In studying a structure, it is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed “conjunctural” (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental)…. When an historical period comes to be studied, the great importance of this distinction becomes clear. A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them.

These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the “conjunctural”, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise. These forces seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative, the accomplishment of certain historical tasks (imperative, because any falling short before an historical duty increases the necessary disorder, and prepares more serious catastrophes).... (The demonstration in the last analysis only succeeds and is “true” if it becomes a new reality, if the forces of opposition triumph; in the immediate, it is developed in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces.

Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*

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April 2018

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of pathological failure of highly developed nations to meaningfully confront the ecological challenge of the 21st century. Ingolfur Blühdorn theorizes that this ongoing political failure reflects a paradigmatic shift in the cultural-historical context within which eco-politics are played out, a transformation he labels the ‘post-ecologist turn.’ He posits that the 1970s cultural zeitgeist, which embodied egalitarianism, ecological rationality, and socio-cultural integrity, has been exhausted as a plausible alternative construct to inspire environmental politics, undermined by a hyper-materialist cultural turn. This has given rise to a ‘politics of unsustainability,’ in which the seriousness of the eco-crisis is acknowledged, while at the same time, the systems that have produced the crisis are fiercely and unconditionally defended; in other words, politics is preoccupied with 'sustaining the unsustainable.'

This dissertation investigates the plausibility of the theory of post-ecologism as the condition of particular historical-political processes in the Canadian context. Informed by a neo-Gramscian political theory of discourse, I employ a critical discourse-historical methodology in analysing the trajectory of eco-political discourse in The Globe and Mail editorials over a 56-year period, from 1960 to 2016. This paper was chosen because of its status as the national newspaper of record for political, business and intellectual elites across the political spectrum; therefore, its editorial position contributes to the hegemonic voice on public affairs.
In the first half of the study period, the establishment paper strongly supported an aggressive environmental agenda. A clear and relatively abrupt shift in discourse occurs between 1987 and 1992, consistent with the hegemonization of neoliberalism throughout Western democracies. Editorial framing aligns with Blühdorn’s characterization of the post-ecologist turn, revealing that Blühdorn’s theory of a post-ecologist politics of unsustainability is plausible in the Canadian context, and has some explanatory power regarding the widespread failure to deal with the eco-climate crisis.
DEDICATION

As the song goes, this is dedicated to the ones I love:

Caroline and Laura, two amazing young women who are making their own mark in the world, but who still might find inspiration from their mother who, at age 52, went back to school and started over;

and David, who, as I was retreating into the ivory tower to study politics, went forth into the world of politics, applying his formidable intellect, talent and passion to its real-world application.

I am humbled and inspired by you three, and infinitely grateful for your love and unquestioning support as I travelled this (sometimes seemingly endless) road.

I have now arrived: we can all breathe.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Becoming a student again - reading, pondering, analysing, discussing, writing - that was the easy part (well, perhaps not the writing). Navigating the academy after being out of it for 30 years, on the other hand, required a lot hand-holding.

First my committee: My supervisor, Joanna Everitt, a real role model for me, has been imminently patient and helpful as the years rolled on; Chris Doran pushed me to think harder and go deeper; Rob Moir's experience in the realpolitik of New Brunswick kept things grounded.

In the School of Graduate Studies, Janet, and in Financial Services, Tracie, every semester, reminded me to register and pay my tuition, and filed paperwork on my behalf. At the Harriet Irving Library, Lynn, Grace, Alicia, and Aggie made sure I had work space, my books were renewed, and that I was electronically and research literate. The Document Delivery staff are behind-the-scenes heroes. I am especially indebted to Rob Glencross at the Centre for Digital Scholarship, without whose help this document would never have been fit to print.

I was not the only late-career graduate student on the road. I shared the journey with fellow travellers Louise, Vince, and Julian, each of whom are friends from our other lives, and Donna, a new old friend. I will miss the 5th floor HIL commiserating and camaraderie.

I am also grateful to Peter Brown at McGill who invited me to be part of the Research Group on the Ecology of Collapse. In that group were leaders in the field of environmental studies, from McGill, York and George Mason universities, and I was
privileged to collaborate on a book with them, in which I have a chapter. I could not have asked for better mentors.

Two people deserve special mention. My weekly coffee meetings with Michael Clow in the early writing days were invaluable in getting the jumble of ideas in my head organized into a reasonably coherent narrative. Andy Secord got this whole thing rolling by suggesting I might be able to teach if I just had a master’s degree, and has encouraged me every step of the way.

It goes without saying that this accomplishment rests on the back of my family, David, Caroline and Laura, who sacrificed more than they probably realize. As I left the full-time workforce, scarce resources were channeled into tuition, and the new responsibilities of academia crowded out family time. Never once did anyone complain about that – except, perhaps, myself. I am greatly blessed as a mother and a life partner.

Finally, there is Kathie, who, when I was trying to decide whether to accept a four-year SSHRC fellowship to do a Ph.D., remarked, "Well, what else are you going to do for the next four years?" What else indeed!

Nearly eight years later, all I can say is thank you - to everyone.
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Part I: Problem, Theory and Method

Chapter 1: Understanding society’s failure to come to grips with the eco-climate crisis

1.1 The state of the planet

The state of the environment, locally and globally, has been a salient subject of social and political discourse in industrialized states since the 1960s. The body of knowledge associated with both diagnosis of and cure for environmental problems has grown exponentially over that period. Environmental education programs have been institutionalized at all levels producing a large professional class of environmental scientists, managers and policy experts working inside state, corporate and civil society institutions. The popular wisdom, as well as the operating assumption of environmental movements, has been that as people become more aware of and educated about environmental issues, governments become more responsive, and social and political institutions are transformed into responsible stewards of the commons through the integration of environmental protection measures into decision-making - the knowledge-deficit model of behaviour change (Hansen et al, 2003; Meyer, 2016). This rational approach has proven naïve. Environmental conditions have gotten worse, not better.¹ Environmental protection has been losing ground on many fronts for the past two decades. For instance, the ethical foundations and ecological-economic rationality of the

¹ Over the past decade, various comprehensive assessments have tracked the negative effect of the human enterprise on the existing and future prospects for human and other species (for instance, IPCC 2014 and WWF 2016).
‘soft energy path’ (Lovins, 1979), the acid rain crisis (1980s), the myriad troubles of the nuclear industry, and by the end of the 1980s the alarming scientific pronouncements on global warming at the 1988 World Meteorological Organization’s (WMO) conference held in Toronto, Ontario, all pointed towards an inevitable transition to an energy system based on renewable sources (WMO, 1988). Nearly three decades later, the transition has not occurred, despite the accumulating body of scientific evidence of actual changes, as well as the experience of on-the-ground disasters, related to global warming. The most recent business-as-usual emissions scenario of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) puts the planet on track for four-to-six degree warming by the end of the 21st century, a state that would make human civilization as we know it impossible to sustain (IPCC, 2014). The 2015 UN climate change conference (COP 21) held in Paris is widely viewed as a positive turning point in geo-political climate change relations, with most nations endorsing the goal of keeping warming below 2 degrees Celsius (and aspiring to a limit of 1.5 degrees warming), yet the voluntary nature of the agreement makes its achievement a matter of peer- and public-pressure.

In Canada, victories won in the first two decades of the environmental movement (1970-1990) have been rolled back; old battles are back on the table to be re-fought but on weaker social foundations, even as the stakes are much higher (McNeil, 2014). Successive Canadian federal governments have distinguished themselves as unwilling to take climate change seriously. They have been either laggards - the Chrétien government

2 The final statement from the 300 international scientists and policy makers who attended the first international scientific conference on global warming held in Toronto in 1988 began with this warning: ‘Humanity is conducting an unintended, uncontrolled, globally pervasive experiment whose ultimate consequences could be second only to a global nuclear war’ (WMO, 1988).
took seven years to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol or, in the case of the Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper who withdrew Canada from the Kyoto Protocol in 2011, hostile to an emerging global agenda to tackle the issue (Paehlke, 2008; Urquhart, 2008; Macdonald, 2016). Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, elected in October 2015, has changed the official climate change rhetoric in Canada, and yet has committed to the dramatic expansion of fossil fuel pipeline infrastructure in order to facilitate the movement of Canada’s energy resources to markets (Prime Minister, 2016). This is despite the International Energy Agency’s 2011 assessment that ‘if internationally coordinated action is not implemented by 2017, we project that all permissible CO2 emissions...will come from the infrastructure then existing, so that all new infrastructure from then until 2035 would need to be zero-carbon’ (IEA, 2011).

It is not any particular government’s hostility to the environmental agenda that is of interest in this research. Governments do not last forever, and at least some of the damage done, in theory, can be repaired by new governments if they are so inclined. In my view, a more significant concern is the larger context within which the retreat from institutionalized environmental governance as developed during the 1970s in North America, and on a broader level, the failure of politics to avert an eco-climate crisis, has become possible. What systemic analysis might be usefully employed to help explain this post-millennial current of environmental politics, and thereby inform a constructive response to it?

Various scholars have addressed aspects of this question. In general, political theories of the eco-crisis can be categorized as follows: 1) the failure of environmental movements to sufficiently influence governments, corporations, and/or the general public (e.g.
Shellenburg and Nordhaus, 2004); 2) the failure of states to properly regulate commercial and/or individual activities that impact the environment (Boyd, 2003; Kennedy, Jr., 2004, Macdonald, 1991, 2007); 3) the failure of international regimes to effectively coordinate state responses on a global level (Levy and Newell, 2005; Speth and Haas, 2006; Sandberg and Sandberg, 2010); 4) the failure of the market to internalize the costs of environmental pollution and resource depletion (Weaver, 2008; Smart Prosperity Institute, 2018); 5) the failure of individuals to voluntarily change their consumptive/materialist lifestyles (Christensen, 1997); 6) the failure of the education system or the state to produce ‘ecological citizens’ (Worldwatch Institute, 2017); 7) the undue influence of corporations on a) the state due to their elite power status (Klein, 2014; Macdonald, 2007), and/or b) the public through tactics of ‘greenwashing’ and financing of third party ‘climate change denial’ public relations campaigns (Beder, 1997). Each of these conditions represents one or more variables (albeit in unequal proportions) in an incredibly complex systemic pathology that constitutes the eco-political problematic.

The focus of this research is to better understand this pathological failure to meaningfully confront the ecological challenge of the 21st century by characterizing it as the condition of particular historical-political processes. This provides a useful entry point to the discourse on a necessary eco-political praxis; conversely, an effective praxis begins with such a characterization. My research is intended to make a contribution in this regard.
1.2 Blühdorn’s theory: The post-ecologist turn and the ‘politics of unsustainability’

The result [of the Kyoto negotiations] is a paradox. Global intergovernmental cooperation on the environment is top of the agenda, but appears to be out of the question - at the same time.

Layachi Yaker, Former UN Under-Secretary General for Africa and former Brandt Commissioner (quoted in Toth and Szigeti, 2016, pp. 283-84).

European scholar Ingolfur Blühdorn has taken up the question of why late-modern societies ‘have neither the will nor the ability to get serious’ about the eco-crisis at hand and how this condition came to be (Blühdorn, 2007b, p. 253). He writes of the European context,

The firm institutionalization of eco-political actors, the unprecedented accumulation of eco-political knowledge and the implementation of a wide range of environmental policy instruments have brought about significant improvements in many areas of eco-politics. Yet... even in the richest and technologically most advanced countries, the strategies of ecological modernisation and environmental management have been unable to halt, let alone reverse, the trajectory of environmental consumption and destruction. Technological progress has not brought about sufficiently intelligent solutions.... Environmental policy measures perpetually appear as half-hearted. What they accomplish is invariably too little and too late (Blühdorn, 2007b, p. 251-52).

Blühdorn theorizes that this ongoing political failure reflects a paradigmatic shift in the politico-cultural context within which eco-politics are played out, a transformation he labels the ‘post-ecologist turn’ or the ‘era of post-ecologism’.³ He posits that the 1970s

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³ The term, ecologism, refers to a new paradigm or worldview embodied by the political-ecologist-green movements of the 1970s, expressed both in philosophical-ethical terms and political-theoretical terms (Dobson, 2007; Oates, 1989). Its meaning and significance will be discussed further in chapter 2, section 2.5.2.
radical political-ecologist re-conceptualization of society, one which embodies egalitarianism, ecological rationality, and socio-cultural integrity, has been exhausted as a plausible alternative construct to inspire environmental politics. Among other factors, it has been undermined by a neo-materialist turn characterized by an individualistic concern for financial success, personal identity rooted in consumerism, and an economic and political discourse that nurtures those qualities. According to Blühdorn, post-ecologism has given rise to a ‘politics of unsustainability’ in which the seriousness of the eco-crisis and thus the need for serious change in dominant social systems is acknowledged, while those same systems are fiercely and unconditionally defended. As he argues:

The politics of unsustainability is unfolding amidst the simultaneity of, on the one hand, a general acceptance that the achievement of sustainability requires radical change in the most basic principles of late-modern societies and, on the other hand, an equally general consensus about the non-negotiability of democratic consumer capitalism – irrespective of mounting evidence of its unsustainability (Blühdorn & Welsh, 2007, p. 198).

In short, the eco-politics of unsustainability is a ‘simulative’ politics, the preoccupation of which is ‘sustaining the unsustainable’ (Blühdorn, 2007b).

With his post-ecologist thesis, Blühdorn presents a complex argument about a changing eco-political discourse that is both explanatory and controversial. In the European context, he has introduced a socio-cultural theoretical dimension that is “outside the box”

4 The reference to neo-materialism is significant in relation to Ronald Inglehart’s theory of post-materialism which was to have explained the rise of environmental concern in industrialized societies since the 1960s (Inglehart, 1977).

5 I provide a more thorough examination of Blühdorn’s post-ecologism thesis in chapter 2.
in terms of environmental political theory scholarship. It is controversial in that he suggests that conventional eco-political thinking has not evolved to take account of a very different cultural landscape within which eco-politics is now playing out. He suggests that scholars of environmental politics fail to appreciate this normative shift, thereby rendering their contributions, framed as they are within the ‘ecologist’ paradigm, anachronistic (I discuss this further in chapter two). Needless to say, this bold assertion challenges much of contemporary eco-political theorizing, which makes it interesting in and of itself. Having an entire issue of the flagship academic journal *Environmental Politics* (2007, vol. 16, no. 2) devoted to his theory of post-ecologism, however, speaks to its significance as an emerging theory with compelling explanatory power.

For these reasons, I believe Blühdorn’s conception of a politics of unsustainability is worth testing in Canada. The question of whether a theory derived from the European eco-political context has relevance in Canada, and therefore worth the effort to pursue, is valid. It can be argued that it would be more logical to test the alignment of Canadian environmental politics with that of the United States rather than Europe, especially since many of the environmental issues facing this country are bound up with Canada-United States economic and political issues. I would counter, however, that until the election of a majority Conservative government in 2011, the zeitgeist of Canadian eco-politics was more in line with an internationalist perspective than a continentalist one (McCullough and Teigrob, 2017). Moreover, the radical ‘green’ discourse that developed in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s has the same roots as that in Europe, manifested in very similar political programmes of Green parties in West Germany and Canada (Harvey, 2009). Finally, Blühdorn himself generalizes his theory to the politics of ‘democratic consumer
capitalist' economies, of which Canada is one. In making this generalization, then, he opens up the question of whether the theory holds when examined at a country-level.

1.3 This research: Has Canadian eco-politics taken a post-ecologist turn?

This dissertation takes up the task of investigating more systematically the plausibility of the theory of post-ecologism in the Canadian context. This is by definition a very broad and complex question, since Blühdorn essentially argues that a cultural paradigm shift underpins this post-ecologist turn. In a special issue of *Environmental Politics* (2007, vol. 16, no. 2) devoted to post-ecologism, Blühdorn and Welsh provide guidelines for a research agenda that interrogates this theory. As a conceptual framework, they suggest a broad objective of trying to ‘to understand the specific conditions and constellations which determine the ways in which late-modern societies are framing and processing their environmental problems’ (Blühdorn & Welsh, 2007, p. 198). In other words, how have late-modern eco-politics come about?

They pose several possible research questions: i) how has the progressive agenda of environmentalism been recast; ii) what factors triggered the process of recasting and which parameters are shaping it; iii) how does the recasting affect political actors historically associated with agendas of radical change – can they reposition themselves to be effective in a fundamentally changed political landscape; iv) by what mechanisms are advanced consumer democracies sustaining simultaneous discourses of radical change and uncompromising defense of the status quo; v) why are both being sustained, and who benefits from this schizophrenic public discourse; and vi) how does this simultaneity of discourses affect established understandings and institutions of representative
democracy? (Blühdorn & Welsh, 2007, p. 199). What each question implies is the discursive nature of eco-politics. Agendas are ‘recast;’ political actors are ‘repositioned;’ politics consist of competing radical and status quo discourses; public discourses affect understandings and institutions. It follows, then, that an investigation of post-ecologism should be informed by a political theory of discourse, and further, the evidence supporting the post-ecologism thesis should be found in public discourse. Since modern public discourse is virtually entirely mediated (Gouldner, 1990; Jackson, Nielson and Hsu, 2011), the mass media plays a central role in framing public discourse and conditioning political action (Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2003). Therefore, a focused analysis of eco-political discourse in the media is a reasonable starting point. To that end, this research examines editorials in *The Globe and Mail* from 1960 to 2016, for evidence of a post-ecologist turn in Canada. Because editorials provide a relatively unambiguous record of the position of the paper on environmental questions, they represent a voice of influence in public affairs. I have chosen this paper as a data source because of the paper’s status as the national newspaper of note for both the political and business elites, as well as the intelligentsia across the political spectrum, over this period.

This study period is divided into four phases: the 1960s; the 1970s; 1982 to 1992; and post-1992. Within Blühdorn’s theoretical construct, this period would correspond with the formation, consolidation and de-consolidation of authentic concern for the state of the environment. It is logical to assume that the eco-political discourse in *The Globe and

6 Jackson, Nielson and Hsu (2011) define the contemporary ‘mediated society’ as one that has a ‘specific regime of communication that expresses a certain regional or local angle on culture, that has a particular effect on the type of citizenship that is practised, and that has a specific normalizing [original emphasis] impact on subjects that have been created by – and who also create – its institutions’ (p.2).
Mail would change as historical contexts of and meanings attached to environmental politics change; therefore, this research looks for shifts in discourse over time in the direction that Blühdorn theorizes.

The questions I pose in this inquiry are adapted from Blühdorn and Welsh’s starting question, and include: How has the public discourse of environmental politics been framed in The Globe and Mail editorials over time and is there evidence of a post-ecologist turn in these frames? This is measured by determining what discursive paradigm(s) are evident in The Globe and Mail’s editorial accounts of environmental problems or conflicts in each of the phases studied. By identifying how the frames and meanings change over time, I analyze whether they change in the directions suggested by Blühdorn, and suggest what historical processes might account for the nature of the evolution of discourse over time.

As this analysis shows, Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism is plausible in the Canadian context. A clear and relatively abrupt shift in editorial discourse occurs between 1987 and 1992, which at least in general terms aligns with Blühdorn’s characterization of ecologist and post-ecologist paradigms, including a politics of unsustainability. Where this analysis diverges from Blühdorn’s is in how I account for this shift. While Bluhdorn attributes the post-ecologist condition to an evolutionary modernization process, I argue that it is socially constructed and can be accounted for within a post-structuralist discourse theory.
1.4 Contribution to scholarship

There appears to be no published literature to date that engages Blühdorn’s hypothesis directly in the Canadian context. Certainly there are critiques of the failure of environmental policy and politics; several provide a political economy perspective, and more specifically linking this failure to the broader neo-liberal context. Most studies are grounded in issue- or sectoral/institutional- or jurisdictional- specific contexts. None examine the historical context of eco-political discourse generally in Canada. Thus this research makes a distinct contribution to the eco-political literature in Canada. Furthermore, because I engage a theory of eco-politics grounded in European experience, it also contributes to the international environmental politics literature.

Beyond this, the explanatory power of Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism in the face of society’s failure to come to grips with the eco-climate crisis gives the environmental movement, and everyone concerned with how we might get to a stabilized planetary state, some insight into the challenges before us. A peaceful, just and rapid global transformation to a carbon-free future, is likely contingent on an equally sweeping cultural values-shift that provides the political space necessary to impose the dramatic changes necessary. Reorienting decades of political-strategic thinking to take this into account will be a major challenge for environmental and other social change movements.

1.5 Thesis outline

This dissertation is divided into three parts. Part 1 includes this introduction, as well as theoretical and methodology chapters. Chapter two provides a fuller treatment of the theoretical frameworks for this research: Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism, and
Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s post-structuralist political discourse theory, which I argue provides a more compelling account of the discursive shift evident in the editorials. Chapter three describes the methodology for this research. I use qualitative frame analysis to characterize the editorial eco-political discourse over time, drawing on Wodak’s discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis. Part II contains the data analysis. Chapters four, five, six and seven present the results of this analysis, divided according to four time periods. In Part III, I discuss the findings in the context of the research questions outlined above (chapter eight) and my conclusions (chapter nine).
Chapter 2: Theory: The Politics of Unsustainability

...A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. Antonio Gramsci, 1999, pp. 399-401.

In Section 1.2, I introduced Ingolfur Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism. This has two components: the idea of a cultural paradigm shift which he calls the post-ecologist turn (Blühdorn, 1997; 2000; 2002) and a consequent politics of unsustainability (Blühdorn 2007, 2011; Blühdorn and Welsh, 2007). Blühdorn elaborates his theory to explain the dynamics of Green party politics in Europe and more broadly the international climate change negotiations (Blühdorn, 2011) and considers its implications for democratic systems at large (Blühdorn, 2013). In the ‘post-ecologist turn,’ he characterizes a seismic normative shift in democratic consumer-capitalist societies that becomes evident in the late 1980s, which in turn gives rise to a politics of unsustainability. In this chapter, I describe each of these elements in more detail. I also critique some of his assumptions about the post-ecologist turn, and suggest a more rigorous theoretical framework for understanding that turn, a political theory of discourse.

---

7 The term, ecologism, refers to a new paradigm or worldview embodied by the political-ecologist anti-nuclear movements of the 1970s, expressed both in philosophical-ethical terms (Oates, 1989) and political-theoretical terms (Dobson, 2007).
2.1 The ‘post-ecologist turn’: A cultural paradigm shift

Blühdorn begins with the idea that politics take place within certain cultural *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the time. The underlying system of norms and values, the product of both tradition and forces of change, determines what things are possible politically and what are not, what can be said, and what cannot. Blühdorn describes three stages of cultural values change as context for environmental politics in the post-war and late 20th century period, each of which presupposes that modern societies value security and autonomy above all else. These are summarized in Table 2.

The first, the ‘pre-ecologist’ (or materialist) frame of mind, reflects the post-war preoccupation with production and distribution; security and autonomy were understood in collective terms as societal goals to be met through the welfare state. Blühdorn invokes Ronald Inglehart’s theory of post-materialism in characterizing the second stage of post-war values evolution. This holds that the rise of the middle class along with widespread entry into post-secondary educational institutions created a new level of material security in Western society, which in turn propelled a shift towards post-material values, including a new concern for environmental quality. As economic growth fueled middle class material security, a silent cultural revolution gave rise to a ‘post-materialist’ frame of mind (Inglehart, 1977). Security and autonomy were reinterpreted in cultural, rather than material, and in individual rather than collective, terms. Values shifted from material security to autonomy-identity, with emphasis on self-determination, self-realization, and self-expression (Blühdorn, 2002, pp. 3-4).
This post-materialist value shift provided the cultural context for the construction of the radical discourse of political-ecologism in the 1970s (Hajer, 1995). Underpinning the new environmental movement of this period were counter-hegemonic discourses of limits to growth, apocalyptic critiques of technocentric, industrial society, and proposals for a new conserver (rather than consumer) society.8 A growing unease with what was deemed the loss of moral community was reflected in discourse elements of anti-consumerism, anti-alienation, a commitment to democratization, and a protest against ‘colonization of the future.’ This was part of a larger critique of modernism and rationalism, as well as the growth imperative of industrialism, both capitalist and communist/socialist versions. Unlike the distributional politics of the political left, this critique was ‘directed “not against the failure of the state and society to provide for economic growth and material prosperity, but against their all-too-considerable success in having done so, and against the price of this success”’ (quoting Berger in Offé 1985, p. 847). In other words, ‘the “radical environmental movement asked for a clarification of [liberal capitalist culture’s] purposes, a re-ordering of priorities, and a redefinition of key problems”’ (Hajer, 1995, pp. 87-88 quoting O’Riordan, 1983, p. 300).

This eco-discourse was not exclusive. It co-existed with reformist and longer-standing discourses of conservation (the wise, renewable use of natural resources) and its antithesis, of wilderness preservation. It is distinctive, however, as a discourse of the new,

8 These co-existed with the discourses of other new social movements, such as feminism, pacifism, self-determination and grassroots democracy. They all became part of a broader discourse formation known as ecologism from which the manifesto of the Green political movement was constructed (Dobson, 2007).
post-war environmental movement which responded to extreme conditions of pollution, congestion, and waste generated by rapid urbanization, population growth, and industrialization. Its defining characteristic was the recognition of the biophysical finiteness of Earth, and therefore the necessity of limiting the human enterprise, in other words, a fundamental challenge to the modern idea of progress, with obvious negative implications for capital accumulation.

According to Blühdorn, this discourse does not map directly onto Inglehart’s post-materialist frame. As an ideal type, it embraces the idea of limits to growth, acknowledges the intrinsic value of nature, and critiques industrialism as an unsustainable system which needs to be replaced by a steady-state or conserver society. To this can be added an egalitarian-collective approach to material and physical security, an ecological rather than economic rationality, and a commitment to participatory democracy, as well as to the post-materialist values of anti-authoritarianism, pluralism and social autonomy/identity. In short, the new radical agenda of political-ecologism tapped into pre-existing values of collective security embodied in the welfare state, and the post-

9 Its progenitors are the anti-industrialization discourses of 19th century Britain.
10 The Western institutional response to the ecologist challenge followed the publication of several benchmark reports in the United States and Europe (Commoner, 1971, Goldsmith, Allen, Allaby, Davoll, & Lawrence, 1972, Meadows, Meadows, Randers, & Behrens, 1972). National and sub-national governments established environmental agencies, and enacted a body of environmental legislation for those agencies to administer. This administrative rationalization deconstructed environmental problems into parts - air, water, and soil – and compartmentalized their management. Pollution per se was not structurally problematic; instead regulation focused on achieving degrees of environmental quality. This focus on ameliorative, technocratic, end-of-pipe - *ad hoc, ex post* - remediation reflected a basic subservience of environmental protection to industrial politics and therefore was antagonistic (Hajer, 1995, p. 24-25).
materialist values of individual self-determination; essentially, an individual-in-community frame of mind (Blühdorn, 2002).

Inglehart’s ‘silent revolution’ in cultural values attributes the rising environmental concern of the 1970s to a newly affluent, post-materialist middle class that could afford to take on higher level, quality of life issues. Following this, one should expect that as long as levels of societal wealth remain high, environmental conditions in advanced industrial or post-industrial societies would steadily improve. Blühdorn observes, justifiably, that this has not been the case. Despite a tremendous escalation of economic growth rates and an unprecedented level of wealth accumulation since the adoption (beginning in the 1980s) of neoliberal economic policies, global environmental conditions have worsened. Instead of moving towards a post-materialist utopia, Blühdorn theorizes that the process of modernization has produced a ‘counter-silent revolution’ in cultural values, the third cultural shift which has shaped eco-politics. This he calls the ‘post-ecologist turn’ (Blühdorn, 2000) which is characterized by:

- the gradual normalisation of the environmental crisis; the depoliticisation of the ecologist critique and the techno-managerial reframing of environmental issues within the paradigm of ecological modernisation; the diversification – and thus relative weakening – of eco-political values and imperatives; and the becoming prevalent of ideals of identity, self-determination and self-realisation (Blühdorn 2013, p. 19).

In the post-ecologist turn, Blühdorn cites the destabilization of the welfare state by a globalized neoliberal political economy as the trigger for the re-emergence of material security as an overriding preoccupation. The collective-purpose principles that built the middle-class in the post-war period are replaced by individualist self-interest motivations. The ideal of a risk-averse, universal, common good gives way to a winner-take-all
‘opportunity society’ in which individual risk-taking is highly valued and potentially richly rewarded. Fueled by neoliberal principles of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization, the opportunity society asserts

…the right to unrestricted personal development and benefit. It understands opportunity and self-realization in terms of material accumulation and consumption.... Collectivity and community now appear, first and foremost, as interference to the private sphere and as illegitimate obstacles in the way of personal fulfillment (Blühdorn, 2002, pp. 4-5).

Post-materialist values are replaced by 'a new phase of hyper-materialism' which is 'egoistic and exclusive' rather than collectivist and inclusive. As consumerism becomes 'the dominant model of identity construction and self-expression,' the neo-Marxist critique of modernity is turned on its head. Alienation becomes defined not by one’s entrapment by consumer culture, but by one’s exclusion from it due to limited earning capacity and spending power. Post-materialist ideals of liberation, emancipation and self-realization are reinterpreted as the maximization of this economic capacity (Blühdorn, 2002, pp. 4-5).

While economic precariousness gives rise to neo-materialist value priorities, the postmodern 'dissolution of the normative certainties of traditional modernity' reinforces 'the fact that only material values seem to provide a reasonably solid foundation for social consensus.' This gives rise to 'new constructed certitudes,' drawing from fundamentalist/authoritarian paradigms for 'guidance and reassurance.' Fundamentalisms are traditional/ideological (ethnic, religious, nationalist, ecological) but also 'allegedly post-ideological…the metaphysics of the market or the religion of competitiveness - or the moral superiority of western liberal democracy' (Blühdorn, 2002, pp. 5-6). In the context of economic, moral and identity uncertainty, then, 'the major challenge for late-
modern society is to restore certainty, or at least to find effective strategies for the management of uncertainty’ (Blühdorn, 2002, p. 5). Stability, not change, is the watchword. Once-radical concepts inherent in critiques of liberal capitalism have become aligned with maintaining the status quo:

The established concepts simulate continuity and committedness to the modernist values and tradition, yet their meanings have changed in such ways that they are compatible with the perpetuation of the capitalist growth economy… an economic system whose logic relentlessly colonizes all other social systems and extinguishes all non-economic codes or ways of thinking…. In their redefined, contemporary understanding…these concepts all serve to stabilize and reproduce the consumerist, growth economy. They provide moral and political legitimacy for the further expansion of this system and for the crusade against its internal and external enemies (Blühdorn, 2002, p. 7).

Table 1 summarizes this redefinition of cultural values (from Blühdorn, 2002, p. 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Materialist/Ecologist Value</th>
<th>Post-Ecologist Redefinition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>Freedom of choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Equality of opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>Efficiency and profitability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Realization of self-interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Transparency and accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual identity</td>
<td>Unique consumer profile</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomous self-definition</td>
<td>Realization of one’s full productive/consumptive capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion</td>
<td>Inclusion into the labour and consumer market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental integrity</td>
<td>Resource efficiency and sustainable development</td>
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According to Blühdorn, ‘The silent counter-revolution…dismantles the ecologist frame of mind right down to its very foundations’ (Blühdorn, 2002, p. 5).

These ideals are profoundly incompatible with the norms underpinning ecologist thinking in that they are: to an unprecedented extent based on ever accelerated consumption; highly complex, flexible and open to internal contradiction in a way that is incompatible with any notion of ecological virtues or an ethics of ecological duty or responsibility; and inherently anti-
egalitarian and exclusive, and therefore represent a permanent source of social conflict. Thus, a profound value- and culture-shift has considerably weakened the societal appeal and political impact of the ecologist critique and vision. The normative frame of reference of ecological communication has comprehensively changed (Blühdorn, 2013, p. 19).

Without its normative foundation, ecologism no longer provides a unifying moral imperative for dealing with the ecological crisis.11

2.2 ‘Sustaining the unsustainable’: The politics of unsustainability

According to Blühdorn, this post-ecologist cultural Zeitgeist at least partially explains the failure of environmental politics in consumer-capitalist democracies to come to grips with an existential ecological/climate crisis. Rather than simply a measurable physical condition, unsustainability in the political sense is ‘an incompatibility between certain empirical phenomena or developments and established social values and expectations.’ In such a situation, the physical conditions of unsustainability can be sustained for quite some time (although not indefinitely) through meeting the following conditions: i) reducing environmental side effects by means of techno-managerial approaches; ii) managing the social impact of environmental conditions ‘through displacement, externalisation [distancing] or enhanced security systems’; and iii) as long as ‘social norms and expectations can be adapted in such a way that the social and ecological side effects are no longer perceived as unacceptable,’ in other words, normalizing the crisis. These ‘reframing processes’ constitute ‘the performance of seriousness,’ the purpose of

11 Oates provides ample evidence that the primary propositions of ecologism, particularly the need for limits on economic growth, social control of technology, and acknowledgment of the intrinsic value of nature, were widely accepted during the 1970s and 1980s and were routinely represented in mainstream environmental discourse (Oates, 1989).
which is to ‘cope with the dilemmas posed by the project to sustain the unsustainable' (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 44).

Paradoxically, notes Blühdorn, this simulative politics is playing out in the very countries that have supported the unprecedented accumulation of scientific knowledge about environmental change and where several decades of environmental movement campaigning has established an equally unprecedented societal awareness of the sustainability crisis. Despite this, while the polity generally acknowledges the ecological predicament and aspires to the progressive/modernist goal of sustainability, in truth, there is little appetite for the kind of transformation in social relations that would be required to meet the goal. Contemporary eco-politics has become schizophrenic: on the one hand, the rhetoric of sustainability is warmly embraced by, and indeed is expected of, political leaders and parties. On the other, any policy proposal that would seriously disrupt the unsustainable status quo is likely to be roundly punished. Political columnist George Monbiot captures this pathology in a 2003 column in *The Guardian*:

> As people in rich countries – even the professional classes – begin to wake up to what science is saying, climate change denial will look as stupid as Holocaust denial or the insistence that AIDS can be cured by beetroot. But our response will be to demand that the government acts while hoping it doesn’t. We will wish our governments to pretend to act. We get the moral satisfaction of saying what we know to be right without the discomfort of doing it. My fear is that the political parties in most rich nation countries have already recognized this. They know we want tough targets, but that we also want those targets to be missed. They know that we will grumble about their failure to curb climate change, but that we will not take to the streets. They know that nobody ever rioted for austerity (Monbiot, 2003 quoted in Barry, 2012, p. 18).

The management of social and ecological unsustainability, then, becomes the central concern of late-modern politics.
Whatever its declared commitments, its primary concern is to manage the inevitable consequences, social and ecological, of the resolve to sustain the established order. Rather than trying to suspend or even reverse the prevailing logic of unsustainability, its main pre-occupation is to promote societal adaptation and resilience to sustained unsustainability (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 20-21).

This is done through the construction of narratives in which modern societies reassure themselves that they fully recognize the seriousness and urgency of the sustainability crisis, have a clear understanding of what action is required, and then command the political will and ability to implement it. Blühdorn suggests the discourses such as sustainable development, ecological modernization, the science of sustainability, and green consumerism which ‘render post-industrial consumer capitalism socially and ecologically benign’ all fall into this category (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 21). Simulative politics – the politics of performance - takes the symbolic politics of critical theory to the next level as these narratives of reassurance are constructed and taken up by a wide spectrum of society – virtually everyone is complicit.

These societal self-descriptions...create discursive spaces in which individuals, collective actors and society at large can present and experience themselves as ecologically virtuous and committed without compromising the post-ecologist value preferences which condition their thinking and behaviour otherwise (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 21).

In short, this societal pathology serves to reinforce and sustain late-consumer capitalism which is itself unsustainable.

Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism and the politics of unsustainability has generated spirited responses from eco-political scholars. Early reviews of the full-length treatment of his theory (Blühdorn, 2000) are mixed. While Brulle calls it ’a work of considerable elegance and insight' and 'an original and compelling argument [that] merits our serious
consideration,' he interprets it as 'a provocative challenge to both the environmental movement and to the intellectuals associated with it' (Brulle, 2002, p. 498). Brulle and Barry both criticize Blühdorn’s characterization of ecologism as an all-embracing moral code, the dissolution of which has led to a post-moral, post-ecologist culture. This, they assert, misrepresents the history of the environmental movement and its 'struggles over the definitions of issues and what constitutes environmental problems' - these have always been contested (Brulle, 2002, p. 497; Barry, 2004, p. 128). Barry is particularly defensive over Blühdorn’s characterization of the radical philosophical assumptions of ecologism (and by extension the environmental and green political movements and their organic intellectuals, as Gramsci would call them) as ‘exhausted.’ Calling it a work of ‘happy nihilism’ of the post-modern 'post-ecologist,' Barry summarizes Blühdorn’s thesis as follows:

The dynamics of development of modern society are going in an anti-ecological direction. Ecologically-committed thinkers are therefore naïve and unrealistic in thinking they can alter this. Therefore they should abandon 'castle-building' and get 'sociologically real,' that is seek to accommodate and tailor the 'ecological project' to the 'reality' of advanced, market-based, high consumption society…. his conclusion is that the best green politics can hope for, by way of influencing modern society, is a technocratic, elitist, 'reformist' version of ecological modernization…. Or, to put it bluntly, the best green politics can (and ought to) do is to 'green' capitalism (Barry, 2004, p. 127).

This, however, is a serious misreading of the text.\(^{12}\) Blühdorn’s thesis is not prescriptive, that is, he is not proposing a post-ecologist environmentalism; instead, it is his exposition

\(^{12}\) Barry, in fact, admits to not fully grasping the thesis. He writes, 'The dense, complex, sociologically-based theoretical framework and debates from which Blühdorn advances a 'post-modernist' sociological critique of green political theory do make it difficult to comprehend fully what the main arguments are…There is also a fundamental problem with distinguishing the explanatory and prescriptive/normative aspects of the book.' (Barry, 2004, p. 127). Brulle also misinterprets Blühdorn’s intent when he suggests that Blühdorn was proposing a post-ecologist environmentalism (Brulle, 2002, p. 495).
of the (regrettable) state of contemporary eco-politics. Further, he suggests, (perhaps a bit too forcefully), that the green movement has failed to grasp the profound cultural change that has rendered its 1970s normative grounding anachronistic in the 1990s. Without understanding this context and the politics of unsustainability to which it gives rise, green politics is naïve and risks perpetuating the very pathology that post-ecologism describes. Barry later concedes this point in a recent book in which he references Blühdorn as he lays out a political-ecologist agenda for what he calls ‘the politics of actually existing unsustainability’ (Barry, 2012, pp. 2, 6, 18-19). Notwithstanding his nod to the explanatory power of Blühdorn’s simulative politics of performance, the book title suggests a further criticism. Barry rejects the social constructionist characterization of the environmental crisis:

[R]ather than the subject of analysis being the actual, “real”, “material” degradation of the environment, and the variety of social, political, economic and cultural causes and consequences of this, the subject becomes the disintegration of the ecological issue as a linguistic/communicative problem (Barry, 2004, p. 129-130).

A ‘materialist’ environmentalism, on the other hand, is concerned with 'dominant political, cultural and economic forces’ which underpin the 'ecologically hazardous dynamic' of modern societies. Such approach is ‘concerned with the relationship between inequalities of power and marginalised groups and classes on the one hand and environmental degradation and quality of life and livelihoods on the other’ (Barry, 2004, p. 129-130). In his later writing, Blühdorn removes the green movement and its theorists as a target of criticism – an unnecessary yet serious distraction from his main purpose - and presents his thesis more objectively (Blühdorn, 2002, 2007a, 2007b; Blühdorn and Welsh, 2007). He also addresses the materialist-social constructionist dichotomy. Far
from denying the empirically measurable object, he defines unsustainability as ‘an incompatibility between certain empirical phenomena or developments and established social values and expectations’ (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 44). These clarifications and adjustments in emphasis provide openings for scholars to engage more constructively with Blühdorn’s post-ecologism in their own work.

While expressing a common critique of post-modernism (relativizing the “real”), in his fixation on Blühdorn’s social theorizing, Barry does not actually address what is of interest (to this author) in the post-ecologist proposition: the simulative politics of performance oriented to sustaining the unsustainable. Nevertheless, Barry does identify a serious weakness in Blühdorn’s theory: the notion that the post-ecologist condition of late-liberal consumer culture is the product of a systemic evolution of modernism, devoid of agency, decisions or politics. This, writes Barry, is a ‘profoundly conservative’ conception of society, one that ‘effectually “naturalises” the current development path of society, so that its underlying principles and dynamics are simply beyond human collective control’ (Barry, 2004, p. 128). To remove decision-making from the equation is to depoliticize the process, which is in itself a political act serving the interests of those who would wish their decisions to remain inscrutable.13 Further, a conception of any societal condition as the product of immutable forces severely constrains the theoretical

13 This insight is attributed to Dr. Cynthia Enloe in her keynote address to the Atlantic Provinces Political Science Association Conference, ‘Research for Social Change’, held September 25-27, 2015 at Mount St. Vincent University, Halifax, NS. The title of Dr. Enloe’s address was ‘What if they really did take us seriously? The risks and potential in doing feminist political analysis.’ It is also taken up by Kenis and Lievens (2014) their interpretation of post-ecologism.
and practical possibilities for counter-hegemonic interventions.¹⁴ For this reason, I propose a political-discursive rereading of Blühdorn, which I discuss in section 2.2.

2.3 Post-ecologism from a discourse-theoretical perspective

Even though Blühdorn’s descriptions of the contemporary cultural context of eco-politics in democratic consumer-capitalist societies is insightful and instructive in analyzing contextual barriers to effective interventions in the ecological crisis, I agree with Barry that he does not adequately account for the cultural-normative shifts he has described. Blühdorn invokes a systems theory of modernization, that cultural evolution is driven by the internal logic and adaptive capacity of the self-reproducing social system, including the evolution of cultural norms (Luhmann, 1989), to explain the cultural paradigm shift from ecologism to post-ecologism (Blühdorn, 2000). Such a conception is devoid of agency or interests, in other words, the political. Thus, he negates the possibility – indeed the likelihood - that discursive strategies, embedded as they are within a particular social-historical system, have a significant influence over the trajectory of modern society.

This, I suggest, is a serious weakness and a major inconsistency in Blühdorn’s approach. As Brulle notes, Blühdorn appropriates systems theory uncritically, nor does he

¹⁴ This is not to suggest that systems do not have internal forces or dynamics that propel them. Dynamic systems theory understands this process as one in which disturbances, reinforced by positive feedback loops, continually push the system away from equilibrium while negative feedback loops seek to re-establish equilibrium. System change occurs when negative feedbacks fail to counteract the forces moving the system far-from-equilibrium. At some point a threshold is crossed and the system tips into a new state. Thus, particular systems are neither inevitable nor permanent, since the new state is unpredictable. While natural phenomena can contribute to system destabilization, positive and negative feedback loops are also the results of real (conscious or unconscious) decisions, actions and events energized by real actors, occurring over very long or relatively short historic time frames. That said, decisions are always contextual and therefore constrained by the specific characteristics of the system at any point in historic time. (Meadows, 2008; Wallenstein, 2004b).
acknowledge the value judgements implicit in it (Brulle, 2002, p. 497). In modernization theory, agency as a driver of cultural change is unacknowledged. Yet Blühdorn’s own initial theorizing is premised on his account of the ecological crisis as a normative construction of the green political movement in the 1970s and 1980s, and which is now politically ‘exhausted’ because its public salience depends upon a cultural value system that no longer exists. In other words, he ignores the insights of social constructionism in his account of the post-ecologist turn, while at the same time characterizing the environmental crisis as a normative construct.

This analytical gap is most significant in his account of the post-ecologist turn, the timing of which coincides with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the solidification of the neoliberal consensus in industrial/post-industrial countries. While Blühdorn acknowledges this point, he does so only incidentally and so the connection between the two is underdeveloped in his writing. From a Gramscian perspective, however, this period would represent a historical conjuncture brought about by a complex confluence of socio-political forces which destabilize the system, and the strategic actions of elites to push it in a particular direction (Harvey, 2007; Swarts, 2013). As such, it warrants a great deal of attention as a study of how normative change comes about at the hands of what Swarts calls ‘norm entrepreneurs.’ In his account of economic transformation in Anglo-American democracies, Swarts analyzes neoliberalism

...as a prime example of the social construction of political and economic change. In this account, neoliberalism is presented as, in large part, an ideational and discursive construction – what I shall call a “political-economic imaginary” – promoted by elites as part of a strategy to reset the basic parameters, expectations and shared norms of the relationship between the state, society and the (inter-)national economy (Swarts, 2013, p. 5).
Far from the inevitable result of an inexorable force of modernization, the neoliberal turn is brought about as

…norm entrepreneurs successfully persuaded and coerced other social actors to either agree with or at least acquiesce to their proposed “reforms.” The long result was the shift toward a new set of intersubjective norms about appropriate economic policies, the role of the state in the economy, and the proper expectations and aspirations of citizens, indeed the very nature of an advanced industrial democracy in a globalizing world – in short, a new political-economic imaginary [original emphasis] (Swarts, 2013, p. 5).

In other words, the neo-liberal turn was not inevitable, nor is it immutable.

Despite this weakness, Blühdorn’s post-ecologist theory provides an important heuristic for interpreting contemporary eco-politics. Further, he actively engages a constructionist approach in his proposal of a post-ecologist research agenda as outlined in Section 1.3. In it, he stresses the discursive nature of simulative politics, invoking ‘reframing processes’ which normalize the eco-crisis, and the construction of narratives that ‘perform seriousness’ while leaving contradictory norms and beliefs intact. Consequently, I propose that a post-structuralist discourse-theoretical perspective on the ‘politics of unsustainability’ would address the problem of accounting for the post-ecologist cultural shift, and of a subsequent politics of unsustainability, and inform a strategic response on the part of green-political movements.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe employ post-structuralist discourse theory to interrogate the political processes that reinforce and/or threaten the reproduction of capitalist society (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Post-structuralist discourse theory asserts that social relations, including relations of power, are not grounded in essentialist subject positions (as in Marxist theory) but are constructed through discursive practices.
Integrating neo-Gramscian processes of social antagonism and hegemony with the contingent contextuality of post-structuralist thought, they offer a perspective on discourse theory that is grounded in political activism. Both were engaged in Latin American emancipatory struggles before becoming scholars, and this has shaped their intellectual development, particularly how they have read neo-Marxist theory (Torfing, 1999, pp. 15-16). Their experience revealed a lacuna separating structural neo-Marxism on which liberation struggles were theorized, from the realpolitik of Latin American politics. Furthermore, neo-Marxism could not adequately account for the rise of the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which were not class-based and therefore did not conform to predetermined identities based on economic relations.

[In Marxist structuralism]..., the concrete is reduced to the abstract. Diverse subject positions are reduced to manifestations of a single position; the plurality of differences is either reduced or rejected as contingent; the sense of the present is revealed through its location in an a priori succession of stages. It is precisely because the concrete is in this way reduced to the abstract, that history, society and social agents have, for orthodoxy, an essence which operates as their principle of unification (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 21-22).

This reduction of the concrete to the abstract fails to account for the specificities of processes, contexts, and agents that define particular political struggles, nor is it sufficient to simply declare these specificities as contingent on essential economic infrastructure and the binary relations defined by that infrastructure. By integrating Gramsci’s concept of hegemony and Foucault’s insight that all relations are discursive, and all discourses have a genealogy by which they are shaped and understood, Laclau and Mouffe theorize political struggles as grounded in the discursive construction of identities and social
relations (Torfing, 1999, pp. 70-71). The primary contours of their political theory of discourse are as follows.

2.4 A political theory of discourse

Discourse can be defined as a decentred structure in which meaning is constantly negotiated and constructed; both physical objects and social practices are considered meaningful parts of discourse (Torfing, 1999, p. 85). Discourses are constructed within a particular theoretical horizon or ‘discursive field’ which assigns meaning to all objects of discourse based on a ‘socially constructed system of rules and significant differences’ (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 3). In response to what critics have called the ‘descent into discourse,’ Laclau and Mouffe write,

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God’, depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p.108)

Howarth and Stavrakakis give the example of a forest. It certainly exists in a material form and it performs material functions in the context of the landscape in which it is located. However, in the social realm, the forest is constructed in many different ways, e.g. as a source of economic wealth, a recreation area, a wilderness, a habitat for wildlife, a carbon sink, a source of spiritual inspiration or of fear and danger; it can be a Crown resource, public trust or indigenous territory; it can have instrumental or intrinsic value.
Each of these meanings can be associated with a concrete discourse and the subject-position of social actors, whether a forestry corporation, a naturalist, bureaucrat, politician, environmentalist, angler or indigenous person (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 2).

Concrete discourses attempt to fix or monopolize the nature and meaning of social formations consistent with particular ideological principles. Each concrete discourse contains, in the positive, certain historically and culturally contingent ‘conditions of possibility’ for social relations (Laclau, 1990, p. 220), and, in the negative, the frontier or limit of social formations (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000). No discourse can exhaust the totality of all possible meanings and identities for all time. Nor can a concrete discourse accommodate the range of potential meanings that is available at any point in time. Only those meanings and identities that are consistent with the central ideological principle that underlay the discourse can be positively integrated into it. Meanings that contradict the ideological principle around which a discourse is organized cannot be affirmed by it without threatening the internal logic of the discourse itself.

By necessity, then, a concrete discourse that seeks to explain or construct social ‘reality’ establishes both conditions of possibility and conditions of impossibility. The process of excluding certain possibilities creates what Laclau calls a ‘constitutive outside’ and thus a dislocation or decentring of the discursive structure (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 13). According to Laclau,

a discourse, or a discursive formation establishes its limits by means of excluding a radical otherness that has no common measure with the differential system from which it is excluded, and that therefore poses a constant threat to that very system (quoted in Torfing, 1999, p. 124).
The radical other undermines the representation or identity of the ‘inside’ as a totalizing or universal system of meaning, and thereby constitutes its meaning in the negative. This 'blocking' of identity creates a dislocation of meaning which in turn gives rise to social antagonisms. The antagonism is against those agents, systems or institutions that are perceived as preventing the full realization of a group’s identity (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 10). The ‘very essence of politics,’ according to Laclau, is ‘the management of the incompleteness of society’ created by this ‘constitutive split’ (quoted in Torfing, 1999, p. 183).

The discursive process of normalizing one set of social relations, while marginalizing others, is a hegemonic process. Hegemony as conceived by Gramsci is the process by which political, ethical and intellectual elites construct through discourse a collective (‘national-popular’) will (Torfing, 1999, p. 108). This, in turn, legitimizes decisions made in the name of the collective. In liberal-capitalist systems, maintaining hegemony involves a continual process whereby hegemonic actors discursively establish/re-establish the legitimacy of hegemonic institutions. Hegemony is achieved and maintained through articulation, a discursive process by which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic groups compete to ‘fix’ meaning and identities in accordance with a particular ideological principle, or ‘nodal point.’ Ideologies try to manage dislocation by articulating a chain of signifiers (previously belonging to other, now dislocated discourses) around a new nodal point (accepted as) incarnating an ultimate fullness of meaning and thus as suitable to hegemonize a certain discursive field and appeal (as an object of identification) to the respective audiences to which it is addressed (electorate, party membership, public opinion, and so on) (Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 101).
Through this process, a concrete discourse or discursive formation is constructed (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, pp. 105, 112).

Laclau introduces the concepts of myth and social imaginary, (the term used by Swarts to describe the construction of neoliberalism), to characterize the hegemonic process. A social imaginary is a hegemonic discourse which establishes a ‘horizon' or 'absolute limit’ of possible meanings; in other words, it provides the filters or criteria by which reality is understood. The effect of a hegemonic discourse is to construct a particular social formation in which certain relations, systems, identities and meanings are normalized and institutionalized, while others are excluded. Dislocated elements hover at the frontier of the social imaginary, implying 'the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps' (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 136). These become points of contestation in the hegemonic process in a dialectical, not linear or teleological, process. Because the frontier of a social imaginary is constantly being contested, there can never be a stable hegemonic political project. A hegemonic discourse attempts to remain so through ongoing re-articulation of contested discursive elements, in an attempt to minimize opposition and maintain social order. One hegemonic strategy is to redefine the excluded elements so that they can be partially integrated into the hegemonic option (fully integrating them would undermine the ideological principle of the hegemonic discourse). Another strategy is to affirm rhetorically their potential, while preventing their actual realization (Torfing, 1999, p. 68).

Persuasion involves making somebody, whose beliefs have already been put into crisis...give up one set of beliefs in favour of another by offering a more or less thoroughgoing redescription of the world which, on a pragmatic basis,
presents the new set of beliefs as the more suitable, appropriate or likely…. Although persuasive re-descriptions are not guided by the telos of a rational truth, they are likely to provide good reasons and strong motivations for someone to adopt a new set of beliefs… (Torfing, 1999, p. 67-8).

Each re-description of the world expresses a particular rationality that is contingent on the ideological principle underlying the discourse, which conversely attributes ‘irrationality’ to the discourses of opponents in the public sphere. At play is an appeal to pragmatism – a rationalization that says more is to be gained by acceding to the hegemonic discursive formation than by opposing it.

The many competing identities and interests in society preclude the development of a monolithic social imaginary, or a stable hegemonic political project. The hegemonic process is opposed by social actors associated with alternative conceptions of reality who construct and disseminate counter-hegemonic discourses, or ‘myths’ - utopian representations of society or social relations. At the discursive frontier of hegemonic discourse, counter-hegemonic discourses also attempt to re-articulate dislocated elements in an attempt to ‘suture’ their dislocation. A counter-discourse that successfully sutures social dislocations by incorporating a great number of social demands is transformed into a social imaginary, thus becoming hegemonic (Howarth & Stavrakakis, 2000, p. 15). Discourses of oppositional movements constitute not just binary polarities, but a distinctive discursive field,

...an oppositional form to which symbols of a wide variety become attached. Nor are they simple oppositions that only negate each other; they anchor widely separated ends of a continuum, thereby defining a space or field in which discourse can be framed...[This discursive field constructs] an alternative source of authority with which to challenge the authority of prevailing ideas (Wuthnow, 1989, p. 555).
Social change processes, then, can be understood as discursive struggles against hegemonic systems, in which counter-hegemonic social actors attempt to articulate-rearticulate a new collective will or social imaginary. This is how Laclau and Mouffe characterize the new social movements which formed in the 1970s. They attribute the emergence of various emancipatory movements (e.g. women’s, minorities, peace, Third World, and ecology) to the development of social antagonisms in the wake of the patriarchal commodification and bureaucratization of most dimensions of social life in the post-war period. The ecology movement in liberal democracies, for example, is seen as a reaction against the pollution, waste and environmental destruction inherent in industrialism. This resistance was inspired by ‘an egalitarian imaginary’ articulated in a renewed liberal-democratic discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 161).

While Laclau and Mouffe reject Gramsci’s essentialist characterization of hegemonic and ‘subaltern’ actors, his notion of a historic conjuncture that provides the context for the development of counter-hegemonic discourses is useful. Gramsci writes,

[In studying a structure, it is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed “conjunctural” (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental)….When an historical period comes to be studied, the great importance of this distinction becomes clear. A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the “conjunctural”, and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organise. These forces seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative, the]
accomplishment of certain historical tasks (imperative, because any falling short before an historical duty increases the necessary disorder, and prepares more serious catastrophes).... (The demonstration in the last analysis only succeeds and is “true” if it becomes a new reality, if the forces of opposition triumph; in the immediate, it is developed in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces (Gramsci, 1999, pp. 399-401).

While Gramsci was writing in the historical context of the Communist opposition to Mussolini’s Fascist regime in Italy, we can also understand the post-war period of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population and economic growth in Western democracies as a historic conjuncture. During this period, the ‘incurable structural contradictions’ between industrialism, followed by consumer capitalism, and protection of the natural world become apparent, generating the existential ecological crisis and its associated social dislocations.

Modern environmentalism, then, can be seen as a conjunctural movement responding to this crisis by engaging ‘in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political, and juridical polemics’ or counter-hegemonic discursive struggle. Perceptively, Gramsci understood the potential for such a historic conjuncture to persist over time, sustained as hegemonic actors employ their considerable discursive resources to maintain the status quo: institutionalizing demands, delegitimizing the opposition, normalizing crisis, simulating action. Accordingly, the environmental opposition persists over time, changing form and adapting discourses in what Gramsci called the ‘war of position.’ Simultaneously, the ascendency of neo-liberalism in this period can also be seen as a counter-hegemonic play, specifically against the hegemonic Keynesian welfare state, with great significance for the radical green movement. This phenomenon illustrates the
complex, non-binary nature of hegemonic struggle, and the non-essential nature of social antagonisms.

Laclau and Mouffe’s neo-Gramscian political theory of discourse, then, provides a framework for analysis that recognizes Gramsci’s emphasis on culture as a stabilizing force for hegemonic systems, as well as the centrality of agency, propelled by various motivations, in social and political dynamics. Combined with Gramsci’s theory of historical conjuncture, they provide a lens through which the possibility of a post-ecologist turn, and the dynamics of a related politics of unsustainability might be understood.

2.5 Eco-politics as discursive struggle

The application of political discourse theory has transformed environmental politics research by informing the study of power effects produced by and built into environmental discourse (Feindt & Oels, 2005). From a discourse-theoretical perspective we can understand the construction of a politics of the environment as the manifestation of hegemonic struggles to define or articulate a collective understanding of the existential environmental problematic, and how it might be solved (Hajer, 1995; Stavrakakis, 2000). According to Hajer, the primary goal of hegemonic actors is to manage the social conflict or dislocations that arise from environmental degradation, and only secondarily is it to solve existential problems (Hajer, 1995, p. 2). Challenged by the emergent discourse of ecological crisis, hegemonic actors attempt to re-align the public-environmental interest with that of dominant institutions by discursively shaping public perception of the environmental problematic and the range of legitimate responses to it. Whether the
environmental problematic appears as a floating element that can be internalized through incremental change, or as an irreparable dislocation that fundamentally challenges liberal-capitalist institutions, depends on the way in which the problems are framed and defined:

Problems can be conceptualized in such a way that they pose an institutional challenge, they can be scaled down so as to become institutionally manageable incidents, or they can be seen as processes of structural change that are beyond human intervention (Hajer, 1995, p. 41).

Each of these three problem-conceptions poses different implications and stakes for the actors involved, since each implies different societal responses. The discursive struggle begins as the subtle process in which some definitions of issues are organized into politics while other definitions are organized out...The political conflict is hidden in the question of what definition is given to the problem, which aspects of social reality are included and which are left undiscussed (Hajer, 1995, pp. 42-43).

Counter-hegemonic actors develop competing discourses or storylines in a bid for influence in the public sphere, and consequently in the decision-making process. Once a storyline gains enough socio-political resonance, it starts to generate political effects. Rather than fixed storylines, however, the process is dialectical, as actors adapt their discourses to respond to new circumstances, information, contexts, and opposing discourses. Through this process, they construct ‘fields of action’ that are, nevertheless, constrained by convention, rules of the game, mutual positioning among actors, institutionalized routines, and changing contexts (Hajer, 1995, pp. 275-76).

Environmental conflicts, then, are not ‘semi-static plays in which actors have fixed and well-memorized roles.’ Environmental politics becomes an argumentative struggle in which actors not only try to make others see the problems according to their views but also try to position other actors in a specific way. Hence...actors...have an intuitive idea about discourse theory, in actual fact they constantly practice it....The argumentative interaction is a
key moment in discourse formation… [that can] explain the prevalence of certain discursive constructions (Hajer, 1995, pp. 53-54).

From a discourse-theoretical perspective, then, we can understand the emergence and evolution of a politics of the environment as the manifestation of hegemonic struggles to define or articulate a collective understanding of the existential environmental problematic. Environmental politics is no longer a question of the material facts of an eco-crisis, but one of contextual and ideological interpretation (Hajer, 1995, pp. 13-14; Stavrakakis, 2000).

The struggle over definition and interpretation of the environmental problematic is embedded in ‘a broader discursive landscape’ in which it interacts with discourses of economic growth, job creation, and, since the 1980s, neoliberal ideals of individualism and the minimalist state. Eco-discourses are thus infused with non-ecological elements representing competing interests. An example is the negotiations around the interpretation of the text of the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the original intent of which was to stem the calamitous rise of species extinctions. Instead, it has become a battleground for conflicts over gene prospecting, intellectual property rights, and royalties involving transnational corporations, nation-states, indigenous peoples, seed-saving farmers, and global networks of social and eco-justice organizations. In such cases, environmental discourses are often the site of expert and counter-expert disputes, which speaks to the 'fragility of knowledge and the contestability of basic concepts' as well as to power relations embedded in the discourse (Feindt & Oels, 2005, p. 162).

Kenis and Lievens apply the discourse-political perspective directly to Blühdorn’s conception of post-ecologism. They agree with Blühdorn’s general analysis of post-
ecological politics; however, they suggest his attribution of the post-ecologist turn to a (fatalistic) process of modernization obscures any constructive points of intervention.

‘The political’ is a discursive order in which conflict, division and the exercise of power – the constants of social relations according to Laclau and Mouffe – are evident; in other words, social relations are problematized and the systems that produce them are contestable. A political reinterpretation of the post-ecologist turn illuminates the political - and therefore actionable - process behind the demise of authentic eco-politics (Kenis & Lievens, 2014).

To this end, Kenis and Lievens re-read the post-ecologist turn as a particular manifestation of a broader trend of post-political discourse. Post-political discourse conceals such conflicts and normalizes their systemic roots. This is achieved when problems, in our case ecological problems, are represented not as systemic contradictions, but as conditions amenable to technocratic-managerial interventions and consensus decision-making within the dominant paradigm.

What remains invisible in post-politics is the fact that a social order is fundamentally contingent, and that grounding a social order always generates exclusions, and therefore, antagonisms (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 6).

The effect of this hegemonic process is to close off the possibility of discursively contesting the dominant paradigm, thereby delegitimizing discourses that attempt to do so. Eco-political discourse is particularly vulnerable to post-politics, since ‘nature’ is generally represented as external to the social, so that there is no privileged ‘subject’ of environmental struggle or specific object of environmental change. The actors have become universalized: we are all complicit in environmental degradation (nobody in
particular is to blame), and, as President George H. W. Bush asserted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil, we are all environmentalists now (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 9-10). In short, environmental concern has been institutionalized and therefore marginalized as a site of struggle. From a discourse-political perspective, such institutionalization represents a hegemonic re-articulation of environmental concerns. Discourses of ecological modernization, including such variants as sustainable development and green growth (see Section 2.6), which are intended to marginalize the radical discourse of ecologism,

present themselves as taking the environmental crisis very seriously while at the same time refraining from any fundamental questioning of existing social systems and structures...

[T]hese new eco-political discourses go together with a call for all-round cooperation and the rejection of conflict. Confronted with the urgency and scale of the challenge, it is argued, we no longer have the luxury to engage in time-consuming struggles that only hamper the cooperative action that is needed now. That is why these discourses can be called fundamentally post-political (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 2).

Blühdorn and Welsh (2007) also recognize that the idea of sustainable development has been appropriated by mainstream politics, and re-articulated as amenable to management by the ‘state/corporate nexus,’ delivered through public/private partnerships (quoted in Kenis & Lievens, p. 13). The success of strategies of depoliticization, represented by the effectiveness of new eco-political discourses, depends on maintaining the invisibility of the hegemonic process itself. Conversely, the post-ecologist turn becomes amenable to repoliticization through counter-hegemonic discourses which expose underlying conflicts and problematize the notion of consensus (Kenis & Lievens, 2014, p. 13-15).
Læssøe provides empirical evidence of a depoliticizing post-ecologist politics in his study of the dynamics of citizen participation in environmental decision-making in Denmark. He found that environmentalism had changed from a confrontational grassroots movement which contested values and political ideology, to a professionalized sector engaged in consensual actions and with mundane preoccupations such as ‘household technologies.’ He concludes that a post-ecologist orientation has marginalized any conflicts around the normative assumptions underlying official sustainable development agendas, thereby depoliticizing citizen engagement.

Interestingly, this marginalization of conflict potentials has not come about through conscious and strategic top-down efforts to replace the heroic bottom-up grassroots movement with mainstreamed participation. Instead there has been an incremental realignment process promoted not least by relatively open-minded governmental initiatives that have actively engaged environmentalists. This has been a process of inclusion and levelling that has narrowed the scope of citizen participation on sustainable development (Læssøe, 2007, p. 232).

The idea that this process is not a strategic goal of particular actors is arguable, of course. The often explicit objective of such processes to reduce or eliminate conflict is itself a strategic-political goal, the effect of which is to disguise the real power relations inherent in consensus-building processes. Constructing conflict as regressive and obstructionist, as the discourse of consensus-building does, delegitimizes confrontational strategies of activist groups, and often results in tactical decisions by such groups to engage with conflict-management processes in order to “stay in the game.” Elite actors are the beneficiaries of such processes, as environmentalists abandon their external power base - the ability to mobilize public opinion - when they move from a position of exclusion to
inclusion. Nevertheless, Læssøe’s analysis of this phenomenon supports Blühdorn’s politics of simulation, the purpose of which is to manage the conditions of unsustainability rather than resolve them. While not using the term post-political, Blühdorn cites the ‘depoliticisation of the ecologist critique and the techno-managerial reframing of environmental issues within the paradigm of ecological modernisation’ as one of four signifiers of the post-ecologist turn. The other three - ‘the gradual normalisation of the environmental crisis;’ ‘the diversification – and thus relative weakening – of eco-political values and imperatives;’ and ‘the becoming prevalent of ideals of identity, self-determination and self-realisation’ (Blühdorn 2013, p. 19) – can all be read as social constructions, the result of discursive processes.

2.6 Ideological paradigms and discursive formations

As discussed in Section 2.4, discursive formations can include a diversity of elements, but ultimately, they are ideologically bounded so as to exclude fundamentally contradictory notions. The ideological nodal point that ultimately differentiates eco-discourse formations has to do with competing conceptions of the human-nature dynamic. In this section, I construct the outlines of three ideological paradigms within which eco-discourses can be categorized: a hegemonic paradigm, a counter-hegemonic

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15 The dynamics around this process are very complex and worthy of in-depth treatment. A case can be made, for instance, that the rise of government-sponsored multi-stakeholder consultation processes in Canada in the mid-1980s and continuing until after the Earth Summit in 1992 in an attempt to manage conflict over environmental demands, spelled the demise of the popular environmental movement as a political force in Canada for over a decade. Although the movement started to rebound in the early 2000s around the issue of climate change, it was effectively dispatched once again by the Harper government’s election in 2006. It remains to be seen whether it will resurrect itself under the Liberal administration elected in October 2015.
paradigm, and the discursive frontier of contested elements. I propose that the eco-ideological “line in the sand,” which distinguishes hegemonic and counter-hegemonic nodal points, centres on the question of limits, in particular whether or not there are ultimate bio-physical limits which constrain human endeavor (Clow, 2015). The dominant paradigm assumes that there are no material limits on the scale and scope of human enterprise. The counter-hegemonic paradigm presumes that the finitude of Earth ultimately imposes bio-physical and associated ethical constraints on the human reach. At the frontier-edge of this ideological dualism, limits are perceived as relative to the stage of development of human ingenuity, more theoretical than real.

These ideological paradigms, then, differentiate discursive formations that contain a number of characteristic propositions or frames. These frames, in turn, constitute distinctive eco-political discourses: the ‘no limits’ presupposition is one of several elements of technocentrism, while the idea of ultimate limits is embedded in an ecocentric paradigm (Carter, 2007, p. 77). Below I outline the primary assertions and their presuppositions associated with these paradigms.

2.6.1 The hegemonic paradigm: No limits

The ‘no limits’ paradigm is integral to liberal-capitalist political economies. While Keynesian interventionism and market fundamentalist neoliberalism represent quite different perspectives on the role of the state, neither pays much heed to the environment. In both models, economic growth is the central goal of public policy, expanding material wealth the mark of progress, and science and technology the tools by which progress will
be achieved. The preeminent Keynesian policy goal in the post-war West was full employment. This, however, created a production-growth treadmill:

Whereas in the past we needed to have more people at work because we needed the goods and services they produce, now we have to keep increasing production simply to keep people employed (Victor, 2008).

The effect was that, over the decade of the 1950s, GNP growth gradually became a policy end in itself, 'a prophylactic or remedy for all the major current ailments of western economies' (Victor, 2008, p. 14 quoting Arndt, 1978). Economic growth policy was motivated by several goals, including:

- desire for continued material progress, the greater ease of dealing with competing claims when economic output is growing, making other problems such as achieving full employment more manageable, maintaining a 'cheerful state' in society, harking back to Adam Smith, and keeping up with the others.
- It was this final motive of international rivalry that gave "rapid growth a status among the other objectives of economic policy of the major (and even the minor) powers almost independent of rational assessment of benefits in terms of standard of living" (Victor, 2008, p. 14, quoting Arndt, 1978, p. 76).

The spread of this policy doctrine is evident in the founding charter (1960) of the OECD which set as its aims to ‘achieve the highest sustainable economic growth.’ All trade and fiscal policies ‘are best regarded as instrumental policies in the general pursuit of faster, more robust economic growth (Victor, 2008. pp. 18-19). No growth means interest payments cannot be made: businesses default, jobs are lost and consumption contracts. Businesses take out fewer loans so no new money enters the economy (at least without government stimulation made possible by incurring new debt) (Heinberg, 2011). Thus the economic growth model contains a built-in positive feedback mechanism that compels policy-makers to attempt to maintain economic expansion at whatever cost.
In the 1970s when capital accumulation began to slow under Keynesian economics, the neoliberal ideological project was launched in order to stimulate growth and re-establish high rates of capital accumulation. David Harvey summarizes its basic tenets:

The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices [including guaranteeing] ... the quality and integrity of money, [setting up] ... those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) to their own benefit” (Harvey, 2007, p. 2).

