuts that all countries accept and, most importantly, a treaty whose structure of incentives can be trusted to produce the desired effect. In all these aspects, the neoliberal view of “market mechanisms” rather than directly regulated emissions reductions is accepted. The top priority that this analogy entails is not any particular national policy or technological innovation, but a global rule regime with universal buy-in from which emissions reductions will automatically flow. Thus, I characterize this analogy as informing the search for a putative regulatory holy grail, the “perfect mechanism”, just as the ozone and sulfur agreements finally produced ingenious incentive structures to successfully reduce these dangerous emissions.

We can see the power of this analogy by looking at two quite different attempts to explain the failures of the treaty-making process, but which retain in basic ways an allegiance to the fundamentals of the treaty analogy.

The most influential work on interstate negotiations in the sociology of climate change is Parks and Roberts’ (2007) *Climate of Injustice*, a quantitative work in the theoretical tradition of world-systems theory. In brief, they attempt to explain the paradoxical North-South divides in green diplomacy where countries of the North (with the growing exception of the US) have done the most to cause climate change, will have the easiest time adapting, and yet are working the hardest to secure a post-Kyoto agreement (though it is unclear how much such an agreement would actually benefit countries of the South); while countries of the South which are relatively clear of responsibility, face enormous consequences from even now-unavoidable climate change,

and have been reluctant to agree to any binding agreement. Parks and Roberts find that the history of colonialism and enduring income inequalities explain the diplomatic impasse (a major mechanism is Southern distrust of Northern motives, alongside genuinely unhelpful Northern positions), and urge a more wide-ranging, justice-oriented pact that will provide a platform for a comprehensive climate agreement.

With respect to our analogy, then, we find three things striking. Parks and Roberts gesture mightily to political and economic concerns, but remain tightly focused on global warming as an environmental issue (albeit within a framework of broader political and economic justice)—here they strain, but do not break with the consensus. Second, they never question whether Southern (or Northern) state negotiators consistently and genuinely represent their populations and their concerns, even though the notion that either the American or Brazilian government represents its population's structural interests as determined by the world-system is highly questionable. Third, the end goal remains a negotiated agreement which, by virtue of its incentive structure (and agreed assorted mechanisms), provides the foundational framework for a just solution to the problem of climate change.

From a rather different angle, Victor's (2011) *Global Warming Gridlock*, while it is still a book about green diplomacy, strains the treaty analogy perhaps to its breaking point. Victor argues that green diplomacy has failed because it took its inspiration from other environmental treaties when on an issue as complex and far-reaching as climate change, negotiators should instead have looked to the economic treaties that produced the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The method of these treaties was substantially different in two ways: first, due to their complexity they were negotiated by small

“clubs” that brought further members on board incrementally; and second, they were set up to fit the policy capabilities of the countries in question, rather than being reverse engineered from an abstract set of objectives. (With climate treaties, the trend has been to establish the maximum safe amount of warming—2 degrees celsius—calculate how much carbon that entails, and then determine the level of cuts needed—at least 80% by 2050 for the developed world.) Meanwhile, in assembling his iconoclastic account, Victor proudly sets out to dash the conventional wisdom of three groups of experts—scientists, negotiators, and engineers. It would seem then that he has violated all three conditions of our green treaty analogy. He has dispensed with the green straightjacket of the analogy and in his argument for an essentially iterative treaty-making process that entails running feedback between national policy and internationally agreed commitments, he has at once blurred the lines between the interstate negotiating field (and its actors) and national policy regimes (and their actors) and he has broken with the idea that a perfect fix will re-orient the key incentives for those further down the scalar hierarchy (international—>national—>local). We have not discussed in detail the economics of climate change at the international level, for instance the question of market mechanisms. But it is worth mentioning that here too Victor breaks with conventional wisdom, at least in being forthright in admitting that his plan entails the construction of “Potemkin markets” which allow powerful interest groups to hoard the benefits of new rules—so long as these lead to (inefficient but) needed emissions reductions.

