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*Re-articulating Media Re/presentations of Climate Change Discourse(s) in South Africa:
Climate Change Politics in the Global South*

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Centre For Communication Media and Society (CCMS)
University of KwaZulu-Natal

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December 2019

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been complete without the support, contributions and generosity that different individuals, institutions and funders directly and or indirectly extended to me at various stages. Nevertheless, I take the responsibilities for errors of content and analysis that this work might have. My profound gratitude goes to my supervisor, Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, whose guidance has made this work enjoyable and possible. I want to register my acknowledgement and appreciation to the Centre for Communication, Media and Society (CCMS), the College of Humanities for the postgraduate bursary, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in general for granting me the opportunity to study at this premium university of African scholarship. In addition, I am indebted to Darlington and Tinashe for their critical help and suggestions at different stages of writing the thesis. Finally, yet importantly, nothing can describe my appreciation to my family, but I would like to thank them for their unwavering trust and support. Overall, I glorify our Mighty God for his unfailing love and companionship throughout the course.

Declaration

I, Henri-Count Evans, declare that this submission is my own original work and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. Where another person's work has been used (either from a printed source, Internet or any other source), this has been explicitly acknowledged and referenced. I have checked this work to ensure that there are no instances of plagiarism contained within. I understand that disciplinary action may be taken against me if there is a belief that I used someone else's work without their permission and/or did not acknowledge the original source in my work. I know that plagiarism is wrong and that the University of KwaZulu-Natal considers plagiarism a form of Academic Misconduct (Rule 9.28 of the Rules for Students Handbook). I understand what plagiarism is and I am aware of the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Plagiarism Policy and Procedures (Ref: CO/05/0412/09). I have used a recognised convention for referencing in this work (Harvard) as stipulated by the Discipline.

Signed:  Henri-Count Evans

December 2019

Signed: _____ Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli

December 2019

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all those who perished due to climate change-induced disasters (Cyclone Dineo and Idai in 2017 and 2019 respectively), the victims of coal mine pollution across the KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, all those who lost their loved ones and their property due to climate change and all people who have been forced to migrate because of climate change. It is the plight of all these people, the memories of those who perished and continue to perish, that gives me the strength to fight for climate justice and to continually argue for equality, social transformation and true sustainability anchored on living well together with other humans and the Earth (our home).

List of Acronyms

ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulation of South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
BASIC	Brazil, South Africa, India, and China
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CAIA	Chemical and Allied Industries Association
CBDR	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
CBDRRC	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
COP	Conference of Parties
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DA	Democratic Alliance
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DoE	Department of Energy
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FARNPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network
G77+China	Group of 77+China
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEO	Global Environment Outlook
GHGs	Greenhouse gases
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GRPS	Global Risk Perception Survey
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency

IEA	International Energy Agency
INDCs	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
IOL	Independent Online
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPP	Independent Power Producer
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LMTS	Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios
NALEDI	National Labour and Economic Development Institute
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NOAA	National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
PGM	Platinum Group of Minerals
PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SACP	South African Communist Party
DEA	South Africa's Third National Communication on Climate Change
SAWEA	South Africa Wind Energy Association
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Abstract

Climate change has become a critical 21st global problem, and with it, more threats to planetary existence are increasing. Notwithstanding the seriousness of the climate problem, politicians and policymakers in South Africa and globally have identified climate change as a problem but prescribe solutions that extend either the interests of the fossil fuel industry under the guise of technological development (clean coal and carbon sequestration) or Promethean neoliberal solutions benchmarked on renewable energy and carbon trading. Both solutions prioritise neoliberal interests and fall short of averting a more severe biospheric and planetary catastrophe. The news media, generally long thought of as the societal ‘watchdog,’ have also acceded to the injunctions of profit and accumulation, and construct climate change and solutions to it within paradigms that promote capitalist self-mutation. Through theoretical sampling, this discourse analysis study selected four weekly newspapers from South Africa, namely, the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *City Press*, and examined how they represented climate change discourses. The media selected for this study were instrumental and had sheer capacity to define and determine the frames and representations within which climate change is articulated and understood in South Africa and outside. At a grand theoretical level, the thesis incorporated the metabolic rift/ecological rift theories (Clark and York, 2005; Foster et al., 2010) as grand paradigms for theorising climate change. Articulation (Laclau, 1977; Hall et al., 1978, 1980, 1985; Grossberg, 1992, 1996; Slack, 1996, 2008, 2016) and discourse analysis (Fowler et al., 1978, Hall et al., 1978, Hall, 1985, 1986, Hall and O’Shea, 2013, Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 1995; van Dijk, 1983, 1985, 1988, 2008; Foucault, 1971) were used at both theoretical and methodological levels and were useful in deconstructing ideologies in the news, the role of language, the sponsors of such discourses and the power they hold in society. The thesis, through discourse analysis, together with articulation, the metabolic rift theories, and ecological rift theories, examined 290 stories selected from the four newspapers for emergent themes that came from the chosen news stories. The key themes related to a) news media constructions of climate change impacts, b) news media representations of climate change politics, internationalisation and multilateral processes, c) news media representations of South African energy futures, d) news media representations of South African responses, especially carbon tax policies, e) news media reproduction of the green economy Promethean discourse and f) news media representations of climate justice. Overall, two key observations were made regarding South Africa’s climate change

policy and discourse arenas as they played out in the news media. Firstly, climate change discourses in South Africa were intimately linked to energy discourses because the country was an energy-intensive economy, where coal represents the lifeblood of the entire economy. Climate change mitigation required that countries divest from coal and reduce emissions by all possible means. Essentially, future energy plans (energy futures) determined how South Africa would manage to reduce its emissions. The second observation was that as the country sought to move away from coal, at least ideally, there had been optimism in technological and renewable energy interventions. The techno-renewable energy optimism had become so naturalised, at least at discourse and not implementation level, with hopes that this would lead to a more ‘successful’ green economy.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to thesis

Climate change has become one of the critical threats to planetary and human existence. Climate change, itself a risk of modernity, engineered by unending exploitation, has and will continue to have disastrous impacts on life on Earth. This age of climate change(s) has been rightly labelled the Anthropocene, an epoch where humans have become an essential geological force, altering the metabolic balance that existed between the Earth and its inhabitants. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change¹ (IPCC) in 2019², has predicted more severe impacts than had been reported before. A 2019 Pew Research Center³ survey noted that “people around the world agree that climate change poses a severe risk to their countries”. The observation from the Pew Research Center is also supported by the Global Risk Perception Survey (GRPS) conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF) which found that climate change risks “accounted for three of the top five risks likelihood and four by impact” (WEF 2019, p.6). In the GRPS report, “extreme weather was the risk of greatest concern” triggering fears about “environmental policy failure” in the context of inaction post-Paris COP21 (WEF 2019, p.6). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in its sixth Global Environment Outlook (GEO) report of 2019 saw “Providing a decent life and well-being for nearly 10 billion people by 2050, without further compromising the ecological limits of our planet and its benefits” as “one of the serious challenges and responsibilities humanity has ever faced” (UNEP 2019, p.04). The above brief synopsis of climate change is meant to show that climate change is a serious challenge that must be addressed. It is in the context of discourses to address the climate change problems that this study situates

¹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) a United Nations body mandated with “assessing the science related to climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988 to provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments concerning climate change, its implications and potential future risks, and to put forward adaptation and mitigation strategies. It has 195 member states”. (<https://www.ipcc.ch/2019/>)

² https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2019/08/4.-SPM_Approved_Microsite_FINAL.pdf

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/02/10/climate-change-still-seen-as-the-top-global-threat-but-cyberattacks-a-rising-concern/>

itself, especially as these discourses play out in the mainstream news media in South Africa. The achievement of the objectives set by UNEP depends on the discourses that have salience and superiority in the news, policy, economic and political discourses. The discourses that become powerful will shape and direct how the world will respond to climate change.

The tasks set out by UNEP are noble but difficult to achieve in the context of runaway climate change fuelled by the continued exploitation of fossil fuels and the never-ending consumerist culture. This study argues that the policy choices taken in South Africa and globally to address the climate crisis are either inadequate or incapable of preventing more climate change-induced catastrophes. The news media, with their ideal role as sources of public information and platforms for debate and engagement, are central to how the climate change crisis is addressed. This study concluded that the news media in South Africa, through their representation of climate change discourses, have reproduced solutions to climate change that essentially reproduced either the continued exploitation of fossil fuels or the transition to a 'green economy' anchored on technological optimism in renewable energy. The latter, the study contends, is inadequate as it replicates the very political-economic system of capitalism responsible for climate risks. As a way of argument, the study points towards solutions that put climate justice, social justice and economic justice at the centre of any solutions to climate change. Such approaches, it is argued here, can restructure the political-economic base and lead to 'true' sustainability that is collective and equal.

1.2 Global Climate Change: Defining the Problem

In 2013, the IPCC released its Fifth Assessment Report indicating that climate change was human-induced and that the impacts could worsen further if no immediate actions to control greenhouse gas emissions were adopted. In a summary for policymakers in the Fifth Assessment Report, IPCC (2013, p.v) showed that there was scientific consensus (95 per cent) "that human activity is the dominant cause of observed warming since the mid-20th century". The report showed that global warming was 'unequivocal', stating further that the "atmosphere and the ocean have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, sea level has risen, and the concentrations of greenhouse gases have increased" (IPCC 2013, p.4). The report showed that the increased warming of the atmosphere and the oceans was a result of increased emissions and atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs), namely, carbon dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄) and Nitrous Oxide

(N₂O) “due to human activity” since 1750 (IPCC 2013, p.11). IPCC (2013, p.11) estimated that between 1951 and 2010, greenhouse gases increased the “global mean surface warming” in the range of 0.5°C to 1.3°C” (IPCC 2013, p.17). Noting that the emission of GHGs was already unprecedented, the IPCC warned that further emissions would “cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system” (IPCC 2013, p.19). As a corrective measure, the report called for “sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions” as a way of “[L]imiting climate change” (IPCC 2013, p.19). This call by the IPCC echoed sentiments expressed in 2004 by Farhana Yamin and Joanna Depledge, who stressed that climate change needed “continued urgent attention” (2004, p.xxi). This urgent action was to be based on “a broad understanding of its [climate change] social, economic, developmental, scientific, political and environmental aspects” (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.xxi). Climate change impacts “will affect the environmental, social and vital economic interests of all states and have profound consequences for virtually every aspect of human society” (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.1).

Why is all this important to this study? The brief overview of the climate system shows that there is a consensus that climate change is a result of greenhouse gas emissions, and there is agreement that countries should reduce their greenhouse gas emissions if the world is to limit the impacts of climate change. South Africa’s global climate change profile is vital to consider in arguing why the country should drastically reduce its emission levels. First, the country’s economy is energy-intensive, with coal accounting for over 70 per cent of total energy emissions (Nhamo 2011; Department of Environmental Affairs 2017; Hallding et al. 2011, 2013). Secondly, because of the energy-intensive economy, South Africa contributes 1.65 percent towards total global greenhouse gas emissions (Friedrich et al. 2017), coupled with the highest per capita emissions in the world and contributing over 40 percent of total African emissions (Human Development Index 2010; Hallding et al. 2013; Pauw et al. 2014).

1.3 Climate Change in South Africa: Severity of the problem

Climate change impacts are wide-ranging. Every part of the world has been affected or has witnessed the impacts and implications of climate change. Africa has been the most affected region due to the lack of adaptation capacity and financial constraints. The impacts of climate change include reduced precipitation in most areas and increased rain intensity in some regions leading to drought and famine respectively (IPCC 2013; DEA 2017). All these impacts combined may hurt food security systems not only in South Africa but globally. Higher temperatures are predicted to continue (IPCC 2013; DEA 2017). The Department of Environmental Affairs (2017), in the Third National Climate Change Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), reported that South Africa has witnessed an above-average warming from 1931 to 2015 where “most of the country has experienced warming of an estimated 2°C/century or even higher” almost twice surpassing the average global warming in the regions of 0.85°C/century (IPCC 2013). This sustained warming is linked to the increase in the “annual number of hot days” and “decreases in the annual number of cold nights over most of the country” (DEA 2017, p.ix). Global warming is predicted to worsen, and the future does not look good for South Africa. The DEA (2017) warned of a drastic increase in temperature in South Africa if there is low or no mitigation. It noted that for “the far-future period of 2080-2099, temperature increases of more than 4°C are likely, over the entire South African interior, with increases of more than 6°C plausible over large parts of the western, central and northern parts” (DEA 2017, p.ix-x). As the temperature increases, “increases in heat-wave days and hot days, with potentially devastating impacts on agriculture, water security, biodiversity and human health,” are anticipated (DEA 2017, p.x).

The DEA concurred with recommendations of the IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report that a better “mitigation pathway can still significantly decrease the amplitude of this warming” (2017, p.x). Climate change has brought severe risks to the South African agricultural system. The DEA (2017, p.xiv) opined that the sector “is impacted directly by changes in precipitation, temperature, and evaporation”. Agriculture-related climate change-induced risks in South Africa “include increasing temperatures and more variable precipitation that are likely to have significant impacts on a wide variety of crops and forestry production” (DEA 2017, p.xiv). These conditions are “anticipated to add pressure on water resources as irrigation demands [are] projected to increase

due to increased temperatures” (DEA 2017, p.xiv). The impacts on agriculture are not limited to crops but extend to the livestock sector that is projected to continue suffering “under oppressive temperatures” (DEA 2017, p.xiv).

The DEA (2017, p.xiv) noted that climate change impacts expose the country to health problems. Climate change is projected to have adverse impacts on human settlements. These impacts are linked to aspects of town and urban planning that expose some communities to adverse impacts. Communities with a “deficit in infrastructure and provision of services have increased vulnerability to climate change” (DEA 2017, p.xvi). The adverse impacts are worse in communities that do not have the necessary infrastructure and services in place as it will become difficult for the South African government to provide such services in an environment that is not conducive for human habitat as the environment is continuously exposed to climate change threats. The government, through the Department of Environmental Affairs, has blamed increased exposure to climate change risks for informal settlements and other vulnerable locations to what the government called the ‘apartheid legacy’ and also “spatial variabilities, planned and unplanned growth and dispersion patterns, topography and numerous socioeconomic factors, human settlements will be exposed to climate change threats” (DEA 2017, p.xv). DEA (2017) stated that informal settlements and their populations are the most vulnerable to climate-related hazards, yet they have the lowest capacity not only to cope but also to mitigate such disasters. South Africa, as a developing nation, has a large part of its population living in informal settlements (mainly in mining and agricultural places) both in urban and rural areas.

It is essential for the media in South Africa when reporting on climate justice internally, to talk about the existing intra-national inequalities concerning climate change vulnerabilities as they compare to inequalities in responsibility. The media should interrogate how the government, through mitigation policies, either reduce or promote risks to vulnerable human settlements and societies. The media need to discuss the dualised nature of the country’s social and economic systems – highlighting how continued emissions are currently and will continue to impact societies differently based on inherent inequalities. The discussion should be a moral call for reduced dependence on fossil fuels in South Africa. It is the role of the media to represent, as a fourth estate, how the climate change policy and implementation discourses shape out and if the policy proposals themselves are sufficient to help South Africa achieve the needs of the planet and reduce

global warming and the consequent impacts that are dire for the country and the world. This study makes a strong contention that South Africa has a global and moral obligation to reduce emissions and help lead the world towards a cooler and safer atmosphere. However, this study also contends that whatever action is taken is mediated within and by South Africa's self-positioning in related discourses around economics, politics, and power.

1.4 The Media and Climate Change Re/presentation

With the development of climate change coverage in the mainstream media, the debates and contestations on the subject have also increased and the mass media have become "a critical arena for this debate, and an important source of climate change information for the public" as what the media writes "influences public perceptions and thence policy" (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.191). In journalism and media studies, the media are perceived as the 'fourth estate' with the responsibility of holding public officials and the private sector accountable to the public. Jurgen Habermas (1989) argued that ideally, the mainstream news media should act as a 'public sphere' with the role of providing the public with information, giving equal access to the platform to enable debates, and providing crucial opportunities for participation to different groups in social, political, and economic processes that affect their lives and enabling them to reach informed decisions (Louw 2010). Anabela Carvalho and Jacqueline Burgess (2005, p.1458) argued that the news media "play a central role in the social construction of risk. Different social actors (scientists, politicians, policymakers, businesses, pressure groups, and media professionals) are locked in discursive competition around how climate change risk is to be framed in the media".

Pertinent to this study is how the news media in South Africa have accomplished these envisaged roles, whether or not they have afforded equal participatory opportunities to different people in relation to the debates on climate change. Mark Stoddart and David Tindall (2015, p.402) rightly pointed that the media offer "publicly visible sites for conflict" in relation to climate change governance, hence, those who want to appropriate, build and influence climate governance narratives use the media "to communicate to various audiences and engage each other in public debate; these social groups use media access to engage in the 'cultural politics of climate change'" attempting to shape public understanding and influence decision-making. The news media are seen as "key organizational actors in climate governance" who through "selecting issues and news

sources [...] circulate representations of climate-change impacts and solutions and define for audiences who can ‘authoritatively speak for climate’” (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.402). This thesis sought to map how different groups defined climate change for the South African public and ascertain which groups were given more mediated visibility.

The news media are important in the climate change discourse as they provide “public information,” set the agenda on issues to be discussed, how they are discussed, build, and maintain public perceptions on the subject (Carvalho 2010, p.1). Similarly, Maxwell Boykoff (2008) saw the media holding power to shape and influence “discourses and imaginaries circulating in cultural and political, [and economic] contexts” (p.550). In the same understanding, this study contends that the mainstream news media in South Africa are central to the climate change discourse. By providing ‘public information’ and setting the agenda on issues to be discussed and how they are discussed, the media become influential builders of understanding of climate change issues in South Africa and have the potential to influence policy and decision-making. Maxwell Boykoff and Tom Yulsman (2013, p.2) saw the media as strategic in the climate change discourse, pointing to the media’s access to the climate change scientific, social, economic, and political discourses. To this end, the media were better placed to communicate climate change compared to scientists as most people have no “direct access to peer-reviewed research that informs our understanding of climate change and rather that citizens more often rely on the mass media to gain access to news and information about climate change” (Boykoff & Yulsman 2013, p.2).

Carvalho (2010) stressed the centrality of the news media in building public perceptions on climate and promoting public action on the issue. How the media provides access to different discourse actors to define the climate change problem determines how the issue is appropriated by the audiences (Carvalho 2010). Carvalho’s views conform with Alison Anderson’s (2009, p.166) argument that through mediating the “scientific, economic, social and political dimensions” of climate change and “giving voice to some viewpoints while suppressing others,” the media legitimise “certain truth claims as reasonable and credible”. As such, there is a need for inclusivity of divergent interests (economic, social and political) in the coverage and representation of climate change (Carvalho 2010, p.7).

1.5 Available Research and its Limitations

Tanja Bosch (2012, p.44) observed that much research on media coverage of climate change is “located in the North”. Bosch (2012) observed that while “the body of literature exploring links between the media and climate change grows,” there remained “a glaring absence of studies about and from the global South” (p.44) and called for “research on this topic from and on the global South” (p.47). Mike Shanahan (2009, p.145) noted that while studies have been done on climate change coverage in the global North, “less well understood is how journalists are covering this story in the rest of the world, both in rapidly industrialising economies with high greenhouse gas emissions and in the poorer settings that are largely vulnerable to climate change”. Drawing from the above observations, this study attempts to research media coverage of climate change in the global South and from the global South by examining climate change representations and constructions in the South African mainstream media through discourse analysis. While few studies on climate change and the media have been done in South Africa, “there have been few or no academic studies on climate change and the media in the rest of the global South” (Bosch 2012, p.47). Most importantly, studies on “content analyses...more detailed newsroom engagement and qualitative research (which might include interviews with journalists and news sources), the role of global news agencies or international comparative work, which help researchers analyse broader socio-political issues in the reporting of environmental affairs” are some of the grey areas (Bosch 2012, p.47).

Taking a cue from the West, the media are essential in climate change communication. Evelyn Tagbo (2010, p.6) saw the role of the media as central in “disseminating information to effectively guide public debate and understanding about weather and climate change”. Studies on climate change in Africa and South Africa (Tagbo 2010; Cramer 2008) mostly saw the media’s role as more important with regards to promoting adaptation. This frame of understanding has been pinned on the argument that the developing countries are still developing, confronted with high poverty levels and contribute the least to greenhouse gas emissions. The representations of climate change from the South African media influence public understanding and can contribute towards the need for mitigation dialogue. The need for a stronger emphasis on mitigation stems from the contradictions that South Africa finds itself in.

On the one hand, the country is developed with high emissions, and on the other, the country is still poor and with more people being more vulnerable to climate change than others. This dual nature of the South African system and the contradictions thereof were summarised by Jill Johannessen (2013, p.34) who noted that:

South Africa is in an unusual position where it straddles the ‘carbon divide’ between industrial and developing economies. On the one hand, South Africa is relatively developed, economically powerful, and ranked as the 12th largest greenhouse gases emitter in the world [...] On the other hand, South Africa is a developing country with domestic challenges that run deep, which means it needs economic growth to reduce poverty.

However, this study contends that the politics of climate change in South Africa is characterised by discourses that blame climate change and global warming on the global North countries. These discourses of blame have led to the argument that the global North countries must be more responsible for emissions reduction and in funding climate change adaptation and mitigation in the global South. Tagbo (2010, p.10) argued that from the United Nations (UN) Copenhagen Climate Conference (COP15), South Africa has firmly maintained its accusation of the global North countries. The argument stresses that any unfunded and unsupported attempt towards mitigation will derail progress on developmental projects within South Africa.

These arguments fail to account for the fact that the developing countries, especially those in the BRICS category (South Africa is a member of the BRICS group, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), are the leading producers of greenhouse gas emissions (Human Development Index Report, 2010; Weston, 2012), with China being the largest polluter and South Africa ranked number twelve globally and again accounting for forty percent of total emissions from Africa. Johannessen (2013, p.34) noted that from the 1970s, “the greater part of the growth in emissions... comes from the developing countries”.

1.6 Rationale of the study

While acknowledging that studies on the relationship between the media and climate change have increased (Boykoff 2007, 2008, 2009; Carvalho 2005, 2007; Carvalho & Burgess 2005), Takahashi and Meisner (2012) noted that most of the research focused on the global North countries. They argued that the trend was due not only to the predetermined neglect for the Global South nations but also lack of data. Few studies on general media coverage of climate change in the global South have been carried out (Joubert 2006; Tagbo 2010; Takahashi and Meisner 2012; Doulton & Brown 2009; Cramer 2008; Meiring 2013; Goodman 2014; Gess 2012; Jones 2012; Bosch 2012; Shanahan 2009; Mare 2011; Johannessen 2013). These studies primarily focused on three aspects of that coverage: a) the presence/absence of climate change coverage in the news media b) the frequency of the coverage of anthropogenic climate change in news media and c) the framing of climate change along with climate science consensus and denial. To the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies that have been undertaken to focus exclusively on the re/presentation and re/construction of climate change in the mainstream media. Also, studies embedded within the critical theoretical and methodological approaches such as discourse analysis, political economy and articulation do not exist. This study complements what already exists by focusing on the above gaps.

The empirical studies available (Cramer 2008; Mare 2011; Meiring 2013; Goodman 2014) have relied on quantitative methods on their analysis of climate change coverage. These studies were concerned with issues of frequency and accuracy of reporting in the media. Johannessen (2013), with a methodology close to discourse and representational analysis, only examined coverage during the Conference of Parties (COP17) held in Durban. As noted by Rouxnette Meiring (2013), a full investigation of media coverage and representation of climate change should be cast over a more extended period, maybe covering more years rather than focusing on a specific event. This study, thus, examined the re/presentation and re/construction of climate change from 2011 before the Durban (COP17) summit to 2017 (post the COP23 in Bonn). This period allowed the researcher to gain an extensive understanding of the issues at hand and enough depth to focus on contextual issues that influence climate change communication. Other scholarly articles, especially those published in 2012, (Jones 2012; Bosch 2012; Finlay 2012; Wasserman 2012; Gess 2012) mostly sought to map new pathways on climate change communication research in South Africa.

This study focused on the re/presentation of the global South concerning climate change in South African mainstream newspapers. While a lot of climate change communication research has focused on the global North, few studies have focused on the representation of climate change by the South African media, regardless of their reach and power to influence public opinion in the global South. The South African media, because of its broader coverage in Southern Africa, has more influence on climate change perceptions and attitudes not only within South Africa itself but throughout the Southern African region. More important to note, South Africa has been rated Africa's best economy (Tagbo 2010, p.17) and its inclusion in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) block of developing countries gives the country more power to influence regional and international climate change policies.

The above selection of newspapers provides a sample made up of four weekly titles, each of which is owned by a different press conglomerate. Furthermore, the four selected newspapers are distributed nationally and regionally. This study notes that mainstream newspapers in South Africa are the dominant providers of climate change information (see literature review) and hence examined the way climate change issues in South Africa and developing countries (Global South) are reported on and framed.

The assumption is that the news content produced by the newspapers in question inform and will influence the decisions of policymakers and opinion leaders both in South Africa and Southern Africa since these news outlets are distributed beyond South African borders into the wider region. The media in South Africa, because of their reach online, fit into what Daya Thussu (2010, p.228) defined as transnational/geocultural media that have regional influence and appeal to the diaspora and the global North at the same time. He noted further that these transnational media had redefined international communication from the one-way north to south even to mean south-south and south to north. This is evidenced by the regularity of how global media even get their news stories and leads from their global South counterparts. In this way, the media in South Africa have the power to shape the climate change discourse locally, regionally and globally. This study examined how the South Africa media has represented climate change, its causes, impacts, and

responsibility for addressing the climate problem and their overall representation and construction of global climate change policy negotiations and summits.

1.7 Research aims

The aims of the research were:

- i. Critically examined how the mainstream newspapers in South Africa (named in Section 1.9) report on and represent issues of climate change in the global South;
- ii. Investigated and examined the emergent and recurrent themes throughout the news articles on climate change, the ideologies they represent and how the ideological legitimisation is achieved through discourse;
- iii. Inductively explored the political economy of climate change as it plays out in the news media;
- iv. Situated climate change representations in the media within the broader geopolitical and ecopolitical struggles between the global South and the global North;
- v. Located the discussion of media representation of climate change into a critical political economy context of capitalism and the symbiotic relations between policy discourses, media discourses, and business discourses; and
- vi. Provided a theoretical framework for understanding the South African media re/presentation and re/construction of climate change.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

To achieve the above aims, the study set out:

- i. To analyse climate change news stories from four the selected national South African newspapers (named in Section 1.9 above);
- ii. To inductively analyse the news stories for emergent themes and sourcing patterns in the surveyed articles; and
- iii. To find out the key emergent and recurrent themes throughout news articles on climate change.
- iv. To examine the ideologies that underpin these themes and how they are legitimised.

1.9 Location and Scope of the study

The study was conducted in South Africa. Mainstream quality weekly mainstream newspapers that are national were chosen, namely, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *Mail and Guardian* and *City Press*.

The Mail & Guardian

The *Mail & Guardian* is a South African national weekly newspaper published by the M&G Media Limited. The newspaper was founded in 1985 by journalists retrenched from the collapsed *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Express* (<https://mg.co.za/page/about-us>). It started as the *Weekly Mail*, and after acquisition by the United Kingdom Guardian Media Group, the newspaper changed its name to the *Mail & Guardian*. In 2002, the Guardian Media Group sold its majority stake to Zimbabwean media mogul, Trevor Ncube, who in 2017 offloaded his ownership of the newspaper to the Media Development Investment Fund. The Chief Executive Officer, Hoosain Karjiker, became the minority empowerment shareholder. The M&G Staff Share Trust holds about ten per cent of the shares, and the rest of the shares are owned by minority shareholders.

Sunday Independent

The *Sunday Independent* was established in 1995 and is published by the Independent Media group. Though mostly concentrated in the Gauteng Province, the newspaper carries stories that are national in character and is distributed across the country and outside. The Independent Media website notes that the *Sunday Independent* has a readership of 130 000 people and a circulation of 21 205. The newspaper has a strong digital footprint as it has a competitive website hosted under the umbrella group site of Independent Online and operates social media handles accounts on Twitter, Facebook. The newspaper, according to the Independent Media website, has 90 000 online subscribers.

City Press

Founded in 1982 as the *Golden City Press*, the *City Press* is a South African national weekly newspaper published on Sunday. The newspaper is owned by the Media24 group (itself a subsidiary of Sekunjalo Holdings). According to the Media24 website, the *City Press* has a circulation of 46 535 and a readership of 1 698 000 people across the country and outside.

Sunday Times

The *Sunday Times* is the biggest weekly newspaper in South Africa. It was established in 1906. Currently, the newspaper is owned by the Tiso Blackstar group. According to the ABC Q2 statistics of 2019, the *Sunday Times* has a circulation of 240 000 and over 3 411 000 readers in and outside of South Africa.

1.10 Summary of chapters

Chapter One: Introduction

This Chapter introduced the research study and provided the background and outline of the research problem. It went on to provide the rationale and aims of the study, the research problems that necessitated the study, and which the study seeks to address.

Chapter Two: Climate change, Institutionalisation, Internationalisation, and Political economy

This chapter examined and discussed the politicisation of the climate problem and the resultant political ideologies that have attempted to shape climate governance. To achieve this, the chapter traced the internationalisation and institutionalisation of the climate problem. The chapter focused further on the political economies and ecologies of climate change in South Africa and globally.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework – Ecological Rift and Capitalist Risk Society

This chapter served as the grand theoretical foundation for the study. The chapter alluded to the idea that the problems of climate change that the world is facing are not isolated from the social relations of our existence. The chapter introduced and discussed the metabolic rift and ecological rift theories.

Chapter Four: Climate Change and the Media – A Review of Literature

Chapter four focused on exploring the role of the news media in relation to climate change coverage, representation, and construction. The chapter noted that research on climate change communication has substantially increased, albeit with more studies focusing on the global North. The chapter traced the historical development of climate change coverage in the news media, analysing the trends that have characterised this development. Further, the chapter discussed, from

a literature background, the influence of media political economics on climate change news representation and construction.

Chapter Five: The Theories and Methods of Articulation and Discourse Analysis

This chapter developed from the previous chapter by presenting the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin the discourse analysis study being undertaken. This chapter introduced and extended the key theories necessary in examining the news media representations and discourses of climate change in South Africa.

Chapter Six: Re-articulating media constructions of 'dangerous' climate change

Chapter six traced how the newspapers in South Africa have re/presented the climate change problem between 2011 and 2018, questioning the drivers of coverage and the critical discourse sponsors and how the knowledges and discourses of the key actors resulted in a particular slant in coverage in the four newspapers analysed. The chapter discussed how the newspapers re/presented the theme of climate change impacts.

Chapter Seven: Concealed agency and blame-shifting responsibility -The Politics of Global Climate change negotiations as represented in the South African Press

This chapter built a historical re/presentational overview on how the South African news media re/presented climate change negotiations between 2011 and 2018. The negotiations are a major news feature in the news media coverage and re/presentation of climate change.

Chapter Eight: Contradictory national discourses – Representing the political economy of climate change and energy in South Africa

Chapter eight presented the analyses and interpretation of climate change mitigation debates as they permeated the South African news media, identifying the key discourses on mitigation and energy and linking discourses to the vested interests of the actors that promoted them. Discourses on coal indispensability, nuclear optimism, and shale gas optimism are a preserve of the minerals-energy complex and the Department of Energy and that of Mineral Resources, the and beneficiaries of any developments in those sectors.

Chapter Nine: Contested Landscapes and the Barriers to Action: Corporate South Africa and the rhetoric of Industrial Growth

This chapter rearticulated mitigation discourses that were premised on the carbon budget and carbon taxes. The chapter discussed how these discourses played out in the newspapers, examined whether the media took ideological positions that promoted and reproduced the interests of particular actors, especially those in the minerals-energy complex or reproduced the government discourse. Overall, this chapter provided a general critique of market instruments of a carbon tax and the included elements of carbon trade in the mitigation approaches pursued by South Africa.

Chapter Ten: Media (re-)production of the neoliberal green economy: Towards Environmental Financialisation and Commodification

The first section articulates the green economy optimistic discourses as they traversed the South African weekly newspapers. The news media representations of climate change in South Africa, as part of the solutions narrative, often reproduced the ideas of techno-optimism where buzzwords such as ‘green economy,’ ‘sustainable development’, and ‘green growth’ were used and reproduced as common-sense ideologies. The second section provides a re-articulation of these discourses by bringing out the ‘small’ but critical green economy disarticulating discourses. Most of the articles in the second section were in the form of Op-Eds from academics, environmental activists and the faith communities.

Chapter Eleven: Summary and Conclusions

Chapter Eleven provides a conclusion and summary of the entire thesis.

Chapter Two: Climate Change: Institutionalisation, Internationalisation and Political Economy

2.1 Introduction

An articulation of media representations of climate change in South Africa demands a full grasp of the problems that have been brought by the warming climate, the politics that are at play in terms of governance as well as attempts to address the problem and the political economy of climate change in South Africa and globally. The chapter starts by discussing and tracing the internationalisation and institutionalisation of the climate problem. This is followed by South Africa's response and mitigation mechanisms to climate change. The chapter goes on to examine and discuss the politicisation of the climate problem and the resultant political ideologies that have attempted to shape climate governance in South Africa. The chapter further discussed the political economics and ecologies of climate change in South Africa. Allusions are made to the need to simultaneously curb emissions and achieve economic development, the latter requiring (as per the government of South Africa policy narratives) a reliance on fossil fuels.

2.2 Climate change politics: Institutionalisation and Internationalisation

Climate change is a major problem for the whole planet. The climate problem has been acknowledged globally starting with the Brundtland report published in 1987. The first discourses on climate change were dualised between those who denied the science (Carvalho 2005; Carvalho & Burgess 2005) and those who strongly believed that climate change was anthropogenic and human activities were worsening the state of the climate. (Carvalho & Burgess 2005). However, through continuous research by universities across the globe and by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) ranging from the first assessment report of 1990 to the fifth assessment report of 2014, governments globally now concur that climate change is real and human activities are responsible. This is evidenced by the broad consensus found in the Conference of Parties (COP) meetings held under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The key problems facing the world today are how the world should approach, respond and mitigate climate-induced problems. Key divisions exist between the global South developing nations such as South Africa, China and India, and the global North developed countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia. The latter have successively advocated for responses hinged on neo-liberal market principles that commodify nature and subject it to the capitalist motives of profit. Contradictions are also prevalent within the global South nations who are now divided according to levels of development and exploitation of natural resources. Within this bloc, countries with high emission ratios are reluctant to cut their emissions using ‘the need to develop and catch up’ as a defence. Brazil, South Africa, India, and China (BASIC) are the countries whose emissions combined constitute over 40 percent of total global emissions (Friedrich et al. 2017)⁴. There have been calls for these countries to curb emissions and follow a sustainable future.

This study, grounded within South Africa, examined the climate change discourse(s) as they have played out in the mainstream quality newspapers in the country. This is important as these newspapers are highly influential in terms of informing policy and public opinion (Carvalho 2010; Boykoff 2008). The newspapers selected here are key agenda-setters in South Africa. Combined, all the four newspapers are quality and have a wide national and regional reach, with enormous power on agenda indexing and being a key guide for what is in the public interest. Therefore, how the South African media covers and represents the policy positions and implementation is important.

The next section discusses the international climate change response process.

⁴ <https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/04/interactive-chart-explains-worlds-top-10-emitters-and-how-theyve-changed>

2.3 International Response to Climate Change

Globally, climate change responses have been institutionalised and internationalised multilaterally through the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p. xxi). The UNFCCC is a product of the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit of 1992. Steps towards institutionalising climate change can be traced to the publication of the Brundtland Report entitled '*Our Common Future*' in 1987 (Böhm et al. 2012), a document that gave warning on global warming, and incubated the idea of sustainable development. Subsequent to the Brundtland report, Malta gave a request to the United Nations General Assembly in 1988 to seriously consider climate change. The General Assembly "took up the issue for the first time and adopted resolution 43/53, declaring climate change to be 'a common concern of mankind'" (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.22). The climate change institutionalisation process received momentum in 1990 when the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) produced its First Assessment Report detailing that "although there were many uncertainties, human activity was leading to increased atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ and rising temperatures" (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.23). The report led to the Ministerial Declaration of the Second World Climate Conference "which recommended that negotiations on a framework climate convention begin without delay" (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.23).

While the UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, it only became operational in 1994. Post the 1994 operationalisation of the UNFCCC, the first Conference of Parties (COP1) met in Berlin in 1995 and "adopted a number of decisions elaborating on the Convention, including for example, guidance to the financial mechanism and guidelines for submitting national reports" (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.24). As noted by Farhana Yamin and Joanna Depledge (2004, p.24), COP1 adopted the Berlin Mandate which found that the emission reduction commitments from industrialised countries were inadequate and called for a binding instrument. The Berlin Mandate called for renewed negotiations with the view of reviewing "the commitments of industrialised countries, but not introduce any new commitments for developing countries" (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.24). As one of the key climate response tools, the Berlin Mandate concentrated on 'historical responsibility' and became blind to 'present responsibilities', thus, it shielded the global South fast developing economies from taking any reduction action. It is then important to articulate that it is from these international processes that the fast-developing

countries in the global South have found refuge and continue to claim for ‘developmental spaces’ despite these countries being the biggest global carbon emitters combined. The news media reports analysed show that the mentality of the right to develop and escaping responsibility continue to characterise the attitudes of developing global South countries such as South Africa, India and China towards emissions reduction.

In 1996, the IPCC released its Second Assessment report. The report was formerly adopted and endorsed at COP2 held in Geneva the same year. The IPCC’s first assessment report had indicated that despite the several gaps in science, human activities were likely to blame for the warming planet. The second assessment report brought more scientific evidence. The evidence was supported by many scientists who concurred that “human activities were indeed changing the world’s climate” (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p.24). Following the adoption and endorsement of the second assessment report in 1996, Parties to the UNFCCC, meeting as COP3 in Kyoto in 1997, began a process towards a binding roadmap on emissions reduction. Similar to the Berlin Mandate, the underlying argument at COP3 was that developed countries had to cut their emissions by 5.2 percent of the 1990 levels (Earth Negotiations Bulletin 2010). The result of the Kyoto summit was the Kyoto Protocol “which contains more specific, binding commitments and concrete reduction targets, within specific deadlines for industrialised countries” in terms of climate change mitigation (Yamin & Depledge 2004, p. xxi). The Protocol, which became operational in 2005 did not prescribe mitigation commitments to developing countries. Joanna Depledge (2006) has argued that the Kyoto Protocol and its Doha amendments of 2012 were ineffective as they were not ratified by some key emitting developed countries. For example, the United States which is one of the top emitters, refused to sign and ratify the protocol. In 2010 another top emitter, Canada, withdrew from the agreement. While the protocol has been lauded as an achievement, this study notes that the Protocol took a neoliberal approach by introducing the Clean Development Mechanism and the Emissions Trading Scheme, instruments that effectively began the process of commodifying nature (Kumi et al. 2014). In the last section of this chapter, a discussion of neoliberalism and market economics in relation to South Africa and climate change is provided.

Due to the poor ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, the UNFCCC attempted to come up with a post-2012 second phase of the Kyoto agreement. Meeting as COP13 in Bali in 2007, the UNFCCC again failed to achieve a binding agreement and only came up with amendments to the original Kyoto Protocol. The geopolitical divides between the global North versus the South made it difficult for an agreement to be reached. Global North countries insisted that the fast-developing countries be included in the mitigation action scenarios, while the fast-developing countries were reluctant to commit to any binding emissions reduction arrangement. They argued that they needed a ‘developmental space’ to catch up and improve their societies. Ultimately, the amendments agreed in Indonesia became known as the Bali Road Map, which was basically an agreement for a two-year negotiating period with the hope of coming up with binding climate change deal at the COP15 meeting in Copenhagen. Unfortunately, the hopes of a climate change deal in 2009 faded on the eve of the conference as leaks from the University of Anglia’s (Climategate) scientists revealed that scientists had manipulated data. New hopes were put on COP17 which was to be held in 2011, in Durban South Africa (Earth Negotiations Bulletin 2010). The COP17 again failed to deliver a climate deal, only managing to come up with the Durban Platform which gave a roadmap for a global climate deal by 2015 and an agreement to have second Kyoto commitment period, with the mechanism for this second phase being left to be decided at COP18 in Doha. Central to note is that the news media in South Africa constructed and re/represented the Kyoto Protocol as a common sense and a best way to address the climate change crisis (see Chapter Seven).

In 2015, meeting as COP21, parties to the Conference of Parties in 2015 adopted the Paris Agreement, which became the new international mechanism towards addressing climate change. It is important to note that the Paris Agreement, rather than being an internationally binding agreement, is based on what is called the ‘name and shame’ principle where countries voluntarily put forward their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) and thus mitigation is achieved through faith that the countries will meet their mitigation commitments. However, the United States, through its President Donald Trump in June 2017, notified the UNFCCC secretariat of the pulling out of the U.S. from the Paris Agreement describing the deal as a “hoax concocted by China to weaken the competitive industrial power of the U.S.” (Zhang et al. 2017, p.213). President Trump asked for a renegotiation of the deal to accommodate the growth needs of the United States. Yong-Xiang Zhang et al. (2017, p.214) argued that the United States withdrawal

was “expected” because Trump “had claimed several times that climate change is a hoax”. The United States’ withdrawal could also be attributed to Trump’s desire “to re-stimulate the U.S. fossil energy industry” and his Republican party background, a party that “support the development of fossil fuel energy above all other aspects of energy policy” (Zhang et al. 2017, p. 214). Within the South African government and the news media terrains, Trump’s decision was described as ‘heating’ the world and going against the spirit of multilateralism. Several Op-Eds and news stories across the newspapers criticised the United States withdrawal.

Reaching a legally and internationally binding agreement, despite the need for such an instrument, has always been a challenge. The negotiations have often suffered due to aspects of sovereignty and geopolitical divides between the global North countries (especially the United States, Canada and Australia) and the global South. (mostly led by China, South Africa and India). As Depledge (2006, p.32) observed, the negotiations have been marked by geopolitical dichotomies with global South countries refusing to reduce emissions because they are not historically responsible for global warming. The global North has called for global South countries to curb their emissions based on present responsibilities, which largely point to developing countries such as China, India, Brazil and South Africa. These countries have become heavy emitters and thus need to reduce their carbon footprints. Whilst failure by the international system to regulate greenhouse gases could be attributed to many reasons, Yamin & Depledge (2004, p.1) argue that the main reason is that of “sovereignty which states are reluctant to concede”. Drawing from this argument, the non-binding nature of the Paris Agreement could be explained from this perspective as nation-states are reluctant to have international monitoring and regulation of their emissions. This is even though emissions are not nation-specific but affect the globe as a whole and thus the need for an international instrument to protect and preserve life on earth. In the preceding sections, it was mentioned that South Africa and its members in the BASIC bloc of countries have the highest emission rates in the world. Having looked at international response to climate change, it is important to look at how the BASIC group and South Africa in particular, have or are responding to climate change.

2.4 South Africa's response to climate change

South Africa has responded to climate change both as an individual and by forming partnerships through joining BASIC, BRICS, Africa Group etc. Participation in the multilateral climate change regimes is diverse and includes governments, non-government organisations, corporations, and specialised United Nations institutions. According to the UNFCCC website as of 2018, the Convention has a membership of 196 countries plus the European Union (which works as a united economic and political bloc). The groupings or negotiating blocs are normally organised around similar interests, vulnerability to climate change and geopolitical reasons. The global South countries are mostly organised around the Group of 77+China (G77+China), and the Africa Group. Other small but equally important groupings are there, such as the grouping of Small Island Nations. South Africa is a member of the Africa Group, the G77+China and BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) grouping. The latter is composed of fast developing countries whose economies are based on the consumption of fossil fuels for their growth. In these countries, fossil fuels are viewed as engines of growth (Never 2012; Hallding et al. 2013). These countries have consistently rejected calls to drastically reduce their emissions, claiming the 'right to pollute' and catching up. These geopolitical aspects of the international climate change debates also played out in the news media, where for instance, through political indexing, newspapers in South Africa reproduced the climate change foreign policy frameworks of the government. The themes such as 'the right to pollute,' 'catching up' and that South Africa was still a developing country in need of space to grow its economy, were reproduced and entrenched across the four newspapers. (the *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press*, the *Sunday Times* and the *Sunday Independent*). This was part of the concealment of mitigation responsibility and the 'clamour' for climate change finance because 'the country was just a passive victim of climate change' (see Chapter Seven).

It is crucial to trace the genesis and development of discourses that re/present and construct the global South as not responsible for taking climate change mitigation action. These histories are partly found in the United Nations climate discourses and partially found in individual national discourses where sovereignty and the 'right to develop' are considered central. Climate change regimes from 1992 were primarily based on the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) adopted in Rio de Janeiro. This principle allowed developing countries to continue emissions unhindered to achieve economic and social development. The principle of

Common But Differentiated Responsibilities is defined in principle seven of the Rio Declaration as a process where:

States shall co-operate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, states have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command (UNCED 1992).

In 1992, through the UNFCCC, a new dimension of Respective Capabilities was added. It emphasised that countries should reduce emissions in line with their specific national circumstances and developmental needs. The extended principle became known as the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (Pauw et al. 2014). Pieter Pauw et al. (2014) argued that the principles of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities were included in the UNFCCC framework to cater for "countries' different capacities and development levels" (p.1). At that moment, these were necessary to enable "negotiators to agree on an international legal framework for climate policy in the 1990s" (Pauw et al. 2014, p.1). According to Pauw et al. (2014, p.7), the concept of CBDR is based on "the ethical principle of consequentialism (i.e. justice based on outcomes of behaviour and decisions), polluters have a responsibility to act".

Based on historical responsibility, the principle placed responsibility for global warming squarely in the hands of developed countries. As such, developed countries were supposed to reduce their emissions and at the same time provide adaptation finance to global South developing countries. However, calls have been made by developed countries and scientists for a review of the original principle considering the developments in greenhouse gases emission scenarios. The balance in emissions has shifted from the industrialised countries being the major emitters to the developing countries, especially those in BASIC and Russia becoming the major emitters, accounting for more than 40 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions (Friedrich et al. 2017). South Africa, as a key global greenhouse gas emitter and a global South nation, has consistently refused to take climate mitigation action citing the CBDR principle. The principle, as Chapter Seven shows, has been central to the South African government's negotiating tactics and the news media have largely followed this discursive construction. Within these constructions, South Africa is universalised

with the rest of the ‘developing countries’ who are passive victims of climate change and in need of financial action to take action.

Pauw et al. (2014, p.1) argued that the “dichotomous differentiation between the ‘Annex 1’ parties [developed/industrialised countries] and ‘Non-Annex 1’ parties [developing countries]” was problematic because it “reflects neither scientific knowledge nor current political realities”. As a result, the international climate change regime is viewed as “dysfunctional” because “mitigation efforts by industrialised countries alone would be insufficient to avoid dangerous climate change” (Pauw et al. 2014, p.1). This has reduced South Africa and its partners in the BASIC bloc to mere spectators despite having the highest combined emission rate. Important to this study is this lack of participation by South Africa and its implications and impact on climate change news reports in South African media.

The “rise of emerging economies such as China and India – now among the world’s major greenhouse gas emitters” (Pauw et al. 2014, p.1), called into question the adequacy of the international climate change system that is based on Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC). Pauw et al. (2014) saw the need for a reconfiguration of the “conceptualization and implementation of CBDR” pointing to the fact that Differentiated Responsibilities imply “adoption and implementation of different commitments for different states while taking into account their diverse circumstances and capacities, their historical contributions to CO₂ emissions and their specific development needs” (Pauw et al. 2014, p.2).

Members of BASIC have received a lot of attention and criticism from the global North countries at the UNFCCC meetings that deal with climate change mitigation. As a result, BASIC countries feel “increasingly pressured by developed countries to take emissions limitations that they see as unfair due to their minimal role in creating the climate change problem in the first place” (Hallding et al. 2013, p.609) As Babette Never (2011, p.4) argued, these countries “not only gain weight in the international political system, but also have a growing impact on ecosystems while they struggle to sustain economic growth and development”. Drawing from Karl Hallding et al. (2013, p.610), these countries see “natural resources” and especially “energy sources” as central to the development of their economies as they are regarded as “engines of development”. As such, Hallding et al. (2013, p.610) linked the exploitation and usage of these energy resources to social

and political power, noting that these countries' "future prosperity" depends on energy utilisation hence they seek to reinforce their positions and fight for a "developmental space" in the "carbon space". Delys Weston (2012, p.100) noted that "South Africa, in concert with China, India and Brazil, has argued it is a developing economy with large impoverished populations and, as such, cannot have restraints placed on its development trajectory".

South Africa together with other Global South countries (Non-Annex 1 as per the UNFCCC definition) see the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities as an important principle of the international negotiation system. However, they view plans to revise it as curtailing their 'right to develop'. This is in contrast with Pauw et al. (2014, p.3) who argued that CBDRRC as it is currently read, "hardly reflects ... greenhouse gas (GHG) emission realities". This shows that South Africa and her global partners are more concerned about development than reducing their emissions. It has been argued that all countries must act, and their contributions are subject to their 'differing circumstances'. The differing circumstances refer to the developmental needs, especially those of developing countries. South Africa has used this argument to allow for more allowances in the global carbon space/budget so as to meet its economic developmental needs and to catch up with the global North. The promotion of the notions of 'the right to pollute' and 'a developmental space' by the South African government, were re/produced without questioning by the news media. Analogous to Bernard Cohen's (1963) observations, the news media often reproduce the foreign policy of their governments with little or no questioning. This is true of the mainstream newspapers in South Africa. Claims by the government were often reproduced directly and entrenched by the newspapers.

South Africa is one of the main actors and capable of influence in international climate change governance through its membership of groupings such as BASIC, BRICS, G77+China and the Africa Group. However, due to its present socio-economic state of being partly a developed country as well as being a developing country, it has chosen to take the stance taken by developing countries. Throughout the UNFCCC framework, developing countries have treated themselves as passive victims of climate change and less attention has been paid to the increasing emissions by these countries including South Africa.

Pauw et al. (2014, p.27) noted that due to “high per capita emissions” South Africa pledged to cut its emissions by about 34% by 2020 at the Copenhagen COP15 in 2009. However, South Africa was not only criticised for these ‘unrealistic’ ambitions but also for dishonesty as the country was developing coal-fired power plants (Medupi and Kusile). This raised questions on how the 2009 pledge was going to be achieved (Bond, 2012). The country further received criticism from the G77+China and the Africa Group who saw this move as moving away from ‘collective responsibility’ negotiating principle. The position taken by South Africa had deviated from the umbrella Africa Group negotiating platform. Godwell Nhamo (2011, p.5) observed that “South Africa surprised many when it pledged to reduce emissions by 34 per cent in 2020 and 42 per cent in 2025 a day before the Copenhagen Climate Summit of December 2009”.

South Africa did not only face criticism from its negotiating partners and observers but there was also indecision within itself. The South African negotiators announced a reduction of 34 per cent in 2020 on the 7th of December in 2009. The following day on the 8th of December, the office of the Presidency issued a statement announcing that the country: “As a developing country with huge developmental challenges, South Africa cannot afford to take on any binding emission reduction targets” noting that South Africa had “an energy intensive economy” (The Presidency 2009c cited by Nhamo 2011, p.18). This shows that the pledge was an empty rhetoric riddled with internal policy inconsistencies. Lumumba Di-Aping accused the South African delegation to the Copenhagen summit of 2009 of “actively [seeking] to disrupt the unity of the Africa bloc” (Di Aping cited in Bond 2012, p.152). South Africa, through its 2010 Green Paper noted that the country was both a big contributor to emissions and at the same time a key victim of the impacts of climate change. Patrick Bond (2012, p.152) criticised this position because it seemed to “fit within an all too predictable Pretoria formula: talking left, so as to more rapidly walk right”.

At the global level, South Africa has been referred to as the “bridge builder” between the members of G77+China countries and developed countries with its flexible approach to the principle of CBDR (Pauw et al. 2014, p.28). However, this flexible approach is nothing but a flip-flopping exercise which achieves nothing but hinders SA’s full commitment to solving the climate problem.

South Africa, operating under BASIC in 2011 and as part of the Africa Group in 2014, advocated for the adoption of a climate change deal based on the Equity Reference Framework (Ngwadla & Rajamani 2014, p.4). The Equity Reference Framework (ERF) included three elements “(a) a definition of the required global effort as informed by the temperature goal, (b) a definition of the relative fair effort by parties – who does what, and (c) an assessment process for adequacy of commitments by parties” (Ngwadla & Rajamani 2014, p.4). This ERF is also underlined in the proposals put forward by the Africa Group through a submission by Swaziland. The proposal noted that the Paris Agreement was to be modelled along the ERF principles:

Determination of the required global effort to meet long-term goal agreed ... comprising of the required mitigation and adaptation effort, including the associated finance and technology needs, noting the adaptation, finance, and technology needs depend on the depth of commitments by Parties (Ngwadla & Rajamani 2014, p.4).

Despite both the Africa Group and BASIC bloc agreeing on the ERF, politics has shaped the global climate change negotiations. The BASIC bloc and the Africa Group often disagreed on response frameworks, where countries stuck to their national priorities and actions. This creates problems for South Africa as it is a member of both groups. South Africa is often conflicted, and this might explain why the country seems to be always suffering from indecision when it comes to tackling the climate change problem. However, South Africa’s actions within the negotiations framework shows that the country often put its national priorities first ahead of agreements within the negotiating groups. That is, it always goes against what would have been agreed within the groups as mentioned earlier in this section. However, generally, South Africa, as part of both BASIC group and the Africa Group, places more emphasis on the two aspects of historical responsibility and developmental needs. Additionally, South Africa excludes the ‘present responsibility’ view, which lies mostly with its partners in BRICS, BASIC, and G77+China. This showed in the country’s proposals which lack any narrative on how the country seeks to correct present responsibility in relation to emissions inequality within the country and in Africa. The centralisation of two aspects of historical responsibility and developmental needs is an attempt to shape policy narratives and discourses by locating responsibility for mitigation ‘elsewhere’ through ‘othering’ and ‘distanciation’ (McManus 2000) while providing immunity to the country.

The discourse on climate change is never value-neutral and is always characterised by ideological viewpoints of different discourse actors. While the global South countries pursued the path to development based on exploiting natural resources, it is important to understand how the mainstream newspapers selected for this study either challenged or strengthened such a developmental discourse built by the government and the corporate sector. The media are important in shaping discourses in society and hence play a central role in policy formulation, adoption and implementation. Studies have shown that the media tend to follow the foreign policy positions of their countries (Cohen 1963) and often consciously or subconsciously participate in legitimising ideological and policy positions of their countries. This study examined how the South African quality mainstream newspapers represented climate change discourses as they evolved and how they covered the policy positions taken by the South African government. How the media covered the policy positions of the South African government worked in legitimising such positions.

The media is important in these debates because of their power to control discursive structures. The media selected for this study are also instrumental for their sheer capacity to define and determine the frames and representations within which climate change is to be articulated and understood in South Africa and outside. By either legitimising or delegitimising the views of the South African government, the media can contribute significantly on how climate change governance is shaped and implemented both at national and international levels. This is because of the country's strong influence on the climate change international scene as it belongs to powerful negotiating groups. The views of South Africa, BASIC countries and the Africa Group are becoming prominent at the international stage. As noted earlier, international climate change arenas are always characterised by geopolitical divisions. The legitimisation of South African and global South viewpoints on climate change mitigation, especially on emissions reduction and redefining the CBDR, not only help shape climate change governance but also serves a political purpose of positioning the country as a key actor within the international community. The role of the media, therefore, becomes one of strengthening the image and power of the country. The media becomes a site of ideological signification and for promotion of global south ideologies against the global north. Importantly, the ideological cultures resultant thereof promotes global south

representations and cultural maps. The climate change responses discussed in this section can also be understood through reference to the internal national contestations and discourses.

2.5 Climate change mitigation in South Africa

Discussions on climate change mitigation in South Africa gathered pace post-2007 after the African National Congress (ANC) conference that adopted a resolution on climate change for the first time (Never 2011). Since then several proposals on mitigating climate change have been put through. These included the National Climate Change Response White Paper, the Long-Term Mitigation Scenarios (LTMS) study, the Mitigation Potential Analysis (MPA), the first, second and third national communications to the UNFCCC and the Carbon Tax Bill of 2015 and its revised version of 2018. Furthermore, the country's energy policies bear weight on how the country develops and implements climate change policies. South Africa's energy sector mitigation strategy is broad and focuses on diversifying energy sources, promote carbon sequestration (capture) and reduce the use of coal-bed methane (DEA 2017, p.xix). In terms of the transport sector, the government hopes to reduce emissions by promoting investments in electric vehicles and biofuels. However, this has been met with suspicion as there is no explanation as to the source of the electricity to be used by these electric vehicles. This study observed as a weakness the way the transport systems are to be transformed. If the electricity is from coal, then the demand for fuel is simply shifted from the oil sector towards the coal sector and there is no actual reduction in emissions that takes place. The data analysis chapters have revealed the reproduction of these policy imperatives, mostly uncritical, by the newspapers. For example, the energy futures discourse was characterised by nuclear and renewable energy optimism, while techno-managerial interventions such as carbon sequestration were reproduced by the news media as a common sense and rational way of reducing emissions. The news media, this study argues, reproduced and entrenched the policy discourses of the government and the minerals-energy complex because of the inherent reliance of journalists on official government sources (indexing).

2.6 The political economy and ecology of climate change in South Africa

Weston (2012, p.13) posited that, a critical political economy approach enables one to “analyse and understand how particular ideologies serve particular social classes and how this is tied to concepts of power and hegemony”. The media do not operate in a political-economic or cultural vacuum; hence the need arises for the interrogation of that context and building of explanations on

how the context articulates and is also articulated by discourses. Articulation comes in to re-think, re-theorise and re-link this discourse to this context, this context to this politics and this politics to this practice (Grossberg 1992). Therefore, it is important for this study to interrogate and understand the relationship between politics, economy, social development and climate change in South Africa.

South Africa has an energy-intensive industry and this impacts on its desired mitigation policies. This study examined, through media representations, and other prevailing discourses (political, policy and energy), the congruence between the proposed mitigation measures contained in the government proposals such as Third National Communication and others, against the actions on the ground. Globally, the country has taken an ambitious plan to curb emissions and the Third National Communication presents another ambitious commitment by the country. However, contradictions emerge between what is proposed and what takes place on the ground. While the government has proposed massive cuts in emissions, new coal mines and coal-powered power plants continue to be constructed, new oil refineries are built and old ones expanded, the transport sector continues to rely on diesel power and the investments in renewable energy are tiny. The news media analysed seldom critically talked about these contradictions and discourses, rather the media reinforced the preferred policy principles of the government through their representation. Below is a brief overview of South Africa's preferred proposals towards carbon emissions. Following this section, is a discussion on the political economy and ecology of climate change and global warming in South Africa. This is done to juxtapose the gaps between the proposals and the actions on the ground. By so doing a better understanding of the climate change discourse in the country is developed.

Weston (2012, p.iii) argued that "the Earth's biosphere is approaching global warming tipping points which, if passed, will become irreversible, taking the planet on a trajectory to a new geological era, unsuitable for human life". Noting that there has been little debate on the feasibility of the current market proposals to solve climate change (renewable energy, technology), Weston (2012, p.iii) argued that "the dominant political economy framework in which they are embedded, precludes real and effective alternatives". Weston (2012, p.iv) noted further that "[T]he problems of global warming cannot be solved through capitalism". Drawing from Samir Amin (1997), Weston argued that South Africa "captures and reflects the global social relations of production,

exemplifying the ecologically exploitative and destructive nature of the capitalist political economy” (Weston 2012, p.5).

Weston (2012, p.5) noted that

South Africa is run on neoliberal economic policies; it has enormous poverty and on some reckonings is the most unequal society on the planet; it exhibits the symptoms of a classic Marxist ‘metabolic rift’ – that is, the rift between the ecological and economic reproductive dimensions of society. South Africa demonstrates the traits of alienation in various forms; it reveals in various ways both the imperative and the expansion of capital accumulation and growth (and a failure of trickle down); it exemplifies the way that financialisation occurs and how that exacerbates not only inequality and class divisions but also global warming; it demonstrates the convergence of interests of the global elites; it provides a good example of the contradictory influences of international institutions and the capitalist model of development, particularly in the context of global warming...illustrates the lack of motivation on the part of the national government and of global institutions such as the World Bank when driven by the edicts of neoliberalism to address the problems of global warming.

As noted by Hallding et al. (2013, p.49), the South African economy is energy intensive and “its per capita greenhouse gas emissions are high by world standards”. This view aligns with observations made by Nhamo (2011, p.6) who saw South Africa’s emissions as “too large compared to its population and economy” and are “by far the highest in Africa”. Coal is the biggest source of energy for both residential and industrial areas. In relation to the emission of greenhouse gas emissions, it has been argued that “the coal-burning power plants of the parastatal Eskom and the coal/gas-to-oil conversions of Sasol” (Bond 2012, p.145) are the key culprits. Weston (2012, p.99) observed that “South Africa, compared to the rest of Africa, is a disproportionately large producer of carbon emissions – emitting more than 40 per cent of Africa’s greenhouse gases from less than 8 per cent of Africa’s population – and with the majority of its electricity produced from coal”.

The complexity of the energy and climate-mitigation nexus in South Africa needs evisceration. On the one hand, the country’s economy is dependent on fossil fuels and on the other hand the present climate change problems require the country to drastically reduce its carbon footprint. Cutting fossil fuels means at the same time cutting the ‘prospects of development’ and reducing unemployment. However, the present use of the fossil fuels, as Bond (2012) argued, has not led to

better standards of living for the majority of South Africa. Rather, few industrial elites in the minerals-energy complex have benefitted. These observations are important when read together with the news stories. Government and actors from the minerals-energy complex often promoted climate change policy frameworks that sought to maintain the status quo. Discourses from companies such as Eskom, Sasol, BHP Billiton, and ArcelorMittal often revealed these tendencies of economising coal use in the name of ‘economic growth’ and job creation. This universalisation of interests that were necessarily of the minerals-energy elite, was used to interpellate the people, make them imagine and feel addressed by the voices of these actors. Overall, it is important to argue that South Africa’s climate change policy arenas are hugely polluted by vested interests from the minerals-energy complex. Together with government discourses, especially those emanating from the Department of Energy, these discourses became tendential forces with discursive superiority.

Weston (2012, p.78) argued that South Africa “provides a snapshot of the contradictions and processes of capitalist system and capital accumulation both historically and in the contemporary neoliberal phase, from the viewpoint of a middle-income country which displays the considerable distresses of uneven and ecologically destructive development”. Furthermore, Weston (2012, p.78) saw South Africa displaying the contradictions of global warming noting that:

on the one hand the economy is underpinned by coal as the primary source of energy and the extraction rate of South Africa’s vast reserves is being increased for domestic consumption, for the cheap/less-than-cost processing of materials for multinational benefit and export. On the other hand, South Africa, and Africa generally, is very vulnerable to the impacts of global warming.

While energy consumption is high in South Africa and is often equated to economic growth, it has been shown that this development has not been helpful in uplifting the standards of living for many South Africans (Hallding et al. 2011, p.49). Inequalities and lack of economic opportunities for the majority remain rife. Governments within BASIC and the global South in general have in the past refused to curb emissions because they were still pursuing development for the betterment of their people. However, this is not the case for South Africa where only big corporations and industrial giants have benefitted and not the majority of the population. Not only is there no benefit for the country’s poor but also it is the poor who have been greatly affected by the aftereffects of

big corporations like in the case of children dying from cancer related illnesses in Mpumalanga province. Additionally, Hallding et al. (2011, p.49) observed that while electricity generation was high, “many people still have poor access to energy sources”. They further noted that South Africa “suffers from enormous levels of economic inequality” where “much of the population is yet to benefit from the country’s growing economy” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.49). These contradictions were best described by Amin (1997, p.np) who characterised South Africa as:

a kind of microcosm of the global capitalist system, which brings together in a single territory a number of features peculiar to each constituent category of that system. It has a white population which, in its life style and standard of living belongs to the ‘first world’, while the urban areas reserved for blacks and coloureds belong to the modern day industrial ‘third world’ and Bantustans (now ex-Bantustans) containing the ‘tribal’ peasantry do not differ from peasant communities in Africa’s ‘fourth world’.

This underlines what Bond (2012) put forward that the levels of emissions in South Africa were not at par with economic development. He explained this disparity by drawing references to Ben Fine and Zavareh Rustomjee’s (1996) concept of the Minerals-Energy Complex where most of the emissions were due to coal-powered stations that supplied cheap electricity to the mining corporations and citizens had to pay more electricity rates to cover for the deficiencies created through these energy-mining subsidies. This culminates, in the words of David McDonald (2009), in ‘electric capitalism’. Importantly, these mining corporations who received cheap electricity did not reinvest the money locally but repatriated their profits back to Australia (in the case of BHP Billiton) and London (in the case of Anglo American) creating deficiencies in the country’s current accounts and balance of payment Bond (2012). Interesting to note is that the news media have reproduced the ‘myth’ of coal for development. The sponsors of the coal indispensability narrative were often drawn from actors in the minerals-energy complex, actors who propagated, through economisation and blackmail, the idea that coal was an indispensable resource in South Africa’s development trajectory. Actors from the minerals-energy complex had power over both the media and policy discourses, as the policies that were and still being pursued by the government often followed the interests of the minerals-energy complex. A case in point is the Integrated Resource Plan of 2010 and its subsequent revisions, which have put coal at the centre of ‘energy security’ and ‘national development’. The licensing of new coal mines and power stations such as

Thabametsi and Coal3 (discussed in chapter eight) is testament of the discursive power of the minerals-energy complex.

Furthermore, Sam Ashman et al. (2010, p.178) contended that South Africa ran along the lines of mixed or dualised economy influenced politically and economically by the 'Minerals-Energy Complex', an economy heavily dependent on mining and coal powered power plants. Ashman et al. (2010, p.178) noted that in this economy "accumulation has been and remains dominated by and dependent upon a cluster of industries, heavily promoted by the state, around mining and energy". Bond (2012, p.145) also noted that the "electricity produced by burning coal is cross-subsidized so that it is the cheapest available anywhere in the world's largest mining and metals corporations". The biggest consumers of electricity are mining companies. These companies receive electricity at subsidised rates (Bond 2012; McDonald 2009; Fine & Rustonjee 1996) yet their activities do not benefit the majority of the South Africans both socially and economically. Anglo-American and BHP Billiton companies receive subsidised electricity for their smelter consumption at \$0.02/kw/h, with other big mining companies also getting their electricity at extremely cheaper prices of \$0.05/kw/h. Other beneficiaries of cheap electricity in South Africa are big mining corporations such as ArcelorMittal and Xstrata (Bond 2012, p.145). Nhamo (2011, p.6) saw the "low energy prices" enjoyed by the "coal-energy economy" as responsible for "the development of energy-intensive industries" rather than social and economic development.

Additionally, Fine and Rustonjee (1996) noted that the South African economy was organised around and controlled by what they termed the minerals-energy complex. They noted that the relationship between energy producers was too close and the mining companies paid too little for electricity. With the remaining balance being paid for by individual consumers who paid more for their home electricity. McDonald (2009), in furthering this conceptualisation, concluded that the South African economic matrix was characterised by what he termed Electric Capitalism (McDonald 2009).

The political economy and ecology of South Africa has been widely defined as too neoliberal. Behind the soft climate change policies by South Africa (emphasising on the country's willingness to curb emissions), Bond (2012) saw the expansion of fossil-fuel based energy industries in the country as a sharp contradiction of the rhetoric of a 'good global citizen' that South Africa wants

to portray globally. While the country issued several policy documents such as the Green Paper of 2010 and the Second National Climate Change Communication, on the ground, the country pursued an environmentally hostile path characterised by the introduction of the Medupi and Kusile coal powered power plants. The Medupi plant was financed through a World Bank loan of \$3.75 billion in 2010 (Bond 2012). This shows contradictions and double standards not only by South Africa but also by international blocs/superpowers and financiers. On one hand they want to reduce emissions but on the other hand they are funding projects which increases emissions. Both the 2010 Green paper and the 2017 Third Climate Change Communication report noted that South Africa as a ‘good global citizen’ truly seeks to reduce its global carbon footprint. However, such a position sharply contrasts the developments on the ground (Bond 2012). Critical to note are the extensive developments that took place at Medupi power plant – with capacity to expand coal-powered electricity generation, and the development of over forty mines across South Africa to act as feeders to Medupi and the successor Kusile (Bond 2012, p.157).

To enhance the criticism, the *Mail & Guardian* in 2015⁵ paid attention to the political economy of the Medupi and Kusile power stations. The political economy of the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power stations, revealed that not only big corporations are part of the minerals-energy complex but also the South African government who benefited by being awarded a R40 billion tender to Hitachi Corporation, a company 25% owned by the ANC through its investment arm, Chancellor House. At the time of tender awards, Eskom Chairman, Popo Molefe, was also a member of the ANC’s Finance Committee and was Chairperson again of Chancellor House. These revelations help to bring to the fore the conflicts of interests and corruption that characterised South Africa’s energy plans. Key to note is; the government and actors in the minerals-energy complex continued to promote and propagate ideas that saw coal as a key ingredient of South Africa’s energy futures to satisfy ‘energy needs and national security’. These claims were again used to push against climate change mitigation policies that sought to do away with coal.

⁵ <https://mg.co.za/report/chancellor-house>

It is clear that the global warming discourses in South Africa have two neoliberal and highly capitalistic fronts. One that seeks to perpetuate the exploitation of natural resources and the one that seeks to promote the emissions trading facilities. According to Weston (2012, pp.10-11), the “global warming debate is contextualised within the capitalist framework which is so hegemonic that it presents the world as if it is ‘how it is’, the one and only reality and possibility for human development”. Steffen Böhm et al. (2012, p.4) criticised responses to climate change on neoliberal prescriptions because they worsened “uneven growth and disparities of income” and promoted “unequal distribution of economic, social and environmental risks that global markets produce”.

This study adopted the concept of discourse network analysis to examine how the companies and corporations that are part of the minerals-energy complex are covered and represented in the mainstream quality newspapers in South Africa. This study interrogated through discourse analysis, how these companies influenced the prevailing climate change discourses in South Africa. This comes after a study in Canada (see Chapter Four), noted that key polluters were not active in the press but rather used environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to do the lobbying. Most importantly, these studies noted that these players influenced policymaking even though they did not participate in media-environmental discourses. These companies are active participants and have an influence on the prevailing climate change discourse. It has been noted that Eskom and Sasol exert considerable influence in climate change policy formulation as they have permanent members in the South African climate change negotiating group (Never 2011). It was also noted that their relationship and influence in the Department of Energy (DoE) is also enormous. By using Discourse Network analysis this study explored groups that have influence in both the media and policy discourses. At a political level, the study attempted to address climate change discourses as they play out in parliament, political formations and gatherings. Research has shown that climate change in South Africa suffers from low political currency as the subject “barely registers as a political issue” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.50). The problem of climate change’s low political profile was blamed on the lack of discussion of the issue significantly in parliament “in which few voices raise climate change issues at national level” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.50). Inversely, it is assumed that since media and political discourses are constitutive, the lack of discussion in either discourse could have had a bearing on the salience or lack thereof, in the other. This study has observed that climate change discourses, be they political,

policy, or media, are often a preserve of a few actors in government, environmental non-governmental organisations, the minerals-energy complex and academics. Discourse analysis pays attention to how the non-discussion of a key issue can be itself a strong discursive act, hence the study interrogated the absence of climate change issues in parliament and investigated on the above issues and reflected on the underlying and some insidious issues and other connected discursive aspects surrounding the subject of climate change. The study was also interested in how the silence by the parliament legitimised the prevailing dominant neoliberal politics that characterise climate change mitigation in the country. The free passage of neoliberal climate change policies in South Africa could be blamed on the silence from political parties that have pronounced themselves as opposed to the doctrine of neoliberalism, for example, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the African National Congress (ANC) itself and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

Important to this study is the fact that “climate change and our reaction to it are, at least partly, socially constructed” (Never, 2011, p.5) and the media, together with other discourse actors are key in the production and construction of knowledge (or the silence on knowledge) and the shaping of climate policy. It is important to understand how the media discourses on climate change build representations and perceptions on climate governance that resonate with the discursive interests of influential discourse network actors. The media and these other discourse actors are part of what Never (2011, p.6) called a ‘communities of practice’ which are “informal networks whose members are not only bound by the exchange of information, but by a sense of joint enterprise or a common identity”. These groups and their relationships become very important as their actions, when they act together, significantly shape the future of climate and people. This study, therefore, examined, through political economy and discourse analysis, how these groups (politicians, civil servants, the news media and the minerals-energy complex) represented aspects of climate change, define and determine policy and hence help build consensus on mitigation measures to be taken by the South African government.

The economy of South Africa “is built heavily around its natural mineral and fossil fuel resources, and abundant coal” and this brings “powerful industry actors with interests aligned with this mineral-energy complex” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.51) to the climate change policy and media discursive spaces to control and define how these issues are discussed and thought about. As Never (2011, p.19) found, climate change governance in South Africa was “being driven by a small circle

that functions ‘almost like a closed club’’. At national government level, Never (2011, p.18) observed that the individual actors were in the ranges of between 15-25 people. At institutional level, the Department of Environmental Affairs was seen to be the most engaged, and also to a “lesser extent” the Department of Science and Technology and the Department of Energy. Academics were seen to be active – working as “delegations at the international negotiations, and some form part of the transnational epistemic community IPCC, thus connecting domestic and global governance” (Never 2011, p.18). Within the NGO sector, Never (2011, p.19) saw the World Wild Fund (WWF) as the most influential and close to the Department of Environmental Affairs. Other notable organisations were the Earthlife Africa and Climate Action Partnership. The examination of sourcing patterns in the news stories analysed across the four newspapers concur with and confirm these assertions by Never (2011). For example, the news media drew most of their stories from events organised or attended by officials from the Department of Environmental Affairs. This inadvertently led to the inherent indexing of political voices. The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, was by far the most referenced source across the four newspapers from 2011 to 2018. Furthermore, these sources also individually and sometimes in groups, wrote Op-Eds meant to outline policy frameworks and shape perceptions. In some cases, news reporters then produced stories that identically resembled the same views expressed in the Op-Eds.

At corporate level “two major emitting companies, Eskom and Sasol” were seen to be highly active as a community of practice (Never 2011, p.18). Never (2011, p.20) established that energy executives were awfully close and therefore had an influence on the Department of Energy. Eskom and Sasol were “very close to the DoE [Department of Energy]” and because of this relationship, the companies had “a strong influence on the energy components of climate governance” in South Africa (Never 2011, p.20). Hallding et al. (2011) supported this argument and noted that Eskom and Sasol have a very close relationship with government and heavily influence climate change policy formulation.

However, it has been noted that “some individuals and units in the companies and the DoE advocate *against* climate protection – or for nuclear energy – while the climate change teams and other parts of the DoE favor renewable energy and greater climate protection” (Never 2011, p.20). This shows lack of consensus even for groups that are part of a community of practice. It is

important for this study to see how such contrasts and contradictions are reported in the mainstream media. For its part Eskom, a state-owned monopoly electricity company, has been “criticized for an institutional culture that is openly hostile to renewable energy” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.51). Eskom reports more to the Department of Public Enterprises than the Department of Energy and the company has “permanent representatives on the country’s delegation to the UNFCCC” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.52). Sasol, “which produces liquid fuel from coal [and the] largest point-source of greenhouse gas emissions” was described by Hallding et al. (2011, p.51) as a “strategically important and influential industry player” and “important factor in the domestic energy sector”. Key to observe is that in the newspaper stories analysed, the two companies, together with actors from ArcelorMittal and BHP Billiton, often got preferential primary definitional power in the news where they promoted discourses that were diffident towards renewable energy. This, they achieved, through a discursive strategy of de-economisation. Renewable energy sources were constructed by these actors as ‘unreliable,’ ‘inefficient,’ ‘unable to provide baseload’ and too expensive. Coal and nuclear on the other hand, were considered reliable, efficient and cheap alternatives. These discourses often cohered with key ideas coming from newspaper editorials and Op-Eds written by senior editorial staff. For example, at the *Sunday Independent*, Jovial Rantao, Editor of the *Sunday Independent*, often showed bias towards coal which he portrayed as providing reliable electricity supply and Don Derby, the *Business Times* editor, who argued against renewables because they could not provide baseload. Drawing from Hallding et al. (2011, p.51), as a result of these conflicted interests, the strong links between the energy industry, the news media and those drafting and implementing climate change policy in South Africa was also responsible for curtailing policies that are ambitious in curbing greenhouse gas emissions because “powerful economic interests feel threatened by the prospect of an ambitious mitigation policy” (Hallding et al. 2011, p.51).

While there are key forces resistant to climate change mitigation based on reducing the use of fossil fuels, those, especially from the Department of Environmental Affairs who favour renewable energy are also contradicted. The South African response to climate change is highly contradictory. On the one hand the country seeks to continue with the exploitation of natural mineral energy resources, and on the other hand has actively participated in the UNFCCC sponsored Kyoto Protocol by endorsing the principle of Clean Development Mechanism, a scheme that is built on

carbon trading. It can be argued that carbon trading cannot be a panacea to climate change mitigation as it allows those companies with enough money to pollute and pay off their emissions by actually buying more carbon credits (Cabello 2009). The carbon market has become a potential new global financial market where nature is being subjected to the neoliberal tenets of profit (Evans & Musvipwa 2017). Due to their neoliberal nature, carbon markets allow big polluters to pollute and buy credits to continue polluting through buying carbon credits from developing countries and communities. At policy level, the Green paper of 2010 and the Third National Communication to the UNFCCC, South Africa sees its participation in the carbon market as lucrative. For example, the Greenpaper endorsed “market-based policy measures” which include “carbon trading and offsets” (Bond 2012, p.157). South Africa, through its participation in the carbon market, has benefited from a World Bank grant of US\$14.4 million to convert methane to electricity at the Bisasar Road dump in Durban. Communities around the Clare Estate have rejected the project and called for the closing of the dump that receives about 5000 tonnes of waste per day (Bond 2012). The news media often celebrated market-led climate solutions. Aspects of carbon trade, now included in the Carbon Tax Act of 2019, were celebrated as ways of addressing climate change. The uncritical reproduction of neoliberal solutions then led to capitalistic self-mutation where capital is viewed as capable of addressing the risks it produced.

This section has discussed the political economy and ecology of climate change in South Africa. The next section is a critique of this political economy, showing how it continues the appropriation of ‘finite’ resources as though they were ‘infinite’. Ulrich Beck’s (1992) risk society thesis is used to illuminate these criticisms.

2.7 Finite Resources and Risk Society: Capitalism with no guarantees

This section discusses the shortcomings of neoliberal capitalist responses to climate change and emissions reduction as informed by Beck’s (1992) risk society thesis. Using Beck’s ideas, the study also examined how the political economy and ecology of climate change in South Africa are re/presented in the news media. The key actors within the risk society attempt to gain legitimacy through defining the climate problem and proposing solutions through discourse. While past responsibility for global warming rests with the industrialised global North, present responsibility points more to industrial activities in very few countries of the global South, with BASIC and BRICS member states accounting for over 40 percent of total global emissions and South Africa

accounting for 40 percent of emissions in Africa. This new scenario brings to the fore the need for mitigation commitments from global South countries, who for the past, have claimed a space in the global carbon space to achieve ‘economic development’.

Informed by Beck’s thesis, it is important for this study to interrogate how elite actors within the minerals-energy complex and their proxies in the South African government might achieve dominance in climate change governance through their access to the media and also provide a pool of sources for the media to rely upon when constructing climate news. By so doing, they are able to articulate their views on climate change that favour a developmental path characterised by continued use of fossil fuels to ‘achieve economic development’ and to ‘lift the masses out of poverty’. At a geopolitical level, the discourse sponsors push through the dichotomy of North and South and play South Africa victim to global capitalist machinations that seek to hinder economic development. Principles of historical responsibility are emphasised, and aspects of present responsibility are conveniently ignored. All these discourse practices help build public opinion around capitalist interests. It was important for this study to interrogate how the media reported on these discourses.

Beck (1992, p.21) saw climate change problems as “risks of modernisation” and outcomes of industrialisation facilitated by the expansion of capitalism. Similarly, Felix Guattari (2000, p.15) saw climate change problems that face the world today as a wholesome product of exploitative tendencies symptomatic with capitalist expansion, arguing that a “capitalism that does not exploit resources – be they natural or human – is yet unthinkable. A capitalism that is symbiotic rather than parasitic may never be possible”. Importantly, Beck (1992, p.28) noted that the exploitation of natural resources led to the emergence of industrial society (risk society), which is characterised by the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere through industrial activities, leading to ecological risks such as increased land and sea temperatures, reduced precipitation and extreme weather. In his risk society thesis, Beck (1996) identified two phases that are between the industrial society (modernity) and risk society. Firstly, through industrial development, environmental risks in the form of an increase in atmospheric greenhouse concentrations and pollution are produced but are not subjected to public and political debate. Secondly, the “hazards of the industrial society dominate public, political and private debates” (Beck 1992, p.23) and at this stage “industrial

society” acknowledges that it is a risk society but still continues to make decisions and act on patterns of the old industrial society.

As these risks become evident and the need for change in our relationships with nature emerge, the dominant capitalist structures begin to provide prescriptions that ensure the survival of neoliberal capitalist systems at the cost of climate justice. Zygmunt Bauman (1991) cited by Beck (1996, p.38) criticised attempts to cure the climate change problem through neo-market principles arguing that such attempts bring more challenges than solutions:

fighting against the risks of unrestrained business activity has itself become a ‘major business offering a new lease of life to scientific/technological dreams of unlimited expansions. In our society, risk-fighting can be nothing else but business – the bigger it is, the more impressive and reassuring. The politics of fear lubricates the wheels of consumerism and helps to ‘keep the economy going’ and steers away from the ‘bane of recession’. Ever more resources are to be consumed in order to repair the gruesome effects of yesterday’s resource consumption. Individual fears beefed up by the exposure of yesterday’s risks are deployed in the service of collective production of the unknown risks of tomorrow (Bauman 1991 cited by Beck 1996, p.38).

Beck (1992) noted that the commodification and commercialisation of risks aligns so well with the capitalist logic of profit where environmental risks are seen as opportunities.

The media are important in the social constructions of risk and contestation (Cottle, 1998) as they legitimise the neoliberal capitalist system through “creating a climate of unquestioning passivity” Guattari (2000, p.15) to both local and global mitigation proposals. Jaclyn Dispensa and Robert Brulle (2003 cited by Boykoff 2011, p.4) saw “the news media [as serving] as an important institution for the reproduction of hegemony” where capitalist worldviews of climate governance are represented. For this reason, Boykoff (2011) suggested that any study of media representations of climate change should focus on the cultural politics of the representations to understand “how social and political framings are woven into both the formulations of scientific explanations of environmental problems and the solutions proposed to reduce them” (Boykoff 2011, p.5). Boykoff argued that the cultural politics that favour neoliberal responses and the “concomitant politics of interest groups have resulted in a naturalised consideration of market-led approaches to policy action” based on, “Commitments to economic growth, and deeply entrenched technological

optimism, have been significant forces influencing the wider cultural politics of climate change” (2011, p.5). While condemnations abound on “the dangers of emergent carbon capitalism associated with commodifying the atmosphere, and the fixation with market mechanisms as primary tools to answer climate questions,” (Boykoff 2011, p.5). Boykoff (2011) argued that such criticisms are absent from the mainstream media and rather the media is inundated with representations of market-led solutions. This study examined the extent to which these neo-liberal cultural politics of climate change are embedded and entrenched in the chosen mainstream newspapers in South Africa.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the institutionalisation, internationalisation and politicisation of climate change. All these tasks were undertaken because an articulation of media representations of climate change in South Africa demands a full grasp of the problems that have been brought by the warming climate, the politics that are at play in terms of governance, attempts to address the problem, and the political economy of climate change globally and in South Africa. This chapter examined and discussed the politicisation of the climate problem and the resultant political ideologies that have attempted to shape climate governance. To achieve this, the chapter traced the internationalisation and institutionalisation of the climate problem. The chapter went on to discuss the political economics and ecologies of climate change globally and in South Africa. The contradictions in climate governance in South Africa were discussed. Allusions are made to the need to simultaneously curb emissions and achieve economic development, the latter requiring (as per the government of South Africa policy narratives) a reliance on fossil fuels. The formal and informal networks that shape climate policy in South Africa were also examined. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework. The chapter introduces and discusses the metabolic and ecological rift theories found within environmental sociology. These theories are used in the study to align the analytical framework to critical approaches that have politicised and problematised the climate change problem as a problem of political economy and not the physical environment alone.

Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework - Ecological Rift and Capitalist Risk Society

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed highlighted the institutionalisation and internationalisation of climate change issues. This chapter serves as the grand theoretical foundation to the study. The chapter alludes to the idea that the problems of climate change that the world is facing are not isolated from the social relations of our existence. Rather, they are intrinsically tied to the political economic system of capitalism. As a way of entry, this study argues that global climate change and its attendant sub-problems are products of capitalist accumulation and material reproduction. Any discussion of climate change should encompass critical views from environmental sociology that agree that unfettered and unbound capitalist interests all work in entrenching accumulative behaviour, ecological destruction, biospheric disruption and thus climate change. The chapter draws on the works of Karl Marx (1963) to elucidate the concept of metabolic rift, as well as John Foster (2000, 2010), Brett Clark and Richard York (2005) and Clark (2008) to extend Marx's concept of metabolic rift to that of ecological rift. The concept of risk society (Beck 1992, 1996) is applied to draw attention to the risks produced by capitalism's logic of accumulation and the never-ending desire to exploit both nature and labour. These theoretical underpinnings are necessary in unpacking capitalism as an exploitative regime that has huge negative impacts not only on the exploited labour but on nature which it views as given *gratis* (freely) and thus valueless. Studies on media representations of climate change have seldom drawn their theoretical inspiration from these concepts. It is the object of this study to situate the discursive analysis of climate change representation in the news media within these broad theoretical foundations to broaden the analytical field and account for whether the media re/presentations themselves pay attention to these structural and existential issues of capitalist political economy and its attendant consequences on nature. As a way of argument, the study contends that the solutions put on the table to deal with climate change have been hugely neoliberal, shy away from the real questions of political economy, and therefore prescribe solutions that extend and entrench the culture of self-mutation that characterises capitalism. Concepts such as sustainable development, it is argued, are meant to build an image of capitalism that can cure the ills it produced through the rhetoric of responsible technologies and environmental engineering.

Two key observations regarding South Africa's climate change policy and discourse arenas are worthy describing. Firstly, the climate change discourses in South Africa are intimately linked to energy discourses. As noted earlier on in this thesis, South Africa is an energy-intensive economy, where coal represents the lifeblood of the entire economy. Climate change mitigation requires that countries divest from coal and reduce emissions by all possible means. To imagine this in the South African context also forces one to imagine the complex energy scenarios and vested interests. Radical coal divestments mean that the country will have to sacrifice its coal mines and coal-fired power stations, it means removing electricity subsidies for huge mining and processing companies, it means reduced profits for the mines and heavy energy consumers and it also means changed power relations. Essentially, the future energy plans (energy futures) determine how South Africa will manage to reduce its emissions. This observation is important as it illuminates the difficult terrains that characterise the South African economy and how the country will manage to truly reduce its emissions without breaking particular relationships. All it means is that coal interests are powerful in determining the climate change policy arenas. Continuing with coal use, as is argued later in this chapter, perpetuates the metabolic and ecological rifts, something not pleasant considering the state of the planet. The second observation is that as the country seeks to move away from coal, at least ideally, there has been optimism in technological and renewable energy interventions. The techno-renewable energy optimism has become so naturalised, at least at discourse and not implementation level, with hopes that this would lead to a more 'successful' green economy.

All these two observations also shape out in how the news media in South Africa have represented the climate change response policy frameworks. The representations have been divided between coal indispensability and techno-renewable optimism leading to a green economy. All these divisions (discourse tribes) are firmly reproduced through the discursive strategies of economisation, coal for example, is represented as providing reliable electricity to power economic growth on the one side and renewable energy being constructed as energy of the 21st century providing clean energy solutions for economic growth under the green economy. All these discursive tribes, this study argues, promote the capitalist interests of elite groups. Coal use promotes the interests of the minerals-energy complex while renewable energy promotes the

interests of the multinational renewable energy companies and their local proxies. None of the discourses propose a shift away from capitalism. At this realisation, the study then invokes the metabolic and ecological rift theories, as a way of unpacking the embeddedness of capitalism in the climate change risk and ecological rift society. These frameworks move away from neoliberal theories of economic modernisation, towards truly political projects of transformation informed by environmental sociology theories.