Swarts adds to this typology the conception of the state as facilitator and custodian of market mechanisms, rather than an alternative to them. This entails a commitment to the removal of social welfare benefits that are seen as disincentives to market participation; subordinating social justice principles to perceived economic imperatives; defense of labour market flexibility and the promotion of efficiency as measured by short-term cost-benefit analysis; confidence in the use of private finance in public projects, and more generally, ‘in the allocative efficiency of market and quasi-market mechanisms in the provision of public goods’ (Swarts, 2013, pp. 3-4). These principles are translated into environmental policy through the introduction of so-called market-based policy instruments to control pollution, and the de-regulation of industrial development. In this view, virtually all public policies are subservient to economic growth, not complementary to it.
Whereas classical economics holds that value is created through labour acting on resources, both of which are physical and therefore limited entities, neoclassical economics determines value to be not in the resource itself but inherent in its utility, an abstraction subject to theoretically infinite potential manifestations. Thus, the underlying assumptions in conventional economic theory are disconnected from the physical basis of economic production (Daly, 1996; Nadeau, 2003). Accordingly, eco-political discourses derived from the ‘no limits’ paradigm either i) fail to acknowledge any bio-physical limits to human activity (the idea is simply “not on the radar” and therefore ignored); or ii) directly challenge the notion of limits. Its ideological nodal point is a presupposition of infinite capacity of the human intellect to overcome any conceivable barrier to ‘progress,’ including barriers posed by nature, and the non-satiation of individual desires (Leiss, 1994). Two distinct eco-political discourses within this discursive formation are the cornucopian-promethean discourse and the domination of nature discourse, described below. Both arise from the Enlightenment idea of progress, a central paradigm of the Western worldview. As a philosophy of history, it holds that humanity has progressed ‘from pre-agrarian simplicity to the builders of computers and space stations,’ due to the accumulation of knowledge made possible by 17th century scientific rationalism (LaFreniere, 2008, p. 146).

2.6.1.1 Cornucopian-Promethean discourse

Cornucopianism refers to the idea of the ‘resourceful earth,’ the endless potential for Nature’s bounty to support growth in populations and production (Simon & Kahn, 1984). Prometheanism relates to the equally boundless optimism in human ingenuity to drive the
human enterprise to ever higher achievements through science and technology, and an embracing of novelty and risk associated with new technologies. According to this perspective, left to their own devices, humans will automatically generate solutions to problems; indeed, problems themselves are welcome because they trigger human ingenuity in the search for solutions (Blühdorn, 2007b, p. 261). These largely implicit presuppositions, explicitly articulated in the book, *The Resourceful Earth* (Simon and Kahn, 1984), lie at the heart of modernity’s idea of progress (Merchant, 1982; Lasch, 1991; LaFreniere, 2008), and directly repudiate the notion of limits to growth. This worldview has the following elements:

- Human intellect is the ultimate, unlimited resource which therefore sits atop a hierarchy of value and agency.
- Nature is simply a vast store of energy and resources for human use;
- Given enough energy to do so, matter is infinitely transformable (therefore, everything is substitutable);
- Economic growth driven by scientific and technological innovation provides the means to overcome scarcity and deal with pollution (after the Environmental Kuznets Curve theory),\(^{16}\) given rational, supportive public policy;

\(^{16}\) This holds that the relationship between economic development and environmental pollution takes the shape of a bell curve whereby pollution increases in the early stages of economic development and then peaks at the point where the jurisdiction in question is wealthy enough to be able to afford technological solutions to those problems and the population is financially secure enough to demand investments in pollution control. After this point, pollution declines. While this model may hold for ambient air and water quality in growing economies, it does not hold for problems distant in time and space like global warming, nor does it account for the offshore movement of polluting production operations which has the effect of ‘distancing’ the impacts of production from the ultimate consumer (Victor, 2008, pp. 164-65).
• Since price, the ultimate indicator of scarcity, prompts the market to provide substitutes, and competition is the means by which innovation occurs to overcome scarcity, markets should replace states as environmental managers;

• Since individuals are problem solvers, population growth is not a problem; populations adapt to available resources; the fact that population has grown along with longevity suggests there are plenty of resources to support that population (Dryzek, 2013, p. 69).

An updated variation on Simon and Kahn’s Prometheanism is offered by Bjørn Lomborg, for whom the existential scarcity is not biophysical but financial (Lomborg, 2001). He argues that the capital available to solve the world’s problems is limited, and therefore should be allocated to those social problems in which investment will produce the greatest immediate return. He argues, for example, that scarce capital should be spent on poverty reduction rather than trying to “solve” climate change – a distant and therefore heavily discounted problem. Allocating scarce capital to economic growth and poverty reduction will lift people out of poverty, thereby increasing their resilience to withstand the impacts of climate change as they are manifested on once vulnerable populations (Lomborg, 2015).

2.6.1.2 Domination of nature discourse

The terms, "domination of nature"," control of nature" and “conquest of nature,” generally understood as being achieved by means of scientific and technological progress, are all found interchangeably in writings from the 16th century up to modern
utopianism (Leiss, 1994, p. 12; 15-16). In its earliest manifestation, Francis Bacon’s fervent advocacy of the potential of the scientific method and its mathematical rationality is summarized by Merchant:

The new man of science, [Bacon] wrote, must not think that the "inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden." Nature must be "bound into service" and made a "slave," put "in constraint," and "molded" by the mechanical arts. The "searchers and spies of nature" were to discover her plots and secrets. "By art and the hand of man," nature should be "forced out of her natural state and squeezed and molded." In this way, "human knowledge and human power meet in one" (Merchant, 2005).

Three hundred years later, a similar optimism is expressed by E. F. Murphy in light of the potential of new computerized technology:

It appears that a total control of nature is possible in a not very distant future. Many ecologists deny this, claiming that nature is too complex to be reflected in the simulation of any computer technology. Such assertions indicate that we have not yet managed to describe nature completely. Until the subject has been fully described, it is not likely that the controller can freely manipulate it with a superiority to natural processes. But the means of acquiring that complete description are already well developed, as are the economic and social conditions that make a greater control of nature necessary (from Governing Nature, 1967, quoted in Leiss, 1994, p. 18).

Thus we have as key propositions of the ‘domination of nature’ discourse, i) the positivist notion of scientific knowledge being put to the service of humankind, and ii) the exploitation of nature as natural resources and territory in the competition of economic and political interests in the life-world. Highly developed production systems, according to Leiss, which are organized to locate and transform new resources into commodities, are rationalized as meeting the ‘burgeoning requirements for individuals.’ The assumption is that it is possible to achieve a level of abundance that will satiate these
ever-increasing consumer demands (Leiss, 1994, p. 16). This fails to recognize, however, that advances in technology clearly enhance the power of ruling groups within societies and the relations among nations; and as long as there are wide disparities in the distribution of power among individuals, social groups, and states, technology will function as an instrument of domination’ (Leiss, 1994, p. 121).

Further, and ironically, the quest to master nature in the scientific sense has produced a ‘progress trap’ - the capacity to effectively destroy life on Earth (Wright, 2004).

2.6.2 The counter-hegemonic paradigm: Ultimate limits

According to post-structural discourse theory, at the heart of the hegemonic process is dislocation,

the moment of failure and subversion of a system of representation (that is, a political ideology, a social paradigm or even a scientific explanation…) .[that] introduces a rupture in a normal - or rather 'normalised' - order of things. [Dislocations]...have productive elements in that they generate new discursive projects which seek to suture or reconstitute reality (Stavrakakis, 2000, pp. 105-6).

In the hegemonic paradigm of progress driven by utility and economic growth, nature itself is dislocated, creating a particular lacuna in the psyche of Western culture.

Nature is "out there," inert and unimportant except as symbol, as means, perhaps as mere stage upon which the really important human activity is played out…. [T]hat activity might be economic, scientific, social, or even artistic. But the root attitude is identical: the world of nature is divided from the human world. It is a dead thing without meaning or value, except as an adjunct to the human (Oates, 1989, p. 221).

The effect of this view is three-fold: the separation of humans from the larger web of life in which they are embedded, an existential loss of meaning that comes from being part of
a greater whole, and a material ecological-climate crisis that threatens to undermine the very basis of human civilization.

Robyn Eckersley identifies three related crises to which the “new politics” of the post-war era responded. The first is a crisis of survival: pollution and resource exploitation are seen as direct threats to the survival of human civilization, giving rise to a particular apocalyptic discourse (Eckersley, 1992, p. 11). The second is a crisis of participation: a central concern of the new social movements of the 1970s is the corruption of democratic processes (Eckersley, 1992, p. 7). Finally, there is a crisis of culture: debate extends ‘beyond the realm of the physical limits to growth to the point of questioning the very notion of material progress and lamenting the social and psychological costs associated with the dominance of instrumental rationality’ (Eckersley, 1992, pp. 17-18). As the New Left fails to suture these dislocations, the counter-hegemonic paradigm of political-ecologism is consolidated by the discourses of radical environmental and green political movements of the 1960s and 1970s (LaFreniere, 2008; Leiss, 1994; Morito, 2002; Oates, 1989; Pepper, 1996; Worster, 1994). Rather than a retreat into metaphysical romanticism or superstition, ecologism itself is a product of modernity. With its key concepts of holism, balance, cooperation and the cybernetic system, it is a cosmology or belief system extrapolated from ecosystem science (Oates, 1989, p.5).

Human relations, ethics and morality, social questions, even aesthetics, philosophy and theology have all been recast in ecological form - that is, in ways which claim "nature" for their validation and starting point, and which apply the principles of the ecosystem to human life and thought. The ecological worldview begins with a factual science, but ends with conclusions about values (Oates, 1989, pp. 3-4).
The upshot of such a worldview is that humans must come to grips with their place in and dependence on the natural world. Planetary boundaries ultimately constrain the expansion of human enterprise, both in population size and the scale of consumption. Further, these limits include ensuring that non-human species have the bio-physical means to survive and flourish, whether for instrumental reasons (they are necessary for ecosystem function) or for ethical reasons (they possess intrinsic value). In short, it means putting humans in their biophysical place and limiting their footprint, lest they rupture their physical, psychological and spiritual lifelines.

While dominant political discourses attempt to hegemonize the ecological counter-discourse by incorporating floating ecological elements as peripheral elements in the hegemonic discursive formation, Dobson casts ecologism as a distinct political ideology.

...The Earth [is] the very foundation-stone of [ecologism’s] intellectual edifice...its finitude is the basic reason why infinite population and economic growth are impossible and why, consequently, profound changes in our social and political behaviour need to take place’ (Dobson, 2007, p. 12).

From a discourse-theoretical perspective, the systems-ecological view of nature ‘as something prior and superior that has to be used as a model for the refoundation of society’ represents a nodal point that cannot be accommodated by the hegemonic discourse (Stavrakakis, 1997, p. 271). The signifiers 'green' or 'nature'

constitute the centre, which determines the meaning of a whole chain of signifiers. It is because nature or a conception of the ecosystem constitutes the centre of the Green ideological discourse that Eckersley has described it as 'ecocentrism' (Stavrakakis, 1997, p. 271).

Ecologism is categorized as an emancipatory discourse, articulated by the new social movements of the 1970s. The political manifestation of ecologism is the Green political
movement which began at this time. The Cold War, economic decline, youth alienation and Third World development, as well as ecological destruction, defined the political agendas of the new social/politics movements, and are embodied in all Green political manifestos (Capra & Spretnak, 1984; Porritt, 1985; Gahrton, 2015). Accordingly, ecologism contains these other counter-hegemonic elements: social justice, post-patriarchal relations, grassroots democracy, peace, local self-reliance, decentralization, respect for diversity, global responsibility, and intergenerational justice. These are not exclusive to ecologism; they are also articulated in, and in some cases form the nodal points of, other emancipatory discourses. In ecologism, however, these elements are rearticulated through the lens of a new ecocentric nodal point.

Green ideology [represents] a 'new' articulation (due to its nodal points) of 'pre-existing' elements (a certain conception of democracy, a conception of decentralization, etc.). Thus the differentiation between Green ideology and other discursive forms that include Green dimensions will be the location of the 'Green' component, that is, whether it constitutes a nodal point or a single moment in the periphery of the articulatory chain (Stavrakakis, 1997, p. 262).

Dobson identifies two distinguishing discourses of the political-ecologist paradigm that sets it apart from other counter-hegemonic discourses, and from what he calls (reformist) environmentalism: first, its limits to growth thesis, and second, its assertion of the intrinsic value of non-human nature (Dobson, 2007). These are discussed below.

2.6.2.1 Limits to growth discourse

The discourse of ‘limits to growth’ differentiates counter-hegemonic eco-political discourse from reformist environmentalism (Dobson, 2007).

Amid the welter of enthusiasm for lead-free petrol and green consumerism it is often forgotten that a foundation-stone of radical green politics is the belief that our finite Earth places limits on industrial growth. This finitude, and the
scarcity it implies, is an article of faith for green ideologues, and it provides the fundamental framework within which any putative picture of a green society must be drawn (Dobson, 2007, p. 53).

This presupposition of biophysical limits to growth stands in direct opposition to the hegemonic industrial-growth paradigm underpinning competing political ideologies. According to Porritt, from an ecological perspective, the dialectic between socialism and capitalism as largely superficial.

Both [capitalism and socialism] are dedicated to industrial growth, to the expansion of the means of production, to a materialist ethic as the best means of meeting people’s needs, and to unimpeded technological development. Both rely on increasing centralization and large-scale bureaucratic control and co-ordination. From a viewpoint of narrow scientific rationalism, both insist that the planet is there to be conquered, that big is self-evidently beautiful, and that what cannot be measured is of no importance. Economics dominates: art, morals and social values are all relegated to a dependent status....[T]he similarities between these two dominant ideologies are of greater significance than their differences....[T]hey are united in one, all-embracing ‘super-ideology’...[of] industrialism.... [T]his super-ideology, in that it is conditioned to thrive on the ruthless exploitation of both people and the planet, is itself the greatest threat we face (Porritt, 1985, p. 44).

This critique of industrialism is anchored in two influential publications. The 1972 best-seller, The Limits to Growth, reported on a ground-breaking Club of Rome computer modelling research project. The outcome demonstrated that at (then) present rates of resource exploitation, environmental degradation, consumption and population growth, economic growth would slow and then come to a halt by mid-21st century. The question was whether society would choose a planned transition to a steady-state economy, or continue with business-as-usual until natural limits foreclosed on further growth.
The second is *Small is Beautiful* which critiqued the dehumanizing scale and complexity and inherent danger of growth-centric technological gigantism (Schumacher, 1973).

Their impact was bolstered by two compelling metaphors that entered public discourse in the 1960s. The metaphor of ‘Spaceship Earth’ was popularized by writers such as, economist Kenneth Boulding (1973), Barbara Ward (1966) and Buckminster Fuller (1968). The second metaphor is that of the Earth as household or home, inspired by the first photograph of Earth from space in 1968, called ‘Earth Rise,’ which quickly became the defining image of the new environmental movement (Oates, 1989). The Earth as household invokes all the rules, systems and behaviours that are integral to harmonious living arrangements for all the household’s members, including maintaining the integrity of the home itself. In such closed systems, whether spaceship or household, the maximization of individual utility is a non-starter; cooperation is a necessity. So is the protection and maintenance of all the parts that make up the system. Everything is networked and interdependent; thus, the loss of any components compromises the integrity of the whole.

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17 The actual mechanism by which economic and population growth would end would be the scarcity of capital, not any one resource. The models suggested that eventually society would no longer be able to finance the responses to severe ecological disruption and pollution (the contemporary example would be climate change adaptation) and the substitution of scarce resources.

18 ‘Eco’ or ‘oikos,’ the root of ecology and economics means ‘home’. 
This ecological meta-narrative constructs an ecologically-rational vision of society that seeks to heal the rift between society and nature created by the technocentric-economistic hegemonic discourse.\textsuperscript{19} Ecologism asserts the unsustainability (and undesirability) of growth-centric political economies and the necessity of a steady-state economy in which total production and consumption shrink and eventually reach equilibrium, while available material goods are redistributed from over-consuming to under-consuming populations. Quantitative consumption is replaced by qualitative life improvements as the measure of ‘a good life; wants are distinguished from needs; and GDP is replaced by ecologically and socially sensitive indicators as the measure of collective wellbeing (Dobson, 2007, pp. 13-14).

While the growth critique had some currency in the 1970s and into the 1980s, it had been largely silenced by the 1990s. Significantly, it has been revived post-2000 in response to several assessments of planetary decline, as well as the near-collapse of the Western economy in 2008 (see for instance Heinberg, 2011; Jackson, 2009; Rubin, 2012; Speth, 2007; Victor, 2008). The 21\textsuperscript{st} century version of the limits discourse also includes a new discourse of ‘degrowth,’ which argues that because the human enterprise has already exceeded the Earth’s carrying capacity and is in overshoot (Catton, 1982; Wackernagel & Rees, 1996), simply stabilizing material throughput is no longer sufficient; over-

\textsuperscript{19} Full and partial articulations of alternative society are found in eco-discourses of social ecology (Bookchin, 1980), eco-socialism (Foster, 2009), deep ecology (Naess, 1988), eco-theology (McFague, 2001), eco-feminism (Plumwood, 1986), ‘environmentalism of the poor’ (Guha, 1997), eco-justice (Shiva, 2005), steady-state or ecological economies (Daly, 1973; Daly & Cobb, 1989; Jackson, 2009; Schumacher, 1973; Victor, 2008), and appropriate technology, right livelihoods and regenerative agriculture (Goldsmith et al, 1972; Schumacher, 1973). While these conceptions differ in emphasis, and may even contradict each other on certain elements (for example, deep ecology and social ecology), each of these eco-discourses has as its starting point the finitude of Earth and the limits that this places on human endeavour.
developed economies must contract, or ‘de-grow,’ if not by choice, then inevitably by the laws of nature (Kerschner, 2010; Latouche, 2010; Research & Degrowth, 2010).

2.6.2.2 Intrinsic value of nature discourse

The second distinct discourse arising from the ecologism paradigm asserts the intrinsic value of non-human nature possesses intrinsic value, thereby challenging the hegemonic notion of the instrumentality of nature in the service of human progress. Ecologism values all species in their own right, as well as the integrity of the system as a whole, thereby placing ethical obligations on humans’ interaction with and use of nature (Dobson, 2007, p. 15). Such a stance rejects administrative-rational approaches to environmental management such as risk analysis and cost-benefit analysis in determining acceptable levels of environmental degradation because they use quantitative metrics to assign relative values, including monetary value, to humans and non-human life, as well as ecosystems. It also rejects the commodification of elements of nature as required by market-based policy instruments.

2.6.3 The discursive frontier: the ‘relative limits’ paradigm

Hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses compete at the frontier of their discursive fields to define and re-define what is in contention, in this case the nature of the ecological problematic. Here we find hybrid discourses that attempt to bridge the divide between the two paradigms. Such discourses try to skirt nodal differences in order to achieve short term or pragmatic objectives. For our purposes, the discursive frontier situates the wide array of eco-political discourses which fall within what can be called a ‘relative limits’ paradigm. In these discourses, limits are relative to the current and future
capacity of human ingenuity and will: in colloquial terms, limits if necessary but not necessarily limits. Such discourses acknowledge the seriousness of environmental problems in the face of ecological limits, but express varying degrees of faith in the possibility of these problems being solved within and by existing institutions. Rather than seeing the eco-crisis as a manifestation of systemic flaws, the assertion is that the crisis arises either from i) gaps in scientific knowledge or technological capacity; ii) administrative or policy gaps; or iii) market failure.

Theoretically, each of these diagnoses fall within the management purview of existing institutions to address. Anchored by positivist assumptions about technological innovation, proposed responses range from expert-driven state intervention (administrative rationalism) to market-based policy instruments (economic rationalism) to greater public participation (democratic pragmatism) (Dryzek, 2013). Such discourses can be quite divergent in matters of agency, instruments and ethics, but they all share the presupposition that the capitalist economic model is a given, albeit with different emphases. In some, policy interventions must not unduly interfere with economic growth or capital accumulation since this is the only way wealth is generated. In others, the assumption is that it is futile to oppose growth, and so we must work within capitalism to achieve short-term environmental improvements. In both senses, economic growth is often invoked as a beneficial outcome of environmental policy.

Dobson reflects this ‘relative limits’ characterization in his ideological distinction between ecologism and environmentalism. The latter, he suggests, is rooted in a ‘managerial approach to environmental problems’ which assumes that such problems ‘can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production
and consumption’ (Dobson, 2007, p. 2). In other words, it is a reformist movement operating within the dominant paradigm of industrialism and compatible with (perhaps even central to) the idea of post-industrial ‘technological, affluent, service society’ (Dobson, 2007, p. 5).

Environmentalists do not necessarily subscribe to the limits to growth thesis, nor do they typically seek to dismantle ‘industrialism’. They are unlikely to argue for the intrinsic value of the non-human environment and would balk at any suggestion that we (as a species) ‘nurture our spiritual capacity’…. Environmentalists will typically believe that technology can solve the problems it creates, and will probably regard any suggestions that only a reduction in material throughput in the production process will provide for sustainability as willful nonsense. (Dobson, 2007, pp. 26-27).

Dobson may be unnecessarily harsh here, especially with those who accept that there are real biophysical limits to growth, but choose for strategic reasons not to engage in systemic critique. Interestingly, Paehlke makes this argument from a positive perspective, suggesting that environmentalism has become and will continue to be a progressive force in conventional contemporary politics precisely because of its discursive flexibility (Paehlke, 1989).

While Dobson and Paehlke focus on environmental movements, the ‘relative limits’ discursive frontier is arguably more significantly populated by institutional and business actors. The ongoing response of hegemonic actors to the political legitimacy of the environmental movement centres on the construction of discourses that attempt to colonize floating elements within counter-hegemonic environmental discourse. Thus we find here political and corporate commitments to environmental stewardship aimed at restoring their legitimacy in the face of public and environmental movement disapproval. Likewise, we find environmental actors adopting hegemonic discursive
elements in an effort to broaden the appeal of its agenda. The criticism of this stance is that because such eco-reformist discourses do not have a paradigmatically distinct nodal point, they are vulnerable to appropriation by dominant actors with greater resources to ‘win’ the discursive contest.

In the following sections, I summarize the key discourses within this paradigm.

2.6.3.1 Institutional discourses

Three discreet institutional eco-discourses can be understood as attempts to accommodate or hegemonize eco-political conflict: administrative rationalism, democratic pragmatism, economic rationalism (Dryzek, 2013).\textsuperscript{20} The first two – administrative rationalism and democratic pragmatism - are state responses to public demands for action to reduce environmental pollution. The third – economic rationalism - originates with the private interest-sponsored neoliberal discourse which has come to dominate state approaches to environmental management.

Dryzek characterizes these problem-solving discourses as ‘essentially agnostic about global limits, focusing instead on the work to be done in the here and now’ (Dryzek, 2013, p. 145). Such language denies their political nature, which Hajer captures in his distinction between problem closure and discursive closure. While policy analysis typically focuses on aligning an objectively defined problem with a rational, evidence-

\textsuperscript{20} To this list one could add scientific rationalism, although Dryzek includes this under the category of administrative rationalism. The argument for treating it separately could be that scientific knowledge is or should be considered as objective and therefore independent of bureaucratic, political or corporate considerations. I will follow Dryzek here. Rather than existing independently as objective truth, scientific knowledge is a tool (weapon?) that all parties to environmental debates incorporate into their own discourse according to their own interests.
based solution – problem closure – Hajer proposes that unless and until there is discursive closure on the nature and dynamics of the problem, any policy solution is likely to fail on one or more accounts (Hajer, 1995, pp. 21-23). In a constructivist context, an ‘environmental problem’ comprises ‘an historically constituted set of claims’ (Hajer quoting Forester, 1982, p. 43) by actors such as experts, politicians, business, environmental groups and the public.

These various constitutive elements of the problem…are nearly all contested. Yet at the same time one can see how out of these discursive fragments certain claims ‘somehow’ become related to one another and result in a particular definition of the policy problem. This process may be called the ‘discursive closure’ of policy problems (Hajer, 1995, p. 22).

Hajer’s discursive closure represents a process of discourse construction by institutional policy-makers in which those elements of competing claims that are essentially compatible are captured within a new discourse that ultimately maintains institutional hegemony. In addition to constructing a problem definition that can be accommodated within existing institutional and ideological constraints, discursive closure must also resolve or contain the social conflicts inherent in contested claims.

In this context the art of regulation is to find a way to secure credibility in the face of these contradictions, to render regulatory strategies acceptable, and to generate trust for the institutions that are put in charge of regulation. Here discursive strategies constitute an essential variable for political action both of policy-makers and their critics… (Hajer, 1995, p. 21-23).

In other words, discursive closure represents a struggle first and foremost to define environmental problems such that i) the ideological and power centre of hegemonic institutions is not threatened; ii) their resolution is manageable within existing institutional constraints; and iii) the legitimacy of hegemonic institutions is maintained and social conflict minimized (Hajer, 1995, p. 22).
Each of the institutional problem-solving discourses within the ‘relative limits’ paradigm attempts to construct environmental problems as amenable to human management, but their nature differs according to whether the policy instrument is government regulation or the market’s invisible hand. Common to all is the absence of a critique which constructs the problem as endemic to industrial society and its institutions, thereby excluding such critique as a legitimate subject of discourse.

Rooted in the post-war welfare state, administrative rationalism assumes that environmental problems result from a failure of management, and that state institutions populated by scientific and management experts and backed by legislation are the proper agents of environmental protection. This rationalist-management paradigm is institutionalized in all developed states through pollution control and resource management bureaucracies and other advisory bodies. Its implementation takes the form of regulatory (pejoratively called ‘command and control’ since the 1980s) policy instruments which require enforcement and judicial prosecution and penalties, expert-driven approval processes such as environmental impact assessment, and land-use planning. Assumptions inherent in this paradigm are that nature or the environment is amenable to human management, that the administrative state is apolitical, populated by scientific experts and managers, that it embodies the public interest, and that the judgment of the state should supersede other interests (Dryzek, 2013, pp. 74-98). Discourses of conservation, variously referred to as wise use, sustainable yield and scientific management of resources, fall within this paradigm. It also includes the discourse of pollution control with its concepts of maximum allowable limits, safe levels of exposures, and acceptable risk. Administrative rationalism presupposes that scientific
and expert rationality should prevail over the irrationality of public sentiment and political machinations, a position that is either invoked or rejected by actors engaged in environmental struggles, depending on the case.

While the public has demanded that the state respond to the material conditions of pollution and resource degradation by legislating against environmental abuse, skepticism of experts and bureaucracies has led to the expectation that civil society should play a role in environmental decision-making. Countering the expert-driven management approach of the state, the discourse of democratic pragmatism recognizes the political nature of environmental decisions, invokes liberal democratic principles, and vests citizens with some degree of agency. This discourse rests on two assumptions, each with different implications for the design and conduct of the engagement process: i) that citizen participation will result in better environmental decision-making; and/or ii) that participation will quell public conflict.

Public accommodation in decision-making is typically in the form of institutionalized public consultation attached to administrative tribunals, multi-stakeholder advisory processes, policy dialogues, and public hearings. In such cases, the terms of participation are determined by the sponsoring agency, including agenda-setting (what is and is not on the table) and participant selection (who is a legitimate participant) (Hajer, 1995). These processes are often criticized for being manipulated to deliver the result desired by the state, whether administrative or political (Dryzek, 2013, pp. 99-121). Legislated protections such as the public’s right-to-know and right-to-information, environmental bills of rights, and provisions that give standing to citizens in legal actions, protect
citizens from arbitrary administrative decisions, but also subject the exercise of those rights to the constraints of formal judicial processes which can be prohibitive.

Economic rationalism, the third discourse of hegemonic accommodation, took hold in the 1980s as a challenge to the ‘command and control’ model of administrative rationalism (Dryzek, 2013, pp. 122-144). It is important to note that economic rationalism is not the same as neoliberal economism which reduces all social elements to narrow economic metrics. Economic rationalism does not deny environmental problems, nor does it typically elevate economic concerns above environmental protection. Instead, this discourse argues that environmental problems are the result of market failure, and that market-based policy instruments rather than direct state intervention are the most economically efficient means of reducing environmental damage. Alternatively, it allocates monetary values to natural features in order that they can be recognized as valuable in cost-benefit analyses.

Admittedly, the line between economic rationalism and economism does become fuzzy as the latter has become hegemonic. Discursive frames such as reducing the role of the state through deregulation, and voluntary compliance through industry-driven codes of conduct, third party certifications, and labelling of consumer products are generally shared. The value of nature, or a clean environment, is monetized and subject to market-forces; competition will determine its true present value while future value is discounted based on positivist assumptions about substitution of scarce resources through technological innovation. From an institutional perspective, we can understand economic rationalism as a discursive strategy of policy-makers with problems to solve, trying to
capture elements of the increasingly influential neoliberal discourse in order to garner the cooperation of the private sector in achieving environmental goals.

2.6.3.2 Ecological modernization

Carter writes, ‘The tension between economic growth and environmental protection lies at the heart of environmental politics’ (Carter, 2007, p. 207). This dynamic is represented by duality of the “limits – no limits” paradigms. In the face of this environment-growth dualism, discourses that deliberately seek to conjoin economic development/growth and environmental protection constitute the discursive field of ecological modernization (Hajer, 1995). While ecological modernization has several different facets, it is essentially a discourse of economic transformation, or modernization, in that it seeks to dismantle the traditional conflict between economic growth and/or profitability and environmental sustainability. In this ‘modern’ economic model, these two are not only compatible, but necessarily inseparable if civilization is to have a future. While ‘strong’ versions of such discourses align closely with the ‘ultimate limits’ paradigm, their ‘weak’ versions can be characterized as futile, even cynical, efforts to ‘green growth,’ thereby rescuing its legitimacy on the environmental front (Carter, 2007, pp. 214-15).

Hajer accounts for the emergence of the ecological modernization discourse in the context of the economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the subsequent rise of neoliberal discourse. Economic insecurity combined with overt attempts to delegitimize state regulation had the effect, on the one hand, of muting the radical ‘limits to growth’ discourse, and on the other, of discouraging proactive state engagement. Oppositional interests responded in a way that resulted, inadvertently, in a convergent
policy discourse. In order to retain public legitimacy in a changing public sphere, environmental organizations abandoned antagonistic critiques of growth-centric industrialism in favour of strategic alternative narratives proposing new sectoral models such as ‘soft energy paths’ and sustainable agriculture. In this sense, environmental groups took up the role of counter-expert, illuminating alternative solutions to what were increasingly seen...as environmental problems (thus bracketing deeper institutional causes). The problem-makers of the 1970s had become the problem-solvers of the 1980s (Hajer, 1995, p. 94).

While these models represent radical departures from dominant industrial energy and food systems and their inherent power relations, the 1970s ethical-critical discourse was replaced by a pragmatic economic discourse. Simultaneously, institutionalized versions of ecological modernization as policy discourse were constructed within UN agencies, international non-government organizations and the OECD through the publication of influential reports which introduced new vocabularies and narratives (Hajer, 1995, pp. 96-99). Thus

…the emergence of the policy discourse of ecological modernization is not to be attributed to the success or power of one particular group. EM is the unlikely product of an argumentative interplay between several social forces that in the mid-1970s still showed radically converging ideas about the nature of the environmental problem. To be sure, EM is not all there is in environmental discourse. Yet EM is…the dominant way of conceptualizing environmental matters in terms of policy-making (Hajer, 1995, p. 100).

At the institutional level, ecological modernization discourse embodies two premises. First, it assumes a ‘win-win’ proposition, that is, there need be no material trade-off between environmental protection and economic activity, and that no reductions in consumption or material standards of living are required to achieve environmental
sustainability. Accordingly, from a process perspective, environmental policy consensus would be achieved through multistakeholder collaboration, including environmental interests, rather than the conflict-driven eco-politics of the 1970s. The explicit goal is to reduce conflict thereby easing decision-making; and the effect is to depoliticize environmental problems. Second, it assumes that the historic link between economic growth and growth in energy and materials throughput can be ‘decoupled’; in other words, the economy can grow without increasing non-renewable resource extraction or generating more pollution (Carter, 2007, pp. 227-28).

In its “strong” version, any biophysical limits can be overcome by radical innovations in materials, design, technology, management, policy and new models of public service provision (McDonough & Braungart, 2002; Ryn & Cowan, 2007). Its weak version is presented as the next frontier of capitalist growth, as environmental goals open up new markets for “green” technologies and products. This discourse of greening capitalism gives rise to “green-washing” which is simply a public relations and marketing strategy. Apart from the manipulative invocation of green growth, the critique of ecological modernization centres on its implicit naïve/utopian assumption that there is infinite potential for decoupling growth in energy and material throughput from economic growth. As long as economic and population growth rates outstrip gains in efficiencies and dematerialization, environmental degradation will continue (Jackson, 2009, pp. 67-86; Rees, 2007). Nevertheless, ecological modernization is firmly entrenched as a management discourse.

Even though [ecological modernization] did not materially and immediately change the way things were done inside agencies, it came to conquer the “discursive space” in the environmental domain and came to be seen as the
most legitimate way of conceptualizing and discussing the environment as a policy-making problem (Hajer, 1995, p. 101).

A central discourse in the ecological modernization paradigm is that of sustainable development. It was introduced in the 1980 report, World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development, as an alternative development model to Western industrialization for Third World countries (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), 1980). The adoption of sustainable development as the organizing principle for the 1997 report of the U.N.-appointed World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) chaired by Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland placed it at the forefront of an emerging, highly charged eco-geo-politics. As a result of the Brundtland Report, UN member nations undertook to develop sustainable development strategies; the World Business Council on Sustainable Development was formed; the UN hosted the 1992 Earth Summit at which a sustainable development agenda was drafted (Agenda 21); and two follow-up conferences have been held, in 2002 and 2012, to track and encourage progress towards sustainable development, with oversight by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (Carter, 2007, pp. 208-09). Not surprisingly, its meaning has become contested by a wide range of agents, including developed and developing nation-states, various United Nations agencies, world trade and private sector organizations, and international, regional and local environmental groups.

The Brundtland Report defines sustainable development as:

development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: i) the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and ii) the idea of
limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs. Thus the goals of economic and social development must be defined in terms of sustainability in all countries – developed or developing, market-oriented or centrally planned (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43).

The report argues that developing countries require economic growth in order to alleviate poverty and meet basic needs. At the same time, it implies that further growth in developed countries is unsustainable and asserts that downward trends in materials- and energy-intensity of production must continue (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, pp. 49-52).

The discursive struggle around sustainable development is between those who see it as either i) fatally flawed since it does not explicitly acknowledge the biophysical limits of Earth and therefore is a greenwashing of exploitative economic relations; ii) a hopeful roadmap for important policy changes in key sectors around which all ‘stakeholders’ can coalesce; or iii) a vindication of existing growth-dependent political economies and neoliberal structural adjustments for developing nations. These competing interpretations are a function of ‘different interests trying to stake their claims in the territory.’

For if sustainable development is indeed a dominant discourse, astute actors recognize that its terms should be cast in terms favorable to them. Environmentalists might try to build in respect for intrinsic values in nature that is conspicuously missing in Brundtland....Third World advocates would stress the need for global redistribution, and highlight the needs of the poor to which Brundtland pointed. Business groups equate development with economic growth, even if it is styled “green growth”.... For Meadows and colleagues [authors of the Limits to Growth report] sustainability means an end to economic growth; for the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, sustainability requires perpetuation of economic growth (Dryzek, 2013, p. 148).
This intense competition for articulating meaning takes place at the discursive frontier of eco-political discourse. In industrialized nations, and predominantly in Europe, sustainable development becomes rearticulated as ecological modernization.

2.6.4 Summary

The key propositions of the discursive paradigms described above are summarized in Table 2. The ‘relative limits’ discourses blunt the sharp edges of the ‘no limits’ and ‘ultimate limits’ paradigms, thereby creating inclusive spaces where a diversity of social actors with competing interests may find a home. This is the nature of the hegemonic process, and it is the space within which most environmental decision-making has taken place since the 1970s when the environmental movement forced pollution and resource problems onto the political agenda.

What confounds these discourses, however, is the material reality of the ecological problematic. As described in chapter one, scientific assessments at the turn of the 21st century have indicated ongoing, even precipitous declines in the natural conditions that support life on Earth. Discourse on the frontier of eco-politics is continually adapting and changing in order to cope with a crisis of legitimacy facing existing environmental problem-solving models, and capitalist growth itself. It is in this context that Blühdorn’s discourse of post-ecologism as outlined in Section 2.1 should be examined.
Table 2. Key propositions of discursive paradigms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>‘No limits’ paradigm</th>
<th>‘Relative limits’ paradigm</th>
<th>‘Ultimate limits’ paradigm</th>
<th>Post-ecologist ‘condition’*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On limits</strong></td>
<td>There are no absolute boundaries to constrain human enterprise.</td>
<td>Bio-physical limits may exist, in principle, but their limitations on human endeavor are relative to the state of human knowledge and technological advancement at any point in time. Poor management may result in unsustainable resource use.</td>
<td>Natural resources, pollution neutralization, and ecological carrying capacity are limited by finite Earth systems, thereby creating the conditions that limit growth of economic production and thus human population/consumption.</td>
<td>General and full acceptance of the in principle existence of bio-physical limits, the seriousness of environmental issues, and the need to act on them. Warning that, despite all undeniable seriousness, the eco-crisis must not be overstated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On growth, progress</strong></td>
<td>Economic growth is the primary public policy goal and the means by which other social goals are achieved. Progress is understood as amassing material wealth through scientific discovery and its technological application, particularly the transformation of nature into commodities; The domination of nature is a mark of progress.</td>
<td>Current political economies can be made sustainable. Economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive; both can be achieved through multi-sectoral, multi-lateral collaboration (ecological modernization; sustainable development). Economic growth and throughput growth can be decoupled.</td>
<td>Industrial / consumer society is unsustainable in ecological, economic and cultural terms; The current rates of resource depletion, overshoot of carrying capacity, and excursion of earth system thresholds all point to the collapse of industrial civilization within the current century.</td>
<td>Subordination of environmental issues to the priorities of economic competitiveness and growth, the security of Northern lifestyles, and the preservation of established global power relations; Establishment of green consumerism and the wellness sector as major markets; these former alternative business sectors now replicate the basic principles of consumer capitalism and no longer viewed as the symbolic anticipation of a radically different lifestyle, human-nature relationship and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>'No limits' paradigm</td>
<td>'Relative limits' paradigm</td>
<td>'Ultimate limits' paradigm</td>
<td>Post-ecologist ‘condition’*</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Problem response** | Human ingenuity through science and technological innovation will rise to any challenge, including substitution of scarce resources | Scientific knowledge of ecological processes and technological innovation will allow human management and control of nature, as long as we respond intelligently and in a timely way. The common good (environmental protection) is a matter of public deliberation, not expert fiat; therefore, environmental management and decision-making should involve the public and affected communities. The costs of environmental protection are outweighed by the benefit to humans of maintaining ecological services, avoiding illness, etc. | Sustainability requires achieving a steady state in economic production and population while redistributing material consumption from over-consumers to under-consumers. Because even a steady state at current throughput rates is unsustainable, the world economy must shrink from its current scale – degrowth must precede steady state economy. | Normalisation of the environmental crisis
Fragmentation of ecological diagnoses and strategies and implicit mobilisation of environmentalism against itself.
Environmental protection as an opportunity for technological innovation and economic growth; reformulation of ecological problems as scientific, technological, economic or managerial issues.
Institutionalisation of environmental concerns and delegation to ‘experts’ and ‘professionals’ |
| **On nature**     | The domination of nature is a mark of progress. Nature has only instrumental or utilitarian value; it exists for human benefit, as an economic resource, a sink for wastes, and an aesthetic or recreational amenity which itself is commodified. Those aspects of nature which have no apparent human utility have no value. | Nature is valued based on the services it provides to society. Environmental protection is justified on the grounds that society is harmed by environmental degradation. | All life, including humanity, is embedded within and dependent on the finite Earth Nature as a whole, its functions, and its components have intrinsic value; they exist in their own right, and not in relation to their benefit to humans. | Disconnection from nature.
Narrowing of anthropocentric frames to individualistic issues such as consumer rights, health and safety questions and food standards. |
| **On the state**  | The role of the State is limited to ensuring the integrity of free markets, the provision of security services, and the legal protection of individual and private property rights. | The state is the steward of the common good (environmental protection) and therefore is the proper agent for environmental and resource protection and management. | The State has a duty to impose restrictions on human activity to ensure ecological integrity and social justice; Governance must be reorganized along ecological principles of | Emancipation from restrictive notions of redistribution, equality, justice and solidarity;
Cultivation of narratives of technological efficiency revolutions, corporate responsibility, ethical consumption, fair |
| Elements | 'No limits' paradigm | 'Relative limits' paradigm | 'Ultimate limits' paradigm | Post-ecologist 'condition'*

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**Individual versus collective ethics**

| | The State has an important role in facilitating and sustaining economic growth through strategic interventions. | The common good can and should be achieved by the workings of the invisible hand of the market, as long as markets are created for non-commodified environmental commons and all costs are accounted for (externalities are internalized in the price). | mutuality, respect, inclusiveness, interdependence, commensurability. | trade, ethical investment, green consumerism, etc. which are consistent with the basic principles of productivism, consumerism, etc.

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| | Pursuit of economic self-interest, whether individual or corporate, results in achievement of social goals. | Sustainability is a collective goal that cannot be achieved through self-interest maximizing behaviour. | An ecological society is built at the local level, grounded in ecological principles of cooperation, respect for diversity, and mutual flourishing, and with participatory/egalitarian rather than hierarchical decision-making processes. | Confidence in the logic of competitiveness and individual success; venturing and entrepreneurial outlook; readiness to experiment and take risks. Prominence of neo-materialist and consumption-oriented patterns of identity construction, self-expression and self-experience. Identification with democratic consumer capitalism and end of the vision of and desire for a radically different society in the ecologist sense. Disillusionment with the practices and capabilities of grassroots democracy and increasing reliance on supposedly more efficient instruments for achieving the common good (experts, markets, political leaders, regulating bodies, etc.).

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Chapter 3: Methodology: Analyzing Eco-Political Discourse

3.1 Eco-political discourse in The Globe and Mail editorials

As I set out in chapter one, the goal of this study was to inquire whether Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism might explain the dynamics of eco-politics in Canada. From a discourse-political perspective, such a simulative politics would be manifest in the public sphere as a schizophrenic discourse of environmental concern on the one hand and a defense of the conditions that create and reproduce the eco-crisis on the other.

Because Blühdorn posits a cultural-values paradigm shift over a generation, it follows that a study to find evidence of this would be longitudinal, covering the entire period of which Blühdorn theorizes. Media sources are obvious candidates for longitudinal studies. Since mass media is the predominant vehicle for public claims-making, as well as a central player in framing public issues and conditioning political action (Reese, Gandy & Grant, 2003), it follows that the general trend in eco-political discourse posited by Blühdorn would be evident in media representations over a relatively long period of time.

Specifically regarding the role of the media in environmental politics, Lester writes,

The ‘environment’ that is the subject of mediated public debate is constructed through complex processes of knowledge transfer, meaning making and symbolic interplay. Cultural resonances, many rooted in history and grounded to place, help produce shared but also contested notions of ‘the environment’ and its value. When combined with power and strategy, core features of all public debate, ‘the environment’ becomes a site of contending interests and political intervention, but also a site where emotions run deep (Lester, 2010, p. 17).
Lester’s depiction of ‘the environment’ as contested constructions in the public sphere, and her specific reference to ‘cultural resonances’ justifies locating empirical analysis of post-ecologist discourse within media treatments of environmental issues.

News discourse in particular plays a key role in shaping public opinion and in influencing political agendas (van Dijk, 1998). Over the past two decades, news media – primarily print media but increasingly across all media platforms - has become an important focus for eco-political analysis. In their meta-analysis of the research field of media representations of climate change, Schäfer and Schlicting identify 133 discreet studies across all continents that fall within this field. The predominant focus of these scholars has been on ‘national quality broadsheets’ in several countries, accounting for over 40 per cent of all studies (Schäfer and Schlicting, 2014). In Canada, for example, Young and Dugas (2011), Ahchong and Dodds (2012), and Stoddart and Tindall (2015) have used *The Globe and Mail* as media subjects. This research, which analyzes editorials in *The Globe and Mail* over a period of 56 years for evidence of what Blühdorn calls the post-ecologist turn and the politics of unsustainability, demonstrates that what Blühdorn theorized from a Western European perspective, also holds in Canada. In this chapter, I explain the methods I used to test Blühdorn’s hypothesis, drawing on the perspective of post-structural discourse theory, but first I will elaborate on my choice of *The Globe and Mail* as a data source, and discuss some variables related to the paper that may be relevant to the interpretation of the paper’s editorials.
3.1.1 The Globe and Mail as a single data source

Besides longevity and the availability of the paper over the entire period of Blühdorn’s theorizing, I also argue that this type of analysis – the tracking of eco-political discourse over time – requires a single data source. The task is to be able to compare discourse over time to identify changes. To be able to draw any conclusions, the changes must be evident within a single source. While it may also be valuable to compare two sources over time to see if a pattern holds across sources, such analysis is beyond the scope of this research project.

Having established the need for a single data source and the value of the media as a subject of longitudinal research, the question remains, why The Globe and Mail? Gramsci’s insight is that hegemonic discourse must resonate with the cultural common sense in order to gain and maintain the consent of the governed. Post-structural political discourse theory describes how maintaining hegemony requires that dominant discourses articulate elements of counter-hegemonic discourses. The extent to which counter-hegemonic ideas penetrate the dominant discursive field depends on how resonant they are with the predominant value system: the more resonant, the more likely hegemonic voices will articulate those ideas. Applying this to Blühdorn’s contention that societal values were amenable to the radical ecologist discourse in the early years of the environmental movement, one would expect to see elements of that ecologist discourse within a hegemonic discourse, and not just counter-hegemonic sources.

Consequently, it makes sense that Blühdorn’s theory should be tested by examining a media source that is widely recognized as an elite voice, and one that has clear
hegemonic credentials. *The Globe and Mail*’s influential status in the Canadian media landscape is well-established (Stoddart, Haluza-DeLay and Tindall, 2016). Soroka’s study of agenda-setting in Canada suggests that, like the *New York Times* in the US, *The Globe and Mail* is a leading newspaper in the influence it has on other media outlets in Canada, particularly on issues of national scope (Soroka 2002, p. 106-7). The fact that the paper, for the past four decades, has positioned itself as a national newspaper also adds to its appeal as a source. From the mid-1980s until 2018 (when distribution in the Atlantic region was halted), it was distributed nationally and thereby became recognizable across the country as an authoritative source on national and international issues.

It bears repeating at this point, that my interest is not *The Globe and Mail* per se, but whether or not, as a major actor in the public sphere in Canada, Blühdorn’s theory might be evident in the paper. That said, the most commonly asked question when discussing this research is whether internal changes at *The Globe and Mail* over this period might account for the shift in discourse, reflecting a distinct corporate strategy. Although this was not a subject of investigation, the literature provides some information to illuminate

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21 Soroka’s quantitative analysis of *Globe and Mail* news coverage looked at coverage of eight issues, one of which was environment, between the years 1985-1995. His focus was on issue salience – the frequency of coverage – and not issue content. The agenda-setting impact, then, was not on what to write, but what to write about. Economic issues and national unity, in which *The Globe and Mail* was a ‘significant predictor’ of issue salience in other newspapers, were considered national issues. Environment is classified by Soroka as regional, thereby explaining why there was little coherence between coverage in *The Globe and Mail* and other papers. Since 1995, environmental issues have become less regional and more global, as evidenced by later studies. Ahchong and Dodds (2012), for example, compared climate change coverage in *The Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* and found little difference in their spatial focus, with both framing the problem as primarily national and international. It may be, then, that *The Globe and Mail* has gained more influence as an agenda-setter on this issue.
this question. Suffice to say that many changes have occurred at *The Globe and Mail* over the 56-year time span of this research. While it has changed ownership four times during the study period, the Thomson Corporation has had full or partial ownership since 1980 and currently is the sole owner of the private business. Also, there have been 11 editors-in-chief over the entire study period.²²

In his 1992 book, *Power and Influence*, journalist David Hayes provides an exhaustive account of the history of *The Globe and Mail*, ending with the 1987-1992 period, exactly when the paper’s eco-political discourse changes (see Chapter 6). Hayes emphasizes that while some publishers have had a personal commitment to the journalistic mission of the newspaper, as agents of the owners profitability has always been their “bottom line,” and editors have always been sensitive to this reality. To a great extent, then, the modern history of the paper has been shaped by its successive responses to threats to its bottom line, first by television and more recently by the internet, as well as by other Toronto-based papers.

Nevertheless, it developed as a ‘writer’s paper,’ one in which the business end represented by the publisher rarely interfered with the editorial end, as Hayes puts it, the separation of Church and State. As long as the paper was profitable, the journalistic work was left to journalists. *The Globe and Mail’s* ideological leanings during the period of Hayes’ study reflected its historical roots as a merger between George Brown’s feisty liberal organ *The Globe* and the conservative *Mail and Empire*. While it routinely

²² This information is pieced together from several incidental sources, and is summarized in [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Globe_and_Mail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Globe_and_Mail), retrieved most recently on August 14, 2017.
endorsed Conservative governments (until it backed Pierre Trudeau in 1968), it also had a reputation for reformism and supported the post-war social welfare agenda; in other words, it was a ‘red Tory’ newspaper. According to Hayes, editorially *The Globe and Mail* was sympathetic to the social upheaval of the 1960s and its mood of confrontation. Inspired by the *Washington Post*’s Watergate exposé, new college grad reporters introduced to the newsroom a ‘critical culture’ and a model of ‘interpretative reporting,’ an ‘expression of the times.’ The news editor of the day, Richard (Dic) Doyle, who used the editorial page to back up news stories, saw the paper as the ‘conscience of the nation’ and the ‘official opposition’ in Ontario (in the face of a William Davis Conservative sweep in 1973), and the paper’s investigative reporting in the early 1970s earned it a reputation as a crusader (Hayes, 1992, pp. 108-118).

On the business end, the first major change took place in 1965 when the family-owned paper was bought by the FP media conglomerate, making it one of a chain of newspapers. Although *The Globe and Mail* remained profitable, FP was poorly managed and in the late 1970s was broken up and its parts sold off to Southam and Thomson newspaper chains, with *The Globe and Mail* acquired by the latter in 1980. In 1978, FP had appointed Roy Megarry, a management consultant and corporate ‘fixer,’ as publisher of *The Globe and Mail*. Megarry was retained as publisher by Thomson and over the next decade, with Thomson’s financial backing, embarked on a modernization program that included opening news bureaus across Canada and overseas, facilitated by a wholesale adoption of new computer technologies and satellites. The goal was to increase market share by positioning *The Globe and Mail* as a national paper, separating it from the pack.
in the highly competitive Toronto market, and thereby expanding its appeal to advertisers.

Once these structural changes had been made, Megarry set his sights on the news operations, then-editor Norman Webster’s turf. In the 1980s, Hayes writes, there was a boom in business journalism, and ‘suddenly business was sexy’ (Hayes, 1992, p. 198-99). The most significant internal changes represented efforts to hone the paper’s content to an increasingly rarified audience – the growing class of ‘managerial and professional Canadians’ (so-called MPCs), whose significant disposable income was coveted by advertisers (Hayes, 1992, p. 201). In 1988, the weekly *Financial Post* became a daily newspaper, and its first editorial was titled, ‘Positive view of business.’ Until that point, *The Globe and Mail*’s business reporting was confined to its flagship and profit-centre, the daily *Report on Business* (*RoB*). In the face of this new competition, Megarry set out to revamp the content of the paper accordingly. This included elevating the status of and prioritizing new resources to the *Report on Business*, while integrating business reporting throughout the paper.

To facilitate this change, Megarry fired Webster and managing editor Geoffrey Stevens, and hired William Thorsell, an Albertan and then-chair of the editorial board, as the new editor-in-chief. Hayes compares successive editors-in-chief this way:

> Webster, Doyle and Dalgleish [1952-1963] had, each in his way, represented the responsible, civil, imperial character of ruling central Canada.... Dalgleish and Doyle brought to the paper sensible, middle-class values of order, fairness, and justice; they held sturdy, middlebrow views acquired through experience, not academe, in keeping with the character of the newspaper trade of their generations. Webster, raised in that cradle of aristocracy the Eastern Townships, a Rhodes Scholar and Oxford grad, was suited to the better-educated newsroom of the 1980s; he brought a social conscience
rooted in *noblesse oblige*. All three were, in their respective times, prototypical custodians of a dignified Establishment paper whose core audience of powerful political and business leaders were sufficiently entrenched to be unafraid of views contrary to their own. In the ivied chamber of the *Globe’s* institutional soul resided a mildly jaunty progressivism. In this company, Thorsell qualified as a maverick and an outsider....Thorsell, who, at nearly thirty, had developed a coherent world-view, was strongly pro-free enterprise and freer trade, tolerant of limited state intervention, and a supporter of individual liberties and a stronger national voice for the West within a unified Canada (Hayes, 1992, p. 242, 247).

With this appointment, then, *The Globe and Mail’s* news, and thus public, face shifted.

Thorsell set out to change the critical tone of its coverage, and thus the culture of the newsroom. In a 1990 speech to journalism students, he explained his view:

“When we speak so reverentially of investigative journalism, we mean uncovering something that has gone wrong – ‘the wronger the better’ – growing out of the classic but intellectually careless aphorism that it is the role of journalists to ‘comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.’ …As a result, we tend to be somewhat like fundamentalist preachers in our concentration on the evils of the world, ponderously finger-wagging from page one right through columns, editorials, and reviews. There is certainly a role for us on this pulpit, uncovering evil and righting wrongs, but it is much too narrow a perch to carry the weight of the news for a larger, loyal audience” (Hayes, 1992, pp. 251-52).

Megarry resigned as publisher in 1991; Phillip Crawley, appointed publisher in 1999, remains so today. That same year, Thorsell resigned as editor-in-chief, and since then, several editors have come and gone. Bruce Walmsley, hired from the CBC in 2014, is the current editor-in-chief; he succeeded Jonathan Stackhouse, who succeeded Edward Greenspon. Ownership has seen fewer changes. After a decade as part of the publicly-traded Bell Globe media conglomerate, in which Thomson retained a significant number of shares, Thomson has since assumed full ownership and the paper is back in private hands.
How does this narrative fit in with the thesis of this research? I have already indicated that my research reveals a pattern of discourse in The Globe and Mail editorials that is consistent with Blühdorn’s theory of the post-ecologist turn. On the face of it, one could say that the change in editorial discourse can be fully explained by the corporate evolution of The Globe and Mail as it chases profits and advertisers, represented primarily by the appointment of Thorsell as the voice of business. But newspapers operate within societal contexts, and I will argue that the same cultural shifts posited by Blühdorn could also explain at least partially these internal changes in the newspaper’s management and editorial stance. I will pick up this discussion in Section 8.4.

As a particular genre of news discourse, editorials are a potent source for discourse analysis. Since they represent a newspaper’s corporate voice in debates on issues of public concern, editorials explicitly insert the paper into the public sphere as an actor with a distinct voice. Nevertheless, I was unable to find any Canadian studies that use editorials exclusively for eco-political media analyses. Studies of climate change media coverage in major Canadian newspapers (Good 2008), and the two national papers (Young and Dugas, 2011; Ahchong and Dodds, 2012, Stoddart and Tindall, 2015), combine editorials and other op-ed opinion pieces with news stories and features. Yet editorials are very distinct from news reporting and follow different journalistic norms and standards. Easily identified - ‘always printed on the same page, in the same place and in the same graphic form’- they are ‘one of the widest circulated opinion discourses of society’ (Achugar, 2004, p. 294 quoted in Rupar, 2007, p. 599). Aggregating editorials with other news pieces misses a potentially significant part of the media story – the
deliberate construction of meaning, invocation of symbols, and definition of issues in an attempt to influence public discourse.

Van Dijk identifies four structural elements of opinion discourse: i) presuppositions; ii) assertions; iii) propositions; and iv) conclusions (van Dijk, 1998). Presuppositions are elements that are constructed ‘beforehand and elsewhere’ which function ideologically by reinforcing and normalizing contingent relations (Fairclough, 1995, p. 14). These are implicit in opinion discourse and (partially) form the foundation on which a proposition or argument is built. Explicit assertions are also used to support the propositions of an argument. Assertions play the role of truth-claims, which have the effect of normalizing, and thus hegemonising a certain knowledge, experience and view of the world (van Dijk, 1998, p. 33). The argument itself may be expressed as a proposition or series of propositions which reflect a subjective assessment or evaluation of a situation.

Propositions ‘make sense’ of an event or situation, proposing a particular interpretation for the benefit of the readers. In this task, presuppositions ‘may be strategically used to obliquely introduce into a text propositions which may not be true at all,’ but which makes sense in the context that has been constructed by the text (van Dijk, 1998, p. 34). Since opinion discourse reflects a particular mental model, its coherence or rationality is ‘relative and referential’ to that model (van Dijk, 1998, p. 37). Seen through the lens of a different mental model, it may appear completely irrational. Finally, an editorial generally concludes with a point of advice, recommendation or warning (van Dijk, 1998, p. 60). This can serve a general pragmatic purpose, or it can be strategically directed to influence the opinions of decision-makers or readers broadly.
In short, unlike news stories in which biases are generally implicit and journalists employ certain norms and standards of objectivity to gain legitimacy, editorials express ‘evaluative beliefs.’ These presuppose a value and involve a judgement about a person or situation (van Dijk, 1998, p. 29). While some beliefs can be judged as ‘factual,’ in that they meet ‘socially shared criteria of truth (e.g. observation, reliable communication, valid inference, scholarly research, etc.),’ other evaluations simply reflect the norms or values of a cultural group and therefore qualify as opinion. Such evaluations draw on personal (the writer) knowledge and experience as well as group (e.g. the editorial board, the publisher, a segment of society) attitudes, beliefs and values; in other words, ideology (van Dijk, 1998, pp. 26-27). The process of generating the editorial judgement on a topic is captured in this account of New Zealand dailies:

[T]he editorial is agreed to every day at a meeting attended by the editor-in-chief, senior editors and the editorial writer. They discuss the topic, the newspaper’s point of view and the main arguments that will be used in the editorial. The editorial writer consults the newspaper’s library to check what has been written on the topic in the same way a news writer consults press clippings to summarize some of the previous material in a background paragraph. The news story functions here as a source of information, and the editorial becomes ‘information’ itself – a separate text that tells the reader the newspaper’s position in relation to the topic discussed (Rupar, 2007, p. 599).

Even though editorials are opinion and not news reports, they derive credibility from a commitment to news journalism principles to provide accurate information to the public, and to function in the (putative) public interest (Rupar, 2007, p. 598). Editorials construct common sense by representing their interpretation of reality as ‘best for all,’ taking an authoritative, pragmatic, middle-of-the-road, ‘down to earth’ approach.

The process of representing and interpreting an event includes, naturally, its simultaneous construction: the common sense approach draws its power from
the fact that it tells the reader what values should be assigned to the issue discussed in the editorial (Rupar, 2007, p. 595).

In this sense, van Dijk’s value-laden opinion discourse becomes normalized as socially-accepted knowledge, thereby legitimating certain discourses and excluding others from public discourse.

Beyond being an indicator of issue salience, editorials seek to persuade their audiences of the legitimacy of their argument (Seigel, 1983, p. 15). The persuasive power of editorializing is contingent on the authoritative status of the newspaper. As Canada’s ‘newspaper of record’ for business, political and intellectual classes across ideological spectrums (Wallace, 1996), and the only newspaper with broad national reach,23 The Globe and Mail’s potential for influence on opinion nationally is greater than any other single newspaper.

At this point, the Globe remains "the kingdom and the power" of the Canadian newspaper industry because of its unique capacity to penetrate the governmental and business elites of the country and to set the national agenda with its commentary and investigative reporting. Its gray respectability attracts wealthier and better-educated readers, and its Report on Business section, its op-ed pages, and its arts reporting have made it must reading for a variety of different readerships (Taras, 2001, p. 18).

This profile suggests that the paper’s influence is probably less significant for shaping public opinion than for the elites. Since decision-making is concentrated in the hands of elites, however, The Globe and Mail’s rather rarified audience is exactly the significant

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23 This is the case for much of the study period (1960 – 2016) but not all. It had a primarily Toronto/Ontario focus until the early 1980s when it began publishing in six cities across the country. Thereafter it could more legitimately wear the moniker of Canada’s national newspaper. At just under one million in average weekly circulation, the National Post circulation is less than half that of The Globe and Mail (Canadian Newspaper Association, 2013).
point. Whether the paper’s editorials are influential in the policy sphere, or whether they simply reinforce and legitimize the pre-existing stances of segments of their audience, depends on the issue. Clearly a newspaper does not exist in a vacuum; it is one element out of several that contribute to the formation of public policy and political stances (Miller, 2015). Nonetheless, the media does exercise power and influence in the public sphere in its own right, and contributes to the reproduction of hegemonic power relations, through several means, including editorializing (Seigel, 1983, pp. 14-18; Taras, 2001, pp. 30-53).

Notwithstanding my focus on one specific news organ and sub-genre, it is important to note that this is not media studies research per se. I do not make claims about or set out to demonstrate the influence of The Globe and Mail with respect to eco-politics in Canada; nor do I seek to demonstrate media effects on audiences, whether the general public or decision-makers. Finally, I do not account for editorial discourse in The Globe and Mail at a micro-level, such as the influence of corporate structure, changing ownership or changing editorial personnel over the time period studied. Instead, this research examines whether the broad trends in eco-political discourse in western consumer-capitalist democracies as characterized by Blühdorn are evident in The Globe and Mail during the study period. Should this be case, one could assume that it is because of the influence of external contexts and dynamics common to western democracies, rather than being attributed solely to internal (to the paper) or domestic particularities.24

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24 That said, internal particularities are not isolated from external context. Functions of a globalized media political economy, such as media ownership concentration and fragmentation of markets in the face of exponential growth of on-line digitized media, are routinely played out inside newsrooms and editorial boards across western nations (Anderson 2015; Taras 2001).
media discourse according to pre-existing discursive paradigms, as outlined in Chapter 2 and summarized in Appendix B, provides valuable insights into the broader context of political debate and decision-making. This opens the door to further investigations into the specific mechanisms by which power is exercised in the construction and dissemination of the post-ecologist discourse in Canada and devising of strategies for how it may be countered (Miller, 2015, p. 63; Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 7).

3.2 A discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis

Following Foucault’s conception of power ‘as a systemic and constitutive element or characteristic of society,’ critical discourse analysis (CDA) is concerned with the relation between social power and discourse.

In texts, discursive differences are negotiated; they are governed by differences in power that is in part encoded in and determined by discourse and by genre. Therefore, texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance (Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 10).

While discreet texts are the subject of analysis, however, texts alone do not constitute a discourse, nor do they have the power of a discourse with its recurring contents, symbols and strategies, lead[ing] to the emergence and solidification of “knowledge” and therefore...sustained effects (Jäger and Maier, 2009, p. 38).

The intent of CDA is to place texts within their socio-political contexts; thus, analysis must focus on both text and context. Yet Carvalho (2008) contends that media discourse studies in the CDA school, for the most part, have not fully attended to the text-context analytical aspirations of CDA scholars. First, regarding media text analysis, she notes the predominance of attention to ‘language, grammar and rhetoric,’ a legacy of the critical
linguistics origins of discourse analysis. Other discursive strategies such as framing, positioning, legitimation/delegitimation and politicization/depoliticization, employed not just by journalists but also by other social actors engaged in extra-textual discourse, are under-analyzed (Carvalho, 2008, p. 164).

Second, regarding context, Carvalho asserts that critical media studies have largely ignored the ‘time plane’ of the discourse in question. Most media discourse studies are synchronic, that is, they are snapshots of media texts within a short period of time. Longitudinal media studies of environmental issues are primarily quantitative content analyses, tracking numbers of story topics and frames over time (Parlour and Schatzow, 1978; Reis, 1999; Walgrave, Soroka and Nuytemans, 2008; Djerf-Pierre, 2013). Excellent environmental discourse genealogies have been written by Litfin (1994) and Hajer (1995), but these are political, not media-oriented. In recent years, media discourse on climate change specifically has been the subject of many studies. Schäfer and Schlichting (2014) found that on this topic, case studies (typically in one national context within a short time period) are the most numerous (39.6 per cent of studies). Longitudinal studies were next in number at 23.9 per cent, followed by cross-sectional comparative (20.9 per cent) and comparative/longitudinal (10.4 per cent) studies. Several of these studies are Canadian. Jennifer Good, for instance, compares the framing of climate change in major Canadian, American and British newspapers over the course of one year. Her research questions focus on the volume of text and frequency of occurrence of certain frames (Good, 2008). Nathan Young and Eric Dugas compare climate change coverage in The Globe and Mail and the National Post, Canada’s two national newspapers in three study years - 1988/89 (The Globe and Mail only), 1998/99 and
2007/08 (Young and Dugas, 2011). While their quantitative content analysis could be categorized as longitudinal, one could also argue that three years sampled within a 20 year period, each about 10 years apart, constitutes three synchronic studies which can then be compared.

Similarly, Mark Stoddart and David Tindall compare climate change coverage in *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*, in this case between the years 1997-2010, including how that coverage shifted over the 10 year period. Their sample includes all articles within that time span (8960), with 20 per cent of that sample selected for coding and analysis (Stoddart and Tindall, 2015). While their sampling is more intensive, it covers a shorter period of time and therefore provides a smaller window through which to view trends. They too use quantitative content analysis, although their discourse network methodology allows for actors and connections between them to the added to the more conventional analysis of volume and frequency of stories and themes. Using the same data set, a second level of analysis identified thematic frames, rhetorical frames and issue categories on articles from one year, 2007/2008 (Stoddart, Haluza-Delay, Tindall, 2016). This provides a greater degree of insight into the structure and content of the respective paper’s discourse on climate change, but as a synchronic comparison. The most recent use of the 10-year data set is in a study that looks at media visibility of climate change policy network actors between the years 2006-2010 (Stoddart, Tindall, Smith and Haluza-Delay, 2017). Once again, we have a more focused comparative analysis over a short period of time.
Depending on the research question, of course, a synchronic study is entirely appropriate. Understanding the development and trajectory of discourse, however, requires a long and contextualized view. Discourse has a history (or as Foucault calls it, a genealogy); it does not appear spontaneously out of nowhere. Understanding the evolution of discourse over time provides essential context for any synchronic text analysis.

Besides tracing the history of public issues (the sequence of texts appearing in the media and the evolution of their meaning), 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 (Carvalho, 2008, p. 164).

A socio-political and temporal contextualization of discourse, in other words, enables a fuller appreciation of the continual hegemonic processes that can be revealed in media texts. Texts-in-historical-context can be understood as discourse strands, ‘flows of discourse that centre on a common topic’ (Jäger and Maier, 2009, p. 46). Analysis of the flow of discourse over time constructs a history of that discourse strand that reveals ‘changes, ruptures, ebbings and recurrences’ within it; such historical analysis sheds light on contemporary discourse and allows for some level of informed future scenario-building. Although a comprehensive genealogy of a complex discourse strand is beyond the scope of a single study, each project should ‘create reliable knowledge about a certain sub-zone of overall societal discourse’ (Jäger and Maier, 2009, p. 51).

An even more compelling argument for placing discourse analysis within historic context is Gramsci’s theory of historic conjuncture, discussed in Section 2.3. In the spirit of the catchphrase, “timing is everything,” counter-hegemonic discourses are produced when structural contradictions become manifested in a social crisis, which in turn creates the historic conditions for opposition movements to form, challenge and potentially replace
hegemonic systems. Without a sense of where a particular text or discursive exchange is located within a historic conjuncture, one runs the risk of an overly simplistic analysis, thereby either over-estimating or under-estimating its significance.

Ruth Wodak and colleagues apply a discourse-historical approach (DHA) to critical discourse analysis in order to account for the historical context of discursive events and explore changes in discourse throughout time (Wodak, 1999). Yet Carvalho notes that DHA has rarely been applied to critical studies of media discourse.

Until recently, time had largely been unaccounted for in the existing literature on discourse analysis of journalistic texts. Most forms of analysis do not express awareness of the time sequence of texts nor do they clearly explain the implications of previous discursive positions on subsequent ones… [Yet] [t]he historical nature of discourse is one of its most fundamental characteristics. Texts always build on previous ones, taking up or challenging former discourses (Carvalho, 2008, p. 163).

In advocating for this, she acknowledges that the problem becomes how to bound the inquiry without truncating the analysis.

The fundamental problem . . . is how to put constraints on such a “contextual” or “situational” study. Indeed, how do we know or decide where to begin and where to stop such an analysis, since obviously it may begin with details of the interaction, the properties of speakers or of settings, but may stretch to such vast societal “contexts” as contemporary capitalism, neoliberalism, globalization, patriarchy, postmodernism, and so on. That is, if contextual analysis should be relevant, it is crucial not only to define possible contexts, but especially to limit them (van Dijk, 2004 quoted in Carvalho, 2008, p. 163).

Nevertheless, Carvalho contends that temporal markers can be placed on much public issue discourse and extra-textual context can be meaningfully bounded with careful consideration and explanation. One strategy is to identify ‘critical discourse moments,’ ‘periods that involve specific happenings, which may challenge the “established”
discursive positions’ defined by ‘political activity, scientific findings or other socially relevant events.’ Critical discourse moments may bracket the beginning point for analysis, and temporal benchmarks along the way; in both instances, they would indicate the introduction of a new or alternative discourse to the hegemonic field, and points at which arguments, as well as the actors engaged in discourse formation, begin to change (Carvalho, 2008, p. 166).

The difference between a critical discourse moment and Gramsci’s historic conjuncture has to do with the temporal scale involved. Conjunctural crises, which unfold over potentially long periods, and are characterized by distinct discourses, are punctuated by critical discourse moments. A critical discourse moment could be as specific as a distinct event, such as the publication of a book (e.g. Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*) or a high profile conference (e.g. the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro). Economic recessions, during which environmental agendas are often sidelined, are also critical discourse moments. According to Gramsci,

> It may be ruled out that immediate economic crises of themselves produce fundamental historical events; they can simply create a terrain more favourable to the dissemination of certain modes of thought, and certain ways of posing and resolving questions involving the entire subsequent development of national life (Gramsci, 1999, p. 409).