In all these areas, Victor’s work represents important advances in the debate over climate treaties. But he too suffers somewhat from Grubb’s prophetic slippage, as the foundations for his critique of prior work on treaties do not quite ground his alternative proposals. Although he acknowledges that the interest groups that would stand behind a plan to decarbonize the economy

“do not yet exist” (Victor 2011: 4) he offers no clear path for overcoming the extraordinary power of the lobbies that do already exist, in particular the major oil and gas companies which have so far blocked all attempts to establish a cap-and-trade system in the United States (Fisher 2006). Overcoming the power of presently entrenched interests would doubtless entail major social conflict of the sort Victor avoids discussing. While he cleverly offers a model for incorporating the policy process into the negotiation process, in the end this is but a more sophisticated displacement of the “perfect fix” from outcome to process; although Victor does not black box national policy per se, as we see in his discussion of Potemkin markets, he does black box the *political realignments* needed even to get the Potemkin markets up and running. Most crucially, this black-boxing ignores the reality that a conflict of interests very often represents a structural social situation (for instance, the US economy’s structural dependence on coal and to a lesser extent oil, and capitalists’ resistance to any form of planning discipline). Instead, it retains the view of the treaty analogy that policies of their own accord, in the present context and if intelligent enough, can settle conflicts of interests. The symbolic analogy to different sorts of, more expansive, treaties, is a better match for the scale of climate politics. But the practical analogy it entails only adds bureaucrats from powerful ministries into the mix. The key actors remain government technocrats and perhaps some enlightened entrepreneurs, but it is unclear that such a coalition is sufficient to transform the economy. As we shall see below, a version of this dilemma reappears with our next two analogies.

*A terrifying uncertainty: the cosmopolitan imagination and the analogy to human rights campaigns*

Our second family of historical analogy is the least coherent. It is also the least significant in the public domain, although its appearance as a default liberal globalist fall-back in the wake of the successive treaty failures, its resonance in academic circles (especially in cultural studies and cultural sociology), and its political affinities with a post-structuralist conventional wisdom—or even a psychologically simple naïveté about the inherent corruption of government and virtue of good intentions—make this analogy worthy of discussion. The cosmopolitan analogy is also an important attempt to grapple with the failure of campaigns like Al Gore’s, which target an ostensible information deficit by seeking to persuade the public of the veracity of climate science through globally televised projects kicking off with 24-hour events, like Live Earth (7 July 2007) and The Climate Reality Project (14 September 2011). Indeed, we should see this analogy to international networks of savvy intellectuals, often involved in human rights campaigns, as a kind of self-conscious adjustment in strategy away from a focus on states in the wake of the treaty failures, just as the human rights campaigns of the 1990s which inspired this strategy saw themselves as taking over from an ossified, depleted, and discredited labour movement in the fight for “progressive” political ends (Michael Ignatieff’s and Tony Judt’s careers are examples of this type of journey).

In this ideal type, I group together those concerned with the difficulty of processing objectively the uncertainties of knowledge at play in the climate change debate (Lahsen 2009 on scientists, Lorenzoni and Whitmarsh 2007 on public opinion), who often relate it to other domains of uncertainty like terrorism and in particular the fall-out from the 9/11 attacks (Hulme 2009, Urry 2011), and who prescribe transnational, cosmopolitan politics as a solution (Beck 2009, Urry 2011). The normative cosmopolitan argument tends to refer for examples back to the 1990s

wave of scholarship on transnational activism and one of its leading works, Keck and Sikkink's (1997) *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, which uses for its case studies of the power of international activism environmental, women's, and human rights networks, and the local successes these campaigns sometimes achieved, which were generally legal adjustments. If our treaty analogy is primarily concerned with the actions of states, our uncertainty analogy takes for its protagonists actors belonging to what is conventionally called civil society.

What I want to address here is a more thoughtful variant of generic calls for greater civil society organizing to avert catastrophe, of the sort we may associate with Al Gore, and which Swyngedouw (2010) has likened to a post-political populism, where "the presentation of climate change as a global humanitarian cause produces a thoroughly depoliticized imaginary, one that does not revolve around choosing one trajectory rather than another, one that is not articulated with specific political programs or socio-ecological project or revolutions" (219). Swyngedouw diagnoses the basic analogy, whose three key features are a) the parallels between the uncertainties involved with climate change and other global, contemporary phenomena, like terrorism and financial capitalism; b) the need for a new cosmopolitan politics to transcend narrow national communities which are inherently inadequate to the task of mobilizing to confront these new global uncertainties; c) the view that ultimately, such uncertainties represent a resource for creativity and a political opportunity, rather than a roadblock. But the most articulate exponents of this view are not Swyngedouw's post-political populists; their more sophisticated positions are at once refreshingly counter-intuitive and reassuringly compatible with a worldly intellectual's sense of self worth.