The theoretical and methodological choices that have been made in this study are very subjective and move the study towards being a political project, one that is interested in capitalistic rupture and the ushering in of social, economic and climate justice. An argument is made for climate change approaches that seek a change in the nature-human relations based on reciprocity and metabolism. Through the examination of media representations of climate change issues and more specifically the energy debates, it was observed that news media in South Africa promoted climate solutions that put the market ahead in the form of coal-based capitalism or techno-renewable energy-based capitalism. This central issue encroaches across the entire work presented here.

3.2 The Metabolic Rift Society: It's Genesis

The metabolic rift theory has its origins in natural sciences (Clark & York 2005, p.397). Marx (1973) brought the term into humanities following the writings of agricultural chemistry scholars such as Justus von Liebig (1859) who argued that “the intensive methods of British agriculture were a system of robbery” (cited by Clark & York 2005, p.398). The agricultural chemistry scientists saw urbanisation and the transportation of food from rural areas to urban areas as leading towards the depletion of soil nutrients. This study adopted the concept of metabolism from environmental sociology, especially the Marxist reconstructions by scholars such as Clark and York (2005), Clark (2008) and Foster (2000, 2010). The metabolic and ecological rift theories are central because they are able to grapple “with both qualitative and quantitative dimensions of relationships” becoming frameworks that help one to “deal with both sides of the dialectic between society and nature (Foster, Clark & York 2010, p.140).

Marx defined metabolism as the “complex, dynamic interchange between human beings and nature” (cited by Foster et al. 2010, p.141). Jason Moore (2011), while advancing the theory of capitalist-motivated environmental metabolic rift, noted that the theory is not only as important in understanding capitalist development but also as “indispensable”. According to Moore (2011, p.1), capitalism should not be seen as having an “ecological regime” but rather as “an ecological regime” itself. In advancing this premise, Moore (2011, p.1) sought the “dialectical unity of the accumulation of capital and the production of nature”. Similarly, Raymond Williams (1980, p.83) observed that the relationship between humanity and nature ought to be that of interdependence and symbiosis. However, because humans had “mixed our labour with the earth, our forces with its forces too deeply to be able to draw back and separate either out,” the relationship was no longer dialectic but one based on humans’ unending conquer of nature (Williams 1980, p.84). He asserted that “[W]e ourselves are products: the pollution of industrial society is to be found not only in water and in the air, but in the slums, the traffic jams, and not these only as physical objects but as ourselves in them and in relation to them” (Williams 1980, p.83-84).

The exploitation of nature, to draw from Williams’ work, destroyed the metabolic/symbiotic interchange that humans ought to have with nature. The idea interchange, as Marx (1964 cited by Foster et al. 2010, p.142) argued was to be aligned to the recognition that nature was a finite resource and that “man lives on nature” where “nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die”. Drawing from Marx, Foster et al. (2010, p.142) noted that this metabolic relationship was destroyed through human interventions that saw nature as an infinite resource. Commercial agriculture, for example, was blamed for the first metabolic ruptures as land degradation due to excessive land use led to the loss of soil nutrients. Few proprietors sought to maximise their yields for profits by using “intensive methods of production”. These processes began the journey towards an ecological rupture in the human-nature interactions. As a way of dealing with the loss of soil nutrients, solutions were thought to have been found in ‘technology’.

This involved the application of artificial fertilisers to restore soil productivity. However, these artificial fertilisers or what Foster et al. (2010, p.94) called the ‘technological fix’

created [more serious] additional ecological rifts and other environmental problems. The production of synthetic fertilizer produces airborne nitrogen compounds that increase global warming. Nitrogen runoff overloads marine ecosystems with excess nutrients, which compromise natural processes that generally remove nutrients from the waterways. The increased concentration of nutrients within the water causes eutrophication. This leads to oxygen-poor water and the formation of hypoxic zones—otherwise known as “dead zones” because crabs and fishes suffocate within these areas.

Consequently, the “attempts to ‘solve’ the rift (loss of soil nutrients) created additional rifts and failed to solve the primary problem, given the continuation of production based on the accumulation of capital” (Clark & York 2005 p.398). Contrary to the traditional agricultural production systems where “essential nutrients were returned to the soil, capitalist agriculture transported nutrients essential for replenishing the soil, in the form of food and other crops, hundreds, even thousands, of miles to urban areas, where they ended up as waste” (Clark & York 2005, p.397-398).

Essentially, capitalist agriculture and trade within the global agri-food systems widened the metabolic rift. Owing to the logic of capital and its profit tendencies, Clark and York (2005) saw the “pursuit of profit” as a driver behind the “sacrificed investment in the land, causing the degradation of nature through depleting the soil of necessary nutrients and despoiling cities with the accumulation of waste as pollution” (p.399). Capitalism widened the metabolic rift, not only with regard to agriculture but “in other realms of the society-nature relationship” (Clark & York 2005, p.399). As the demand for food increased, food production also increased “through expanding agricultural production to less fertile land – depleting the nutrients of these areas – and through the incorporation of large quantities of oil in the agricultural process, used in the synthesis of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, contributing to the carbon rift” (Clark & York 2005, p.399). Clark and York (2005) noted that because of mechanisation, agriculture had “become the art of turning oil into food” (p.399). While the objective of producing more food succeeded, the greater ecosystem suffered. The effects of the technological interventions (artificial fertilisers) produced risks that affected the entire ecosystem through land, water and air pollution. The IPCC report of 2019 (see Chapter One), indicated land use practices currently contribute about 23 per cent of the

total atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions. These emissions are inherently coming from commercial ‘chemical-oil’ agricultural activities. As noted earlier in this chapter, chemical agriculture, not only does it cause pollution through chemical fertilisers, but because it is so mechanised, the oil used in commercial agricultural processes makes the emissions even worse. South Africa is heavily invested in commercial agriculture, with farms across the country that feed the growing cities and towns. Demand for food is growing, hence farming, through whatever means possible, is seen as central to ensuring the country’s food security. However, drawing from the arguments put forward in this chapter, the increased agricultural production to satisfy the capitalist system worsens the metabolic and ecological relationships between humans and nature. The South African government, as part of climate change response strategies, as envisaged in different policies such as the South Africa’s Third National Communication to the UNFCCC of 2017, put agriculture as a central aspect to be taken care of. Agriculture, paradoxically, is both a key driver of climate change and at the same time a key victim. Extreme weather events have already shown how agriculture could be affected by severe climate change impacts (examples include the 2015-2016 and the 2018-2019 El Nino periods characterised by excessive flooding in some areas and unbearable drought in others). However, in the climate change response discourses, the government and consequently the media (because of excessive reliance on government sources) have not popularised responses that seek to alter agricultural practices towards the restoration of the metabolic relations between humans and nature, solutions that propose aspects of producing what is sufficient and not surplus-based agricultural forms. This study contends that, such discourses, if given discursive access, could become entry points to (dis)articulating agriculture from oil and chemicals, such ideals, if met, could then become re-tracing and re-establishing forces, of course, with the ultimate goal being agriculture for food based on use and not exchange value. The agro-based climate change discourses represented in the news media only limited the discussion of agriculture as a passive victim of climate change, in need of urgent technological interventions. These interventions included techno-optimism what the government called climate-smart agriculture, a concept that the news media reproduced uncritically without paying attention to its processes and political economy. This study, as argued in Chapter Six, Seven and Ten, does not see climate-smart agriculture as a solution, but just another technological intervention creating more social and ecological risks.

3.3 Capitalism and the Carbon-Ecological Rift Society

While key social interactions with nature can be traced to the advent of the Homo sapiens, human species as they tried to control nature, especially through making fire, biospheric destruction can be acutely linked to the development of industrial capitalism (Clark & York 2005, p.403). Although human exploitation of nature began with the primitive man burning trees and plants for warmth and cooking, leading to the release of carbon dioxide (CO₂) stored by the natural forests, the impacts were not drastic. As capitalism developed, industrial society's desire to exploit and use resources at its disposal increased. The introduction of industries meant that human labour alone was no longer sufficient. New forms of energy were then necessary to sustain the ever-increasing (population which led to the increase in mass production) demand for mechanical production. From its early phases, industrial society needed greater access to energy sources. As Foster et al. (2010, p.96) observed, nature began to suffer deforestation as the demand for energy increased with wood being the primary source of energy. Industrial processes such as metals smelting put "greater pressure on forests, as trees were fed to the fires" (Foster et al. 2010, p.96) leading to deforestation across Europe especially in those areas that were closer to production sites. As the rifts caused by deforestation emerged, industrial society managed to bring in fossil fuels (especially coal and gas) to address the imminent energy crisis. These fuels, more than just closing the gap left by deforestation, were much able to facilitate increased industrial production. Instructive, however, is that these very solutions are primarily behind the global warming and other environmental problems the earth faces today.

It is important to note that the "same logic that dictated the expansion and intensification of agricultural production fuelled the drive behind the productive systems in cities" (Clark & York 2005, p.404). As agricultural production intensified, ownership of the land became concentrated in the hands of few landlords and this forced people to move into cities "to seek work ... struggling for survival, under the anarchy of the market" (Clark & York 2005, p.405).

This was coupled with capitalist development of technology to complement human labour and energy for maximum productive efficiency. As Marx (1976 cited in Clark & York, p.405) averred:

An increase in the size of the machine and the number of its working tools calls for a more massive mechanism to drive it; in order to overcome its own inertia, requires a mightier moving power than that of man, quite apart from the fact that man is a very imperfect instrument for producing uniform and continuous motion.

In agreement with Marx, Clark and York (2005) noted that the era of industrial society required tools that could transcend human labour limitations to maximise production. This new industrial society requirement enabled the adoption of fossil fuel “for the new machines” (Clark & York 2005, p.405). As industrial society evolved, coal-powered steam engines were developed to facilitate transportation, mass production and trade, thus causing “increases in the quantity of matter-energy throughput” (Clark & York 2005, p.405). All these developments had one objective, to oil the capitalist machinery and produce more profits for those who were in ownership and control of the means of production. Profit accrual, Foster et al. (2010, p.157) argued, “remains the primary objective in capitalist economies”. As industrial capitalism developed, its dependence on increased supply of raw materials increased and as a result the economy was structured “around fossil fuels (a reality that is now deeply entrenched) [where the] ability to take coal and petroleum from the earth accelerated the expansion of capital, releasing large quantities of CO₂ into the atmosphere” (Clark & York 2005, p.406). As more fossil energy resources were exploited for capitalist accumulation, more carbon dioxide was dumped into the atmosphere thereby “placing greater demands upon the carbon cycle to metabolize this material” (Clark & York 2005, p.406). However, the ability of the of the natural atmospheric processes (carbon sinks) to absorb the excess carbon have been overwhelmed by the increased and undeterred emissions of greenhouse gases. This rupture (failure to sink the excess carbon) has resulted in catastrophic global warming and climate change.

While consensus is there that industrialisation is the principal driver behind global warming and climate change, Clark and York (2005, p.404) argued that it is paramount to understand industrialisation as existing within “a particular global economic system” which puts profit accumulation above environmental concerns. In discussing the dangers of ceaseless accumulation, Paul Sweezy (2004, p.7-8) contended that:

A system driven by capital accumulation is one that never stands still, one that is forever changing, adopting new and discarding old methods of production and distribution, opening up new territories, subjecting to its purposes societies too weak to protect themselves. Caught up in this process of restless innovation and expansion, the system rides roughshod over even its own beneficiaries if they get in its way or fall by the roadside. As far as the natural environment is concerned, capitalism perceives it not as something to be cherished and enjoyed but as a means to the paramount ends of profit-making and still more capital accumulation.

Analogous to Sweezy’s thesis, Clark and York (2005) described the capitalist industrial society as a society that “freely appropriates nature’s supplies and leaves wastes behind” (Clark & York 2005, p.407).

Capitalism successfully conquers the earth (including the atmosphere), taking its destructive field of operation to the planetary level. The exploitation of nature is universalized, increasingly bringing all of nature within the sphere of the economy, subjecting it to the rationality of profitability” (Clark & York 2005, p.408).

Critical perspectives on climate change have not been robust. Environmental sociology has been weak. The reconstruction of Marx’s writings on the value theory and the metabolic rift resurrected the consciousness of environmental sociology to the core problems and drivers of climate change. Scholars such as Clark, York, Foster, Beck and Maarten Hajer. have been able, to some extent, to bring in critical perspectives and show that climate change problems must be understood as problems of society and the dominant mode of production that has enjoyed over two centuries of hegemonic cultural monopoly. Foster et al. (2010, p.139) argued that capitalism

has been the global hegemonic economic system, influencing human interactions with nature, shaping the particular organization of material exchange. Thus, it is important to grapple directly with how global climate change is related to the historical era of capitalism, which serves as the background condition influencing social development. Through understanding the logic of capital, it is possible to assess how such socioeconomic system confronts natural systems and affects their ability to sustain human life.

Other proponents of this view such as Clark and York (2005, p.395) argued that most environmental sociology works have simply acknowledged that human activities have contributed to the ever accumulation of carbon dioxide and continues to do so resulting in planetary warming. However, simply acknowledging this trend is not enough but there is need to understand “the logic of capital and its development” (Clark & York 2005, p.396). The accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was “tied to the accumulation of capital among the economic elite” (Clark & York 2005, p.396). Clark and York (2005) sought to develop a grand theoretical framework that could be used to understand “human influence on the carbon cycle and the influence of climate change (potentially stemming from ruptures in the carbon cycle) on societies” (p.391). They applied Marx’s metabolic rift theory in explaining the nature-society relationship by

examining the connections between anthropogenic (human generated) influences on the carbon cycle and the accumulation of carbon in the biosphere, the inability of technological fixes to solve climate change...and the flooding and destruction of carbon sinks due to the ceaseless drive to accumulate capital (Clark & York 2005, p.392).

Ecological and metabolic rift theories examine and seek to explain the “social problems that contribute to climate change” (Clark & York 2005, p.393). As the world continues to pursue industrialisation and development, something synonymous with global South political-economic ideology, Clark and York (2005, p.392) bemoaned that “waste emissions continue to be created at the rate faster than natural systems can absorb them, contributing to the creation of a global ecological crisis”. Eugene Rosa and Thomas Dietz (1998, p.421) noted that the relationship between the climate system and humanity was constitutive and interdependent. They argued that “[C]limate shapes human activity. Human activity shapes climate” (Rosa & Dietz 1998, p.421). This is contrary to postulations by theorists within the economic modernisation paradigm⁶ who see nature as a free gift ready for exploitation, disregarding this essential interdependence and

⁶ Ecological modernisation theory “assumes that through the ongoing modernization/rationalization of productive systems and public and private institutions, society will progress to a ‘green’ state- i.e., environmental regulations and environmentally benign industries will produce a sustainable future, as market economies continue to develop” (Clark and York 2005, p.394).

ignoring the fact that nature itself is a finite resource with boundaries. Problems in this relationship, to borrow from Marx's metabolic rift treatise, emerge as a result of humanity's exploitative tendencies that deplete nature's ability to support human systems. The quest for capital and accumulation are primary in the depletion of nature's resources that are central to the survival of human beings. By extension, through destroying the metabolic relationship between humanity and nature, a rift emerges that leads to the current ecological rift crises characterised by climate change. "The capacity to support life on earth -and, therefore, all societies – depends on the moderating influences of gases that envelop the planet, warm its surface and protect it from harmful radiation. All plant, animal and human life on the planet is dependent upon the warming capacity of these gases, referred to as the 'Greenhouse Effect', for maintaining a habitable climate" (Rosa & Dietz 1998, p.422). Rosa and Dietz (1998, p.423) argued that over the past billion or so years, the Earth maintained a "natural balance [of the gases] necessary for regulating temperature to life-supporting levels". However, due to human activities through industrialisation and mechanised agriculture, this balance and the "proportions mix" have been disrupted and as a result the global mean and sea temperatures have warmed and continue to do so unabated resulting in the global warming crises that the planet is facing today. As Clark and York (2005, p.392) showed, any alterations on the earth's natural energy balance systems and the natural process of "material exchange can potentially undermine the endurance of societies" stating that "nature and society influence and shape each other" (see also Rosa & Dietz 1998, p.421). While humanity's destructive tendencies are well-documented, what had lacked was the uptake of the ecological discourse within sociology and humanities, especially the neo-Marxist branches of critical environmental studies and media and cultural studies.

This study, informed by Marx's metabolic rift theory, Beck's ground-breaking risk society theory and Foster, Clark and York's ecological rift theory, argues that any study on climate change politics and the communication discourses should be done with a strong affinity and fixation on these theories, for they provide researchers the ability to examine how capitalism, as a way of life, was being reproduced in the news media. Central to note in this study is that South Africa, already exhibiting essential characteristics of a risk society, still has strong discourses that promote the continued use of fossil fuels, especially coal under the pretext of economic development, and

reducing poverty. The discourses on coal indispensability were being given extensive prominence in the news media and were sponsored by actors in the minerals-energy complex and in government. By re/producing these views, essentially the news media also re/produced the economic system that benefits from coal use, and industrial capitalism. While the coal indispensability discourse was being promoted through discursive economisation and as benefitting all, the news media largely failed to pay attention to the ideologies that were being propelled under the false pretence logics of ‘economic development’. Through translating coal use into oral models, the news media also constructed neoliberalism as a common sense. By advancing the interests of industrial capitalism, the news media at the same became culpable in the planetary ecocide⁷.

South Africa, as an energy-intensive economy, is solidly built within a capitalist economic framework that survives on the exploitation of natural-mineral energy resources (fossil fuels). It has high per capita emissions globally. Despite the exploitation of fossil fuels in the name of economic development and social emancipation, the majority of its populations are within the lower hierarchies of society in terms of material possessions and they live in abject poverty. There is massive accumulation of material wealth at the top echelons of society. While calls are being made for reduced use of greenhouse gases, South Africa has continued and is expected to increase its fossil energy consumption in the name of catching-up and economic development. This developmental course of action being taken by South Africa and other economies in transition such as India, China, Brazil and Russia leave questionable the “ecological sustainability of human societies” (see Clark & York 2005, p.392). While the epistemic discourse on the destructive and disruptive impacts of climate change is now cemented (IPCC 2013 as reference), the energy, policy and media discourses in South Africa continue to point in the direction of coal.

⁷ “the extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (Higgins 2012, p.3).

Peter Grimes and Jeffrey Kentor (2003, p.261), while acknowledging that global north countries were responsible for global warming, noted that the dependency on foreign investment by the global south countries allowed multinational companies to export their emissions from the north to the south. They argued that “foreign capital penetration in 1980 [had] a significant positive effect on the growth of CO₂ emissions between 1980 and 1996” (2003, p.261), as the investments were “concentrated in those industries that require more energy” (Grimes & Kentor 2003, p.261). In their quest for ‘economic development’ under the ethos of catching-up, global south countries (South Africa included) have often opened up to and attracted foreign investments in sectors that are energy intensive. This has worked well in displacing emissions from the global north to the global south and fits well with the ideas of Lawrence Summers (1991), the then World Bank Chief Economist, where he saw as beneficial for the developed countries to transfer dirty industries to developing countries. Summers, in a World Bank leaked internal memo of December 12, 1991 argued for the following three points:

'Dirty' Industries: Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging MORE migration of the dirty industries to the LDCs [Less Developed Countries]? I can think of three reasons:

1) The measurements of the costs of health impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view, a given amount of health impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost, which will be the country with the lowest wages. I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that.

2) The costs of pollution are likely to be non-linear as the initial increments of pollution probably have very low cost. I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly UNDER-polluted, their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. Only the lamentable facts that so much pollution is generated by non-tradable industries (transport, electrical generation) and that the unit transport costs of solid waste are so high prevent world welfare enhancing trade in air pollution and waste.

3) The demand for a clean environment for aesthetic and health reasons is likely to have very high income elasticity. The concern over an agent that causes a one in a million change in the odds of prostate cancer is obviously going to be much higher in a country where people survive to get prostate cancer than in a country where under 5 mortality is 200 per thousand. Also, much of the concern over industrial atmosphere discharge is about visibility impairing particulates. These discharges may have very little direct health impact. Clearly trade in goods that embody aesthetic pollution concerns could be welfare enhancing. While production is mobile the consumption of pretty air is a non-tradable.

3.4 Neoliberal Green Responses and the Limits of Prometheanism

Ecological modernisation theorists believe that technology has the potential to dematerialise the world. Proponents of ‘green capitalism’ argue that “through innovative technological development and appropriate reformist government policy, the economy can be dematerialized” (Clark & York 2005, p.410). Technological developments were constructed as having the ability to disarticulate and decouple “the economy from energy and material consumption, allowing human society, under capitalism, to transcend the environmental crisis” (Clark & York 2005, p.410). To pacify fears of increased ecological rifts under “capitalist economic operations,” the neoliberal discourse has sought to portray capitalism as a force that “will lead to improved technologies and efficient raw material usage, and that this will decrease emissions and environmental degradation” Clark and York (2005, p.409). Through the neoliberal techno-optimistic discourse, ‘green capitalism’ was seen as “saving the planet from the ecological destruction” (Foster et al. 2010, p.60).

However, in resisting the techno-optimistic neoliberal discourses, Foster et al. (2010, p.60), argued that those who advocate for sustainable capitalism do so on the basis of “a distorted accounting deeply rooted in the workings of the system that sees wealth entirely in terms of value generated through exchange. In such a system, only commodities for sale on the market really count. External nature – water, air, living species – outside this system of exchange is viewed as a ‘free gift’”. As observed by Clark and York (2005, p.410) the ecological modernisation paradigm

is at base a functionalist theory in that it does not see the emergence of ecological rationality as coming primarily from social conflict, but rather from ecological enlightenment within

the key institutions in societies. Ecological modernization theorists contend, then, that radical ecological reform does not require radical social reform – i.e., the institutions of capitalist modernity can avert global environmental crisis without a fundamental restructuring of the social order.

Similar to Foster et al. (2010) and Clark and York (2005), Polly Higgins (2012, p. xiv) noted that neoliberal solutions were unable to “disrupt the very system that is destroying our world”. Solutions to climate change need to address the capitalist roots of the ecological rift and risk society:

Climate change is just a symptom. Like a cold, we hope we can brave it out until it recedes. But this is one cold that has turned serious, not just for you and me but for the whole of humanity. The problem is we are treating it with thinly disguised placebos in the hope that they will do the trick. Without addressing the source, the symptom has no chance of being cured. Instead the symptom returns time and again, each time worse and increasingly debilitating. In time we become accustomed to the debilitation and accept it. Yet still it gets worse: like a smoker who is hacking and coughing but nonetheless drags deeply on his cigarette, choking in the knowledge that his behaviour is facilitating his own painful death. So too are we continuing to indulge a habit that has no benefit for us either in the short or the long term (Higgins 2012, p.xiii).

Capitalism could not be trusted with solving climate change because, as an economic system, capitalism was “a bubble economy, which uses up environmental resources and the absorptive capacity of the environment while displacing the costs back on Earth itself, thus incurring an enormous ecological debt” (Foster et al. 2010, p.53). In a similar argument, Felix Guattari (2000, p.28) contended that climate change problems could not be solved by prescribing the same solutions that, in the first instance, are responsible for the current ecological crises. He argued that a system “regulated in a univocal way by a profit economy and by power relations, would only lead, at present, to dramatic dead-ends” (Guattari 2000, p.28).

Environmental sociologists refute the ability of capital to foster sustainability and the social good. Clark and York (2005, p.411), for example, agree that through capitalist innovations, new technologies have been birthed and that some of these have been able to eliminate some forms of pollution. Foster et al. (2010, p.94) warned that while capitalism, may at some moments, appear to be solving environmental problems, it is important to note that in doing so “new crises spring up where old ones are supposedly cut down”. For example, while fossil fuels are primarily blamed

for the ecological and climate crises, “the proposed solutions are to shift the problem from one form of energy [fossil fuels] to a new form of energy” (Foster et al. 2010, p.96). The now promoted energy systems include nuclear power, which though unpopular because of past disasters, has risen back to the top “with new promises of how the new nuclear plants are safer—never mind the issue of radioactive waste” (Foster et al. 2010, p.96).

The technological and market-driven solutions to climate change provide a scapegoat for the global elite and leaders “to avoid addressing greenhouse gas emissions, since they can claim that technical fixes make it unnecessary to take action to preserve forests and curtail the burning of fossil fuels” (Foster et al. 2010, p.96). These approaches

avoid addressing an economic system that is largely structured around burning fossil fuels and must constantly renew itself on a larger scale as it runs roughshod over nature. Often techno-solutions are proposed as if completely removed from the world as it operates, without any sense of the social and economic relations of power. The irony is that such narrowly conceived ‘solutions’ would only serve as a means to prop up the very forces driving ecological degradation, allowing those forces to continue to operate, as they create additional ecological rifts (Foster et al. 2010, p.96).

The desire to address climate change through a capitalist lens (market-driven solutions and technological fixes) obscures critical discussions on the need to challenge the mainstream mode of production and its limits in responding to the environmental crises it created. Capital’s desire for profit and never-ending accumulation only helps to reproduce more rifts and ruptures in the nature-human relations. As Foster et al. (2010, p.99) noted, market-driven solutions to climate change only help the system to “reproduce itself on an ever-larger scale”. While the problems of climate change are admissibly anthropogenic, and the international community has heeded calls to address them, it is important to note that what the international community has sought to solve are not the root causes of the environmental problems (see Higgins 2012). The fixes that are being proposed are being done “without addressing the fundamental crisis, the force driving the ecological crisis—capitalism itself” (Foster et al. 2010, p.100).

The global reach of capital is creating a planetary ecological crisis. A fundamental structural crisis cannot be remedied within the operations of the system. Marx explained that the future could be ruined and shortened as a result of a social metabolism that exhausted the conditions of life. Capital shows no signs of slowing down, given its rapacious character. The current ecological crisis has been in the making for a long time,

and the most serious effects of continuing with business as usual will not fall on present but rather future generations.... Capitalism is incapable of regulating its social metabolism with nature in an environmentally sustainable manner. It's very operations violate the laws of restitution and metabolic restoration. The constant drive to renew the capital accumulation process intensifies its destructive social metabolism, imposing the needs of capital on nature, regardless of the consequences to natural systems (Foster et al. 2010, p.100).

In order to truly solve the problems of climate change and other attendant environmental crises there is “need to go to the root of the problem: the social relation of capital itself” (Foster et al. 2010, p.99). Frank Fischer and Maarten Hajer (1999, p.5) also poked holes into the Promethean approaches dealing with climate change:

We see various key practices of modernity working to further this political-economic dynamic: the dominance of scientific rationality and expert knowledge, the strong reliance on- and belief in – technological innovation as the agent of progress, the implicit legitimization of the use of violence, and the central tendency to see nature as an exploitable resource or as an externality.

Fischer and Hajer (1999, p.3) noted that the solutions to climate change through the rhetoric of sustainability have been housed within the Promethean theoretical discourse of technological and scientific solutions where it is believed that “problems, once recognized and publicly acknowledged, can be handled by the institutions of science, technology, and management”. They concluded that “sustainable development [the discourse] has facilitated a project of institutional learning, according to which the existing institutions internalized the ecological dimension into their thinking but without addressing this cultural critique” (Fischer & Hajer 1999, p.3). This aligns with the criticisms put forward by Bauman (1991), who asserted that it is difficult for environmental problems to be solved by the very mechanisms that caused them in the first place. Guattari (2000) in his *Three Ecologies*, also noted that capitalist institutions would not work, arguing that a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and nature was unimaginable as capitalism relies on exploitation and alienation of both human labour and the natural environment. This argument is also widely supported by (Beck 1992, 1996; Foster 2010; Clark & York 2005 and Foster et al. 2010). Joseph Schumpeter (cited by Foster et al. 2010, p.32) saw capitalism as a system of “creative destruction ... a process [of accumulation and growth], stationary capitalism would be a contradiction in *adjecto*”. Derrick Jensen and Aric McBay (2009 cited by Foster et al.

2010, p.7-8) argued that the movement on sustainable development is not primarily concerned with averting global warming but rather an attempt to stop climate change without structurally destroying the capitalist core. In criticising the sustainable development discourse, Jensen and McBay (2009 cf. Foster et al. 2010, p.8) argued that “[I]ndustrial capitalism can never be sustainable. It has always destroyed the land upon which it depends for raw materials, and it always will. Until there is no land (or water, or air) for it to exploit. Or until, and this obviously the far better option, there is no industrial capitalism”.

Important for Fischer and Hajer (1999) is the cultural continuities symptomatic of the sustainability discourse where the “conceptual frame and specific actors through which environmental discourse get reproduced” have not changed. They argued that the “dominant discourse that shaped up around the notion of sustainable development was one that suggested that the major institutions could learn, had learned and would be able to reinvent themselves so as to become co-producers of a new sort of development that would be more environmentally sustainable” (Fischer & Hajer 1999, p.4). Drawing from the environmental sociology paradigm, they noted that current prescriptions offered to deal with climate change were problematic because “the insistence that the (existing) system [capitalism] could adapt, glosses over important characteristics of a globalized modern capitalist system” Fischer and Hajer (1999, p.5). In strengthening this view, they saw the “ecological crisis” as the unintended “consequence of some of capitalism’s essential features, such as the continued reliance on economic growth and its insatiable desire to create new markets, as well as its use of such growth to create space for political interventions”.

Central to their argument was the need to understand capitalism as a cultural system and they drew their definitions of culture from Raymond Williams (1961 cited by Fischer & Hajer 1999) where culture is given three explanations. Firstly, Williams (1961 cited by Fischer and Hajer 1999) saw culture as art (aesthetic), secondly, he defined culture as *cultura* which means the cultivation of the mind and spirit. The third definition defined culture anthropologically, where he viewed it as a way of life. This study, similar to Fischer and Hajer (1999) adopts the third definition and throughout the dissertation capitalism is treated as a culture (way of life) that is predatory to nature and society. By way of discourse analysis, this study explored how capitalist relations with

nature/environment are ideologically represented and reproduced by the news media in South Africa. Such an attempt was central to sufficiently make clear the cultural politics of climate change within a capitalist economy like South Africa.

Fischer and Hajer (1999, p.7) called for an investigation into the “cultural embeddedness of policy-making, of our social life, and of the way of governing economic activity”. Drawing from this call, this study extends this examination into the cultural embeddedness of news production in the context of climate change. The study sees news production as culturally embedded, either in ideological cultures of capitalism or in opposition to them. How the media culturally produces and reproduces the climate change, environmental and sustainability discourses is important to understand. The cultural frames that they produce and reproduce shape the policy-making discourses, shapes social life and either legitimise or delegitimise particular ways of climate and environmental governance, and economic governance.

Fischer and Hajer (1999, p.7) distinguished between cultural critique and cultural politics. Cultural critique “refers to the various utterances within environmental discourse that problematize existing arrangements and suggest alternative ways of living with nature” where the media criticises the “effluents of affluence”. Cultural politics “is about the way in which different systems of ordering are either maintained or imposed on others, how questions of identity feature within environmental discourse, how social relationships get redefined, or how particular ways of doing things either get reproduced or are changed” (Fischer & Hajer 1999, p.8).

Hajer (1995, p.5) argued that “developments in environmental politics critically depend on the specific social construction of environmental problems”. In this study, discourse analysis became useful in the analysis of how climate change and environmental problems are reproduced in the news media. This was essential to gain an in-depth understanding of climate change cultural politics in South Africa. Specific to this study are the forces that are active in media constructions of the climate change crisis, which ideologies are entrenched, constructed, legitimised and promoted.

In his critique of the sustainable development mantra, Hajer (1995, p.12) argued that

the present hegemony of the idea of sustainable development in environmental discourse should not be seen as the product of a linear, progressive, and value-free process of convincing actors of the importance of the Green case. It is much more a struggle between various unconventional political coalitions, each made up of such actors as scientists, politicians, activists, or organizations representing such actors, but also having links with specific television channels, journals and newspapers, or even celebrities (Hajer 1995, p.13).

For Hajer “[T]hese coalitions are unconventional in the sense that the actors have not necessarily met, let alone that they follow a carefully laid out and agreed upon strategy. What unites these coalitions and what gives them their political power is the fact that its actors group around specific story-lines that they employ whilst engaging in environmental politics” (Hajer 1995, p.13). In the process the discourse coalitions “develop and sustain a particular discourse, a particular way of talking and thinking about environmental politics” (Hajer 1995, p.13).

It is important to note that while the discourse coalitions may converge on particular storylines, their interests are often divergent with “different social and cognitive commitments, but they all help to sustain, in their own particular way, the story-line” of environmental issues (Hajer 1995, p.13). Important to this study is an understanding of who, among these discourse coalition actors, gets to define and control meanings of climate change and environmental problems that are produced in the South African mainstream news media. Hajer (1995, p.14) attached much significance to the concept of “representation,” notably, that our understanding of climate change and environmental politics are products of particular representations. This study used the concept of representation to understand how through discourse constructions, particular discourse coalitions re/present and construct particular cultural politics in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation. And by extension how the dominant capitalist coalitions get the definitional power and dictate how climate change politics are organised internally and globally. Drawing from Hajer (1995, p.15), discourse analysis was used in this study “to illuminate the social and cognitive basis of the way in which problems [climate change] are constructed” in the South African news media as part of climate change discourse coalitions. Examining discourse practices helps in understanding how “common understandings are produced and transformed”

(Hajer 1995, p.15). This study examined the ‘agency’ of media systems in their construction of climate change stories.

Scholarship on climate change and environmental sociology is often polarised between those who believe in ecological modernisation as a fix to the environmental problems and those that seek a new sustainable path. Environmental modernisation attempts “to bend nature even more to our will, to make it conform to the necessities of our production” (Foster et al. 2010, p.8). The latter view “involves an analysis that examines the social drivers of ecological degradation, illuminating the contradictions of the social order” (Foster et al. 2010, p.8). It is the latter view that this study draws upon. Any attempt to understand climate change communication should be made with a clear understanding of the social drivers of climate change and examine how the media deals with such key issues in its coverage. Such an exercise, achievable through employing discourse analysis, brings to the core whether the media, as part of climate change discourse coalitions and actors overtly or covertly promote ecological modernisation or are critical and bring to their re/presentation the social and ideological facets that underpin capitalist development.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter is critical in laying the possibilities of environmental sociology concepts in understanding the attendant foundations of the climate crisis and the application of these concepts in the study of news media representations of climate change. The argued that the problems of climate change are not isolated from the social relations of our existence. Rather, they are intrinsically tied to the political economic system of capitalism. The chapter conceptualised the global climate crisis and its attendant sub-problems as products of capitalist accumulation and material reproduction. As such, any discussion of climate change must encompass critical views from environmental sociology that contend that unfettered and unbound capitalist interests all work in entrenching accumulative behaviour, ecological destruction, biospheric disruption and thus climate change. The chapter drew on the works of Karl Marx to elucidate the concept of metabolic rift, on John Foster, Richard York and Brett Clark to extend Marx’s concept of metabolic rift to that of ecological rift. The concept of risk society was applied to draw attention to the risks that are produced by capital’s logic of accumulation and the never-ending desire to exploit both

nature and labour. These theoretical underpinnings are necessary in unpacking capitalism as an exploitative regime that has hugely negative impacts not only on the exploited labour but on nature which it views as given *gratis* (freely) and thus valueless. Studies on media representations of climate change have seldom drawn their theoretical inspiration from these concepts. Hence, the chapter sought to situate the discursive analysis of climate change representation in the news media within these broad theoretical foundations to broaden the analytical field and account for whether the media representations themselves pay attention to these structural and existential issues of capitalist political economy and its attendant consequences on nature. As a way of argument, the chapter argued that the solutions put on the table to deal with climate change have been hugely neoliberal and shy away from the real questions of political economy and therefore prescribe solutions that extend and entrench the culture of self-mutation that characterises capitalism. Concepts such as sustainable development, it was argued, are meant to build an image of capitalism that can cure the ills it produced through the rhetoric of responsible technologies and environmental engineering. The next chapter reviews the literature on the media and climate change. The chapter traces the profile of climate change in the news media, with a focus on how the coverage and representation have evolved. The chapter also examined and discussed the discursive strategies used across the news media.

Chapter Four: Climate change and the media

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the metabolic and ecological rift theories and their significance in unpacking climate change discourses. The metabolic and ecological rift theories provided an understanding of the social nature of climate change, thus, the need for this study to examine how the news media politicise or depoliticise the climate problem, away but not disconnected from the discourses hinged on science and economic modernisation. Further, the theories are useful in analysing the neoliberal climate change discourses in the news. This chapter concerns itself with exploring the role of the news media in relation to climate change coverage, representation and construction. The chapter noted that research on climate change communication has substantially increased, albeit with more studies focusing on the global North. There a significant gap regarding studies that specifically focus on the global South geopolitically, regionally and at national levels. It is therefore imperative for this study to significantly contribute towards the critical body of knowledge on climate change re/presentation and re/construction in the global South, specifically through studying how the subject is re/presented and re/constructed in the South African news media. The chapter identified gaps in literature and the study tries to fill up these. The chapter discusses the ideal concepts on the role of the media proffered by different scholars while at the same time appreciating the barriers that limit the media from accomplishing its duties. The chapter traces the historical development of climate change coverage in the news media, analysing the trends that have characterised this development. Further, the chapter discusses, from a literature background, the influence of media political economics on climate change news re/presentation and re/construction. Following this political economy discussion are analyses of the ideological representations of climate change in the news media. The chapter continues to discuss and present literature on how the global South news media have re/presented and re/constructed climate change. The last section in the chapter provides a concise summary of all key studies done on South African news media coverage of climate change and the issues that these studies sought to articulate. This discussion helped in the collection and analysis of data relating to news media re/presentation and re/construction of climate change in South Africa.

4.2 Evolution of Climate Change Cover[age] in the News Media: trends and patterns

Climate change presence in the media is traceable to the 1960s in the United States of America. During the early phase, the cover[age] went through peaks and downs and was indexed to major environmental disasters and key scientific publications. David Sachsman (2000, p.3) noted that the publication of the 'Silent Spring' by Rachel Carson in 1962 increased the mediated visibility of environmental problems and helped direct public perception to the subject. Important is the view that regardless of this emergent visibility, the coverage remained low and its influence limited. Mark Neuzil and William Kovarik (1996, p.xii) contended that the early forms of environmentalism were "likely to be local instead of national in scope". Coupled with this observed localism and parochialism is the argument that climate change has been characterised by its relationship with 'issues attention' that led to inconsistent and short-lived coverage of the subject. In contrast to this local orientation of news stories, studies in South Africa observed that the news media covered climate change as something external and happening elsewhere (Tagbo 2010). While the media gave attention to key environmental problems such as oil spills (Sachsman 2000), the attention given to other critical issues (for example, the anthropogenic nature of climate change, the need to change unsustainable lifestyles and diminishing rainforests) was minimal.

Scholars observed a marked shift in news media coverage of climate from around 1988 (Carvalho & Burgess 2005; McComas & Shanahan 1999). The shift coincided with the emergent definition of climate change from political spectrums such as Margaret Thatcher (the then prime minister of the United Kingdom), the Montreal Protocol that began to regulate ozone-depleting chemicals, and other environmental conferences. As noted by Katherine McComas and James Shanahan (1999), the media began paying attention to a phenomenon called the 'greenhouse effect' and between 1988 and 1992 the coverage of this phenomenon and related environmental problems increased. However, as they argued, this attendant trend in coverage subsided because it was linked to some environmental 'drama' and hence event-based. And then so what if it subsided? Strike the nail on the head!!

Contrary to McComas and Shanahan (1999) who explained the downs in news media attention towards climate change after 1992 to the absence of constant dramatic environmental issues, Boykoff and Yulsman (2013) and Carvalho and Burgess (2005) saw the fall in political activity

and pronouncements relating to climate change as responsible for the diminished coverage. Carvalho and Burgess (2005) and Boykoff and Yulsman (2013) all concurred that politics and politicians were influential factors shaping the environmental and climate change discourses in the media than science. Their studies observed climate change coverage in the news media as cyclically evolving (following a similar thesis proposed by Downs in 1972), concluding that in both the United Kingdom and the United States, climate change visibility in the media was closely related to the attention the subject received from political and economic discourse actors and sponsors. In the United Kingdom for example, Carvalho and Burgess (2005) saw Margaret Thatcher and the conservative government as influencing media attention towards climate change. Climate change mediated visibility increased in correspondence with and to key speeches and announcements made by Thatcher at the Royal Society in 1988, and at the United Nations in 1989.

Arguably, the role of politics in influencing the climate change discourse relates closely with Bennett's (1990) concept of 'indexing' political debates in news coverage. The concept of indexing links media discourses to political discourses, showing how the media coverage of events and issues draws from the political activities and discourses. Further, drawing from Carvalho and Burgess (2005) and Carvalho (2005), this study considers the peak in climate change coverage in the media between 1988 and 1992 to be linked to the Brundtland Report published in 1987. This report became the red flag in relation to human agency in causing climate change. The report triggered the Montreal Protocol of 1988 that sought to regulate ozone-depleting chemicals and reduce carbon emissions. In addition, it led to the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit held in Brazil in 1992, which began the process of institutionalising and internationalising climate change and saw the formation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. From the above discussions, this study examined the key factors behind the re/presentation and re/construction of climate change in South Africa, ascertained the power and involvement of politicians in defining or shaping the definition of, and issues around climate change. Further, the study attempted to relate peaks in climate change visibility in the media to external events (political, economic, environmental and scientific) and discussed and established how these influenced either peaks or falls in subject coverage.

This study contends that visibility and non-visibility of climate change in the news media at particular junctures all talk to and inform media coverage. While coverage resembles the importance of the subject to the media, non-coverage represents and constructs climate change as not important. Therefore, the study examined moments of media silence to determine why and how the media rendered climate change unimportant during those moments, understand which issues attracted media attention. Overall, the study examined developments in the climate change scientific, environmental and social discourses and determined media negligence and attention to these developments. This helped to understand and determine which groups and events in society are important for the media and thus, are given the power to shape how the discourse develops in the media public arena. This conceptualisation derives from Phil McManus's (2000) study in Australia where the media were found to have collectively neglected to cover the Conference of Parties (COP4) meeting in Buenos Aires. By not covering the event, McManus (2000, p.307) concluded, the media diminished "the potential for debate and public concern". McManus (2000, p.311) observed that newspapers in Australia turned a blind eye to COP4, except for The Age which published 12 articles from international wire services, local reporters and other international media. By so doing the news media constructed the "negotiations in Buenos Aires as happening elsewhere, with little attempt to link the causes of climate change with daily lives of people in Australia" (McManus 2000, p.316), noting that what "emerges, however, is a situation in which the Australian government has been relatively unchallenged in its attempt to define and negotiate climate change actions using the argument of protection of the national economy" (McManus 2000, p.316).

4.3 Political Indexing and Peaks in Media attention

Boykoff (2007), like Carvalho and Burgess (2005), linked the peaks and falls in news media cover[age] of climate change to political and ecological developments in the United States. A "dramatic increase" in coverage was observed between 2003 and 2006 in both the United States and the United Kingdom. This increase related to political movements in climate change policy rhetoric at the G8 summit held in Scotland. Before the conference, the then president of the United States George Bush and the then United Kingdom prime minister Tony Blair had made strong climate-change statements which fed into United States "media speculation about a potential shift in the Bush administration's stance on climate change policy" (Boykoff 2007, p.476). Peaks in

United States media coverage of climate change also link to key events such as the Kyoto Protocol negotiations, the release of Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* and the Stern reviews in the United Kingdom (Boykoff 2007, p.481). Doulton and Brown (2009, p.198) saw that the peak in cover[age] coincided with major events, noting that articles (majority) published in 1997/1998 drew mostly from events and discussions around the Kyoto conference and protocol. They noted that the two key prominent discourses (rationalism and potential catastrophe) were related (i.e. their peaks in coverage) to key events (the publishing of Bjorn Lomborg's 'Sceptical Environmentalist' in 2001).

Notwithstanding the increase in scientific knowledge on the climate change subject between 1991 and 1997, the level of climate change coverage in the media declined. Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1465) explained this fall in terms of the lack of sustained political activity and political announcements during the period. This scenario showed that "there is little correspondence between scientific knowledge of climate change risk and media understanding of that risk". Rather the subject gains high-mediated visibility when linked with political discourse actors. In the United States, Boykoff (2007, p.474) noted that politicians also usurped the definitional role of climate change from scientists. This often meant that the re/presentations sponsored by politicians promoted climate science denial and scepticism. The media construction of climate change differed "significantly from the scientific consensus" (Boykoff 2007, p.474).

In their analysis of the controversies related to the coverage of climate change in the French media, Stefan Aykut et al. (2012, p.157) described the coverage of climate change as "an expression of a struggle over ownership and framing of climate change as a public problem". Prior to the year 2000, (Aykut et al. 2012, p.161), climate change coverage in France centred on international events such as the 1992 Rio conference in Brazil, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol negotiations and the subject was "not considered a major domestic problem, and climate policy was mainly reduced to its international component". Aykut et al. (2012, p.161) observed that the subject of climate change attracted peaks in media attention after the 2000s, with domestic lenses being applied (linked to meteorological events such as heatwaves and winter storms). However, the coverage and "media attention still coincided with international events" such as The Hague Conference of 2000, the release of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) third and fourth assessment reports in 2001 and 2007 respectively (Aykut et al. 2012, p.161).

Aykut et al. (2012) explained the downs and peaks in climate change coverage in France by examining changes in journalism and climate science. They argued that before 2000, climate change journalism had not gained traction and after the millennium turn, more focused, professional climate journalism emerged. While the pre-2000 journalism re/constructed climate change in the “international tone”, the new crop of focused reporters took an “anecdote” approach focusing on “awareness raising”. These focussed reporters re/constructed climate change in terms of its “effects on people’s life-worlds, and options for mitigation were reduced to individual lifestyle changes”, shaping the climate change issue “as a matter of individual morality” (Aykut et al. 2012, p.162).

Further, Aykut et al. (2012, pp.162-163) linked peaks and falls in coverage to “social and institutional changes” in the field of climate change science, noting that climate research in France was “weakly organised” pre-2000 and that the subject was not “a major research issue”. In addition, the peaks and falls were also linked to the “lack of institutionalised structures of communication to the media blurred the scientific message” (Aykut et al. 2012, pp.162-163). In the late 1990s to early 2000s, climate science research became progressively more professionalised (Aykut et al. 2000, p.163) and “climatologists began to invest time in communicating with or educating journalists” and scientists began to “play a central role in legitimising environmental journalists in their newsrooms”.

Lastly, Aykut et al. (2012, p.164) noted that until the 1997 Kyoto conference, non-governmental organisations were not organised around climate change. However, this changed just before, during and after the Kyoto conference. They noted that these social and institutional changes also account for the peak in media-climate change attention after the millennium turn. Aykut et al. (2012, p.164-165) observed that climate change attention moved from coverage of uncertainties to a clear focus on the consequences, with the shutting-out of sceptical voices and denialists.

4.4 Political Economy, the Media and Climate Re/presentation

The political economy of the media influences how they re/construct and re/present issues of climate change (Anderson 2009; Boykoff & Yulsman 2013). The political economy approach “emphasizes the influence of media ownership, corporate finance and advertising upon news content” (Anderson 2009, p.170). The political economy of specific news organisations impact on news coverage and re/presentation where the news stories produced take profound ideological

dimensions, with Boykoff and Yulsman (2013, p.2) noting that “mass media representations arise from large-scale relations” with the political economic environment and newsroom structures of journalistic practice. They stated that political economic pressures imposed on the news media negatively impacted the media’s effort to produce fair and accurate news reports of “complex scientific, economic and political issues such as climate change” (Boykoff & Yulsman 2013, p.2). Carvalho (2007) noted that the reproduction of the capitalist ideology in relation to climate change representation went against the need to change the overall way of life, a change that requires a shift from consumerism and high energy use towards an equitable society based on environmentally-friendly energy sources. Ideally, Carvalho postulated:

Effective climate politics would require changing some of the core characteristics of market-based democracies: moving from short-term goals to political far-sightedness, decoupling good government from economic growth and correcting imbalances of the global economic order (2007, p.180).

In such instances, Carvalho articulated, the media would then be required to explore “the impact of big business – especially transnational corporations - on climate change” as “a necessary (though insufficient) condition of informed economic and political citizenship. Yet, their primarily commercial logic means that the media continue to be silent accomplices [*and enablers*] of the damaging practices of those agents” (Carvalho 2007, p.181).

The capitalist political economy of climate change was blamed for how the news media construct and represent issues of climate change (Boykoff & Yulsman 2013, pp.2-3) in a manner that reproduces the dominance and hegemony of the capitalist system, observing that “state or corporate control of media through ownership or other means influences media coverage differently in different countries”. The political economy of the media and climate change should be understood from the mainstream political economy theoretical perspective. Robert McChesney (1999, p.31) argued “profit motivations can go a long way to providing context for understanding the nature of media content.” The same profit motivations can also influence the media cover[age]. This argument was amplified by Carvalho (2005, p.21) who asserted that “factors like ownership and the wider political economy of the media can provide significant contributions [to media content...] as well as the press’s relations with established interests and the social distribution of power”.

The current disinvestments in the media industry “through decreases in mass media budgets for in-depth journalism, and the huge cuts in manpower” (Boykoff & Yulsman 2013, p.3) affects the cover[age] of climate change as reporters are left reliant on second-hand information produced by public relations services, lobby groups and think-tanks. Such second-hand information sources become very powerful in deciding how the climate change issue is re/constructed and re/presented. They become strategic discourse actors and sponsors whose discursive strategies are uncritically reproduced by the news media. As Diaz Nosty (2009, p.103) argued, “Opinion generating institutions, such as foundations” are used. Further, industrial companies whose activities attract public backlash due to their environmental effects “have now become pillars for the environment through ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’” initiatives (Nosty 2009, p.104). Through “advertising, sponsorship and public approaches, they make people believe that major energy companies are environment friendly and that they even promote world sustainability” (Nosty 2009, p.104). Thus, most of the information on climate change, it has been argued, find its way into newsrooms without routine critical checking and thus reducing journalism to a mere megaphone for the discourse sponsors (Boykoff & Yulsman 2013).

Mark Stoddart et al. (2017, p.386) argued that the news media “promote a field of engagement among a range of actors with a stake in climate change policy debate” and these can include corporations, environmental organisations, governments, scientists etc. It is important to study the political economy of the news media and consequently their re/construction of climate change in countries whose overall political economies are closely linked to fossil fuels. As such Stoddart et al. (2017) examined how the media in Canada constructed and represented climate change. They noted that “Canada has one of the highest per-capita carbon footprints in the world, coupled with a poor record of performance on climate change mitigation. This is at least partly because the Canadian political economy is deeply intertwined with the carbon complex,” which is constituted by “oil and gas exploration, producing and refining companies; [and] vehicle, plane and ship manufacturers; media, advertising and cultural corporations that promote high-carbon lifestyles” (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.388 citing Urry 2013, p.76). Importantly, Stoddart et al. (2017, p.388) argued that the “economic power of the carbon complex, particularly the Alberta oil industry, has helped shape Canada’s stance relative to international climate change negotiations”.

Stoddart et al. (2017) argued that the “political economic context of climate policy debate provides a foundation for interpreting the mediated policy networks that are enacted by national news media” (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.388). In their hypothesis, they expected “fossil fuel interests to have high mediated visibility and to be well-connected to other key actors in challenging climate change mitigation [...and] environmental organizations to have lower levels of mediated visibility and to be weakly connected to other key actors in promoting climate change mitigation”. However, their study revealed that the environmental organisations together with the national and provincial governments enjoyed more mediated visibility compared to fossil fuel industries. This did not mean, however, that the fossil fuel industry was weakly organised or that the media tried to fend off their influence. Rather, there was an ideological collusion between and among the fossil fuel industry, government and non-governmental organisations.

Environmental organisations

had limited political efficacy during 2006-2010. Instead, the news sources that appear to be able to serve as switchers between communication networks and policy networks are those representing the federal government and Environment Canada, the Liberal and NDP opposition parties, and the provincial governments of British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta (Stoddart et al. 2017, pp.396-397).

However,

Environmental organizations are key actors in mediated policy networks and are linked to other actors through common discursive orientations, including provincial governments [...] are part of a constellation of news sources that promotes cap and trade and carbon taxes as solutions, and is openly critical of federal government performance on climate change (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.397).

Though the fossil fuel industry did not enjoy any mediated visibility, neoliberal responses to climate change were still mediated in the media through government representatives, think-tanks and even environmental organisations. Stoddart et al. (2017, p.397) observed that

During the period 2006-2010, the political economic importance of the oil sector did not translate into speakers from this industry appearing as central actors in mass mediated policy networks [...] Claims that addressing climate change will be an economic disaster, support for carbon capture and storage, or opposition to carbon taxes and cap and trade policies – positions we might associate with the carbon complex- are articulated by politicians [...] or think-tanks, rather than oil companies themselves (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.397).

The interests of the fossil fuel industry were communicated by other news sources indirectly who acted as

switchers between economic networks, communication networks and policy networks. Where low mediated visibility is coupled with this proxy effect, it may not indicate disempowerment or marginality, but rather is consistent with the notion that media visibility and invisibility may both be used strategically by key actors in environmental conflicts (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.397).

Regardless of the absence of the fossil fuel ideologies in the Canadian news media coverage of climate change, the government was seen to be acting in their interest (for example the pulling out of Canada from the Kyoto protocol), thus allowing Stoddart et al. (2017, p.397) to conclude that “economic networks may carry more weight than communication networks in influencing Canadian policy network responses to climate change” (Stoddart et al. 2017, p.397).

In a study of how fossil fuel companies (specifically ExxonMobil) sought to promote climate change doubt, Geoffrey Supran and Naomi Oreskes (2017) argued that ExxonMobil (one of the biggest oil and gas companies globally) successfully misled the public on climate change science by promoting ‘doubt’ through their advertorials in the *New York Times* and other key newspapers in the United States. They noted that the advertorials that appeared in the *New York Times* and came from ExxonMobil did not consistently communicate the truth about climate change being real, human-induced, and a serious problem. Supran and Oreskes (2017) analysed peer-reviewed and non-peer-reviewed articles published by ExxonMobil scientists, internal company communications and advertorials published in the *New York Times* between 1977 and 2014. They found that as the “documents become more publicly accessible, they increasingly communicate doubt” noting that;

[T]his discrepancy is most pronounced between advertorials and all other documents. For example, accounting for expressions of reasonable doubt, 83% of peer-reviewed papers and 80% of internal documents acknowledge that climate change is real and human-caused, yet only 12% of advertorials do so, with 81% instead expressing doubt (Supran & Oreskes 2017, p.1).

The advertorials were more accessible than the scientific journals and again the scientific articles were written for scientists not the public. Therefore, Supran and Oreskes (2017) concluded that ExxonMobil advanced climate science “through its scientists’ academic publications – but promoted doubt about it in advertorials” and thus misled the public on climate change.

It is important to argue that the media in South Africa also operates in political economic environments (with powerful fossil fuel industries) and thus it is imperative for this study to interrogate this environment with the view of explaining and examining how the political economy of the media in South Africa conditions how the news media re/produces and re/constructs the climate change discourse. Studies elsewhere have noted the influence of the energy industries (Supran & Oreskes 2017; Stoddart & Tindall 2017) on how the media constructs and represents climate change. It has been found that these energy and fossil fuel-based industries provide misleading information on climate change, especially on human-agency and counter the narrative of alternative energy as this threatens their own industrial existence. Anderson noted that fossil fuel companies had engaged lobbyists and think tanks together with public relations companies to undermine science, especially in the United States. “PR, then, has played a highly significant role in the climate change debate and claims-makers are employing increasingly sophisticated strategies to target the media” (Anderson 2009, p.171). The media’s dependence on official sources make these people the ultimate definers of reality. Anderson avowed:

Control over the media is as much about the power to silence and suppress issues as it is to publicise them. Moreover, claims-makers are engaged in continual definitional struggles, requiring an in-depth and multi-faceted analysis of the factors influencing the effectiveness of media strategies over time (2009, p.173).

A close examination of the political economic environment of the media in South Africa helped in understanding the role of the mining-energy industrial complex’s relationship with the media and how this relationship impacts on the re/production and re/presentation of climate change in the country. Anderson (2009, p.170-171) contended that “media corporate interests and the vested interests of advertisers [...might] discourage criticism of the government’s inaction over climate action or industry’s role. A dependency on advertising revenue from fossil fuel industries may lead journalists to self-censor their stories”.

4.5 Ideological Re/presentations of Climate Change

Climate change discourses in the media are affected by a wide range of factors. Hugh Doulton and Katrina Brown (2009) posit that climate change coverage and representation are influenced by science, political actors, sources used by the media, reporters' knowledge of the climate change subject, journalistic norms, newsrooms practices and newspaper ideological affiliations. Because of these factors, certain worldviews are privileged in the media over others, through selection and exclusion (Bennett 1988). Carvalho (2007) perceived the media as crucial in the manner in which certain climate change political and economic discourses and ideologies are constructed and represented. She defined ideology as "a system of values, norms and political preferences, linked to a program of action vis-à-vis a given social and political order" where "people relate to each other and to the world on the basis of value judgments, ideas about how things should be, and preferred forms of governance of the world" (Carvalho 2007, p.225). The media discourse and media ideology are "mutually constitutive" and the media produce texts embedded with ideological closure and constructed and represented to reinforce and reproduce particular worldviews (Carvalho 2007, p.225). Carvalho (2007) argued that "science is reconstructed and not merely mirrored in the media" and that "Particular values and worldviews are produced, reproduced and transformed in media discourses" (Carvalho 2007, p.223). The media achieved this by "allowing or disallowing other social actors to advance their ideological standings" (Carvalho 2007, p.223).

The media are both important arenas and important agents in the production, reproduction and transformation of the meanings of social issues [...] The particular discourses that they amplify strongly affect the social construction of problems and of 'authorized voices'. Therefore, media(ted) discourses play key roles in social life as they are both conditions of intelligibility of the world and conditions of possibility of action (Carvalho 2010, p.2).

Appreciating the importance of these conceptualisations, this study examined how particular discourses and ideologies (of both discourse sponsors and actors together with those of the news media) precondition the re/construction and re/presentation of the climate change discourse as it traverses the South African media-informational economy. This is important as those ideologies and discourses privileged by the media influence public understanding of the climate change problem and likely shape the national and regional policies addressing climate change. The

worldviews that are given salience in the news media attain a powerful discursive position and become naturalised and are understood as common-sensical by the public (Gramsci 1971).

4.5.1 Media-political Ideology and Climate change cover[age]

How the media re/presents and re/constructs issues of climate change follows the ideological leanings of individual newsrooms. This trend is more noticeable in the global North media systems where studies have shown that the media tended to construct climate change according to their ideological systems and normally follow the inherent political divisions between left-leaning liberalism and right-leaning conservatism (Carvalho 2005; Carvalho & Burgess 2005; Stoddart et al. 2015, 2017).

While studying media representation of climate change in the British mainstream newspaper industry, Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1467) observed that newspapers constructed and represented climate change according to their ideological standpoints. They pointed out that the conservative newspapers tended to construct climate change and the science as not proven and usually followed the discursive strategies used by the conservative governments. At the same time, the left-leaning newspapers such as the *Guardian* and the centre-left *Independent* constructed climate change as a reality and a problem needing urgent solutions.

Ideological orientations of the media do not only affect the re/presentation and re/construction of climate change, but also the level of attention the subject receives from the media. As concluded by Boykoff and Mansfield (2008), the ideological affiliations of newspapers played significant roles in determining the level of attention afforded the subject in both the United States and United Kingdom mainstream media. Cementing this observation, is the discovery by Carvalho and Burgess (2005) that left-leaning newspapers such as the *Guardian* and the *Independent* gave climate change more mediated visibility compared to the conservative neo-liberal newspapers such as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* and their Sunday stable-mates.

The construction of climate change in the mainstream British press between 1988 and 1990 followed the ideological standpoints of each publication (Carvalho & Burgess 2005). As such, the *Guardian* (left-centre leaning, social democratic ideology) and *The Times* (conservative, right-leaning and neoliberal ideology) “depicted scientific knowledge on the enhanced greenhouse effect

as consensual and reliable” and their reports relied on scientists as news [climate change] sources (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462). Though they defined climate change in the news, the scientists’ “capacity to influence the media agenda and therefore the public and political agendas – remained very limited as suggested by the number of articles” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462). While the media represented climate change with scientific confidence, the media failed or was unwilling to show “traits of catastrophism” and refrained from projecting the risks and consequences. As Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1462) noted, “newspapers remained silent about responsibility for the problem, not only leaving unquestioned the economic and social practices that generate greenhouse gases (GHGs) but also omitting references to the role of political institutions”. However, after the United Kingdom prime minister Margaret Thatcher’s speech to the Royal Society in September 1988, there was an increase in the volume of stories on climate change in the mainstream newspapers, hence showing “the weight of political leadership in the definition of risks [and ...] after Thatcher’s speech, climate change was often narrativized as a major risk for human security [...] for the first time, scenarios of impacts were brought forward” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462).

The *Independent* began publishing stories on the subject, and *The Times* (a conservative paper) published stories showing catastrophic consequences of climate change. Interestingly, the newspaper (*The Times*) changed course as “the range of political measures, economic transformation, and lifestyles necessary to address climate change became evident” and took a “a more sceptical position [...] emphasizing the lack of evidence and the exaggeration of the problem by the other media (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1463). The *Guardian*, coming from a different pro-environment, liberal social democracy ideology, amplified its narrative on climate risks (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1463). The newspaper criticised government policies on energy (especially the proposal towards nuclear energy solutions) (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1463). Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1463) noted that the *Independent* provided mixed representations, with some articles aligning with “the government’s discursive construction of climate change but others showed a more critical attitude”.

The ideological representations of climate change also played out in the media after the publication of the first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change in 1996 (Carvalho & Burgess 2005). The *Guardian* and the *Independent* published articles emphasising

the science, with the *Guardian* writing more articles that criticized “official positions or policies” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1463). However, the conservative neo-liberal newspapers, especially *The Times* and their Sunday-mates, questioned the veracity of the scientific claims, using what Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1463) described as a “rhetorical strategy of de-legitimizing unwelcome scientific or political knowledge claims by discrediting the agents of such claims”. Of interest, however, is that *The Times*, though conservative in character and ideology, found itself opposed to the conservative government policies of Thatcher because of what Carvalho and Burgess labelled as “*The Times*’ allegiance to values of individual freedom, free market, and the preservation of the status quo [...] In this period, the paper’s core values were dominant in its discourse” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1464).

The climate change discourse as sponsored by Margaret Thatcher was re/presented in a polarised manner by the mainstream news media. The left-leaning liberal newspapers acknowledged the importance of the government conceding to climate change scientific consensus but differed with the neoliberal solutions that the government offered and they also rejected the de-centring of the global warming problem from the industrialised countries. For example, the *Guardian* acknowledged “the importance of Thatcher’s speech” but “largely contested her propositions” while the *Independent* did not publish any articles based on Thatcher’s United Nations speech, a decision “equivalent to refusing to view it (publicly construct it) as significant” (Carvalho 2005, p.9).

In contrast to the left-leaning news media, the conservative newspapers reproduced Thatcher’s views and at the same time presented oppositional opinion pieces from activist groups, which Carvalho argued “is representative of a discourse that has a minority status” (Carvalho 2005, p.9). For example, Carvalho (2005, p.9) observed that “*The Times* consistently awarded Thatcher the predominant framing power in debating the issue, reinforcing and legitimating her views” noting that the “negative reactions of opposition parties and non-governmental organisations were often listed at the bottom of articles, in an apparent attempt to meet the professional principle of balance” (Carvalho 2005, p.9). Synonymous with conservative newspapers in Canada and the United States, the conservative newspapers questioned the authenticity of climate science, for example, “*The Times* and especially the *Sunday Times* often dismissed climate change by discrediting and de-authorizing the social agents that emphasized the severity of the problem” (Carvalho 2005, p.9).

Similar to the discursive strategies of the *National Post* in Canada (Stoddart & Tindall 2015), *The Times* disagreed with discourses that advocated for radical change in lifestyles, especially those that sought to overthrow neoliberalism. The newspaper “often fought claims for a need to change the economic, social, and political status quo and advanced a Promethean perspective of humans relations with the environment, which suggests an infinite capacity for man to exploit nature” (Carvalho 2005, p.9-10).

There were dual representations of climate change and the government position on the issue in the *Independent*. The constructions depended on individual authors and the paper had both uncritical and critical constructions of climate change and government construction of the subject (Carvalho 2005, p.10). By using a variety of sources (such as environmental groups, scientists, political parties), the *Guardian* chose a “precautionary approach to [challenging] government policies and debated alternatives” (Carvalho 2005, p.10). After Thatcher was replaced by John Major in 1991, Carvalho observed that *The Times* adopted the strategy of personalisation, helping “the prime minister’s claim to international leadership in addressing climate change by awarding him full protagonism” (Carvalho 2005, p.11).

Throughout the conservative government stay in power from Margaret Thatcher to John Major, the conservative news media “continually anchored [their] representation of the issue in official sources and clearly contributed to reinforcing both Major’s power and the government’s standing in the debate” (Carvalho 2005, p.11) while the left-leaning news media challenged “the position of the British government on climate change by exposing the fact that its concessions to the US position weakened the UNFCCC” (Carvalho 2005, p.11). The left-leaning liberal news media such as the *Guardian* took the strategy of shifting perspectives and “looked at the problem in a few articles through the eyes of other actors such as developing countries or NGOs” often contesting “dominant ideologies, like economic liberalism” (Carvalho 2005, p.11).

However, all the newspapers, both left-leaning and right-leaning were found to be conveying “a reductionist representation of international environmental politics. Constructing an opposition between North and South, the press simplified the causes of international conflict and often enhanced a biased reading of climate change by filtering the problem through northern lenses” (Carvalho 2005, p.11). Newspaper representations of anthropogenic climate change remained:

Within the broad ideological parameters of free-market capitalism and neo-liberalism, avoiding a sustained critique of the possibility of constant economic growth and increasing consumption, and the profound international injustices associated with the greenhouse effect (Carvalho 2005, p.2).

According to Carvalho (2005, p.11), “fundamental issues [were] being reduced in the press to ‘squabbles between rich and poor’ [...] Strategies of de-legitimation and dismissal of the claims of developing countries, often positioned as extorting money from the North, were on display” (Carvalho 2005, p.11). Carvalho blamed the way climate change was institutionalised and internationalised starting from the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Earth summit in Brazil. She argued that the summit had (Carvalho 2005, p.11-12)

consolidated the ideology of sustainable development. Claiming to harmonize economic growth with environmental protection, this discourse was hard to resist and harder to contest. Such a consensus became hegemonic, despite the fact that it continued to privilege a capitalist logic and promote consumerism, and the promises for the environment were quite vague (Carvalho 2005, p.12).

Consequently, the news media appropriated the sustainability discourse “by displaying an optimistic view of its potential and thus naturalizing mainstream political discourses” (Carvalho 2005, p.12).

In their examination of media representation and construction of climate change in the United Kingdom mainstream newspapers, Doulton and Brown (2009) identified eight major discourses that prevailed in the media. The first discourse was the optimism discourse, a discourse that did not see climate change as problematic but rather viewed climate change as beneficial to humanity. Climate change “predictions and their likely effects are viewed with scepticism and climate scientists are seen as doom-mongers” (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.194). This discourse gave primacy to the benefits of a warmer climate and saw no need for action to fight it (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.194). The second discourse was the rationalism discourse, a discourse that sought to prioritise other developmental issues (which were thought to be more current than climate change) and deferring climate action to such a time when the need arise. This discourse acknowledged the severity of climate change but argued that the costs for adaptation and mitigation are too high hence the need to deal with problems as they occur, noting that climate change is not the biggest humanitarian priority. The third discourse was on ethical mitigation, and

this discourse encouraged developed countries to lead in mitigation activities based on historical responsibility and blamed global North countries such as the United States for non-action. It is relevant to point out this discourse relates to what studies on media representation of climate change in the global South (Billet 2010; Johannessen 2013) have observed, that the media in the global South are likely to promote this kind of discourse and blame the global North for current climate change problems using the historical responsibility pretext.

Similar to this ethical mitigation discourse in the United Kingdom news media, is how the media in Sweden constructed climate change in a manner that encouraged the global North to lead in mitigation efforts and also blamed the United States for non-commitment to mitigation actions. Ulrika Olausson (2009, p.426) noted that the Swedish media constructed climate change mitigation in relation “to international political events such as G8 summits” etc. Olausson (2009, p.426) argued that mitigation was constructed as an international issue that requires international corporation. This is synonymous with what Carvalho and Burgess (2005) noted with the British right-leaning press that framed climate change as an international problem requiring collective mitigation. Contrastingly though, while the right-leaning conservative media in the United Kingdom blamed population growth and deforestation in the global South as the causes of global warming and thus the need for these countries to join mitigation efforts, the news media in Sweden gave responsibility for mitigation to actors in the industrialised global North countries, arguing that that would allow developing countries to develop.

An interesting turn is that there are divisions on mitigation responsibility even on the corpus of developed countries. As Olausson (2009, p.426) observed, the news media in Sweden constructed key dichotomies between the European Union “who treat global warming as a serious problem and want to take action” against the United States “who neglect the global impact of the changing climate and refuse even to discuss regulations”. The media in Sweden constructed the European Union “metaphorically [...] as the ‘engine’ of climate change negotiations,” opposed to the “stubborn” United States who were seen as impediments to climate change mitigation (Olausson 2009, p.27). Even though the European Union and Sweden are discussed separately in the Swedish press, “they are both described as being part of the group of ‘good guys’, they appear side by side in the reporting, and the agreement and commitment between them are underlined” (Olausson 2009, p.427).

The fourth discourse that Doulton and Brown (2009) uncovered was the self-righteous discourse, a discourse that blamed the developing global South countries such as India and China for the increasing emissions, noting that the Indochinese position was threatening the future of the planet. This kind of discourse resonates with what Phil McManus (2000) called ‘distanciation’ – a concept where the media attempts to situate the problem elsewhere, creating the dichotomous notion of ‘them’ and ‘us’ which basically imply and are founded on power hierarchies or superiority and inferiority complexes. Not only global North media use this discursive concept of distanciation, but rather studies on the global South media systems have arrived at the conclusion that the same tactic is employed where mitigation action is pitched as the responsibility of the global North to allow the global South space to develop without any emission caps in order to meet the global South developmental objectives.

The fifth discourse identified by Doulton and Brown was the discourse on disaster strikes. This discourse constructed climate change as a current problem and called for action to help communities adapt and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. In opposition to the rationalism discourse, the discourse on disaster strikes constructed climate change in the present tense, highlighting extreme weather events as evidence of a changing climate. This kind of construction is similar to what Olausson (2013) observed concerning the Swedish media coverage of climate change where climate change was viewed as a current problem requiring urgent collective action. The sixth discourse was on potential catastrophe, the discourse emphasised future impacts of climate change especially for the developing countries. The seventh discourse was the crisis discourse, which argued for the need to balance global imbalances and inequalities in order to address climate change. The eighth and last discourse that Doulton and Brown discovered was the discourse on opportunity, where it was thought that overcoming climate change could help the poor through the use of clean energy thereby harmonising economic growth with economic development.

Potential catastrophe was the most prominent discourse (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.197). However, the discourse on potential catastrophe was more prevalent in the *Guardian* and the *Independent* newspapers (36% and 45% respectively) and was less prominent in the *Telegraph* and *The Times* (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.197). Rationalism was the most common discourse in *The Times* articles (48%) together with self-righteous mitigation in the *Telegraph*. Rationalism featured

less in the *Guardian* and never in the *Independent* (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.197). Self-righteous mitigation was rare in the *Independent* and *The Times* and never in the *Guardian*. The discourses on disaster strikes and crisis were more prevalent in the *Independent* and the *Guardian*, with the opportunity discourse featuring less (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.198). It was observed that all these three discourses did not feature in the *Telegraph* and *The Times*. Doulton and Brown's (2009) study found that ethical mitigation discourse was covered though not prominently in all the newspapers.

Contrary to the view that the journalistic norm of balance influences climate change stories (Boykoff & Boykoff 2004; Boykoff 2007; Nosty 2009), Doulton and Brown (2009, p.199) saw that different newspapers had different preferred discourses (thus diminishing) the view on balance. Rather, there was no indication of "a strong attempt to represent a balanced mix of the different views surrounding climate change and development" because each newspaper had more prominent discourses, for example the *Independent* and the *Guardian* had crisis discourses dominating, while rationalism dominated coverage in the *Telegraph* and *The Times* (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.199). Doulton and Brown (2009, p.199) noted that the distinctions in discourses for each newspaper could be a result of newspaper ideology. They noted that *The Times* and the *Telegraph* are conservative newspapers that identify more with neoliberal political economics, hence the prevalence of discourses on optimism and rationalism "discourses that deny the need to do anything about climate change and shy away from the idea of potentially severe problems for the developing world" (Doulton & Brown 2009, p.199).

Similar to these observations, ideological polarisation of climate change in the media emerged as an active element of how the media in Canada represented and constructed climate change. Stoddart and Tindall (2015) sought to explore the links between media representations and "understand the cultural politics of Canadian involvement in the climate change" in the overall climate change politics in Canada. In doing this, they analysed the coverage of climate change in Canada (the *Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*). Their study revealed that climate change is a divisive issue in Canada as much as it is in other developed global North countries. The divisions in the representation and construction of climate change in the Canadian news media were found to fall within the ideological contours of left (liberal) and right (neo-liberal conservatism).

Analogous to left-leaning liberal media coverage of climate change in the United Kingdom (Doulton & Brown 2009; Carvalho & Burgess 2005), the *Globe and Mail* (liberal left-leaning) focused on debates around the responsibility of the government, ecological and meteorological impacts and corporate responsibility (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.411). In the same manner as the neo-liberal conservative newspapers in the United Kingdom (Doulton & Brown 2009; Carvalho & Burgess, 2005), the *National Post* (conservative neo-liberal right-leaning) had themes on the “reliability of climate science, international negotiation, and the ecological and meteorological impacts of climate change” (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.411). The *National Post* questioned whether climate change was a “significant environmental problem” (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.411). The *National Post* in 2006 was found to have focused its climate change debates on the “reliability of climate science” (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.411). The *Globe and Mail* in 2010 was found to have presented a number of issue categories that included government responsibility, reliability of climate science, international policy negotiations and Canada’s dependence on oil. Coverage treated Canadian dependence on oil as a barrier to effective action on climate change while the *National Post* focused its attention on the negative impacts to the economy and markets of climate change mitigation, especially to oil industries and regions dependent on oil such as Alberta. (Stoddart & Tindall 2015, p.412).

Noting that South Africa as a country is inherently dependent on fossil fuels and that the fossil fuel industry is such a big industry that exerts its influence across the whole economy (Weston 2012), this study theorised how the news media in South Africa affords mediated visibility to different actors, especially the fossil fuel industry. This study navigates if the fossil fuel industry receives greater mediated visibility and how that visibility relates to discourses that seek to ‘other’ the responsibility of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by exporting that responsibility to the global North. The study interrogated the presence of a symbiotic relationship between the worldviews of these industries and those of the news media. This was done by examining how such worldviews or discourses were either critically or uncritically re/produced or rejected by the news media. Further, the study compared the discourses of the fossil fuel industries in and outside of the media and those that are re/produced by the government, specifically the national response policies. This helped to understand who, between the news media and the fossil fuel industry, holds much power in influencing government policies.

Furthermore, the study examined newspaper specific re/presentations of climate change among the four newspapers that are the focus of this study. The analysis focused on whether particular newspapers construct climate change from a neoliberal perspective or rather call for radical politics (Carvalho 2007) that seek to alter the status quo by rejecting neoliberal solutions to climate change. The perspectives or ideologies that specific newspapers promote helped to understand that particular newspaper's ideological orientation.

4.5.2 Political re/constructions and climate change re/presentation in the media

Politicians and not scientists, are often offered the definitional role of climate change by the media. Carvalho (2005) argued that between 1988 and 1990, the then United Kingdom prime minister Margaret Thatcher was able, through the media “to control the definition of the climate change issue: instead of ignoring the problem, she appropriated it and made several high-profile interventions to set the agenda in line with neo-liberal principles” (Carvalho 2005, p.5). The appropriation of climate change by a conservative government was seen as unusual because of the conservatives' pro-neoliberalism ideological orientation. However, as Carvalho (2005) argued, the conservatives upheld climate change “as a useful justification for maintaining and increasing investment in nuclear power, and for strengthening the wider Thatcherite agenda, especially privatisation of the electricity industry and destruction of the coal-mining industry” (Carvalho 2005, p.5). “Thatcher and other officials presented nuclear power as the solution to the problem of the greenhouse effect” and the media (especially *The Times* and the *Independent*) “prominently and uncritically reproduced” the government's policy choice. This reproduction of the Conservative government's views could be explained by reference to the newspapers' right-leaning ideologies. However, the *Guardian*, with a more centre-left ideological stance, rejected the government policy options (Carvalho 2005, p.6).

The ideological “lines were drawn between neo-liberal politics, which framed climate change as a global threat that required every country to act and share the burden, and a side of more radical politics which argued that adaptation and mitigation costs should be met by industrialised nations most responsible for the production of greenhouse gases” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462). As Carvalho and Burgess argued,

The discursive construction of climate change into a public risk was clearly tied to the government’s initiative to situate the risk within a neo-liberal economic program, sharing the costs globally while reaping potential economic benefits nationally (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1464).

Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1462) showed the power of politicians in influencing the discourse on climate change. They argued that “political actors have played by far the most powerful and effective role in shaping climate change in the public affairs” and that their views were mediated through the media’s “preferred ideological worldview” (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1458). They noted that in the United Kingdom mainstream media, coverage mostly resonated with political statements. Of note was the “direct intervention” into the climate change debate of the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Her intervention, they argued, “usurped” the definitional power of climate change from scientists to politicians (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462).

Discourse sponsors are able to employ discursive moments and sway the media to re/produce their worldviews in a manner that legitimises their ideological positions. Thatcher’s United Nations speech in 1989 (Carvalho 2005, p.6), made climate change her central message, focusing on the risks it posed to all nations. Carvalho (2005) argued that Thatcher sought to project climate change as an international problem in need of collective global mitigation not just by the industrialised countries. The problem with such a re/construction of climate change is that causation and agency of the global North industrialised countries is deleted (Carvalho 2005, p.6) and climate change is made ahistorical and everyone is required to self-righteously mitigate (Doulton & Brown p.2009) and reduce their carbon footprint regardless of historical responsibility. Carvalho (2005, p.6) observed that “Thatcher put the emphasis on world population growth and deforestation as sources of the problem, thus de-centring the analysis from the sphere” of industrialised countries. Borrowing from McManus (2000), it can be argued that Thatcher adopted the discursive strategy of distancing and located the sources of global warming outside the confines of the United

Kingdom and hence blame the global South's population growth and deforestation as the global warming problem sources. The strategy entailed not mentioning the historical responsibility of the global North industrialised countries, thus de-centring the problem from the historically emitting countries.

This worked "to globalize the greenhouse effect and thereby re-locate responsibilities from specific agents in specific places to a generalized, globalized physical problem" (Carvalho 2005, p.7). According to Carvalho, such a construction of the climate change problem had "a prescriptive function" and hence supported "the passivity of policy-makers at local, regional, and national levels, justifying and excusing inaction" (Carvalho 2005, p.7). Further, "the discursive construction of climate change into a [global] public risk was clearly tied to the government's initiative to situate that risk within a neo-liberal economic program, sharing the costs globally while reaping the potential economic benefits nationally" (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1464).

Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1462) in their analysis of climate change coverage in the British quality newspapers discovered that from 1985-1990 the discursive construction of climate change evolved due to usurping of definitional power from scientists by the then prime minister, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher. They argued that between 1985 and 1988, the newspapers in Britain relied on scientific sources, within this period the scientists remained the key definers of climate change and its processes. Unfortunately, the news media "underestimated the risks associated with climate change and refrained from presenting its possible consequences [remaining silent] about responsibility for the problem, not only leaving unquestioned the economic and social practices that generate greenhouse gases (GHGs) but also omitting references to the role of political institutions" (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462). The change in media climate change discourse came in 1988 after Thatcher's speech to the Royal Society where she admitted that humans massively interfered with the system of the planet (Carvalho & Burgess 2005).

As argued by Carvalho and Burgess (2005, p.1463), Thatcher's speech became a "turning point in media" in the representations of climate change and consequently "was able to set the terms for debate, and that the press discourse on climate change departed from science and was shaped by the discourse framework defined by the government". They observed that

The impact of her intervention has been widely commented upon and the sharp rise in the volume of subsequent press coverage on the greenhouse effect clearly indicates the weight of political leadership in the definition of risks (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1462).

As climate change became a highly politicised issue, political actors sought to offer their interpretations of scientific claims in a bid to promote their agendas (Carvalho & Burgess 2005). Climate change was framed by the British government as an "existential threat" (Carvalho & Burgess 2005, p.1463). Carvalho and Burgess (2005) noted that as political and economic measures necessary to address climate change became evident, a division in media representation of climate change arose. They argued that *The Times* shifted to a more sceptical position and emphasised the lack of proof and the exaggeration of climate change by the media. The *Guardian* maintained the risks associated with climate change and was very critical of the Thatcher administration proposals of using nuclear energy as an alternative to coal and petroleum (Carvalho & Burgess 2005) and *The Times* aligned with the government.

Sources play important roles in determining issue-definitions. This is also true of climate change communication. The sources that the media rely on shape how the climate change discourse is appropriated in the South African national context. This study put emphasis on the need to examine the trends in climate change mediated visibility, exploring the factors and actors behind this visibility and showing how particular actors and events attract attention from the media. By getting this attention, the study regards how these actors attempt to construct climate change in a way that advances their ideological and discursive worldviews as important and worth critiquing. In this arena, the influence of politics and politicians, the business elites (especially the fossil fuels industry and other interested groups) become apparent to understand how they have appropriated the climate change discourse, and sought to influence how it is constructed in both the public and the media. The study's strength lies in comparing and discursively analysing the influence of politicians and business elites on the hand and that of scientists on the other. Essential to note is that inasmuch as there is scepticism and denial in the media in general, discourses at the

international stage have evolved, moving from denial/consensus discourses to discourses that seek to influence global response to climate change. This study aimed to understand how the news media in South Africa have navigated and mediated this new discourse and the solutions they privileged and why.

4.6 Climate change scepticism and denial in the media

Studies on media representation of climate change have noted that in some instances, especially in the United States, United Kingdom, France and Canada, the media often promotes sceptical and denial voices. To explain this, scholars have examined the effects of journalistic norms of balance and objectivity, influence of sources (think-tanks, lobby groups, non-governmental organisations, academics, fossil fuel industries' representatives, public relations), newspaper ideologies and political discourses in determining how climate change gets to be represented in the media.

The media in the United States has been found to lead in sceptical and denialist voices. For example, in a 2007 study of news media representations of climate change in the United States and United Kingdom, Boykoff (2007, p.477) discovered that there was a contrast in coverage between the two countries. He noted less prevalence of sceptics and denialists in the United Kingdom news media and concluded that while climate change remained a high “politically divisive issue” in the United States, both the Conservative and Labour governments in the United Kingdom had embraced climate science though they differed on solutions. Further, Boykoff argued that in the United States, resistance to international climate policy has been a concern of the Republicans (Boykoff 2007). Boykoff (2007, p. 477 citing McCright, 2007) posited that

despite the fact that carbon-based industry interests have exerted considerable influence over climate change policy in countries, associated scientists and policy actions who have questioned the significance of human contributions have been housed in the United States universities, think tanks and lobby organisations.

Bernardo Nosty (2009, p.101) explained the existence of climate scepticism and denial in the media by arguing that media representations of climate change follow “different narrative patterns”, noting scepticism and discrepancies between the media reports and scientific reports originate from the journalistic norm of seeking balance. Nosty also blamed the journalistic reliance on non-science sources and experts that led to news articles that avoided “scientific explanations” and had “a questionable impact on public opinion” (Nosty 2009, p.92). In trying to explain “how

and why US media have represented conflict and contentions, despite an emergent consensus view regarding anthropogenic climate change science” between 1995 and 2006, Boykoff (2007, p.478) also drew attention to journalistic norms as a potential factor in the “discontinuities” and denial and scepticism that characterised the United States media coverage of climate change. He argued that

US mass media coverage of anthropogenic climate change is not a simple collection of news articles and clips produced by journalists and producers; rather, media coverage signifies key frames derived through complex and non-linear relationships between scientists, policy actors and the public that is often mediated by journalists’ news stories (Boykoff 2007, p.478).

The United States media covered climate change as “contentions”. These representations were influenced by “Political economic factors as well as social and cultural influences” (Boykoff 2007, p.481). Results presented by Boykoff (2007, p.481), essentially on the coverage of climate change as a contentious issue, reflect and reveal how discourse sponsors (in this context the United States then president George W. Bush, Exxon) influenced this trend and journalists paid little attention or no attention to scientific consensus but rather, through selection of sources, privileged some views of political and economic sponsors and actors/agents over scientific agreement. Boykoff concluded that

media coverage of nature’s agency in response to human influences is the often subsumed by socio-political and economic concerns, such as how certain greenhouse gas reduction efforts may restrict economic activities. With such socio-political concerns at the fore, greater stress is placed on the danger of climate policy on trade and economy, rather than also considering how trade and the economy may have detrimental effects on the global climate (2007, p.485).

While the media in the United States and United Kingdom construct climate change along the contention and scepticism frames (Boykoff 2007; Carvalho & Burgess 2005), the Swedish press constructed climate change along the lines of “scientific consensus and consequences clearly expressed” (Olausson 2009, p.429) . There is “an unquestioned and taken-for-granted frame of certainty [...] in the Swedish press” and

[T]here seems to be no room for scientific uncertainties or conflicts about the existence, extent, and current effects of climate change. The phenomenon has become a naturalised common-sense concept implemented into everyday news discourse (Olausson 2009, p.430).

The media in Sweden did not construct climate change as a futuristic distant problem, warranting a wait-and-see attitude – like in the United States (Boykoff 2007; Boykoff & Yulsman 2007) but linked climate change to present extreme weather (Olausson 2009, p.430). Where scientists are hesitant to link current extreme weather phenomena to climate change, the press gave space to that but however,

[H]andled [the matter] in a manner that reduces its salience in all essentials. The frame of certainty is built by means of the collection and presentation of arguments from actors with strong ethos and a high level of legitimacy, to de-legitimize the skeptical perspective [...] Political or environmental actors outside the sphere of institutionalized politics are to a large extent omitted from the reporting, as are skeptics of human-induced global warming (Olausson 2009, p.431).

The press in Sweden legitimised the certainty frame through the use of “scare stories” where “the news stories are fear-generating and explicitly relate serious risks and various sorts of harm to the phenomenon of climate change” (Olausson 2009, p.431).

In France, the climate change consensus discourse was met with resistance during the 1990s from the “political, intellectual and scientific elite” who felt that “the growing political focus on ecology” threatened to change the existing status quo by bringing “a new ‘ideology’ or ‘new ecological order’” (Aykut et al. 2012, p.165). These forces of resistance saw “the values of state-led progress as being endangered by ‘irrational environmentalism’” (Aykut et al. 2012, pp.165-166). However, from 2000 onwards, attention given to contesting actors was limited in the media, with scientists taking a more pronounced stand (Aykut et al. 2012, p.166) and sceptics’ access to the media became restricted in the public discourse. An analysis of the *Le Monde* showed that “while the first phase [the 1990s] was characterised by sporadic but persistent attacks on the hypothesis of human-induced climate change and the ‘new green ideology’ expressed in international climate negotiations, such voices received little media attention in the second phase [the 2000s]” (Aykut et al. 2012, p.166).

James Painter and Neil Gavin (2016) examined the accommodation of sceptics in climate change news coverage in the United Kingdom. They found that right-leaning/conservative newspapers had a higher percentage of sceptical stories compared to the left-centre-leaning newspapers. They analysed news articles, opinion pieces, commentaries, and letters published between February

2007 and February 2011. Painter and Gavin (2016, p.444) found right-leaning newspapers to have the highest number of scepticism “of articles with skeptical voices within the articles covering climate change” noting that there was “closer correspondence between ideological leaning and the prevalence of skeptical voices” in opinion pieces. The left-leaning papers such as the *Guardian* and the *Independent* had less articles that included sceptical voices both in news stories and opinion pieces (though between 2009 and 2010 these newspapers had an increase in the number of sceptical voices). Painter and Gavin (2016) linked this peak in the left-leaning press to the leaking of climate change emails from the scientists at the University of East Anglia (popularly referred to as *climategate*). The peaks in cover(age) during *climategate* could also be linked to aspects of news values where negative news attract more media attention.

