

**CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION VERSUS COMPLACENCY: HOW POLITICAL
POWER AND INFLUENCE SHAPE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

ERIN FLANAGAN

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Dennis Raphael

Advisor's Name: Dr. Dennis Pilon

Supervisor's Signature: _____



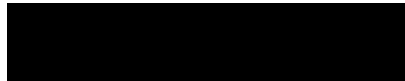
Date Approved: _____



Advisor's Signature: _____



Date Approved: _____



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Abstract

The catastrophic effects of climate change are being felt around the world – in both developed and developing countries, with expeditious action needed to avoid a serious global crisis. There has been an array of political responses that have been developed with hopes of forestalling, or even completely eradicating, these impending environmental catastrophes. However, there exists large differences between the responses of countries, particularly amongst the Anglo-Saxon liberal welfare states (LWS) – Australia, Canada, UK, and USA – and the Nordic social democratic welfare states (SDWS) – Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The SDWS have created policy that simultaneously responds to climate change while also promoting existing public policies that emphasize the economic and social security of the population. Alternatively, the LWS continue to emphasis non-governmental responses that serve to depoliticize and individualize the solutions towards the climate crisis. Using a political economy framework, I continue to explore the relevance of the “eco-social welfare state” literature and define how the robustness of a country’s welfare state is explicitly linked to the proactiveness of the environmental policies that are put forth. Furthermore, I provide evidence of five public discourses that demonstrate how public opinion and the resulting conceptualization and framing of the climate crisis may also be influenced by the political economy of a nation. Overall, I conclude that, currently, eco-social welfare state environmental policies are the most proactive, however despite their intentions, are unlikely to control climate change as even the world’s “best” policies are not contributing

enough preventative action. Finally, I suggest that only a post-capitalist eco-socialist state can avert a global environmental catastrophe.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Climate Change is seen as a relevant and pressing issue that requires immediate government action. As described by the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), “Recent changes are rapid, intensifying, and unprecedented over centuries to thousands of years. With each additional increment of warming, these changes will become larger, resulting in long-lasting, irreversible implications” (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2021).

Thus far, this global phenomenon has created devastating effects in terms of both human and economic infrastructure. There have been millions of lives that have been uprooted and are now at risk due to extreme climate conditions (Australia Academy of Science (AAS), 2021). Additionally, there have been billions of dollars in infrastructure damages caused by intense bursts of unprecedented weather (AAS, 2021). These adverse effects influenced by the changing climate have resulted in multiple events, increasing in frequency and severity, that are now cumulatively known as the “climate crisis” (AAS, 2021). These dramatic environmental changes are a serious problem for both current and future generations, as both will be devastatingly impacted by the extreme shifts in global temperatures. Thus, there remains an urgent call to action for governments and policy makers to both acknowledge and respond to this growing international emergency.

Currently, there is a window for countries to put forth more proactive policy to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis. Although, despite this opportunity, not all countries are responding with the same level of urgency (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019;

Spies-Butcher & Stebbing, 2016). The lack of effective policy action by many nations is concerning as the IPCC predicts devastating climate changes to occur by the century's end (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2021). In particular, the responses of the LWS nations towards the environmental crisis have been overwhelmingly insufficient, however, not all countries have modelled these poor responses. In contrast, the SDS nations have been treating climate change as more of a policy priority by viewing the climate crisis as a form of social risk and have, therefore, created robust public policies that simultaneously protect the environment and health of their population (Khan et al., 2021).

Despite the action on behalf of the SDS, there remains debate as to whether even the most eco-friendly countries are putting forth policies that will be sufficient in avoiding future climate devastation. As a result, government failure to effectively address the climate crisis has initiated other non-government responses to the growing concerns around climate change. These competing responses have both failed to address the severity of climate change and have resulted in the simplification and depoliticization of current environmental issues. My research explores how these approaches ignore the larger social, political, and economic structures, which have caused the climate crisis to instead be reinforced and further entrenched into society through the means of individualized “solutions”. This has resulted in governments being alleviated of their responsibility of formulating effective policy intended to safeguard the environment, and by extension the wellbeing of their population, against dominant corporate capitalist interests.

Objectives and Statement of Key Research Question

Throughout this paper, I will be continuing to verify these trends by comparing the major themes found within the environmental policies of the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic countries - specifically Canada, UK, Norway, and Sweden, and will also be researching whether any country is currently on the path towards avoiding the climate crisis.

To distinguish amongst the varied responses, I have divided current political responses and action related to the environment under five competing categories that have been identified through the reading of academic and other popular grey literature. The categories are as follows: 1) individual responsibility; 2) local action; 3) public policy advocacy; 4) balancing of power in society; and 5) establishing a post-capitalist society. These processes likely not only shape public policy responses to climate change but also the dominant societal discourses around the impending climate crisis and means of preventing it. The first two categories are individualized and community-based responses to climate change, while the third recognizes the importance of public policy. Both the fourth and fifth categories consider issues of power and influence, with the latter being based primarily around concerns with the capitalist economic system.

The variation in values that each discourse embodies complicates the formation of climate-related solutions as each approach conceptualizes the causes and appropriate responses to climate change utilizing distinctly different methods. Furthermore, it is important to note, that there are nuances within each of these cases – with multiple discourses being simultaneously promoted within different regions and/or countries. Therefore, I will be exploring, the reason behind why certain rhetoric around climate

change is supported within some countries, or jurisdictions, and why it is rejected within others. I will use Canada as a case study when diving into further detail around these competing discourses.

To investigate my research question, I have completed a critical case study of national environmental policies by applying a political economy lens to clearly demonstrate how environmental policies and dominant discourses are influenced by high-ranking social actors and economic powers. This welfare state regime analysis is informed by a critical social research perspective that interprets the political responses to climate change as a manifestation of the broader social systems controlled via the welfare state. Furthermore, this approach allows for examination of how differing environmental policies shape and maintain accompanying climate change discourses.

Overall, I hypothesize that LWS, utilizing more individual based solutions, will demonstrate the use of ineffective climate change responses as well as promote public discourses that simplify and depoliticize current environmental issues. In contrast, SDWS will have more effective state responses to the climate crisis and will have evidence of public policy and discourses that favour greater state action. However, overall, I presume that current efforts towards the climate crisis, regardless of welfare state typology, are not proactive enough to prevent future environmental catastrophes. Lastly, as a final hypothesis, I am assuming that welfare state typology will be directly related to the quality and proactive nature of a nation's climate change response as well as to the primary discourses found amongst the public and policy makers.