Hulme's (2009) *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity* is a lucid and erudite survey of numerous fields, as befitting his stature as the founding director of the prestigious and important Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in the UK. It sits easily with, and frequently leans on, work in the social studies of technology (STS) tradition (see especially Jasanoff 2007). Hulme effectively shows that in a number of domains, different opinions on climate change issue less from "mistakes" that may be corrected (for instance, by reading Al Gore or James Hansen) but more deeply rooted presuppositions—tendencies to trust science, to trust other people, to disbelieve experts, and so on. In fact Hulme makes light of scientists like Hansen who argue for relatively clear relationships between polluting activities and ecological outcomes—which Hulme views less as urgent diagnoses of earth system breakdown than maudlin acts of hubris. For Hulme, we face a stark choice between self-isolating and overly self-confident over-reaction, and a kind of reflexive wisdom that slows the pace of climate politics to accommodate dissent and while settling in for the long haul.

On the one hand this is powerful stuff, and it demonstrates the depth of the barriers to the kind of climate politics activists like George Monbiot want desperately to instil in mass movements. A resource for creativity is more appealing than certain frustration; and a long-term project of global bridge-building appears more promising than old-fashioned parochial activism. But the foundations of Hulme's claims have a rote quality to them. Seven of his chapters, ranging from science, to fear, to governance, show that we disagree about climate change because we disagree about  $x$  component of climate change—"one of the reasons we disagree about climate change is because science is not doing the job we expect or want it to do" (74); "one of the reasons we disagree about climate change is because we evaluate risks differently" (181); "one of

the reasons we disagree about climate change is because we seek to govern in different ways” (288). These claims are ultimately question-begging: Why do we disagree about  $x$ ? Hulme’s account is like a factor analysis that leaves the object unchanged. But in so doing, he effectively suggests that climate politics is less than the sum of its parts—since each of the micro-disagreements he uncovers may be addressed on its own by a modest politics of improved communication. The prospect of deeper similarities between the disagreements, and their common origin in the historical genesis of capitalism, is quite simply never broached.

Beck’s (2009) *Global Risk Society* is a more politically motivated book in the same family (also heavily indebted to STS and to post-structuralist currents of cultural studies/cultural sociology) whose arguments I will not try to reconstruct here in detail. They’re scattered and weakly connected. But his memes have a certain beguiling charisma, he has a way with words (eg his influential discussion of “methodological nationalism”), he raises important points, and serious writers like Urry (2011) engage his work. In brief, Beck believes we live in an era where modernity’s successes paradoxically threaten it with extinction—through financial meltdown, environmental collapse, and terrorism. These global threats turn out, however, to be an opportunity for a new cosmopolitan politics that transcends all divisions. The eccentric nature of Beck’s arguments can be demonstrated by seeking to understand what he means by claiming that today’s “relations of definition” with respect to risk—who is affected by risk, how this should be remedied, et cetera—are the modern equivalent of Marx’s relations of production. And as Calhoun (forthcoming) shows, Beck’s work on cosmopolitanism betrays a serious failure to take class cleavages seriously—not only in terms of their interests, but also the way they structure political organizing.

For instance, the nation may remain the most effective venue for those who lack the cosmopolitan's easy access to global flows of information and capital.

If the green treaty analogies black-boxed the political-economic changes that would be needed to actually achieve the emissions reductions they sought to legislate (a project which on its own terms has not even succeeded), the human rights analogy black-boxes politics altogether. Its visions of an ethical globalization of cosmopolitan virtue appears remarkably distant from the challenges at hand; yet its in more sophisticated variants, like Hulme's, it possesses the real virtue of exploring, at least superficially, subjective barriers to action. The problem is that the symbolic analogy to sophisticated moral thinkers only implies a practical analogy of the same: coalitions of globally mobile elites spreading sophistication in thought.