While this study did not primarily seek to study the presence or absence of sceptical voices in the news media, it was beneficial to build on this literature to understand how the news media in South Africa constructed climate change. Central to this is to know the forces at play that either help to accommodate or reject scepticism. This study developed scepticism from the traditional questions of whether climate change is a reality or not, to questions of scepticism regarding the solutions to addressing the problem. This was achieved by examining the mediated struggles between different policy options.

4.7 Re/constructions of climate change in the global South media

Studies on news media representation and construction of climate change have given much attention to the global North media systems compared to the global South. This section is testament to the dearth in research focusing on the global South as few studies were done. Simon Billet (2010, p.2) summed this gap in research as follows “To date, almost all research on communication of climate change has focused on Western social contexts and norms, with little consideration of how the issue is being framed in other countries where the macro-scale normalising values in the public sphere are different” (Billet 2010, p.2).

The global South news media, in a similar manner as some sections of the global North news media, has re/constructed climate change as an existential problem. However, divergences have emerged regarding how these two geopolitical regions re/construct climate change adaptation and mitigation. Where the global North largely constructs climate change as distant, affecting countries outside (Doulton & Brown 2009; Carvalho & Burgess 2005), the global South has consistently

constructed climate change as a local problem (Billet 2010; Olausson 2009). This re/construction has been linked to current extreme weather events that are already affecting most countries in the global South. On the other hand, where the global North has sought a collective agenda on mitigating climate change through greenhouse gases emissions reduction, the global South has sought to locate and situate that responsibility outside, calling for the historically responsible global North countries to act. It is important to note that the global South, especially the BRICS countries, are presently significant emitters of greenhouse gases and therefore ethically required to reduce their global emissions.

Billet (2010) examined how the English-language newspapers in India construct and represent climate change issues. Billet began his analysis by appreciating that “India is a major producer of global greenhouse gas emissions” and that the country’s energy consumption continues to rise (Billet 2010, p.3). How the news media in India represent and construct climate change is important (Billet 2010, pp.2-3) because the country is a big greenhouse gases emitter and again while the country has registered massive growth post-2000, the country remains relatively poor, with more than 70% of the population still living in rural areas and in abject poverty. The Indian case relates to the South African context, where the country’s socio-economic structure is dualised, on the one hand the country is poor (high levels of poverty characterised by increasing of inequalities between the rich and poor) and on the other hand the country is developed (contributing significant amounts of greenhouse gases emissions).

In describing the Indian news media, political and economic construction and representation of climate change, Billet (2010, p.3) observed that the country “remained politically defensive both in response to these national physical threats and also in terms of international action to fight climate change” maintaining that “historic responsibility for climate change resides with the developed world”. Think-tanks, lobby groups – opinion leaders on climate change and discourse sponsors in India such as the Centre for Science and Environment (Billet 2010, p.3),

have regularly used the term ‘carbon capitalism’ to describe current climate negotiations, arguing that efforts by developed countries to ‘force India’ to reduce its emissions are yet another attempt on the part of the developed world to stifle India’s development.

Geopolitical definitions of climate change were present in how climate change was constructed and represented in the Indian news media where “Climate change is viewed primarily through a North-South perspective, where responsibility for present and future change lies with developed countries, the international, postcolonial ‘other’” (Billet 2010, p.3-4). Contrary to the scepticism in the global North newspapers (Boykoff 2007), Billet (2010, p.5) found that in India, climate change was represented along consensus discourses. The climate change problem was seen as a current problem affecting India but caused outside of the country. Further, climate change threats were represented as already in existence with attribution to human causes “98% of [news] articles directly attributed climate change to anthropogenic causes” (Billet 2010, p.5). The news media “directly attributed their certainty about climate change to current, observable environmental change” (Billet 2010, p.7). In contrast to the global North news media that located the impacts of climate change outside national borders (Doulton & Brown 2009), the Indian press constructed climate change risks locally seeing India as a country “under threat” (Billet 2010, p.8) without “othering’ them from the national scene” as is common practice in the global North. The effects of climate change were “located within the State that define the frame of risk. This placement of threat reflects the wider Indian political position that climate change is a phenomenon caused outside of India but which India is suffering from nonetheless” (Billet 2010, p.8).

There are similarities on how the media in Sweden (representing the global North) and India (representing the global South) constructed climate change. Climate change adaptation in the Swedish news media, just like in India, was localised and constructed as the responsibility of municipalities, politicians, and national authorities where the “risks connected to climate change, as portrayed by the press, all call for action at the national or local levels” (Olausson 2009, p.427). However, the international and transnational perspective which characterised news media construction of climate change mitigation was missing from the adaptation perspective in Sweden. The problem with this “neglect of a transnational perspective on adaptation is the fact that the Third World is not incorporated into the frame. Instead, the reporting in this area remains within the conventional frame of pity” (Olausson 2009, p.429). “Hence, the frame of pity and postcolonial guilt, by which the Third World is more or less mechanically constructed in the press, could be said to obscure the possibility of including Third World countries in the collective action frame of adaptation” (Olausson 2009, p.429).

In contrast to the localisation of climate change risks, the media in India “placed the responsibility and demand for action resolutely outside the country” (Billet 2010, p.8). By emphasising the global North historical responsibility and omitting the present complicity of the global South on global greenhouse gases emissions, the news media constructed climate change in way as to make people understand “that ‘developed countries’ could not avoid ‘the mess they created,’” (Billet 2010, p.9). The emphasis on the historical aspect of greenhouse gases emissions “was used by the press to underpin the dominant discourse on actual ‘action’ [...] 38% of the articles dealing with mitigation believed that only the North should cut its emissions [...] 55% of the articles advocated that action should be approached globally but in a differentiated way” (Billet 2010, p.9). The articles gave salience to the view that “India must instead prioritise its commitments to poverty reduction and economic growth” (Billet 2010, p.10). To Billet, the construction “against responsibility and action over climate by the English-language press reflects the wider governmental approach to climate change in India” (Billet 2010, p.10).

This study contends that the omission of the global South in the mitigation discourse builds on the discourse of ethical mitigation (Doulton & Brown 2009) and works to subject the global South to pity. The Indian news media, thus, constructs climate change mitigation as a reserve for countries in the global North with the European Union and the United States being the major players. This fails to account for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the global South, especially those within the BRICS association. Failure to involve these countries in mitigation solutions runs the risk of reverse transfer of emissions from the global South to the global North. Further, this kind of climate construction helps to ‘other’ climate change “at the international scale in a strongly reactionary narrative that clearly situates the causes of climate change” outside the global South (Billet 2010, p.10-11). Drawing from McManus (2000), Billet (2010, p.11) argued that the causes and effects of climate change are “distanced” and constructed “along developmental and international North-South lines”. The media constructed India and other global South countries as unfairly targeted by the international community who sought to limit their progress. For example, Billet (2010, p.11) analysed how the media in India represented the Kyoto Protocol, and found that the press represented the negotiations and the protocol negatively in a manner that suggested that the “policy is focused on trying to relocate responsibility for emissions cuts to India, even though the Kyoto Protocol actually exempts emerging economies” (Billet 2010, p.11).

From the media perspective, “not only does India face the threats and impacts of climate change, but also suffers from an international political system that seeks to create emissions caps for the third world” (Billet 2010, p.11). The global North was framed as failing to reduce their emissions. The news media re/presented other developing global South countries as in the suffering position of India, arguing that climate change was facilitating imperialism. However, the “frame of southern cohesion or uniformity in both the impacts and policies of climate change extended the international division of risk and responsibility to a global North-South divide” (Billet 2010, p.12).

Billet (2010, p.13) noted that the international focus on climate change responsibility diminished the “coverage of differences in domestic responsibility or of the potential for domestic mitigation action within India” (Billet 2010, p.13). The media failed to report on the stratified nature of Indian society in relation to emissions with news articles “making no reference to stratification in emissions or capacity to adapt to climate change” (Billet 2010, p.13). Therefore, the “absence of coverage on domestic stratification, and so on potential climate mitigation within India, reflects the press’ use of historical emissions profiles as the foundation for the entire climate change discourse within the country” (Billet 2010, p.13). Drawing from Watkins (2007), Billet argued that

The focus on historical, international, inequalities in greenhouse gas emissions creates a discourse that is not only biased towards coverage of international divides but also neglects the issue of domestic emissions divides within India – emissions divides that are of the same absolute magnitude as those at the international scale (Billet 2010, p.13).

The media coverage of climate change

is based around a divisive allocation of risk and responsibility in a narrative that separates climate change across North-South lines. By defining these clear lines, the press created a narrative based on international postcolonial divides, portraying the south as a single homogenous entity at risk from global climate change (Billet 2010, p.13).

In Nepal, the construction and representation of climate change is influenced by the media’s overreliance on official sources. Sangita Shrestha et al. (2014, p.167), while doing content analysis of the Nepalese radio program ‘*Batabaran Dabali*’ found that the radio program used official sources more. They noted that in Nepal, “elites tend to have the most newsworthy voices” as they “define the problems associated with climate change [...] ordinary people were largely excluded from participation” (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.167), underrepresenting the voices of the local

communities. These findings from Nepal, a global South country, are important in the understanding of how elites and officials in the global South play a central role in influencing the climate change discourse and defining the problem for the general people. These sources become discourse sponsors and inform how climate change is constructed in the media and ultimately in the policy and social networks.

The radio program (*Batabaran Dabali*) “largely served as a forum for elite environmental discourses primarily for exchanging environmental knowledge among elites themselves rather than communicating with ordinary Nepalese people” (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.167). Like observations made by Billet (2010) in India and Olausson (2009) in Sweden, Shrestha et al. (2014, p.167) noted that climate change was constructed as a current national problem, linking environmental problems to climate change. The vulnerability of Nepal was strengthened by using evidence from international assessments and at the same time “was framed more in terms of certainty than future risk” (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.168). Following the pattern noted by Billet (2010) regarding the construction of climate change adaptation and mitigation in India, the news media in Nepal constructed climate change impacts as a local problem, and saw climate change responsibility lying with the developed global North nations (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.168). Nepal was constructed as a “helpless and unable to avoid the punishing impacts of climate change” (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.169) and the country was seen as constrained by mitigation obligations, rather calling for the country to be allowed space to develop (Shrestha et al. 2014, p.169).

In China, Jingrong Tong (2014) examined the role of investigative journalism in response to environmental (not necessarily climate change) problems in China. As China’s economic development is linked to the growth in greenhouse gas emissions, Tong argued that it is difficult to expect the media to reflect on “risks posed by environmental problems” as doing so is similar to reflecting on the “consequences of economic modernization” which is the priority of the Chinese government (2014, p.346). The situation is compounded by restrictive and controlled operational environment of the media in China.

However, Tong (2014, p.346) argued that the media in China

represent environmental problems in a way that tends to oppose [...] national priority for economic growth, challenge rather than reinforce the current institutional discourse of development, and criticize rather than uphold the present structure of the capitalist mode of production in China (Tong 2014, p.346).

While the news media in China constructs environmental problems as social problems that are human-induced and a product of modernisation (Tong 2014, p.354), “topics like climate change and global warming [...] are extremely marginalized” rather attention is given to pollution, health and geological problems without linking them to either climate change or global warming (Tong 2014, p.355). The media reports link the “causes and consequences of environmental problems [...] to social injustice and inequality” constructing a dichotomy between the “politically and socially advantaged versus disadvantaged people and institutions, producing a crisis discourse of the current capitalist mode of production” (Tong 2014, p.357). The media reports blamed economic development for the environmental problems, poor government practices, operations of big commercial organisations and the coal miners (Tong 2014, p.358). This study found that within the South African climate change discourses in the news, climate change was seldom linked to aspects of capitalist agency, rather the climate crisis was largely re/constructed as a simple problem of the environment. Discursive strategies of scientisation could be blamed for how the news media diminished a focus on the cultural politics of climate change in South Africa.

4.8 Media re/presentation and re/construction of climate change in South Africa

In South Africa (Tagbo 2010, p.25), the coverage of climate change is poor, with the newspapers only having a peak in coverage during United Nations climate conferences and publication of scientific reports. Tagbo observed that climate change coverage was closely linked to international events and more distanced from the local problems facing Africa. The most dominant sources of climate news were identified as global news agencies with very few articles originating from the internal reporters. Further, climate change was framed as a problem of those in decision-making positions with much of the focus being placed on the political and economic impacts of climate change (Tagbo 2010, p.29). Shanahan (2009, p.146) noted that just nine per cent of all journalists who attended the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) summit in Bali in 2007 were from the global South “and nearly the entire UN list of 50 Least Developed Countries, there was zero media representation”. Shanahan argued that the absence of journalists

from the global South at UNFCCC summits “prevents relevant information from reaching people in such nations and means that negotiators are under little public scrutiny” (Shanahan 2009, p.146).

Tagbo’s findings are supported by the findings of Carolyn Cramer (2008) who used quantitative analysis to examine the coverage of climate change in three Western Cape daily newspapers (*Cape Times*, *Cape Argus* and *Die Burger*). Her study analysed 513 articles, downloaded from the newspapers’ websites (*Cape Times* 229, *Cape Argus* 148 and *Die Burger* 135). Cramer (2008, p.57) observed that most of the news articles in all the three newspapers were linked to conferences, scientific reports and summits. Climate change was framed according to the impacts it posed, linking climate change to ecological problems where climate issues that were discussed related to the “melting of the ice caps and the rising sea levels” (Cramer, 2008, p.58). Cramer (2008, p.63) noted that the stories that were studied were mostly irrelevant to the local context, “nearly half of all the articles had no African, South Africa or Western Cape context at all”. She noted that “Just over 10% gave some African context” observing that “More than 35% of articles had South African context and a little over 25% of articles had localised Western Cape context” (Cramer 2008, p.63). Rouxnette Meiring (2013) used quantitative methods to examine how the broadcast media framed the COP17 negotiations in Durban. Her study revealed that the South African broadcast media had more stories on climate change during the negotiations. Meiring’s study showed that coverage was dominated by the political and economic frames, followed by stories that focussed on climate justice and that climate change sceptics received little attention.

Tagbo (2010, p.18-19) examined climate change coverage frequency in South Africa and Nigeria using four newspapers, two from each country. The research revealed that in Nigeria, out of the estimated 86 760 stories published by the *Guardian* and the *Vanguard* in the six months of the research, only 79 stories (0,091%) focussed on climate change. For the South African media, out of the total estimate of 28 800 stories published by the *Star* and the *Mail & The Times* only 96 (0,33%) stories focussed on climate change. Tagbo (2010) noted that most climate change reports were driven by scientific reports, conferences, regional events, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious groups. The dominant frames that Tagbo (2010) discovered were political and economic issues, climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation. Tagbo (2010) noted that

for the *Star*, most of the climate change stories it published originated from news agencies, mostly with issues outside South Africa. Twenty-three per cent of the articles by the newspaper were about international events and scientific reports and “70% of the stories in the *Mail & The Times* were tied to international events with neither a South African nor African background. 18 per cent were for other international events” (Tagbo 2010, p.27). Her study further revealed that stories by the local reporters only accounted for six per cent of total coverage. The stories presented climate change as a political issue (34%), mitigation (24%), adaptation (16%), and impacts of climate change (18%). Climate change surfaced as a concern for those in government and with power (Tagbo 2010, p.29).

Tagbo (2010) argued that climate change received little attention in both the South African and Nigerian media because it is not a “front page subject except when - there is a strong local, political or economic dimension to it” (Tagbo 2010, p.34). She cited lack of specialisation from journalists and understanding in newsrooms as some of the barriers to climate change cover[age] in Africa, arguing that “Lack of understanding of the issues on climate change makes it difficult for most African journalists to do a good job in reporting it” (Tagbo 2010, p.34). At most times, the journalists always look for the dramatic and catchy angle, which the environmental issues rarely provide, the environment is given less attention in the media, except in cases of major disasters (Gess 2012, p.55). Harold Gess (2012, p.55) argued, the “Natural or man-made environmental disasters, with human casualties and heroism, offer a chance for the environment to become a dramatic ‘event’ that contains many of the ‘news values’ which can push it up the news rankings [...] ... Such stories may then linger lower in the story matrix for a week or two, before disappearing altogether”. Alan Finlay (2012, p.16) noted that studies on climate change and its coverage in the media have often reached the same conclusions and results. The most arrived at results include lack of specialisation, lack of interest, under-resourced newsrooms, dependence on wire services and the failure to provide a local perspective in the stories. Finlay (2012, p.18) argued that “the systemic social consequences of climate change are complex” not that the impacts were not immediate and the science still confusing, making it difficult for the journalists to determine whether weather events are due to climate change (anthropogenic) or natural variations.

Nicola Jones (2012, p.31) argued, “the environment beat is still considered a ‘lower-order’ genre in South African newsrooms,” pointing out that there “is dearth of ‘science’ or ‘environmental’ reporters”. Jones contended that “climate change and other environmental stories rarely make the front page, unless official or celebrity figures are attending a conference or supporting a particular event or issue” (Jones, 2012, p.31). Jones (2012, p.33) argued that in South Africa “journalists battle to find new and interesting angles for stories in this area, which raises the notion of ‘sexing up’ issues – using sensationalism in order to sell stories”. However, this is contrasted by Tagbo (2010) who argued that the environment and climate change beat has several attraction points noting that “the concept has so many dimensions that could excite public interest as much as traditional politics and corruption stories” (Tagbo 2010, p.36).

Jill Johannessen (2013, p.32) investigated how the “media constructed representations of climate change” in South Africa focusing on the “interface of climate change, poverty and justice”. Johannessen (2013, p.33) noted that the coverage of COP17 was low compared to the coverage of COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. This study put emphasis on the mainstream elite media in South Africa because “serious coverage of climate change in the tabloid press is very limited” Johannessen (2013, p.36). During the COP17 summit, the *Business Day*, the *Mercury*, and *SABC3* news had climate change as a key subject between 25 November and December 14, 2011 (Johannessen, 2013, p.44). The *SABC3* had 18 news stories with long news stories “mostly lasting around five minutes and containing two or three story lines” (Johannessen 2013, p.45). The *Mercury* published an estimated 111 stories both online and offline (excluding non-staff items) and the *Business Day*, which “has a history of covering international climate change negotiations,” published 101 news articles excluding non-staff items. All the three outlets had significant numbers of the articles put on the front pages or bulletin headlines (Johannessen 2013, p.45).

Johannessen (2013, p.45) noted that the media largely framed COP17 as a political game where “political solutions, the political game, or positions taken by different parties topped the list of topics reported”. She observed that stories that make it to the headlines “were concerned with the political side of the climate negotiations” (Johannessen 2013, p.45). The frames were distributed as follows climate justice 9%, political solution/position 42%, Business solution 15%, UN process

3%, Science 6%, other global challenges 14%, South Africa hosting 5%, problem 6%. The media coverage did not focus on the negotiations but also on the side events such as demonstrations (at least half of the stories the stories). The coverage on business solutions to climate change discussed “green solutions, renewable energy, and innovations” (Johannessen 2013, p.46). The coverage also touched on climate justice, concerns such as threats on food security, and improving copying mechanisms. Johannessen (2013, p.47) argued that the stories from *SABC3* gave prominence to political solutions, often taking the official agenda while the mainstream newspapers gave space to ideologies from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, the *SABC3* also gave some space to the concerns of activists who were demonstrating in the streets. This cover[age]’ as Johannessen (2013, p.47) suspected, could have been triggered by the news outlets’ need for live coverage, noting that “thousands of people in the streets demonstrating or doing different stunts is more eye-catching than grey suits”.

Johannessen (2013, p.47) revealed that the *Business Day* gave less attention to the political issues and climate justice, rather framing the stories from economic lines “beneficial... to their affluent audience”. This was opposed to the *Mercury* that had more stories on climate justice and criticism of big corporations such as Eskom, Sasol and “coal-powered stations in general, big corporations, and banks that lent money to fossil fuel energy and mining” (Johannessen 2013, p.48). At the same time the newspaper reported on “the wary of South Africa’s reliance on coal, less attention was given to criticise market mechanisms” and published articles criticising capitalist market mechanisms (Johannessen 2013, p.48). “The *Mercury* clearly prioritised climate justice issues.... It embraced events that were organised by the climate justice movement” (Johannessen, 2013, p.49). She observed that the *Mercury* had more articles “reporting on other global or development challenges than *Business Day*...[that] was more concerned with how climate change was affecting human development and to some extent the environment, *Business Day* gave more attention to how society could adapt to a changing climate. Some of the *Business Day* stories related adaptation to climate finance and the Green Climate Fund”. Cramer (2008, p.63) noted, “The most common source of information in all the articles analysed were scientists, scientific reports and research. One in every four articles on average referred to a scientist. Politicians were quoted in 17% of all

articles. Wire copy was used for little over 15% and other newspapers were quoted in 6% of the articles. Less than 10% of articles used NGOs as a source”.

Sourcing patterns

Johannessen (2013, p.50) detected that during the COP17 negotiations or international climate negotiations in general “politicians and chief negotiators” are given more space and afforded “the greatest power to define what climate change is all about in the mainstream media,” constituting the major social actors in the news. The NGOs were mentioned by Johannessen (2013, p.50) as the second group of social actors to receive more attention from the media, especially the *Mercury*. “*The Business Day* viewed negotiations through an economic lens in which business/private sector has an important role to play in solving the problem – a much less threatening option than activists hammering on the door of the corporate world” (Johannessen 2013, p.50). Helge Rønning and Tawana Kupe (1999, p.24) argued, “Often the only way for media personnel to get into the disaster area is courtesy of the aid organisation” where the journalists “get powerful stories, dramatic pictures. The NGOs get their message about the suffering through to millions of viewers and readers in the North, which again generates millions of dollars for the NGOs and their operations”.

Ordinary people rarely made it into the news as sources. The ordinary people, whenever they were included in the news, often came out as victims. These victims of climate change were described in general terms as “African/Africans, poor people/countries, developing countries, small island nations, or the least developed countries” (Johannessen 2013, p.51). Johannessen (2013, p.51) contended that the “non-personalised, broader level of depicting the affected parties, such as cities, nations or continents in order to emphasise the dramatic outcomes of climate change is a general trend in climate change reporting”. In addition, Johannessen (2013, p.52) posited that few stories covered the victims as people “of flesh and blood”. According to Johannessen, both the *Mercury* and *Business Day* used language that constructed climate change as an economic problem, with the *Business Day* arguing for private sector investments into renewables.

4.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the role of the news media in society in relation to climate change representation and construction. The key normative and functional scholarly arguments related to the duty of the media as a public sphere and watchdog were discussed. However, the chapter has highlighted that the ideal functions of the media are not always achieved and various factors such as media political economy, journalistic norms, influence of sources and experts, and the ideological orientations of the news media affect the way climate change come to be constructed and represented. The chapter examined the evolution of climate change news in the media, articulating key concepts and hypotheses. Through this examination, the chapter noted that climate change news in the media are indexed to natural disasters and political activity. Further, the chapter discussed the ideological construction and representation of climate change in the media, observing that the news media are largely influenced by their already existent ideological stance. In the global South, the chapter noted that the news media largely constructed climate change along the consensus discourse and saw adaptation as urgent. However, the same global South media de-centred mitigation efforts from the global South, rather putting responsibility on the shoulders of the global North. In South Africa, the chapter noted that climate change coverage is not yet fully developed and the coverage comes from news agencies and rarely linked to local contexts.

Chapter Five: The Theories and Methods of Articulation and Discourse Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on media representations of climate change in South Africa and globally. The chapter drew attention to the fact that media representations of climate change across the world are not value-free but embedded in ideological constructions. This chapter develops from the previous chapter by presenting the theoretical and methodological frameworks that underpin the study. With its focus on articulation and discourse analysis, the study details how climate change and environmental discourses are naturalised and legitimated through the news. Articulation and discourse analysis become useful tools and methods in deconstructing ideologies in the news, the role of language, the sponsors of such discourses and the power they hold in society. Articulation and discourse analysis helped analyse news stories to understand how climate change is re/presented, the discursive strategies used, the relations of power inherent in news media coverage, and to critically understand how particular discourses are taken-for-granted, legitimated and naturalised through their reproduction and maintenance in the news. The study adopted a social constructivist approach embedded in social/critical theory to account for underlying forces that influence discursive practices.

5.2 Articulation and the News Media Re/presentation of Climate Change

Discourse analytical studies focussing on news media representations of climate change in the global South are few (examples include Billet 2010; Johannessen 2009). While at a global level discourse analysis has begun to enjoy widespread appreciation, concepts emanating from Cultural Studies, utilising articulation, and focusing on the global South, have not been used for the analysis and examination of news media representations of climate change. Examples of discourse analytical studies on climate change and news include the following Carvalho (2004 2005, 2007), Doulton and Brown (2009), Carvalho and Burgess (2005), Pepermans and Maesele (2018) and Kotyeko and Atanasova (2016). Studies on global South media and climate change have often shied away from critical studies towards an interest in ‘coverage’, presumably because of the poor profile of climate change in the news media.

Central to this study is how the news media in South Africa, regardless of the frequency and popularity of climate change, have re/represented the climate change discourses. The concern is not with the figures (something central to quantitative content analysis studies); instead, it is on how in those instances when the subject is discussed, climate change is re/constructed, how particular worldviews are re/produced and consequently are rendered rational and reasonable. Tied to this critical agenda is the need to understand the ideologies inherent in the re/presentations, the structures and discursive strategies that work in re/producing structures of dominance and the interests served by the same. Lawrence Grossberg (1992) noted the need to question “the structure of the relationships within which cultural practices and effects have to be located” (p.52). Articulation, together with discourse analysis, can help in achieving these tasks. This study, therefore, introduced the concept of articulation, combined with discourse analysis, as a methodological and analytical framework in the study of news media discourses on climate change in the global South.

These two approaches combined, allow for the examination of all the structures that shape news re/production. Such an assessment can answer the critical questions of ideology, inequality and political economy. The study employed articulation because of its origins in structural theory. The word articulation “suggests some kind of joining of parts to make a unity” (Slack 1996, p. 116). Articulation developed in the 1970s as a response to the increase in theoretical positions within Marxism that were reductionist. Bruce Berman (1984) noted that articulation “was initially developed from the structuralist concept of ‘social formation’ consisting of the hierarchic linkage of several modes of production under the dominance of the capitalist system” (p.129). Berman (1984) linked the development of articulation as a theoretical and methodological approach in social sciences to the need for an approach that could account for under-development and the continuities of pre-capitalist forms and relations of production at the periphery of the global system. Articulation rose to question the Marxist traps of economic and class reductionism. Jennifer Slack (1996) saw articulation as “a way of characterizing a social formation without falling into the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism” (p.112). As a cross-cutting theoretical and methodological position in this study, articulation becomes the ‘super guardian’ against the

temptation to reduce all environmental problems to capitalist determination. The study is alive to the need to take a path clear of these traps.

With its origins in structuralism, and having been an asset of Cultural Studies, articulation has been predominantly defined from within the confines of conceptualisations of scholars such as Ernesto Laclau (1977), Stuart Hall (1978, 1983, 1986), Jennifer Slack (1996), and Lawrence Grossberg (1992, 1996). These scholars have immensely contributed to the understanding and application of articulation as both theory and method, from whose richness, this study is indebted. Stuart Hall (1985) defined articulation as:

a link which is not necessarily given in all cases, as a law or a fact of life, but which requires particular conditions of existence to appear at all, which has to be positively sustained by specific processes, which is not 'eternal' but has to be constantly renewed, which can under some circumstances disappear or be overthrown, leading to the old linkages being dissolved and new connections - re-articulations - being forged (p.114).

Important to note in Hall's definition is that the new connections forged were not a guarantee of the forged unities becoming 'identical' or 'dissolving into the other'. Instead, the elements of the forged connections maintained their "distinct determinations and conditions of existence" (Hall 1985, p. 114). In 1986, Hall expanded his conceptualisation of articulation, defining it as:

the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? The so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'. The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between the articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected (Hall 1986, p.53).

In extension to the 1985 definition, Hall in an interview with Lawrence Grossberg (1996) elaborated that articulation in English "means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate" and used the metaphor of a lorry where the front cab and the back trailer "can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another" (p.141) and where the "two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage, that can be broken". John Clarke (2015) noted that Hall's use of the articulated lorry metaphor:

is often taken up in terms of how different elements are articulated in a discursive or ideological formation, in which the elements have no necessary belonging - it is the way in which they are assembled together, the forging of specific links and connections that gives them their social, cultural or political force (p.4).

Similar to Hall (1985, 1986, 1996) and Slack (1996, 2006, 2016), articulation, in Lawrence Grossberg's (1992) arguments, sees "nothing as guaranteed" - "that no correspondences are necessary, that no identity is intrinsic" (p.53). For Grossberg, articulation provided the 'starting point' in explaining

the process of forging connections between practices and effects, as well as of enabling practices to have different, often unpredicted effects. Articulation is the production of identity on top of difference, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, this experience to those politics (Grossberg 1992, p.54).

Similar to Hall's conceptualisation of articulation, Grossberg (1992) saw articulation as involving "delinking or disarticulating connections in order to link or rearticulate others. Articulation is a continuous struggle to reposition practices within a shifting field of forces, to redefine the possibilities of life by redefining the field of relations" position within a context (p.54). Articulation is the connection that brings two or more different elements together under particular conditions. They are linked to each other through specific linkages that can be broken and be re-linked or de-linked. Articulations are not absolute but fluid and change between time and space in historical moments. The links between practices, cultures, classes, social formations and ideologies are not permanent, guaranteed, essential or determined. The connections exist within particular conditions. In an interview with Grossberg (1996), Hall argued that

a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a particular discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects (p.142-3).

Analysing discourses and events, therefore, involves a process of 're(constructing)' them by "fabricating the network of relationships into which it is [they are] articulated, as well as possibilities for different articulations" (Grossberg 1992, p.54). To understand the re/presentation of issues in the news media, Grossberg (1992) observed that three critical aspects were important to consider: the source of production (background), the actors on the set meanings (agents) and the

theory of effects (product of discourses). Grossberg (1992) brought in and emphasised the aspect of 'context' within articulation, to the extent of arguing that, articulation was basically "a theory of contexts" (p.55). He argued that one could understand phenomena from their "specific contexts" because practices only had effects in particular contexts and that "identities and relations" existed within specific contexts. Therefore, he argued, "articulation does not separate the focus from the background, instead, it is the background that actually articulates the focus" (Grossberg 1992, p.55). Similar to Grossberg (1992), Slack (1996) also emphasised the importance of contexts in researching through articulation. Context, it was argued, "is not something out there, within which practices occur or which influence the development of practices. Rather, identities, practices, and effects generally, constitute the very context within which they are practices, identities or effects" (Slack 1996, p.126).

Augmenting Hall's conceptualisation of articulation, Slack (2016) postulated that the articulation theory is concerned with understanding how "elements are linked in a social formation and the way in which change happens within it" (p.1). Articulation is about joints/links of fragments that make particular formations possible at particular times and conditions (contexts) and also how the same connections can be (dis-)joined or (de-)linked (disarticulation) at particular moments and contexts. These connections are not necessary, permanent and determined but contingent because "the work of making or breaking connections and the unities they form are dependent on specific conditions, which are other elements and forces in the social formation" (Slack 2016, p.2). From this understanding, there are no permanent connections; instead, connections are time and context-dependent and can be broken and remade. The theory of articulation, therefore, helps "to explain how articulations create, enable, empower, and privilege certain possibilities and disable, disempower, and marginalize others" (Slack 2016, p.1).

For cultural theorists, articulation "suggests two critical dynamics: a contingent joining of parts to make a unity or identity that constitutes a context, and the empowerment and disempowerment of certain ways of imaging and acting within that contexts" (Slack 2006, p.225). Slack (2006) argued that "articulation refers to the way different things (values, feelings, practices, structures, organizations, ideologies and so on) come into connection or relation at a particular historical

conjuncture” observing that these relations are “contingent” and could have “come together differently” (p.225). This view sees communication and discourse practices having no necessary guarantees and that ideological practices from different social actors can converge at a particular time and place to serve shared interests. However, these relations are not necessarily determined but are conjunctural and contingent. Discourses and ideological practices can come together in unity to constitute a particular moment as social forces, social formations and cultural forces. These forces/blocs can converge and share similar interests at a particular time without any guarantee that any coherent unitary class or ideology have substantially determined these relations.

Neither the character of an articulated conjuncture nor the possibilities thus empowered are guaranteed ... a conjuncture never is ‘sewn up’, or an absolutely fixed unity, but a web of articulating, dynamic movements among variously homogenous and heterogeneous forces and relations. Consequently, articulation is an ongoing process of disconnecting, reconnecting, reinforcing and contradicting movements (Slack 2006 p. 226).

Analogous to the concept of intertextuality (see Fairclough 1992, 1995), Grossberg (1992) contended that texts do not exist independent of other texts because the “beginning point of one story ... is the end of another story which has to be told” (p.55). To rearticulate discourses, therefore, means going back by relating texts to previous texts and forth relating texts to subsequent texts. These precedent and subsequent texts form the discursive context that is necessary to understand the present text. These texts should be understood within their contexts and be related to the present one, an exercise necessary to understand discourse development, evolution and transformation and to account for contexts that necessitated either discursive change or continuity. In emphasising contexts, Grossberg (1992) maintained that “What we take for granted, what we use as the resources of our storytelling, is often what is most in need of having its own story told” (p.55). Rearticulating discursive constructions meant the ability to observe the intrinsic meaning of statements, the positions of political activities, the experiences derived from particular economic relations, the correspondences between stories and inherent meanings (ideological closure) and how all these become naturalised, legitimated and taken for granted (Grossberg 1992, p.53).

This thesis and the theoretical frameworks that underpin it, are indeed practices of articulation, linking and relinking somewhat different theoretical and paradigmatic points to charter a new way of seeing and understanding the cultural politics of the climate change discourse(s) in the South

African news media. These theories are not necessarily unidirectional or determined but are linked in the exercise of articulation to find new ways of understanding the research question at hand. The theories are used at particular conjunctures to respond to specific analytical and theoretical demands of the study. The articulation and re-articulation of the theoretical and methodological positions was done to provide tools to rethink news media discourses on climate change.

The use of articulation served two essential purposes. Firstly, articulation was deployed due to its ability to account for the media-climate political economy, media contexts, influence of structures in both media organisations and news structures, and news media ideology. This was necessary to avoid results that reduced the re/presentation of climate change in the news media to some deterministic forces; instead, articulation enabled one to examine all conditions existent without falling into the traps of reductionism and essentialism. Secondly, Cultural Studies, as a scholarly discipline - characterised by the need to open-up and re-theorise, has not been able to embrace ecoculturalism within its analysis. Instead, the discipline has resisted ecoculturalism due to its obsession with studying popular culture (Slack 2008, p.478). This study is useful in unlocking the potential of Cultural Studies in unpacking the ecocultural and hence contribute to the development of Cultural Studies in environmental analysis. Cultural Studies has been concerned with popular forms of media, and its focus has been on how the subordinated groups appropriate the popular. By making use of the mainstream newspapers in South Africa and how they re/produce dominant worldviews of climate change, the study enhances Cultural Studies' analytical fields.

Further, while Cultural Studies has been committed “to the anthropocentric concepts of discourse and apparatus”, this study notes that ecoculturalism and discourse analysis could be complementary (Slack 2008, p. 482). Slack (2008, p.483) argued that while cultural theorists might as well defend the anthropocentric nature of Cultural Studies because it is “cultural studies after all, not eco studies”, ‘nature’ is also ‘cultural’ (see also Williams 1980).

Through using the theory and analytical method of articulation, this study utilised the opportunity it provides in answering questions of inequality at both global and local levels and the conditions that necessitate it. Articulation is relevant in the discursive analysis of news because as theory and

method, it “entails [the examination of] linkages among utterances, statements, texts, practices, meanings, ideologies, experiences, politics, structures, effects, material conditions, and other elements that can be considered ‘realities,’ such as the environment” (Slack 2016, p.3). In the context of climate change re/presentation and re/construction in South Africa, this study questioned how the media discursively promoted particular ideologies and re/presented the interests of the global South, for example, navigating the contradictions of market mechanisms and the refusal to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The study, thus, rearticulated the re/production of climate news through the examination of the contexts within which such news flows and exchanges took place. This study benefits from re-articulating the climate change news discourse, not only by examining the theories of capitalism but also the structural conditions within the South African economy and media landscapes that shape the existing news informational terrains. Primarily, the study examined how the South African media terrain, in some ways legitimate and reinforce the same structural inequalities in the overall climate change political economics.

The study rejects the perspective of news re/production being determined by only capitalistic forces and imperialism – where everything is reduced to the economic base. Instead, the study re-articulates the social, economic and political formations within both the global and the local contexts that account for discursive representations of climate change in South Africa. While accepting the existence of innate inequalities and biases in climate change discourses, the study adopted articulation as a way of not limiting all things to the economic determinism thesis, but, rather providing a focus that accounts for both the internal and external contexts. This study goes along with what Slack called “the need to retheorize processes of determination” by providing other ways of theorizing the elements of a social formation and the relations that constitute it not merely as relations of correspondence “but also as relations of non-correspondence and contradiction, and how these relations constitute unities that instantiate relations of dominance and subordination” (Slack 1996, p.117).

This study adopted articulation as an analytical method because of its ability to account for both the global and the local forces that influence media re/presentations of climate change. Rachid Boumashoul (2009) noted that articulation “allows exploring the dynamics within the local and

the global” (p.13), accounting “for the responsibility of both the local contexts and the global factors in the shaping of cultural configurations” contrary to the notion of cultural imperialism and dependency theorists who always view the global South from a position of global passivity. Articulation as an analytical tool enables one to explore issues of political economy as the method is “not blind to the question of ownership” allowing for a better understanding of both internal and external dynamics that influence media representations of particular discourses in society (Boumashoul 2009, p.13). Boumashoul (2009) criticised the taken-for-granted blaming of the global North for all the problems in the global South thus diminishing the focus on global South internal contradictions and failures. Similarly, this study draws from this criticism and argues that often the global South blame the global North for all the climate problems, in the process passivising responsibility where climate change action, both adaptation and mitigation, have been put as a responsibility of the global North. The global South countries have successively tried to evade responsibility even in the context of evidence that carbon emissions are mostly from the developing countries post the 1970s. In studying the news media, there is a need for a methodological framework that appreciates these geopolitical structural dynamics in relation to the media – a method suitable to account for the internal global South dynamics that help maintain unequal relations at the local and global levels (Boumashoul 2009, p.15). A method that “could rethink the local processes that have kept their methodological complacency and found subterfuge in blaming the ‘West’ for their internal failings through theories like ‘dependency models” (Boumashoul 2009, p.15).

This study considered how climate change discourses are articulated in the news media in South Africa. The links that are established between contexts, news events, news sources, the produced news stories, the language of discourse, and the media-political economy are essential in understanding how particular ideologies/discourses/cultures, especially the dominant capitalist discourses are re/produced and maintained. As a method, articulation gives room to the interrogation of how through news re/production (itself not a culturally, politically and economically exclusive act), distinct possibilities (ideological cultures) are created and empowered and at the same time how others are disempowered/disarticulated and marginalised.

5.3 Climate Change News, Articulation and Discourse Analysis

The application of articulation in this study transcends the theoretical level to include a concern for methodology. Because of its concern with structures, articulation has a role in discourse analysis by way of thinking and examining structures of society, and structures of discourse. This concern with structures accounts for dominance, power and relations in society as represented in discourses. Slack (1996) saw the possibility of articulation operating at an epistemological level as “a way of thinking the structures of what we know as a play of correspondences, non-correspondences and contradictions, as fragments in the constitution of what we take to be unities” (p.113). The combination of articulation and discourse analysis strengthens the transdisciplinary nature of this study where the methodological foundation is not fixed on some “rigid templates or practical techniques” but draws from Cultural Studies’ definition of methods to mean “practice” where “techniques are borrowed and combined, worked with and through, and reworked” (Slack 1996, p.114). Borrowing from Slack (1996, p.114), articulation is used in the study to “create conditions” within and between the news media discourses, political, economic and environmental discourses and their coalitions and actors.

This study notes that critical environmental sociology, has often at times, fallen into the excesses of reductionism and essentialism thinking, where “economic reductionism maintains that economic relations, thought of as a virtually static mode of production (the base) controls and produces (determines) everything else in a society (superstructure)” (Slack 1996, p.114). Similarly, economic determinism has been a strong position in environmental sociology where arguments of causation have been promoted. All climate change and environmental problems have been explained from and as products of capitalist exploitation. While this is largely correct, this study takes a position that accounts for factors (fragments both capitalist and non-capitalist) that shape climate change discourses in political, economic, social and media discourses. By applying articulation, this study managed to approach media re/presentations of climate change in South African news media with clarity and awareness, especially regarding the normative temptation of reducing everything to the economic base and see all discourse re/constructions as products of the capitalist formulation. However, while the desire to avoid reductionism is noble, it is essential to note that even within foundational Cultural Studies, such attempts were not always successful. At

some moments, scholars fell back into the trap, for example, scholars such as Raymond Hoggart attributed “the post-war changes in English working-class culture essentially to capitalism, via the imposition of mass culture” (Slack 1996, p.117).

Articulation essentially becomes much vital as an instrument to ‘retheorise processes of determination’. While in Chapter Three, the work of Foster, Clark, York and Moore can be thought of as falling into the traps of reductionism and essentialism, this study contends that their application in this thesis is another way of (re-)theorising and (de-)theorising. This is an exercise within Cultural Studies’ definition of theory. That a theory is not to be thought of as a fixed body of knowledge that is “objective, formal tool, or even value-free ‘heuristic device’” instead, theory is taken to mean a detour “to help ground our engagement with what newly confronts us and to let that engagement provide the ground for re-theorising (Slack 1996, p. 114).

For example, the metabolic and ecological rift theories are not taken as ‘formal’ or ‘objective’ tools for understanding the underlying climate change and environmental crises, preferably, they are used to ground the study’s engagement with the climate change and environmental crises and how these are re/presented in the news media. The study, hence, becomes an opportunity to rearticulate and disarticulate the positions of these theories and in so doing help in re-linking them to the present understanding of the climate change discourses(s) as they traverse the South African economic, social, political and cultural spheres. Drawing from Kuan-Hsing Chen (1994), articulation becomes that sign/instrument “to avoid reduction” and opens the possibilities of theorising and understanding climate change and the environmental crises and the social formations around them. Such attempts see the relations between these problems and the social formations not as based on correspondence “but also as relations of non-correspondence and contradiction, and how the relations constitute unities that instantiate relations of dominance and subordination” (Slack 1996, p.118).

The theory of articulation is alive to the power of ideologies in discourse. This study contends that the discursive constructions of climate change in the news media are ideological and ideology becomes the vehicle through which relations are naturalised and cemented through production and

reproduction. Discourses are instrumental in this naturalisation process of particular worldviews. For Ernesto Laclau (1977), ideologies were central in discourse. Laclau (1977) argued that reductionism could not account for some behaviours of the working class. He suggested for the replacement of the logic of economic reductionism with articulation. Laclau (1977) applied Plato's allegory of the cave where prisoners' backs face the cave entrance and incorrectly link the voices in the cave to the shadows they see. In Laclau's conceptualisation, articulation becomes the "links between concepts" (1977, p.7) wherein Platonian discourse, the object of articulation is to remove (disarticulate) the wrong connections and re-link (re-articulate) them with the correct links.

Consequently, the study of news media representations of climate change through articulation and discourse analysis means that one has to search for and examine the connotative links inherent in the discourses, those links that render the discourse a unit, an exercise to disarticulate these links and being able to analyse the complex, "multiple, and theoretically abstract non-necessary links" (Slack 1996, p.120). Parallel to Norman Fairclough's (1992) conceptualisation of discourse translation, Hall et al.'s (1978) concept of the public idiom and Teun van Dijk's (1985) concept of oral models, Laclau argued that discourses seldom have "class connotations, the meanings within discourse are always connotatively linked to different class interests or characters" (p.7). Class hegemony, Laclau (1977) noted, is achieved by that class that can interpellate the subordinated groups by articulating and pretending to be representing their interests. Hegemony was not achieved violently but through the consent of the subordinated groups in society:

A class is hegemonic not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized (Laclau 1977, p.161).

By extension, the discursive hegemony of particular worldviews about climate change is achieved by those discourses that are successfully constructed in the ideology of common sense and 'imagined universal consent', where the interests of some social formations/blocs are mainstreamed through discourse and are naturalised and legitimated. The neoliberal market-driven responses to climate change problems, for example, through the rhetoric of sustainable development and rationalism, have been made commonsensical and have gained political-economic and discursive hegemony.

Articulation is also interested in understanding hegemony and how it is achieved and maintained. Hegemony is understood, not as static and permanent but as a site of ideological struggle. The social formations and forces that can maintain their hegemonic status, regardless of the struggles for signification, acquire what Antonio Gramsci (1971) called 'tendential forces' (see also Hall 1996, 1985, 1986). When rearticulating media re/presentations of the climate crises, one must question, for example, the structures of dominance that have sustained the neoliberal way of life (capitalism) and these answers are found in how the capitalist material forces have been re/produced through discourse (language) to the extent of naturalisation. As argued earlier in this chapter, articulation, because of its stance on rejecting determinism and reductionism, also sees hegemonies as sustained by discourse(s) of consensus and common sense. Gramsci (1971) defined hegemony as a site of alliances and blocs that blurs the simplicities of class relations, domination and subordination.

Hall (1983) argued that for Gramsci, hegemony is “the process by which a historical bloc of social forces is constructed, and the ascendancy of that bloc secured” (p.82). Similarly, Clarke (2015) noted that hegemony should be understood as the “construction of popular consent to the project and programme of a ‘ruling bloc’” by way of articulating the subaltern (subordinate) groups “through material and symbolic concessions in which they are ‘taken account of’ in such ways that they can come to identify themselves in the leading project” (p.5). This is achieved through “borrowing and bending the forms and styles of popular thought” and by elaborating “ways of addressing, appropriating themes attached to, and speaking for subordinate social groups” (Clarke 2015, p.5). There is a need to rethink the relationship between hegemony and common-sense and how this relationship is achieved. Fragments of common-sense discourses are galvanised to create “the appearance of a shared, unitary and coherent understanding of the world” (Clarke 2015, p.5). Slack (2016) noted that the

process of articulation links common sense, ideology, social practices, economics, and politics as a bloc (an alliance) that becomes dominant in a social formation. The bloc asserts its dominance through leadership that is naturalized in the articulation of these links. Such a process was seen as shaping the consent of the working class to structures of capitalism that at the same time served to dominate that class (p.5).

In elaborating how hegemonies are produced and sustained, Hall paid attention to language and how through language, subjects were interpellated into the language of the dominant and begin to identify and act in the interests of the dominant ruling social formations and blocs. Hall (1987 as cited in Clarke 2015) argued that:

Since, in fact, the political character of our ideas cannot be guaranteed by our class position or by the ‘mode of production’, it is possible for the Right [Conservatives - neoliberals] to construct a politics which does speak to people’s experience, which does insert into what Gramsci called the necessarily fragmentary, contradictory nature of common sense, which does resonate with some of their ordinary aspirations, and which, in certain circumstances, can recoup them as subordinate subjects, into a historical project which ‘hegemonises’ what we used- erroneously - to think of as their ‘necessary class interests’. Gramsci is one of the first modern Marxists to recognise that interests are not given but have to be politically and ideologically constructed (p.5).

Common sense, in Gramsci's view (1971) referred to “the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become ‘common’ in any given epoch” (p.322). Stuart Hall and O’Shea (2013) observed that political elites often attempt to win popular consent by claiming that their policies appeal to the interests of the commonsensical and to the popular people (common sense is also a site of political contestation) (p.8). The elites appeal to what Hall and O’Shea referred to as ‘what everybody knows’. However, as Hall and O’Shea contended, “what they are really doing is not just invoking popular opinion but *shaping and influencing* it so they can harness it in their favour. By asserting that popular opinion *already agrees*, they hope to produce agreement *as an effect*” (2013, p.8). Hall and O’Shea (2013) defined common sense as

a form of ‘everyday thinking’ which offers us frameworks of meaning with which to make sense of the world. It is a form of popular, easily-available knowledge which contains no complicated ideas, requires no sophisticated argument and does not depend on deep thought or wide reading. It works intuitively, without forethought or reflection. It is pragmatic and empirical, giving the illusion of arising directly from experience, reflecting only the realities of daily life and answering the needs of ‘common people’ for practical guidance and advice. It is not the property of the rich, the well-educated or the powerful, but is shared to some extent by everybody, regardless of class, status, creed, income or wealth. Typically, it expresses itself in the vernacular, the familiar language of the street, the home, the pub, the workplace and the terraces (pp.8-9).

Hall and O’Shea (2013) observed that the common-sense discourse of neoliberalism as perpetuated by the Conservatives - key among them Margaret Thatcher, George Osborne and David Cameron - entrenched a value system of ‘fairness’ especially in line with benefits for the unemployed and

those with lower wages. This common-sense discourse (though appearing logical) was built on lies about the number of people who received benefits and called for a fair system where people were rewarded for their hard work and not get the same treatment as those that the discourse labeled 'workshy' 'lazy' etc. People were supposed to be paid based on hard work. The discourse was premised on using the language of 'othering' the benefits claimants and 'immigrants'. As noted by Hall and O'Shea (2013) the "neoliberal discourse is increasingly hegemonic and setting the agendas for debate" (p.21). Because of its pervasiveness, and its appeal to common sense (which is the opposite of good sense), the discourse managed to steer the debate and receive support from the public. Hall and O'Shea (2013) demonstrated the power of this discourse among the public by examining comments to a story by the *Sun* of 18 January 2013 of Iain Duncan Smith's introduction of the bill to cap benefits below the rate of inflation.

They noted that the comments/contributions accepted

Cameron's definition of 'fairness' as a 'system that matches reward with effort, a right to get out only what you put in. The reasonable-sounding nature of this position serves to deflect the criticism one might expect toward xenophobic undercurrents it relies on. It represents a success for neoliberalism- dismantling of any collective social responsibility and a reduction of citizens to barterers - 'something for something': worlds away from the collective social model (2013, p.19).

Relating these arguments to this study, it is contended that the dominance and hegemonic nature of capitalist/neoliberal discourses on climate change is not necessarily achieved through the crude imposition of neoliberal worldviews, relatively, the capitalist blocs have managed to use the discourses of the subordinated groups in articulating the capitalist class interests of profit-making. Still, in this way of thinking, it is argued here that the dominance of sustainable capitalism is achieved in news and international policy discourses through the appropriation of populist discourses of 'development' and 'sustainable development', concepts which by themselves appeal across class divisions.

Slack (1996), drawing from Hall (1980), argued that discussing articulation in relation to communication calls for a rethinking of the processes of communication - the "who says what in which channel to whom with what effect" (p.125). Each element of the communication process is

seen as an articulation with no necessary relationship of correspondence with the other elements. However, particular elements and practices are more important as they operate from privileged positions. In terms of climate change communication, there are particular elements (who) that have access to the media and have a definitional role of climate change (says what) through news media institutions (channels) with the effect of naturalising and rendering capitalist responses to climate change common-sensical. The sources used, and the sponsors of the discourses have more power in the communication process as they operate from positions of privilege defined by access to the media and thus the power to define the problem and offer solutions that appear common-sensical.

Citing Hall (1989), Slack (1996) argued that communication institutions and practices “have become a ‘material force’ dominating the cultural” (p.125), hence when examining climate change representations in the news media (articulated structures), it is crucial to interrogate “the ways in which the ‘relatively autonomous’ social, institutional, technical, economic and political forces are organized into unities that are effective and are relatively empowering or disempowering”. Examining the re/presentation of the climate change discourse(s) as they traverse the South African mainstream news media necessitates the interrogation of how the particular worldviews on climate change are made into consensus discourses and appeal to what can be called common-sense and how in so doing they help entrench the capitalist system. These forces ‘enter the circuits of culture’ and have a role to play in shaping cultural practices and “understandings and conceptions of the world of men and women in their ordinary everyday social calculations, construct them as potential social subjects, and have the effect of organizing the ways in which they come to or form consciousness of the world” (Hall 1989, p. 49).

For instance, the unity of the climate change discourse (the dominant) Promethean discourse in the South African news media representation should be understood as a unity of distinct and different elements whose connections are made necessary because of particular moments. The political economy of climate change and the media and the ideologies of news producers combine with the views of the minerals-energy complex and those of government not necessarily because these social formations belong to the same class but rather one should ask “at what point and under

what circumstances are the connections forged” (Hall 1996, p.141) to produce a particular view of climate change that assumes dominance and gets represented as a consensus view.

Drawing from Grossberg (1992), this study notes that the climate change re/presentations in the South African media can be fully understood through a process of re-articulation where the discourse players, the forces at play and the possible outcomes of their articulation are reimagined and rearticulated. The object of this process requires the study to identify the politics of the climate change discourse using a map “not only of the actors and agents, but of ... agencies of this struggle” (Grossberg 1992, p.113). The analytical frame encompasses practices of understanding “the relationship of subjects, actors and agency. This relationship holds the key to understanding how history is made, how articulations are put into place” (Grossberg 1992, p.113).

The climate change discourse should be necessarily understood as a political and cultural discourse. The discourse of, for example, green capitalism (erroneously called sustainable development) has been re/constructed and risen to be a hegemonic force within the contours of climate change responses. The successes of this discourse can be traced to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit in Brazil where the aspect of ‘sustainability’ was introduced as a way of responding to the climate problems, albeit without structurally reforming the cultural politics of greenhouse gas emissions and capitalist consumption tendencies. The discourse on green capitalism has been re/constructed through the lens of common sense where the need to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions is recognised and at the same time improve industrial efficiency and hence lead to economic development.

The discourse is ideologically constructed to render it natural and common-sensical. It was critical, hence, that this thesis dissected the South African informational economy (news media) to understand how these common-sense constructional planes have traversed the news cycles and try to rearticulate the media-climate change ideological and discursive construction with developments in policy-making, politics, science and the green businesses. It is essential to understand how for example, the South African government, claims to avoid reducing greenhouse gas emissions citing the need to develop and at the same time receive support from fossil fuel

companies. It does not mean that their interests are the same but could be an aspect of the government attempting to avoid economic downturn and the fossil fuel companies trying to remain in business. All these forces will make their claims in the name of ‘national interest’, ‘economic development and employment creation’, claims that appeal to what could be called the ‘aspirations of the people’. So, by appropriating the ‘national’ and the ‘rational’, the capitalist motives of profit-making win over the environment. The elite successfully talk about issues that directly appeal to the subordinated groups and hence green capitalist policies are mainstreamed.

The discourse actors helpful in re/constructing green capitalism as a necessity should not be thought of as a ‘unity’ or a social/economic class but rather as fragmented and existing in non-necessary discursive coalitions conjuncturally and as meeting at contingent points as they seek to protect and promote their different political and economic interests - all achievable by promoting a kind of capitalism that is ‘green’ and appear ‘sustainable’. This is of course achieved by borrowing and bending the popular interest of clean and sustainable lifestyles (in the real sense). This study notes that the ideological hegemony of green capitalism is achieved, in the words of Clarke (2015) by the construction of “popular consent to the project and programme” of the ruling bloc and alliances (p.5).

The subaltern/subordinate groups are drafted into this project by way of articulating their interests and accounting for them (at least ideologically) through ways of interpellation, address and symbolic representations in a manner that they think and feel to also belong. The study, at an analytical level, questioned the strategies of address used in news media discourses on climate change, the symbolic re/presentations that appear to account for popular consent and interests, essentially how popular thoughts are galvanised and utilised/ritualised in service of interests that belong to ideological and discursive elites as far as climate change is concerned. This task involved questioning how the notions of sustainability, economic development, clean energy, employment creation and equality were used to interpellate the masses into the rhetoric of sustainable development (green capitalism).

While theorists like Hall and Slack have insisted that articulations cannot and will not remain permanent, it is crucial to argue that in line with what Gramsci (1971) and Hall in Grossberg (1996) noted, some articulations remain in force for a longer timeframe and these are called “tendential forces” taking account of how difficult it is to disarticulate them. This study classifies the sustainable green capitalism discourse as a tendential social force that continues to enjoy articulative hegemony in the climate change discourse and this discourse has powerfully permeated the news media climate change reportage in South Africa as well as elsewhere with relative force and resolve. Important to note is that hegemony is not just established but maintained in place and time if the different social forces (blocs/alliances) continue to converge and articulate their positions in a way that maintains their perpetuity. The green sustainability crusade can, in Hall’s logic, be called ‘common-sense neoliberalism’. This study combined and linked a number of theories (political economy, discourse analysis, articulation, metabolic rift) to transcend the limits of singular frameworks and approaches.

5.4 Discourse Analysis and (re-)articulating media re/presentations of climate change

For one to do discourse analysis, the term discourse itself must be defined. Discourse, as a term, enjoys definitional fluidity. However, in the interest of this study, the definitions put forward by Fairclough, Hall and van Dijk are given much attention. Norman Fairclough (2003) defined discourse “as ways of representing world views, the structures of material world, the mental world of thoughts, feelings, and beliefs” (p.87), a way of representing certain “aspects of the world” arguing that “different discourses are different perspectives on the world”. He noted that discourses shape “relations people have to the world, their positions in the world, their social and personal identities and their social relationships in which they stand to other people” (Fairclough, 2003, p.87). Correspondingly, Hall (1992) defined discourse as “a group of statements which provide a language for talking about, that is, a way of representing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (p.201). Drawing from Michel Foucault, Hall (1992) argued that “discourse does not consist of single statements, but rather several statements that work together to form a ‘discursive formation,’” positing further that “discourse is about the production of knowledge through language” and is itself produced by a “discursive practice”- the practice of meaning production (p.201). All social practices have meaning and therefore all aspects of the social are discursive, and therefore discourse enters and influences social practices.

In expanding the 'discursive concept', Hall saw discourses functioning as ideologies that produce knowledge in service of group interests in society (1992, p.202). Knowledge is produced within a competitive struggle between discourses and that each discourse "is linked to a power struggle and the outcome of this discursive struggle" (Hall 1992, p.204) will decide on what is true or false, and that discourse is not innocent and is always projected in ways of the "us" versus 'them". There is always the representation of the "other" (alterity) in every discourse. Hall (1992) argued that representations are based on stereotypes and dualised oppositions where the world is divided into the symbolic representation of 'us' versus 'them' and the "good-bad, us-them, attractive-disgusting, civilised-uncivilised, the west-the rest" dichotomies (p.215). Sander Gilman (1985) noted that these dualised systems generate *bi-polar* "pairs of antithetical signifiers (i.e. words with apparently opposing meanings" (p.17).

The discourse analytical framework advanced in this study draws from such strands as semiotics, critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis. From semiotics, the study argues for the centrality of language in constituting social formations. Most importantly that discourses acquire their meaning by way of *a priori* bi-polar oppositions (see also Foucault 1971, Hall 1980). Discourses are constructed from particular points of view which are different from those they oppose in structured relationships dictated by the discursive strategy of othering where things are put in antithetical positions of 'us' and 'them', 'subaltern' and 'alterity', 'good' and 'bad', 'the global South' and 'the global North'. The analysis of the selected newspaper articles paid close attention to how binary oppositions were re/constructed and from whose point of view, which ideologies/worldviews were privileged in opposition to 'others'. These re/constructed oppositions "become entangled with certain meanings and values which lie beyond the mode and form of any specific sign-vehicle and are associated with more general recognitions and expectations of the social identities, roles and relations of the two geopolitical poles" (Deacon et al. 2007, p.143). These expectations become mentally institutionalised and thus "exert normative pressure on the mode and form of signification involved" (Deacon et al. 2007, p.143) and through such cognitive and mental processes, the expectations become "social consensus, legitimising tradition or social myth". The viewpoints and ideologies naturalised and made commonsensical in discourse render discursive, social and cultural inequalities 'inevitable and natural' and thus mis/represents social

reality and thus the concealment of hierarchical social structures ordered in dominance and subjectivity. This essentially works in entrenching hegemonic grip of the capitalist system as a preferred of life and as a solution to the environmental and climate crises the planet faces today.

Discourse analysis has been used in the study of news beginning in the 1970s (see Fowler et al. 1979; Hall et al. 1978; van Dijk 1983, 1985, 2008; Fowler 1991; Fairclough 1989, 1992, 1995, 2003) and also in examining media representations of climate change (see Carvalho 2004, 2005, 2007; Carvalho & Burgess 2005; Doulton & Brown 2009; Pepermans & Maesele 2018). The analyses firstly took a critical linguistics approach (Fowler et al. 1979; Fowler 1991; Fairclough, 1992) and was expanded to a more cultural and sociological approach by Hall et al. (1978) where discourse analysis was applied in the study of crime coverage and representation in the news. Teun van Dijk (1983, 1985, 2007, 2008) introduced the concepts of ideology in the news, specifically in the study of how racism was reproduced in the Press. Studies by Fowler (1991) and Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003) elaborated further the strength of discourse analysis in news analysis. The theory and method of discourse analysis was critically brought into the analysis of climate change in the news by Carvalho (2005, 2007), Carvalho and Burgess (2005) followed by Doulton and Brown (2009). John Dryzek (1995, 2005) included discourse analysis in relation to the analysis of earth and environmental discourses. Neyla Koteyko and Dimintrinka Atanasova (2016) provided a biography of discourse analytical studies focussing on climate change while Pepermans and Maesele (2018) expanded and elaborated on how to do a discourse analysis of climate change news.

The theory and method of discourse analysis used in this thesis has no unitary and formal routines that are universal and standardised but is flexible. Discourse is a problematic concept, and this is primarily due to "so many conflicting and overlapping definitions formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary standpoints" (Fairclough 1992, p.3). The theory itself has so many variants and because of this, it enjoys transdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary. Discourse analysis developed and applied in this study is critical and sought to understand news texts in relation to their production and contexts. It investigated dominance in and outside, before and after the text and how the text is involved in the construction of this dominance and also constructed by

it. The attempt to go beyond the text enables one to account for aspects of power, domination and ideology and maybe the transformative abilities of discourse. Drawing from Deacon et al. (2007, p.151), this study avoided strictly linguistic paradigms because they reduce language to “an abstract system in isolation from the social, cultural and historical contexts”. Deacon et al. (2007) have discarded purely linguistic approaches as “sociologically and historically sterile for media studies” (p.151).

Due to the interpretive/constructivist paradigm informing the ontological and epistemological values of this study, it is argued that the climate change representations found in the South African quality mainstream newspapers are not in any way ‘reflections’ of ‘objective reality’ out there, somewhat they are inherently ideological constructions of those with access and power to, and over public discourse. Discourse is important in society as it governs what is written or said in society and how these are written or said by way of inclusion and exclusion. Discursive formations and strategies are deployed to benefit the existing power relations. For Deacon et al. (2007, p.154), undertaking a discourse analytical study is a way of exposing the “systematic links between texts, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices” and enables researchers to critique “how relations and structures of power are entrenched in everyday language use, and thus how language legitimises existing social relations and the hierarchies of authority and power”.

Discourse is not an expression of reality independent of discourse. The news stories are a construction of the social actors (and their interests) who are given the primary definitional role by the journalists. Newspapers, it should be noted, play a central role in the domain of public communication (maybe better than other mediums) because the printed/written version “is usually better recalled than is television news” (van Dijk 2008, p.55) and they are “perceived to be qualitatively superior”. Drawing from van Dijk (2008, p.58), the mainstream quality newspapers in South Africa have enormous “power potential”, making it necessary to probe “the schemata, topics and style of news” (van Dijk 2008, p.58) about climate change. This critical examination is necessary to deepen “our understanding of the exercise of political, economic, social and cultural power, and of the communication and acquisition of the ideologies that support it” (van Dijk 2008, p.58). Similarly, Stuart Hall (1980, p.118) argued that the news media was “a major cultural and

ideological force, standing in a dominant position with respect to the way in which social relations and political problems were defined and the production and transformation of popular ideologies in the audience addressed”.

The role of the news media in communicating climate change is crucial. Very few people have access to or power over the debates and decisions (which have been highly condomised and made a preserve for a 'club' of experts, policymakers and industry players) concerning climate change in South Africa. The debates are highly centralised in policymaking, business, academia and the science community. The entry into these debates is not easy for many, hence the role of the media in providing the necessary mediation. By playing this mediation role, the news media become connective and actively participate in the construction of public opinion(s) on climate change in society. The opinions built resonate (mostly) with the reigning dominant ideas of the moment and hence have what can loosely be called 'legitimacy' because they are believed to be widely shared by the public. As primary sources of public information, the news media have “a near-monopoly over ‘social knowledge’” (or lack of thereof) and they use this position to allow “the free passage of the dominant ideologies” (Hall et al. 1978, p.64).

The media thus help to reproduce and sustain the definitions of the situation which favour the powerful, not only by actively recruiting the powerful in the initial stages where the topics are structured, but by favouring certain ways of setting up topics, and maintaining certain strategic areas of silence. Many of these structured forms of communication are so common, so natural, so taken for granted, so deeply embedded in the very communication forms which are employed, that they are hardly visible at all, as ideological constructs, unless we deliberately set out to ask, 'what, other than what has been said about this topic, could be said?', 'what questions are omitted?', 'why do the questions - which always presuppose answers of a particular kind - so often recur in this form? Why do certain other questions never appear?

By examining the climate change discourse(s) re/presentations in the mainstream quality South African newspapers, this study appreciates and takes language as central to understanding social, cultural, economic and political phenomena. For example, discourse analysis allowed the researcher to understand how capitalist ideas (one of the main ideologies re/produced in the news) was re/produced by the news media through language. Climate change is itself a product of a risk cultural language (capitalism), a culture that has found force across the global social system, a culture that is self-mutating. Capitalism, this study contends, has not been so much successful as

the most 'preferred way of life' through some conspiratorial organisation, but through how it is and has been constructed through language (discourse). Key to note is that the climate change debate has been and continues to be represented within the parameters set by capital, either by promoting further exploitation of fossil fuels (through the rhetoric of catching-up and development in the case of the global South countries) or through the appeals towards Promethean neoliberal approaches that see solutions through the lenses of capital and the never-ending desire for profit and nature exploitation (see Chapter Three and Ten for detailed analysis). The re/construction of nature (as a gift ready for exploitation) has only worked to put through the interests of capital and accumulation ahead of metabolic relations that are mutually inclusive and self-preservatory. Thus, this study used discourse analysis as both theory and method in unpacking how language was used to re/construct and reinforce certain ideologically laden views on climate change in South Africa. Through language, worldviews were legitimised and delegitimised, naturalised and condemned. The language and resultantly the discourses produced by the language of news “influences thought” by channelling “our mental experience of the world” (Fowler 1991, p.4). For example, how the news media accepted the taken-for-granted language of neoliberalism in relation to climate change solutions, i.e., Promethean approaches that place neoliberal accumulation (carbon markets for example) at the epicentre of addressing climate change. In this examination, the task included an attempt to elucidate the aspects of climate change and global warming that were re/presented as natural and thus taken for granted.

Further, through language, the news media can unconsciously endorse neoliberalism and fail to provide a critical lens for the reading public to understand climate change as a risk produced by the unrestrained clamour for accumulation and consumption. The extent to which the media represent the climate change problem as a risk of modernisation or re/produce the normative values of capital and expansion should be interrogated. As argued by Fairclough (1992), language is important as an agent of social change (p.26). Fairclough regarded language as encompassing a turn towards the neoliberal agenda in all aspects of life such as labour, education and the environment. Because “languages embody particular worldviews” and that “particular texts embody particular ideologies or theories”, the object of this study involved an exercise to recover

“the social meanings expressed in discourse” (Fairclough 1992, pp.26-27) that deals with aspects of climate change and global warming in South Africa.

Since the entrance of climate change into the public arena in the 1980s, the subject has been defined mostly from science, politics, and economics. The news media have been very much part of this evolution and have constructed and reconstructed views from scientists, politicians, and economists. The language used in the news has ideological value because there “are always different ways of saying the same thing, and they are not random and accidental alternatives. Differences in expression carry ideological distinctions” (Fowler 1991, p.4). Key worldviews on climate change have emerged dominant, especially those that advocate neoliberal solutions to the climate crisis and that depoliticise the subject. The climate crises have been defined as a problem of excessive greenhouse gas emissions (physical), with the support of unequivocal scientific reports (scientisation) and that these emissions are responsible for the warming of the planet resulting in climate change and the associated problems (increases in land and sea temperatures, extreme weather, displacements, arctic ice melting, droughts). The root of these crises in the social/cultural has not been entirely criticised in the news media. That climate change is necessarily a risk of capital and the never-ending accumulation of wealth alongside the infinite exploitation of both nature and labour has received less attention.

Discourses on the subject have moved from scientific and political consensus towards ‘solutions’. The solutions which re/produce capitalism as a way of life have become dominant. These include forms of addressing climate change through the rhetoric of sustainable development (a polite name for green capitalism). Carbon markets, geoengineering and technological-managerial solutions have taken a dominant global discursive position. This dominance has “led to the dominance of techno-managerial approaches and the marginalization of calls for addressing structural issues at the root of climate change” (Carvalho 2018, p.1). Carvalho (2018) argued that ideologies

construct the meaning of both climate change and the practices and structures that are at its root, thereby influencing understandings of those issues, constraining social and material action and contributing to the institutionalization of given ideas and values, all of which, in a dialectical manner, contributes to the production of (given) discourse(s) on climate change (p.1).

The news media, through their failure “to convey more radical views on the relation between humans and nature and the associated social arrangements, most media have legitimated and reinforced the existing social order [capitalism]” (Carvalho 2018, p.5), resulting in the hegemonic status enjoyed by “free-market capitalism, individualism and neoliberalism” in the climate change discourses. Ideals strictly but unfortunately Promethean, have been successfully institutionalised as the panacea to addressing the attendant climate problems. This has been achieved through the discourse of sustainable development, ecological/economic modernisation and geoengineering. Critical approaches to discourse analysis are used in this study because they can account for how the climate change discourses(s) are shaped by "relations of power and ideologies" (Fairclough, 1992, p.13) and further show the effects of discourse upon social systems of climate change knowledge and beliefs. Fowler et al. (1979) argued that “language serves to confirm and consolidate the organizations which shape it” (p.190). The language used in the newspaper re/presentations of climate change has the capacity to re/construct, re/produce and naturalise the ideological structures and interests that shape the climate narratives in South Africa and outside. Important to note in this study is that language shapes and embodies worldviews that have an in-built bias towards dominant social systems, organisations, ideologies and thus ways of life. Through language, discourses “do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or 'constitute' them” (Fairclough 1992, p.3). This viewpoint is made stronger by Hilary Janks (1997) who argued that language is a “form of social practice” through which “existing social relations are reproduced or contested and different interests are served” (p.329). Examining discourse (language use) and the strategies of discourse is important in unbolting the re/presentation of climate change in the news media. As Gramsci (1971) argued, “in ‘language’ there is contained a specific conception of the world” (p.323).

5.5 The Social Re/construction of News

It is crucial to critique news re/production to open understandings of the preferred ideological and value systems in the news and how these preferred or taken for granted views lead in the re/production and transformation of climate change worldviews in the global South, the re/construction of the climatic in the mental, social and cultural relations of humans toward nature. As Roger Fowler (1991) argued, news go through a process of gatekeeping (selection, priming, framing), a process with transformational power. The outcome of gatekeeping becomes

unconscious reference(s) to particular ideas and beliefs. The analysis of news "can reveal abstract propositions which are not necessarily stated, and are usually unquestioned, and which dominate the structure of presentation" (Fowler 1991, p.2). The ideas promoted in the news often relate positively to the "ideas of the controlling groups in an industrial-capitalist society" (Fowler 1991, p.2). This conceptualisation of news is important in this study as it highlights the centrality of key participants and controlling institutions/groups or individuals in the climate change discourses presented in the news. The neoliberal ideas on life in general and climate change in particular, because of their privileged access to the news media gain the primary role of defining the problem and offering 'neoliberal profit oriented' solutions without facing criticism or questioning. Thus, for Fowler (1991) news are "a practice: a discourse which, far from neutrality reflecting social reality and empirical facts, intervenes ... [in] 'the social construction of reality'" (p.2). News is understood "as a social and ideological produce" (Fowler 1991, p.3).

Fowler (1991) was interested in the role of language "in the construction of ideas in the Press" arguing, news "is not facts about the world" rather ideas, beliefs, values etc (p.1). Accompanying this conceptualisation of news is the view that language is not value-free/neutral "but a highly constructive mediator". In spite of the journalistic claims to objectivity and impartiality, news are "socially constructed" and instead of communicating facts, the news media propagate value systems and ideologies (Fowler 1991, p.2). The epistemological vision underpinning this study involves conceptualising news as a social construct. News are social products that have a key role both in the discursive and ideological. In terms of climate change re/presentation, the socially re/constructed news build particular worldviews, promotes particular narratives over others and essentially have a role to play in how climate change related knowledge(s), actions, policies, and attitudes are formulated, reformulated and maintained.

Similar to Fowler's (1991) conceptualisation of news, Peter Vasterman (1995) argued, journalists do not report events but are producers of news and reality. Fowler (1991) described news as;

a representation of the world in language; because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is represented; and so inevitably news, like every discourse, constructively patterns that of which it speaks. News is a representation in this sense of construction; it is not a value-free reflection of 'facts' (p.4).

Journalists construct reality, they construct facts, they construct statements and they re/construct a context in which these facts make sense. This is because journalists rarely

witness events firsthand. They have to rely on the accounts of others... Readers, whether they are attentive citizens or interested officials, tend to lose sight of the fact that news is not reality, but a sampling of sources' portrayals of reality, mediated by news organisations.... Newspapers can do little more than establish some standard operating procedures for sampling potential sources. Whatever procedure they adopt unavoidably biases their selection of content (Sigal, 1973 as cited in van Ginneken 1998, p.81).

What is represented in the news is seldom "direct representation" (see also Fairclough 1992; 1995) because journalists rarely become "direct witnesses to events; rather, their data are mostly other discourses, such as eye witness reports, press conferences, press releases, statements of officials, interviews [etc.] Hence, the construction of news is most of all a reconstruction of available discourses" (van Dijk 1983, p.28). Hall et al. (1978) argued that news sourcing, selection and representation work towards formalising and operationalising certain ideologies over others. From this argument, it can be noted that news production and representation are ideological practices and hence the need to study the structures that produce and are produced by these discourses.

Carvalho (2008) saw news production as "a discursive re-construction of reality" (p.164), because journalists rarely see/witness events first-hand, rather they rely on the information from others. The representations in the news media are more/less claims by those people (sources) used as primary definers by the news media. The media constructions and representations of climate change, therefore, build "on the ways other social actors construct issues in their multifarious discourses" (Carvalho 2008, p.164). This study examined the discursive strategies of sources (social actors) in their re/constructions of climate change for the news media and how their views were re/produced or rejected by the journalists. For Jaap van Ginneken (1998), what the media presents as 'news' is in fact a representation of the ideological interests of the producers, where the "quasi-consensual" ideologies of the powerful are portrayed in the media as "natural and common sense" (p.33). van Ginneken concluded that:

News production and news consumption can also be seen as a twenty-four hour ideological repair shop for our world order and our world-views. Possible anomalies are identified, checked and 'normalised,' so that the ideological machine keeps running smoothly (1998, p.33).

The advantaging of one worldview over another is not an act of overt bias but an object of how representation works. Bias, Fowler (1991) argued, should be thought of in terms of deliberate attempts to distort reality while representation is manifest in anything that is written or spoken. Because there is no neutral news or news media, representations in news are determined by ideological, institutional, economic and political interests of the news medium where the news are "reported from some particular angle" (Fowler 1991, p.10). The events reported in the news "are not intrinsically newsworthy, but only become 'news' when selected for inclusion in news reports. The vast majority of events are not mentioned, and so selection immediately gives us a partial view of the world" (Fowler 1991, p.11).

Hall et al. (1978) noted that the news media "do not simply and transparently report events which are 'naturally' newsworthy *in themselves*" rather news must be understood as "the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories" (p.53). Therefore, news is not gathered, but made by journalists who editorially and unconsciously follow a set of guidelines to determine newsworthiness. Su Jung Min (1997) noted that news production processes such as selection, interpretation and presentation "construct reality in a manner underlying the ideologies of the producers" (p.147).

Anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position. A news report imposes a structure of values on whatever it represents, and so inevitably news reports produce meanings that construct ideological representations of the social world (Jung Min 1997, p.147).

Discourse Actors and Sponsors

As part of discourse analysis, the study examined the sourcing patterns manifest in news stories. This study acknowledges the centrality of sources in defining the agenda and promoting particular viewpoints over others. In examining the stories, the researcher analysed how sources were used in news articles and how they were balanced. van Ginneken (1998) pointed out that if one "has the power to set other people's agenda, one does to a certain extent have the power to influence what they will think and talk about, to draw attention to certain elements and divert it away from others" (p.87). The researcher analysed the sourcing patterns employed in the articles with the view of understanding which sources and ideological viewpoints were privileged over others and how their

views were represented along the common-sense paradigm (see Gramsci, 1971). Governments, political, economic, environmental elites have the power to affect the agenda of the press and hence at the same time affect the agenda of the public (van Ginneken 1998). This is consistent with what Ginneken (1998) observed, that, “news is based on a selective articulation of certain voices about supposed events, not only the voices of the journalists get articulated but also those of their sources” (p.85). Studies have shown (Johannessen 2013; Cramer 2008) that the media in South Africa tend to use politicians, activists, scientist and business people as sources. Through the selection of official, political, activist and business sources, the media allow a particular section of society to have ‘definitional power’ over climate change issues in the global South. These sources become dominant voices in the construction and definitions of solutions to climate change while oppositional views are left out through non-representation.

The task of examining news sources is supported by Carvalho (2005) who noted that the news media’s “depictions of social problems depend on their institutional affiliations, preferences, and news values but invariably build on ways other social actors organise their claims and draw attention to issues” (p.3). Because of this reason, discourse analysts should probe both sources’ discursive strategies and the journalistic interventions. There is need to explore “source strategies” and “media representations” (Carvalho 2005, p.3). These sources are often people with access to the media and are powerful in business, politics, academia, etc. and when their voices are translated into everyday language of everyday people, their superior identities are collapsed and they become:

represented as speaking in a language which readers themselves might have used, which makes it so much easier to go along with their meanings [Thus the] news media can be regarded as effecting the ideological work of transmitting the voices of power in a disguised and covert manner (Fairclough 1992, p.110).

This process of intertextual translation naturalises the dominant viewpoints and allow them to acquire hegemonic status in the struggle for signification. Discourse representation entails that when journalists report on a particular story, they make a choice to re/present it in one form and using different language and resources, and not other ways.

In discussing the power of news sources, van Dijk (2008) drew attention to the fact that discourse is about power and that power is needed for purposes of domination and control both the discursive and the material aspects of social life (p.vii). This control extends to mean control over the cognitive abilities of the audiences and hence their worldviews and actions. This realisation of the power of control calls for attention towards those who have "access to the fundamental power resource of public discourse, who have access to political discourse, to media discourse [etc.], to the climate change discourse and to the policymaking discourse" (van Dijk 2008, p.viii). This power to control the climate change narrative in South Africa is held by those who have access to discursive resources in the environmental and climate change debates. Those given access, get the power to define (for everyone else with no access), the climate change narratives, they become dominant and their ideas on climate change become ruling ideas of the epoch. This control is also achieved through the ability of those with access to forms of public communication to control and determine the re/production of the climate discourse. This could be through press conferences, press releases, seminars, and publications. Drawing from van Dijk (2008), those with access and control over the re/production of the public environmental/climate change discourse(s) "also control part of its contents, and hence, indirectly, the public mind - maybe not exactly what people will think, but at least what they will think about" (p.viii). Johannessen (2013) noted, "journalists do not only convey 'objective' news stories, but also establish interpretative schemes in communication with their readers within which those stories acquire meaning" (p.40).

According to van Dijk (2008), "power is related to control, and control of discourse means preferential access to its production and hence to its contents and style, and finally to the public mind" (p. viii). He argued further that dominance, for example, "involves differential access to social power" and that "access to public discourse ... [is] one of the resources of social power" (2008, p.34). van Dijk (2008) argued that the dominant groups:

tend to conceal their ideologies ... aim to get their ideology generally accepted as 'a general' or 'natural' system of values, norms and goals [where] ideological reproduction assumes the nature of consensus formation, and the power derived from it takes on a hegemonic form (p.34).

Media power derives from the news media's ability to 'exclude' and 'undermine' "alternative sources, alternative information and other relevancies in the description of world events" (van Dijk

2008, p.58). Access to the news media is crucial for the re/presentation of climate change: how the subject is re/presented, who gets the definitional power and how the problem is defined. The inclusion and exclusion of different social actors guarantees that only those whose worldviews are given access to the media-climate change discourse at the same time enjoy access to the audiences (public discourse) to the detriment of those whose worldviews are excluded and undermined by the news media. Thus, differential and preferential access to the news media legitimises and delegitimises worldviews about the subject. *A priori* bi-polar subject positions surface, with those with access having their ideologies and definitions governing narratives about climate change and the environment - while 'others' - alternative or oppositional voices earn re/presentation in terms of either negativity or passivity.

Elites enjoy privileged access and positions in climate change news while the ordinary people seldom participate as active and meaningful contributors to the debates. This study critically examined the elite localisation and parochialisation of sources that were given access to define the narrative parameters and structures of climate change in the South African quality mainstream newspapers studied. Official sources (government), experts, policymakers, think-tanks and industry people were found to dominate the climate change discourses permeating the news ecosystems in South Africa. Analogous to Fowler (1991), the members of the public (ordinary people) seldom made it into the news as credible sources except if they happened to be witnesses to some disasters or events and "their status as sources is accidental rather than privileged" as opposed to the elite club sources whose credibility was "established by official authority, by social status or by commercial success; they are organized, with a bureaucratic structure which embodies spokespersons ... have the resources to pay for the publicity and public relations" (p.22).

These sources also have privileged access to the media and at the same time the journalists have privileged access to these institutions and people. Fowler (1991) argued that this access is "reciprocal" where the "media conventionally expect and receive the right of access to the statements of these individuals, because the individuals have roles in the public domain, and reciprocally these people receive access to the columns of the papers when they wish to air their views" (p.22). By contrast, ordinary people hardly have access to the news media as sources. This

discursive access imbalance "results in partiality, not only in what assertions and attitudes are reported - a matter of content - but also in how they are reported" (Fowler 1991, p.23). Because of the reliance on official sources, the discourses produced, and the language used in the news media reproduce the ideologies of the sources used. The institutions and people used as sources in the re/presentation of climate change in South Africa, to draw from Fowler (1991) "provide the newspapers with modes of discourse which already encode the attitudes of a powerful elite. Newspapers in part adopt this language for their own and, in deploying it, reproduce the attitudes of the powerful" (p.23).

Stuart Hall et al. (1978) noted that the "media define for the majority of the population *what* significant events are taking place, but, also, they offer powerful interpretations of *how* to understand these events" (p.57). The re/production of dominance by the media is not an aspect to be thought of in terms of conspiracy theories but answers should be sought in the "routine *structures* of news production" that enable the media to "reproduce definitions of the powerful" (Hall et al. 1978, p.57). The reliance by journalists on "readily available and credible sources and the general professional and ideological aspects of newsworthiness, all concur in social cognitions and text production that favour stories about the most powerful people, groups, or institutions in society" (van Dijk 2008, p.55). Because of their reliance on experts, institutional sources (see also Fowler 1991; van Dijk 2008), the media do not primarily define/create news autonomously but are led to "specific" topics and events by the sources. Through this reliance on 'credible' sources, the news media "reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order" because the opinions and definitions of the powerful, highly-positioned and government sources are accepted as they are thought to have access to reliable and specialised knowledge and information" (Hall et al. 1978, p.58) and thus these sources become "the primary definers of topics".

While journalists function through the rhetoric of balance, objectivity and impartiality and this rule often requires them to bring 'other' views, it is critical to underline that the accession of the primary issue definitional status to elite and institutional sources and experts serves to give them an upper hand in the debates and interpretation of the problems or issues discussed. Their opinions become

dominant in the discourse and acquire legitimacy at the expense of the 'less-important other' voices. As Hall et al. (1978) argued, the structural relationship between the news media and the primary institutional definers enables the institutional definers to

establish the initial definition or *primary interpretation* of the topic in question. This interpretation then 'command the field' in all subsequent treatment and sets the terms of reference within which all further coverage or debate takes place. Arguments *against* a primary interpretation are forced to insert themselves into its definition of 'what is at issue' - they must begin from this framework of interpretation as their starting-point (p.58).

Arguably, these are powerful in deciding what society talks and thinks about and the frames of reference applicable in the debates and discussions. They set the public agenda and set parameters for discussion. Whatever issues arise, should be discussed from the frames put in place by the primary definers. In the realm of climate change re/presentation, issues could be about whether reducing emissions will affect jobs and stifle economic growth. Those who share a different viewpoint would have to begin by debunking these prior assertions. The frame of debate would have been set by the primary definers thereby closing out any other ways of debating the topic. Drawing from Hall et al. (1978) 59), "the primary definition *sets the limit* for all subsequent discussion by *framing what the problem is*" (p.59). Hall et al. (1978) went on to argue that the news media do not conspiratorially reproduce the ideologies of the elite but achieve this by "their structured relationship to power" which make them "play a crucial but secondary role in *reproducing* the definitions of those who have privileged access, as a right, to the media as 'accredited sources'" (p.59). In this view, the news media function from the position of "structured subordination to the primary definers" (Hall et al. 1978, p.59). This structured relationship between the news media and their powerful sources opens "up the neglected question of the *ideological role* of the media" giving much credence to Karl Marx's view that "the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class" where the class that owns and controls the means of production, has more crucially, the means of mental and cultural production and reproduction at its disposal (as cited in Hall et al. 1978, p.59). By subordinating themselves to the dictates of powerful sources, the news media begin their cultural role of constructing social reality that depicts "a particular image of society which represents particular class interests as the interests of all members of society" (Hall et al. 1978, p.59). This conceptualisation of the news media fits into what has been referred to elsewhere in this chapter as 'imagined social consensus' that is achieved by

superimposing the views of the elite on wider society through translating the language and views of the dominant into everyday language of the ordinary people (interpellation) where the audiences are put into positionalities of consent and thus achieving the reign of the dominant.

5.6 Discursive Strategies and the reproduction of dominant worldviews

Key to this study is how the neoliberal approach to understand and address climate change has been able to dominate the ideological and definitional minefield and continue to wield ideological control at a multilateral and intra-national level. This dominance is accounted for by Gramsci and Hall in dealing with articulation. The study appreciates that neoliberalism has dominance and has acquired the definitional power concerning climate change and global warming. Articulation (Hall 1996; Slack 1996; Grossberg 1992, 1996) describe this dominance (notwithstanding the struggles) as an aspect of the ideology having traits of a tendential force (see the discussion of the concept above). The consolidation of the tendential force attribute of neoliberalism can be explained by examining the language and discursive strategies that naturalise the capitalist culture as given and commonsensical. Through discourse and discourse coalitions of different institutions, players and individuals that converge at particular moments and spaces, the tendential forces are strengthened, not through conspiracy but rather through convergence and accidents.

Passivisation and Nominalisation

The discourse analytical approach used in this study helped in examining texts to show how, through the discursive systems of nominalisation and passivisation, the agency of capitalism and the global South in present greenhouse gas emissions was concealed. For Fairclough (1992), nominalisation and passivisation “may be associated with ideologically significant features of texts such as the systematic mystification of agency: both allow the agent of a clause to be deleted” (p.27). Nominalisation obscures agency and thus deletes questions of responsibility and culpability (Deacon et al. 2007, p.155). van Dijk (1988) argued that passivisation serves to “dissimulate the negative actions of elite or powerful groups” (as cited in Deacon et al. 2007, p.155). The study examined how the discursive devices of nominalisation and passivisation are used in the news to conceal the responsibility and culpability of the global South in climate change mitigation.

De-politicisation and labelling

The researcher also examined definitions, strategies and labels that are used in news media texts about climate change. Carvalho (2018) alluded to the power of labels that are used to describe climate change. As an example,

terming climate change as an ‘environmental issue’ may create (somewhat) distorting conceptual lens. By reducing it to the realms of nature and ‘the environment,’ this commonly found language practice detaches climate change from the economic, social and political sites and systems that produce it and that need to be transformed (Carvalho 2018, p.5).

In a way these language practices essentially de-politicise a subject that is highly political. De-politicisation of climate change “refers to the deletion of alternatives and of democratic debate about alternatives regarding climate change from public spheres” (Carvalho 2018, p.6). The techno-managerial depiction of climate change in the news media discourses has been rendered natural and citizens have been left with no role to play (regardless of the people being more affected) (Carvalho 2018, p.6).