Carvalho’s own research on climate change discourse (Carvalho, 2005, 2007) demonstrates the kind of diachronic, critical analysis that her framework promotes. Following Carvalho, this research takes a discourse-historical approach. Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism posits a dramatic cultural shift over time. He describes a counter-hegemonic paradigm of ecologism emerging from the post-materialist culture of
the 1970s which, by the late 1980s, gives way to a hyper-materialism that is entirely incompatible with an ecologist viewpoint. Interrogating this proposition requires a diachronic approach to discourse analysis which covers the period of time over which Blühdorn theorizes a post-ecologist turn.

3.3 Units of temporal analysis

This research surveys eco-political discourse in *The Globe and Mail* editorials over a 56-year period, beginning in 1960, just prior to the development of the modern environmental movement, and carrying through to 2016. I propose that this period represents a historic conjuncture during which the growth-centric model of post-war industrialism, and in the West, consumer capitalism, produces an inevitable ecological crisis which continues to unfold to this day. Eco-political discourse is associated with the rise and consolidation of the modern environmental movement in industrialized nations (1960s-1970s), a response to material conditions of environmental degradation, and the popularization of scientific research on environmental problems. The movement’s anti-industrialism counter-discourse is subsequently met by the institutionalization of environmental discourse in nation-states and at the United Nations (1970s-1980s), which is, in turn, countered by corporate and neoliberal discourses (1980s). The post-1992 period can be seen as a period of eco-discourse rationalization in the context of a new neoliberal hegemony.

In order to make the number of units of analysis (individual editorials) manageable, I have selected sample years within these four periods. With some exceptions, I use a five-year sample interval. Five years provides enough temporal space to avoid unnecessary
replication, while still being representative of the historic period. The exceptions to this rule are in the early and late years. Because the 1960s represents the beginnings of the modern eco-politics in Canada, and the 1970s as its consolidation, I have chosen three sample years in each of the first two decades: 1960, 1965, 1969 and 1970, 1972 and 1977. The third period includes the years 1982, 1987 and 1992. The final period covers the years 1997, 2002, 2007, 2012, 2015 and 2016. I divert from the five-year pattern in the final years because of an important political event. The year 2015 is an election year at the end of Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s 10-year regime. *The Globe and Mail*’s editorial treatment of his environmental record leading up to and throughout the campaign is of interest here. Harper’s defeat on October 21, 2015 by the Liberal Party led by Justin Trudeau ushers in a new eco-political era, at least discursively. To determine the influence, if any, of a new political discourse on the paper’s editorial discourse, I have included the first year of the Trudeau administration in this study. Besides this federal election, several critical discourse moments in eco-politics help to sub-divide this period. These will be highlighted in the detailed descriptions in Part II.

Two databases were used to identify the units of analysis. The primary database was ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Globe and Mail* (1844-2011). The years 2012, 2015 and 2016 were accessed through the Canadian Periodicals Index Quarterly. Both were accessed through the Harriet Irving Library, University of New Brunswick in 2014, early 2015, November-December 2016 and March 2017. After some experimentation with keyword searches, I settled on three which provided the widest possible range while
screening out most unrelated articles: these keywords were ‘environment,’ and/or ‘environmental’ and/or ‘pollution.’

Interestingly, by 2007, these keywords were producing very few results. At that point, environmental discourse in The Globe and Mail was limited to the issue of global warming; other environmental issues had vanished from editorial sight. Accordingly, for the final years of analysis (2007, 2012, 2015, and 2016) I added the keywords ‘global warming’ and/or ‘climate change’ to the search. I then conducted searches in the earlier years using the new keywords to see if adding these keywords in 2007 would skew the results. No additional editorials were found. Before the 1980s, the terms global warming and climate change did not occur at all in media discourse.

I then read every editorial identified by the search to establish relevance. I discarded editorials in which the word ‘environment’ was used in a different sense, such as in the phrase ‘business environment,’ as well as editorials in which the subject of the environment was very peripheral to the topic, such as in a list or as an illustration of a different point. Most, however, were entirely or substantially relevant to the broad concern of environmental politics. I printed each relevant editorial and organized them by time period, thus preparing for conducting a frame analysis.

Figure 1 summarizes the units of analysis generated for each sample year. In total, 398 editorials were identified, distributed over 15 sample years spanning a 56-year period.

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25 I should note that I excluded the keyword ‘nuclear’ from this search. Because the formation of an anti-nuclear movement in the 1970s represented a quite distinct counter-hegemonic challenge to the technocratic growth discourse of the day, to do it justice would require a much larger effort than this project can afford. See Clow (1989) for an in-depth treatment of the nuclear power issue by selected newspapers in Canada.
This basic quantitative analysis reveals that editorial interest in eco-political topics waxes and wanes over this period. The number of editorials in any given year varies widely, from a high of 44 in 1972 to a low of seven in 2012. The 2012 editorial count is even lower than in the early 1960s, when the popularization of environmental concern is just getting underway.\(^\text{26}\)

![No. of Editorials by Study Year](image)

**Figure 1.** Number of editorials by sample year over the study period that substantively matched the keywords 'environment', 'environmental' or 'pollution'. From 2007, the keywords 'climate change' or 'global warming' were added to the search. The ‘year’ is a calendar year.

As these numbers show, and saying nothing about the actual content of the editorials, each study year following 1965 (with notable exceptions of 1982 and 2012), finds a

\footnote{\textsuperscript{26} This is not, however, a reflection of total coverage of environmental topics by the paper since news stories and op-ed commentaries far outnumber editorials. A search for all articles, opinion pieces, etc. in 2012 using all keywords (but without screening out irrelevant articles) identified a total of 2,061 separate items: 1,937 news articles; 114 columns; 7 editorials; 5 ‘briefs’; 2 interviews; 1 product review. These were distributed across three sections: business news (661); news (597); and lifestyle (275). Compare this to a total of 2,611 total units in 1985 (not a sample year): 2,608 news articles; 2 columns; 1 brief; 1 editorial.}
relatively consistent editorial interest in environmental issues and politics, with nine of the 15 years being at 25 or higher, in several years much higher.

**3.4 Frame analysis**

Within this historical context, I use frame analysis to characterize each editorial discourse. The literature on framing and frame analysis is extensive and multifaceted, including studies of media content, audience impact, and strategic communications and public relations (Ihlen & Nitz, 2008). The diverse framing research approaches reflect three different conceptual orders and methodological emphases.

The first order, the idea of a cognitive frame, comes from the fields of psychology and neuroscience. Cognitive frames are unconscious structures which serve as ‘schemata of interpretation’ for information received by the brain, enabling individuals to ‘locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences or life experiences’ (Goffman, 1974, p. 21).

All of our knowledge makes use of frames, and every word is defined through the frames it neurally activates. All thinking and talking involves ‘framing.’ And since frames come in systems, a single word typically activates not only its defining frame, but also much of the system its defining frame is in (Lakoff, 2010, p. 72).

Neuroscience takes this cognitive element one step further by demonstrating that frames are, in fact, physically manifested in neural circuits. Repetitive triggering of a frame through language physically strengthens the synapses in the neural circuitry in which it is located; further, these frame-circuits are connected to emotional regions of the brain. This physical-emotional response deepens one’s investment in a particular frame, making it very difficult to ‘change the channel’ – to interpret one’s experience of the world differently (Lakoff, 2010, p. 72).
From a social-psychological perspective, framing is the essence of communication. In order for social groups to function effectively, cognitive frames must be shared among a social group. Reese defines frames as ‘organizing principles that are *socially shared* and *persistent* over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully *structure* the social world’ (original emphasis) (Reese, 2003, p. 11). Indeed, Hertog and McLeod insist that frames are cultural rather than cognitive structures, constructed by myths, narratives and metaphors which carry extensive meaning to ‘culturally articulate individuals’ (Hertog & McLeod, 2003, p. 141). These represent culturally inherited storylines and their adaptations over time. This subconscious level of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’ underpins Gramsci’s cultural notion of common sense, or the ‘traditional conception of the world’ (Gramsci, 1999, p. 430), with which any hegemonic process has to resonate in order to gain or maintain legitimacy.

A second order of framing studies is located in the field of communications research, specifically the operations and role of news media in the public sphere including the effect of media stories on various audiences. Studies on agenda-setting, priming and issue salience fall into this category. Frames in this case can be very narrowly understood as common elements in the architecture and construction of news stories, rather than cognitive-cultural or hegemonic-ideological frames. For instance, media studies have identified five common ‘frames’ of investigative news stories: attribution of

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27 Cognitive frames and cultural frames are not mutually exclusive: culture is the primary source of social cognition. Nor is it clear what they mean by ‘culturally articulate individuals.’ It seems that cultural myths and narratives are meaningful to all members of a social group, and primarily on a subconscious level.

28 Gramsci distinguishes between common sense and good sense. Common, in this case, means commonly-held, regardless of whether it is in the collective best interest.
responsibility frame, human-interest frame, conflict frame, morality frame, and the (economic) consequences frame (Tong, 2014, p. 353). Which of these five story frames a journalist chooses is not an inherently ideological choice. A more pertinent category of media framing studies relates to the way in which media represent frames constructed by actors involved in policy networks. In this sense, framing can be understood as

\[ \text{select[ing]} \text{ some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993, p. 52).} \]

Actors exercise influence when the media selects their particular frame to communicate to their audience about an issue. Frame analysis of media texts, then, seeks to discern the political relations embedded in the media representation of an issue (Stoddart, Haluza-Delay and Tindall, 2016). While media studies use different language, this aspect of framing relates to the third order of frame research which is concerned with strategic discourse, or discourse in the service of power. After Gramsci, gaining and maintaining hegemony requires an ongoing process of articulation and re-articulation of/with ‘common sense’ or cultural-cognitive frames’ in order to gain support for a hegemonic project. Cognitive frames evolve over time through processes of direct experience of the world, as well as through public discourse. Gramsci writes,

\[ \text{Common sense is not something rigid and immobile, but is continually transforming itself, enriching itself with scientific ideas and with philosophical opinions which have entered ordinary life. ‘Common sense’ is the folklore of philosophy, and is always half-way between folklore properly speaking and the philosophy, science, and economics of the specialists. Common sense creates the folklore of the future, that is as a relatively rigid phase of popular knowledge at a given place and time (Gramsci, 1999, p. 629).} \]
In order to retain and advance its essential contours, both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects strategically contribute to this transformation by “moving people along” and then to normalize those aspects that run counter to cultural-cognitive frames. In short, hegemonic/counter-hegemonic processes involve the strategic framing of discourse in a ‘war of position’ (Stoddart, 2007, pp. 220-21).

Critical discourse studies fall within this category of framing research (Carvalho, 2005, 2008; Tollefson, 2014). As previously discussed, framing is the essence of communication. Analyzing framing as a discursive strategy, then, examines ‘how, and not whether, an actor frames reality’ (Carvalho, 2008, p. 169). Carvalho defines framing as organizing discourse according to a particular point of view or perspective. In media discourse, this entails a) selection, ‘an exercise of inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgements, etc.,’ and b) composition, ‘the arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning.’ While Carvalho implies the possibility of subconscious framing (as in the first order), CDA views framing from a social constructivist perspective as

an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614).

In other words, framing is the strategic deliberate construction of meaning to elicit a particular effect or understanding (Benford & Snow, 2000; Chong & Druckman, 2007; Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes & Sasson, 1992; Tankard, 2003).

In this study, I used frame analysis to deconstruct editorial discourse following Van Dijk’s four-part schematic of editorial structure (see Section 3.1). Presuppositions and
assertions provide the presumptive and evidentiary foundation on which the editorial writer’s evaluation of a situation is based. That judgement is expressed as a proposition, and the conclusion represents the editorialist’s determination of what action should be taken by whom (van Dijk, 1998). These structural elements can be ascribed to more generalizable eco-political discursive frames. Where a statement reflects an implicit presupposition regarding a hegemonic notion that goes without saying within a dominant discourse, the presupposition constitutes the evaluative or ideological frame that is invoked by the statement. In other instances, an assertion or proposition represents the frame.

Either way, it is the generalizability of a statement or presupposition that justifies its classification as a frame. This means certain frames can be identified with certain identifiable discourse formations (as summarized in Appendix B). By tracking the occurrence of particular frames in the editorials over time, it is possible to identify the dominant eco-political discourse(s) that occur in The Globe and Mail editorials within each of the four time periods, as well as the trajectory of editorial eco-discourse over time.

To illustrate this analytical process, consider these three statements from a Globe editorial published on March 18, 1970 (“Only pressure will do it”), which is critical of then-Ontario Premier John Robarts for not dealing firmly enough with industrial pollution:

Statement 1: ‘The pulp and paper company which is polluting the water it uses and the chemical company which is polluting the atmosphere have the responsibility for correcting the damage they have done.’
Assertion/truth claim: pulp and paper and chemical companies are polluting and it is causing unacceptable damage.

Proposition: the polluters are responsible for cleaning up their mess.

Statement 2: ‘Of course, the governments can help but they also have the responsibility to see that the corrective measures are undertaken with some dispatch.’

Proposition: Governments are responsible for making sure polluters clean up their mess.

Proposition: Some (presumably financial) assistance to the companies may be warranted, but this is secondary to enforcement of clean-up orders.

Statement 3: ‘Tough and co-ordinated action - on government, not industry's timetable - is what now must be forthcoming.’

Conclusion/recommendation: Government needs to set the rules and implement a crack-down in short order.

These statements can be generalized into four frames:

Frame 1: *Industrial pollution is unacceptable.*

Frame 2: *Corporations are accountable for the damage they do.*

Frame 3: *Governments are responsible for holding polluters accountable.*

Frame 4: *Governments are responsible for protecting the commons (air, water).*

These frames generally reflect the discourse of the environmental movement which was emerging at that time and demanding action on the gross levels of pollution evident in the 1960s industrial boom. Once considered simply a cost of progress, by 1970 pollution had become socially unacceptable and corporations were being called to account for it. To reinforce the editorial’s assertions, the editorial quotes Premier Robarts who calls industrial pollution ‘devastating’ and warns that this generation may have to answer to their grandchildren about ‘what went wrong.’ The editorialist responds: ‘It may already be too late to avoid those questions.’ Two additional frames are invoked here. The first
frame, *running out of time*, suggests an existential reality of ecological limits. The second, *answering to our grandchildren*, invokes an ethical imperative of intergenerational justice. Both of these frames are associated with the counter-hegemonic discourse of ecologism (see Section 2.6.2). Frames 3 and 4, however, also point towards a (frontier) discourse of administrative rationalism which sees a strong role for the state in regulating industrial activity (see Section 2.6.3). This discourse arises from the broader post-war interventionist consensus in which government plays a prominent role in shaping the conditions of life for citizens (Hall and Massey, 2010; Swarts, 2013).

From a perspective which sees the state as a facilitator of capital accumulation, this institutionalization of environmental concern represents an attempt to manage social conflict by articulating or hegemonizing a strand of the counter-hegemonic discourse. Yet this tendency is not particularly evident in the editorial’s tone or recommendation for action. Government is framed as an accountable protector of the public interest, as opposed to a protector of special or vested interest. This presumably reflects a disposition towards the state that would resonate with the cultural ‘common sense’ of the paper’s readers, that is, a cultural consensus, applied to a new field of political contestation.

We see in this editorial, then, the influence of the radical discourse of the new environmental movement interpreted through the lens of a progressive welfare state. At a high level of interpretation, the editorial reinforces the emerging counter-hegemonic eco-political discourse by directly challenging the heretofore privileged status of economically powerful industries and asserting a new field of political engagement, the environment. On another level, however, administrative rationalism is inherently vested in existing structural relations: the presupposition is that the system is capable of
resolving the rupture between economic activity and citizens’ expectations for
environmental quality.

In Table 3, I have compiled the assertions, propositions, frames and their associated
discourses identified in my analysis of nearly 400 *Globe and Mail* editorials over the
study period of 1960 to 2016. A total of 16 different categories of assertions and
propositions were identified. I then categorized these frames according to their
association with Blühdorn’s two main paradigms, ecologism and post-ecologism. This
categorization is summarized in Table 4. Should Blühdorn’s theory hold, then we would
expect to find frames associated with the ecologist paradigm in the earlier years, and with
the post-ecologist paradigm in the later years.

My analysis does support this prediction. There is a significant transition at the end of the
third study period, from a discourse which reinforces dominant cultural values and
norms, and legitimizes many of the claims of the radical green movement, to a discursive
strategy of actively delegitimizing those norms and the environmental politics they
enabled. Eventually, in the face of intractable evidence of a worsening climate crisis and
related political demands, editorial discourse assumes the stance of Blühdorn’s simulative
politics of unsustainability. In following chapters, I describe this discursive journey
within the historical context of the emergence and maturation of environmental politics in
Canada at the national level. A discussion of the implications of this analysis follows in
Chapter 8. Appendix A provides a summary of the occurrence of all frames across the
entire study period.
Table 3. Summary of frames and associated discourses found in The Globe and Mail editorials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertions / Propositions</th>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Associated Discourse(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertions that a particular environmental situation is of grave concern and strong corrective action is required, whatever the cost.</td>
<td>Raising the alarm; environment in crisis; pollution/ environmental damage unacceptable; eco-catastrophe</td>
<td>Ecologism/limits to growth; ecological rationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition that it is the responsibility of government(s) to ensure the protection of the environment; assertions that government is being ineffective as lead actor.</td>
<td>State as legitimate lead actor; governments responsible for protecting the commons; holding polluters to account</td>
<td>Ecologism; Administrative rationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposition that environmental problems are the (inevitable) product of modern society, industrialization, population and economic growth, urbanization.</td>
<td>Critique of industrial society / progress / limits; eco-catastrophe</td>
<td>Ecologism Malthusianism; Limits to growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions that protection of ‘the commons’ serves the public interest, is related to national identity, or is a matter of national sovereignty, and therefore overrides narrow private interest.</td>
<td>National sovereignty, national interest, common good are associated with environmental protection</td>
<td>Ecologism; ecological rationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding the importance of respecting democratic processes, public engagement/ advocacy, and First Nations rights, protecting people from environmental harm, and providing proper restitution.</td>
<td>Legitimacy of democratic processes; ecological / justice / rights protection; environmentalism</td>
<td>Democratic pragmatism; ecological justice; ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions against citizen engagement, environmentalism</td>
<td>Illegitimacy of activism, environmentalism</td>
<td>Post-ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding Canada’s stance on transboundary environmental problems as contributing to a greater good; importance of being a good role model, a team player on the global stage.</td>
<td>Global commons need to be protected; legitimacy of multilateralism and global cooperation; global citizen</td>
<td>Ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding Canada’s national interest in transboundary environmental negotiations being connected to short-term economic interests.</td>
<td>Illegitimacy of multilateral processes; national economic self-interest must be protected</td>
<td>Neo-liberalism; economism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding environmental protection as a matter of acting ethically, of ‘doing the right thing’; of doing one’s duty for future generations by setting aside short-term interests and acting for the long term; that there is intrinsic value in nature or non-human species that must be respected.</td>
<td>Legitimacy of ethics, morality, duty; intergenerational justice</td>
<td>Ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertions / Propositions</td>
<td>Frames</td>
<td>Associated Discourse(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions based on the science of ecology; the need to account for the interdependence of all elements of nature, including humans; nature as life support system; the intrinsic value of, and the importance of protecting, biodiversity and whole ecosystems.</td>
<td>Legitimacy of ecological science; ecological rationality</td>
<td>Ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Against scientific evidence and assertions of harm and urgency to act.</td>
<td>Illegitimacy of climate change</td>
<td>Cornucopianism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding the role of experts, research, technology in the environmental problematic (cause, solution); the acceptability of risk.</td>
<td>Primacy of professionalized expertise, technology; risk management; technocentrism; techno-managerialism</td>
<td>Prometheanism; scientific and administrative rationalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding economic rationalizations for environmental protection; instrumental value of nature; pollution cost to society is high – economically responsible to clean up; prevention is cheaper than cure</td>
<td>Economic rationalism (pro-environment)</td>
<td>Ecologism; sustainable development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Win-win propositions – environmental protection can be good for the economy/development; we can protect the environment while expanding the economy</td>
<td>Possibility of green capitalism; no trade-offs;</td>
<td>Ecological modernization; sustainable development; post-ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions regarding the primacy of economic interests over environmental protection; individualization of the ecological problematic; role of the state as advocate for economic interests.</td>
<td>Economism; reductionism; individualism</td>
<td>Neo-liberalism; post-ecologism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertions which normalize the eco-crisis, while defending status quo political-economic relations; current lifestyles and economic systems can be maintained while achieving environmental goals.</td>
<td>Sustaining the unsustainable; techno-managerialism</td>
<td>Post-ecologism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Discourse frames associated with Blühdorn’s paradigms of ecologism and post-ecologism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames related to political-ecologist discourse</th>
<th>Frames related to post-ecologist discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raising the alarm; environment in crisis</td>
<td>Against alarmism/environmentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits to growth; critique of progress, industrialism</td>
<td>Scientific rationality; techno-optimism; managerialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological rationality; intrinsic value of nature</td>
<td>Sustaining the unsustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State as legitimate lead; responsible authority</td>
<td>Market fundamentalism; economism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy; eco-justice; citizen engagement</td>
<td>Climate science legitimacy questioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global commons stewardship; multilateralism</td>
<td>National/economic self-interest; against multilateralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development (certain context)</td>
<td>Sustainable development (certain context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public interest; common good; national identity/sovereignty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic rationality (pro-environment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics of responsibility; morality</td>
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Chapter 4: Period 1 - The 1960s

4.1 Prelude: Early environmental history

The 1960s is widely recognized as the decade in which ‘the environment’ as a subject-position was constructed and politicized (see Section 4.2). The prelude to the politicization of ‘the environment’ (as opposed to specific resources) in North America was a century-long no-holds-barred campaign to industrialize the economy and engineer the landscape. In Canada, this meant the construction of canals and waterways (including the St. Lawrence Seaway in the 1950s, which permanently changed the entire Great Lake system), hydroelectric dams and causeways; draining of wetlands; development of mines and their toxic legacies; industrialization of forestry operations; and widespread transformation of the Prairies into agricultural landscapes. The state did act during this time, in the face of growing concerns about resource depletion and degradation. During the late 19th century, governments began taking measures to protect public health by establishing water and sewage works, thereby reducing exposure to pollutants. By 1929, there were 95 municipal sewage systems operating in Ontario, serving 1.6 million people (Macdonald, 1991, p. 86). A Conservation Commission involving federal and provincial representatives operated from 1909 to 1920, studying issues related to forestry, lands, fish and wildlife, water, minerals and public health. In 1917, responding to widespread decimation of waterfowl species, Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Birds Convention (Macdonald, 1991, p. 81). The International Joint Commission (IJC) was formed in 1909 by Canada and the US to oversee issues relating to boundary waters,
including pollution and resource issues. Forestry schools were established at the University of Toronto in 1907 and University of New Brunswick in 1909, importing the scientific forestry management regime from Germany (Macdonald, 1991, p. 81).

Although smaller and less vocal than its counterpart in the United States, the early conservation movement in Canada influenced these developments. Generally comprised of well-educated natural scientists and, once professional schools were established, trained foresters, agriculturalists and planners, this movement was dedicated to the “wise use” and sustainable management of natural resources, and to a lesser extent the preservation of nature.29 The national and provincial parks systems remain high profile examples of their legacy. The Rocky Mountains Parks Act of 1887 set aside Banff Springs as the first national park; Algonquin Park in Ontario was established in 1893. Rather than a preservation agenda, however, early parks had a clear utilitarian mandate: they were for the recreational and health benefit of people, and thus were important anchors for a nascent wilderness tourism industry (Forkey, 2012, pp. 77-79). Besides the obvious tourism infrastructure in Banff, evidence of this focus can be found in Fundy National Park, established in 1948, which incorporates a golf course and a swimming pool. It was not until 1988 (revised in 2000) that the goal of protecting ecological integrity was added to the purposes of national parks (Finkelstein and McNamee, 2012).

29 Canadian conservation organizations were formed later than those in the United States where the North American conservation and preservation movements began. Ducks Unlimited has its roots in 1937 when hunters began raising money in the United States to conserve waterfowl habitat in Canada. The Audubon Society, which eventually became the Canadian Nature Federation, was formed in 1948. It was not until the 1960s that other national conservation organizations were formed.
These developments formed the foundation for the post-war environmental politics. First, they established the role of the state as a legitimate authority, (albeit a contested one in federal-provincial relations), in the management of public goods (e.g. water, wildlife) and commercial resources (forests. Second, they established the legitimacy of experts, hired by the state, but also elite members of newly formed conservation organizations, in determining the proper allocation and management of land and resources.

**4.2 Politicization of the environment: The 1960s**

In the 1960s and early 1970s... [e]nvironmentalism became for the first time explicitly political, imbued with the social questioning and activism of the period (Macdonald, 1991, p. 32).

The post-War period was one of unprecedented industrial and population expansion in Europe and North America, a phenomenon that has been characterized as ‘the great acceleration’ (Steffen *et al*, 2011). While this growth spurt began in 1950, the 1960s is generally acknowledged as the historical moment when the modern environmental movement in Western industrialized nations took root and began to politicize the ‘environment.’ The movement constructed a broad discursive field, the nodal point (the ideological centre) of which directly challenged the hegemonic assumptions of modernity – that progress is defined by industrial growth enabled by techno-scientific innovation to be applied primarily to the extraction of natural resources and the engineering of natural landscapes.

Environmentalism in the post-war period is distinguished from the pre-war resource conservation movement by the popularization of concern for the negative by-products of industrialization, urbanization and militarization. On the one hand, there remained a
growing public appreciation for nature and wilderness protection, encouraged by the
growth of middle-class cottaging and camping, the public appeal of landscape artists, and
the allure of the North and other wilderness areas as formative of the Canadian identity
(Macdonald, 1991, p. 85). On the other, several critical discourse moments in the 1960s
challenged the hegemonic assumptions about the nature of progress. The publication in
1962 of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, and the occurrence of several high profile
environmental disasters reinforced an emerging public concern about exposures to
pesticides, radioactive fall-out from above-ground nuclear bomb testing (an issue driven
by the early peace movement), and water pollution (Macdonald, 1991, pp. 86-87). The
effect was to create a cultural opening for new eco-political discourses that began to
resonate broadly within the public. By the latter half of the decade, new citizens’
advocacy groups had formed across the country, focusing attention on the side effects of
rapid industrialization and urban growth. These formed the foundation of the modern
Canadian environmental movement, distinct from the conservation movement.

30 The Canadian Wildlife Federation was formed in 1962 and the National and Provincial Parks
Association, now the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) in 1963. World Wildlife Fund
Canada was formed in 1967 by Senator Allan MacNaughton, a former Liberal Member of Parliament and
Speaker of the House, six years after the parent organization was formed in Great Britain. Most of these
organization have evolved to take on pollution and other environmental issues since they threaten the health
of wildlife and integrity of natural areas.

31 Examples are the 1967 Torrey Canyon oil tanker spill in Great Britain; an oil rig blow-out off the coast of
Santa Barbara, California; the 1970 grounding of the *Arrow* in Chedabucto Bay, Nova Scotia (Macdonald,
1991, p. 93); the ‘death’ of Lake Erie due to eutrophication; and the Cuyahoga River (Cleveland, Ohio)
bursting into flame in 1969 (MacDowell, 2012).

32 The New Brunswick chapter of the Voice of Women, a national peace organization, began organizing
against the spraying of Agent Orange and other herbicides on CFB Gagetown in the mid-1960s.

33 Canadian environmental organizations formed in the late 1960s include the Yukon Conservation Society
(1968), Pollution Probe (Toronto, 1969), and the Conservation Council of New Brunswick (1969). Even
though two of them retained the conservation label and ethic, all three tackled pollution and toxic
chemicals, the latter focusing initially on the running sewer the Wolastoq (St. John) River had become, and
issues at stake went beyond first generation issues of sustainable management of resources and wildlife, to complex second-generation issues [that were] connected to post-war changes in the world of production, issues such as industrial air and water pollution, nuclear waste,...the long term effects of environmental degradation and other aspects of so-called modernity....(MacDowell, 2012, p. 245).


This politicization of the environment was common across Western democracies. The new discursive field of environmentalism entailed a thorough-going critique of industrial society and its view of progress. Besides Silent Spring, other influential books included R. Buckminster Fuller’s Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth (1968) and Ann and Paul Ehrlich’s best seller, The Population Bomb (1968), as well as the iconic image of Earth from space (known as Earthrise) produced from the Apollo 8 space flight (Oates, 1989). This counter-hegemonic discourse was reinforced by other 1960s counter-cultural movements whose opposition to the Viet Nam war, the nuclear arms race, patriarchy, and then on the long-running aerial pesticide spray program blanketing New Brunswick forests and rural communities. The early 1970s saw the formation of Greenpeace, Ecology Action Centre (Halifax), Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (Vancouver), and Société pour vaincre la pollution and STOP (Montreal), as well as several anti-nuclear power groups such as the Maritime Energy Coalition, Energy Probe and Birchbark Alliance (Ontario), and the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility (Montreal).
the alienating values of consumer society, brought environmentalism into a larger context of cultural critique (MacDowell, 2012, p. 245).

The new environmentalism claimed that problems lie at the very heart of the modern political economy, even our basic philosophical and cultural outlook...The symptoms of environmental problems may be measured biologically, but the disease itself lies in our socioeconomic organizations, and the solutions are ultimately political (Paehlke, 1989, pp. 36).

The emergence of an activist social movement concentrating on environmental degradation and supported by an engaged scientific community, and the publication of now-canonic critiques in the form of best-selling books, all contribute to the construction of a counter-hegemonic discursive field which defined the oppositional parameters of a new politics of the environment.

4.3 Early institutionalization

At the beginning of the decade, the state-hegemonic discourse of progress accommodated the utilitarian conservation agenda of ensuring efficiency in the exploitation of natural resources, but the limits of that discourse were clear. The 1961 federal-provincial Resources for Tomorrow Conference, organized by the newly formed Canadian Council for Resource Ministers, eschewed any ‘emotional’ or ‘sentimental’ motivation respecting resource management; instead their agenda was to modernize resource management in the face of increasing international competition (Macdonald, 1991, p. 82). By mid-decade, however, that discursive field had broadened to include various pollution concerns, the by-product of both industrial and urban growth. Urban public health concern expanded from water and sewage management to air pollution, with the first regulations to control air emissions set in Ontario in 1967. In 1966, the Canadian Council
for Resource Ministers staged a follow-up to the 1961 conference, called the *Conference on Pollution and Our Environment*, which was attended by 800 government, academic, and industry delegates. Held in Montreal, the agenda included an overview of the state of knowledge of sources and impacts of pollution, as well as technical and legislative control mechanisms. Notably, no citizen-based environmental organizations participated and so the field was still dominated by technical experts and bureaucratic managers (Macdonald, 1991, p. 96).

The dramatic expansion of the hegemonic discursive field represents the ongoing process of articulation and re-articulation of the boundaries of eco-political discourse, as states respond to increasingly resonant counter-hegemonic constructions of existential events and conditions – social antagonisms - that challenged their legitimacy. This 1966 event was an important indicator of the institutionalization of pollution politics across provincial and federal jurisdictions in response to public expectations.

Water pollution, primarily the problem of municipal sewage, was the overriding priority for governments of the day. In his case study of the federal government’s response to water pollution problems (he studied the years 1945-1972), Parlour notes that until 1967 environmental issues were not the stuff of House of Commons debates. In that year, however, the Speech from the Throne indicated for the first time that environmental legislation would be forthcoming in the 1968 legislative session. From then on, to the end of his study in 1972, each throne speech included environmental provisions. Even so, Parliament had virtually no influence on federal environmental policy development; it was all directed by and from the Executive Branch. Nor did the emerging environmental movement pay much attention to what was going on in Ottawa. Since pollution and
resource management were considered solely provincial jurisdiction until the mid-1960s, most of the advocacy work of newly formed citizens groups, along with the attention of the media, were directed towards provincial and municipal levels of government. Nevertheless, despite provincial opposition, the federal government began to assert its powers under the Fisheries Act and the Navigable Waters Act by mid-decade (Parlour, 1977, pp. 48-50; 63-64).

Federal resolve to assert and expand its environmental jurisdiction and influence was bolstered by two reports by the International Joint Commission (IJC) on Great Lakes pollution, one in 1965 and the other in 1969, which raised alarm about eutrophication in the lower Great Lakes. Ultimately, this led to the 1970 Canada Water Act which, among other things, imposed limits on the phosphate content of detergents in Canada. By 1970, work was also underway on a federal Clean Air Act, as well as on plans to establish Environment Canada (1971), a super-agency which was to administer new environmental legislation and consolidate existing environmental mandates dispersed across several federal departments and agencies (Macdonald, 1991, pp. 94-95). This marked the formal institutionalization of the environment as a significant public policy problem at the national level.

34 The International Joint Commission was established under the 1907 Boundary Waters treaty between Canada and the United States as a vehicle for resolving disputes over shared waters. This has frequently included pollution and fisheries issues, as well as water level management. Because the IJC is a vehicle for transboundary water management, Ottawa and Washington jointly refer issues to the IJC for study and receive and act upon the commission’s reports. The two governments referred the issue of Great Lakes pollution to the IJC for study in 1964.
4.4 International context

The establishment of eco-politics in Canada was reflected in other Western countries, thereby leading to environmental politics becoming institutionalized at the international level during this period. In 1968, Sweden sponsored a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly that directed the UN to hold an international environmental conference. Part of this resolution was quoted in a *Globe and Mail* editorial:

"the continuing and accelerating impairment of the quality of the human environment caused by such factors as air and water pollution, erosion and other forms of solid deterioration, waste, noise and secondary effects of biocides, which are accentuated by rapidly increasing population and accelerating urbanization" may result in “degradation of the quality of life” (Pollution is big issue, Dec. 4/68).

The editorial also quoted Canadian Liberal MP Robert Kaplan who spoke in favour of the resolution at the General Assembly:

"We must act to arrest the abuses of our environment and to remedy the abuses already inflicted upon it." For the first time in man's history, he said, fresh air, fresh water and clean soil "must be considered in the same economic terms as food, clothing and electricity." The cost of rectifying the errors of the past in terms of pollution are huge. The cost of taking preventative action was comparatively small [citing the Great Lakes as an example] (Pollution is big issue, Dec. 4/68).

The resolution passed and the *UN Conference on the Human Environment*, the first of several, was scheduled for Stockholm in June 1972. Canadian diplomats played a key role in organizing the conference. Businessperson and diplomat Maurice Strong served as the Secretary-General of the conference, as well as its 20-year follow-up, the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*, the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Strong and other Canadian diplomats played a central role in shaping the
UN environmental agenda over that two-decade period. Clearly, the Liberal government led by Pierre Trudeau was sufficiently conscious of the environment as an emerging issue on the international stage that it was interested in establishing an early high profile, along with Sweden, at the UN. This may be due to the fact that the federal government can act at this level without too much provincial interference. Multilateralism from this point on provides a context for Canadian eco-politics throughout the study period.

4.5 The Globe and Mail editorials: 1960s

In his case study of the rise (and fall) of water pollution as a public policy issue in Canada between the years 1945-1972, Parlour devoted significant attention to the role of the mass media and associated public concern in driving the water pollution agenda. His results show a slow incline in media interest in water pollution until 1968. At this point, coverage increased dramatically, peaking in 1970 and then dropping off sharply to 1972 (Parlour, 1977, p. 173). Parlour found that newspaper coverage of water pollution, including editorial writing, tended to focus on isolated local issues, broadening out somewhat in the early 1970s to consider national and international dimensions as well as

35 The constitution grants the provinces primary jurisdiction over resource management and pollution, although over time federal environmental jurisdiction has been expanded in important ways, especially in cases where the effects of pollution or of resource management are transboundary. Nevertheless, federal-provincial jurisdictional tensions are perpetual and largely determine the nature of national environmental politics in Canada.

36 Parlour studied popular magazines and television coverage as well as newspapers. Here, I only discuss his newspaper analysis. He combined a quantitative content analysis of news reporting and editorializing on water pollution issues in four prominent newspapers (Vancouver Sun, Ottawa Citizen, La Presse in Montreal, and the Toronto Globe and Mail) with direct interviews of media personnel to arrive at his conclusions. Further, he compared this media analysis with existing public opinion surveys from this period to correlate media coverage with public attitudes (Parlour, 1977, pp. 171-72).
actions of governments to correct specific problems.\footnote{37} Editorials generally provided commentary on and critical appraisal of the performance of municipal and provincial regulatory agencies in dealing with water pollution, while only rarely mentioning the federal government (Parlour, 1977, p. 184).

Significantly, from a political perspective, Parlour found no influence of public opinion \textit{per se} on the news coverage over this period.\footnote{38} While the rise of environmental problems on the political agenda is often attributed to the advent of public concern, Parlour suggests it is more accurate to attribute this to the politicization of the intelligentsia and well-educated opinion leaders whose members populated the new environmental organizations, university faculties, professional organizations and government departments, as well as the media organizations themselves. Parlour observes:

\begin{quote}
Over the period from 1966 to 1972 there is a definite trend towards a more "activist" approach to environmental reporting in the mass media, particularly by newspapers which have shown a marked tendency to be critical of the lack of government action to correct environmental problems. The activities of environmental "pressure" groups were given wide publicity after 1968 with a concomitant increase in affirmative, investigative, reporting on environmental issues; in some cases field work was initiated by reporters and writers to obtain first-hand information about the quality of the environment (Parlour, 1977, pp. 184-85).
\end{quote}

He argues that the media, as the primary source of information on environmental matters for the public, was stoking public concern, not responding to it. According to Parlour, on

\footnote{37} As for the quality of coverage, Parlour found the scientific and technical content to be generally poor, with little effort to write about complex issues for a lay audience; likewise, prior to 1968 there was very little investigative reporting, with reporters depending heavily on secondary sources (Parlour, 1977, p. 180).

\footnote{38} He is referring here to the general population, not the segment involved in environmental organizations.
issues for which the public has no direct experience or personal knowledge – generally the case for environmental issues – newspapers remain the most important source of information for the public.

Does Parlour’s analysis hold true for The Globe and Mail? As the newspaper of record for Canada’s political, business and intellectual elites, it is clearly embedded within the hegemonic sphere and thus an organ maintaining legitimacy. Yet this study reveals a complex role that serves to legitimate substantial elements of counter-hegemonic discourse. While Parlour’s research was limited to water pollution, and his conclusions were drawn from a broad range of all media coverage, not just editorials, this study also finds that editorials take an activist stance from the outset of the study period.

I examined three years of Globe and Mail editorials during this period: 1960, 1965 and 1969. Searching for the keywords, environment, environmental and pollution, the trend in numbers of editorials is upward, which is to be expected given that this is the decade when environmental politics becomes entrenched in Western democracies. Even so, it is not an even trajectory, as Figure 2 indicates. The low numbers in the first two sample years indicate a slow start to the ‘ecology decade’ (Worster, 1994), with significant increases in editorial attention evident at the end of the decade. With the exception of 2012, 1965 sets a quantitative floor for editorial attention across the entire study period (see Figure 1, Section 3.3), thus demonstrating that by the end of this decade eco-politics has become the subject of sustained public discourse in Canada.
As Figure 3 illustrates, editorials in 1960 cover parochial issues of water pollution, air pollution, nature and general conservation, as well as broader themes of international law, scientific research (in a regional context), and modernization as a driver of environmental problems. The range of editorial concern shrinks in 1965 to only local issues, including a new concern for radiation pollution from the emerging civilian nuclear power industry in Ontario.
Figure 3. *Globe and Mail* editorial topic summary, 1960s sample years. Environmental editorials in the 1960s covered 15 different topic categories. In this chart, the first seven topics (from left to right) were introduced in 1960; the eighth, nuclear power, was the only new topic in 1965. The rest were new in 1969.

Between 1965 and 1969, the number of topics subject to editorializing more than doubled, representing both an expanded repertoire of problems, and the inclusion of an environmental dimension into more conventional policy areas. For instance, included in the 1969 topic categories are broader geo-political issues of the day (nuclear weapons testing; Arctic sovereignty) which the editorials associate with environmental degradation. Also new in 1969 is a focus on problem-solving agency, primarily by the state (institutional capacity), but also by environmental groups.

The overall stance of *The Globe and Mail* throughout this decade is one of an unapologetic environmental advocate. This is evident by the dominant frames in these
editorials (see Figure 4). Characterized by the frame, ‘raising the alarm,’ the paper takes a strong stand against water and air pollution in the face of rapid, unplanned urban and industrial development. The framing of the state as the legitimate lead on such matters is equally dominant.

![Eco-political discourse frames in Period One](image)

**Figure 4. Occurrence and frequency of eco-political discourse frames in Period One editorials.**

While sewage is a dominant water pollution concern in the early years, vehicle emissions are the most frequently cited source of bad air, and the growth in traffic persists as an editorial topic into the 1970s. Both sewage pollution and traffic-related air pollution are artefacts of rapid urbanization and population growth, particularly in southern Ontario, the region which preoccupies much of *The Globe and Mail*’s attention during this period.
Editorials repeatedly assert that there is an existential environmental crisis at hand. Titles such as, ‘The battle against pollution,’ ‘Wasting our wealth,’ ‘Paradise or pollution,’ ‘Pollution warning,’ ‘A national disgrace,’ and ‘The biggest junk yard’ (referring to space, the final frontier), all appear in 1960. Equally evocative language is used in the body of editorials:

...Ontario...by past neglect, has squandered its water resources by allowing pollution....We have urged such measures for years, and for years we have been largely ignored by Queen’s Park. Meanwhile, pollution has steadily worsened until, of all the Great Lakes around us, only Lake Superior may perhaps be said to be clean – and not for long....It is no part of statesmanship to allow resources fundamental to all industrial and commercial life to be wasted and destroyed to the point where it has become a burden of massive size to extricate, rehabilitate, and reclaim them (The battle against pollution, Jan. 5, 1960).39

The reference here to statesmanship is significant. Clearly, the paper is presupposing a responsibility of the modern state to protect public goods such as water from abuse. Often assertions of a pollution crisis are accompanied by a proposition that government(s) needs to act post-haste, without concern for cost: ‘But the battle against pollution will have to be such a burden.... It is the duty of the government to see that these resources are available.’ The related frame is that the cost of pollution is ultimately much higher than the cost of preventing it:

39 Note the reference in this quote to the ‘years’ of advocacy on this issue. Although this study starts with 1960, I also reviewed editorials from 1955 and found the same frame of ‘raising the alarm’ and a similar stridency and urgency of discourse. So editorial discourse on pollution as the scourge of industrial society predates the conventional view that modern environmentalism began in the 1960s.
It is much simpler to stop pollution before the fact than after it; this is the hard lesson Ontario has learned as it has spent vast amounts of money each year to reclaim polluted waterways (Clean up – or else! May 20/65).

The cost issue refers to the responsibility of municipalities to build sufficient new wastewater and water treatment infrastructure; it is framed as the cost of urban growth which, if left unattended, will result in disaster. Many editorials frame environmental problems as the consequences of reckless industrialization and urban expansion, recognizing the limits of nature – even in 1960, before the popularization of the limits to growth discourse - and the disastrous implications of ignoring those limits:

Does it [Queen’s Park] think Ontario can expand indefinitely while wasting soil and water indefinitely? The day of reckoning is bound to come, and the bill will be a great deal higher... (Wasting our wealth, Feb. 27/60).

Nature, in this editorial, is framed as the ultimate source of wealth. A rather alarming consequence of this ‘no limits’ attitude is painted:

The mills of nature, as of God, grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small. If our legislators do not understand this, let them visit some of those Mediterranean countries which once were wealthy but now subsist mainly on goatmeat and foreign aid (Wasting our wealth, Feb. 27/60).

There are already lessons to be learned from other countries: wasting resources leads to backwardness and stagnation – progressive, modern nations, beware.

Water, according to several 1960 editorials, is our most important asset (after people) and no effort should be spared to protect it.

Yet governments and people alike have taken this basic resource for granted, have treated it as something that would always be there and needed neither conservation nor protection.... All these difficulties [pollution, erosion, siltation, spring torrents, summer trickles] are bound to intensify with the growth of the population (The neglected resource, Mar 4/60).
Not only are resources finite, so is the timeframe for dealing with the problems before thresholds are breached or tipping points reached:

Scientists...warn that at the alarming rate that pollutants are being poured into Ontario’s water resources, the point of no return may be reached within 10 years...The plain fact is that water resources are not inexhaustible – and industry must be made to realize it (Clean up – or else! May 20/65).

Framing pollution in terms of limits, tipping points, and thresholds puts the paper in the forefront in constructing the eco-political discursive field. Drawing on scientific expertise for legitimacy, the limits to growth discourse is intuitive and immanently rational. Conversely, to ignore these limits is irrational, akin to thumbing one’s nose at incontrovertible – and potentially dangerous - natural laws.

In the early decade, conservation is understood as the antidote to the problems of growth. At some point, however, conservation cannot keep pace with the losses:

Among the dictionary definitions of conservation are: The action of conserving; preservation from destructive influences. In Ontario, preservation from destructive influences is not keeping pace with the growth of destructive influences caused by rapid urban and industrial development... [T]his province needs something more than conservation by this definition. It needs re-creation. The efforts of the past few years have not begun to replace the losses caused by past mismanagement, in denuded forests, eroded soil, polluted streams and rivers empty of fish (More effort needed, July 30/60).

An editorial on air pollution continues the alarmist-ominous tone, introducing public health as a motivator for action:

Without warning, a heavy fog could descend on any of Canada’s large urban centres sealing thousands of tons of poisonous gases in the air and causing widespread sickness and loss of life. This is the constant threat of air pollution.... [A]pproximately 600,000 registered motor vehicles in Toronto pour about 2,400 tons of noncombustible wastes into the city’s air every day....’ (Ominous cloud over Canada’s cities, Feb. 6/65).
This editorial also introduces the topic of public awareness of or interest in pollution problems, noting that political response requires public demand. Reflecting Parlour’s judgement that the media and an informed professional class were driving public discourse on environmental problems during this time, the writer laments:

[N]othing short of...disaster...seems to spark public interest in the problems of air pollution.... The Canadian public remains at best apathetic and, at worst, hostile to pollution control measures.... Until there is general public acceptance of the urgent need for pollution control, the dangers of pollution will continue to hang like the smog itself over Canadian urban communities. The distressing question is how many Canadians will suffer sickness and even death in the interval (Ominous cloud over Canada’s cities, Feb. 6/65).

Here, the paper positions itself as the vanguard of environmentalism during this period, pushing the government to address what it views as an existential crisis.

The frame of national sovereignty linked to natural resources and environmental quality also appears in this period. The first is in the context of American overtures regarding water diversions from Canada. The editorial castigates the federal government for responding with ‘platitudes instead of policies.’ Rather than contemplating selling water, which the paper calls ‘dangerous folly,’ Canadian politicians should be developing plans for ‘cleaning up our own pollution... [and the] polluted boundary waters in which we share the blame with the United States.’ Advice to the Americans: ‘Clean up your own pollution and you’ll have plenty of good water’ (A strategist’s view on water, Oct. 9/65).

In 1969 the sovereignty-as-environment frame is invoked by the planned transit of the American oil tanker, Manhattan, accompanied by US Coast Guard ice breakers, through the Northwest Passage. This introduces a new pollution concern - oil spills from
supertankers— as well as a nationalistic sense of identity and stewardship associated with the Canadian north. Calling Canadian officials ‘just a bunch of patsies’ for their tepid response (The master sails elsewhere, Sept. 5/69), the risk of oil spills to the fragile Arctic environment is a central argument in favour of Canada taking a strong stance against this and future such undertakings:

Canada must be in control for navigational purposes and because of the risk of pollution in the Passage - an ice-smashed tanker could pollute vast areas for nobody knows how many years. They also recognize that the Passage may soon become one of the world’s most important shipping routes.... If the Manhattan succeeds, other oil-laden vessels will follow in her wake. Before that happens, Canada must be ready to receive and control them; for it is Canada’s northland that would be despoiled if the ice won and the tankers lost (Too big to be ignored, Sep 9/69).

Oil pollution would become a preoccupation for the next several years.

Two other related frames are prominent in this period: state legitimacy and corporate legitimacy. In the first case, the editorials consistently invoke the responsibility of the state to intervene to protect, prevent, and restore environmental quality. There is a strong concern for institutional capacity, jurisdiction and state responses to pollution problems; indeed, of the 27 editorials in 1969, 10 of them address the perceived lack of institutional capacity, the failure of provincial governments (primarily Ontario) to act aggressively on pollution files, and provincial resistance against perceived federal encroachment on their jurisdiction. The ‘legitimate state’ frame is implicitly and explicitly associated with the ‘public interest/public commons’ frame. This presupposes a greater good – that of clean

40 The Torrey Canyon tanker disaster had occurred in Great Britain in 1967, and the oil rig blow-out off Santa Barbara, California in 1969.
air, clean water, ecological integrity, natural patrimony, and public access to nature - to be pursued over parochial, short term, economic/financial or private interest.

In the early years, much of the attention is on the obligation of all levels of government to spend the necessary money to prevent or clean-up pollution that comes with rapid urban expansion, as previously discussed. The idea of land use planning in southern Ontario is also broached and substantially supported, with the greatest concern being lack of public access to recreation:

With rapid growth of population, and uncontrolled spread of urban and industrial development, Ontario could run out of prime agricultural land, park and recreation land, and fresh water supplies within the foreseeable future. A realistic land use plan could encourage industrial and urban development and protect the best [agricultural] land at the same time. The shortage of parkland in Southern Ontario...is hardly less than a public scandal... Along the shore of Lake Ontario...which should be a focal point for recreation, there is hardly a section reserved for public use (Planning for conservation, Oct. 4/60).

The ‘public interest’ frame is also invoked in a 1965 editorial supporting a controversial move by the federal government to scale back private enterprise within national park boundaries:

The parks were established to preserve in their natural beauty and wilderness a part of the Canadian heritage for the perpetual enjoyment of Canadians...The intervention of the Crown is necessary to ensure that developments fit the parks, and that third-party profits do not price tourist needs beyond the reach of Canadians. The Government is right to move – though it must move gently – to reclaim and preserve the parks (Parks: rumor and reason, Aug. 20/65).

By 1969, the paper has begun to address the institutional capacity of the state to control environmental threats. This includes a concern for federal-provincial jurisdictional
squabbling over constitutional powers to act, particularly between Ottawa and Quebec, presaging future constitutional crises.

These individual [provincial] efforts have not been impressive; even coordinated they would not add up to enough; but what generates exasperation is that the whole pollution problem is being polluted by the constitutional problem...It is so obvious, indeed, that only a person quite unduly dedicated to [Quebec] nationalist and provincial-rights ideas could overlook it. Yet even nationalists need clean water and pure air, as – gasping and gurgling – they may too late discover. The annoying part is that all the rest of us could be gasping and gurgling with them (Water and wind won’t wait, Aug. 6/69).

On the proposed Canada Water Act, the context for the previous quote, the editorialist writes:

In this age, when our environment is being poisoned and defaced, a powerful argument can be made for saying that pollution control is for the general advantage of Canada. The federal government should impose a standard to which all provinces must adhere (The philosophy is sound, Aug. 27/69).

The lack of institutional capacity to fulfill these growing expectations (at this point there are no designated departments of environment in Canada) is taken up in an editorial responding to President Nixon’s executive order to establish an Environmental Quality Council (EQC). The editorial quotes Nixon himself:

“The deterioration of the environment is in large measure the result of our inability to keep pace with progress... We have become victims of our own technological genius. But I am confident that the same energy and skill which gave rise to these problems can also be marshalled for the purpose of conquering them.” Surely we should be contemplating a structure at least parallel to that established by Mr. Nixon, even if only to meet it on a similar level (A lead against pollution, June 2/69).

Corporate legitimacy is a related frame. While most editorials push governments at all levels to ramp up their game in terms of infrastructure, financial commitment and
political will, only a small subset of these specifically address the role of industries in creating the problem. This begins rather gently in 1960, with a jab at the automobile industry’s spending ‘billions’ on ‘sales appeal of annual auto body changes’ instead of on ‘combustion research’ (Just suppose, Mar. 21/60). Similarly, in an otherwise strongly worded 1965 editorial on air pollution, we find the rather understated comment, ‘Industry meets municipal anti-pollution with reluctance.’ The real target in this editorial is the disengaged public, as previously discussed (Ominous cloud, July 1/65). At the end of the decade, air pollution from cars remains a concern, but still only passing mention is made of the role of the ‘car lobby’ in defeating a bill in the California Senate to ban internal combustion engines by 1975, an initiative that, however futile, ‘served to emphasize the seriousness and the magnitude of the problem and, possibly, the scale of the remedy that might be sought’ (On with the job, Aug. 15/69). Other editorials are more blunt:

Industries, many of which depend on an ample supply of pure water for their own operations, must not be allowed to pollute other people’s water by discharging their waste into it. There are laws against this type of vandalism, and they should be rigorously enforced.... [Ships on the Great Lakes] must be prevented from dumping oil, sewage and garbage (Pollution warning, June 18/60).

Industries are vandalizing common property, a frame which elevates the public good over private gain. When the Ontario Water Resources Commission threatens officials of 400 companies with fines or jail time if they do not ‘undertake promptly a pollution control program,’ the editorial complains,

Having the power and using it are two different things. The Commission has been able to levy fines since 1957, yet very few convictions have been obtained (only one in 1964). [Besides cleaning up existing pollution] the Commission must take care that new factories and new additions to old plants will not pollute Ontario’s lakes and rivers’ (Clean up – or else! May 20/65).
In a final example, an editorial praises the Ontario government for moving to regulate air and water pollution in the pulp and paper sector. Challenging the industry’s claim that regulation will force mills to shut down or vacate the province, the editorial notes that most jurisdictions are moving in the same direction so there is nowhere to go without becoming too distant from large Ontario markets. While acknowledging that ‘the cost [to industry] is high...the cost in social and economic terms would be even higher in letting the pollution continue’ (Some answers to pollution, Nov. 3/69). The corporate legitimacy frame, delegitimizes private gain at the expense of the public good, which is to be defended by the state through the enactment and enforcement of laws. In no case does an editorial invoke and defend the economic interests of the private sector over the greater public good of a clean environment.

Three final frames are worth noting, all of which appear in at the end of the period. The first is democratic pragmatism. By 1969, the environmental movement has established itself in Canada and is demanding access to the political process. This sentiment appears in an editorial follow a Globe and Mail investigation into the construction of a heavy water plant at Douglas Point, in which a journalist uncovers information about toxic emissions from the plant. The editorial calls for a halt to construction and an independent safety study, asserting that people living nearby have a ‘right to know’ the risks they will be exposed to (...and urgent new questions, Nov. 3/69). Such demands for due diligence and transparency anticipate the institution of environmental impact assessments of industrial projects in the 1970s. Likewise, the federal approval of an airport east of Toronto Islands draws this blistering critique:
Creation of a just society, citizen participation, responsibility, dialogue with the people, accountability – all meaningless words to Transport Minister Donald Jamieson. Yet they are the words which won the election for his leader, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau... Mr. Jamieson should...publish immediately all the proposed plans and specifications for the island airport – and those other mystery sites – so that the citizens can examine them and comment to their municipal representatives or directly to federal officials...

Participation means participating in the decision-making process. It does not mean commenting after decisions have been made (Airport autocracy, Nov. 21/69).

Transparency is also demanded in an editorial addressing pesticide spraying on Toronto Islands:

We want to know the names of all the insecticides that were used on the island this year and we want to know when they were used. We want, in fact, to see the records of the Metro Parks Department (Let’s have the record, Aug. 14/69).

These editorials imply that by 1969, the public – which the paper had castigated in 1965 for a lack of awareness and concern for pollution – has awakened to environmental degradation. The discourse reflects the participatory-democratic demands of the new social movements generally, and the environmental movement specifically.

Finally, the frame of progress and modernity, while not absent in earlier years, takes on a heightened importance in 1969, in the context of the moon landing on the one hand, and an escalating Cold War nuclear arms race on the other. This frame elevates the perspective from the very local (e.g. Toronto Islands) and regional (e.g. Great Lakes) to the global and to the general condition of modernity. Three editorials explicitly connect nuclear weapons with environmental destruction. The first references negotiations at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament to ban underwater nuclear missile deployment. The
editorial’s support for a ban is situated within a rather catastrophic Malthusian limits frame:

There was reason for optimism when the two major nuclear powers, the United States and Russia, agreed to end atmospheric testing – a major victory in the fight to prevent the radioactive pollution of our environment.... The paramount consideration in all the maneuverings is that adequate measures be taken to prevent the contamination of the world’s last major untapped resources. “Farming” the sea may be the only solution to the Malthusian equation which will be facing a hungry planet in a very few years. It could be suicidal for any nation to jeopardize the long-term hope for short-run gains in the Cold War (Seabed without weapons, May 20/69).

Two other editorials oppose weapons testing in the Pacific Ocean, citing environmental contamination such testing imposes on unsuspecting populations. In an ironic account of the destruction of Bikini Atoll, the editorialist decries the return of islanders to a ‘radioactive wasteland’ (Remember?, Sept. 23/69). Another criticizes plans for a test in the Aleutian Islands, raising issues of earthquakes, tidal waves and radiation contamination, and criticizing the US Atomic Energy Commission for its sense of immunity and unaccountability (The unwelcome blast, Sept. 29/69). Here the editorialist is clearly tapping into the discourses of the new peace and environmental movements. The presupposition is that the nuclear arms race needs to end; there is certainly no evidence of support for the dominant discourse of nuclear deterrence.

While nuclear technology represents humanity’s penultimate destructive power, the paper’s response to the moon landing constructs an unabashed techno-positivist frame:

Man took the first step yesterday from earth to infinity. When Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin brought their Eagle to a stop on the moon, they proved that human beings can leave this planet for another, and beyond that another and another, until perhaps – probably – they can slip out of their own solar
system, their own universe….Eternity can be theirs… Men and their machines. They have done it. And now, if they can refrain from long enough from blowing up their launching pad [emphasis added], the moon can be their stepping stone to the stars (Man on the moon, July 21/69).

This is the boldest statement of promethean optimism found in any editorial in this study.

Nevertheless, the editorialist places a caveat on that potential. While technology and human ingenuity have created unbounded opportunity, they have also created an existential threat to survival. Star Trek-ian future aside, the immediate value of the moon landing is earthbound. Taking a philosophical stance, the editorial places the greatest value on the symbolism of the moon landing to inspire progress, not on pushing back frontiers but on solving existential problems.

But beyond all that, it has taught us what men can do if they will. It has given us a system by which we can lick the problems of the earth if we choose to lick them. If we select our objectives and put behind them the same concentration of money, resources, energy inventiveness and enthusiasm, there is nothing we cannot accomplish, whether it is feeding the hungry, cleansing our earthly environment or mending the differences between races and nations (Man on the moon, July 21/69).

Two points are noteworthy. First, human progress is ultimately defined, not by technological dominance or economic expansion which is the typical promethean frame, but by measures of social justice, ecological integrity and peace. Significantly, there is no mention of any economic benefit to be gained, other than some industrial innovations in efficiency; the phrase, economic growth, does not appear. Second, the variable at play is not science or money but human agency. Solving earthly problems is a function of will and choice; in other words, these are ultimately political decisions.
4.6 Discussion

How can we reconcile the historical context of the establishment of eco-politics in this decade, and the editorial discourse of *The Globe and Mail* from a discourse-political perspective? Having established a legitimate role for the state in the management of natural resources in the first part of the century, the expansion of federal reach into environmental politics appears to be motivated a combination of opportunism and purpose. On the one hand, constitutionally the federal government had far fewer jurisdictional powers over the lives of Canadians than the provinces. The adoption of national public health care, and the expansion of other welfare provisions in the 1960s, cemented the role of the federal government in the lives of all Canadians. In the environment and resource field, however, with few exceptions, constitutional jurisdiction lay with the provinces. As the public expectations for state intervention to deal with environmental degradation grew, the hegemonic field was not monolithic. As the federal government expanded its eco-political reach, it came into conflict with provincial governments. In essence, the federal government took advantage of the counter-hegemonic eco-political challenge to build its own institutional base and consolidate its own public constituency in this new field, thereby building a power base to counter-act the power of provincial governments.

On the other hand, as Canada adopted its new flag and celebrated its 100th year as a nation, national-popular discourse was constructing Canada as a sovereign, mature, modern nation. Simultaneously, however, eco-political challenger discourses were shining a light on the dark underbelly of economic growth, potentially undermining the legitimacy of the modern-progressive national discourse. Successive Liberal governments
appeared to be motivated by a shared view that a modern state needed to take on the environmental problematic, not only in an attempt to manage social antagonisms, but also to do, and be seen to do, the right thing. In short, at a relatively high level, the hegemonic field expanded to accommodate many elements in the frontier between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic fields.

In the same way, the editorial record in *The Globe and Mail* does not necessarily conform to common perceptions of how hegemonic relations play out. We might expect, for example, that the paper would use its position and influence to defend capital as the instrument of economic growth and modernization; indeed, its *Report on Business* section is all about that. In the emerging field of environmental politics, however, the paper assumes the role of challenger, putting industry on notice that it is not a privileged actor, and demanding that the state constrain and penalize those actors who infringe on the public good. As Parlour observed, the paper acts as an advocate for environmental protection against the dual problem of state neglect and corporate irresponsibility, asserting a clean environment to be in the best interest of society. Its dominant discourse is one of crisis and urgency, of finite resources and finite time scales, legitimizing several elements of the emerging radical green discourse. By the end of the period, it directly engages the discourse of progress, in which the ultimate threat to survival, nuclear weapons, is juxtaposed with the promise of an infinite human frontier, representing the two faces of progress, and counsels caution, such as the legitimacy of state intervention, and the environmental framing of national sovereignty fit more comfortably within the hegemonic paradigm of a welfare state. Governments at all levels are framed as the responsible, and thus legitimate agent for protecting this environmental public interest. In
this sense, environmental protection represents a higher purpose, above parochialism, provincialism and narrow economic interest, whether state or private. Editorials consistently take a future orientation, asserting that if the price of pollution prevention and ecological restoration is not paid now, the cost to society will be much greater in the future, and further, that there is a present obligation to steward a natural patrimony and forestall future disaster. We even see an ethics of holism and stewardship that embeds social relations within the biosphere, recognizing their interdependence. Throughout, there is a distinct lack of economistic discourse. Corporate voices, while dominant in other articles and editorials in the paper, are not represented in eco-political editorials.
Chapter 5: Period 2 - The 1970s

During the 1970s and 1980s environmental politics moved from the fringe to the centre of Canadian political life. Every few years concerns were raised over a new polluting substance, while scientific understanding of the effects of pollution steadily increased. Public attitudes changed and with them the rhetoric and, to a lesser degree, the actions of politicians (Macdonald, 1991, p. 32).

5.1 The first wave of environmental politics

The 1970s can be characterized as the decade of consolidation of environmental politics across Western democracies. Paehlke refers to this period as the ‘first wave of environmental concern’ – the decade in which the environmental movement emerged to challenge industrialism, and environmental politics became institutionalized as governments started to build their capacity to respond to new public demands (Paehlke, 2009, p. 4). Several critical discourse moments punctuate the development of eco-politics in this decade.

By April 22, 1970 public consciousness of environmental deterioration had grown to a point where 20 million people in the United States participated in the first Earth Day. This was followed by the mass formation of citizen-based environmental organizations in Western democratic nations, including Canada. This consolidation was facilitated by the publication of several canonic books. The Club of Rome’s report, *The Limits to Growth*...

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41 The most well-known of this canon include The Club of Rome report, *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al, 1972); *The Closing Circle* (1971) by American biologist Barry Commoner; *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet* (1972) coauthored by French scientist René Dubos and British economist Barbara Ward for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment; *Blueprint for Survival* (1972), a reprint of a manifesto published in The Ecologist, a British journal; and *Small is Beautiful* (1973) by British-German economist E. F. Schumacher. These books, among others, were on the reading list of environmental activists and groups across North America and Western Europe.
(1972) which became an international best seller, had as great an influence in this decade as Carson’s *Silent Spring* did a decade earlier. Its computer-modelling of business-as-usual growth rates in population, resource extraction, and industrialization (the first such use of computer models) projected the end of economic growth by mid-21st century due to the high financial costs of resource scarcity and environmental degradation. The only way out, the report concluded, was to transition to a steady-state (no-growth) economy in equilibrium with ecological systems (*Meadows et al*, 1972). The report received widespread media attention and attracted vigorous denunciation from mainstream economists and political pundits. Nonetheless, the idea of limits to growth and steady state became the nodal point of the transnational eco-political discourse of ecologism (see Section 2.6.2).

In the wake of the 1973 OPEC oil embargo which reinforced the limits discourse, energy issues quickly rose to the top of political and public agendas. The energy crisis of the 1970s – a combination of petroleum shortages in industrialized economies and steep increases in the price of oil – contributed to an economic recession characterized by low economic growth, high unemployment and high inflation. These issues came to define top public policy issues throughout the decade, prompting governments to establish strategic reserves of oil, accelerate exploration for and development of domestic supplies, adopt aggressive energy demand reduction (conservation) programs, and invest in renewable energy sources as well as nuclear power. Consumers responded to high prices by insulating their homes and buying small Japanese cars (*MacDowell*, 2012, p. 172).
While Parlour (1977) suggests that environmental concern peaked in 1970, it is more accurate to say that focus shifted to an energy-environment nexus of political action (Paehlke, 1989). A new energy discourse was introduced in the mid-1970s by American physicist and analyst Amory Lovins. His ground-breaking book, *Soft Energy Paths*, characterized the industrial/nuclear energy complex as the ‘hard energy path’ which embodied a whole host of pollution, supply (non-renewable) and safety problems, and mapped out a transition to a ‘soft energy path’ consisting of intensive energy efficiency applications combined with renewable energy technologies (Lovins, 1979). This gave rise to the alternative energy movement, including the anti-nuclear power movement which responded to the promotion of civilian nuclear power industries in North America and Europe. The anti-nuclear movement is in many ways the most visible and durable manifestation of the broad critique of technocentric, industrialist society, and to a great extent operated parallel to, rather than integrated into the broader environmental movement. This was the case in Canada as well as other Western democracies. It was in this socio-political context that the Science Council of Canada constructed a unique Canadian discourse of the ‘conserver society’. The Science Council began raising concerns about pollution, natural resource exploitation, and the impacts of technology in 1968, two years after it had been established to advise the federal government on issues of science and technology policy. By 1973, the Council was convinced that solutions to these problems would only be found in a transformed society (Science Council of

42 According to *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, the Science Council of Canada ‘often argued against the mainstream of advice from other agencies, public and private, and sometimes against the apparent inclinations of federal ministers. It was often a catalyst for action.’ In this sense, the conserver society concept is seen as one of its most enduring contributions. The Science Council was abolished in the 1993 budget of the newly elected Liberal government of Jean Chretien (Steed and Millin, 2006).
Canada, 1977, pp. 11-13). It introduced the phrase ‘conserver society’ in its 1973 report, *Natural Resources Policy in Canada*, in which the Council states,

Canadians as individuals, and their governments, institutions and industries, [should] begin the transition from a consumer society preoccupied with resource exploitation to a conserver society engaged in more constructive endeavours’ (Science Council of Canada, 1973, p. 39).

The Council then formed the Committee on the Implications of a Conserver Society, chaired by University of Toronto metallurgy professor Dr. Ursula Franklin. In its position paper, ‘Toward a Conserver Society: A statement of concern,’ Franklin laid out the committee’s premise, which deserves to be quoted at length:

We live in an advanced industrial society. In the quest for ever-increasing productivity, we have been enormously successful...We have moved slowly from an industrial system that sought to satisfy basic human needs to one that seeks to satisfy ever more exotic needs in ever more costly ways. We have come to expect from our industrial society fulfillment and satisfaction that is perhaps better achieved through interpersonal relationships. We have developed unrealistic expectations of how far our collective *raison d’être* can be equated with production and consumption.

The ‘busyness’ and ‘growthmania’ that characterized our society can perhaps continue for some time. But we are coming to realize that there must be limits to this type of activity. Growth processes (biological or social) must at some point slow down; they run into environmental limits, resource supply bottlenecks, shortage of capital, consumer satiation, impediments from waste products, and a kind of entropy arising from the increasing complexity of social interactions. There is a widespread sense, and increasing evidence, that the industrialized world has entered that phase....

Indiscriminate growth for growth’s sake will have to give way to a more selective growth. One attempt to describe this change is to say that we face a transition from a ‘consumer society’ to a ‘conserver society’ (Franklin, 1976, p. 18).

This statement is remarkable from a prestigious federal – read, hegemonic - science agency, assumed to be a bastion of objectivity. It unabashedly laid out a normative judgement of industrial society and introduced a discourse organized around an entirely
new ideological nodal point. It articulated and legitimized the green movement’s critique of industrialism, growth and consumerism, and applied its substantial intellectual and financial resources to studying the ways and means by which such a transition might be realized. To engage Canadians in the dialogue, the Science Council’s conserver society committee established an informal bibliographic journal, *Conserver Society Notes/Carnet d’Epargne*, which it distributed quarterly to a mailing list of 1500 people beginning in October 1975. Its position paper was published in *Science Forum* (June 1976), *Québec Science* (June, 1976) and *Canadian Consumer* (June 1976). Its reach extended beyond the Canadian border as the full text of the paper was read into the U.S. Congressional Record in March, 1977. The term conserver society was also picked up in Australia and New Zealand (Thompson, 2013). The federal government then provided funding to the GAMMA research group, a collaboration of researchers at the Université de Montreal and McGill University, to develop several scenarios for transitioning to a conserver society in Canada (Sindell, Smith & Valaskakis, 1976).