*A green new deal: the ultimate win-win*

Meanwhile, as interstate negotiations have sputtered and the roaring nineties have given way to an age of austerity, seeming to relax the grip of market orthodoxy, a compelling and optimistic historical analogy has risen to prominence. Instead of focusing on the international arena it looks to the national one as the key site of climate politics and seeks to build a new and powerful class-coalition head-on. (For classic arguments in favour of a green new deal solution see Newell and Paterson 2010 or Urry 2011; for an emphasis on war planning, see Bartels 2001 and Monbiot 2006.) This green new deal has for instance been the object of a major UK-based NGO campaign ([www.greennewdealgroup.org](http://www.greennewdealgroup.org)), frenzied US media speculation (for instance, wondering if Obama is or is not covertly pursuing a green new deal), and even United Nations-linked advocacy (Barbier's *A Global Green New Deal* (2010) grew out of a UN report and was co-published by the

United Nations Environment Programme). The notion of a green new deal of course refers to the golden age of capitalism, a time of economic prosperity and growth marked by increasing living standards for the working and middle classes, unlike the economic polarizations associated with the neoliberal period. The green new deal has also won special resonance in US debates for a slightly more subtle reason: while Americans have failed to rally behind sacrifices in the name of preventing global warming, it is thought that public opinion can be won for investments in energy security and “green collar jobs” even without (in fact—perhaps better without) flying the flag of climate change (Nordhaus and Shellenberger 2007).

The analogy’s basic argument is made most succinctly in the title of Van Jones’ (2009) best-selling *The Green Collar Economy: How One Solution Can Fix Our Two Biggest Problems*. The two problems are climate change (and associated environmental crises) and radical socioeconomic inequality. As such, the green new deal approach breaks in a powerful way from the green treaty approach in its treatment of the politics of climate change less as a case of an environmental domain of politics. It also breaks from the cosmopolitan vision by emphasizing the national political arena. Van Jones’ work here is important because he was at one point in a position to put much of this vision in action as the White House’s special advisor for green jobs; not long after his appointment, however, a fierce campaign led by Glen Beck resulted in his forced resignation. Across the Atlantic, the politically influential and much-read Anthony Giddens’ (2009) *The Politics of Climate Change* offers in some ways quite a similar vision, but as we will see it differs substantially in its account of politics. At the outset it’s also worth noting some ambiguities in the green new deal approach, for the analogy may include any and all of: the New

Deal politics of Roosevelt during the 1930s, the war planning economy of the Second World War, and the outline of the political economic consensus of the post-war boom.

I define the ideal type of this analogy in terms of the following three features: a) privileging the national economy as the site of climate politics; b) an emphasis on constructing a broad political coalition that includes labour, (green) business, civil society, and government; c) the role of government in some form as an economic activist, investor, and perhaps even planner. At the core of these arguments, then, is the notion that by successfully realigning politics one can achieve a series of “win-wins”—in particular, a win for the political economy, and a win for the climate. Here I look first at Giddens’ and then Van Jones’ arguments to clarify the limits of this analogy.

Giddens’ attempt to align the interests of fighting climate change and achieving otherwise desirable political economic goals is premised on hitching both to the concept of energy security. His vocabulary for this practical and ideological enmeshing of objectives is political and economic convergence.

The goal of this political and economic convergence is to produce a politics of climate change by which he means a lasting, cross-party policy consensus among elites rooted in institutional mechanisms designed to outlast the electoral alternations of political parties. What this consensus most powerfully entails, he argues, is his vision of an “ensuring state”, a kind of humanized, decentralized, democratized, market-friendly return to planning (Giddens 2009: 69). Such a state is crucial, Giddens argues, since only a lasting and interventionist institution can help solve what he curiously labels “Giddens’ paradox”—the fact that we are less likely to act with the long term in mind because of how pressing the problems of the short term appear. Gid-

dens thanks environmental movements for their help on this, but at this point views them as being on the whole unhelpful for moving forward. But who is going to make this happen? For Giddens, the elites who must agree to the ensuring state are not just presented as its foundation, but also its origin. Here Giddens very much echoes the classical treaty analogy in his view of state elites as the unmoved movers of climate politics; he is acutely aware of the need for a broad-based coalition, but views its genesis as effectively external to its components.

Naturally, therefore, Giddens' account is vulnerable to the arguments I raised above with respect to the treaty analogy—namely, Whence the displacement of the entrenched interests which benefit from the status quo? One predecessor of Giddens' ensuring state that also makes a helpful analogy would be the North Atlantic welfare state. There is in the US elite consensus that social security must be maintained, even if there is substantial disagreement about its precise form. But elite consensus certainly didn't bring social security into effect, nor did elite consensus prevent George W. Bush from privatizing it in 2005. Social movements (broadly understood) played key roles both in establishing and defending it. And indeed, work in comparative historical and political sociology has shown how instrumental organized working class pressure has been in the establishment and defense of key welfare state provisions has been in Europe and North America (for example, see Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Huber and Stephens 2001).