For this research I draw largely from the works of Raphael (2011), Gough (2016), Klein (2014) and Carrol (2020) – all of whom have previously analyzed power and politics within the realm of climate change. Raphael (2011) has provided a thorough explanation of the political economy approach by clarifying the inequities that occur around the quality and distribution of essential resources – this reasoning informs the main argument of this paper. Gough has previously applied the political economy framework to the understanding of environmental policies, developing the emerging topic of “eco-social” states – which are national frameworks that prioritize both public health and the environment. Additionally, both Klein and Carrol have researched the main underlying themes of the final two discourses relating to the power and influence involved in the formation of preventative climate frameworks, especially concerning the Fossil Fuel industry and the power of their economic interests. Although these authors have contributed extensive research to this field, they have yet to specifically consider the importance of public discourses and opinions within their work, which is what this research uniquely contributes to this discussion.

This research provides added value to the field as I propose that all solutions towards the climate crisis that do not address the rebalancing of corporate and state power, are ineffective in conceptualizing the true causes and solutions of climate change and are complacent in the financial schemes of the Fossil Fuel industry. My work provides a unique take on the climate crisis by taking the distribution of economic and social resources into consideration and examining how power and influence have influenced popular public discourses and policies. Furthermore, this research is

contributing to the larger discussion around climate change in Canada by highlighting current public policy approaches and the structures and influences that have contributed to the government action, or lack thereof, taken towards the environment.

This major research paper (MRP) is divided into the following sections: chapter 1 contains an introduction to the research question and provides background theory on the climate crisis as well as a literature review. The second chapter is an overview of the methodology used throughout my research as well as in-depth analysis of the linkages between environmental policy and the welfare state. The third chapter is an analysis and comparison of each of the five discourses. The final chapter is an overview of the unique contributions and implications of the research and concludes with policy recommendations.

Background Literature

The Climate Crisis

Earth's climate has changed significantly over the past century resulting in devastating effects for both the planet and society (AAS, 2021). The term 'climate' refers to the weather and the interrelated conditions of oceans, land surfaces, and ice sheets measured over a significant period of time (AAS, 2021). 'Climate Change' defines the alterations in the usual weather and temperature patterns of the climate. The earth's current climate model has changed by experiencing a rate of warming in both the atmosphere and oceans that is unprecedented (Royal Society, 2022). These increments of

warming have influenced drastic changes such as the melting of glaciers and ice sheets, which has resulted in sea levels rising at rapid rates and has also influenced other major geological changes (Royal Society, 2022). These changes have accumulated into what is now known as the “climate crisis”, the rapid increase of global temperatures creating the abrupt and irreversible environmental changes that are now threatening future human existence (Climate Emergency Institute, 2022). The irreversible effects of the climate crisis have been felt in “every continent and region” and with every future increment of warming, the resulting changes become even larger and more severe (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2021).

The most recent data suggests that the warming of the planet is “unequivocally” driven by human activity, specifically greenhouse gas emissions (Masson-Delmotte et al., 2021). The sun is the earth’s main energy source and typically, part of the solar energy that the earth receives is reflected directly back into space in the form of infrared radiation (Royal Society, 2022). The atmosphere – through greenhouse gases such as: water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, then absorbs the infrared energy and re-radiates the heat back towards the earth’s surface (Royal Society, 2022). This phenomenon is known as the “greenhouse effect” and is responsible for the trapping of solar energy resulting in the earth’s surface being considerably warmer than it otherwise would be (AAS, 2021). The greenhouse effect is necessary to sustain life on earth, however, there is a very fine balance that exists between energy in-put and out-put (Royal Society, 2022).

Recently, over the past 150 years, a stark increase in the two primary greenhouse gases, carbon dioxide and water vapour, has occurred (AAS, 2021). Due to the sharp increase of these emissions in the atmosphere, the flow of the earth's heat back into space has been reduced causing an unprecedented warming of the planet (Royal Society, 2022). Numerous human activities have contributed to the increased concentration of these gases in the atmosphere. These practices include but are not limited to; the burning of fossil fuels – like coal, oil, and gas, the clearing of forests, crop fertilization, storing waste in landfills, raising livestock, and producing industrial products (United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), 2016). These activities, amongst others, are responsible for releasing large amounts of gas that amplify the greenhouse effect, creating a feedback loop that has resulted in Earth's rate of warming dramatically increasing since the mid-1970s (Royal Society, 2022). Current climate models indicate that unless greenhouse gas emissions are considerably reduced and gas concentrations stabilized, greenhouse warming will continue to increase exponentially and the Earth's surface will be a full 4 degrees warmer by 2100 (compared to mid-19th century temperatures) (AAS, 2021).

As a result of this phenomenon, the last decade (2011-2020) was recorded as Earth's warmest period on record (United Nations (UN), 2022). However, it is important to note, that in addition to rising temperatures climate change includes dramatic changes to ecosystems, coastal systems, fire regimes, food and water security, health, infrastructure, and human security (UN, 2022). Since the mid-20th century, climate change has caused an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events

which have put human health, housing, safety, work, and the ability to grow food all at risk (USEPA, 2016).

The effects of climate change have already been realized in several countries around the world. Conditions such as rising sea-levels have forced whole communities to relocate and have put many others at risk of famine (UN, 2022). Drought, influenced by the stark change in weather conditions, can also harm food production and health. Additionally, frequent flooding can impact human safety by leading to greater disease spread and can cause serious damages to ecosystems and infrastructures (UN, 2022). Therefore, the changes to the environment have significant consequences on all aspects of human life, including our work, homes, and wellbeing. As a result, in the future, the number of “climate refugees” – those that have been displaced and detrimentally affected by climate change related events, are expected to rise dramatically (UN, 2022).

During the past decade, due to the severity of their implications, environmental and energy issues have become more prevalent within political discourse. Despite this increase of attention, some countries have taken the threat of the climate crisis more seriously than others. Policy responses to the climate crisis have varied widely and evidence suggests that this variation is related to the economic and political structures/processes of a particular nation. This group of public policies is known as the welfare state, and it has been suggested that the implementation of public policies that address climate change are greatly influenced by welfare state typology.

Responses to the Climate Crisis

Effective public policy solutions to climate change include investing in renewable energy sources and reducing the heavy dependence on fossil fuels (NOAA, 2019). The Nordic SDWS nations of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden appear to have extensive climate change policies while the opposite is the case for Anglo-Saxon LWS nations of Australia, Canada, UK, and the USA. A new “eco-social” perspective explains this by linking both sets of processes embedded in their form of the welfare state (Gough, 2016). Although, will this eco-social perspective be enough to avert climate catastrophe without transforming the capitalist economies common to all SDWS and LWS?

Welfare States and Environmental Policy

Sustained policy “under-reaction” towards the climate crisis has occurred in many countries, especially within the Anglo-Saxon world (Howlett & Kemmerling, 2017). However, not all countries have echoed this laissez-faire attitude, as countries vary greatly in their responses and political strategies towards resolving the impending climate catastrophe. Research suggests that nations which are generally more proactive in providing economic and social security to their citizens may also be more likely to proactively respond to the climate crisis. This theory has merit as this would imply that their societal structures and processes are organized around a proactive state that is more likely to assume responsibility for societal well-being, and thus, is invested in the prevention of environmental emergencies that may harm the overall health of their population.