The influence of the conserver society discourse went beyond the research community to penetrate the public policy realm (Walker, 1979), as well as the environmental movement (Solomon, 1978). Because of the profile of the Science Council of Canada, the notion of limits imposed by a finite plant and the need for economic-cultural transformation away

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43 *Conserver Society Notes* were published quarterly by the Science Council from 1975-1977. At that point, the New *Conserver Society Notes* began to be published by Alternatives, Inc., eventually being incorporated into the quarterly journal, *Alternatives*, published first out of Trent University, and subsequently Waterloo University (Orfald and Gibson, 1985).

44 The 15 studies produced by GAMMA are cited in the Science Council’s final report, *Canada as a Conserver Society: Resource uncertainties and the need for new technologies* (Science Council of Canada, 1977).
from consumption-driven economic growth became part of mainstream public discourse during this period. While it was not uniformly embraced, as a counter-hegemonic discourse it certainly gained legitimacy and profile as federal funds supported extensive development of the concept of conserver society, and the public dissemination of research results. For a time, the conserver society discourse appeared to have the potential of moving from its status as counter-hegemonic myth to hegemonic social imaginary.

5.2 International institutionalization

Eco-politics became institutionalized at the international level in this period through the construction of a multilateral governance discourse that framed the first United Nations-sponsored global environmental conference. Held in Stockholm in June 1972, and chaired by Canadian diplomat Maurice Strong, one outcome of this conference was the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the institutional voice of the UN on environmental matters. It also launched processes which resulted in a number of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to which Canada is signatory: Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972); Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (1972); Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of World

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45 Strong, with a background in business, was appointed by Prime Minister Pearson as Deputy Minister of External Affairs, during which time he formed the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In 1970 he was drafted to deliver a successful international environment conference, ensuring the participation of Third World countries; he was appointed at the same time as UN Undersecretary General responsible for environmental affairs. Subsequently, he was appointed the first head of the United Nations Environment Programme, established in 1972 as recommended by the Stockholm Conference.
Fauna and Flora (1973); and UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (1979) (Macdonald, 1991, p. 59). Signing an MEA obliges parties to the convention to enact domestic policies and legislation consistent with the goals and measures in the convention; thus, Canada’s participation at the international level had a direct influence on the institutionalization of a national environmental regime. As noted earlier, this created a multilateral stage that has greatly influenced eco-political discourse in Canada.

5.3 Institutional consolidation

The consolidation of the modern environmental movement and the establishment of an international environmental protection regime was mirrored by the institutionalization of environmental politics in Canada, in the form of environmental protection and regulatory agencies and the enactment of environmental legislation. During Pierre Trudeau’s first mandate as Prime Minister (1968-1972), a total of nine environmental statutes were passed, including the Canada Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Ocean Dumping Control Act (implementing the UN-led ocean dumping convention), and amendments to the Fisheries Act which boosted federal powers to control pollutants that damaged fish habitat (McKenzie, 2002, p. 108). Environment Canada was established in 1971 to

46 These had been preceded by Canada-US environmental treaties, the Boundary Waters Treaty (1909) and the Migratory Birds Convention (1917), as well as the international convention on whaling in the 1940.
administer these and other laws. Similar institutional developments occurred across the provinces by both Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments.\textsuperscript{47}

Contrary to more recent trends which have seen support for environmental agendas fall away during economic downturns, the 1973 OPEC energy crisis and high inflation and interest rates seemed to fuel this critique of industrialism and growth rather than suppress it. During this decade, the Trudeau government instituted the Office of Energy Conservation, recognized as ‘the best in the world’ at the time (Bott, Brooks and Robinson, 1983, p. 2) within the federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Along with Environment Canada, it funded a major study, coordinated by Friends of the Earth Canada, on Canada’s potential to transition away from non-renewable energy sources, including nuclear power (Brooks, Robinson and Torrie, 1983). Eventually published in 1983 as a book entitled, \textit{Life After Oil: A Renewable Energy Policy for Canada}, and with a forward by then-Governor General Edward Schreyer, it contained transition analyses for each province and territory and a national policy strategy to achieve the goal of moving to a ‘soft energy’ future (Bott, Brooks and Robinson, 1983).\textsuperscript{48}

While these initiatives constituted a very small proportion of federal energy spending, the discourse of transitioning to a renewable energy future had salience within scientific, political and public service elites. Further, there was support within those elites for

\textsuperscript{47} In New Brunswick, for instance, the Progressive Conservative government established the Department of Environment in 1971, passed several pieces of legislation including the Clean Environment Act, and instituted an environmental impact assessment process, an Environmental Advisory Council, and the Pesticides Advisory Board. Similarly, Ontario passed its Environmental Protection Act (1971) and Quebec its Environmental Quality Act (1972).

\textsuperscript{48} The publication of this book prompted ‘soft energy path’ studies to be carried out in many countries in Western Europe, as well as the United States, Japan, India and Australia.
collaborations with environmental groups which had developed their own analytical capacity and policy expertise in transitioning to a conserver society.

A parallel development focused attention on the complex issues surrounding energy security, northern development, and public participation in environmental decision-making. Rival plans for building a northern pipeline to transport Alaskan oil and gas to the southern United States emerged in the early 1970s, both of which required crossing indigenous territory in Canada’s north. Opposition was mounted by the affected First Nations, environmental organizations, soft energy path advocates, and nationalists who objected to greater dominance of American corporate interests in Canadian affairs. The issue became sufficiently politicized that, in 1974, Prime Minister Trudeau appointed Mr. Justice Thomas Berger to lead a commission of inquiry into the matter. The Berger Inquiry, as it became known, was unprecedented in both length and process, and its findings and final recommendations shaped northern development politics for decades. Rather than holding hearings in a central location in southern Canada, Justice Berger travelled to native communities throughout the north to hear directly from elders and other community members. His 1977 final report, which became a national best seller, recommended a 10-year moratorium on any pipeline proposals through Canada’s north to allow indigenous communities time to develop the capacity to negotiate such developments on their own terms (Macdonald, 1991, pp. 107-09). Consequently, discourses of environmental justice and northern environment-as-national identity became articulated as hegemonic values, providing an effective counterweight against the discourse of extractive growth. While he was not obliged to do so, Prime Minister
Trudeau accepted Berger’s recommendation and the western Arctic was declared off-limits to oil and gas developments.

Despite passing significant environmental legislation in the first half of the decade, and a willingness to forego industrial development in the north, a significant degree of environmental schizophrenia was evident within the federal government during this time. As an immature, and in some eyes interloping department, Environment Canada struggled to establish itself as a significant player. Over 15 years, the department had 10 different ministers, each of whom was relegated to the social policy committee within Cabinet as opposed to the powerful priorities and planning committee. Operationally, the department’s autonomy was constrained by economic line departments such as Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Energy, Mines and Resources Canada (McKenzie, 2002, p. 114).

According to McDowell,

From 1975 to 1986 – a decade defined by the energy crisis, high inflation, a recession, and pressure for restraint from businesses and the provinces – the department kept a low profile, lacked consistent leadership, faced institutional competition from other departments for financial resources, and encouraged the provinces to do frontline environmental regulation. The federal government passed the Environmental Contaminants Act in 1976 to control chemicals such as PCBs from entering the environment, but with limited resources and erratic research, implementation of the act and other policies was ineffective (McDowell, 2012, p. 253).

McKenzie attributes the waxing and waning of Environment Canada’s fortunes during the period 1971-1985 to the issue attention cycle: the number of Canadians who identified pollution as a serious problem ranged from a high of 69 per cent of in 1970 to a low of 46 per cent in 1985 (McKenzie, 2002, p. 114). Compared to the dramatic swings in popular concern in more recent years, however, this does not seem like a significant
political factor. An issue which garners the attention of nearly half the population is surely worthy of political attention. It is more likely that the department’s effectiveness at least into the early 1980s was limited by its own internal capacity (building a department from scratch would have involved a lot of trial and error); the federal-provincial jurisdictional minefield; and inter-Cabinet competition for influence, jurisdiction and resources.

Some of these domestic limitations on Environment Canada were overcome by the department’s leadership on multilateral and bilateral environmental negotiations. In 1972, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement signed with the US resulted in significant sewage upgrades, typically the purview of municipal and provincial authorities, to remove phosphates and other contaminants (Macdonald, 1991, p. 95). Similarly, under the new Environmental Contaminants Act (ECA), in the late 1970s ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) were banned for use in aerosol cans in response to international scientific concern about the thinning ozone layer. After signing the U.N. convention prohibiting the trade in endangered species, and responding to domestic pressure to address problems relating to wildlife, in 1978 Environment Canada established the expert-led Committee on the Status of Endangered Species in Canada (COSEWIC); this was the precursor to enacting endangered species legislation both provincially and federally (McKenzie, 2002, p. 121).

49 Also under the ECA, the import, manufacture and sale of polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs) were banned in 1977, although existing uses were grandfathered; the release of PCBs to the environment was prohibited in 1985. Although the use of the pesticide DDT was banned for most uses in the US in 1972, and its use in Canada severely curtailed since that time, it was not banned in Canada until 1985 under the Pest Control Products Act (Macdonald, 1991).
Over the decade, then, Canada constructed a regulatory framework for managing pollution and other environmental damages, initiatives that coincided with a larger post-war program of ‘social regulation of business’ including labour protections, occupational health and safety, and product safety (e.g. motor vehicles, cigarettes, food and drugs).

Macdonald calls this phenomenon

the first stirrings of the “risk society,” an abandonment of the nineteenth-century belief that accidental death and illness were acts of God, to be accepted with stoic fatalism, in favour of the view that the expertise of administrative rationalism, both in corporate head offices, but more importantly in regulatory departments of government, could make risk something amenable to human control (Macdonald, 2007, pp. 75-76).  

This imposition of government control over an expanded range of business activity - a hegemonic response to pressure groups and reinforced by civil servants and politicians in order to maintain legitimacy and manage social conflict - seemed to take the private sector by surprise. The business community had failed to recognize the significance of the new environmental movement, or at least its staying power, and therefore was functioning in reactive mode throughout the 1960s and 1970 in the discursive war of position. This began to change in the late 1970s when, in addition to the licensing and permitting requirements that had been imposed through regulatory changes, federal and provincial governments enacted statutes that required major development projects to undergo public environmental impact assessments (EIA). Until then, environmental

50 Ulrich Beck defines the ‘risk society’ as one in which complex, large-scale genetic, atomic and chemical technological systems represent ultimately irremediable large-scale hazards, thereby subjecting populations to inevitable, unknowable and uncontrollable risks for which no person or institution can be held accountable (Beck, 1995, pp. 1-4).
permits had been negotiated behind closed doors between the proponent and the regulator on a project-by-project basis. With its mandatory public participation provisions, including, in some jurisdictions, intervener funding paid by the project proponent, environmental impact assessment (EIA) represented, in theory at least, a significant threat to one of the major sources of business power in the environmental policy process: its ability to engage in private negotiation with regulators (Macdonald, 2007, p. 72).

Despite industry warnings about an undue financial burden of environmental regulation and the threat of job loss, the fact that new environmental institutions with all their growing pains managed to legislate an impressive body of environmental statutes during this decade speaks to the under-development of corporate eco-political discourse

5.4 The Globe and Mail editorials: 1970s

In his case study of water pollution, Parlour generalizes that public-media interest in environmental problems fell off after reaching an apex in 1970 (Parlour, 1977). His conclusion does not hold up over time. Media attention to a single issue, e.g. water pollution, may well reflect a water pollution-specific issue-attention cycle, but the broad category of environment encompasses many discernable issues, as well as broad critiques of industrial society.

In this period, I examine three years of editorials: 1970, 1972 and 1977. My analysis shows that while there is issue and coverage variability across these sample years, The Globe and Mail editorials maintain relatively consistent attention to the environmental

51 This provision was first introduced by the Berger Commission, setting a precedent for public review processes.
file throughout the decade, with a significant drop-off not evident until 1982 (see Figure 5). Indeed, the apex of eco-political editorial coverage in *The Globe and Mail* is reached in 1972, and the number of editorials in 1977 is greater than in 1970. As for breadth of coverage, the issues of the late 1960s are retained and expanded (see Figure 6). In 1970, 10 topics are the subject of editorializing; this expands to 16 in 1972, and then 14 in 1977. Representing the expansion of eco-political discursive elements in play, new topics include solid waste, oil/gas and northern development. As well, broad philosophical concern for local and global limits receives more focused attention.

As Figure 6 indicates, the discourse frames that appear in these editorials are similar to those of the previous period. Editorials raise the alarm about pollution, demand strong state action, and in this period, expand their broad critique of progress and modernity, including endorsing the premise that there are limits to growth.
Figure 6. Occurrence and frequency of eco-political discourse frames in Period Two editorials.

5.4.1 Critical discourse moments

Three critical discourse moments in the study years serve as potential indicators of the eco-political orientation of *The Globe and Mail* editorials during the decade. The first is Earth Day, April 22, 1970, during which an estimated 20 million Americans participated in events across the country and demanded government action on pollution, and which environmental histories generally invoke as the advent of a broad-based, popular environmental movement (Shabecoff, 2012). Nevertheless, despite *The Globe and Mail’s* advocacy stance throughout the 1960s, editorialists make no mention of Earth Day in
1970. On the other hand, two other non-Canadian critical discourse moments in 1972 do command the attention of the editorial board.

When in January 1972, the Club of Rome released their report, *The Limits to Growth*, an editorial marks the release and accepts its premise uncritically, interpreting its findings as forecasting ‘that the world will face doomsday in just over 125 years.’ It asserts Canada’s failure in key policy areas, leading to unsustainable growth trajectories, and even proposes that had the study used Canada as the benchmark, perhaps the doomsday date may have been pushed up to 2000. The editorial quotes federal Science Minister Alistair Gillespie who stated in speech at York University, “[A]t my ministry, we take these forecasts very seriously...There is no surer road to national or global suicide than just throwing up our hands and drifting along.” The editorialist opines,

Perhaps the Science Minister should be preaching this view more forcefully to his Cabinet colleagues, especially in the four areas he emphasized in his talk...namely, over-population, armaments proliferation, impending resource depletion, and pollution (Survival begins at home, May 18/72).
It is interesting to note that at least some members of the federal government had acknowledged the report and embraced the discourse of limits and survival, describing a default course of inaction as “suicide.” The editorialist also adopts the eco-catastrophe discourse.

[W]e think it would be instructive for the Government and all Canadians to ask if our present laws come to grips with this awesome problem of survival. Do our laws on birth control and abortion provide the means to fight over-population? Does our construction or commissioning of more submarines, faster warships and more efficient fighter planes counter or enhance the world
armaments race? Do the regulations which permit the comparatively uninhibited squandering of our natural resources hasten or postpone the day when we shall be a depleted nation? Do our toothless laws against pollution and our blind-eye attitude to major polluters contribute to the improving of the environment (Survival begins at home, May 18/72).

The paper’s presuppositions about the state of consumer-industrial society are reinforced by the *Limits to Growth* report. That said, the editorial takes a reductionist approach to its analysis and conclusions. Other than the reference to population, the editorial does not come to grips with the idea that growth *per se* will ultimately ‘do in’ society as we know it. The report concludes that an equilibrium, or steady state, economy has to replace the dominant growth-centric paradigm. Instead of grappling with this singular proposition, the editorial focuses on the failure of governments to properly control resource exploitation and pollution, presupposing that a properly motivated administrative approach is sufficient to stave off ‘the date of collapse.’ In this case, the editorialist does not engage with the counter-hegemonic claim that a fundamental societal change is needed, although a broader societal critique does appear in several other editorials.

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52 This premise is engaged by other Globe and Mail commentators, however. Regular columnist Ronald Anderson provides a thorough and accurate overview of the *Limits to Growth* report, concluding ‘Many authorities still reject the finality of the Club of Rome’s conclusions – though it should be recognized that they were not offered as predictions but as projections of what would happen if developments are allowed to proceed on their present course...[M]any of the more thoughtful critics are inclined now to pause and reflect that the study, in its main outlines, might just possibly be correct. Wherever the limits to growth might lie, it is being acknowledged that the limits do exist (Anderson, Aug. 31/72). Similarly, economics professor Arthur Donner, a regular Globe commentator on economic affairs, writes in the business section of the paper, ‘The challenge posed by this computer study is a very serious one.... The Club of Rome report can probably be criticized as being too technocratic, or for possibly underestimating man’s propensity to generate newer technologies. Nevertheless, it is up to the critics to provide an alternative analysis to dispel the gloomy predictions for the world. At the very least, the study will shock many out of their complacency, and it should help influence nations to reassess their priorities (Donner, Dec. 19/72).
however (see section 5.4.3). Here, the frames of administrative rationalism and the interventionist state are safely within hegemonic bounds.

The third critical discourse moment is the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, the first of what would become a series international environmental ‘mega-conferences’ (the others are in 1992, 2002 and 2012). Two editorials address this topic, one at the beginning and one following the June event. The first stakes out the paper’s ground in relation to the radical ecologist discourse of the day, introducing a reformist rationality that has been missing in earlier editorials. The title, ‘For a living world, not the Garden of Eden,’ belies the tone. It speaks to the plethora of proposals that have come before the conference:

a combination of cloud-nine idealism, trendy New Left posturing and, somewhere in there, serious concern with the question of what is going on in the delicate equation of Man and his life-supporting world (For a living world, not the Garden of Eden, June 7/72).

Presumably this is a reference to a pro-development discourse that rich countries not impose an unrealistic or unfair environmental agenda on Third World nations that need jobs and development. While the tone tends towards the pejorative, there is also a genuine concern that the conference would produce

only a sheaf of grand resolutions that will be easily forgotten because of their impracticality or, alternatively, that it will dissolve in cynicism and recrimination if realistic economics are asserted too strongly (For a living world, not the Garden of Eden, June 7/72).

Neither result is desirable. Here the paper assumes an instrumental-rationalist stance uncharacteristic of previous editorials, thereby precluding ecologism’s ethical stance on the intrinsic value of nature.
What is needed…is cool assessment of the existing knowledge of the environment and constant awareness that the primary objective is human welfare, not the restoration of the Garden of Eden (For a living world, not the Garden of Eden, June 7/72).

The challenge of the conference is to relate environmental protection recommendations ‘to human needs and find the right balance.’ The editorial concludes with a presumed common-sense rationalism:

The one unreservedly commendable recommendation before the conference is to establish a world-wide agency under UN auspices to collect and correlate the available scientific information about environmental control, and possibly to initiate its own research programs where knowledge is found to be lacking.\textsuperscript{53} The world is only at the beginning of a clear understanding of its pollution and conservation problems. There are many ideas, good, bad and indifferent: they all need greater discipline of facts (For a living world, not the Garden of Eden, June 7/72).

This scientific-rationalist frame, which assumes a set of scientific facts can be discovered to reveal an inherent ‘truth’ on which public policy can be built, denies the conflict inherent in environmental politics. That said, this is one of the few instances of this frame found in \textit{The Globe and Mail} editorials to date. The advocacy stance taken by the paper is more typically grounded in ethically-based presuppositions that environmental degradation is wrong, leading to propositions to ‘do the right thing.’

Another digression in this editorial from the paper’s typical stance is the generalization of ‘fault’. By 1972, editorials are routinely calling out profit-motivated unethical practices of polluting industries, enabled by weak-kneed government agencies more attuned to

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\textsuperscript{53} This recommendation was accepted and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was formed following the conference. It has not become a scientific research body, however.
business than the public interest. In this international context, however, the paper chooses to equivocate. Referring to the

idealists, scientists and intellectuals gathered at Stockholm,...[t]hey should remember that there are no precise villains to be identified in the problem of pollution and environmental destruction, neither greedy capitalists nor quota-obsessed commissars, engineers or tanker captains. All of them are agents of the Progress that – rightly or wrongly – most of us demand (For a living world, not a Garden of Eden, June 7/72).

Implicitly, the price of progress, defined as modern society, is environmental degradation; explicitly, we are all equally complicit, an apparent dismissal of ‘trendy New Left posturing.’ The frame of progress as the culprit is repeated in the follow-up editorial: ‘We are only at the beginning of a concerted effort to discipline human progress and bring it into harmony with the natural environment...’ (In Stockholm a beginning, June 22/72). Yet this ecologist stance is followed by a slightly contradictory statement: ‘Conservation has to be considered in due regard for human necessity, or environmental ideals become nonsense.’ Thus we begin to see more conventional hegemonic elements entering editorial discourse, not in defense of Canadian interests, however, but from a North-South justice perspective.

The distinction between human progress and human needs could well be argued; the editorial, however, does not do this. Even so, the editorial fully backs two resolutions as ethical imperatives: A 10-year moratorium on whaling, and an end to nuclear weapons testing. According to the editorial, their anticipated rejection by Russia and Japan in the first case, and France in the second, could undermine the legitimacy of the conference itself.
Yet despair would be wrong....France’s persistence in its nuclear folie de grandeur is an affront to world opinion, but the Stockholm conference has served to make the French government aware once again that such pretentious nationalism is becoming intolerable in its effects as well as fatuous....[W]e should hope that the Stockholm conference has made the Japanese and Russian Governments aware of world concern and ready at least to give protection to those whale species that are most in danger... (In Stockholm a beginning, June 22/72).  

The Globe and Mail’s disgust with France over its nuclear testing in the South Pacific is evident in other editorials. One derides Canada's abstention from a vote at the Stockholm conference on the resolution calling for an end to all nuclear testing:  

Ask why Canada dumbfounded the...conference by abstaining in...voting on a resolution calling for an end to all nuclear weapons testing, and the External Affairs Department stumbles around like a gored ox, trying to explain the diplomatic niceties of the position...the Canadian people are entitled to have their External Affairs Department express clearly, consistently and without qualification, not only their general opposition to nuclear weapons testing, but their special objection to the French nuclear arms program’ (France before principle, June 15/72).

Later that year, an editorial complains about the Canadian government’s lacklustre response to the ramming of the vessel, Greenpeace, and the harassment of its Canadian crew in international waters in the South Pacific by the French navy (Holes in the French Navy story, Nov. 8/72).

Ironically, it may have been the less visible and internationally egregious issues that have been overlooked; otherwise, the ecological crisis may not be as serious today.

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54 The paper underestimated the influence these resolutions would have. France conducted its last atmospheric nuclear bomb test in 1974, well ahead of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban treaty signed in 1996. In 1982 the International Whaling Commission agreed to a commercial whaling ban beginning in the 1985/86 season; Norway, Iceland and Japan maintain their hunt on ‘scientific’ grounds.
Perhaps the most important result of this conference is that it has firmly established the principle underlying all others, that pollution and conservation are truly international problems, above considerations of national sovereignty (In Stockholm a beginning, June 22/72).

This environmental cosmopolitanism frame recognizes the transboundary nature of many environmental problems and reflects an expectation that international institutions should influence nation-states to transcend their self-interest in order to achieve a greater good. Clearly, the paper’s discourse on the Stockholm conference is more nuanced than on other environmental topics, and it introduces hegemonic frames that suggest necessary trade-offs between environmental protection and human needs. Yet there is no indication in any other editorials that the paper is worried about Canadian ‘needs’ per se (the exception being concerns for indigenous livelihoods and culture in Canada’s north).

Indeed, they suggest that rich countries should scale back their demands on nature in order to allow poor countries to pollute as necessary to meet their economic needs. Thus the paper remains a staunch critic of industrial pollution and environmental degradation in Canada.

These two critical discourse moments in 1972 give structure to the paper’s eco-political discourse in the 1970s and reveal it to be drawing upon a discursive field far beyond national borders. The paper’s preoccupation, however, remains with national and local issues. For the most part, editorials continue to “raise the alarm,” playing the role of advocate for stronger environmental protection action by governments. I will illustrate this by examining in detail two quite different themes: the national issue of oil pollution, and the burgeoning municipal problem of solid waste. On both these topics, the paper
mounts a multi-year campaign which targets both governments and, to a much greater
degree than the previous decade, irresponsible corporations.

5.4.2 Campaign against oil

In 1970 pressure mounts to develop oil and gas resources in the Arctic and oil tanker
traffic increases in Canadian waters. The Globe and Mail responds with frequent
editorials throughout the three study years that invoke frames of ecological catastrophe,
national sovereignty-national identity associated with ideas of the pristine North and the
bountiful ocean, legitimacy of the interventionist state, illegitimacy of corporate profit
motives, participatory democracy, and indigenous justice. Each of these frames locate the
paper in the discursive frontier, pushing the boundaries of hegemonic discourse.

Many of these frames appear in a 1970 editorial which addresses the impending
development of Alaskan oil reserves, and the Canadian government’s support for a
pipeline route across Canadian territory to U.S. markets, as opposed to a costly sea route.
The editorial is scathing in its reaction to the energy minister’s instrumentalist view of
that territory:

A land mass. Yes, we have often suspected that the United States viewed
Canada as little more than a land mass, but it is discouraging to find a
minister of the Crown doing the same thing... [O]il companies are already
hard at work on this mass of land that some of us would rather call Canada.
(More than a land mass, Jan. 26/70).

National identity and national sovereignty are asserted, positioning American interests as
contrary to Canada’s. To the news that a relatively short piece of pipeline is already being
tested by oil companies out of Inuvik, the editorialist replies: ‘It is a thought to terrify.’
This surprising language speaks to the depth of which the paper’s conception of Canadian
identity is tied to the idea of a pristine north. It then implies an “insane” corporate agenda bearing down on ‘our’ north:

In attempting the sane development of our Northland we must expect to face pressures not only from the U.S. Government but from the oil industry. This industry is one of the vastest and most powerful in the world. It spends huge amounts of money on exploration, and wants to get that money and more back as quickly as possible by getting the oil it finds to market. Its record does not inspire confidence (More than a land mass, Jan, 26/70).

The editorial’s proposition directed to Ottawa further challenges industry legitimacy, while invoking an ecological/scientific rationality:

Before the oil industry can be allowed to roar through Canada’s North, a wise Government would demand much research and many answers [regarding impacts on] the northern environment and northern residents, what tankers and submarines loaded with oil could do to northern waters, which can affect all the world’s waters (More than a land mass, Jan. 26/70).

The paper presupposes that the impacts would be disastrous and therefore illegitimate. It then goes further to question the dominant car culture which creates the demand for the product itself. That it refers to a fundamentally normative judgement as ‘information’ belies the paper’s presumption of an objective rationality that, unburdened of vested or political interests, can be discovered by reasonable people.

We need to have such a simple, basic, essential piece of information – which nobody has bothered to get – as whether we should in fact be pouring out our oil for the use of inefficient internal combustion engines when it is a non-replaceable resource with many other vital uses (More than a land mass, Jan. 26/70).

This one editorial covers a lot of ground: it raises the alarm about environmental degradation associated with oil development, directly links the North to Canadian identity, asserts the intrinsic value of the northern environment, challenges corporate legitimacy including the profit motive, invokes a scientific rationality as grounds for
decision-making, critiques modern culture, and appeals to an interventionist state.

Essentially, this discourse mirrors the new social movement’s critique of industrial society, coming just short of a full-on embrace of an ecocentric, steady state society.

Nine days later, the Liberian tanker, Arrow, runs aground spilling 3.5 million gallons of Bunker C oil into Chedabucto Bay, Nova Scotia. The subsequent editorial calls for new regulations to control the

movement of tankers and other bearers of pollutants in our waters...[including placing] on tanker operators and/or owners the full cost of the damage they may do...[because the public will not] permit any further concessions to shipping lobbies. The people are angry about pollution; they will demand stern measures... (Our troubled waters, Feb. 10/70).

The editorialist invokes a collective concern, suggesting an aware, engaged public, as well as a scientific rationality, calling for research to answer some basic questions before allowing the movement of oil tankers through the Northwest Passage.

We do not yet know enough to judge whether tankers can safely be permitted to traverse the Arctic, we do not know enough about what an oil spillage would do to the life of the area, we do not even know enough about what to do if an oil spillage occurs....[S]cientific knowhow does not yet extend to taking on a massive oil slick (Our troubled waters, Feb. 10/70).

This expression of concern and precaution changes to outrage one week later as an empty U.S. supertanker Manhattan traverses the Northwest Passage without asking Canadian permission. The paper’s alarmist stance combines national sovereignty, ecological rationality, and corporate/state legitimacy frames.

He [Minister Sharp] appeared positively flattered when he announced this week that Humble Oil and Refining Co. had informed [original emphasis] the Government – no asking by your leave, just informed – that the supertanker Manhattan may make a second attempt at the Northwest Passage this spring. The company had not yet made up its mind....So Ottawa continues to fawn on
whatever international oil companies may have in mind for our Arctic – while
down in Chedabucto Bay a million gallons of oil coats the rocky beaches and
kills wildlife and makes fishermen despair for the 1970 season. Just a million
gallons. Humble Oil...is talking of a fleet of tankers each carrying 75 million
gallons. Let a chunk of Arctic ice or rock hole one of those. The disaster
would be unimaginable... (In the Arctic, the wrong man is meek, Feb. 18/70).

The Government’s ‘pusillanimous’ stance needs to change if the ‘mandatory need to
prevent Arctic ecological catastrophe’ is to be met and Canadian sovereignty defended
against ‘the oil interests [which] amount to a giant world power...moving in on the
Arctic.’ The editorial closes with a clever turn of phrase: ‘Mr. Sharp has been far too
humble, the Humble Oil Co. far too sharp’ (In the Arctic, the wrong man is meek, Feb.
18/70).

Two months later the federal government unilaterally extends Canadian jurisdiction in
territorial waters from three to 12 nautical miles and imposes tanker safety regulations
out to 100 nautical miles in the Arctic Archipelago. In praising this state intervention, the
editorial once again excoriates oil corporates as a rogue industry:

    What endangers the Arctic is not the United States, but the tankers of
international oil corporations, which are only very lightly subject on the high
seas to the governments of even their parent states, and which can often
escape that slight subjection by registering under the flags of trivial nations
that make no pretension to controls (Bold and necessary, Apr. 10/70).

In the face of U.S. opposition to Canada’s unilateral action, the editorialist is very pointed
in its nationalist stance.

    The United States objects to the Canadian bill. Let it. The ships that pose the
greatest threat of oil pollution to the Arctic are American. And the Americans
have been something less than a driving force in pushing for realistic
international controls (The crisis is now, Apr. 17/70).
Responding to the particular U.S. objection to the provision in the bill that imposes liability on the oil companies for any environmental damage, the editorial invokes an ecological rationalism that speaks to the irreplaceability and non-substitutability of ecological integrity. As in the 1960s, the public interest and greater good are seen as vested in an intact, unpolluted environment:

Sure, it will allow Canada to collect damages if oil is dumped in the Arctic. But will money be able to restore the ecology? Will money be able to replace the seal, fish and wildlife populations? Will money ever be able to redress the damage that can be done? Damage that, because of the Arctic climate, may never be reversible? (The crisis is now, Apr. 17/70).

Then, in soaring rhetorical style, the paper responds to U.S. accusations of protectionism as the ulterior motive of the Canadian government’s new legislation. It invokes a transformation of national grassroots consciousness that values quality of life, measured in ecological integrity and national sovereignty, over crass economic opportunism.

[Canada] seeks not to restrict and protect like a miser over its hoard. It seeks not to enclose but to expand; not to hold back but to push forward. Its focus is the quality of life. Its aim is to improve that quality. Its tools are whatever levers can be found in government, business and private life to divert events in ways that can improve the quality. Its prophets, its disciples, its armies are the people. Its fountainhead is not the politicians, the captains of industry, the traditional spokesmen. Its fountainhead is in homes across the nation. From the doorsteps where people look out to see the air, the land and the water fouled...It is from these steps that they watch events careening past, driven by unseen forces that so often seem unmindful of what stands in the way. It is from these people that the transformation flows. These people who are stepping down from their doorsteps to raise up traffic signs to mark the routes along which events shall roll. The Arctic files now before Parliament are a reflection of these concerns...The bills bear heavily on our ability to protect our environment and on our ability to set and pursue our own standards – the double issue of pollution control and sovereignty (The quality of life: A Canadian voice is heard, Apr. 27/70).
From complaints in the 1960s of the public’s indifference, even ignorance, regarding environmental concerns, *The Globe and Mail* now raises up an engaged citizenry that defines quality of life in environmental, not economistic, terms. In addition to the ‘double issue of pollution control and sovereignty,’ this editorial introduces the new frame of the legitimacy of public engagement and environmentalism. The editorial’s representation of the “best interest” of society lies with grassroots with whom the paper casts its lot.

One other 1970 oil editorial is worth highlighting. The paper had received several letters critical of its opposition to the federal government’s appointment of oil company representatives to a task force sent to the Mackenzie Delta to assess the risks associated with oil operations there. Shortly thereafter, a pipeline owned by Great Canadian Oil Sands Ltd. ruptured near Fort McMurray, sending an oil plume 150 miles down the Athabasca River into Lake Athabasca, the drinking water and food supply for First Nations communities. This editorial uses the pipeline break to reinforce its assertions that a) oil spills are disastrous, b) technologies will fail, and c) corporations will always downplay the risk of failure and exaggerate their capacity to deal with such failures.

Another [critic] hinted that we were promoting mass hysteria on pollution dangers, and went on to bring us up-to-date on pipelines: “...Proper checking would show you that pipelines are highly automated, controlled and monitored and a break would become evident almost immediately and flow stopped.” Residents of Fort Chipewyan might have case to recall this assurance as the slick moved more than 150 miles into Lake Athabasca to threaten their water supply. So might ecologists and biologists, dismayed by the danger posed to animal and plant life...Let’s hope we learned something – about cleaning spills and assurances (Learning to deal with oil, June 29/70).

The editorial points out that the company involved did not know how much oil spilled and reminds the government not to be ‘naïve’ when it comes to company claims, which
are self-interested. The line between public and private interest is clearly drawn. Governments are ‘guardians of the public interest’ which imposes a responsibility far greater than that of corporations, and while cooperation between private and public agencies is important, ‘this does not mean amalgamation’ – in other words, corporate capture of government.

Next to oil, our greatest danger will be complacency. There is always a tendency to talk airily about having nailed down all foreseeable contingencies. The designers of the Titanic did that when they drew pictures of an unsinkable ship (Learning to deal with oil, June 29/70).

The editorial frames oil as inherently dangerous and ecology as paramount, asserting that corporate and public interests are inherently divergent, and that governments are public interest guardians, not corporate apologists. Associated frames are: raising the alarm, the legitimacy of the interventionist state, legitimacy of public interest, and illegitimacy of corporate polluters.

The concern about oil pollution continues to be prominent in 1972. The first eco-political editorial that year criticizes the federal government for leasing offshore gas and oil exploration rights off Sable Island, which had been protected since 1961. It complains of a lack of concern for the Atlantic coast compared to the West coast where such leases had been banned, and asserts that an oil spill in the vicinity of Sable Island would be disastrous for its unique ecology, birds and ponies. Finally, it asserts the illegitimacy of the environment minister’s pro-corporate, economy-first stance (Safeguarding Sable Island, Jan. 7/72; The great tanker risk, Mar. 4/72). The issue arises again in the context of the release in the United States of a report documenting the potential ecological impacts of an oil tanker accident on the West coast, which the editorialist finds
shocking in the extreme; so shocking, indeed, that the U.S. Interior Department has finally admitted that it is going to have to consider alternative methods of moving the oil, which would include doing it by pipeline through Canada (Dilemmas in oil, Feb. 11/72).

Of equal interest to the paper is the fact that the U.S. had recently enacted legislation requiring environmental studies to be done prior to developments being approved, and giving legal standing to citizens to challenge any project on environmental grounds:

U.S. citizens have been able to work through the courts to halt, perhaps forever, the very dangerous [oil transport by supertanker], and at least to force public exposure of all its dangers. Canadian citizens do not have the same powers and, in fact, our East Coast is now being explored for oil and gas, with the Government’s blessing, under conditions just as dangerous as those exposed for the West Coast (Dilemmas in oil, Feb. 11/72).

The emphasis here is the frame of legitimacy of citizen participation and even legal intervention to protect the environment. Not only is the paper serving as an environmental advocate, it is championing advocacy by others.

These concerns are validated when an oil spill from a refinery in Washington State, over which the province has no jurisdiction, washes onto a beach in British Columbia.

Government and corporate irresponsibility stand frighteningly exposed in the oil spill which has fouled five miles of beach in British Columbia...British Columbia is at the mercy of a corporation which puts its refinery at the end of narrow and dangerous waters, where the vastly greater part of damage it does will be done to Canada, not the United States. British Columbia is at the mercy of a U.S. Government which was complacent about such placement...British Columbia is at the mercy of tankers flying flags of convenience, which are condoned by the oil industry and governments around the world. And which are frequently in dangerous condition. British Columbia, worst of all, is at the mercy of a Canadian Government which talks when it should act (Lonely, amid the oil, June 8/72).
Once again, the editorial invokes frames of the illegitimacy of a non-interventionist state in the face of corporate profit-seeking. The frame of (dubious) progress appears in a later editorial critical of the approval of a new supertanker port in the St. Lawrence, 100 miles east of Quebec City:

When the “inevitable” spill occurs there, tidal waters of the river can be expected to spread unheard-of pollution into the very heartland of Eastern Canada. And all in the name of progress (Bigger and worse, Oct. 19/72).

The paper’s campaign against oil pollution continues throughout the decade. The first eco-political editorial in 1977 confronts the problem of flags of convenience in the face of ongoing accidents and spills throughout the world.

What is needed, surely, as a first step is a set of clear and enforceable rules that would require the multinational oil companies to disclose their holdings in shipping and oil brokerage – in short to reveal their direct ties to those unseaworthy hulks and the oil they spill into the seas and onto the shores. To companies that spend millions on television commercials proclaiming their devotion to the environment, such disclosure could be powerfully persuasive (Tankers in trouble, Jan. 10/77).

It invokes once again an interventionist frame, in this case implying the need for an international regime to impose rules on transnational companies. We also find the frame of transparency and disclosure, calling out the loopholes that allow oil companies to hide their complicity in oil pollution, as well as the hypocrisy of their public relations.

A subsequent blow-out at a North Sea drilling rig (Bravo) adds fuel to the fire. In responding, The Globe and Mail this time reveals its own inherent contradictions. While its editorials have excoriated oil companies and governments for reckless disregard for ecological integrity, it has not meaningfully confronted the existential oil dependency of modern society. Despite its rhetoric, the paper resorts to the hegemonic technocentric
managerialism as the logical or perhaps only means of risk reduction. Reducing that dependency is not on the table:

There is no question that the world desperately needs oil, but how long must we wait for improvements in the technology that produces and transports it? Before Arctic waters are subjected to what could be irreparable damage, the public deserves a frank assessment of the dangers involved and an outline of the safety precautions to be taken. The Beaufort venture should be delayed until the drillers can produce conclusive evidence that they are better equipped to avoid or cope with major accidents than the North Sea operators. Our technology should at least be adequate to ensure that accidents, which are bound to happen sooner or later, will not produce ecological devastation (Disaster from the deep, Apr. 27/77).

Of course, previous editorials have warned against taking such assurances seriously. Thus the paper finds itself in an untenable contradiction: it attempts to maintain its ecological rationality that oil development and transport are inherently dangerous and that ecosystem protection is the top priority, while presuming the inevitability of expansion of the industry. The only recourse is to concede rhetorical ground to the hegemonic argument that the problems of modernity can be made tolerable through expert management and technological improvements.

By 1977, the politics of pipelines has come to the fore. In developing its Alaskan oil reserves, the United States is positioning for a pipeline across Canadian territory; failing that, oil would be shipped by tanker from Alaska down Canada’s Pacific coast. While the paper is ambivalent on what that decision should be, it continues to raise the alarm over the prospect of more oil tankers plying Canadian waters.

The problem of oil spills is potentially immense. Within a year, a fleet eventually reaching 30 tankers will begin carrying up to 1.65 million barrels of Alaskan crude oil per day down the west coast... Some environmentalists claim it is “certain” that massive oil spills will occur as tankers navigate the
tricky channels along the mountainous coast....The dismal oil-spill record of 1976 (19 tankers lost) is getting through to everyone (Oil and water do not mix, Mar. 3/77). 55

Even so, The Globe and Mail gets squarely behind the Berger Commission appointed by Prime Minister Trudeau to study the proposal for a natural gas pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley to southern Canada, whose report an editorial calls ‘a unique and precious piece of work.’ Even though previous editorials show impatience with the federal government on pipeline decisions, now the paper sides with Justice Thomas Berger who declares, ‘it is not a time for decisions.’ Instead, such developments must abide the rights and aspirations of ‘the native peoples who view [the North] not as a frontier but as their home’ (Impact of a pipeline, May 10/77).

Accordingly, the paper criticizes the National Energy Board (NEB) for its approval of another pipeline proposed by the corporation Alcan, without the benefit of Berger-like scrutiny. Asserting that the approval lacked thorough study and democratic process, and was subject to political interference, it frames the NEB process as illegitimate:

The effect of the NEB report...is to suggest that intensive and costly study is good for projects it is not necessarily going to approve, but can be put off to the future for projects it is going to approve...The Alcan proposal may be the best option for Canadians, but the Government will need to prove it (The pipeline we don’t know, July 5/77).

Berger has set the standard for public consultation and fairness in assessing risks and benefits, advising a moratorium on northern pipeline development for 10 years. The Globe and Mail appears to accept the primacy of such consultation, including

55 The first major tanker accident in northern North America occurred in March 1989, when the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Alaska’s Prince William Sound.
the prospect that the result could be the denial of approval, over and above economic interests. In an editorial responding to an agreement in principle between Prime Minister Trudeau and President Carter to build an overland gas pipeline (not the Mackenzie Valley route) to bring Alaska gas to U.S. customers, and possibly Canadian gas to Canadians, the editorial is skeptical of Ottawa’s assurance of minimal impacts and adequate compensation to indigenous communities for the unavoidable ‘mess’ it will make.

...[W]ould the pipeline company be required to pay (and would U.S. consumers therefore be required to pay?) the $100-million or more which the Lysyk committee says should go to Yukoners for the mess the project is sure to make with the land and their lives?...[I]t is also right to remember that the people who will be disturbed by the pipeline – especially the native people – are particularly vulnerable to disturbance, and that the northern environment is more fragile than any which southern pipelines cross. Either the cross-Canada route, with the costs of justice for Canada’s northern people and land, is worth it to the United States or it is not. We cannot give away essentials under the delusion of striking a bargain (Hard bargaining ahead, Aug. 10/77).

Here we find a Berger Commission-inspired ecological-indigenous justice frame in which economic and political interests are secondary.

Overall, The Globe and Mail editorial discourse on fossil fuels in the 1970s - the environmental impacts of exploration, production and transportation, corporate interests, government responsibility, and ecological-indigenous justice – is dominated by a counter-hegemonic alarmist frame which asserts, first and foremost, the (unacceptable) danger of this industry to the environment and indigenous populations, and challenges the legitimacy of both government and corporations in managing this danger. This discourse is grounded in more malleable frames of national sovereignty, national identification with the north, and a new democratic imperative of participation, respect, transparency and accountability. What is especially interesting is that this discourse persists in the context
of the 1973 OPEC oil embargo. Gasoline shortages and high prices are driving a recession, yet appeals to economic rationality over environmental protection are absent in these editorials. Given the contemporary Canadian conflicts over oil sands expansion, natural gas fracking, and associated pipelines, this makes for potent comparisons of editorial discourse in the two time periods.

5.4.3 Campaign against garbage

In the 1970s, the exponential growth in solid waste becomes the poster child of urban environmentalism, giving rise to the mantra of the “3-Rs” – reduce, reuse, recycle. Urban growth, combined with the explosion of convenience containers (disposable, single-use, take-out food and drinks), creates a crisis of litter and waste disposal for municipalities. Further, the limits to growth discourse raised concern for scarce resources and the need to use materials more efficiently to avoid waste. In this issue, we find The Globe and Mail totally engaged.

While this was not the most frequent environmental topic for editorializing, or perhaps the most significant, The Globe and Mail’s perspective on the packaging/container problem is worth highlighting for its alignment with the ecologist discourse of the day. In short, the paper sides with environmental groups in demanding that the Ontario government ban non-refillable beverage containers and restrict unnecessary packaging. Railing against the food industry’s move to throw-away packaging and the government’s tepid response, the editorialist writes:

Where did the Government have its noble steed tethered when milk passed out of returnable glass bottles into cardboard cartons and throw-away plastic pouches, when beer first appeared in cans, when soft drinks appeared in cans and non-returnable bottles? (Saddle up, Mr. Auld, July 11/72).
The assertion here is that the government should have directly intervened with the food and beverage industry to prevent these developments in the first place, and that the public interest in reducing waste trumps the whims of the free market. The editorial explicitly names the paper as advocating for a very draconian policy intervention.

*The Globe and Mail* has urged the Government before to ban the sale of all beverages in so-called one-way containers. We feel now the argument should be carried further – that the Government should give serious consideration to insisting on standardized and returnable containers for a much wider range of products in the food industry and to compelling industry to do away with unnecessary packaging (Saddle up, Mr. Auld, July 11/72).

This remarkable stance speaks to a high level of unease with expanding consumerism. The frame of the interventionist state is obvious, as is the framing of the public interest as associated, not with consumer choice and price, but with environmental protection and resource conservation. The paper takes the topic up again in responding to a speech by the Ontario environment minister to a meeting of the packaging industry in which he threatens the industry with regulations if they do not voluntarily deal with over-packaging.

[Quoting the Minister] “We have reached the stage where goods are over-packaged.” We certainly have...the average person now creates five pounds of garbage a day, twice as much as a decade ago...Consumers (or bottlers or canners), he said, have not demanded throw-away pop bottles or cans; these products have been forced upon them by the container manufacturing industry, which wants the business, and the big retailers, who do not want to be bothered with returns....The amounts of solid waste cannot continue to grow. They are unsightly and expensive to deal with, they cause air and water pollution, they use up irreplaceable energy and raw materials (No leniency on litter, Oct. 10/72).
Here the paper extends to the Minister the benefit of the doubt, but wants the

government to be prepared to follow its appeal to voluntarism with a readiness to wield a

big regulatory stick should the industry not step up:

... [T]he industry has nine months in which to make voluntary reforms; after

that the ‘may’ (we trust Mr. Auld means) will become “must”.... The

minister’s speech was received with stony silence and just enough applause at

the end to be polite, which would suggest the industry thinks the public has

reason to hope the minister will act....The day when the great Ontario clean-

up starts may really be just over the horizon (No leniency on litter, Oct.

10/72).

In other words, if the industry is displeased, then the government is on the right t

rack.

The editorial shows no concern the impact of regulation on business viability,

competitiveness, consumer choice or the free market. Nor is the paper satisfied with half

measures, calling Ontario’s announced ban on three-quart plasticized-paper milk cartons,

‘another soggy, half-apologetic slap on his adversaries in the war against container

pollution.’ Referencing support for standardized refillable beverage containers in Alberta,

the editorialist lays out its expectations:

Mr. Auld should be hacking his way briskly toward this sort of objective

rather than puttering around in the minor leagues of reform. The crushing of a

paper carton idea is fine, but it is drowned out in the crashing of bottles of all

shapes, sizes and uses – all over the landscape (Excellent work – on paper,

Nov. 13/72).

At this point, recycling is not on the agenda – reducing and reusing are the imperatives.

When a Metro Toronto committee report recommends diverting reusable items from the

waste stream, an editorial asserts,

the traditional notion that everything thrown away by society is useless’ is no

longer acceptable, and that ‘much of our garbage can be used again (Practical

places to start, June 20/72).
The political battle lines on packaging and solid waste are drawn here: on the one hand, governments are dealing with an ‘ominous...tide of garbage...that, even when it is collected on schedule,...threatens to engulf its producers’ (Practical places to start, June 20/72); on the other, a powerful food industry intent on socializing the cost of their packaging.

Five years on, the solid waste war is still fully engaged; the industry is winning while The Globe and Mail remains steadfast on the losing side. The paper decries the influence of the packaging and beverage industry on public policy:

The Government’s cautious campaign against throw-away soft drink containers is clearly faltering...[C]ertain regulations designed to encourage the use of reusable containers will be softened or perhaps even dumped...Those ringing statements of principle about a clean and efficient environment lose their clarity as they filter beyond the doors of the Legislature into the lobby. The Lobby... The majority of Ontario’s “little people” is not in the habit of hiring Bay Street law firms to plead its case with the provincial Cabinet. In theory, public policy should not be the hostage of special interests.... Mr. Kerr [the new environment minister] is looking distinctly more frightened than flexible (The returnable policy, Mar. 1/77).

Ontario’s concession on the introduction of non-refillable cans to the pop market is to levy a tax on the can, in theory to incentivize consumer demand for a refillable glass container which the industry would be required to continue to provide. This early application of an economic policy instrument is derided by the paper:

Mr. Kerr will recommend an extra tax on canned pop to discourage buyers, although similar taxes have had no effect elsewhere. It’s a gesture. Part of Mr. Kerr’s well-practiced art of backing down. Noticeably. (Timidity on pop cans, Mar. 15/77).

When this tax measure falls through because of partisanship in the Legislature, the paper takes on the Liberal and New Democratic (NDP) opposition parties in similar tone:
[The opposition] has done so [defeated the tax], not because of an inherent weakness in the proposal or in the purposes it was intended to serve, but because we now have in Ontario two opposition parties more intent on flexing their muscles than on exercising their minds (Games of the opposition, July 11/77).

The NDP eventually comes out in favour of a deposit/return system for all beverage containers, which would not penalize the purchase of a can over a refillable container. The paper believes this to be the worst option short of none. While more cans would be recovered from the waste stream, it would not reduce the resource intensity of can manufacture (the energy intensive process of aluminum production was part of the argument against cans), nor would it privilege the purchase of refillable bottles. The tax proposal, while inexcusably weak, at least accomplishes that. The editorial board’s frustration is evident:

If the opposition parties...believe that it is the duty of the opposition to oppose...we wish they would exercise it a bit more selectively. Not, for example, on Government legislation which, at the best of times, has all the bold thrust of an introverted groundhog in January. It was always expected that there would be lobbies dedicated to defending the can industry – none, as it happens, more vociferous than the New Democratic Party. In the ears of the minority Conservative Government, this has rung louder than the voices that call for conservation and protection of the environment, so it has reacted by retreating – not for the first time – from its 5-cent tax plan. Maybe the thinking that a public plied with so many promises and hit with so many disappointments in this area, will ultimately settle for almost anything but the current wasteful arrangement (Lost again, Nov. 21/77).

*The Globe and Mail*’s treatment of the solid waste issue differs from that of the oil industry and its pipelines. While it sees oil and its transport as a dangerous threat, it does not get beyond the ‘raising the alarm’ frame in a substantive way by articulating a clear policy position and advocating for that position over time.
Instead, its complaints against both industry and government, while vociferous and persistent, ultimately retreat to imploring the parties to minimize or mitigate the threat that this expanding industry poses. In the case of the container campaign, the paper takes a firm and radical stance – government needs to ban one-way containers and standardize packaging to eliminate waste - and pursues it unwaveringly over several years. The food, beverage and container industries are clear adversaries; their lobby and the government’s concessions to it are equally illegitimate and contrary to the public and environmental interest. The two are similar, however, in that in neither case is the paper concerned for the economic viability of the industries involved or the jobs associated with them; economic rationality is simply not part of the discourse.

5.4.4 Progress, growth, modernity

The critique of progress and modernity, which is central to the radical ecologist discourse and present in 1960s editorials, becomes more prevalent in the 1970s. As discussed in Section 5.1, the Limits to Growth report and the Stockholm conference represent critical moments in the construction of counter-hegemonic discourse. The strongest language appears in a 1970 editorial excoriating the growth of industrial society, calling mankind ‘that filthiest of animals’ who needs to ‘clean up after himself’ (Our next challenge: to move a mountain, Mar. 9/70). The scourge of pollution in several industrialized nations – Canada, United States, and Australia – is blamed on untrammeled progress, which has an ‘other side.’ Referencing the Minamata mercury disaster, the editorialist writes:

Perhaps, though, it is Japan that most horrifyingly displays what man’s disrespect of his environment can do to mankind. In Japan’s haste to rebuild
the industrial empire which now stands third in the world, the demands of
economics were permitted to override those of nature; and the bill is being
rendered.... (The other side of progress, Aug. 3/70)

Here the paper takes an ethical stance against economism, a recurring theme throughout
this decade which presupposes the primacy of nature. It concludes: ‘And we did it all
ourselves. Will we see the errors in time to correct them, and save ourselves? (The other
side of progress, Aug. 3/70). The implication here is that humans are not as clever as we
think we are, and that we may, in fact, author our own demise.

This tone continues in an editorial prompted by new exhibits at the Ontario Science
Centre: ‘Humanity’s ingenuity, perseverance, strength and skill rise on all sides.’

Recognition of the costs of this prowess, on the other hand, is vastly underrepresented.

A small corner...has been reserved for a modest voice of disagreement. A
little exhibit about pollution – and one that does not inspire preening. At the
entrance, a space-shot picture of the planet is accompanies by the invitation:
Let’s take a closer look. Those who do encounter some blunt warnings about
the rate at which we are fouling the earth: curiously little about the counter-
offensive [despite] the great upsurge of concern about air, water and earth
pollution during the past few years (Dark side of the mirror, July 3/70).

Rather than triumphalism, this is a discourse of eco-catastrophe and crisis of modernity.

Another 1970 editorial takes on the issue of over-population, popularized by Paul
Toronto professor’s presentation to the House of Commons Committee on Environmental
Pollution unlimited population growth in affluent society:

The reasoning is horrifying in its logic. As population grows in these “have”
areas, so does the need to make use of more of the world’s natural resources
to support it...over-population in rich areas means a greater assault on our
already damaged environment.... [Optimism that] technology will adapt, new
methods will be found to increase productivity, new mineral resources will be
discovered [is tempered by a realization that the pace of growth may well
create] a gap between society’s technological ability to adapt and the
depletion and spoiling of the world’s resources (Dangers in affluence, Oct.
30/70).

While population debates tend to focus on developing countries, this editorial clearly
frames it as a first-world problem, directly connecting the high consumption rates of rich
countries to environmental degradation. It anticipates the 1972 Limits to Growth report
which argues that it is ultimately impossible to de-materialize growth. By linking
affluence and population, it also anticipates a much later discourse of ecological footprint
which focuses on consumption. Instead of an overarching goal of society, affluence has
become dangerous.

*The Globe and Mail*’s preoccupation with the ultimate environmental threat, nuclear
weapons, is highlighted in an editorial that compares with the lack of attention to the
Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) talks at the time with the intensity of public
focus on the fate of the Apollo 13 crew:

Who noticed [the SALT talks]? Who stayed up to get the latest progress
reports? Yet what is at stake is the fate of all of us on spaceship Earth....It is
the same mad world that joyfully welcomed the astronauts home. It is a world
that, to take one instance of its madness, spends $175-billion each year on
armaments that must never, never be used...and the investment in death is
expected to double every 15 years (No such anguish for Earth, Apr. 18/70).

This is a risky stance: to imply that the fate of a single spaceship is inconsequential
compared to the existential crisis of nuclear annihilation, and further to castigate the
general public for its misplaced priorities. The frames of eco-catastrophe, finite Earth,
and a skewed modernity are evident in phrases such as ‘spaceship Earth,’ mad world,’
and ‘investment in death.’
These themes continue in 1972. The revelation that Mount Kilimanjaro, ‘a world away from the crass materialism of civilization, with its congestion and pollution,’ is strewn with human garbage – the higher one goes, the worse it gets – prompts the lament:

We are filled with that special brand of despair that comes from the realization that the practice of scattering trash around is one of those human weaknesses that can occur at any latitude, longitude or altitude (Carried to extremes, Feb. 17/72).

Thus, the utopian notion that there are places on Earth where one can escape the detritus of consumerism is dispensed.

At a more local level, several editorials decry the perils of urban growth. Modern Toronto is depicted in rhetorical flourish as in a downward spiral from which there may be no exit:

Every working day in this city of more than 2 million, 800,000 people converge on the downtown core to work in the insistently growing concrete and steel cliffs of business or the sprawling industrial plants where wastes further deteriorate the land, air and water whose freshness and beauty so stirred Canadians 105 years ago. Twice daily they push and struggle past, through and over each other like a mammoth log jam on a tidal river, or a horde of ants in frustrated efforts to funnel all at once through a narrow passage, yet without the ant’s ability to relate to the colony as a whole (Madness of urban growth, June 30/72).

As nuclear proliferation is ‘mad,’ so is uncontrolled growth. Future projections are even more dire:

If only the present plans and projects for downtown Toronto are carried through, a two-block radius...will be jammed by nearly twice as many people as inhabited the whole of Toronto of 1867. The litany [of development projects] is endless...Hundreds of thousands of people – and the equal number of transients...squeezed into ever-narrowing tunnels, fighting for air to breathe, space to see their shadows and room to turn around (Madness of urban growth, June 30/72).
Rather than a booster of development, the paper criticizes the motivation for this 'galloping growth' – increased property tax revenue – and presages ecological economist Herman Daly’s conceptualization of uneconomic growth (Daly, 1996). The editorialist clearly posits that the conventional view of progress is simply illegitimate.

But there are those who wonder what will be the cost of this and all the other schemes to citizens in taxes for services, medical treatment for crowd-engendered anxieties and other illnesses, the family breakdowns and personal sufferings brought on by living and working in an impersonal, ever more polluted and impossible environment.... The problems must be faced before the city becomes uninhabitable, for as long as our rulers continue to believe that more and more buildings means progress, the human needs of people are neglected...Official projections show that before the end of this century, more than 80 per cent of Canada’s population will be living in the megalopolitan centres of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Living or existing? (Madness of urban growth, June 30/72).

This editorial problematizes urbanization, growth and the conventional view of progress, consistent with the new social movement’s critique of modernity as destructive of humanity and ecology. Nonetheless, the paper’s view of real progress is bound up in the technological achievements of the day. Its response to the December 1972 lunar mission asserts the value of the space program to be inherent in the advancement of ‘knowledge and understanding’ which is ‘vital to Man’s progress, or what is Man about?’ [original emphasis].

[T]he Saturn rocket carrying three brave men into space is a beautiful sight; a rocket with a nuclear warhead is the symbol of universal death… Man knows now that it is within his intelligent capacity to equip himself and move out into regions that were beyond even fear a generation ago. This is not an escape from failure on earth; rather it is a demonstration that what Man wills can be achieved. Out of this triumph can come a regenerated will to master the problems that bedevil earthbound humanity... (Legacy from the moon, Dec. 20/72).
Absent is any pretense of conquest or nationalistic domination of space. The mastery that the space program represents is symbolic rather than material: If we choose to do so, we can solve the problems facing humanity on Earth. On the other hand, we also have the power to wipe out life on Earth.

While there are significantly fewer eco-political editorials in 1977 than in the previous two study years, there is little change in framing. Two editorials pick up the themes of progress, growth and modernity, one focusing on the affluent North and the other the struggling South. More metaphysical reflection on the meaning of modern life appears in an editorial on the energy crisis – supply shortages and high prices - that gripped Western nations during this decade (see Section 5.1). Recounting a litany of electricity-powered conveniences that now replace human labour and human interaction in middle class homes, the editorial romanticizes a simpler way of living:

It wasn't long ago that “heat and serve” was the final stage in a laborious but satisfying process of washing, chopping, mixing, beating, rolling, pouring and spreading. Now it means you have just stepped in to the kitchen and dinner is 15 minutes away....The proliferation of machinery, and its invasion of almost every aspect of our lives, are not surprising. We dwell in the wide-eyed adolescence of technology – assuming that anything man can do, a machine can do better, and that, therefore, machines should be made to do just about everything. This isn’t surprising, but neither is man entirely happy as he rides toward redundancy on the back of a machine. Will he be any happier if the current and looming energy crisis pulls the plug? (After the shame of living better electrically, June 25/77).

With the word ‘shame’ in the title implying a moral judgement on convenience products and a profligate use of technology, the writer muses about whether we really are ‘living better electrically.’ Once again, the paper challenges the dominant discourse of progress and invites a public discussion of alternative models of social organization.
The energy crisis...is almost a metaphysical problem, involving the relationships of man with our men and of man with the world. We need the energy, yes; but what do we want to do with it? To what extent would we rather do without it? What do we want our lives to be like? The energy shortage is one thing, and we are confronting it. The energy crisis is quite another, and it would be a tragedy if we failed to address it, now that we finally have a break in the technological conversation. The shortage is a problem, a major one. The crisis could be a godsend (After the shame of living better electrically, June 25/77).

The editorialist is reflecting the collective existential crisis of the decade, given expression by the various strands of environmental and alternative movements. Change is coming fast and furious without the benefit of critical reflection or accounting for costs. Given this, it is surprising that no editorial is written in response to the Science Council of Canada’s Conserver Society research project, the report of which was published in this year. Given that the Science Council published a similar critique of modern society, presumably, the paper would have approved (see Section 5.1).

The second 1977 editorial critical of the dominant discourse of progress responds to the release of a United Nations Environment Program report on the deteriorating environmental conditions in Third World countries. In its condemnation of a development trajectory that mimics Western industrialization, the paper cites Susan George, a well-known critic of conventional development policies, who the year before had published, How the other half dies: The real reasons for world hunger:

What seems lacking in the UNEP report is any insights of the sort that Susan George, a British economist [sic]...has provided in her studies of Third World economics, national and international. Third World governments, pursuing

56 George is an American-French scholar, not British, who studied philosophy, not economics (see following quote).
the development of glossy capitals and industrial status symbols, have poured their capital, most of it borrowed, into their cities rather than provide the basic services that could keep a productive rural society flourishing. The best growing land has been put into cash crops for export – to gain foreign exchange, which has not always been enough even to pay for the imports made necessary by this policy of producing for export rather than for self-sufficiency (Earth’s resources wasted, June 20/77).

Further, the editorial criticizes the export of Western agricultural technology which supports the industrialization of agriculture for export:

The Green Revolution, which seemed for a time to offer all the answers to world hunger, has replaced the old cycles of subsistence farming and crop rotation with intensive cultivation, year after year, of the same crop, leading, in spite of heavy use of chemical fertilizers, to soil depletion. In some regions irrigation has led to salinization of the soil and to erosion. Huge and costly dams, built for flood control as well as power production, offer help only for the short term (Earth’s resources wasted, June 20/77).

Finally, the editorial declares, ‘The wasting of the earth is no act of God;’ it has a root cause, which the UNEP report fails to recognize - the imposition of a development model by donor nations through international development agencies.

But this may be an occupational hazard in an organization of national governments, many of them pursuing economic policies that ignore, or accelerate, this deterioration of the sources of supply of food and fuel, the basic necessities of life’ (Earth’s resources wasted, June 20/77).

This critique of the dominant development model reflects the counter-hegemonic discourse of the emerging Third World solidarity movement as well as the sustainable agriculture, ‘small is beautiful’ appropriate technology, and local self-reliance strands of environmentalism. Clearly, the editorial board is not only familiar with this discourse, but also embraces it as legitimate.
5.4.5 Discussion

As in the 1960s, the dominant frame in 1970 Globe and Mail eco-political editorials is alarmist, even apocalyptic, indicated by the use of words such as anguish, crisis, survival, danger, disaster, dark, madness, risk and trouble, to describe contemporary and future prospects. On specific domestic issues, critique is matched with a demand for state intervention, while highlighting the illegitimacy of polluters and state accommodation of industrial lobbies. In short, the paper continues to act as an advocate for strong action to protect a presupposed public interest represented by a clean environment.

The broader critique of modernity, progress and growth reflects a generalized cultural angst in the face of rapid change. Editorial stances on the nuclear arms race as the ultimate environmental threat, and its indictment of dominant North-South relations, indicate that the editorial board during this period is intellectually engaged with the discourses of the new social movements. While it is likely that a comparison of the paper’s eco-political discourse with other editorial discourses, for instance on conventional economic topics, would reveal inconsistencies and contradictions, it is fair to conclude that the discursive frames of ecologism - limits to growth, and recognition of the ecological basis of human society – resonate with the editorial board. We can understand this as the effect of a now very broad eco-political discursive field, which permits frequent excursions into the frontier between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic fields. Remembering Gramsci’s insight that maintaining hegemony requires the articulation of values that resonate with the cultural common sense, we can assume that these editorials speak to a broadly sympathetic audience, even for the paper’s most radical propositions. In order words, the paper is giving voice to the cultural zeitgeist of
the time, given the status of *The Globe and Mail* as a mainstream paper. This is significant in the context of Blühdorn’s theory of a ‘post-ecologist turn’ which posits that radical political-ecologist discourse developed within a particular cultural context in which discourses of biological and technological limits, as well as alternative conceptions of society, had real resonance. The question is, does it persist?
Chapter 6: Period 3 - 1982 – 1992

During the 1980s, politicians, for the first time, realized that taking action on pollution was good politics (Macdonald, 1991, p. 116).

6.1 The second wave of environmental politics

As discussed in Section 5.1, the 1970s represented the first wave of environmental concern. During the ‘second wave’, the 1980s, the environmental movement consolidated as a political force throughout the West, characterized by the professionalization of environmental organizations, including their increasing skill at commanding media attention, and the growing memberships of those groups (Paehlke, 2009, p. 6). Accordingly, and despite a grueling recession in the early part of the decade, the field of environmental politics expanded and the stakes grew.

Several critical discourse moments counteracted the effect of economic malaise on public environmental discourse in the early 1980s: the Love Canal toxic waste scandal which came to light in 1978 and persisted into the 1980s; the Three Mile Island nuclear accident in 1979 which put a halt to nuclear expansion in North America; the pesticide factory disaster in Bhopal, India (1984); the Chernobyl nuclear plant explosion and fire (1986); and the PCB warehouse fire in Montreal (1988), among others. Together, these large-scale disasters, along with high profile issues such as acid rain, escalate public environmental concern, especially about the dangers of toxic chemical and radiation exposures, peaking in the late 1980s. Governments respond by increasing their regulatory capacity and political will to intervene as an environmental actor (Macdonald, 2007, p. 95-96). Vested interests also respond by engaging more proactively in the competition to
define the ecological problematic, and challenging the counter-hegemonic discourses of political-ecologism as well as the hegemonic discourse of administrative rationalism) which had dominated to this point. This decade, then, represents a historical conjuncture for eco-politics, as discursive struggles among competing actors result in a complete redefinition of power relations.

Four interrelated discursive strands are established early in the 1980s and persist throughout the study period. First, and most significantly, this period is marked by the emergence of neoliberal discourse as the new field on which eco-politics is played out over the next two-and-a-half decades. The second is the globalization of environmental problems, and thus the internationalization of environmental politics. In this decade, transboundary and global issues of acid rain, stratospheric ozone depletion, and global warming come to dominate the agendas of environment ministers, prime ministers, and the UN. Environmental movements also “go global” during this decade, influencing multilateral agendas and organizing around issues such as rainforest destruction and species extinctions, often in solidarity with indigenous populations being impacted by expanding resource extractive industries. The third, also an international discourse, relates to the UN effort to reconcile the ongoing animus between the rich and poor countries, first expressed at the 1972 Stockholm conference, over the perceived threat by northern environmental protection agendas to southern economic development. The fourth discursive strand is constructed by the private sector across OECD countries, which by the early 1980s has strategically injected itself into the agenda-setting and framing contests, not just as an antagonist but as a protagonist actor in the eco-political field. Its green corporate discourse dovetails with the neoliberal discourse of market
fundamentalism which comes to dominate political discourse generally. These four discursive strands, described in more detail below, compete throughout this decade to define and thus hegemonize the next phase of eco-politics nationally and globally.

6.2 Internationalization of eco-politics

While the environmental problematic had been contextualized as a ‘spaceship Earth’ dilemma since the 1960s, and while the 1972 Stockholm conference brought the world community together to consider the intersection of environment and development for the first time, until the 1980s eco-politics were for the most part local, preoccupied by issues that could be resolved by national or sub-national jurisdictions. During the 1980s, eco-politics expanded decisively onto the international stage in response to scientific evidence, initially, of the hazards of transboundary air pollution, and subsequently, of the planetary scale of impacts of emissions of ozone-depleting chemicals and anthropogenic greenhouse gases.

Acid rain as a transboundary air pollution issue preoccupied Canada-US relations throughout the 1980s. Acid rain was first brought to the international community at the 1972 Stockholm conference by Swedish researchers who had conclusive proof of the increasing acidity of precipitation since the 1950s, and of its long-range transport in the upper atmosphere from industrial regions of Europe to the hinterlands. In 1977,

57 In Canada, the exception to this was the problem of Great Lakes water quality which is the subject of a bilateral Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with the United States.
Environment Minister Romeo Leblanc described acid rain as ‘an environmental time bomb’ and ‘the worst environmental problem ever faced by Canada.’ Both Canada and the US had set up monitoring programs by 1978, the Bilateral Research Consultation Group on acid rain reported on the problem in 1979, and in 1980 Prime Minister Trudeau and President Carter signed a memorandum of intent to negotiate a formal acid rain agreement (McKenzie, 2002, 209-10). Even though this cross-border momentum slowed to a crawl with President Reagan’s election in 1981, the Canadian government’s commitment to this file remained intact. Scientific evidence of widespread damage to forests, lakes and rivers, with accompanying collapse of iconic species such as Atlantic salmon and other angling favourites, generated great public concern and the fact that a good deal of blame (but certainly not all) could be assigned to another country allowed the government to take the high ground on the issue:

[A]cid rain was the first pollution issue the federal government – instead of trying to downplay – actively drew to public attention, presumably because there was political benefit to be gained by appearing to take a strong stand against the traditional Canadian enemy. Thus reverberating with the emotional overtones of Canadian nationalism and propelled by the sophisticated lobbying of the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain, established in 1980 with far more financial assistance from the governments of Ontario and Canada than had ever before been given to an environmental organization, acid rain quickly became the first environmental issue ever to rise to the top of the Canadian political agenda (Macdonald, 1991, p. 111).