Van Jones' view is rather different—for him the agents for a green new deal are to be found in a hoped-for coalition between eco-entrepreneurs and certain sectors of civil society: labor, social justice activists, environmentalists, students, and faith organizations. There isn't much to unpack about this argument, whose theme “more eco-populism, less eco-elitism” (Van Jones 2008: 100) obviously contrasts markedly with Giddens. But it is worth noting how much his notion of

green-collar jobs is pitched at a reading of blue-collar jobs pegged less to current trends of deskilling and outsourcing than to a Keynesian golden age. Van Jones defines the green-collar job as “*a family supporting, career-track job that contributes directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality*”. Like traditional blue-collar jobs, green-collar jobs range from low-skill entry-level positions to high-skill, higher-paid jobs and include opportunities for advancement in both skills and wages. Think of them as the 2.0 version of old-fashioned blue-collar jobs, upgraded to respect the Earth and meet environmental challenges of today” (Van Jones 2008: 17).

Van Jones’ account is remarkable as well for the wealth of examples he provides of successful local community efforts to combine environmental- and inequality-based organizing, suggesting that at the molecular level, the components of a social justice-environmental coalition already exist. Like Giddens, Van Jones is critical of the failures of prior waves of green organizing, but he is more optimistic about the ability of bringing middle-class environmentalists on board with to a more economically focused agenda. Indeed, optimism is one of the key hall-marks of Van Jones’ plea for what he calls a “social uplift” environmentalism designed to displace the “dead hand” of the old economy.

Ultimately, then, while Giddens and Van Jones differ diametrically on the source of the new political coalition—the landscape artist in Giddens’ case, and the grassroots coalitions in Van Jones’—they appear equally unwilling to rest their programme on a logic of conflict with entrenched interests. Indeed, Van Jones argues forcefully for abandoning the notion of a David vs Goliath metaphor in favour of a Noah’s Ark one (ie, where Noah must build consensus and found a new society). Each appears to work backwards from the vision of victory to the steps needed to achieve it. If their symbolic and practical analogies differ substantially in the actors to whom

they assign primacy, they converge in an anxiety to avoid conflict and a reluctance to consider carefully the strengths of their opponents.

One could make the argument that each was deceived by what appeared to be favourable political circumstances—David Cameron’s vow to lead the greenest government in British history, hence making the environment a matter of cross-party concern, and Obama’s campaign pledges to deal with global warming, and eventual (if short-lived) appointment of Van Jones to his administration). Perhaps. But this would only demonstrate the fundamental weakness of both their cases. At root, the notion of the win-win is premised, just like the treaty analogy, on the argument that there is an intellectual solution to the climate crisis which the appropriate politics can solve—in the green new deal case through coalition building at the national scale, rather than negotiating at the interstate level. The question of whether existing state structures would permit such outcomes is never truly raised.

Meanwhile, a discussion of the New Deal in terms of the highly confrontational class struggles undertaken by labour movements in alliance with other sectors, and of the critical intra-capitalist class splits that enabled the New Deal, does not appear in the classic instances of this analogy. And here we find a major distinction between the new deal analogy and the environmental treaty and human rights analogies. Whereas these latter two appear doomed from the start, looking to structure climate politics along the lines of political projects whose stakes are dwarfed in size and complexity by the climate crisis, whose successes appear poorly suited to being scaled up, and whose very structure appears to black-box the critical processes involved in transforming capitalism, the analogy to the New Deal is a potentially fruitful look at a transformative set of reforms undertaken by a strong state. That the New Deal analogy may have been a

missed opportunity then tells us something particularly interesting—namely, what is lacking is not a dearth of instructive historical examples, but an explicit or implicit theory of change that would enable public intellectuals in the climate politics debate to appreciate the intense stabilizing powers of political economic structure, and the role of inter- and intra-class struggle in transforming these structures.

### Three fates, or one fateful omission

A comparison between the analogies above along a set of key axes is offered in the table below. Visible in the table are a number of dissimilarities in the analogies; but once we read between the lines, we find a surprising amount in common.