One approach to further analyzing and understanding this theory is that of Esping-Anderson's welfare state typology. Esping-Andersen (1990) has identified three welfare state regimes: the social democratic (SDWS), conservative (CWS) and liberal (LWS) to which other researchers have added a fourth regime - the Latin (Saint-Arnaud and Bernard, 2003). SDWS (Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway) provide the most public benefits and have the greatest degree of state intervention involved within their policy-making processes (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). This form of state involvement permits the decommodification of essential services so that they remain available to the public, opposed to being privatized and paid for out-of-pocket, thereby limiting their accessibility (Bambra, 2007). This system aims to minimize social class differences and policy outcomes are aligned with the social and economic security of the population (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

The conservative welfare state also offers support for citizens as well as a role for the government in public life, but at levels less than seen in SDWS. This ideology is shaped by traditional family values and tends to encourage family-based financial assistance dynamics. State assistance is provided when the family's capacity to aid its members is exhausted (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Within these systems, benefits are often earnings-related and administered through an employer (Bambra, 2007).

Lastly, liberal welfare regimes emphasize the role of the free market, sans government intervention, and offer limited supports to citizens (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). This type of welfare state typically encourages market-based solutions to social problems as state provision of services is minimal. The benefits provided by the

government are often modest and have strict entitlement criteria (Esping-Anderson, 1990). Additionally, within liberal welfare states, state intervention levels are lower leaving market-forces to establish levels of social security, creating large wealth gaps and power imbalances within society (Bambra, 2007).

The rise in globalisation and neo-liberal capitalism was adopted in varying degrees within different economies, contributing to the contrasts between the different welfare states (Gough, 2016). The liberal welfare states have more strictly adhered to the neoliberal agenda, which explains the favouring of policies that promote capitalism, deregulation, and reduced government spending (Gough, et al., 2008). These have linked to their weak environmental policies. Whereas, SDWS environmental policies are explicitly linked to safeguarding human wellbeing as justification for moving towards a green economy (Khan, et al., 2021). SDWS have governments heavily involved in both social provision and environmental protection, which is the opposite case in LWS.

Therefore, using critical political economy theory, this paper hypothesizes that the differences amongst countries' responses to climate change are attributed to the differences also found amongst welfare state regime typology. I seek to verify if climate policies, which directly and indirectly manage risk to societal and individual wellbeing (Spies-Butcher & Stebbing 2016) are stronger in SDWS and weaker in LWS.

Preliminary Research

Spies-Butcher and Stebbing (2016) have previously argued that social, economic, and environmental policies are all connected by implying that strong environmental

policies are necessary for the creation of a healthy society, which also requires strong social policies. Furthermore, Zimmermann and Graziano (2020) provide support for this hypothesis by noting that the four SDWS have performed above average, compared to 27 other European nations, on a variety of eco-social indicators, including environmental health, ecosystem vitality, domestic material consumption income inequality, unemployment rate, and long-term unemployment.

Similar findings are reported by Koch and Fritz (2014) who find SDWS higher on welfare (income inequality, social spending) and ecology indicators (use of renewable resources, CO₂ and ecological footprint per capita, and green taxes) than LWS. However, as my research will show, there is increasing doubt that even assuming an eco-social welfare state position will be enough to successfully reduce the threat of the climate crisis. In most cases, the authors indicate that it may be necessary to instead move towards a post-capitalist eco-socialist state. This is a conclusion that is now increasingly more common amongst the climate change literature, although it is certainly no simple task (Fisher, 2009).

But exactly how do these differing welfare state structures and processes create environmental policies that address – or ignore – climate change and the impending crisis? How do economic relations – what Marx has called the base of society – create a superstructure that endorses differing public discourses as to the nature of climate change and appropriate means of responding to it?

This paper examines how social policy and the role of government, and the welfare states are directly linked to the level of political attention allocated towards the

environment. This concept is then linked to the prevalence of different environmental discourses found amongst policymakers and the public within different jurisdictions subscribing to different political ideologies. This paper further explores the “eco-social” (Gough, 2016) perspective, which links countries with more robust social policies, and thereby more powerful welfare states, to more critical discourses and analyzes whether this is a sufficient approach in averting the climate crisis, or if greater global action is needed

CHAPTER II

‘ECO’ – SOCIAL WELFARE STATES

In this chapter, I consider the interrelated nature between welfare states and environmental policy by exploring how governing authorities, influenced by economic processes, implement environmental policies. I use the Marxist concepts of base and superstructure - the base referring in this case to the economic power of resource extractors, and the superstructure referring to the environmental policies and public discourses built upon this base. Throughout this next section, I explore how these concepts play out in different forms of the welfare state and their implications for creating effective responses to climate change. Specifically, I use Canada as a primary case study of LWS where dominance by the business sector, particularly the fossil extraction sector, shapes environmental policy and public discourses around climate change. Lastly, I question if even SDWS are capable of averting a climate change catastrophe or if greater action, such as post-capitalism, is needed.

Methodology

This critical case study is informed by a critical social research perspective whereby environmental policy responses to climate change are a manifestation of the structures and processes of the welfare state. Critical theory is a set of paradigms involving issues of power and domination (Torgerson, 1996) and is oriented at critiquing and changing society as a whole (Bryant, 2009). The assumptions of critical theory are that reality is composed of the political, cultural, economic, social, ethnic and gender

factors that have formed social structures. Harvey (1990) describes critical social research as situating social phenomena within dominant social structures perpetuated by political and economic power and legitimated through ideological messaging. As discussed by Harvey (1990), the case study researcher ‘deliberately selects, for detailed empirical analysis, a case that provides a specific focus for analysis of myth or contradiction’ (p. 153). In this case, I researched existing differences in environmental policy and climate change discourses and linked these to what is known about the politics of the welfare state and the economics of modern capitalism.

I used Google ScholarTM to identify academic literature relating environmental policy to the welfare state by searching terms of “climate change and welfare states”, “climate change and political economy”, “climate change and capitalism”, “climate change and neoliberalism” and “climate change and eco-socialism.” Martin-Martin and colleagues (2018) show that Google ScholarTM yields significantly more citations than ScopusTM, WoS Core CollectionTM and Web of ScienceTM in the coverage of academic literature in humanities and social sciences. I then searched the terms “climate change and discourses” and “climate change and public attitudes.” I used GoogleTM to collect environmental policy documents from the nations that were examined.

Main Findings

Welfare States and Environmental Policy

A policy solution that arises in much of the climate change literature is the integration of social and economic policy solutions, implying that strong support for social services is tied to proactive environmental responses (Gough, 2016). This model suggests that social and environmental policies are interrelated, suggesting the improvement of one will directly affect the other (Spies-Butcher & Stebbing, 2016). This is credited by the fact that environmental related policies are a part of a broader agenda to create a healthy society, which is directly related to the presence of supportive and protective social policies (Gough, 2016).