The climate change discourse in the South African mainstream news media may re/present climate change as a natural problem. What is not discussed is that it is a risk created by capital’s excessive exploitation of nature and labour. The source of the problem is deleted through language. Through passivisation and nominalisation, the agency of capitalism in the global warming and climate change crises is hidden and problems are presented as things that were bound to happen. In the same understanding, it follows therefore, that particular solutions (neoliberal) are to be followed to address the problems.

Yves Pepermans and Pieter Maesele (2018) examined “how news media contribute to manufacturing consent by disabling ideological disagreement about established social structures underlying climate change” (p.621). They used discourse analysis to account for how the Belgian newspapers de-politicised climate change. They defined de-politicisation as “any communication practice that misrecognizes or conceals the ideological values, perspectives and choices at work in, for instance, a given policy decision or framework, thereby shielding the latter from contestation and closing democratic discussion” (Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.623). For

example, in the case of the de-politicisation of climate change in South Africa may refer to how the government and institutions with interest in energy (Eskom, Sasol, mining companies) claim that the continued utilisation of coal is rational/moral because it provides energy. This claim is then represented in the news media as the “only rational or moral way to define or deal with the problem, while the values, interests, and assumptions informing this representation remain concealed, and dissent is delegitimized as ‘immoral’ or ‘irrational’” (Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.623).

Pepermans and Maesele noted that the “characterization of depoliticization is used to criticize technocratic or consensual discourses that reduce action on climate change to market-driven technological innovation or green consumerism, without addressing the root causes of climate disruption” i.e. capitalism and its exploitative tendencies (2018, p.623). The justification of the continued use of coal by South Africa through the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), Eskom, and government energy discourses on the logic of economic growth and development are also a mechanism meant to depoliticise the climate problem in South Africa. The opposite of de-politicisation is politicisation of the climate crisis by way of rejecting imagined universal consensus constructed by primary definers, the rejection of specific neoliberal solutions. An article by the *City Press* (Yolandi Groenewald “Coal still on 2050 agenda,” *City Press*, November 26, 2016), used Non-Governmental Organisations to reject the South African energy policy that seeks to retain coal powered power plants by 2050. A politicised discourse would transcend the surface descriptions of climate change “scientists say,” or “physical causes are,” to a more socially active approach that searches for “societal root causes” (Pepermans & Maesele 2018 p.624). A critical analysis of the climate change discourse accounts for “the role of ideology in media representations of science” (Carvalho 2007, p.225) by questioning the agents, their interests and ideological inclinations.

The Public Idiom and the Ideology of Consensus

Fowler (1991) saw representation as "a constructive practice" not that news production techniques and structures make it impossible to have any event or idea communicated in a neutral way. The

structure of news, structures of news organisations, and medium choices, all have specific social, economic and ideological contexts which determine how they function.

Through the use of 'oral models' in newspapers, a kind of writing that appeals to the reader as an individual, and writing in an interpersonal way, the newspapers are able to normalise and naturalise ideologies by transmitting elite discourses into everyday language - thus interpellating the audiences through language. The elite discourses are accepted as common sense by the interpellated audiences. Hall et al. (1978) observed that the common sensing of elite discourses is achieved through "translation of official viewpoints into a public idiom" where the viewpoints are invested with "with particular force and resonance" and bringing them "common-sensically within the horizons of understandings of various publics" (p.61). The news give "an illusion of conversation in which common sense is spoken about matters on which there is consensus" (Fowler 1991, p.np). The success of the Promethean and sustainable capitalism neoliberal climate change discourses can largely be accredited to the use by newspapers of the 'public idiom' (Hall et al. 1978) or what Fowler (1991) called 'oral models' which represent issues in a common-sense discourse through the consensus ideology. For example, such expressions as 'everyone agrees that ...'. This imagined social consensus is built by the primary definers and is incorporated into news language by journalists who translate the 'common sense' and 'consensus' views of the elite and dominant into a socially agreeable public language thereby naturalising and automatising elite worldviews.

Fowler (1991, n.np) argued that "[A]rticulating the ideology of consensus is a crucial practice in the Press's management of its relations with government and capital, on the one hand, and with individual readers on the other". This study addressed questions such as:

- (a) How the newspapers use the language of consensus to naturalise the views of elite sources, capital and the government.
- (b) How, through the same vices, the news media propel the exploitation of nature by capital under the common sense pretext and the interpellation of audiences and discourse subjects.
- (c) Whose interests are established and re/produced by the ideology of consensus?
- (d) Whose consensus is imposed as the 'consensus' of 'everyone'?

The ideology of consensus is promoted by the use of such words as 'we', 'our', 'us' South Africans. Fowler (1991, p.np) defined the consensus discourse as assuming "that, for a given grouping of people, it is a matter of fact that the interests of the whole population are undivided; and that the whole population acknowledges this 'fact' by subscribing to a certain set of beliefs". As Fowler (1991) argued, those who attempt to project a different view from the consensus view could be labelled negatively through such words as 'deviants', 'trouble-makers,' 'enemies of progress'. They are "subjected to marginalization or repression" and boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are enacted and enlarged by the default perception of seeing those who view the world differently as working against 'facts' and what is socially agreeable. The use of the public idiom/oral models is to accomplish an ideological function of naturalising "the terms in which reality is represented, and the categories whose terms represent Conversation implies a commonly held view of the world, a shared subjective reality that is taken for granted and does not have to be proved" (Fowler 1991, p.np). Berger and Luckman (as cited in Fowler 1991, p.np) stated:

The most important vehicle of reality maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality Most conversation does not in so many words define the nature of the world. Rather, it takes place against the background of a world that is silently taken for granted If this is understood, one will readily see that the great part, if not all, of everyday conversation maintains subjective reality. Indeed, its massivity is achieved by the accumulation and consistency of casual conversation - conversation that can *afford to be casual* precisely because it refers to the routines of a taken-for-granted world. The loss of casualness signals a break in the routines and, at least potentially, a threat to the taken-for-granted reality ... language *realizes* the world, in the double sense of apprehending and producing it.

Through ownership of both the means of production and the means of mental production, the worldviews of the elite become readily available, acquiring the status of universality in defining the "social world", thus, re/producing the way of life of the powerful as natural and legitimate. The universality of elite worldviews ensures that they "are shared to some degree by the subordinate classes of the society" winning the consent of the governed, not only through "overt coercion" but through "ideas" (Hall et al. 1978, p.59). By using the language of the:

supposed would-be readers/audience" (the public idiom) the "newspaper's own version of the language of the public to whom it is principally addressed: its version of the rhetoric, imagery and underlying common stock of knowledge which it assumes the audience shares" the views of the primary definers are made publicly accessible and available,

investing them "with popular force and resonance, naturalising them within the horizon of understandings of the various publics (Hall et al. 1978, p.61).

Intertextuality as a discursive tool and strategy

Michel Foucault (1971) argued that "there can be no statement that in one way or another does not reactualize others" (p.98). Intertextuality was conceptualised as a discourse analytical tool by Fairclough in 1992 drawing upon the earlier work of Kristeva and Bakhtin. Mikhail Bakhtin (as cited in Fairclough 1992, p.101) noted that "texts and utterances are shaped by prior texts that they are 'responding' to, and by subsequent texts that they 'anticipate'". For Fairclough all texts spoken and written are intertextual and "constituted by elements of other texts" (1992, p.102). Intertextuality was applied in this research as part of the discourse analytical framework that examining the discursive re/presentations of climate change in the South African mainstream news media. The idea is to be able to examine how particular media re/presentations are in effect linked retrospectively and prospectively to other texts. The referenced texts have a bearing on the ideologies and discourses promoted. Intertextuality works well in analysing news because, by way of journalism standards, journalists make implicit and explicit references to other texts, and to news sources and in giving background to their news articles. The references work in building particular worldviews, ways of seeing the world from the viewpoints of sources, from the viewpoints of other texts that they reference. By making these references, and using language (metaphors, euphemisms etc.) the news media contribute in the legitimation or delegitimizing of particular worldviews.

The climate change news stories published by the news media, to borrow from Kristeva (1986 as cited in Fairclough 1992, p.102) insert history into their stories, that is, "the text absorbs and is built out of texts from the past". Through intertextuality there is the insertion of "the text into history" which means that "the text responds to, reaccentuates, and reworks past texts, and in so doing helps to make history and contributes to wider processes of change, as well as anticipating and trying to shape subsequent texts" (Fairclough 1992, p.102). Climate change news stories are not history-free but strongly attached to other texts belonging to other discourses (government, academics, energy, environment etc.). These other discourses shape and are shaped by the news texts, with the end results being the establishment, re/production and transformation of climate

change knowledge(s), attitudes, actions and experiences. Intertextuality is useful in unpacking how hegemonies are re/produced and sustained because of its ability to account for "the productivity of texts, ... how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions ... to generate new ones" (Fairclough 1992, p.102). The productivity of these texts is "socially limited and constrained, and conditional upon relations of power" (Fairclough 1992, p.103). It is possible to "conceptualize intertextual processes and processes of contesting and restructuring orders of discourse as processes of hegemonic struggle in the sphere of discourse, which have effects upon, as well as being affected by, hegemonic struggle in the wider sense" (Fairclough 1992, p.103).

5.7 Sampling

Newspaper selection

The selection of newspapers for analysis was based on their greater chance of covering climate change news, their wider geographic distribution both online and the physical copies, thus, giving them a more pronounced advantage to influence the climate change discourses within South Africa and the Southern Africa region. More critically, these are well established newspapers and have acquired a stature for themselves for defining serious news and creating a framework for major news and thus wielding control in terms of setting the news agenda for South Africa. The newspapers selected for the study are the *Sunday Times*, the *Mail and Guardian*, the *City Press* and the *Sunday Independent*. These newspapers were selected because they are 'quality, elite and mainstream'. These four weekly quality mainstream newspapers selected were chosen despite their relatively depressed circulation figures compared to dailies and tabloids because "they have an important agenda-setting function for opinion leaders, the public, other media" (argument drawn from Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.628).

Stories' selection

The news stories selected for analysis were downloaded from the websites of the newspapers, Pressreader and the online database *Sabinet Online*. For the purposes of this study, 290 stories focusing on climate change issues in the global South (Southern hemisphere) were analysed, 106 from the *Mail & Guardian*, 61 from *City Press*, 65 from the *Sunday Times* and 58 from the *Sunday Independent* stories from each newspaper. The news articles were selected through a keyword

search on the websites of the newspapers, Pressreader and online database *Sabinet Online*. The study used news articles published between 2011 (prior to the Durban COP17) and December 2018 (after the COP24 in Poland). This time span is in line with recommendations put forward by Carvalho (2008) for analyses that account for “the time sequence of texts” and therefore the eight-year period satisfies this need thus making the study longitudinal (p.161). In addition, Carvalho (2008) noted that discourse analysis needed to take account of “the time plane,” that is “the time sequence of texts and its implications” (p.162). Discourse analysis accounts for the “social processes ‘outside’ the text”, which is necessary to understand the discursive strategies employed by social actors “in a variety of arenas and channels ‘before’ and ‘after’ journalistic texts” (Carvalho 2008, p.161). The examination of time planes in discourse analysis allows the researcher to understand the “implications of previous discursive positions on subsequent ones” and to extend this argument, to account for changes in discursive positions over time and the factors necessitating such changes. Texts are retrospectively responding to previous texts and prospectively anticipating subsequent ones (see Fairclough, 1992 on his discussion of intertextuality) because they “build on previous ones, taking up or challenging former discourses” (Carvalho 2008, p.163). The time plane analysis, as Ruth Wodak and Theo van Leeuwen (1999) argued, provides the much-needed historical background and this accounts for any changes in discourses over time.

While most discourse studies examine news texts over shorter time spans, this study appreciates the importance of longitudinal (longer time planes) studies that give the historicity of discourses because climate change is still evolving in terms of knowledge and the phenomenon. The discourses about it are likely to evolve, change or be transformed over time. The study accounted for the development(s) and changes (if any) in the discursive constitutions and re/constructions of climate change in South Africa between 2011 and 2018, at the same time being critically aware of key critical discourse moments, the key actors and the history. This historical approach allowed the researcher to understand that 2011 became the key entry moment of the climatic into the mainstream South African social discourse (due to COP17). For Carvalho (2008) “a time-sensitive discourse analysis also means considering the particular context of a given period, from specific events and developments related to the issue under examination to wider aspects of the social environment” (p.164).

The keywords used were climate change, climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation, emissions reduction, global warming, renewable energy, carbon tax and developing countries. All the articles on the websites and electronic databases that included these keywords were included in the population sample. A total of 736 stories were collected from this exercise. The researcher moved on to identify the news hole from this first sample, identified the formats of the articles in the sample (for example news items, lead articles, commentary and analysis, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor) and lastly the sections they appeared in.

Having done the above, the researcher moved to sample two, where the researcher sifted the first sample for particular characteristics. This section was based on purposive sampling. Only news stories produced by the local staff, opinion pieces, commentary and analysis, and lead stories were considered (internal news reporters and not news agencies and letters to the editor). These articles selected were to be from and about South Africa, and the global South/developing countries.

After sifting sample one and building sample two, the researcher moved on to build sample three. In the case where sample two had more articles than the desired ones, the number of articles were narrowed down using random sampling proportionate to each individual media outlet to maintain equity and representation. This process was complemented by “scan-type reading” (Carvalho 2005) of all the texts to select those that had ‘climate change/global warming/emissions reduction/climate mitigation and adaptation’ and ‘developing countries’ in the headline or had orientations to these subjects occupying a significant position in the article and were both presented as central themes.

After establishing the third sample, the researcher applied a number of measures. The researcher recorded the main and sub-topic for each story, date, page/section (specifically the headline and the lead paragraph: Stories were broken down into several categories (this enabled the researcher to do the quantitative distribution of the topic across different media outlets. The following were also analysed; subject category/theme, source of item (official, expert, political actor, activist, celebrity, popular perception), context of the story (response to a crisis, conference/gathering, response to activism, news briefing etc.), framing of item (discursive analysis), policy issue/outcome at stake, type of intervention (adaptation/mitigation). This thematic structure and form analysis also examined the roles of the actors and existents as they are presented in the news

stories. Thematic structure and form – consists of an event or chain of events, behind which one or more news actors stand (Johannessen 2013, pp.41-42). Johannessen (2013) defined an agent as:

the narrative subject of the narrative predicative, described in the statements in the form of ‘do’. The importance of an agent can be seen in the extent that he/she takes significant action. Major agents are those who play a leading part in the stories, while minor agents could have been omitted without destroying the story even though it would impoverish it.

5. 8 News Data Analysis

As a primary step preceding the actual analysis of news stories, the study identified the range of arguments and viewpoints that exist about climate change in South Africa. For instance, this process yielded themes that include: the need to catch-up and the indispensability of coal, the need to abandon fossil fuels, climate justice, technological optimism (clean coal and nuclear), carbon markets, carbon tax, and foreign policy Drawing from Philo (2007), these themes/arguments “showed what was available for journalists to choose from, as well as which arguments ‘belonged’ to different interests” (p.179) and the conditions or contexts within which these arguments were made. The study went on to examine how these arguments were re/presented, re/produced or challenged in the mainstream newspapers. This process began by an attempt to map the public-policy debates prior and post the Conferences of the Parties (COP17) in 2011 up to COP24 in 2018. Having established this map, the study moved to “analyse how different parts of the debate were featured in news ... and the manner in which some accounts were highlighted or ‘preferred’ in the text” (Philo 2007, p.179).

The process of news analysis began by “an open-ended reading of texts without very specific questions and hypotheses” which enabled the researcher to identify “the most significant characteristics of the data, without the filter-effect” (Carvalho 2008, p.166). The initial reading (open-ended) of texts included all the texts that were available (on websites, on Sabinet and Pressreader), a close attention was paid to the news headlines and the leads of the stories that constituted the corpus. From this open-ended reading phase, a scan-type reading was also done to further narrow the number of all the articles to those that specifically dealt with issues of climate change (the phenomenon [science], politics, economics, responses) and global warming and mostly written by local staff (not wire services).

The above process yielded 290 stories that were then set for analysis. Articles that were written during the critical discourse moments were given close attention. Years with higher frequencies allowed the researcher to make informed decisions about identifying the critical discursive moments across the eight-year period (See Carvalho 2007, 2008). These critical discourse moments allowed for a closer examination, taking account of the key actors, their agency and the forces sustaining the coverage. According to Carvalho (2008, p.166), critical discourse moments are “periods that involve specific happenings, which may challenge the ‘established’ discursive positions” - these can be seen by “political activity, scientific findings, or other socially relevant issues”.

After the scan-type reading of news stories suggested by Carvalho (2005, 2007), news articles were selected based on the scope and form that they used. More broadly, the study adopted and modified the discourse-analytical framework for the scope and form of climate change discourse developed by Maesele and Raeijmaekers in 2017. Scope “informs us on what is being addressed, while form pays attention to how this is portrayed” (Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.626). Scope examines the prominence or exclusion of particular topics/angles, social actors (who sets the terms of debate or achieves primary definitional power), and viewpoints. Through the examination of scope, one is able “to identify the ideological preferences at play in a particular discursive construction” (Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.626). Form examines the layout, style, linguistic and discursive strategies. Following suggestions from Pepermans and Maesele (2018) and part of analysis, each article was treated “as a unit of analysis,” was “read, reread, and compared in terms of scope (prominence or exclusion of particular topics/angles, social actors, and viewpoints/preferences) and form (layout, linguistic choices, discursive strategies)” (p.629).

Recurrent discursive strategies and ideological inclinations across the four newspapers were identified and examined. Some of the emergent discursive re/constructions included but were not limited to: Coal is indispensable, Climate change justice, Optimism in market-led and techno-managerial climate solutions (clean coal, nuclear energy, carbon markets), Carbon tax, South Africa within the International Climate System, The global North should lead emissions reduction and pay for adaptation in the global South.

5. 8.1 Textual Analysis

The first level of analysis under text layer and organisation examines the surface of the newspaper and the article. These included the section in which the article was published, the page number, whether it was accompanied by visual elements (photographs, graphics etc.), the title of the article and the author. The headline, the lead and the first three paragraphs of the story were carefully examined to understand the preferred readings built within them. The second level examined the objects re/constructed in the news texts. The objects included themes/topics, for example economics of climate change, climate change impacts on agriculture and solutions to the climate crises. Events or issues related to the broader issue under discussions were considered. The third level identified the discourse actors (people or institutions) mentioned in the news articles. The stage also critiqued the interests of the actors in the article, and the level of influence they held in the article by shaping the overall meaning of the story. Further, at this stage, the study explored and described the dominating perspectives in the text (which actors were afforded primary definitional role) and how the power of social actors was framed (the capacity of one actor to convey his/her views through the media in quotes or by reference). Carvalho (2008) noted that those actors with a predominant framing position had social influence. The fourth analytical level examined the key metaphors and other rhetorical devices used to build ideological closures and preferred readings. At this level attention was paid to the vocabulary used in re/presenting the issues, ideologies and realities. Semantics, syntax and lexicalisation were also analysed. Nominalisation and active/passive sentences were analysed as part of the syntactic analysis in the news media discourse. Metaphors, metonyms, euphemisms and rhetoric were identified and examined.

The fifth level of analysis examined the discursive strategies used in the news text. The researcher examined the forms of discursive manipulation of reality by the social actors and journalists to build preferred readings and achieve ideological closure. Carvalho (2008) defined discursive manipulation as a form of “discursive intervention” and includes aspects of discourse framing by claims-making and directing attention to something (p.169). “Framing is to organize discourse according to a certain point of view or perspective” (Carvalho 2008, p.169). This can include “selection and composition” where certain facts are included, and others excluded (also includes viewpoints, opinions, sources). Key at this stage was to examine how the angles, viewpoints and

‘facts’ in the stories were organised to produce a particular ideological meaning and how the sponsors of these views (actors) framed ‘reality’. The analysis sought to differentiate between the discursive strategies of social actors to those of journalists. Attention was paid to aspects such as legitimisation where particular actions or powers were sanctioned based on normative reasons, the positioning and construction of viewpoints of social actors “into a certain relationship with others” (Carvalho 2008, p.169), politicisation or de-politicisation (see sections above for definitions), othering, distanciation, labelling, passivisation and nominalisation, common-sensing, and constructing responsibility.

The six-level of analysis under the textual layer and structural organisation was concerned with the ideological standpoints embedded in the news articles. Further, in examining the ideologies built into the story, the analytical process sought to understand how preferred readings and ideological closures were built into news stories through language, discursive strategies, text structure and layout. Further, it was key to understand how all these factors naturalised particular worldviews and rendered them natural and common-sensical. Noting that ideological standpoints are always implicit, through comparative synchronic analysis, the analysis, explored how the same events/issues and social actors were re/presented in the same news media and in other newspapers. As Carvalho (2008) argued, one should look for what is absent/excluded and the one which is included/present in the article because “silence can be as performative as discourse” (p.171). What is obscured in the text is very important because the inclusion and exclusion of some voices and issues create a particular meaning and a particular reality. The study moved on to focus on how, through discursive re/presentations of climate change in the South African mainstream news media, ‘a particular policy approach is (de-)legitimized or (de-)naturalized’. The ideological interests underpinning the news re/constructions were analysed. The seventh level of analysis involved an investigation on the ontology of the discourse (specifically how the climate change phenomena are understood, the discursive authority afforded to different sources, the role of science and evidence and the policy directions envisaged for both adaptation and mitigation). The eighth analytical level drew attention to the taken for granted assumptions about natural relationships (the likely impacts of climate change in South Africa, where, when, how effects are/will be felt, degree of uncertainty/certainty, possible solutions). The stage also examined the

political and economic dimensions of the climate change discourse, systematised the main strategies of the press and of political actors by reading strategies directly from texts authored by political actors and indirectly from quotes and reports (non-linguistic) actions that are compared in the four newspapers.

5.8.2 Contextual Analysis

After going through the outlined textual analytical stages, the analysis moved to a comparative contextual analysis which involved looking “beyond the text to the overall coverage of an event or issue in one news outlet and examine the wider social context” (Carvalho 2008, p.171). This stage involved examining the amount of coverage dedicated to one issue/event over a certain period to understand the importance attached to the issue by that particular news organisation. This stage of the examination paid key interest towards what Carvalho (2007) called “simultaneous depictions” of the same events, reports or stories across all the four newspapers (p.227). This enabled one to understand how the same event/issue was re/presented by the different media institutions. This also fulfils the call by Carvalho (2008) for a comparative-synchronic analysis, which by extension, demystifies the inherent ideological viewpoints held within stories. Further, this also helps in understanding the discourses of newspapers outside of those of the social actors. Comparative-synchronic analysis - “means looking at the various representations of an issue at the time of the writing of one specific news text (unit of analysis)” (Carvalho 2008, p.171). It involves comparing “one text with other representations of the issue: texts published on the same day (or another time unit) by different authors in the same news outlet or others” (Carvalho 2008, p.171).

The comparative-synchronic analysis is important in:

attempting to reconstitute the original events (discursive or non-discursive). By cross-referencing news outlets and checking original documents, researchers can form their own image of reality, which is hopefully more accurate and/or complete than each individual media representations (Carvalho 2008, p.171).

Having done the comparative-synchronic analysis, the researcher, conducted a historical-diachronic analysis - this stage involved accounting for the social context able to “produce a history of media constructions of a given issue” by examining the “sequence of discourse constructions of an issue and assessing its significance” (Carvalho 2008, p.172). This stage helped to re/construct how media re/presentations of reality affected subsequent texts and realities, how particular

worldviews were re/produced or contested, which alternative arguments were available at the moment, how were they accounted for or excluded from the public agenda and why. The historical-diachronic analysis is a biographical study of issues as they evolve in the news over time.

5.9 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the twin concepts of articulation and discourse analysis and their application in examining how the news media articulate, re-articulate and dis-articulate climate change discourses in South Africa. The chapter laid a methodological foundation for the study of climate change representation in the news through articulation and discourse analysis. The theoretical and methodological frameworks advanced in this chapter show the possibilities of these concepts and the advantages of such methodological and theoretical hybridity. Used together, the concepts are useful in analysing the neoliberal climate change discourses in the news. Hence, this chapter, with its focus on articulation and discourse analysis, details how the neoliberal climate change and environmental discourses are naturalised and legitimated through the news. Critically, they help understand how dominant ideologies are legitimised and they achieve their status through discourse practices. Articulation and discourse analysis become useful tools and methods in deconstructing ideologies in the news, the role of language, the sponsors of such discourses and the power they hold in society. This chapter introduced and extended the key theories necessary in examining the news media representation and discourses of climate change in South Africa. Articulation and discourse analysis are used as foundations for the methodological framework. The next five chapters present the results of this study. The analysis and presentation of the results is being done thematically and each chapter presents the results and analysis of news media representations of each key theme that emerged from the analysis.

Chapter Six: Re-articulating media constructions of 'dangerous' climate change

6.1 Introduction

Anthropogenic climate change is a crucial global challenge characterised by rising sea levels, rising temperatures, and incessant extreme weather events (including droughts and flooding). South Africa, due to present and anticipated climate change impacts (DEA, 2011, 2017), has participated in global and local initiatives to map response mechanisms to mitigate and adapt. Alongside the evolution in policy initiatives, the news media coverage and representation of climate change have also evolved, from a representation centred on doubting the science to a consensus climate change discourse. This chapter traces how the newspapers in South Africa have cover(ed) and re/presented the impacts of climate change in South Africa between 2011 and 2018. Further, the chapter questioned the drivers of cover(age) and the critical discourse sponsors. The *Mail & Guardian*, followed by the *City Press*, gave extensive coverage to the climate change impacts theme, where the newspapers attempted to localise the climate problem and to project it as both a present and future problem. Overall, climate change was re/presented through the discursive devices of scientisation and depoliticisation. Science reports and experts gained discursive power in defining the climate change problem, science was re/presented as 'unequivocal' and 'unquestionable,' and resultantly, the solutions proposed by the scientists were to be followed. Further, through depoliticisation, the media portrayed climate change as an issue of the environment, de-linked from aspects of cultural politics and political economy. However, the *Sunday Times* gave space to sceptical actors and views that questioned climate change science. From the final sample that was analysed, there was no story from the *Sunday Independent* that had climate change impacts as a key theme.

6.2 Climate change and extreme weather: Drought and Floods

The re/presentation of climate change impacts in the newspapers analysed was linked to extreme weather events, the release of scientific reports, and international climate change conferences. The news stories on climate change impacts were premised on the views of 'established' scientists and experts. The *Sunday Times* gave different messages about the science of climate change, and this depended on who wrote the stories or the Op-Ed or the sources used in the story. Actors that

questioned climate science were drawn into the stories and often wrote their own articles. However, through analysing the stories and editorials, the messaging was mixed, though, at editorial level, the scientific consensus discourse was accepted. In contrast to the mixed messaging characteristic of the *Sunday Times*, the *Mail & Guardian* advanced a scientific consensus ideology and discourse. For the newspaper, science was unquestionable and urgent action was needed. The newspaper sought to mobilise public awareness and action by portraying climate change impacts as ‘grave’ and likely to worsen if no action was taken soon. The predictions from science were represented as certain and unequivocal. Science journals were utilised the most in the *Mail & Guardian*, especially in stories written by Siphso Kings. Kings drew his stories from various global academic journals and international organisations dealing with climate change, such as the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA-United States), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA – United States). These were then presented as undisputed authorities. The discursive strategy of authorisation (Carvalho 2007) was extensively used to legitimise scientific sources/experts. The stories here portrayed the extreme weather events, especially in South Africa (case in point storms and fires in January 2015) to global warming. The *City Press* reported on climate change impacts, relying, especially on climate change conferences and the C40 Cities project. The coverage was event-oriented, and rarely did the newspaper produce stories that relied on scientific journals.

In the story “Man’s impact ‘disrupting natural cycles,’” Sashni Pather (*Sunday Times*, 09 January 2011) attributed climate change to human activities. This view was first expressed in the headline: “Man’s impact ‘disrupting natural cycles’”. The story referred to the “wettest December in 150 years,” further alluding to extreme weather in Australia and the United States. The extreme weather had “wreaked havoc locally and across the globe, with floods, blizzards and torrential rain affecting millions of people”. In the same newspaper, a similar attempt to link extreme weather to a climate problem was given in a story by Bobby Jordan, “Get used to the weather...,” (*Sunday Times*, 30 January 2011). The story argued that the weather in South Africa was getting extreme and “weirder” and that these “extremes of drought and flooding are the new normal”. The story, “Prepare for long season of drought, and some floods, too” (Bongani Mthethwa, *Sunday Times*, 26 March 2017) paid attention to extreme weather events. It has been observed that while the

newspaper wrote about climate change impacts linked to extreme weather events, essential to note is that often, this theme also came out from conferences or press releases. For example, this story was a product of the World Water Summit conference held in Durban in 2017. The story directly represented the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Dr Asmerom Baraki arguing that "due to climate change, Southern Africa might see more of these extreme situations". The story depoliticised climate change because of scientific instrumentalisation,

Sipho Kings, the environment reporter at the *Mail & Guardian*, often made attempts to link the present extreme weather events in South Africa to climate change and in doing so localise climate change problems. The journalist used scientific research findings together with extreme weather to build a discourse that saw climate change as a present problem, not a futuristic one. Unlike early coverage where reports were about events happening elsewhere (distanced), Kings constructed a climate change that was local and relevant to different South African communities. For Kings, climate change was not just happening elsewhere but was a threat to life in South Africa. In the story "Climate change evident in Cape storm and Knysna fires," (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 June 2017), Kings argued that "South Africa's climate is changing and with that comes extreme weather. Events such as crippling storms and droughts, which used to happen once a century will happen every decade, or more frequently". Climate change was responsible for extreme weather: "In Cape Town, the worst storm in two decades saw 8m waves thundering into the coastline. In Knysna, that storm drove fires, which spread for 100km and destroyed several homes. Seven people died. Initial estimates by disaster management officials are that overall damage will amount to more than R4-billion" (Sipho Kings, "Climate change evident in Cape storm and Knysna fires," *Mail & Guardian*, 14 June 2017).

The extreme weather events were seen to be worsening with rising sea levels in South Africa's coastal cities a notable example. (Sipho Kings, "Climate change will worsen flooding in SA's coastal cities," *Mail & Guardian*, 02 June 2017). The story drew this conclusion from a journal article published in *Scientific Reports* which noted that "One metre of sea-level rise is going to be a game-changer for the coastal zone [and] Storms and floods that already eat away at cities such as Durban will not only be more intense, they will also start off from a higher point - because the sea level will be higher". Another story constructing the impact of climate change on cities

was written by Monica Laganparsad, “City not ready for ‘climate-change’ rain,” (*Sunday Times*, 13 November 2016). According to the story, climate change was responsible for extreme weather events such as floods, and cities such as Johannesburg were “not ready for climate-change’ rain”. Dhesigen Naidoo (CEO Water Research Commission) was directly quoted arguing that “Climate change had brought with it ‘high-intensity’ rain which falls over a short period of time” which led to urban flooding and destruction of property. As discussed in the next paragraph, the ‘climate-rain’ would overwhelm the already ‘crowded’ cities.

Analogous to the construction of climate change and its impact on urban areas, the story “Climate change among the most significant risks facing humanity,” by Vuyo Mkize (*City Press*, 27 June 2018) documented what different cities were doing to adapt to climate impacts. Additionally, the story saw “rapid urban migration and growth” as increasing climate risks. Just like the *Mail & Guardian*, this story failed to link urban migration and growth to the capitalist economic system among other things. The story, by failing to address the political economy of rural-urban migration, essentially depoliticised the climate problem. Urban migration and growth are seen as natural and inevitable processes. This fails to account for the factors (capitalistic) that pull people to urban centres.

Climate change was a threat to South Africa’s water resources, affecting the already ‘fragile and inadequate’ water resources. This posed a danger to the well-being of the country and more importantly, people living in informal settlements. Fiona Macleod, in “Climate change a policy watershed,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 31 March 2011) noted that South Africa’s water resources “will be hardest hit” with the impact more severe “in urban areas, with about 61% of the population”. Macleod asserts that these urban areas were overcrowded because of the “rapid influx of people” into cities that were already suffering from “large service delivery backlogs” and “informal settlements”. While this is true, the nexus between social and climate justice was not discussed. The “influx of people” into cities was blamed for the overcrowding and the mushrooming of “informal settlements” and not the failure by government to provide decent accommodation and basic services both in and outside of cities. The article opened the possibility of a discourse that would combine social and climate justice, a discourse that will manage to link climate vulnerability to inherent internal inequalities in the South African social system. The complicity of government

and the minerals-energy complex in exacerbating these inequalities and subsequent vulnerabilities is hidden. The article used passivisation and nominalisation to diminish inequalities.

The story relied on a government green paper that was used as part of consultations for a whitepaper in preparation for COP17. The green paper was used as the only source and had overall definitional power, which by extension made the government the only definer of reality. The paper points out that “if negotiations do not succeed in decreasing the average global temperature by at least 2°C, ‘the potential impact on South Africa in the medium to long term is potentially catastrophic’”. This resulted in the production of a notion of ideological agreement, manufacturing ‘imagined consensus’ and a one-dimensional discourse. The article, together with the direct discourse of the green paper, scientised the climate change problem. Climate change was constructed as strictly an environmental problem, depoliticised with no attempt made at linking climate change to anthropogenic activities that have led to the risk society.

To address climate change, the story focused on adaptation and renewable energy. Climate change was to be addressed through UNFCCC multilateral arrangements and techno-managerial innovation. Ideologically, the article indirectly naturalised and moralised multilateral techno-managerial responses which are inherently market-led and Promethean in nature. Excluded from the story are debates/views on emissions reductions and responsibility. This contributed to the depoliticisation of climate change. The scientisation of the discourse (allusions to science and impacts) left out questions of present responsibility and agency. While the global multilateral system was constructed as the best platform to address climate change, the story was silent on the local responsibility of South Africa in emissions and the need for their reduction. The emphasis on a global framework generalised responsibility and diminished a clear focus on South Africa as a key global emitter of greenhouse gases. The depoliticisation, together with the strategies of passivisation and nominalisation ensured that South Africa’s responses and emissions are left without scrutiny. The article’s focus on adaptation essentially excluded any discussions on mitigation. In addition, a focus on adaptation, though important, is critical as a discourse strategy that constructs South Africa as a victim of climate change, with its historical and present emissions hidden. This strategy diminished scrutiny and discussions on the need for effective reduction at a local and national level.

A similar focus on climate change impacts on water resources came from the *City Press*. The story “Climate change: Will SA run out of water,” (No author, *City Press*, 23 November 2015) discussed climate change impacts in South Africa and was based on the book: *Climate change: Briefings from South Africa*, by Robert Scholes, Mary Scholes and Mike Lucas of Wits University. The story quoted the book noting that the “warming trend is already apparent, and it is much higher than the global average rate. Temperatures in the interior of the country could rise by 3°C by the end of the century if the world greatly and urgently reduces its greenhouse gas emissions, but by up to 6°C if it does not” adding that “the rate of warming in South Africa is near twice the average rate recorded worldwide so far”. The story relied on the discursive strategy of scientific instrumentalisation.

While the *Sunday Times* has given access to climate change denialism and scepticism, this editorial “Our water woes are a collective burden,” reflects the editorial thinking relating to climate change (31 January 2016). Climate change was constructed as real and already affecting South Africa’s water resources. Because of global warming, “it feels like it’s getting drier by the day”. The dry conditions were affecting tourism, agriculture etc. “Climate change is altering rainfall patterns significantly, resulting in lower rainfall in some parts of the country. Rising sea levels ... are real and present threats to our water table”.

In addition to worsening water woes in South Africa, the changing climate was also constructed as inducing food insecurity across the country and the continent. Niren Tolsi’s story “Alarm raised over decline in maize crop,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 09 June 2011) saw climate change as exerting strain on agricultural productivity and thus leading to food insecurity. The impact on agriculture was mostly felt in maize production, a staple food for the country. Maize production was projected to “plummet by 35% in Southern Africa by 2030 if climate change continues unabated”. The newspaper discourses attributed food insecurity to and blamed “western governments for their inertia over response strategies to climate change”. Raj Patel (author of the book ‘Stuffed and Starved’), was directly represented in the story warning that Southern Africa was “likely to be one of the epicentres of hunger and malnutrition in decades to come”. Patel’s discourse constructed climate change and the threat of hunger as a result of the capitalist international food system: “the real culprit is the international food trade system, which discourages grain reserves, encourages the world to be dependent on a few oil-fuelled industrial agriculture”. Patel provided an essential

ideological alternative to the mainstream capitalistic structures of world trade, of subduing everything under the logic of capital and profit. Most importantly, Patel criticised industrial agriculture, the real culprit behind the metabolic and ecological crises. In this discursive construction, food security could not be achieved if the world relied on the capitalist structures of agricultural production and trade. This study argues that industrial agriculture is not good for the environment and will not lead to food security.

Similar to Niren Tolsi's story above, Kwanele Sosibo, in "Women at the mercy of climate change" (*Mail & Guardian*, 15 September 2011), focused on climate change impacts on agriculture and how this would affect women. "Small-scale and subsistence farmers will play an increasingly important role as climate change takes its toll on Africa, but they will need more support from governments". The story was based on the report produced by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network. William Barclay (Senior Regional Programme Advisor for the World Food Programme) was directly represented arguing that "Climate change is expected to play havoc with the region's food security in the future". The newspaper discourse supported this argument by noting further that "Agronomists predict that yields of corn, soya bean, maize, wheat and rice will decrease dramatically as temperatures rise". Africa and other developing countries were constructed as passive victims of climate change. Due to climate change "65% of the global total increase in climate-related hunger was likely to occur on the African continent".

Government ministers also sought to advance the notion of 'dangerous' climate change impacts on agriculture, a sector that was "extremely vulnerable to climate change" in South Africa (Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and COP17 President, in Yolandi Groenewald, "The good and bad of farming," *Mail & Guardian*, 03 November 2011). Nkoana-Mashabane used the public idiom to translate elite government views: "There is consensus that climate change will have a significant impact on agriculture in developing countries". The use of the consensus discourse was meant to construct the issue as a topic where universal consent was available.

News stories that highlighted the climate change impacts on food security had the undertones of empathy with the affected people and panic-inducement. For example, these discursive qualities were present in the *Sunday Times* reference to the drought which affected Namibia in 2012 and

2013: “The drought has highlighted the climate change and socio-economic challenges Namibia faces” (Jana Marais, “A long, dry season of hunger,” *Sunday Times*, 18 August 2013). “Namibia, the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa, is feeling the effects of climate change, with droughts and flooding threatening the traditional way of life of many of its tribes”. To address the impacts of climate change, Jana Marais’ feature story sought to promote local adaptation: “There was need to improve the seeds, soil fertility, farming methods and weed control by small-scale farmers”. Tueemuine Mbendura (elderly Himba woman from Kunene province), was quoted in the story observing that in “the olden days, the old men would go and build a fire and consult with the ancestors about rain. The young ones don’t do that anymore”.

Impacts of climate change were widespread and included the negative ones on agriculture in general and forestry in particular. The story “Climate change may shrivel forestry, agriculture” (Lucas Ledwaba and Nicola Lazenby, *City Press*, 16 January 2011), addressed the issue of dealing with the impacts of climate change in South Africa, especially in forestry and agriculture. The story drew from a handbook by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) which according to the story, painted “a gloomy picture for South Africa’s forestry” and warned that “some areas may no longer be suitable for commercial forestry due to a projected increase in rainfall and temperatures”. The handbook by the CSIR concluded: “Climate change is likely to exacerbate existing declines in river run-off due to water use by commercial plantations, agriculture, and urban and industrial land use”.

In addition to the impacts on forestry, climate change had a footprint on wine production as estates were affected by droughts. The story “The days of wine aren’t rosy,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 02 May 2013) drew attention to impacts of climate change in South Africa, specifically the wine estates in the Western Cape. The story relied on farmers, academics and environmental NGO representatives for its discursive construction. A research paper from Conservation International was used to scientise the climate change impacts: “climate change would destroy 25% to 75% of all the areas currently used for wine cultivation around the world. South Africa stands to lose 55% of its wine-cultivating land”. Ultimately climate change impacts were depoliticised through scientisation because the problems of climate change were constructed as having their solutions in local adaptation initiatives, and no reference was made to macro-structural

transformations of the capitalist economic system. For example, the wine estates were already trying to make their estates resilient by adopting solar to replace reliance on the Eskom grid. While this is good for the survival of the estates, it downplays the need for the radical transformation in the consumptive and exploitative culture of capitalist political economy. Simon Grier, wine estate co-owner, criticised the provision of cheap electricity as the major problem behind the high emissions: “Cheap power was the biggest disservice made to this country and our industry because it made us wasteful and inefficient”. Grier used the discursive strategy of delegitimising cheap electricity given to polluting industries. Indirectly, Grier critiqued the industrial minerals-energy complex beneficiaries of cheap electricity.

The *Sunday Times* also linked the 2015 drought that affected the greater part of South Africa to climate change. The drought destroyed crops across the country. This representation was manifest in the story “It’s growing too hot for growing” (Monica Laganparsad, *Sunday Times*, 01 March 2015). The headline warned that due to global warming, “it’s growing too hot for growing”. The story cited Dr Francis Engelbrecht from the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) noting that “The African continent has a very strong temperature signal”. Through indirect representation, the story cited Engelbrecht observing that “over the past century, the global temperature had increased by about 2° Celsius over the interior region of South Africa”. Climate change is depoliticised by way of scientific instrumentalisation. Farmers were represented only as victims of the climate-induced drought but not agenda-setters and discourse sponsors. The newspaper discourse noted: “Unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced and climate change is slowed, Southern Africa faces an even higher increase in temperatures over the next century”.

6.3 Climate change and increasing temperatures

The transition from fossil to renewable energy was often described as slow and thus leading to increased global warming. A report from PricewaterhouseCoopers and the International Energy Agency, in “Emissions set to exceed tipping point,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 28 June 2012), argued that the transition “from fossil fuels to renewable energy has been too slow to keep global temperature increases within the threshold needed to avert serious disaster”. Drawing from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the newspaper discourse noted that the demand for electricity in South

Africa was “projected to increase from 17 200 terawatt-hours in 2009 to 31 700 TWh in 2035” something that made emissions reductions “unlikely”. It is clear from the story that the increase in demand would fuel emissions. This study contends that the demand for electricity is directly linked to processes of increased industrial production, extensive urbanisation and rural-urban migration.

Consistent with this reality, a reduction in consumption is needed to lower the electricity demand. The realisation of the notion of living well opposed to ‘good life’ and promoting the idea of ‘small is beautiful’ is important. More importantly, decreased consumption is key to climate change mitigation. The reduction requires a transformation in definitions of good life and development, a shift from modes and cultures of production that stimulate consumption, towards social cultures that promote use and not exchange value, systems of de-development and decrease in social and capital inequalities. This requires a new kind of thinking that challenges the inherently dominant culture of capitalist accumulation. There is need to disarticulate society from the capitalist chains of accumulation and exploitation. The story regretted “slow transitions” to renewables and saw the transition as the most necessary route to decarbonise the atmosphere. Excluded from the discourse are worldviews that seek emissions reduction through transforming the system of accumulation responsible for the risks not a transition from one system of exploitation to the other.

Some stories directly linked the activities of the minerals-energy complex to the dangerous temperature increases. Climate change was portrayed as a result of greenhouse gas emissions from heavy industries. For example, the story “Carbon report puts SA in the hot seat,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 05 December 2013) lightly attempted to politicise climate change in South Africa by pointing out the country’s culpability in present emissions. The mining companies together with energy companies were portrayed as responsible for the higher per capita emissions of South Africa. Because South African companies were at the top in emitting greenhouse gases, the story legitimised the calls for the inclusion of countries such as South Africa in a new and wider Kyoto Protocol/agreement. More importantly, the story exposed the duplicity of economies in transition that called themselves ‘developing countries’ whenever it suited them to try and avoid emissions reduction.

Furthermore, “a new report on carbon emissions shows that only 90 international entities are responsible for two-thirds of all the greenhouse gas emissions in the past 250 years”. Citing a report by the Climate Accountability Institute, the story noted that these entities also included big South African mining giants: “The report shows that Anglo American has been responsible for 0.5% of all historical emissions and Xstrata for 0.15% Sasol has been responsible for 0.24% of all emissions globally”. The lack of reduction action in South Africa was blamed on the big South African industrial and mining companies who used the ‘development’ narrative to evade emissions: “South African companies have avoided responsibility when it comes to lowering emissions by using the argument that they are responsible for a negligible amount of carbon emissions”. This story discredited South Africa’s calls for the developed global North to act because developing countries still required a ‘developmental space’. Kings showed that South African companies were part and parcel of the historical emissions and are still responsible for present emissions.

Steve Kretzmann, in the story “UN report urges drastic action for SA climate change,” (*City Press*, 17 October 2018) argued that South Africa needed to “cut coal faster than planned if the country intends on honouring international commitments to play its part in keeping global warming below 1.5°C”. The story relied on a report by the IPCC which warned that “a further 0.5°C temperature increase spells exponential increases in climatic extremes across almost all natural systems and human activities”. The IPCC report also noted, “the use of coal globally will have to be phased out completely by 2050 and halved by 2030 (45% below 2010 levels)”. This, the story argued, meant that South Africa needed to phase out Kusile and Medupi and any other coal projects. The story called for a just transition, expressing optimism in renewables. University of Cape Town’s Energy Research Centre director, Harald Winkler called for the need for “a just transition away from coal, and towards community renewables and low-carbon energy systems” leading to the “redistribution of resources, both across and within countries”. South Africa’s continued use of coal was blamed by Tasneem Essop (National Planning Commission) on “massive contestation by vested interests”.

Citing the Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission Report on Planetary Health, Siphon Kings, politicised climate change and planetary health, blaming humans for the 'Anthropocene' age where humans are the main driver of ecological disruptions (*Mail & Guardian*, 16 July 2015). Climate change was linked to increased planetary warming and data from the NASA -United States was used to support these claims: "Last year was 0.6°C warmer than average, meaning it was over half a degree warmer than it should have" (Siphon Kings, "A 'new state' for the planet will jeopardise human life," *Mail & Guardian*, 18 January 2015).

The story directly represented Gavin Schmidt (Director of NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies) noting that "We expect that heat records will continue to get broken - not everywhere and not every year - but increasingly, and that does not bode well for a civilisation that is continuing to add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere at an increasing rate". The story employed the discursive strategies of science instrumentalisation. Climate change was constructed as a reality and that science is unequivocal. The warming temperatures were evidence of the warming atmosphere: "the last 38 years were warmer than the average for what they should have been". The story used language that assumed universal consensus. Climate science was constructed as "consensual, certain and authoritative" (Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p. 633). "The data released by Nasa on Friday - and supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States" (Siphon Kings, "A 'new state' for the planet will jeopardise human life," *Mail & Guardian*, 18 January 2015). The fact that the data was released by NASA and supported by the NOAA authenticated and legitimised the science and the worldviews expressed. Science is advanced as "a normative basis for policy, thereby implying that debate is unnecessary" (Pepermans and Maesele, 2018). Scientisation was sustained by another discursive element of demoralisation and problematisation where NASA's Schmidt demoralised "a civilisation that is continuing to add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere at an increasing rate". Schmidt problematised climate change as a result of a civilisation whose path is sustained by greenhouse gases. The framing and primary definitional power are given to scientists. While the civilisation was continually emitting greenhouse gases, the danger was already being felt. The story demoralised the global political system for lack of action citing island states, such as Kiribati, which are slowly being buried by rising sea levels.

The effects of rising temperatures were seen to be “relentless and irreversible (Sipho Kings, “IPCC report: Climate change will be ‘irreversible’,” *Mail & Guardian*, 04 April 2014). Increased temperatures were seen to be leading to both flooding and droughts. These two consequently led to climate change-induced migration. The story “Intense heat will drive migration,” by Sipho Kings (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 May 2016) linked climate change-induced temperature increases to forced environmental “migration”. The lead paragraph of the story went on to state that “climate refugees are already a reality”. The story used research reports from the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry and the Cyprus Institute in Nicosia. The research showed “that vast swaths of the Middle East and North Africa will become inhabitable by 2050”. Science was used in the story as a normative basis for knowledge. Monette Zard, from the Forced Migration and Health Programme at Columbia University, saw climate change as responsible for increased forced migration globally and argued that “If climate change continues, some places will become inhabitable and people will need to be relocated” (Joan van Dyk, “Prepping for the world’s biggest move,” *Mail & Guardian*, 16 November 2018). Environmental migrants would increase as “Several small island states such as Tuvalu in the South Pacific and the Marshall Islands farther north are already exploring options [and] Rising sea levels will eventually force populations on those islands” to become environmental refugees.

The Op-Ed “Latest data proves world is heating up,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 13 January 2017) by Sipho Kings stressed that climate change was happening, and the scientific data was unquestionable. The headline “Latest data proves world is heating up” put science at the forefront of the debate. The data was legitimised because of being “latest” and came from the NOAA which is “one of the world’s most important climate observation groups”. The story used direct representation in reproducing the views of NOAA: “The rate of warming over the first 15 years of this century has, in fact, been as fast or faster than that seen over the last half of the 20th century”. Science from NOAA was contrasted with the ‘faulty’ data from other unreliable sources. The data from NOAA was reproduced as legitimate and reliable. Science was used as a normative basis for knowledge and addressing climate change. The discourse of scientific certainty was entrenched and supported against the oppositional and faulty sceptical discourse.

Using The Anthropocene Review as the sole discourse sponsor, Siphos Kings, in “Planet of the Humans ends badly,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 17 March 2017) constructed climate change as a certainty caused by anthropogenic (human) forces. The actions of humans had led to the Anthropocene age (the geological age where humans were a dominant force on climate and the environment). Capitalism was criticised for being a geological force: “if little is done to curb global warming and the extreme rate of climate change, ‘societal collapse’ will ensue ... because the dominant economic logic of today - that of neoliberal market economics - is based on the idea of ‘endless resources on an infinite planet’”. The Anthropocene Review was directly quoted arguing that “In the last six decades, anthropogenic [human-driven] have driven exceptionally rapid rates of change in the Earth’s system” due to “purely a function of industrialised societies”.

The Op-Ed “Earth faces climatic moment,” by Siphos Kings (*Mail & Guardian*, 12 October 2018) noted that climate change impacts were dire, noting that “In Southern Africa, we have already had a taste of the worst. By 2040, nowhere will be safe. By the end of this century, life will be terrible for everyone”. Kings criticised governments for being irresponsible because they delayed climate action notwithstanding all the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, he noted that the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) that governments put through under the Paris Agreement were inadequate in reducing emissions and averting intense warming. He concluded that, “the current plans by all governments will mean the world will warm by 4°C this century”. However, he also contended that there is optimism in technological fixes as governments move to green energy and electric vehicles, this will reduce carbon emissions resulting in less pollution. Sustainable capitalism through neoliberal techno-fixes is promoted.

The story “Why things are really hotting up for SA,” by Bobby Jordan (*Sunday Times*, 25 June 2017), attributed the hot temperatures in South Africa to climate change. This was supported by the “latest data” which showed that “Southern Africa’s climate is changing faster than global average”. The story noted that climate change had “a range of effects and this is expected to increase as temperatures rise”. The story relied on science and essentially depoliticised the climate problem.

The sub-theme on climate change and increased temperatures impacts was relatively given prominence in the *City Press*. Phelokazi Mbude's story "Climate change: How hot the world will be in 2050," (*City Press*, 26 June 2018) discussed the impacts of climate change on cities. The story was based on the report produced by the C40 Cities' project called the Future We Don't Want which revealed that "in 2050 more than 970 cities will be regularly exposed to the hottest three-month average temperatures reaching at least 35°C". The story did not localise and detail the climate impacts even though it claimed to rely on the Code for Africa's online tools for predicting future climate change impacts. The story was reliant on the discursive strategy of scientisation which effectively depoliticised the climate problem.

Mandi Smallhome's story "Be prepared: It's getting hotter and drier," (*City Press*, 10 September 2018), a feature series that is a product of a partnership called Our Land between *City Press*, Rapport, Code for Africa and Landbouweekblad, attempted to map and visualise the impacts of climate change in South Africa's different regions and to different species. The headline revealed the central theme: "Be prepared: It's getting hotter and drier". The story quoted the report: State of Climate Change Science and Technology in South Africa which also expanded the theme: "in the next 30 years, the western parts of South Africa are expected to be hotter and drier than the rest of the country. More extreme weather, droughts and floods can be expected. All the viewpoints and actors in the story depoliticised climate change and thus diminished scrutiny of the mode of production responsible. The story depoliticised climate change by limiting the discussion to science and constructing climate change outside of the political-economic forces that gave rise to the climate and ecological risk society.

The research cited, although not directly acknowledged, a key rebuttal of the capitalist system of ever-increasing consumption, globalisation and production - the world food system. "Farming meat uses a huge amount of energy, food and space. Each part of the process of growing an animal - feeding it, killing it, packaging it, shipping it and packaging it again for people to buy at shops - requires materials that are bad for the planet". This sentence demoralised capitalist agricultural systems. The article, in a subtle way, mobilised for a discourse that disrupts the capitalist globalisation and consumption patterns in the beef and dairy industries. Such a transformation, were it to take place, will effectively disrupt Capitalism as a system. However, the article

diminishes the call for political-economic transformation by minimising climate action to the individual rather than corporate behaviour.

As part of efforts to avoid extreme warming, the feature story “Cutting out meat and dairy slashes your carbon footprint,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 31 August 2018), relying on the University of Oxford’s Reducing Food’s Environmental Impacts Through Producers and Consumers study, suggested the need for people to cut meat from their diet to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases from animals and thus also reduce climate change impacts. The Oxford study had “found that meat and dairy products make up 60% of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions but provide only 18% of all calories and 37% of the protein that people ingest”. Furthermore, the study was directly quoted noting that “Cutting out anything that comes from an animal reduces each person’s carbon footprint by 73%. This would drop the amount of land used worldwide for farming animals by 75%,”. Thereby recommending a “move away from intensive feedlots to letting animals graze on natural fields. If 50% of animals that produce dairy and meat products were produced this way, there would be a two-thirds reduction in carbon emissions”. Critical to note in this article is the underlying connotative argument that delegitimises capitalist agricultural systems.

The editorial “We must act now to save the world” by the *Mail and Guardian* (12 October 2018) argued that climate change posed a threat to life. The article implicitly legitimised neoliberal green economic, something that in the beginning, it had sought to denounce. “Wind and solar energy, batteries and all sorts of industrial efficiencies mean we can do it”. Important to note is the confidence in neoliberal climate responses. By interpretation, one could argue that the discourse on the green economy has been successfully mainstreamed to an extent that it has become a common sense and a tendential force. Business is demoralised as pursuing their selfish interests at the expense of the environment. “The only things stopping us are politicians and their funder masters”. Climate change is constructed as a problem of “our obsession with neoliberal capitalism”. “Large corporates aren’t doing anything about climate change because they only care about returns on profit this quarter”. “In South Africa, it is kleptocrats who make energy decisions based on what cut they can take. It is the lie of trickle-down economics, favouring big projects by big companies that then don’t pay taxes”.

6.4 Climate change and the Seas

Fiona Macleod's story "Ocean acidity is on the rise," (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2011) focused on climate change impacts, especially ocean acidification as the oceans absorb more carbon dioxide. The story relied on scientific experts for the primary definition. The discourse strategy of scientisation, thus, took centre stage and the story became wholly depoliticised. Though the story warned that "Continued carbon emissions will put the world's seas under increasing pressure," it did not place responsibility for carbon emissions reduction on anyone. Carol Turley from the Ocean Acidification Research Programme was directly represented noting, "changes caused by climate change will affect the ocean in ways we are only beginning to understand Research has shown that the ocean absorbs about 26% of global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions every year The rising acidity and decreasing pH levels are bad for marine organisms". The scientific plane used in the story constructed climate change as a physical problem, the discourse is scientific and depoliticised, and the agency of capitalist risk culture is passivised and deleted from the discussion.

Climate change, in some stories, was blamed for mass extinctions of ocean species. While most news reports have used the future tense when discussing extinction, Siphon Kings' story "Mass extinction may have already begun'," (*Mail & Guardian*, 10 October 2013) linked and constructed the extinctions as a present problem. The headline helped to construct climate change, not as a future problem but a present crisis that had a dangerous footprint: "Climate change is making the world's seas more acidic and warmer. They hold 90% of all life and this will lead to mass extinctions, with dire results". Climate change was constructed as anthropogenic: "the blame lies firmly with the emissions of carbon dioxide from human-driven burning of fossil fuels". The story used a report by the International Programme on the State of the Oceans of 2013. The report noted that "The risks to the ocean and the ecosystems it supports have been significantly underestimated We are entering an unknown territory of marine ecosystem change and exposing organisms to intolerable evolutionary pressure". The discourse in the story is scientised and depoliticised climate change. The governments were constructed as environmental villains: "For the most part, the public and policymakers are failing to recognise, or choosing to ignore, the severity of the situation and are not taking action necessary to address it".

Climate change was responsible for arctic sea melting and the resultant threat to the survival of polar bears. The story “Polar bears in struggle to survive,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 24 April 2016) directly quoted Dena Cator from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) who noted that polar bears were being forced to swim long distances as “a result of the warming climate shrinking the extent of Arctic sea ice. The ice provides a habitat for polar bears” leading to “a high risk of extinction and the threat is serious”. The stories on climate change impacts in the *Mail and Guardian* were consistently based on scientific experts, thus instrumentalising science and ignoring the political economy and cultural politics of climate change, leading to a depoliticised climate change discourse.

Sipho Kings’ story “Arctic melt threatens life as we know it,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 02 December 2016) contended that climate change-induced arctic ice melting posed a threat to life. The story was based on the Arctic Resilience Report of 2016 produced by the Stockholm Environment Institute and the Stockholm Resilience Centre. The report, as quoted in the story, noted that “The Arctic is now changing at an unprecedented pace, on multiple levels, in ways that fundamentally affect both people and ecosystems”. The story used science as a normative discursive basis. Climate change is depoliticised. Arctic melting is reduced to global warming without paying attention to social and economic faces behind global warming, the need for transforming social forces that are harmful to nature.

Suthentira Govender’s story “Climate change threat to sardine run,” (*Sunday Times*, 06 August 2017) portrayed climate change to marine life and subsequently to tourism: “Marine scientists and conservationists have warned that the sardine run, which generates an estimated R500-million in tourism for the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast, could be under threat because of climate change”. Citing Lesley Rochat, Marine Conservationist, the story noted that climate change was a threat to marine life as “60% of ocean species could be extinct by 2050 if climate change is not addressed as a matter of urgency by all nations”. The theme on climate change impacts in South Africa is tied to extreme weather events, this is especially true for the *Sunday Times*. In some news stories, extreme weather events were then directly linked to climate change. Outside of the extreme weather events, the *Sunday Times* coverage of climate change impacts was poor.

6.5 Climate change and Health

Climate change was linked to extreme heat because of increasing temperatures in South Africa. This heat was not good for workers, especially those who worked outside. The story “Protect workers against the heat,” by Mia Malan (*Mail & Guardian*, 01 December 2012) described the impacts of climate change, especially increased temperature on people’s health and more importantly outdoor workers, with the result being reduced productivity. The news story used the discursive strategies of scientisation and moralisation with little economisation. The story called for the South African government to “act immediately to protect workers”. The impact of high temperatures called for immediate action because workers “in many parts of the country are already working in conditions that are so hot that it is very uncomfortable for them.” The intervention needed was that of enhancing adaptation to the new temperatures scenarios through “a lot of basic public health measures that we could put in place right now to increase workers’ comfort and protect their health.” This type of intervention, this study contends, is micro and fails to address the climate change problems by way of reducing greenhouse emissions and more essentially the transformation of a mode of production that promotes consumption and exploitation of both workers and the environment.

Climate change was depoliticised through scientisation where the solutions to climate change were reduced to ‘public health interventions’ with no role to play in the overall transformation from capitalism to true sustainable social change based on human-nature metabolic relations. Important to note also is that the interventions being promoted have nothing to do with addressing climate change per se but improving the working conditions in order to enhance productivity and the well-functioning of the capitalist system of production. By referring to experts/scientists, the story excluded views from the workers themselves and other actors. While the story discussed issues of workers, there was no attempt to involve them in the discourse and rather they were talked about and not talked to. Elite views were reproduced and naturalised as the only available ones, closing out ideological disagreement and thus manufacturing consent and one-dimensional discourse.

Yolandi Groenewald linked increased “children’s springtime sneezing and wheezing” to climate change (Yolandi Groenewald, “Climate change to blame for early sniffles,” *City Press*, 06 June 2014). Quoting a report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the United States, the

story noted that “climate change - spurred by fossil fuel gases - increases the production and spread of airborne allergens and is causing asthma and hay fever”. This argument was supported by a local South African aerobiologist, Dilys Berman, who argued that “predicted climate change will have a profound effect on airborne allergens like pollen, fungal spores and house dust mites”. The story also quoted a mother of asthmatic children confirming increased incidence. Interesting to note is that ordinary people are only used in the news where they appear as victims and never as discourse sponsors.

In an Op-Ed “Will our grandkids inherit a liveable world,” Bob Scholes, an academic from Wits (*Sunday Times*, 27 September 2015), underlined the need to curb emissions as a moral duty to leave a liveable world for future generations. If ‘we’ care about the welfare of future generations, then we will take action to reduce emissions that will make their world warmer and intolerable. The failure to reduce emissions or to act towards such reductions was seen as failure and lack of responsibility, as seen in this sentence : “Why, then, are we so reluctant to curb our burning of fossil fuels, so that future generations can inherit a liveable world?”. There was no need to debate whether climate change was real or not because the science was unequivocal. “Climate data have been collected in South Africa since 1856. The overwhelming majority of stations show that warming over their period of record, averaging about 1.2° C per century”. “Sea levels have also been measured in South Africa for a long time and show an accelerating rise that can only be explained by warming of oceans and melting of ice on land”. Bob Scholes warned: “If we continue on our current path, temperatures in the South African interior will be up 6°C warmer than at present by the end of the century”. “Water shortages in South Africa, already a challenge, will very likely become more acute”.

6.6 Climate change or variability

News stories under this sub-theme were exclusively from the *Sunday Times*. The stories here, not only questioned the science, but at some moments, the reporters were cautious to link the extreme weather events to climate change, settling rather for the more comfortable ‘climate variability’ approach. There was no uncertainty in the *Mail & Guardian* and the *City Press*, while there was no explicit coverage of climate change impacts in the *Sunday Independent*. Dual representations were a common occurrence in the *Sunday Times* stories on climate change impacts. One notable

example is the story, “Man’s impact ‘disrupting natural cycles’,” (Sashni Pather, *Sunday Times*, 09 January 2011). While the framing of the headline sought to portray humans as responsible for climate change and global warming, which led to the extreme weather events, the sources used constructed the topic differently and promoted a totally different discourse of ‘climate variability’. The news reporter was clear to link the extreme weather, as indicated in the section above, but the actors used de-linked the extreme weather from climate change and chattered a more cautious ‘variability’ narrative. For example, the story directly represented weather forecaster, Puseletso Mofokeng, arguing that the extreme weather “isn’t a rare occurrence in summer and would soon abate”. The actor, in contradiction to the story headline, reproduced the discourse on scientific uncertainty and scepticism. Professor John Meiklejohn of Rhodes University extended the discourse on scientific uncertainty arguing that climate change was a natural occurrence because “the climate is ever-changing”. The construction of climate change as ever-changing promoted scepticism and scientific uncertainty. The snowstorms experienced in South Africa were attributed by Meiklejohn to “the eruption of the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland, which would have emitted matter into the atmosphere, which may have reduced the quantity of solar radiation transmitted to the Earth’s surface, causing temporary cooling”.

Similarly, the story “Get used to the weather...,” (Bobby Jordan, *Sunday Times*, 30 January 2011) recognised the extreme weather as a serious problem but did not link the extreme weather to climate change. Rather, the story used discourse actors who preferred linking the extreme weather events to climate variability and not change. While extreme weather was the “new normal”, the story argued that “top scientists, however, say it is too soon to confirm that global warming is behind the increasing number of droughts and floods - including countrywide floods that have now claimed at least 88 lives in the past six weeks”. The story avoided describing the extreme weather events in the name of climate change, opting rather, for a safe term “climate and weather variability”. Scientists and the government had “warned of dire consequences if South Africans did not fast adapt to ‘increasing variable’ (or unpredictable) weather”.

Another opponent of the view, Themba Dube, a senior manager of climate services at the South African Weather Service was quoted saying that “while the overall trend pointed towards long-

term changes, it was too soon to say whether the latest floods were the direct result of human-induced climate change”. Dube’s definition of the problem was reproduced, and the worldview of scepticism was promoted. The idea of climate change as the reason behind extreme weather was questioned and diminished. Thus, therefore, in a way, discredited climate science views of consensus and diminishing calls for responses. Scepticism became a major theme across the story. Peter Lukey, Chief Director of Air Quality in the Department of Environmental Affairs was represented denying the link between extreme weather and climate change: “it is not possible to link specific extreme weather events to climate change directly”. Willem Landman, principal researcher at CSIR described the extreme weather events as part of climate variability and not change. This construction represents climate change as something yet to happen and futurises events and responses: “Seasonal forecasters said as early as August that there was a likelihood of it being extremely wet (in December/January). If we can’t deal with climate variability, then how will we be able to deal with climate change. It irks me that so much attention is given to long-term climate change while people are drowning now because of climate variability”. All the actors constructed climate change as a future problem, not something to worry about now. The current weather issues were related to climate variability and not change. This was also reproduced by the story by disabling ideological disagreement and using actors that share the same worldviews. The scepticism was promoted by way of discourse exclusion of alternative actors and viewpoints.

6.7 Chapter summary

This chapter, the first one in a series of data chapters, presents and analyses the results of how the news media in South Africa covered and represented climate change impacts. The chapter revealed that the news media largely represented climate change as a present anthropogenic challenge that needs urgent remedy. The news media constructed the ‘anthropogenic’ climate change as a key global challenge characterised by rising sea levels, rising temperatures and incessant extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding. This chapter traced how the newspapers in South Africa have represented the climate change problem between 2011 and 2018, questioning the drivers of coverage and the key discourse sponsors and how the knowledges and discourses of the key actors resulted in a particular slant in coverage in the four newspapers analysed. While climate change was constructed as a reality, with real present and future ‘dangerous’ impacts and a

consensus issue in the *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press* and the *Sunday Times* gave space to sceptical actors and views that questioned climate change science. From the final sample that was analysed, there was no story from the *Sunday Independent* that had climate change impacts as a key theme. The *Mail & Guardian*, followed by the *City Press* gave extensive coverage to the climate change impacts theme, where the newspapers attempted to localise the climate problem and projecting it as both a present and future problem. Overall, climate change was represented through discursive devices of scientisation and depoliticisation. Science reports and experts gained discursive power in defining the climate change problem, science was represented as ‘unequivocal’ and ‘unquestionable’ and resultantly the solutions proposed by the scientists were to be followed. Further, through depoliticisation, climate change was portrayed in the media as an issue of the environment. The political economy and cultural politics of climate change were therefore not addressed, leading to solutions that sought to reproduce capitalism as a magic bullet for action through technological-managerial innovation.

Chapter Seven: Concealed agency and blame-shifting responsibility: The politics of global climate change negotiations as re/presented in the South African Press

7.1 Introduction

This chapter builds a historical representational overview on how the South African news media represented climate change negotiations between 2011 and 2018. The negotiations are a major news feature in the news media coverage and representation of climate change. The negotiations are represented and constructed as a site of geopolitical contestation and struggle between the developed global North and the developing global South. The global North is predominantly constructed as a blockade and stalling the achievement of a globally binding climate change deal. They are constructed as selfish, unwilling to honour their historical responsibility and truant. The developing global South is represented as a passive victim and this category even economies in transitions such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa are lumped into ‘poor’ countries in the south. The global North is ‘othered’ and must bear the cost of emissions reduction and adaptation because they are ‘historically responsible’. Interesting to note from this discursive strategy is that while ‘historical responsibility’ is emphasised, there is silence on ‘present responsibility’ which is more crucial and where South Africa is a key culprit. Geopolitics in the news is achieved by othering the global North as ‘villains’ while the global South is constructed as ‘victims’ whose agency in the climate problem is immaterial. The appeal towards the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) by the South African discourse actors, a move necessarily meant to moralise South Africa and hence its pursuit of coal and other fossils are reproduced by the press as legitimate if not moral. By this discursive effort, the discourse achieves delegitimisation of the calls towards another equally bad principle of ‘equal responsibilities’ touted by neoliberalists in the global North. South Africa’s high per capita global emissions thus are saved from scrutiny and exposure. The exclusion of emissions contributions from BRICS and BASIC countries and other nations in transition is pervasive in the media representations of climate change in South Africa.

The global South is represented as unequally related to the North in terms of emissions. This contradicts the fact that BRICS countries are significantly contributing towards global warming through massive industrialisation, for example, South Africa, China, India and Russia. The agency of the North (which is represented as the ‘other’) is emphasised when it comes to greenhouse gases emissions while at the same time the activities of the South are passivised and nominalised through discourse.

7.2 Manufacturing Multilateral Consent in Global Climate Governance

Through reading news and comment articles in the four newspapers, it was discovered that scientisation and moralisation were used effectively as discourse strategies. South Africa is seen to be pursuing a binding multilateral climate deal. This is reproduced by the media through replicating the ideologies of the elite, especially the official South African government position. The UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, together with the Paris Agreement are seen as inevitable mechanisms to deal with climate change. Outside of the multilateral system, all the four newspapers failed to provide alternative viewpoints, especially the voices of those who advocate for minilateralism. Science is seen as the moral normative authority informing policy ‘because the science is unequivocal, action should be taken now, as a planetary moral standard’. Framing power is given to government ministers, spokespersons, elite business leaders and science experts. However, the *Mail & Guardian* and *City Press* afforded some framing power to non-governmental organisations and civil society groups. Responsibility for global emissions is attributed and distanced to the global North because of historical responsibility at the same time allowing developing global South nations a ‘developmental space’. The four newspapers actively contributed towards manufacturing consent about multilateralism, Promethean/neoliberal market-led responses to climate change.

The international multilateral system, though characterised by mistrust and geopolitical divides between the global North and the global South, is constructed as the only available platform for solving climate change problems. The actors used to mainstream this worldview all agreed on the supremacy of the international multilateral system and countries/leaders who seem to deviate from the ‘rules-based’ multilateral processes are portrayed as deviants and isolationists. This is true of the representation of countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia and Saudi Arabia who

sought to cripple the Kyoto Protocol and Donald Trump who withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement. While these ‘deviants’ were against addressing climate change, climate science was against their stance. Science is put forward as a normative basis for policy and action and scientisation became a discursive strategy to delegitimise the deviants. The multilateral system is seen as common sense and part of this construction included the legitimisation of neoliberal responses such as the Kyoto Protocol, Promethean solutions anchored on techno-optimism, and carbon trade.

7.2.1 COP17 and the ‘fight’ for a second Kyoto Commitment Period

The discursive strategy of consensus-oriented multilateral optimism is used in almost all the stories that dealt with the global climate change negotiations between 2011 and 2018. In 2011, the multilateral system ‘hope’ included the renewal of the Kyoto Protocol. Fiona Macleod, in “EU has high hopes for climate talks,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 April 2011), naturalised and common-sensed the need for a second Kyoto Protocol, a neoliberal response instrument. The discourse sponsor for the second commitment in this story was the European Union. The renewal of the Kyoto commitment period, it is noted, was a divisive issue at COP17. The European Union, China, South Africa and India were in support of a second commitment period while the United States (which refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol), Canada (was threatening to withdraw), Japan and Australia were against the Kyoto process. The European Union saw the extension of the Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 as one of the markers of success at the COP17. South Africa is represented as ‘under pressure’ to secure a second Kyoto commitment agreement. Macleod noted that the European Union wanted “a second commitment under Kyoto and developed countries to commit to emissions reductions”. In the same story, Canada, Japan, Russia and Australia are portrayed as villains who opposed “a second Kyoto”.

The European Union’s support for a second commitment period was also covered by Yolandi Groenewald in the story “COP17: Deal or no deal”.

The European Union, the main player in the Kyoto Protocol due to its carbon market, is willing to commit to a second commitment period of Kyoto if there is a ‘wider agreement’ - meaning that the United States must make comparable commitments to those of Europe in Kyoto round two.

Similarly, in the story “Crunch time for Kyoto” (Yolandi Groenewald, *Mail & Guardian*, 06 October 2011), the need to revive Kyoto is constructed as a moral imperative only curtailed by villainy behaviour from environmentally irresponsible countries such as the United States. “The United States ... wants nothing to do with Kyoto”. The ‘rebellious and deviant’ United States is represented in a bi-polar opposition to South Africa and the European Union who were working hard to revive the Protocol: “The European Union believes it is important to negotiate some kind of settlement on Kyoto’s second commitment period.” The European Union wanted a legally binding climate deal. The French climate change negotiations ambassador, Serge Lepeltier, is directly represented arguing: “We as the European Union want to go further than a second commitment period.”

Articulating with the European Union position, South Africa also supported a second Kyoto commitment period. In the story “Pledge to Kyoto the bottom line” (Yolandi Groenewald, *Mail & Guardian*, 11 August 2011), Maite Nkoana-Mashabane (International Relations Minister and COP17 President) and Edna Molewa (Environmental Affairs Minister) are represented in support of the second commitment period and the newspaper reproduced their views uncontested. The officials are given the overall definitional power and their views are constructed as the only available worldviews on the subject. Discourse, as Foucault (1978) argued, operates by way of inclusion and exclusion. The exclusion of alternative actors and worldviews helps in building ideological closure and the manufacture of consent. The story outlined the key agenda of South Africa towards COP17 and cast a pessimistic overview of the global leaders ‘reaching a globally binding’ climate agreement in Durban. Edna Molewa was quoted in the story arguing that COP17 was going to “be a step towards a fair global regime on climate rather than concluding a comprehensive agreement”. Amid this pessimism, the realistic hope for South Africa was to try and “fight to ensure that the Kyoto Protocol does not die at the United Nations’ big climate conference”. Saving the Kyoto Protocol was on top of the South African agenda because South Africa was perceived as a major actor in climate diplomacy. A key characteristic of the story is also on South Africa’s diplomacy that needed to be saved at all costs. It was not just about the Kyoto for its sake but to appease the international community: “Much is expected of South Africa as a host nation and the country’s negotiation position will play a large part in brokering a climate treaty”.

It is interesting to note that the ‘need’ for a second Kyoto commitment period became an overarching sub-theme of the negotiations for a global climate change deal. Several actors from the European Union and the global South converged ideologically. The European Union, South Africa’s International Relations Minister, also COP17 President Maite Nkoana-Mashabane and her counterpart in the Department of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, and actors from Greenpeace Africa are major sponsors of this discourse. Stories by Yolandi Groenewald on a second Kyoto commitment period are consistent in rationalising and naturalising the idea, constructing those in support of the idea as ‘responsible’ actors while labelling and othering those seen to be ‘blocking’ this rational and common-sense idea. In an article, “Kyoto at heart of brewing climate storm” (*Mail & Guardian*, 13 October 2011), Groenewald continued to represent Russia, Japan, the United States and Canada as obstacles to the second Kyoto commitment period: “old battle lines were redrawn when Japan, Russia, Canada and the United States insisted they would not sign up to a second commitment period for Kyoto”.

The opposition to a second Kyoto commitment period was to be understood as a matter of going against a ‘rules-based’ international system and global common sense. On the other hand, the global South “insisted that Kyoto should not die”. Pa Ousman Jarju of Gambia and also Chairman of Least Developed Countries at COP17 is indirectly represented in the same story demoralising the stance taken by the ‘deviant’ countries because “poor countries needed financial mechanisms embedded in Kyoto to help them cope with climate change” and thus considered “a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol to be of great importance”.

Similar to Fiona Macleod’s story, the article by Yolandi Groenewald (“COP17: Deal or deal,” *Mail & Guardian*, 20 October 2011), saw geopolitical divisions as potential impediments to a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period. The need for a multilateral deal is seen as the best possible outcome of COP17 though not promising, opting to settle for a second Kyoto commitment period as an ideal outcome from COP17. The global South was in support of the second commitment period: “Africa, including South Africa, also wants a second Kyoto.” Canada, the United States and Russia were represented as the stumbling blocks. “Japan and Russia are also reluctant to move without the United States”. The story showed disagreements within the climate change superpowers. What is missing, however, is why the United States was reluctant to join

Kyoto. The story is silent on the root causes of the divisions, in the end, the global North is blamed and othered. The United States expected developing countries such as India, China, Russia, South Africa, Brazil to also commit to emissions cuts due to their present responsibilities. These countries, in turn, were against this idea claiming a developmental space to ‘catch-up’ with the developed world. India was in support of a second commitment period and insisted “that the developed world must agree to a second commitment period, while it is given the chance to grow its economies without further legally binding carbon targets.”

In Ngoako Matsha’s story: “Call for climate financing,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 03 November 2011), the need for another Kyoto commitment period is emphasised. The developing global South wanted Annex 1 countries to recommit to a second Kyoto period. Bernarditas Muller (Chief Negotiator for the G77) is directly represented arguing that “Durban will not be a burial ground of the Kyoto Protocol”. Failure to secure another commitment period was seen to be catastrophic for the global South countries: “Poor countries have so much to lose if we don’t get this right”. The global South had no trust in the global North agreeing to a second Kyoto commitment period and were constructed as likely “to dodge any existing commitments”. Muller was sceptical of the developed global North countries arguing that they could not be trusted: “They want to get rid of legally binding commitments. They want new ones which [will allow them] to continue their wasteful lifestyles”. The only actor in the story, Muller, alleged secrecy in the negotiations and that the developed global North countries were “denying their historical responsibility”. The Kyoto Protocol and its renewal are constructed as common sense and natural. The story wholly reproduced the worldviews of the G77.

The story “Half-backed forecast for climate talks,” (Suthentira Govender, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) was pessimistic about the success of COP17. “The city is gloomily being touted as the graveyard of the Kyoto Protocol - the most significant treaty on climate change, adopted in 1997 in Japan”. The fears for a no-deal COP17 would soil South Africa’s diplomatic reputation and the International Relations Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is represented through the newspaper discourse as “desperately” in need to “dispel” the graveyard perception: “fears are mounting that Durban will turn into yet another talk shop”.

Nkoana-Mashabane was directly quoted stressing that “There is an urgent need for all parties to approach this year’s negotiations with an element of maturity”. The preservation of the Kyoto Protocol is taken as a given, a doxa, the story did not challenge it or provide other actors with the discursive access to enable ideological disagreement. The *Sunday Times* constructed the Kyoto Protocol, and its preservation, as marking the success of COP17. The neoliberal nature of the Kyoto Protocol became an issue where the consensus ideology existed, it became a common sense, naturalised and automatised. The neoliberal language and instruments such as Emissions Trading and CDM that commodify and financialise nature are reproduced and legitimised. By excluding alternative actors and viewpoints, the story helped to build a preferred reading that reproduced South Africa’s policy discourses - thereby creating a one-dimensional society. The failure of COP17 is indirectly attributed to unnamed but existing climate villains.

The global North countries are consistently represented as blockades to both a global climate deal and a second Kyoto commitment period. For example, in “‘Wayward’ Canada draws flak,” (Faranaz Parker, *Mail & Guardian*, 08 December 2011), Canada is represented as a “wayward” country seeking to pull out of the Kyoto Protocol. This decision by Canada is criticised in the story as being motivated by Canada’s investments in the oil sands. Alden Meyer (from the Union of Concerned Scientists) is cited criticising Canada: “Canada was the only signatory to the Kyoto Protocol that simply ignored its responsibilities”. The Canadian Environment Minister, Peter Kent, is quoted saying the Kyoto Protocol was “in the past” and a “job-killing, economy destroying” accord. Hannah McKinnon from the Climate Action Network Canada is directly represented arguing that the decision by Canada to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol was due to the country having “sunk hundreds of millions of dollars into promoting the tar sands as an oil source abroad to ensure that no doors are closed to its use of the fuel”. Canada is portrayed as an environmental villain, whose activities were only meant to benefit its selfish national interest. Canada is thus juxtaposed against progressive countries that sought to address the climate problem, with Canada being the stumbling block. The Canadian decision is demoralised and delegitimised as an attempt to save Canadian jobs and the oil industry.

Although Canada had sought an agreement that included all key carbon emitters, the story does not include this narrative. The exclusion of Canada's clamour for all key global carbon emitters to be included in the second Kyoto commitment period passivised and deleted the possibility of scrutiny and the assessment of the merit of the Canadian position. Although Canada is constructed as environmentally retrogressive, the story diminished the centrality of Canada's argument that fast-emerging economies (India, Brazil, South Africa, China and Russia) be included in the Kyoto process and be compelled to reduce their emissions based on present responsibility. The politics of climate change is outlined by these sharp differences where the fast-emerging economies sought to be allowed further use of fossils to catch-up and receive funding from the developed global North as part of the 'historical guilt payment'. On the other hand, the global North countries sought those responsible for present emissions to also be compelled to reduce their emissions.

The Canadian position is delegitimised as wayward and against international consensus and common sense (doxa) that was prevailing at COP17. Important to note is also how global South countries, including South Africa, saw an opportunity to address climate change through neoliberal approaches of carbon trading. The neoliberal narrative is so dominant that it seems there is no alternative. It is entrenched and made a common-sense discourse. Reading the story, it is clear that the Kyoto revival crusade is represented as the only available avenue- with wayward Canada standing in the way of common sense and multilateral consent.

Contrary to Yolandi Groenewald's stories that disabled ideological disagreement and presented a one-dimensional discourse on the common sense of a second Kyoto commitment period, Fiona Macleod, though still portraying a second Kyoto commitment period as common sense, at least attempted to draw from the worldviews of the 'deviant actors' thereby enabling ideological contestation and disagreement. In the story entitled "Protocol 'needs new worldview,'" Macleod used Peter Kent (Canada Environment Minister) as the primary discourse sponsor. Masahiko Horie (Japan's global climate change ambassador), Jonathan Pershing (United States deputy special envoy for climate change) and Connie Hedegaard (European Union Commissioner for Climate change) are the co-discourse sponsors. The global North requested the global South to "take responsibility for their carbon emissions and stop expecting 'guilt payments' for past mistakes" (Fiona Macleod, "Protocol 'need new worldview'," *Mail & Guardian*, 08 December 2011). The

global North opened debate around the present agency and responsibility of the global South's rapidly industrialising countries in emissions. "Disputes about sharing responsibility for atmospheric pollution lay at the heart of the stalemate among delegates this week ... Canada threw down the gauntlet, saying Kyoto was based on an outdated view of developed and developing countries". The Canadian Environment Minister, Peter Kent, is quoted noting that the "Kyoto is ineffective and unfair because the major emerging economies - which still like to consider themselves, when convenient, developing economies - are obviously the largest emitters". The European Union, Japan and the United States also supported the need for developing economies to "take on more responsibility". In the build-up to COP17, the developing countries and South Africa had promoted a worldview where the global North needed to take responsibility based on historical responsibility - a discursive strategy of blackmail and exporting responsibility, passivising and nominalising the present emissions emanating from the south.

Key to note was the uncommon alliance between Russia, Japan, India, China and the United States and Canada. These countries objected to the second Kyoto commitment period, not necessarily because they had one common purpose. Their articulated positions only promoted the rejection of a second commitment period but coming from distinct geopolitical and ideological premises. For Canada it was about the unwillingness to reduce emissions in the case of the United States, for the European Union, it was about Canada taking firm action reducing emissions and the United States ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and taking firm action against emissions. This is expressed in the story by the European Union's Connie Hedegaard (European Commissioner for Climate Change) who argued that: "current and future emissions had to be factored in at the negotiations A second Kyoto period with only the EU, representing 11% of global emissions, [adhering to it] is clearly not enough for the climate." The United States wanted emerging economies to be "brought into the mix". Jonathan Pershing (deputy United States envoy for climate change negotiations) argued the United States position where he noted that: "The major emerging economies represent a much larger and growing share of global emissions than a decade ago. We can't be in the same discussions as a decade ago around their engagement". While for Russia, India, Japan and China, it was more to do with the need to develop their economies to catch-up with the developed world. These countries (India and China) have very high global emission ratios but sought to passivise their agency in emissions and advocate for an approach that gave them a 'developmental space'.

Their (all these countries) stances - ultimately made it difficult to have a coherent global framework towards a second Kyoto commitment period. China wanted “developed countries to ‘rise up’ to their historical responsibility and take the lead by undertaking ambitious and robust mitigation commitments consistent with science”. Su Wei (Deputy Head of the Chinese delegation) is directly represented arguing that the global South could “implement enhanced mitigation actions in the context of sustainable development and enabled and supported by finance, technology and capacity building”. This is regardless of China being the world’s largest present emitter of greenhouse gases. “The South African delegation said the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro had established the ‘polluter pays’ principle”. Edna Molewa noted in the story that: “This implies the responsibility of developed nations to not only mitigate their emissions but take a degree of responsibility for the consequences of their emissions on the developing world.” These constructions by the Chinese and South African delegations attempted to passivise their present emissions responsibilities. The discourse strategy constructs China (biggest emitter) and South Africa (12th biggest emitter) as part and parcel of the passive victims in the global South. The construction of victimhood would then justify their stance in refusing to commit to emissions reduction. It will delete their agency in current emissions debate and thus allow them to substantially develop their economies through business as usual dirty principles.

The *Sunday Independent*, like the *Mail & Guardian* and the *Sunday Times*, also reproduced the need for a second Kyoto commitment period as central to the success of COP17 in Durban. Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa was used as the key sponsor for this discourse in the *Sunday Independent*. Again, the need for a second Kyoto commitment period was represented as common sense in the *Sunday Independent*. The continuous reference to the need for the second Kyoto commitment period reinforced and reproduced its neoliberal apparatus and further subordinated environmental action to the whims of capital that see carbon as a commodity. In the story “All eyes on UN climate talks” (Eleanor Momborg, *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011), Molewa was directly quoted emphasising the centrality of the second Kyoto commitment period: “We must confirm the mitigation pledges of the Kyoto Protocol’s signatories and obtain a commitment from those who did not sign up to it. We also need to ensure there is a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.” Absent from Molewa’s logic is the fact that South

Africa was not part of the Annexure 1 countries expected to reduce emissions due to their historical responsibility under the Kyoto Protocol. She successfully lobbied for a second Kyoto commitment period because it did not come with a cap on South Africa's emissions. This chapter argues that the Kyoto Protocol did not meet its goal on emissions reductions. This is why countries like South Africa hoped that by securing the second Kyoto commitment period, economies in transition will be excluded from emissions reduction commitments, and global North countries will continue benefiting from carbon trading. The story naturalised the neoliberal preferences of responding to climate through a) the Kyoto Protocol process, which essentially commodifies carbon and creates a new financial market and b) a development of a green economy benchmarked on technological optimism.

The story lacked ideological disagreement because of its exclusive reliance on one actor: Edna Molewa. The government position is given the exclusive discursive privilege. By allowing the government to define the problem and then offer solutions, the story helped in constructing the legitimacy of the government agenda. Through the exclusion of alternative viewpoints and actors, the world of climate change is constructed as that of ideological consensus. The structure and representation of the story point to constructions that actively close out the possibility of other voices elsewhere. The views of Edna Molewa have discursive access to the readers of public discourse and thus, also to the cognitive choices given to the readers.

The representation of the need for a second Kyoto commitment period as common sense is also present in the *City Press*. The story "COP17: Hope for SA to pave way," (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 06 November 2011) is an example. Basic countries are represented as countries that were trying their best to be environmentally responsible. The overall mentality within BASIC can be summarised by reading the argument expressed by India which is described in the story as having "taken a hardline approach to the Kyoto dilemma, demanding rich nations to sign on to a second commitment period without developing countries taking on any responsibilities". Further, the story noted that "the four [BASIC] nations agreed that developing countries had already done a lot and gave even further than rich countries". Here the views of the BASIC group were reproduced without questioning. Their adoption and reproduction of the market-led Kyoto

Protocol show that the neoliberal economic responses have acquired the status of a tendential force in climate change discourses. The Kyoto Protocol is reproduced as a rational and natural instrument - the need for a second commitment period that further excluded non-Annex 1 countries is constructed as a consensual ideology.

Through bi-polar distinctions, the story represented BASIC countries in opposition to the environmentally immoral “rich countries” who were refusing to sign up to a second Kyoto commitment period. Their refusal is constructed as counterproductive. By blame-shifting, the story passivised the role of BASIC in the present emissions scenario. BASIC, being responsible for more than half of the present global emissions, escapes responsibility and their claim for a second Kyoto commitment period allows them to continue exploiting fossils in the name of catching-up and development. By claiming for a developmental space, BASIC countries pursued a path that is based on business as usual.