	<b>Green treaty</b>	<b>Cosmopolitanism</b>	<b>Green New Deal</b>
<i>Key historical antecedent</i>	Successful environmental treaties of the 1980s and 1990s curbing CFCs and SO <sub>2</sub>	Third sector feminist, environmental, and human rights campaigns	FDR's new deal (and to a lesser extent associated projects like war planning, the post-war welfare state, and the Manhattan and Apollo projects)
<i>Key actor</i>	States (represented by negotiators, who also interact w other kinds of experts at summits)	Civil society (represented by NGOs, in contact with other cosmopolitan intellectuals)	A combination of enlightened national policy-makers and an in-country coalition of unions, business leaders, and NGOs
<i>Key stage</i>	Global inter-state system	Global civil society	National state

<i>Key economic mechanism</i>	“Market mechanisms”, in particular emissions trading schemes, shaped by internationally agreed targets	Implicitly, “market mechanisms”, though the issue is little discussed	Mixed approach combining “market mechanisms” and strong government intervention with a renewed focus on planning
<i>Key academic influences</i>	International relations	Science and technology studies	Comparative politics

Each of the schools can claim to refer to earlier political victories. Admittedly, only the New Deal appears substantial enough to warrant a direct comparison; but the others can claim to have found important seeds that could grow productively. And these claims should be taken seriously. If the US had signed the Kyoto Protocol, and all countries had taken it seriously, its modest emissions reduction targets may have been reached. Similarly, if the cosmopolitans had through courts of law and public opinion managed to shift elite imaginations wholesale, perhaps enough piecemeal, voluntary, and/or uncoordinated experiments could have yielded the basis for more expansive climate policies in the years to come. We must remember that there is a vast array of well-researched books and manifestos being published constantly that show innumerable ways of drastically cutting emissions with existing technology and without dramatically altering (at least in the short term) North Atlantic median lifestyles. If we assume such programs to be in some sense viable, and the hurdles to be political, we must then ask why the three dominant paradigms for thinking climate politics have so far failed to advance any of these projects successfully.

Like the three fates, the analogies above share more than they acknowledge; they are more like bickering siblings than rival clans. What do they share? In each of their silences on the central place of conflict in politics—and in particular, the role of conflict in adjusting or transforming the selectivities of the state—the analogies project backwards in time a prejudice about the

present, an implicit view of globalization in which a version of the Washington Consensus has been so victorious that there can be no reason for discussing political economic arrangements that differ from the standard of low-profile, unambitious government intervention in private investment found in the North Atlantic democracies. Unger's (1998) phrase on analogies is now worth quoting in full:

“The world has been linked by a chain of analogies: analogous problems, opportunities, and solutions. The thesis of the worldwide chain of analogies fastens on the residue of truth in the illusions of the convergence thesis” (98).

Unger is not just making the rather obvious point that just because the whole world is capitalist, that does not mean that every situation is the same, or shortly to become the same. He is also making the more important argument that the range of possibilities for polities within a capitalist world is much greater than usually imagined and that, therefore, *analogy* as a kind loose and action-oriented form of conceptual connective tissue is all the more useful. The rub, then, is to make the right analogies—to fasten to the residues of truth, rather than the illusions. What I have argued above is that the reigning analogies for climate politics, by associating outcomes rather than processes, has in fact projected backwards today's illusions—mostly gravely in the case of the new deal analogy, where a different historical emphasis, on the processes of inter- and intra-class struggle that produced epochal political economic reforms, would yield rather different guidelines for present political practices.

Here I want to pause and suggest that what is projected back is actually a touch more subtle than a necessitarian acceptance of market fundamentalism. Today, in its stagnation and decline, social democracy appears as a rearguard attempt to humanize a necessary evil (market rule). But in social democracy's original campaigns of decommodification, in its war-time mo-