Social safety nets are intended to mitigate the effect of social risks on the health and quality of life of the public. Climate policies, both indirectly and directly, manage social risk to individual wellbeing (Spies-Butcher & Stebbing 2016). This is done through environmental policies mitigating the social repercussions of climate change, which include; environmental disasters, risks from increased competition over resources, and the health risks from other policy responses (i.e. carbon intensive economic activity) (Spies-Butcher & Stebbing 2016). Due to their integrated nature, social policies play a crucial role in environmental sustainability and vice-versa (Johansson & Koc, 2020). This implies that countries with more extensive social policies have more successful climate change mitigation policies.

Examples of this are the Nordic countries, who have a comprehensive environmental framework paired with fulsome social policies (Khan, et al., 2021). The

Nordic nations are known for their well-developed social safety net as well as their progressive action against climate change. Their environmental policies hold the same principles as their social policies, which advocate for quality of life and well-being as utmost priorities. Sustainable development and health are viewed as more important than a growing economy (Khan, et al., 2021). In fact, discussions of economic growth are rather limited in the actual policy discourses of these countries. Instead, emphasis is placed on the safeguarding of human wellbeing in the transformation towards a green economy (Khan, et al., 2021).

Canada, as well as other LWS, follow the opposite of the previously mentioned Nordic model, as the country has both social and environmental policies that leave much to be desired. Since the 1970s, Canada and the other LWS have become a victims of austerity policies that have reduced social spending, which has greatly altered the country's social "safety net" (Gough, et al., 2008). Instead, funds have been funnelled towards the establishment of a free market to enhance economic growth. Unlike the Nordic models, economic growth is an absolute priority within both Canadian environmental and social policies (Gough, et al., 2008).

On the 2021 Climate Change Performance Index, the Nordic countries are listed as leaders, whereas Canada is listed as 58th out of 61 countries (Roth, et al., 2020). Canada's poor performance cannot merely be attributed to the foundation of its economy, the production of oil, as Norway is also in the business of this natural resource. However, the two countries vary greatly in their goals and current actions towards climate change.

Canadian carbon emissions increased 20.9% from 1990-2018, whereas Norway's emissions increased only 3% during that same period (Roth, et al., 2020).

These major differences are attributed to the fact that Norway, like the other Scandinavian countries, has an environmental framework that is ingrained within social justice principles (Khan, et al., 2021). Additionally, the Nordic countries have an active role for the state within their policies, which inhibits private interests from becoming involved. This is often the case in Canada, where petroleum corporations have more leverage on climate policy compared to the government (Roth & Laan, 2020). Canada also lacks the key principles of wellness that build the foundation of the Scandinavian climate change response.

An example of legislation that has resulted in the Nordic countries pulling ahead in strength with regards to their environmental policy is their efficient use of energy taxes. In 1990, shortly after the European recession, the Nordic countries introduced the taxation of fossil fuels as an approach for responding to the country's economic crisis (Roth & Laan, 2020). Finland was the first country in the world to introduce carbon pricing and shortly after Denmark and Sweden followed suit by introducing their own array of energy taxes (Ahmed et al., 2022). During, that same year Norway also implemented a carbon tax, which significantly increased tariffs to the oil and gas sector. Overall, this strategy has proven that taxing fossil fuels is an effective method in raising revenues, reducing budget deficits, and preserving the environment as the affected countries have now managed to recover financially while maintaining favourable environmental

performances (Ahmed et al., 2022). As further proof, since 2000, the Nordic economies have grown 28%, which has been simultaneously accompanied by an 18% drop in the nation's carbon dioxide emissions (Roth & Laan, 2020). The country is, therefore, managing to thrive economically while adhering to strict environmental protocols in attempt to reduce climate change related risks.

Furthermore, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden continue to have the most ambitious environmental policies compared to other countries, as they all aim to be carbon neutral by 2050 (Khan, et al., 2021). The Nordic countries have also distinguished themselves from other countries by implementing higher energy taxes, particularly on gasoline as their process are 20% higher compared to similar countries, and their promised greenhouse gas emission reductions exceed those of comparable countries (Greaker et al., 2019). Furthermore, they are in the process of making the necessary changes, such as reduced emissions by switching to green energy sources, to stay on route towards their policy goals. Specifically, the countries have recently invested in renewable energy, bioenergy, and carbon offset technologies in effort to reach their future political targets (Roth & Laan, 2020).

Several examples of these new energy initiatives include Denmark utilizing public electricity taxes to subsidize their nation's wind energy, which has contributed to the country becoming a global leader in renewable energy sources (Greaker et al., 2019). To further increase energy efficiency, Denmark also provides higher tax rebates to companies that have agreed to energy efficient agreements, which involve investing in energy saving equipment. The other Nordic nations have

followed similar strategies, by combining corporate taxation with incentives to influence businesses in investing in energy efficiency initiatives and technologies (Greaker et al., 2019).

Lastly, and arguably most importantly, the Nordic nations have combined higher energy taxes with lower public income taxes, as they have decided to use the energy taxes to fund social spending. This is seen as an important shift in state policymaking as the main taxation focus has shifted from labour to the fossil fuel industry, and social spending is now prioritized (Roth & Laan, 2020). The increase taxation on fossil fuels has been an effective method in raising social spending, while continuing to thrive economically.

These major differences between national responses are, therefore, a result of the drastically distinct priorities of the opposing states. The Nordic countries have governments which are heavily involved in both social and environmental provisions. Canada is the opposite, where the state is very removed from these operations and private interests tend to delegate the outcome of these issues. As further evidence, in the Paris Agreement, the Nordic nations set more ambitious targets for emission reduction compared to other industrialized countries, including the previously mentioned LWS – Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada (Greaker et al., 2019).

I conclude that the role of the state, whether it be reduced or heavily involved, is largely dependent on the organization of the country's welfare state. Welfare state typology is directly related to the quality of a nation's social provisions, thereby also

influencing climate change responses, as the comprehensiveness of social policies is directly related to the proactiveness of environmental legislation.

Discussion

As mentioned, climate change may be categorized as an emerging social risk, as it poses threat to individual health and wellbeing. The increase in the world's temperature affects both social and environmental determinants of health (UN, 2021). Thus, environmental and social policies are deeply intertwined due to their similarity in nature (Gough, 2016). This paper hypothesizes that governments manage environmental risks similarly to how they manage impending social risks.

Social risks are controlled through the presence of a welfare state. A welfare state is the institutional composition of a particular nation; the role of the labour market and the state (Bambra, 2007). The role of the government is determined by the extent in which the health and well-being of its citizens are provided for through the establishment of a "social safety net". Esping-Anderson (1990) identifies three broad regimes that describe three different welfare state typologies: social democratic, conservative, and liberal.