The newspapers analysed blindly reproduced these ideologies and constructed them as common sense and, in a way, helped to demoralise and delegitimise countries who were in opposition to a second Kyoto commitment period. The Press took neoliberal market responses to climate change for granted. A second Kyoto Protocol commitment period is constructed as common sense and having ‘universal consent’ from all progressive countries except those environmentally irresponsible like the United States, Canada, Russia and Australia. The discourse on a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period excluded contrarian views on the continued reliance on market-led responses to climate change. The first Kyoto Protocol created the European Union-led Emissions Trading Scheme and the Clean Development Mechanism, both of which have been criticised for their commodification and financialisation of environmental common goods where polluters are rewarded through carbon offset mechanisms. The story reproduced the mainstream European Union and South African ideologies and closed out ideological disagreements thereby promoting the manufacturing of consent around neoliberal responses to climate change. Regardless of the failures of the previous Conference of Parties (COPs) to come up with any solutions, the idea of the United Nations system offering solutions to the global climate problems is taken for granted and as obvious. The newspapers uncritically reproduced the South African

government position without asking what and how exactly was the Kyoto Protocol could be an answer to the climate change problems. The Kyoto Protocol extension meant a continuation of the market-led climate responses such as the CDM and carbon trade.

Central to note in the discourse on a second Kyoto commitment period is how different actors, with different interests and ideological imperatives cohered and conjunctured to produce the need for such a second commitment period as common sense and thus legitimised the neoliberal tenets that underpinned it. The European Union's support for the second Kyoto Protocol commitment period should be understood with the contours of the Union's active development and participation the Emissions Trading Scheme and the Clean Development Mechanism, all neoliberal market instruments, where big polluting companies are allowed to pollute and offset their emissions by buying carbon credits from the global South and also fund clean development projects that have an additionality value to curbing emissions from the global South. This maintains the operationality and profit accumulation by European companies. The global South, in general, as beneficiaries of selling carbon credits and clean development grants from the Europeans, supported the second commitment period for the continued inflow of revenue. Specifically, fast-developing economies in the global South such as India, South Africa, Brazil and China supported the second commitment period because of two key reasons. Firstly, these countries, regardless of their present huge global emissions, were not part of the Annex 1 countries obliged to curb emissions under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Therefore, a second commitment period would mean that these countries would continue their business-as-usual emissions tendencies without global legal bottlenecks. This kind of ideological foundation has its genesis in the Rio 1992 Earth principle seven of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities where countries not historically responsible for global warming and climate change were exempted from taking drastic carbon cuts to allow them to 'catch-up' and grow their economies. These countries, it is argued here, were part and parcel of the stampeded to a global climate change deal and a second Kyoto commitment period because of their refusal to acknowledge their 'present' emissions responsibility. Secondly, the fast-developing economies were also beneficiaries of carbon trade proceeds and therefore were unwilling to a revised global emissions curbing framework that would have taken away their privileged access to 'clean development finance'.

7.3 Negotiating for a Global Change Deal

The need for a globally binding climate deal was central to the climate change negotiations. Between 2011 and 2015, newspapers in South Africa saw the need for a globally binding climate change deal as a prerequisite and a necessity. Whereas the global temperatures were increasing, global political actors were seen to be delaying or stalling climate action. The discursive strategy of scientisation was often used to demoralise and delegitimise the non-action. Fiona Macleod's story, "Emissions turn on heat on COP17," (*Mail & Guardian*, 09 June 2011) used the increasing emissions to delegitimise this non-action. Firstly, the story depicted a dire climate situation, noting that scientific evidence called for "urgent climate change action" because "greenhouse gas emissions last year were the highest in history". This 'reality' required the negotiators "to deliver a binding settlement at global climate talks in Durban." South Africa's climate change negotiator, Alf Wills, was pessimistic that COP17 would deliver a binding climate change deal despite the increase in emissions, conceding that: "We face real difficulties in delivering a big bang in Durban." According to the newspaper, the key impediments to a global deal "included Japan's refusal to undertake emissions reductions post-Fukushima, political opposition in the US, the global recession and differences between developed and developing countries".

Scientific evidence from the "International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates this week showed that 30.6 gigatons of CO₂ were released into the atmosphere in 2010, a rise of 1.6 gigatons compared to 2009". The increase in emissions meant that the goal of keeping temperature increases below 2° Celsius was too ambitious. The story directly quoted the IEA's chief economist, Fatih Birol expressing worry at the rate of emissions increase: "I'm very worried. This is the worst news on emissions It is becoming extremely challenging to remain below two degrees. The prospect is getting bleaker - that's what the numbers say." Lord Stern (author of the famous Stern Review) is cited arguing that: "These figures indicate that emissions are now close to being back on a 'business as usual' path ... such a path ... would mean about a 50% chance of a rise in the global average temperature of more than 4° C by 2100" adding that "I hope these estimates provide a wake-up call to governments."

These scientific figures were then used in the story to justify calls for a globally binding climate change agreement. The story further cited Greenpeace Africa's Fiona Musana concurring that the "carbon tipping-point is very nearly upon us. The world's heavy dependence on fossil fuels has brought us to the brink of runaway climate change". This new reality, Musana was cited arguing, required "now, more than ever, action and leadership through the international negotiations". Musana's optimism in the multilateral system is strong and unopposed in the story. In support of the multilateral system, the newspaper further quoted the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) Richard Worthington who contended that: "It is imperative that the rest of the world be prepared to move forward - without the United States for now - particularly with extending the Kyoto Protocol".

Fundamental to note is that while there is a general lament regarding increased emissions, albeit with the root agent (capitalism) passivised and nominalised, the actors were optimistic that capitalist institutions and mechanisms such as the Kyoto Protocol could help solve the problem. The faith in Kyoto was blind to its neoliberal nature and failure to curb emissions. The Kyoto, through the CDM and the Emissions Trading Scheme, essentially financialised and commodified nature, offsetting carbon emissions in the global North through purchasing polluting rights (credits) in the global South.

The global climate deal, which the news media represented, was a step forward in addressing climate change. This global legally binding deal was to be based on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) framework. This multilateral-consensus discourse is constructed as a given and without alternatives or opponents. In 2011, though prospects of reaching a global climate deal are represented with pessimism in the Press, it still remained an ideal achievement, that if failed to be reached in Durban at COP17, at least, the COP17 should produce a way forward in reaching such a deal at a later COP meeting. The hope for a climate deal was a moral one and the one 'everyone' looked forward to. The prospects of a global climate deal in Durban seemed elusive: "it seems increasingly unlikely that a legally binding agreement will emerge from the talks [in Durban COP17]," (Yolandi Groenewald, "Crunch time for Kyoto," *Mail & Guardian*, 06 October 2011). In the same story, South Africa is constructed "as a historical bridge-builder" where the "country will have a huge part to play in getting parties to remove

negotiating stumbling blocks”. Through newspaper discourse, South Africa as COP17 president was expected “to secure a legally binding commitment that is ‘a great step forward’” (Fiona Macleod, “EU has hopes for climate talks,” *Mail & Guardian*, 14 April 2011). The story by Fiona Macleod promoted optimism in ‘consensus-led’, multilateral legally binding frameworks: “The most important discussions will be around a legally binding global framework”. However, attempts at reaching such a deal were being scuppered by the self-interests of countries such as the United States and China, “the world’s two biggest polluters”, who are constructed as ‘environmental deviants’ (Fiona Macleod, “EU has hopes for climate talks,” *Mail & Guardian*, 14 April 2011).

Government ministers, especially the Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa and International Relations Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane contributed their own Op-Ed articles that set the tone for government policy discourses in the news media. Towards the COP17 meeting, in the article “Eyes of the world on Durban’s climate conference,” (Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, *Sunday Independent*, 16 October 2011), International Relations Minister and incoming COP17 President, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, constructed climate change as an existential challenge which needed urgent solutions. These solutions included the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund and a second Kyoto commitment period. The ‘urgent’ need for these two was moralised by the prior portrayal of climate change as a problem with “an impact on both our way of life and our ability to feed our societies”. It thus became a moral duty to fund the Green Climate Fund and to extend the Kyoto period. Nkoana-Mashabane saw the role of South Africa at COP17 as that of providing global leadership towards “a common consensus in terms of reversing these adverse impacts of climate change”. The consensus involved seeking “an outcome which is fair, transparent, inclusive and upholds the Convention [UNFCCC] principle of Common But Differentiated responsibilities and capabilities”. The reference to this principle invoked by the Minister emphasised historical responsibility and concealed the present emissions responsibilities which South Africa is morally obligated to ensure are reversed. For Nkoana-Mashabane, the best way to address climate change was to be found at the multilateral COP17 which ensured “rules-based multilateralism as one of our fundamental interests to which we aspire globally”. While criticisms have been advanced against the multilateral, bureaucratic and unequal elite-based systems, the Minister passed on the doctrine of multilateralism as a fundamental principle of

interest. This negated views that have often correctly criticised the multilateral approach because of its construction of climate governance as a preserve for the political and economic elites at the expense of climate justice and poor people and solutions that seek structural transformations of the political-economic system of capitalism that are responsible for climate risks.

The journey towards COP17 witnessed the culmination of several ideas on what different actors thought should be the defining feature of a successful climate deal. Using actors in the global South, especially South African government officials, the *Sunday Independent*, of all the newspapers analysed, was interested in stories on agriculture as part of a global climate deal. These stories were based on actors who saw ‘climate-smart agriculture’ as a common sense that needed to be included in the global climate negotiations. In one story, “Agriculture cornerstone of any deal at COP17, says Minister,” (Eleanor Momberg, *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011), all the discourse actors supported a move towards climate-smart agriculture. All the sources except for Lindiwe Sibanda were government officials. Their interests are political and sought to mainstream the South African diplomatic efforts and foreign policy. Lindiwe Sibanda, from the think-tank Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Policy Analysis Network (FARNPAN), co-sponsored the centrality of agriculture discourse. The story, by being one-sided, reproduced and legitimised the elite views and helped in automotising them. The inclusion of agriculture as a main negotiation subject was normalised and rationalised because the continent was envisaged to be the “food basket of the world”.

The negotiations were to be premised on efforts to fund agriculture. Agriculture had the potential to contribute to adaptation and mitigation but was being neglected as the subject was peripheral during climate negotiations. The story took a focus on agriculture as a moral point and one that involved the duty to feed the world “especially since the continent was supposed to be the food basket of the world”. Regardless of this importance, the subject had been neglected and Molewa is represented in the story speaking from a position of everyone in Africa and as a moral voice, bringing the subject of agriculture into the mainstream negotiations. A deal that did not include agriculture as a priority was “a betrayal to the farming sector and anybody who needs food to survive”. The interests of a few neoliberal farmers that support techno-led farming interventions

are translated to become the language of the common people. Those calling for the inclusion of agriculture were constructed as ‘responsible’ and having ‘duty-care’ because they wanted ‘everyone’ to have access to food. These responsible actors (Edna Molewa, Jacob Zuma, Lindiwe Sibanda, Xolisa Ngwandla etc.) are dualised against the present but not mentioned ‘irresponsible’ actors who are against feeding people. FARNPARN is quoted arguing: “No agriculture, No Deal”. The FARNPAN discourse is constructed from the planes of morality and common sense. ‘Without a deal on agriculture, people would die of hunger’. While this call is important, it is key to question the kind of agriculture that was being sought. The story reproduced climate-smart agriculture as an ethical and moral imperative. Hidden is the neoliberal nature of climate-smart agriculture (especially its reliance on geoengineering agriculture) and how it has key capitalist exploitative tendencies and fits well within the neoliberal discourse of globalisation and benefits a few food suppliers who benefit from the global food distribution chain (Taylor, 2017, p.1).

For Edna Molewa (quoted directly), agriculture was to be discussed “within the context of other agenda items, including the adaptation or the discussions to secure a Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) deal”. The reference to REDD reveals that South Africa’s preferred climate change response mechanisms were always neoliberal. The construction of REDD at the level of ideological consensus helped in entrenching and representing neoliberal discourses as natural and consensual. REDD and REDD+ have been criticised for their commodification of nature and especially the commodification of ‘the air we breathe’⁸ (Kulick and the case of Papua New Guinea). The references to REDD are made also in the story by Alf Wills (Chief Climate Negotiator for South Africa) who “emphasized that agriculture and the reduction of emissions by the sector was placed firmly within REDD, which included positive incentive-based means to lower carbon emissions from agriculture in developing countries”.

⁸ The Air We Breathe

Neoliberal responses are mainstreamed and reproduced by being produced as the only available solutions to address the climate change problem. The story depoliticised climate change and promoted worldviews that sought climate change solutions in the neoliberal frame. The ‘air we breathe’ thesis by Don Kulick is central to this argument. The approaches sought by the global South political and climate elites commodified nature instead of seeing nature as a natural good. The South African president Jacob Zuma is quoted in the story constructing climate change from a scientised and depoliticised basis by defining climate change as simply “changing weather patterns [which] are affecting the environment, health, natural resources, agriculture and food production”. For Zuma, climate change effects were to be seen from a physical science perspective not the social interactions between the environment and people.

Through discourse synchronic analysis, the study found a keen interest in agriculture as a key element of climate change negotiations in the *Sunday Independent*, specifically stories by Eleanor Momberg. In the story “Greater focus on farming urged in climate change fight,” by Eleanor Momberg (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011), agriculture is primed as central to the climate change negotiations to be held in Durban. The story was based on the resolutions by African agriculture ministers meeting held in Johannesburg in September 2011. The ministers wanted more “attention to be given to farming and food production as mitigation and adaptation factors in the fight against climate change”. The story referred to the need for finance to “enable climate-smart agriculture”. The African agriculture ministers called on:

Developed countries to support the scaling-up of early action programmes, including best practices and technologies in climate-smart agriculture and to prioritise food security. Greater investment in research, technology and information dissemination to facilitate adaptation and application of climate-smart agriculture. International financial support for climate-smart agricultural projects that benefit small-holders. Africa is represented in the story as a passive recipient of climate change and thus a victim.

This representation translated into representing the continent from a position of dependence. The solutions to food security and climate change were to be found in technologies transferred from the global North. The adaptation and mitigation efforts in the global South were to be predicated on financial assistance from the global North countries.

The techno-optimistic discourse constructed by the story left out the embeddedness of ideologies of dominance in technology. This chapter contends that technology transfer involves the transfer of both hardware, software and more critically, the human capital from the technology producers. Technologies from the global North countries carry with them the neoliberal ideologies and values of their producers. They perpetuate dominance and unequal relations further entrenching dependence. Furthermore, while the story advanced the need for climate-smart agriculture, absent is what is meant by this ideologically laden concept. The agency of technology in geoengineering and the consequences on nature are not discussed as part of the culprits of the risk society. Climate-smart agriculture is represented in the story and the resolutions of the agriculture ministers meeting as common sense. The neoliberal and globalist language of climate-smart agriculture acquired what Hall and O'Shea (2013) called the 'neoliberal common-sense language'. By naturalising climate-smart agriculture, the story at the same time legitimised the neoliberal expansionist policies of chemical production, the appropriation of genetically modified products hidden beneath the 'common' and 'natural' agenda of climate-smart agriculture. The costs of these measures on people and environmental health are not highlighted or problematised. The health hazards and the related costs to the poor are not discussed. By producing the views of the ministers, the story legitimised the embedded ideologies of neoliberal global food systems. The interests of key actors are enhanced by the unquestioning reproduction of views that seek to benefit from climate change. The story reproduced the need for technology and technology transfer from the "developed" countries without questioning the ideological inclinations of those technologies.

The discourse on climate-smart agriculture gained discursive hegemony and was rendered natural. It became a common-sense language whenever issues of global food security were raised during global climate talks. However, missing from the discourse "is a fuller theoretical account of the forms of discursive, institutional and material power which are driving and shaping this agenda and drawing boundaries around the diagnosis of the drivers of climate-(in)compatible development and the solutions that are therefore advanced as 'climate-smart' agriculture'" (Newell and Taylor, 2017, p.2). The discursive representation of climate-smart agriculture reproduces "the prevailing food regime that operates globally at this historical juncture" (Newell and Taylor, 2017, p.1). The discourse on climate-smart agriculture should be understood as a socially constructed

discourse firmly embedded in the neoliberal agenda and “the prevailing modes of agrifood production and governance [where] business-as-usual” modes of farming are “rendered compatible with addressing the threat of climate change” (Newell & Taylor 2017, p.2). Newell and Taylor (2017) argued that the discursive consensus on climate-smart agriculture is achieved through “mutually reinforcing discursive, institutional and material sites of power whereby powerful actors seek to frame, govern and align CSA with the overriding imperatives of the dominant global system of food and agriculture” (p.2). A critique of the climate-smart agriculture discourse “helps to explain how responses to date are shaped by and further entrench- landscapes of power in the global system of food and agriculture” (Newell & Taylor 2017, p.2).

7.3.1 The Paris Agreement (COP21): Celebration and disappointment

Climate change negotiations at COP21 were constructed as deeply divided along geopolitical lines. It is important to note that a key finding from analysing the coverage of climate change negotiations by the South African news media shows that the developed global North countries are represented as insincere, irresponsible and not to be trusted. The global North is represented as villains who sought to derail climate action and blocking a globally and legally binding treaty. In contrast, the global South is represented as passive victims of climate change and were responsible actors as they demanded ‘climate action now’. Further, the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibility is taken for granted in the media and the constructions produced by elite politicians are reproduced in the media unquestioned. South Africa, as a ‘responsible actor’ “took a tough stance ... accusing developed nations of blocking negotiations around finance” (Yolandi Groenewald, “The issue of finance divides nations,” *City Press*, 06 December 2015).

Developing countries say the principle of rich countries taking the lead- the cornerstone of the UN Climate Convention - is being eroded because the US and other developed countries are pushing for a deal where nations will act voluntarily according to their ability and without legal liability (Yolandi Groenewald, “The issue of finance divides nations,” *City Press*, 06 December 2015).

South Africa’s Ambassador to the United Nations and Chair of the G77+China at COP21, Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko accused the developed countries of “undermining the agreement”. The global North was portrayed by Mxakato-Diseko as irresponsible: “New language is emerging that has nothing to do with the convention. It puts us in a precarious position. We do not understand what

this language is and where it is coming from.” The global North countries were represented as feeling “free to waste time ... with no sense of responsibility”.

The story “Exclusive: SA’s UN ambassador tells us about the climate talks,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 13 December 2015) brought out the fissures and disappointment at COP21 negotiations. South Africa’s United Nations Ambassador and G77 chair at COP21, Nozipho Mxakato-Diseko, was represented as angry towards the High Ambition Coalition group which she criticised for “using new side coalitions to undermine developing countries”. The developed countries were accused of using “donor-based” relationships to force developing and less developed countries into the High Ambition Coalition group. “There is nothing like a high-ambition coalition in the official negotiations It does not exist. It has no status. It will not deliver anything”. “We understand that their tactic is to find a shield from where to hide, an umbrella so that they can hide beneath it”. The use of donor-relationships to gain support from developing countries was constructed as “absolutely immoral”. Developed countries are accused of “a conservative effort to break the unity of the G77”.

Mxakato-Diseko alleged that some countries attempted to get her removed from chairing the G77 because they saw her as “problematic” and “even offered money as sweetener” president Jacob Zuma. At stake, this study argues, is the exclusion of South Africa in the High Ambition Coalition group and how key members of the G77 chaired by South Africa had jumped ship. South Africa’s diplomatic prowess was at stake and at loss. While the High Ambition Coalition is constructed as having an agenda of breaking the G77 group, Mxakato-Diseko attempted to allay the fear of disunity in the group arguing that under her leadership “the G77-plus-China grouping has grown in stature” because of her South African heritage: “Us South Africans focus ourselves on the bigger picture”. Mxakato-Diseko labelled the Umbrella group a “difficult group of countries” that they were facing as G77. “We are creating an agreement around them We are literally squeezing ourselves to fit their needs”. Mxakato-Diseko is constructed by the story as a “hard worker”, “Her hard work at the talks has been inspired by her desire to make a difference for those South Africans that will be worst affected by climate change”.

Yolandi Groenewald's story "SA powers on despite 'exclusion' from COP21's high ambition coalition," (*City Press*, 11 December 2015) further highlighted divisions and fissures that characterised the global climate change talks. The story portrayed the anger within the South African negotiating group when South Africa was left of the secretive High Ambition Coalition Group. Alf Wills (South Africa's Chief Negotiator) accused the High Ambition Coalition of "negotiating through the press and not in the negotiating sessions". The coalition was comprised of the United States, the EU, Mexico, Columbia, 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. These countries ditched the South Africa-led G77 + China negotiating platform. South Africa, India and China were not invited to join the group. The group was against any kind of minimalist deal and wanted a five-year INDCs review.

The BASIC negotiating group (Brazil, India, China and South Africa) was represented as a group of countries most willing to see action on climate change. For example, the story "No 'climate holiday' before 2020," (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 09 December 2015) portrayed the BASIC delegates at COP21 as people who wanted urgent climate action. This representation is first expressed in the headline: "No 'climate holiday' before 2020, say COP21 delegates who want action now". Action before 2020 meant that countries should start work on climate action immediately even if the Paris Agreement was to enter into force in 2020. This followed the agreements made in Durban under the Durban Platform to have a second Kyoto commitment period to stand in between the first commitment (ending in 2012) and the operationalisation of the Paris agreement in 2020. Action on climate change was exported and shifted to developed countries. Through the discursive tool of othering, the global North were blackmailed into action: "The group [BASIC] has publicly maintained the need for developed countries to take the lead in emission reductions and also to fulfil the support needed for developing countries through finance and technology for undertaking actions".

Climate change mitigation responsibility was left in the hands of those 'historically responsible' and the global South countries are only to act upon the provision of finance and technology. The story reproduced these worldviews as rational and thus helped to legitimise them. Silent in such worldviews are aspects of present responsibility where the BASIC countries, especially, are

complicit and have become the highest carbon emitters. The BASIC group, loosely portrayed as just the global South developing countries, are represented as passive victims of climate change. Without climate finance, the BASIC group argued, it was impossible for them to act. India's Environment Minister, Prakash Javadekar was cited in the story arguing that the global North was supposed to provide the finance: "Because they have, and we don't have, the haves must provide." Xie Zhenhua, China's special climate representative is quoted in support of India's position and blaming the developed countries for not providing the funding: "we are definitely not seeing the money that we reportedly got". Javadekar was indirectly represented noting that "the action of the developing world depended on finance and technological support from the developed countries," while Zhenhua attempted to pacify the need for BASIC countries to equally contribute towards climate finance because "China was already contributing through bilateral relationships with the countries most in need". The story effectively reproduced, through disabling disagreement, the views of South Africa, India and China. By reproducing the passive victimhood discourse, the story failed to critique the responsibility and agency of BASIC countries in present emissions. The representation of BASIC on the equal plane with less developed countries helped to portray them as poor and qualify the argument that they are poor and in need of aid.

At COP21, South Africa wanted an "ambitious, fair and effective deal" that had a "legal status" and "kept temperatures below two degrees Celsius" (Yolandi Groenewald, "Climate change: SA wants ambitious, fair and effective deal," *City Press*, 07 December 2015). Disagreements during the negotiations were between the developed global North and the global South who fought over climate finance "which would help developing countries cope with the effects of locked-in climate change". Developed global North countries were failing "to commit to a finance deal". The story constructed the global South from a position of passive climate change victims, who were suffering from the effects of "global inaction on mitigation" and resulting in the increase of the "adaptation burden on developing countries". Because of this burden, the global South wanted climate change adaptation to be part of the deal and for developed countries to commit to a loss and damage funding.

From the discursive construction inherent in the story, the global South and South Africa in particular, are constructed from the planes of victimhood and have no responsibility and capacity to reduce their emissions. This representation naturalised the claims for non-action by the global South because they are not historically responsible for greenhouse gas emissions. Hidden within this sort of representation is the present emissions responsibility and agency of countries whose economies are responsible for emissions. This deletion of the present agency also obscures critique and questioning, allowing these countries to continue emissions through avoiding cutting their carbon footprint. The constructions further help entrench claims for a ‘developmental path’ and only sees climate action as the responsibility of the global North. The focus on adaptation finance is also meant to divert attention from the mitigation responsibility of the global South.

The Paris Agreement was portrayed by government officials and some news media as progressive, except for few actors from academia and environmental non-governmental organisations who saw it as inadequate in addressing the climate change crises. The story “SA will have to start ridding itself of its coal addiction,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 13 December 2015) described the Paris Agreement as “a game-changer for humanity”. In line with the pledges made in Paris, South Africa was now expected “to start ridding itself of its coal addiction little by little”. As part of constructing the Paris talks as a success, Groenewald quoted Sam Barratt of Avaaz arguing that the treaty was “a turning point in history, paving way for the shift to 100% clean energy that the world wants and the planet needs”. Bill McKibben (founder of the NGO 350.org) was less optimistic of the deal: “But the power of the fossil fuel industry is still reflected in the text, which drags out the transition so far that endless climate change will be done”. South Africa and China “accused rich countries of trying to railroad them into a deal that would damage their economies”. Kumi Naidoo of Greenpeace argued that South Africa was not a good example: “We can’t say to the world that climate change is a problem, but back home we are building coal power stations and opening more coal mines”. To support the need to eliminate coal, Jackson Mthembu (ANC Parliamentary Chief Whip) is represented noting that “We have to legalise South Africa’s pledges at the conference into a strong legal framework back home. We will also engage industry to make this happen”.

Contrary to the NGOs constructions, the article “SA lauded for significant role in Paris climate change agreement,” (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 07 February 2016) portrayed the agreement as good for the planet and at the same time reproduced multilateralism. The headline of the article indirectly praised and saw the Paris Accord as a significant global achievement and a win for multilateralism. Despite the Paris Accord being neoliberal and promoting Promethean responses to climate change through market instruments and its lack of a binding and regulatory framework through the vulgar of ‘name and shame’ principle, where countries voluntarily submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), Edna Molewa endorsed and praised it.

The Paris Agreement at COP21 was to be celebrated as “a turning point in global climate change governance and [that also] strengthens rules-based multilateralism”. Her view showed confidence and support for the Paris Accord. Evans and Musvipwa (2017) have argued that the Paris Agreement does little to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions, criticising the agreement for being based on a weak principle proposed by Barack Obama, former US president, of ‘naming and shaming’ that shies away from a legally binding force to ensure Parties to the Agreement curb emissions. The accord, Molewa noted “establishes nationally determined contributions by all parties to the global mitigation effort,” albeit without setting any enforcement mechanism. Molewa’s article noted that the Paris arrangement was “a solid foundation from which all parties will launch enhanced action to address climate change in the post-2020 period, with renewed determination”. While the Accord has received criticism for its lack of a legally binding mechanism and its embeddedness within neoliberal responses, the South African government saw the Accord as a win for the developing global South.

Elijah Maholola’s story, “Paris Pledges fall short of 2°C rise,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 22 July 2016), described the pledges to reduce emissions under the Paris Accord as inadequate. The headline captured this disappointment: “Paris pledges fall short of 2°C rise” and rather called for the strengthening of individual country pledges “to limit future climate change to well below the 2° C limit included in the Paris climate agreement”. Whereas the goal of the Paris Agreement was to

keep temperatures increases below 2°C, Joeri Rogelj (lead author International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis- Austria) was cited showing dissatisfaction:

our analysis shows that these measures [carbon reduction pledges] need to be strengthened in order to have a good chance of keeping warming to well below 2o C, let alone 1.5o C Our study clearly shows that the current national [INDCs] plans are too incremental and thus inconsistent with the long-term ambition from the Paris Agreement. If we want to keep 2oC within reach, we'll need much more rapid and fundamental changes.

The story by Aldi Schoeman “Paris climate deal: Good for the environment, bad for jobs,” (*City Press*, 16 May 2016) argued that the Paris Climate deal was “Good for the environment” but “bad for jobs”. It was “bad news for the labour market and the economy” and this was being worsened by “long-standing talks about carbon tax” all of which made job losses ‘inevitable’. The story quoted Alan Mukoki, the Chief Executive of the South Africa Chamber of Commerce and Industry sponsoring these worldviews: “The impact will be significant. There will certainly be job losses. In addition, developing countries have a handicap because we do not have all the technology that is needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions”. Judy Beaumont (Deputy Director-General in the Department of Environmental Affairs) was represented in the story disputing the jobs-killing discourse: “we have entered into an agreement and we must honour it. It’s about balancing development and the environment”.

7.3.2 Trumping the Paris Agreement

Debates on the Paris Agreement moved past 2015 to include events prior and after the United States elections of 2016 that elected Donald Trump as president of the country. Donald Trump, as part of his election campaign made it clear that he was against climate treaties because they were bad for the United States and for the economy. Upon his election in 2016, Trump announced that he will pull-out the United States from the Paris Agreement, an agreement he perceived to be unfair to the United States. In 2017, Trump followed on his promise and announced the United States withdrawal from the Paris Agreement. All these events in the United States had a bearing on global climate governance, including South Africa.

South Africa received the announcement by the United States President Donald Trump to pull out of the Paris Agreement with disappointment. The election of Donald Trump in November of 2016 and his amplification of the anti-climate change tirade motivated Edna Molewa to write the Op-

Ed “SA hopeful Trump’s fiery rhetoric won’t overheat the planet,” (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2016). South Africa remained optimistic that “Trump’s fiery rhetoric” would not “overheat the planet”. The threats by Trump to pull the United States out of the Paris Agreement were morally and environmentally irresponsible because “After China, the US is the second-largest contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions”. While the actions from Trump are constructed as irresponsible and immoral, the Obama administration is portrayed as progressive and rational. “During President Barack Obama’s term in office the international community made unprecedented progress in climate change negotiations, culminating in the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement”. The threat from Trump and the actual withdrawal were taking the world back and having the consequence of undoing the Paris Accord.

The United States could renege on its obligation to reduce emissions by not adhering to “it’s nationally determined contribution and financial support to developing countries”. The withdrawal of the United States was represented as going against the multilateral spirit. Molewa averred that: “The reality is that there is no viable alternative to collective multilateral action. The Paris Agreement is our best hope to achieve climate safety globally”. Further to the moralisation of the Obama administration, Molewa noted that the United States had remained “committed to working with other parties to combat climate change in the spirit of cooperation and under the convention”. Molewa was clearly against Trump’s isolationist climate change foreign policy.

Similarities between government discourses and newspaper discourses on Trump’s desire to withdraw from the Paris Agreement were observed. The article by Siphso Kings, “Trump’s hot words heat the world,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 11 November 2016) portrayed and constructed the United States president-elect Donald Trump as environmentally careless and insensitive: “President-elect Donald Trump’s stance on global warming spells trouble for the country’s carbon footprint”. The first paragraph of the story quoted Trump’s tweet: “The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make the US manufacturing noncompetitive”. Trump and the Republican party that he represents, were constructed as villains standing in the way of a moral call and duty to protect the environment and avert catastrophic climate change. “In the Republican worldview, industries that emit pollutants and warm the environment are good for the economy and that means good for job creation”. The ‘immoral’ and ‘careless’ Trump and the

Republican party were represented as the ‘other’ - in opposition to progressive and responsible Barack Obama and the Democratic party. Under Obama, Kings argued, “The United States has become a world leader in tackling global warming” because “President Obama has made this a cornerstone of his second term, with agreements signed with China and other big emitters”. Trump and the Republicans were, therefore, a threat to the progress made by the Obama administration. Kings argued that the Paris Agreement came out weak without legally binding clauses “because it could not get past a hostile Republican House”. Trump represents the bad while Obama stands for the good. The Democrats are constructed as having a good relationship with the environment: “the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol was intended to lower emissions. That was driven by a Clinton presidency [Democrat], but then George W Bush [Republican] pulled the US out of the protocol”.

The editorial “Editorial: Trump’s need for vindication hurts the world,” (*City Press*, 04 June 2017) criticised the United States decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement by President Donald Trump. The headline saw the withdrawal as not based on substantive reasons but Trump’s “need for vindication” which “hurts the world”. Further, the lead paragraph also develops the same argument by describing the decision as shameful: “One of the shameful acts in US history”. It was shameful for the United States to withdraw from the Paris deal because of the country’s historical responsibility and that the “US is the second-biggest carbon dioxide polluter after China”. Having outlined the United States greenhouse gases culpability, the editorial constructs the United States as a calamity, immoral and irresponsible. The US’s actions were to be seen as villainy. The reference to the United States culpability is also an attempt to criminalise, demoralise and delegitimise the United States. The decision, the editorial argued, was based on “Trump’s Obama fixation” and the political connection of the Republicans to the oil industry “big oil and coal business is running his political party” which led to “this contempt for the world and the future”.

Edna Molewa, Minister of Environmental Affairs, in an Op-Ed in the *Mail & Guardian*, “Trump won’t scupper Paris agreement on climate change,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 09 June 2017) saw the announcement as “regrettable” and blamed the United States for being ‘irresponsible’. The decision by Trump, Molewa argued, reflected “an abdication of global responsibility ... the US has to reduce emissions”. Molewa saw Trump’s announcement as “contrary to the spirit of

multilateralism, the rule of law and trust between nations”. The Paris Agreement was constructed by Molewa as “the best flexible and dynamic approach to keeping global temperature increases well below 2°C and is a victory for multilateralism”. Molewa universalised the climate problem and limited action to address emissions to developed countries’ actions: “The success of the Paris Agreement hinges heavily on the extent to which developed countries, historically bear the responsibility for the majority of the world’s climate change-causing emissions, are able to meet their commitment to developing countries, which have historically been low emitters”. In her view, the decision by the United States was retrogressive considering the United States’ historical responsibility in causing climate change. Rather than ditching the Paris Agreement, it was necessary for the United States to remember that it had “a moral obligation not only to lead in reducing emissions but also to support poorer economies in contributing to the global effort”. She further endorsed multilateralism, arguing that climate change could “only be effectively addressed multilaterally, under the broad-based legitimacy of the UN framework convention”.

7.3.3 Concealing responsibility and blame-shifting

Yolandi Groenewald, in the story “Crunch time for Kyoto” (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 October 2011), portrayed the politics within the negotiations on emissions reduction where “the old question of which countries should take what responsibility for capping emissions to the possible detriment of their economy is still very much at the centre of the talks.” South Africa’s international climate policy was underpinned by the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This principle gave responsibility for climate action to the global North industrialised countries in line with their historical responsibility. However, with developments in the fast-developing economies, countries that are members of BRICS had their emissions levels escalate, requiring that they also should start actions to limit emissions. Regardless of these new developments, economies in transition/fast-developing economies continued to use the CBDR principle under the pretext that their economies needed to catch-up. These discourses mostly found their way into the news media and were reproduced with little or no questioning. For example, the story “Seeking balanced, fair and credible outcomes,” (No author, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) reproduced South Africa’s negotiating stance at COP17: the aspect of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities. There is an imagined consensus that is built around multilateralism as the best platform for addressing climate change.

The International Relations Minister and also incoming COP17 President, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane was directly represented arguing that “All parties appear to be in agreement that the outcome in Durban should be balanced, fair and credible, that it should preserve and strengthen the multilateral rules-based response to climate change”.

The rules-based multilateral system was to “be informed by the principles that form the basis of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations”. “These principles include multilateralism, environmental integrity, fairness based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, equity and honouring of all international commitments and understandings made in the climate change process”. Through the CBDR principle, South Africa remained represented as a passive victim of climate change. Allusions to fairness underpinned by the CBDR principle helped to delete South Africa’s complicit behaviour in present responsibility, of which it must act. A focus on adaptation also helped to passivise and nominalise a discussion on South Africa’s mitigation responsibility. The entire story was based on one actor and thus ideological disagreement was disabled. It is key to mention that the South African news media largely followed the dominant South African foreign policy discourses relating to the climate change negotiations. The media reproduced the South African worldviews and seldom questioned the vested interests behind.

Global climate change negotiators, especially those from the global North were also constructed as self-interested in the story, “Diplomats win, but climate loses,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 22 December 2011). Despite the International Relations Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane’s portrayal of COP17 as a success because it secured the Durban Platform that drew a roadmap for a legally binding deal by 2015 and a second Kyoto commitment period ending in 2018, the story saw the outcome of COP17 as “a political coup” that “failed to deal with the nitty-gritty of how to keep global temperatures from rising”. The story used NGOs discourses to draw this conclusion. Tasneem Essop of WWF for Nature described COP17 as an “empty shell”.

In “EU has hope for climate talks,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 April 2011), the responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions reduction is constructed as belonging to the developed global North developed countries. This construction fits well into South Africa’s insistence on the

need for a ‘developmental space’. Excluded from the story are discussions on local (South Africa) reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Correspondingly, in “Basic puts science-based plan on table,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2011), the global North countries were represented as pursuing their own selfish interests at the expense of addressing climate change. Although the global North countries pursued selfish interests, the BASIC group was constructed as trying to bring in a “science-based” approach to the negotiations. The approach was to be premised on agreeing on the second Kyoto commitment period (where all Basic countries) will be exempt and on the aspect of fairness. The approach proposed by the BASIC countries was portrayed as progressive by the news story, regardless of the BASIC member countries only promising to legally reduce their emissions post-2020. The attempt to postpone action from the Basic group was left without scrutiny by the newspaper discourse. The United States, Canada, and Russia are represented as stumbling blocks to a second Kyoto commitment period.

The South African government saw climate action (providing adaptation finance and mitigation) as a responsibility of the global North countries. The Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, in the Op-Ed “Climate change burden must be shared,” (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 26 July 2015), constructed South Africa as a developing country and a passive victim of climate change impacts. By constructing South Africa as a passive victim, Molewa indirectly bundled South Africa into the group of ‘poor countries’, ignoring, by exclusion and nominalisation, the role of South Africa in global greenhouse gas emissions. Molewa’s article laid out the approach to be taken by South Africa at Paris COP21 regarding global climate change negotiations. South Africa pushed for a global deal that was “fair, rules-based, binding and applicable to all”. Regarding adaptation and mitigation financing in the global South, Molewa drew from the closet of historical responsibility, noting that “the adaptation burden should be a global responsibility- and should not be shouldered by developing countries”. This was a direct call for the global North to provide financing for adaptation in the global South in consideration of their historical responsibility: “Developed countries should at least indicate their intended levels of support from 2020 to 2030” (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 26 July 2015).

Molewa's article also shed light into the climate change negotiations and the geopolitical polarisation that characterised them: "Developed countries expect more commitments from developing countries, despite their poverty and developmental challenges" (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 26 July 2015). Problematic in this discursive construction used by Molewa is how conveniently South Africa is bundled together with other 'developing and poor countries'. Concealed in this construction are the emissions inequalities within South Africa and the Africa Group where South Africa is responsible for above 40 % of emissions emanating from Africa. This and South Africa's emissions levels are concealed and consequently, the present responsibility of South Africa in reducing emissions in line with current responsibility is passivised. The agency of the global South nations comes to light when they are constructed from a position of climate impacts vulnerability, but their complicit in emissions, especially the BRICS countries, is passivised and thus left unquestioned. This discourse then allows Molewa to articulate a vulnerability discourse which even calls for more exploitation of fossils "because South Africa is a developing country We will therefore, over a reasonable time, continue to argue for our developmental space without being pressured into further emission reduction" (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 26 July 2015). The narrative of 'catching-up' and the need for a developmental space is brought into the debate. South Africa's emissions cuts are deferred "over a reasonable time" to allow the country to develop. While this discourse appears normal and common-sensical, it leaves out questions of internal inequality within South Africa and Africa unanswered. Essentially, it has been argued in Chapter 2 that the key beneficiaries of continued fossil fuel usage are the players in the minerals-energy complex. Patrick Bond argued that despite the claims for developmental space, there has been no improvement in the standard of living for ordinary South Africans but rather inequalities have widened.

While Molewa appealed for a developmental space, she at the same time projected a transition into renewables by "creating alternative renewables through new technological innovation". There is an element of techno-managerial optimism that underpins government thinking. The headline suggests that global climate change responsibility must be shared, however, the article itself showed that the belief is that in the meantime the global North be doing more to reduce carbon emissions because they are 'already developed' and at the same time provide funding to help global

South countries adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. The global South is thus not responsible but should be given a developmental space.

In the article, “SA lauded for significant role in Paris climate change agreement,” (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 07 February 2016), the developed global North is constructed and represented as historically and morally responsible for leading action towards mitigation and adaptation. South Africa, as Molewa alluded, relied on the 1992 Earth summit principle of ‘Common But Differentiated Responsibility’. Molewa argued that “It was important that we argued strongly, as we did, that the final text should give effect to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities” which makes sure that “developed countries should take the lead in not only reducing greenhouse gas emissions but in supporting climate change activities in developing countries”. Countries in the global South are constructed as incapable of taking any further climate change action because they were victims in need of help: “The reality is that countries like South Africa are doing what they can with little resources they have.” The othering and distancing of climate change responsibility passivised and nominalised South Africa’s agency in present emissions and left the current emission scenarios without scrutiny. This passivisation went along with the claim for South Africa to be given the right to pollute and a developmental space: “As a country, it’s our responsibility to do our part to fight climate change while simultaneously be cognisant of our status as a developing country.”

Sipho Kings’ story “Big polluters backpedal at climate talks,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 28 November 2013) was pessimistic at the possibility of a binding deal because of the villainy of “Big polluters” who were “backpedalling” through “scrapping their pledges to reduce emissions”. This backpedalling led the global South “vulnerable nations” to demand “that something happens now before it is too late”. The big polluters were seen as villains and “vulnerable nations” are constructed as passive victims of the historical and present actions of the big polluters.

Political change in some of the world’s biggest greenhouse-gas polluters has resulted in them backpedalling from pledges to lower emissions. Australia, which is building a thriving economy on coal exports, has elected a government that does not believe climate change is driven by humans. Canada has pulled out of the Kyoto Protocol and other climate agreements. Japan has lowered its targets, and Europe is refusing to increase its targets. The United States has started lowering emissions only through executive orders that bypass

Congress (Sipho Kings, “Big polluters backpedal at climate talks,” *Mail & Guardian*, 28 November 2013).

In protest to the ‘backpedalling,’ “the Chinese delegation led a walkout with 131 other developing nations”. The aspect of climate finance, similar to 2011, was contentious and the global South nations were unhappy with “the lack of progress on funding for ‘loss and damage’ ... the developing world want the rich world to pay for it to use less carbon-intensive energy and for the damage caused by climate change because the majority of emissions were produced by the developed world”. For their part, the global North countries blamed “the recession for a lack of funds,” and also wanted the BRICS economies to step up and contribute towards the fund because they were “now on a par with the developed world, they should not benefit from any funding”.

The story exposed the politics of climate change negotiations where Parties in the developed global North disagreed that only the rich should pay for emissions because economies in transition were responsible for present emissions. The story, however, put the blame on the developed countries and by so doing deleted the primacy and agency of BRICS countries in present emissions responsibility. This study argues that the countries in BRICS attempt to avoid emissions cuts claiming a developmental space and require funding for clean development forgetting their present emissions responsibility. By sticking to equality in emissions responsibility, the global North countries (Canada and Australia) are portrayed as backpedalling and thus stalling progress.

The story deleted, by passivisation and nominalisation, the agency of BRICS countries as the key present big polluters, thereby lessening focus and scrutiny on their ambitions and actions to reduce their carbon footprint. This also shields these countries from scrutiny and promotes a worldview where they can easily claim passive victimhood to climate change. The discursive strategy of othering and labelling is used. The developed global North was labelled as “big polluters” and responsibility for climate actions shifted through exporting responsibility and blame.

Notwithstanding that most of the stories in the newspapers constructed climate change mitigation as a responsibility of the global North, at least some articles managed to balance their stories by pinpointing the activities of global South fast-developing economies. The story “Valli Moosa drafted to ease deadlock,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 24 November 2011) brought to the

fore the politics prevailing at the COP17 climate change talks in Durban, including a discussion of the political economy and geopolitics of climate change. The appointment of Valli Moosa (former South African Environment minister) was meant to “to try to prevent a stand-off between the world’s worst polluting nations that could scupper any chance of a global agreement being signed at the conference in Durban at the end of the month” and pacify India to agree to a binding climate change deal. “India’s hard-line is causing a stumbling block. India and China are saying they won’t move, so the US is also saying it won’t move. The three countries are holding things up,” (Fiona Macleod, “Valli Moosa drafted to ease deadlock,” *Mail & Guardian*, 24 November 2011). While the discussions on emissions have been about the global North, the story focused on the politics of emissions reduction within economies in transition in BRICS. India and China were constructed in the story as stumbling blocks and because of their actions, the United States got an opportunity to escape.

Observers this week said India’s refusal to commit itself to legally binding carbon emission cuts was giving the United States an excuse to play hardball. India accounted for 6.2% of global carbon emissions last year, the US for 16.4% China, responsible for 24.6% of the world’s emissions, was also reluctant to take any binding cuts (Fiona Macleod, “Valli Moosa drafted to ease deadlock,” *Mail & Guardian*, 24 November 2011).

India favoured voluntary actions, not a legally binding deal. India is constructed as a climate villain, for refusing to agree with other ‘progressive countries’. The United States, India and China were represented as the world’s “worst” polluters and yet they were not willing to act because of selfish interests. Whereas the story brought out emissions for these three countries, the emissions from South Africa are not mentioned, neither is the South African position regarding emissions reduction plans.

Discourses from the global South critically attached climate action responsibility in the hands of the global North. However, the global North countries pushed back on this narrative and promoted a discourse of universal action. This pluri-versal action required everyone to work together multilaterally. Thus, it was inevitable for the global North to promote the multilateral process because it was universal. The endorsement of multilateralism came also from global North diplomats stationed in South Africa. The British High Commissioner to South Africa, Nicola Brewer, in the Op-Ed “We have the green light to curb emissions,” (*City Press*, 23 January 2011), depicted the United Nations as a common-sense platform for addressing climate change. For

Brewer, climate change could only be tackled through a “global deal”. “For the first time, there is an international commitment to ‘deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions’”. The Cancun COP16 was praised in the article for sending “a very clear and positive message - that the UN process is back and with renewed momentum”. The language used by Brewer suggests that the author was intertextually responding to competing discourses that had lost faith in multilateral responses and platforms. The author attempted to reproduce multilateralism as common sense and a consensual ideology worthy embracing: “Cancun was a triumph for the spirit of international cooperation in tackling an international threat.” The construction of climate change as an international threat is consistent with the United Kingdom policy that attempted to universalise the climate problem and by so doing diminishing the responsibility of Britain as a key contributor to the risk society produced by climate change (Carvalho 2004, see also chapter 4).

By constructing climate change as a universal threat, the discourse attempted to bury the actors and economic systems behind this threat and rather universalise action in addressing a risk produced by the few. The multilateral language is crucial for Britain as it helped to create a climate change which is universal and therefore requiring universal action, diminishing the historical responsibility of the elite culprits. The language of universality is captured in the headline: “We have the green light to curb emissions”. Britain attempted to rationalise climate responses as the responsibility of ‘everyone’ by interpellating the global South to see themselves as part of the problem and the solution. More important also is that while South Africa and other countries in the global South attempted to export climate change responsibility, this article by Brewer could be interpreted as a rebuttal of the tribal politics depicted by the global South. Essentially, Brewer’s article became a response that sought to say, ‘we are all responsible, and therefore we should act together’. The multilateral spirit, therefore, was crucial for this universalisation project.

7.3.4 Climate Finance and historical ‘debt payment’

Climate change financing is a key feature of the climate change negotiations theme. The subtheme of finance was constructed as common sense and reproduced along with the policy choices of the South African government and non-governmental organisations. In the *Mail & Guardian*, the aspect of climate financing, especially the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund, took

centre stage. The *Mail & Guardian* devoted several stories towards the climate financing sub-theme and constructed finance as a key issue for the success of climate talks, from COP17 to COP21. The news story “Green fund full of empty promises,” by Siphon McDermott (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 October 2011) is one example. Funding of the Green Climate Fund was viewed as a key sticking issue that needed to be resolved at COP17 in Durban: “one of the most contentious issues in the negotiations is where that money will come from and who will dispense it.” The story moralised the need for climate finance and the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund because: “The fund will help poor countries to adapt to climate change and to develop low carbon economies” and in addition “pay for developing countries to change their development trajectories to more environmentally sustainable ones”. The developed global North countries were blamed for the lack of progress on the Green Climate Fund implementation mechanism. Trevor Manuel, South Africa’s Planning Minister and co-chair of the Green Climate Fund Committee, was directly represented saying “it was ‘easier to extract teeth from chickens that convince G20 finance ministers to part with money”.

The underlying expectation was that developed countries were responsible for funding climate action based on their historical responsibility under the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities. The need for the Green Climate Fund operationalisation was seen as a moral and natural way of helping “poor countries” respond to climate impacts and pursue a cleaner developmental path. Interesting is that the global South reporters, analogous to global North journalistic practices (see Evans, 2016), also refer to the global South as “poor countries” - labelling that achieves the goal of normalising their perceived victimhood. Because they are poor, they need financial assistance from the rich and developed countries. The global South thus is represented as dependent on aid from the global North to develop and respond to climate change. Furthermore, the construction of the global South as victims deletes the agency of present responsibilities from the economies in transition.

The South African news media has constructed the neoliberalisation of climate change as common sense and having acquired imagined universal consensus. The aspects of climate finance, support of the Kyoto Protocol and the Green Climate Fund are constructed as given and natural. The media has naturalised and normalised these Promethean discourses as serving planetary interests. The

commodification, marketisation and fetishisation of nature have not been critiqued and questioned in the news media. By blindly reproducing the dominance of neoliberal climate change responses, the news media effectively entrenched and legitimised the self-mutative tendencies of capitalism as a tendential economic, cultural and material force. Responses that put nature at the profit altar have been uncritically reproduced and reinforced. Key to this production has been the news media's dependency on a 'club' of experts and actors in climate policy, governance, whose interests are predominantly capitalistic. The media essentially reproduced elite ideologies because of the news structures and requirements for 'expert sources'.

Using synchronic discourse analysis, the study managed to find that within the *Mail & Guardian*, different reporters managed to build stories about climate finance that were in ideological agreement and reproduced the views of the dominant government actors. Synonymous to Siphon McDermott's story above, Fiona Macleod "No cash will be a COP-out," (*Mail & Guardian*, 17 November 2011) constructed finance as a key to a global climate deal. The story discussed what it constructed as impediments to global climate talks. Non-governmental organisations had warned that "Durban will achieve little if no money was forthcoming for the climate fund". Kumi Naidoo of Greenpeace International is directly represented arguing that "With no agreement on any long-term sources of finance, the Green Fund is an empty shell". The NGOs expected global North developed countries to make more pledges towards the Green Climate Fund to lure global South nations into a deal. Jeremy Hobbs of Oxfam International is represented directly echoing the same sentiments: "The fund currently stands empty, so governments must now decide where the money needed to fill it will come from." The story reproduced the discourses from NGOs without including any ideological disagreement. Finance is constructed as the key to unlocking the potential of having a global climate deal. Nothing is written about the responsibility of present key emitters in the global South.

Within the discussions at the COP meetings, one of the emergent themes was the issue of climate finance, embodied within the need to operationalise the Green Climate Fund. At COP17, the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund was so important for South Africa's diplomatic posture. International Relations Minister and incoming COP17 President Maite Nkoana-Mashabane wrote an Op-Ed (Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, "Eyes of the world on Durban's climate

conference,” *Sunday Independent*, 16 October 2011) benchmarking the success of the talks on the provision of climate finance. For Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, the Durban COP17 was supposed to operationalise agreements made at COP16 in Cancun, Mexico. She writes of “agreed consensus” on the need to operationalise the Green Climate Fund, the need to finalise a second Kyoto commitment period and agreeing on a legally binding climate deal. South Africa’s position in terms of climate change mitigation and adaptation are closely attached to neoliberal approaches. The Green Climate Fund is an example together with the need for a second Kyoto commitment period. This meant an indirect but strong endorsement of market-led responses to the climate problem. The Kyoto Protocol gave birth to carbon trading and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), systems that essentially financialised and commodified climate change responses.

The article by the International Relations Minister (and incoming COP17 president), Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, “Negotiations need mature approach to pertinent issues,” (*City Press*, 16 November 2011) noted that there was a need for the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund as agreed at COP16 in Cancun, Mexico: “Developing countries demand a prompt start for the fund through early capitalisation”. The minister further endorsed the market-led responses of Kyoto by making a second commitment deal common sense. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane constructs climate change as a matter of science, she achieves this by instrumentalising science through explicit confidence and references to the effects citing extreme weather events globally and Africa. The climate problems, thus, required a response mechanism that addressed the science challenges, i.e. reducing emissions by whatever scientific means possible. The source of the emissions is not discussed nor opportunities for rethinking the structural processes, capitalism, that have resulted in the ecological rift are thus not discussed. Effectively, the solutions to be sought are found in technological and managerial innovation leading to green capitalism. In this article, Nkoana-Mashabane is clear that the future should be based on neoliberal principles of the Green Climate Fund and the Kyoto Protocol signatures of carbon trade and clean development mechanism. She successfully de-politicises climate change by constructing the problem in the scientific and the failure to refer to the political economy of the climate problem. The article takes for granted notions of neoliberal responses. It is hoped that neoliberal approaches would result in fair and equitable climate responses. This study points out that any climate change response principle

should seek to address global inequalities, intra and extra-territorial inequalities. Climate change widens these. A system that critically restructures our conditions of existing with nature should question the political-economic foundations of neoliberalism and argue for a radical detour that puts people and the environment over profit.

Similar to Nkoana-Mashabane, Eleanor Momborg, in the story “It’s all eyes on UN climate talks” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011), saw the talks in Durban as pivotal “to finalise details for implementation of the fund [Green Climate Fund],” a fund that “would assist poor nations adapt to and mitigate climate change”. The success of the Durban climate negotiations was to be evaluated against the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund. Failure to operationalise the fund was constructed Edna Molewa as a failure for South Africa because: “We have a name to lose... the name South Africa is very expensive”. This quote in the article from Edna Molewa (also head of the South African delegation) sums up the overall agenda of South Africa. It was more of a geopolitical and diplomatic win than one for the environment. The country wanted to make a name for itself for hosting a successful meeting that operationalised the Green Climate Fund and secured a second Kyoto commitment period. The agenda of the talks, thus, was mired in this diplomatic race to pitch South Africa as a key player at the multilateral level for global climate governance. It was part of the South African policy, to emerge as a key leader in these talks and secure international victory. By securing the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund, South Africa hoped to appease “poor countries”. The operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund is moralised because it would “assist poor nations to adapt to and mitigate climate change” and this type of discourse takes for granted the view that the fund automatically ‘helps’ poor nations. Therefore, South Africa, by pursuing this agenda, was a champion of poor nations that it spoke for and act on behalf of. The political economy of the green climate fund is missing from the story.

The story “For Earth, against the odds,” (Maureen Isaacson, *Sunday Independent*, 13 November 2011) mirrors government-sponsored activism. June Josephs-Langa (the Chief Executive Officer of the Environmental Affairs Department’s Indalo Yethu) contributed to constructing the South African position regarding the climate change negotiations in Durban. Josephs-Langa amplified the construction of the global North as unfaithful and failing to honour their promise of contributing “0.7 percent of their annual GDP to the fund set up to address the dire consequences

of climate change for developing countries”. The global South is constructed as a unity and as passive victims of climate change and in need of aid in order to adapt and mitigate. The unitisation of the global South helped in constructing all as having the same emissions dynamics and even the economies in transition in the global South, presently responsible for emissions (Brazil, India, China and South Africa) are lumped together and scrutiny on their emissions efforts and non-efforts is erased from the discourse. The story portrayed the world as a duality between the global North and south with the former being responsible and the latter as passive victims. Effectively, the high emissions from the global South, especially the economies in transition were passivised and nominalised through the discourse.

News stories in the *Sunday Independent* saw the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund as part of the principles agreed in Cancun Mexico during COP16. Fiona Macleod’s story “Green Fund may be only positive to come from COP17,” (*Sunday Independent*, 04 December 2011) argued that the operationalisation of the green climate fund was one of the key target achievements of the South African government. The government had hoped to have the Green Climate Fund operationalised in Durban. This would have been a diplomatic score for the government. The story signals that there was no hope on other agenda items (Kyoto Protocol Second Commitment Period, a globally binding climate change deal etc.). Trevor Manuel, the Planning Minister expressed hope that COP17 would deliver a Green Climate Fund operationalisation mechanism, noting a deal on the fund “was not dead in the water”. Manuel argued that the “fund has not failed. We should not fret negotiation grandstanding”. The story constructed climate change negotiation as geopolitically divided between the developed global North and the developing global South. The talks were not producing results because of these geopolitical divides and the United States is especially represented as a villain at the talks for refusing to sign up. The story stated that “the US and Saudi Arabia had earlier withdrawn their support for the design and modalities of the climate change financial mechanism”. The United States and Saudi Arabia, together with some developed countries are portrayed as working against a deal on the Green Climate Fund. The global North is constructed as having the historical responsibility to provide climate change finance “to assist developing countries to kickstart mitigation and adaptation programmes, including reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation [REDD], adaptation, technology development and transfer and capacity building”.

Manuel is cited emphasising on this global North responsibility: “The biggest problems relate to firstly, persuading lawmakers in the rich world that they have a responsibility to the rest of the world.” The emphasis on global North responsibility should not be seen as a common and inevitable course but rather as a deliberate South African government policy to other and export responsibility on climate change. This is done under the auspices of the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities principle of 1992, without paying attention to the present growth of emissions in the BRICS, economies in transition and South Africa included. The continuous and consistent export of responsibility allows South Africa to propagate the discourse on the need to ‘catch-up’ and develop using fossil fuels under the logic of ‘the right to pollute’. It defers South Africa’s climate change responsibility.

The entire story lacked ideological disagreement as it relied on a single actor, Trevor Manuel. The views of Manuel represent the policy discourses of South Africa as expressed in the Climate Change Response White Paper. These views of Manuel are reproduced and are pitched to the readers as consensus views and the only ones accessible and available. They become common sense. The granting of officials extensive discursive space allows them to set the parameters for issue-definition and their solutions towards climate change to achieve a discursive-hegemonic consensus because they are uncontested. The reproduction of these worldviews excludes other available discourses, other actors and other narratives. Crucially, the South African government has the capacity to set the climate agenda, define the issues and offer solutions that are put to the people as moral, natural and in the interest of the country.

Eleanor Momberg’s “MDG goals at risk, UN report warns,” (*Sunday Independent*, 11 December 2011), made it morally binding that climate change negotiations should have come up with a “legally binding agreement setting targets for the immediate reduction of carbon emissions” together with the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund to avert the effects of climate change. The Green Climate Fund operationalisation is represented as an issue of morality and common sense because:

Creating a Green Climate Fund and ensuring long-term funding for mitigation and adaptation in the developing world has been vital not only to ensure communities did not suffer food and water shortages or have their lives claimed by climatic changes in future,

but also for development of technology and skills to come up with alternative ways of providing the services and development needed without increasing carbon emissions (Eleanor Momborg, “MDG goals at risk, UN report warns,” *Sunday Independent*, 11 December 2011).

The story expressed optimism in the Green Climate Fund as an adaptation and mitigation financing scheme. The fund was built as a moral intervention because it would avert food and water shortages in the global South and lead to emissions reductions. Techno-optimism is represented as a common-sense worldview, by so doing the neoliberal green capitalism agenda was legitimised and moralised. It is represented through the public idiom/translation into a common-sense everyday language, for example, statements such as “it is vital not only to ensure communities did not suffer food and water shortages or have their lives claimed by climatic changes ... but also for the development of technology”. The story moralised neoliberal techno-optimistic responses.

The high carbon emissions from South Africa are acknowledged but passivised: “Despite South Africa being the 13th highest carbon emitter in the world, particularly because of its reliance on the coal-based power supply, Africa is the lowest contributor to climate change. But it is the hardest hit.” Momborg diminished the agency of South African emissions, though acknowledged as high, were insignificant because, after all, Africa was the lowest contributor to global emissions. South Africa and Africa were produced as passive victims of climate change that needed urgent climate finance to help the continent cope with climate impacts. The emphasis on victimhood and vulnerability essentially prioritised discourses on aid and finance over mitigation action, of which South Africa, as the 13th emitter globally, ought to be contributing. The passive agency of the global South is emphasised regarding victimhood constructions and at the same agency regarding emissions is passivised. Molewa is represented arguing that “We are highly dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as rain-fed agriculture. Combined with severe development challenges the continent already faces, this makes Africa particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change”. Molewa’s use of the discursive tool of oral models and public translation helped her assume the position of speaking on behalf of everyone in Africa: “We are highly dependent” becomes some sought of universalising language meant to interpellate and constitute subjects as well-represented in discourse. While this could be correct, the overemphasis on vulnerability diminishes the prospects of critiquing South Africa’s active agency and complicity in present

emissions, thus, creating a new perspective where South Africa is not just a passive victim but an active agent in creating the ecological and climate crisis.

The vulnerability is co-sponsored by the World Bank's Andrew Steer who, through discourse, created unity and universality of 'developing countries' with equal and similar climate dynamics. This unity is produced as having to suffer "three-quarters of the negative impacts of changing weather patterns, water shortages, and rising sea levels, and they are the least equipped to deal with them". This, therefore, justified and moralised calls for the developed global North countries to provide the 'essential' Green Climate finance to help the 'poor victims of climate change cope'.

The story "Tough talks ahead on climate change," (Eleanor Momberg, *Sunday Independent*, 23 October 2011) set out South Africa's expectations at the global climate change talks in Durban 2011 (COP17). Key for South Africa was a second Kyoto commitment period and the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund. The Green Climate Fund was necessary "to help nations adapt to climate change". The Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa, was cited arguing that it was the responsibility of rich nations to "assist particularly the least developed nations and low-lying Island states, to among others, adapt to climate change, mitigate its effects". There is a bi-polar representation of countries along with the rich-poor binaries. South Africa is constructed as a representative and a voice of the developing poor countries fighting against climate villains such as the United States and Saudi Arabia that were against a Green Climate Fund operational mechanism: "a final deal could face yet another delay after the withdrawal of support from the United States and Saudi Arabia for the design and modalities of the fund." The story also highlighted the deep-rooted divisions within the global climate change multilateral negotiating blocs. "Part of the debate in recent months had been fairness and whether fast-developing economies such as India, China, Brazil and South Africa should not also contribute to the Fund". These views were represented indirectly and are not expanded on. The story did not mention who the sponsor(s) of these views are. The story builds the narrative around 'fairness' by implicitly invoking the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities.

Climate change is constructed as an environmental problem that could be overcome through economic modernisation (Promethean solutions) such as carbon trade and technological

innovation. It is argued in this study that the plausible way to respond to climate change would be through addressing and transforming the very issues at the root of climate decay, consumption and capitalist accumulation. The story is silent on how the Green Climate Fund would radically alter and restructure the processes of production and accumulation that are the foundations of the capitalist risk society. Providing finance through the Green Climate Fund is not in any way related to key issues of aggressive emissions reduction to avoid warming beyond 1.5° Celsius by 2100.

Edna Molewa, in the Op-Ed, “Need to clear air over climate finance,” (*Sunday Independent*, 14 December 2014), argued that reaching a global climate deal depended on the financial package given to developing countries: “While there are many pillars in the negotiations [for a global climate deal], finance is considered the main element under the means of implementation”. A global climate deal was supposed to come up with a financial package to enable developing countries to adapt to the negative impacts of climate change and develop in a cleaner way. Molewa argued that climate finance “is directly linked to the level of action envisaged as needing to be taken by developing countries to deal with climate challenges in adaptation and mitigation”. Molewa moved the argument that the global North needed to provide a sound financial mechanism to help the developing countries adapt and mitigate. The responsibility for climate action is put in the hands of the global North: “It is time for all those who bear the greatest responsibility for the effects of climate change to show leadership”. While Molewa conceded in the article that South Africa’s emissions would peak and begin to fall in 2035, she argued that South Africa was “managing the transition to an internationally-competitive low-carbon economy and society” alongside what she called “South Africa’s national priorities for sustainable development”.

Yolandi Groenewald’s Op-Ed “COP21 - it’s about money,” (*City Press*, 13 December 2015) reproduced the claim that without finance, developing countries were unable to take climate action. Climate action, especially mitigation efforts, were expected to be led by the global North countries because of historical responsibility and because “they have” and “we don’t have”. South Africa and other economies in transition such as India and China were treated in the story as developing countries who are passive victims of climate change without the capacity to act in the absence of financial aid. South Africa’s Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa was directly cited by

Groenewald arguing that “We are a developing nation, and we need the funds to switch We, as South Africa, are quite insistent that rich countries should come to the party with financing”. The global climate talks were constructed along the dichotomous lines with developing countries on the one-hand (passive victims) and developed countries (culprits) on the other. The divisions mirror the outward geopolitical character of the North-South relations that are marked by suspicion and mistrust. The global North is represented as countries attempting to evade responsibility because they “want major developing nations such as China and India to also contribute to the pot [climate finance]”.

The construction of climate change in this way passivised and nominalised present climate change responsibility and promoted inaction from the developing global South. While climate finance is important, there is a need for discourses that seek to expose the complicit nature of economies in transition. The provision of finance to the developing countries was produced as fair and normal. The use of sources that had a consensus point of view withheld ideological disagreement and helped create a one-dimensional story. The story, therefore, legitimised the views of the NGOs, reproducing them as the most normal and without alternative. The developing global South countries are represented as victims who should be compensated. The agency of the global South in emissions is passivised and no attention is paid, in particular, the high emissions from BRICS. Interesting to note is also that, by way of articulation, it is possible to see how the discourses on finance from the NGO actors cohered well with the global South governments' discourses, especially South Africa.

The Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa, contributed Op-Ed articles also to *City Press* and attempted to promote the official government position of doing nothing without the provision of climate finance. In an Op-Ed “COP21: SA needs help to reduce emissions,” (Edna Molewa, *City Press*, 13 December 2015), the country needed “help [finance]to reduce emissions”. Climate finance was a central issue at the Paris talks: “One of the central issues throughout COP21 negotiations in Paris has been the provision of climate finance to enable developing countries to enhance their ambitions of reducing carbon emissions pre-2020.” Molewa discursively constructed South Africa as a developing country “particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change”. The labelling of South Africa as a developing country passively affected by climate effects helped

to diminish and silence debates around South Africa's climate change responsibilities as a key greenhouse gas emitter globally. It helped to create a sense of sympathy and generalised South Africa into a bunch of poor countries who have no role to play and are just victims of risks created elsewhere.

To further cover up the discussion of South African emissions, Molewa entrenched her narrative within the adaptation discourse to flag away links to the South African emissions. An entrenchment of adaptation stretched the representation of South Africa as a passive victim and thus passivised present emissions that must be reduced with or without climate finance. For Molewa, adaptation needed urgent attention: "adaptation should, of necessity, receive equal priority with mitigation". For adaptation to be successful the Paris "agreement must affirm this obligation of developed countries to provide climate finance that is additional, predictable and sustainable". South Africa, Molewa argued, was "a developmental state" with "a duty ... to advance socio-economic development and transformation to better the lives of all our people" - thus "Our national efforts, notwithstanding, scaling up efforts by developing countries such as ours requires financial investment, the deployment of new and innovative technologies and enhanced capacity for effective implementation".

The Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa, in the article "Implementing the Paris climate agreement calls for big money," (*Mail & Guardian*, 21 October 2016) praised the signing of the Paris Accord at COP21 in 2015 but warned that South Africa needed "big money" to implement it. In the article, Molewa, through nominalisation and passivisation, attempted to foreground the need for finance from developed global North countries and does not mention or discuss South Africa's present culpability in emissions and the responses thereof. Molewa constructed South Africa as a passive victim of climate change in need of aid. South Africa and the developing countries in general, could only scale up their Paris agreement ambitions provided there was monetary assistance: "The reality is that developing countries can only scale up their climate action efforts with significant investment." The global North countries, in Molewa's view, were supposed to, according to the Paris Agreement, "provide \$100-billion a year by 2020 and scaling that up in 2025".

In the *Sunday Times* Op-Ed “Let us keep the impetus on climate action,” (23 October 2016), Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa celebrated the multilateral United Nations process celebrated for agreeing to the Paris Agreement. The Paris accord was constructed as a victory for the planet: “It is a victory for climate action”. However, notwithstanding the construction of the Paris agreement as a success, Molewa argued that without South Africa was unable to take climate action under the auspices of the Paris Agreement without assistance from the global North: “South Africa requires funding from international sources as well as a greater role by the private sector if it wants to attain its climate change objectives”. The referral to a “greater role by the private sector” set the tone for market-led response instruments, especially private finance capital. The entrenchment of climate responses within neoliberal discourses is achieved. The ‘greater role by the private sector’ moralised the neoliberal interventions. For Molewa, “the issue of climate finance is critical”. Molewa constructed South Africa, not as an economy in transition, but essentially as a developing country: “The reality is that developing countries such as South Africa can only scale up their climate action efforts with significant investments”. The Paris Accord could only be implemented upon the provision of finance. The finance was “to enable developing countries to meet the costs of adaptation to, and mitigation of the effects of climate change”. Molewa, in stressing the need for finance, saw adaptation as more crucial than anything else. To moralise the call for adaptation finance, Molewa drew upon the impacts of climate change on South Africa: “Like many other countries on the continent, South Africa is semi-arid, with less than 5% of annual rainfall available to recharge our groundwater aquifers”. She gave more examples of impacts such as extreme weather, impacts on health etc. “Scaling up the provision of climate financing is critical if we are to meet the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement”.

Interesting in Edna Molewa’s article is that she does not deal with the aspect of climate change mitigation. While there is a thin line that South Africa was investing heavily in mitigation efforts, the entire article went on to construct South Africa (equated with the rest of Africa and developing poor countries) as a passive victim of climate change. The attempt to universalise the aspect of poverty and ‘developing’ country achieves the discursive agenda of constructing South Africa as a victim in need of ‘financial help’ to adapt. The universalisation passivises and nominalises South

Africa's high emission ratios globally and manages to delete a discussion on the need for South Africa to act in curbing emissions.

Climate finance was so central during the climate change negotiations under the timeframe of this study. Between 2011 and 2018, the issue of climate finance remained an evasive yet central concern for the global South negotiators. The media construction of climate finance centrality was consistent. News stories reproduced the need for climate finance as a moral imperative. Yolandi Groenewald noted that: "Money is a major sticking point in international talks about addressing climate change" (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2018) because the global South countries were not willing to "start planning their transformation into green economies until they knew how much money they will receive from rich countries". The South African position on the need for climate finance is seen as a firm one: "South Africa has been firm that it can't meet its promises made in Paris in 2015 to decarbonise its economy if it doesn't receive financial aid".

7.3.5 Representing uncertainty

Newspapers often constructed climate change negotiations with pessimism. Within this regulatory pessimistic discourse, political actors handling the negotiations were portrayed, most often, as self-interested and uninterested in addressing the climate change problem. This portrayal was mostly applied to actors from the global North, whom most news stories saw as roadblocks to a globally and legally binding climate deal. For example, in the story "Success of summit remains uncertain," by Peter Fabricius (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011), the prospects of COP17 reaching a deal were gloomy. The headline of the story is pessimistic about the prospects about COP17 becoming a success: "Success of summit remains uncertain." For Fabricius, the pessimism also concerned the need for the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund and securing a second Kyoto commitment period: "even the adoption of the Green Climate Fund, the minimum achievement expected, has now been cast in doubt". The story made it simple and expected that the Green Climate Fund and the second Kyoto Protocol commitment period were to be operationalised and extended: "More ambitious expectations such as keeping alive the Kyoto or agreeing to a much broader legally binding treaty which commits all major emitters of carbon to emission cuts, remain even more elusive goals"

Fundamental in the story is how the author assumed and concluded that these were the expectations of everyone. What the story is representing as ‘everyone’s’ expectations, are essentially the expectations of the South African political and climate elites. The success of these meant a diplomatic success for South Africa on the international scene. The South African foreign policy and pride were more important than any concern for nature. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane was quoted cementing the view that the Green Climate Fund was more of a political project than an environmental case: “The Green Climate Fund represents a centrepiece of a broader set of outcomes for Durban”. The Green Climate Fund was important for South Africa because “it will help finance the efforts of poor countries to mitigate and adapt to the effects of global warming”. This moral role of the fund made South Africa’s clamour for its adoption, a necessary moral duty. However, it should be argued that while the fund was thought to be the “centrepiece”, the involvement of private international capital is not questioned. The impact of the fund in extending the debt, inequalities and further making vulnerable the economies of the global South to debt from the global North is silent. The adoption of the fund and the preservation of the Kyoto process are constructed as views and aspirations of ‘everyone’ except those against nature. Left unquestioned are the consequences of the solutions on social and environmental inequality and justice. The story reproduced the Kyoto Protocol and the Green Climate Fund as necessary and progressive responses to climate change, hence failure to agree on these meant the summit would have been a failure.

The theme of uncertainty is also found in the *Sunday Independent* story, “Climate deal a few years away,” (Eleanor Momberg, 11 December 2011). Governments at COP17 were constructed as self-centred because they were failing to come up with “a legally binding global treaty that would save the world from an environmental catastrophe”. The failure was a failure of South Africa’s diplomatic efforts at a global multilateral level. The failure went against President Jacob Zuma’s call to “save tomorrow today” through “an accord that would force rich nations to cut carbon emissions while financially aiding poor nations mitigate and adapt to climate change or a second commitment to the Kyoto Protocol”. Zuma’s call for emissions reductions to be done in the global North is reproduced as common sense. Connotatively, such a call was made in the context of the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities. The othering of emissions (the rich

nations are responsible) worked in diminishing the calls for economies in transition such as South Africa to take responsibility for present emissions. Further, the consistent call for a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period also helped in helping South Africa continue with business-as-usual industrial emissions since South Africa, a non-Annexure 1 country, is not obliged to reduce its emissions as it is categorised as a poor country. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which South Africa sought to extend, would have passivised and nominalised the need for economies in transition to curb their emissions.

The article geo-politically saw the historically responsible global North as having the responsibility to reduce emissions and fund mitigation and adaptation in the global South. South Africa had hoped to persuade the global North to agree to an accord. However, part of the failure of the Durban negotiations arose out of the request by the developed countries for economies in transition to commit and do more to cut their present emissions. The global North is blamed in the story for stalling the talks. “Instead, the developed world, through the EU, appeared to have won the day with most countries supporting their idea of a carbon emission reduction agreement that would be designed and finalised by 2015”. The blame is apportioned on the global North and the global South is represented as having approached the negotiations innocently. Missing from the argument is what the global South economies in transition had offered to reduce their emissions that are presently responsible for global warming. The article highlights the discord and mistrust that characterised COP17 negotiations. Deep divisions emerged between the United States, India, China on one side with South Africa, Brazil and Small Island Nations on the other.

The bickering among nations during COP17 climate change negotiations in Durban are exposed in the story, “COP17 threatened by delays,” (Peter Fabricius, *Sunday Independent*, 11 December 2011). The European was represented as a progressive global actor because of “its conditional proposal to keep the Kyoto Protocol alive if other big greenhouse gas emitters such as the US, China, India, and Brazil, which are not bound by Kyoto, agree in Durban to start negotiating a new treaty that would bind them too”. However, these good gestures from the European Union were being met with reluctance from “the US, China and India ... to commit themselves to such legal constraints”. The story documented the geopolitical differences, especially the refusal by India,

China and the US to a legally binding second Kyoto commitment period that would limit their economic activity.

Similar to other Op-Eds in the *Sunday Independent*, Liz Clarke's article, "Gloom and doom hang in the air at climate talks," (*Sunday Independent*, 04 December 2011) represented the uncertainty that characterised the climate change negotiations happening in Durban. The article was sceptical that the talks in Durban would produce anything tangible. For Liz Clarke, it was all "gloom and doom". Clarke portrayed the politicians, "world's polluters," gathered in Durban as people pursuing their selfish national interests and "playing Russian roulette with human existence" despite the warnings from scientists that the "world teeters on point of no return". The article used scientific instrumentalisation to call out the selfish interests of the politicians negotiating. The reliance on scientific instrumentalisation unintentionally depoliticised the climate story by constructing science as unquestionable and beyond criticism. The reliance on science excluded the cultural politics of climate change and attention to the political-economic logic underpinning the selfish interests of individual countries is diminished: "The bottom line, hammered home by every scientist on the planet, was that if humans don't put the brakes on dirty fossil fuel emissions ... life as we know it will come to an end". The divisions and bickering characterising COP17 are exposed in the article:

Main players in this planetary tug of war are the polluters doing everything in their power to defer any meaningful agreements on dirty business to the next COP and the next. Next door are green engineers pushing for alternative energy, from windmills, to water, nuclear to natural gas.

Notwithstanding wide support for the United Nations multilateral climate governance systems, some news reports depicted pessimism towards multilateralism. For example, the story "A climate for change," (Siphesihle Mthembu, *City Press*, 04 December 2011), relied on artistes gathered in Durban in December 2011 for discourse definition. The central theme in the story was the role of art and artistes in climate responses. The artistes "from across the globe are in Durban to make sure COP17 is more than a talkshop". The statement implied that the official United Nations gathering was simply a "talkshop" with no results coming out to save the planet. The meeting of the artistes became a platform to delegitimise the United Nations multilateral system and an approach to involve the ordinary people. The newspaper discourse noted that the artistes were

converging as part of “a civil society climate conference”. Angus Joseph from Durban Knights (organisers of the art exhibition) was quoted arguing: “It’s important for us to speak directly to people so that they can join the call for immediate action.” By way of opposition, Joseph constructed the United Nations COP17 as a gathering that did not involve or include people. He described it as a “conference of polluters”.

Yolandi Groenewald’s story, “COP17 dithers as earth withers,” (*City Press*, 11 December 2011), expressed disappointment at the slow pace of negotiations and the likely on the deal outcome. The headline expressed this disappointment: “COP17 dithers as earth withers”. The failure to reach an agreement would be embarrassing for South Africa’s diplomatic status: “SA will have egg on its face if the event ends without a solid agreement”. The only hope expressed in the story was for COP17 to adopt the green climate fund operational mechanism. The text produced at the talks was described as “weak”. Sam Smith (World Wide Fund for Nature) is indirectly represented arguing that “the text available yesterday had not gone far enough to keep the global temperature rise under the necessary 2oC”. In the same story, Kumi Naidoo of Greenpeace saw the negotiations deadlock as a victory for “the carbon cartels [who] will once more be drinking champagne and dancing in the streets of Durban tonight - job done, business as usual”.

The story’s “Can COP17 forge global consensus?” (Lucky Biyase, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) the headline was sceptical that a globally binding climate deal could be reached in Durban. This pessimism was because “climate change [was] low on agenda in face of the world’s economic woes”. A deal was impossible because of deviant and environmentally irresponsible actors such as the United States and China. Shaun Nel, from BDO Consulting, was directly represented labelling the United States and China as lacking the will “to commit to targets”. Richard Worthington from WWF for Nature is also quoted promoting the scepticism. The climate change negotiations are constructed as being held back by the United States, China and other vested interests domestically: “hurdles at the conference will stem from the reluctance of the US to embrace a multilateral approach, its opposition to any binding agreement and its apparent refusal to stop free-riding on the efforts of others to avert climate catastrophe”. The global North is consistently constructed as villains and hurdles to a climate deal. Tony Twine of Econometrix is

represented in the story criticising the global North political leaders of being selfish and unconcerned about the environment: “Politicians in the developed, western world are hanging on to their jobs by their fingertips, and very few ruling parties of today will still be in power in five years’ time”. The global North is represented in the news media as the impediments to successful climate change negotiations. The global North, blamed for historical responsibility but unwilling to act, is dichotomously represented in opposition to the global South that was not historically responsible, likely to suffer more but willing to act. The global South is universalised, even countries with high emissions whose economies are fast developing are bundled together as poor and passive victims of global warming and climate change.

Lucky Biyase’s construction of climate change negotiations along the pessimism and uncertainty planes continued throughout the duration of COP17. In the story “COP17 deal unlikely amid uncertainty,” (*Sunday Times*, 04 December 2011), the headline shows the *Sunday Times* was sceptical and uncertain about COP17 reaching any global climate agreement: “COP17 deal unlikely amid uncertainty”. The negotiators at COP17 were constructed as self-interested: “Fighting climate change is a sideshow in the minds of those at the Conference of Parties when their political survival is at stake.” Canada was labelled and delegitimised: “Canada has indicated that it will not commit itself to a second Kyoto period after 2012 unless the world’s biggest emitters such as China, the US agree to an internationally binding deal”. South Africa is constructed as a progressive and responsible country that sought a fair deal. Tasneem Essop was directly represented arguing that “Countries like South Africa that play a progressive and facilitative role in trying to find a common good to find solutions are also those that understand that climate effects will incur major costs”. Within this construction, the global North was represented as not progressive and irresponsible. The global North was oppositionally constructed against the global South that is responsible and caring.

Rene Vollgraaff’s story “Scepticism about COP17 deal,” (*Sunday Times*, 31 July 2011) shed light on the pessimistic attitude that some people had towards COP17 producing a global climate deal. The headline is reinforced by the lead paragraph that noted that “there is much scepticism about the possible outcomes of the event”. The story quoted Rentia van Tonder, head of the Green

Industry Strategic Business Unit at the Industrial Development Corporation, reinforcing the scepticism: “We have not really seen much happening subsequent to other such events”. Faith in the United Nations multilateral system was diminished and a call towards unilateral and unilateral action was made.

Similar to the frustrations expressed in the *Sunday Independent* and *Sunday Times* in 2011, the *Mail & Guardian* in 2013 produced stories that showed disappointment and frustration with the international climate negotiations. This disappointment is manifest in stories such as “Bonn-fire of vanities,” (Michelle Nel, *Mail & Guardian*, 06 June 2013). In this story, the newspaper discourse showed disappointment with the lack of action and progress in the international global climate change negotiations, especially the failure to secure a binding global climate deal and a mechanism to operationalise a second Kyoto Protocol commitment period as envisaged under the Durban Platform. “International negotiations to build a successor to Kyoto continued in Bonn in May. But, is the process just a tedious, expensive talk shop to fiddle with documents while the planet burns?”. “Negotiations for a new protocol to reduce carbon emissions have been slow but temperatures continue to rise”. Despite the frustrations with the failure to find common ground, crucial to note however, is that the article saw and constructed the global multilateral system as the natural and best platform to address the climate change crisis: “One of the achievements of the COP17 climate change meeting in Durban in 2011 was an agreement by countries to establish a binding global treaty for emissions reductions by 2025”. The story directly represented the UNFCCC’s Christiana Figueres warning that the “recent record levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere should prompt governments to take climate change seriously”. The allusion to increased temperatures amid slow or non-productive negotiations was used to paint the political systems as pursuing selfish interests at the expense of the environment. Tasneem Essop of WWF for Nature is directly represented expressing the same disappointment in the negotiations: “The underlying political barriers - for example, north versus south will still exist and will probably re-emerge as the real negotiations take place up to 2015”. Ferrial Adam of Greenpeace Africa was quoted also expressing disappointment: “The negotiations are moving extremely slowly”.

In the story, South Africa is portrayed as a villain and a stumbling block to emissions reduction because “we celebrate baby steps while science is screaming for great leaps”. Ferrial Adam argued

that “South Africa, as one of the biggest emitters of CO₂, should play a leading role” and criticised the construction of “two of the biggest coal-fired power stations in the world and declaring coal a strategic resource bodes poorly for South Africa’s commitments, and is disappointing given that Africa will be on the frontline of climate change impacts”. Further, Bob Scholes from CSIR also expressed disappointment noting that: “The rate at which countries are agreeing to reduce their greenhouse emissions- and then actually doing it is currently far too slow to avoid a global temperature rise.” Similarly, the South African government’s continued investment in coal was demoralised and delegitimised as irresponsible:

South Africa is building two massive coal-fired plants at Kusile and Medupi (the world’s third and fourth-largest), opening an anticipated 40 new coal mines in spite of scandalous local air and water pollution, and claiming that more ‘carbon space’ to pollute the air and thus threaten future generations is required for ‘development’ (Patrick Bond, “SA reps at climate talks ‘are letting us down’,” *Sunday Independent*, 06 February 2011).

The sub-theme of representing COP negotiations pessimism and uncertainty found space also in the *Sunday Times*. Happy Khambule’s Op-Ed “COP has negotiated all my life. Now close the gap,” (*Sunday Times*, 21 November 2013) saw the negotiations as a site of geopolitical struggle between the global North and the south: “developed countries have insisted that the mitigation gap should be addressed based on what they call Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities, which includes the role of developing countries in addressing the present gap”. The author expressed a loss of hope in the COP process due to delays in reaching a globally binding climate deal: “You have negotiated all my life. How much more time do you need?”.

The story “Climate is changing. So must we,” (Ufrieda Ho, *Sunday Times*, 18 November 2015) expressed pessimism on the COP process which it described as dysfunctional. The headline “Climate is changing. So must we” called attention to the need for a global climate deal that took concern of the affected people. The negotiations and global politicians were represented as restrained by their selfish interests: “For global leaders the big push has come in the form of the UN Conference of the Parties processes, but they are already 21 years old and still the talking continues”. Collen Vogel (from the Wits University Global Change and Sustainability Institute) argued in the story that COPs were characterised by disappointments: “The big disappointment

over the past 21 years has been COP Copenhagen in 2009, when we failed to get firm commitments to emissions reduction.”

For Ufrieda Ho, COP meetings were only going to be successful if there were “hard and fast emission cuts and real penalties for transgressors”. Contrary to the dominant bi-polar distinctions that consistently blamed the global North for stalling climate action, Bobby Peek (an environmentalist) criticised fast-developing economies in the global South for consistent refusal to cut emissions using the “right to pollute” premise.

Countries such as China, India and South Africa are hiding behind their poor and claiming they need more Medupis and Kusiles [coal-fired power stations] but they are actually not getting energy to the poor. The North has outsourced its carbon emissions to us and our spineless politicians have accepted this at the expense of the poor. The poor have become poorer and there is an increase in global poverty and inequality (Ufrieda Ho, “Climate is changing. So must we,” *Sunday Times*, 18 November 2015).

Sipho Kings’ feature article, “Africa will burn after timid talks,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 11 December 2015), represented the Paris COP21 negotiations as chaotic and with little chances of success. The headline of the article “Africa will burn after timid talks” showed disappointment and pessimism on the negotiations. Africa was thus constructed as a victim of “timid talks” whose results “guarantees that the Earth will be 3° C hotter this century”. Kings had faith in and endorsed the green economy ideology. “Spend some money now on greener economy which in itself will drive a whole new industry - or spend a whole lot more dealing with the damage a changing climate will do to the economy”. The neoliberal ideology in Kings’ article was also supported by the endorsement of multilateral neoliberal Kyoto Protocol. Kings argued that the UNFCCC’s “first success was the Kyoto Protocol in 1997”. Kyoto, as has been shown in this study, is one of the worst instruments in addressing climate change because it subjects nature to profit dictates through the commodification and financialisation of nature.

The BASIC group are constructed as refusing to be environmentally responsible because “they sought to defend their high-coal development pathways. Led by China, it [BASIC] sank COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009”. The structure of the Paris Agreement proposal, Kings argued, does “enough to keep global warming to just below 3°C this century” which in itself “is catastrophic”. The pledges by the United States and China were portrayed as “just politicking”. The “Oil-rich

countries such as Saudi Arabia” were vilified as seeking “the weakest agreement possible to secure their oil revenues” together with the BASIC group “which wants to avoid responsibility for their growing emissions, while still getting funding from developed countries to adapt to climate change”. Developing countries were represented as passive victims of climate change: “the poorest and most vulnerable countries, such as island states ... are already suffering from climate change”.

The European Union was portrayed as a responsible negotiator: “Europe and most developing countries want an agreement that keeps the world less than 1.5° C hotter”. The goodwill from Europe was being scuppered by the:

Basic group [which] largely rejects this [review of INDCs every five years] - particularly India, which is going through a boom in coal-fired power generation. The group is instead focused on the Green Climate Fund, which developed countries set up the Copenhagen COP to disburse 4100-billion a year in climate funding (Sipho Kings’, “Africa will burn after timid talks,” *Mail & Guardian*, 11 December 2015).

The theme of representing negotiations uncertainty is found across the study period 2011 to 2018. In the story, “COP24 ignores dire climate warnings,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *Mail & Guardian*, 18 December 2018), COP24 was portrayed as a failure because it could not get “nations to commit themselves to cut their emissions even further to save the world”. The United States, Kuwait, Russia and Saudi Arabia are constructed as the villain Parties who “worked hard to bury the report (IPCC’s Climate Report) ... countries such as the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Australia and Brazil had clearly shown that they were not prepared to do what they said they would”. The headline of the story “COP24 ignores dire climate warning” constructed politicians as selfish and not pursuing goals meant to save the planet. The story used South African negotiators and actors from the NGOs as discourse definers. The countries that were stumbling blocks were represented dichotomously with nations trying to do something about the environment. South Africa was represented as a key global climate player that was interested in saving the world: “the rulebook negotiations threatened to end in a stalemate, but some political manoeuvring, which the South African delegation helped facilitate, saved the day”.