ment of radical planning, and in its Third World counterpart, the decolonizing (and often revolutionary) developmental states, all raised the spectre of unpredictable departures from liberal capitalist orthodoxy (Riley 2011, Chibber 2006, Unger 2009). It was once thought that a chain of reforms could yield something other than capitalism with a human face. But these reforms would not be achieved by the devotion of enlightened technocrats, but through (large sections of) the working classes' confrontational exercise of power and application of pressure, in alliance with other sectors, including of the peasantry, middle class, business and/or state managers. (And of course, China and Russia offer more sobering visions of the same indeterminacy of broadly capitalist forms, what Žižek has called the "divorce" of capitalism from democracy.) What is erased by the neoliberal common sense is usually one of two views. First, the recognition that certain reforms may have a very wide range of outcomes in the medium and long term may be dismissed by a facile endism which sees present-day market fundamentalism as the ultimate convergence point of institutional history. Ironically enough, its mirror twin is the view of a number of eco-socialists, who cannot see the nuances and potentialities of a capitalist adaptation to climate change, since they posit at an effectively ontological level a fundamental opposition between capitalism and sustainability (an opposition most profoundly problematic in the short and medium term), turning the a slogan like "eco-socialism or barbarism" into a substitute for analysis (Foster et al 2010). And second, the insight that reforms that challenge entrenched political-economic interests (although not necessarily capitalism in general) cannot be achieved without class struggle is often forgotten by those concocting elaborate policy shifts from the perspective of enlightened technocrats. It is common enough to suffer only from one of these erasures; it is rare to suffer from neither.

**Conclusion: An alternative, structuralist narrative and**

I have so far referred extensively and obliquely to conflict and structure without explaining what I mean. The question is yet more complicated since we can easily take comfortable refuge in debating a false opposition between conflict and structure, or agency and determination, obscuring among other things the fact that sometimes a social system is hotter (typically in moments of crisis), with more contestation and more alternatives on the table, and sometimes it is colder, with less contestation and the appearance of fewer if any alternative arrangements (Unger 1987). The key then is to look at the (variable) links between structure and conflict—how, at any given moment an existing structure will favour certain kinds of political action, benefitting certain groups (even if the degree of favour will vary according to the “heat” of the moment).

Building on Offe’s (1984) argument that the capitalist state has “structural selectivities” that privilege certain class interests over others, Jessop (2002) and Brenner (2005) have elaborated the concept of “strategic selectivities”, whereby state structures—and the state here is understood rather expansively—privilege certain kinds of political strategies. The theory refers to particular strategies with particular *political* bases within fractions of classes. In Offe, Jessop, and Brenner’s formulations, the sources of selectivity are strictly social—the complex class conflicts and alliances of capitalism.

But—and this is crucial for our global warming theme—we can add external, environmental factors and keep the insight. Fisher (2006) demonstrates that coal’s abundance in the American mainland, the country’s consequent dependence on burning coal for energy, and thus the power

of coal lobbies, together explain the inability of the US House of Representatives or Senate to pass strong climate legislation. While she draws on Molotch's (1976) growth machine theoretical framework we may also read her argument as an amendment of the structural selectivity thesis: resource endowment, in conjuncture with existing political economic structures, regional class alliances (for instance, coal miners' unions, coal companies, utilities) and regimes of regulation (including campaign finance rules), produces a historically specific, structurally embedded set of strategic selectivities which render efforts to de-carbonize the American economy especially difficult.

This is a daunting perspective. It suggests that to overturn the present strategic selectivities will require attacking them at their root—if not making the US's abundant coal supply vanish with the wave of a wand, then at least reducing the power of big money in US politics, fracturing existing class alliances, electing (or threatening to elect) politicians with different political bases (which imply alternative class alliances), and so on. The bottom line here is that it is hard to imagine any movement succeeding that is not ready to fight, and dislodge, a rooted hegemonic force; and so an appropriate analogy would have to seek action-oriented parallels in *the kind of struggle* that met this sort of challenge. (Unfortunately, Fisher does not have a public sociology counter-part, i.e. an alternative framework for climate politics, to her excellent structural analyses.)

This is in stark contrast to the way each of the three analogies I discussed referred to *outcomes* rather than conflictual *processes* (or mechanisms) of socio-structural (and environmental) change.

The strategic selectivity approach is useful for analyzing the pitfalls of the three analogies discussed so far. First, with respect to the green treaty analogies, we see that working from the

outside in, a perfect mechanism designed to intervene in existing social (and environmental) structures can hardly be expected to work. Even Victor's (2011) reformulations fail to address the fundamental problem that the interests of American coal corporations pervade the American political system.