The rise in globalisation and neo-liberal capitalism was adopted in varying degrees within different economies, contributing to the contrasts between the different welfare states (Gough, 2016). The liberal welfare states have more strictly adhered to the neoliberal agenda, which explains the favouring of policies that promote capitalism, deregulation, and reduced government spending (Gough, et al., 2008). Using critical

political economy theory, this paper hypothesizes that the differences amongst countries' responses to climate change are attributed to corresponding welfare state regime typology.

Furthermore, underpinning government values influence the political ideology of all other social institutions, which is reflected through dominant public perspectives. Referring to the literature, Marquart-Pyatt et al. (2019) examined how welfare state regime typology is echoed by citizen's energy-related attitudes and opinions on climate change. They analyzed seventeen European countries and concluded that national social and political contexts play a role in shaping the publics' energy policy preferences with regards to climate change. Their results show that social democratic and the conservative nations have higher percentages of individuals being in favour of green energy policy preferences and energy-efficient behaviours than liberal welfare states. Thus, regional differences across Europe regarding environmental attitudes remain present. This has contributed to the differing views of climate change across welfare states that is reflected in national policy responses.

Recent studies have further documented that political orientation of citizens and governments influence opinions regarding climate-change. For example, in the U.S., Democrats report greater concern for environmental impacts compared to Republicans (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). Additionally, research has found that "political orientation and environmental values, beliefs, and attitudes" are strong predictors of green energy support (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). As a result, citizens and governments that are left-leaning are in greater belief and concern about the climate crisis compared to those that

are right-leaning (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). Overall, Marquart-Pyatt et al. (2019) conclude that welfare state regime typology is relevant when considering environmental attitudes, policy preferences and behavioural intention.

There is also a link between neo-liberal beliefs and the denial of science, which may explain the strong opposition to climate policy in countries with liberal welfare states (Gough, 2016). Within liberal welfare state regimes, such as the USA and Australia, climate change is now viewed as an “ideological marker” resulting in polarized opinions (Gough, 2016). This phenomenon is referred to by Brulle (2020) as “denialism”, and it is very prevalent within liberal welfare states, particularly the United States. Denialism explores the long-term effort that corporations and associations involved with fossil fuels have used to oppose action to mitigate carbon emissions. This has influenced a complex climate change countermovement, which has ultimately influenced cultural perceptions of climate change, leading to the continued obstruction of climate action (Brulle, 2020).

Although not all OECD countries have subscribed to neo-liberal ideologies to the same extent as others; the Nordic welfare states provide social and environmental security to their citizens while continuing to thrive in international competition (Gough, 2016). The Nordic countries remain competitive within the economic arena, yet also lead the charge for “productive welfare states” and “social investment” (Gough, 2016). Social democratic nations have connected social, climate and economic perspectives by viewing economic and ecological values as mutually reinforcing (Gough, 2016). Social democratic welfare states, with their coordinated market economies, have been deemed

as “best placed” to navigate the challenges presented by climate change and social policy (Gough, 2016).

In the Nordic model of a green economy, the state plays an active role in supporting innovation and technology development, facilitating cooperation amongst different actors, and securing social welfare and wellbeing. The foundation of the Nordic plan is to have economic growth paired with sustainable development (Khan et al., 2021). Khan et al. (2021) also mention that the importance of the welfare state is emphasized in all three countries and their respective environmental plans. In the Nordic transformative green approach, there is a broad conceptualization of welfare and wellbeing, as well as an active role for the state to secure a more equitable distribution of social services (Khan, 2021).

As Gough (2016) mentions, neoliberal ideas have become more dominant within policymaking. These ideas have influenced a shift in policy that dramatically reduces the role of the state while prioritizing deregulated financial growth and the role of the free market. Many social provisions have been commodified, which has led to the distinct differences between welfare regimes. The contrasts between welfare regimes continues to expand, particularly with regards to their environmental policies. Additionally, these opposing views are reflected amongst the environmental discourses that are present within a particular country.

Action towards climate change is a direct reflection of the welfare state, and thereby the political ideology and prevalent discourses within a particular society. This paper aims to review the different discourses that exist surrounding climate change and

their connection between welfare state typology. It is hypothesized that the more critical discourses are associated with more developed welfare states, and thus more effective action towards climate change.

CHAPTER III

DIFFERING DISCOURSES

The various political ideologies surrounding climate change have resulted in the birth of five competing discourses, which offer alternate causes and means of responding to the climate crisis. These different narratives contribute to the confusion and vagueness surrounding the climate crisis and have resulted in grossly inefficient solutions appearing within certain country's policies. This paper argues that the least popular discourses, the political economy and post-capitalist approach, provide the most powerful and effective climate change solutions. Additionally, the presence of these more critical discourses is found rooted within social democratic and socialist approaches. Presently, the social democratic is leading the climate change response as evidenced by the performance of the SDWS, however, the final two discourses remain marginalized both amongst the public and within the policy arena of all nations, including those of the SDWS.

In the following sections, the different societal discourses around climate change are reviewed. The analysis of discourses has become increasingly important as discourse statements are perpetuated through society and exert influence on research, practice, and public opinion (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). Only two of these discourses consider the role and the political and economic power of the corporate and business sector, particularly the fossil fuel industries, play in the continuing climate crisis. Otherwise, the issue is seen as a personal or community problem, which has led to the persistence and worsening of climate change, despite the immense research noting the devastating future outcomes. Furthermore, several of these discourses give the false impression that climate

Table 1. Various Discourses Concerning Climate Change (CC) and its Solution					
CC discourse	Hypothesized Causes of CC	Key Concept	Dominant research and Practice Paradigms	Primary Targets	The role of public policy
CC as an individual responsibility	Usually neglected and depoliticized.	Individuals are responsible for solving CC through energy-efficient behaviour	Provision of environmental education and information focusing on individual action	Individual's behaviour through adapting more 'green' practices	Minimal attention to major sources of CC and need for public policy to address these issues
CC resolved by public education and community outreach	Usually neglected and depoliticized.	CC action via local agencies (i.e. tree planting, recycling initiatives, etc.)	Provision of environmental education and establishment of community-based initiatives to respond to CC	Communities where public education and local activities can take place	Advocacy for policies that fund and support community activities
CC resolved through public policy advocacy	Modern societal reliance on fossil fuels and other technological advances	Public policies respond to CC through renewable energy	Identify public policy to reduce emissions and create renewable energy sources.	Public policymakers with some public outreach	Advocacy can lead to public policy action to improve CC
CC resolved by rebalancing power in society	Profit-making by the powerful owners and managers of the energy sector.	Powerful forces profit from public policies that do not address CC.	Naming of societal structures and processes controlling the distribution of economic resources. Organizing to produce equitable distribution of power	Undue influence and power of the corporate and business sector, particularly fossil fuel industries	Public policy can modify the power and influence of those who control the energy sector.
CC resolved by a Post-Capitalist Economy	Capitalism's relentless drive for capital accumulation.	Capitalist accumulation causes CC and makes its solution impossible.	Make explicit the processes by which capitalism causes CC and prevents solutions.	Public understanding of the economic system and providing alternatives.	Ongoing shifts in public policy will lead towards a post-capitalist society.

change is being effectively dealt with, thereby relieving governments of the responsibility to act (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent within liberal welfare states, where the state has a decreased role within the public sphere (Gough, 2016).