7.3.6 South Africa and climate diplomacy

The news media managed to portray South Africa as a key actor during global climate change negotiations, especially in 2011 (COP17 in Durban) and 2015 (COP21 in Paris). This kind of representation was entrenched by reproducing the views from the Ministers of Environmental Affairs and International Relations and ambassadors. The Ministers and government officials also often published Op-Eds in newspapers that constructed South Africa positively in global climate governance.

In Sabelo Ndlangisa's story "Norway hopeful before climate talks," (*City Press*, 04 September 2011), South Africa and Norway were represented as progressive countries who sought progress in climate talks. They were climate champions whose work was being disturbed by the irresponsible actions of "Major world economies such as Japan, India, the US and China" who were "reluctant to make far-reaching commitments". The othering and labelling of these 'other' countries created a bi-polar reading of 'us' the good against 'them' environmentally immoral and irresponsible who are selfish and "reluctant" to act against climate change. The othering helped in nominalising and passivising the present role of South Africa in greenhouse gas emissions.

In the article, "SA lauded for significant role in Paris climate change agreement," (Edna Molewa, *Sunday Independent*, 07 February 2016) the Environmental Affairs Minister encouraged South Africa to "be proud of the role played by the entire [negotiations] delegation". South Africa is constructed as a force to be reckoned with: "South Africa played an active and leading role as part of the Africa group" and its "solid reputation and negotiating capabilities in diplomatic circles" was proven at COP21. This deal was achieved, in Molewa's construction, partly through the chairing of the G77+China and because of their role, the South African negotiating delegates were "lauded by the COP21 French presidency and other parties for our role in drawing together the diversity of positions of 136 countries towards a common goal". South Africa was a good representative of the developing countries as it "played a pivotal role in ensuring that the aspirations of developing countries were captured".

7.3.7 Representing South Africa's double standards

While the South African government sought to portray an image of good environmental and global stewardship, discourse actors from environmental civil society groups and some academics called out the government for what they perceived to be double standards. These actors delegitimised South Africa's international posture, arguing that actions at home were not in sync with environmental and climate change demands. Coal expansion was seen by these actors as retrogressive and worth abandoning. The Op-Ed, "SA reps at climate talks 'are letting us down'," by Patrick Bond (*Sunday Independent*, 06 February 2011) criticised South Africa's proposals towards reducing emissions through "nuclear" and "carbon trading". Bond criticised the neoliberal approaches that the South African government pursued arguing that they lacked credible reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. He described the South African Green Paper on climate change as 'embarrassing' because it promoted "two dangerous strategies - nuclear energy and carbon trading". The negotiating teams from South Africa were accused in the article of "joining a contradictory movement of emerging economic powers that both want to retain Kyoto's North-South differentiation of responsibility to cut emissions and to either gut Kyoto's binding targets or establish complicated, fraud-ridden offsets and carbon trades that would have the same effect". Bond's article also delegitimised the United Nations multilateral system that he described as a "Conference of Polluters". Carbon trading, a neoliberal instrument under the Kyoto Protocol, was seen as a way of making profits at the expense of the climate. The economic modernisation and geoengineering approaches and the introduction of GMOs are seen as having the same effect, that of propelling capitalism and the ecological risks and health risks as well.

Synonymous with criticisms on coal projects by Greenpeace and WWF for Nature, Patrick Bond "Eskom's supply of the cheapest electricity in the world to two of the biggest mining/metals companies in the world (BHP Billiton and Anglo American Corporation)" as part of South Africa's emissions problem. The policy to continue with the extraction of coal through the 'development card', thus, served "major corporations instead" of ordinary people. Bond attempted to demystify the lies in the government's claims that local use was for development purposes because only the minerals-energy complex benefited and not the ordinary people. The interests of the minerals-energy complex were being served by the government. Patrick Bond re-articulated the climate change problem as a problem of capitalism. He disentangled the myth promoted by the government

that they needed more coal usage for development purposes, rather, he began to link the desire for coal exploitation to the profit interests of the minerals-energy complex.

In the Op-Ed, “COP17’s dirty secret: another failure will please certain South Africans,” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011,) Patrick Bond argued that South Africa’s interests in COP17 were “grounded in the crony-capitalist minerals-energy complex”.

Although Pretoria claims a desire for the Kyoto Protocol’s extension after 2012, this appears a rhetorical gambit to bait-and switch on the other African delegates, now holed up at the Hilton, because satisfying both Washington and Beijing also ensures our elites’ prosperity (Patrick Bond, “COP17’s dirty secret: another failure will please certain South Africans,” *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) .

For Bond, the neoliberal climate change responses favoured by South Africa would benefit South Africa’s elite. “A good measure of our economic elites’ addiction to fossil fuels is carbon intensity per capita unit of output, and we have among the world's highest, far worse than even that great climate Satan, the US”. Bond built a biographical picture of all the things that showed South Africa’s insecurity when it comes to emissions reduction: (a) R250- billion-plus worth of coal-fired electricity generators being built by Eskom at Medupi and Kusile (b) The continued operation and expansion of Sasol’s gasification plant at Secunda in Mpumalanga (c) Approval of 40 (forty) new coal mines in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo and (d) The one-trillion rand nuclear project.

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter built a historical representational overview on how the South African news media represented climate change negotiations between 2011 and 2018. The negotiations were a major feature in the news media coverage and representation of climate change. The negotiations were represented and constructed as a site of geopolitical contestation and struggle between the developed global North and the developing global South. The global North was predominantly constructed as a blockade and stalling the achievement of a globally binding climate change deal. The North was constructed as selfish, unwilling to honour their historical responsibility and truant. The developing global South was represented as a passive victim of climate change. The global North was ‘othered’ and was to bear the cost of emissions reduction and adaptation because they were ‘historically responsible’. Interesting to note from this discursive strategy is that while

'historical responsibility' is emphasised, there is silence on 'present responsibility' which is more crucial and where South Africa is a key culprit. Geopolitics in the news was achieved by othering the global North as 'villains' while the global South is constructed as 'victims' whose agency in the climate problem is immaterial.

Chapter Eight: Contradictory National Discourses: The Political Economy of Climate Change and Energy in South African

8.1 Introduction

This study observes that any understanding of climate change mitigation discourses in South Africa should involve a deeper appreciation of the political economy of energy in the country. The social formations/blocs with vested interests in energy hold much influence on climate change decision-making and policy direction. The South African energy ‘futures’ (energy mix) terrain is a key feature of the news media representations of climate change and global warming. Future energy choices have a bearing on whether the country will be able to meet its obligations on emissions reductions and decarbonise its industry. Climate change discourses in South Africa are intertwined with energy discourses. Fundamentally, any climate mitigation action is linked to the country’s energy complex. The climate and energy discourses intersect, at some moments, as allies and at some as adversaries. Climate mitigation requires a reduction in emissions, mostly from the energy industry and thus, discursive and policy conflicts are inevitable. This chapter presents the analyses and interpretation of climate change mitigation debates as they permeated the South African news media, identifying the critical discourses on mitigation and energy and linking discourses to the vested interests of the actors that promoted them. Discourses on coal indispensability, nuclear optimism and shale gas optimism are a preserve of the minerals-energy complex, the Department of Energy (DoE) and that of Mineral Resources, the beneficiaries of any developments in those sectors. The actors from these sectors and institutions used the discursive strategies of moralisation and economisation to moralise the ‘need’ for South Africa to use coal because the country was still ‘developing’ and thus coal was necessary for economic growth and international trade competitiveness. These actors also promoted the oxymoron of ‘clean coal’.

Oppositional discourses (coal, nuclear and shale gas diffidence) competed for discursive signification in the news media representations of the South African energy futures. Actors from environmental non-governmental organisations and academics mainly sponsored the oppositional discourses. In expressing opposition to coal, shale gas and nuclear, these actors promoted the Promethean techno-renewable energy optimism. At some moments, their discourses converged with the discourses from the government, especially the Department of Environmental Affairs,

that sought to steer South Africa towards ‘renewable-energy’ green growth. The Promethean discourses re/constructed climate change as a problem that could be fixed through technology, techno-managerial strategies and market-led initiatives.

These discourses naturalised geoengineering and green capitalism. They conceptualised (to draw from Pepermans & Maesele 2018, p.642) “nature (including the climate) as a resource that can be mastered through unlimited scientific and technological progress and economic growth” (see also Foster 2010). Economic growth (wealth) and mitigating the climate change risks were seen as complementary and compatible through technological innovation and market activities (the carbon market system).

In discussing the energy and climate change mitigation discourses, it is essential to point out that discourses and knowledge are constitutive. The discourses that get salience can shape knowledge and resultantly also human cognition and the conceptualisation and framing of climate change by the discourse consumers. Knowledge, this study argues, is a result of discourse and discursive hegemony of some knowledge(s) over others. The knowledge(s)/ideologies in discourse are socially constructed by the journalists and the knowledge/social actors who define issues and subjects from their tribal ontologies. This argument is reinforced by the example given by Tor Halvorsen (2017, p.7) when discussing the relationship between knowledge production and creation of social systems that do not favour the majority. Halvorsen observed that during the apartheid era in South Africa “lawyers, social scientists and biblical scholars, in particular, formed an alliance [articulation] with the ruling party. Together they reinforced the foundations of colonialism and created the ideology of apartheid, which legalised and justified racial repression and exploitation” (Halvorsen 2017, p.17).

Similar to Halvorsen’s (2017) argument, the representatives of the minerals-energy complex, the government, the financial industry representatives formed an alliance that culminated in the ideologies of ‘self-preservation’ through pursuing coal for ‘developmental purposes’ and that of ‘sustainable green growth’ both of which are premised on the false hope that economic growth

through neoliberalism would reduce social-internal inequalities and lead to a cleaner and liveable environment (Halvorsen 2017, p.17).

Tor Halvorsen (2017) argued that the

ethical challenge is to find a way out of the contemporary growth paradigm [neoliberalism], which creates wealth for a few at the great cost to nature and the poor while insisting that wealth will eventually trickle down to everyone if we all seek economic growth. Despite much evidence that shows this to be false, a blind faith in the relationship between free trade and widespread prosperity continues to be proclaimed (p.15).

While concern has been placed on discourse, Halvorsen's argument indirectly but more importantly saw knowledge as indispensable in social evolution trajectories. What at times, has been missed, are the consequences of knowledge and the contributions of those who created those knowledge(s). Halvorsen argued that the producers of knowledge have had tremendous power in shaping the world, and he drew references from those who wrote and supported white racism in the United States and the culmination of Donald Trump as a result of actions of knowledge producers of almost a century ago. Inferences are also drawn from Germany. Drawing from Halvorsen's conceptualisation of knowledge and the power of knowledge producers, this study brings in his important views into the study of discourse. Influenced by Halvorsen's ideas, this study argues that discourse is identical to knowledge and ideology. As Halvorsen (2017, p.17) noted: "the real challenge facing the world is a global economy that promises prosperity for all, while, in fact, destabilising the earth's heat balance, causing mass extinctions and leaving more and more people vulnerable to poverty". Capitalism through the exploitation of finite resources leads to the widening of the metabolic and ecological rifts. While it has been taken to be commonsensical to argue that capitalism and democracy all promote prosperity, a sharp warning from Angela Merkel (2014, 109 cited by Halvorsen 2017, p.20) is instructional and provides a basis for questioning how through the veil of democracy, neoliberal policies that favour the few in the minerals-energy complex and government have been possible:

Capitalism and democracy follow different logics: unequally distributed property rights on the one hand, equal civic and political rights on the other, profit-oriented trade within capitalism in contrast to the search for the common good within democracy; debate, compromise and majority decision-making within democratic politics versus hierarchical decision-making by managers and capital owners. Capitalism is not democratic, democracy not capitalistic.

The logic of coal, nuclear and renewable energy, all aspire to satisfy the interests of the few business and economic elites at the expense of the poor. The news media stories analysed show that the aspects of coal, nuclear and renewable energy were constructed and packaged through interpellating the discourse subjects into believing that these discourses spoke about and on behalf of their interests. Hidden underneath the walls of ‘economic development,’ and the vulgar of ‘sustainable development’ were the real beneficiaries of such neoliberal policies, all of which negatively bear on the human-nature relationships and are characterised by intensified exploitation of people and the environment.

8.2 ‘Coal is indispensable in the South African Economy’: Dominant Discursive Voices

The discourse on coal indispensability relied on strategies of rationalism, economisation, common sense and moralism. Coal was portrayed as ‘cheap’, ‘quick’, and the ‘best’, way to provide energy for development. The continued use of coal (whether ‘dirty’ or ‘clean’) served the political, economic, social and moral imperative of development and growth. The key actors (Eskom, coal-mining companies, mining companies who benefit from cheap electricity, Sasol, and the government) propelled this discourse in the news media. While coal indispensability discourses found their way into the *Sunday Independent*, *the Sunday Times* and *City Press*, the entire sample frame from the *Mail & Guardian* did not have any story that promoted such a discourse. Coal indispensability was more prevalent and powerful in the *Sunday Times*, attached to renewable energy diffidence and the rationale of economic development.

To try and intertextually respond to coal criticism, often the sponsors of the coal use discourse applied the oxymoron of ‘clean coal’⁹ as an appeasement strategy. The story “‘Clean’ coal for small carbon footprint,” (Christelle Terreblanche, *Sunday Independent*, 20 February 2011) is an example. The discourse actors, two ministers - Ebrahim Patel (Minister of Economic Development) and Enoch Godongwana (Deputy Minister, Economic Development) contended in the story that South Africa’s energy needs were enormous and while the government acknowledged the need for a transition towards renewables, the present energy needs called for continued coal use. Thus, a discourse benchmarked on the oxymoron of ‘clean coal’ is promoted. Ebrahim Patel defined the discourse arguing that South Africa would pursue a cleaner coal pathway as part of addressing the huge greenhouse gas emissions. The clean coal discourse was embedded within a worldview that sought to continue with coal exploitation if the technology for reducing emissions (at least a cover-up) was available. The continued coal exploitation was moralised by alluding to the need to vigorously pursue ‘economic development’. Enoch Godongwana, in a presentation to parliamentarians, was indirectly represented arguing that “the government was still not persuaded that renewable energy could be adequate for the base-load power supply needed to grow South Africa’s gross domestic product by 4.4 percent a year”.

The government position thus promoted a pessimistic reading of the renewable energy discourses and constructed them as ‘unreliable in the meantime’. The views of the government ministers were reproduced and translated by the structure and language of the news story. The story took as fact, the claims made by Patel and Godongwana. Through the newspaper discourse, it was argued that

⁹ Clean coal involves the use of technologies that seek to reduce the pollution caused by the burning of coal and its processes. The technology is based on carbon capture, flue-gas desulphurisation, fluid-bed combustion, integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC), low nitrogen burners and electrostatic precipitators. Clean coal technology does not reduce emissions emanating from the mining of coal and the processes thereof.

the movement towards 'clean coal' was a solution to South Africa meeting its "commitment to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its coal-dependent economy by 2025".

It is interesting that the newspaper's own discourse constructed and imagined the possibility of 'clean coal' as rational and posing as an alternative energy source. The newspaper discourse did not find it oxymoronic to write about the rhetoric of clean coal. This study maintains that coal is not clean - the clean coal discourse is a culmination of attempts by countries and fossil fuel companies to moralise and legitimise continued coal exploitation under the guise of the planetary scatology of 'clean'. The story used the discursive strategy of discourse translation by translating elite worldviews into common sense language. For example, in the lead paragraph, the story noted that "A move to an alternative 'cleaner' coal is on the cards as the government considers how to meet South Africa's commitment to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its coal-dependent economy by 2025". The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions was made subservient to the need to grow the economy. Patel argued that "We have a major developmental challenge, as a country faced with enormous poverty and unemployment". The continued use of coal, therefore, was a moral issue for the eradication of poverty and providing employment. Patel used language to bring everyone into his discourse. The use of personal pronouns such as "we" was meant to universalise the moral call for continued coal use because 'all of us' needed to develop the economy and create jobs. The use of clean coal was seen as an opportunity by Patel to "link our climate-change commitments and the fact of the economy's coal base and the potential of the green economy". Instead of abandoning coal completely, Patel argued that "the cheap coal method would have to be used as an incentive for South Africa's entry into the renewables market" and "In the meantime, 'gasification' would help clean coal-driven power generation and reduce the country's carbon footprint".

From the news story under analysis, it clear that South Africa sought to address climate change by putting any climate change actions under the subservience of the economic growth imperative. Solutions to climate change needed to be compatible with South Africa's goal of attaining economic growth at all costs. Economic modernisation/Promethean solutions were given prominence. This approach involves optimism in technology to produce 'clean coal' and nuclear

energy technology. Solutions to environmental concerns were to be sought in capitalist tendencies and geoengineering. Attempts were not made in the story to politicise the issue of emissions as an issue of capitalist risk culture. Economic development, loosely translated as endless accumulation and exploitation, was not questioned but solutions were sought from the very economic system at the heart of the ecological biospheric crises. The beneficiaries of continued coal exploitation, the minerals-energy complex, would continue to enjoy low electricity tariffs and pollute the earth. While the provision of electricity is constructed as a moral duty in the story, what is left unanswered is who benefits from coal in South Africa. The reliance on government sources rendered their worldviews common-sense and gained hegemonic discursive power.

Similar to the *Sunday Independent*'s construction of coal as indispensable, the *Sunday Times* by far had more stories devoted towards coal centrality in the South African energy mix. René Vollgraaff's story "Coal is best, cheapest options says Eskom boss," (*Sunday Times*, 08 May 2011) is one of the stories that overtly and explicitly promoted the coal indispensability discourse. The headline "Coal is best, cheapest option says Eskom boss" was an endorsement/legitimation of the official dominant view. While it is agreed that efforts towards reducing emissions should be pursued, the Minister of Energy, Dipuo Peters, supported further coal use basing her views on the Integrated Resource Plan "which sets out power-generating plans for the next 20 years, [and] still includes a large percentage of coal-generated power". The continued exploitation of coal was also promoted by the Eskom Chief Executive Officer, Brian Dames because there was "a massive energy issue on the continent" and to provide 'light' to the "dark continent".

By not questioning or providing alternative voices to those of Eskom and the government, the story essentially reproduced and naturalised the dominant views and ways of life, i.e., the indispensability of coal in South Africa's development. By presenting coal use as viable and moral, it made sense to use coal "because it is still the cheapest and quickest option". The discursive strategy of common sensing is also manifest in the story. Coal and nuclear make sense and are readily available. While the story does not discuss available alternatives, by affording Eskom and the government the primary definitional power of the energy futures of South Africa, their positions are accepted. The argument of the sources is juxtaposed against the 'invisible calls' for clean energy and abandonment of nuclear energy.

This study goes beyond the texts and establishes the context within which these discourses on coal indispensability and nuclear optimism gain discursive salience. The debates took place within the context of the World Economic Forum on Africa in Cape (micro context) and were umbrellaed by the evolving discussions on climate change, the need to reduce South Africa's greenhouse gas emissions and the imminent COP17 in November to December of 2011. The government was at the time facing stiff criticism from environmental Non-governmental Organisations and academics on its continued coal projects in Mpumalanga and Limpopo (Kusile and Medupi) – projects which themselves stood as proof that the government had no plans to de-escalate coal-powered electricity generation. The views expressed by Eskom and the Minister of energy intertextually rebut such criticisms and by talking about envisaged clean energy projects, the dominant voices responded prospectively to any future criticisms against their actions.

Common-sensing: We will use coal “because this is still the cheapest and quickest”. There are no better alternatives ‘now’ and coal “was the easiest and most efficient way to deal with energy scarcity” of the moment. The introduction of the aspect of “energy scarcity” plays a key role in the production of a moral code and duty-care to provide electricity (regardless of the source). What is absent from the story is the energy complex matrix in South Africa. While Eskom and the Minister construct coal as a way of providing energy to the people, concealed is the fact that energy and resources benefit the mining-energy complex more than ordinary people (Fine & Rustomjee 1996, McDonald 2009, Bond 2012, Weston 2012). The economic interests in coal are powerful. Key companies such as Exxaro are involved in the extraction of coal that they sell to Eskom. The argument is purely in the interests of the mining-energy complex camouflaged as a public good.

By reproducing the state/official position, the *Sunday Times* story worked to reproduce dominant views on energy in South Africa. The interests and practices of the actors in the fossil energy industries and related organisations whose desire for the maintenance of the status quo are reproduced. However, their interests are concealed by the public idiom where the discursive strategy attempted to make a case for energy as a benefit for the people of South Africa and Africa. The consensus in the story is sought at a macro-continental level where Eskom extends its coal-use morality claim to “we” – alluding to what Brian Dames called the “massive energy issue on the continent”. The speaker/actor self-assigns the position of speaking for ‘all’ by saying “we”

trying to make a case for the need for further coal exploitation. Who is “we”? Dames begins to interpellate the entire continent: the need to exploit coal was not just a South African issue, but an issue facing ‘everyone’ in Africa. There is an implied and imagined ideological consensus within and outside of South Africa. The absence of alternative sources/views helped in presenting the views of Eskom and the government as the only available views closing out, by exclusion, any contrary worldviews that would likely politicise the discussion.

The alliance between the government and the minerals-energy complex was reproduced through primary definitional power, common-sensing and the translation of official views into the public idiom. The continued use of coal was constructed as a public necessity because “only 30% of Africa’s one billion people had access to electricity” which accordingly was necessary because it “is impossible to improve education and health systems without power”. The entire story diminished the role of coal in the climate change debate and the primary definers saw coal (not as a source of emissions) but as a tool for ‘growth’, and ‘development’, in Africa. The attempt was to legitimise coal use and while conceding that there is a need for action, the present demands outweighed any climate change concerns. By so doing, the minerals-energy complex, its views and interests and practices are sustained and entrenched.

Similar constructions of coal indispensability were prevalent in the *Sunday Times*. For example, the Op-Ed “Voetsek, Greenpeace - poor need jobs, food,” (Peter Delmar, *Sunday Times*, 07 December 2011) argued that coal was indispensable in the South African economy. The headline expressed annoyance and despise towards environmental groups such as Greenpeace that opposed further coal use: “Voetsek, Greenpeace”. Coal was constructed positively because the “poor need jobs, food” and could not simply be done away with. “We’re burning coal and we damn well intend to keep burning the stuff until it runs out in 100 years’ time because we need energy and because we’re poor where a lot of people have no jobs and no food”. Environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace were ridiculed for opposing coal. For Delmar, these organisations opposed coal simply because they wanted to continue receiving donations: “Greenpeace doesn’t particularly care about facts - not nearly as much as it cares about relentlessly driving the agenda that keeps it in grants and donations”. Because South Africa is a poor and developing country, there was a need for continued coal dependence. The use of coal was represented to be in the interest of the poor looking

for food and jobs. Drawing from Bond (2012), this study also argues that there is no guarantee that coal use leads to the betterment of ordinary people's standards of living in South Africa. Inequalities have widened alongside increased coal use. Constructing coal exploitation in the language of the poor is meant to interpellate them and thus appear to be speaking for and from and on their behalf. The interests of the elite are translated into oral models, made to become part of the everyday general language of common people and thus achieve universal consent and consensus.

The story "Emissions target impossible," by Lucky Biyase (*Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011), used multiple sources to reproduce the discourse of coal indispensability and described President Jacob Zuma's target of cutting emissions by 34% in 2020 and 45% by 2025 as "impossible". Robbie Louw, from a carbon trading consultancy firm, Promethean, claimed: "The probability that this can be achieved is highly unlikely to almost impossible". Dawie Roodt, an economist with the Efficient Group argued that coal was indispensable in the South African economy: "The reality is that we need cheap energy and coal is the only real alternative for now". The rationale behind this construction is that South Africa needed cheap energy which could only be realised through coal in opposition to the 'expensive' other alternatives. Makwe Masilela from BP Bernstein also supported the coal indispensability discourse, noting that: "Not only does coal provide electricity, but it is also an essential fuel for steel and cement production, and other industrial activities". This construction of coal made it appear as a necessity and any discussions to get rid of coal were therefore not rational and defied common sense. The basis of this discourse was cheap energy and other industrial uses of coal. As part of ideological disagreement, the story quoted World Wide Fund (WWF) for Nature's Richard Worthington in support of Zuma's pledges because they were "a reduction against business-as-usual baseline, not an absolute emissions reduction".

Loni Prinsloo's story "Third coal-fired power station looms," (*Sunday Times*, 20 November 2011) was in support of a third coal-fired power station, notwithstanding, as the story conceded, "government's recent commitments to a less carbon-intensive economy". The new coal-fired power station, the newspaper discourse averred, could "be the only feasible option to ensure short-term power supply for South Africa". Coal was, therefore, an 'a necessary evil' providing short-term energy security. This view was shared by Ken Robinson from Accenture Consultancy who

was directly quoted arguing that “an honest assessment of the targets to reduce carbon emissions indicate that building a third-coal fired power station is probably the best way to meet the country’s short-term energy needs”. For Robinson, coal-fired power stations were not only cheaper, but reliable because “coal-powered technology has been proven, while nuclear is still uncertain and both nuclear and renewables are deemed expensive”.

Ideological disagreement was enabled in the story by including Greenpeace’s climate change campaigner Melita Steele. Steele criticised coal as expensive and dirty: “Coal-based electricity is unsustainable, polluting and socially devastating. What we need is investment in clean and sustainable power infrastructure”. However, the structure of the story helped to reproduce the views of Ken Robinson whom the story afforded the primary definitional power and agenda-setting. The placement of Melita Steele’s views at the end of the story may well have worked to passivise and diminish the worldviews expressed. The representation of coal indispensability at the beginning gave the discourse the discursive power and entrenchment. It became a superior discourse and the ideology it carried was given legitimacy and supremacy.

Consistent with its 2011 representation of coal, in 2012 the *Sunday Times* reproduced and legitimated the oxymoron of clean coal. In the story “Wind of change blows for big miners,” (Loni Prinsloo, *Sunday Times*, 24 April 2012), Anglo American’s nuclear engineer, Samantha Hoe-Richardson claimed that Anglo American was concerned about climate change and “accepted the responsibility to address both the causes of climate change and the effects it could have on the business and its assets and on communities”. As a way of addressing the climate problem, Hoe-Richardson supported techno-optimism that included “clean coal technologies” and “technologies such as carbon capture and storage into commercial production”. Constructed alongside the ‘clean-coal optimism’ was a denial of climate science. The *Sunday Times* managed to offer considerable coverage to voices of climate change denialism. Philip Lloyd from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, in the same story, denied the existence of climate change. He argued that climate change science was a “questionable hypothesis ... [and] that some people had doctored statistics to ‘terrify people’” because there was no “evidence that the world has gotten any warmer over the past 150 years”. For Lloyd, coal use was necessary, and the continued emissions were “not

necessarily a bad thing ... as plants would be able to ‘mop up’ the excess carbon dioxide and developing countries would be able to grow their economies”.

Within South African discourses on climate change mitigation, energy discourses are key in determining policy. The Op-Ed “Renewables no panacea, it’s about coal or nuclear,” by Ron Derby (*Business Times* editor) (*Sunday Times*, 24 July 2016) was pessimistic about solar and wind and argued that South Africa was simply enriching the United States and China by buying their renewable energy products. Solar and wind, Derby argued, could not be relied on for baseload: “The most pertinent question with the power situation on the continent and in South Africa is base-load power. There is no solution without a base-load one”. The headline opened the pessimism: “Renewables no panacea, it’s about coal or nuclear”. Coal and nuclear were legitimised because they are able to provide base-load power compared with renewables. The article further justified nuclear by drawing examples from Europe “when there isn’t enough solar power, Europe’s biggest economy [Germany] simply taps into the supply from neighbour France’s nuclear power stations”.

In another Op-Ed “Renewable power has a role, and limitations,” Ron Derby (*Sunday Times*, 31 July 2016) argued that though the fight against climate change was noble, the attempt to use solar and wind as a panacea to South Africa’s energy needs was “irrational”. Derby discredited renewables because they had no capacity to provide base-load electricity:

The extra 2100 MW of renewable energy - of which only 30% is available at any given time - that has been added to the grid over the past eight years would not cover South Africa’s energy shortfall if - suddenly and rather miraculously - global growth returned to the pre-2007 levels. Our lights would go out again.

While South Africa was trying to bring renewables online, not even Europe, a developed continent, had phased out coal and nuclear. “Europe, with a population of more than 740 million people living on a landmass of over 10 million square kilometres, has 185 nuclear power plants”. For Derby:

Coal is still a feature of their lives, even in Germany, where it makes up about a quarter of the country’s energy profile In Africa, with more than a billion inhabitants on a landmass triple the size of Europe, there’s one nuclear plant with two reactors in the form of Koeberg in the Western Cape (Ron Derby, “Renewable power has a role, and limitations,” *Sunday Times*, 31 July 2016).

Similar to the coal indispensability discourses represented in the *Sunday Times* and *Sunday Independent*, the *City Press* also gave the theme and its sponsors considerable representation. In the story “The value of coal,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 30 October 2016) the transition from coal is constructed by Eskom and other discourse sponsors on the side of coal indispensability as an issue of the economy: “An Eskom spokesperson said that any policy-driven transition to a low-carbon society must take into account the overriding priority to address poverty and inequality”. In terms of the coal indispensability construction, coal use was not just about energy, but a moral call to end poverty and inequality. The construction of this indispensability discourse in the poverty and inequality planes universalised coal benefits in South Africa through portraying coal as part of the ingredients for eliminating poverty and inequality.

This construction attempted to draw support from those that aspire to end poverty and inequality. The unnamed Eskom spokesperson further argued that “Zero growth in CO₂ emissions from 2025 means no new coal coming online after 2025 This will have an impact on job security in the coal mining sector, which is the largest employer of semi-skilled and unskilled labour”. In the same story, Joanne Isaacs from Nedbank defended the bank’s financing of coal projects in South Africa. Funding coal projects was good because banks were “lending into a sector that is critical to economic growth and energy security, playing a vital role in South Africa’s development”. Obakeng Moloabi (executive director at Pele Natural Energy) advised against ignoring “South Africa’s context,” characterised by the need “to create jobs” and only coal could offer “more job opportunities than renewables”. The story showed the convergence of Eskom, coal mining companies and the finance capital discourses. All these forces articulate at this juncture because of their interests in profit. Eskom for selling electricity, Nedbank from giving finance to both coal mines and Eskom. All these profit motives are covered as needs for South Africa. The coal industry attempted to bring ‘everyone’ onboard into their discourse by portraying coal as good for energy security and jobs and economic growth. Coal indispensability is moralised through economisation.

Sizwe Sama Yende's story "Molewa fights green groups," (*City Press*, 18 February 2018) highlighted the contestations between the government and environmental groups. The 'green groups' were unhappy with the granting of environmental authorisations to new coal mines by the Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa, whom they accused of "using outdated information about the country's energy needs". The South African government had argued that the IRP 2010-2030 permitted the development of new coal power of up to 6.3GW. The country's energy needs outweighed any climate considerations. For example, Edna Molewa was directly represented backing new coal mines because "the harm that would result from the establishment of new coal-fired facilities to generate an additional 6.3 GW was outweighed by the benefit to the country of having old-energy generation capacity". As noted earlier in this chapter, aspects of emissions reduction in South Africa were to be subservient to the 'needs' for energy. The new coal and the coal indispensability discourse that Molewa sought to promote are constructed as benefitting the nation - nuances of a developmental path and economic development are manifest. While Molewa constructed coal as indispensable, the development of coal energy also directly benefitted the capitalist system, i.e. the minerals-energy complex. The environmental groups, on the one hand, sought to discredit the coal common sense discourse that the government promoted.

Leon Louw (Free Market Foundation) saw the reduction of coal power in the 2018 IRP as bad for South Africa. In the Op-Ed "SA's daft electricity policy: 7 myths debunked, including 'green power'," (*City Press*, 09 November 2018) Louw pushed a narrative that saw coal energy as central to South Africa's economic development and future. While the IRP moved towards Independent Power Producers (IPPs) on renewables, Louw argued that it was a bad policy. Louw described the 2018 IRP as a "daft electricity policy" which contained a lot of "myths" about "green power". According to Louw, the IRP "will perpetuate stagnation, unemployment and retarded transformation". There was a need to get rid of this policy and action required "brave, patriotic and wise politicians and officials to prevail over subversive interests". Renewable energy policy was constructed as a bad choice because it forced South Africa to "import what we do not have, render worthless what we have, destroy the environment, fleece the poor, suffer blackout and maximise corruption". Renewable energy was not ideal for South Africa because it was expensive and the renewable energy optimism expressed in the 2018 IRP was based on a myth "created by

concealing the real cost of getting power procured from independent power producers (IPPs) to consumers, and of thousands of square kilometres of land diverted to solar and wind farms”.

Further renewables were constructed as not renewable at all:

People concerned about ‘climate change’ and ‘resource depletion’ have been conned. Electricity from windmills, for instance, are like temporary skyscrapers built with toxic materials from resource-depleting mines, processed in coal-burning factories running on non-renewable power.

Louw sought to discredit renewable energy, especially solar and wind farms which “occupy vast expanses of previously natural or agricultural land”.

8.3 ... actually, not true: Underling Coal Diffidence Voices

This sub-theme examines how alternative viewpoints (politicisation discourses) attempted to discredit the taken-for-granted coal indispensability discourses(s). The *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press* and the *Sunday Independent* had more stories devoted to rebutting the official government and minerals-energy complex discourses on coal indispensability. The *Sunday Times*, though to a lesser extent, also included coal diffidence discourses. Lucky Biyase’s story “Coal mines add to acid threat,” (*Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) to some extent attempted to demoralise and denaturalise coal use. The story did not just construct coal as bad for the climate but also a threat to water resources. The headline noted that “Coal mines add to acid threat” and the lead paragraph expanded by noting that “Acid mine drainage from coal mining also affects water resources: acidifying rivers and streams, raising metals levels and killing fish”. The story saw coal, not just as a resource for local electricity generation but as a key export resource, an explanation maybe, that could explain the increased insatiable appetite for its exploitation. “South Africa was the fourth-largest exporter of thermal coal During that year [2009], coal sales amounted to R65-billion, the highest-value commodity for the year when compared with platinum’s R58-billion and gold’s R49-billion”. The World Wide Fund’s (WWF) Christine Colvin explained in the story that “our already stressed water resources are under threat from coal mining operations located in important water-provisioning catchments”.

A similar focus on coal diffidence and its effects on water resources was in the story, “Coal is bad for our water: Greenpeace,” by Eleanor Momberg (*Sunday Independent*, 22 April 2012). The story produced coal and nuclear as bad energy choices for South Africa. The story was written within the context of Earth Day and World Water Day. Mike Baillie (Greenpeace Africa representative) noted in the story that “sticking with coal-powered electricity will intensify the effects of climate change and make a bad water situation even worse”. Coal-fired power stations were seen as using more water compared to renewable energy sources:

coal-power was an extremely bad choice Even if we were to completely ignore the effect that coal power will have on the climate, its impacts on our water situation are serious enough to warrant a complete overhaul of our energy system In a country blessed with sufficient Sun and wind to power, these alternative energy supply means, nuclear energy was also not the way to go for South Africa.

The story was an antithesis to the mainstream South African government narrative that supported coal because it was good, cheap, quick and useful in the development of the economy. Greenpeace saw a move towards renewable energy as the only way to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The slant towards renewables resonates with the green growth crusade and does promote the naturalisation of economic modernisation perspectives and Prometheanism. The Greenpeace discourse only challenged government policies but essentially did not construct climate change as a product of capitalist systems and relations of production. This study argues that the interest in renewables leaves capitalists with the power to define and continue to exploit resources.

Trusha Reddy (Earthlife Africa), in the Op-Ed “Coal3 will be another Eskom catastrophe,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 03 October 2013) expressed disappointment with South Africa’s plans to build “another climate-killing coal plant, dubbed Coal3”. The article described such plans by the government as environmentally irresponsible, noting that the planned power station was not consistent with “SA’s pledge to a 34% decrease in emissions by 2020”. South Africa did not need any further emissions increases because the country was “the 12th-largest carbon emitter in the world because of its dependence on coal for 95% of electricity”. Reddy attempted to expose the hypocrisy of the South African government which in 2009 (at COP15) proposed to cut emissions

by 34% by 2020 but back home had “already committed to building a 10.1 GW coal plant and will build 6.25 GW more coal-firing capacity between 2014 and 2030”.

The story “SA faces funding crisis as lenders go for green,” by Yolandi Groenewald (*City Press*, 15 June 2014) noted that international lenders such as the World Bank were no longer interested in funding coal projects to reduce emissions. While lenders were divesting their funds from coal, South Africa sought to expand its electricity generation by building a 4 600MW power plant at Waterberg (also known as Coal3). The World Bank vice-president, Rachel Kyte, was quoted in the story noting that financial institutions took cognisance of the climate change threats and that meant “thinking twice about financing projects such as coal power stations that ramp up greenhouse gases”.

As of 2019, the name Coal3 seems to have been replaced by the Musina-Makhado power station where 4600MW will be produced against the latest IRP (2018) proposal of 1000 - 1500 MW. The Musina-Makhado power station is also known as the Power China International Energy Project. The South African government signed a memorandum of understanding with the Chinese government in September 2018 where the Bank of China will invest \$1.1 billion in special economic zones and industrial parks. The Musina-Makhado power station is part of the deal and was estimated to be worth over \$10 billion. This shows that South Africa’s appetite for coal is not over and the talk of leaving coal behind is just rhetoric and symbolic. There are divisions in the South African energy policy and politics with groups that are aligned to the minerals-energy complex having more power. The funding of coal by China also shows how globally China keeps an environmentally friendly face and at the same time fund dirty coal in Africa.

The Op-Ed article by Adi Mistry-Frost (climate campaigner at 350Africa.org) and Ferrial Adam (350Africa.org team leader), “Don’t bank on ‘Eugreen’ future” (*Sunday Independent*, 21 December 2014) attempted to deconstruct the complicity of banks in the financing of coal. While banks in South Africa claim to be ‘green’ and funding renewable energy projects, Mistry-Frost and Adam argued that this was just another public relations stunt as the same banks had huge investments in coal. There was “serious hypocrisy” because “Nedbank, Standard Bank and Absa collectively sunk R10 -billion of direct financing into coal projects between 2005 and 2013, which

in turn contributed to combined annual profits of over R32 billion in the 2013 financial year”. The authors argued that:

The face of the South African banking industry may be greenwashed but its heart is as dark as coal ... banks are happy to highlight their investments in renewable energy but hide the full extent of their financing of fossil fuel projects there is a great deal of money to be made and for the fossil-fuel industry it's a good thing if South Africa falls deeper into its current addiction to coal.

In this article, the authors, through language, were able to call out the agency of South Africa in causing global warming as the country remained the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases in Africa. Further, this was worsened by the government's "backing future coal power stations and hundreds of new coal mining licences that are also under consideration". The article demoralised the claims by the government and the minerals-energy complex that continued to argue that the use of coal was meant to boost the economy. The authors attempted to debunk this narrative and pointed out that the increased appetite for coal could worsen global warming. The banks were complicit in this because they funded coal projects in pursuit of profit.

Nicole King, Divestment Campaign Advisor at 350Africa.org, in the Op-Ed "SA must divest from coal and oil," (*Sunday Independent*, 15 February 2015) was against the continued exploitation of coal and oil and was critical of the institutions that funded it. For King, funding coal was against scientific evidence and common sense that showed that "The scientific health check of the Earth is dire". The first section of the article outlined the effects of climate change based on science, which is constructed as a moral and unquestionable yardstick. King challenged the dominant paradigm players in the minerals-energy complex and the financial institutions to stop their activities. People could help force banks to divest from coal through "using their collective power as bank account holders, students, and academics, religious leaders and members of faith-based communities to get banks to divest from coal and oil". The fight for divestment was thus set between the people 'us' against 'them' (banks and the minerals-energy complex). Due to the continued extreme weather events, the call for divestment was even stronger because "the human cost of rising temperatures is proving too high". References to recent extreme weather in Malawi and Mozambique were used to pull the problem closer and localise it. The flooding in these two countries "claimed hundreds of lives and left thousands more people homeless and facing food

shortages”. These references acted as ‘factors in aggravation’ and helped the readers to visualise the human cost of climate change. This could be an attempt to bring in the human aspect and thus politicise the issue to gain public discursive salience.

King’s article also expressed lack of trust and confidence in coal and oil as these were responsible for the current problems: “There is scepticism about the promises of jobs and fear about the health risks associated with polluted water and air”. Due to these risks, the call for coal and oil divestment was a moral and responsible appeal. It became a moral duty for all “people of conscience” to “use their collective power” to stop investments in coal and oil. Those who are for coal and oil were portrayed as ‘others’ and without ‘a conscience’. Further, the author was opposed to hydraulic fracking, especially “the government’s plan to fast-track economic development through oil and gas exploration off the coast, including a potential 3.5km-deep oil well off KwaZulu-Natal’s coast” under Operation Phakisa¹⁰.

Oppositional discourses in the news stories often portrayed South Africa as hypocritical by comparing the government claims of emissions reduction against the government’s increased coal appetite. The discord in government policy and action was constructed as showing signs that South Africa was not willing to take climate action. The story, “SA talks green as it burns coal,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 19 July 2015) described South Africa’s coal appetite as unending: “Recent development plans show that South Africa has no intention of scaling down on its coal dependency to provide the country with energy”. The lead paragraph delegitimised South Africa’s international posture as a climate champion by arguing that the posture did not match action at home. Ferriar Adam of 350.org cited directly in the story, cemented this description of South

¹⁰ According to the Operation Phakisa website (<https://www.operationphakisa.gov.za/Pages/Home.aspx>), *Operation Phakisa* (Hurry Up), launched by President Jacob Zuma in July 2014, is a government mechanism “to implement the National Development Plan” through “a fast results delivery programme ... with the ultimate goal of boosting economic growth and create jobs”.

Africa: “South Africa says one thing on the international arena but has a whole other domestic policy”. Adam argued that while the international posture is promoted by the departments of Environmental Affairs and International Relations, “the department of energy was responsible for determining what kind of energy South Africa would use” and this policy discord in government was because “the departments don’t talk to each other”. The development of Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power plants was demoralised and constructed as irresponsible. The power stations “will be two of the largest five coal-fired power stations in the world. And more are coming. Another sibling is planned for Medupi in the Waterberg. Eskom’s Coal Three has President Jacob Zuma’s backing”. Dominique Doyle of Earthlife Africa opposed coal expansion because there was no “more room in South Africa’s carbon budget for more coal-fired power stations” as increased coal would “make South Africa the laughing stock of the international negotiations because it will show that South Africa cannot keep its promises” (Yolandi Groenewald, “SA talks green as it burns coal,” *City Press*, 19 July 2015).

David King (the United Kingdom climate advisor) saw the South African government’s investment in the Medupi and Kusile power stations as misplaced and irresponsible, both environmentally and economically. King, in the story “‘SA is building white elephants’,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 08 November 2015) questioned why “any country [would] invest billions in infrastructure that will be obsolete in less than 50 years?” because the “stranded assets will not yield electricity in 50 years because you would have mothballed them in favour of clean, renewable energy”. The story delegitimised and denaturalised the discourse of coal indispensability that is promoted by the South African government and the minerals-energy complex. The South African government believed that coal would be useful soon to power the country’s development. King’s assertions rebut these claims in favour of investments in renewables.

The expansion of coal projects was constructed as wasteful because the assets will be “obsolete in less than 50 years”. The newspaper discourse further delegitimised South Africa’s coal energy expansion by contrasting the coal indispensability narrative to South African contributions towards global warming: “South Africa’s emissions are listed as the 12th highest in the world per person, with the country emitting more than 500 million tons of greenhouse gases annually”. This was

meant to show that the expansion of coal energy through Medupi and Kusile by the government was irresponsible and contrary to good environmental stewardship. It was a bad decision because already the country's per capita emissions were already too high, and any increase would worsen the South African carbon footprint. The story disabled ideological disagreement by using actors that promoted a one-dimensional worldview of clean energy. Ferrial Adam from 350.org was quoted in the story blaming “vested interests in coal mining in South Africa, and political buy-in for coal as a resource” which blocked the plans for coal divestments.

The debate and discussions on South Africa's carbon emissions are to be found in South Africa's energy futures discourses. The Energy Futures discourse is predominantly defined by those with interests in coal and nuclear energy. The two were primarily defined as indispensable in relation to South Africa's energy needs and security. Sizwe Sama Yende's story “The green fight to stop coal power,” (*City Press*, 18 September 2016) revealed these deep discussions and policy choices being contested. Environmental activists were against coal expansion and their discourses denaturalised claims that linked coal use to economic growth. The battle was constructed in the headline “The green fight to stop coal” as between the green/environmental groups and coal interests. “Environmentalists are hellbent on putting the brakes on the construction of 10 proposed coal-fired power stations by independent producers”.

While the government had given environmental authorisations to new coal plants, environmental groups saw this as irresponsible and immoral. Earthlife Africa challenged the issuing of the authorisations for Thabametsi and Khanyisa power stations at the Pretoria High Court. The contestations reveal the articulations that are between the government, coal mining companies and Eskom in support of further coal exploitation against the discourse disarticulations that are pushed by environmental groups. Mxolisi Mgojo (Exxaro Resources CEO) was quoted in the story “Coal fight off to court,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 16 October 2016) in support of the Thabametsi power station because it would create “opportunities to supply coal to other coal independent power producers in the Waterberg that could bid in the second window, as well as the mining of high-value coal seams for the export market”. Exxaro as a mining giant saw coal as a way of making money under the pretext of energy security. The power of the minerals-energy

complex in South Africa's energy debates and climate change mitigation is also revealed. The minerals-energy complex attempted to construct coal as a way to develop the economy and create job opportunities. This strategy was meant to moralise and justify further coal appetite. Earthlife and the Centre for Environmental Rights, in opposition, criticised any further coal development as counter the interests of the environment.

Earthlife Africa (an environmental organisation) had approached the High Court in Pretoria to reverse these authorisations, especially Thabametsi. Earthlife attorney, Nicole Loser, on behalf of the Centre for Environmental Rights argued that "More and more countries are moving away from both coal and nuclear, and transitioning to renewable energy". "Considering the high costs of coal and its impact on the health and wellbeing of South Africans, there is no justifiable basis for authorising new coal-fired power projects in our country". Accordingly, rather than seeking coal expansion, South Africa should have sought renewables because the country is "renowned for its optimal renewable energy potential, for both solar and wind energy" which were "cheaper and cleaner, unlike the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power stations".

The story "Environmental Affairs in Catch-22," (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 03 March 2017), revealed contradictions in South Africa's climate change policy arena. The contradictions were between the 'word of mouth' aspirations to reduce emissions and the 'actual' actions. More importantly, the story went on to show the power players and policy disunity between the departments of Environmental Affairs and that of Energy respectively. Having signed the Paris Agreement in 2015 and offered to reduce emissions by 42% by 2025, South Africa still intended to grant licences for coal-fired power stations in Thabametsi. The Thabametsi coal-fired powered station would be "fuelled for 30 years by Exxaro (through its Grootegeeluk mine and the planned Thabametsi mine)". In terms of shareholding, "Japan's Marubeni has a 24.5% share of Thabametsi power station and is leading its development. Other partners include the Public Investment Corporation (government), South Korea's Kepco (24.5%), Royal Bafokeng Holdings, KDI and Tirasano". This study notes that although Exxaro sponsors the Climate Change Governance Chair at UNISA, the company seems to be doing actions completely against the climate. The Department of Environmental Affairs gave an environmental authorisation and was taken to court by Earthlife

Africa which argued that “South Africa should not be building power plants that warm the planet, and that it will have a disproportionate impact on the country, which is already feeling the shift in rainfall patterns and increased temperatures”.

In its response in court, the Department of Environmental Affairs’ affidavit argued that “The department acknowledges that coal-fired power stations are heavy greenhouse gas emitters but accepts that some measure of coal-generated energy is necessary to meet South Africa’s current and medium-term energy needs” contending further that “there is no legal requirement for climate change impact assessment to be done for a plant to get environmental authorisation” because the country’s “obligations have not been [under the Paris Agreement] enacted in national legislation ... [and] they do not bind parties within the republic”.

The arguments by the Department of Environmental Affairs reveal South Africa’s real climate policy: to pursue internal economic development first and deal with environmental and climate change consequences later. The granting of licenses to new coal-fired plants showed that South Africa’s appetite for coal, despite the public rhetoric on massive emissions reduction, was still very high. One should also allude to the political economy of coal energy as an imperative to fully grasp the politics of climate policy in South Africa. Big national and multinational conglomerates and mining houses are heavily interested and invested. These companies have policy power through their discourse coalitions in the Departments of Energy, Mineral Resources and to a lesser extent the Department of Environmental Affairs. The interests of these big minerals-energy companies are then translated into public national language by the government that argued that increasing coal-energy supply satisfied the present and future national interests. Behind the veil of national energy needs, lies big corporate power involving government investment companies, Eskom, banks, and giant multinational companies such as Exxaro, ArcelorMittal, BHP Billiton, and Anglo American who are heavy energy consumers and not interested in seeing their profits nose-dive because of stringent climate regulations. Further to note is how the loose nature of the Paris Agreement allows member states to put their national interest first before climate because the agreement is not legally binding. The ambitions of reducing emissions in South Africa are seen

to be dependent on national circumstances. Anonymous sources within the Department of Environmental Affairs were quoted revealing deep disappointment:

We're in this absurd position of defending something that we do not believe in defending.... We hate this case. But what else can we do but apply the law and use the tools available to us? ... This is huge. It's the kind of precedent-setting case that we should be fighting on the right side of history.

The Thabametsi power plant manager argued in the affidavit that "It would be unfair and oppressive to refuse Thabametsi an environmental authorisation for the failure to submit a climate change assessment which was not a legal requirement".

The diffidence to the continued coal exploration and exploitation in South Africa was also echoed in the *City Press*. Yolandi Groenewald's "The value of coal," (*City Press*, 30 October 2016) compared the views for and against coal in South Africa's energy futures discourse. The views against the continued investments in coal were aligned to the need to reduce carbon emissions from coal energy. While there are evidence and calls for emissions reduction, South Africa is first constructed as a country still in pursuit of coal energy and whose appetite was insatiable. "Alarm bells are going off as new investment in fossil fuel projects may exceed the carbon budget that South Africa is allowed, which means investors could end up with billions of rands of stranded assets". The discourse, mainly from the government and industry on coal indispensability, was denaturalised and delegitimised. The IRP that the government relied on for its energy policies was described as "outdated". Jesse Burton, academic from the University of Cape Town's Energy Research Centre, saw "a mismatch between the IRP and the least cost mitigation plan" because it was "extremely risky to plan new plants that you won't reap profits from". South African banks such as Nedbank who continued to invest in coal were delegitimised and represented as going against global common sense where "Big banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Bank of America, Citigroup and Morgan Stanley are backing away from coal".

The story "State's court loss is also its gain," (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 10 March 2017) discussed the Pretoria High Court's decision to order the Department of Environmental Affairs to revisit and "reconsider its decision to grant authorisation for the construction of a new coal-fired power station" because the "South Africa's legal and policy framework 'overwhelmingly' supported the conclusion that granting an authorisation required an 'assessment of climate change

and mitigation measures”. The article celebrated this judgment as progressive and the Environmental Department could “now stop initiatives that contribute to climate change”.

The ruling by the Pretoria High Court Judge John Murphy for the reconsideration of the Thabametsi power plant authorisation certificate is celebrated in the *Mail & Guardian* editorial “Green ruling a win for all,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 10 March 2017) as a victory “for all”. The editorial saw no need for additional coal mines because it “is at odds with the imperative for all countries to lower their carbon emissions”. The decision by the Department of Environmental Affairs to allow “a coal-fired power station permission to be built” was therefore immoral because “South Africans are already, per capita, the 12th highest emitters of carbon in the world” and the Thabametsi plant would account “for 4% of the country’s total emissions by the 2050s”. The granting of the environmental authorisation was irresponsible considering that “the effects of climate change will be disproportionately felt here and across Africa. Rainfall patterns are already changing, with farmers unable to plant in time to avoid winter frost, and extreme heat is drying out entire provinces”. Despite all these climate impacts, the Environmental Affairs Department still wanted more emissions generating power plants to be built. “Big business - with its long history of externalising its pollution and making the poorest pay through diseases such as asthma - and other government departments have consistently blocked climate change legislation and a carbon tax”. “In this particular case, it meant the environment department signed off on a coal-fired plant because the energy department - vested with more political power - had advocated for its construction”.

In the story “Earthlife wins first case against coal power,” (Sizwe Sama Yende, *City Press*, 12 March 2017), the Pretoria High Court Judge John Murphy’s judgment ordering the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa, to consider a climate change impact assessment for the Thabametsi coal-fired power plant was victory for Earthlife Africa and the environment. The story brought to light the ideological contestations that permeate energy and climate debates in South Africa. - setting the environmental NGOs on the one hand and coal mining companies and government on the other. Nicole Loser from the Centre for Environmental Rights was given enough access to define what the court victory meant: For Loser, the judgment was “a major blow for the future of coal” and expressed the need to adopt renewables: “clean, cheap renewable energy

sources such as solar and wind do not suffer from this legal constraint”. Loser, by alluding to the environmental impacts of coal mines and power plants, attempted to draw a discussion around common sense.

The government and coal mining companies were acting irresponsibly because: “Given that these are coal plants, which will have unavoidably significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions - GHGs radiate heat, making the earth warmer - and given that South Africa is extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change”. The coal plants were going to use “significant amounts of limited water and posing a risk to the quality of that water ... they will be exposing South Africa to further vulnerability to climate change effects” (Sizwe Sama Yende, “Earthlife wins first case against coal power,” *City Press*, 12 March 2017). Retrospectively, it can be argued, the government and the coal mining companies and Eskom, were acting immorally ignoring the attendant coal impacts on the environment and the climate system. The newspaper discourse further criticised the government for the continued coal projects which had been “proven to be a source of respiratory illness” and leading to “2 200 deaths” in South Africa.

While the issue of the Thabametsi power station received wide coverage in *City Press* and the *Mail & Guardian*, the issue only found itself inside a completely different story in the *Sunday Times*. The story “Living under a sulphurous coal-fire cloud in Marapong,” (Siphe Macanda and Matthew Savides, 13 March 2017) in the *Sunday Times* was on pollution caused by the Marapong power station in Lephalale, Limpopo - close to Thabametsi. The story alluded to high pollution that was causing illnesses to residents nearby: “The towering power station releases pollutants, including toxic sulphur dioxide (SO₂)”. The story delegitimised the Marapong coal-power station as an environmental hazard that negatively affected people’s health. While the story did not discredit the power station from a climate change view, it did show the negative effects of coal power plants on communities. This could be seen as delegitimising and demoralising government efforts to expand coal-fired power stations in South Africa. The story quoted a health victim of the power station, Rabelani Mulovhedzi, who was “worried about my health so I can’t continue staying here anymore”. One important observation from the data analysis has been that the South African news media relied on government officials, business leaders, academics and NGOs for their climate change news. Ordinary people seldom made it to the newspapers, except, as this study noted, when

they appear as victims. This story included the voices of two residents who were victims of pollution from the Marapong power station. Ordinary people, it is argued, are not worthy sources of news, their involvement is limited to passive victimhood and not debate and agenda-setting.

Dewald Van Rensburg's story "Ramaphosa's bizarre power plan," (*City Press*, 09 September 2018) criticised, through demoralisation, the logic of coal expansion and indispensability. The planned 4600MW power station (Coal3) to be constructed within the Musina-Makhado Special Economic Zone (SEZ) was a "bizarre power plan" that was even contradictory to the revised Integrated Resource Plan published in 2018. "This came only a week after Energy Minister Jeff Radebe revealed the long-awaited new Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), charting the future of energy investments in South Africa - a future conspicuously lacking in major new coal". The story constructed this planned coal expansion as a policy discord and contradiction.

The Musina-Makhado power station was part of the Memorandum of Understanding for an SEZ signed between the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, and Chinese President, Xi Jinping, which included "a hugely improbable plan to build another new 4600-megawatt coal power station in Limpopo". While this was contradicting the 2018 IRP, the news story quoted the Department of Trade and Industry suggesting an adjustment: "The aim is to invest in the construction and operation of a 4600 MW coal-fired plant". As part of the delegitimisation of coal expansion, the story directly represented Chris Yelland (an energy analyst) arguing that the "announcement was completely 'whacko' and joking that 'some people live in alternative logic and regulations". The signing of the deal was even more ironic because "Ramaphosa and his Chinese counterpart, President Xi Jinping, signed an agreement to cooperate on climate change alongside the memorandum of understanding to build a major new coal power station".

8.4 Nuclear Energy Optimism

Nuclear energy has been central to energy debates in South Africa, especially after President Jacob Zuma's COP15 announcement that South Africa would reduce emissions by 34% in 2020 and 42% by 2025. This announcement was followed by the inclusion of nuclear into South Africa's energy blueprint, the Integrated Resource Plan (2010 -2030), which envisioned nuclear contributing 9600

Megawatt/hour of electricity in the new South African energy mix. Nuclear was seen offering two key advantages to South Africa. Firstly, the government and some private sector players with interests in nuclear energy value chains promoted nuclear as a way of securing the country's energy needs and secondly as a way of securing the country's energy needs through a resource that reduced the country's emissions (signalling the move away from coal). On these two premises, nuclear energy became common-sense that was legitimised through discursive strategies such as moralisation and economisation. Nuclear energy powered-South Africa would lead to economic growth, reduce unemployment and make the country economically competitive. Nuclear energy, therefore, was rationalised and automatised as inevitable and moral.

Missing from the nuclear optimism discourses is the political economy of nuclear energy and the newspapers did not question this. As a way of complementing the news analysis, this section also draws insight from authors that have written about the political economy of nuclear energy, more importantly the ownership patterns of uranium mines and the proposed beneficiaries of nuclear energy reactors, France's Areva and Russia's Rosatom, the links between nuclear support and Duduzane Zuma (son to former President Jacob Zuma) and the Gupta-linked and partly owned Uranium One. This is done to show that the nuclear optimism discourse, regardless of the veil of public interest and energy security claims by the actors, was meant to benefit a few economic elites and this was achieved by constructing the benefits of nuclear as in 'everyone's interest' and for the country and the economy. On the other hand, the newspapers managed to also represent nuclear diffidence and these oppositional discourses came from some academics and environmental non-governmental organisations who sought to denaturalise the nuclear morality claims by constructing nuclear ambitions as environmentally risky and economically too expensive. These actors, on the contrary, supported emissions reduction and energy security along the planes of techno-renewable energy optimism.

The story "SA's nuclear projects go ahead despite Japan," (Lucky Biyase, *Sunday Times*, 20 March 2011) reproduced the Eskom and government worldviews on nuclear indispensability in South Africa's future energy mix. Nuclear energy, the story argued, would provide South Africa with the energy security it required. Brian Dames, the Eskom CEO, was used as the only source in the story. He was given the primary power and monopoly to define and offer solutions on South Africa's

energy futures. The story took note of the March 11, 2011, nuclear disaster in Fukushima Japan but went on to portray South Africa as having the capacity to prevent such from happening. Dames allayed fears by arguing that: “Eskom has operated Koeberg, safely for more than 26 years”. Nuclear energy was good because it would help South Africa “meet the challenges of affordability [electricity] and the security of supply and the climate change issues”. The dominant views on nuclear were left unchallenged through the disabling of ideological disagreement. The construction of the entire story through Brian Dames helped in excluding alternative worldviews. Consent was manufactured through this one-dimensional discursive representation. Nuclear energy was moralised as safe and helping in fighting climate change and as an energy source that provides energy “security”. The political economy of nuclear energy is not discussed in the story and the vested interests behind nuclear were shielded from scrutiny.

Through news media representations, the dominant government and energy views on nuclear optimism were discursively constructed. René Vollgraaff’s story “Coal is best, cheapest options says Eskom boss,” (*Sunday Times*, 08 May 2011), despite environmental concerns, constructed nuclear energy as a clean and viable form of energy to replace the usage of coal in the long run. Eskom and the South African government were the sponsors of the nuclear optimism discourse. Eskom CEO Brian Dames was cited arguing that the government through the Integrated Resource Plan was clear about future energy policies. These included huge investments in nuclear. “Hence nuclear power then needs to play a role in meeting our energy needs”. While concerns were noted regarding “the safety of nuclear power after the disaster at the Fukushima plant in Japan”, the Minister of Energy Dipuo Peters, maintained that “the government had taken a decision to consider nuclear power as part of its energy architecture”.

The *Mail & Guardian*, though few, did give space to stories that promoted the nuclear optimism discourse. The story “‘Bright future’ for nuclear power,” (Lisa Steyn, *Mail & Guardian*, 02 June 2011) celebrated nuclear as providing a bright future for South Africa’s energy mix: “South Africa has the raw material to produce cleaner nuclear energy with fewer risks”. The structure of the news story and the placement of source attributions helped in allowing pro-nuclear actors to get the primary definitional power. Three pro-nuclear actors were used against one alternative nuclear pessimistic actor, whose views were placed at the end of the story and rendered less important.

The story did not make a direct reference to climate change but is important as a contribution to the South African energy futures debates which go along with mitigation action through reducing emissions from energy production. The story constructed a view of addressing global emissions through optimism in nuclear, especially thorium which is not easily adapted to weapons manufacturing. The story moralised the use of thorium for energy generation in South Africa because it has “fewer risks”. This optimism feeds into the mainstream dominant framing of nuclear energy as ‘safe’ and ‘clean’ and therefore suitable for South Africa’s energy needs. Though rendered less significant, the story allowed for nuclear diffidence at the end. WWF for Nature described nuclear as undesirable “nevertheless it is a major liability issue and the toxic waste is long-lived”.

Energy Minister, Dipuo Peters, in an Op-Ed “Nuclear power, is a key part of SA’s future,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2011) constructed nuclear energy as a key ingredient of South Africa’s future energy mix. Nuclear did not just represent the future of energy in South Africa but the existence of South Africa as a country. The headline made this claim clearer: “Nuclear power is a key part of SA’s future” because it offered “not only a secure electricity supply but also benefits in terms of climate change, job creation and development”. Nuclear was key because it was a “reliable source of affordable electricity” which guaranteed “a strong and successful economy for any modern country competing in global markets”. Peters used language that shows her discussions of nuclear energy were intertextually responding to preceding texts and discourses that were pessimistic about nuclear energy. The use of words such as “secure” was meant to pacify those who advocated for other ‘insecure’ sources of energy (such as wind and solar). The country could not rely on insecure forms of energy. The use of nuclear was thus moralised through economisation: the benefits were too far great to be ignored in favour of less reliable and less affordable forms of energy. Nuclear energy would provide “job creation and economic development”. This construction of nuclear’s potential was meant to respond prospectively to discourses that opposed its adoption.

Furthermore, the inclusion of nuclear was meant to satisfy future energy needs as projected in the IRP. This automatically therefore justified and moralised the government’s decision to adopt nuclear energy. ‘The demand will be huge, and we should increase supply’. To fully position

nuclear energy as compatible with South Africa's energy futures, Peters shamed and condemned renewable energy sources:

South Africa is a water-stressed country and does not have large rivers that would help to increase indigenous hydropower capacity Wind and solar power are developing rapidly and are expected to make a substantial contribution to South Africa's energy mix. The fact that both are limited in the number of electricity hours that they can generate means that other suitable base-load technologies are required.

These "suitable base-load technologies" were to be found in nuclear. Because of the limitations presented by other forms of renewable energy, South Africa had a duty to pursue nuclear to create jobs, address climate change and to develop the economy. Further, the limits presented by other forms of energy justify and legitimise the use of 'other suitable' energy sources because: "Nuclear power is a suitable base-load source. It is well established, having provided up to 17% of world electricity for more than 25 years." As a way of reducing South Africa's dependence on coal, Peters noted that there was a need to increase "the amount of low-carbon nuclear" in the energy mix.

In prospective response to criticism of nuclear energy based on accidents elsewhere (for example Fukushima), Peters noted that South Africa had experience from the two nuclear units it operates from Koeberg. This experience was backed by "Technological improvements and lessons learned from the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl have been taken into account". Referring to the Fukushima disaster in Japan of 2011, Peters argued that only three deaths were related to the nuclear accident and there were no deaths due to the radioactive materials that were released. To back her claims, she cited the conclusion of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that "to date, no confirmed long-term health effects to any person have been reported as a result of radiation exposure from the nuclear accident". Peters seemed to be suggesting that even if South Africa was to have any nuclear accident, chances of its effects on health and lives were not there. For her, the deaths in Japan were a result of the tsunami and not the nuclear accident: "A massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake and ensuing tsunami hit Japan on March 11, 2011, causing widespread destruction and leaving thousands dead and missing". While no deaths were directly attributed to radiation, the Minister silently did not acknowledge environmental and health impacts.

Caiphus Kgosana's story "SA ready to roll out R300bn nuclear stations," (*Sunday Times*, 26 February 2012) represented nuclear energy as a cornerstone of South Africa's energy mix. Nuclear energy was necessary to "ensure a supply of an extra 9600 megawatts of electricity". The drive towards nuclear was due to the "rising demand for electricity and climate change requirements that force coal-reliant South Africa to diversify its energy sources".

Peet du Plooy from the Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies, in the Op-Ed "Seductive nuclear power of Thor," (*Mail & Guardian*, 08 March 2012) expressed optimism in nuclear energy as a key component of South Africa's energy futures. The article intertextually agreed with the Integrated Resource Plan that sought to build 9.6GHW of electricity capacity by 2030. Peet du Plooy promoted Thorium as a better nuclear energy substitute compared to uranium: "Just 4000 tonnes of thorium could satisfy South Africa's electricity needs for 100 years". On top of it being safer, Thorium also made sense because it was "four times more abundant in the Earth's crust than uranium". To legitimise and entrench the use of Thor, du Plooy argued that thorium was safer and produced

less radioactive waste with lower levels of radioactivity than uranium-based reactors and contain none of the waste products that can be used for making nuclear weapons. On top of this, when something goes wrong, thorium-based reactors shut themselves down, protecting them from the kind of overheating that resulted in the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi plant after the tsunami that hit Japan last year.

In support of nuclear energy powered South Africa was Ayanda Myoli (Chief Executive of the Nuclear Industry Association of South Africa), who the article "Nuclear WAR," (Ayanda Myoli and Ferrial Adam, *City Press*, 11 March 2012), presented nuclear as a safe energy source which will contribute towards South Africa's greenhouse emissions reduction. Myoli also used economisation to legitimise nuclear energy by arguing that the adoption of nuclear would provide "adequate electrical energy for the future prosperity of South Africa" and contribute towards the "upliftment of impoverished populations". Thus, the adoption of nuclear fulfilled a moral cause. The language of nuclear optimism is translated into the interests of 'everyone' 'everywhere' and therefore appears to appeal to common sense and rationality. The underlying interests of nuclear clubs, the corruption, the power plays and the neoliberal nature of the nuclear energy discourse are diminished and passivised. The political economy of nuclear energy, the vested political and

economic interests behind it are hidden, their agency was deleted, and a front is put where nuclear energy is for the benefit of the people. The discourse interpellated subjects by articulate the interests and positionalities of the poor and impoverished so that they can also identify themselves as being represented in the discourse. In an intertextual response to the nuclear pessimists, Myoli argued that “Nuclear power is well proven in 31 countries, including South Africa, and can play a major contribution towards climate change mitigation since nuclear power plants emit no CO₂”. This construction of nuclear energy represents it as a consensual issue, and that everyone agreed that it was the best.

In the story “Time running out to meet nuclear target,” (Tina Weavind, *Sunday Times*, 03 June 2012), Tina Weavind bemoaned the delays in bringing nuclear energy capacity because “Time [was] running out to meet nuclear target [and] The date has already been pushed back by five years - it was originally expected to be on stream by 2018 - and several years’ work still needs to be done before the first sod is turned”. The adoption of nuclear needed “tough decisions ... to be made soon if nuclear power is to be added to the South African grid by 2023”. The story pretended that there was no debate or disagreement about nuclear energy in South Africa. The only source used was the Energy Minister, Dipuo Peters, hence reproducing dominant discourses and worldviews and presenting them as the only ones available.

Similar to the articles in the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Sunday Independent* also gave discourse access to nuclear optimism. The Op-Ed “Government’s brave and bold nuclear move,” (Jovial Rantao, *Sunday Independent*, 22 June 2014) reproduced elite dominance, interests and views by promoting the government-sponsored nuclear discourses. Rantao achieved this by constructing South Africa’s energy needs as “desperate”. Nuclear energy was desperately needed to prevent the “intermittent power cuts” and to improve the “lives of those they lead [government]”. The author noted the problems with coal and nuclear in the context of the Fukushima disaster but went on to argue that “Our government deserves credit for acting, when a nation is faced with a crisis” but also “We [South Africans] will now become the subject of hate from environmental activists backed by some powerful, yet faceless powers”. Rantao saw campaigns against nuclear energy as “hate” and saw those against nuclear energy as ‘sponsored’ thereby de-agentising them. Those

against government nuclear plans were demonised and constructed as enemies who worked in the interests of ‘powerful’ and ‘faceless’ organisations. By so doing, the article deleted people’s agency in resisting government policies. The article intertextually began to prospectively anticipate backlash and thus labelled any future opposition to its discourse as “hate” and ‘sponsored’ by the country’s enemies. Those who disagreed with the government became unpatriotic enemies of the state and the people. The government position was legitimised and reproduced because it was a response to a national energy crisis which could be averted by nuclear energy. The nuclear optimism discourse is thus attached to morality and rationality claims without question. Further, the article made no attempt to construct the present and future energy needs as existing within a way of life that favours unrestrained consumption. This study argues that the issue of increased energy generation serves one particular interest, that is, unlimited consumption- and all the related aspects of its production, mining, and business which feed into the exploitation of subordinate groups and further widens the social, economic and political inequalities in South Africa.

Jovial Rantao’s, a senior editor and journalist at *Independent Media (IOL)*, views on nuclear energy articulate and collude with those of the minerals-energy complex and the South African government. This is important to note because it shows how at a political-economic and ideological level, the mentality within the *Sunday Independent* and the publisher were highly pro-nuclear and thus a consistent reproduction of the dominant views of nuclear optimism and a key bias towards the energy industry. Rantao argued that South Africa would face criticism even relating to the decision to allow fracking in the Karoo. Zuma’s decision to adopt nuclear energy, in Rantao’s thesis was “unpopular” but “will provide solutions to problems faced by the people he leads Solutions that will, in this case, provide energy security and help grow the economy. The president of a country always has to do what is in the interest of the country, no matter how unpopular”.

Rantao’s article brought out the idea that South Africa’s adoption of nuclear energy has never been an issue of addressing greenhouse gas emissions or climate change but a selfish national agenda that sought to achieve “energy security” at all costs. The article constructed the energy problems by drawing from the public idiom of high-density suburbs of Mofolo and Soweto “None of us will

be brave enough to go to Mofolo or any part of Johannesburg and explain to them why they must stay in the dark and cold, in the middle of the fiercest winters”. By drawing upon the problems affecting the ordinary high-density person, the article sought to personalise its discourse by way of pretending to articulate the group interests of the ordinary people, bear with them and speak on their behalf. The everyday language, especially of power problems, the darkness, the fiercest winter etc. was good enough to appellate people and railroad the elite nuclear energy discourse into the language and interests of an ordinary South African. An elite discourse is translated, moralised and automatised through making an appeal to the lowest common denominator interests of the majority. This discursive strategy helps in gaining consent from the discourse subjects. Nuclear adoption is constructed as a way of responding to “our” (shared) problems. Concealed in this construction are the ideological and capital investments of powerful actors in the government and the nuclear industry. The government was constructed as fighting a war with ‘haters’ who are ‘faceless’ and hence the government has a moral duty to fight for its people’s interests.

Dawid Serfontein also promoted nuclear optimism in the Op-Ed “Nuclear can pay its own way,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 August 2015). Serfontein moralised nuclear because it had “small health hazards” “compared with the very high number of deaths yearly caused by pollutants from coal-fired power plants”. Intertextually, the author was responding to both retrospective and prospective texts that demoralised nuclear because it was expensive for South Africa and had health hazards from the released radioactive material.

In some instances, the *Sunday Times* constructed nuclear as renewable energy that had the potential to reduce South Africa’s emissions. For example, the story “France and SA to work together on nuclear power,” (Jan-Jan Joubert, *Sunday Times*, 03 December 2015) argued that the use of nuclear was meant to replace coal as a base-load source of energy. The story reproduced the optimism of the French Nuclear Society and the Nuclear Industry Association of South Africa. “French and South African nuclear scientists have come out in support of nuclear as a clean energy option after meeting in Cape Town”. Valerie Faudon, the French Nuclear Society’s executive officer, promoted nuclear energy because it provided “the best tools to mitigate climate change”.

Lynne Brown, South Africa's Public Enterprises Minister, was indirectly represented in the story "Lynne Brown backs nuclear," (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 24 July 2016) in support of nuclear energy because it provided "base load power - as opposed to peaking power used at the peak times of the day -South Africa had just two options: coal and nuclear". Brown contended that the need for nuclear was a consensus ideology: "There is growing consensus that future cost comparisons will swing in favour of nuclear ... [it] offers one of the cheapest sources of electricity that comes with zero greenhouse emissions". The story lacked ideological disagreement. The dominant nuclear optimistic paradigm is reproduced throughout the story using actors from government and Eskom.

8.5 Nuclear Diffidence

The nuclear energy discourse in South Africa is a contested terrain. The key opposition to the government's nuclear optimism comes from NGOs, churches and academics while the government and the nuclear industry, banks and the energy-intensive industry seem optimistic about nuclear energy. The key discursive divisions are to be found in how the country should move forward in terms of the energy mix. The government policies, especially the guiding IRP, favour the interests of business and largely ignored calls for a rethink of nuclear plans and the continued exploitation of coal. The government policies, through the policy and media discourses, have largely mirrored the interests of the minerals-energy complex, capital and profit-oriented companies. In adopting nuclear energy and further exploiting coal, the government often used the moral standard of energy supply and economic development. This is against the unavailability of evidence that increased electricity generation has improved the standard of living of the poor or reduced class inequalities. Rather the increased electricity generation has been seen to benefit the intensive energy consumers in mining and industry.

Several environmental groups criticised the government's IRP which envisaged an energy path with 9600MW of nuclear energy. Michelle Pietersen's story "Activists urge nuclear rethink: It's biggest mistake ever," (*Sunday Independent*, 20 March 2011) portrayed the South African government as irresponsible for adopting nuclear energy. In the context of the Fukushima disaster of March 2011, the South African government pressed ahead with its nuclear path contrary to what the story saw as international common sense:

As a result of Japan's horrific accident, we understand that governments are reviewing their commitment to nuclear energy. South Africa cannot ignore the implications of what is now looking like the worst nuclear accident in the history of the industry.

Representatives from the environmental groups argued that nuclear energy was a "false solution" that was expensive and "unsafe and high risk". Tristen Taylor of Earthlife Africa saw South Africa's adoption of nuclear energy as "the biggest mistake ever" and described the decision as "reckless".

The NGOs, in their letter to cabinet ministers, Dipuo Peters (Energy) and Edna Molewa (Environmental Affairs), assigned themselves the role of speaking on behalf of everyone who was 'responsible' and not 'reckless'. This strong language represents the bi-polar distinctions that the NGOs constructed between 'us' the people (against nuclear energy) and 'them' the villains (government, banks, nuclear industry etc. who were for nuclear). The letter argued that "We can't help but think they (government) have a deal and that's why they are pushing it through". Dipuo Peters, the South African minister of Energy denied the claim that the government was pushing the nuclear path because it had a deal with foreign nuclear multinationals. The story further quoted the Deputy-Director-General in the Energy Department, Ompi Aphane, who was adamant that the nuclear plans were continuing: "This (plan) looks 20 years into the future. When you look at the plan, you'll see that most urgent was the renewables". Asked what the government would do next, Aphane was quoted saying, "Implementation. We launched it on Thursday and within the month, the bidding process for the renewables will open".

The views of the NGOs are presented first and are given the primary definitional power. The NGOs, labelled activists in the story, are constructed as building a case for the non-adoption of nuclear energy. The NGOs constructed nuclear energy as unsafe and expensive for the country, especially in the context of the Fukushima disaster in Japan. However, there is no single name of the people representing the NGOs in the first twelve paragraphs. Only Earthlife Africa's Tristen Taylor got quoted in the 13th paragraph. In contrast, two government officials are given the right to reply and are afforded almost the same discursive space to rebut the claims made by the nameless NGOs. These are Dipuo Peters and Ompi Aphane. While the views of the NGOs are the

basis of the story, the extensive coverage given to the Department of Energy almost renders the claims from the nameless NGOs irrelevant and unsubstantiated.

The Department of Energy Minister, Dipuo Peters made a serious morality claim for the adoption of nuclear energy. Peters saw the adoption of nuclear energy benefitting “all of us”. There is implied and imagined consensus and benefit through the translation of elite views into everyday public idiom: “everywhere you go when you want to determine what particular challenges you have, especially in consideration of the X-ray environment, we apply nuclear”. It followed, therefore, that nuclear energy benefits outweighed the fears raised by the NGOs. The nuclear energy optimism discourse translated itself into a rational and morality discourse. Missing from the arguments put forward by Peters and Aphanze is the politics and political economy of nuclear energy in South Africa. The story is not inclusive of the contradictions within the South African society when it comes to energy access and use, the interested parties, the powerful multinational investors such as France’s Areva, Russia’s Rosatom, etc. The political economy of nuclear energy and procurement is concealed in the story. At best, the story is a surface description of deeper economic and political interests in the energy sector.

The government, banks, and the private sector had vast interests in nuclear because of the huge amounts involved. The goal was always profit and not development and energy supply, these were the fringe outcomes of the profit drive. The views expressed by the government are essentially the interests of the minerals-energy complex, the nuclear industry, and multinational nuclear companies. The nuclear energy discourse in South Africa becomes an articulation of the energy, policy, finance and mining coalitions and their interests. By providing extensive rebuttal space to the government, the views of the government were reproduced along the rationality plane and common sense. The government, contrary to criticism was “very responsible, caring and extremely cautious (Peters)”.

The story “‘Avoid disaster on our shores’,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 24 March 2011) constructed nuclear energy as unsafe and undesirable for South Africa. The story began by delegitimising the South African government for making nuclear energy a key component of the Integrated Resource Plan. The plan to have 9600 megawatts of nuclear energy in the future energy

mix was viewed as a sign of an irresponsible and insensitive government. Six actors are used to demoralise nuclear energy optimism. “Environmentalists call on the government to reconsider SA’s nuclear plans ... from its climate change strategy following the earthquake and threatened meltdown of Japanese reactors”. The disaster in Fukushima (March 11, 2011) was used as a discursive basis to ridicule the government’s plans to use nuclear energy as part of the energy mix. The disaster in Japan was ‘proof enough’ for the government to see the dangers of nuclear. The story directly represented Tristen Taylor from Earthlife Africa emphasising: “This crisis [in Japan], considered the second-worst nuclear accident in history, has proved that nuclear power generation is not safe”. Alongside these calls by activists, the story also referred to Germany closing its nuclear reactors after the Japanese disaster. In terms of the story construction, this could be seen as a way of moralising the calls for the abandonment of nuclear and demoralisation of the government’s nuclear plans.

South African Minister of Energy, Dipuo Peters, was indirectly represented defending South Africa’s nuclear plans and making the claim that “the Japanese crisis had not affected government plans to expand the nuclear energy supply from 6.5% to 14% of the country’s energy mix by 2030”. Peters defended the government plan because it was meant “to ensure energy security as well as meet climate change mitigation undertakings”. The claims by Dipuo Peters were preceded and proceeded by views and actors who actively demoralised the government claims. Nuclear pessimists saw nuclear energy as too costly, and “depended on fossil fuels for the mining, processing and enrichment of uranium”. Diffidence on nuclear was also shared by the trade union, National Union of Mineworkers. The trade union’s Mziwakhe Nhlope was directly represented in the story noting that as a union they opposed nuclear because it “raises issues of safety, cost, sustainability and the impact on jobs”.

As an alternative to nuclear, the actors who were against nuclear energy expressed optimism in solar and wind. The story displayed ideological disagreement between the government on the one side and civil society representatives on the other. Through the headline and structure of the story together with the placement of actors’ views, the story built the idea that nuclear energy was bad for South Africa. Regardless of views from Dipuo Peters and Eskom, the overarching idea was that nuclear was not good for the country.

While the South African government adopted the Integrated Resource Plan that proposed 9600 MW of electricity to be produced from nuclear, Adam saw such actions as counterproductive (Ferrial Adam, "SA must remove nuclear blinkers," *City Press*, 17 June 2011). Intertextually, the article was responding to the nuclear provision in the IRP and the dominant government discourses that attempted to promote nuclear energy as part of ensuring energy security and reducing carbon emissions. The plans by the government to introduce and promote nuclear energy were constructed as going against common sense because even "Governments around the world are rethinking nuclear energy. The Germany government has decided to phase out nuclear energy and 95% of Italians voted against the use of nuclear in a recent referendum". It followed, therefore, that the proposal by South Africa as envisaged in the IRP was not rational and moral. The South African government was demoralised and delegitimised as irresponsible for adopting nuclear proposals "Merely six days after the Japanese were reeling from a nuclear meltdown". Adam argued that: "The claim that nuclear power could be a solution to climate change is false" because it can "only reduce CO2 emissions by 6%" and is also "dependent on a non-renewable resource, creates dangerous radioactive waste and is very costly".

Rianne Teule, from Greenpeace Africa, in the Op-Ed "Nuclear power will cost the country dearly," (*Mail & Guardian*, 20 October 2011), argued that the move towards nuclear energy was not good for South Africa because of the costs. By way of discursive de-economisation and demoralisation, the article attempted to delegitimise the mainstream government discourse of nuclear optimism. Using examples from Japan, the article constructed a pessimistic tone against nuclear energy which was described as providing "too little, too late and at too high a price". The article ideologically disagrees with the government position on nuclear and by way of intertextuality responded to the government premise by delegitimising the dominant frames of nuclear energy. The South African government's nuclear project was delegitimised and demoralised because other countries "around the world are rethinking nuclear energy after the Japan nuclear disaster". More importantly, the nuclear project would require a lot of funding: "The high price of nuclear is already being paid by Japanese citizens after the Fukushima disaster in March this year". The author laid the background in a bid to delegitimise the government worldview. The article drew into the politics of nuclear energy: It was not just about energy, but key multinational energy conglomerates had vested interests to invest in nuclear in South Africa. "No wonder nuclear companies, supported by their

governments, are desperately clinging to South Africa's nuclear expansion plans ... The French companies Areva and EDF need to sell reactors abroad to survive". For Teule, it was incorrect to link nuclear energy to emissions reduction because "nuclear energy will not combat climate change" because it had "a small contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions".

Ferrial Adam in "Nuclear WAR," (Ayanda Myoli and Ferrial Adam, *City Press*, 11 March 2012) attempted to delegitimise and demoralise nuclear energy as unsafe and unclean. Adam criticised the South African government for failing to learn "from the tragic lessons of Fukushima" by "pushing ahead with its nuclear plans to build six nuclear reactors". While Myoli argued that nuclear energy was "well-proven in 31 countries," Adam argued that "Governments across the world were rethinking nuclear energy after the Japanese nuclear disaster". In this way, the South African government was represented as going against global common sense. "It is hugely irresponsible for the government to believe that they can spend billions of taxpayers' rands on such dangerous and expansive technology". While Myoli argued that nuclear energy would help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Adam rebutted that construction by arguing that the contributions of nuclear power towards emissions are "too little, too late and at high a price". Instead of nuclear, Adam was optimistic about renewable energy that provides "a sustainable, long-term increase in green jobs".

Bishop Geoff Davies, executive director of the Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute, in the Op-Ed "Nuclear power will worsen the wealth gap," (*Mail & Guardian*, 25 April 2012) attempted to politicise the nuclear energy debate. Intertextually, the article was a direct response to the South African government's Integrated Resource Plan that envisaged an increased role of nuclear energy in South Africa's energy futures supplying 9.6GWH of electricity from six reactors by 2030. While the government-sponsored the discourse on nuclear energy optimism, Davies delegitimised nuclear. The government claimed that nuclear was cheap and safe, but Davies believed that the use of nuclear energy could have "devastating consequences" as evidenced in Fukushima, Japan. Davies further drew from environmental sociology critique and agreed with the metabolic theory that sees humans and nature as having relations of interdependence. Davies argued that "the web of life and our wellbeing is dependent on the wellbeing of the planet. We,

humans, are but part of the web, entirely dependent on a healthy planet. We threaten all life through our carbon-intensive way of life [capitalism], our habitat destruction and pollution”.

The optimism in nuclear was portrayed as based on myths promoted by the government and its agents: “Eskom continues to propagate the myth that coal and nuclear power are the only sources of energy that can provide base-load electricity”. On the contrary, Davies expressed optimism in green energy techno-fixes wherein “[with] thermal batteries and a mix of wind, sun and ocean currents, we can produce clean base-load electricity that is cheaper than nuclear power and new coal and has no fuel or decommissioning costs”. Davies also delegitimised the view that nuclear energy is clean by arguing: “Taking into account the mining of uranium, its transport and the construction of power plants, nuclear energy is certainly neither carbon-neutral nor ‘clean’”. The article discredited nuclear, shaming the drive towards nuclear energy by asking why

most industrialised countries, such as Germany and Japan, are turning their backs on it? The only conclusion is that there is an immense amount of money in the nuclear industry for those involved and in power. They will reap the financial benefits, not the majority of South Africans. This will exacerbate the poverty-wealth gap.

In the story, “Coal is bad for our water: Greenpeace,” (Eleanor Momberg, *Sunday Independent*, 22 April 2012) Greenpeace expressed diffidence towards the government’s decision to continue with its nuclear energy plans: “Our government is barrelling ahead with its nuclear plans without consultation of public stakeholders or transparency to its plans”. Greenpeace’s Ferrial Adam was quoted contending that “The government’s rushed decision to build six additional nuclear reactors is a clear indication that the South African government is not learning from the systematic failures around the world’s nuclear industry, as became apparent recently in Fukushima, Japan”. Adam reasoned further that “Nuclear energy is a dirty energy source that offers too little, too late, at too high a price”.

Dirk de Vos (consultant in renewable energy) delegitimised the South African government’s support of nuclear energy. He achieved this in the Op-Ed “Put nuclear dreams aside for now,” (Dirk de Vos, *Mail & Guardian*, 18 April 2013) by alluding to the March 11, 2011, Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. “Fukushima showed that nuclear safety requires not only good engineering but also high-level, vigilant and independent regulation that constantly and critically seeks to identify risks on a never-ending, relentless and ongoing basis”.

Pieter-Louis Myburgh, in the Op-Ed “Nuclear family,” (*City Press*, 23 April 2017) drew attention to the political economy of the South African energy futures debate as it relates to nuclear energy. The article, based on the extract of the book “*The Republic of Gupta: A Story of State Capture*” by Pieter-Louis Myburgh, attempted to join links between the Zuma administration’s clamour for nuclear energy and the Gupta uranium interests: “the Gupta family’s and Duduzane Zuma’s investment in uranium mining ... coincides with the involvement of the Russian state-owned nuclear energy corporation Rosatom”. In 2009 at COP15 in Copenhagen, Zuma announced South Africa’s ambitions to reduce emissions and surprised many: “According to the Rand Daily Mail ‘his announcement ... revealed Zuma’s nuclear ambitions”.

In the story “Nuclear deal ‘comes with price for SA’,” (Bulelwa Payi, *Sunday Independent*, 11 February 2018), NJ Ayuk (oil and gas lawyer) was the sole discourse sponsor against nuclear energy optimism because “there was no reason for South Africa to consider nuclear energy as part of its energy mix”. Nuclear energy was detested because the “proposed deal might come with political pressure which could lead to political capture”. The story and the main discourse actor concurred that South Africa needed “to look at other energy sources to meet its climate change commitments”.

Ayuk opposed nuclear energy, not because of any concern for the environment, but because it would lead to “political capture” by global North countries whose countries were interested in developing nuclear energy capacity in South Africa. Ayuk could have been intertextually responding to, though not mentioned in the story, French, Russian and Chinese companies that were interested in building nuclear reactors in South Africa. “Do you want a member of the Security Council that’s dependent on another country for its energy security and needs? Africa needs a representative that will articulate its views and not one that will be perceived to be captured by another strong power”.