58 Scientific evidence of the problem in Eastern Canada and the northeastern States included acidified (dead) lakes and rivers and forest die-back. Sources of the nitrous oxides and sulphur dioxide responsible for the acidic precipitation were primarily coal-fired power plants, other industrial operations, and vehicle emissions. While local (Canadian) sources contributed significantly to localized impacts, most of the remote damage was the result of the long-range transport of air pollutants from the industrialized Midwestern United States.
Such was the public pressure to resolve the acid rain issue, ‘one of the best known and most politically powerful environmental issues in Canada’ (Macdonald, 1991, p. 242) that Canada-US relations were dominated by the issue in Mulroney’s first term in office. Momentum behind the issue was well established prior to the 1984 election, causing Mulroney to promise a federal-provincial program to cut Canadian emissions within six months of taking power, a goal he achieved by building on the progress of previous Liberal regimes. This was a necessary step to establish Canadian legitimacy in negotiations with the U.S. on a Canada-U.S. acid rain agreement which were successfully concluded in 1990 under President Bush.

Beyond the bilateral politics of acid rain, the consolidation of scientific evidence - and the popularization of this evidence - of stratospheric ozone depletion and anthropogenic global warming, propelled the development of a truly global ecological politics, coordinated by United Nations agencies. In this, Canada (and Mulroney) played a significant role. Canada hosted and chaired the 1987 meeting at which the Montreal Protocol was signed, an implementation protocol to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Although it was quickly superseded in 1990 by a stronger agreement, the Montreal Protocol is widely acknowledged as the first successful multilateral agreement dealing a global environmental problem (Macdonald 1991, p. 257).  

59 New scientific data following 1987 revealed that the control measures provided by the Montreal Protocol were not sufficient to curb the thinning of the ozone layer; thus the parties agreed in 1990 to a more ambitious timetable for eliminating certain ozone-depleting substances. The cooperation among the parties established at the Montreal meeting set the groundwork for the rapid implementation of a subsequent agreement.
In June 1988, Environment Canada hosted the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) conference, ‘Our Changing Atmosphere: Implications for Global Security.’ Chaired by Stephen Lewis, Mulroney’s appointment as Canadian ambassador to the UN, this first international science-policy conference firmly established global warming as a serious geo-political problem. The conference statement, endorsed by all participants, identified unchecked global warming as second only to thermonuclear war in its potential disastrous consequences (WMO, 1988). Negotiations on an international global warming treaty followed, leading to an unprecedented signing by world leaders, including Prime Minister Mulroney, of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, at the Earth Summit in 1992. The 1988 meeting’s call for nations to commit to a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels by 2000 then appeared in the 1993 Liberal election platform.60

The advent of global pollution problems, along with the broader environment and development agenda of the UN (see Section 6.3), changed the eco-political dynamic in Canada. During the first two decades of modern environmental politics (1960s and 1970s), environmental problems were largely manifested at the local level and therefore within the purview of provincial governments, making the federal role ambiguous and difficult to navigate within the constitutional constraints of federal-provincial division of powers. As the transboundary and then global nature of certain environmental problems

60 The Liberal campaign platform document, the Red Book, included a sweeping environmental platform prepared under the direction of Paul Martin who was the opposition environment critic at the time. When the Liberals gained power in 1993, Martin was appointed Finance Minister and the Red Book environmental content was largely ignored. This speaks to the influence of the environmental movement through the late 1980s and early 1990s, on the one hand, and its rapid marginalization in the post-Rio period.
became evident in the 1980s, the federal government by necessity assumed a much higher profile, offering successive Prime Ministers an opportunity to show leadership on the international stage, with residual political benefits on the domestic front. Prime Minister Mulroney took full advantage of this, positioning Canada as a serious, cooperative global partner, while bringing the provinces along as necessary.

6.3 The advent of neoliberalism

The political-economic context for eco-political discourse early in the decade (1980-85) was a deep economic recession in all Western democracies. Unlike the economic crisis triggered by the OPEC oil embargo in the early 1970s, which fueled the limits to growth/conserver society counter-hegemonic discourses, the crisis of capital represented by the early 1980s recession had the effect at the beginning of the decade of dampening public interest in pollution issues (Macdonald, 1991, p. 109-110). The recession also fueled the uptake of neoliberal discourse which proffered economic relief through freeing the market from the state-imposed burden of regulation and trade barriers, and freeing the state from the burden of budget deficits and ownership of economic assets. The elections of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom (1979-1990) and President Ronald Regan in the United States (1981-1989) provided the public face of and the most powerful spokespersons for neoliberal discourse (more commonly referred to as neo-conservatism at the time) throughout the Western world (Swarts, 2013).

It is important to recognize that neoliberalism entered the political field as a counter-hegemonic discourse, seeking to destabilize the hegemonic consensus around the social welfare state, economic protectionism, and government intervention to overcome
geographic and economic disparities across regions (Swarts, 2013, pp. 52-55). While the neoliberal prescription of smaller governments and freer markets was resisted in Canada initially, and while free trade was foresworn by Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney during his 1984 election campaign, once elected Mulroney assumed the role of neoliberal ‘norm entrepreneur,’ working to generate a new national-political consensus in Canada (Swarts, 2013). The Mulroney government implemented several measures that aligned with the emerging neoliberal discourse such as significant cuts to federal services; federal intervention in the economy was also reduced through privatization of Crown corporations such as Petro-Canada and Air Canada, and narrowed mandates of the Foreign Investment Review Agency and the National Energy Board. Delivery of certain public services was contracted out to private firms, and private sector management practices were imported into the bureaucracy (Savoie, 1994, p. 14).

Negotiations with the United States on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) began shortly after the 1984 election, and the 1988 election was fought on the issue of free trade with the United States, with the Liberals and New Democrats opposing it. Mulroney won the election, despite losing the popular vote, and during his second term (1988-1993) negotiations were concluded to expand the FTA to include Mexico. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect in 1994, after the election of the Liberal government of Jean Chretien, which carried on with the neoliberal policy agenda introduced by Mulroney. 61

61 The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went far beyond reducing trade barriers among the parties. Its ‘investor’s rights’ protections (Chapter 11), allowing foreign corporations to sue national
The imposition of a neoliberal agenda in Canada was not unopposed. The earliest successful opposition to the Mulroney agenda was mounted by the environmental movement shortly after the 1984 election. Following two sympathetic environment ministers (John Fraser in the Clark government (1979-80) and John Roberts (1980-1983) and Charles Caccia (1983-1984) in the Trudeau-Turner governments), Prime Minister Mulroney’s first environment minister, Suzanne Blais-Grenier, a rookie Quebec MP, was judged by environmental groups across Canada to be decidedly hostile, and her effort to cut programming at Environment Canada was met with vehement protest (Macdonald, 1991). Perhaps a more skillful minister may have survived the public criticism and calls for her resignation; nevertheless, the fact that she was removed from that ministry in 1985 speaks to the salience and political reach of the environmental movement at the time. While Mulroney resisted the widespread opposition to free trade - the anti-free trade movement was broad-based and a majority of Canadians voted for parties opposing the FTA in 1988 - two side agreements on environmental and labour cooperation were included in the final NAFTA, reflecting the leadership of these two movements in governments for any perceived interference with their profit-making potential, set an international benchmark for subsequent bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, which now routinely include protections for investors against government regulation that would result in reduced or lost profits. Between 2005 and 2015 most of the investor law suits were filed against Canada, and most of those related to environmental protection and resource conservation laws and policies, including regulations on gasoline additives, pesticides, salmon angling, water exports, fracking, and quarrying, and an environmental impact assessment process (Sinclair, 2015).

62 Cuts to Environment Canada included a 22 percent reduction of staff at the Canadian Wildlife Service which affected programs such as contaminant monitoring in the Great Lakes, a review of pesticide use in Western Canada, and monitoring of the effects of forestry pesticides on songbirds in New Brunswick. By the 1988 election campaign, the department’s budget had largely been restored, with significant environmental spending promises made in the Progressive Conservative election platform (Macdonald, 1991, p. 120).
opposing the deal. The NAFTA Commission on Environmental Cooperation was established in Montreal in 1994 to implement the environmental side agreement.

Thus the ideological context for ecological politics during the period of 1982 to 1992 was schizophrenic. On the one hand, the adoption of neoliberal governance principles directly challenged the 1970s interventionist model underpinning the institutionalization of environmental politics. On the other, the Mulroney government was susceptible – some would say amenable - to public and environmental movement pressure, seizing several opportunities to provide both domestic and international leadership on the environmental file. Whether out of new-found personal concern or sheer political pragmatism, following the Blais-Grenier debacle the environment portfolio became a significant preoccupation for the Mulroney government, earning Mulroney in 2006 the moniker of ‘greenest prime minister’ in Canadian history by the watchdog magazine Corporate Knights (CBC News, 2006). Among the environmental accomplishments of the Mulroney administration were completion of the Canada-U.S. Acid Rain Agreement (to some extent an artefact of the close relationship between the Prime Minister and President Reagan); passage of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the first new

63 Mulroney contradicted Thatcher and Reagan on the environmental file, as well as the South Africa file, taking a leadership role in the international community in imposing economic sanctions on the apartheid state.

64 These accomplishments were achieved under the leadership of successive environment ministers: Hon. Tom McMillan (1985-1988); Hon. Lucien Bouchard (1998-1990); Hon. Robert de Cotret (1990-1991); Hon. Jean Charest (1991-1993). Notably, Tom McMillan hired Elizabeth May, environmental lawyer and activist, as senior policy advisor in 1986. In that position she was involved in all of the major legislative and policy developments noted above. She resigned on principle in 1988 over a back room deal to approve the Rafferty-Alameda Dams in Saskatchewan without proper environmental assessment.
federal environmental legislation since the 1970s\textsuperscript{65}; creation of eight national parks including the high profile Haida G’waii National Park Reserve\textsuperscript{66}; hosting of the UN negotiations which resulted in the Montreal Protocol on stratospheric ozone depletion (1987); hosting of the first international scientific and policy conference on global warming in Toronto in 1988 (WMO, 1988); and the signing of several multilateral agreements including the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting substances and, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in June 1992, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on the Protection of Biodiversity, and the Convention on Desertification. The following section elaborates.

\textbf{6.4 Corporate eco-political discourse: Greening capitalism}

While neoliberalism was emerging as a counter-hegemonic challenge to the post-war consensus of the interventionist state, business elites were repositioning themselves as hegemonic actors in environmental politics, not only in Canada but throughout Western democracies. Over the first two decades of modern eco-politics in Canada, agendas were set by experts, public officials, scientists, environmental groups, and the media. Businesses implicated in the growing demand for pollution controls and environmental legislation were reactive, acting to fend off regulation from a defensive position and, given their privileged access to decision-makers, behind closed doors. This rear-guard

\textsuperscript{65} While this legislation was touted by the government as the toughest regulation of toxic chemicals in the world, it really just consolidated existing legislation under one umbrella while adding tough penalties for violations. Environmental groups were highly critical of the outcome (Macdonald, 1991, p. 120-21).

\textsuperscript{66} This was the resolution of extended conflict pitting First Nations and environmentalists against the logging industry and the Province of British Columbia. Campaign strategies of the environmentalists resulted in this regional issue garnering not only national but international attention (see May, 1990).
action was insufficient to prevent a significant body of environmental legislation from being passed at federal and provincial levels during the 1970s (Macdonald, 2007, pp. 50-51).

By the 1980s, the momentum behind environmental protection had changed the political context within which business was operating, prompting a change in strategy within the well-established corporate sectors. The emerging environmental movement and a growing public intolerance of environmental degradation and toxic exposures represented a counter-influence within the halls of power. As Macdonald puts it, ‘It was not until the 1980s that any significant amount of power slipped out of the hands of regulated firms and into those of the environment departments and their allies in the environmental movement’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 93). Business responded by collectively adopting a new form of corporate activism in order to re-establish the business hegemony with regard to environmental regulatory agendas. This meant the rapid expansion of trade and industry associations as vehicles for escalating public relations and lobbying, and the formation of cross-sectoral alliances to oppose increased regulation of their operations and/or products, and to proactively influence emerging environmental policy (Beder, 1997, pp. 16-17; Macdonald, 2007, pp. 83-91).

This repositioning of business in the public sphere had a dual goal: retaining profit margins and regaining public legitimacy, the latter the *sine qua non* of maintaining hegemony. Macdonald notes,

> the degree of [business] interest in legitimacy is directly related to social acceptance of the environmental critique, that is, the extent to which its behaviour has come to be generally seen as illegitimate’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 27).
Re-establishing legitimacy requires a discursive strategy that positions business positively within the new eco-political discursive field. Emerging more or less simultaneously from corporate and institutional actors, the discourse of ecological modernization served this purpose. This discourse has many variations, as discussed in Section 2.5.3; indeed, sustainable development can be categorized as an ecological modernization discourse. The essential common element is that economic goals and environment goals need not be incompatible. The corporate version integrated neo-liberal and environmental frames to construct a discourse of market-driven, voluntarist, ‘greening’ of capitalist profit centres through efficiency investments, and in which the state plays a minimal role. At its best, progressive firms innovate to create and fill new markets for ecologically-efficient infrastructure, production and consumption systems (McDonough and Braungart, 2002). At its worst, the discourse represents nothing more than ‘greenwashing,’ the goal of which is to undermine radical environmental discourse (Beder, 1997), or as Macdonald puts it,

convinc[ing] citizens sympathetic to the goals of environmentalism that in fact those goals are defined as economic growth, with blue-box recycling on the side’ (Macdonald, 2007, p. 53).

Three assumptions underpin this discourse: i) polluters, rather than the state, are best placed to figure out how their companies can reduce their environmental footprint at the least cost; ii) if polluters are ‘at the table’ helping to devise solutions, they are more likely exercise good corporate citizen and voluntarily reduce their environmental impact, thereby avoiding regulation; and iii) if environmental protection can be made profitable, then polluters will automatically shift from polluting to protecting the environment. In other words, environmental problems invited ‘win-win’ solutions that could be arrived at
consensually through rational deliberation among ‘stakeholders’ within new multi-stakeholder processes in which business representatives, because their participation was essential for success, were prominent participants (VanNijnatten, 1999).

This non-adversarial, voluntarist, ‘win-win’ discourse which was taken on by the regulatory agencies, and eventually by segments of the environmental movement that saw partnerships with business as the best way to achieve incremental change, directly challenged the dominant 1970s framing of environmental problems as sites of conflict (Hajer, 1995). As a result, the locus of environmental politics changed, from the public sphere in which conflicts were clearly defined and played out, to private meeting rooms, out of the public and media eye. The identification of actors as stakeholders to be invited into consultations, instead of antagonists to be engaged in the public sphere, had the effect of privileging certain voices while marginalizing others. Agendas and terms of reference were determined by appointed chairs and their sponsor department. Participation in such consultations was by invitation, not self-selection, and hierarchical norms of conduct and disclosure were imposed. Stakeholders were expected to “play by the rules” of consensus-building; conflicting perspectives were downplayed or excluded. By virtue of their hegemonic status, business, often represented by high-level

67 It is fair to say that governments at the political and the civil service levels were uncomfortable with the conflicts associated with regulating and controlling pollution. Not only were they mediating conflicts between environmental groups and industries, there were also internal conflicts between regulatory ministries and resource development ministries. The idea of bringing all interests together around a table to hammer out a consensus approach had great appeal for those civil servants responsible for environmental protection. Thus they welcomed the overtures from business interests to move in that direction.

68 Environment Canada sponsored several such processes during this period. An example is the Task Force on the Management of Toxic Chemicals (1985) which included executives from the largest chemical
executives (an indication of their perception of the stakes involved), occupied a place of privilege at the table. With the attendant shift of responsibility for environmental protection from the state to the private sector, environmental discourse became depoliticized and conflict de-legitimized as a means of addressing environmental problems.

The issue of business legitimacy in environmental politics was greatly advanced by the complementary and sometimes indistinguishable neoliberal discourse. The deregulation and privatization agenda, argued for as a means of freeing the market, directly targeted the legitimacy of the state. State regulation became known, pejoratively, as ‘command-and-control’, invoking contradictory images, on the one hand, of a domineering Big Brother, and on the other, of a bumbling, inefficient, hapless bureaucracy trying to

producers in Canada, industry associations, civil servants, consultants, and representatives from two environmental groups (including the author). To address the growing problem of government sponsors of such processes handpicking environmental groups to participate, the Canadian Environmental Network, a loose association of environmental groups across the country, negotiated an agreement with Environment Canada whereby the CEN would manage the process by which the member groups would select their own representatives to participate in multi-stakeholder processes on a case by case basis. Representatives selected through the CEN process were accountable to those groups through reporting-back mechanisms. The author served on the board of the CEN during much of this time.

The first high-profile, national multistakeholder process in Canada was initiated in 1986 by the Canadian Council of Resource and Environment Ministers (CCREM). The National Task Force on Environment and Economy, as it was called, was co-chaired by the Manitoba Environment Minister and the Executive Vice-President of Inco, the company that at the time was the most egregious acid rain polluter in Canada. The mandate of the National Task Force was to prepare the Canadian response to the anticipated Brundtland Commission report. Among other recommendations in its report, the Task Force recommended the establishment of a multi-stakeholder National Round Table on Environment and Economy (NRTEE), as well as Round Tables in each of the provinces. Their explicit task was to prepare national and provincial reports which would comprise Canada’s submission to the 1992 Earth Summit. The recommendation was accepted and round tables were established nationally and in every province following the model of appointing high profile corporate executives to their membership, along with environmentalists. The NRTEE was formed in 1988 with David Johnston, then-Principal and Vice-Chancellor of McGill University and currently Governor-General of Canada, as chair. Among its first members were Roy Aitken, Executive Vice-President of Inco, David Buzelli, President and CEO of Dow Chemical, Jean Gaulin, CEO of Ultramar Group, and Jack McLeod, CEO of Shell Canada (NRTEE, 1990). The NRTEE operated until 2013 when it was dismantled by Prime Minister Stephen Harper.
control much more competent, intelligent, efficient businesses. The administrative rationalist discourse of the 1970s was replaced by the neoliberal/green business discourse invoking market (price signals) and voluntary (self-regulation) policy instruments, the inevitability of economic globalization, and the imperative of global competitiveness. This discourse successfully shifted public attention away from business as perpetrators of environmental degradation, and towards individuals as consumers, a shift that is manifested in the green consumer discourse of the 1990s (Wall, 2000). Accordingly, business was framed as the source of solutions.

To summarize, we can understand the second wave of environmental politics as one of eco-political hegemonic/counter-hegemonic contestation characterized by discourse formation and adaptation by all actors. Public concern and support for aggressive government action on these problems grew over the decade and peaked in the late 1980s, mirroring the growth in scale, capacity and political effectiveness of the environmental movement and fueling the momentum leading up to the Earth Summit. On the other hand, hegemonic interests responded to the growing influence of counter-hegemonic demands by constructing discourses that attempted to re-establish their public legitimacy and political power. The outcome of this struggle shaped eco-political discourse in the post-1992 period, the final one of this study.70

70 While the seeds of the corporate and neoliberal discursive formations were planted during this period, they were not fully developed until the period following the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
6.5 Discourse of sustainable development

Besides the transboundary and global nature of the new generation of environmental problems, the internationalization of eco-politics is also reflected in several significant critical discourse moments articulated as the nexus of environment and development. These include publication of the World Conservation Strategy (1980) by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)\(^7\) which introduced the concept of sustainable development; the formation in 1983 of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, the Brundtland Commission) by the UN; and the release of the Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987. That report defined sustainable development as that which provides current generations with their needs while not undermining the capacity of future generations to provide for their own needs (WCED, 1987). It conjoined the environment and the economy as interdependent variables, encouraging a marriage of heretofore distinct policy sectors through the integration of environmental parameters into economic sector plans at all levels of government. Most significantly from an environmental politics perspective, it weighed in on the issue of growth, which had been in contention since the publication of the 1972 report, *Limits to Growth*. Its qualified stance on growth has been interpreted by both ‘limits’ proponents and pro-growth interests as supportive of their mutually exclusive agendas. In her Forward, Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland wrote:

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\(^7\) The IUCN is a scientific organization with both government and non-government members accredited by the United Nations and operating primarily in southern countries.
Many of the development paths of the industrialized nations are clearly unsustainable. And the development decisions of these countries, because of their great economic and political power, will have a profound effect upon the ability of all peoples to sustain human progress for generations to come. Many critical survival issues are related to uneven development, poverty and population growth. They all place unprecedented pressures on the planet’s lands, waters, forests, and other natural resources, not least in the developing countries... (WCED, 1987, p. xii).

Rather than repudiate growth, however, Brundtland concludes, ‘What is needed now is a new era of economic growth – growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable’ (WCED, 1987, p. xii). Within the body of the report, we find:

The world must quickly design strategies that will allow nations to move from their present, often destructive, processes of growth and development onto sustainable development paths (WCED, 1987, p. 49-50).

The Commission then reiterates the dominant view that overall growth floats all boats.

Growth must be revived in developing countries because that is where the links between economic growth, the alleviation of poverty, and environmental conditions operate most directly. Yet developing countries are part of an interdependent world economy; their prospects also depend on the level and patterns of growth in industrialized nations. The medium-term prospects for industrial countries are for growth of 3-4 per cent, the minimum that international financial institutions consider necessary if these countries are going to play a part in expanding the world economy. Such growth rates could be environmentally sustainable if industrialized nations can continue the recent shifts in the content of their growth towards less material- and energy-intensive activities and the improvement of their efficiency in using materials and energy....Sustainable development involves more than growth. It requires a change in the content of growth, to make it less material- and energy-intensive and more equitable in its impact. These changes are required in all countries as part of a package of measures to maintain the stock of ecological capital, to improve the distribution of income, and to reduce the degree of vulnerability to economic crises (WCED, 1987, pp. 52-53).
Despite its attempt to be all things to all parties and its utopian assumptions regarding the
dematerialization of a growing economy, not to mention the unproven motivation of
industrialized nations to do so, the discourse of sustainable development was embraced
across political and sectoral spectrums. Both growth and no-growth advocates framed
sustainable development for themselves, taking from the Commission’s report those
aspects that suited their purpose. The no-growth discourse coalition pointed to the
report’s broad condemnation of industrial growth, emphasizing the idea of qualitative
development rather than quantitative growth, including wealth redistribution. It pointed to
the Commission’s critique of natural resource sectors and prescription for radical
restructuring of agriculture, energy, fisheries, and other sectors to meet environmental
sustainability goals, which closely aligned with that of the environmental movement. The
pro-growth discourse coalition pointed to the report’s bottom-line endorsement of GDP
growth across both industrialized and developing nations within a globalized market
economy, while downplaying the arguably naïve entreaty that growth must be
environmentally sustainable and socially just, and that wealth must be redistributed.

The contestation over the meaning of the Brundtland report dominated eco-political
discourse internationally and nationally for the next several years. At the state level,
countries including Canada responded to the Commission’s recommendation to develop
national and sub-national sustainable development plans (Doern and Conway, 1994).
Internationally, the United Nations accepted the task of organizing a world summit on
sustainable development to be held on the 20th anniversary of the 1972 Stockholm
conference. This period of globalization of environmental politics culminated in the June
1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in
Rio de Janeiro. The so-called Earth Summit was the largest gathering of heads of state in world history, at which they all signed international treaties to address the problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, and desertification. The Summit’s non-binding Agenda 21, billed as a blueprint for sustainable development, and which included radical proposals for revamping production and resource sectors, was also signed.\(^{72}\)

Canada was heavily invested in the process related to the Brundtland Commission’s work. Key Canadian actors in the 1972 Stockholm conference were involved in the Commission and its seminal report. Canadian Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of the Stockholm Conference and the first Secretary-General of the United Nations Environment Programme, was appointed to the Brundtland Commission, and subsequently was appointed Secretary-General of the 1992 Earth Summit. Jim McNeill, a Canadian public servant who organized Canada’s participation in the Stockholm conference, served as Secretary of the Commission, and is credited as a primary drafter of the report, *Our Common Future*.\(^{73}\) Canada provided financial support to the Commission and hosted one of its many consultation meetings, to which Environment Canada, several provincial departments, and many environmental organizations made submissions. When the Commission’s report was submitted to the UN General Assembly in 1987, Environment Minister Tom McMillan was the first speaker to address it (Macdonald, 72).

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\(^{72}\) Agenda 21 was heavily influenced by civil society organizations that participated in the Earth Summit and was seen as a catch-all document covering all issues and all concerns. Because it was not legally binding, it has garnered little public attention and has had little impact on government policy.

\(^{73}\) McNeill was in charge of water resources in Saskatchewan in the Tommy Douglas administration and then held in several senior positions in the federal government, including heading up Canada’s preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Conference. As Director of Environment for the OECD from 1977 to 1984, he was responsible for the development of the OECD’s position on the links between environment and economy. From this position, he was appointed as Secretary to the Brundtland Commission.
Prime Minister Mulroney played an equally prominent role in the 1992 Earth Summit itself, leading a large Canadian delegation which included environmentalists as well as private sector representatives. From a political perspective, Mulroney was personally invested in the form, if not the function, of sustainable development, which in Canada was interpreted as the intersection of environment and economy. In 1988 he established the National Round Table on Environment and Economy to prepare Canada’s submission to the 1992 Earth Summit and to be a visible and active advocate of sustainable development and of environmental-economy linkages, networks, and consensus-based approaches’ (Doern, Auld and Stony, 2015, p. 120).

Mulroney also unveiled a three-billion dollar, five-year Green Plan in 1990 which put new financial resources into Environment Canada as well as other departments to achieve specific sustainable development goals (Doern, Auld and Stony, 2015, p. 120). The plan was widely criticized by environmental groups, however, as simplistic and naïve (Macdonald, 1991).

Arguably, the greatest threat to the political position of the environmental movement came in the form of a new discourse embedded in the Green Plan, which blurred the lines between corporate polluter and individual citizen, and between those with the power and responsibility to order changes and those without that power. This signaled the successful neoliberal hegemonization of eco-politics. The document implied that ‘responsibility for environmental protection rested, in the final analysis, not with government but with

74 Prime Minister Stephen Harper eliminated the National Round Table in a 2012 omnibus budget bill, effective March 31, 2013.
individual citizens’ and that environmental problems reflected “the failure of Canadians at all levels of society” (quoting the Green Plan) (Macdonald, 1991, p. 122). The discourse of the strong interventionist state so central to eco-politics up to this point, was replaced by an individualization of the environmental problematic, deflecting public attention from corporations and governments as responsible agents. The accompanying frame, ‘we’re all environmentalists now’ (Macdonald, 1991, p. 115), neutralized the highly divergent interests and culpabilities in the eco-political landscape, destabilized the environmental movement, and for the next decade, significantly depoliticized the ecological problematic.


In this third study period which spans a decade from 1982 to 1992, I examined editorials in three sample years. Quantitatively, the number of editorials varies quite dramatically, from a low of 15 in 1982 (compared to 36 in 1977) to a high of 42 in 1987, and a more average 25 in 1992 (see Figure 8). The 1982 number is extraordinary; similarly low numbers had not occurred since the very beginning of the study: 17 in 1960 and 12 in 1965. As discussed in Section 6.1, despite economic troubles in the early years, and the election of a conservative government, a series of environmental disasters as well as international developments energized eco-political discourse as the decade proceeded. By 1987 the number of editorials nearly matched the peak of 44 in 1972, arguably the apex of environmental concern during the first phase of environmentalism. (This high does not hold, however, as the 1997 number indicates).
This period exhibits both similarities and differences relative to the previous periods. The sparse editorial coverage in 1982 stands out as lacking in focus and intensity, possibly the effect of a preoccupation with the recession and federal-provincial energy squabbles (the National Energy Program). This changes in 1987 and 1992, but in conflicting ways. On certain issues such as acid rain and the South Moresby (now Haida G’waii) park issue in British Columbia, the editorials retain the strong advocacy stance of the previous periods. This is indicated in the frequency of editorials in the categories of acid rain and parks/protected areas, particularly in 1987 (see Figure 9).

Unlike the two previous periods, however, during which editorial frames are relatively consistent, there is a marked change in tone and framing from the beginning of this period to the end. Compared to 1987, several editorials in 1992 reflect a significant ideological shift on the part of the paper. Many of these are in reference to the 1992 Earth Summit, a critical discourse moment which is a significant conjuncture in eco-politics.
Figure 9. Globe and Mail editorial topics during study period three, 1982-1992. Topics are added chronologically from the bottom upward, with the first nine topics occurring in 1982. In 1987, 13 topics are added, and in 1992, another 6.

Figure 10 shows the discourse frames and their frequency in study period 3.
Figure 10. Occurrence and frequency of eco-political discourse frames in Period Three editorials.

6.6.1 Campaigns on acid rain and wilderness protection

Similar to its 1970s treatments of the oil industry and solid waste, *The Globe and Mail* mounts two sustained advocacy campaigns over the first years of this study period. The topic of acid rain receives the most extensive editorial treatment by far (see Figure 6), even without any mention in 1992 (an agreement with the U.S. was concluded in 1990).

The familiar frames of ‘raising the alarm’ and ‘eco-catastrophe’ permeate editorials on this topic. Most acid rain editorials deal directly with the bilateral politics of acid rain. As in previous periods, Globe editorials exhibit at best a defensiveness with respect to the
more powerful U.S., invoking nationalistic frames of sovereignty in issues of pipelines, tankers and overflights of dangerous substances (e.g. The plutonium hazard, July 30/87).

On the acid rain issue, the paper is downright derisive of President Reagan and his administration’s environmental politics:

You can’t discuss solutions to an environmental crisis when one side refuses to admit the crisis exists. And there is a crisis... [I]ndustrial societies have made a staggering contribution to the problem. Canada’s record is not spotless... But Canada has at least been aggressive on the main issues.... Instead, the U.S. wants a few years to think about it – ignoring documents like Still Waters, a 1981 report by a Commons subcommittee which contained enough startling facts to support swift and concerted action.... The distressing signal from the bilateral negotiations is that the Reagan Administration, faced with this and numerous other examples of Canadian irritation, doesn’t really care (The acid rain dance, June 18/82).

The editorial presupposes an aggressive response by interventionist state, justified by evidence presented in an authoritative government-sponsored report. According to this scientific rationality frame, the U.S. government illegitimately ignores such evidence. The paper directly ridicules President Reagan for his unwillingness to accept and act on ‘the science’ which The Globe and Mail finds definitive, the assumption being that ‘the science’ speaks for itself and any intelligent lawmaker would respond accordingly.

Most depressing, Mr. Reagan still does not accept the reality of the acid rain problem. He reverts to elementary grades on the issue.... The President has donned the blinkers he wore before last March’s meeting with Brian Mulroney where, supposedly, Mr. Reagan fully recognized the existence of the problem. Clearly, there will be no progress on acid rain until Mr. Reagan goes to pasture (U.S. budget and you, Jan. 8/87).

Not only does this quote impugn Mr. Reagan’s intelligence, it implies by the reference to ‘going to pasture,’ that this shortcoming may be associated with his
age. The assertion that the President does not have the intellectual capacity to ‘understand’ is only partially veiled in the following quote:

[President Reagan] calls for more research into a problem that has, by the latest reckoning, killed 14,000 Canadian lakes and put 40,000 others at risk. In short, he has broken faith with those who imagined, following his “full endorsement” last March of a bilateral report on acid rain, that he had read and understood the 35-page document....[External Affairs Minister] Mr. Clark is right to express, in diplomatic code, his and Canada’s anger (Acid rain inaction, Jan. 21/87).

The accusations of scientific irrationality extend beyond the President personal incapacity to criticize the blatantly political distortion of ‘the science’ by those within the administration. The context in this case is a report by the U.S. National Acid Precipitation Program which concluded that acid rain is a non-issue:

Only a combination of specious argument and selective elimination of fact could lead to such outrageous conclusions. The document pretended to be an unbiased scientific study when it was, in reality, a political statement rife with what Environment Minister Thomas McMillan has labelled “voodoo science.” The report is a political whitewash of the worst sort, taking the legitimate work of respected scientists and twisting it to support an indefensible position....[T]he NAPP report serves only as a downpour of propaganda that will cause destruction far beyond our lakes and forests (Problem ignored, Sep. 24/87).

In these political games, The Globe and Mail fumes over the superior gamesmanship of the Americans and Canada’s apparent impotence in influencing the play, evident in the following quotes from four different editorials over a three-month period in 1987:
Perhaps the Prime Minister should learn from the Mexicans’ tactics. They didn’t sing When Irish Eyes are Smiling. They didn’t even hire Michael Deaver, the ex-White House aide turned lobbyist [to get a bilateral agreement on acid rain with the U.S.]. Instead, they started up the Nacozari copper smelter...and began to spew 1,300 tons of sulphur dioxide a day northward – much to the dismay of Arizonans. Suddenly the United States discovered what it means to be downwind. Does Canada have to unleash a stinker of its own in order to achieve a Mexican stand-off with its indifferent neighbour (Politics of a smelter, Jan, 10/87).

In a couple of months those old Irish eyes will be smiling again – assuming they aren’t streaming from the effects of acid rain... (The will to clean up, Feb. 3/87).

Senator George Mitchell said there has been a “massive deception” of Canada on the question of acid rain. It is a suspicion that has occurred to many Canadians, accompanied by the embarrassing confirmation that we are pretty naive in dealings with our crafty American cousins – easily smooth-talked into thinking that we are actually getting somewhere (The plot on acid rain, Feb. 13/87).

... [F]rom the United States there has been a reluctance to move and some extremely bitter (not to mention annoyingly stupid) responses to Canadian pleading on the subject...The senator [chair of the Senate environment committee] is a mischievous windbag... (A break in the clouds? Mar. 19/87).

[Mr. Reagan] will be a shrewd Yankee horse-trader if he persuades Mr. Mulroney at Shamrock [Summit] II to reward him for not reneging on what he promised at Shamrock I (Pre-summit signals, Mar. 24/87).

American acid rain politics clearly offends the presupposed ecological/scientific rationality of the paper’s position. With no leverage in Washington, The Globe and Mail

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75 This is a reference to the first so-called Shamrock Summit between Prime Minister Mulroney and President Reagan, during which the two, along with their respective wives, appeared on stage singing ‘When Irish Eyes are Smiling,’ a moment which was touted as a sign of the closeness of the two leaders and thus of the two countries.
simply rails against American politicians, framing them as blinkered, anti-intellectual and cunning. Intermingled with frustration with the Reagan administration’s refusal to play by the rules of scientific rationality and fair dealing, *The Globe and Mail* implores Canadian institutions to ensure their legitimacy at the negotiating table by making sure their hands are clean. Canada needs to ‘do the right thing,’ to ‘go first,’ to ‘lead by example,’ regardless of cost (a sharp contrast with the reactive ‘wait and see’ stance which we find in later years on the climate change issue). The Globe and Mail chastises Ontario Hydro for continuing to burn coal in its power stations without installing expensive scrubbers, especially in the context of proposed electricity exports to the United States:

> If one were to remove from the proposition all concerns over acid rain, the export of electrical energy to the United States by Ontario Hydro would be irresistibly attractive. But it is no easier to filter environmental anxieties out of the argument than it is to filter sulphur dioxide out of the smoke stakes of coal-fired generation stations’ (Acid rain dilemma for Hydro, Apr 29/82).

In short, financial prospects for the utility do not override environmental concerns. The problem remains that

> there are no scrubbers on the Nanticoke units which will produce the power for export. Why doesn’t Ontario Hydro clean up the point, as well as the air, by putting scrubbers on the Nanticoke units?’ (Clearing the air, Feb. 18/82).

This ‘go first’ framing persists in 1987 editorials, with The Globe and Mail agreeing with an all-party committee of the Ontario legislature that Ontario Hydro should not be exempted from acid rain reduction standards imposed on other major polluters:

76 While the same rationalities and accusations could be applied to American political framing of global warming a decade later, *The Globe and Mail* takes a very different stance in that case (see Chapter 7).
Resistance to clean-up programs south of the border has often been based – sometimes falsely – on perceived weaknesses in Canada’s domestic effort. As the matter stands, there is ample justification for attacking the sluggish U.S. response to the problem, but our case will be all that much stronger if we ensure that parity begins at home (No Hydro privilege, May 13/87).

Similar consternation is leveled against those provinces (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) that, after signing the federal-provincial agreement to cut acid rain emissions, are now making greater demands on Ottawa:

While the battle over U.S. reluctance continues, a second front has been opened. To our embarrassment, Canadian [original emphasis] heels are being dug in. Federal Environment Minister Thomas McMillan accuses [New Brunswick premier] Richard Hatfield of “worse than blackmail,”.... Prime Minister Brian Mulroney can hardly feel happy about the backsliding or about the tactics used to squeeze more money out of the federal treasury, as he prepares for another cheery chat with Mr. Reagan... (Acid revisions, Mar. 12/87).

Rather than championing provincial autonomy and the protection of unique provincial circumstances, a discourse we find later in the climate change debate, as in the 1960s The Globe and Mail stands firmly behind the federal mandate and expects the provinces to also act in the national interest, as opposed to opportunistically in their own self-interest.

In summary, The Globe and Mail adopts a scientific rationality discourse on acid rain, presupposing the legitimacy and authority of scientific evidence as the basis on which political decisions should be made. Against the popular economistic concern for increased electricity costs associated with scrubber technology, The Globe and Mail’s economic rationality argues for paying to reduce pollution in order to avoid much greater environmental and financial costs in the long run, as it does in the previous two periods. From the paper’s ethical standpoint, Canada must model the behaviour we expect others
to adopt. This framing - that the utility should ‘do the right thing’ and ‘go first,’
regardless of the competition and regardless of cost, to achieve a greater good, in this
case solving the problem of acid rain - is also consistent with the ecologist discourse
found in earlier periods.

The other issue on which The Globe and Mail editorializes over several months is the
public campaign to establish a national park in South Moresby, an area of the Queen
Charlotte Islands archipelago (now Haida G’waii), off the north coast of British
Columbia, which Ottawa eventually comes to support. In the mid-1980s the Province of
British Columbia issues leases to forestry companies to log the ancient coastal rainforest
on some of the islands. The savvy media campaign by wilderness organizations in that
province leads ultimately to the establishment of a national park reserve named G’waii
Haanas. In its support of this campaign, The Globe and Mail frames the old-growth
wilderness area as a national patrimony of international significance. This frame asserts a
national duty to protect the region in perpetuity; short term economic interest is
secondary to this higher purpose. The Globe and Mail weighs in following Ottawa’s offer
to buy out the logging rights on Lyell Island in the South Moresby archipelago, in order
to protect it:

Still, the province balks. Its forest industry is in crisis. It seems more
willing to feed the island’s wood to the loggers than to preserve a site of
international significance, one of importance to future generations of
Canadians, and, in economic terms, of value to B.C.’s tourist
industry…We hope [federal Environment Minister] Mr. McMillan’s talks
bear fruit, and that the province finally recognizes the true value of the
trees it is threatening to destroy (Lyell Island’s trees, Jan, 14/87).
Besides the patrimony frame, the editorialist invokes an ecological rationality over the economic interests of the extractive logging industry. The value of standing trees goes far beyond that of a harvested commodity and the jobs that supports; furthermore, the provincial government is negligent in not recognizing this. Two months later, the B.C. government announces that it will not issue any new logging permits, although existing permits will not be revoked. This is not sufficient, according to The Globe and Mail.

[The freeze on new permits] raises a glimmer of hope – hope that the government is waking up to what its people, and the people of Canada as a whole, stand to lose if Lyell is devastated. As the logging of Lyell continues, its value as a unique, educational and awe-inspiring stretch of wilderness steadily diminishes….There has been a tendency to let the attraction of accessible, high quality timber on Lyell Island blind the cabinet to the area’s history, its role as home to rare plants and creatures, and some of the oldest trees on earth. We would like to read into Thursday’s decision that Victoria has recognized the folly of leaving future generations to pay the price of a devastated preserve. It would be easier to take that reading if the logging of Lyell Island were stopped cold (The logging of Lyell, Mar. 21/87).

The editorialist is not framing the issue as one of balancing economic and environmental interests, usually understood as dividing up the pie amongst competing interests. Because the patrimonial-ecological value is undermined by the harvesting of economic value, both values cannot be realized; instead, one must be traded-off for the other. The prioritizing of plants and animals dependent on the ancient forest, as well as the forest itself reflects the radical ecologism discourse. Wild nature, as defined by The Globe and Mail, has inherent value, irrespective of its use by humans, even as its protection is justified in human terms (education, awe):

Ottawa speaks in this for Canadians generally, not for “easterners.” It sees a national as well as a provincial interest in preserving a wilderness which very probably escaped the ravages of an ice age that ended 10,000 years ago, has
survived to this day relatively unscathed and should remain the birthright of future generations of Canadians (A park for ransom, June 18/87).

As negotiations continue between Ottawa and Victoria, the editorialist breathes ‘a sigh of relief’ that the two parties have agreed in principle on federal compensation for loggers and spending on tourism (A park’s progress, June 6/87). When Premier VanderZalm stalls for more money, however, the editorialist cries foul. The issue is far greater than mere financial dealings, and the Premier is diminished by opportunistic demands:

It is hard not to see this as a ransom demand for the preservation of South Moresby, and Lyell Island in particular, though Premier VanderZalm would doubtless characterize it as B.C.’s due….It is difficult to weigh the cost of such damage [clearcut logging] against the monetary cost of, for example, 70 lost logging jobs on Lyell Island, because the scales are so different; the damage done now to the islands would remain a legacy for centuries. For Victoria to threaten to compromise South Moresby because Ottawa will not enrich its regional development fund is close to spiteful. It may be in the national interest for Ottawa to pay the ransom to stop the logging. It is in no one’s interest for William VanderZalm to demand that ransom (A park for ransom, June 18/87).

This repudiation of monetizing what The Globe and Mail deems to be intrinsically valuable further reflects the ecologism discourse. When the two parties finally do reach a financial arrangement, as well as an agreement on an unresolved Haida land claim, the editorial title essentially proclaims a ‘dream’ come true. The paper is effusive about what has been saved:

It is an environmental marvel, nurturing varieties of plants and animals that exist nowhere else on earth. Its trees, centuries old, are an integral part of a microcosm of many of the world’s climates and altitudes (Dream of a park, Jul 8/87).
The Globe and Mail’s interest in South Moresby reflects a general support for establishing parks and protected areas, particularly the 1987 recommendation of the Brundtland Commission that countries set aside 12 per cent of their lands and waters in protected areas by the year 2000. In that regard, the paper supports the recommendation of the Task Force on Park Establishment that Canada act much more aggressively to complete the national park system by the 2000 target year. While the Task Force based its arguments on the economic value to Canada of national parks (contribution to GDP), the editorial asserts, ‘Even if national and provincial parks were not money-makers, there would be reason enough to create and preserve them as national treasures’ (Priority for parks, June 3/87). Yet it is skeptical of government commitments to do so:

If Canada is to meet [this target]...it will need to protect the equivalent of 74 South Moresby’s a year for the next eight years. If it takes 10 to 20 years to add each new reserve...their commitment will be more for show than results (Saving endangered spaces, Feb. 18/92).

Such support for protected areas continues into the final study period, but the national patrimony/protection frame becomes more and more dissonant with other environmental frames during that period.

**6.6.2 Internationalization and sustainable development**

As discussed in Section 6.2, environmental politics took a noticeable global turn by the end of this period. Beyond the occasional treatment of other countries (China in ‘When the land fails, Oct. 7/82; ‘The Soviet Union’s dirty secrets, Nov. 10/92), the emergence of a central role for the United Nations in mediating eco-geo-politics is evident in Globe editorials. The release of the Brundtland Commission report, *Our Common Future* in 1987 is a critical discourse moment, in which the concept of sustainable development is
taken up by all actors in the eco-political arena, and framed by each according to their particular vantage point. *The Globe and Mail* takes note of this in two 1987 editorials. The first reports on a speech by Canadian diplomat Maurice Strong, a member of the Brundtland Commission, at Harvard University prior to the report’s release. Strong calls for a new model of international governance that would have the political muscle to tackle transnational environmental problems, among others.

Issues of universal concern…would be dealt with by a new international order, something short of world government. Nation-states would let down their guard and co-operate to address pollution, poverty and war. He [Strong] concedes that his vision is, to put it mildly, ambitious… He recognizes the odds against it but sees no alternative. “The principle basis for optimism that the kind of changes I foresee as necessary will occur is very simply, that they are necessary and therefore must occur.” To make his point, he presents a grim catalog of life as most of the world knows it, the cumulative effect of which is either numbing or galvanizing. Mr. Strong is out to galvanize (*Planet on the edge*, 1987, Apr 18).

The editoralist is convinced, at least, of the validity if not the practicality of Strong’s prescription. Strong’s alarmist-crisis framing of the global situation is taken for granted. No objection is raised to his proposition that national sovereignty needs to accede to a higher level of governance on those global issues that transcend national treatment, nor to the mandate of the Commission.

Mr. Strong has provided a foretaste of the enormous issues the report will tackle. Part warning, part optimism, his speech is an antidote to the complacency that will, unchecked, assist in the deterioration of the planet and the betrayal of our children (*Planet on the edge*, 1987, Apr 18).

Ecologist frames are evident here: the catastrophic ‘raising the alarm,’ ‘intergenerational justice,’ and ‘legitimacy of intervention’, in this case not by the nation-state but by a global institution that could override national sovereignty in matters relating to planetary
integrity and future survival. These are radical themes, certainly in the context of an emerging neoliberal discourse. Shortly thereafter, these frames recur in an editorial responding to the release of the Brundtland report:

On every side there are reminders of the dire shape this planet is in, with miseries ranging from the aggravating to the catastrophic...The message is basic... [I]t will take international cooperation and national restraint to make any real progress (This abused planet, Apr. 27/87).

Here the editorial introduces and endorses the concept of sustainable development, the core message of the Brundtland Commission.

The commission pushes for “sustainable development” and defines it this way. Development is a healthy and inevitable drive, not least for countries still at the starting line, but everyone will lose if development pushes people further into poverty and strips the world of clean air, drinkable water, living creatures of countless species – the list goes on. [Quoting the report] “The commission’s hope for the future is conditional on political action now to begin managing environmental resources to ensure both sustainable human progress and human survival.” (This abused planet, Apr. 27/87).

This editorial asserts the legitimacy of the UN report, the moral duty to fix the problems of poverty and environmental degradation, and the proposition that development must attend to both. Further, The Globe and Mail endorses the Brundtland Commission’s social democratic version of internationalism or cosmopolitanism whereby Western nations whose wealth and power are dependent on a historically unjust taking of the Earth’s resources have a responsibility to redress this imbalance through new relations of power- and wealth-sharing within the United Nations system.

To appreciate the challenge ahead – a polite word for enormous problems – consider the commission’s call to ensure a fair share of resources for the poor....The commission with its focus on sustainable development, makes a pitch to the world’s frequently disunited nations to clean their houses and help clean other’s in their own self-interest. Nobody says it will be easy; just crucial (This abused planet, Apr 27/87).
Clearly, *The Globe and Mail* has not yet embraced the emerging neoliberal discourse of free markets as the answer to underdevelopment, nor the structural adjustment policies imposed on debtor nations by the International Monetary Fund. In a subsequent editorial, the paper is critical of the World Bank’s lending policies that impose the Western development model of industrialization through financing of environmentally-destructive megaprojects which undermine indigenous economies and local communities. The title, ‘The bank is nature,’ asserts the indivisible dependence of human society on Nature, an ecologist frame. It invokes the Brundtland Commission’s discourse of sustainable development, and, as it did in the 1970s, that of the Third World solidarity movement:

> It has become accepted wisdom that the world cannot pursue economic development in the absence of environmental protection. The environment is our wealth; we have no riches separate from it...Gradually the whole world grows poorer as its forests, mineral deposits, rivers, oceans and farms are impoverished. In this area the World Bank has historically been part of the problem, rather than part of the solutions (The bank is nature, July 31/87).

Regarding the World Bank’s announcement of the formation of a new environment department which will conduct environmental impact assessments of projects for which the bank would provide loans, *The Globe and Mail* calls it insufficient and wrong-headed.

> [T]he bank’s initiative does not meet crucial demands for smaller-scale projects with more involvement by local people. And the World Bank has not simply overlooked those demands, it is actively resisting them. Small scale development is increasingly seen as crucial to saving the environment, and to feeding the world’s hungry, who now number in the many millions. Without some attempt to address that reality the World Bank’s reforms will need reforming very soon (The bank is nature, July 31/87).

The assertion that autonomous, community-based, small-scale initiative ‘is increasingly seen as crucial’ invokes the counter-hegemonic voice of the Third World solidarity
movement, and runs counter to that of the institutional-development elites. Indeed, framing the assertion as it does suggests an emerging, new common sense that authoritatively challenges the legitimacy of the status quo.

In summary, from the 1970s to 1987, The Globe and Mail adopts a counter-hegemonic discourse with respect to underdevelopment and environment degradation, and aligns itself with the social democratic internationalism of the Brundtland Commission. This social-ecological justice framing once again is consistent with the radical discourse of ecologism.

6.6.3 Ideological shifts: Neoconservative/liberal frames

Throughout this chapter, I have alluded to discursive shifts and inconsistencies that begin to appear in The Globe and Mail by the end of this period. As discussed in Section 6.3, the counter-hegemonic neoliberal (then referred to as neoconservative) discourse emerges as a political factor in the early 1980s, increasing in influence and legitimacy within policy circles as the decade proceeds. There is little evidence of this in the eco-political discourse of Globe and Mail editorials in the 1982 and 1987 study years.\(^7\)

That The Globe and Mail is not an early adopter of the new ideology is evident in a 1982 editorial that pronounces broadly on the emerging ‘neoconservative’ discourse. The occasion is the annual convention of the federal Progressive Conservative (PC) party,

\(^7\) This is not to suggest that is not a factor in editorial discourse on other topics such as free trade, competitiveness, growth or government deficits. Since this study examines eco-political editorials exclusively, I only speak to the influence of neoliberal discourse on The Globe and Mail’s assessment of the environmental problematic.
then in opposition, to which organizers have invited, according to the editorialist, ‘a tag team of foreign imports with their damn-government one-liners’ (Civilized, reasonable, May 22, 1982), referring to advisors to U.S. President Ronald Reagan. This pejorative language signals the illegitimacy of both the messengers and the message and a defence of the hegemonic paradigm. It asserts that Canada is still distinct politically from other countries, and that the core anti-government message of neoconservatives is a non-starter in this country. The editorial goes on to reproduce much of former PC leader Robert Stanfield’s speech to the convention, in which he warns the party against adopting the ‘neoconservative agenda’ of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservatives in Britain and Ronald Reagan’s Republicans in the United States. The following quote reaffirms, first, that the environment is a legitimate political concern in 1982, and second, that the market does not occupy the rarefied space at the pinnacle of political ambition, for neither the Progressive Conservatives, nor *The Globe and Mail*.

[Stanfield] had a store of Canadian home truths that his party will ignore at their peril. Most important was an attack on the idea that the great god, the market, will cure all the ills of our fevered society. As Mr. Stanfield noted, "The market is not likely to emphasize enhancement of our environment, be this control of pollution, decent urban planning or the protection of a valuable heritage…The motivation of the market is making a buck, and a miner or a manufacturer does not make money improving the environment. He does not make a buck worrying about the socially disadvantaged or tiding over employees in times of unemployment. Any civilized society has concepts of order and ideals that are not the business of the marketplace (Civilized, reasonable, May 22, 1982).

While it goes too far to suggest that Stanfield or *The Globe and Mail* are anti-free market, it is very evident that a discourse on the limits of the market, and the imperative of state stewardship of the public interest to keep the uncivilized impulses of ‘making a buck’ in check, is still hegemonic in Canada in 1982. Stanfield refers directly to those who are
peddling this new discourse as interlopers in the public sphere which until this point has been preoccupied by a higher purpose: working out how society advances civil liberties and human rights. They distort the discourse of freedom with their self-interested preoccupation with the baser ‘freedom to use and accumulate property’ – a central tenet of capitalism. In quoting Stanfield as it does, *The Globe and Mail* clearly shares this perspective – these people and their message are not welcome here.

He [Stanfield] described another, darker side of the new neoconservatism: "The advocates of a free market are not...at the forefront of freedom of discussion or civil liberties or human rights. They often have a sweeping definition of what is subversive. Sometimes their concept of freedom seems to relate more to freedom to use and accumulate property than to personal liberty.” Moderation, balance, pragmatism were what Mr. Stanfield urged on his party.... Such a civilized, reasonable man. He looks better and better (Civilized, reasonable, May 22/82).

For the editorialist, Robert Stanfield embodies a distinctly Canadian ideal: that social welfare, social justice, civil rights, and environmental protection are the hallmarks of a civilized, orderly society. The purpose of government is to undergird such a society by acting as a foil against capitalism (although the word is not used) which is animated by the baser instinct of accumulation. The paper-of-note for business and political elites is at this point invested in a social democratic discourse which, equally significantly, is given voice by a former leader of Canada’s version of conservatism. This suggests that in 1982 the ideological distance between left and right along the Canadian political spectrum is quite short, and *The Globe and Mail* is comfortable locating itself on the leftward end of it.

By the end of this study period - almost exactly 10 years later and in an uncannily similar context – *The Globe and Mail* has abandoned this discourse. In late 1991, the Liberal
Party of Canada gathers in Aylmer, Quebec, for a major policy convention. The party is in opposition and is positioning itself to regain power in a 1993 election. Like the Progressive Conservatives ten years earlier, the invited convention speakers – norm entrepreneurs, according to Swarts (2013) - represent the cutting edge of neoliberal discourse; their task is to provide a new ideological centre for the Liberal Party around which an election platform would be crafted (Chretien, 1992). A February 1992 editorial entitled, ‘Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow,’ referring to Liberal leader Jean Chrétien, discusses this convention. It advocates for an ideological repositioning of the Liberal Party, declaring the era of nationalistic, activist, social democratic politics embodied by previous Liberal governments to be out-dated and moribund. The Globe and Mail has a new vision of future politics and the party of Pearson and Trudeau will not cut it. Praising the Liberals for their recognition of the new political reality, the editorialist observes:

The break-out from the nostalgia trap started last fall in Aylmer, Que., at which a phalanx of intellectuals tried to uproot some of the most entrenched of the Grits’ misconceptions about the world’ (Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow, Feb. 21/92).

Fealty to the social democratic principles touted in 1982 are now the stuff of futile nostalgia. Rather than ‘a tag team of foreign imports with their damn-government one-liners,’ this time we have a ‘phalanx of intellectuals’ providing policy advice to a national party in Canada. To his credit, Mr. Chrétien, a veteran of Trudeau’s ‘just society,’ seems to be coming around.

After that meeting, Mr. Chrétien’s language indicated that he was beginning to grasp the world as it is, not as the Liberal party once hoped it would be. “In the world of tomorrow, the concepts of right and left do not mean anything,” he [Chrétien] said. “Globalization (of the world economy) is not right-wing or left-wing. It is simply a fact of life” (Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow, Feb. 21/92).
While in 1982 *The Globe and Mail* clearly saw neoconservative discourse as ideological (praising Stanfield’s attack on ‘the idea that the great god, the market, will cure all the ills of our fevered society’), now the discourse of the ‘free’ market is depoliticized.

Globalization, achieved through free trade agreements and deregulation, is normalized - a ‘fact’ as opposed to an artefact of a particular ideology, while national economic planning and protectionism are hopelessly misguided.

Canadians found in the 1980s that the country’s economic place in the world had changed in two fundamental respects. Our natural resource industries, faced with falling real prices and rising environmental costs, no longer earn easy money on world markets. And the globalization of the world economy as corporations allocate resources in response to broader market opportunities makes the high cost of protectionism unsustainable. (Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow, Feb. 21/92).

The nation-state is now redundant; corporations are driving the agenda. Governments have no choice but to relinquish sovereignty over heretofore domestic matters to multinational institutions which the Liberals and *The Globe and Mail* invoke as an acceptable and inevitable proxy for national representative government.

The Liberal stated response to the challenge of globalization and to the consequent loss of sovereignty of the nation state is internationalization of government. They correctly see the need for strengthened world mechanisms to deal with environmental or trade matters. Are they prepared to accept changes in supply management, lower tariffs for textiles and stronger patent protection? If the Liberals are to earn victory, they will do so only by honestly dealing with the modern age (Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow, Feb. 21/92).

Canada’s ‘home truths’ of 1982 have given way to ‘world mechanisms,’ all in the name of furthering corporate expansion. The adoption of the corporate sector’s public policy menu – ending supply management, extending patent protection, and eliminating protections for domestic industries - goes without saying, even though they represent a
contradictory set of demands in which free market-small government dictates are comfortable bedfellows with government supports such as patent extensions, tax concessions and subsidies (Harvey, 2007). The ‘modern age,’ according to *The Globe and Mail*, is not a construct of particular actors but a new global stage – the product of seemingly random forces - on which all politics will forthwith be played, including environmental politics.

This is not to suggest that *The Globe and Mail* ceases to be concerned with environmental problems. Editorials dealing with ozone layer depletion (Unfortunately, the future looks bright, Feb. 13/92), smog (Smog gets in your eyes I, II, Mar. 16, 18/92), collapse of the North Atlantic cod populations (Policing the Grand Banks, Feb. 25/92), damming of the Old Man River in Alberta (A desert of green, Jun 10/92), and the World Wildlife Fund’s Endangered Spaces campaign (Saving endangered spaces, Feb. 18/92) all take a strong environmental stance. The more telling editorials in terms of a shift in perspective are those dealing with solid waste, the United Nations’ Earth Summit, and environmentalism more generally.

The influence of neoliberal discourse is unambiguous in two editorials dealing with solid waste, in which the cost of recycling in one case, and a tax on aluminum beverage cans in the other, are problematic. Recall that in the 1970s, the paper was calling for such interventions as banning unnecessary packaging to reduce waste, and even standardizing packaging to blunt the influence of advertising on consumption. In 1992, the paper suggests that Toronto’s recycling program may not be worth the cost, given that it is more expensive per tonne of material than disposing of that material in a dump.
Recycling...has the magical sound of a good idea. But what does it cost? Is it economically sensible? Is there not something wasteful about a blue box program that spends so much to recycle non-dangerous materials? Perhaps, after an informed public debate, people will decide that there isn’t. But first, they ought to be given a clearer idea of what costs are being incurred in recycling, and for what reasons...The requirement now is public information about the true costs of recycling. The requirement then will be public judgement about the real public interest (The economics of recycling, Apr. 18/92).

This new economistic frame stands in sharp contrast to earlier periods when editorials routinely invoked an ethical frame of ‘doing the right thing’ regardless of cost. Now environmental policies should meet the cost-benefit test of public opinion. Tellingly, the editorial does not call for a full-cost accounting, including environmental costs, of producing and then disposing of discarded packaging and used goods in landfills.

A second editorial takes on the government of Ontario’s ten-cent tax on aluminum beverage containers which is intended to encourage consumers to choose refillable containers instead. Initially, the concern is the motive behind the tax: ‘Is this protectionism in environmentalist’s clothing?’ – implying a distortion of the market in favour of glass bottlers. The writer then acknowledges there is an environmental objective in the policy, but questions the mechanism of a tax:

Should a recyclable aluminum can be heavily taxed to encourage people to switch to refillable glass bottles? Moderately taxed? Lightly taxed? Or not taxed, leaving market prices to do their rational work? To put it simply, how does one properly measure environmental cost that the marketplace does not already capture (Cans of beer on the wall, May 30/92)?

Not only should this cost-benefit analysis be applied to solid waste management, ‘The rest of Ontario’s hodgepodge of environmental regulations [for which the paper advocated for decades] also deserve a closer look.’ This marks the beginning of The Globe and Mail’s framing of environmental problems from an economistic perspective:
first, that environmental protection needs to pass the test of economic efficiency, and second, that the market is the most rational allocator of value.

The paper’s neoliberal-economistic framing takes full flight in an editorial which repudiates (its own) nearly three decades of eco-advocacy writing. Its broad-spectrum intent is evident in the title, which is simply, ‘Environmentalism’ (Aug. 10/92). It begins: ‘Most environmental groups are convinced that the environment is so important that standards cannot be set too high and must be met regardless of cost.’ As we have seen, of course, this has been the paper’s stance on many issues during the previous decades. Its former appeals for government spending on pollution-preventing infrastructure, crackdowns on polluters, and wilderness protection are framed in ethical terms as ‘doing the right thing’ and ‘intergenerational justice;’ from a cost perspective, framing includes ‘prevention is cheaper than cure’ and, more philosophically, the incommensurability of monetary value and ecological or heritage value. Such ecologist framing is now cast as irrational and thus illegitimate:

Such belief will gradually come to haunt greenery’s advocates. For nothing – not even cleanliness – comes free; and the costs of environmental policies are likely to rise sharply over the rest of the century. If the green enthusiasm generated in the past four years is to survive in public policy, the enthusiasts must learn the language of priorities, and of costs and benefits. In case after case, that language is being ignored (Environmentalism, Aug. 10/92).

This editorial signals the significant shift in discourse and in eco-politics that has taken place between the release of the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the 1992 Earth Summit. At the same time as environmentalism reaches an apex in global political influence, neoliberal discourse also reaches its stride. Completely absent from The Globe and Mail’s framing of the Brundtland Report in 1987 (This abused planet, Apr. 27/87), it is
now the lens through which environmentalism is viewed: everything is monetized and cost-benefit analysis is the new rationality or discipline to be imposed on all public policy.

[In Germany] it is safe to predict that the costs of collecting 80 per cent of all laminated bacon wrappers and recycling 80 per cent of those...will greatly exceed the environmental good achieved. Such zeal has been enshrined in laws borne upon the wave of popular environmentalism....Once the most egregious pollution has been cleaned up – as it has been, by and large, in the rich countries – the iron law of diminishing returns starts to take hold. Good environmental lawmaking starts by trying to pinpoint what risks really matter. Once governments have decided their environmental priorities, the best way to attain them is usually by looking for ways to harness the force of the market....Broadly speaking, any given level of environmental virtue can be delivered more cheaply by using green taxes, or other measures that harness market endeavour, than by using regulation....Green taxes have another, little-noticed advantage: they force voters to decide how much they really value a cleaner environment (Environmentalism, Aug. 10/92).

In this passage, environmentalists are zealots, in other words, driven by an irrational religiosity, wielding an unjustified influence on environmental policy. Environmental ‘problems’ of previous decades are now considered ‘risks,’ a term with quite different connotations. A discourse of “problems” implies the need for solutions; risks, on the other hand, are weighed against avoidance costs – as well as a calculation of who or what will assume that risk - in a risk/cost-benefit analysis. Monetizing environmental benefits is now the best way of establishing their value; a population’s ‘willingness to pay’ is the ultimate determination of environmental value.

While economistic framing is one thing, the significant benchmark for The Globe and Mail’s ideological-paradigm shift is its editorializing about the 1992 Earth Summit. Two editorials bookend the Summit. In the run-up, the editorial headline poses the question,
‘Will environmentalism come down to earth?’ (June 1/92), in which the paper constructs ‘the Other’ from what had previously been integral to its own editorial identity.

The environmental movement – or religion – has all the momentum that a troop of true believers can sustain. In the developed world, it pervades politics, the media, the churches and the schools. It angrily challenges business and private behaviour. It mixes morality with apocalypticism in the best tradition of travelling tent shows (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

Such framing is stunning in its reversal and its viciousness. As this study demonstrates, the paper itself has angrily challenged business, private behaviour and governments, often threatening apocalypse, all from an ethical or moralistic stance. Now, in a blatant attempt to delegitimize a social movement at its peak in salience and therefore political influence, that movement is not only irrational, driven by a religious fervour, but also engaging in evangelical deception through spectacle.

It is important and trivial, commanding the attention of kings and sheiks and gringos and Indians. And Maurice Strong, a Canadian, will this week chair the biggest international conference/carnival in the history of the world (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

The derision with which the diversity of participation in the Earth Summit is depicted is insulting and racist, implying the importance of some, the triviality of others, and the carnivalesque orchestration by the same Canadian diplomat who the paper lauded five years earlier. It is not as though environmental problems do not exist, however. The editorial acknowledges ‘the appalling degradation of some natural environments’ and ‘justified fears for human health.’ Yet it is quick to establish the distinction between the irrational and the rational voice, the latter being the role it now assumes.

Not surprisingly, the facts that sustain the environmental movement are much more ambiguous than the movement itself. Although a growing consensus exists that extra global warming due to mankind’s production of additional
greenhouse gases is underway, for example, the evidence and even the science are much disputed. Still, many people believe that vigorous action is needed now to reduce greenhouse gases through regulation and taxation of human activity (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

While in the past, The Globe and Mail argued for pre-emptive action on environmental pollution asserting that prevention is cheaper than the cure, now the rationality is reversed: until ‘science’ is indisputable, it implies that government restrictions on greenhouse gas production would be irrational, imposing undue economic harm. The editorial engages its own brand of fear-mongering:

Stacked against the predicted horrors of rising seas and expanding deserts is the spectre of economic recession across the planet as cars, trucks, power plants and factories disappear (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

While it gives a nod to developing countries’ fear that their economic aspirations might be short-circuited by international environmental agreements, the editorial’s proposition for a ‘rational’ approach falls firmly within the Western neoliberal frame, and perhaps more surprising, within the skeptic frame:

The first challenge in responding to environmentalism is the separation of myth from fact. Bad science and bad journalism justify too much bad policy. The more conviction and momentum the environmental movement sustains, the more skepticism is necessary to avoid wasteful mistakes (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

One wonders whether it would count its own environmental advocacy editorializing in the past as bad journalism. That aside, casting the problem as ‘environmentalism’ and not existential environmental threats, serves to divert attention from the message of the Earth Summit to the messenger. The invocation and presumption of ‘bad science’ presages the denial campaign backed by fossil fuel interests that would confound multilateral climate change negotiations for the following two decades (Oreskes and Conway, 2010).
planting of doubt in public discourse regarding scientific legitimacy is the first order of business; this questioning then frames subsequent discourse on legitimate public response.

The second challenge is the design of sensible policies to meet the environmental problems that do exist. Overwrought regulation (some environmental assessment laws and standards impose absurd tests of probity in development) and preference for public over market solutions inflate the costs of solving real problems (Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1/92).

The language is presumptive on several counts: Some environmental problems are simply fictitious; existing regulations represent emotional responses to real or unreal problems, and thus impose irrational burdens; regulation is more expensive than market instruments; and market instruments actually solve environmental problems. These frames are prototypical of neoliberal discourse of market fundamentalism, aligning with the new ‘common sense’ of globalization.

The post-Earth Summit editorial is equally spectacular in its bold defence of inertia. Once again, the editorial title – ‘Better jaw-jaw than spend-spend’ - tells it all. Talk is cheap, and that’s a good thing.

That the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, aka the Earth Summit, did not live up to its billing...is...perhaps, the best news… The organizers...were pushing for an approach that would have involved the North committing itself to the transfer of tens of billions of dollars annually to the governments of the South, ostensibly for environmental purposes, with control over the purse-strings left unclear. This was designed to make the inhabitants of the industrialized world feel good, without necessarily doing anything to better the environmental lot of those living in underdeveloped countries (‘Better jaw-jaw than spend-spend,’ June 16/92).
Framing the transfer of funds from North to South as an ameliorative for Northern guilt, while at the same time implying a manipulative southern agenda, directly contradicts The Globe and Mail’s apparent sympathy for the predicament of the South in the previous editorial. It at once marginalizes those demands and thus those countries and delegitimizes the frame of wealth redistribution at the heart of Brundtland’s sustainable development discourse which it supported in 1987. Arguably worse, The Globe and Mail situates itself ignobly in the climate change skeptic camp, setting the stage for a decade of obfuscat ing and obstructionist editorials (discussed in Chapter 7).

American opposition was instrumental in forcing the industrialized nations to accept a looser treaty on climate change than they had intended, aiming but not promising to hold emissions of carbon dioxide to 1990 levels by the year 2000…. The evidence linking carbon dioxide and global warming is as inconclusive as the evidence of global warming itself. In addition, the Americans justifiably feared that if they signed a binding accord, they might be the only ones who would actually carry out its dictates (‘Better jaw-jaw than spend-spend,’ June 16/92).

Only a few years earlier, The Globe and Mail was America’s greatest environmental critic. Ironically, the paper’s ‘go first’ ethic in the case of acid rain so as to set an example that the U.S. government would find hard to ignore, is replaced by a self-interested ‘you first’ stance, a shift from a cooperative frame to a competitive one. The editorial’s conclusion represents the first appearance of a post-ecologist discourse: at once, an acknowledgement of an ecological imperative, and a justification for inaction.

By focusing attention on the environment, while avoiding writing too much in stone, Rio gave us the best summit outcome we could have hoped for. This is not an ode to inaction. It is rather an appeal for future calls to environmental action that are worth heeding, with proposals that are well thought-out and directed at clear objectives (‘Better jaw-jaw than spend-spend,’ June 16/92).
In other words, not this, not now, but something, sometime later. The unsubstantiated assertions are that current calls for environmental action are not worth heeding, that current proposals are not well thought-out, and not directed at clear objectives, and further, that these will come in the future and we will recognize them when we see them. Perhaps the clear objective of the proposed climate change treaty to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 by the year 2000 is a bit too clear; in that case, *The Globe and Mail* prefers fuzzier, ill-defined aspirations. Such contradictions, which have the effect of justifying the unjustifiable, or as Blühdorn calls it, sustaining the unsustainable, typify post-ecologist discourse. This editorial sets the tone for the final period in this study, the post-Earth Summit years.

6.7 Discussion

I have noted this study period represents a historic conjuncture in environmental politics. In some ways, it can be seen as the logical extension of the previous two study periods. Environmental problems continued to be manifested in various forms, and public support for aggressive government action on these problems grew over the decade, peaking in the late 1980s. This mirrored the growth in scale, capacity and political effectiveness of the environmental movement and fueled the momentum leading up to the 1992 Earth Summit. But the discursive ‘war of position’ was much more complex than in previous periods, and the stakes, ultimately, much higher.

In the conventional pattern of hegemonic struggle, environmental actors continued to pressure state institutions on an expanding set of increasingly complex issues. At the same time, they found themselves confronted by a new counter-hegemonic movement –
neoliberalism - that threatened to undo the eco-political gains over the previous two decades with the undermining of the interventionist state. At the same time, the business sector repositioned itself to reclaim lost ground in the hegemonic field, establishing itself as a protagonist rather than antagonist in the quest for sustainable development. Eventually, the environmental movement is out-manoeuvred and its political momentum, epitomized by the 1992 Earth Summit, is simultaneously undermined by it. At the national level, the Green Plan serves as a Trojan horse, institutionalizing the neoliberal version of environmental discourse. The four discursive strands that develop in this period end here.