Table 1, using a similar analysis to that of Mendly-Zambo & Raphael (2018), presents details regarding the differing climate change discourses. These were grouped by their: a) hypothesized cause of climate change b) key concept; c) dominant research and practice paradigms; d) primary targets; and e) the role attributed to public policy. The first two discourses focus on the immediate responses to climate change, however, deal very little with the broader policy implications of the crisis. The following two, focus on the broader factors affecting climate change, but offer significantly different public policy designs towards remedying the problem. Finally, the last discourse explores a world post-capitalism, as it has been debated whether even the most progressive solutions are sufficient in averting the climate crisis.

Climate Change as an Individual Responsibility

The “climate change as an individual responsibility” discourse focuses on personal behaviours and how they impact the environment. Research and organizational campaigns advocate for actions such as recycling and carpooling to reduce the effects of climate change. Overall, this frames climate change within the discourse of lifestyle behaviour, suggesting that the global phenomenon of the climate crisis can be remedied through individual action.

This is consistent with the theme of individualism that typically dominates neoliberal societies (Gough, 2016). This discourse implies little about the actual sources of climate change and how to improve the current state of the environment. As such, it represents an individualistic and depoliticized approach to climate action that is more common amongst liberal welfare states.

This is consistent with the study done by Marquat-Pyatt et al. (2019), that found liberal welfare nations voted more in favour of purchasing energy-efficient appliances compared to other countries. They mentioned that this may “reflect their political preferences of the individual good over the public good and minimizing government intervention” (Marquat-Pyatt et al., 2019), as energy efficient appliances provide direct benefits to their owner and address climate change through individual action.

Overall, there are a number of problems with this discourse as it places the onus on the individual and fails to allocate responsibility towards the state (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). Governments are then excused of any action, due to the public being culpable for individual environmental solutions. Within this discourse, climate change has been decontextualized and conveyed in an apolitical manner, forcing individuals to bear the burden of the current state of the planet. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the liberal welfare states, where this discourse is the most prevalent, have the least developed environmental policies.

Climate Change resolved by public education and community outreach

Climate change outreach initiatives include the presence of community organizations that engage in public education and other communal activities. Examples of these actions include community tree-planting events or organized non-profits intending to aid climate change relief efforts. In reality, although intended otherwise, these initiatives divert attention from the causes and appropriate means of responding to climate change. Furthermore, governments contribute to these organizations, rather than becoming more actively involved by implementing public policy (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). Overall, these initiatives have been criticized for being both ineffective and creating a false sense of dealing with climate issues.

Although these responses are well-intentioned, they depoliticize climate change as they give the impression that effective action is being taken. The emphasis placed on non-governmental responses to climate change diverts attention from the structural powers responsible for the decreasing state of the environment. These responses partly explain that despite the growth in knowledge and increased media coverage concerning climate change, the situation is worsening (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018).

There are also numerous municipality-based initiatives working to reduce energy usage, promote green spaces, and reduce consumption in Canada. Some examples are the Climate Change Adaptation Community of Practice (2022), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (2022) Integrating Climate Considerations: Community Planning Project (2022) and the Community Climate Action Initiative in Toronto (2022). These well-intentioned initiatives are unlikely to make a real dent in the drivers of climate change

and, like the individual action discourse above, may create a false sense of dealing effectively with climate change.

These programs shift public focus from the political, economic, and social causes to short-term solutions that, contrary to popular belief, do not remedy the escalating environmental issue. Like the previous discourse, this public education and community outreach discourse shifts the burden away from the state and towards the willingness of the public to undertake social initiatives and create temporary solutions.

Again, this form of discourse is more prevalent within liberal welfare states, as it limits state intervention and increases individual responsibility. These are both trends that are prevalent within liberal welfare state policies as they reflect neoliberal values (Gough, 2016). This ideology advocates for a decreased role of the state, increased individualism, and for markets to remain unencumbered. Overall, this discourse does little in terms of combatting the corporate powers responsible for the continuation of greenhouse emissions and environmental degradation.

Climate Change resolved through public policy advocacy

The third discourse speaks to how climate change has recently become a priority on the political agenda of many countries, even those within the liberal welfare state world. Climate change has been recognized as a threat, however the political action that has been taken among certain countries continues to leave much to be desired.

For example, in the Canadian context, current climate change policies have been labelled as “one eye shut” as the country’s growing oil and gas production is impeding the nation from meeting its climate commitments (Carter & Dordi, 2021). The federal

government has attempted to strengthen its climate policies, however, simultaneously continues to support oil and gas production growth. The country is turning a blind eye towards the climate consequences of this industry, opposed to committing to phasing-out of fossil fuel production as other social democratic nations, like Denmark and New Zealand, have announced (Carter & Dordi, 2021).

Therefore, the main issue with this discourse is that these policy campaigns are performative and fail to address the underlying sources of climate change, which are rooted in the inequitable distribution of power and resources. Although this discourse addresses some social issues and puts forth political action, it fails to highlight the underlying power relations that prevent more proactive climate policies from being implemented.

This may be because many advocates assume that the government would automatically choose to implement the most progressive environmental policies, as they are what's best for the health of current and future populations (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). This would imply that governments are neutral bodies that consider research objectively and are focused on attaining the most benefits to society. These assumptions would be based on the public policymaking theory of *pluralism* (Brooks and Miljan, 2003).

The theory of pluralism holds that society consists of interest groups that attempt to gain government attention to achieve their policy goals, which in this case would be effectively addressing climate change (Bryant, 2016). It proposes that in democratic societies all groups have an equal opportunity to influence public policy. Pluralism

suggests that arguments are evaluated on their merit and decisions are made that will favour society as a whole. Therefore, governments are seen as part of the solution and responsible for enacting the most appropriate and beneficial policies (Bryant, 2015).

However, there are limitations to pluralism as it views the role of government as neutral and fails to consider the role of power in the policy making process (Bryant, 2015). This approach assumes that governments act in the interest of the majority by seeking public policy solutions to maximize public benefits (Bryant and Raphael, 2015). This theory fails to consider the significance of political, economic, and social resources within the policy arena and how distributions of power can influence the state.

As mentioned within the Canadian context, climate change has been deemed a policy priority, however these announcements have not been accompanied with strong policy action. This is similar to other liberal welfare states who have enacted climate change policies that are merely performative. In light of the recent environmental summit, COP26, Canada and other countries have promised ‘net zero’ emissions by 2050, however there are many issues with this supposedly progressive goal (Buck, 2021).