Second, regarding the role of risk and uncertainty in politics, Beck (2009) makes much of the parallels between terrorism and climate change. But if these are indeed so similar, US policy in the past 10 years is difficult to explain—the tremendously expensive invasion of Iraq based on highly uncertain intelligence and perpetual stalling on climate change in the face of unprecedented scientific consensus. Even a Pentagon-commissioned report has expressed serious concerns about the catastrophic security implications of climate change in the near future, suggesting that within two decades, “Once again warfare would define human life” (Schwartz and Randall 2003: 17). Not just the Pentagon (and CIA) but numerous other advanced capitalist countries' military divisions have expressed grave concerns about the catastrophic security outcomes of climate change (Dyer 2010). If, however, we consider the US state's strategic selectivities, including the political projects of the country's presidencies—like the neo-conservative Project for a New American Century founded by many of President Bush's top advisors (Project for a New American Century 1997)—it is less surprising that one threat of relative uncertainty (state-sponsored terrorism) led to action, while another area of relative certainty (climate change) led to inaction.

Third, looking to the Green New Deal analogy, we find that so far this has focused overwhelmingly on building the right coalition of winners, but very little on transforming the already

existing winners into losers. This is analogous to playing chess and only thinking through one's one side's moves—and even there, that assumes equality of opportunity!

What the structural selectivity approach most deeply suggests, however, is that not only does the present state structure enhance the power of existing, wealthy corporations—it also makes it easier for them to ally with other corporations and with the state, than for an upstart coalition to do so. This is most fundamentally so because corporations, even when their individual interests diverge, are apt to agree on a bottom line of withholding control over investment decisions from the state. Chibber (2006) offers, in the context of South Korean and Indian development, a most rigorous case that capitalists will with almost no exception resist state discipline over their investment decisions, even when this might plausibly benefit them economically. The implications of this argument for our discussion should be clear. What each of the analogies is after, especially the first and third, is a way of re-shaping market activity. So far so good. But as Spash (2011) has shown, corporations have been able systematically to weaken the impact of “market mechanisms” on politically strong sectors of the GHG-emitting economy; this finding speaks to a pervasive failure of government planning in the present era. One key way the state may actually be empowered to plan, Chibber (2006) suggests, is if a labour movement is strong enough to exploit fissures in the capitalist class and/or between state managers and capitalists. Certainly, a structural analysis offers no grounds for believing that structural selectivities can be overcome in the absence of substantial conflict. Thus, as with the two earlier analogies, by focusing on the outcomes of power plays and not the structures of power, the Green New Deal analogy misses the nub of politics—namely the dynamics of intra- and inter-class conflict, and the dynamic relationship between these and the state.

The problem of planning, it turns out, is not a problem of planning at all (nor a problem of “political will”, the call for which is always a sign that one has run out of ideas), but a problem of political power—one that cannot cleanly be broken down into discreet national boundaries. Even if the US were to adopt European emissions targets, there would still be the matter of actually meeting them! But given the failures of the treaty and cosmopolitan approaches, and the latent potential of a truer-to-history reworking of the New Deal story, bottom-up approach within specific polities, in conjunction with other approaches in other places, would appear promising.

And indeed, a fourth analogy has arisen, this time to the civil rights movement. Al Gore (2009) has made this analogy in *Our Choice* in a way that recalls the analogy to the new deal: an analogy to the outcome, not to the struggles prior. But this was a superficial adaptation of the long-running environmental justice movement’s adoption of the mantle of civil rights. This analogy has acquired fresh life in the campaign against a new pipeline facilitating the extraction of the Alberta Tar Sands, which has engaged in civil disobedience and sought to build bridges with environmental justice advocates, and which has referred to the example of the civil rights movement in particular with respect to its thoroughgoing organizing and confrontational tactics (see [www.tarsandsaction.org](http://www.tarsandsaction.org)). Here the concept of climate justice also arises, and seeks to link through symbolic and practical analogy grassroots campaigns around the world. The civil rights analogy has also reappeared in contemporary, highly militant campaigns against the NYPD’s practices of Stop and Frisk, and other upstart micro-movements appearing in the arena of Occupy Wall Street (with which the anti Stop and Frisk campaigners have associated themselves). In building confrontational coalitions, then, we might see such groups’ actions as moving from symbolic to practical analogies, connecting Northern and Southern populations as well as envi-

ronmental, social, and economic forms of injustice, all knotted to a conflict-centred analysis of the civil rights movement (in the US context) to inform present practices of coalition-building, and tactics of confronting power. Whether a struggle-oriented civil rights analogy will animate a new kind of sustainable and effective US-based climate politics, only time can tell.

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