The Globe and Mail begins the study period in staunch defence of the post-war consensus, and continues to champion strong action on environmental issues. By the end of the period, the paper has become a neoliberal norm entrepreneur, actively rearticulating eco-politics to the new neoliberal hegemony. What this represents is a shrinking of the hegemonic discursive field on which eco-politics plays out. The broad tent of the post-war consensus legitimized a surprising range of counter-hegemonic elements as environmental problems were politicized. The new hegemony of neoliberalism can only accommodate narrow spectrum of economistic elements, in order to retain the integrity of its ideological nodal point of market fundamentalism. This vastly limits the range of legitimate debate in the public sphere.

The Rio conference of 1992 marked the apogee of the political power of the environmental movement, both in Canada and other countries (Macdonald, 2007, p. 134).

So ends the second wave of environmental concern. Macdonald summarizes the achievements of that period: Several international agreements had been signed addressing transboundary air pollution, the stratospheric ozone layer, desertification, biodiversity loss and climate change, while Canada and the US concluded a bilateral acid rain agreement. At the national level, legally-binding regulations were imposed to control acid rain emissions, ozone-depleting chemicals, and toxic substances from pulp-and-paper mills. Federal and provincial environment enjoyed increased budgets and greater influence within Cabinets (Macdonald, 2007, p. 134).

Not long after the ink dried on the agreements signed at the Earth Summit, however, things started to unravel.

At the time, no one could have predicted that the years ahead, that seemed so full of promise, would in fact see a fundamental reversal of environmental policy…. The size of environment departments was reduced by anywhere from one-third to two-thirds; environmental laws and regulations were amended, reducing the standards of care they imposed upon regulated industries; and governments began to use the policy instrument of voluntary programs, rather than law, to achieve new environmental objectives. All of this added up to a reversal of the movement of environmental policy since the 1960s – in the mid-1990s, Canadian governments began to decrease the level of environmental protection they provided (Macdonald, 2007, pp. 134-35).

It is popular today to attribute the reversal in environmental protection in Canada to the Conservative administration of Stephen Harper (2006-2015). In fact, the weakening of federal environmental regimes in Canada began at the hand of Liberal Prime Minister
Jean Chrétien and his finance minister, Paul Martin. Provincially, leadership in this regard was provided by the Progressive Conservative premiers of Ontario (Mike Harris) and Alberta (Ralph Klein), with all other provinces (and party affiliations) following their lead to a greater or lesser extent. Paehlke identifies three contributing factors to this remarkable development: the impacts of economic globalization, a return to provincialist views regarding jurisdiction, and a counter-wave of public ambivalence in the face of a new economic recession beginning in 1993 (Paehlke 2000). I would add to that a new preoccupation with budget deficits, a key element of neoliberal discourse. At the confluence of these forces, governments made massive budget cuts to environmental protection agencies and programs in the 1990s, undermining their capacity to fulfill their stated mandates.

We can associate these trends with the emerging discourses of the 1980s (see Sections 6.2-6.5). In that decade the rise in environmental concern and thus the legitimacy of environmental demands was answered by several new discursive formations each of which sought to hegemonize environmental discourse. The immediate post-Rio period, revealed the outcome of that hegemonic struggle: a neoliberal-corporate hegemony succeeded in colonizing, and by extension, de-legitimizing the counter-hegemonic discourses that had produced the eco-political outcomes summarized above. In the following sections, I outline the major contours of the eco-political field in this final study period.
7.1 NAFTA and economic globalization

In broad terms, the explanation for many recent Canadian environmental cutbacks lies within the economic vulnerability of a medium-sized trading-oriented economy in a rapidly globalizing world. Recent changes in the structure of North American and global production and trade have accelerated the mobility of capital and production to the point that it is difficult for any nation to be too far out of line in terms of any economic or policy variable that significantly affects production costs. Such variables would include wages, labor standards, interest rates, taxation levels, social policies, and the stringency of environmental protection (Paehlke, 2000, p. 165).

In the early 1990s, talks began to expand the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement to include Mexico. Opposed by the Liberal opposition (as well as environmental movements in the three countries), nevertheless once in elected in 1993, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s Liberal government ratified the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Its investor protection provisions contained in Chapter 11 of the agreement provided a template for OECD-led negotiations on a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which would have provided blanket protection in OECD countries for transnational capital against national regulations deemed to impede profit potential.78 The MAI was

78 Canada has been the subject of more investor-suits under NAFTA than either the United States or Mexico. Investor suits under Chapter 11 are heard by a closed three-person tribunal with one member appointed by each of the parties, not a court of law. Most of those suits are related to natural resource sectors or environmental protection regulations enacted by the federal and provincial governments. As of April 2016, of the nine active claims by US firms against Canada, six deal with environmental, renewable energy, or oil and gas policy. The monetary claims in these cases total $1.38 billion. Of the 13 claims by US firms that were settled between 1995 and 2016, five were related to natural resource or environmental policy in which claims were awarded against Canada: $157.3 million was paid out in Canadian dollars, while $413.6 million plus interest was paid out in US dollars. Nearly $1 million was paid out to claimants in costs (Government of Canada: Global Affairs Canada website).
abandoned in the face of sustained opposition by global civil society, the first successful transnational campaign against the globalization agenda.\textsuperscript{79}

The anti-globalization movement – a broad coalition of environmental, social justice, labour, indigenous and global south activists, emerged from this victory. Focusing its attention on the WTO and culminating in the 2009 “Battle of Seattle” which shut down WTO negotiations, the counter-hegemonic discourse that held the coalition together framed economic globalization as a ‘race to the bottom.’ According to the movement, job security, social programs, fair wages, health and safety provisions, and environmental protection are all sacrificed on the altar of global competition for corporate profits (Barlow and Clarke, 1996). While the scope and scale of WTO negotiations were curtailed as a result of the anti-globalization movement, the investor-protection agenda continued to be pursued through subsequent bilateral and regional free trade agreements negotiated between and among groups of nations. Because of the economic dominance of trade with the US in the Canadian economy, NAFTA entrenched the neoliberal discourse of international competition (including reductions in public spending and taxes) as the reference point for all public policy debates in Canada (Swarts, 2013). Thus NAFTA materially changed the context for Canadian eco-politics after 1993.

\textsuperscript{79} This was also the first campaign to use the Internet to organize globally. Canadians figured prominently in this battle. Former Liberal cabinet minister and president of the Liberal Party of Canada, Donald J. Johnson was the Secretary-General of the OECD when the MAI was being negotiated (1996-1998) (OECD, 2017). Maude Barlow, Council of Canadians, and Tony Clarke, Polaris Institute, were high profile leaders of the anti-MAI campaign, and subsequently anti-globalization movement (MacDowell 2012, p. 261; Barlow and Clarke, 1996).

Responding to the unprecedented level of public environmental concern, the Liberals entered the 1993 election campaign with an equally unprecedented environmental platform, the handiwork of then-environment critic Paul Martin. The Liberal Red Book, as the platform document was called, promised a raft of pollution taxes, deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, a number of new environmental regulations in the name of increasing the competitiveness of Canadian businesses, the creation of more national parks, and endangered species legislation (Marshall, 2004). Yet, as Finance Minister in the new Liberal government, Martin inflicted severe damage on environmental regimes in Canada. Embodying the discourse of the 1991 Aylmer Conference, his 1995 budget imposed government-wide austerity programs including dramatic budget cuts to environmental protection programs and capacity in several departments.

In the neoliberal discourse of the 1980s, international competitiveness became the Holy Grail in the new globalized economy, and public debt was framed as an existential threat to achieving that goal (Paehlke, 2000). Taxation, reframed as “taxpayer dollars,” to pay for public services, and government, reframed as bloated, inefficient and wasteful of public funds, were delegitimized. Likewise, regulation and corporate taxes were reframed as excessive, impeding private investment and thus economic growth. Thus a policy regime of eliminating budget deficits, cutting taxes, reducing “red tape” and liberalizing trade became the *sine qua non* of responsible government. This mandate was taken on by Martin with the fervour of a true believer. In his 1995 budget speech, he promised to slay the federal budget deficit “come hell or high water” (Stanford, 2004, p. 31). Four
successive budgets (1995-1999) imposed structural changes that rolled back federal-institutional capacity to levels not seen since 1949-50, before the system of social welfare programs that defined post-war Canada were in place. This was followed by tax cuts that reduced revenues, and debt repayments that soaked up budget surpluses (2000 budget), thereby restricting the possibility of reinvesting in slashed programs or transfer payments (Yalnizyan, 2004).

Budget cuts on the order of one-third to two-thirds reduced the institutional capacity of environment and resource departments throughout Canada to such an extent they had no choice but to withdraw from key areas. This amounted to a de facto deregulation of the private sector with respect to environmental affairs. The greatest impact was on enforcement of existing laws, monitoring of environmental conditions and new regulatory initiatives (Macdonald, 2007, p. 38). By 1998, only 70 environmental enforcement officers were employed by Environment Canada across the country, and the Environment Commissioner, a position in the Auditor-General’s office created by the Liberal government, reported that lack of funding was leading to “a band-aid approach” to the department’s environmental protection mandate (Marshall, 2004, p. 108).

Instead of new regulatory initiatives, voluntary compliance and reporting programs were negotiated with regulated sectors. For instance, the Voluntary Challenge and Registry (VCR), which simply encouraged companies to register their voluntary greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, was the centerpiece of Canada’s 1995 National Action Program on Climate Change, its submission to the first Conference of the Parties to the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change. While the business sector lost its battle
against Canada’s ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (this occurred in 2002), which required regulated emissions reduction targets, it did not lose the climate change policy war. From 2003 to 2005, the minority government of then-Prime Minister Paul Martin engaged in private negotiations with three major industrial sectors on a Kyoto implementation plan. The outcome: a one-third reduction in the share of national greenhouse gas emissions cuts that had originally been assigned to so-called large emitters (mostly energy corporations), shifting more of the burden for emission reductions onto other sectors. Moreover, the effect of the consultation process was to delay the adoption of a Kyoto implementation plan for two years, just before the minority Martin government was toppled by a Conservative-New Democratic Party non-confidence vote in Parliament (November 2005). Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (and ultimately Canada’s ratification of it) died at the hand of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper (Macdonald, 2007, pp. 165-69).

In addition to voluntary programs, regulatory “rationalization” targeted duplication between federal and provincial jurisdictions; for example, the 1998 Canada-wide Accord on Harmonization reduced federal involvement in provincial environmental impact assessments. This was opposed by environmental groups on the grounds that it represented a downloading of federal responsibility for environmental protection onto provincial jurisdictions that had fewer resources and/or lesser inclination to adequately protect the environment. Paehlke notes the paradox of decentralizing environmental administration in Canada even further (the constitutional division between federal and provincial powers already makes Canada one of the most decentralized nation-states) at the same time as the economy was globalizing. From an environmental perspective, this
maximized the power of multinational corporations relative to the smaller jurisdictions, especially natural resource companies (Paehlke, 2000, p. 172).

The devolution of federal engagement, and by extension environmental protection, was not explicitly articulated as a political agenda; nevertheless, it was the inevitable outcome of the widespread adoption by governments of the austerity-deregulation-competitiveness framing of public policy discourse. Rather than assuming an environmental leadership role as promised, both Chrétien and Martin were against 'mandating firm shorter-term policy goals, and using all possible federal levers’ to attain these goals. Instead, they viewed the federal role as environmental policy facilitator...putting in place conditions for others - the provinces, industry, civil society groups, and citizens - to take action gradually (VanNijnatten and Boardman, 2009b, p. xviii).

Macdonald examines the role of the corporate sector in this development. While he finds no public evidence of business lobbying specifically for a weakening of environmental law and policy regimes, the Business Council on National Issues,\textsuperscript{80} representing Canada’s largest corporations, was a pivotal actor in Canada in the articulation of the emerging neoliberal discourse (Macdonald, 2007, p. 137; Swarts, 2013).\textsuperscript{81} Of the role played by the BCNI leading up to this period, Barlow and Clarke write:

\textsuperscript{80} The BCNI subsequently changed its name to the Canadian Council of Chief Executives (2001), and more recently to the Business Council of Canada (2016). John Manley, former minister of Industry, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Deputy Prime Minister under Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, became President and CEA of the BCC in 2010.

\textsuperscript{81} The BCNI followed the lead of the Business Round Table in the United States, in lobbying for, and ultimately succeeding in changing macroeconomic policy across Western nation-states and dictating conditions for financial support of developing nations (Harvey, 2007).
Over the past fifteen years, the B.C.N.I. has been instrumental in establishing a dramatic shift in the macroeconomic framework for policy-making in Canada. Its relentless campaign to privatize and deregulate government enterprise became the norm. The B.C.N.I. wrote its own pro-competition legislation, fought government plans for an industrial strategy and extensive job creation program, and engineered tax changes that favored corporations and the wealthy, all policies eventually adopted by government. It forced consecutive governments to lower corporate tax levels or face capital flight. Whereas in the sixties Canadian citizens and business contributed 50-50 to tax revenues, today Canadian citizens account for 92 percent of all tax revenues, while business contributes only 8 percent. The Canadian government subsequently fell further and further into debt, as have governments all over the world. And corporate Canada has used this fact as a form of political terrorism to force government to slash public infrastructure across the board. The B.C.N.I. played a pivotal role in making deficit slashing the number-one priority in government policy-making, constantly (and falsely) blaming social programs for the debt, and it successfully paved the way for the dismantling of our universal social programs, including unemployment insurance, social assistance, health care and pensions (Barlow and Clarke, 1996).


While the rollback of environmental protection in Canada was first associated with the austerity budgets and regulatory inertia of the federal Liberal regime, the Conservative regime of Stephen Harper is notable for its direct and systematic dismantling of the legal basis of the federal environmental protection regime that had been constructed during the 1970s and 1980s. Harper’s hostility to the climate change agenda was already well-established during his time in Opposition. Through incremental changes during his minority government years (2006-2011) and then wholesale regulatory rollback (2011-2015) once he achieved a majority government, by the time of his defeat in October 2015
Harper had essentially bulldozed what was left of the federal environmental protection landscape, notably without significant public outcry.

From the outset, he prioritized ‘responsible resource development,’ retrenching an extractive staples economy in his power base in Western Canada and resolved to remove whatever barriers might stand in the way of maximizing resource extraction, especially oil and gas (MacNeil, 2014, pp. 91-92; VanNijnatten, 2016b, p. xiii). Regulatory rollbacks included removing legal obligations to protect water, fish habitat and species-at-risk, restricting public participation requirements and environmental impacts content of project approval processes, and de-funding scientific research and muzzling communications that could undermine the legitimacy of resource development projects (Winfield, 2016, p. 86). Further, he ‘altered both the possibilities and the pathways for dissent across the political system’ by centralizing power in the Prime Minister’s Office, silencing civil servants, especially scientists, hamstringing Parliament, and demonizing and directly undermining environmental organizations by interfering with their financial operations (VanNijnatten, 2009, p. xiv).

Harper accomplished much of this agenda through two omnibus bills passed in 2012. Bill C-38, according to MacNeil ‘the largest environmental bill in Canadian history,’ made sweeping, regressive changes to the Species at Risk Act, Fisheries Act, Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the National Energy Board Act, among others, and eliminated the National Round Table on Environment and Economy, a federal advisory body established in 1988. It also repealed the Kyoto Implementation Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, replacing the latter with a severely truncated version (MacNeil, 2014, p.
In addition, the already-decimated budgets of Environment Canada, Parks Canada and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency were cut by over 30 per cent, and related jobs by nearly 20 per cent by 2015 (Winfield, 2016, pp. 86-88). The second, Bill C-45, amended 64 separate acts or regulations (VanNijnatten, 2016b, p. xv). This was the environmental legacy left by the Harper government when it is defeated in October 2015.

7.4 Internationalization of eco-politics

The internationalization of Canadian eco-politics established in the 1980s became fully entrenched in this final period. The international obligations established in 1992 at the Earth Summit - the general commitment to sustainable development (variously interpreted), as well as the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) which was signed by all participating nation-states - have served as a reference and a pressure point for eco-geo-politics ever since.82 Globally, this long period was punctuated by two decadal follow-up eco-summits to the 1992 Earth Summit, 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, and 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Each of these events took as their reference point the commitment made by nation-states at the Earth Summit to the broad, albeit contested, goal of sustainable development as articulated by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. To underscore the urgency of achieving sustainable development globally, the

82 Two other conventions were also signed at the Earth Summit – on biodiversity protection and desertification. These have received far less public attention than the UNFCC and so have had little impact on eco-politics globally. That said, the biodiversity convention has been the site of extensive and extended conflicts between states representing transnational corporations and those representing indigenous peoples and artisanal farmers over issues such as gene prospecting, seed protection and access rights, and patent protection for genetically modified organisms. While these have significant environmental, political, social and economic implications, the competing discourses are largely absent from the public sphere in Canada. Stephen Harper also withdrew Canada from the convention to prevent desertification.
science community, especially in the lead-up to the 2012 conference, released studies on the general failure of the world community to stem the tide of ecological decline and demands new commitments by nation-states within the international community (Barnosky et al, 2012; Steffen et al, 2011; Biermann et al, 2012). Despite this, the follow-up summits became explicit discursive battlegrounds over meaning, mirroring the widely divergent interests existing within individual nation-states, within and between geographic regions and between the corporate sector and a globalized yet diverse civil society.

The hegemonization of neoliberal-corporate discourse during this period achieved the corporate goal of increased political influence and legitimacy in environmental politics. As a result, the private sector assumed a more prominent status in these international summits, advancing the discourse of ‘sustainable growth’ (downplaying the more ambiguous notion of development), and corporate voluntarism (as opposed to regulation). Population emerged as a significant schism in 2002, pitting religious conservative jurisdictions and groups against liberals. Wealthy nations split over the legitimacy of the demands by the Global South for significant financial transfers from the North in order to meet sustainable development goals. These conflicts raised the ultimate question of the legitimacy of UN-sponsored environmental multilateralism. Final consensus declarations negotiated by official delegates reflected these contradictory stances, thereby rendering them virtually meaningless (Najam et al, 2002; O’Neill, 2007; Blühdorn, 2011; Death, 2011; Biermann, 2013; van Alstine, Afionis, Doran, 2013). By 2012, the geo-political and ideological distance from the discourse of limits (ecologism) which provided the context for the 1972 Stockholm conference, and the 1980s social democratic discourse of
redistribution of the Brundtland Commission, was simply too great to maintain any semblance of coherence. Instead of binding treaties as in 1992, the Rio+20 conference statement was criticized for its ambiguity and lack of ambition. This suited Canadian environment minister Peter Kent just fine, according to a Canadian Press story:

"It does not have unrealistic, inappropriate binding commitments," he told reporters in a conference call a few hours before the conference was set to end..."It does point us, in my view, in a forward direction, but it doesn't have instant confections" that would duplicate existing processes, or commit countries inadvertently to harmful policies. "Canada's satisfaction with this document is as much as with what's not in it," Kent said, adding he was "very happy, very satisfied" with the outcome (The Canadian Press, 2012).

Over this period, climate change politics came to dominate the global eco-political agenda, and to a great extent, domestic eco-politics, superseding all other environmental issues. Serious global eco-politics was (and continues to be) performed at the annual negotiating sessions or Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC). The first implementation agreement, the Kyoto Protocol, was signed in 1997, came into effect in 2005, and expired in 2012. The successor protocol to Kyoto became the subject of COP negotiations beginning in 2005; these were not concluded until the 2015 COP where the voluntary Paris Agreement was signed by the world’s nations, subsequently coming into effect in November 2016.

Indirectly, the 2005 COP represented a conjuncture in Canadian eco-politics. Held in Montreal, it was chaired by Paul Martin’s Environment Minister Stephane Dion, who had recently tabled Canada’s long-awaited Kyoto implementation plan in Parliament. The drama around this COP was intense, with U.S. delegates attempting to prevent a consensus agreement to proceed with negotiations for a successor to the Kyoto Protocol.
Dion was widely praised for successfully negotiating that consensus and marginalizing the US position. Yet Dion himself did not survive the event as Environment Minister. Just as the COP was getting underway, with thousands of people including national delegations from around the world gathered in Montreal, then-opposition leader Stephen Harper and then-NDP leader Jack Layton joined forces in a motion of confidence to bring down the minority Martin government. This triggered a federal election which Stephen Harper won. While Dion continued to chair the COP to its conclusion, this marked the end of Canada’s positive engagement in the COP process until after Harper’s defeat in 2015. Jack Layton’s role in this was of great concern for environmentalists. Despite his strong position on climate change, he seemed unconcerned about the timing of the Martin take-down – in the midst of a high-stakes climate change negotiation hosted by Canada - nor about collaborating with Harper, a declared opponent of the Kyoto Protocol and Canada’s ratification of it. It was clear, should Harper form a government that the Kyoto implementation plan would fall by the wayside. Playing ball with Harper to defeat the Liberals was seen by many in the climate change movement as a betrayal by Layton. Citing the need for a trustworthy and uncompromising political voice on climate, the incident prompted Elizabeth May, then-executive director of the Sierra Club of Canada, to leave her position to become the leader of the Green Party of Canada which until that point had not particularly distinguished itself from the NDP on the environmental front (May, 2009).83

83 Ms. May was elected to Parliament in 2011 and 2015, representing the British Columbia riding of Saanich-Gulf Islands, the first Green parliamentarian to be elected in Canada.
One of the significant shifts Paehlke identifies during this period was the transition in environmental leadership from North America to Europe. Canada and the US both lagged in climate policy relative to the European Union; their national governments had been stunningly ineffective while Europe's have made commitments, set goals, and either acted to achieve reductions or at least have avoided the sharp increases in greenhouse gas emissions that have been the norm in Canada and the United States’ (Paehlke, 2009, p. 11).

While Canada had played a key role in the establishment of and support for multilateral environmental protection regimes from the 1972 Stockholm Conference to the 1992 Earth Summit, after 2002 multilateralism gave way to self-interested protectionism. This was especially true under the Harper regime. Harper repudiated the Kyoto principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities,’ which meant that the rich nations would ‘go first’ in cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, Harper asserted that Canada would move on climate change only when there was a commitment from "all major emitters" to reduce emissions… [consistent with] a broader "interest-based" approach to engagement in international environmental discussions, one that adopts a nuanced, non-interventionist, and narrow perspective on global environmental co-operation in order to safeguard Canada's economic interests (VanNijnatten, 2016b, p. xvi).

7.5 Ambivalence

As discussed in Section 7.3, the Harper government proactively engaged broad-scale environmental deregulation to fundamentally change Canadian environmental protection

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84 The Chrétien administration supported the United Nations climate change convention; nevertheless, it took five years to ratify the Kyoto Protocol in the face of strident opposition from oil-producing provinces and the corporate sector. It never succeeded in setting legal targets and timetables for greenhouse gas reduction targets.
regimes. Further, it was overtly hostile towards the environmental movement, a stance no prime minister had taken in fifty years of environmental politics. How was that possible without risking significant political blowback?

While much of the damage done by Harper can be attributed to his personal animosity towards environmentalism and his total investment in extractive industries as the engine of economic growth, two other factors made this dismantling politically possible. First, the now-hegemonic neoliberal discourse of balanced budgets propelled massive budget cuts to environment and natural resource departments, federally and provincially, first attempted by Mulroney in the 1980s but becoming successful during the Chrétien-Martin years. By the time Harper formed his first government in 2006, the environmental protection regime in Canada was a shadow of its former self, with little material capacity to fulfill existing mandates or exercise influence within government. Second, neoliberal hegemony had the effect of fundamentally changing the political norms governing the relationship between the state and economic and social actors. By the 1990s, the interventionist state had been delegitimized, creating a power imbalance between regulator and the regulated, and eroding the public constituency for strong state action in environmental affairs (Swarts, 2013; Winfield, 2016). The disappearance of a public constituency, in turn, undermined the political currency of the environmental movement which had been pivotal in the elevation of eco-political salience domestically and globally from the 1960s to the early 1990s. Paehlke points to the counter wave or trough brought on by an economic recession and the newly-constructed concern for public debt.

Canada seemed to move ahead environmentally in the late 1980s but by 1992 or 1993 what had been newly established was suddenly again vulnerable. There were few direct assaults on environmental protection, but the sense of
priority and momentum had been lost. Those inclined to budget-cutting were able to prevail within environmental as well as other realms, with the regretful blessing of an electorate willing to look the other way (Paehlke, 2000, p. 171).

While public opinion polls on environmental concern fluctuated throughout this final period, there was always a mismatch between ‘environmental concern’ and ‘willingness to sacrifice;’ in every case, economic concerns were prioritized by the public. Paehlke further observes:

> Within a few years, momentum had disappeared altogether. Even when prosperity returned by the late 1990s, environmental opinion and effective governmental environmental action were slow to rebound, in part because the world, in the meantime, had changed (Paehlke, 2009, p. 8).

These changes were rooted in the hegemonization of neoliberalism and economic globalization which destabilized, on the one hand, economic security for individuals, and on the other, the post-war social-political norms that had provided social safety nets against such insecurity (Swarts, 2013). In the face of material uncertainty, people became unwilling to support measures that were perceived to further threaten their material position.

> In this context the public's concern for environmental protection finds its way to the back burner, and in such a context corporate managers can even believe that resistance to environmental regulations is a public service (Paehlke, 2000, p. 170).

This shift in norms did not preclude a resurgence in environmentalism, but occasional rebounds could not be sustained. By 2002, advances in climate change science sparked what Paehlke labels the ‘third wave’ of environmental concern.’ This was focused exclusively on climate change and gave momentum to the pro-Kyoto Protocol-ratification
stance of Prime Minister Chrétien (Paehlke, 2009, p. 9). Once ratified (in 2002), however, public and media attention drifted once again as negotiations over an implementation plan moved to political back rooms. Public concern was revived after the 2006 election of Stephen Harper’s first minority government, a reaction against his vocal opposition to Kyoto. Taken aback, Harper promptly changed his discourse, promising significant regulatory action to reduce greenhouse gases in a bid to quell social antagonism. This rhetorical strategy was a sufficient ameliorative, despite the fact that, other than mandating U.S. vehicle fuel efficiency standards in order maintain access of Canadian automakers to the American market, the regulations never materialized and his government was not held to account (Winfield, 2016, p. 86).

This third wave of environmental concern, intermittent and limited as it was in Canada, collapsed in 2008 in the face of the global financial crisis. As a critical discourse moment, the economic crisis exacerbated social antagonisms and in theory could have seriously disrupted hegemonic power relations. Instead, rallying behind the discourse of “too big to fail,” those relations were buttressed and re-entrenched. While election campaigns are complex and voter behaviour often inscrutable, the demise of the third green wave may be at least symbolically represented in the 2008 electoral failure of the Liberal’s ‘Green Shift’ platform, which declared global warming to be a priority issue and proposed a carbon tax, among other measures, to drive the shift to a green economy (Winfield, 2016, p. 86). Whatever the mix of factors that resulted in a second minority government for Harper, the election delivered a clear message that he could safely ignore the green agenda and its constituency; his 2011 majority win consolidated that message. It is unclear to what extent Harper’s anti-environmental agenda contributed to his
electoral defeat four years later (2015); in any case, the Conservative Party remains the Official Opposition in Parliament and enjoys the base support of at least 30 per cent of the Canadian electorate.85

This two-decade-long collapse of public environmental concern and the attendant marginalization of counter-hegemonic eco-politics is characterized by VanNijnatten as a state of ‘deeply rooted ambivalence.’ By this she means

a state of having both positive and negative attraction towards someone or something, situations where "mixed feelings" of a more general sort are experienced, or where a person experiences uncertainty or indecisiveness (VanNijnatten, 2016b, p. xvii).

She notes several indicators of this collective state of mind.

- The public supports environmental protection but will not choose it over economic growth policies;
- There are few incentives in the political system to reward parties that take strong environmental stands;
- Environmental groups struggle to design campaigns when their product is clearly not of interest to any policy communities;
- Federal and provincial governments fail to balance environmental policies of conservation against the incommensurable staples economic policies that underlie large but fragile resource sectors;

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85 Less than a week following the election of climate change denier Donald Trump in the United States, a Conservative Party leadership candidate’s statement that he is also skeptical about climate change was cheered by the audience at an all-candidate town hall meeting in small-town Ontario (Raj, Nov. 14, 2016).
Federal and provincial governments proclaim support for greenhouse gas emissions reductions but fail to ‘seriously grapple with the trade-offs’ that must be made in order to achieve them, especially in oil and gas producing regions.

VanNijnatten concludes,

So deeply entrenched is this ambivalence in our environmental policy regime that even the most well-intended government (e.g. the Trudeau Liberals) will face immense difficulties trying to overcome this tendency' (VanNijnatten, 2016, p. xvii).

The assumption that the Trudeau government may have different intentions vis-à-vis the environmental agenda does not address the more fundamental question raised by Blühdorn of the existence of a ‘politics of unsustainability’ that transcends specific late-capitalist governments. The test will be whether or to what extent the Trudeau government (elected in October 2015) restores the federal environmental protection regime that has been dismantled. The Liberal platform contained strong statements in this regard, as well as a commitment to re-engage with international climate change initiatives and establish Canada as a climate leader (Liberal Party of Canada, 2015). At the time of writing, hundreds of environmental scientists had been rehired, and Canada had rejoined, at least symbolically, the international effort on climate change with its ratification of the 2015 Paris agreement (October 5, 2016), but restoration of the environmental regulatory framework that was decimated in 2012 had not yet begun.

Notwithstanding the reversal of policies that were motivated by Harper’s personal animosities and biases – Trudeau’s promise of “sunny ways” was a welcome relief for most Canadians – there is reason to suspect that his government is also practicing the politics of unsustainability, attempting to maintain hegemonic legitimacy while
‘sustaining the unsustainable.’ Significantly, the Liberal government’s first climate change action plan retained the Harper government’s greenhouse gas reduction targets, even though analysts have declared those targets insufficient (McCarthy, July 25, 2016). Writing immediately following the October 2015 election, VanNijnatten observes,

[I]t is not entirely clear how the Trudeau Liberals will balance their environmental policy efforts with their energy policy; in pre-election media statements, Trudeau declared support for pipelines (rather than trains) in getting oil to market…’ (VanNijnatten, 2016b, p. xxi).

A year following the election, the Trudeau government remained committed to expanding pipeline capacity out of northern Alberta to facilitate ongoing expansion of mining operations in the Athabasca tar sands (Windgrove, Sept. 13, 2016), a strategy seen as incommensurable with its climate change commitments (Hughes, 2016).

Suffice to say at this point that Liberal and Conservative administrations since 1993 differed in their eco-political discourse only in tone and degree, not in direction. All have operated within a neoliberal hegemony resulting in a dramatically diminished environmental protection regime that now does not have the capacity to mount a credible response to the converging climate and ecological crises. Perhaps more significantly, the systemic cultural ambivalence generated by this discourse, both politically and culturally, poses a significant barrier to a counter-hegemonic campaign to delegitimize the hegemonic eco-politics: a deeply ambiguous public cannot be counted on to provide sustained support and political cover for bold climate action. Such unwillingness to grapple with the trade-offs inherent in meeting carbon emissions reductions – and the ambivalence this represents - is consistent with Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism. In
the following section, I discuss the extent to which *The Globe and Mail* participates in this paradigmatic discursive shift in the final study period.

### 7.6 The Globe and Mail editorials: 1997-2016

Examining the frequency of editorials in this final study period establishes a useful starting point for the analysis of editorials (see Figure 11). Since this period spans nearly two decades, we find the greatest total number of editorials (146) over six sample years. Consequently, there are some interesting variations in coverage within this time frame, as well as compared with other periods.

![Period 4 Editorials 1992 - 2016](image)

**Figure 11. Frequency of editorials in Period 4 (1997-2016) compared to shoulder year 1992.**

At 38 editorials, the year 2007 represents the third highest frequency in the entire study, following 1972 (44 editorials) and 1987 (42 editorials), years which represent the peaks in phases one and two of environmental politics. This high level of attention may be surprising given the serious reversal in the status of environmental politics during this period. On the other hand, given that the average number of editorials across the entire
study (not including 2012) is just under 28 per year, the poor showing in 2012 of seven editorials is equally surprising. It is as if the environment dropped completely off the paper’s radar as a legitimate editorial topic. It is notable that this is the year in which Stephen Harper, enjoying his first majority mandate, essentially dismantled a nearly four-decade long legacy of environmental legislation through two omnibus bills.

Topic-wise, we see some equally interesting developments. Unlike the other three study periods in which *Globe and Mail* editorials addressed a wide range of environmental issues, the eco-political discourse in this final study period narrows significantly to an overarching preoccupation: global warming or climate change (used here interchangeably) and the energy politics associated with it (represented by the bottom four topics in Figure 12. The topic “federal eco-politics” includes editorials on partisan competition on climate action strategies as well as the Harper government’s attacks on environmental organizations engaged in campaigns to oppose tar sands expansion and pipelines. Editorials in the “oil & gas/pipelines” category do not mention global warming but are integral to global warming politics. The topic, “global warming/energy” refers to editorials in which both topics are raised, either in relation to one another or as separate topics in an envelope of policy priorities.

By far the most frequent topic, “global warming/climate change,” includes editorials on UN climate politics as well as those that make no mention of the associated energy issues. Together, these topics total 97 editorials out of a total of 146. Other one-off topics that could be indirectly associated with global warming and/or energy include the “Leap
Manifesto,” “First Nations conflicts,” “sustainability/limits,” and “environment vs. economy.”

![Graph showing editorial topics in Period Four]

**Figure 12. Editorial topics in Period 4.**

Frames in this period are quite different than previous periods. For instance, frames relating to market fundamentalism and post-ecologism only appear in this period, while ethical and public interest frames virtually disappear. Figure 13 provides a summary of frames in this period.
Figure 13. Occurrence and frequency of eco-political discourse frames in Period Four editorials.

7.7 Framing eco-politics: From advocate to antagonist

Clearly, this period is dominated by the politics of energy and global warming, with only token mention of other issues. This represents a sea-change in eco-political editorializing, including the entrenchment of a new discourse of skepticism, even hostility, towards environmental agendas, which first appears in 1992. To contextualize that change, it is important to consider the albeit-scant treatment of issues other than global warming and related energy politics over this study period. Gone are the sustained campaigns such as
the paper’s advocacy on acid rain in the 1980s or solid waste in the 1970s, yet the paper continues to assert the legitimacy of government action on at least some environmental problems. The paper complains, for instance, that the 1997 election campaign was largely devoid of environmental content, an indicator of the shift in public salience following the 1992 Earth Summit, and in the face of then-Finance Minister Paul Martin’s neoliberal deficit-slaying discourse.

It was only a few years ago that Canadians ranked the health of the environment among their greatest concerns.... [T]hey at least demanded that their leaders pay attention to the well-being of the natural surroundings. Did you hear anything about the environment in this campaign? (A hostile environment, Jun 2/97)

Notwithstanding this concern, the paper’s tone tempered and its corporate investment in the outcome clearly more detached. Its stance is qualified by an economistic rationalism (first revealed in 1992) by which environmental politics will now be judged.

It is as if, in reining in past excesses, the pendulum has been swung too far back.... That environmental extremism has not powered this [election] campaign (remember the gnashing of teeth that accompanied a few sealed barrels of PCBs sitting on a wharf in Baie Comeau?) is a welcome development. That the environment is no longer even news is not.

Pejorative references to ‘past excesses’ and ‘environmental extremism’ (elucidated in that remarkable 1992 editorial, ‘Environmentalism’, Aug. 10/92) delegitimize the very environmental discourse in which The Globe and Mail itself once engaged, and position the paper’s newly articulated environmental agenda as the legitimate alternative.

The next government has an unfinished agenda on its plate... Canadians are the custodians of a rich natural heritage, a storehouse of flora, fauna and clean air. We are duty-bound to do what we can, within reasonable limits, to preserve this trust for ourselves and posterity....A promising Environmental Protection Act, giving concerned citizens the ability to initiate court challenges against polluters...should be passed into law in the first term....A
new, more robust endangered species bill should be high on the next government’s agenda....The end of the campaign should mark a new beginning for the environmental issue (A hostile environment, Jun 2/97).

The reference to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) aside, what survives of The Globe and Mail’s earlier eco-political discourse is a continuing focus on protected areas and endangered species. Along the spectrum of environmental causes, these sit on “safe” end; in other words, they are considered motherhood issues with which few could argue. Accordingly, editorials on the topics of “parks/protected areas” and “wildlife/endangered species,” in which the paper maintains its supportive position, recur throughout the period (e.g. Spaces for species, Mar 19/97; Species at risk, Apr 8/02; Land for the preserving, Apr 9/07; The creeping threat to Wood Buffalo, Jul 6/15; A path to the future, Feb 2/16).

In addition to these nature preservation issues, The Globe and Mail remains concerned about water quality and management. Editorials include two on the controversy during the 2015 election campaign over Montreal’s dumping of raw sewage into the St. Lawrence River. Consistent with its long-standing advocacy for objective, rule-based decision-making, the paper complains about the politicization of an issue that, outside of an election campaign, could have been handled competently through existing

86 CEPA was actually promulgated in 1988, the handiwork of then-Environment Minister Tom McMillan and his senior policy advisor environmental lawyer Elizabeth May. In 1997, the Act was undergoing a mandatory review and amendments were being sought (Macdonald, 1991).

87 This speaks at some level to the naiveté of The Globe and Mail’s environmental politics, since the listing and protection of endangered species is a direct threat to industrial and commercial expansion, particularly extractive industries. It is no accident that it took decades for the federal government to complete and pass the Species at Risk Act in the face of fierce opposition, and the final product still reflects serious compromises to appease private landowners and resource companies.
administrative processes (e.g. Ottawa raises a stink, but its’ a little late, Oct 9/15; Let it flow, Nov. 11/15). Also in 2015 we find a reprise of the late 1960s concern about eutrophication in Lake Erie (Erie’s eerie waters, Jul 20/15), a call for proper valuation of groundwater (It isn’t free, Jul 28/15) and outrage at the persistent problem of contaminated drinking water on First Nations reserves (Unsafe to drink? Hard to swallow, Oct 14/15). The following year, the paper expresses concern about the approval of a water diversion from the Great Lakes that contravenes the International Joint Commission rules (Deep waters ahead, Jun 28/16). Such editorials are the exception, not the rule, in this final period. Unlike previous periods, such pro-environment framing is limited in both scope-of-issue and frequency, and becomes more and more dissonant with the paper’s preoccupation with, and framing of, the new politics of global warming.

This study period is marked by several critical discourse moments which provide context for and shape of Globe and Mail editorials on the topics of global warming/climate change and its associated energy politics. Following the 1992 signing of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC), the Kyoto Protocol is signed in 1997, after which annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs) become political lightning rods; Canada ratifies the Kyoto Protocol in 2002; Stephen Harper, an antagonist of the climate change agenda, is elected prime minister in 2006; Harper pulls Canada out of the Kyoto Protocol in December 2011, on the eve of the 2012 Kyoto Protocol compliance deadline; the Paris Agreement, Kyoto’s replacement, is signed in 2015; Canada ratifies the Paris Agreement in October 2016; it comes into force as an international accord in November 2016. Thus we have an ever-evolving geo-political context within which The Globe and Mail frames its editorial stance. Notably, this stance varies over time,
exhibiting different influences as the following chronological analysis of global warming-related editorials shows. Importantly, *The Globe and Mail* never gets firmly behind the issue as it did acid rain in the 1980s, solid waste and oil tankers in the 1970s, and sewage pollution in the 1960s.

From the perspective of post-structural discourse theory, we can say that the hegemonic field for eco-political discourse which was quite expansive through the 1970s and 1980s, contracts significantly between 1987 and 1997. Sample years post-2000 reveal efforts by *The Globe and Mail* to enlarge its field of discourse once again, even while taking on a very narrow set of core elements with which to accommodate a broader discourse. Not surprisingly, the result is not convincing.

### 7.7.1 1997 editorials

*The Globe and Mail*’s eco-political editorials in 1997 ultimately point to the December Conference of the Parties (COP 3) to be held in Kyoto, Japan, where the first implementation agreement for the 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change is to be signed. Overall, the paper’s stance is negative, employing various discursive threads across the editorials to build a case against Canada’s signing of the protocol, from climate science skepticism to fear-mongering over the economic implications of Kyoto to cynicism towards the U.N. process itself.

Reprising its uncharacteristic cynical tone in 1992 and employing a classic neoliberal frame, an early editorial mocks the support of Canadians for the Liberal government’s commitment to meet greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets.
Air is free, but clean air comes at a price. So how much are you willing to pay....? If Canadians want to meet the targets for greenhouse-gas emissions, they can but they will have to pay for it. Perhaps that is what they will choose. They should be under no illusion that anything comes free (Gassing up the atmosphere, Jan. 6/97).

The contrast with framing in earlier periods is vivid. First, *The Globe and Mail* no longer counts itself as among that amorphous mass of Canadians that (thinks it) wants a clean environment. The collective ‘we’ of previous periods – a unity of people whose identity and values are defined by Nature - has become ‘you’ and ‘they.’ In issuing a “be careful what you wish for” warning, the paper stands apart from an implied public naiveté about the implications of dealing with global warming. It further upends its framing in previous periods of clean air and water as a default and reasonable expectation of citizens in a civilized country, by now declaring such expectations as a rather pricey choice. The presupposed norm is now polluted air which, apparently, costs nothing. Finally, rather than invoking the government’s responsibility to protect the public interest (a clean environment), environmental protection policy is now posited as a rational choice of self-interested individuals taking into account costs and benefits.

This represents a profound ideological shift in the paper’s view of the common good. Re-framed in *The Globe and Mail*’s pre-1990s discourse, the argument in this editorial might have read: “Clean air is free. To pollute it comes at a price. So how much are you willing to pay? If Canadians do not want to meet greenhouse gas emissions targets, then they will have to pay for that decision in the form of increased costs to the health system, agricultural production, damage and loss of forests due to more fires and insect infestations, infrastructure damage due to storms, flooding and other disaster costs, as well as species extinctions. Because these costs affect all sectors and jurisdictions, the
powerless here and abroad, plants and animals, and future generations, it is the rightful role of government to prevent the harm that climate change is projected to cause. It will be much cheaper to act now to prevent the damage rather than try to contain it once it begins.”

Integral to this earlier discourse is the presumption of legitimacy and integrity of scientific research and advice. In the run-up to the U.N. negotiating session in Kyoto, Japan, however, *The Globe and Mail* takes a skeptical view, asserting that, ‘The science on global warming is sketchy,’ and ‘there are doubts’ about whether ‘global warming really is a problem’ (Hot air and greenhouse gases, Jun 27/97). The paper elaborates its skepticism with more passion as the December 1997 Kyoto session approaches:

The campaign to control greenhouse gases rests on four assumptions: that the Earth’s climate is warming up; that human activity is the main cause; that warming will have disastrous consequences; and that only immediate government action can avert those consequences. Each of those assumptions is questionable (Time for caution on global warming, Oct. 24/97).

Further, computer modelling that suggests the earth surface is warming, or that violent storms are attributable to such warming are ‘little more than educated guesswork’ and ‘unreliable.’ As editorials do, common sense is invoked to counteract an irrational, proactive stance by government. From subsequent editorials:

We are not sure yet whether it is actually happening…. even if there is a warming trend, we do not know if humans are causing it’ (Common sense about global warming, Oct 31/97); ‘[W]e are not convinced it [global warming] is underway’ (Green and greenhouse, Nov. 29/97); ‘It may well be that global warming is to some degree caused by human behaviour, although in the face of the evidence presented so far we remain skeptical (At sea over hot air, Dec. 4/97).
Here, *The Globe and Mail* gives voice, rather ignominiously, to the emergent climate denial discourse, constructed by the same public relations firms used by the tobacco and lead industries in their fight to stave off government regulation, and fronted by industry-sponsored think tanks (Oreskes and Conway, 2010).

Climate science denial serves a purpose. For its sponsors, it is a strategy to protect profits and growth. For *The Globe and Mail*, it is to justify its opposition to an international accord that the paper believes will undermine existing economic relations, and therefore the national interest.

The treaty that is supposed to be signed in Kyoto is quite simply the most ambitious, most costly environmental program ever....[T]he cost will be vast....Whether the tax is direct or takes the form of an emissions permit, those taxes will lower the living standards of all Canadians, especially those in energy-producing provinces such as Alberta.... [P]ressing ahead now with tough, binding controls on greenhouse-gas emissions would slow economic growth around the world and lower living standards for millions. The controls being considered by Canada and other industrial nations are ill-considered and premature. Until we know more about the science of global warming, we should put them where they belong: on the shelf (Time for caution on global warming, Oct. 24/97).

In this, *The Globe and Mail* engages in the same kind of scare-mongering about the impacts of the Kyoto agreement of which it accuses environmentalists. Citing a report by the C.D. Howe Institute which the editorial finds ‘a pillar of common sense,’ the paper argues for delay.

Environmentalists say that unless governments act now to cut emission levels dramatically, the disaster of global warming will overtake us. That, says Mr. Schwanen [of the C.D. Howe Institute], is simply not true...the world could easily wait 20 years before imposing mandatory emissions controls. If, by that time, science proves a link between human activity and global warming, there will still be plenty of time to act....Waiting would be far less costly because instead of retooling overnight, industries could adapt over time. New
technologies would become more advanced and more affordable. If the world’s governments are really going to attack the greenhouse-gas problem, they need time to change their ways and time to convince their publics that change – and sacrifice – is necessary (Common sense about global warming, Oct. 31/97).

The editorial is advancing a pragmatic common sense, explicit in the title and in its endorsement of an economic think-tank report based on the author’s ‘thorough study of the scientific and economic literature.’ In all things, the paper claims to be sensible.

While it is ‘sensible’ to worry about increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere, ‘What is not sensible is to do something hasty.’ Yet only if global warming turned out to be a false alarm would this be the case, and the paper provides enough qualification of that possibility to discredit the wait-and-see approach.

The idea that waiting to start retooling would be cheaper is entirely counterintuitive - it would simply shorten the timeline within which reductions would have to be made - and conditional on assumptions about technological change. Considering the paper’s own discourse in earlier periods on the imperative of acting boldly on pollution problems, including assertions that prevention and precaution are the only sensible course, this logic would not have passed the paper’s own scrutiny a decade earlier.

A second discursive strand questions the integrity of the U.N. process itself, particularly the principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibility’ on which the Kyoto negotiations are premised. A product of North-South tensions within the international forum, the principle asserts that since global warming is product of industrialization in rich countries, then those countries should be the first to cut greenhouse gas emissions; developing countries would participate the second phase of cuts, post-Kyoto. Here the
paper adopts the position of the U.S. Congress, in opposition to the Clinton administration’s participation in the Kyoto negotiations.88

Even if the industrialized world’s governments were able to convince voters to go along with all that [fuel tax, surcharges on gas-guzzling vehicles], there would remain another, even larger political problem. The developing world – and that includes the country that will soon be the world’s biggest greenhouse-gas emitter, China - has mostly managed to exempt itself from all of this. In short, we, the industrialized world, are bailing water out of the Ark with a teaspoon, while the developing world pours it in with a bucket. If global warming really is a problem – and there are doubts about that – it can’t be addressed by only half the world (Hot air and greenhouse gases, Jun 27/97).

This theme recurs in Globe editorials in subsequent study years, grating against longstanding Canadian support for and participation in U.N. fora, and the paper’s own multilateral discourse of previous periods.

Perhaps in response to public criticism of its Kyoto stance, a subsequent editorial takes an entirely different tack. It tries to establish the paper’s legitimacy in the Kyoto debate by invoking ecologic frames in relation to the national psyche:

The environment has a proper hold on our imaginations as Canadians. It reflects concern for our material well-being, our health and our food supply. It also reflects our understanding that all life on Earth is part of one tapestry that life is miraculous in the empty darkness of space, and that each of us is alive only for the briefest second in the history of time, as profoundly indebted to the past as we are responsible to the future. That is why next week’s meeting in Kyoto about climate change draws so much fundamentally justified attention (Green and greenhouse, Nov. 29/97).

88 While supported by Prime Minister Chrétien, this objection to the ‘go first’ rule for industrialized countries would form the basis of Prime Minister Harper’s opposition to the Protocol, and his demands on the provisions of subsequent agreements.
It is all here: our dependence on nature for sustenance; the interconnectedness of all life, and our ethical obligation to both our heritage and future generations. This narrative is strangely dissonant with *The Globe and Mail*’s economistic 1990s discourse – and therefore unconvincing. Having asserted its ‘green’ credentials, the editorial then goes on to legitimize its position with assurances that, should the evidence become strong enough to deserve its support, the paper would get onside:

If it is true that humans are significantly altering the global climate in disastrous ways, we must work together to stop it. It is the authenticity of that “truth” which splits opinion. We are of the view that dramatic or costly actions are not justified by our current state of knowledge, but that view will change if the knowledge equation does (Green and greenhouse, Nov. 29/97).

Just to reinforce its environmental *bona fides*, *The Globe and Mail* then stakes its a claim as a defender of Canada’s environment against existential threats, evoking a nationalistic wilderness mystique:

We are much less tentative about other environmental matters. As citizens of the second largest sovereign land mass in the world, Canadians are trustees of diverse and major ecosystems. We have a global, historic and spiritual responsibility to ensure that the integrity of these ecosystems survives the presence of human civilization over time. Thus, we have along [sic] endorsed the goals of the World Wildlife Fund’s “Endangered Spaces” campaign for Canada.... (Obviously, significant man-made global warming would undermine those goals, but we are not convinced this is underway). Whatever agreement comes out of Kyoto next week, Canada should press on to ensure the integrity of its existing ecosystems from more immediate and pressing threats...The test of virtue on environmental matters must include a commitment to the more verifiable and material challenges in managing our relationship with nature (Green and greenhouse, Nov. 29/97).

With this backhanded dismissal of the existing and already impressive body of climate science behind the U.N. negotiations, the paper sets its own environmental bar that the
government must scale, while denigrating the Prime Minister’s commitment to the international process to deal with global warming:

Coming home from Kyoto seeking glory because Canada has undertaken to do something about 3 per cent of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions will ring hollow indeed if it is not matched by stronger undertakings to ensure that our much larger share of the Earth’s surface is properly tended right down on Canada’s ground (Green and greenhouse, Nov. 29/97).

In the end, Prime Minister Chrétien is undeterred by naysayers; he signs the Kyoto Protocol. While the COP is underway, an editorial complains about what it calls Canada’s commitment under the protocol a ‘last-minute, back-of-a-cocktail-napkin policy,’ for which there is no implementation plan.

Bereft of a thoughtful policy, Canada appears willing to blow in whichever direction the Kyoto conference is headed, so long as wherever it lands is one step beyond the Americans…. The government apparently has no other policy on this issue save good optics and political popularity. The promises Ottawa is making at Kyoto have the empty ring of electoral platitudes, in which we are told that less pollution is better (care to argue with that?) but nothing is said of how we are to achieve it (At sea over hot air, Dec. 4/97).

The editorialist then presumptively argues that regardless of the problem, the ultimate determination of action must be financial, without indicating what would constitute acceptable costs versus unacceptable costs.

[E]ven if one accepts the arguments on the need for a global reduction in greenhouse emissions, you then have to ask how these reductions are to be made… Perhaps those costs, which could add up to several billions of dollars a year, should be borne. Perhaps not. Such an evaluation is, however, rather difficult to make considering that we know nothing about how the government intends to apportion those costs, or even what it thinks the costs will be (At sea over hot air, Dec. 4/97).
The final editorial of 1997 strikes quite a different pose. In the face of public support for Canada’s participation in Kyoto, it maintains its critique of the government while trying not to appear too off-side from the Canadian public and the world community.

At last, a deal! After 11 grueling days of tortuous negotiations, ending with a grueling all-nighter, delegates emerged from the global-warming conference in Kyoto, Japan, to herald peace in our time, or something like it…. Is the cheering warranted? At first glance, the answer looks like yes (Hot air in Kyoto, Dec. 12/97).

Is this an about-face for the paper? More likely, it is a retreat from its increasingly embarrassing climate-skeptical positions in the face of an emerging global consensus on the political imperative of dealing with global warming. In the spotlight of a global conference covered by international media, at which all the industrialized countries make serious statements about and commitments to pollution reduction, The Globe and Mail risks appearing anachronistic and aligned with discredited, corporate-sponsored climate denialists. Rather than remaining the outlier, the paper drops its criticism of the process and its climate science skepticism, focusing its criticism on the federal government.

These are ambitious targets…. How either Mr. Chrétien or Mr. Clinton intends to deliver this miracle is unclear. Canada went to Kyoto in a state of wild disarray. The government shuffled its feet for months before finally announcing a negotiating position on the eve of the conference, the last major industrial country to do so. Only days before the conference did it bother to hold serious talks with provincial governments, whose support it will need to enact the Kyoto cuts…. The premiers of at least three provinces – Ontario, Alberta and Saskatchewan – have expressed serious reservations about Ottawa’s global-warming plans. Unless Mr. Chrétien can change their minds, Canada will fail to meet its Kyoto commitments… Ottawa has done even less to prepare the public for the Kyoto cuts (Hot air in Kyoto, Dec. 12/97).

One could forgive the Prime Minister if he were exasperated with this indignant, even self-righteous tone. After all, The Globe and Mail had spilled a lot of ink trying to
delegitimize the government’s position and the Kyoto process itself. Rather than helping plough the ground of public support, the paper had backed provincial naysayers and sowed seeds of doubt in the public mind. Even after the conference, the paper continues to undermine Ottawa. Of the Prime Minister’s claim that emissions reductions would create economic opportunities, the editorialist writes,

This is not credible. Although it’s hard to say exactly how much Kyoto will cost us, one international study [not attributed] has estimated that simply stabilizing emissions would shave between 0.5 and 2 per cent from the annual income of developed countries…. Even if Canada can slither through these loopholes [buying and selling emissions credits], cutting our emissions by the amounts agreed to at Kyoto in little more than a decade will require a massive shift in the way we use energy. This is by far the most serious environmental promise that Canada has ever made. It is time that Mr. Chrétien told us how on earth he intends to keep it (Hot air in Kyoto, Dec. 12/97).

This preoccupation with GDP growth in relation to environmental politics is new in this final study period. In the first three periods, the paper had always insisted on the wisdom of investing early in environmental protection to avoid greater costs down the road, or that environmental protection had to trump economic considerations. With only momentary exception, this pattern of objection and criticism continues throughout the final period.

7.7.2 2002 editorials

In this study year, we find the materialization of Blühdorn’s ‘politics of unsustainability as the editorial positions waffle between assertions of seriousness of the climate crisis, and equivocation on the appropriate response. On December 17, 2002, the Canadian
Parliament ratifies the Kyoto Protocol.\textsuperscript{89} Not surprisingly most of \textit{The Globe and Mail}'s editorials in this year form part of the contentious public discourse on whether or not this ratification should happen, with the paper ultimately coming down on the “no” side. The tone and substance of the early 2002 editorials is supportive, however. Without more targeted research, it is difficult to explain this shift in discourse from 1997 to 2002. The signing of the Kyoto Protocol at the end of 1997 by 193 nations including Canada and the United States certainly changed the political context for the issue. The Canadian public supported Kyoto and the scientific evidence of the problem was mounting each year. It does appear that the paper is sensitive to the public mood, not wanting to be on the wrong side of an emerging consensus, especially a scientific one. After all, its own legitimacy must be protected above all else, and its earlier climate change skepticism certainly challenged that.

To illustrate the shift in discourse from 1997 to early 2002, consider the mockery \textit{The Globe and Mail} makes in a 1997 editorial of the ground-breaking report by University of British Columbia researchers on the concept of ecological footprint\textsuperscript{90} and its application to the greater Vancouver region. Noting pejoratively that the team of professors and

\textsuperscript{89} While Canada was a party to the Kyoto Protocol negotiations and assumed commitments under it, the U.N process requires that such agreements be ratified by the parliaments of the signatories. Of the original 193 parties to the Protocol, 55 nations representing 50 per cent of global emissions were required to ratify the agreement in order for it to come into effect as international law. This threshold was met in 2005 with Russian ratification.

\textsuperscript{90} This is an accounting tool used to measure the draw-down of natural resources of the consumption patterns of a given population (Wackernagel & Rees, 1997). Since its development in the 1990s, it has been adopted in many countries as a benchmark for sustainable development implementation (Global Footprint Network).
graduate students received ‘$2.4 million of federal taxpayer’s money,’ the editorial is scathing:

There is really only one tiny flaw in their report that we feel honour-bound to point out: it is nonsense. The trends away from “environmental sustainability” described with such concern in the report do not foreshadow an ecological disaster, but describe the evolution of a small city into a great metropolis. This is a development to be celebrated, not decried; managed, not stifled…. [T]here is an empirical link between wealth and environmental stewardship: Richer people demand a better environment. Small, poor communities cannot afford to treat their sewage properly or to pay for improved air quality. Nowhere has environmental quality improved more in the world since 1945 than in the industrialized West… Rather than government-enforced population controls in the Basin, the appropriate policy follow-up to this report is compulsory rustication for a few academics (Vancouver the unsustainable, Sept 25/97).

Not only does the paper believe it is qualified to critique this research, it feels entitled to call for the suspension of the researchers.

Five years later, The Globe and Mail directly connects wealth and industrialization with environmental degradation and particularly global warming in an editorial responding to a report by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation, the agency formed as part of the environmental side-agreement to NAFTA:

Governments, like individuals, tend to postpone making hard choices until the moment of crisis is upon them. The message from the intrinsically conservative commission is that the moment is coming nearer. “We stand on the edge of a global cataclysm,” it said in reference to planetary warming…. The main problem, of course, is the appetite of wealthy North Americans… Even last year’s higher gas prices didn’t stop the trend to the bigger and thirstier. Bigger vehicles, urban sprawl, the spread of coal-burning factories – all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, which lead to the warming of the planet. The immediate benefits of this consumption are obvious: higher standards of living, including longer lives and lower infant mortality. But the commission directs us to environmental damage that we might not wish to see. The challenge is to continue growing economically
without destroying the natural resources that underlie our long term economic health. But how? Give up those muscular four-wheelers and revert to subcompacts? That’s not likely to happen, however desirable it might be. (The economic beating of a butterfly’s wings, Jan. 8/02).

Rather than the 1997 economic boosterism, the framing here is circumspect, even defeatist. This editorial grapples with the existential dilemma of modern society: short-term economic goals may well undermine long term security. This is a valid – and necessary – debate to have; indeed, this ‘limits to growth’ discourse was engaged by The Globe and Mail in the 1970s. The editorialist gives up on it, however, acceding to the inevitability of unsustainable growth and the allure of consumerism, but not happily.

This sets the tone for global warming editorializing for the next few months. The issue is framed as an emergency, with the paper advocating for a national action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a reprise of its acid rain stance of the 1980s. On Kyoto, The Globe and Mail counsels against relenting to pressure by the U.S. Ambassador to Canada Paul Celluci to not ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Kyoto…is not [quoting Celluci] “in the interests of the United States or its economy, and we don’t think it is in the interests of the Canadian economy either.” He is right, in a sense…it may put our companies at a competitive disadvantage in the highly integrated North American economy. But he is wrong in a more fundamental way. Global warming threatens the long-term sustainability of the North American economy…. Canada also has concerns [about Kyoto], but it sees merit in working within Kyoto to address those concerns…. The world needs a spur; Kyoto is a spur (It’s the folks next door, complaining about Kyoto, Jan 29/02).

On the face of it, the paper has been convinced that global warming is a significant problem, that Kyoto is the best option available for getting on with a global response, and
that Canada has an obligation to be part of that. In a subsequent editorial, the writer is much more directly critical of U.S. intransigence on the matter.

Go it alone and go slow. That is the essence of the U.S. position on global warming… And that is bad news – for the planet, and for Canada…. On global warming [President Bush] remains a skeptic. The rest of the developed world is much more certain about the need to do something about global warming…. Canadian businesses may have to bear a cost that their U.S. counterparts do not. Still, Canada should not waver on Kyoto. There may be some short-term pain – how much is not clear – but the case for controls on greenhouse gases will grow more compelling, not less, as warming accelerates, and those countries that can cut their emissions at the lowest possible cost will ultimately be more competitive, not less. For both Canada and the United States, it is a question of paying now, or paying later (Kyoto or no Kyoto, Feb. 12/02).

This is a reversal of the paper’s 1997 economic framing, reflecting instead its preventative logic of the 1960s-1980s, and presupposing the accuracy of climate science. Still, the paper’s stance appears to hinge less on its acceptance of objective evidence, and more on the weight of opinion of ‘the rest of the developed world.’ This is not a position of leadership or one based on certitude; instead, The Globe and Mail does not want to be out of step with most other OECD countries. Blühdorn would characterize this as a response to a public expectation of seriousness; in other words, a simulative politics. This makes for a rather unstable and tenuous policy position, which could explain the shift as the year progresses. That aside, The Globe and Mail takes some strong stands early on in favour of the Kyoto Protocol, including criticizing the behaviour of certain provincial premiers.

What a pathetic spectacle Canada’s premiers created last week in Moscow. Led by Alberta’s Ralph Klein, they blind-sided Prime Minister Jean Chrétien during the trade mission to Moscow, presenting a letter demanding he drop his support for the Kyoto Protocol… As political theatre, it was a subtle as a swarming (Keep the train on the Kyoto tracks, Feb. 19/02).
"The Globe and Mail" further scolds Premier Klein for his intransigence on the issue:

[B]urying one’s head in the sand would make it easier to ignore credible warnings about the contribution of CO2 emissions to global warming…Mr. Reagan was wrong to make light of acid rain. Mr. Klein, for all his understandable concern about Alberta’s industries, is wrong to treat Kyoto as a mad plot (Waiting to exhale, Feb. 28/02).

The Prime Minister also comes under attack, setting the tone for an ongoing and eventually hostile criticism of the federal government’s approach:

He has not yet set out a strong, clear vision of what Kyoto means to Canada and how Canada can reach the emissions targets…He has yet to make Kyoto the subject of a major policy speech…He has not personally made the case he should be making: This is not altruism, folks, it’s self-interest…Ottawa needs to make the case that there are substantial benefits in combating global warming…This is a terrific opportunity for Canada’s new innovation agenda. And what of the costs of not signing Kyoto – in health problems caused by poor air quality, or the longer-term possibility that the Atlantic coast will be devastated by rising sea levels, or that parts of Alberta will become a desert? (Keep the train on the Kyoto tracks, Feb. 19/02).

Such economic rationalism, certainly consistent with the dominant neoliberal discourse, is tempered with a longer view which does not discount the future; indeed, it counsels action now to avoid future costs. President George W. Bush also gets a scolding, not for denying global warming but contending that the United States will go it alone and weather the impending storm:

What he knew and when he knew it will one day emerge as critical questions for President George W. Bush as the nation looks back at warnings of an implacable foe. No, not terrorism. Global warming…Having recognized the threat, what did President Bush do about it? He adopted a fatalistic posture. The carbon pollution that drives planetary warming is too far advanced to be turned back, his administration insists. Warming is on the way. The United States will adapt, as always, with the help of “American ingenuity” …. [F]atalism is no great attribute when there is still time to do something about fate’s course (What warming means, Jun 4/02).
The editorial which provides the most extensive defense of the Kyoto Protocol is published on May 23. The gist of the argument is that Kyoto is the beginning, rather than the end, of the global effort to deal with climate change. The paper acknowledges that it does not go far enough, but that it is important, symbolically and otherwise, to get started. It also acknowledges the political difficulty posed by divergent provincial interests with respect to Canada’s carbon economy, being sympathetic to Alberta whose economy depends on extracting and ‘selling the very product consumers will be told to use more sparingly under Kyoto.’ Nevertheless, the greatest challenge is to

…the Canadian imagination. It requires two uncertainties to be weighed, crunched and considered: the economic uncertainty about signing on and the uncertainty about the environment in a warmer age. Moreover, the long-term health of the economy depends on that uncertain environment (How Canada can get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02).

The editorial is accepting a level of uncertainty in the evidence, particularly in what might lie ahead for Canada, but argues for action on ethical grounds, even if only to forestall future costs to the rich world, including Canada.

Perhaps Canada would be largely unscathed. The developing world, however, faces cataclysmic flooding that would wash away the homes of millions of people. Would we Canadians bask at our cottages enjoying long summers while the world’s poor struggled to survive? One way or another, Canada and other rich nations would pay (How Canada can get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02).

Invoking the ecologist frames of decades earlier, The Globe and Mail mounts a defense of Kyoto as ethical, precautionary, and responsible, even while injecting the element of self-interest as a motivator for a less altruistic audience:

Kyoto, then, calls on Canada and other developed nations to be global citizens. Like any good citizen, we will be serving the community while at
the same time reinforcing our own interests. Canada is surely up to the Kyoto challenge (How Canada can get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02).

Furthermore, the possibility that Canada has overreached its capacity in making its Kyoto commitments does not faze the editorialist. Kyoto’s provision for a nation that does not meet its first phase targets to make up for any gap in the next phase of implementation seems to reassure – if we do not get it right the first time, we will have a second chance. But make no mistake: we must engage wholeheartedly.

Ah, now here’s the nub of it. Canada can fail. Having done its best to meet its Kyoto targets, it can, at the end of it all, take its shortfall and add it to the next round of targets, yet to be negotiated. Failing honourably is better than tumbling off a cliff. Worst of all is not even trying (How Canada can get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02).

Similarly assertive editorials appear on June 4 (What warming means) and July 1 (Where there’s smoke).

Something happened over the summer. An editorial on September 5, 2002 marks the turning point in the paper’s tone and substance. While support for Kyoto remains (‘…there is global recognition that the threat to the world’s environment is real and that the time for action is upon us’ (Canada confronts Kyoto challenge, Sep 5/02)), The Globe and Mail begins to question what ratification of Kyoto will mean for Canadians. This editorial follows the Prime Minister’s announcement that Canada will indeed ratify the protocol during the fall session of Parliament, revisiting 1997 criticisms of the agreement. Whereas in May, the paper argued for taking that ‘leap of faith’ (How Canada can get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02), now it plants seeds of doubt.

The Kyoto Protocol…is a flawed agreement that may have a bigger impact on Canada than any other country. Prime Minister Jean Chrétien’s decision to push ratification through Parliament means Canadians are being asked to
make a leap of faith…. The Kyoto pact is a first brush with a serious issue and ultimately deserves Canada’s support. But one hopes that more effective and equitable agreements are built upon it in the coming decades… (Canada confronts Kyoto challenge, Sep 5/02).

From a voice within the polity, ascribing common values and responsibilities to the collective, the editorial re-assumes its detached voice of 1997: it is not ‘we’ who are being asked, but Canadians. Furthermore, after shouldering some of the weight of building a case for Kyoto in previous months, this editorial shifts the burden of proof back onto the Prime Minister, assuming a detached ambivalence, as Blühdorn would expect.

Still, what does Ottawa intend to do to ensure real reductions in pollutants? ... In particular, how will Canada’s Kyoto requirements be squared with policies to build the resource sector, especially through exports? … It is up to the Prime Minister, having made this international commitment, to show it can be carried out fairly and with the least possible economic impact. But for now, one can only hope that Canada’s Kyoto decision turns out to be one of those remarkable occurrences when doing good eventually translates into doing well (Canada confronts Kyoto challenge, Sep 5/02).

Mere months ago, The Globe and Mail was arguing strongly for the innovation agenda that an early commitment to emissions reductions. Now, the editorialist is less convinced of its economic potential, and of Canada’s ability to live up to the challenge.

The following day’s editorial makes a final pitch for seizing the economic potential:

The broad challenge is to view Kyoto not merely as a new set of costs but as a reason to sharpen efficiency and translate that into an aggressive new industry… On this challenge, Canada has fallen down… [E]ven as we talk about the Northern Tiger we wish to become, we’re still pretty toothless… Canada seems to be falling behind competitors, particularly in the United States, in high-demand areas such as renewable energy… (Kyoto, meet the tiger, Sep 6/02).
It is not clear just who this editorial is aimed at, whether the federal government or the private sector. However, a month later *The Globe and Mail* takes clear aim at Ottawa and, as in 1997, questions the wisdom of Kyoto ratification based on the potential economic costs.

What is Ottawa’s actual plan to meet the Kyoto requirement…? The federal government has been derelict. Mr. Chrétien has fueled this unacceptable situation, suggesting that implementation will be a prolonged work in progress…a step into the unknown. But Kyoto binds Canada to a specific obligation and there are consequences – economic penalties, possibly – if it isn’t met. Ottawa’s Kyoto process is backwards. Instead of pledging to ratify it before working out a plan, it should have a credible plan in advance. This is particularly egregious since Canada, which produces more greenhouse gas emissions per capita than any other country, may face the largest impact from the accord – a result, in part, of maladroit bargaining when it was signed (Kyoto without a map, Oct 7/02).

The advocacy stance is abandoned; the heels begin to dig in. The ‘do the right thing’ frame of a few months earlier is now replaced by the ‘show us the plan’ frame, a reprise of the arguments against signing Kyoto in 1997 (eventually this becomes: show us the made-in-Canada plan). The earlier view that the Kyoto Protocol allows a second chance if at first we do not succeed, is replaced by an accusation of incompetence. This discourse reflects that of the business community and the Alberta government, both of which are obstructing the federal process of developing a national plan that would attract their support and mounting a vigorous public campaign to prevent the ratification. The extent of this influence on *The Globe and Mail* is evident in this about-face:

To what extent will Kyoto affect consumers through disincentives on the use of fossil fuels or incentives to use alternative energy sources? To what extent will the cost be borne by the energy industry and, therefore, by Albertans generally? Will the benefits of Kyoto even outweigh the costs? And how should that be measured, especially when countries like the United States and Australia have withdrawn from what they feel is a flawed pact? Canadians…
have reason to wonder why a former politician as respected as Peter Lougheed would throw himself into this battle at age 74 if the potential impact was not significant (Kyoto without a map, Oct. 7/02).