The concept of ‘net zero’ hides a multitude of loopholes, where countries will now focus on new technologies to reduce carbon from the atmosphere opposed to cutting emissions and ties from fossil fuel corporations (Buck, 2021). This frames the climate problem as occurring after the combustion of the fossil fuels - the emissions, opposed to before at the point of fossil fuel production. Overall, production has been absent from policymaking discussions, especially within liberal welfare states (Buck, 2021).

Although, several social democratic nations, such as Norway, have started to diversify their economy and diverge from their reliance on non-renewable commodities.

Overall, these “macro-level” policies are broad frameworks that suggest productive government reactions, however these responses do not question the structures and ideologies in which these solutions are produced (Mantoura & Morrison, 2016). This implies the importance of a more critical climate change discourse that directs attention to how economic interests and political ideology affect climate change public policy making. This discourse views climate change as a result of neoliberal public policy that benefits specific social actors at the expense of others. In the “climate change as an imbalance of power” discourse, the lack of proactive climate change policy is the result of processes that bribe governmental policy making to prioritize the elite over the wellbeing of the masses.

Climate Change as an imbalance of power in society

The political economy discourse views climate change as a result of economic, political, and social processes (Bryant, 2016). This form of discourse, particularly within the critical materialist stream, analyzes the imbalances of influence and power amongst social actors that shape political and economic structures and processes (Bryant, 2015). It moves beyond previously mentioned discourses to include how the influence of specific societal sectors, such as the corporate and business sector, shape the policies that govern Canadians, as well as the environment. In the specific context of the climate crisis, it is

the fossil fuel industry that is seen as benefiting from the public policies that fail to significantly address the root causes of climate change.

The business and corporate sector have the greatest potential to shape aspects of economic and political structures, including policymaking (Bryant, 2015). William Carol documents the “corporate stranglehold” that the fossil fuel industry holds over environmental politics. He acknowledges the relationship between carbon-capital corporations and knowledge-producing civil society organizations, such as think tanks, that create a “soft” denial regime. This process “acknowledges climate change while protecting the continued flow of profit to fossil fuel and related companies” (Carroll, 2021).

The corporate and business sectors are also working to maintain the perception that the climate crisis is being adequately responded to, meanwhile the oil and gas lobby groups play a dominating role in Canadian policy (Buck, 2021). In the first year since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, fossil fuel industries and associations met with government officials a total of 1,224 times, or more than 4.5 times per working day (Carter & Dordi, 2021). Therefore, current policy - such as the net zero framework, diverts public and policy attention away from the more fundamental issue: that effective and lasting climate change mitigation requires an end to the fossil fuel sector (Buck, 2021).

The fossil fuel industry is a prime example of corporate power that reaches into political and civil society and greatly affects democracy. The corporate power of this sector has distorted the conversation around this issue by privileging the interests of those

who own and control capital. The fossil-capital sector has continued to input strategies that protect their own investments and profit (Carroll, 2021). As the scientific facts surrounding the climate crisis have become incontestable, the denial strategy on the part of the fossil fuel corporations has evolved and now involves proposing policies “that appear as credible responses to the scientific consensus but do not harm big carbon” (Carroll, 2021). Therefore, the corporate and business sector have infiltrated current democratic processes to ensure their interests continue being served.

The political economy analysis moves beyond other discourses to expose these moral malfeasances. This discourse argues that proactive climate change policies must oppose the power of the corporate and business sector through political and social action. The main solution found within the literature, is the previously mentioned theory of “Eco-Socialism” that links climate mitigation with the improvement of other social services (Gough, 2010). This solution goes beyond the apolitical “technocratic” remedies provided by think tanks and other governmental agencies that coincide with the conventional wisdom of the dominant structures of power (Navarro, 1999). Instead, critical views are incorporated that oppose conventional narratives and call for political reform.

The framing of climate change as anything but a societal issue makes the forming of a solution more difficult. Therefore, this paper argues that climate change should be viewed within a political economy perspective, so that this national problem is seen as resulting from the imbalance of power and requiring state action, opposed to individual remedies. The overall solution to climate change is for citizens, through advocacy efforts,

to force governments to enact policies that change these inequitable distributions (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018). Changing this imbalance of power will help improve climate change, as these powerful forces are directly responsible for the increase in greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful pollutants.

Climate Change Resolved by a Post-Capitalist Economy

This final discourse sees effective responses to climate change and averting a climate catastrophe as not possible under the existing economic system of capitalism. Eco-socialism therefore, recognizes the necessity of moving towards a post-capitalist society. Interestingly, the work of Friedrich Engels on the interrelationship between the environment and capitalism – written as early as 1883 – suggesting the incompatibility of preserving the earth’s environment with the capitalist economic system is increasingly being cited (Foster, 2020; Roberts, 2020). Engels (1883/1977) gives an example of the environmental effects of capitalist-inspired colonialism:

What cared the Spanish planters in Cuba, who burned down forests on the slopes of mountains and obtained from the ashes sufficient fertilizer for one generation of very profitable coffee trees—what cared they that the heavy tropical rain afterwards washed away the unprotected upper stratum of the soil, leaving behind only bare rock!

Marx (1844) spoke of a “metabolic rift” by which capitalism alienates humans from nature (Foster, 1999). In 1844 he wrote: “Humans live from nature, i.e., nature is our body, and we must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if we are not to die” and “To say that humanity’s physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for humans are part of nature.”

In this discourse the relentless drive of capitalism for capital accumulation and its stranglehold on environmental policies will lead to a climate catastrophe (Klein, 2014). This reality is summed up by Mark Fisher’s (2008) statement “It’s easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism” (p.1). This eco-socialist discourse is increasingly becoming mainstream; Swedish activist Greta Thunberg’s (2018) states: “If solutions within this system are so difficult to find then maybe we should change the system itself.”

In Canada, calls for a post-capitalist eco-socialist state are increasing. Carroll (2021b) cites Mario Candeias’s notion of “green socialism” that moves not only from fossil capitalism but from capitalism itself by bringing under public control, energy, water, and other utilities, expanding public sector services, adopting principles of economic democracy, redistributing wealth and socializing investment. Naomi Klein’s (2014) best-selling book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate* suggests the climate crisis can create a “collective narrative about how to protect humanity from the ravages of a savagely unjust economic system and a destabilized climate system” (p. 8). The *Leap Manifesto* was issued in 2015 by a coalition of Canadian environmentalists, Indigenous, labour, and faith leaders, authors, and artists as

a call to action to confront the climate crisis. It was seen by some as an implicit call for a post-capitalist society (Aivalis, 2016). It states: “The time for energy democracy has come: We believe not just in changes to our energy sources, but that wherever possible communities should collectively control these new energy systems.”