By default, Ayuk saw South Africa’s energy solutions as coming from renewable energy. Ayuk economised the renewable optimism discourse by arguing that they were clean and were able “to create jobs and grow the economy”. In his argument, renewables were supposed to dominate South

Africa's energy mix because they had "the potential to alleviate poverty ... will create jobs and allow small businesses to participate in the sector". The newspaper discourse aligned with the techno-optimistic constructions of renewable energy as economically making sense and moral. His views are reproduced through direct and indirect discourse representation. The views Ayuk expressed are represented as very important and unquestionable because he is "a leading oil and gas lawyer [who is] widely recognised as one of the top influential businessmen in the oil and gas sector globally". His Promethean beliefs are reproduced and he himself constructed renewable energy and technological innovation as common sense and the most rational and logical sources of energy: "Renewable energy must be the core part of the energy mix [because] it has the potential to alleviate poverty ... [and] create jobs". Renewable energy, therefore, is moralised by way of economisation and alluding to the perceived benefits. Through the newspaper's own discourse and indirectly representing Ayuk's views, it is argued that renewable energy would be a catalyst towards meeting South Africa's "commitments signed on climate change".

8.6 Techno-renewable energy optimism

News media discourses on climate change in South Africa are closely tied to the energy discourses. Energy discourses are important because the future energy choices made by South Africa have a direct impact on climate change mitigation. Four key energy discourses emerged from the news analysis. Firstly the coal discourse (argued for the continued use of coal for economic development and energy security), the nuclear energy discourse (argued for the expansion of nuclear capacity for economic development coupled with 'clean' energy), the shale gas discourse (argued for the extensive exploration of coal gas to replace coal because gas 'cleaner' than coal) and last the renewable energy discourse (argued for the transition towards wind and solar energy). The renewable energy discourse was primarily sponsored by actors from environmental non-governmental organisations, the Department of Environmental Affairs and partly the Department of Energy. The South African Climate Change Response White Paper of 2011 articulated a future that was based on techno-renewable energy optimism that led to a 'green economy'.

Renewable energy was constructed as a clean and moral way of developing the country. The sponsors of the techno-renewable energy optimism used environmental moralisation and economisation to try and common-sense it. For them, renewable energy was good because it

provided jobs and could develop the economy in a clean way. This study argues that the techno-renewable optimistic discourse was intensely embedded within, at least ideologically, within the capitalist logic of ‘Sustainable Capitalism’ grounded within the economic modernisation paradigm. Such discourses, rather than seeking a transformation of the capitalist risk society, sought climate change solutions within the same mode of life that promotes consumption and exploitation. However, actors who opposed the techno-renewable optimism, mostly from the Department of Energy, the Department of Mineral Resources and the Minerals-Energy complex argued that renewable energy was too expensive and unreliable because it could not provide base-load. News stories, especially in the *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press* and the *Sunday Independent* demonstrated a close affinity to Promethean discourses where climate change presented opportunities for South Africa to transition to a ‘neoliberal green economy’ through renewable energy and technological advancements.

Wilson Manganyi (a researcher at Mistra - Mapungubwe Institute), in the Op-Ed “Is South Africa ready to embrace the hydrogen economy?” (*Sunday Independent*, 06 November 2011), argued against coal because South Africa’s emissions were seen to be a result of power generation by Eskom. “Ninety percent of Eskom’s electricity comes from this fossil fuel [coal] which explains our excessive carbon footprint”. In the third paragraph, the article problematised the coal problem by making direct links between coal and the political economy of the South African energy system, especially the benefits going to the minerals-energy complex: “Our aluminium, zinc and steel industries have been buttressed by a steady supply of cheap electricity from coal ... coal is also used to produce liquid fuels [Sasol].” Manganyi argued that the energy problem was historical and cited the government’s 1998 energy white paper that envisaged the centrality of coal in South Africa’s energy mix. The article argued that South Africa needed to move away from fossil fuel towards a “hydrogen economy” anchored on the use of platinum group of metals (PGMs) such as “platinum, palladium, ruthenium, osmium, rhodium and iridium - all crucial to a hydrogen economy (H2ECO)”.

The article used the discursive strategy of economisation to moralise the move towards the hydrogen economy. This transition had the advantage of reducing emissions while meeting the country's energy needs and most importantly "South Africa can become a major supplier of fuel cells across the globe - with major implications for manufacturing and services". Crucially, the culture of unending exploitation is left unquestioned, rather new ways of exploiting both nature and humans are sought. Because South Africa is endowed with the platinum group of metals, the country was supposed to fully exploit this potential. The article constructed nature as given freely and open to unlimited human exploitation and conquer through technological interventions. This study maintains that technological interventions only benefit the capitalist class and worsens ecological risks as new technologies bring in new risks. The call to explore the PGMs was made without questioning the need to expand mining and the use of chemicals in the process thus furthering the metabolic rifts between humans and nature. By completely ignoring the social and cultural embeddedness of the capitalist system, the article concealed the agentive responsibility of capitalism towards the ecological catastrophe. Approaches that favour economic modernisation and Promethean discourses were rendered rational, moral and common sense. Approaches (technological interventions) that seek to reinvent capitalism through shifting risk sources and economic modernisation but not addressing the foundational political-economic structures of the climate ecological problems were promoted. While the article saw coal divestment as a crucial step, it did not question the structural inequalities in energy access and use in South Africa.

News stories in the *Mail & Guardian* saw renewable energy as the panacea to South Africa's energy future. Renewable energy was economised and thus acquired a moral campus. In "Blowing up a storm," Fiona Macleod (*Mail & Guardian*, 12 May 2011) used the discursive strategies of scientisation and economisation to legitimise and moralise wind energy optimism where "electricity from wind turbines will soon be cheaper than power from the Eskom grid" and "cost 95 cents a unit against the more than R1 a unit that will be charged by Eskom in four years' time". Because of this economic common sense, it was imperative that the economy moved towards this new energy resource that was both clean and cheaper. This economisation and moralisation helped in constructing legitimacy and a consensus ideology. While this appears noble on the surface, it is the ideological role of such texts that should be probed. The texts build narratives in the common-sense discourse but essentially entrenching a culture of consumption and exploitation.

The story automatised renewable energy as the best energy for the future. While aspects of the renewable energy discourse appear as common sense, they only become so because of how journalists and other actors have constructed and naturalised them. Renewable energy (Promethean discourse) was constructed as a panacea to sustainable and clean development. Central questions of the cultural politics of climate change were not addressed. Climate change, and the responses to it, therefore, this study argues, must be discussed from an understanding of climate change as a product of capitalist risk culture that sees exploitation in its operations.

The same principles of Capital and expansion and efficiency that produced the risk society are naturalised and automatised that no alternatives seem possible. Capitalism and the market-led responses ingrained in technological optimism were not debated. This study contends that any attempt to solve the climate crisis should begin by disintegrating and disentangling the risk tendencies of capitalism. Responding to climate change through renewables is made to appear commonsensical. The news story constructed an image of consensus discourse that everyone agrees that renewables and technology interventions are the answer. Climate change is a cultural problem, whose answers should be constructed from changing the cultural structures of exploitation, massification and inequality. Excluded from the Promethean discourses expressed in the story are alternative (environmental sociology) views that speak to and about transforming society from exploitation to equality, views that see the need for a restoration of truly metabolic relations between nature and society: where nature is viewed as a finite resource and hence the need for dialectical human-nature relationships. Moving towards renewable energy under the capitalist praxis simply relocates the centres of expansion, exploitation and the consumerist culture. The doxa of renewable energy and sustainable clean energy cannot be viewed as innocent. The Promethean discourses that find comfort in techno-optimism have been legitimised, automatised and commonsensed by their representation and construction as the only ones available.

The story “SA will have to transform its transport and energy sectors,” (No author, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) contended that South Africa needed “to transition its transport and energy sectors” in order to reduce emissions. The key actor in the story was the United Nations Development Programme resident representative, Dr Agostinho Zacharias: “In tackling climate

change, we cannot get away from the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the transport and energy sectors”. The techno-optimism discourse was moralised by Zacharias through the strategy of economisation: “By investing in renewable energy, valuable jobs can be created, particularly in rural areas where they are desperately in short supply”. Overall, the story reproduced the ideology of Promethean capitalism: What was needed was just a shift from coal to renewables without fundamentally altering the capitalist political economy.

Yolandi Groenewald, in “Our green is good as gold” (*City Press*, 15 December 2012) praised the government for its efforts in ‘green electricity’ production and supply. The lead paragraph noted that “South Africa’s renewable energy expansion programme is viewed as one of the biggest in the world”. There was a scramble and rush for renewable energy investment: “Solar and wind farms are rising between the koppies on farms from the Soutpansberg in Limpopo to Boshoff in the Free State and De Aar in the Northern Cape”. The article reads like a public relations release from a government department.

Key details in the story are important in this study. The story noted that renewable energy funding in South Africa “originates from private or overseas investors” and “South African banks like Nedbank [who had] also invested considerable resources in the programme”. The neoliberal nature highlighted was presented as a milestone and good for South Africa. Under the pretext of fighting climate change, neoliberalism sees climate change and global warming as opportunities for making more money. It is about profit and accumulation and not reducing emissions and upholding a strategy that seeks to alter the current global capitalist system. Renewable energy investments become the new alternatives where capital moves from coal to renewables but maintaining the same structures and systems of accumulation. These much-celebrated Promethean approaches do not have the capacity to usher climate justice, social justice and economic justice. Rather these are stratagems that are meant to ensure the morphosis and self-mutation character of capital. Sustainable capitalism only shifts the forms of exploitation, but continuously seeks to exploit natural resources for the benefit of a few. The solar and wind farms cause displacements and noise but the benefits are shared by a minority who own the means of production. Key is that addressing climate change should at the same time become a fight against the economic system, an attempt to

move towards de-consumption and de-exploitation of nature, a real attempt to restore the metabolic human-nature relations.

The story “Sustainable energy savings,” (Alf James, *Sunday Independent*, 28 April 2013) represents optimism in renewable energy and argued that “sustainable power boosts opportunity” and could lead to poverty alleviation and better living conditions. As part of attempts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there was a need for “doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix ... sustainable energy - energy that is accessible, cleaner and more efficient” with the potential to ‘power’ sustainable development. As part of moralising renewable energy, the article delegitimised what it termed “inefficient energy” that harmed “economic productivity and energy-related emissions contribute significantly to the dangerous warming of our planet”. The article portrayed renewable energy initiatives as automatically leading to sustainable development. The power of renewable energy in this regard was to be understood as a matter of common sense.

Dipuo Peters, the Minister of Energy, was represented in the story constructing renewable as contributing “immensely towards reducing poverty, mitigating climate change”. The story was premised on two major events. Firstly, the launch of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon’s Sustainable Energy for All programme and secondly the presentation by Dipuo Peters at the Africa Energy Indaba. Peters addressed the topic from an ideology of consensus and used public idioms such as “we have” and “we believe that” and thus brought ‘everyone’ to the support of renewable energy optimism. While her views were essentially the views of the South African Department of Energy, her address universalised the views to represent the entirety of Africa. Climate change and poverty were depoliticised and constructed as problems that could be solved by changing the source of energy. The answers to poverty and climate change lay in technological innovation. The answers were to be found, not necessarily in the change/reduction of emissions, but in creating new energy sources, this perpetuates the dominant capitalist system. Sustainable development, if seen from this Promethean, neoliberal discourse and ideology, becomes essentially rhetoric that has no real effects in making better the environment and the social status of people. By using official sources, the news article legitimised the official views of the UN elite and the South African government elites. The discursive dominance of the elite was entrenched by the

obvious lack of alternatives. The absence of other views makes the available views automatic, and natural.

In contrast to coal that was consistently constructed as dirty and bad, Siphos Kings, in “SA set to profit from wind power,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 June 2013) endorsed renewable as safe and attractive. In terms of ideology, the story helped in naturalising and legitimising techno-optimistic and neoliberal discourses that see climate change solutions through the lenses of renewable capitalism. These ideas/solutions feed into the global mainstream rhetoric of sustainable capitalism masked as development. The legitimisation and naturalisation of wind energy help in entrenching the neoliberal agenda of innovation and does not seek to proffer discourses that pursue the transformation of capitalism as an environmentally corrosive system. Within the renewable energy discourse, wind and solar (all public goods) are appropriated *gratis* for the maximisation of profit for a few capitalists whose investments in renewable energy are profit-oriented. Aspects of equality and climate justice are not part of the renewables crusade. Any benefits to the environment are purely incidental and coincidental if not accidental.

There was no ideological disagreement because alternative discourses were excluded thereby leading to the story being one-dimensional and the manufacture of imagined ideological consent and consensus. The worldviews of the actors were translated into everyday common-sense language and spoke on behalf of logic and rationality. The story used intertextuality to respond to both retrospective and prospective discourses that opposed wind energy as not good for the environment. “Darling has benefitted the wind industry in various ways. By giving the public and other stakeholders an up-close view of the turbines in operation, it has alleviated many of the insecurities and concerns that lobby groups have wrongfully advertised”. This way of constructing wind energy was done to legitimise and portray wind energy (turbines) as friendly to people and biodiversity. This helps in buying consent.

Another example of techno-renewable energy optimism is found in an article by Rashmi Mistry, an Oxfam senior campaigner, “Actions at home need to match SA’s posture on climate,” (*Sunday Independent*, 21 December 2014). The article was techno-optimistic as it saw climate responses through renewable energy sources because “the cost of renewable energy such as wind and solar

power is coming down and could provide affordable energy, generated nearby, to communities battling with the rising costs of our coal-fed electricity lines”. For Mistry, South Africa needed to move away from its heavy reliance on coal power and saw the development of Kusile and Medupi power stations and the proposed Coal 3 as putting “doubt whether the country can reach the emission reduction targets it has promoted on the world stage”. Essentially, the article, starting with the headline saw contradictions between what South Africa was saying on the world stage and the domestic action especially in the energy sector with the continued coal appetite.

Patrick Bond, Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in the Op-Ed “Patrick Bond favours sunshine and wind for energy generation and warns of the high risks and costs of nuclear and coal power, fracking and offshore drilling,” (*Sunday Independent*, 15 February 2015) attempted to problematise and politicise the debate about South Africa’s energy mix. He began by criticising the government’s approach towards coal and later the nuclear drive. In his pursuit to reproduce and legitimise the techno-renewable energy discourse, Bond depended on the demoralisation and delegitimisation of coal and nuclear energy. Bond’s article can be read as intertextually defying the mainstream government discourses of coal indispensability and nuclear expansion.

Two key issues are salient in Bond’s diatribe. *Coal diffidence*: “Water, land and air are being poisoned by coal. Climate change will be worsened by the 30m tons a year of carbon dioxide emitted by each of the coal burners”. While the primary concern for Bond regarding coal was related to carbon emissions, he also paid attention to the political economy of the energy mix in South Africa, criticising the corrupt nature of the awarding of tenders to Hitachi Corporation for the Medupi and Kusile coal-fired power stations. Worrying was that Eskom’s Chairperson - Popo Molefe, also sat in the ANC Finance committee and knew that Chancellor House, an ANC investment arm, had a 25 percent stake in Hitachi, the company that was given the R40 billion tender for the Medupi and Kusile power stations. *Nuclear Diffidence*: Bond noted that President Jacob Zuma had put in place an energy policy that “Other than building three huge coal-fired power plants, the long-term supply strategy option is nuclear”. Bond expressed concern that there was a possibility of nuclear accidents, drawing parallels from the Japan March 11, 2011, Fukushima disaster, Chernobyl 1996, and the Three Mile Island 1979. Further, Bond drew from

the politics of nuclear energy in South Africa, arguing that the nuclear energy program was a potential corruption breeding place. The other concern was with the cost of nuclear energy to the South African economy. Furthermore, while the South African government also pinned its hopes for energy supply on hydraulic fracturing, Bond saw this move as counterproductive. The dominant ideology of nuclear common sense, of coal indispensability and fracking, were questioned and delegitimised. Instead of a reliance on coal, nuclear and natural gas, Bond promoted a techno-optimistic ideology.

Comparable Bond's renewables thesis, Yolandi Groenewald, in "Retailers try to go green," (*City Press*, 07 June 2015), reproduced the idea of a green economy founded on techno-renewable energy. The retailers were represented as making efforts to 'green' their operations because they realised "that renewable energy makes sense". Woolworths's Justin Smith was represented in the story noting that "Global climate change negotiations have highlighted the ongoing need for the retail industry in South Africa to manage energy".

Mike Brown (CEO at Nedbank) constructed climate change as a living reality and it was about "Either we change or the climate does" (Mike Brown, "Either we change or the climate does," *Sunday Times*, 14 June 2015). The impacts of climate change were represented as dire and thus there was a need for 'everyone' to agree and act. Through universalising language "As business, we need to deliver a firm mandate to our negotiators in Paris to enhance the likelihood of a successful deal that will create new opportunities as we move to a low-carbon economy". While admitting that climate change risk society was human-induced, Brown argued that the causes were to be explained from a genuine moral imperative.

"What makes it particularly difficult for people and business - to grasp is that climate change isn't actually caused by evil intentions or deliberate selfishness. Rather, it has its roots in our well-meaning efforts to provide affordable energy, food, and higher living standards". These statements attempted to moralise the exploitation of humans and the environment as something that happened for everyone's benefit. The breakdown of the human-nature metabolism was explained as an unintended consequence from a development path that sought to benefit everyone. The article advanced techno-optimism in renewables "energy efficiency and energy storage technology".

Climate change responses, therefore, were to be thought of within a Promethean neoliberal discourse that prioritised technology and market instruments of a carbon market and carbon budgets.

Craig Dodds in “For energy win, wary investors must be wooed,” (*Sunday Independent*, 11 October 2015), promoted renewable energy optimism by constructing it through the discursive strategies of economisation and moralisation. The story used the International Renewable Energy Agency’s (IRENA) Adnan Amin as the sole discourse sponsor. Amin saw the financing of renewable energy projects as problematic regardless “of the need and escalation of energy demand”. Therefore, the funding of renewables was to be sought through the private sector: “the question on financing becomes, how do you mobilise private capital at sufficiently low cost”. The paradox is that traditionally, renewable technologies have always been imported from the global North, now also India and China, the importation of technology has two attributes: dependence on the manufacturers for the technology hardware, software and training and the importation of the ideologies that underpin those technologies. The question is not about technology transfer, but essentially, transfer of what and under what conditions.

The absence of financing locally also meant the dependence on global private capital from the same suppliers of the technology. This dependence creates a syndrome of reliance and control in a top-bottom centre-periphery structure. Key to note in this study is that the discourse on technological optimism has found a central discursive salience across the global South. The techno-optimism expressed through the government and other players shows how the idea of technology transfer and innovation has been taken for granted and how the political economy of those technologies has been depoliticised. It is necessary to question the political economy of the technology transfer discourse which for now has enjoyed extensive support. This study argues that while technology transfer has been criticised from the frameworks of cultural and technological imperialism paradigms, the discourse has found consent from even the victims of the transfer in the global South. Governments and key discourse sponsors have appropriated, without any difference, the rhetoric of sustainability and the underlying ideas of technology transfer and innovation. There is no difference in the way the rhetoric is accepted and made commonsensical

between the global North and the global South - it has become a planetary vulgate, scatology. The rhetoric of technology optimism has been rendered a consensus ideology that has not been challenged, especially by the governments in the global South.

This could be explained by noting that the discourse itself has found multilateral salience, achieving the status of common sense and thus enjoying ideological hegemony. Technology transfer and innovation discourses are closely tied to the rhetoric of sustainability and the technology itself is seen as the centrepiece of Promethean capitalist responses. The discourse, this study argues is inherently neoliberal and has become automatised. Renewables is another mechanistic and material name for new capital frontiers that come under the banner of sustainable development: whose technology? Whose finance? And under what conditions?

Africa and its vulnerability and desire to develop are the vistas of opportunity for capitalists in the global North. Adnan Amin noted: “We’re seeing renewables developers from Europe and the US looking at the African market as a major opportunity because if electricity demand is going to triple by 2015”. The energy needs and climate problems faced by the global South are a window of opportunity for the global North private capital. The contradiction is how there is convergence between the capitalist interests of global finance capital and the policies of global South governments. Articulation as an analytical tool becomes essential. The convergence of interests, even if they are not the same - all lead to the same outcome of a technology-led green economy which carries with it ideals of a sustainable society. The unquestioning appropriation and proliferation of the sustainability discourse in the news media rendered Promethean responses to climate change dominant ideologies and thus continue to entrench neoliberal market-led solutions. The sustainability discourse, therefore, opens by default, global South economies to technologies and finance from the global North thereby maintaining the same logic of capital based on centre-periphery exploitation, inequality and dependence.

Renewable energy optimism ran through the story “Huge solar power projects take a shine to the Northern Cape,” (Claire Keeton, *Sunday Times*, 13 December 2015). Projects such as the Bokpoort Concentrated Solar Power plants were seen as revolutionising energy supply in South Africa.

Solar-thermal power plants were promoted in the story because they had an “added bonus of promoting industrialisation and creating jobs”. Valli Moosa, former Environmental Affairs minister and investor in solar-thermal projects noted “Concentrated solar power is the renewable technology of choice. It has the real potential to supply electricity on an industrial scale, and with storage, it can supply electricity during peak demand”.

The article “Searching for GREEN POWER,” by Yolandi Groenewald (*City Press*, 14 February 2016) reproduced neoliberal techno-optimism in renewable energy. The renewables were constructed as the energy that could power South Africa into the ‘future’. Coal, on the other hand, was seen as “the pariah fuel of the world”. South Africa was “looking for solutions to power our economy into the future, and renewable energy could be the answer”. The story praised the Energy department for committing “South Africa to increase renewable energy generation to 13 225 MW by 2025 in terms of South Africa’s Integrated Resource Plan”. Groenewald used economisation to legitimise the drive towards renewable energy: “Official figures show that so far the programme has attracted R192.6 billion in committed investment”. The article directly entrenched and endorsed the green-sustainable market-led solutions to South Africa’s energy futures and climate responses.

The government planned to have “renewable energy development zones ... where wind and solar photovoltaic technologies can be incentivised and where deep grid expansion can be directed” (Jan-Jan Joubert, “Renewable Energy Development Zones mooted,” *Sunday Times*, 18 February 2016). The optimism in renewable energy follows a ‘sustainable development’ path informed by the expansion of renewable energy. The growth trajectory is neoliberal and continues along with the capitalist lenses of profit, exploitation and accumulation.

The story “Sun and wind for Africa, yet we go for coal,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 October 2016) argued that while the availability of renewable sources of energy in South Africa was guaranteed, the government still pursued coal, showing signs of insatiable coal appetite and environmental immorality. The headline is crucial for this depiction: “Sun and wind for Africa, yet we go for coal”. The headline demonstrated disappointment with the decision to continue coal exploitation instead of renewables: “Renewable energy farms have shown that carbon-free

generation is possible, thanks to the country's wealth of wind and sunlight. But the energy department this week gave preferred bidder status to two new coal-fired power stations". The government was accused of providing the funding of the coal power stations, Khanyisa and Thabametsi in Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces: "The R40-billion it will cost to build the new coal plants has been raised, with a quarter of the money coming from the government through the Industrial Development Corporation, the Public Investment Corporation and the Development Bank of Southern Africa". The story quoted Life after Coal warning that "The long-term environmental liabilities created by coal mining and power make any further investment in coal infrastructure a high-risk proposition". The newspaper discourse added that "The plants are being built in areas where air quality is already poor".

The Op-Ed "Tapping sun and wind's energy is only natural," (*Sunday Times*, 07 May 2017) by Thorsten Herdan, director-general for energy policy at the Germany Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, favoured South Africa to transition to renewable energy sources which he constructed as "natural" and were "important economically, employing around 330 000 people in 2015". Herdan argued that "Energy systems centred on renewable energy and energy efficiency have started to provide the most economical way to generate and use electricity, heat and mobility". Renewables were good because "They will also serve as a basis for achieving the climate goals that the world agreed on," at the same time providing "cheap and reliable electricity".

Siseko Njobeni's story "Energy group blows up over stalled PPAs," (*Sunday Independent*, 18 March 2018) exposed the key fights between those who wanted to have coal as a dominant energy source in South Africa and those that wanted to see renewable energy sources becoming the dominant sources. Actors that were referred to are the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) and Transform SA. NUMSA and Transform SA were represented as being against the Independent Power Producers because, as reported in the story, they had argued in the High Court that "Eskom was producing excess power and did not need additional capacity from IPPs". However, the South African Wind Energy Association (SAWEA) believed that NUMSA and Transform SA's "arguments were based on questionable data". SAWEA was given the primary definitional power in the story while NUMSA and Transform SA were represented as

villains. Through the newspaper discourse, the author agreed with the arguments put through by the wind energy association. The story used the discursive strategy of economisation to moralise the call for renewable energy dominance, for example, the story argued that the “wind and solar projects are expected to unlock investments worth R56 billion over the next two to three years”. In further support of the renewable energy optimism discourse, the story quoted SAWEA Chief Executive, Brenda Martin, who justified the IPPs because they would lead to a reduction of fossil fuel reliance and give South Africa a new energy balance. Beyond economisation, the article thus constructed renewable energy sources as environmentally moral and therefore whoever was against them was an environmental villain. Martin is quoted in the story arguing: “In addition to growing economic effects, South Africa cannot continue to ignore these large negative impacts on human health and the environment when much cheaper and cleaner job-creating options are readily available”.

The newspaper discourse, in support of the arguments put forward by Martins, averred that the “growth of low cost, clean, renewable energy technologies provided a critical opportunity to reduce the economy’s exposure to the risks of job losses, of long-term tariff increases and of human and environmental health effects”. Therefore, SAWEA and the newspaper constructed the transition to renewable energy sources as a natural common-sense option, because the advantages were many. The South African government also initially acted in alliance with the renewable energy side and used economisation to automatise and moralise renewable energy. A government statement is cited in the story noting that:

The renewable energy independent power producer procurement programme will ensure that consumers in our country have access to cost-efficient and clean energy and will bring much-needed investment in South Africa.... These projects will provide 61 600 full-time jobs, 95 percent of which are for South African citizens, specifically youth.

The use of SAWEA as discourse definers quoted directly and the indirect quotation of NUMSA and Transform SA helped in legitimising the renewable techno-optimistic discourse and vilified the positions taken by environmentally ‘uncaring and irresponsible’ NUMSA and Transform SA. Transform SA and NUMSA, because of their background in mining, felt threatened by the issuance of Power Purchase Agreements to the IPPs as this would result in job losses at the coal mines and power stations. Instructive from this story is that the energy discourse in South Africa is quite

complex and actors attempt to discuss the energy mix and climate change from their own value-interest vantage points. For trade unions such as NUMSA, the war was about job security while for mining companies, it was about continuity and profitability. Consequently, through accidental convergence, the anti-renewables discourse brings together mining companies and trade unions, generally foes, into one discursive corner. The energy discourse, therefore, must be re-articulated from an understanding of deep political-economic factors that underpin energy production, distribution and maintenance of the hegemonic power of the minerals-energy complex. The South African government, through the Department of Energy, “cancelled the conclusion of PPAs with 27 independent power producers”. However, it is interesting that while the government seems to have fallen to the pressure from the mining interests and trade unions, it still claimed to be pursuing renewable energy, something that, in the context of the cancellation of the PPAs, remained mere rhetoric and helps to show the power and bullying of the minerals-energy complex was in force.

In “Dirty business as coalition of the sidelined distorts the clean energy debates,” (*Sunday Times*, 28 October 2018), Anton Eberhard, Professor Emeritus at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business, described the people who opposed renewable energy as “frustrated and angry that they will no longer have access to special deals with Eskom or the coal and nuclear industries”. The opposition to the IPPs and renewable energy was a matter of self-aggrandisement and political survival: “others may feel marginalised and alienated from President Cyril Ramaphosa’s new political dispensation”. While critics of solar and wind were wary of the costs, the author argued that “innovation and expanding global markets have led to dramatic cost reductions.”

8.7 Wind Energy Diffidence

As part of discourse analysis and the metabolic/ecological rift analyses, this study examined the actual locations of the proposed renewable energy sites and how these were being accepted or rejected by local communities. For the government, it was about being seen to be doing something, while for the multinational companies, it was about profit. This is done through the moralisation of renewables as the answer to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. This study maintains that capitalism cannot cure itself, the diagnosis should reveal the embeddedness of the Promethean discourses in the very architecture of profit and exploitation. As the resistance discourse in the

story below shows, renewable energy projects are being imposed on communities, are not good for the environment and lead to forced displacement of humans and other living species to give room to the 'clean and safe' technology. The beneficiaries are the capitalist elites who go on to benefit from investment-friendly deals that are tied to renewables as incentives. Capitalism remains exploitative and sees nature as given gratis. The solutions to climate change are to be found in transforming the consumption patterns towards a 'living well' basis and not 'good life'. There is need to de-escalate the capitalist risk culture.

The story "An ill wind blows in Paternoster," (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 28 April 2011) dealt with local communities' resistance to the proposed wind farms in Paternoster on the Cape West Coast. The actors in the story offer ideological disagreement, the communities are not happy with the projects because "There are better locations for wind turbines than tourist towns". However, the story quoted a government position paper that disregards these concerns, because it must be done at all costs. "Urban dwellers will have to become accustomed to the idea of new technologies influencing the urban landscape". The residents of Paternoster were "in high dudgeon over plans to erect hundreds of wind turbines as part of a scramble to meet the government's renewable energy targets". The Paternoster project (West Coast One) "is the first of numerous commercial wind farms planned along the coastline from Darling to Namaqualand. It is being implemented by Moyeng Energy, jointly owned by Investec Bank and French multinational energy company GDF Suez". Keri Harvey, a resident of Paternoster was directly represented arguing against the wind farms because of the noise they produce: "why place the turbines in the oldest and most beautiful, traditional fishing village on the West Coast? The wind farms should be moved away from civilisation and tourist attractions". Residents noted that "companies are buying land close to the coastal towns for wind farms with an eye to capitalising on renewable-energy reimbursements from the natural energy regulator as well as internationally funded carbon offset programmes"

Andre' Kleynhans noted the residents were "bullied into this. There's lots of wind further inland." The residents were opposed "to the thudding vibration of the turbines" which they linked "to health problems such as headaches, anxiety and nausea". The story denaturalised Promethean optimism in renewables. Residents were worried that "the 100m-high wind towers will cause fatal collisions

with endangered bird species found in the area [Britannia Bay]”. In Britannia Bay, residents were against the wind project by Terra Power Solutions because “The planned site is designated a critical biodiversity area, with limestone strandveld and two other endangered endemic vegetation types”. The logic of capital remains at the centre of energy initiatives. Wind and sun, public goods, were being commodified through international carbon financial systems. Aspects of use-value were overridden by the need for exchange value.

The story “Man-made weather could make it worse,” (Yolandi Groenewald, *City Press*, 08 April 2012) demoralised the attempts to address reduce emissions through geoengineering nature. The headline warned that “Man-made weather could make it [climate change] worse”. The scientists involved in geoengineering were constructed as having “big and dangerous dreams” because geoengineering was a “mysterious and controversial art”. The United States, the United Kingdom and greater Europe were viewed as reckless entertainers of geoengineering because for them “a quick fix would be welcome”. These countries were giving “a sympathetic ear” because their economies “will have to dramatically cut their fossil fuel diet to curb the effects of climate change”. The actors used in the story co-sponsored the pessimism. For example, Dr Paul Johnston of Greenpeace Lab was quoted against geoengineering which he described as “very dangerous, because the effect of tampering with the climate is so unpredictable”. Johnston argued that while the dangerous geoengineering scientists were entertained in the global North, “Africa with its fragile ecosystems is in a good position to catch the downstream effects of whatever climate scheme Europe or the US has initiated”. Furthermore, Johnston noted that the scientists were working together with the private sector: “Equally unsurprising is that once the smog clears, the major private sector players in geoengineering will likely be the same folks who geo-engineered us into this mess in the first place” -Johnston. The story discusses geoengineering as a viable response to emissions reduction and climate change because it tampered with the climate system while the consequences are unknown”.

8.8 Shale Gas Optimism

In 2012, the South African energy discourses began to take a turn towards what the government called ‘energy diversification’ and as part of this drive, the government began to entertain ideas about shale gas exploration in the Karoo. Shale gas, if found and exploited would then replace coal as fossil energy of choice. In 2014, the then President, Jacob Zuma, launched Operation Phakisa (Hurry up) as a way of speeding the implementation of the National Development Plan. Within the parameters set for Operation Phakisa, the government envisaged an expedient exploration of shale gas reserves. Key energy multinational companies such as the Royal Dutch Shell (operating through Shell South Africa) applied for exploration licences in the Karoo and were optimistic of hydraulic fracking providing new energy potential for the country. However, this study notes that the shale gas optimism in government, especially the Departments of Energy and Mineral Resources, working together with fossil fuel energy companies, received a fair share of opposition from individuals and groups who still believed that shale gas was a dirty form of energy and thus wanted South Africa to fully incorporate renewable energy sources. The *Mail & Guardian*¹¹ in 2014 and 2015 published key information that is highlighted here. From reading the stories in the *Mail & Guardian*, the shale gas optimism from the government and the fossil fuel industry must be understood within a framework of the beneficiaries of shale gas exploration, i.e. the government through increased revenue base, corrupt civil servants through kickbacks, the oil companies and also the ruling African National Congress, which, through its investment arm, Chancellor House, has shares in Shell South Africa’s Karoo operations.

The news media largely reproduced the shale gas optimism that was promoted by the government and industrial elites without many critiques. Siphso Kings’ story “Shale gas energises government,”

¹¹ Fracking conflicts of interests

<https://mg.co.za/article/2015-09-29-hitachi-and-chancellor-house-how-the-events-unfolded76>

(*Mail & Guardian*, 20 September 2012) represents optimistic discourses on shale gas in providing energy security. Oxymoronicly, shale gas was represented “as a greener way to secure South Africa’s future electricity supply”. The story saw a dirty fossil fuel as a “greener’ source of electricity. The allusion to the fiction of ‘greener shale gas’ helps in building consent - if the energy source is greener, therefore it is good for the country. The story celebrated the lifting of a fracking moratorium by the government: “For now, shale gas has the government excited and not just because it could add R1 - trillion to the economy. It is being seen as the next big power source, something that could give a big cleaner backbone to the economy than coal and that is more reliable than green energy”. The news reporter uncritically accepted the view that shale gas was clean energy - and celebrated its possible addition to the energy mix. The contradictions are key. In the sub-headline, the story alluded to shale gas “as a greener” energy source but in paragraph three, it mentioned that it could be cheaper and “reliable than green energy”.

In support of shale gas, Mineral Resources Minister, Susan Shabangu opined that shale gas had “the potential to energise this country and this energy will be built into the integrated resource plan and it will form part of the country’s energy mix”. Important to observe is that South Africa planned to shift the environmental risks from one form of dirty energy to another, i.e. from coal to shale gas. The desire for expansion and accumulation was bigger and louder: “gas is used to make the transition from carbon-intense economy with high emissions to a more sustainable one driven by green energy. Gas has much lower carbon emissions and the power stations that run on it are friendlier to the environment and much cheaper than coal power station”.

For Shabangu, “shale gas would help South Africa to meet its commitments under the Copenhagen Process to reduce its carbon emissions by 42% by 2025”. Unfortunate to note is that deliberate misinformation was used by the minister and passed on to the readers through the unquestioning newspaper discourse. The story did not probe how and when the fracking exploration was to begin, could shale gas be usable by 2025 and how it could contribute to the reduction of South Africa’s emissions as early as 2025. Shabangu was quoted arguing, of course without any basis that “Shale gas will contribute to clean energy and will come as part of our programme to mitigate our carbon emissions”. By allowing the Minister of Mineral Resources to be the primary definer of the subject, the story managed to build a preferred reading that aligned to the dominant views of the

government elites. The viewpoints of the Department of Mineral Resources were supported by Shell, a multinational energy company with which the governing African National Congress party had shares in Shell's Karoo operations through its investment arm, Chancellor House. The actors' discourse and that of the news reporter were all optimistic that shale gas was 'the future'. The dominant views were mainstreamed and legitimised through discursive devices such as creating shale gas as clean, green and leading to sustainable development and bringing R1-trillion to the South African economy. At the end of the story, the newspaper discourse brought in alternative actors and worldviews who attempted to delegitimise the dominant representations of shale gas.

The placement of shale gas diffidence views at the end of the story rendered them inferior to the primary definitional voices. These alternative actors and their viewpoints were constructed from within the predefined parameters set at the beginning. Key to note is that some of the alternative actors were only in opposition to the price and logistics and not shale gas exploration and production. These actors did not demoralise the official government views but were sceptical of the costs and logistics without providing a counter-narrative. For example, Dirk de Vos fits into this bracket. De Vos was concerned with "the costs of getting the shale gas and moving it around [...] just because there are proven resources does not mean they are commercially viable." However, some actors attempted to discredit the cleanliness of shale gas. Ferrial Adam of Greenpeace Africa noted that "Shale gas is dirty and the process to extract it is associated with dangers to water and the environment".

Bonang Mohale, Chairman and Country Manager of Shell South Africa, in the Op-Ed "Resource stresses require action," (*Sunday Independent*, 17 March 2013) argued in favour of exploitation of natural gas to address energy security and global warming. Mohale built the narrative based on a Shell study on The New Lens Scenarios. Important to note in Mohale's argument is that the world's demand for energy was increasing, mostly because the "global population is growing by more than 200 000 people everyday" and also "One projection involves the equivalent of one new city of almost 1.5 million people every week for the next forty years". These developments, argued Mohale, made it morally good and necessary for increased energy production, and this included shale gas exploration and production. This argument should be read together with Shell South Africa's interests in shale gas in the Karoo. The moralisation of shale gas as an imperative should

therefore not be isolated from an attempt to acquire government and society's acceptance of fracking activities in the Karoo.

Mohale universalised and moralised the energy futures based on shale gas through using common sense language: "We need to work together to starve off an energy and resource crisis". By alluding to "we" Mohale constructed the need to address the "world's resource and environmental stresses" as the responsibility of everyone. Mohale homogenised these claims by using discourse translation by raising issues that resonated with the 'imagined' everyone and thus implying a point of ideological consensus. The energy stresses, in Mohale's construction, presented a moral obligation to act together because the "study of future scenarios shows time running out; [and therefore the need to act in a] united effort" to "avert a global crisis". The claim by Mohale that "Hundreds of millions of people are emerging from poverty as wealth levels rise" served to legitimise the call for increased energy exploitation. Mohale saw answers to the global energy crisis in "opening up of vast new shale gas and oil resources in North America" to "ease some of the pressure, especially if China and other countries like South Africa develop their own resources". This legitimisation of shale gas emanated from Shell's key interest in the Karoo. Conveniently, Mohale did not discuss the environmental concerns caused hydraulic fracturing and intertextually responded to criticisms from the Karoo communities and environmentalists who wanted the moratorium on Karoo fracking to be indefinitely put on hold. Implicit in Mohale's views was that such an approach would worsen the global energy crisis.

The author argued "Meanwhile, greenhouse gas emissions are rising fast. On existing trends, the world will far exceed the average temperature rise of 2° regarded as the limit for avoiding the most effects of climate change," thus, intensifying "pressure on water, energy and food resources". Mohale noted that water, energy and food resources were "tightly woven" and required "that we will need to address them intelligently and in unison". Some of the solutions were to be found in "intelligent urban planning in the world's rapidly growing cities" and "cleaner fossil fuels will also be critical in meeting the world's energy needs. But the sheer scale of energy demand means fossil fuel consumption will continue to grow". Bonang Mohale began dangerous rhetoric of 'clean fossil fuels' which is a self-serving oxymoron with no evidence of helping the planet cope with the urgent

climate change problems. While it could be correct that energy needs will rise, Mohale only saw the increase as a result of population growth and not increased capitalist-motivated consumption. Mohale did not seek a discourse that was based on transforming the capitalist economic system but continues to encourage ways of salvaging the way of life-based on never-ending consumption and exploitation. While the article conceded that coal use will continue for the foreseeable future, the solutions were to be found in making the coal ‘clean’ and also replacing it with other ‘clean fossils’ such as shale gas: “So displacing coal-fired power with natural gas, the cleanest burning fossil fuel, could make the most substantial contribution to reducing CO₂ emissions over the next forty years. When used to generate power, gas produces around half the emissions of coal”. This, therefore, morally justified hydraulic fracturing.

Natural gas was constructed as key in supporting the “growth in renewable energy”. Despite the foreseeable growth of wind and solar energy, Mohale argued that they still “need back-up because they cannot operate all the time. With energy storage technologies in their infancy, gas-fired power is well placed to do this because it can be switched on and off quickly”. Bonang Mohale spoke on behalf of one of the major environmental culprits, Royal Dutch Shell, but the article moralised and universalised the arguments. While the central issue was about Shell’s interest in the Karoo shale gas, Mohale built a picture of a global energy crisis that needed heroes (Shell) to provide solutions through ‘clean natural gas’. Key to note is that the ANC, through Chancellor House, has shares in Shell’s Karoo exploration agenda and this made the discursive and policy power of actors such as Mohale more serious. The article was a solicitation of moral support and consensus for hydraulic fracturing in the Karoo amid resistance from the local communities.

The story “Fracking report inflames gas feud,” (Sarah Wild, *Mail & Guardian*, 04 July 2013) promoted the view that natural gas was clean energy. This was done by quoting Barack Obama: “The bottom line is natural gas is creating jobs And it’s the transition fuel that can power our economy with less carbon pollution even as our businesses work to develop and then deploy more of the technology required for even cleaner energy economy of the future”. In South Africa, the newspaper discourse noted, shale gas offered “the opportunity for South Africa to move away from dirty coal-based electricity and its high greenhouse gas emissions”. The story allowed ideological disagreement where residents of the Karoo attempt to show their pessimism towards fracking in the Karoo. Jonathan Deal of the Treasure the Karoo Action Group said the availability of methane

in drinking water “indicates the potential for the emigration of gases from far below the surface area where the gases are expected”. Saliem Fakir (WWF) was concerned about the regulatory framework. “It depends on the regulatory regime that is able to set standards of the wells should be capped or sealed”.

In the story “Coal’s future looks dark as gas lift energy hopes,” (No author, *Sunday Times*, 12 April 2015), natural gas, a fossil fuel, was represented as a response instrument in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Quoting Jonathan Stern from the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies, the story praised big oil companies that were diversifying into natural gas exploration and production because shale gas was “likely overtake coal as the world’s second fuel by the 2020s”. The story argued that shale gas was “a preferred fuel around the world because it is cleaner to burn than coal and oil”. Helge Lund, the Chief Executive of Statoil ASA supported natural gas because it would replace “in electricity production”. The gas optimism was legitimised and naturalised by Shell’s Chief Executive Officer, Ben van Beurden who claimed that “When burnt for power, gas produces half the CO₂ coal does”.

The Op-Ed “Mix it up to gain energy security,” (*Sunday Independent*, 28 June 2015) by Busani Ngcaweni, Deputy Director-General in the Presidency, supported nuclear energy and hydraulic fracturing as possible new vistas for South Africa’s energy security. This feeds into the debate on South Africa’s energy mix. The article buttressed the government’s policies and actions regarding Operation Phakisa and nuclear projects. This was “based on the realisation that the country needed a diversified energy mix to meet current and future needs South Africa can confidently claim the capability to safely and cost-effectively manage the installation, operation and maintenance of new nuclear power stations”. Shale gas and nuclear energy were contrasted with unreliable and insecure wind and solar energy sources which were only useful “towards satisfying household and industrial energy needs”.

Nuclear and shale gas were seen as giving South Africa opportunities in terms of economic growth and job creation. Ngcaweni maintained that “activists should appreciate the political economy and recognise the scope of public policy, with the medium and long-term outcomes of the decisions

made today”. Though claiming to be writing in his own capacity, coincidentally, Ngcaweni’s views align with official government ideas on the energy mix and climate change. The need to provide enough energy, grow the economy and create jobs is used as a justification for optimism in both nuclear and shale gas. The article was more concerned with energy sufficiency and relegated environmental impacts. Ngcaweni legitimised, through economisation and moralisation, the views on nuclear and shale gas optimism. By referring to jobs and the economy, the article painted the IRP as a progressive policy. Absent from the article was a discussion on the beneficiaries of nuclear and shale gas optimistic policies. Overall, the present energy needs trumped the calls for emissions reduction and environmental integrity.

The concerns about nuclear problems and fracking raised by activists were not as important as the perceived benefits in terms of improved energy supply scenarios. Further, South Africa could improve nuclear safety through research and innovation at universities. The benefits of nuclear and shale gas were immense: “Nuclear power has the advantage of providing electricity in conjunction with technological development in other applications, including health, agriculture, mining, poverty alleviation and security of water supply”.

8.9 Shale Gas Diffidence

Eleanor Momberg’s story “Strong opposition to fracking,” (*Sunday Independent*, 22 April 2012) expressed hydraulic fracturing diffidence. The story was sponsored by the Diamond Route, a company owned by De Beers and Debeswa (De Beers is a member of Anglo American Plc as of 2019). The political economy of the Karoo and Shale gas fracturing was alluded to. The story pointed out the conflicts of interests that faced many interested parties. For example, the ANC owns shares in Shell South Africa, and Shell was doing the feasibility in the Karoo. The ANC shares were held its investment arm, Chancellor House. Key people at Chancellor House were Popo Molefe (Chairman) and Manatho Netsianda (CEO). Chancellor House has interests in Hitachi Power Africa (a company given the tender for the Kusile and Medupi coal power stations) where it held 25%. Eskom awarded Hitachi R20 billion tender for the supply of six steam generators for the Medupi and Kusile power stations while its Chairman, Popo Molefe also set in the ANC’s finance committee and was again Chairman of Chancellor House.

The story laid out the complex nature of the Karoo and energy clubs in South Africa, the interest of big companies versus environmental concerns. The story problematised fracking by alluding to the political economy of shale gas exploration. The story raises concerns about the ANC as both judge and player and the existence of an ANC member in the Karoo Community Action Forum “which supports fracking, and the ownership of another exploration applicant, Sungu Petroleum, by a former senior Minerals Department official”. Simi Sobukwe was represented further delegitimising fracking: “But very few people will benefit from fracking and this approach of tearing everything down is not going to help. We need a partnership to fix things”. Dougie Stern believed that “the introduction of fracking would affect the country’s meat and wool production”. The fracking resistance discourse is legitimised and moralised because the Karoo “produced 30 percent of South Africa’s meat, and sheep farmers contributed extensively to the international wool industry”.

David Fig sought to rebut the South African government claims that shale gas is clean energy (David Fig, “Fracking issues require new laws,” *Mail & Guardian*, 16 August 2012). David Fig, an honorary research associate at the environmental evaluation institute at the University of Cape Town, politicised fracking as a system harmful to both people and the environment:

Up to 8% of the shale gas will escape in the process and enter the atmosphere, creating a problem for climate change. Methane is a greenhouse gas 28 times more lethal than carbon dioxide People who make their livelihoods in the Karoo rely entirely on underground water for their survival. The risk of contamination is high Trucking in freshwater, sand and chemicals to each well will cause immense dust pollution from the gravel roads of the Karoo Farmers in the Karoo have said they believe fracking and agriculture are incompatible. Water contamination and dust pollution could cost the Karoo its reputation for purity, ruining the reputation of products such as Karoo lamb Fracking will compromise our supply of freshwater. It may contaminate the Karoo’s fragile resources and do away with livelihoods It will extend South Africa’s dependence on fossil energy rather than encouraging the use of renewables.

By making several allusions to the impacts of fracking in the Karoo, the article began to show that while the government and multinational companies seeking to maximise their profits through shale gas, the impacts on the environment and people were massive. This study contends that the need for shale gas (with less carbon dioxide emissions compared to coal and oil) is simply a matter of rift shifting without addressing the challenge. The leakages of about 8% of methane and shale gas mean that the reductions it offers are overpowered by the risks it produces. In the end, there is no

real reduction of greenhouse gases. Shale gas optimism is dominant because of the discourse coalitions (government, ANC and private multinational companies and the news media) that support it at the expense of concerns raised by the people. The Op-Ed is an attempt to offer ideological disagreement. However, regardless of the ills outlined in the article, the author does not wholly disagree with the idea of hydraulic fracturing but attempts to make the government draft new laws to accommodate the impacts and thus minimise harm: “it is imperative to write a new Act to cover the specifics of the shale gas industry to ensure it does minimal harm to the fragile Karoo environment”.

8.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented the analyses and interpretation of climate change mitigation debates as they permeated the South African news media, identifying the key discourses on mitigation and energy and linking discourses to the vested interests of the actors that promoted them. These discourses included coal indispensability, nuclear optimism and shale gas optimism that were promoted by the minerals-energy complex and the Department of Energy and that of Mineral Resources. These actors used the discursive strategies of moralisation and economisation to moralise the ‘need’ for South Africa to use coal because the country was still ‘developing’ and thus coal was necessary for economic growth and international trade competitiveness. The oxymoron of ‘clean coal’ was also promoted by these actors. In opposition, there are actors who strongly opposed coal, shale gas and nuclear energy. These contrarian discourses were sponsored by actors from environmental non-governmental organisations and academics. In expressing opposition to coal and nuclear, these actors from non-government organisations and academics promoted the Promethean techno-renewable energy optimism leading to the green economy. At some moments, their discourses converged with the discourses from the government, especially the Department of Environmental Affairs, that sought to steer South Africa towards ‘renewable-energy’ green growth. The Promethean discourses construct climate change as a problem that can be fixed through technology, techno-managerial strategies and market-led initiatives.

Chapter Nine: Contested Landscapes and the Barriers to Action: Corporate South Africa and the Rhetoric of Industrial Growth

9.1 Introduction

Climate change discourses in the news media were characterised by ideological and discourse contestations between the need to reduce internal carbon emissions and those actors who preferred a ‘do nothing’ approach. The government, through the Environmental Affairs Department and the Treasury Department, had policies in place to reduce the country’s emissions, mostly coming from the energy sector. These plans included setting up carbon budgets and implementing a carbon tax as instruments to encourage companies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through opting for renewable energy. The actors in the minerals-energy complex heavily resisted the introduction of a carbon budget and a carbon tax. This tax, they argued, would kill the industry and thus lead to massive unemployment. These actors used ‘bullying,’ ‘lobbying,’ and economic blackmail to try and discourage the government from implementing these instruments. This chapter rearticulates these discourses as they played out in the newspapers, examines whether the media took ideological positions that promoted and reproduced the interests of particular actors, especially those in the minerals-energy complex or reproduced the government discourse. Overall, this chapter provides a general critique of market instruments of carbon tax and the included elements of carbon trade in the mitigation approaches pursued by South Africa.

9.2 Carbon Tax Diffidence: ‘It’s an industry and job-killing policy’

Opposition to the proposed carbon tax came mostly from the minerals-energy complex. In the story “Carbon budget ‘bad for business’,” (Lynley Donnelly and Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 17 November 2011) brought out the opposition to a government White Paper on climate change that proposed carbon budgets and a carbon tax. Mining and energy companies were opposed to any idea of a carbon budget and tax. While the White Paper found support amongst environmental groups and civil society who saw it as a step towards mandatory mitigation measures per sector, the Chamber of Mines opposed the proposed policy arguing that: “We find the department of environmental affairs has gone back on its word and has included numbers that are still in discussion, including whether the baseline that informed those numbers was correct”. Eskom’s Mandy Rambharos was quoted in the story in opposition to the tax because: “A blanket

carbon tax, for example, is a blunt instrument that will not produce the desired results to reduce emissions and change behaviour It may, in fact, result in pervasive behaviour [such as exporting emissions] and have a negative impact on emissions as well as greater economic impacts such as job losses”.

Although the story gave the primary definitional power to the Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa, the use of direct representation, the headline and the abundant use of minerals-energy discourse actors reproduced their views as the most dominant ones and that any attempts on carbon budgets and tax were bad for the economy because they could result in “job losses”. Actors from the minerals-energy complex, assisted by the news structure and discourse, represented carbon budgets and taxes as enemies of business. It was against common sense to pursue policies that could harm the economy. The story showed the power of the minerals-energy complex in determining and influencing climate change policies in South Africa which are achieved through bullying and blackmailing civil society and government. The story reproduced interests of the minerals-energy complex as interests of everyone because their fears were generalised and normalised and thus, ‘we should all care not to disrupt business and the economy’.

Carbon tax diffidence discourses were also given room in the *Sunday Independent*. For example, the story “Mining industry lays golden egg for SA,” (Eleanor Momberg, *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) used Xolani Mkhwanazi (President, South Africa Chamber of Mines and the Chairperson of BHP Billiton South Africa Operations) and Bheki Sibiyi (Chief Executive of the South Africa Chamber of Mines) as the discourse sponsors against the carbon tax. The two constructed the proposed carbon tax as an affront to business and therefore an undesirable irritant. For them, mining was the mainstay of the South African economy, putting unnecessary taxes would strangle business and the economy. The carbon tax was seen by Mkhwanazi as “imposition of non-essential additional taxes” which needed to be avoided because they added, “to an already onerous cost profile for the South African mining industry”. The newspaper discourse inadvertently expressed support of the discourse put forward by the Chamber of Mines: “In a climate affected world, the industry remained committed to acting immediately to ensure that South Africa remained competitive as a resource-efficient country in a future carbon-constrained world”. The Chamber of Mines was represented arguing that there were other better instruments

that could be used to reduce South Africa's emissions. Mkhwanazi was represented stating that "The Chamber's intention is to help find a climate policy that is not harmful to business and which fosters job creation and advances capacity for the mining sector to increase its contribution to national economic growth and development".

The emphasis from the mining sector was on growth and profit. While it is common knowledge that the minerals-energy complex in South Africa is key in both emissions and in mitigation because of the extensive use of coal energy and also the cheap electricity paid by the mining sector, the industry was against a carbon tax because they saw it as just "a blunt instrument to raise revenue for the national Treasury without necessarily achieving a lower carbon intensity objective". The story economised the contributions of the mining industry to the South African economy, for example, "about 19 percent of GDP," over "50 percent of merchandise exports," "1 million jobs," "30 percent of capital inflows into the economy," over "40 percent, or close to R2 trillion of the market capitalisation of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange," and "more than 90 percent of SA electricity generation capacity ... about 13 percent of direct corporate tax receipts". The provision of the statistics relating to the economic contributions of the mining industry helped to propel the industry's claim that they did not need any more taxes. The centrality of the mining industry, hence its role in the political economy of climate change responses was made clear by the sheer contributions of the industry to the economy. The South African economy is dependent on mining, hence the power of the minerals-energy complex in the climate change mitigation discourses.

The dominance of the minerals-energy complex was legitimised by the news article discourse which effectively, through translation, agreed with the viewpoints of the mining companies. Further, the story quoted Bheki Sibiyi, Chamber of Mines Chief Executive, emphasising the importance of the mining industry to the South African economy when appearing before the parliamentary portfolio committee on minerals. Sibiyi's arguments were paraphrased throughout the story. The exclusive use of actors from the South African Chamber of Mines helped to naturalise the views of the minerals-energy complex. The provision of economic contributions of the mining industry moralised their rejection of the carbon tax. Implied in this discourse is that any additional taxes would have an impact on the economy, on jobs etc. and thus, not good for

everyone. From the ideologies promoted in the story, the mining industry in South Africa served everyone and therefore should not be burdened by “non-essential taxes”.

Central to note is that the claims of the minerals-energy complex were reproduced by way of direct and indirect representation. Rather than the story focusing on the emissions from mining and how the tax could help South Africa in reducing its emissions, the story diverted to account for the benefits of the industry to the entire economy. Interestingly, the story used the mining industry as discourse sponsors in a debate that they themselves are the villains. Their views were not challenged but reproduced and legitimised. The emissions from the mining sector, according to the worldviews expressed in the story, were to be understood as inescapable evils. This study contends that the unquestioning reproduction of the elite ideologies only helps to maintain the status quo characterised by high emissions coming from the minerals-energy complex. Key also is the omission of the political economy of mining and energy in the country and the attendant inequalities that are created by the conglomerate mining houses. The minerals-energy complex only benefited a few elite and had no direct benefit to the people. Essential to argue is that the level of emissions from mining and the overall per capita emissions did not correspond with the wealth of ordinary people.

In another story related to the one by Eleanor Momberg, Peter Delenno produced the story “Carbon tax could sink mining, SA Chamber chief warns,” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) that also described the proposed carbon tax as harmful to the South African economy. Xolani Mkhwanazi, South Africa Chamber of Mines Chair and the chairperson of BHP Billiton South African Operations, was the sole actor used in the story. Amid the calls for a carbon tax to help South Africa reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Mkhwanazi was indirectly represented opposing the tax because “The already declining South African mining sector would be further damaged if the government did not grant high energy users, such as smelters, exemptions to the proposed carbon tax”. Mkhwanazi, while overall speaking on behalf of the Chamber of Mines, it should be noted, represents the interests of BHP Billiton, a big beneficiary of cheap electricity from Eskom and a key part of the minerals-energy complex. While acknowledging that climate change was a reality, Mkhwanazi was directly represented arguing that South Africa, as a less developed country

could not afford to put a carbon tax regime, noting further that that should be left to the more advanced economies: “Developed countries have moved closer to becoming service economies so they have better opportunities to develop a carbon free economy”. The developing countries such as South Africa, Mkhwanazi argued, needed assistance, “If the developed world does not help the developing countries, we just might not implement these measures. South Africa is just a 1 percent emitter ... compared with countries such as China it is tiny”. The discourse strategy used by Mkhwanazi was to attempt to picture South Africa within a generalised bracket of ‘developing and poor’ countries. He did not allude to the huge volumes of emissions coming from South Africa. By arguing that South Africa was just “1 percent” of global emissions, he attempted to reduce the scale of responsibility for present emissions on the South African shoulders. This strategy actively passivised and nominalised the role of South Africa in the global greenhouse gas emissions. The drawing of parallels between the developed countries and China was meant to diminish local greenhouse gas emissions and thus argue that they were too tiny to warrant a carbon tax. South Africa’s emissions were therefore globally insignificant and ignorable and at the same time allowing the country ‘a developmental space’.

Within the climate change discourses in South Africa, some actors believed that climate change-induced regulations such as carbon budgets and taxes were bad for economic growth. In the Op-Ed “Carbon limits bad for growth,” Johan Muller (*Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2011), (an energy and power systems industry analyst at Frost & Sullivan) argued that South Africa was a country with higher inequalities and not ready for any changes meant to reduce carbon-based economic activity. Muller was worried that South Africa, a country he characterised as having its own unique inequality challenges, was busy with problems that were ‘western’: “Against the backdrop of a country struggling to adapt to the lingering effects of apartheid and a relatively slow-growing economy, we find the often ‘first-world’ issues related to climate change (and its accompanying effects) a real concern” In Muller’s view, climate change was a western first-world perspective and problem. Because of the higher inequalities in South Africa, the country needed a developmental space free from environmental regulations to catch-up. “In terms of the Gini Index South Africa is consistently ranked in the bottom five in the world, holding that the distance between the income of rich and poor is more than almost any other country in the world”. Muller

noted that “various policies” meant to develop the economy “have to be balanced against climate-change issues that have the potential to slow down economic growth rather than stimulate it”. Inequalities were used to moralise the thesis of dirty development. Patrick Bond (2012) has argued that there was no evidence linking the continued use of fossils and the massive GDP growth to better standards of living for the poor people of South Africa.

Muller warned against “eco-protectionism” because it hurts “the major energy consumers such as Eskom, Sasol, BHP Billiton and ArcelorMittal” with the “knock-on effect ... [being] felt all the way down to single household consumers”. The discourse against emissions reduction that was peddled in this article speaks on behalf of the minerals-energy complex discourse coalition. The coalition stands to benefit from non-restrictive environmental measures. Their profits and interests will continue to grow at the expense of the environment. The article pushed forward the interests of actors in energy and mining disguised as a concern for the ordinary people. The reference to the “knock-on effect” being felt at the household level was meant to interpellate the readers and ‘everyone’ into the discourse. Using oral models and discourse translation, Muller began to speak on behalf of all those who ‘care’ about the economy and inequality.

The reference to inequalities and poverty was meant to build a moral benchmark to launch the argument. The fictive concern for inequality ignored to mention that despite the continuous exploitation of fossils, these inequalities have not shrunk but widened, a clear position to attest that there is no co-relationship between fossils use and better living conditions for the poor. To the contrary, inequalities have hugely widened alongside the growth in profits for big companies that enjoy very low electricity tariffs. While inequalities have increased together with environmental degradation, the profits of a few have soared. Big minerals-energy coalitions have not benefited the people but a few industrial capitalists. The author attempted to promote an elite minerals-energy discourse coalition position under the false pretence of ‘development’ and reducing inequality and poverty. The language consistently used in the article was that of the public idiom and oral models. It appeals to the lowest common denominator of meaning production and makes a common-sense appeal (see Hall and O’Shea 2013). Hall and O’Shea (2013) noted that common sense is the opposite of right sense. The language common senses the discourse through allusions to development and inequality. On face value, the discourse talks to and about issues that affect

ordinary people. Key to note, however, is that the commonsensical nature of the article was an attempt to win the consent of the subordinated by using language that speaks to their daily struggles. It allows people to identify themselves with the story, the author and the interests represented by both. In so doing, the interests of the minerals-energy complex discourse coalition are preserved and gain consent from the people. The public is interpellated and assimilated by way of language into the interests of the elite, which on face value, seem to represent ‘everyone’s’ views.

Some news stories sought balance in their representation and coverage of the carbon tax debates. One example is the story by Johann Barnard “Carbon pricing under the microscope,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 23 August 2012). The story was based on the *Mail & Guardian’s* Critical Thinking Forum (sponsored by one of the biggest beneficiaries of cheap electricity - BHP Billiton). The story is a summary of the viewpoints from industry, civil society and government about carbon pricing and budgets. The story portrayed big businesses as opposed to the introduction of the ‘harmful’ carbon pricing and carbon budgets and preferred that the pricing be deferred to later years. Michael Rossouw from Xstrata argued: “Surely, we should first determine what we can practically do without causing detrimental harm to our economy and growth and jobs”. This view was also supported by Brandon Fraser from the Consumer Goods Council who noted that “If we continue to look at these indirect taxes, it becomes a system of an elastic band”. Rob Jeffrey from Econometrix also supported this view: “The current trend toward certain green energy would more than double the costs of electricity production Sadly, our competitive advantage is going to be dependent on using coal and gas, and we need to maintain the competitive advantage if we are to promote our economic growth”. Jeffrey added that research had shown that “that by 2021 the carbon tax alone could reduce the country’s GDP by 2% contributing a loss of an additional 700 000 jobs”. These discourses from the industry show that the industry was not in support of carbon pricing. They used the discursive strategy of de-economising the carbon pricing regime by alluding to its impacts on global economic competitiveness and the loss of jobs. While the arguments put forward are about reduced competitiveness and growth, the interests represented here were not of ‘all’ South Africans but a few industrial elites in the minerals-energy complex. The attempt to define carbon pricing as a threat to the economy and “our competitive advantage,” and the use of oral models, became discursive strategies meant to appeal towards what ‘should’ be

commonsensical and logical. Policies that destroyed the economy and killed jobs, were seen as not good for the country. This discourse strategy tries to speak on behalf of the interests of the ‘people’, make them ‘its interests’ and thus interpellate people into talking from the sourcebook of capitalist industrial elites. By using the public idiom and oral models through discourse translation, the discourse makes carbon pricing evil and cannot be commonsensical.

However, on the other hand, the ideological disagreement was provided by Richard Worthington (WWF) and Cecil Morden (Chief Director of Economic Tax at the Treasury Department) who argued in support of carbon pricing and urgent climate action. Worthington argued that “There is a cost associated with greenhouse gas emissions The cost is currently being deferred into the future, but we know we can’t continue doing that indefinitely. In support, Cecil Morden promoted the use of market instruments in reducing emissions: “The use of prices as an instrument is important, and it is in that context that there is no free lunch”. The preponderance of carbon tax diffident voices in the story made the views of the minerals-energy complex more prominent and acquire discursive legitimacy.

Lynley Donnelly’s story “Carbon or resource rent tax?” (*Mail & Guardian*, 07 March 2012) attempted to dissect the contested carbon tax policy terrain. The story relied on a document produced by the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party on the Resource Rent Tax. The ANC was sceptical of a carbon tax preferring rather a resource rent tax. The newspaper discourse described the ANC as “ambivalent about introducing a carbon tax”. The ANC document showed carbon tax diffidence by arguing that the tax “could be extremely damaging to our economy and should be put on hold [and would] potentially render many energy-intensive beneficiation operations unviable”. These views were supported in the story by Peet du Plooy from the Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) who argued that “Unless a way is found to reduce the impact on the poor, such as free basic electricity, a carbon tax would disproportionately affect them. At high levels, it can also put some competitive strain on energy-intensive and export-exposed sectors”. The agenda of the ANC as a governing party was to dissuade the nation from following a path of polluter pays. The scepticism towards carbon tax served the interests of the industrial and business elites. The carbon tax could also affect companies that some ANC members and investment vehicles were involved with.

For the ANC to push forward a debate against the carbon tax, its discourse articulates well with concerns of the industrial-energy complex that also opposed the tax. The two, not necessarily always converging, begin to cohere together as a social and discursive bloc. The ANC's allusion to a carbon tax as "extremely damaging to our economy" translates the language of government and industry elites into a doxa, it is not just about the tax but "our economy" which becomes a social collective and shared. Anything that could harm "our economy" was to be opposed. The use of the translation of elite discourses and the public idiom/oral models was meant to present carbon taxes as evil against 'all of us' and therefore must be resisted. By so doing, the interests of industry and government were constructed as points of national ideological consensus and people should not accept carbon taxes. Hidden behind these oral models were the ideological interests of the industrial capitalists, bankers and the minerals-energy complex who are to directly be affected through reduced profits. It was not about the people but the capitalist system. The newspaper discourse argued that "the private sector has grave reservations over the implementation of such a tax and particularly over the threat it would pose to the competitiveness of South Africa's carbon-intensive mining and manufacturing industries".

The dominant views of the ANC and industrial capitalists were built into a common-sense language, legitimised and moralised through the delegitimisation and demoralisation of the proposed carbon tax. The ANC and Peet du Plooy effectively discredited carbon taxes as harmful to the economy, to jobs etc. More importantly, du Plooy extended his narrative and began to speak on behalf of the poor and energy-intensive and export-exposed industries. This helped to demoralise the carbon tax discourse by portraying it as against national interest. Richard Worthington (WWF South Africa) was quoted at the end of the article providing an alternative view. The placement of the counter-discourse at the periphery of the story helped in portraying the views as negligible and inferior. The structure of the story played a crucial role in building ideological closure, rendering some views more important (ANC and du Plooy) and the alternative ones as less important. The structure of the story also helped in the meaning formulation that helped people to read and produce meanings that are consistent with the worldviews of those given the primary definitional power. Worthington's views, it should be noted, already were limited in scope by the discursive parameters already set by the news writer and social actors enjoying the primary definitional power.

While the Mail and Guardian, *City Press* and the *Sunday Independent* hardly had stories that promote climate change denialism and scepticism, the *Sunday Times* devoted several stories and actors that constructed climate science as a lie. Op-Eds by Stephen Mulholland denied climate science. For example, the article, “Global warming is mythical nonsense” (*Sunday Times*, 12 May 2013), described those who supported the climate science consensus discourse “crazies”. The introduction of the carbon tax by the government was described as “This cult has decided that man is changing the earth’s climate in ways that destroy us ... it now appears our ravenous revenue service has converted to the climate change religion”. The author sought to moralise the denialist discourse by quoting a scientist, Professor Philip Lloyd from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology: “SARS is riding the climate change frenzy to extort even more in hidden imposts from our tiny base of taxpayers”. The carbon tax “will not be ring-fenced and used for environmental purposes. It will disappear, as does the fuel duty, into the fiscal pot to be squandered by incompetent and corrupt civil servants and their political bosses”.

The story “ArcelorMittal may be forced to pay carbon tax,” (Dewald van Rensburg, *City Press*, 23 June 2013) noted that the carbon tax proposed by the Treasury Department could force ArcelorMittal South Africa to pay the environmental sin tax. The story brought about the disagreements between the government and the minerals-energy complex (ArcelorMittal is part of it). The government argued that carbon tax was a way of encouraging energy efficiency and emissions cuts. ArcelorMittal saw the carbon tax as “no more than a revenue-raising initiative” which was bad for the country because “The reality is that South Africa is de-industrialising”. The tax will cost the country “R600 million per year while it actually has no feasible way of reducing its emissions except by reducing its production”.

In the story “Carbon tax regime faces hurdles,” (Jana Marais, *Sunday Times*, 23 June 2013), the proposed carbon tax regime was demoralised as having negative impacts on the economy and with little environmental impact. South Africa, ‘a developing country’ first to introduce such a tax, “will have a limited effect on global emissions and will render the economy uncompetitive, costing jobs and investment”. While the news story quoted the Treasury’s research findings that noted that the tax “will have a limited negative impact on economic growth and will assist in nudging the

economy into a more sustainable and low-carbon growth path”, the story went on to question this claim. The tax was portrayed as not making any economic sense. The aspects of the environment and climate change were to be subjected to economic logic first. The cost of carbon would be transferred to consumers by Eskom. “Concerns were also raised as to whether imported products from countries without carbon taxes will face an additional import tax in South Africa to ensure a level playing field ... relocation of companies to countries without carbon taxes - as this would leave total global carbon emissions unchanged and would defeat the purpose of the tax”. The sponsors of the anti-carbon tax regime were “big companies, including ArcelorMittal South Africa (Amsa), Sasol, Anglo Gold Ashanti and Exxaro”. Amsa’s group environmental manager, Siegfried Spänig, described the tax as

a revenue-gathering exercise that would have dire economic consequences Even if you tax us to death, we cannot change our behaviour. We should ask if we - as a developing country facing a number of challenges including unemployment, air pollution and water scarcity and with a focus on beneficiation to grow the economy - should be at the forefront of implementing carbon tax.

The opposite to the carbon tax by the minerals-energy complex is being normalised and legitimised through the de-economisation of a carbon tax in a “developing country”. The notion of a developing path and the right to pollute was manifest in such discourses. The aspect of a carbon tax was not projected as a problem for the profit margins of the minerals-energy complex, but rather through discourse translation - where it became an issue of the “entire economy” affecting jobs, investments, growth etc. By drawing their legitimation for the economic growth/development discourses, the minerals-energy complex attempted to make their concerns nationwide concerns. The carbon tax would harm the economy and therefore, it was immoral and irresponsible for the government to impose such a tax in a country faced with “many challenges”.

The introduction of a carbon tax as part of South Africa’s plans to cut emissions was met with resistance from the business sector which argued that the tax was not necessary since because “SA contributes less than 1% of the world’s greenhouse gas” and that “There is no reason for South Africa to ‘take a lead’ with climate change mitigation” (Dewald van Rensburg, “Business lobby lashes carbon tax,” *City Press*, 08 September 2013). The Business Unity SA group (Busa), as quoted in the story, saw “no reason for South Africa (to be) the first developing country to

introduce a carbon tax”. The discourse of development was used to normalise and rationalise the need for South Africa to avoid a carbon tax because “much of the South African economy literally cannot reduce its emissions and should be exempted from the tax”.

The Busa argued further that it was nonsensical “to tax unavoidable emissions” and that “the tax will achieve next to nothing except a steep increase in electricity prices”. The ideas of the Business Unity SA and ArcelorMittal were reproduced without questioning. The argument against a carbon tax was made as an argument in the interest of ‘everyone’, the ‘economy’ and the people who will be affected by the “steep increase in electricity prices”. While the major beneficiaries of a new tax are the actors in the minerals-energy complex, the story represented the tax as bad for everyone. The minerals-energy complex (see also chapter 2) is a beneficiary of cheap and subsidised electricity. A carbon tax would force Eskom to increase tariffs that had a knock-on effect on the profits of big mining and industry corporations that consume over 70% of the South African energy. The beneficiaries of the dirty coal were against instruments that potentially reduced their profits. Therefore, to gain public sympathy, the discourse on carbon tax diffidence was constructed in the public idiom using oral models so as to interpellate readers and recruit them to become members of discourse that at face value champions their interests. Hidden underneath such a discursive construction were the interests of the elite blocs that enjoyed energy subsidies from Eskom and make huge profits.

Stephen Mulholland was given quite wide access to the climate change discourse in the *Sunday Times*. As part of attempts to reject the proposed carbon tax, Mulholland began by questioning the science of climate change itself. An example is a story “Climate change band plays on,” (Stephen Mulholland, *Sunday Times*, 29 September 2013) where he constructed climate change as a hoax that was being promoted by “crazies” who had “been fooled by ambitious scientists who had doctored the evidence”. Mulholland described those interested in climate change as “groupies, including our own [South African] climate crazies”. The article used the 2015 emails leak scandal during COP15 in Copenhagen to moralise the climate change denialism claims: “leaked documents from the climate research unit at the University of East Anglia showed conclusively that a hoax was being perpetuated.” Climate change was represented as construction by “insatiable politicians

and civil servants [who] see global warming alarm - despite overwhelming evidence that it is largely a scientific fraud - as a means to extract yet more revenue from the private sector". Mulholland was against carbon taxes because they represented a "punishment" instead of focusing on 'incentives' for reducing carbon emissions. For Mulholland, carbon emissions reduction were necessary, not for climate change reasons, but because "they are not healthy."

Carbon tax diffidence was more prevalent and pronounced in the *Sunday Times*. Brendan Peacock, in his story "The hidden calamity of carbon tax," (*Sunday Times*, 06 October 2013), delegitimised carbon tax as bad policy for South Africa. In the headline, "The hidden calamity of carbon tax", the story portrayed a climate of pessimism and opposition. South Africa was seen as being over-ambitious by championing a carbon tax: "South Africa - a relatively small polluter by world standards and first developing country anywhere with such a tax and business is railing against yet another blow to our global competitiveness if such costs come to pass". It was immoral and irresponsible for South Africa to tax carbon because the country was just "a small GHGs emitter globally" and was still developing. The introduction of a carbon tax was a "blow to our competitiveness" globally and therefore bad for everyone. By de-economising the carbon tax discourse, the story attempted to paint such policies and initiatives as against logic and common sense. The economy was paramount and the environmental concerns were secondary. Within this story, notions of 'the right to develop' or the right to 'pollute' are connotatively present. While "the leading polluters by some distance are China and the US, and other developed nations have balked at the idea of committing to such a tax", South Africa, a low key emitter, wanted to crucify its industry by introducing such a tax regime. The story directly represented Philip Lloyd (an anti-climate Professor from CPUT) arguing that "internationally carbon taxes had not reduced emissions" and that "In every jurisdiction I have identified where there has been a carbon tax in place for a reasonable period ... carbon emissions at best have been almost static, and in a number of cases they have soared in spite of the tax". Pieter Roos, a consultant at the South African Chamber of Commerce supported Lloyd's argument: "some economic sectors in South Africa - like heavy industry - would be hit hard by this tax and job losses would need to be reabsorbed into other, less energy-intensive sectors" and thus forcing companies to "shed employment and make us less competitive".

News stories by Brendan Peacock promoted carbon tax diffidence. In the story “SA’s share of global emissions falling, say experts,” (*Sunday Times*, 06 October 2013), greenhouse gas emissions from South Africa were represented as ‘already’ falling and thus there was no need for the government to put carbon caps on the economy. The story relied on discourse constructions by Philip Lloyd, an ardent opposition scholar to climate change and a carbon tax dissident. The consistent choice of Lloyd and his stance against climate activities is questionable. According to Lloyd, carbon tax and emission caps “would be fatal because energy consumption and wealth creation are so intimately linked”. Lloyd attempted to demoralise the attempts to reduce emissions by de-economisation such as attempts as going against economic logic.

For the carbon tax diffidence discourse, caps on energy consumption had negative effects on economic growth and thus undesirable. To moralise the claim, Lloyd further brought statistics from Econometrix to dispute government claims of minimal economic effects. “Where Treasury talks of a small impact on job creation, Econometrix talks of hundreds of thousands of job losses. The truth must lie somewhere in between”. The South African Chamber of Commerce’s Pietman Roos argued that the carbon tax “would hurt a prestige local agricultural commodity [sugar]”. Instead of a carbon tax, the story used direct discourse representation to summarise the views of Gisela Pieterse of Tax Advisory who argued for incentives where the government provided incentives for greenhouse gas cuts: “in the form of grants and tax breaks for companies to reduce their carbon emissions”.

An Op-Ed from Peter Delmar “SA needs carbon copy of Aussie wheeze,” (*Sunday Times*, 04 November 2014) opposed the plan of introducing a carbon tax. While the government was pushing through with plans to implement a carbon tax, Peter Delmar attempted to promote opposition to the carbon tax by using Australia as an example. South Africa was supposed to ditch the tax the same way Australia had done it: “SA needs carbon copy of Aussie wheeze” “if they [Australia] could get away with it, why can’t we”. South Africa was just “a little country ... one that is not nearly as rich as Australia, we have a government that is hell-bent on inflicting on hard-working industrialists a carbon tax so that it can buy more Mercedes-Benzes for its cadres deployed to dysfunctional municipalities”.

The Chemical and Allied Industries Association (CAIA) responded to David Hallows' article with an Op-Ed article headlined: "Climate policy may harm industrial growth" (*Mail & Guardian*, 24 June 2015). From the Op-Ed, it is clear that CAIA believed and pushed through an agenda of regulatory scepticism. There was a belief that any climate action, especially the carbon tax would "harm industrial growth". Growth, a buzzword of capitalism, was put forward as more important than any environmental concerns. Regulatory scepticism was emphasised in the article: "Significant investments have been made by industry players to mitigating GHG emissions, without regulatory or economic instruments being imposed by government". The underlying theme in the carbon tax and carbon budgets debates was that of polarised discourses between regulatory optimism against regulatory diffidence from the industry. Regulation, industry discourses argued, stifled economic development and this discourse unit blackmailed and bullied the government into inaction. When industry translated their profit interests into a common language of growth - the discourse began to talk on behalf of national interest and veered off the actual agentive interests of Capital. "Though it can be agreed that the carbon intensity of the South African economy should be reduced in a phased manner, there is no urgency for this to take place". From the viewpoint of the CAIA, South Africa could wait to implement climate action to facilitate growth and development: "Along with the electricity supply catastrophe, climate policy in South Africa runs the real risk of causing increased deindustrialisation. Its negative effects must be seen in the light of future growth and stability and the economic freedom of its citizens".

9.3 Reducing Emissions through Carbon Tax and Carbon Budget Optimism

The *Mail & Guardian* largely reproduced the carbon tax optimism, also seeing the tax as a progressive instrument that would make companies more responsible and leading South Africa towards a 'green economy'. Political indexing of officials in the Treasury and Environmental Affairs departments was common in all the newspapers. However, the *Mail & Guardian* did not critique this Promethean instrument, rather co-discourse sponsors from the environmental non-governmental organisation were sought to buttress the importance of the carbon tax. The story "No carbon tax, but power levy up," by Fiona Macleod (*Mail & Guardian*, 03 March 2011) showed in indifference that carbon tax would not be implemented due to the shelving of the tax. The story reproduced elite views by only using Pravin Gordhan (Minister of Finance) as the key actor and disabling ideological disagreement. The story pacified a serious subject not critiquing South

Africa's unwillingness to punish polluters in the context of a warming planet. The carbon tax is constructed as a simple issue of policy and the story does not seek to problematise it and expose the government's lukewarm responses: the shelving of carbon tax meant that pollution remained unchecked. This worked in the interests of the high polluters in the minerals-energy complex.

Sipho Kings McDermott's stories in the *Mail & Guardian* portrayed the carbon tax policy as progressive. In "Climate change fight gets tax nod," (Sipho Kings McDermott, *Mail & Guardian*, 01 March 2012), the reporter discussed carbon tax as a progressive tool in efforts to reduce emissions: "The proposed tax, R120 per tonne of emissions, will penalise companies that do not start lowering their emissions. It will also reward efficiency. " The move towards the tax was supported by all the actors in the story. Edna Molewa was quoted in support "market-based instruments such as an escalating carbon tax" were to be used to reduce emissions.

Similar to Sipho Kings' acceptance and reproduction of the carbon tax optimism, Lisa Steyn, in the story "We'll all pay the price for dirty power," (*Mail & Guardian*, 07 March 2013) constructed the proposed carbon tax as the best way to force companies to reduce carbon emissions. Carbon tax legitimisation in the story was also achieved because of the actors who were chosen. Peet du Plooy (Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies), Pravin Gordhan (Finance Minister) and Cecil Morden (Chief Director of Economic Tax at National Treasury) all supported the carbon tax. The story "Carbon tax will power SA's drive to clean up its act," (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 March 2013) built endorsements for the carbon tax regime as an instrument to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The article delegitimised, by way of intertextual representation, the views that saw carbon taxes as harmful to the economy: "Robbie Louw, a director at Promethean Carbon, said the effect on business will be significantly less than most people think".

To delegitimise the 'big business' for promoting carbon myths, Hallows noted that already the effects of climate change were affecting many people and leading to loss of life: "Already, the deaths of half a million people a year are directly attributable to climate change". This was happening in the midst of corporate refusal to cut the 'death-causing' emissions: "They [big business] argue first that South Africa's emissions are globally insignificant, second, on Sasol's say-so, that government's carbon reduction objective has already been met". The article argued

that these discourses from the minerals-energy complex were meant to shield these corporations from taking climate action.

Sipho Kings' story "Is carbon tax the key?" (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 June 2013) supported the attempt to promulgate the carbon tax "as a way of forcing industry to become more energy efficient and emit less harmful greenhouse gases". Alex McNamara from Camco Clean Energy was directly cited in the story noting that "the tax would help change the current unsustainable mix of South Africa's carbon-intensive economy with considerable health and water-related benefits". The newspaper story was optimistic that carbon taxes had the potential to help South Africa reduce its emissions and force companies to be energy efficient. The carbon tax was moralised because it came with health and water-related benefits as pollution levels went down. A move towards carbon was also going to usher in the 'green economy' powered by renewable energy: "With renewable energy sources becoming increasingly attractive, more money would be spent on research and development in technology". Key to the carbon tax proposal was a market-led approach of carbon trade where companies that needed to emit more could buy credits: "All sectors will start with an immediate 60% discount on the tax. Companies that need to compete on the international markets, such as those in iron and steel sectors, get a further 10% reduction. They can then trade carbon credits from initiatives that lower carbon emissions to lower it [tax] by another 5% to 10%".

The story alluded to South Africa's carbon footprint as one of the largest, accounting for about 1% of total global emissions and having higher per capita emissions. "Each South African emits 10 tonnes of carbon per year. The world average is 4.7". While the per-capita calculation is world standard, this study argues that this has been one of the many ways inequality in the South African social system has been enveloped. The per capita calculations effectively delete the agency of key multinationals and the minerals-energy complex that accounts for more usage and gets its energy cheaper than the ordinary South African. By using the per capita accounting standards, it is clear that emissions in South Africa become universalised and focus is taken away from the major polluters. The same companies responsible for emissions are the ones getting 70% discounts on emissions and Eskom getting also 70% and offsetting the other 30% by charging consumers an extra. The solution could have tariff increases on those industries that consumed more and polluted more. Greenhouse gas emissions in South Africa are unequally distributed and the capitalist system

bloc benefits more than the ordinary people. The story did not enable ideological disagreement. Carbon taxes were accepted as the best way. Critical to note however is the lack of quantification in the story. How effective is a carbon tax in reducing emissions given that 70% discounts for five years are given to companies with higher emissions? The tax remains, from the face of it, an international public relations scam where South Africa was to be seen to be doing something about emissions. The story carried praises of such strides “South Africa is leading the developing world in implementing a carbon tax” and “KPMG has named South Africa as the 13th most active country, out of 21 major global economies, in using tax as a tool to drive sustainable corporate behaviour and achieve green goal”.

David Hallowes, in the Op-Ed “Corporate SA promotes carbon myths,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 17 July 2015) problematised and politicised climate change politics in South Africa. The responses to climate change, especially the need to reduce emissions, were portrayed as areas of deep corporate contestation. Bipolar depictions between the government and civil society on the one side and business on the hand are clear. The article demoralised and delegitimised the discourses of non-action from businesses that bully and lobby against climate action and emissions reduction. Business, especially the Chemical and Allied Industries Association (CAIA) and the Intensive Energy Users Group (minerals-energy complex) were constructed as barriers to carbon tax implementation and emissions reduction. Hallowes accused them of seeking selfish corporate profits over the environment. They were portrayed as ‘immoral’ and ‘irresponsible’ actors: “Big industry has decided that South Africa should not do anything about climate change CAIA does not support South Africa’s continued development of climate change policy, including that of carbon tax”.

Sipho Kings, in most of the stories on the carbon tax, managed to portray the big business within the minerals-energy complex as villains who refused to accept ‘a progressive’ carbon tax. In the story “Big business stalls crucial carbon tax,” (Sipho Kings, *Mail & Guardian*, 18 June 2015), Kings alluded to the debate around carbon tax as a mitigation instrument in South Africa. The carbon tax was constructed as a site of struggle between environmentalists and the government on one side and the minerals-energy complex on the other. Kings moralised and legitimised the carbon tax because it could “reduce carbon emissions straight away”. Unfortunately, according to King’s

construction, the reduction of emissions in South Africa through a carbon tax was being hampered by “Bullying and lobbying by industry”. The industry was thus seen as ‘immoral’ and ‘irresponsible’ for lobbying against the only “policy instrument that can reduce carbon emissions straight away”. Sasol, one of the biggest polluters in South Africa was quoted arguing against the tax because it was “not in the best interests of South Africa”. Similarly, the South African Chamber of Mines was against the tax because “would undermine the competitiveness of the industry and would have negative economic and social effects”. These two quotations served to legitimise and demoralise the claims by ‘immoral’ and ‘irresponsible players’ who were selfish and only concerned about their interests and profit. These industry players, thus, were enemies of the environment and their views and “bullying” tactics were ‘irresponsible’. The power of the minerals-energy complex is illustrated: “The tax is being undone by bullying Business has the resources and power to be belligerent, while the government does not even have a united position”. Big business used bullying and financial muscle to muzzle progress towards a green carbon tax that “was intended to change consumer and producer behaviour by making dirtier forms of production more expensive”. The industry was further demoralised through using WWF for Nature’s Saliem Fakir to define the industry as powerful and abusive: “The capability of corporations whose job is to remove anything that lowers the rate of return is serious”. The story quoted an unnamed investment expert arguing that: “Government maybe trying to do the right thing with the tax, but it is faced with companies desperately trying to defend their profits”.

The big businesses, the story reported, bullied the government “threatening to cut jobs or divest”. The Intensive Energy Users Group spokesperson, Shaun Nel, denied bullying allegations: “Capital moves where it makes sense. That’s not a threat, it’s a fact Business in no way thinks we should not have a price on carbon. But a tax in this form makes no sense when emissions are dominated by Eskom, Sasol and ArcelorMittal”. The story allowed for ideological disagreement, even though it has a strongly preferred reading. Shaun Nel was quoted arguing that companies will move out of South Africa to places without the tax and cheaper electricity: “They will still emit and we will suffer the local impacts from those emissions while not getting any of the economic development”. The statement shows that for the Intensive Energy Users Group, profit came first over the environmental concerns. The South African government was given a choice between economic development and reducing emissions. The story brought out the ideological struggles that

characterise climate change debates in South Africa, the contours of a struggle between the government, civil society and the minerals-energy complex. The headline of the story helped in building the dichotomies of climate politics in South Africa. Big business was constructed as the ‘other’ - the villain that was stopping a ‘crucial’ tax meant to save the planet. The government, through the tax, was represented as taking the right steps.

The story used, as its primary definer, an unnamed carbon trade consultant to deauthorize and demoralise industry. This study makes an important finding in terms of the articulations of different social groups. The news reporter, government and the carbon trade consultant all agreed that climate change mitigation could be achieved through a carbon tax. Articulation informs us that the unity of social formations is not necessarily out of correspondence and agreement but social formations often cohere out of their contradictions but converge by accident and coincidence. It is normal for carbon traders to support carbon tax systems because South Africa promised 5-10% tax exemptions to companies if they traded or bought carbon credits. A carbon tax is a good business for carbon consultants. For the government, a carbon tax meant another revenue stream. This is important as Treasury did not ring-fence revenues from carbon tax towards any environmental programmes and projects. It makes sense for the government to come up with an instrument that would bring more revenue. For the newspaper, it could be a matter of supporting environmental concerns and the legitimate need for lowering emissions. However, at an ideological level, the legitimation and endorsement of the carbon tax in the story helped to legitimise the market-led Promethean ideology behind it. By making carbon tax common sense, the story effectively endorsed market-led responses. In doing so, the language of the elite and the financialisation and commodification of public commons were made natural and a sense of imagined universal consent was built. Green capitalism becomes a winning force. Important to note is that all these discourses are profit-oriented and still exploit nature.