It is clear whose voices are now being heard in the editorial board room. From being critical of the U.S. position, now the southern neighbour along with natural resource-exporting Australia, are worth listening to. Similarly, Peter Lougheed’s stature as a political statesman is invoked to legitimize his special pleading for Alberta’s immediate interest. The influence of the energy industry and Alberta’s political class on the shifting discourse of *The Globe and Mail* is evident in the final sentence of the editorial: ‘If Canada is going to ratify the Kyoto accord, Ottawa must not foist on Albertans inordinate responsibility for meeting its targets’ (Kyoto without a map, Oct. 7/02).

As it did in 1997 when the Kyoto conference was approaching, the paper’s anti-ratification rhetoric accelerates from here. This editorial singles out the federal government for criticism, while also taking aim at the provinces and positioning itself outside the fray with no accounting for its own contradictory positions:

\[
\text{Kyoto is rapidly turning itself into Canada’s biggest national unity issue.} \\
\text{This needn’t be a misadventure if there is a clear national plan} \\
\text{[to] spread costs fairly. But Ottawa did little planning after 1997 on how to carry out Kyoto’s requirements advantageously. The vacuum is being filled by the provinces, and they are sniping at each other with growing vigour…}. \\
\text{Meanwhile, federal bureaucrats are trying desperately to jury-rig a plan acceptable to all provinces, one that is being pulled apart at every turn….} \\
\text{Environment Minister David Anderson has little credibility among industry groups…. The result is that Canada may soon have an international obligation to achieve tough targets without a national commitment to do so. Mr. Chrétien, who was so determined to bind Canada to Kyoto…must now lead the effort to actually begin to carry it out – fairly and at minimal cost. Either that, or admit he acted precipitously (Incoherent on Kyoto, Oct. 19/02).}
\]
While this is not an inaccurate account of the political landscape at the time, it does not account for the concerted anti-Kyoto campaign mounted by Alberta Premier Ralph Klein, the ‘large emitters’ industrial sector, as well as the federal Conservative opposition led by Stephen Harper, the goal of which was to create havoc, and thereby thwart momentum on the issue. By adopting this framing, The Globe and Mail further confounds Ottawa’s ability to mount a counter-discourse. Subsequently, The Globe and Mail damned with faint praise the plan Ottawa releases prior to ratification, while raising again the Kyoto critics’ complaints about the agreement.

Ottawa deserves credit for actually releasing a plan to meet the Kyoto obligations it agreed to five years ago…But it remains striking that Ottawa has little idea what Kyoto implementation will cost, either for the federal government or for the national economy. Critics of the protocol, led by some in the business community, won’t be satisfied by any plan Ottawa produces. They just want Canada not to ratify it. But they also have good reason to be concerned about many of Ottawa’s underlying assumptions, pollution targets and regulatory suggestions for meeting those targets (Kyoto plan just raises more questions, Oct. 25/02).

Consistent with Blühdorn’s characterization of a simulative politics of unsustainability, The Globe and Mail continues to send mixed messages on the climate file. While this editorial is still in the Kyoto camp, if tentatively, an editorial several days later is much more critical of Ottawa’s Kyoto agenda. As we have seen before, the paper seems to calibrate its view of the plan to that of others as time goes on; here, the influence of the anti-Kyoto campaign is evident. The Globe and Mail completes the about-face from the paper’s stance earlier in the year, rejecting Ottawa’s plan outright by refusing to acknowledge it as such.

[Ottawa’s Kyoto implementation plan] will merit a passing mark as performance art. But as good governance, it will deserve a failing grade….
Kyoto ratification without an implementation plan is largely a symbolic exercise… (Don’t rush to ratify without a Kyoto plan, Nov. 9/02).

It then asserts a new condition on its support for ratification.

Ottawa will have to provide a financial backstop…If it is not willing to make this commitment, Ottawa should simply make clear that Canada will pull out of Kyoto and forge a made-in-Canada solution if the protocol becomes too expensive (Don’t rush to ratify without a Kyoto plan, Nov. 9/02).

The ‘made-in-Canada’ trope, a central frame of the anti-Kyoto discourse meant to delegitimize the U.N. process and assert Canada’s exemptionalist status, appears here for the first time. The explicit claim is that the international process by which the Kyoto Protocol was crafted, dominated as it was by Western European countries, did not take the peculiarities of the Canadian economy into account. Thus, the Liberal government was negligent in agreeing to the terms, or was ‘maladroit’ in its bargaining skills (Kyoto without a map, Oct. 7/02). Further, the original terms of the Kyoto Protocol itself are illegitimate:

The 1997 agreement is already shot full with holes, since the world’s largest polluters essentially are uninvolved…Canada’s participation will make little different….There is no pressing reason for the Chrétien government to move forward with ratification now. Better to ratify this flawed international accord only after a detailed federal-provincial implementation agreement has been reached. Parliamentary action now would garner attention, but it would be an empty act (Don’t rush to ratify without a Kyoto plan, Nov. 9/02.

As the ratification date nears (December 17, 2002), The Globe and Mail makes one final effort to delegitimize the political act that it advocated for earlier that year. It suggests that the plan released by the Liberals actually concedes the necessity of a “made in Canada” alternative to Kyoto, without conceding the failings of the multilateral process.

Canada’s approval of the international treaty…will be a symbolic gesture only… The Liberal government won’t admit that, of course. It will continue
to pay fealty to the common good of combating this environmental problem multi-laterally. When skeptical Liberal cabinet ministers are asked about the logic of proceeding with Kyoto, they often fall back on the rationale that Canada is supportive of global treaties generally. In other words, this one may appear to make less sense than many, but we’ll do it because it’s good for global governance (Just a nod and a wink for the Kyoto accord, Nov. 25/02).

No longer invoking global citizenship as a legitimate motivation (How can Canada get from here to Kyoto, May 23/02), this editorial presages the counter-discourse to Canada’s long-standing support for multilateralism which becomes an undercurrent during Stephen Harper’s regime. It culminates in Harper’s withdrawal of Canada from the Kyoto Protocol on the eve, literally, of the 2012 deadline for compliance with its provisions.

At this point the editorial introduces another thread of the anti-Kyoto discourse that will recur throughout the period: the impossibility of meeting the Kyoto commitments, which are characterized as ‘artificial timelines negotiated some years ago on the back of an envelope.’ The intent is to further delegitimize the ratification and the Liberal government itself.

Canada’s plan now suggests that the country’s biggest polluters will be allowed to miss the treaty’s 2012 deadline. It’s becoming harder to avoid this simple conclusion: Canada likely won’t meet the Kyoto targets…Ottawa’s policy now seems to amount to a nod and a wink (Just a nod and a wink for the Kyoto accord, Nov. 25/02).

This prediction, of course, becomes self-fulfilling as successive governments fail or refuse to implement the rules and regulations required to meet the targets. Importantly, planting the idea that targets are impossible to meet, or that meeting the targets would come at great and unacceptable cost, ploughs the ground in the public sphere for subsequent abandonment of those treaty obligations without domestic political consequence. The Globe and Mail is complicit in this discourse.
Even so, the paper does not abandon its position that global warming is a problem needing attention, asserting that ‘Canada has a responsibility to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions’ (Just a nod and a wink for the Kyoto accord, Nov. 25/02). Even if the paper believes this, its adoption of the anti-Kyoto discourse constructed by provincial and business actors – that Canada’s current economic structures and relations must be maintained, and that Canada’s interests, therefore, are threatened by a multilateral approach - helps to undermine political and public support for the Liberal government’s efforts on global warming. This two-faced narrative exhibits the key characteristics of Blühdorn’s ‘politics of unsustainability’ in which the reality of the eco-crisis and the need for serious action is acknowledged, while at the same time the systems that have caused the crisis are fiercely and unconditionally defended. It is a simulative politics, embracing the rhetoric of concern while simultaneously advocating to ‘sustain the unsustainable.’

7.7.3 2007 editorials

The manifestation of Blühdorn’s politics of unsustainability is much less ambiguous in this sample year. While we can see how The Globe and Mail’s climate change politics changes from the beginning of 2002 to the end of that year, by 2007 the post-ecologist perspective is deeply entrenched in The Globe and Mail discourse. This year exceeds all others in numbers of eco-political editorials (38 in total) in the final study period, a reflection of the public and political salience of environmental issues at this time.

To recall the political context, the minority Liberal government of Paul Martin had been replaced early in 2006 by another minority government headed by Conservative Stephen Harper who in opposition had established himself as hostile to the environmental agenda
in general, and global warming in particular. Unexpectedly for Prime Minister Harper, after a year in power, the Canadian public has made it known that they are not content with a hands-off approach to environmental problems, and especially to global warming: the environment is on the political agenda whether he likes it or not. He begins by replacing his environment minister and promising new legislation. *The Globe and Mail* actively engages in this public discourse; more consistently – and convincingly - than in any other year, its framing is distinctly post-ecologist.

The dispatch of Ms. Ambrose was the most urgent priority. Her failure to make the Environment job work is in part Mr. Harper’s own failure. He badly underestimated the importance of the portfolio…. It was also Mr. Harper’s insistence on avoiding meaningful commitments on climate change that effectively torpedoed Ms. Ambrose…. Ms. Ambrose’s replacement, John Baird, is a much more forceful and convincing politician… Mr. Harper acknowledged yesterday that “Canadians expect a lot more” on the environment. He now needs to step back and allow Mr. Baird to deliver what’s expected (Harper’s cabinet shuffle strengthens his hand, Jan 5/07).

*The Globe and Mail* singles out climate change as the issue on which the Harper government is expected to perform to expectations. It chides the government for displaying more interest in playing politics with the issue than doing something about it, and asserts that the Prime Minister has a legitimacy problem on his hands.

The problem is that he lacks all conviction on the need to do something about global warming… [T]he blind spot this Prime Minister has on global warming is gaping, and worrisome. The best that can be said is that Mr. Harper has woken up to the politics of the issue. Global warming ranks high among voter concerns (His environmental stand, Jan 9/07).

This questioning of Harper’s sincerity continues in an editorial that legitimizes public concern and damns with faint praise the government’s response.

It may be a forced, highly political conversion to the ecological cause. Some may find it hypocritical, some amusing. But it is mildly reassuring to watch
the federal Conservatives scramble to introduce…new environmental policies this week. There is, however, reason for caution…. What if they win a majority and renounce their faith? Are they merely green with envy at [Opposition leader] Mr. Dion’s political success with the issue? As long as the Conservatives have not merely suspended their disbelief in the environmental cause, they are edging in the right direction on this crucial issue (The Conservatives put on an environmental smile, Jan 18/07).

This is prophetic, as Mr. Harper does win a majority in 2011 with serious consequences for climate change policy. By that time, however, The Globe and Mail appears comfortable with the Conservative environmental agenda (see next section). Here, The Globe and Mail is staking its ground as a “believer” in the problem and in the need for the federal government’s response to be commensurate with public expectations. Yet a contradiction quickly emerges: even though the public backs a multilateral approach, the paper maintains its critique of the U.N. process that produced the Kyoto Protocol. Rather than get behind the government’s now-legally binding international commitment, the paper continues to foment doubt and dissent, with statements like ‘Kyoto is a terribly flawed agreement… Canada can’t meet its 1997 Kyoto goal…’ (His environmental stand, Jan 9/07). Even while chastising the government for its lack of concern, this stance reinforces rather than discourages the Conservative government’s resistance to meaningful climate action.

It is difficult to judge how much of The Globe and Mail’s criticism of the Harper government is genuine and how much is influenced by the public mood, the polling of which gets extensive attention in an editorial which comments on the results of two polls, one of which was commissioned by The Globe and Mail itself.

At this time a year ago, climate change barely made it on the public’s radar screen [four per cent]…By this month, environmental issues had surged to the
top of the worry list of 26 per cent of the people who participated in a [Globe and Mail] poll… An Angus Reid survey [saw] more than a third of Canadians ranking the environment as the number-one issue facing the country today (Hot on the environment and willing to sacrifice, Jan 27/07).

In the past, public salience of environmental concern ebbed and flowed as problems were solved (or more likely, as economic conditions changed). Yet,

This time seems different. “It’s developed a top-of-mind salience the likes of which we’ve never seen before,” said [pollster] Allan Gregg… In particular, a remarkably high percentage of people say they are willing to make personal sacrifices if it means protecting future generations from the potential ravages of climate change and environmental degradation (Hot on the environment and willing to sacrifice, Jan 27/07).

Whether or not the willingness to sacrifice is substantive, the editorial asserts that ‘climate change has taken hold of public attitudes in Canada, and this shift appears irreversible.’ Further, Canadians will not accept ‘lip service’ in exchange for strong action (Hot on the environment and willing to sacrifice, Jan 27/07).

As assertive as these early 2007 editorials are, it is difficult to attribute The Globe and Mail’s climate change discourse to anything but lip service. Even though Kyoto is now international law, the paper continues to repeat the anti-Kyoto mantra that action on climate change must not impede the growth of the energy industry and the (specifically Alberta) economy. Indeed, this condition becomes The Globe and Mail’s sine qua non of any climate policy, whether multilateral or domestic. In short, the unsustainable must be sustained. In making this case convincingly to Canadians, certain claims must be delegitimized: the first is the integrity of multilateral processes, and the second, the integrity of the greenhouse gas reduction targets to which Canada committed. Third, the
idea of Canada’s special status as an energy producer - an exemptionalist frame - must be legitimized. These are discussed below.

7.7.3.1 Delegitimizing multilateralism

The principle of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ among the parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change is a central assumption of the multilateral discourse underpinning the Kyoto Protocol. Without acknowledging the unequal terms on which global parties come to the negotiating table, The Globe and Mail calls it an outrageous position, akin to arguing that developing countries should be allowed to employ slavery to build their economies just because some now-developed countries did so centuries ago. If global warming is the serious threat that scientists say it is – the evidence now seems indisputable – every country, rich and poor, has a stake in reducing emissions (No right of exemption for developing countries, Jan 30/07).

This reads as a thinly veiled ploy by big emitters to forestall action in emission reductions. A more ideological claim is revealed at the end of the editorial, notably without elaboration or justification: ‘Global warming should not be used as a cover for U.N. bureaucrats to pursue an agenda of global wealth redistribution’ (No right of exemption for developing countries, Jan 30/07). This loaded statement draws on a discourse quite distinct from that of global warming. It reflects a deep-seated suspicion of the U.N. system itself: that it is controlled by bureaucrats with presumably socialistic

91 This principle and other mechanisms provided in the details of the Kyoto Protocol recognize the ongoing tensions within the U.N. stemming from the very real power imbalances between what Wallerstein calls the core and peripheral nations in the world economic system (Wallerstein, 2004b). Not surprisingly, peripheral nations come to the international negotiating table with demands for financial support for their participation in what is typically a core nation-driven environmental agenda. Consequently, multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) typically include equity provisions and financial mechanisms intended to facilitate their participation; climate change negotiations are no exception.
agendas. Wealth redistribution is a bogeyman which lurks behind every negotiating text, to be rightfully exposed by wary skeptics. This discourse, constructed by and infused throughout American conservative politics, is anathema to Canadian tradition of support for multilateralism and the United Nations; indeed, successive Canadian prime ministers signed the Framework Convention in 1992 (Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney) and the Kyoto Protocol (Liberal Jean Chrétien) both of which enshrine this principle. That this American trope slips into The Globe and Mail editorial reveals something of the influences on the paper’s anti-Kyoto stance. (The idea of international wealth redistribution gets redefined in later editorials – not from rich-to-poor transfers but from rich (Canada)-to-rich (European countries) - with equal derision).

This objection to giving developing nations a pass on the first phase of emissions reductions is repeated in subsequent editorials (see Cut back? Who, us? Jun 7/07). At a Commonwealth meeting held just prior to the December climate change negotiations (COP 13) in Bali, the Conservative government refuses to agree to a statement that recognizes the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The Globe and Mail is entirely on side with this negotiating stance.

There cannot be a system of good emitters and bad emitters. What the Commonwealth would like to do is pit developing countries against developed ones by exempting nations such as India from the binding targets. It would thereby set up the forthcoming global climate-change negotiations in Bali, Indonesia – where India will be joined by China, the world’s largest emitter – for a repeat of the Kyoto failure. Canada had every right to object (Canada was right to balk, Nov. 24/07).
In addition to repudiating the principle, the editorial repeats the trope that Kyoto is a failure, and subsequently counsels that Canada should spurn any ambitious emissions reduction targets, framing them as economic attacks:

Canada has to do whatever it can to bring India, China and the United States into a framework for new talks, while resisting the imposition of more Draconian targets on our economy (The challenge in Bali, Dec. 4/07).

It had always been understood that any post-Kyoto agreement would include all emitters; such posturing may be more grand-standing than anything else. This agenda, then, appears to be more of a diversionary tactic than a goodwill negotiating stance, and provides a segue to the second claim to be delegitimized by The Globe and Mail: the integrity of the greenhouse gas reduction targets to which Canada committed in 2002 with its ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

7.7.3.2 Delegitimizing Canada’s emissions reduction commitments

In February, a political drama unfolds in the House of Commons in which the opposition Liberals and NDP take advantage of the minority Parliament to pass a bill to force the Conservative government to implement the Kyoto emissions reductions. After affirming Canada’s responsibility to act (‘Global warming is a reality. Canada must join the global effort to curb greenhouse gases’), an editorial declares,

There is no way, short of an economic disaster, that the nation can meet its treaty obligations to slash greenhouse-gas emissions to six per cent below 1990 levels... Despite their good intentions, Canadians would not accept the ensuing reality of drastically lowering living standards and diminished government services such as health care (...and Canada’s plan, Feb. 3/07).

Such fear-mongering (see also, Behind the gloss of Liberal Kyoto virtue, Feb. 16/07) is not backed up with evidence. Planting the seed that ‘...it is not even clear that it is in
Canada’s best interests to remain a party to the treaty,’ The Globe and Mail gives voice to an industry-generated conspiracy theory that the environmental agreement is really a cover for nefarious economic ends:

The Kyoto Protocol is essentially a trade treaty. Other nations...sent financially savvy negotiators. Canada sent aid and environmental experts. The terms reflect the imbalance.... According to Aldyen Donnelly of the Greenhouse Emissions Management Consortium, a not-for-profit group of some of Canada’s largest emitters, European nations were given more quota than they needed. If Canada does not meet its commitments, if it does not buy credits from other nations after 2012, Europe and Japan can impose sanctions on Canadian exports under World Trade Organization rules. “Essentially the treaty is operating against us as a permanent wealth transfer to other nations,” Ms. Donnelly concludes (...and Canada’s plan, Feb. 3/17).

Behind the innocuous name for a new “non-profit” group are Canada’s largest corporate polluters. Their narrative deliberately distorts the Kyoto negotiation process and the rules set out in the Protocol in order to delegitimize both. Framing Kyoto as a trade treaty is a classic red herring; suggesting that Canadian negotiators were duped by more wily operators, constructs an ‘other’ against which Canadians must defend. Once again, the ‘wealth transfer’ bogeyman is invoked. All this has the intent of undermining Canadians’ faith in collaborative multilateralism and the decisions of the previous government. Indeed, the editorialist attacks Opposition Leader Stéphane Dion, the Liberal face on the global warming file, as either ‘naïve or, more likely, he has disingenuously placed politics ahead of common sense’ (...and Canada’s plan, Feb. 3/07). A subsequent editorial title – ‘Behind the gloss of Liberal Kyoto virtue’– casts aspersions on the sincerity of the Liberal stance, and the ‘virtue’ of Kyoto itself, while further delegitimizing the Opposition leader.

No responsible government would come even close to reaching those targets without bankrupting the treasury. Global warming is a reality. Canada has a
moral obligation to curb its emissions. But instead of adopting smart policies, Mr. Dion has embraced a deeply flawed treaty – when it is no longer clear that it is in Canada’s best interests to remain a party to the pact (Behind the gloss of Liberal Kyoto virtue, Feb, 16/07).

Once again, we have the juxtaposition of a statement of concern and duty with a strident attack on the international community’s best effort on dealing with the problem. The answer, according to the paper, ‘lies in improved technology, not a poorer society’ (...and Canada’s plan, Feb. 3/17). The technological fix is invoked without elaboration, but it is in line with an emissions intensity reduction strategy, rather than absolute emissions reductions, later introduced by Prime Minister Harper. After questioning the sincerity of Harper’s apparent conversion on the environment file in an earlier editorial, the paper now positions the Prime Minister as potentially supportable:

Meanwhile, Mr. Harper has cannily adopted a green approach to governing. While he has not pledged to meet the Kyoto targets, next month’s budget will reportedly make substantial investments in an emission-reduction plan...The Prime Minister is recasting himself as a green politician who still cares about economic growth (Behind the gloss of Liberal Kyoto virtue, Feb. 16/07).

As an interesting aside, *The Globe and Mail* is inconsistent in its suspicion of multilateral environmental agreements and the motives of U.N. bureaucrats and signatory states. In the midst of these anti-Kyoto editorials, we find one on Japan’s flaunting of the International Whaling Commission’s (IWC) moratorium on commercial whaling. Of Japan’s ‘wailing’ to have the whaling moratorium lifted, the paper writes,

> Since most developed countries with the scientific capacity to assess the environmental consequences of renewed commercial whaling – including such former major whaling nations as Britain and the United States – refuse to support a resumption of the slaughter, Japan has been working to circumvent them by busily enlisting the support of client statelets to join the IWC.... It is Japan and its new whaling empire...that issued a statement last
week comically accusing anti-whaling countries of “imperialism.” Japan has even threatened to quit the IWC unless it is reformed. Clearly, the Japanese take their “research” too seriously (Japan’s wailing, Feb. 19/07).

If we were to substitute Japan for Canada and whaling for the oil industry, the hypocrisy of the paper’s Canadian exemptionalist stance on the Kyoto Protocol becomes obvious. Further, Japan’s charge of imperialism is glaringly similar to The Globe and Mail’s accusations that the Kyoto Protocol is really a nefarious trade agenda perpetrated by other countries with smarter negotiators, justifying a possible withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol. In short, The Globe and Mail’s version of environmentalism is contingent on whose economic interests are at stake: Japan is expected to conform to multilateral norms, while Canada is not. Similarly, the paper’s ongoing advocacy for protection of endangered species (e.g. whales) and protected natural areas remains a comfortable frame for exercising its environmental credentials. Consider this statement:

[T]he Conservative government’s recent funding of a national campaign to acquire ecologically sensitive land is an elegant investment in the Canada of tomorrow (Land for the preserving, Apr 9/07).

Not extending this concern to climate change and the energy sector reveals the boundaries of its tolerance of economic disruption to achieve environmental ends, and the actors to whom the paper attaches particular legitimacy.

Even within the bounds of the issue of global warming, however, we find glaring inconsistencies in The Globe and Mail’s discourse. Its response to a U.S. Supreme Court decision finds the paper arguing against itself on the matter of greenhouse gas reductions. In a case against the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for refusing to regulate limits on greenhouse gas emissions, the EPA argued that as a global problem, incremental regulation of emissions in the U.S. would make no material difference and
therefore was not the business of the EPA. The Supreme Court disagreed, as did *The Globe and Mail*.

Global warming is just that – a global problem, with global saints and global sinners. But to let that paralyze individuals or governments into inaction, on the ground that nothing they will do will make a difference, is an impulse to be fought at every turn (Do your job, EPA, Apr. 4/07).

This is a commendable stance, yet the anti-Kyoto discourse which *The Globe and Mail* engages contributes to policy paralysis, energizing disagreement among actors leading to long delays in finalizing greenhouse gas reduction plans and, by extension, shortening the timelines for achieving the Kyoto’s targets. Policy paralysis comes at the hand of federal-provincial gridlock, intransigent polluters and unsubstantiated predictions of economic catastrophe. No target is reachable if no action is taken to reach it.

Well before Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol...in April of 1998 [sic], skeptics doubted that its ambitious targets were reachable.... Last May, after years of Liberal inaction, the Conservative government conceded that the level of emissions in 2004 was 34.6 per cent above Canada’s Kyoto target....Emissions have since sailed even higher...Canadians could not make the major cuts necessary to reach targets that start next year without wrecking the economy... (How we got into Kyoto, Feb. 24/07).

With only one year remaining before emissions are to start declining under Kyoto rules (five years before the 2012 deadline), the claim of unreachability becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. A later editorial, which calls the opposition Liberals’ bill to force the government to meet the targets irresponsible, invokes the conclusions of Don Drummond, at the time the chief economist at the TD Bank.

*[According to Drummond] it is clear that any attempt to reach those targets now [emphasis added] would jeopardize the nation’s economic survival... [T]he shock from that attempt would be massive, because it would require a one-third reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions for each of the next five years....None of this lets Ottawa off the hook. Global warming is real. The*
Tories have a duty to produce a substantive package of market-based policies that would foster real reductions, albeit at a slower pace (Those Kyoto costs, Apr. 19/07).

Note the use of the word “now” in the first sentence. Had measures been taken several years earlier, that slower pace would have been possible; the paper, however, has never advocated for this. The Globe and Mail’s understanding of what ‘real reductions’ might be, or what a ‘package of market-based policies’ might look like are not clear to the reader. The inference is simply that there must be a way to achieve reductions without interfering with the economic activity of the oil and gas sector. Consistent with Blühdorn’s post-ecologism, the presupposition here is that the only legitimate options are market-based; no other approach is contemplated.

This discourse continues in the paper’s treatment of a major policy speech by the new Conservative environment minister, John Baird, in which he declares that Canada will not meet its Kyoto targets and instead introduces a plan that will halt the rise of emissions within three-to-five years. The failure lies with the Liberals, not the treaty itself, according to Baird (An overdue dose of eco-realism, Apr. 26/07). While the paper is prepared to accept Baird’s political version, it reasserts the claims the industry’s Greenhouse Emissions Management Consortium:

Still, the minister has not dealt with the basic problem of Kyoto: It is a trade deal that will impose heavy penalties on nations that do not meet their targets. As it stands, after 2012, Canada will be required to purchase pricey emissions credits from nations that have met their targets – or it will face tough trade sanctions (An overdue dose of eco-realism, Apr. 26/07).

This stance implies that Canada should therefore withdraw from the treaty to avoid such penalties. This is not a position that a minority government, even one sympathetic to the
argument, is going to make in the face of strong public support for the multilateral approach, which explains Baird’s soft-peddling of the Conservative’s agenda. The Globe and Mail, however, continues to beat the drum of unreasonable Kyoto targets and cautioning the government against repeating the Liberals’ mistake in the next round of climate change negotiations, arguably softening support for Kyoto in the public sphere (see Striking the right balance, Sep 10/07; Canada was right to balk, Nov. 24/07; The challenge in Bali, Dec. 4/07; Baird has it right, Dec. 8/07).

7.7.3.3 Canadian exceptionalism

The third strand of discourse delegitimizing climate change action elaborates the idea of Canadian exceptionalism: that is, Canada’s economic stake in fossil fuel extraction and export distinguishes this country from the other Kyoto signatories who are primarily energy importers, and therefore warrants different treatment within the Kyoto architecture. This discourse emerges from the Harper government’s economic strategy that is heavily dependent on extractive industries, especially fossil fuel exports. In the run-up to a G8 meeting in June of 2007 at which global warming is a major agenda item, The Globe and Mail repeats Prime Minister Harper’s framing of Canada as a global energy player:

Government officials wouldn’t say it in so many words, but what they meant was this: The Kyoto Protocol – and anything that looks like it – is dead for Canada… Canada has the opportunity and the obligation to tell the truth to

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92 Once the Conservatives form a majority government in 2011, however, they take the unprecedented action of pulling Canada from a United Nations agreement literally on the eve of the Kyoto deadline. By that time the political climate had changed dramatically and Harper paid little political price for the move. In the meantime, the Conservatives do nothing to implement Baird’s plan, either setting industry targets or establishing a cap-and-trade system. The rhetoric of action is sufficient to stave off and then diminish public expectations (see Section 7.3).
those nations: that it cannot meet its Kyoto commitments because the treaty’s terms are stacked against energy-exporting nations. As Canadian officials noted yesterday, any post-Kyoto deal must consequently recognize that Canada is unique in being both an economic powerhouse and an emerging energy superpower (For a truly global emissions regime, Jun 2/07).

In other words, Canada should have special status based on its own economic agenda. The editorial aligns Canada with the United States which did not ratify Kyoto and therefore is not bound by it, and against the Western European signatories from whence the leadership on multilateral action on climate change has come. President George W. Bush has just done an end-run around the Europeans who have been working to keep Kyoto on track, by offering to convene a series of meetings with the world’s 15 largest polluters including China, India and Brazil, in order to come up with a ‘truly global’ regime. Japan and Australia, also large polluters have signed on to the Bush plan.

While the government of Stephen Harper won’t admit it, its desire to defend Canada’s economic interests, and specifically its position as a rising energy powerhouse, puts it closer to the George W. Bush camp…. The big challenge will be to bring Europe into the tent – and that’s where Canada comes in. The Europeans are loathe to dump Kyoto, not least because they are swimming in carbon credits, which they would love to be able to sell to those polluting Canadians who have already blown their Kyoto-emissions commitments. The Europeans are under the impression that Canada can still be persuaded to stay within the protocol. Now is the time for Prime Minister Harper to set them straight (For a truly global emissions regime, Jun 2/07).

Here the geopolitics of climate change for the next several years is revealed. The American strategy is to shift leadership on the issue from the Europeans whose parliaments are relatively coherent and progressive on the file, to the large polluting
nations with significant vested interests. The United States is manoeuvring to replace the United Nations as the convener of nations around this problem, an arrangement that would allow the Bush administration to answer domestic demands for climate change action while writing the rules for its own engagement. While the former Liberal government resisted earlier American efforts to derail the U.N. climate change process, The Globe and Mail is correct in pointing out the alignment between the Bush administration and the Harper government’s exceptionalist agenda. Harper ‘won’t admit it’ because of the high level of public support for U.N. multilateralism and the unpopularity in Canada of the George W. Bush administration. While Harper’s minority government must tread carefully in the public sphere, The Globe and Mail takes on the role of truth-teller and common sense purveyor: European-led multilateralism through the

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93 The proportional electoral systems in most European countries produce parliaments that include Green and other environmentally-minded parties, whose policy influence is reflected by major parties and in government priorities (Carter, 2007).

94 The U.N. process is dealt a serious blow at the 2009 Copenhagen COP when President Obama arrives on the final day and convenes a side meeting with China, India, Brazil, and South Africa which produces the so-called Copenhagen Accord, which other countries are invited to endorse. The official meeting ‘takes note’ of the Accord but does not adopt it as the conference agreement. Nevertheless, it attracts support from Canada and other countries and establishes the terms on which subsequent U.N. COP negotiations are based. The result is a series of failed COPs until the world rallies in Paris, 2015, and produces a final agreement which includes all the major polluters. While the world celebrated, the Paris Accord is not legally binding and its emissions reduction commitments, which are simply the sum total of the voluntary commitments of the individual nations, fall far short of the goal of keeping warming below two degrees C. In that sense, it follows the Copenhagen Accord.

95 The antipathy of the Bush administration towards the U.N. stems from that country’s own exceptionalist stance opposing any external accountability on the world stage. Within the U.N. process, multilateral agreements are by consensus and (generally) binding, with accountability established through collectively negotiated reporting requirements and penalties for non-compliance. Outside of this system there is only voluntary transparency and no accountability mechanism.

96 At the December 2006 COP held in Montreal and chaired by then-Environment Minister Stéphane Dion, the United States, as a party to the 1992 Framework Convention, lobbied the parties unsuccessfully for the U.N. process to be abandoned after Kyoto’s 2012 expiry. Instead, the parties agreed to continue on the track set out in 1997 with a phased approach to ramping up commitments and targets over time. At the heart of the debate was the legitimacy of the multilateral United Nations process. The United States under President Bush was openly antagonistic to the U.N. in general. Therefore, it is not surprising that his administration would attempt to derail the climate change agenda.
U.N. does not serve Canada’s self-interest. Around the negotiating table, however, the Harper government’s agenda is successful:

Yesterday’s G8 summit to seek “substantial” but undefined cuts happily played into Canada’s need for more time while sustaining the push to tackle global warming. That vague commitment dashed European hopes of an agreement to reduce emissions to 50 per cent below 1990 levels…This is a window of opportunity for Canada. Ottawa should begin the hard work of persuading its summit partners and other nations that any new deal must take account of its special circumstances. (To set attainable greenhouse targets, Jun 8/07).

The editorial repeats the frame that the Kyoto rules have advantaged European countries while disadvantaging Canada, whose growing population, a growing economy and growing energy exports justify its distinct status. Framing of European governments as manipulators of environmental negotiations to advance their economic self-interest is integral to this framing.

Despite The Globe and Mail’s active participation in the Harper government’s strategy to delegitimize and then abandon the U.N. process, and its insistence that the growth of Canada’s energy industry must not be curtailed, the paper retains a schizophrenic voice on the problem itself and the government’s strategy. On the heels of its hard-line editorials on the G8 meeting, a contradictory editorial questions the Prime Minister’s global warming bona fides and his new affiliation with the very countries that President Bush offered to convene, including the United States itself. At issue is a rival climate-change pact, the Asia-Pacific Partnership.

The six members of that pact include nations that have refused to ratify the [Kyoto] protocol, such as the United States, and others among the world’s worst polluters, such as India and China. Together, they account for nearly half of all greenhouse-gas emissions (The new company he wants to keep, Sep 26/07).
According to Mr. Harper, Canada wants to be involved in that partnership in order to get those countries on-side with a new, all-inclusive global protocol. Surprisingly, given the stance in earlier editorials, *The Globe and Mail* disagrees. It acknowledges Canada’s credibility gap on this issue in the international arena, suggests that this move expands that gap, and even adopts a somewhat sympathetic tone in referring to the ongoing U.N. process.

The problem is that Canada does not yet have the credibility to be an effective bridge between the big emitters and those nations now struggling to forge a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol…. So why is he now joining the unbelievers? At the U.N. Mr. Harper urged all countries to cut emissions by 50 per cent below 2006 levels by 2050. That may constitute an astute bargaining position, but then he likely weakened that position by joining the non-Kyoto alliance. Canada needs a sensible post-Kyoto regime that balances the needs of its economy and its environment. Mr. Harper did not build bridges this week. He merely added to the confusion (The new company he wants to keep, Sep 26/07).

The Prime Minister could be forgiven for being confused by *The Globe and Mail*’s apparent about-face on Canada’s positioning vis-à-vis the U.N. process. The paper has never signaled an expectation that Canada might play its traditional honest broker role at the U.N. between Kyoto insiders and outsiders; on the contrary, it has urged the government to cross the floor, so to speak. Further, parallel with framing that deliberately seeks to delegitimize the Kyoto Protocol, the editorial now suggests that Canada faces its own legitimacy crisis on the international stage. From its strident calls for Canada to ‘set them straight’ on Canada’s commitment to Kyoto, referring to European members of the G8, the paper now confers some degree of legitimacy on the process by implying that Canada cannot just walk away; it must also demonstrate a commitment to global problem-solving that would be seen as credible by Kyoto backers.
This apparent nod to the Kyoto parties by calling out the ‘unbelievers’ is fleeting. At a Commonwealth meeting in advance of the COP 13 in Bali (December 2007), Harper refuses to sign onto a statement calling for ‘binding commitments to deep, absolute emission reductions by developed countries,’ proposing instead wording that refers to all countries, knowing full-well that India would not agree. The editorial complains:

Canada was once again being made out to be a global environmental villain yesterday. An unnamed senior Commonwealth official ridiculed this country’s obstructionism over efforts to reach a Commonwealth consensus on cuts to greenhouse-gas emissions, and another official sought to personalize Canada’s opposition, casting Mr. Harper in the role of evil genius by expressing surprise at his “vehemence” on the issue...But Canada’s objections to the Commonwealth commitment should have been no surprise since the proposed statement seeks to perpetuate the thinking that made the Kyoto Protocol a failed instrument for achieving a significant reduction in carbon-dioxide emissions (Canada was right to balk, Nov. 24/07).

Kyoto is a failed instrument; the Prime Minister is right to oppose it. This stand-off carries over to COP 13 in Bali. Whereas in September The Globe and Mail’s concern was for Canadian legitimacy in the U.N. process, the advice now is to play hardball:

Bali is no place for Boy Scouts. Canada has to do what it can to bring India, China and the United States into a framework for new talks [negotiations on a post-Kyoto accord], while resisting the imposition of more Draconian targets on our economy.... Canada should commit itself to more talks to set realistic targets while dodging more impossible commitments (The challenge in Bali, Dec. 4/07).

Bali is indeed ‘tricky’ for Canada: Minister Baird needs to divert attention from Canada’s failure to live up to the first agreement by keeping the spotlight on China and India, while arguing for less ambition across the board. The ‘dodge’ has to do with retaining legitimacy while sustaining the unsustainable. The Globe and Mail frames it this way:

Despite the objections of environmentalists, Canada is right to demand that any successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol...avoid unrealistic targets and
tough penalties on earlier non-compliance.... [T]hat is the only sensible way
to preserve economic growth, to fend off punitive sanctions against this
country for current failures, and to protect the environment.... Deep cuts now
would be economically ruinous. And any successor version of Kyoto that
would penalize Canada for not meeting its past unrealistic targets would be
unacceptable. Canada is not walking away from its moral obligations. It
wants any successor agreement to include major emitters..., recognition of
Canada’s position as an energy-exporting nation with a growing economy and
an increasing population (Baird has it right, Dec. 8/07).

Such rationalization is in response to domestic and international criticism of Canada’s
negotiating position as unethical. Neither *The Globe and Mail* nor the Harper government
share that ethical frame. Any moral obligation, according to this editorial, is either
obviated by Canada’s so-called unique circumstances, or met by them; either
interpretation is plausible. In any case, the ethical framing is vastly different from earlier
periods when *The Globe and Mail* advocated for Canada to “do the right thing,” “go
first,” and anticipate and prevent environmental damage. Further, the editorialist’s
suggestion that Canada’s “do less” stance would indeed meet environmental goals is
classic post-ecologist framing.

This study year ends with two editorials praising the performance of Environment
Minister Baird who succeeded in dampening ambition at COP 13 in the face of an ever-
increasing global crisis.

Environmentalists may have bestowed their “fossil of the year” award on
Canada, but it is clear the Conservative government’s hard-line approach at
the United Nations climate-change talks in Bali has forestalled extreme
environmental demands…. But even though Canada had few friends at the
table, it has survived to talk another day (Setting emission targets, Dec. 15/07).
*The Globe and Mail* engages in a reverse logic here. Canada has not just failed to meet its Kyoto reduction target, its emissions have grown by 33 per cent. This represents not a shortfall in effort, but a refusal to engage any effort whatsoever to reduce emissions. Rather than to ramp up ambition, or double-down on action to reduce emissions, the goalpost itself is moved: success is measured as staving off commitments.

Having worked frantically over the past year to dispel the impression that his government is indifferent to the environment, Mr. Baird could have spent his time at the Indonesian resort spouting platitudes about saving the planet, signing on to ambitious emission-reduction targets without protest, returned home to accept accolades from the green movement – and then done nothing. That, after all, is what the Liberals did under Jean Chrétien....Instead...Mr. Baird spent the better part of two weeks arguing – correctly – that such a goal (which would require reductions of 38 to 53 per cent from current levels) was unrealistic.... No doubt the Conservatives have taken a major public-opinion hit for their approach. It does not help that former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has been running around blaming his successors for the failure to meet Kyoto targets – neglecting to mention that they have been saddled with the mess he left behind (Canada’s case in the Bali talks, Dec. 18/07).

What distinguishes *The Globe and Mail’s* discourse on global warming throughout this study year is the noticeable absence of any reference to the evolving scientific context for these geopolitical negotiations. As the years roll by, the case for serious emissions reductions is strengthened, and understanding of the extent of reductions necessary to mitigate climate change deepens. If the original Kyoto goal negotiated in 1997 represents some level of responsiveness to the scientific demands of the problem (critics would say it was inadequate), and if each successive report by the IPCC strengthens the scientific case and shortens the time frame for preventative interventions, then moving the political goalpost further afield to accommodate economic growth projections is counterintuitive and counterproductive. What is required from a scientific perspective becomes
increasingly detached from what is politically palatable. Throughout the first three study periods, *The Globe and Mail* is quick to argue that political and economic expediency are not legitimate bottom lines for environmental decision-making. Editorials during these periods frequently refer to scientific assessments of a problem as justification for strong government action. In this final period, other than to acknowledge the veracity of global warming science (following a rather embarrassing dalliance with climate change skepticism), *The Globe and Mail*’s extended treatment of global warming politics in 2007 invokes no scientific assessment of appropriate mitigation action. Ecological-rationality and future-oriented ethical framing has given way entirely to economicist, self-interested framing, punctuated by frequent invocation of platitudes of concern and the need for action. At no point does the paper recount ongoing scientific developments and increasingly dire prognoses, or explain how its stance (and that of the Harper government) aligns with evidence-based emissions reduction requirements. In that scientific context, *The Globe and Mail*’s discourse appears more delusional than cynical in tone, reflecting an unwillingness – perhaps even a cognitive inability - to honestly confront the implications of global warming. The discourse must sustain the unsustainable status quo; anything else is unthinkable.

### 7.7.4 2012 editorials

What a difference five years makes. From the highest number of eco-political editorials in this final study period, editorial interest in 2012 is the lowest in the entire study.\(^97\) Only seven editorials broach environmental topics: four are concerned with the oil and gas

\(^97\) The previous year, 2011, is only slightly higher at 11 editorials.
industry, while three address the Harper government’s overt attacks on environmental groups. None of them directly addresses climate change. That issue is no longer on the editorial agenda.

To provide context, we need to look back at 2011. The political landscape changes dramatically in May of that year with the Conservatives led by Stephen Harper winning their first majority mandate, freeing the government from the constraints of a minority Parliament. Immediately on his return from COP 17 in Durban, South Africa in December, Environment Minister Peter Kent announces Canada’s withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol, thereby avoiding the penalties that would be imposed for not meeting this country’s reduction targets by the 2012 deadline. In the run-up to COP 17, *The Globe and Mail* repeats its counsel that the minister should ‘show strong leadership...toward realizable goals’ (Progress in a time of divergence, Nov. 30/11). Once the announcement is made, the paper praises it but also urges the government to do something about domestic emissions.

Canada was right to leave the Kyoto Protocol, rather than continue to take part in the false pretense that there is an international consensus. But the federal government should not just wait passively for a serious multilateral treaty to emerge, some year, some decade hence. Rather, it should consider adopting limited, moderate measures to reduce carbon emissions....[While] a thoroughgoing, root-and-branch climate policy is not sustainable...[Canada]... should show some leadership by example (Half a loaf can be wholesome, Dec. 14/11).

The irony of the paper’s position is not lost: with *The Globe and Mail*’s support, Canada has actively worked against rather than for international consensus, and with the Kyoto withdrawal has just abjured its obligation and thus leadership on the international stage. Yet the paper now suggests that a leadership role with other countries, many of which
have met their Kyoto targets, is somehow possible by demonstrating a commitment to half measures (‘half a loaf’). Is this stance cynical, delusional or just naïve? Whatever the case, this is the last climate change editorial for an entire year, arguably because the paper’s agenda on that front has been realized with the Harper government’s withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol.

The editorial focus now becomes how to position Canada’s oil and gas industry favourably vis-à-vis its environmental performance in order to secure international markets. The industry’s reputation as an environmental bad actor is impeding its expansionist agenda. From the paper’s perspective, it is in the industry’s self-interest to be better environmental stewards. In April 2011, an editorial counsels that energy corporations opposing limited conservation measures proposed by the Alberta government are shooting themselves in the foot:

A protracted fight will only magnify concern about the oil sands at home and abroad. That would be self-defeating, because the sands are a precious resource, and their development should continue. But if Canadian bitumen is going to find a welcome market in the United States and elsewhere, its developers ought to start reading the political tea leaves (Harmony of the sands and the land, April 8/11).

The harmony of the title refers to political, not ecological harmony; conservation measures are public relations tools, not environmental protection measures. Achieving Canadian prosperity is contingent on a climate action strategy that is judged credible by the international community, along with a discourse that asserts the ‘enduring need for carbon-based fuels’ in the face of a growing counter-discourse of decarbonization (Catching up with our climate rhetoric, Apr 21/11).
In that regard, the campaign by the newly-established Ethical Oil Institute, funded in part by ‘ethical oil producers’ and with close ties to the Harper government, to frame tar sands bitumen as “ethical oil” draws praise from *The Globe and Mail*. From *The Globe and Mail*’s perspective, the legitimacy of this campaign speaks to the growing influence of the counter-hegemonic anti-tar sands discourse. Despite its ‘crude’ rhetoric, the campaign is an effective and overdue response to the grossly distorted slurs used by some environmental groups to attack the oil-sands industry in Alberta...epitomized by the recent “Rethink Alberta” campaign, an alarmist attack that implies Alberta is awash in toxic sludge and populated by poisoned aboriginals and dead ducks... Politicians...and the oil sands industry itself, have made the oil sands vulnerable to such attacks....That’s where EthicalOil.org can help.

There has been strong response to Mr. Velshi’s [‘former federal Conservative political staffer’ who is ‘driving the campaign] use of what one critic calls the “dark arts of spin and misdirection” on behalf of the oil sands, but EthicalOil.org’s ads should be viewed for what they are: a welcome effort to level the field (The oil-diamond analogy, Aug. 1/11).

In other words, while the Institute’s hands are not clean, such reframing of the tar sands narrative is fair game.

The paper is less supportive of the Institute’s second front in the tar sands propaganda wars which hits its stride in 2012: the campaign to delegitimize environmental and First Nations groups by framing them as “puppets” of foreign interests who fund their anti-tar sands work, and to undermine their fundraising capacity by having their charitable status...
revoked (DeSmog Blog; Ethical Oil.org; O’Neil, 2012). Once the Harper government achieves its majority in Parliament, the government adopts this discursive construction of the activist community. While not acknowledging Ethical Oil.org as the source, *The Globe and Mail* says this goes too far. Indeed, three of the seven eco-political editorials in 2012 criticize the government’s aggressive stance against environmental groups. In the context of the National Energy Board’s assessment of Enbridge Gas’s application to build the Northern Gateway pipeline through northern British Columbia, the editorial responds to an open letter by Natural Resources Minister Joe Oliver in which he

…denounced “environmental and other radical groups” who “threaten to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda.” They “use funding from foreign special interest groups to undermine Canada’s national economic interest,” he said in an open letter. They even, if all else fails, “will take a quintessential American approach: sue everyone and anyone to delay the project even further.” All this noise about foreign money, U.S. special interests and the U.S. approach of using the courts – it almost sounds like anti-Americanism. It’s a bogeyman, though not terribly frightening. There is no reason to think the independent panel reviewing the pipeline will be hijacked. In fact, any sign that people are not given a fair chance to be heard would make court action all the more likely to succeed....The government should respect the process enough not to heap scorn on the participants (A radical attack on due process, Jan 11/12).

As the Conservative campaign against environmental groups continues, *The Globe and Mail* becomes increasingly critical of it. The omnibus budget bill of 2012 allocates eight million dollars to the Canada Revenue Agency to investigate the political activity of registered charities. *The Globe and Mail* calls it a ‘dishonourable attack meant to intimidate environmental groups’ and a ‘witch hunt.’

Foreign sources? It’s not illegal for Canadian charities to take money from outside the country. And why should it be? If a Canadian cancer researcher... receives money from a foreign foundation, what is wrong with that?... But foreign charitable donations for advocacy? Why, they’re a threat to the
Canadian way of life! The real target is obvious: environmental groups, especially those opposed to the Northern Gateway pipeline.... Environmentalists have every right to seek out foreign donations, just as foreign oil companies have every right to make their views known on the perceived benefits of the Gateway pipeline. The pipeline may turn out to have great benefits for Canada, but the environmental risks need to be discussed, and the federal government ought to respect the rights of Canadian charities to raise money abroad and express, in a non-partisan way, their concerns. Who is the hijacker here? (Beware of foreigners bringing money, Mar. 31/12).

In the face of such criticism, the ‘witch hunt’ becomes an increasingly futile attempt to legitimize the government’s deliberate targeting of pipeline opponents; public attention turns from the targeted groups to those government actors whose discourse becomes ever more improbable.

Environment Minister Peter Kent’s unsupported accusations of “money laundering” involving foreign and Canadian environmental charities are part of an apparent campaign to smear and intimidate groups opposed to the Northern Gateway pipeline....The Environment Minister has accused unnamed environmental charities of criminal activity, and yet provides no specifics...There is paranoia, there is partisanship, there are wild allegations. But evidence? No....The only nefarious thing in sight at the moment is a government bent on quashing a legitimate debate (Wildly uncharitable allegations, May 7/12).

Implicating the federal government as the hijacker of the regulatory process, in this case the National Energy Board hearings, and defending the right of environmental advocates to participate fully in administrative processes, as the editorialist does, confounds any simplistic characterization of The Globe and Mail as a pro-oil sands co-conspirator.

Alone among many other frames in earlier study periods, the frame of administrative rationality retains its robustness in this final period. Admittedly, the need for regulatory processes reviewing tar sands expansion proposals to be perceived by the public as fair is
part of the environmental legitimacy make-over that *The Globe and Mail* says is necessary for the government to undertake. Nevertheless, the idea that expert-driven, arm’s-length administrative tribunals will sort the wheat from the chaff of competing claims, thereby arriving at objective, legitimate judgements of the public interest, reveals a deep faith in the modernist ideal of expert-driven arbitration as a means of resolving public conflict. In this vein, the editorials above acknowledge that there are legitimate environmental concerns associated with this pipeline proposal that deserve to be heard. Given objective facts, rational, informed people will make rational decisions. Unstated is the presupposition that the expert-derived “truth” will align with the “common sense” that the newspaper conveys in daily editorials.\(^9^9\)

This assumption that oil and gas can be developed safely by a responsible industry is evident in two environmental editorials in 2012 that deal with the messy reality of producing and transporting diluted bitumen. The report of a U.S. regulator on a 2010 bitumen spill from an Enbridge pipeline into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan compared the company’s spill response to the ‘buffoonish policemen’ of the Keystone Kops. Reacting to the regulator’s report, *The Globe and Mail* asserts that while ‘pipelines remain the safest means to transport oil and gas,’ given the ‘huge amount of oil and gas being moved, some accidents are probably inevitable.’ Even so, the reputational damage to the industry has been largely self-inflicted....It is not the sort of ruling that is likely to build public confidence in pipelines, especially coming

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\(^9^9\) *The Globe and Mail* holds out the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement as an example of rational environmental leadership. Negotiated between forestry companies and certain “blue chip” environmental groups, it divides large swaths of the forest into conservation and industrial zones, with the industry committing to harvest only in designated areas. This is known as an offset agreement, whereby the industry gets to operate without interference in exchange for relinquishing leases or licences in certain areas (Catching up with our climate rhetoric, Apr. 21/11).
after three spills this spring in Alberta....It is in the industry’s interests that the risk is minimized and the response is credible (An industry’s self-inflicted wounds, July 12/12).

The second editorial deals with the strengthened environmental monitoring program in the Alberta tar sands, a joint federal-provincial response to mounting criticism by scientists of the existing system. The Globe and Mail is ready to criticize the status quo, but also to repeat the government’s rather convoluted rationale for a new investment in environmental monitoring:

Despite years of claims by industry that the oil sands were being developed in a sustainable manner, report after report noted that there was little scientific evidence to support this and insisted that far more data needed to be gathered. Finally, industry and government players woke up to the fact that they had to gather more evidence to prove their position, especially in light of U.S. and European concerns over “dirty oil”.... [A]s [federal Environment Minister] Mr. Kent said this week, the oil-sands monitoring program is to “give some of our critics abroad tangible scientific evidence of the responsible way the oil sands...are being developed”... (Oil sands monitoring must be credible, Jul 20/12).

The framing here is at once critical and supportive. Several reports prior to 2012 contain evidence of actual contamination of water and air from tar sands installations (for instance, see Kelly et al, 2009; Kelly et al, 2010; Weinhold, 2011). Yet the editorial frames the problem as a lack of evidence to prove claims of no contamination. The call is for more monitoring to prove that the environment is not being harmed, rather than for tar sands operations to clean up proven contamination. The (il)logical extension of this framing is that monitoring could go on indefinitely in a futile effort to prove no impact, even as evidence of negative impact piles up. This typifies post-ecologism’s discursive contortions that avoid confronting its own contradictions. The idea that economic and
environmental goals might be fundamentally incompatible, even in the face of contrary evidence, cannot be broached.

The presupposition that environmental problems associated with tar sands expansion can be credibly mitigated persists in The Globe and Mail’s response to the election of Alberta premier Alison Redford, who promised to ‘build bridges’ with the rest of Canada in order to advance the expansion of the oil industry in Alberta. The paper positions the new premier as a moral force who can legitimize tar sands expansion nationally and internationally:

The future belongs to Alberta. It is an oil-producing province in an oil-hungry world. . . . [G]iven the importance of Alberta’s oil industry to Canada, the ability to ease environmental concerns over the impact of that vital industry is critical. Alberta can’t duck that challenge. Albertans won’t benefit from a leader who hunkers down or carps; they need someone who sees the bigger picture, and can talk to people who have different perspectives. . . . The province is an economic leader and Ms. Redford is in the position now to enhance its standing as a moral and national leader (The challenge of being rich, Apr. 25/12).

Imbuing Alison Redford’s leadership with a moral dimension reveals the extent to which The Globe and Mail conflates tar sands development with a broadly-cast national/public interest, and not simply a provincial or corporate interest (compare this with its stance on the need to save South Moresby from the British Columbia logging industry in the 1980s). It presupposes the possibility of establishing a moral authority that would assuage the rising tide of concern for the environmental and health impacts of the industry. The first indication of Redford seizing that mantle comes a few months following her election, when she indicates that the Alberta government is willing to take the lead on environmental regulation in the face of federal inaction. In its response, The Globe and
Mail reaffirms its stance that an environmental regulatory regime is the price of admission to oil export markets.

For Alberta, such willingness [to impose environmental regulations] should be considered a matter of enlightened self-interest. To simply move full-throttle towards oil-sands development, without adequate checks in place, would be to risk squandering the industry’s long-term potential. In order to fully capitalize on demand for its oil, Alberta needs to convince the United States and other international markets that it takes mounting environmental concerns seriously. If it speaks to Ottawa’s relative passivity on the file, it also suggests that Alberta is increasingly coming to see economic and environmental interests as interrelated rather than in conflict with one another (Alberta’s newly ambitious aims, Aug. 15/12).

This stance belies a misunderstanding of the confluence of economy and environment. In its original 1980s construction, the discourse proposed that environmentally damaging industries would be replaced in a new sustainable or “green” economy, not that damaging industries could continue with a bit of tweaking to make them less harmful. Missing here is any acknowledgement that tar sands producers have limited financial tolerance for environmental protection constraints. Nor is there an understanding that tar sands operations at their current scale, let alone any expansion, pose non-mitigatable impacts to land, water, biodiversity, human health and climate. Such possibility is unthinkable within a frame that views the industry as integral to the national public interest.

7.7.5 The 2015 election campaign and the post-election Trudeau effect

The Harper regime’s framing of the tar sands as central to the nation’s wellbeing is taken on by The Globe and Mail, despite its criticism of the tactics of the federal government in pushing that agenda. How, then, does the paper respond to the election of a government that campaigned on a renewed commitment to climate change goals? In this final section, I analyze editorials written in 2015 and 2016, the federal election year and the first full
year of the new Liberal government led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Since my sample editorial years have generally spanned five years, I do not cover these two years equally. In 2015, 33 eco-political editorials are published; by far the majority of articles (22 of the 33) address topics relate to climate change and the energy industry, most frequently as separate topics but also in relation to each other. Since my specific interest is The Globe and Mail’s positioning during the election campaign and the two months following the October 19 election, I analyze selected editorials published between June and December. In 2016, 24 editorials fall within the eco-political category; once again, energy development and climate change dominate the landscape (22 of the 24). I provide an overview of this entire year.

After the editorial drought of 2012, by 2015 climate change is back on the paper’s agenda. This is a function of persistent international focus, public and political criticism of the Harper government’s anti-environmental record, as well as aggressive new climate policies of the Ontario (Kathleen Wynne) and Quebec (Pierre Couillard) Liberal governments. In an uncharacteristic assertion of fact, The Globe and Mail appears to awake to the legitimacy of the climate change issue. It begins with a surprised reaction to the declaration of the June meeting of the G7 countries, attended by Stephen Harper, that the world economy will have to “decarbonize” by the end of the century, a claim The Globe and Mail says is ‘hard to imagine.’

The declaration includes a commitment to reduce global greenhouse-gas emissions by 40 to 70 percent by 2050, compared with 2010 levels. But it’s the “decarbonization” that is eye-catching. It is supremely ambitious, but also somewhat obvious. If global warming is real (it is), then over time the economy must dramatically cut emissions, and maybe even move to zero emissions, to limit the damage of climate change (Necessity, mother of green invention, June 9/15).
Here the editorial makes two contradictory claims: what is ‘hard to imagine’ (an honest reaction) is also ‘somewhat obvious’ (an effort at face-saving). There is no indication that The Globe and Mail has ever considered such a prospect; in fact, it has repeatedly invoked the ‘enduring need for carbon-based fuels’ as justification for the expansion of Canada’s tar sands (for example, Catching up with our climate rhetoric, Apr 21/11). After reflecting on the significance of the G7 statement, the editorial board appears to be trying to convince itself that climate change is, in fact, a public policy priority.

... [the accumulation of words around climate change, year after year, is bending inexorably toward action....If you don’t believe in global warming, you can stop reading right now. We won’t try to persuade you. Like the G7, we take the conclusions of climate science – that warming is happening, and that it is driven by man-made carbon emissions – as a given. The scientific consensus means that political action to address it is inevitable. Something big is going to have to be done, eventually.... (It’s the economy, stupid, June 13/15).

That the editorial has to recite the “climate change is real” mantra in 2015 reveals how disengaged it has been from the international scientific and political momentum behind the issue. That debate had been left on the meeting room floor at the 1992 Earth Summit when the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed by 192 countries. Yet the above quote suggests The Globe and Mail has not moved on from there. After an embarrassing flirtation with denialism (1997), The Globe and Mail for a time got behind the Liberals’ multilateral agenda (early 2002) but then adopted and maintained the anti-Kyoto discourse of the oil and gas industry and the Harper Conservatives (late 2002; 2007). In government, Stephen Harper constructed a firewall around Canada, behind which the paper was content to park, claiming special status as an energy exporter and conflating environmental targets with public relations (2011-12). In 2015, the G7 meeting
is a wake-up call, but The Globe and Mail is stuck in the 1990s. While the editorialist writes, ‘something big is going to have to be done, eventually,’ the scientific community and other nations are saying, that luxury is long past. The window is rapidly closing to avoid dangerous levels of warming – indeed, it may already be too late. Thus the urgency with which the U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is organizing towards COP 21 to be held in Paris in December 2015, which is being framed as the world’s last chance to get it right.

Yet, Canada’s newspaper of record for the intellectual, economic and political elites has not grasped the urgency and implication of what is at stake, which is, phasing out the fossil fuel industry. Evidence of this cognitive gap is its trite invocation of a magic bullet that will deliver this ‘supremely ambitious’ result.

Solving the 21st century’s most important issue means turning to the teachings of another science, namely economics. Global warming should be an opportunity, politically and ideologically, for any serious conservative party...They’d turn to the free market....Raise the price of it [carbon pollution] – and let the market, millions of people and businesses, each individually figure out how to save money by reducing their use of this newly expensive thing, while also stimulating researchers and entrepreneurs into developing alternatives. If we put a price on pollution and harness the power of the markets, it can be done, possibly even without harming the economy (It’s the economy, stupid, June 13/15).

Despite a decade of economic turmoil in Western countries, neoliberal dogma on the power of the market to deliver social goals is still dominates The Globe and Mail editorial board. Rather than understanding the problem of global warming as a consequence of growth-centric market economics, the paper asserts that it can be absorbed into the market economy as a new opportunity for growth, given the correct
price signal. The reference to ‘any serious conservative party’ is a nod to the Harper Conservatives, setting the marker for comparing and evaluating election platforms in the upcoming campaign.

Despite its tacit acknowledgment of the G7’s decarbonization discourse, The Globe and Mail retains its 2011-12 framing of tar sands expansion as integral to Canada’s national interest. This is evident in the paper’s assessment of the federal parties’ treatment of bitumen pipelines in their election platforms. The editorial reviews the four parties’ pipeline platforms, and then concludes:

Canada needs a federal government that favours moving Canadian oil to market as cheaply, efficiently and expeditiously as possible. The Harper government was right to push this to the top of the agenda. It was right to say that Canada needs new pipelines. But Canada also needs stronger, clearer environmental rules for pipeline approval, and public trust in those rules. The government of the day should be able to step back and leave it to respected regulators to determine which privately-built projects pass muster. The next government must also set tighter greenhouse gas emission limits – and leave it to the market to figure out how to most efficiently hit those targets (Which party is right on pipelines? Aug. 15/15).

Two presuppositions are apparent: first, that pipelines will be built, and second, that administrative tribunals can be designed to garner public trust in their determination of

100 Variations of this discourse are common. Preston Manning, populist founder of the Reform Party of Canada, promotes its pure market fundamentalist form to conservatives (Manning, 2014). Since global warming is seen as simply an externality or market failure, which can be corrected through proper price signals, nothing more needs to be done than impose a tax on carbon. Others invoke the economic opportunities embedded in a ‘root and branch’ transformation of the economy as a means of gaining public support for getting off fossil fuels, and include pricing carbon as one of several policy instruments needed to achieve this transformation.

101 The Globe and Mail will go on to endorse the Conservative Party in the election campaign, although not its leader, Stephen Harper. It takes the rather improbable stance that, should he win the election, the Prime Minister should resign and turn the party reins over to someone less offensive on the democratic front (The Tories: An imperfect choice, Oct 17/15).
which ones ‘pass muster.’ As in 2012, The Globe and Mail invokes an administrative rationalist frame, revealing a naive understanding of pipeline and climate change politics. Even with the new constraint of limits on greenhouse gas emissions, the editorialist sees no contradiction in this position; indeed, it anticipates this criticism:

> These objectives are not diametrically opposed. Being solely pro-pipe [Conservatives] or singularly pro-environment [Greens] may be the easiest to sell to voters. But Canada needs both [Liberals, New Democrats] (Which party is right on pipelines? Aug. 15/15).

The proposition, then, is that the next federal government must both facilitate pipeline expansion and set tighter environmental rules, while regaining public trust in the process.  

The following week, The Globe and Mail compares the federal parties’ carbon pricing policies. After a short lesson in neoliberal economics, the editorial asserts, ‘A pro-market party should be the most favourably disposed to a market-based plan’ (Which party is right on carbon? Aug. 22/15). Yet the neoliberal Harper government fails the test. It has set carbon reduction targets without measures to meet them, and it is campaigning against carbon pricing platforms of the other parties. The paper calls the NDP’s cap-and-trade scheme unreliable and open to manipulation. The Liberals endorse a price on carbon but refuse to commit to one, probably trying to avoid the 2008 campaign debacle in which then-leader Stéphane Dion’s Green Shift became the Conservative’s punching bag, with great effect. Only the Green Party has a definitive carbon pricing scheme: their fee and

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102 As Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau takes on this discourse with predictable results. The expansion-protection discourse is seen as a massive deception by climate, pipeline and First Nations activists (for instance, Minsky, Nov. 30, 2016; Harris, Feb. 25, 2017).
dividend system would see a fee levied on fossil fuels at the source, with revenues dispersed as dividends back to Canadians. Of the Green scheme, the paper writes,

It isn’t perfect – its goal of pushing the carbon tax ever higher may be too ambitious and its plans to use some of the carbon cash for income redistribution is questionable – but we’re grading on the curve. As such, the Greens get the highest mark (Which party is right on carbon? Aug. 22/15).

Such qualifications are not insubstantive. Without ratcheting up the carbon tax, the necessary emissions reductions will not be realized, and course, income redistribution is anathema to neoliberal economics. Further, the paper ignores the full package of climate change measures which all parties have. Keeping the narrow focus on climate pricing is consistent with the market-fundamentalist view that government intervention should be limited to minor price corrections. This is a simplistic, naïve view, according to analyses which suggest that unless carbon is priced in the hundreds of dollars per tonne – a level The Globe and Mail would surely reject - scientifically-determined reduction targets cannot be met (McKibben, 2016; Weber, 2016).

Once the Liberals are elected, The Globe and Mail resumes its advocacy for both carbon taxes and pipelines:

Mr. Trudeau’s convictions about climate change appear more firmly felt than his predecessor’s. And he is right to have invited all the premiers to the Paris conference early next month. But he should vigorously urge a carbon tax, rather than cap-and-trade schemes, which tend to encourage deal-making and patronage.... At the same time, this week’s Alberta budget is a reminder to support Canada’s oil-and-gas industry...If enough Canadian oil is to be exported, the Keystone XL pipeline project, which the prime-minister-designate supports, needs to be lobbied for in Washington, D.C.(Justin Trudeau’s to-do list, Oct. 31/15).
Following President Obama’s rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline application, a lengthy editorial decrying the pairing of that particular project with climate change (‘it will have zero impact on global warming’), and the pejorative labeling of ‘Canada’s oil sands as dirty oil,’ praises the Prime Minister and proposes next steps:

[T]here are still major steps the Trudeau government can take to improve Canada’s ability to move oil, while also improving the country’s ability to fight global warming. Conveniently, the new government has promised to do both. On global warming...it has said it will work with the provinces to come up with national targets, and... the new government is in favour of putting a price on carbon...That’s a stark contrast to the previous government’s position....In opposition, the Liberals promised a new, more independent and effective process for reviewing Canadian pipelines. A process that might reject some proposals but which would have the public legitimacy to make its stamp of approval stick. The new government has to start delivering, and quickly (With Keystone dead, what’s next? (Nov. 7/15).

There is nothing new here; the paper maintains its stance that oil expansion and fighting global warming are not incompatible. The question is, what will the Prime Minister do? While waiting for the answer, Alberta’s New Democratic government releases its climate action plan, moving that province ‘from pariah to paragon,’ according to The Globe and Mail. Among other measures, the plan, supported by the oil patch, will impose a carbon tax across the economy.

Some are calling this the most radical change to Alberta’s economy in decades. But the goal of this policy is to be as un-radical as possible....If the policy works as intended, Canada’s most carbon-based province will meaningfully lower its greenhouse gas emissions without destroying its oil industry or economy.....Dealing with climate change need not involve choosing...between a “drill baby drill” status quo and end-to-oil environmentalism.... (A sound plan to put a price on carbon, Nov. 24/15).

What the paper considers ‘meaningful’ action on climate change is not defined.
The final editorial of this year weighs in on the multilateral agreement negotiated at the Paris Conference of the Parties (COP 21) in December. While Prime Minister Trudeau’s intervention there receives widespread international and national news coverage, declaring Canada’s leadership on climate change, The Globe and Mail does not address his claims in an editorial. Instead the focus is the Paris agreement itself. With a tone of skepticism, the editorial provides a revisionist history of the legally-binding Kyoto Accord (‘a total bust’) and suggests that the voluntary Paris agreement stands the change of accomplishing more than Kyoto. It couldn’t achieve less. The hope is that international peer pressure and domestic public opinion will encourage governments to act. In democratic societies...that’s not an entirely delusional idea....In Canada, the Libs are relying on the provinces to put carbon plans in place...However, those steps aren’t likely to meet even Canada’s relatively modest carbon-reduction goals. Ottawa managed to generate a lot of public goodwill in Paris, without actually doing anything – or asking voters to accept unpleasant new taxes or costs. The coming months and years will not be so easy (Yes, we have a (non-binding) deal, Dec. 15/15).

Editorial ambivalence is palpable. While it seems to deride the voluntary nature of the Paris agreement, in the past it has also excoriated the binding provisions of the Kyoto Protocol. While it counselled Prime Minister Harper not to make ‘unrealistic’ emissions reductions commitments, it now suggests that Canada’s ‘relatively modest’ targets (set by Mr. Harper), and certainly the government’s ill-defined measures to meet them, might not stand up to scrutiny. In predicting a rough road ahead in getting the national program in place, the paper stays detached, not revealing how it will play its hand as the new climate change politics unfold. The fact that it does not endorse Canada’s renewed commitment to the multilateral process suggests its Harper-era bias against it remains unchanged.
In the final year of this study (2016) in which the Paris agreement becomes the global context for national climate politics, we see little change in editorial stance. The year is dominated by Ottawa’s efforts to wrangle a consensus from the provincial premiers which it can then call a national plan. This inevitably involves horse-trading and promises of financial transfers, and ultimately the refusal of two premiers to sign on.

The Energy East pipeline occupies a great deal of editorial attention during the first half of the year. In January, the paper scolds the group of Quebec mayors led by Montreal’s Denis Coderre for displaying ‘astounding provincialism’ in opposing the pipeline. Mr. Coderre appears as a ‘greedy toll collector’ prepared to block a national project because not enough benefit will flow to his city. In the paper’s view, the pipeline will bring Alberta oil to Montreal and to Saint John, where it can be refined for the Canadian market....The pipeline won’t reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but it won’t increase them either, since the Alberta crude will replace foreign imports. That imported oil will no longer have to be shipped to Montreal on tankers in the St. Lawrence River – where a spill would be far more damaging than a pipeline leak – and through myriad pipelines that already exist in the area. A cross-country pipeline would also reduce the transport of crude oil by rail, which is far less safe (Petty pipeline provincialism, Jan. 25/16).