More explicitly, the former Green Party of Canada leadership candidate, Dimitri Lascaris, launched *Green Left* which has as its goal: “Replacing exploitative capitalist economic systems with ecosocialist solutions is the primary objective of our political activities”. Its platform moves well beyond advocacy for environmental policies (Green Left, 2022):

Our existing economy not only puts profit before people and guarantees spiraling inequality, but it is also the root cause of the ecological emergency. Economy and ecology are inextricably intertwined. To mend our relationship with the earth, we must wrest power from private corporations and bring the economy under democratic control so that it meets human needs without exceeding the limits of our planet. The vision of Just Green Wellbeing outlined here provides the foundation on which our blueprint for ‘Responding to the Ecological Emergency’ rests.

These developments in Canada are proceeding in step with scholarly contributions on the necessity for an eco-socialist response to climate change (Albritton, 2019; Baer, 2020; Bond, 2021). These activities may merge into other Canadians’ calls for a post-capitalist economy (Bush, 2019; Jackson, 2021) and a generally positive disposition

among Canada towards socialist solutions as illustrated by a 2019 poll where 58 percent of Canadians had a positive view of socialism, with only 40 per cent holding negative opinions (Baneres, 2019).

Overall, the prevalence of certain environmental discourses within a country is related to citizen attitudes, broader policy, and the welfare state regime of a particular nation. I have outlined five discourses on climate change that reflect ongoing activity in Canada. We do not know the extent to which these climate change discourses are endorsed by Canadians. We do know Canadians generally endorse environmental policy action to address climate change, but they also believe that such action will not be effective. Research needs to examine the relevance of these discourses to Canadians as well as Canadians' – and others – receptivity to these different ways of understanding and responding to climate change.

Currently, Social democratic nations are leading the fight against the fossil fuel industry, while liberal welfare states are content with the current “business as usual” model (Wright & Nyberg, 2017). The paradigmatic shift that is described within the last two discourses is most likely to occur within the social democratic nations as they have succumbed the least to neoliberal rhetoric and practices (Gough, 2010). However, as of present, there is little discussion regarding these discourses in the media, public education systems, and amongst policymakers. Furthermore, the final two discourses remain increasingly marginalized, even amongst SDWS. Therefore, further discussion around proactive solutions to the climate crisis that acknowledge the dangers of capitalism and corporate power are undoubtedly needed.

CHAPTER IV

Implications for responding to the Crisis

As Ian Gough (2016) advocates, to successfully respond to the ecological crisis that we face, we must also respond to the simultaneous economic crisis. This reiterates the concept of building an “eco-welfare” state. There is a need for less silo-bound and more integrated research between the two domains. Climate change policy is a relevant component of social policy, and both are influenced directly by the welfare state of a country.

These thoughts are echoed in the final two discourses that were reviewed: “climate change as an imbalance of power in society” and “climate change resolved by a post-capitalist economy”. The political economy approach views effective responses to climate change as moving beyond environmental issues, and including broader social policies. This discourse advocates for the redistribution of economic, political, and social power. Furthermore, the final discourse argues for the abandonment of familiar capitalist processes in order to successfully avert a climate catastrophe. Eco-socialism recognizes the necessity of addressing corporate power and moving towards a post-capitalist society.

Thus, the causes and means of responding to the climate crisis are a part of a variety of political issues that require social and political movements to combat the power of the corporate and business sector. It requires a paradigmatic shift away from neoliberal ideology and capitalism where policy is focused on profit and market expansion. Instead, this approach requires a drastic change with policy built on a foundation of human capital and population wellbeing.

Environmental politics challenge today's dominant neoliberal ideologies that rely on capitalist markets and unregulated economic growth. As Naomi Klein (2021) has argued "it's not about carbon - it's about capitalism". Resolving the climate crisis entails more than reducing global warming, instead solutions need to focus on reforming our current economic system. Society's addiction to growth and profit is the main driver behind the climate crisis (Klein, 2021). Eco-Socialism attempts to redefine the current free-market economic model. This solution promotes rebuilding local economies, reclaiming democracies, and reigning in corporate power, particularly that of the fossil fuel industry.

Although, for this to become reality, it would require a radical change in ideology where collective investment and consumption are prioritized over private commodities. These are radical shifts that would challenge dominant neoliberal interests and narratives. As Gough (2016) has mentioned, referring to the liberal and social democratic welfare divide, it is most likely that this eco-welfare state will be developed within the Nordic countries due to the current trajectory of liberal welfare austerity policies, although currently, there aren't any countries that are completely on track for resolving the impending catastrophe.

Conclusion

Ultimately, deep institutional and ideological differences persist across developed countries, which are reflected through the variation in welfare regimes typologies and different capitalist practices. These differences drive the policy outputs in both social and

environmental outcomes for different welfare states and separate the liberal welfare states from the social democratic ones (Gough, 2016). Social democratic welfare states have the optimal political model for mitigating climate change effects by having a framework that supports both economic and ecological growth. The Nordic countries have been pioneers in developing comprehensive environmental policies that are also embedded within a social justice framework that advocates for public wellbeing. Liberal countries, with less developed welfare states, tend to oppose environmental and economic values and favour neoliberal policies (Gough, et al., 2008). As Gough (2016) concludes; “the degree of hegemony of neo-liberal ideas in a country will constrain the scope and depth of the environmental state”. Therefore, political ideological markers, such as dominant discourses and adherence to capitalist systems, greatly influence a country’s policy response to climate change and impending environmental disasters.

The looming presence of climate change and the increased urgency surrounding this issue has caused numerous non-government solutions to appear. Responding to a problem as broad as climate change has been further complicated by the lack of consensus amongst the competing discourses. Most of the relevant causes and solutions obscure the structural sources of climate change and reduce it from a problem revolving around social and economic power, to a personal or community issue. The critical materialist political economy approach provides the most effective means of responding to the climate crisis by abandoning the harsh resource-extraction methods of capitalism.

This discourse advocates for Eco-Socialism that requires action that addresses the imbalance of power and resources within society. This solution supports the rejection of

dominant discourses and promotes the challenging of corporate and government rhetoric concerning both environmental and social policies (Gough, 2010). This discourse advocates for state intervention and for the governments to regulate powerful interest groups who place their personal needs over the wellbeing of the greater population. Thus, solutions include the need to educate and mobilize Canadians on the societal causes of climate change, as well as broader social issues. This will help build the political and social movements necessary to reduce the environmental crisis (Mendly-Zambo & Raphael, 2018).

In conclusion, the literature sheds light on the important barriers that exist between climate change discourse and policy action (Marquart-Pyatt et al., 2019). O'Connor (1998) in his "contradictions of capitalism" lists environmental degradation as one of the factors that will destroy the success of the capitalist system. Therefore, climate change mitigation efforts should be at the forefront of all political agendas. Both social and climate change policies can be applied to achieve complementary goals. Environmental policies should not be layered over social policies. As the Nordic countries have proved, "eco-social" policies can be integrated to successfully address both environmental and welfare issues. Welfare state typology has shown to determine public attitudes, prevalent discourses, and to what extent a country values a healthy society. It is important that all countries participate in an ideology shift so that population health and the environment are prioritized in the transformation towards a more sustainable and green economy.

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