In the *City Press*, carbon tax optimism was promoted from news stories written by Yokandi Groenewald. In one example is the “Polluters will have to pay up,” (*City Press*, 05 July 2016). The story noted that South Africa’s overall response to climate change was pinned on market-led responses, with carbon taxes forming part of the response instruments. The carbon tax, which came into force in 2019 through the budget, also gave quite a lot of incentives and exemptions of up to

90-95%, plus also brought in the aspect of cap and trade (carbon trade). The story, written in 2016, praised the government for taking “a step closer to taxing big polluters last week when it published its latest carbon tax regulations”. The tax was also praised because it was meant “to put a price on pollution and encourage heavy emitters to change their ways, while also aligning South Africa with its international commitments to reduce its carbon footprint”. The environmental non-governmental organisation, however, were constructed in the story pessimistic that the carbon tax regime would work because of the offset projects: “Earthlife Africa called it a false solution for climate change”. For David Hallows of groundWork, it was “a disastrous policy, largely driven by Treasury’s faith in markets”. The story revealed that different and contesting viewpoints on the aspect of a carbon tax in South Africa. The government, on one hand, supported the aspect of carbon tax and trade as an income, CSO was supportive of the idea but pessimistic because of the inclusion of huge exemptions while heavy emitters did not see a carbon tax as a solution. For example, Alex Anderson of Sasol argued that a “carbon tax would not change behaviour” and Thava Govender, Eskom’s group executive for Transmission and Sustainability “welcomed the inclusion of the offsets in the draft, but warned that the long lead times required to deliver these projects could limit their effectiveness”.

On top of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the *Mail & Guardian* saw the carbon tax “could save 20 000 lives a year”. The tax was good because “South Africa can cut its emissions by a third and dent the progress of global warming. All it has to do is sign off on a local carbon tax. This will make business pay for its pollution and encourage it to lower emissions” (Sipho Kings, “Tax could save 20 000 lives a year,” *Mail & Guardian*, 18 November 2016).

The story “Carbon bill drops the ball on actual taxes,” by Dewald Van Rensburg (*City Press*, 07 November 2018), while in support of the carbon tax, lamented the weak nature of the final carbon tax bill. noted that the new carbon tax bill “pushed out the actual imposition of the new tax and significantly reduced the tax burden in real terms”. The story saw the carbon tax as part of South Africa’s progress towards emissions reduction. The adoption and implementation of the carbon tax are to be understood as a rational and inevitable market choice.

9.4 Chapter summary

Climate change discourses in the news media were characterised by ideological and discourse contestations between the need to reduce internal carbon emissions and those actors who preferred a ‘do nothing’ approach. The government, through the Environmental Affairs Department and the Treasury Department, had policies in place to reduce the country’s emissions, mostly coming from the energy sector. These plans included setting up carbon budgets and implementing a carbon tax as instruments to encourage companies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through opting for renewable energy. The actors in the minerals-energy complex heavily resisted the introduction of a carbon budget and a carbon tax. This tax, they argued, would kill the industry and thus lead to massive unemployment. These actors used ‘bullying,’ ‘lobbying,’ and economic blackmail to try and discourage the government from implementing these instruments. This chapter rearticulated these discourses as they played out in the newspapers, examines whether the media took ideological positions that promoted and reproduced the interests of particular actors, especially those in the minerals-energy complex or reproduced the government discourse. Overall, this chapter provided a general critique of market instruments of carbon tax and the included elements of carbon trade in the mitigation approaches pursued by South Africa.

Chapter Ten: Media re/production of the neoliberal green economy: Towards Environmental Financialisation and Commodification

10.1 Introduction

This chapter has two sections. The first section articulates the green economy optimistic discourses as they traversed the South African weekly newspapers. The news media representations of climate change in South Africa, as part of the solutions narrative, often reproduced the ideas of techno-optimism where buzzwords such as ‘green economy’, ‘sustainable development’ and ‘green growth’ were used and reproduced as common-sense ideologies. In this section, the media constructions and representations of these discourses, that are Promethean in nature, are analysed and critiqued. All the newspapers reproduced this optimism, leading to the manufacture of consent and a one-dimensional discourse that saw solutions to address climate change through the neoliberal market-led lenses. The green economy/Promethean discourses acquired a tendential force status by way of economisation: they were constructed as ‘bringing jobs’, they were ‘clean’ and ‘safe’ etc. These discourse strategies enabled the neoliberal language to be exerted as a commonsense language. Techno-responses combined with market principles were seen as rational, normal and innovative because they balance economic growth with clean air. The agency of capitalism in the climate change crisis was concealed but it was greatly revealed in offering ‘rational’ solutions. Capitalism is indirectly referenced as the best ideological and material force to address the climate change problem (self-mutation and entrenchment). The Promethean discourses construct climate change as a problem that can be fixed through technology, techno-managerial strategies and market-led initiatives. They conceptualise (to draw from Pepermans and Maesele 2018: 642) “nature (including the climate) as a resource that can be mastered through unlimited scientific and technological progress and economic growth” (see also Foster 2010). Economic growth (wealth) and mitigating the climate change risks were treated as complementary and compatible through technological innovation and market activities.

The second section provides a re-articulation of these discourses by bringing out the ‘small’ but important green economy disarticulating discourses. Most of the articles in the second section were in the form of Op-Eds from academics, environmental activists and the faith communities. This study argues that the news media largely failed to offer alternative ways of addressing climate

change. The solutions that were reproduced in the news media followed the economic modernisation ideological paradigm and failed to account for theories and solutions that are found within environmental sociology paradigms which argue against environmental commodification, fetishism and financialisation. These paradigms seek to re-articulate the human-nature relations and see capitalism as opposition to true metabolic relationships. Tor Halvorsen (2017) drew attention to the false hopes preached under the neoliberal climate responses crusade. The neoliberalist economic agenda sees solutions to climate change as a way for “the state to create secure markets in the environmental sector” (p.21). “Instead of supporting an economic system capable of reproducing democracy, neoliberalism reproduces power relations that ... undermine democracy at all levels, particularly when democracy asks for alternatives to the knowledge that the market allows to develop” (Halvorsen, 2017, p.21). This argument was also buttressed by Henri-Count Evans and Rosemary Musvipwa (2017) who argued that “Carbon markets are part of a broader set of ‘green economy’ discourses and practices, which facilitate profit accumulation through the capture and monetisation of ecosystems and environmental ‘resources’ (p.39).

10.2 Contested landscapes: the global political economy of climate-smart agriculture

Of all the newspapers analysed, only the *Sunday Independent* had climate-smart agriculture optimism. The climate-smart agriculture discourse was uncontested and reproduced as common sense. The Op-Ed article “Climate-smart agriculture for Africa: In search of the Triple Win,” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) by South Africa’s Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Tina Joemat-Patterson and Andrew Steer (World Bank special envoy for climate change), expressed confidence in climate-smart agriculture, being optimistic that climate-smart agriculture could be a solution to climate change-induced food insecurity. Adopting climate-smart agriculture was represented as a moral call to feed the growing world population and COP17 was “an opportunity to make decisions that will improve the prospects of feeding this already vast population and the additional two to three billion that will join their number in 2050”. The authors made the problems of population growth, climate change and food security universal challenges. These problems were ‘everyone’s’ problems. They attempted to write using language that was translated into the language of everyday universal conversation: “The challenges we face” require ‘us’ to make decisions that will enable “food production” to increase “by 70 per cent by 2050”.

Scientific instrumentalisation was used to legitimise the claims for the adoption of climate-smart agriculture. For example, the authors argued that “leading scientists” agreed that climate-smart agriculture was a necessity and called for “the negotiators in Durban to recognise and support the potential that climate-smart agriculture offers”. The reference to “leading scientists” helped in legitimising the claims made in the article and to construct the claims as a moral imperative. The article argued further that climate-smart agriculture could “provide a triple win for farmers by creating higher yields and increasing climate resilience, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and storing carbon in plants and soil”. All this was done as a way of building consent and reproducing the elite and neoliberal ideology that underpins climate-smart agriculture as a legitimate pathway. The path of climate-smart agriculture was constructed as ideologically unquestionable because even the “leading scientists from 38 countries” agreed that it is the best. In this instance science is seen as unquestionable and unequivocal.

The examples of climate-smart agriculture successes were shared: “Kenya is supporting a pilot programme on triple-win agriculture”. The language of discourse scientisation was used across the article. Food security and climate change were reduced to science where climate-smart agriculture was envisaged to play a critical role “at a time when scientists estimate that unless there are strong adaptation measures, yields are likely to fall by 10 to 20 percent”. The challenges were worse for Africa because “Demand for food will rise by 200 percent by 2050” and because of this “Africa needs nothing less than a transformation in agriculture”. Climate-smart agriculture was the ‘hero’ and the best available way to combat climate change through adaptation and mitigation. Climate-smart agriculture entailed the ability of farmers to “use proven conservation agriculture techniques, together with innovative technologies such as drought and flood-tolerant crops, improved early warning systems and risk insurance”. The authors argued that there was “need for climate-smart agriculture which can provide a triple win”. Notwithstanding the entrenchment of current global food systems inequalities in agricultural trade, the article did not see solutions in changing the global agri-food processing and trade systems, systems based on competition. Rather, solutions lay in increased production (unending exploitation of nature because humans could conquer nature) even if it meant the spread and proliferation of genetically modified food (GMOs) that have serious health impacts on both people and the environment. Technology was again seen as

the best tool at the disposal of humanity. Climate-smart agriculture was normalised and automatised. The calls for climate-smart agriculture ignored the most important calls for restructuring and transforming the global agri-food production, processing and distributional imbalances. The responses proposed and promoted all indirectly reproduce neoliberalism and thus making the neoliberal ideology a common sense.

Climate-smart agriculture was again represented as having a contribution to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Agriculture was seen as a piece of the climate change puzzle: “NO STRATEGY for mitigating climate change can be complete or successful without reducing emissions from agriculture, forestry and other land uses” (Eleanor Momberg, “Agricultural communities have a role in fighting climate change,” *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011). As agricultural activities were partly responsible for global warming, solutions were to be found in agricultural innovation. The news story was based on a scientific report released by the Worldwatch Institute. Solutions to climate change were to be found through “land-based or ‘terrestrial’ carbon sequestration” which “offers the possibility today of large-scale removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through plant photosynthesis”. The story limited solutions to climate change to scientific interventions and neglected the social nature of climate change which led to the breakdown of the metabolic human-nature relations. The discourse was depoliticised through the non-reference to the social and material forces that gave rise to the risk society and climate change. The social and economic systems responsible for global warming and climate change are constructed as possible solutions.

10.3 Green economy optimism

Since their inception, the United Nations-led climate change talks were benchmarked on the need to reduce carbon emissions and help countries adapt to the negative effects of climate change. The solutions sought became universalised as encompassing an agenda for technological interventions including the aspects of renewable energy, constructed as the springboard for a ‘green economy’. The language of the green economy was promoted and made commonsensical by the United Nations, politicians and business leaders, acquired a level of ‘imagined consensus’ where it became desirable and only rational to aspire to transition towards the ‘green future’. Based on the ideological values of Promethean capitalism, the discourse on the techno-supported green

economy became a discursive tendential force and thus had planetary hegemony. The news media in South Africa, it is argued here, were part of the reproduction and legitimisation of this green economy discourse and helped it to acquire the common-sense status and thus providing it with ideological and discursive superiority. As part of its entrenchment, the green economy discourse (part of economic modernisation) was to be understood as a way of achieving sustainable development. Discursive devices such as moralisation and economisation were instrumental in how the news media reproduced and legitimised ‘the green economy’ which, in this study, is treated as ‘sustainable Promethean capitalism’.

Discourse analysis allows researchers to do synchronic and diachronic-comparative analyses of representations. In this study, the synchronic analysis examined the prevalence of themes in stories written by the same reporters within the same newspaper while the diachronic-comparative analysis enabled the researcher to compare representations across all the newspapers. These analyses naturally play out through the structures of all the chapters and sections.

Victoria John, in the story “Greener pastures for Durban,” (*Mail & Guardian*, 01 September 2011), expressed optimism in the green economy. The story relied on a report released by the Academy of Sciences of South Africa (Assaf) which recommended reducing Durban’s carbon footprint “through biomass suited to a subtropical climate and increased local production to reduce the burning of fossil fuels”. The newspaper discourse noted that “the transition in Africa to ‘low-carbon’ cities could be seen as an economic opportunity, not a burden.” All the social actors used in the story came from the Academy of Sciences of South Africa, making the story one-dimensional. The story moralised the green economy because it offered “significant co-benefits, including improved public health as a result of reduced air pollution, greater agricultural productivity and greater water and energy security”.

The transition to a ‘greener economy’ was perceived as inevitable and natural. There was an assumption that ‘everyone’ agrees to this transition, it is common sense to go the direction of a green economy. The exclusion of alternatives effectively meant that the ideology of green sustainable capitalism was given a universal imagined consensus. The green economy rhetoric was anchored on the actors’ optimism in technology and innovation: “The eThekweni municipality should foster technological and social innovation”. Roseanne Diab, Assaf Chief executive, was

indirectly represented arguing that “a green economy could create employment opportunities” (economisation). The story’s discursive strategies of scientisation and economisation effectively depoliticised the climate change problem. The story did not question the consumerist behaviour that underpins emissions. Instead of a discourse that sought to disarticulate capital and its tenets, the story propelled capitalist exploitation and self-mutilation.

In the South African news media, key discourse actors such as government ministers and civil servants together with civil society (environmental) groups and the renewables industry embraced and promoted the green economy discourse. The green economy optimism is a theme that cuts across all the four newspapers analysed. In a story by Peter Fabricius, “Meeting in SA this week to clear major obstacles to successful COP17,” (*Sunday Independent*, 04 September 2011), the green economy optimism discourse was sponsored by Norway’s International Development and Environment Minister, Erik Solheim, who was cited proposing to assist South Africa in its transition to a green economy through supporting “the South African Renewable Energy Initiative (Sari)”. Dominant worldviews on addressing climate change, especially the neoliberal solutions, were reproduced and made natural.

The news story “A green SA economy: ‘The train is shifting direction’,” by Lynley Donnelly (*Mail & Guardian*, 24 November 2011) celebrated the introduction of what it called a ‘green economy’ based on the agreement between business, government and labour which committed South Africa “to the creation of 300 000 jobs by building a green industrial base”. The agreement

comprises 12 overarching commitments, including increasing investment in the green economy, enhancing renewable energy procurement, the development of biofuels, clean coal initiatives, promoting energy efficiency across the economy Renewable energy, including wind power generation, is targeted for the creation of 50, 000 jobs by 2020.

In the story, Cosatu’s Zwelinzima Vavi supported the agreement because it would “make a huge contribution in turning the structure of the economy around so that we rely more in future on manufacturing capacity of the country”. The story lacked ideological disagreement. The actors in the entire story agreed on the necessity and the need for a green economy. The vulgates of a green economy and clean coal were not questioned but reproduced and endorsed by the news story.

The one-dimensionality of the story helped in manufacturing imagined consent and consensus that the renewable green economy was common sense, natural and inevitable. This study notes here

and elsewhere that the Promethean discourses seek to perpetuate consumption, seek solutions in science and technology but do not provide measures for addressing the foundational and structural issues such as capitalism that are responsible for the climate chaos. These discourses bank their hope on capital's self-mutative capabilities. Of interest is how the labour movement articulate so well ideas of capitalist accumulation. The views from Vavi concur conjuncturally with those of government and business and together they form a dangerous social formation that propagates and entrenches capitalism as a tendential force.

It is interesting to note that business, labour and the government agreed on the green economy crusade. Implied by this story is that 'everyone' agrees that the green economy is the way to go. The green economy rhetoric was taken-for-granted, constructed as common sense and automatised through implied ideological consensus. Everyone had to support green economy initiatives without questioning. By so doing, the story promoted and reproduced the dominant environmental ideology and discourse of green capitalism over alternatives. By excluding alternative discourses, the story helped to reproduce dominance and the hegemonic prowess of sustainable green capitalism ushering society towards a one-dimensional capitalist logic. The discursive strategy of economisation was used to legitimise and moralise the green economy logic. The green economy was good because it led to "the creation of 300 000 jobs".

At the COP17, Environmental Affairs Minister Edna Molewa, hoped for the world to move closer to a greener economy by pursuing "a whole chain of green economy initiatives" leading to "a more environmentally sustainable South Africa" (Eleanor Momberg, "All eyes on UN climate talks," *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011). Momberg paraphrased Molewa's optimism to include "the introduction of renewables into the energy mix". In another story, Eleanor Momberg used indirect representation to represent the green economy optimism views of the United Nations Environment Program's (UNEP) Executive Director, Achim Steiner, who argued that:

there was rapidly growing evidence that accelerating a transition to a low carbon, resource-efficient, employment-generating Green Economy may not only be the key to meeting sustainability challenges of the 21st century, but also provide a considerable contribution to meeting other MDGs (Eleanor Momberg, "MDG goals at risk, UN report warns," *Sunday Independent*, 11 December 2011) .

Steiner argued that the green economy “put a fresh lens on the challenges and spotlight on the multiple cost-effective economic and social opportunities from investing and reinvesting in modern clean-tech systems”. The story wholly reproduced Steiner’s worldviews on Promethean capitalism. Outside of the Promethean green economy frontage, the story did not include alternative viewpoints to addressing climate change. The optimism in the green economy was overarching. Edna Molewa also built on the green economy narrative by arguing that “Africa needs to embark on a path of sustainable development with new, clean, appropriate technologies”. The story reproduced and legitimised the elite views of the South African government, the UNDP and the World Bank. Missing from this discourse is the inability of capitalism to address the ecological and climate crises that it produced. Capitalism enjoys another lifeline as a credible ideology to addressing climate change.

The *Sunday Times* also promoted the green economy optimism discourse in its coverage of climate change debates in South Africa. The story “Greener pastures for jobs,” by Mamello Masote and Tshepo Mashego (*Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) directly reproduced the discourse of green economy optimism. The introduction, through the discourse strategy of economisation, noted: “More than 460 000 direct job opportunities could be created by 2025 in the green economy”. The lead paragraph constructed the green economy as natural, thereby legitimising it. At ideology level, this discourse construction naturalised and automatised the neoliberal green economy sustainable capitalism narrative. The Minister of Economic Development, Ebrahim Patel, was quoted arguing: “The competitiveness of our exports in global markets can be sustained and improved through the greening of our economy”.

In the story “SA’s green economy linked to job creation,” (Staff Writer, *Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) Ebrahim Patel (the Minister of Economic Development), David Jarvis (head of strategic operations at the Development Bank) and Jorge Maia (economist from the Industrial Development Corporation) sponsored the green economy optimism discourse. The discourse strategy of economisation was used throughout the story to naturalise, moralise and legitimise the neoliberal Promethean approach to address climate change. The story did not have ideological disagreement and worked by way of excluding alternative actors and worldviews.

The newspaper constructed the green economy discourse and ideology with optimism, representing it as “one of South Africa’s most undeveloped sectors, yet it has the potential to create employment opportunities”. Patel, the newspaper noted, launched a “bullish report outlining the potential of the green economy and job creation prospects”. Here, there is a conflation of newspaper discourses and actor discourses. By way of language translation, the story portrayed the report by Patel as “bullish” and by so doing presented the views of the government as serious and correct. The climate change discourses and specifically the rhetoric of the green economy, were constructed by the government and made widespread and believable by the media. The newspaper, in its own discursive construction, unequivocally declared that “South Africa’s green economy can create considerable employment opportunities”.

Both the newspaper and the actors further constructed this optimism. The agreement between the actors and the newspaper was clear. Important to observe is how the news media constantly rely on indexing official sources for their stories. The South African government has an upper discursive hand in the construction of climate change worldviews in South Africa. The turn towards green jobs indicates a point where government sees opportunities in the market-driven technological innovation and the green economy rhetoric. By constructing climate change responses in the neoliberal language, the news media discourses mainstream, legitimise and rationalise these dominant views and privilege them over alternatives that are excluded. The imagined leap from coal to renewables was constructed as rational and environmentally moral, however, lacking is the politicisation of the climate change problem, essentially the need to question the taken-for-granted rhetoric of sustainable development and green economy. Ebrahim Patel argued that:

There are extraordinary growth opportunities as our economy gravitates towards a job-rich new growth path. A growing green economy should translate into opportunities for entrepreneurs in energy generation ... from sustainable, renewable and alternative sources with low or no carbon emissions. Our colleagues in Germany, the US and Brazil have made greater strides in the adoption of the green economy.

In support, David Jarvis noted that the “economic merit of many of these technologies may only be fully established in years to come but placing a requirement on local industries to invest now is critical to the success of SA’s decision to move into the green space”. Jorge Maia argued: “What

is important is that those that have made the early mover advantage do realise that growing green economy does translate into opportunities for localisation, either through increased utilisation of existing production capabilities, or the establishment of new capacity”. The rhetoric on green economy/growth and techno-optimism is constructed as the only available discourse in addressing climate change and ensure a move away from fossils. Climate change should be seen as an opportunity for business to make profits. The exclusion of politicised alternative viewpoints helped in reproducing the hegemonic status of mainstream market-led neoliberal ideas. Responding to climate change is reduced to imagined and implied neoliberal consensual discourses. The green economy and technological innovation are reproduced as capable of solving the climate problem. Economic modernisation/Promethean discourses, by their access to the media gain discursive dominance and appear to be the only available discourses.

The story “Long walk to greendom,” (No author, *Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) focused on the events at COP17 and the views of some business delegates participating at the conference. The story, from the headline, embraced and automatised the green economy ideology. The headline: “Long walk to greendom” revealed the disappointment with the “long walk” which, this study argues, was seen as a walk towards a necessary epoch of a green economy, named a ‘greendom’. The story quoted Irvan Damon, ambassador for the Sustainable Energy Society of Southern Africa, contending that “his organisation had embraced opportunities provided by COP17 to add impetus to creating competitive green industries, local green-collar jobs and embracing a low-carbon culture”. The market-led Kyoto Protocol instruments such as carbon trading were embraced and celebrated: “New opportunities are emerging for low-carbon investment in developing countries such as SA. There is a signal of renewed confidence to investors in carbon markets”.

Suthentira Govender and Subashni Naidoo, in the story “Jobs promise gives SA green fever,” (*Sunday Times*, 04 December 2011) represented the green economy as a boom for jobs and the economy. The story celebrated the green economy as good for ‘all’. It was constructed as the natural way to go. The headline expressed this optimism: “Jobs promise gives SA green fever”. The green economy, a neoliberal construction/language, was naturalised and celebrated through the translation of elite neoliberal interests into public and common interests of the poor. The green economy was about the people, all were going to benefit. This type of representation helped in

aligning the neoliberal profit interests of the elite with the aspirations of the interpellated poor. The market-led climate transition into the green economy was covered as if it was about ordinary people, the underlying vested interests of capital, the elite and multinationals were covered up. The green economy “could boost the economy and generate hundreds of thousands of jobs within years”. The green economy optimism was closely tied to the techno-renewable optimism: “Renewable sources of energy and materials form the basis of a green economy”. The discursive strategy of economisation was used, the green economy was moralised and legitimised because it would “boost the economy and generate hundreds of thousands of jobs”. The economisation of climate change responses fits well into the economic modernisation paradigm that sees solutions through neoliberal initiatives. This economisation depoliticises the climate problem and deletes the views that seek to address the political economy of green economics and the interests that it represents at ideology level and the attendant inequalities and risks that it produces along. In the story, Ebrahim Patel called for a quick transition. Edna Molewa was directly represented arguing that “We have stressed that there will be creation of jobs. This is not just an effort that is jobless, we will be getting into sustainable development, that talks to our people, our economy and takes care of our environment”.

Ravi Naidoo (Group Executive, Development Bank of South Africa) and David Jarvis (Divisional Head on green programmes - DBSA), in an Op-Ed, encouraged South Africa to pursue a growth plan anchored on “green infrastructure,” and argued that “The development of green infrastructure is vital to creating a sustainable growth path for Africa” (Ravi Naidoo and David Jarvis, *Mail & Guardian*, 14 December 2011). They saw climate change as offering threats and opportunities, with an emphasis on the need to tap into the opportunities. The authors utilised the discursive strategies of scientisation and economisation. “Every 1.5° C temperature change globally translates into a 3° C increase in Southern Africa and the region is little prepared for the hardship and social disruption that may results”. This, therefore, the authors argued, moralised the need to maintain Africa’s growth path because climate change offered “an ideal opportunity for the region and the continent to build a greener development path for itself”. The authors argued that “sustainable development holds more promise than outdated developmental models”.

The authors advocated for sustainable capitalism/Promethean approaches to development. “Green infrastructure” was constructed as moral and “resilient”. The article supported green capitalism because it made sense and even good for the environment because it takes “into account the effects of climate change and variability and will thus facilitate more enduring infrastructure and avoid additional retrofitting costs for poorly conceived investments”. Beneath these common-sense discourses, lie the ideological framework of capital, especially when bankers promote investments in green business. Critical to this ideology is profit which, however, discursively is fronted by the naturalised and legitimised need to ‘go green’. Denotatively, the article outlined a developmental framework that had sustainability as its nucleus. Important, however, is to underscore the connotative ideological investments of the text in the ideology of profit, techno-managerial climate responses and heavily neoliberal principles of consumption, expansion and profit. The article reproduced capitalism, offered no politicisation of the climate problem, but rather crafted climate solutions through the same logic of risk manufacturing. The language of the text spoke to an imagined consensus on the need to adopt ‘green capitalism’. The article saw no need for debate but took for granted the environmental imperative to go green without transforming or eliminating the risk capitalist culture that is responsible for the climate crises.

Alf James, in the story “Opportunity to power job creation,” (*Sunday Times*, 11 March 2012) moralised the green economy discourse through economisation. The green economy would create jobs and green the South African economy. The headline automatised the green economy rhetoric: “Opportunity to power job creation”. The green economy was represented as an opportunity. This discourse emanated from the government policy discourses on climate change. Government views were reproduced and legitimised in the story. Minister of Energy, Dipuo Peters, was represented directly emphasising the benefits of the green economy, as envisaged in the 2011 IRP. The green economy “provides us with a unique opportunity to create jobs, and tackle the concerns of climate change at the same time”. “Realising the opportunity to create jobs, the Green Economy Accord that was recently signed by the government and its social partners sets ambitious targets for local procurement in the manufacturing and assembly”. The discursive strategy of economisation was used to legitimise and automatise the green economy discourse. “Peters said the Green Economy Accord sought to: Create 300 000 jobs in the clean energy sector and its associated value chain;

ensure 75% local context, ensure business commits to funding and supports the government target of a million solar water heaters by 2014”.

In an Op-Ed “The second transition will be green,” (Edna Molewa, *Mail & Guardian*, 22 March 2012), the Environmental Affairs Minister conceptualised the green economy and sustainable development to mean same: “We have witnessed progress towards putting South Africa on the path of sustainable development, encompassing economic growth, social development and the conservation of natural resources”. The article by Molewa showed her optimism and allegiance to the green economy narrative. “The move to a more sustainable development path will create new green jobs ... open up new investment opportunities and export markets”. Correspondingly, Rene Vollgraaff’s story “Growth can be green,” (*Sunday Times*, 10 June 2012) legitimised the green economy as a good transition for South Africa. The headline stressed that “Growth can be green” and the story noted that the transition to renewables could also bring economic development. At discourse and ideology levels, the story reproduced neoliberal Promethean ideas. Neil Morris from KPMG was represented directly noting arguing that “Businesses operating in Africa should decouple growth from environmental and resource depletion.”

The green economy was good because it could “create thousands of jobs” (Matthew Savides, “‘Green economy’ to create thousands of jobs,” *Sunday Independent*, 04 December 2012). In this story, the discourse actors (Ebrahim Patel, Minister of Economic Development; Pravin Gordhan, Minister of Finance; David Jarvis, researcher at the Industrial Development Corporation; and Ana Sanchez from the International Labour Organisation) argued that there was an economic and moral imperative for South Africa to move towards a green economy because it would create “close to 500 000 jobs”. The newspaper discourse began by a comment lead, which revealed the newspaper’s optimism in the green economy and at the same time aligned with the discourses of the actors in the story. By using a comment lead and having the first three paragraphs of the story in support of the green economy rhetoric, the newspaper endorsed the neoliberal ideological positions that are promoted by the discourse actors and also the values of capital that inform such ideologies and discourses. The translation of elite neoliberal views into common language of jobs rendered these ideologies attractive, commonsensical and natural. If the green economy could create ‘thousands’ of jobs, it was only commonsensical to pursue such a developmental path.

Absent from such a discourse are key arguments about the true character of capitalism. As a way of life and as a risk culture, capitalism cannot bring true sustainability that speaks to social, economic and environmental justice and equity. Neoliberalism, as both ideology and discourse is dominantly produced as the available solution to responding to climate change. The story ideologically reproduced inequality and exploitation.

While the constructions were translated into public language/idiom, they were essentially elite views and through translation, they became cultural resources for the everyday man. By closing out alternatives, the green growth and sustainable capitalism discourse was reproduced as the only one available, as natural and rational. This one-dimensionality reproduction gave social power to the discourses that were given access to platforms of public communication and engagement. The voices that get to be heard, also get the power to define issues for the people, set the agenda and parameters for discussion with the effect of shielding the dominant discourses from scrutiny. Absent from the Promethean discourses promoted in the story is the need to rethink capitalism and to restructure the way of way of life.

Evidence from environmental sociology has consistently pointed towards the widespread dominance of neoliberal ideas in addressing climate change and argued that capitalism itself was the problem and not a viable solution. The story is clear about South Africa's preference of market-led economic modernisation-based policies and approaches to achieving green growth. Patel was represented arguing that

we also need the community to buy into this whole thing. We need to have a market for these products [solar panels, geysers etc.] for it to be successful. Every year about 200 000 electric geysers burst and are replaced with other electric geysers. We are busy working on a partnership that will get these replaced with solar geysers. That creates a market - but we need people to be involved with us.

The perception of the green economy as an opportunity signals the extent to which capitalism is willing to sacrifice nature at the altar of profit. A green growth trajectory included carbon trading, displacement of communities, the nuclear age, the commodification of nature, which is supposed to be a public good but now for the benefit of a few.

The movement towards a green economy was always praised in the South African news media. The discourse on the transition to a green economy often used political indexing and reproduced the views of elite politicians legitimising the ‘green economy’ crusade. Yazeed Kamaldien, in the story “SA on its way to a greener economy” (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 June 2013) praised achievements made by South Africa in pursuing renewable energy. The story relied on official sources, especially the Minister of Energy, Dipuo Peters and President Jacob Zuma. The green economy crusade was celebrated through economisation. President Jacob was quoted noting that: “The positive outcome of our focus in the past year on clean energy initiatives has been more than R70-billion in investments in new generation capacity”. The government had also “signed contracts to the value of R47-billion in the renewable energy programme”. The story made the transition to renewable energy common sense discourse. ‘Everyone agreed’ because it brought jobs, investments and lowers emissions. Economisation was used to moralise, economise and legitimise the Promethean market-led techno-optimistic discourses.

Renewable energy was constructed as benefiting ‘local’ poor people. Therefore, it was good. The newspaper discourse noted that “At least 315 000 solar water geysers had been rolled out by January this year, most of them for poor households that did not have them before”. There was a view that the transition to the green economy was natural and consensual. Ideological disagreement was disabled in the story, resulting in the reproduction of views of the Department of Energy and the Presidency. This helped in building ideological consent and closure. The newspaper discourse, combined with the politicians’ discourses, effectively promoted a one-dimensional reading and manufactured a veil of imagined consensus. The views of the government elites were translated into everyday language to appeal to ‘everyone’ thereby decentralising and normalising elite discourses.

Yolandi Groenewald’s feature story, “SA economy waits for the green light” (*City Press*, 15 December 2013) was optimistic about the ‘green economy’ as a replacement of the old industrial economy. The green economy was moralised and reproduced as a legitimate idea through the discursive strategy of economisation. The green economy would create “more than 460 000 jobs”. The transition to a greener economy was thus automatised because it “is a growing trend as economies around the world try to lessen their reliance on fossil fuels and curb rampant climate

change by creating more sustainable-energy industries”. By referring to the green economy as a global trend, Groenewald effectively constructed the Promethean neoliberal discourse of green economy as common sense and within the parameters of ideological consent. There is a notion of ‘everyone’ agrees that the green economy is the way to go. The rhetoric of green economy was constructed by way of presenting it as the only available discourse - it worked by way of exclusion: no other alternatives existed outside of the ‘green economy’. Effectively, debate and disagreement are disabled, the green economy is given a superior and universal appeal and any other alternative are rendered unavailable and thus deleted from the discourse. The green economy crusade was one-dimensional and built towards the manufacture of consent in green capitalism: “A UN Environment Programme (UNEP) study, South African Green Economy Modelling, shows that investing in a low-carbon, resource-efficient green economy is fundamental for South Africa’s sustained economic growth and wellbeing”.

Christina Kennedy’s “Turning waste into green profit,” (*City Press*, 16 October 2016) saw waste as an opportunity to make money. The headline signalled the logic of capital: “Turning waste into profit”. The profit motive was attached to the need to eliminate emissions. The story reproduced the neoliberal market responses by promoting the commodification of waste. Thato Maleeq Keetse, an entrepreneur, argued that “People shouldn’t look at waste as waste - waste is a resource. Waste is money. At the moment, there’s more money in waste than, I think, in conventional methods”. “Capture the waste emissions and convert them into useful microscopic nanomaterials”. By constructing and championing the ideals of ‘sustainable capitalism’ - the carbon dioxide is commodified, and a new monetary resource is envisaged. This is in contrast with the need to curb and ultimately reduce emissions.

The green economy optimism was not only an ANC-government embodiment, but a national optimism that acquired cross-party currency. The Democratic Alliance party, which is neoliberal in nature, embraced the green economy as the economy of the future. In this Op-Ed “Mayors, businesses tackle global warming,” (*Sunday Independent*, 22 January 2017) article by Helen Zille, the leader of the Democratic Alliance party and Western Cape province premier, argued that cities and businesses were best placed to deal with climate change as opposed to national governments

and the multilateral system. In the context of the election of Donald Trump and Brexit, Zille argued that “it is now cities and businesses delivering the boldest ideas and ambitious plans for a sustainable low carbon future”. Zille saw the future as based on ‘green economy principles’ and noted that “the urgency of the climate crisis and the economic potential for businesses and cities in shifting towards a greener future are too-well established to be rolled back by forces of isolationism”. Private capitalist businesses were constructed as “acting swiftly and seriously with massive investment in the next generation of low-carbon technology and shifting to renewables”. To moralise the green economy discourse, Zille sought a common-sense narrative that privileged the transition to the ‘green future’. The green future was necessary and legitimate because it would “clean the air we breathe and build low-carbon infrastructure [which had the potential to] also improve public health, encourage social inclusion and create jobs”.

The article by Helen Zille showed optimism in the green economy and techno-managerialism. These ideas were legitimised by drawing upon the perceived benefits (economisation and moralisation) of a green economy on health, social inclusion and jobs. These perceived benefits were then used to underpin and legitimise green capitalism as a solution to the climate crisis. Zille saw climate change responses embedded in Promethean solutions as presenting opportunities. Technology and good management practices could solve the climate and ecological crises. Private sector-led technological innovation was an important contributor to a ‘greener and cleaner future’. The article resonated with the neoliberal ideology of the Democratic Alliance party. However, interesting is how, regardless of different political ideologies, the DA and the ANC converge on the aspect of the green economy and sustainable capitalism. This convergence cannot be explained from the planes of political ideology but by examining the overall political-economic ecologies of climate change in South Africa. The article, by seeing private sector investments as the answer to the climate change crisis, legitimised neoliberalism.

10.3.1 Carbon sequestration optimism

The green economy discourse had its springboard being technology. Technology was seen as providing a way out of the environmental crisis. Part of the technological optimism included technologies such as carbon capture/sequestration technologies. These allowed countries to not

reduce their exploitation of fossils but rather use fossils and then apply technology to capture the carbon dioxide. In the story “Blows traded over carbon capture,” (Fiona Macleod, *Mail & Guardian*, 10 November 2011), carbon capture technologies were considered as a way of reducing carbon emissions. While there is a need for the reduction of emissions, the carbon capture technology seeks to allow the current emissions levels because the excess could be captured (sequestered). This is part of the techno-responses that are market-led and seek not to restructure the present forms of production but perpetuate them. The technologies allow business as usual; the soil can keep it so we can continue exploiting fossils. Mark Boneham was directly represented arguing that the “technology could help reduce these emissions by capturing flue gases produced by power plants using fossil fuels Instead of allowing these gases to escape into the atmosphere, we divert them and put them through a chemical process that separates the carbon dioxide from the flue gases”.

However, those who disagreed with the idea only objected to the delay and not the use of the technology itself. Greenpeace Africa’s climate campaigner, Melita Steele, said the technology “could not deliver in time to avoid dangerous climate change. The very earliest that carbon capture might become feasible is 2030, which means it will deliver too little, too late, and at far too high a price. Climate action requires urgent action”. Other points of disagreement included whether the clean development mechanism should include carbon capture projects. Richard Worthington of WWF for Nature South Africa noted that they would oppose its inclusion but was generally not against the technology.

10.3.2 Carbon Trade and Green Bonds Optimism

Some of the neoliberal solutions to climate change included optimism in carbon trade principles. Geoff Sinclair (head of carbon trade at Standard Bank South Africa), in the Op-Ed “Climate funds give our continent an opportunity to lead the world,” (*Sunday Independent*, 13 November 2011) promoted market-led mitigation measures, especially carbon trade. The central argument in Geoff Sinclair’s article was that market-led responses to climate change were rational and could lead to sustainable development. Climate finance in Sinclair’s terms, was necessary “to enable implementation of energy efficiency, renewable energy sources” and an opportunity “to produce economies that are green from the ground up”. Sinclair saw market-led solutions through green

financial instruments (CDM) as the best way to streamline development in Africa. His article moralised this neoliberal approach because it “triggers sustainable growth in emerging economies”. For Sinclair, the CDM was to be expanded and adopted because “A lot has already been achieved” through it.

That’s because CDM is good business. Companies that need to offset their carbon emissions get a business benefit from funding low carbon development in emerging economies. Communities in emerging economies who sell their carbon credits gain revenue that enables them to develop If Africa uses the CDM to create green industries, green markets and green products, it will gain an economic advantage that centuries of conventional development could never give it.

The Op-Ed built a narrative of green capitalism as the panacea to African development. The language used in the article was that of imagined ideological consensus. Africa was constructed as a single unitary entity with similar problems and interests. The fundamental climate inequalities intra-states and between states in Africa were neglected. By using the language of consensus such as “our continent”, the article acquired for itself the identity of speaking on behalf of everyone in Africa. The participation of “us” in the green economy benefited all of “us”. The article interpellated Africa at continental level and generalised African climate problems and access to CDM funds. The overarching idea in the article was profit. For Sinclair, profit was the only reason why Africa should embrace a green society. Concealed in the article are the inequalities involved in the global allocation of carbon finance and the cascading of those inequalities at local and national levels. The financialisation and commodification of nature are superimposed as ideal and good for Africa. The absence of consensus regarding the negative consequences of the CDM projects in Bissar, Durban, for example, is important. Carbon finance and its commodification and fetishisation of nature was presented as a moral response to leveraging development in emerging economies and reducing emissions in the developed world.

The article passivised and nominalised the fact that carbon trading actually does little at all in reducing emissions but only awards more licences to polluters to continue polluting. Carbon trading enables great polluting countries and industries to offset their emissions elsewhere and continue emissions (see Evans and Musvipa, 2017; Kumi et al, 2014). The article, therefore, pushed through the language and ultimately the material practice of market-led responses to

climate change. The narrative resonated with the South African policy on the need for a second Kyoto commitment period. Carbon trading was an essential component of South Africa's climate response strategies. It helped its heavy emitting industries to continue emitting greenhouse gases and offsetting their emissions elsewhere. This well feeds into South Africa's claim to prioritise economic development. However, important to note is the conflation between the discourse-policy-finance networks. Their interests, though divergent and cross-cutting, help feed into the culture of unending accumulation and exploitation. Capitalism is preserved at all costs. It becomes a dangerous tendential force that attempts to construct and reproduce itself as a climate saviour without any structural transformation that addresses social justice, environmental justice and economic justice.

Climate change problems become constructed as 'unrealised opportunities'. Missing in the climate finance argument is how funding is structured in relations of dominance that propel global intra- and international inequalities. Climate finance through private capital opens avenues for global financial flows that are unrestrained. The flows come with higher interest rates that perpetually subordinate the developing global South countries to international debt with a new glamorous name - 'green finance'. As green projects are sought in developing countries, possibilities of displacements of indigenous communities are widespread. Carbon markets become perfect examples of 21st-century financial markets where the public goods (nature) are commodified and sold to the best bidders at the expense of the environment. 21st-century environmental heist/fraud.

Carbon trade was also represented as a common sense in the *Sunday Times*. Thekiso Anthony Lefifi, in the story "Banks wait for the 'green' light," (*Sunday Times*, 27 November 2011) promoted and saw as common sense market-led climate responses. Banks were constructed as key actors in the reduction of emissions due to their participation in the carbon trade scheme. The story represented carbon trading schemes as natural, a common and good business. This representation legitimises carbon trade and hence in common sensing the commodification and financialisation of nature. Banks were eager to participate but were simply waiting "for the 'green' light" from the COP17 negotiations. The story used bankers as the only discourse sponsors. The discourse on 'green financing' is salient and the bankers wanted more private financial involvement in climate

mitigation. Standard Bank's Geoff Sinclair was indirectly represented hoping that "COP17 comes up with a design for the Copenhagen climate finance fund that 'crowds in' private investment, rather than crowding it out". The bankers were worried about the low prices of carbon due to uncertainty about the carbon market post-2012. 'With low-priced carbon, there is less incentive to generate carbon credits and conduct business in a lower carbon manner'. The story, firstly by using sources from the banking industry only, excluded alternative viewpoints. The actors used in the story constructed carbon trading as a given and natural. It is not open to contestation. By exclusion, alternative worldviews were passivised and nominalised leaving the dominant Promethean discourses unchallenged. The neoliberal ideology of private finance (market instruments) is legitimised and reproduced, being rendered a doxa. Consent is thought to be there, this is achieved by the story's unquestioning stance and how it reproduced views that come from actors that do not disagree ideologically".

Fiona Macleod, in the story "South Africa may lose out on carbon-trading," (*Mail & Guardian*, 25 April 2012), took for granted the need for South Africa to participate in the global carbon trading market. The headline "South Africa may lose out on carbon-trading" signalled that the country needed to participate in the carbon trade system. Emissions reduction through carbon trade was not questioned but accepted and constructed as a rational way of responding to climate change. By disabling ideological disagreement, the story deleted the neoliberal character of carbon trade and how it is not a solution but a financialisation and further commodification of nature. The story portrayed a picture of a growing interest in the carbon market. UNFCCC's Chief Executive, Christiana Figueres, was quoted endorsing carbon trade: "The CDM continues to evolve and improve and deliver on a scale well beyond initial expectations". The story promotes and legitimises Promethean approaches to addressing the climate crises".

The feature article "Green bond market set to change Africa's development," by Jocelyn Sambira (*Sunday Independent*, 05 July 2015) was optimistic about the potential of green bond financing to help the growth of African economies. The article used the City of Johannesburg's green bond launch as an example. The City of Johannesburg had successfully listed a green bond of \$145 million. The success of the bond listing was framed by the Mayor, Parks Tau, as a sign of "investor

confidence in the City of Johannesburg and commitment to environmental stewardship and climate change”. Without elaborating on what type of climate-friendly project the money will be used for, the article was only interested in the financing mechanism and not the climate and social impacts generated by the funds. The entire article, i.e., its global structure, promoted the adoption and proliferation of market-led responses to the climate change problem. By seeing green bonds as a panacea, the article legitimised and moralised the neoliberal market instruments. Key to note is that the neoliberal agenda of creating a financial market to trade environmental commodities was extended and not questioned. By excluding contrarian views to the green financing facade, the article presented a one-dimensional side of climate finance. Market-led responses were made to appear commonsensical and natural. This is key because the article even cited the World Bank in support of green bonds. Silent from the discourse are aspects of loan arrangement/terms and conditions and the interest rates. Green bonds are an extension and, in a sense,, a re-incarnation of finance capital with a fancy name ‘green capital’. The commodification and marketisation of nature were normalised and automatised through creating a consensus ideology and commonsensing. “With the market raking in billions of dollars a year, it seems the appetite for these new debts is growing as well as the emergence of new types of issuers”.

10.3.4 Optimism in electric cars

Part of the optimism in the green economy included an optimism in electric cars. Electric cars were promoted as a way of reducing emissions from the transport industry. The invention and proliferation of electric cars would reduce fuel emissions and lead towards a cleaner future. The electric cars optimism discourse was promoted by actors in the motor industry and the Department of Environmental Affairs. While the transport sector is one of the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sectors, the introduction of green cars is celebrated as a driver to emissions reduction. The story “Green cars in first gear,” by Schalk Mouton (*Sunday Times*, 27 February 2013) promoted the introduction of green cars as a way to deal with climate change. Edna Molewa, the Environmental Affairs Minister, was cited in support: “We are in big trouble. This [climate change] is a crisis. This world will run out of food. This world will run out of natural resources and all other resources that we have”. The green cars were “part of the government’s commitment to reducing carbon emissions by 34% by 2020 and 42% by 2025”. “Greenhouse-gas emissions are seen as the biggest cause of rising global temperatures, with cars being the third-biggest contributor to the emissions”.

The coming in of green cars is thus represented as progress towards addressing climate change. The optimism in green cars is high: “authorities want to have as many as half the cars on the road electricity powered in 10 years”.

The feature “A Leaf out of the green book,” by Yolandi Groenewald (*City Press*, 01 September 2013) was techno-optimistic about electric cars as part of emissions reduction. Mbulaheni Maseda, Chief Director of Facilities in the Department of Environmental Affairs was directly represented saying: “You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to see that an electric car makes more sense, economically and environmentally.” The Department of Environmental Affairs was pushing forward with the promotion of electric cars in South Africa and the Nissan Leaf was the car used as part of the government’s ‘green fleet’. For example, the story “SA to see more electric vehicles,” (Justin Brown, *City Press*, 11 December 2016) celebrated the move towards electric cars which it constructed as commonsensical and natural. The headline reproduced the neoliberal Promethean discourses of techno-optimism: “SA to see more electric cars”.

In Roxanne Henderson’s story “Electric cars could help power Eskom out of trouble if tax roadblocks removed,” (*Sunday Times*, 14 January 2018), electric cars were portrayed as a potential business for power utility Eskom: “Electric cars could help power Eskom out of trouble”. “Energy and e-mobility experts believe a boom in the local electric car market could see Eskom sell the 30GW power surplus that is currently costing it millions”. The adoption of electric cars was also useful to help the government reduce emissions: “would help the government reach the carbon-reduction targets set in the national development plan”. The discursive strategy of economisation is used to moralise the need for electric cars because they were “cheaper to maintain and charge less than the costs associated with petrol and diesel fuelled cars”.

10.4 The drowned voices: Climate justice and Climate Justice

While most news stories promoted capitalist-oriented discourses, the news media to a lesser extent paid attention to the ‘small-dissident’ voices that clamoured for climate justice. These voices were against the coal indispensability narrative, demoralised nuclear energy and firmly believed that climate change was real. However, at micro-ideological level, these discourses fragmented with some actors opposing coal and nuclear but supported renewable energy while other voices called

for the structural transformation of the capitalist base. Discourses within this strand attempted to politicise the climate problem by rejecting the market-driven neoliberal solutions which are taken for granted. These discourses advocated an ideological shift from capitalism by altering the way of life towards true sustainability. Climate change was constructed as a site of struggle between civil society on the one hand and governments, corporations etc. on the other hand. The need for ideological directions that put climate, economic and social justice at the heart of policy was emphasised. Climate change is discussed from the position of social asymmetries and inequalities.

David le Page, in an Op-Ed “Stop these crimes against humanity,” (*Sunday Times*, 20 March 2011) described the expansion in the use of fossil fuels as a crime against humanity: “When government licences continued fossil-fuel production - in the absence of an absolute commitment to a low or zero-carbon economy - it, too, is committing a crime against humanity”. David le Page argued that South Africa’s approach to climate action was immoral and irresponsible: “South Africa is the world’s 13th - biggest emitter. But we insist we will only cut emissions if paid to do so”. The article demoralised the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities that was used by the developing countries to claim a developmental space and a right to pollute: “So long as we developing countries claim to have an equal right to pollute, we take a morally bankrupt position where the rich are all too happy to have us the notion of a ‘right to pollute’ is a surreal absurdity, equivalent to a right to commit suicide”. le Page advocated for climate responses that were minimalistic: “many economies must be scaled down, not up, and made more equal”.

le Page also directly demoralised private capital companies that were responsible for global warming and refusing to take action: “South Africa hosts companies that claim to be concerned about climate change - yet their international colleagues fund climate change deniers in the US Congress. Such behaviour, by ArcelorMittal, PP, Bayer and others, is dangerous and disgraceful”. Energy companies and heavy energy consumers were directly mentioned as the real source of climate in-action. The central theme, at the heart of the article, was climate action that pioneers climate justice: “Greater shared prosperity is still possible, indeed essential, and in many instances, action on climate change will greatly help true development”. While climate change was “destroying the lives of millions”, South Africa “adopted a morally bankrupt position”.

The *Sunday Independent* also echoed the ‘small voices’ that called for climate change justice. In the Op-Ed “COP17 isn’t about money, it’s about saving the world,” (13 November 2011) by Geoff Davies (Executive Director of the Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute) politicised the climate problem and called for climate justice. For Davies, profit motives were “the very cause of the climate change crisis”. To address climate change, Davies argued for “putting the well-being of the planet and people at the centre of our negotiations” while at the same time criticising “Our present pursuit of wealth - motivated primarily by our addiction to fossil fuel” which was “is leading to increased poverty, economic injustice and environmental destruction”. Geoff Davies singled out the structures of capitalism and the logic of profit as the key drivers of the ecological rift leading to climate change. Any solution to climate change needed to take root in the need to alter our way of life, i.e. abandoning capitalism and all its attendant principles of consumption and profit, unending exploitation of labour and nature.

Jeff Rudin (a board member of the Alternative Information and Development Centre), in the Op-Ed “Put a cap on capitalism” (*Mail & Guardian*, 17 November 2011) politicised climate problem and offered a fundamental difference to the green economy crusade. Rudin argued that there was a need to break the links between the climate change catastrophe “and our heavily commercialised and commodified economies”. For Rudin, a radical rupture of the capitalist system was needed to address climate change: “Protecting Mother Earth and its life forms from further damage require something altogether different. One possible beginning is to question the social need of each particular product and its priority amongst competing products”. This was necessary because capitalism was “no longer compatible with the challenges of climate change,” hence the need to cap capitalism.

the imperatives of profit maximisation that drive all business results in hugely wasteful competition that, in turn, accelerates climate change Capping capitalism does not mean reverting to a pre-industrial society. What it does mean is an entirely more rational use of finite resources to meet basic human needs, rather than the artificial manufacture of constantly changing wants designed to feed mindless consumerism as the source of profit maximisation for the very few.

Patrick Bond, Professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Michael Dorsey, a professor at Dartmouth College, in their Op-Ed “Climate cash deals are killing us,” (*Sunday Independent*, 20 November 2011) criticised the use of market-led solutions to address climate change. They specifically criticised carbon markets as a way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Carbon markets were seen as benefiting “speculators, financiers, consultants ... and energy lucksters who made billions of dollars in profits on the sale of notional emissions reduction credits”. They argued that “As the air itself becomes privatised and commodified, poor communities across the world suffer, and resources and energy are diverted from real solutions”. For Bond and Dorsey “The CDM is neither reducing emissions nor securing its promised sustainable development”. Patrick Bond and Michael Dorsey essentially problematised and politicised the climate problem, delegitimised market instruments such as carbon trading and the Clean Development Mechanism. They argued that the CDM was a “dangerous vehicle for delivering money to Africa”. The CDM is part of the Kyoto Protocol where the “aim is to facilitate innovative carbon-mitigation and alternative development projects by drawing in funds from northern greenhouse gas emitters in exchange for their continued pollution. It is the use of market solutions to market problems”. The CDM was riddled with corruption, bureaucracy and conflict of interest: “The CDM gives primacy to its ties to large corporations, while often overlooking and even ignoring its foundational institutional mandate to sustainable development on behalf of Africa”. Bond and Dorsey argued that those historically responsible for climate change “should compensate the victims”. The construction of developing countries as victims were being too general. Absent from Bond and Dorsey’s argument was that while they are correct to criticise the market-led solutions, constructing the entire global South from a position of passive victimhood helped to legitimise claims by countries with higher emissions but in the global South such as South Africa that the global North was responsible for providing climate finance to ‘us’ the victims of global North emissions.

Maureen Isaacson, in the story “COP17’s African slant: reshaping values, lifestyles,” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 November 2011) used Cormac Cullinan (environmental lawyer) is the key discourse sponsor and argued that climate change could be addressed by reshaping values and lifestyles. The preferred reading constructed in the story was that a change in values and lifestyles,

not the neoliberal values of consumption could save the planet. Humans and nature had a dialectical relationship that was being disturbed by the values and lifestyles of neoliberalism. The article by Isaacson sought to politicise climate change discourses by laying the blame for the climatic changes on the capitalist logic of exploitation and consumption. The newspaper discourse noted that “a conversation that is not confined to carbon trading but calls for the reshaping of our values and lifestyles” was important in addressing the excesses of capitalism and the resultant climate change”. Cormac Cullinan, an environmental lawyer, had drafted a climate People’s Charter for Africa with the aim of “uniting and mobilising many different sectors of civil society around a common agenda” towards a “conversation about how to achieve an ecologically sustainable and socially just and fulfilling society ... what the world would like if we decided to live in harmony with nature and to contribute to the health and integrity of natural systems instead of exploiting them”.

The article noted that the mainstream discourse on ‘good life’ (consumption) was wrong, preferring rather approaches of “living well” and where the focus shifted to “to the values that promote well-being-safety and communication, friendship and a sense of identity”. Central to note is that the article called for a shift from capitalism and all neoliberal responses to the climate crisis because they promote a good life for others while worsening inequalities. The focus towards living well with less is a concession that capitalism is not able to solve environmental problems. The values of capitalism were to be abandoned in favour of values that respected nature-human metabolism that remained dialectical and constitutive.

Yolandi Groenewald’s story “What’s God gotta do with it,” (*City Press*, 04 December 2011) described politicians as self-interested and environmentally irresponsible because they did not seek climate justice. The key discourse sponsor in the story was the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoff Davies, who argued that the aspect of climate justice involved a metabolic relationship with nature. Davies was directly cited contending that the genesis of the human-nature relationship is to be found in the Bible where God “entrusted us with his creation and we must look after it”. For Davies, we (humans) had failed to look after God’s creation because of “competition between nations to protect their self-interest instead of progress”. The reason why

the talks in Durban were not moving correctly was because of selfish political interests held by nation-states. The selfishness was also the reason for the metabolic rupture between humans and nature. Key to note for Davies' argument is that as a religious/Christian leader, he saw it as his responsibility to speak for justice because it is 'morally right'. He assumed the position of a solitary voice of reason 'crying in the wilderness' against climate, social and economic injustice. The Interfaith Declaration supported Davies' argument by noting that humans were "endangering life on Earth with unacceptably high and rising levels of greenhouse gas emissions". The story also quoted Cardinal Wilfrid Napier (Roman Catholic Archbishop of Durban) arguing that the climate talks were being stalled by "greed and materialism". Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga (president of Caritas Internationalis) argued that "Our economic system and its search for money above all have dehumanised human beings. Religious groups have a duty to humanise them again". The actors in the story actively politicised climate change as a product of the exploitative capitalist system which puts profit above everything else.

In this section, the study included a discourse analysis of the Interfaith Declaration on Climate change. The declaration delegitimised the capitalist system for "endangering life on Earth with dangerous levels of greenhouse gases". Religious leaders appropriated upon themselves the need to revitalise the metabolic relationship between humans and nature. "Today our faiths stand united in their call to care for the Earth, and to protect the poor and the suffering." The call for climate change justice was coupled with the call for social and economic justice. The declaration constructed climate change as "a moral, spiritual and cultural" problem and that humanity should be taught "to live together within the shared limits of our planet". The declaration correctly saw the environment as finite as opposed to the dominant belief that sees natural resources as infinite and open to endless exploitation.

The planet, the declaration argued, is "shared" and expressed hope and optimism in "great opportunities" brought by climate change, i.e. "Mitigating climate change can stimulate economies sustainably, protect our planet, lift up the poor, and unite us to a common cause". While the calls for climate justice in the declaration are laudable, the declaration sees hope in neoliberal green opportunities. The hope of uplifting the poor and protecting the poor was left in the hands of the

same economic system that the declaration demoralised. Implied is that carbon capitalism is bad but could be replaced by 'green capitalism'. While calls for transforming the economic system are made, what becomes clear is that the declaration only hopes to replace one form of capitalism with another. The political economy of green capitalism is not debated but rather legitimised and naturalised. Green capitalism becomes a carbon copy of carbon capitalism. I argue here that capitalism that is symbiotic is unthinkable.

In another Op-Ed in 2013 "Humanity's long, slow suicide," (*Mail & Guardian*, 06 June 2013) Jeff Rudin rejected Promethean responses to the global climate crisis. Rudin attempted to politicise climate change and demonstrate the agency of capitalism as the primary driver of climate change: "We know that our economic activity is the cause of the global warming fuelling climate change". The green economy was constructed as a "fantasy ... which is at best a wishful illusion and at worst a deceptive myth". Capitalism was criticised for its agency in causing climate change "while at the same time creating the idea of a different, 'green' economy to provide the illusion that something is being done". This article delegitimised the Promethean ideology of a green economy as 'fiction'. This is important in shaping a discourse whose basis is the transformation of the political-economic system at the root of the climate crisis. Rudin's views denaturalised and demoralised the dominant green economy rhetoric as deceptive and promoting the same system responsible for climate change. It rejected the fallacy of capitalism that is able to cure its ills and sees the green economy claims as another sign of capitalism's self-mutative behaviour. "The green economy, whether by design or otherwise, serves to deflect attention from the main economy [capitalism]. In doing so the green economy becomes an integral part of the problem rather than a proposed solution ... we have electric cars and hybrid cars, but what is not said is that these 'green' cars reproduce all the far-from-green absurdities of the car industry".

Patrick Bond in 2014 argued that there was a systematic cutting of funding towards climate change projects at the Department of Environmental Affairs. These funding cuts, for Bond, were a signal of political capture of the Environmental Affairs Minister, Edna Molewa by interests in the minerals-energy complex: "She regularly bows to the durable power of the so-called minerals-energy complex ... [and because of the capture at] least 40 major new mines are now being dug or

planned to feed Eskom's Medupi and Kusile plants". Bond chronicled the coal projects that were penciled across the country:

Even more damage is likely 12km away if Ibutho Coal opens a similar mine on the historic park's direct border - a hare-brained plan that government has already approved. Ibutho refuses to disclose its corporate sponsors but, of the six principals named in its application, half are tied to Glencore and BHP Billiton, the world's largest commodity trader and mining house respectively. The crony capitalism dates to apartheid, when it boosted the salaries of finance minister Derek Keys and Eskom treasurer Mick Davies. This helps to explain why the Australian-British firm gets electricity at a fraction of the price paid by ordinary people. It consumes 6% to 10% of our national power load, and exports the profits while employing fewer than 1500 at the main Richards Bay smelters. The NDP [National Development Plan] supports carbon-intensive fracking in the Karoo and deepwater offshore oil exploration near Durban: ExxonMobil hankers for prospecting permission at depths of more than 3.5km, in spite of sharpening community opposition. Sasol and a Burmese company are also trying their luck nearby; Zuma endorsed this through his Operation Phakisa, announced in Durban early this year (Patrick Bond, "Climate change: The secrets of our collusion," *Mail & Guardian*, 29 August 2014)

Bond's article was a response to a budget presentation by Molewa but more importantly a revelation or critique of South Africa's contradictory talk right and act left climate change policy.

Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, saw addressing climate change as everyone's responsibility, "All of us have to take considered action," especially upon the realisation that the multilateral system was not bringing solutions. There was a need for "dialogues and bring about local solutions to address our challenges" (Thabo Makgoba, "Let us all take care of our earth for future generations," *Sunday Independent*, 08 June 2014). Makgoba argued that the relationship between humans and nature was that of interdependence: "It is essential that we care for the environment if we are to have a habitable planet in the future [and] To do this we must live in harmony with the planet".

Similar to Bond and Makgoba, Vishwas Satgar, an academic at the University of the Witwatersrand, politicised climate change and examined climate change as a result of not only human effects but the capitalist political economy. Satgar criticised capitalism for being behind the ecological rift crisis:

capital ... is the real geological force destroying planetary life Driven by the need to make short-term profits, capital, through its organisation of production, distribution, consumption and social life, has overshot planetary limits, undermined natural cycles and

now threatens human beings with extinction by means of climate change Capital, in this context, has become a geological force capable of ending human and nonhuman life. It is wired into a systemic logic of ecocode and is incapable of solving the climate crisis... Capitalist modernity, with its mastery of science and technology, has convinced capital that it is the conqueror of nature as well as its master. As a master, it seeks to reduce nature to being a commodity, while ending an alternative conception of nature: nature as a commons. This commodifying illusion informs the market-based techno-fixes of capital, such as carbon trading, which operates with the idea of no limits to capital (Vishwas Satgar, “The climate is ripe for change,” *Mail & Guardian*, 17 December 2014).

Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, in his Op-Ed “Don’t just sit back and watch our planet deteriorate,” (*Sunday Independent*, 28 June 2015) politicised climate change by noting that the consumption habits of capitalism were responsible for the ecological rift and that climate change impacts were felt more by the poor. Makgoba used the public idiom as a strategy of address. By using this strategy, he appealed to ‘everyone’ and his views are constructed so as to represent ‘everyone’s interests’. Those outside of “every South African and citizen of the world” were effectively constructed as outsiders and villains. June 26, a climate change day, was a day for climate justice and a day where everyone took “action to change their consumption patterns and throwaway approach to life”. Makgoba, through indirect representation, brought in Pope Francis into the debate to moralise the climate justice ideology. It is possible that, though Makgoba is an Anglican Archbishop, the invocation of Pope Francis becomes an attempt to reach out, not only the Anglicans but Roman Catholics and all Christians. It was also an attempt to show that there was ideological unity regarding climate justice within the Christian faith communities. Makgoba’s message, therefore, was a call to action for all who are Christians and society at large because he addressed “every South African and citizen of the world”. His method of address attempted to speak from within, it was conversational and appealed to ‘all people’ who cared about climate change as he did. Makgoba constructed responsibility for action within the planes of people. Climate change was constructed as a problem of consumption, hence the call for “action to change their [people] consumption patterns”. The reference to consumption directly implicated the way of life (culture) behind consumption, i.e. capitalism. Critically, for Makgoba, climate justice was to be sought in the transformation of the culture behind consumption, the materialist capitalist mode of living. Thus, Makgoba’s article politicised climate change by blaming the very social roots that underpin the climate and ecological risk society. The language of consumption that was

appropriated in the story spoke of clergy who is making a moral call: “We all have a part to play as responsible and caring citizens if we are to find the solutions to this new environmental reality”. The language here suggested that two camps are imagined. Those taking action to address climate change for justice were “caring” and “responsible” and stand in contrast to those whose actions worsened the planetary plight. Makgoba constructed the relationship between humans and nature through emotional appeals. People should “care” for “our planet to survive”. This construction blends with Marx, Clarke, Foster and York’s metabolic theories. The relationship between nature and humans was to be that of symbiosis and dialectic, where nature was the ‘mother’ to humanity. The call for action was thus about restoring the metabolic and symbiotic relationship between nature and humans and at the same time choosing life over death.

The bottom line is that climate change affects everyone, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. People’s food security, at the very heart of basic human needs, is influenced by our world’s changing climate.

Therefore, saving the planet was also about saving people. This quote introduced the aspect of social justice into the climate change discourse, intimately tied to climate justice. Climate justice also brought social justice and the opposite is also true. To further build the discursive moral ground, Makgoba brought in the aspects of extreme weather that he argued “affect people’s ability to harvest and access food” noting that “climate-related disasters have the potential to destroy crops, tools, equipment and homes, exacerbating poverty and hunger”. These references helped to build a discourse that is based on human emotion, compassion and the duty to protect and save the planet. Interesting to note is that Thabo Makgoba extended his discourse on justice by making reference to internal South African social inequalities that worsened climate change effects for the poor: “South Africa’s most vulnerable people, living in informal settlements, are increasingly experiencing the devastating consequences of flooding and drought each time one these new and extreme weather conditions hits home”. Makgoba saw climate change as having unequal effects, noting that the impacts were unequally distributed according to social class and the ability to adapt. As a solution, Makgoba called for reduced and careful consumption, including “paying greater attention to our consumption of goods and services Eating less meat, and by choosing poultry over beef, for example, would reduce the amount of carbon dioxide created by the production of these animals”. By appealing for radical lifestyle changes, Makgoba challenges the capitalist

system of production. Less consumption meant less production and this had a direct knock-on effect on the profits made by capitalists. These radical changes were calls for even greater social transformation - addressing the root problems of industrial risk society.

Satgar delegitimised the techno-optimistic discourses of the green economy promoted the ideology that sees climate change as a result of a risk culture based on accumulation and the treatment of nature as a commodity. The underlying theme is climate justice based on true sustainability that represents the metabolic symbiosis between nature and humans. Satgar offered a politicised discourse that defied and railed against the often-taken-for granted notions of the green economy and other market strategies that only help to perpetuate the expansionist and accumulative behaviour of capitalism.

Sipho Kings, in this comment article (“Government silent about geoengineering the climate,” *Mail & Guardian*, 06 January 2017), saw geoengineering as creating more environmental risks: “Unwilling to do much to halt catastrophic global warming, governments have turned to geoengineering. This covers anything that changes weather patterns, helps to store carbon emissions, and stops the sun’s rays from coming through the atmosphere”. Governments, especially Canada was singled out and blamed for geoengineering activities that “tinker with the climate for their own gain.” The article was pessimistic about the goodness of techno-interventions that involve geoengineering. Instead of reducing their emissions, governments were “unwilling to halt catastrophic global warming”.

The feature story “Will Maputo weather the storm,” by Sipho Kings (*Mail & Guardian*, 24 February 2017) critiqued the development of a port in Maputo, Mozambique. Kings saw the contradiction between Mozambique’s port expansion and the increase in coal export volumes and handling capacity and the climate change impacts already affecting the country. The expansion included the coal port which had “also grown and aims to export 20-million tonnes of coal a year by 2020”. The Mozambican government was represented as pursuing a self-interested and irresponsible project. “But the coal the port exports is both a short-term blessing and a curse” because the exports from “Maputo therefore help warm the planet”. The Mozambican government was constructed as uncaring and irresponsible. Pursuing development through expanding the coal port facility which increased global warming was not good even for Mozambique itself. The

negative effects of climate change were already severe: “Warming is already affecting Mozambique and threatens the port’s future Last week tropical cyclone Dineo killed seven people. Floods in 2009 covered Maputo’s low-lying business and port districts. Tropical cyclone Eline in 2001 destroyed the homes of 20 000 people in Maputo and killed about 1000 people and 40 000 cattle across the country”.

Despite all these casualties, the government of Mozambique still wanted to pursue a dirty and irresponsible developmental path. The calamities were highlighted to build and portray an image of the Mozambican government that is careless. The expansion of the port was demoralised as irresponsible. Instead of worrying about the environment, the government was interested in profit: “But development policy has hardly catered for the warnings of what will come with global warming”. To strengthen this discourse, the story directly represented Luis Artur from Eduardo Mondlane University arguing: “Authorities and churches avoid creating consciousness that climate change is human-induced and hence may be effectively countered by mitigation measures”. The newspaper discourse added that “This means a development path that favours elites through extractive industries and short-term economic gains”. Booby Peek from groundWork was cited strengthening the critique of the government. Peek argued that the developmental path chosen by Mozambique did not take note of climate change: “It’s madness and short-term thinking at its best. Especially when communities along the entire [Maputo] corridor will be so heavily affected by climate change. Rising seas and cyclones will batter the port that ships coal to nations cutting this form of energy”.

Vishwas Satgar, in a 2018 Op-Ed published in the *Mail & Guardian* (Light a fire under SA’s climate policy,” 13 April 2018) saw South Africa as too self-interested and not willing to do what was right for the climate. The article discredited the claims on jobs and economic growth as hindrances to emissions reduction action: “We also cannot hide behind false dichotomies of jobs and development versus the environment”. For Vishwas, the government’s “inaction over global warming is increasing inequality in the country”. The article argued that global climate change affects the poor more. An example of Cape Town’s water crisis was used: “The poor and working-class citizens of Cape Town have endured ... climate injustice and, if this repeats itself, climate conflict will tear South Africa apart The carbon criminality of the ANC government is not

exceptional and includes President Donald Trump's United States, Russia, China, India and other petro-states". The drive coal and green economy discourses were criticised because they saved the interests of the few: "Essentially, ruling elites have chosen more carbon emissions and hence a climate-driven world with devastating consequences for the poor, working-class and marginalised". Satgar dismissed the Paris Agreement as part of "symbolic gestures" that provide "too little, too late".

Irvin Jim, general secretary of the National Union of Metal Workers (Numsa) in South Africa wrote an article "IPPs fail test for 'just transition' from fossil fuel- NUMSA," (*City Press*, 29 July 2018) criticising the government's plan to move to Independent Power Producers. The transition to IPPs, especially those in renewables, was constructed by Jim Irvin as an "unjust transition" and "signals the dangerous continued neoliberalisation of the productive sector, the increasing privatisation of public resources - resulting in mass unemployment - and the consolidation of elite rule over productive economic forces". Jim's article disagreed with the transition to IPPs because it continued along with the capitalist logic of profit and did not result in a 'just transition'. By so doing, Jim took his article to the core of climate responses, noting that responses should not be rooted in the same economic system responsible for the current crisis. As such, any transition was to meet aspects of social justice, environmental justice and economic justice. Jim argued that the renewable energy sector was supposed to be

socially owned where the community and workers are direct beneficiaries - they own and control it For NUMSA, a just transition means recognising the fundamental contradictions that face workers today. On the one hand, workers depend on the jobs created by the existence of the coal mine, but on the other hand, workers are also victims of the pollution produced by the mine. This is an expression of capitalist accumulation at its worst and it is at the heart of the climate change crisis. The IPPs are not confronting the very system that produces the need for renewable clean energy.

There was a need for a transition that would transform and overturn the capitalist system and "completely change the basis of economic production, away from that which infinitely exploits humankind and the natural environment on the basis of infinite profit accumulation". The ecological rift crises, for Jim, was because "natural resources" were

decimated because capitalist dependence on greed and rampant profiteering, therefore any solution to climate change cannot be resolved separately from the resolution of the capitalist crisis, which is a global class war ... the environment and the future of the planet

has been sold to the highest bidder ... it is naive to believe that corporations can solve the climate change crisis, which is why tackling climate change must involve the destruction of the capitalist system as the basis for any solution.

10.5 Chapter summary

This chapter had two sections. The first section articulated the green economy optimistic discourses as they traversed the South African weekly newspapers. The news media representations of climate change in South Africa, as part of the solutions narrative, often reproduced the ideas of techno-optimism where buzzwords such as ‘green economy’, ‘sustainable development’ and ‘green growth’ were used and reproduced as common-sense ideologies. In this section, the media constructions and representations of these discourses, that are Promethean in nature, are analysed and critiqued. The second section provided a dis(-)articulation of these discourses by bringing out the ‘small’ but important green economy disarticulating discourses. Most of the articles in the second section were in the form of Op-Eds from academics, environmental activists and the faith communities. These paradigms sought to re-articulate the human-nature relations and saw capitalism as opposition to true metabolic relationships.

Chapter Eleven: Summary and Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

Considering the serious impacts exerted by climate change globally and in South Africa, the news media play a central role in climate change knowledge generation, contribute to climate change policy frameworks and help the public build perception and opinion on the subject. Throughout the thesis, the study argued that climate change has become one of the key threats to planetary and human existence. This thesis set out to (re-)articulate news media representations of climate change in South Africa (loosely translated across the thesis to also mean the global South). The selection of newspapers provided a sample made up of four weekly titles, each of which is owned by a different press conglomerate (the *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press*, the *Sunday Independent*, and the *Sunday Times*). Furthermore, the four selected newspapers are distributed nationally and regionally. This study noted that mainstream newspapers in South Africa are the dominant providers of climate change information and hence sought to examine the way climate change issues in developing countries (Global South) are reported on and framed. The assumption was that the news content produced by the newspapers in question inform and will inform and influence the decisions of policy makers and opinion leaders both in South Africa and Southern Africa since these news outlets are distributed beyond South African borders into the wider region.

The thesis examined how these mainstream news media in South Africa represent issues of climate change. This study focused on the representation of the global South in relation to climate change in South African mainstream newspapers. While a lot of climate change communication research has focused on the global North, few studies have focused on the representation of climate change by the South African media, regardless of their reach and power to influence public opinion in the global South. The South African media, because of its wider coverage in Southern Africa, has more influence on climate change perceptions and attitudes not only within South Africa itself, but throughout the Southern African region.

The study argued that with the development of climate change coverage in the mainstream media, the debates and contestations on the subject have also increased and the mass media have become “a critical arena for this debate, and an important source of climate change information for the

public” as what the media writes “influences public perceptions and thence policy” (Doulton and Brown, 2009, p.191). Pertinent to this study was how the news media in South Africa have accomplished these envisaged roles. This thesis has shown that climate change discourses, rather than being diverse and plural, are often and mostly a reserve for a few chosen discourse elites in government, industry, environmental non-governmental organisations and some academics. These clubs have steered the climate change discourse from 2011 to 2018 (period under analysis).

The study was crucial to conduct because of a number of reasons. Firstly, scholars such Tanja Bosch (2012) and Mike Shanahan (2009) had observed that little research on media coverage of climate change was available in South Africa. There was a dearth in research on news media representations of climate change about the global South and from the global South. In that vein, this thesis becomes an important contribution to the body of knowledge on news media representations of climate change in the global South and from the global South. Secondly, while scholars had observed little research on the climate change profile in the news media in South Africa, they also observed that the few available studies were ‘coverage’ studies that focused on aspects of frequency of coverage and patterns. Critical studies embedded within critical interpretivist and constructivist paradigms were lacking. This study, therefore, became an intervention in this regard. The study, at ontological and epistemological levels, adopted interpretivist/constructivist approaches, with two key aims. The first aim was to provide a theoretical and methodological direction that located media representations of climate change within critical approaches that have, as their goals, to politicise the arena of climate change and the media and question the attendant political economy of climate change, a methodological goal often impossible to achieve within strictly systematic and procedural research paradigms. The second aim was to enable a more pronounced methodological approach that allowed for the explication and emergence of results from the data without the constraints imposed by systematic research paradigms. Within this second aim, the study managed to adapt environmental sociology theories (metabolic and ecological rift theories) into news research.

The thesis noted that a (re-)articulation of media representations of climate change in South Africa demanded a full grasp of the problems that have been brought by the warming climate, the politics that are at play in terms of governance, attempts to address the problem, and the political economy of climate change globally and in South Africa. In line with this idea, the thesis examined and discussed the politicisation of the climate problem and the resultant political ideologies that have attempted to shape climate governance locally and internationally. The thesis focused further on the political economics and ecologies of climate change globally and in South Africa. The contradictions in climate governance in South Africa were discussed. Allusions were made to the need to simultaneously curb emissions and achieve economic development, the latter requiring (as per the government of South Africa policy narratives) a reliance on fossil fuels. The formal and informal networks that shape climate policy in South Africa were examined.

In addition, this thesis has argued that the discourse on climate change is never value-neutral and is always characterised by ideological viewpoints of different discourse actors. While the global South countries pursued the path to development based on exploiting natural resources, it was vital to understand how the mainstream newspapers selected for this study strengthened such a developmental discourse built by the government and the corporate sector. This study concurred with Cohen (1963) that the media tend to follow the foreign policy positions of their countries and often consciously or subconsciously participate in legitimising ideological and policy positions of their countries. This study examined how the South African quality mainstream newspapers represented climate change discourses as they evolved and how they covered the policy positions taken by the South African government.

The media is important in these debates because of their power to control discursive structures. The media selected for this study were also instrumental and had sheer capacity to define and determine the frames and representations within which climate change is to be articulated and understood in South Africa and outside. By legitimising the views of the South African government, the media at the same time contributed significantly to how climate change governance was shaped and implemented at a national and international levels. This is because of the country's strong influence on the climate change international scene as it belongs to powerful negotiating groups. The views of South Africa, BASIC countries and the Africa Group

became prominent at the international stage. By so doing the media were instruments in naturalising particular viewpoints and make them appear natural. As noted above, international climate change arenas were always characterised by geopolitical divisions. The legitimisation of South African and global South viewpoints on climate change mitigation, especially on emissions reduction served a political purpose of positioning the country as a key actor within the international community.

At theory and methodology level, the thesis incorporated the metabolic rift/ecological rift theories as grand paradigms for theorising about climate change. The thesis alluded to the idea that the problems of climate change that the world is facing were not isolated from the social relations of our existence and argued that these problems were are intrinsically tied to the political economic system of capitalism. This study argued that global climate change and its attendant sub-problems were products of capitalist accumulation and material reproduction. These theoretical underpinnings were necessary in unpacking capitalism as an exploitative regime that has huge negative impacts not only on the exploited labour but on nature which it views as given *gratis* (freely) and thus valueless. It was the object of this study to situate the discursive analysis of climate change representation in the news media within these broad theoretical foundations to broaden the analytical field and account for whether the media representations themselves pay attention to these structural and existential issues of capitalist political economy and its attendant consequences on nature. As a way of argument, the study contended that the solutions put on the table to deal with climate change have been hugely neoliberal and shy away from the real questions of political economy and therefore prescribe solutions that extend and entrench the culture of self-mutation that characterises capitalism.

The thesis made two key observations regarding South Africa's climate change policy and discourse arenas. Firstly, the climate change discourses in South Africa were seen to be intimately linked to energy discourses because the country was an energy-intensive economy, where coal represents the lifeblood of the entire economy. Climate change mitigation required that countries divest from coal and reduce emissions by all possible means. To imagine this in the South African context also forced one to imagine the complex energy scenarios and vested interests. Radical coal divestments meant that the country would have to sacrifice its coal mines and coal-fired power stations, it meant removing electricity subsidies for huge mining and processing companies, it

meant reduced profits for the mines and heavy energy consumers and it also meant changed power relations. Essentially, the future energy plans (energy futures) determined how South Africa would manage to reduce its emissions. This observation was important as it illuminated the difficult terrain that characterised the South African economy and how the country would manage to truly reduce its emissions without breaking particular relationships. All it meant was that coal interests remained powerful in determining the climate change policy arenas. The second observation was that as the country sought to move away from coal, at least ideally, there had been optimism in technological and renewable energy interventions. The techno-renewable energy optimism had become so naturalised, at least at discourse and not implementation level, with hopes that this would lead to a more 'successful' green economy.

All these two observations also shaped out in how the news media in South Africa represented the climate change response policy frameworks. The representations were divided between coal indispensability and techno-renewable optimism leading to a green economy. All these divisions (discourse tribes) were firmly reproduced through the discursive strategies of economisation, coal for example, being represented as providing reliable electricity to power economic growth on the one side and renewable energy being constructed as energy of the 21st century providing clean energy solutions for economic growth under the green economy. All these discursive tribes, this study argued, promoted the capitalist interests of elite groups. Coal for the minerals-energy complex, and renewable energy for multinational renewable energy companies and their local proxies. None of the discourses proposed a shift away from capitalism. At this realisation, the study then invoked the metabolic and ecological rift theories, as a way of unpacking the embeddedness of capitalism in the climate change risk and ecological rift society. These frameworks moved away from neoliberal theories of economic modernisation, towards truly political projects of transformation informed by environmental sociology theories.

The theoretical and methodological choices that were made in this study are very subjective and moved the study towards being a political project, one that was interested in capitalistic rupture and the ushering in of social, economic and climate justice. An argument was made for climate change approaches that sought a change in the nature-human relations based on reciprocity and

metabolism. Through the examination of media representations of climate change issues and more specifically the energy debates, it was observed that news media in South Africa promoted climate solutions that put the market ahead in the form of coal-based capitalism or techno-renewable energy-based capitalism. This thesis discussed the twin concepts of articulation and discourse analysis and their application in examining how the news media articulate, re-articulate and dis-articulate climate change discourses in South Africa. The study laid a methodological foundation for the study of climate change representation in the news through articulation and discourse analysis. The theoretical and methodological frameworks advanced in this study showed the possibilities of these concepts and the advantages of such methodological and theoretical hybridity. Used together, the concepts were useful in analysing the neoliberal climate change discourses in the news. Hence, this study, with its focus on articulation and discourse analysis, detailed how the neoliberal climate change and environmental discourses were naturalised and legitimated through the news. Articulation and discourse analysis were useful tools and methods in deconstructing ideologies in the news, the role of language, the sponsors of such discourses and the power they hold in society.

11.2 Results

The thesis, through discourse analysis, together with articulation, the metabolic rift theories and ecological rift theories examined 290 stories selected from the four newspapers for emergent themes that came from the news stories examined. The key themes related to a) news media constructions of climate change impacts, b) news media representations of climate change politics, internationalisation and multilateral processes, c) news media representations of South African energy futures, d) news media representations of South African responses, especially carbon tax policies, e) news media reproduction of the green economy Promethean discourse and f) news media representations of climate justice.

Climate impacts

The news media constructed climate change as a key global challenge characterised by rising sea levels, rising temperatures and incessant extreme weather events (including droughts, flooding) etc. This thesis traced how the newspapers in South Africa represented the climate change problem between 2011 and 2018, questioning the drivers of coverage and the key discourse sponsors and

how the knowledges and discourses of the key actors resulted in a particular slant in coverage in the four newspapers analysed. While climate change was constructed as a reality, with real present and future ‘dangerous’ impacts and a consensus issue in the *Mail & Guardian*, the *City Press* and the *Sunday Times* gave space to sceptical actors and views that questioned climate change science. From the final sample that was analysed, there was no story from the *Sunday Independent* that had climate change impacts as a key theme. The *Mail & Guardian*, followed by the *City Press* gave extensive coverage to the climate change impacts theme, where the newspapers attempted to localise the climate problem and projecting it as both a present and future problem. Overall, climate change was represented through discursive devices of scientisation and depoliticisation. Science reports and experts gained discursive power in defining the climate change problem, science was represented as ‘unequivocal’ and ‘unquestionable’ and resultantly the solutions proposed by the scientists were to be followed. Further, through depoliticisation, climate change was portrayed in the media as an issue of the environment. The political economy and cultural politics of climate change were therefore not addressed, leading to solutions that sought to reproduce capitalism as a magic bullet for action through technological-managerial innovation.

Climate change internationalisation and politics

This study built a historical representational overview on how the South African news media represented climate change negotiations between 2011 and 2018. The negotiations were a major news feature in the news media coverage and representation of climate change. The negotiations were represented and constructed as a site of geopolitical contestation and struggle between the developed global North and the developing global South. The global North was predominantly constructed as a blockade and stalling the achievement of a globally binding climate change deal while developing global South was represented as a passive victim and this category even economies in transitions such as Brazil, China, India and South Africa are lumped into ‘poor’ countries in the south. The global North was ‘othered’ and given the responsibility to bear the cost of emissions reduction and adaptation because it was ‘historically responsible’. Interesting to note was that while ‘historical responsibility’ was emphasised, there was silence on ‘present responsibility’ which is more crucial and where South Africa is a key culprit. Geopolitics in the news was achieved by othering the global North as ‘villains’ while the global South was

constructed as ‘victims’ whose agency in the climate problem was immaterial. The appeal towards the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) by the South African discourse actors, a move necessarily meant to moralise South Africa and hence its pursuit of coal and other fossils was reproduced by the press as legitimate if not moral. By this discursive effort, the discourse achieved delegitimisation of the calls towards another equally bad principle of ‘equal responsibilities’ touted by neoliberals in the global North. South Africa’s high per capita global emissions thus were saved from scrutiny and exposure. The global South was represented as unequally related to the North in terms of emissions. This contradicted the fact that the BRICS countries were significantly contributing towards global warming through massive industrialisation, for example, South Africa, China, India and Russia. The agency of the North (which is represented as the ‘other’) was emphasised when it came to greenhouse gases emissions while at the same the activities of the South were passivised and nominalised through discourse.

South African Energy Futures and Climate Change Mitigation

This study observed that any understanding of climate change mitigation discourses in South Africa should involve a deeper appreciation of the minerals-energy complex. These interests hold a lot of influence on climate change decision-making and implementation and they determine the ‘best’ practices in line with their vested interests. The South African energy futures terrain is a key feature of the news media representations of climate change and global warming. Future energy choices have a bearing on whether the country will be able to meet its obligations on emissions reductions and decarbonise its industry. Climate change discourses in South Africa are intertwined with energy discourses. Essentially, any climate mitigation action is linked to the country’s energy complex. The climate and energy discourses intersect, at some moments as allies and mostly as adversaries. Climate mitigation required a reduction in emissions, mostly from the energy industry and thus discursive and policy conflicts were inevitable. This study analysed the climate change mitigation debates as they permeated the South African news media, identifying the key discourses on mitigation and energy and linking discourses to the vested interests of the actors that promoted them. Discourses on coal indispensability, nuclear optimism and shale gas optimism were a preserve of the minerals-energy complex and the Department of Energy and that of Mineral Resources, the beneficiaries of any developments in those sectors. These actors used the discursive

strategies of moralisation and economisation to moralise the ‘need’ for South Africa to use coal because the country was still ‘developing’ and thus coal was necessary for economic growth and international trade competitiveness. The oxymoron of ‘clean coal’ was also promoted by these actors.

The coal, nuclear and shale gas diffidence discourses were sponsored by actors from environmental non-governmental organisations and academics. In expressing opposition to coal and nuclear, these actors from non-government organisations and academics promoted the Promethean techno-renewable energy optimism leading to the green economy. At some moments, their discourses converged with the discourses from the government, especially the Department of Environmental Affairs, that sought to steer South Africa towards ‘renewable-energy’ green growth. The Promethean discourses construct climate change as a problem that can be fixed through technology, techno-managerial strategies and market-led initiatives.

Mitigation Through Carbon Tax

Climate change discourses in the news media were characterised by ideological and discourse contestations between the need to reduce internal carbon emissions and those actors who preferred a ‘do nothing’ approach. The government, through the Environmental Affairs Department and the Treasury Department, had policies in place to reduce the country’s emissions, mostly coming from the energy sector. These plans included setting up carbon budgets and implementing a carbon tax as instruments to encourage companies to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions through opting for renewable energy. The actors in the minerals-energy complex heavily resisted the introduction of a carbon budget and a carbon tax. This tax, they argued, would kill the industry and thus lead to massive unemployment. These actors used ‘bullying,’ ‘lobbying,’ and economic blackmail to try and discourage the government from implementing these instruments. This thesis rearticulated these discourses as they played out in the newspapers, examined whether the media took ideological positions that promoted and reproduced the interests of particular actors, especially those in the minerals-energy complex or reproduced the government discourse. Overall, this thesis provided a general critique of market instruments of carbon tax and the included elements of carbon trade in the mitigation approaches pursued by South Africa.

Green economy optimism versus climate justice

The news media representations of climate change in South Africa, as part of the solutions narrative, often reproduced the ideas of techno-optimism where buzzwords such as ‘green economy’, ‘sustainable development’ and ‘green growth’ were used and reproduced as common-sense ideologies. The media constructions and representations of these discourses, that are Promethean in nature, were analysed and critiqued. All the newspapers reproduced this optimism, leading to the manufacture of consent and a one-dimensional discourse that saw solutions to address climate change through the neoliberal market-led lenses. The green economy/Promethean discourses acquired a tendential force status by way of economisation: they were constructed as ‘bringing jobs’, they were ‘clean’ and ‘safe’ etc. These discourse strategies enabled the neoliberal language to be exerted as a commonsense language. Techno-responses combined with market principles were seen as rational, normal and innovative because they balance economic growth with clean air. The agency of capitalism in the climate change crisis was concealed but it was greatly revealed in offering ‘rational’ solutions. Capitalism was indirectly referenced as the best ideological and material force to address the climate change problem. The Promethean discourses constructed climate change as a problem that could be fixed through technology, techno-managerial strategies and market-led initiatives. In addition, the study provided a re-articulation of climate justice discourses. Most of the articles on climate justice were in the form of Op-Eds from academics, environmental activists and the faith communities. This study argued that the news media largely failed to offer alternative ways of addressing climate change. The solutions that were reproduced in the news media followed the economic modernisation ideological paradigm and failed to account for theories and solutions that are found within environmental sociology paradigms which argue against environmental commodification, fetishism and financialisation.

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