This account of the benefits of Energy East is largely unsubstantiated. As with the anti-Kyoto discourse, The Globe and Mail takes on the nationalistic framing of the Energy East pipeline without testing its claims. Neither refinery mentioned has the technology to upgrade diluted bitumen, which would constitute the bulk of the product to flow through

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103 This cross-Canada pipeline from Alberta to the Bay of Fundy coast in Saint John, New Brunswick was proposed as an alternative when the Obama administration vetoed the Keystone XL pipeline from northern Alberta to the Gulf of Mexico. The industry goal is to get access to “tidewater” in order to access international markets.
the pipe; that product is destined for overseas markets through a terminal to be built for that purpose in Saint John. Only a small proportion of the pipeline capacity would be available for conventional crude. Consequently, foreign imports will not be substantially replaced; tankers will still ply the St. Lawrence River (Harden-Donahue, 2016). Further, the Irving refinery, the largest in the country, will retain its offshore contracts in order to get the best price, even if Energy East is built (Cattaneo, 2016).

A January editorial attributes the Quebec mayors’ engagement in the Energy East debate to Justin Trudeau’s ‘mixed signals about the federal government’s support for Energy East’ (Petty pipeline provincialism, Jan. 25/16). In a follow-up editorial, the extent of the paper’s logical inconsistencies is on full display as it tries to rationalize two contradictory positions. The editorial title is indicative: ‘A referee, but also a leader’ (Jan. 27/16). On the one hand, independent, credible assessments of energy projects are necessary for legitimacy; on the other, the Prime Minister should be providing leadership in the public sphere on the need for such projects. Trudeau has said he supports pipelines, but calls for a ‘robust assessment…that takes into account a new and heightened appreciation of environmental and aboriginal issues.’ The paper concurs, yet appears not to trust its own argument:

His stand is laudable and very 2016, but it can’t hide one hard fact: If he fails to persuade Canadians to build this pipeline, it will be a disaster for the country….Mr. Trudeau is determined to have his government play referee, or “responsible mediator.” He wants the National Energy Board…to take new environmental factors into account – greenhouse gas emissions, above all – and be additionally sensitive to the concerns of First Nations communities…. The Prime Minister is right to try to make the assessment process as credible as possible. That said, it would be a huge mistake on his part to fail to sell the merits of Energy East….Mr. Trudeau needs to persuade Canadians of the fact that a healthy energy sector is a key part of a healthy economy, and of the
consequences that flow from that: Oil must move....The Prime Minister doesn’t need to be a cheerleader. A plain old leader will do (Needed: a referee, but also a leader, Jan. 27/16).

Here we see cracks in The Globe and Mail’s intellectual commitment to the apolitical objectivity of expert-driven administrative tribunals. Its discourse of administrative rationalism is exposed as window dressing for an intensely political agenda. The paper is not prepared to accept a determination by the National Energy Board that the Energy East pipeline or any other might not be able to ‘transport oil safely, efficiently and in an environmentally respectful way.’ The assertion that ‘oil must move’ implies that provision must be made for that, regardless of objections. Splitting hairs between cheerleader and leader is meaningless: the implication is that Mr. Trudeau should employ a bit more finesse than Mr. Harper did to deliver the same outcome. Improving the tribunal process to take account of more issues simply provides a bit more cover for what is a predetermined political agenda. Even so, The Globe and Mail is nervous that unless the Prime Minister ploughs the ground of public perception ahead of time, the political project could fail. This presents an impossible dilemma for The Globe and Mail and the Prime Minister: gaining legitimacy in the public sphere on a divisive issue while sitting firmly on one side of the fence. Stephen Harper did not try to do this, and so he could not be accused of hypocrisy.

The Globe and Mail’s contradictions on the matter of administrative processes sharpen in a subsequent editorial concerning the federal environmental review of a major liquefied natural gas export terminal in British Columbia. From formerly complaining about Stephen Harper’s manipulation of such processes to expedite approvals, thereby undermining public trust in the outcomes, now the paper gives voice to complaints of
“paralysis by analysis” by a Calgary energy company (Tomorrow, tomorrow, Feb. 11/16). Three months later, the paper’s position shifts once again, prompted by a squabble over a pipeline expansion project that has broken out between Vancouver Mayor Robertson who opposes it, and Calgary Mayor Nenshi who supports it. After noting that the decision is the purview of the federal cabinet, the editorialist asserts:

[The federal] government tends to take the NEB’s advice, and should, because the cabinet cannot ever have as much expertise on the merits of a particular project as the NEB, which holds lengthy hearings and reviews mountains of documents.... The best course of action would be for the Trudeau government to design what it believes is a robust, independent pipeline review process – and leave it to the process to decide what gets built and what doesn’t... Get ministers, premiers and mayors out of the business of having to pretend they are qualified pipeline regulators (This is no job for Canadian politicians, June 8/16).

One could add, prime ministers to the list of politicians who should steer clear. Then another flip-flop, this time in the context of federal approval of the Site C hydro dam in British Columbia. The editorial responds to criticism by Amnesty International that the approval violates the rights of indigenous peoples who would be displaced by the dam by saying,

To govern is to choose. Eventually, the Trudeau government is going to have to choose who it wants to disappoint (Somebody is going to be disappointed, Aug. 11/16).

Putting aside the fact that the possible violation of rights is materially different than disappointing certain interests, the paper reverts to acknowledging the inherently political nature of these decisions. The veneer of expert-driven, objective decision-making is just that. At the end of the day, the decision is made by politicians and is therefore a political calculation. But now we are back to the Energy East pipeline process. The investigative on-line news journal National Observer has revealed that members of the NEB panel
reviewing TransCanada’s proposal met privately with company lobbyist and former Quebec premier Jean Charest; protesters disrupted the Montreal hearings demanding the resignation of the panel.

The NEB has botched these hearings, perhaps beyond repair, and ignoring this fact will not somehow make it go away. There is no evidence of unethical behaviour, but the perception is terrible. A poll taken by the CBC in March found that 50.5 per cent of respondents said they had little or no confidence in the NEB. That is not good. Canada needs the Energy East pipeline...To see it stalled or cancelled not for evidence-based reasons but because of political outcry created by the NEB’s mishandling of its own affairs would be a disaster. The only option now may be to ask the commissioners who met Mr. Charest to recuse themselves from the proceedings. If that is what it takes, that’s what should happen (Credibility gap, Aug. 30/16).

The veneer, it seems, must be maintained, notwithstanding the fact that this quote appears to suggest that an evidence-based rejection of the pipeline is possible. Without the legitimacy conferred by the administrative tribunal, social licence will be impossible to achieve.

These process-focused editorials, written over a period of eight months, parallel several others on the topic of climate change. They never intersect; as far as The Globe and Mail is concerned, they are separate conversations. The first appears in early February, less than two months after the Paris conference at which Canada announced its reengagement with the international community on this issue, and one month prior to the First Ministers meeting at which a national climate action plan is to be discussed. The paper is alarmed by the data on Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions status:

You weren’t really supposed to know this, but Canada is rapidly drifting away from its greenhouse gas emissions targets – targets that weren’t all that ambitious to begin with. It is now clearer than ever that, if the Trudeau government plans to meet those modest targets, it will have to take drastic
action in the next four years and be willing to inflict some pain on Canadians. To produce the kind of sharp drop needed...Canada will have to amputate, not nip and tuck...GHG emissions from the oil sands, for instance, will amount to half the increase in total emissions between now and 2030. Can Mr. Trudeau work with Alberta to reduce that through better technology and impose a reduction if that doesn’t work? ...The next four years in the fight against climate change will be critical ones. It’s put-up or shut-up time. Canada must finally meet its targets, while growing the economy at the same time (It’s now or never, Mr. Trudeau, Feb. 5/16).

In this quote, *The Globe and Mail* reveals itself once again as out of touch on this issue. The data it cites has been in the public domain for many months leading up to the Paris conference: why has it not been noticed by Canada’s newspaper of note? More importantly, it is not clear what constitutes ‘drastic action’ or what might be ‘amputated’ in order to get the ‘sharp drop needed.’ The editorial notes that the single largest source of emissions growth will be the tar sands. What it does not say is that the estimate is based on industry projections of growth in bitumen production to 2030 (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016). This growth is dependent on new pipelines moving bitumen to markets, a national economic imperative, according to *The Globe and Mail*. Yet the editorial fails to make the connection. It ambiguously suggests the need to ‘impose a reduction’ if technology cannot do it. Above all, economic growth is to be maintained and this requires tar sands expansion, according to the pipeline editorials. Without limiting production, however, any improvements in greenhouse gas intensity per unit of production would quickly be overcome by overall production growth. The editorial’s ambiguity regarding the tar sands may reflect an acknowledgement of this reality, but a reluctance to articulate it. So we are left with an internal disconnect between alarmist rhetoric and ambiguous remedy.
This ambiguity persists in subsequent editorials in which there is little evidence of support for ‘drastic action’ or ‘amputation’ in order to meet emissions reduction targets. In the run-up to the First Ministers meeting in March 2016, the paper advises Ottawa to tread lightly with the premiers on a carbon tax, even though the paper has advocated strongly for a revenue-neutral carbon tax as the fiscal fix: ‘Ottawa has the power to impose a national carbon tax. But for now, that’s a power it’s wisely trying to avoid exercising’ (Climate change? It’s a taxing business, Mar. 4/16).

The following month it addresses the University of Toronto president’s rebuff of the student-led divestment movement, the goal of which is to have university endowments divest their fossil fuel stocks. Rather than to empower youth in achieving the wholesale change the paper says is needed, it mocks them and then retreats into its own contradictions:

[W]hat makes perfect sense to people tasked with creating revenues for retirees and educators has become anathema to students who insist universities should lead the fight against climate change rather than supporting polluting industries....Students strive to be idealists and are in an enviable position to voice their hopeful ultimatums without the constraints and occasional hypocrisies of real world responsibility – we get this, and the world should always welcome challenges to the status quo. But the current wave of demands for divestment...carry more moral fervour than this ambiguous crusade warrants (Oil or nothing? Apr. 1/16).

This is a classic rationalization of the status quo: those who would attempt to change it are idealists, unrealistic, not living in the real world. It falsely frames the divestment movement as ‘ambiguous,’ when in fact its motivations and goals are very explicit, and it implies that ethically motivated actions are irrational, when in fact the question of whether or not to take global warming seriously is ultimately an ethical question.
Rationalizations commonly invoke red herrings, or false dualisms, evident in the title, Oil or nothing? One is that income security for senior citizens would be traded off for a moralistic symbolic gesture. Another refers to the apartheid boycott on which the divestment movement is modelled.

Apartheid was singularly oppressive, had to be ended and could be, at a stroke...it was a stark, all-or-nothing moral choice. Fossil fuels are different. Society will need them for years to come, and there is no way for the entire planet to ditch them entirely and immediately without widespread harm. The issue is how to gradually ratchet down fossil-fuel use worldwide. The global warming problem, and the solutions, are both matters of degree (Oil or nothing? Apr. 1/16).

It is simply silly to suggest that a successful divestment movement would have the effect of shutting down the fossil fuel industry overnight, or that students might harbour such illusion. Such sophistry undermines the paper’s own intellectual credibility, especially in the face of its earlier editorial (It’s now or never, Mr. Trudeau, Feb. 5/16). Far from dramatic action that is going to inflict pain on Canadians, this editorial mounts an unapologetic defence of incrementalism at best, inaction at worst. Ultimately, this take-down appears to be a cover for the paper’s own moral ambiguity on this issue, a clear indicator of a post-ecologist rationality.

The next three climate change-related editorials respond in detail to the Ontario climate action plan, a comprehensive approach that includes a number of policy measures including carbon pricing through a cap-and-trade system. Where the plan is framed by the Government of Ontario as transformational, The Globe and Mail excoriates the plan as inefficient central planning.

Canada doesn’t need an economic revolution; it needs simple but clear incentives, like carbon taxes, for companies and people to reduce carbon use.
But what Mr. Murray [Ontario environment minister ‘with more enthusiasm than knowledge’] is working on sounds like a Leap Manifesto. It’s not a plan to dramatically lower emissions while screwing up the economy as little as possible. It reads more like a blueprint to meddle as much as possible, to get government’s hands on as many levers and in as many pockets as possible, with climate change as a pretext (First they came for the electricity, Apr. 30/17).

*The Leap Manifesto*, referred to in this editorial, was released during the 2015 election campaign by a coalition of climate, social justice and indigenous activists. It presents a vision for the transition from the fossil fuel-dependent economy to one that is both environmentally sustainable and socially just. Many within the New Democratic Party lobbied for its endorsement by the party leadership. *The Globe and Mail* responded at the time:

> Just when [NDP leader] Mr. Mulcair had that spectre [of radical socialist policies] locked in the closet, out it pops in the form of the Leap Manifesto, a revolutionary (but not in the good sense of the word) critique of capitalism from author Naomi Klein, signed by prominent NDP supporters, native-rights activists, movie stars and pop musicians, and endorsed by public service unions with strong NDP links. The manifesto calls for immediate social revolution in response to climate change...We don’t think Mr. Mulcair endorses the manifesto’s madness. He is far more moderate than that... [H]e wants to govern a country that is by its nature suspicious of radical social upheaval, especially when promulgated by rock stars. Saddling him now, barely a month from the election, with the task of answering questions about a revolutionary utopian manifesto seems like an obvious case of failing to look before you... Well, you know the rest (Not such a great leap forward, Sept. 16/15).

Clearly the paper is not in the mood for social transformation. It presupposes that capitalism as we know it is perfectly capable of meeting the climate change challenge, and any suggestions to the contrary are outside the bounds of rational discourse. Even so, *The Globe and Mail* sees glimmers of the ‘revolutionary utopian manifesto’ in the
Government of Ontario climate action plan (Less central heating, more central planning, May 18/16). The paper’s final pronouncement on the Ontario plan starts with ‘the good news.’

The national debate over global warming has largely moved on from arguing about whether anything should be done to reduce carbon emissions, to debating how best to do it. This is progress. More good news: Ottawa and [most] provincial governments all agree with the idea of putting a price on carbon...Unfortunately, the Liberals are not just going to price carbon and stop there. Instead, they’ve dreamed up what threatens to become a megaproject of micromanagement....[T]he more government gets away from using price signals and other simple and efficient mechanisms to lower carbon emissions, the more it risks creating not the promised green future, but a boondoggle standing in its way (A taxing plan? If only it were, June 11/16).

The editorial presupposes a convenient alignment of economic self-interest and the laws of nature. Market-driven incrementalism – ‘put a price on carbon and let citizens and businesses, through billions of individual decisions, figure out how best to lower carbon emissions’ (Less central heating, more central planning, May 18/16) – not transformation, is the way forward. The corollary is that greenhouse gas reductions would be limited by what the market would bear without inhibiting economic growth or tar sands investments. There is no recognition that the necessary deep cuts in emissions within the time frame indicated by climate science will require far greater intervention than simply a price on carbon.

By the fall of 2016, the Trudeau government begins to show its hand on how it will manage the politics of pipelines and climate change. The context is the U.N.’s COP 22 in Marrakech where the world’s governments will account for their domestic commitments related to the Paris agreement, including whether their Parliaments have ratified the agreement. The Canadian Parliament does so on October 5th and the agreement comes
into force internationally on November 4th. The Pan-Canadian Framework on Climate Change and Clean Growth is signed by Ottawa and most provinces (Saskatchewan and Manitoba do not sign) on December 9th. Getting that agreement requires alleviating the objections of several interests vested in the expansion of tar sands production without undermining Canada’s newly restored credibility on the international front. It begins in October with federal approval of a major liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in British Columbia, a gift to that province in exchange for its support for the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion from Alberta to the British Columbia coast. This is answered by the Trudeau government’s commitment that a national carbon price will be imposed. *The Globe and Mail* approves:

> In fact, it is possible to come up with a policy that allows the economy to grow, the oil and gas industry to expand, the free market to function, and the environment to benefit from Canada meeting its commitment to significantly lower greenhouse-gas emissions. Not only is it possible, but the Liberals appear to be laying the groundwork for it (Ottawa tries to find the balance, Oct. 1/16).

This stance presupposes that the classic neoliberal prescription will produce an economic-environmental “sweet spot” where both goals are maximized. This would be facilitated by a ‘legitimate, science-based review board’ imposing ‘clear environmental rules’ on the new pipelines attached to tar sands expansion.

> That doesn’t mean saying yes to every pipeline proposal. There must be extremely stringent conditions to prevent spills and to force private developers...to fully bear all environmental costs. But if those conditions are met, the regulator...should be able to deliver an impartial, science-based, thumbs-up to at least some projects....[S]o far, Team Trudeau’s approach looks promising (Ottawa tries to find the balance, Oct. 1/16).

The following week, *The Globe and Mail* praises the Prime Minister for announcing that Ottawa will impose a carbon tax on any province that has not already got a comparable
carbon pricing scheme in place by 2018 – ‘give the Liberals credit. With one simple move, they’ve built a foundation for action’ - and scolds conservative Premier of Saskatchewan Brad Wall for opposing it (The trillion-dollar question, Oct. 8/16). The final test of the Prime Minister, however, remains getting a pipeline built to support tar sands expansion: ‘If the Trudeau government can pull that off, then it will have truly achieved something memorable’ (The honeymooners, Oct. 15/16).

The Globe and Mail’s discourse of parallel tracks for climate change action and pipeline development persists throughout the rest of the year, culminating in an December editorial that provides a final assessment of the Prime Minister’s ‘memorable’ achievement. After denying approval to the Northern Gateway pipeline from the tar sands to northern B. C., the Prime Minister has just announced the approval of two pipeline projects in Alberta, the refurbishment of Line 3 and the twinning of Kinder Morgan’s existing Trans Mountain pipeline from Alberta to Vancouver. It is all part of a pipeline deal that includes beefed-up oil spill response capacity on the British Columbia coast and a national carbon pollution pricing scheme. In short, from the perspective of the Prime Minister, as well as The Globe and Mail, there is no contradiction here.

Pipelines are tools to move oil, and they must be made as safe as possible. But pipelines are not, in and of themselves, important greenhouse-gas sources. Trying to reduce carbon emissions by blocking new pipelines makes as much sense as trying to discourage automobile use by limiting the number of new gas stations. There are better ways of lowering carbon emissions. That's why the Trudeau government is right: It's possible to meet Canada's climate-change commitments while growing the economy, and even growing the oil industry (The Liberals strike the right balance, Dec. 1/16).

While there are legitimate environmental issues related to pipelines, including the risk of spills and tanker accidents, climate change is not one of them.
Blocking pipelines is politically spectacular, hence the appeal for so many protesters. But ecologically speaking, if the goal is lower greenhouse-gas emissions, it's an extremely inefficient solution - causing severe economic pain for limited environmental return.... But when it comes to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions, arguing over which pipelines to build and which to block is a sideshow that deserves to be sidelined (The Liberals strike the right balance, Dec. 1/16).

This final statement is simply wishful thinking. *The Globe and Mail* and the Trudeau government have discursively severed Canada’s oil and gas industry, the single largest source of projected growth in greenhouse gas emissions according to Environment Canada, from the problem of global warming and climate change. This is a remarkable achievement – memorable, according to the paper – when much of the world is engaging the discourse of decarbonization of economies. A carbon tax provides cover for this play: the polluter is indeed paying something for the right to pollute. Even fossil fuel companies now endorse pricing carbon because it is not an immediate threat to their business model. It is simply another cost to be integrated into their operations. Meanwhile, they can continue to engage in the same power-brokering that has held emissions reductions at bay for the past two decades, thereby keeping the carbon price as low as politically possible for the foreseeable future. It defers the hard questions that nobody wants to entertain – the ones the Leap Manifesto posed.

**7.8 Discussion**

To summarize, this final period reveals a persistent discourse of post-ecologism in *Globe and Mail* editorials: the paper repeatedly acknowledges the problem, while subsequently vigorously defending the political-economic systems that are causing the problem. In other words, the discourse is constructed so as to sustain the unsustainable. The difficulty
the paper faces is how to maintain its own legitimacy in the face of mounting scientific
evidence of an existential climate crisis. In this sense, the environment is unlike any other
social antagonism. Neoliberal discourse has more or less rearticulated discourses related
to social welfare and maintained a cultural consensus around austerity and economic
growth, thereby keeping the counter-hegemonic discourse arguing for revival of the
social welfare state on the margins.

Nature, however, cannot be so handily dealt with, especially when scientific discourse
and communications are global, beyond control of the nation-state. Even with an
ambivalent public, a sophisticated news organ steeped in Enlightenment values of
scientific rationality would face serious legitimacy problems if it refused to acknowledge
the evidence of a looming biophysical cliff edge. The problem of successfully
hegemonizing the climate crisis discourse arises from the very limited neoliberal
hegemonic field. Options for rearticulation of challenging discursive elements, as Laclau
and Mouffe describe, are limited to only market mechanisms while the dominant
discourse of resource extraction as Canada’s primary source of wealth remains
sacrosanct. Since neither of these are consistent with the wholesale transformation of a
fossil-fueled economy that climate scientists say is necessary, editorial discourse lapses
into an unresolvable contradiction which is best characterized as an effort to sustain the
unsustainable. Thus we see Blühdorn’s post-ecologist turn and its related politics of
unsustainability coming into clear focus as *The Globe and Mail* finds in the Liberal
government’s rhetoric an allied position and very skillful spokespeople.
Part III: Discussion

Chapter 8: Accounting for the eco-crisis in advanced societies

My premise in this dissertation is that advanced consumer-capitalist societies have exhibited a pathological inability to confront and forestall a multi-faceted and interdependent ecological and climate crisis that threatens to undermine the very basis on which such societies are built, potentially hastening their own demise, as well as that of other cultures. Ingolfur Blühdorn’s theory of post-ecologism and the politics of unsustainability provides an incisive account of this self-destructive pathology.

To summarize, Blühdorn theorizes that over the past several decades, the cultural *zeitgeist* in late capitalist-consumer societies, within which ecological politics are played out, has changed, rendering the public policy goal of authentic sustainability (ecological, social) unreachable. Although the rhetoric of sustainability is widespread, the contemporary normative-cultural context, which Blühdorn calls hyper-materialist, is antithetical to the social transformations that will be necessary to bring society within the limits of a finite planet. He contrasts this contemporary normative context with the cultural context of the 1970s, within which the green movement emerged and consolidated, and argues that the evolution of cultural values from an ecologist to post-ecologist disposition now precludes any serious political response to the existential ecological-climate crisis. In Blühdorn’s words, late-modern politics has become the politics of unsustainability, in which unsustainability is understood as ‘an incompatibility between certain empirical phenomena or developments and established social values and expectations’ (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 44).
Whatever [politics’] declared commitments...its primary concern is to manage the inevitable consequences, social and ecological, of the resolve to sustain the established order. Rather than trying to suspend or even reverse the prevailing logic of unsustainability, its main pre-occupation is to promote societal adaptation and resilience to sustained unsustainability (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 20-21).

Simulative politics – the politics of performance - takes the form of narratives in which modern societies reassure themselves that they fully recognize the seriousness and urgency of the sustainability crisis, have a clear understanding of what action is required, and then fail to marshal the political will and institutional capacity to implement it. Reframing processes which prioritize techno-managerial approaches, normalize the crisis, or distance it in time and space, constitute ‘the performance of seriousness,’ the purpose of which is to ‘cope with the dilemmas posed by the project to sustain the unsustainable’ (Blühdorn, 2011, p. 44). Discourses such as sustainable development, ecological modernization, the science of sustainability, and green consumerism which ‘render post-industrial consumer capitalism socially and ecologically benign’ all fall into this category (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 21).

These societal self-descriptions...create discursive spaces in which individuals, collective actors and society at large can present and experience themselves as ecologically virtuous and committed without compromising the post-ecologist value preferences which condition their thinking and behaviour otherwise (Blühdorn, 2013, pp. 21).

Thus unsustainable late-consumer capitalism is reinforced and sustained.

This research was motivated by the question of whether this theory of post-ecologism and the politics of unsustainability has some explanatory power relative to Canadian environmental politics; the results suggest that it does. My analysis of how the public discourse of environmental politics been framed in The Globe and Mail editorials over
time reveals a post-ecologist turn between the years 1987 and 1992, consistent with Blühdorn’s account of that period. I discuss this in more detail below. The remaining task is to try to account for the shift in eco-political discourse towards the politics of unsustainability.

The cumulative distribution of eco-political discourse frames across the entire study period is represented in Figure 13. The first eight frames in this configuration can all be associated with discourses related to the political-ecologist paradigm of the early environmental movement. The next three frames, scientific rationality, economic rationality and sustainable development, belong to the ‘relative limit’s paradigm, and could lean towards ecologism, or rationalize a post-ecologist stance. How they are interpreted, then, depends on the actual text within which they occur. The final five frames are directly associated with a post-ecologist paradigm.

Figure 13 reveals that frames associated with the ecologist paradigm occur in many more years than those at the other end of the spectrum; they dominate the first three study periods. The most frequent frames, raising the alarm and legitimate state lead, suggest a high concern with environmental problems and an expectation that governments have the duty to deal with them authoritatively. Significantly, the radical frame of limits to growth/critique of progress occurs as frequently as several other frames in this paradigm. Frames associated with post-ecologism occur only in the final study period. They represent a much narrower set of elements, yet two frames, market fundamentalism and sustaining the unsustainable, occur regularly enough to compare in quantity to several of the ecologist frames. I elaborate on this analysis in the following sections.
8.1 From advocacy to ambivalence

As Figure 1 reminds us, editorial attention to eco-political issues ebbed and flowed over the 56-year study period. A frame analysis of editorials in these years reveals a distinct shift in editorial discourse consistent with Blühdorn’s a post-ecologist turn. To begin, we are reminded that the backdrop to the entire sweep of The Globe and Mail environmental editorials over this 56 year time span is the ubiquitous and dominant agenda of economic growth, in the early years as a nationalist project (the growth of Canada as an autonomous, highly developed nation) and, by the 1990s, as a player in the global economy. Overlaying this hegemonic expansionist discourse was an expanding and contested field of eco-political discourse that reflected, on the one hand, emerging existential ecological and related health threats, and on the other, the rising stakes of dealing with those threats, both financial (the dollars and cents costs of action or inaction), and structural (the fundamental challenge to capital accumulation).

In the 1960s and 1970s, when the modern environmental movement formed and began making political demands, problems that most frequently appeared in the editorials were spatially and temporally limited and amenable to direct intervention and management by regulatory agencies. This gave rise to strident editorial demands that governments “do the right thing” and fix the problems, whatever they were. Conditions of pollution and resource destruction were unacceptable in a modern, prosperous nation. That said, editorials frequently identified such problems as the product of ubiquitous, expanding industrialization, urbanization and population growth in the Western world (Section 4.2). This led to occasional critiques of ‘progress’ and modernization, as well as an endorsement of the premises of the controversial 1972 Club of Rome report, The Limits
to Growth. A particular concern in the 1970s was the burgeoning transport of oil, the fuel that was driving economic and urban growth, by both ship and pipeline. Editorials recognized the devastating ecological consequences of marine tanker accidents and, in the north, the equally consequential impacts of large pipeline projects on First Nations and the ‘fragile’ and unique northern ecology. Rather than championing the industry, editorial positions were at best equivocal, challenging the credibility of both corporations and regulators in their mutual dealings (Section 5.4.2). Such challenges persisted throughout the 1970s as environmental regulatory systems were developed at all three levels of government.

In 1980s, the spatial and temporal scales of eco-politics took a dramatic turn. No longer were environmental problems confined to The Globe and Mail’s front (urban Ontario) or back yard (Canada’s hinterland), nor were they amenable to silo-management approaches of provincial or federal bureaucracies. Transboundary (acid rain) and global manifestations of exponential economic growth (global warming, ozone depletion, and persistent organic pollutants) transcended and confounded the conventional notions of national problem-solving. With the 1987 release of the U.N.’s Brundtland Commission report, Our Common Future, geopolitical discourse embraced the claims of an impending ecological catastrophe, as did The Globe and Mail. The paper also embraced the social democratic stance of the Brundtland Commission, that there must be a more equitable sharing of the wealth that comes from the common wealth of nature (Section 6.6.2). In short, from the 1970s to 1987, The Globe and Mail adopted for the most part a counter-hegemonic, limits-oriented, social-ecological justice framing of the eco-crisis, consistent with most elements of the counter-hegemonic discourse of ecologism. That said, while it
dallied with the idea that industrial society itself is unsustainable and that structural change is necessary, its consistent invocation of the state as the actor responsible for fixing the problems belied its presupposition that such problems can be solved by and within existing political and administrative institutions.

Several considerations come into play in understanding the paper’s early eco-political record. One is that the editorial board is simply taking a technocentric, ecomodernist view that presupposes environmental problems can be solved without unduly interfering with the business agenda, and that it goes without saying that economic growth is not threatened by the paper’s environmental advocacy. There is some truth to this; clearly, the paper is not putting capitalism on the table. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, given the primarily local nature of environmental claims, it would have been reasonable to assume that responsible businesses should be able to clean up their messes without infringing too dramatically on profit margins, and that governments could control sewage and air pollution. On the other hand, the wisdom of rapid urbanization, the impossibility of unlimited growth, and folly of an uncontrolled free market as the best allocator of scarce resources certainly are in question in several editorials over the first three study periods. The post-war normative consensus was that the market must be constrained by the state, and that there is an overriding public good, beyond economics, for which the state is responsible. A clean environment falls within that rubric.

That such claims were clearly within legitimate bounds of public discourse illustrates the breadth of the hegemonic discursive field at that time. Besides the tenets of liberal-capitalism, by the 1960s it also includes discourse elements that legitimize the social welfare state as a necessary constraint on the market. With the politicization of the
environment in the 1960s, the media generally (Parlour) and The Globe and Mail in particular, played a significant role in expanding the hegemonic field once again. By articulating counter-hegemonic discourse elements, the breadth and depth of claims that were legitimized within a new politics of the environment expanded throughout the decade. This is evident in the increasing number of topics that became the subject of eco-political discourse, and the expansion of problems from local to global, and even to the existential crisis of modernity. By the mid-1980s, The Globe and Mail had constructed a very broad hegemonic tent, making possible the consolidation and institutionalization of eco-politics.

The Globe and Mail’s articulation of environmental politics had changed completely by 1992. From a general trend of advocating for strong measures to protect the environment over the course of three decades, the paper’s 1990s editorials (1992, 1997) were much more unpredictable in that regard, vacillating between advocacy (depending on the issue) and antagonism, thereby presenting a rather schizophrenic public stance. Some editorials exhibited skepticism about climate change science, the first instance in which the paper questioned the scientific basis of an environmental issue. Not only did the stance change, the range of environmental problems that received editorial attention fell off dramatically. Of the years studied, 1997 was the first year in which the crisis-oriented frame, raising the alarm, did not appear in the editorials. From its former proactive, advocacy stance in the previous three periods, editorial discourse became reactive, dealing with issues from a rearguard, defensive position (Section 7.7.1).

By 2002, the paper had abandoned its embarrassing skepticism of climate change science. In that year, it revived some of its ‘greener’ stances, but an economistic bottom line had
become the ultimate policy litmus test (Section 8.1.2). Further, the repertoire of environmental topics shrivelled to a single topic: climate change and its derivatives, the oil and pipeline industries. In 2012, the number of editorials dealing with any environmental topic at all had shrivelled to a mere dozen. Eco-politics, once politically salient from an editorial perspective, had become incidental to The Globe and Mail’s editorializing. The paper’s interest rekindled in the context of the 2015 federal election campaign, as a revived civil society activism specifically targeting climate change, tar sands and pipelines had a material impact on party platforms. The paper understood that, depending on the election outcome, eco-politics could change dramatically, thus its increasing salience as an editorial focus.

The dramatic reduction of environmental topics covered in editorials in the final study period can be seen as a narrowing of the hegemonic discursive field on which eco-politics plays out. By 2007, with only rare exceptions, eco-political editorials focused exclusively on climate change and associated energy issues such as the Athabasca tar sands expansion and in the final years, pipelines. In short, eco-politics had become climate politics. One explanation of this development is that climate change is the single issue in which the inevitable, intractable contradictions of modern society are laid bare, built as it is on fossil fuels. It is on the “hill” of climate change, then, that advanced consumer capitalism will take its final stand. Perhaps more importantly, the neoliberal nodal point of the hegemonic field permits only a very limited range of options for interpreting the world. Issues that cannot be reduced to libertarian or economistic frames remain on the discursive frontier. Once prevalent in editorial discourse, there is now no room in the new
hegemony for discourses of ecological rationality, the public good, intergenerational justice, or simply doing the right thing.

It is too simplistic to characterize this discursive trajectory as ‘corporate capture’ of discourse, or an exercise in promoting a false consciousness, because most editorials in this final period cannot be written off as simply the voice of business. What we see instead is a conflicted ambivalence in editorial tone after the turn of the century (Section 7.5). The ambivalence, I suggest, arises from a cognitive dissonance between what is intellectually demanded by the science, and a complex psycho-ideological attachment to the neoliberal hegemony which is a key driver of ecological decline. For a venerable media institution committed to the ideal of scientific rationality, as well as economic rationality, in the face of an irrefutable body of scientific evidence pointing to catastrophic climate change, the paper could not sustain its business-instigated climate science skepticism of the 1990s. On the other hand, the logical conclusion to which the science points – the abandonment of growth-centric capitalist society - is imponderable for an establishment newspaper. Thus, we find a number of editorials containing rationalizations, contradictions and unlikely propositions, characteristic of Blühdorn’s politics of unsustainability. Its assertion, oft repeated as if to convince oneself, that climate change is “real” and therefore in need of political attention, is notable, but the passionate advocacy for meaningful government action (oil transport and solid waste in the 1970s; acid rain in the 1980s) is missing. While in previous periods, the paper frequently grounded its advocacy on scientific assessments, even making the effort to explain the science to readers, science is rarely invoked in the final period. Instead, the paper is preoccupied with the politics of Canada’s participation in international climate
change regimes, without regard for the periodic scientific pronouncements of intensifying crisis. The crisis, in other words, had become normalized, a key feature of post-ecologism.

Young and Dugas (2011) corroborate this analysis, calling it the ‘banalization’ of climate change discourse. In their content analysis of general climate change coverage (news, features, and editorials) in The Globe and Mail and the National Post across three study years - 1988/1989, 1998/1999, and 2007/2008, they found a narrowing of themes to everyday policy and business aspects of the issue, while avoiding the increasingly dire scientific assessments of the progress of climate change. This had the effect of ‘decontextualizing’ and simplifying the issue, thereby insulating institutions from public demands for the radical change that the issue requires. ‘In other words, climate change has been incorporated into the status quo rather than acting as a subversive or transformative agent’ (Young and Dugas, 2011, pp. 17-19). Stoddart, Haluza-Delay and Tindall draw a similar conclusion. While they only looked at climate change frames in the same two newspapers in one year (2007-08), they found a preoccupation with abstract policy debates which mitigate against robust public discourse and serve to ‘legitimate political inaction’ (Stoddart, Haluza-Delay and Tindall, 2015, p. 228). This analysis aligns with the idea that post-ecologism is a manifestation of a broader post-political phenomenon, which I will discuss later.

8.2 From interventionist state to market fundamentalism

In constructing their argument that journalists are ‘agents of change’ as opposed to ‘agents of control’ (the Marxist view) or purveyors of an objective ‘truth’ (the liberal-
pluralist view), Lydia Miljan and Barry Cooper (2003) propose that Canadian political culture is characterized by an ‘embedded state’ with its own institutional agenda which must be negotiated with private, political and public interests. In this sense, the state is a legitimate political actor of which the business sector, citizens, and media have clear expectations, and vice versa.

The relationship between the Canadian state and Canadian society, including the economy, has very much been one of mutual interdependence. Historically, the role of administrative officials has been central to the operation of the Canadian economy and to the regulation and normalization of Canadian society. The role of the media in this complex has been not so much to denigrate and criticize government per se as to promote a specific kind of change, often by means of mobilizing the administrative capacity of the state (Miljan and Cooper, 2003, p. 49).

Two points are important here. First, they assert that the state plays an integral role in regulating competing interests within Canadian society, while advancing its own autonomous agenda. Thus state hegemony is not simply a proxy for capitalism. Second, they argue that the media is also not a mouthpiece for business; on the contrary, journalists are more likely to promote certain social changes related to the role of the state based on a dominant post-materialist value set within the journalist community.

While it is outside the scope of this research to address their entire thesis, their characterization of the state as an autonomous actor helps to explain the legitimacy, albeit declining, with which other actors imbue the role of the state. This makes the state the subject of competing expectations and political action. Further, their premise that the media frames issues according to values-based presuppositions about the role of the state is useful. Combining values surveys of individual journalists with content analysis of news coverage of economic issues, Quebec separation and the treatment of social issues
by the Supreme Court over one year – July 1, 1996-June 30, 1997 - they quantify what they characterize as media bias in favour of an activist state that responds positively to the social change demands of the new social movements.\textsuperscript{104} This limited synchronic analysis, it could be argued, is insufficient to draw such conclusions.

Nevertheless, to the extent that environmentalism can be included in Inglehart’s typology of post-materialist values, certainly the eco-political discourse of The Globe and Mail editorials over the first three study periods could corroborate their thesis. In the early study periods, the paper’s advocacy on environmental issues presupposes a strong role for the state in regulating environmental protection measures, and public accountability for making that happen. They advocate for state action on new issues, criticize the state for inadequate or misguided action, or praise the state for taking a strong stand (for instance, on acid rain and in the case of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline). The presupposition is that institutional reform, particularly strengthening both regulatory instruments and political will, and overcoming the jurisdictional logjam, will ‘fix’ the problems. This strong role for the state is associated with the expert-oriented eco-political discourse of administrative rationalism, tempered with a democratic pragmatism which argues that the state must be accountable to citizens (Dryzek, 2012). In short, the state has a legitimate and central role to play as a regulator of private interest to achieve a greater good, and the paper acts as a watchdog, holding the government to account in this role.

To the extent that editorials try to reflect what the paper perceives its audience will

\textsuperscript{104} Miljan and Cooper’s sample included three television networks – CBC, CTV and Radio-Canada (Quebec), and three newspapers – Calgary Herald, Globe and Mail and Le Devoir.
tolerate, we could say that this view of the activist state, and of its responsibility towards the environment, also resonated with the common sense – the dominant values - of the paper’s demographic over this period.

While Miljan and Cooper’s intent was to expose a ‘progressive’ bias in the media, the values-bias theory cuts both ways: when values change, so should media bias. There can be little doubt that the values underpinning eco-political editorials change in the 1990s, the same period of Miljan and Cooper’s study year. In both 1992 and 1997, the state remains a focus of editorial discourse, but the worldview underpinning that discourse is distinctly not post-materialist. The discourse is implicitly and explicitly hostile to environmentalism, berating environmentalists - and state support for their demands - as irrational and illegitimate (for instance, Will environmentalism come down to earth? Jun 1, 1992; A desert of green, Jun 10, 1992; Better jaw-jaw than spend-spend, Jun 16, 1992; Environmentalism, Aug 10, 1992).

While I argue in the previous section that this discursive shift cannot be tidily pigeon-holed as adopting the particular voice of business, it does take up the neoliberal ideology that begins to gel in public discourse in the 1980s. As the advocacy stance weakens, environmental issues are increasingly framed in neoliberal economistic terms. Over the first three study periods, despite the default pro-growth position of the paper, never once was economics used as a justification for inaction on an environmental issue. Instead, economic frames, which often had an ethical dimension, focused on the cost of environmental degradation: resource and energy waste were too costly for society; prevention was cheaper than the cure; spending to fix a problem rather than letting it
fester was the right thing to do. By the 1990s, editorials assert that environmental protection measures should not harm economic growth, or Canada’s competitive position in a globalizing economy. Earlier demands for strong government regulation and intervention to protect the environment were inconsistent with the neoliberal imperatives of deregulation, deficit reduction, privatization, and free trade – in other words, disengaged governments - and so those demands end. This is corroborated by Young and Dugas (2011) who found that, ‘whereas in 1988/1989 and 1998/1999 the predominant climate change narrative was risk to the biosphere, in 2007/2008 the modal theme is risk to the economy from climate change action’ (p. 16).

The dramatic shift in values is evident in two editorials, one written in 1982 (Civilized, reasonable, May 22, 1982) and the other in 1992 (Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow, Feb. 21, 1992). The former praises former leader Robert Stanfield’s criticism of the neo-conservative speakers at the Progressive Conservative party’s convention that year, and declares the illegitimacy of the free market as the arbiter of the public good, especially as it pertains to the environment and civil/human rights. The editorial declares that the ideals of civilized societies transcend, and thus are not the business of, the market. Ten years later, the paper chides the Liberal Party for hanging on too long to the insular worldview of Pierre Trudeau’s ‘just society.’ The state now must give way to the global economy; modern politics is to be defined by economic globalization. In a bizarre twist on the sustainable development theme, the editorial declares that since the environment and economy are linked, management of both should be turned over to world governance mechanisms, rendering national sovereignty anachronistic. Other editorials declare the illegitimacy of using trade sanctions to enforce multilateral environmental agreements;
the legitimacy of neoliberal structural adjustment policies imposed on developing nations (in direct contradiction to its 1980s third-world solidarity stance); the priority of governments to create the conditions for foreign investment which underpins economic growth; and the threat posed by the Kyoto Protocol to Canada’s economic interests.

Given the unprecedented profile of the environment as a public issue, the stakes for the neoliberal project are very high. The discursive strategy is to define the legitimate boundaries within which environmental issues are understood. Characteristically, the environment is disassembled into parts that can be monetized, and thus amenable to market-based policy instruments such as various forms of pricing. The Globe and Mail takes this on with ideological fervour, advocating for ‘market solutions’ and ‘green taxes’ rather than expensive, inefficient regulation, cost-benefit analysis, and tests of ‘willingness to pay.’ Even while The Globe and Mail abandons its anti-environmentalism and climate science skepticism of the 1990s, it retains its commitment to ‘market solutions’ throughout the rest of the study period, arguing interchangeably for letting the invisible hand of the market work its magic, and for internalizing externalities through carbon taxes. Thus we can say that The Globe and Mail becomes a neoliberal norm entrepreneur, rearticulating environmental issues within neoliberal frames, delegitimizing all alternative definitions, and closing off all but one possible discursive field on which to debate the issue.

8.3 Changing ethics: From altruism to egoism

Throughout the first three decades, we find propositions that protection of ‘the commons’ serves the public interest, is related to national identity, and is a matter of national
sovereignty, and thereby overrides narrow private interests. We also find propositions regarding the importance of respecting democratic processes, public engagement and advocacy, First Nations rights, of protecting people from environmental harm and providing proper restitution when they are harmed. On transboundary and global environmental issues, propositions include Canada contributing to a greater good, being an international role model, and a team player on the global stage. Environmental protection is framed as a matter of acting morally; of ‘doing the right thing;’ of doing our duty to future generations by setting aside short term interests and acting for the long term. Finally, the science of ecology is invoked in asserting the interdependence of all elements of nature, including humans; of respecting the intrinsic value of nature; and the importance of protecting biodiversity and whole ecosystems. This values orientation is consistent with the discourse of ecologism, infused with the post-war nationalistic social welfare discourse and Pierre Trudeau’s ‘just society.’

In the final two decades, we find economic rationalizations for both environmental protection (greening capitalism) and abandoning environmental goals. Ecological primacy gives way to economic primacy as the justification for action or inaction. In multilateral politics, so-called national self-interest (defined in terms of the interests of the oil and gas industry) replaces global citizenship. Short-termism replaces concern for posterity; the eco-crisis is normalized or banalized; rather than being dependent on ecology, economic interests must be ‘balanced’ against ecological interests. This new ethical framework is consistent with Blühdorn’s characterization of a cultural value shift which he labelled post-ecologist, because it is entirely incompatible with the goal of ecological integrity.
Rather than a systemic evolution of norms as Blühdorn suggests, we can account for this transformation of values as the achievement of neoliberal ‘norm entrepreneurs,’ defined as ‘purposive, politically strategic agents [who] often play key roles in planning, organizing, and mobilizing for fundamental normative change’ (Swarts, 2013, p. 124). As discussed in Section 2.3, Swarts ascribes the successful hegemonization of neoliberalism to a political-intellectual elite whose discourse redefined ‘normal’ social relations and the normative basis on which those relations would rest. The neoliberal re-articulation of society had to first deconstruct the ethical framework on which the post-war interventionist, social welfare states was built. The influence on the normative stance of *The Globe and Mail* is evident in its eco-political editorials.

*The Globe and Mail*’s early environmental advocacy is typically framed in ethical terms, such as ‘doing the right thing.’ Other frames such as ‘environmental protection is in the public/national interest,’ ‘ecological justice/rights protection,’ ‘morality, intergenerational duty,’ ‘ecological rationality,’ and ‘Canada as good global citizen,’ all imply a moral duty to a greater good, embodying an ethical framework of citizenship and stewardship. Such frames are common throughout the first thirty years. A clean environment is a legitimate expectation of citizens in a wealthy country; Canada’s natural heritage is a sacred patrimony to be stewarded for future generations; Canadians have a responsibility to protect other species; Canada has a duty to cooperate with other nations in protecting the global commons. All of these assertions represent the view that the public interest transcends narrow economic calculations. Implicit is the assumption that some level of short-term sacrifice may be necessary to achieve the greater good. Since
citizens may not easily come to this conclusion, the role of the paper is to provide ethical leadership in that regard, thereby pushing governments to also take the principled stand.

This leadership is turned on its head in the 1990s, as the ethical basis for editorializing shifts from altruism to egoism. On international issues, *The Globe and Mail’s* advocacy for global citizenship transforms to a narrow, self-interested economic nationalism. In the face of international pressure for a global climate change accord, *The Globe and Mail* entertains theories about trade conspiracies and illegitimate North-South fiscal transfers, argues for Canadian exceptionalism, constructs economic catastrophe scenarios, and counsels the federal government to abandon the UN process. In short, it fosters misunderstanding, mistrust, selfishness, and fear.

In earlier years, *The Globe and Mail* invokes an ecological rationality, using science to make the case that Canada’s environment was unduly and unjustly threatened by certain developments (for instance, the rapid expansion of oil pipelines and shipping in the early 1970s and acid rain in the 1980s), and that protecting the environment has implications for sovereignty and patrimony. In its later economic rationality, science is inconvenient, and therefore absent. Recounting the threats to the environment in Canada or elsewhere would only undermine its defense of existing drivers of economic growth and trade. Thus, its environmental stance is uncharacteristically unhinged from bio-physical reality, ultimately rendering it indefensible.

As discussed in the previous section, the benchmark editorials for revealing the normative shift are ‘Civilized, reasonable’ (May 22, 1982) and ‘Yesterday’s man meets tomorrow’ (February 21, 1992. This discursive shift, obviously the construction of
particular intellectuals and interests, is imbued with ethical-ideological stances.

Interestingly, in the 1982 editorial, the paper, quoting Robert Stanfield, make these presuppositions transparent. In the 1992 editorial, the ethical implications remain hidden as the process of economic globalization is presented as the inevitable outcome of modernization, and the response of national governments predetermined. The effect is to depoliticize what was clearly a transnational political agenda that had unfolded with remarkable success over a period of a decade.

8.4 Changes internal to The Globe and Mail

To what extent can internal changes in the newspaper’s management leadership explain the post-ecologist turn evident in the editorials? To return to Hayes’ account of The Globe and Mail’s history to 1992 (Section 3.1.1), two mentions stand out. First, he notes the influence on the editorial and news staff of the social upheaval of the 1960s, to which the editorial board was sympathetic (for example, the paper supported marijuana legalization and gay rights in the 1960s). These new social demands were not seen as either left- or right-wing, but a rational evolution of social values that an intelligent, serious paper should support. It is fair to say that the editorial stance of the Clark Davey - Dic Doyle era was decidedly post-materialist (Hayes, 1992, pp. 115).

The second mention is of the increasingly popularization of business journalism in the 1980s; business had become ‘sexy.’ This likely accounts for the shift by the Financial Post from a weekly magazine to daily newspaper. The Globe and Mail’s investigative and ‘interpretive’ news journalism was accused by some of ‘harbouring blatantly left-wing reporters with an anti-business viewpoint,’ although Hayes suggests a more relevant
problem was that ‘the RoB was authoritative but unnecessarily dull and grey, and slow to respond to some of the evolving needs of the modern business audience’ (Hayes, 1992, p. 219). The formation of a more demanding business audience to which publisher Megarry was highly sensitive, is consistent with the emergence of neoliberal discourse in the 1980s, associated with the corporate campaign for government deficit reduction, free trade, deregulation and privatization during the Mulroney administration (see Section 6.2). In William Thorsell, Megarry found an editor with a vision of how the paper should respond to this audience (Hayes, 1992, pp. 247, 251-52). Thus at The Globe and Mail we find a confluence of financial pragmatism which translated into allowing the business agenda to bleed out of the RoB and into the news section, and ideological comfort with the new neoliberal economic order. Related to this is the reframing of critical reporting as political – left-wing – and therefore ‘biased.’ Thorsell’s interest in downplaying conflict and emphasizing ideas, context and analysis, could be interpreted as an effort to depoliticize the news, and thereby normalize dominant relations.

Thus we see that The Globe and Mail simultaneously responded to and reflected changing societal expectations at different points in time, its corporate calculation being to ensure a news product that reflected its target audiences. The change in editorship in 1988, which resulted in a distinct change in editorial tone from the previous two decades at least, coincided with a growing public tolerance of, if not demand for, a neoliberal-business perspective. The question is, how closely does this neoliberal turn signalled by the Thorsell appointment track the change in eco-political discourse in the editorials?
I argue that it is important not to fully conflate the pro-business discourse with post-ecologist discourse. Remember that editorials in 1992 and 1997 were quite different from those post-2000. In the 1990s, the discourse veers sharply towards an anti-environmental stance, consistent with an effort to dispel the criticism that *The Globe and Mail* had taken an anti-business stance in recent years. This anti-environmentalism also employs key neoliberal arguments, as discussed in the previous section, but the hostile, skeptical tone is what stands out compared to previous study years. If this were simply a pro-business agenda, there is no reason for the discourse to change going forward. By 2002, however, we find a different tone, one more closely aligned with Blühdorn’s politics of unsustainability. It is significant that Thorsell leaves and Greenspon takes over between the 1997 and 2002 sample years. It suggests that the anti-environmental interregnum of the 1990s represented Thorsell’s personal stamp on the paper. But an overt anti-environment discourse simply cannot be sustained in the face of scientific evidence and public expectations; instead, with Greenspon and subsequent editors, we find a more palatable post-ecologist discourse, consistent with but not entirely contained by, a new neoliberal hegemony that persists throughout the final study years.

### 8.5 Hegemonic struggle and the politics of discourse

As discussed in Section 2.3, while Blühdorn describes the politics of unsustainability as discursive, he fails to account for the post-ecologist cultural paradigm shift in the same way. According to Laclau and Mouffe’s neo-Gramscian political theory of discourse, politics is an amalgam of discursive struggles in which dominant and challenger interests seek to maintain or gain hegemonic status by articulating (setting agendas, defining
problems and solutions), dis-articulating (critiquing hegemonic discourse) and re-articulating (presenting alternative) conceptions of society in a continuous discursive ‘war of position.’

Applying this general conception to the domain of environmental politics, hegemonic actors would be expected to respond to (segments of) the environmental movement’s radical discourse of political-ecologism by rearticulating the ecological problematic as compatible with the problem-solving capacity of hegemonic institutions, thereby managing the social conflicts that arise from environmental degradation. Counter-hegemonic actors would respond with competing storylines in a bid for influence in the public, and ultimately the political, sphere. The process is dialectical, as actors adapt their discourses to integrate new circumstances, information, contexts, and opposing discourses. Can we attribute the post-ecologist shift in *The Globe and Mail* editorials to such discursive processes? To answer this question, we have to locate *The Globe and Mail* as an actor, and “the environment” as a contentious discursive element, in the hegemonic ‘war of position.’

On the first point, the media generally is an actor unlike the others engaged in the eco-political discursive field. I would argue that *The Globe and Mail* is not agenda-setting - that is the role of other actors - as much as agenda-shaping. Editorials are not isolated claims in which *The Globe and Mail* stakes its ground on a particular issue independent of other actors. Always, editorials are embedded in an ongoing discursive struggle among many actors – municipal, provincial and federal politicians, civil servants, business interests, concerned citizens, indigenous peoples, environmental organizations, scientists,
research institutes, multilateral agencies – to define the environmental problematic and thus set the eco-political agenda. From its privileged position as a medium through which those actors often communicate with each other, and between actors and the wider public, the newspaper is in a position to pass judgement on the legitimacy of those competing storylines, and to articulate its own version of a public issue, thereby exerting influence in the public sphere.

Those judgements are expressions of the ideological, ethical, and business considerations of the editorial board at any given time, which in turn are embedded in a broader landscape or context of dominant economic and political discourses. Material environmental impacts, and thus social antagonisms, arise from the expansion of economic and social activity. Up to a point, technological and managerial fixes within the purview of existing institutions are sufficient to ameliorate most social conflict. We find this dynamic in the editorials of the 1960s and 1970s which called out government regulators for not clamping down on polluting businesses and municipalities, and insisted that the mark of an affluent, civilized society is a clean environment. While The Globe and Mail’s establishment bona fides were never in question, as a self-proclaimed watchdog and opposition voice, it took on the discourse of the new environmental movement. It did not hesitate to call out the environmental problems associated with industrial and urban growth, even to the point of entertaining the ‘limits to growth’ discourse of the 1970s, despite the fact that the RoB championed that growth. So during this early period, was the paper a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic voice? I suggest that it operated on the discursive frontier. By adopting the counter-hegemonic frame of eco-crisis and catastrophe, the paper legitimized ‘the environment’ as a field of discursive
struggle, and answered it with a primarily state-centred administrative rationalist
discourse that places the onus on governments to fix the problems. From the 1960s to the
1980s, provincial and federal governments responded with an agenda of environmental
institution building, including establishing new departments, laws and administrative
processes.

Two interacting factors ultimately constrain this discourse. First, the adoption of techno-
managerial approaches to environmental problems is limited politically by the
willingness of businesses and citizens to pay to prevent environmental degradation. Best-
available technologies, or the banning of certain inherently damaging technologies, are
foregone in order to guarantee profit margins, keep consumer prices low, or, in the case
of public works, avoid tax or rate increases. Regulators allow such cost minimization in
order to stimulate job creation and economic growth. Instead of preventing degradation,
then, regulatory systems are organized around “allowable levels” of pollution, habitat and
species loss, global warming, and human health impacts. Counter-hegemonic discourses
of ecosystem integrity and prevention of harm are rejected in favour of risk- and cost-
benefit analyses, in which impacts on certain populations and/or ecosystems are traded
off for economic goals. Rather than ameliorating conflict, social conflict is the inevitable
result of such administrative and economic rationalizations. This accounts for the rise of
the environmental justice movement, among others, and is consistent with Laclau and
Mouffe’s notion of the permanent dislocation of incompatible elements from the
hegemonic field.
The second factor limiting the risk management-oriented administrative rationalist discourse is the material effects of incremental allowances of pollution and ecosystem degradation on planetary systems. Unchecked growth in economic and social activity will eventually breach bio-physical thresholds, beyond which existing environmental states shift permanently into new, unknown states (Rockstrom et al, 2008). While technological innovation, in theory, may be able to substitute for lost ecosystem services (e.g. pollination, fresh water, arable soil), and ameliorate the impacts on human communities (e.g. heat waves, flooding, forest fires), the capital required to develop and employ such technologies on a global scale simply does not exist. In fact, the 1972 report, *Limits to Growth*, identified capital – private and public - as the scarce resource that would ultimately limit economic growth, as environmental dislocations become increasingly more expensive to ameliorate. Consequently, as economic and social expansion drives environmental degradation, and thus social dislocation, existing economic and cultural paradigms are increasingly threatened; the ultimate implication of this is the repudiation of the growth logic of advanced consumer capitalism.

From a neo-Gramscian perspective, we would thus expect to find hegemonic discourses that attempt to rationalize the contradiction between dominant paradigms and the existential environmental crisis. Ironically, the first study year in which this is obvious in the editorials is 1992, the year of the United Nations Conference on Environment and 105 The shortage of capital reflects an estimation of the ever-growing cost to society of replacing lost ecosystem services with human engineering, of adapting to global warming impacts such as sea level rise and heat waves, of reduced agricultural production due to drought and pests, of repairing the damage caused by more frequent extreme weather events, of the rising tide of environmental refugees, and the health costs of pollution.
Development, or the Earth Summit. As the largest gathering of heads of state in history, the Earth Summit represents the apex of political influence of the green movement. Instead of signaling the advent of a new hegemonic discourse of environmentally sustainable and socially just development, however, it symbolizes, first, the successful re-articulation of counter-hegemonic eco-political discourse by hegemonic actors, and second, the culmination of the shift of neoliberalism from counter-hegemonic myth to hegemonic social imaginary.

That year, *The Globe and Mail* began to rearticulate the environmental problematic, as it attempted to delegitimize ‘environmentalism’ as an increasingly influential political force, and then to redefine it along lines that were non-threatening to the existing political economy. We can interpret this discursive shift in editorial content in the 1990s as an implicit recognition that the increasing costs of accommodating environmental conflict may be too great for existing political economies to bear. Because that particular element of the counter-hegemonic discourse – the ultimate limits to growth - is beyond the bounds of hegemonic re-articulation, the discursive strategy shifted in 1992 editorials, from advocating state action on environmental problems, to delegitimizing environmental demands and introducing the discourse of cost-benefit analysis. The earlier assertion that a clean environment is the *sine qua non* of a wealthy, advanced society, was abandoned; instead, demands for a clean environment were framed as unreasonable, given the demand for capitalist growth, including questioning the scientific basis for those environmental demands.
As discussed previously, this is not a sustainable position. Environmental problems, unlike other social problems, can be grounded in empirical measurement. As evidence mounted, it was difficult to sustain an anti-empirical argument. The editorials in the post-2000 period reflect this. The cost of arresting global warming remained a threat to capitalist growth and consumer culture, but the paper’s own legitimacy required that its discourse embrace the problem and the need to solve it. Solutions, however, had to be articulated within the bounds of hegemonic ideology - by this time, neoliberal globalization - and consistent with maintaining the status quo political economy. Once again, the solutions discourses of multilateral institutions and counter-hegemonic groups were delegitimized, while neoliberal market-based strategies – such as pricing carbon - were advocated. This stance was relatively easy to maintain during Stephen Harper’s administration, given that the government supported The Globe and Mail’s proposition that Canada should withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol. Even so, the paper worried that Harper’s failure to adopt a national climate change plan was undermining the government’s credibility on the international front, threatening its tar sands expansion agenda. With the election of the Justin Trudeau government, The Globe and Mail found a political discourse it could back: international credibility was restored with Canada’s 

106 Throughout the 1980s, several eco-political discourses competed for influence, along with the emergence of neoliberal discourse, which at that time was not hegemonic (see Chapter 6).

107 While The Globe and Mail remains true to its support for a carbon tax in principle, it is not at all clear that it would support any price. For a carbon tax alone to actually achieve the level of pollution reductions required for meeting the warming targets of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the carbon price must move to hundreds of dollars per tonne of CO2. At that price, the oil and gas industry as we know it ends, along with the civil society and political institutions it has spawned, and the consumer culture it supports. If The Globe and Mail retains its bottom line that the unsustainable must be sustained, then we could anticipate that it would abandon its ideological attachment to a price mechanism to drive down carbon pollution. In any case, this post-ecologist stance must ultimately be abandoned, whether because the paper eventually recognizes its pathological endgame, or the socio-ecological manifestations of climate change simply overwhelm and marginalize apologists for the status quo.
ratification of the Paris Agreement and the announcement of a national action plan; at the same time, Prime Minister Trudeau declared that without new pipelines, there cannot be a climate action plan, and further, to an audience of oil and gas industry executives, that no responsible government would leave billions of dollars’ worth of bitumen in the ground (McKibben, Apr. 17/17).

It remains to be seen how stable this ‘balancing act’ is. As of the time of writing, there were more than a dozen court challenges to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and the new NDP government in British Columbia (as of July 2017) stated its opposition to the project. Meanwhile, Trudeau’s legitimacy on climate change is already being challenged on the international scene, as the climate change movement takes note of his support for tar sands expansion (McKibben, Apr. 17/17).

To conclude, a political theory of discourse provides a plausible account of the evolution of eco-political discourse in *Globe and Mail* editorials over the 56-year study period. This is consistent with a Gramscian conjunctural analysis, which would see the politics of entire study period as the social manifestation of a fundamental contradiction between a growth-centric consumer-capitalist culture and a finite planet. These politics have gone through several stages since the post-war period - evident in *The Globe and Mail* editorials - the latest of which can be characterized by post-ecologist, post-political discourse, oriented towards sustaining the unsustainable. This politics is still unfolding and its outcome uncertain, not least because unpredictable, non-linear environmental change is itself a major actor.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

_The decisive element in every situation is the permanently organised and long-prepared force which can be put into the field when it is judged that a situation is favourable (and it can be favourable only in so far as such a force exists, and is full of fighting spirit)._ Antonio Gramsci, 1999, p. 411.

In my introductory chapter I explained that the purpose of this research was to better understand the pathological failure of advanced liberal-democratic nations, including Canada, to meaningfully confront the existential eco-climate crisis of the 21st century, and subsequently, to contribute to the articulation of an effective – and necessary - eco-political praxis. In the previous chapter, I discussed the outcome of my research which demonstrated that Blühdorn’s conception of post-ecologism and its politics can be identified empirically in _The Globe and Mail_ editorials. I also provided an account of that phenomenon from the perspective of a political theory of discourse. In this final chapter, I revisit the scholarly and social significance of the findings, and suggest some possible avenues for further study.

9.1 Contribution to eco-political scholarship

This interdisciplinary project ties together several strands of environmental scholarship. From theoretical perspective, this research “crosses the pond” in both directions. Blühdorn generalizes his theory of post-ecologism to all advanced consumer capitalist democracies. While his research on and experience of Western European politics justifies generalization across that region, there was no empirical evidence of its relevance in a Canadian context. This research begins to fill that gap, contributing a Canadian perspective on a predominantly European discussion of eco-political theory. Likewise,
this research introduces a potentially potent theoretical construct to the study of environmental politics in Canada. The idea of a politics of unsustainability explains the ambiguity and ambivalence of Canadian eco-politics, from politicians to the public.

Further, while many environmental-political scholars are using discourse and content analysis as research methodologies, the application of a post-structural (neo-Gramscian) theory of discourse to eco-political scholarship in Canada appears under-developed. The distinction here is between researching the ‘what’ of discourse, and the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of political-discursive strategies. While this research also emphasizes the ‘what’ (a post-ecologist shift), political discourse theory provides a reference point for also advancing arguments about the ‘why’ that take into account the dialectical, nuanced and often contradictory nature of discourse.

The third strand of scholarship employed in this research is that of using the media, in this case a national newspaper, as the source of texts for analysis. In Chapter three, I explicitly distinguished this research from studies of the media treatment of environmental issues, which is an increasingly important field, since I was not engaging media or communications theories. That said, my discourse-historical approach which placed editorial discourse in historical context, and the comparatively long time period covered, are unusual for environmental-media studies. Consequently, this research provides a longitudinal-contextual framework that could enrich future studies of media content and discourse. Shorter term diachronic and synchronic discourse studies, depending on the goal, run the risk of trying to describe an elephant with a blindfold on. Depending on what part you touch, your explanation of the nature of the beast could be
quite truncated. Having a (relatively) long view helps to prevent this problem. Revisiting existing Canadian media studies from the perspective of this research could reinforce their conclusions, or inform important revisions.

In these ways, this research makes a distinct contribution to the eco-political literature in Canada. Furthermore, because it interrogates a theory of eco-politics in democratic consumer capitalist societies generally, it also contributes to the international environmental politics literature, as well to the field of critical and media discourse studies.

9.2 Contribution to eco-political praxis

Coming from an activist background, I engaged in this research from a praxis perspective. By praxis, I do not simply mean action. While the idea of praxis has ancient philosophical roots, Paulo Freire (1970) uses it in a pedagogical-political sense. His model of reflection-action suggests an iterative process of critical study-reflection informed by experience, leading to strategic action for social change, which in turn is reflected upon and learnings integrated into further action strategies. Expressed as a verb, praxis can be understood as “practicing” in order to hone both knowledge and skills.

Central to praxis is critical reflection: as such, this research is an attempt to illuminate the opaque social processes by which the ecologically- and future-irrational status quo is maintained. While Blühdorn’s insight regarding a post-ecologist values shift, and a subsequent politics of unsustainability, provides a vivid description of this pathology that rings true based on personal experience (otherwise, why choose it over other theories?), it does not illuminate the question of political agency, the other element of praxis. Political
discourse theory addresses this lacuna. If we understand this pathology as the manifestation of a hegemonic discursive struggle, the success of which depends on maintaining the invisibility of the hegemonic process itself, we can see a way forward. The task is to re-politicize the eco-climate crisis and post-ecologist turn through discourses that expose underlying conflicts, problematize the notion of consensus, and re-problematize the eco-climate crisis itself. This may sound very much like what environmental movements have always done; however, the consensus-seeking discourses of sustainable development, green capitalism, and economic rationalism, have blurred the power relations inherent in these discourses, and marginalized critical opposition voices.

As the current political-economic system becomes more and more destabilized, not least because planetary boundaries will be breached, the system that replaces it will ultimately be shaped by the available biospheric supports, but also by the quality of the public discourse that shapes the transition. This is not a matter of simply crafting and delivering better messages in a pluralistic discursive field; nor is it sufficient to stand outside the halls of power and shout. As the stakes get ever higher, strategies designed to decolonize and democratize the public sphere are critical. This includes breaking the stranglehold of hegemonic political parties on legislatures and parliaments, where agendas are set and the contours of allowable discourse determined. Electoral strategies by counter-hegemonic parties are particularly potent, since success depends on discourses that, on the one hand, resonate with the cultural common sense, and on the other, counteract the hegemonic biases that infuse the polity.

In short, understanding the discursive strategies of hegemonic actors is the first step in countering them. Even though we appear to be already on an irreversible course of
dangerous climate change, biodiversity loss and other planetary-scale changes, civil society is and will continue to be engaged in the struggle against unsustainability, whether or not the goal is slipping out of reach. The more strategically informed that engagement, the better.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the qualitative difference in the contemporary context for oppositional discourse arises from Blühdorn’s insight that the cultural zeitgeist is very different than in the past. He recognizes culture as the reservoir of values that gives shape to politics, an insight that is overlooked by environmental movement actors preoccupied by pushing the “right” policy prescription. More importantly, from an agency perspective, Gramsci recognized cultural values, norms and beliefs, which he called ‘common sense,’ as central to hegemonic struggle. Values discourses, then, are more important than policy discourses, as neoliberal ‘norm entrepreneurs’ are well aware.

9.3 Avenues of further study

As with any research project, critical questions remain unanswered and new questions arise. These present opportunities for future study. Two themes are particularly interesting to me. The first has to do with the way in which cultural values are discursively constructed, and how values thus interact with politics. In answering my second research question – how to account for the post-ecologist turn – I only touched on this question. Yet the notion of a values shift really is Blühdorn’s central thesis: a post-ecologist cultural zeitgeist simply cannot support an ecologist political agenda. Having established, at least in one source of texts, evidence of the post-ecologist turn in Canada, connecting this more concretely to a cultural values shift, and accounting for that shift,
would make a significant contribution to eco-political praxis. This could begin by tapping into data from the World Values Survey, which Neil Nevitte has used to demonstrate certain other values shifts in Canada (for instance, Nevitte, 2002).

The other theme relates to environmentalism itself. In this regard, Blühdorn and Welsh posed several possible research questions including: i) how has the progressive agenda of environmentalism been recast; ii) what factors triggered the process of recasting and which parameters are shaping it; and iii) how does the recasting affect political actors historically associated with agendas of radical change. Their corollary to this final question is, can they reposition themselves to be effective in a fundamentally changed political landscape? (Blühdorn & Welsh, 2007, p. 199). These questions relate to an environmental movement that had been largely hegemonized and neutralized by the mid-2000s. In the past several years, however, a new grassroots movement has emerged that combines many different groups, sectors and peoples around climate change. The discourse is uncompromising and non-violent civil disobedience is a *modus operandi*. Rather than repositioning to be effective in a new political landscape, this climate change movement actually intends to change the landscape.

As powerful as this new resistance movement may be, its resilience and potential for long term change is not clear. The lesson from this research may be that unless such movements engage in values-shifting, they will only succeed in stopping individual projects, without facilitating the society-wide transformation to a carbon-free economy. This is not a task that the environmental movement in Canada, at least, is prepared for. The literature on which new understandings and strategies regarding the cultural basis for political change is growing. What is needed now is the intellectual engagement of
scholars and social-environmental change leaders to propose a paradigm shift in how change movements should position themselves going forward. Gramsci would call this leadership the ‘organic intellectuals’ that articulate the vision of a politics of real sustainability with a values framework on which a viable future can be built.

Following on from Robert Paehlke’s three waves of environmentalism, then, this work represents a fourth wave of environmentalism, one that is a direct, purposeful and visionary response to the politics of unsustainability. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Blühdorn’s narrative is incomplete, and a research program which puts the contours on this fourth wave would take it to the next level.


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## Appendix A: Cumulative occurrence of eco-political discourse frames, 1960–2016

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<td>3</td>
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Appendix B: The Globe and Mail Editorials by Year

1960


1965


1968

1969


1970


1972


1977


1982


1987


1992


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http://search.proquest.com/docview/1151515841?accountid=14611


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1997


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http://search.proquest.com/docview/384786853?accountid=14611

http://search.proquest.com/docview/1143652443?accountid=14611


**2002**


2007


2011


2012


2015


Yes, we have a (non-binding) deal. (2015, December 15). *The Globe & Mail*. Retrieved December 30, 2015, from http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.hil.unb.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA437508831&v=2.1&u=fred46430&i=r&p=CPI&sw=w&asid=e6870b539aacaeb1e817e9d0617999e

**2016**


This is no job for Canada’s politicians. (2016, June 8). *The Globe & Mail*. Retrieved October 26, 2016, from http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=CPI&sw=w&u=fred46430&v=2.1&i=t&iD=GALE%7CA454489657&asid=daf973aa3f370451e9ae98f7b0ef3ef


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Editorial work
Conference Presentations:


