

JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT AND INDIA'S CLIMATE POLITICS:
A POSTCOLONIAL POLITICAL ECOLOGY
OF THE ATMOSPHERIC COMMONS

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Global climate negotiations have been at a standstill for over a decade now over the issue of distributing the responsibility of mitigating climate change among countries. During the past few years, countries such as India and China – the so-called emerging economies that were under no obligation to mitigate under the Kyoto Protocol – have increasingly come under pressure to accept limits comparable to those for industrialized countries. These countries, in turn, have strongly resisted these pressures.

My dissertation examines India's participation in these ongoing climate negotiations. Based on qualitative interviews with relevant Indian officials, textual analysis and participant observation, I tell the story of why and how this so-called emerging economy has been resisting a cap on its emissions despite being one of the most vulnerable countries to the consequences of climate change. I draw upon the literatures of environmental justice, international relations, postcolonialism and political ecology to develop my dissertation and adopt a self-reflexive approach in my analysis.

The need for global cooperation to address global environmental issues has arguably provided greater bargaining power to countries formerly marginalized in the global political economy. Following the dynamics of North-South environmental politics, India's climate politics consists of utilizing this power to increase its access to global resources as well as to hold hegemonic industrialized countries accountable for their historical and continuing exploitation of the environmental commons.

A key aspect of India's climate politics consists of self-identification as a developing country. Developed countries with higher cumulative and per capita emissions are seen to have the primary responsibility to mitigate climate change and to provide financial and technological support to developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Developing countries are seen to have a right to pursue development defined as economic growth. The climate crisis is thus seen by my respondents as an opportunity to address the unequal status quo between developed and developing countries. I suggest that this crisis also creates opportunities to redefine development beyond a narrow focus on economic growth. This may be enabled if the demand for justice in an international context is extended to the domestic sphere.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines India's position in ongoing climate negotiations¹ using an environmental justice lens. I situate my analysis within the theoretical perspectives of postcolonialism and political ecology. I utilize contradictions within postcolonial theory, particularly related to binary othering and hybridity and show how the practice of binary othering is used in representational practices by the post-colonial subject, thus offering a new way of conceptualizing a postcolonial politics.² From political ecology I derive the understanding that modernization is valued by marginalized groups struggling to maintain their indigenous identity or control over limited resources, thus enabling the idea of a postcolonial politics that is not necessarily about critiquing modernization as a Western construct. I use these insights to reflect on India's position in climate negotiations, by engaging with ideas of environmental justice in the context of the impending climate crisis.

Discussions of international environmental justice have mostly been framed in a North-South context where the North is seen to owe an ecological debt to the South due to unfair appropriation of ecological space (eg. Anand, 2004; Martinez-Alier, 2002; Castro, 1972). The idea of ecological space originates from the 'limits to growth' discourse but departs from it by emphasizing equity in sharing limited space for growth. The limits to growth idea was perceived by Third World environmentalists and intellectuals as a neocolonial device used by the North to yield power over the South. The North-South EJ argument is closely related to the North-South politics of the 1970s that

arose from the context of proposals for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), where a coalition of formerly colonized countries sought to challenge the unfair terms of trade between themselves and industrialized countries, by demanding changes that would enable the South to achieve self-sustaining economic growth and industrialization (Bhagwati, 1977; Najam, 2004).

Such an argument has been critiqued in part because the South's aspirations for development are seen as a threat to ecological sustainability (Sachs, 2002; Harcourt, 2008; Norberg-Hodge, 2008), and in part because the categories Global South and North are seen to be problematic and state-centric (Barnett, 2007; Toal, 1994). In postcolonial theory, the categories are critiqued as colonial binaries such as First World and Third World that assumes the inferiority of the Third World; similarly development is seen as a colonial practice that should be opposed (Nash, 2004). The significance of my project lies in problematizing these critiques and suggesting a way to envision a postcolonial politics that is not defined by a critique of binaries and a rejection of the idea of development. It does so by privileging the voices of formerly colonized groups who are seeking to challenge the unequal status quo between the industrialized world and the rest.

I examine Indian discourses in these politics in part because it has become a key player in addressing climate change due to its rising emissions profile, but also because of their persistent emphasis on discourses of justice and equity. India's 'emerging economy' and 'major emitter' profile makes their positioning in North-South justice discourses all the more interesting. Very few scholars have examined the Indian position in climate politics. Dubash's (2009) work focuses on domestic climate politics where he shows that there isn't one unified position, rather, a range of perspectives. India's

traditional climate position which was fairly stable for almost two decades, is understood to be influenced by a handful of organizations – the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), the Center for Science and Environment (CSE) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) – but since the appointment of the Prime Minister’s Council on Climate Change (PMCCC), and appointment of Jai Ram Ramesh as Environment minister, there is a sense that there is a greater interest towards engaging proactively with the international community. Swedish scholar Vihma (2011) claims that India’s climate politics have successfully moved past neocolonialist undertones, but it may be premature at this point to make that claim.

Before going further, I want to clarify what I mean when I use the term Global South. The Global South in this dissertation – often used interchangeably with the terms Third World or developing countries – refers to *countries* that have been controlled and exploited by colonial powers (Anand, 2004; Isbister, 2006; Thomas-Slayter, 2003). As such, they are marked by a distinct power differential in global economic affairs, as a result of the lingering effects of colonialism, even after colonial rule may have formally ended. To a greater or lesser extent, the formerly colonized worlds and their colonizers have inherited the legacies left by colonization, and although post-colonial countries have experienced varying degrees of success in recovering from past exploitative relations, they find themselves entangled in a global political economy fundamentally shaped and structured by this system.

Not all countries fit neatly into the two categories, and several scholars have critiqued the validity of these categories (eg. Toal, 1994). I find Isbister’s (2006, 16) approach of looking at these categories as representing the “opposition between the poor

and the rich” as well as “the promise that those who are currently oppressed will eventually overcome their oppression” to be helpful. For him the Third World represents “the poor of the world ... who are disenfranchised in an international system dominated by the industrialized countries: the North, the developed, the rich.” (Isbister, 2006, 16). It is also helpful to see categories not as pre-given and fixed containers of the world but rather as constructed, reinscribed, and renegotiated for political purposes. Consequently, I see the Global South as a spatial imaginary that represents marginalized worlds. This includes countries that have been marginalized in the global political economy.³

When I use the term Global South or Global North, I certainly am not referring to countries that are below or above the equator, although there is considerable overlap. As Anand (2004) has clarified, these terms when used in a North-South politics context connote a political category – shaped by the exigencies of a colonial and imperial history – rather than a (physical) geographical one. Further, she suggests that while each category is internally heterogeneous, their similarities outweigh the differences, and that in the context of global environmental policy and politics, the categories Global North and South continue to hold meaning.

Dissertation Project

The seeds for this dissertation topic were planted a decade ago when I was assigned to write a news article on the then-debated subject of whether or not Nepal should ratify the Kyoto Protocol, as a reporter for The Himalayan Times in the country of my birth. Several months later, I was in Delhi attending a workshop on ‘Sustainable Development’ for environmental Reporters, organized by the Center for Science and

Environment, when I was introduced to the topic of North-South environmental politics. Sunita Narain was addressing the group of South Asian Reporters that had won the opportunity to participate in this regional workshop, and I remember her speak to the issue of the contentious climate negotiations. Several years would pass before I would return to the subject for academic research, though.

During the third year of my doctoral program in 2007, I had been asked by Dr. Scott Bridgham – for whom I was serving as a teaching assistant for the Introduction to Environmental Sciences course – if I could guest lecture on a topic on climate change in his absence. I chose the topic of the politics of the Kyoto Protocol (KP), and issue I found to be of interest. A lively discussion ensued after my brief lecture. Several students were eager to know why countries such as India and China were not expected to mitigate climate change when the US was. Further, they were curious to know how a country gets to be defined as a developing country, as India and China were for the purposes of the KP. In the process of leading this class discussion, I had found my dissertation topic. I was intrigued by the difficulty of deciding where I stood on the issue of whether India and China should be expected to accept a mandatory cap on emissions in order to mitigate climate change. As ‘developing countries’ their governments expected Annex I countries – including the US – to take the lead in leading mitigation efforts. They demanded a cushion from similar obligations similar to international efforts towards addressing ozone thinning. Yet projections that indicated that India along with China and the US would soon be the top three emitters of greenhouse gases (GHG) complicates their negotiating position.

Ironically, South Asia is projected to be one of the regions most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change according to scientific projections (IPCC, 2007). With 60% of its population and 20% of the country's GDP relying on agriculture, India is deemed to be particularly vulnerable to rising temperatures (Lobell and Burke, 2010). The Indian government has acknowledged a range of possible negative impacts of projected climate change for India, including decrease in snow cover for the river systems of the Brahmaputra, reduction in crop yields by 10-40% by 2100, vulnerability of coastal areas to extreme events, increase in health maladies, as well as threats to livelihood security and energy production (MOEF, 2009a; PMCCC, 2009). Through this dissertation, I wanted to understand India's position in international climate negotiations better, given these competing demands and concerns, particularly by looking at the matter from the point of view of those who were engaged in these global discourses.

For the most part I wanted to know how the Indian officials conceptualized what a just climate agreement would be, given the contentious debates circulating around the idea of a post-Kyoto regime regarding mitigation responsibility for countries, particularly India. I also wanted to know about their perceptions of the growing portrayal of India as an emerging economy and major emitter. My research questions focused on the discourses of justice and development in the climate policy circles in Delhi. I asked open-ended research questions about India's official position in climate negotiations and how it was being critiqued; as well as the domestic implications of the per capita equity theme in the official position. The goal of my dissertation project was to answer the following questions:

- How do Indian negotiators and officials position themselves in global climate politics?
 - How do they justify India's position in climate negotiations?
 - How do they respond to claims that India (is an 'emerging economy' and 'major emitter' therefore) does not easily fit into traditional 'developing country' category?
 - What are the domestic implications of the international 'environmental justice' argument?

My research methods consisted of qualitative interviews in Delhi over a six-week period during November 2008-January 2009; participant observation and interviews over two weeks during the UN climate meetings in Copenhagen (COP-15); and examination of NGO and government documents between 2008-2010. My primary sources for interviews were officials from the Ministry of Forests and Environment MOEF, and two influential NGOs in Indian climate discourse and policy, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Center for Science and Environment (CSE), WWF-India, Greenpeace India, Oxfam India, Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN), Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) among others. My respondents included two delegates to UNFCCC negotiations and members of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC). Interviewees were selected by a process of snowball sampling as well as a deliberate targeting of institutions I knew were engaged in international climate discourses.

My intention was not to conduct a comprehensive or representative survey of opinion among all Indian citizens or even officials about India's position in international

climate negotiations, but rather to focus on a small section of the Indian intelligentsia that is engaged in the discourse on domestic and international climate politics and deliberations. As one of my respondents suggested, the discourse of climate change is not as widespread in India, even among those populations that are or will be most affected by its consequences, such as floods and droughts. My primary sources constituted a bridge between these populations and global discourses on climate change and justice.

My respondents shared their views freely with me, and it was clear that I enjoyed ‘insider’ status with them. At times it felt as if I was being regarded as a messenger for their ideas to be conveyed to the Western world. A few of my respondents were a bit offended with my framing of the issue, particularly in addressing India’s position in global climate negotiations as ‘controversial.’ I am grateful to my respondents for sharing their views with me openly, and allowing me to understand the Indian position better as I had originally intended. The quotes in my dissertation in its current form are derived from these interviews, and from other textual sources, including newspaper articles, newsletter editorials, public addresses, and participant observation at COP-15. When I cite quotes or responses from my interviews, I use real names for those who gave me consent to use their real identities. Others are identified (or not) according to their instructions. There were a significant number of respondents who refused to sign the consent form. Yet they agreed to partake in the (in most cases recorded) interview nonetheless, so I did not pressure them to sign the consent form. For these individuals I use their real names and designations unless they asked to remain anonymous.

Organization of Chapters

I have chosen to write the dissertation in a 3-article format. Each of my substantive chapters was written with a view to prepare them for journal publication. Each article therefore follows the publication guidelines of the journal to which it is tailored. An abridged version of Chapter III which was written first, has been submitted to *Global Environmental Politics*. Chapter IV was presented at the 2011 AAG conference in a themed session titled Socio-cultural Dimensions of Climate Change. As of writing, the session organizers are working towards finding a relevant peer-reviewed journal to publish the papers in a special issue. I plan to submit a condensed form of Chapter II to *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*.

In Chapter II, I engage with the postcolonial geographies literature to discuss what are considered key postcolonial critiques, including the problematization of binary representations of the world, and of Western modernization as being colonial practices. I question these claims with the help of postcolonial thinking on hybridity that suggests that colonial strategies can be appropriated by post-colonial groups as a form of resistance. I find that representational practices commonly understood to be colonial practices can be and are used by post-colonial subjects as well, explaining the abiding power of North-South binaries. I also find that post-colonial subjects do not necessarily find liberation in rejecting Western modernization, but rather in seeking to use it in their own terms. This is an insight I draw from political ecology. Other insights derived from posthumanist political ecology and a political ecology of scale allude to the dialectical relationship between environmental change and socio-political-economic power struggles. I suggest this understanding of the inseparability of the social and the

biophysical addresses questions in EJ scholarship about the difference between an anthropocentric EJ and biocentric ecological justice. Inspired by both postcolonialism and a Gramscian political ecology perspective, I adopt an ethico-political approach to my final analysis, where I consider the dangers of academic complicity with maintaining the unequal status quo in the world when dismissing the views of ‘elites’ in the Global South or ‘emerging economies’ in the global political economy as necessarily tainted. Finally I take these multiple postcolonial and political ecology insights to reflect on whether India’s postcolonial politics constitutes a counter-hegemony to the Global North and to what extent.

In Chapter III I engage with the idea that the construction of the Global North and South imaginaries is an inherently political process, and therefore instead of asking whether or not North-South was a valid frame of reference for global inequality, I focus on why this framing holds power in climate politics and in what ways it is reinscribed by Indian officials. On the basis of empirical data from my fieldwork in Delhi and Copenhagen, I attribute the strength of a North-South imaginary in part to the perception that countries of the Global North have not accepted accountability for the greater contributions they have made to the phenomenon of climate change, and in part to the dominance of powerful states of the Global North in global economic affairs. I therefore conclude that addressing these concerns would be important to move a discussion about new criteria for differentiating mitigation responsibility that reflect evolving socioeconomic conditions of countries.

In Chapter IV I summarize the literature on international environmental justice, particularly as it relates to climate change. I then examine how my research data

compares with the existing literature. I show that the concept of EJ that arises from my interview data largely privileges ideas of historical responsibility and per capita equity in a North-South context, largely mirroring the international EJ literature. As such, the North was seen to have an ecological debt towards the South and the South was seen to have a right to any remaining atmospheric space, and by extension, a right to development. India was unequivocally presented as a developing country, and its image as an emerging economy was contrived by Western media, it was suggested. I seek to move the discussion forward by highlighting two questions that for me inevitably arise from the North-South framing of EJ: What are the implications of this line of argument for the issue of domestic inequities within states and by extension within the Global South? A related question is that if justice is seen as right to development, what exactly is meant by development? I conclude that a potentially problematic leap is made between the prospects of emission limits for the state and the wellbeing of the individual Indian citizen. As such I suggest that an EJ approach that emphasizes a capabilities approach to development rather than one focused on economic growth and industrialization may be more ecologically sustainable, and more convincing following a per capita rights approach to EJ. But I also acknowledge that from a historical responsibility perspective, India does seem to have a valid claim regarding economic justice vis-à-vis developed countries.

Brief Background of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol

The dissertation starts with the premise that anthropogenic “warming of the climate system is unequivocal” (IPCC, 2007, 72), therefore I do not seek to engage with

the politics of climate science. Instead, I focus on one aspect of global climate politics, that is, the issue of differentiating responsibility to mitigate climate change among countries. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), formulated during the 1992 Earth Summit established the parameters of differentiation “on the basis of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” adding that “the developed country parties should take the lead in combating climate change and the adverse effects thereof” (UNFCCC, 1992, 4). The document also alludes to the importance of ‘sustainable economic development’ in addressing climate change, and, interestingly, advises against restrictions to international trade for developing countries on account of measures to combat climate change. The text of the convention explicitly notes that “the largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries, that per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low and that the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs” (UNFCCC, 1992, 1)

The Kyoto Protocol (KP) is the prevailing international climate agreement, established in 1997. This agreement derives from the UNFCCC and has the goal of reducing worldwide greenhouse gas emissions to an average of 5.2 percent of 1990 levels over the first commitment period of 2008-2012 (KP, 1998). A clear departure of the KP from the UNFCCC is that it introduced binding commitments to reduce emissions for industrialized countries and European economies in transition, categorized in ‘Annex I’. This higher burden of mitigation for industrialized countries was based on the principles outlined in the UNFCCC text that sought to attribute historical responsibility for the

current levels of anthropogenic GHG emissions to developed countries. The KP which has been ratified by 184 countries, was adopted in 1997 and entered into force in 2005 after Russia ratified it. At present, the US is the only country listed in Annex I to not have ratified the KP. The 1997 Byrd-Hagel resolution – that passed the US Senate with a bipartisan consensus of 95-0 prevented the US from signing the KP without similar commitments from India and China.

As in the UNFCCC text, there are explicit references to the responsibilities of industrialized countries to strive to meet their greenhouse reduction commitments to “minimize adverse social, environmental and economic impacts on developing country Parties” (KP, 1998, 5). Other priorities that are stipulated are the establishment of funding mechanisms and transfer of technology, the continued emphasis on common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and the emphasis on the pursuit of ‘sustainable development’ by all Parties.

The KP also goes further than the UNFCCC in advising against the introduction of new commitments “for Parties not included in Annex I” (KP, 1998, 9). It is fairly evident from a glimpse of these two texts that in addition to aiming to limit catastrophic global warming and to protect the most vulnerable, a key overriding concern in the architecture of these global climate agreements, was pursuit of economic growth and sustainable development, particularly for developing countries. Another element that jumps out is a more or less clear distinction between developing countries, and developed or industrialized countries.

Contemporary Discussions and Debate on Climate Mitigation

Efforts to bring the larger developing countries such India and China⁴ have been consistently made by negotiators representing Annex I countries. To date, India has firmly refused any mandatory commitments to contribute to the mitigation of global climate change, and has insisted the industrialized countries need to bear this burden initially, in addition to providing financial and technological support for any voluntary mitigation activities India undertakes. India's official stance continues to rest on the argument that the "overriding priority" of developing countries – including India – is to pursue "economic and social development and poverty eradication" (PMCCC, 2009, 1). Further, the threat of climate change is attributed to the "accumulated greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, anthropogenically generated through long-term and intensive industrial growth and high consumptive lifestyles in developed countries" (PMCCC, 2009, 1). Indian negotiators frequently summon the CBDR principle as stated in the UNFCCC text, and emphasize the importance of considerations of equity, in making their arguments. Indian negotiators played a significant role in the creation of a Bali Action Plan (BAP) during the 2007 COP-13 negotiations held in Indonesia. The BAP stipulated that non-Annex I countries would pursue non-binding 'nationally appropriate action plans' (NAPA) to mitigate climate change, with financial and technological support from the Annex I countries.

During COP-14 in Poznan, several Annex I countries submitted proposals for differentiation within the non-Annex I group, which were also resisted by India and China. Anticipation of the 15th COP was huge, with expectations that the annual UN meet that year would produce the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, although my respondents

painstakingly pointed out to me that from their point of view, the negotiations at COP-15 were meant to determine mitigation targets for Annex I countries for the second commitment period after 2012. However, in Copenhagen, there were intense debates over the viability of the KP, and eventually the infamous Copenhagen accord was produced, which did away with the CBDR as well as the Annex I/non-Annex I distinctions of the KP. This was not a legally binding document, and has been highly critiqued for being a step backwards. Amidst discontent within Indian civil society, India ‘took note of’ the Copenhagen Accord.

One of the points of contention during COP-15 was the issue of monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV). Annex I negotiators argued that MRV should accompany any aid given for adaptation and mitigation pursuits, but this was strongly resisted by India and China, among other countries. Eventually in an unpopular (in India) move by India’s Environment Minister Jai Ram Ramesh, India agreed to MRV for funded projects. The Minister’s role in the global climate negotiations is seen to be increasingly in the direction of internationalization, seen by some as a positive move away from its traditional position (Vihma, 2011). Interestingly, Ramesh, who had developed a reputation for imposing long-neglected environmental regulations on Indian industry, was replaced as MOEF Minister during a cabinet reshuffle in mid-July 2011 (Gupta, 2011). In the build up to COP-15, India made a commitment to reducing its GHG intensity⁵ by 20-25% from 2005 levels by 2020. Another key development in Copenhagen was the formation of the BASIC group, comprising of Brazil, South Africa, India and China, whose major arguments were to emphasize the importance of the KP, as well as to claim their right - as developing countries – to pursue sustainable development.

Meanwhile, the Guardian reported on the basis of leaked internal correspondence of the Obama administration that the US negotiating team adopted a deliberate strategy of differentiating between two kinds of developing countries and that “advanced developing countries must be part of any meaningful solution to climate change including taking responsibilities under a legally binding treaty.” (Vidal, 2010) The US has over time been successful in garnering increased support from other industrialized countries in advancing this argument that goes at least as far back as 1997 in the US. The rationale given by the Bush administration for not ratifying the KP was that the agreement would give the emerging economies of India and China an unfair and competitive economic advantage over the US. The burden of mitigating climate change was seen as unfairly onerous to industrialized countries. Not all Annex I countries originally shared this sentiment, though. European Union had for a long time advocated that developing countries did need room to grow and should be absolved of immediate responsibilities to mitigate climate change, unless they were voluntary. In recent years, there has been a gradual change in the stance of the European Union, as they have moved closer to the positions of the US negotiating team in regards to the mitigation responsibilities of non-Annex I countries.

In his analysis of domestic climate politics in India, Dubash (2009) categorized Indian sentiment into three categories: growth-first stonewallers, progressive realists and progressive internationalists. See Table 1 for an illustration. The climate discourse in India is understood to have been strongly influenced by two NGOs, the Center for Science and Environment (CSE) and the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), formerly Tata Energy and Resources Institute, for the last two decades. The formation of

the Prime Minister’s Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) in 2007 is understood to have introduced a healthy debate in the country’s climate discourse with the greater incorporation of internationalist⁶ perspectives (Vihma, 2011). As such, there is no single Indian position on climate change, although despite differences the core negotiating positions of refusing an absolute cap on emissions or a peak year at the present moment, and demands for financial and technological transfer, have been stable. This core position in international climate negotiations reflects a long-standing emphasis of developing countries that the responsibility for addressing contemporary global environmental problems falls on the North. As a leader of the global South in making this argument, India has earned a reputation for being a ‘deal-breaker’ in climate negotiations (Dubash, 2009). There have been speculations that climate negotiations could be a springboard for a reinvigorated North-South agenda along the lines of earlier unsuccessful calls for a NIEO (eg. Najam, 2004).

Table 1: Three Strategic Indian Perspectives on Climate Change

	<i>Growth First Stonewallers</i>	<i>Progressive Realists</i>	<i>Progressive Internationalists</i>
<i>Political Reading</i>	Geopolitical threat	India as excuse - fatalism	India as excuse - cooperation
<i>Foundational Demand</i>	Equity	Equity	Equity + climate effectiveness
<i>Domestic Agenda</i>	Growth first	Co-benefits	Co-benefits

	<i>Growth First Stonewallers</i>	<i>Progressive Realists</i>	<i>Progressive Internationalists</i>
<i>International Strategy</i>	Stonewall commitments	Focus at home, delink globally	Link domestic and global
<i>Motto</i>	It's our turn!	It's an unfair world!	Seize the moment!

Source: Dubash, 2009, p. 9

CHAPTER II

INDIA'S CLIMATE POLITICS: A POSTCOLONIAL POLITICAL ECOLOGY

OF THE ATMOSPHERIC COMMONS

The alternative to the commons is too horrifying to contemplate.

Injustice is preferable to total ruin.

Garrett Hardin (1968, 1247)

Introduction

In 1990, the Center for Science and Environment (CSE) in Delhi published a document titled “Global warming in an unequal world: A case of environmental colonialism” where they argued that “the idea that developing countries like India and China must share the blame for heating up the earth and destabilizing its climate, as espoused in a recent study published in the United States by the World Resources Institute in collaboration with the United Nations, is an excellent example of environmental colonialism.” They also indicated that this influential 1990 report implicitly sanctioned the “perpetuat[ion] [of] the current global inequality in the use of the earth’s environment and its resources” (Agarwal and Narain, 1990, 1).

The authors pointed out that “the gargantuan consumption of the developed countries, particularly the United States,” were mostly responsible for greenhouse gas (GHG) accumulation in the earth’s atmosphere. Yet, instead of seeking to address this hyperconsumption, they lamented, Western environmentalists were focusing on the potential increase in consumption of the average Indian and Chinese citizen (ibid, 3).

Denouncing the “highly partisan ‘one worldism’” inherent in Western prescriptions inspired by discourses of “Our Common Future” and intergenerational justice, they urged environmentalists in the Third World to ask those in the West, “whose future generations are we seeking to protect, the Western World’s or the Third World’s?” (Agarwal and Narain, 1990, 18).

I revisit this older tome today because these questions continue to persist in the context of ongoing debates over states’ differentiated responsibilities to mitigate climate change. Furthermore, Agarwal and Narain’s vision of Western environmentalist-Third World leadership alliances and ecologically benign decentralized development are relevant for today’s debates. So is their warning of possible ‘selling out’ of Third World interests and the need to dismantle oppressive government policies in the Third World.

Why did these ideas from a prominent environmental NGO in India never catch the attention of Anglo-American critical human geographers?⁷ Equally puzzling is the fact that there is hardly any work in human geography examining international climate negotiations from the perspective of North-South inequities or politics. The few works that are available simply dismiss rather than engage with or seek to understand this binary frame of reference. In an attempt to provide a possible explanation for this gap in the literature, I suggest that much of the critical human geography literature engaging with the Global South has been preoccupied with injustices *within* the Global South. The relative silence on *North-South* inequities,⁸ might be attributed to three factors.

One is an apparent reluctance among scholars to engage with research problems in which their own privileges – and complicity in maintaining power differentials – might be challenged.⁹ The climate crisis has created an opportunity where these differential

privileges and responsibilities of people (including scholars) residing in the Global North and Global South can and should be addressed. As a scholar residing in the Global North and researching climate politics which are arguably stuck in a North-South impasse, I must be cognizant of my role in the topic I am studying. Residence in the Global North – regardless of my class – dramatically affects my contribution to global greenhouse gases in a relational global context. To be oblivious to my role in contributing to the problem when I draw conclusions from my research is therefore not excusable in my mind. As a scholar examining global climate politics from a critical geography perspective, I cannot ignore the North-South question or dismiss it based on the reasoning that the world is not neatly divided into countries that fit into either category.

Second is the hegemony of class-based analyses in addressing questions of social justice¹⁰. This is tied to the last point made. When class is the dominant frame of reference, it is the dominant classes – the so-called elites¹¹ – in the Global South that are often held responsible for the conditions of the marginalized classes. And while this may be partially true, a full picture of the marginalization of the subaltern does require a consideration of their positioning in a global context. Blaming the Third World elite for the problems of the world's poor (including vulnerability to climate change) might lead the First World (elite?) academic to play the role of savior and “save the Third World subaltern from the Third World elite,” after Spivak's (2010a, 48) famous “white men ... saving brown women from brown men” allegory. But doing so fails to address the power differential between the Third World and the First World elites. An unreflexive critique of the Third World elite might therefore lead us to be complicit in the maintenance of difference in material privileges between the Global North and the South. Similarly,

critiques of North-South binaries might arguably make us complicit with the imperialist strategies of hegemonic powers.

Third, it has become rather unfashionable to speak in support of binaries, driven in part by postcolonial critiques by Said (1978, 1994) among others, and also as part of the customary dismissal of Enlightenment thinking in critical scholarship. However, as I will argue later in the chapter, binary ‘othering’ is not an act that can be performed only by dominant groups. It is also a strategy of resistance to dominance/hegemony by the marginalized. Binaries help us make sense of differences in the world. As Said (1994, 52) remarked: “no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions.” To understand who is behind particular representational practices and for what purpose is therefore important.

This chapter therefore argues that the North-South binary *is* a valid frame of reference for inquiry within the critical geography traditions of political ecology and postcolonial geography, particularly in the context of contemporary international climate politics. It further seeks to answer the question: How do theoretical insights from postcolonialism and political ecology contribute to our understanding of India’s climate politics? In the following section, I will make the case for the current relevance of the North-South problematic for a postcolonial geography. I will then draw upon insights from political ecology to explain how India’s climate politics represents a form of postcolonial resistance.

Postcolonial Geographies

The term postcolonial is sometimes erroneously used to refer to a period after colonization marked by political independence from colonial rule. A hyphenated ‘post-colonial’ may best represent that particular condition as it has been suggested elsewhere (eg. Gandhi, 1998; Said, 1994). For the purposes of this dissertation, the term postcolonial refers to a condition that continues to be marked by “the colonial aftermath” (Gandhi, 1998, 4) as well as diverse forms of resistance to colonial exploitation “that often preceded and continues long after independence” (Nash, 2004, 114). As such, the implicit understanding is that the legacies of colonialism remain, “in new forms of domination that follow and extend old imperial lines of unequal interconnection” (ibid, 105). Neo-colonialism thus refers to “forms of political and economic domination through which the West continues to exploit much of the world” (ibid, 113) through a set of “political, ideological, economic, and social practices” (Said, 1994, 9). Therefore, central to postcolonial theorizing is “a critical engagement with colonialism and its continued legacies” (Nash, 2004, 105).

Recent reviews of work in postcolonial geographies have emphasized the importance of recognizing the materialities of postcolonialism. A geographical approach to postcolonial theorizing – with its emphasis on the mutual associations of the discursive/symbolic and the material – is seen to be a necessary corrective to a predominantly textual and culturally oriented field of study, by bringing about “a productive engagement between postcolonialism and the material realities of global inequalities and towards a revived political and ethical project” (McEwan, 2003, 341; Nash, 2004).

One of the key contributions of postcolonialism has reportedly been to challenge colonial binary representations such as First World/Third World, North/South, developed/underdeveloped, core/periphery.¹² Another is a critique of Western theories of modernist development harkening back to the 1950s and 1960s (McEwan, 2003; Nash, 2004). The foundational basis for such a development theory is understood to be “Enlightenment ideals of modernity and progress, and ... colonial discourses of the ‘civilising mission’” that accompanied paternalistic attitudes and interventions. These discourses are often seen as nothing more than “discursive tools that justify the neoliberal march of free market capitalism” (Nash, 2004, 110).¹³ Extending this logic, McEwan (2003, 343) claims that postcolonial theory has not paid enough attention to global capitalism and class analyses and that its radical and progressive “politics of recognition” does not extend to a “politics of distribution” and that the majority of work has therefore failed to influence global power disparities.¹⁴

She adds that postcolonial geographies are well poised to take up such a political and ethical project by “responding to the need to connect discursive and material realities and to intersect with critiques of global inequality” (McEwan, 2003, 345). Nash (2004, 107) similarly argued for the “necessary but necessarily difficult task of moving towards postcolonial human geographies.” In this vein I suggest that postcolonial geographies are typically understood to mean the distinct ways in which the legacies of colonialism are unfolding in distinct places, so as to counteract a singular grand narrative of postcolonialism¹⁵. Blunt and McEwan (2002, 4) suggest postcolonialism should be understood as a “*geographically* dispersed contestation of colonial power and knowledge.”¹⁶ I argue that North-South postcolonial geographies do not receive nearly

as much emphasis as postcolonial geographies *in* post-colonial places, and more critical geographers ought to take up this problematic. This is necessary if the Third World or the Global South is not to serve merely as an intellectual playground to conduct marginality studies for First World academics (Gandhi, 1998, 59).

A North-South Postcolonial Geography?

Said (1994, 17) remarked that the colonizer-colonized relationship had reemerged in the similarly ‘compartmentalized’ reincarnation of “what is often referred to as the North-South relationship.” Following his lead, a postcolonial approach to geography has largely come to be synonymous with critiquing the North-South framing in geopolitics or international relations. The reason for this is that these constructions “draw on colonial traditions of representation” (Nash, 2004, 110) of ‘us’ and ‘them’ that are predicated on conscious or unconscious forms of Western exceptionalism and superiority (Doty, 1996). Such notions are held responsible for obscuring the role of Western imperialism in subjugating the Third World by naturalizing the superiority and the success of the West over the rest of the world (Sidaway, 2002). Thus Nash (2004, 124) notes that postcolonialism challenges “the binary categories of homogenous colonizing and colonized groups.”

Yet, to fundamentally problematize the use of binary differentiation is uncalled for, particularly when considering that it may be used as a resistance strategy by formerly colonized groups. As Jacobs (1996) has pointed out, the colonizer’s negative constructions of the colonized other are often appropriated in counter-colonial efforts. “The processes by which notions of the Self and Other are defined, articulated and

negotiated are a crucial part of what might be thought of as the cultural dimension of [both] colonialism and postcolonialisms. [This] making and remaking of identity occurs through representational and discursive spheres” (Jacobs, 1996, 2).

For Anand (2004, 2), the term ‘South’ represents the common experiences of people who have been victimized by a colonial and imperial past¹⁷. Countries of the South are seen to be “economically weaker and more vulnerable to the economics of the world system.” Now, such a portrayal may be likened to internalized colonialism, but it may also be interpreted as an identity politics where claiming victimhood increases bargaining power. Calls for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) were made on similar grounds (Bhagwati, 1977; Najam, 2004), although the Bretton Woods institutions rejected these calls by pointing to the fallacy of the North-South divide. The climate negotiations can be seen as a forum to revisit these demands. Roberts and Parks (2007, 7) attributed a ‘North-South climate impasse’ to “larger systemic problems that hinder cooperation between rich and poor nations.” Focusing only on *colonial forms of representation* deflects attention from the material inequities in power and access to resources inherent along the divide.

The validity of a North-South divide is challenged on account of, among other things, dynamics of ‘internal colonialism’ (Blunt and McEwan, 2002; Sidaway, 2000, 2002), that takes into consideration hierarchies of power in the post-colonial state, as well as ‘ultraimperialism’ (Sidaway, 2002), that speaks to the idea of imperialism as an enterprise that goes beyond nationalist tropes and accounts for the power of multinational capital as represented by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank among others. Implicated in both these arguments is the problematization of elites in post-

colonial locations as a key obstacle to eliminating global inequalities. This line of argumentation therefore leads to the irrelevance of speaking of inter-state differences, and feeds into a fetishization of marginality studies. This carries multiple risks. By branding some groups as elites, we freeze their non-subaltern status, thus robbing them of their claims to subalternity in other (North-South) contexts, as (the citizens of) some states do enjoy more power over others in governing multinational corporations and institutions. I therefore think it worthwhile to examine the relative power differentials between categories of countries that have relatively more and less power in global economic affairs.

Sidaway (2002, 27) pointed out that a postcolonial critique enables “an interrogation of Western geography as sovereign-universal-global truth.” While they do not provide silver bullet answers to complex questions, they do “open layers of questions about what underpins and is taken for granted in Western geographical narratives and how they have been inextricably entangled with the world they seek to analyse and mistaken for self-contained, universal and eternal truths.” By applying this assertion to the claim that “a critical geopolitics is one that refuses the spatial topography of First World and Third World, North and South, state and state,” (Toal, 1994, 231) – that has been reclaimed by Barnett (2007) in the context of climate geopolitics – I seek to show how Western knowledge production continues to be complicit in the preservation of the status quo between Global North and South and the countries therein. For in denying the North-South dichotomy, these scholars (of the Global North) lend strength to the assertion – akin to that of the Bretton Woods institutions in the context of NIEO proposals – that more and less powerful countries do not exist, and that the material

wellbeing of the poor in the Global South can be addressed without challenging the fundamental structures of the global political economy that are skewed towards the Global North. As Blunt and McEwan (2002, 6) put it so well, “postcolonial approaches demonstrate how the production of western knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of Western power.”

According to Roos and Hunt (2010, 10), "as the biggest consumer of our natural resources, the largest producer - and exporter - of waste in all its forms, the most insistent defender of capitalism, and the greatest propagator of cultural (post) imperialism, we need U.S. writers, scholars, and critics involved in the conversation [of climate change]. Our critical methods should not reproduce our failure with the Kyoto Treaty." As the authors highlight, the emerging field of environmental justice is ripe for critical analyses at the intersection between postcolonialism and studies of the environment.

Without taking the explicit stance of postcolonialism, Ziser and Sze (2007) do a remarkable job of demonstrating the Orientalism and neo-Malthusian fears inherent in the new wave of US environmentalism that has accompanied the rising specter of climate change. Taking an ‘environmental justice cultural studies’ approach to the imagery of the polar bear in US depictions of global warming, the authors argue that Chinese geopolitical threats serve as a convenient scapegoat for ignoring US responsibility for contributing to global climate change. Thus in spite of being the “world’s largest polluter and emitter of GHGs both in terms of its domestic industries (with 5% of the world’s population, the US emits 25% of the world’s carbon dioxide) and its financing and consumption of polluting industries elsewhere in the world” as a country as well as “a transnational ideological force that drives much of the current economic globalization,”

(Ziser and Sze, 2007, 385), the authors show how responsibility for global climate change “is increasingly being placed at the feet of Chinese consumers choosing the accoutrements of life that are fundamentally Western, with automobiles replacing bicycles, with bigger homes, and with increasing material affluence” (ibid, 393).¹⁸

The US has long been a staunch opponent of the idea of different mitigation obligations for different countries¹⁹. Recent negotiations verify the prevalence of this point of view. Leaked internal correspondence of the US administration revealed by the Guardian shows that the Obama administration’s climate media strategy leading to and in Copenhagen deliberately adopted the strategy of differentiating between two kinds of developing countries and that “advanced developing countries must be part of any meaningful solution to climate change including taking responsibilities under a legally binding treaty (Vidal, 2010).”²⁰ The United States has over time, gradually garnered increasing support from other industrialized countries in advancing this argument. Western newspaper coverage of the climate negotiations consequently portrays the ‘emerging economies’ particularly of the populous China and India as grave threats to global climate change in general, and a workable climate solution in particular.

Drawing on Said, Jacobs (1996) argued that the discursive processes of postcolonial identity construction had concrete political and material manifestations. A contemporary example of this is found in climate politics, where the constructed identity of countries – developing versus emerging – has material consequences regarding whether they are expected to carry the financial burden of mitigating climate change. The struggle over the validity of the KP along with its associated categories of countries regarding mitigation responsibility for climate change, therefore constitutes an excellent

case study for analysis of evolving North-South politics that seem to simply have escaped the attention of most critical human geographers.

Critique and Complicity

Almost two decades ago, Jane Jacobs posed what is considered “one of the most significant questions for contemporary human geography” (Nash, 2004, 105): “Can the spatial discipline of geography move from its positioning of colonial complicity towards producing postcolonial spatial narratives?” (Jacobs, 1996, 163). Nash (2004, 124) maintains, “a human geography informed by postcolonialism retains a critical awareness of its disciplinary history of colonial complicity, and deploys its consequent sensitivity to the politics of knowledge and the danger of grand narratives to locate postcolonial theories.”

The risk of academic complicity with reinforcing global inequalities is a serious one and those of us committed to using our scholarship to enhance social justice rather than maintaining the status quo would be appalled by and wary of it. Postcolonial scholars (eg. Kapoor, 2008; Spivak, 2010) have warned of such complicity and suggested that attention to self-reflexivity is crucial in countering such complicity. I therefore take this to mean that a scholarly examination using a postcolonial perspective takes seriously into consideration the author’s (almost inevitably in the present context from a First World/Western(ized)/elite location) own positionality. This must happen if scholarly work on postcolonialism and justice are to not be treated as just an intellectual exercise. In the context of examining a North-South postcolonial geography, I now proceed to

discuss a few areas where I see the possibility for complicity with North-South material inequality inherent in scholarly critique.

The emphasis on postcolonial critique in the form of the contestation of binary identities such as First World/Third World, North-South is understandable given the role they have played in accentuating colonial power (Jacobs, 1996). However, there is an aspect to this power and identity that has not been explored, to my knowledge – the appropriation of binary construction as anti-colonial strategy in the form of identity politics. I argue that contemporary climate politics provides an excellent opportunity to examine the ways in which colonial/imperial power is both, being challenged and reinscribed. The role of binaries is crucial here, but in a different way from how binaries have traditionally been understood in postcolonialism.

Postcolonial scholars have drawn attention to anti-colonial strategies that utilize the “disruptive power of hybridity” employing the colonizer’s tools of oppression (Jacobs, 1996, 14; Kapoor, 2008). Jacobs (1996, 14) speaks of the ability of colonized groups to subvert colonial power “through disruptive inhabitations of colonialist constructs.” This is enabled by the “vulnerability of imperialist and colonialist power ... against anticolonial formations.” Drawing on Homi Bhabha’s concept of a ‘hybridizing strategy,’²¹ Kapoor (2008, 139) similarly speaks of its ability to “[exploit] the instabilities of power” by “[working] with the dominant discourse” and attempting to beat the master at his own game. Such attempts are not necessarily guaranteed success because of the “ever-changing forms of neocolonial hegemony” (Kapoor, 2008, 147) – the game keeps evolving.

These resistance strategies are adopted in dialectical relation to the “tenacious and adaptive power” of colonial discourses that seek to continually reinvent and reinscribe the status quo (Jacobs, 1996, 14). In this vein, and in the context of climate politics, as mentioned earlier, the US strategy in particular has been, on the one hand, to question the simple binary of Annex I/non-Annex I or developed/developing countries, and on the other, to create a binary distinction between more advanced and less advanced developing countries (mirroring scholarly critique). It is clear that this divide-and-rule strategy is motivated by the perceived economic and geopolitical threats from China and increasingly India as well (Ziser and Sze, 2007).

Awareness of these two-way identity politics obligates postcolonial scholars to examine the dynamics of representations – how they are “constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what components,” (Said, 1994, 314) rather than treat identities as a given. As Jacobs (1996, 162) suggests, an understanding of identity as “social constructs, and strategic ones at that, destabilizes a whole range of claims.” Postcolonialism’s critique of North-South binaries has been predicated mostly on discourses from the colonizers’ vantage-point and as such have focused on the “continued legacies of colonialism [rather] than challenges to them” (Nash, 2002, 221). A neglected but important task is therefore to engage with the multiple forms of agency of formerly colonized people without dismissing them a priori as ‘elitist.’

India can be said to embody a hybrid identity – combining the political and economic clout that comes with its ‘emerging economy’ identity, with widespread poverty.²² Thus while India shares development challenges with several least developed countries (LDCs), it wields greater authority and voice and agency than these countries in

international fora. In this respect, in the context of climate negotiations, the Indian position is predicated on problematizing entrenched differentials in power, material privileges and GHG emissions between the average citizen in more and less powerful states. Despite India's hybrid identity, when Indian officials seek to self-identify with the developing world in the context of climate negotiations, they are taking advantage of the 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak, 1990, 1993) of the Global South imaginary. Viewing "essentialist notions of identity" as strategic social constructs that can be made by hegemonic as well as marginalized groups (Jacobs, 1996, 162) enables me to examine these identity categories from more than one perspective.²³

Seen in this light, the dismissal of binaries as a simplistic construct itself becomes a simplistic and careless argument. To the extent that "theoretical generalizations about the socially constructed nature of essentialized identity have an uneven political consequence which is far from incidental to ongoing political struggles," (Jacobs, 1996, 163) the scholarly dismissal of a North-South politics of climate change for me is disturbingly complicit with the US negotiating strategy in climate discussions. Further, the ability of a Western scholar to pronounce that the North-South frame of binary difference lacks validity is in itself a privileged point of view, enabled by the ability to employ a panopticon (Toal, 1994) where that privilege can conveniently be made to disappear. As Said (1994, 48) suggested, such scholarly privilege fits uncomfortably well with a deliberate imperial agenda. Interestingly, even as binary constructions are critiqued, scholars themselves are unable to escape binary ways of thinking, a phenomenon I might describe as the paradox of binaries, after Jones' (2009, 179) paradox of categories. For one of the arguments summoned is that a North-South problematic is

guilty of what Berger (2004) has called Third Worldism – the appropriation of the North-South discourse by Third World elites. Here a clear distinction (binary?) seems to be made between the Third World subaltern and the Third World elite.

In assuming that the Third World elite does not have the authority to speak on behalf of the subaltern, the implicit assumption then is that it is the First World academic (elite?) rather, that has this authority. Not only does this assumption serve to immortalize Western hegemony on knowledge construction, it reduces the idea of marginality to the essentialized subaltern, thus negating a view of relative marginality. By emphasizing the importance of only the ‘real’ subaltern – the absolute victim of colonization – to speak and be heard, the hegemon in a way ensures that there will always be a subaltern category, for those who emerge from there to develop a voice can get branded as an ‘elite’ whose arguments are therefore immediately untrustworthy.

While celebrating the creative work of scholars to employ strategies to “hear voices of resistance” from “people otherwise silenced by hegemonic relationships of power,” (McEwan, 2003, 346), scholars of a critical bent are strangely complicit in the silencing of voices that *are* ‘emerging.’ Critical geographers should be aware of these dangers of complicity in critique, and therefore more willing to reflexively engage with voices from the Third World or South. If we are to “faithfully engage the actual practice of postcolonial subjects,” as Ashcroft (2001, 19) points out, we cannot simply be content with dismissing the appropriation of dominant discourses by the formerly colonized. In this light, the championing of the framing of global inequality in North-South or First World-Third World terms should not be dismissed a priori as an opportunistic discourse of the Third World elite. While the Third World elite’s ability to represent the interests of

the Third World subaltern can and should be questioned, the contrary should not be assumed.

McEwan (2003, 349, 350) thus argues for a more reflexive as well as “politically and ethically informed” postcolonial geography befitting the complexities of postcoloniality. Such a project refuses to brand all people as consumers as globalism would have us do, and acknowledges that the contemporary moment is still impacted by the colonial heritage, and therefore difference exists at multiple levels. A postcolonial political project within geography should therefore be “provisional and constantly under review, able to respond to different spatialities of the postcolonial but constantly in question.” Heeding the call of postcolonial scholars (Nash, 2004; Roos and Hunt, 2010) to explore the mutually productive relationship between studies of postcolonialism and the environment, I now proceed to a discussion of a postcolonial political ecology of the atmospheric commons²⁴.

Towards a Postcolonial Political Ecology of the Atmospheric Commons

Negotiations and debates over differential mitigation responsibility for states – a key aspect of contemporary climate politics – is in no uncertain terms a struggle over access to the atmospheric commons. The unregulated discharge of greenhouse gases (GHGs), particularly over the course of the last century and a half²⁵ from activities mostly associated with the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath, now threaten to push the global climate past the brink of what scientists refer to as dangerous anthropogenic interference (DAI) with the earth’s climate system (UNFCCC, 1992). Awareness of this phenomenon within the scientific episteme dates back to at least the early 1980s (IPCC,

2007), however, it is with the 1992 Rio Summit that the first international effort to thwart the progress of climate change was institutionalized, in the form of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This arrangement also institutionalized a binary distinction between countries that did or did not need to undertake commitments to take mitigative action, based theoretically on their contributions to GHGs until that point, but from a practical standpoint also on politically feasible figures determined by negotiators (DeSombre, 2002). The UNFCCC evolved into the KP in 1997 with an added legal dimension to the commitments earlier professed. The United States remains the only industrialized country that has refused to ratify the KP as of now. The KP's tenure ends in 2012. During the last several years, the annual UNFCCC negotiations have been focused on producing what has popularly been termed a 'post-Kyoto' climate arrangement (although this framing is itself controversial as I will shortly discuss).

Since these inter-state negotiations are essentially about access to and struggles over a natural resource – in this case the global atmospheric commons as a sink for GHG emissions – political ecology is an appropriate theoretical framework in the critical geography tradition within which to situate this analysis. Two major concerns inherent in political ecology scholarship are central to this examination – a focus on the politics of access and control over resources (Watts and Peet, 2004) that is cognizant of “the role of unequal power relations in constituting a politicized environment” (Bryant, 1998, 79); and a normative orientation towards redistributive justice and ecological sustainability that are derived from a basic radical ethical position” (Bryant and Jarosz, 2004, 808). Recently there has been a recognition of the relevance of a Gramscian approach to

political ecology because of the emphasis on the ‘ethico-political’ dimensions of scholarship in both areas (Ekers et al, 2009; Mann, 2009). Important to fulfill such a radical ethical ethos is the importance of a “self-critical reflection [that] necessitates an awareness and acknowledgement [of] the researchers’ positionality, privilege, power, and the partial, situated ways in which knowledge is produced, legitimated and consumed (Limb & Dwyer, 2001, in Jarosz, 2004, 919).²⁶

Political ecology as a field of study had started out with a focus on the dynamics of environmental change in the Third World with emphasis on critiquing neo-Malthusian explanations of environmental degradation (Robbins, 2004). Uneven access to and power over environmental resources as well as “the ways in which conflict over access to environmental resources is linked to systems of political and economic control first elaborated during the colonial era” (Bryant, 1998, 79) have been key themes in the literature. In recent years there have been efforts to bring political ecology to the First World (eg. Robbins, 2002) as well as to formulate regional political ecologies (Walker, 2003). While political ecology has judiciously sought to situate explanations of environmental change within the context of a globalized political economy, I am not aware of work in this field that has sought to address unequal power relations between the Global North and the Global South in struggles over the environment. This dissertation seeks to make a contribution in filling this gap.

I utilize some important theoretical contributions made in this interdisciplinary area of inquiry that resonate with some of the arguments I seek to make in this chapter. Earlier I mentioned how a key aspect of postcolonialism has been understood as a rejection of modernization as an Enlightenment-based Western practice and system of

knowledge. Drawing on Bhabha's conception of hybridity, I seek to problematize this claim. Similar work has been done in political ecology as well. Bebbington (2004) and Rangan (2004) have shown on the basis of their work in the Ecuadorian Andes and the Indian Himalayas respectively, that contrary to romanticized notions of environmental protest in the Global South,²⁷ it is not necessarily the case that communities struggle to preserve tradition and oppose modernization in regards to preserving their livelihoods, but rather those struggles were meant to wrest control over the means to their livelihoods.

Suspicious of portrayals of development as a "hegemonic discourse of the West," Rangan (2004, 374) describes it instead as a dynamic, complex and contested concept and draws attention to "the diverse ways in which ideas of development, despite their origins in the West, have been translated, appropriated, refashioned, and reconfigured by local circumstances." Social movements that often get pegged as seeking "alternatives to development," she argues, "are in fact very much internal to, and produced by, the processes of uneven geographical development, and articulated within the context of state action.... Their mobilization depends on using the legitimizing discourse of development often employed by the states within which they are based, to press for better access to resources or social rights of belonging, or demand that problems of uneven geographical development are addressed" (Rangan, 2004, 374).

Drawing upon his research on indigenous peoples' organizations, Bebbington (2004) likewise suggests that the assumption of their pursuit of alternatives to development are problematic as they are often less interested in eschewing modern technologies than they are in increasing their control over their ability to bring about social change. Rather than leading to cultural erosion, modernization could become a

means of cultural survival. “Indigenous people may incorporate the techniques of those who have long been their dominators, and yet do so in a way that strengthens an indigenous agenda pitched in some sense against the interests of those dominating groups” (Bebbington, 2004, 396). These understandings of social movements enable an understanding of postcolonial protest as not necessarily simply a critique of modernization-as-development-as-neocolonialism. Rather, for the formerly colonized to seek redress for past and continuing injustices in the form of resource distribution, using the language of the colonizers in their own terms is – if not inevitable – certainly strategic. I suggest that these understandings derived from work in a domestic context are also applicable at an inter-state level.

The politics of access and control over environmental amenities along with the unequal power relations implicated in such politics have been a core concern of political ecology (Neumann, 2009). However, in my observation, the realm of power dynamics has not included North-South relations, despite a prominent and growing environmental dimension to longstanding North-South politics, and despite the problematization of the ‘local trap’ – the tendency in much political ecology work to privilege studies at the ‘local scale’ – based on a priori assumptions about the desirability of justice and sustainability considerations at this scale (Brown and Purcell, 2005, 608). Heeding calls to liberate political ecology from such a ‘local trap’ as well as its apparent ‘land centrism’ (Bryant, 1998, 89), I draw upon the political ecology of scale literature to examine global climate politics.

In his review of the ‘political ecology of scale’ literature, Neumann (2009, 399) describes “scale as socially constructed, historically contingent, and politically

contested."²⁸ As such, he emphasizes that power relations and asymmetries, as well as the scalar practices of actors that constitute these power configurations are important to this field of study. He also draws upon scholars in the field to pursue work that connects the politics of scale with environmental politics, including non-human actors and biophysical processes. Two of the themes identified by Neumann (2009) in the political ecology of scale literature are relevant to my analysis: interactions of power, agency and scale; and the dialectical nature of socio-ecological processes and their relationship to the scaling process.

Although not referring to the politics of scale literature, Sundberg (2011) meanwhile highlighted the importance of non-human agency in environmental and geopolitical dynamics in what she termed a posthumanist political ecology. This is an important aspect of a postcolonial climate politics that I discuss a bit further. Neil Smith's idea of 'jumping scales' is relevant to my analysis as well - the idea that social actors are able to switch between different scales or levels in order to make political claims. This political strategy is used by "groups at a disadvantage at one scale [who] pursue their aims at a different scale, hoping to turn the balance of power to their advantage" (Smith, 1993, in Brown and Purcell, 2005, 608).

Recent climate negotiations offer opportunities to apply our understanding of scale jumping as well as the centrality of biophysical processes in this process (Neumann, 2009) to the more-than-local scale. In recognition of Marston et al.'s (2005) critique of the use of 'scale' in geography, I will clarify that my understanding and treatment of scale is for the most part synonymous with level of socio-political organization. As such, the scales or levels I engage with are the individual, the state, the interstate and the global.

My intention is not to examine the epistemology of scale itself but to show how the politics of scale construction and jumping is an integral part of India's climate politics.

In order to extend the work of political ecology in a North-South context, I draw upon international relations scholarship that utilizes the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Cox, 1983; Doty, 1996). I utilize a discursive approach to global hegemony (Doty, 1996), with the understanding that the discursive realm of scholarship is inherently connected to the material. The environment serves as an entity over which hegemony is reinscribed or challenged (Ekers et al, 2009). As in postcolonial geography, there is a strong recognition of the inseparability of the discursive and material in political ecology (Neumann, 2009). According to Doty (1996, 8), "the hegemonic dimension of global politics is inextricably linked to representational practices." The examination of "how certain representations underlie the production of knowledge and identities and how these representations make various courses of action possible" is therefore crucial. Seen this way, identity categories such as class, state elites, North-South are discursively constructed and contested in efforts to maintain or oppose hegemony, and therefore should not be assumed a priori (Doty, 1996). As Watts and Peet (2004, 25) also argued, power struggles over access to resources "are invariably wrapped up with questions of identity ... these forms of identity are not stable (their histories are often shallow), and may be put to use (they are interpreted and contested) by particular constituencies with particular interests."

India's Climate Politics

In the following chapters, I provide a detailed empirical analysis of the role of the geographical imaginaries of the Global North and Global South in India's climate politics, particularly in the context of defining the parameters of a just climate treaty. In this chapter, I draw from India's official position on climate change, and analyze it in the context of the theoretical approaches outlined above. India's official position rests on the core themes of historical responsibility and per capita equity, reflecting the UNFCCC principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

According to India's 2008 National Action Plan on Climate Change prepared by the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change, responsibility for climate change is attributed to "accumulated greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, anthropogenically generated through long-term and intensive industrial growth and high consumptive lifestyles in developed countries." (PMCCC, 2009, 1) Likewise, according to the Minister of Environment and Forests Jai Ram Ramesh, "We want an agreement that ... does not violate in any way the basic principles of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan... We are not negotiating any treaty here... We are working towards ensuring an agreement that is reflective of the responsibilities that the developed countries have to take as part of the trinity of the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol and the Bali Action Plan" (participant observation, COP-15).

While Ramesh committed to GHG intensity targets of 20-25% from 2005 levels by 2020, he has fervently denied discussions of absolute targets, mandatory caps on emissions or a peak year for emissions. Likewise he has explicitly articulated that international Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) would be acceptable to

India only for funded mitigation projects undertaken voluntarily, otherwise they would be deemed intrusive and a threat to India's sovereignty. Although he is interested in changing India's image as proactive rather than defensive and reactive, he has had to answer to his domestic constituents that increasingly see his moves as selling out to US interests, and is careful to emphasize equitable burden sharing between developed and developing countries in a negotiated climate regime. According to him, the most equitable burdensharing arrangement that currently exists is the per capita convergence principle (participant observation, COP-15).

India's North-South Politics, a Postcolonial Politics

A North-South politics has been fundamentally about calls for international distributive economic justice, first institutionalized in proposals for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) (Bhagwati, 1977; Cox, 1979; Doty, 1996). Although the proposal never came into fruition mostly due to rejection and dismissal by the US, the desire for subverting the status quo has clearly persisted. Global environmental change, particularly in its recent incarnations of ozone thinning and global warming, has provided the opportunity for a remarkable reemergence of the discourse of challenging North-South inequities. The 'limits to growth' and the 'tragedy of the commons' discourses of the early 1970s had met with resistance from Third World intellectual communities that these environmental discourses were vehicles for neo-colonialism in their implicit efforts to thwart economic growth in the South and in their prescription of solutions for global environmental problems. Consequently, distributional justice in an international context has been a key concern in North-South environmental politics, where the South's claims

to development and emphasis on the North's responsibility for contemporary environmental crises occupy an important place in environmental negotiations (Castro, 1972; Conca and Dabelko, 2010). These underlying threads have been a staple in UN fora including the 1972 Stockholm conference, the 1992 Rio conference, as well as in negotiations to curb ozone depletion and most recently to mitigate climate change.

India's participation in the climate negotiations needs to be looked at in this historical context. In labeling India's climate politics a postcolonial politics, I am referring to a number of representational practices that have material ramifications. Firstly, in insisting that India is a 'developing country' whose place is squarely in the Global South – and therefore that India should not be expected to accept a cap on its emissions – my respondents were clearly engaging in a binary 'othering' process that so far has been understood to be the domain of the dominant groups in colonialism. In subsequent chapters, I describe in detail the ways in which my respondents sought to validate India's identity as a 'developing country' where India was portrayed as distinctly different from 'developed countries', most of all, the United States, particularly in levels of economic wellbeing and correspondingly in its production of GHGs. See Figure 1 for an illustration.



Figure 1: A cartoon representing unequal distribution of ‘ecological space’ between North and South. Source: Center for Science and Environment

Similarly, my respondents time and again highlighted the distinction made between Annex I and non-Annex I categories in the UNFCCC and the KP as a way to validate their arguments. The ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (CBDR) principle of the UNFCCC that was emphasized by most of my respondents was itself the result of intense negotiations leading up to the 1992 adoption of the UNFCCC. One of my respondents, Ambassador Chandrashekar Dasgupta²⁹, was instrumental in the insertion of that principle in the UNFCCC text. This text is therefore guarded fervently as it is the only internationally recognized instrument that institutionalizes the historical responsibility of industrialized countries in contributing to the rise in GHG emissions. As IPCC Chair and Director-General of TERI said, “Nobody is trying to shirk

responsibilities, but we shouldn't try to water down something that has been achieved after long negotiations and battles.” (Participant observation, COP-15).

The use of binary categories – developed and developing – is a strategic one for Indian negotiators from the point of view of avoiding mandatory mitigation commitments, and the economic losses that go with them³⁰. Two observations are germane here. One is that binary othering is not only a colonial strategy but a counter-colonial one as well. Postcolonial scholars should therefore pay attention to who uses binary othering as a strategy and towards what ends, rather than rejecting this representational practice a priori due to its colonial associations. Secondly, dominant groups adopt new ways of binary differentiation to reinscribe their power, confirming the adaptive and arbitrary nature of (post)colonial identity construction (Doty, 1996; Jacobs, 1996). In ongoing climate negotiations, this is shown by the US negotiating team's tireless and somewhat successful attempts to establish a binary distinction within the category of 'developing countries' – 'emerging economies' and the rest. And while the US strategy may seem as an effort to transcend colonial binaries (of West and Third World), colonial attitudes persist. As Doty (1996) and Sidaway (2002) have pointed out, the term 'emerging' portrays the non-Western world as requiring paternalistic intervention (Doty, 1996; Sidaway, 2002). This is apparent in the emphasis on MRV that have accompanied what little commitments to adaptation 'aid' have been made by Annex I countries. Even scholars who acknowledge the need for a flow of resources from North to South towards equalizing growth aren't immune to such paternalism, warning that any funds given for adaptation or mitigation should be “carefully managed ... to ensure that these benefits are actually realized” (Roberts and Parks, 2010, 155). In other words, that

they are not misappropriated by corrupt entities. No wonder, MRV is seen by many in the Global South as a tool of neocolonialism.

While a key postcolonial critique has been about how the North discursively represents an essentialized identity of the South (Doty, 1996), my research shows what happens when the colonial gaze is returned, and reveals that Southern actors also engage in similar representational practices. Doty (1996, 8) suggested that these practices are intensified by ‘organic crises’ that threaten to destabilize hegemony. The predicament of global environmental crisis has arguably served as such an organic crisis that threatens to challenge the status quo of the world order. With greater bargaining power now allegedly available to the Global South due to its crucial role in the international cooperation required to combat global environmental crises (DeSombre, 2002; Roberts and Parks, 2010), claims for equity and justice have grown louder in the context of addressing global environmental threats and climate change is no exception (Athanasίου, 2010).

A word of caution is in order when we talk of the language of North-South as a counter-colonial strategy, though. Given well-documented instances of internal colonialism (Sidaway, 2000, 2002) as well as charges of Third-Worldism (Berger, 2004) in the climate change context (Bello, 2007; Norberg-Hodge, 2008), it may be the case that elites in the South appropriate the rhetoric of North-South difference to further their own specialized interests. However, I argue that using this assumption to insist that large-scale inequities in resource access and use do not exist risks making scholars complicit in turning a blind eye to systems of privilege that we are part of. Further, my research reveals that the championing of a North-South framing of the climate debates is not done simply by the Indian elite. My respondents encompassed a range of officials – Indian

representatives for UNFCCC negotiations, other high-level bureaucrats holding offices in government and non-government institutions, civil society members including officials – junior to senior level – of domestic as well as international environmental non-profits, Reporters, professors. They were unanimous in asserting India’s identity as a developing country with competing priorities that rendered India unable to accept emission limits at the present time. I find it hard to dismiss their perspective as ‘Third Worldism’ or the use of Third World rhetoric by the elite (Berger 2004).

The issue of ‘Third Worldism’ is an interesting one. It assumes that the Third World elite that use this rhetoric do so to further their class interests and that they do not speak for the subaltern – in this case the most climate-vulnerable citizens in India. This may or may not be true, but to assume so might effectively contribute to silencing the subaltern. If the ‘real subaltern’ cannot speak in a way that can be heard or understood by hegemonic groups, and the so-called Third World elite who seek to speak for them cannot be trusted to do so, then we have quite a predicament. It then inevitably falls on the First World intellectual to rescue the Third World subaltern from their elite.

Extrapolating this logic to the international context, India and China have a relatively stronger voice than several other developing countries in international negotiations, but branding them as ‘emerging economies’ serves to silence them in their efforts to speak for the Global South vis-à-vis hegemonic states in the North. This is unfortunate for them because as a ‘developing country’ they can claim the right to develop as sanctioned by the UNFCCC. More importantly, by playing the victim card they can confront Annex I’s lack of accountability, or historical responsibility in addressing climate change. But if they cannot claim the right to identify themselves as

such – because now they are branded as contributors to the problem rather than victims – their claims to challenge the status quo are considered that much less valid.

I draw on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s work to emphasize the dangers of such scapegoating of ‘elites’ or ‘emerging economies’. Spivak (2010a, 64) emphasized the importance of acknowledging critical Western scholars’ “complicity in the muting [of the subaltern]... Our work cannot succeed if we always have a scapegoat.” She warned of the risk of “foreclosing of the necessity of the difficult task of counterhegemonic ideological production” by academics (Spivak, 2010, 27) “by making one model of ‘concrete experience’ *the* model (ibid, 28), in this case treating grassroots social movements as the *only* authentic form of resistance to neocolonial hegemony (Bello, 2007; Escobar, 2004; Norberg-Hodge, 2008). Such conclusions are enabled by “the unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, without being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual” (Spivak, 2010, 28). I extend her understanding of the “irretrievably heterogeneous” character of the “colonized subaltern subject” (Spivak, 2010, 38) as including the Third World elite as well.

The Indian intellectual elite, for instance, may feel marginalized in global economic or environmental affairs and has a right to claim subaltern status in that (North-South) context. More importantly, they may be able to represent the ‘real’ subaltern at the negotiating table. This unique ability of the Third World elite must not be dismissed, although they too should certainly be held accountable to their scale jumping³¹ (I elaborate on this in Chapter IV). Likewise the UNFCCC’s ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ structure serves as “institutional validation” (Spivak, 2010b, 228) in

global context, to ensure that the concerns of the climate-vulnerable in the Third World can be heard, and this also must not be categorically dismissed.

India's Claim to Environmental Space or the Atmospheric Commons

As I will describe in more detail in the following chapters, India's official position³² in ongoing global climate negotiations has been predicated on two foundational premises: that the historical responsibility for climate change rests with Annex I countries, and that per capita equity in access to the global resources is an irrefutable thesis (see also Vihma, 2001, 78). India's claim to any remaining atmospheric space³³ is based on these premises. Most of my respondents bristled³⁴ at my insinuation that as an 'emerging economy' India's current and future contributions to GHGs were increasing, and would be comparable to the US' over the next decade – in total emissions, if not per capita.

Going back to India's North-South politics, my respondents were more keen to keep the discussion focused on the historical responsibility of Annex I countries in addressing climate change,³⁵ and by doing so were embodying a key Southern interest. For Dodds (1998, 729) such an emphasis on historical accountability of powerful Northern states towards the rest of the world, and therefore a North-South distinction constitutes a 'new regionalism'. In seeking to make the North accountable for historical and continuing exploitation of natural resources, Indian voices in global climate politics therefore adopt and contribute to the strategic essentialism of the function of the Global South. This also speaks to the enabling effect of environmental factors in the social construction of region, an underexamined matter in political ecology (Neumann, 2009).

Emphasizing the North's historical responsibility for climate change is done in part by seizing upon notions of 'environmental space' (Hans Opschoor, cited in FOE, 2005) and ecological debt (Martinez-Alier, 2002). The idea of environmental space grew out of the awareness of the 'limits to growth' concept, but departs from that idea by introducing concerns about equity (FOE, 2005). Applied to climate change, environmental space refers to the atmosphere's finite capacity to absorb GHGs, and enables a per capita equity approach to the atmospheric commons. The ecological debt concept arose in the context of international negotiations to address ozone thinning. It historicizes the current situation of inequitable access to this global resource, as well as global climate negotiations that for the most part have been future-oriented (Goeminne and Paredis, 2010). Adger et al (2001, 699) characterize the discourse of historical responsibility and ecological debt as a 'populist' discourse that "draws its authority both from science and from a moral imperative."

Goeminne and Paredis (2010, 692) emphasize the importance of ecological debt for postcolonialism thus: "It is well documented how, through the colonial period and the industrial revolution up till now, natural resources have been flowing from South to North and how this has often been accompanied by plundering, ecological damage and social oppression." The idea of ecological debt therefore is a call for justice in the form of reparations, owed by countries³⁶ that benefited mostly from colonialism and continue to benefit from neocolonialism. The demands for reparations are due to past and continuing disproportionate encroachment on environmental space without payment and without recognition of other countries' entitlements to that space (Martinez-Alier, 2002). According to Goeminne and Paredis (2010, 693), "ecological debt is a way of looking at

North-South relations and sustainability issues from a Southern peoples' point of view.... [It] draws attention to how the present situation has grown out of the often violent and unjust past. It points to the collective responsibility of industrialized countries and companies in relation to socio-ecological problems.”

Postcolonial geographers (Bell, 2002, 64; McEwan, 2003, 341) have expressed concern over postcolonial theory’s “preoccupation with the colonial past” (Bell, 2002, 64) “at the expense of the materialities and everyday experiences of postcoloniality,” as well as discussions of “postcolonial futures” (McEwan, 2003, 341, 342). But how can we afford to forget the past when its legacies continue into the present and the future? As Jacobs (1996) suggested, contemporary political claims for reparation necessarily have to draw upon the vestiges of the colonial past. The tenor of global climate politics shows how intricately connected the material and discursive are, as well as what is past and what is to come.

It also indicates how closely connected ‘environmental space’ is to economic and trade relations³⁷. It is uneven power in the global political economy that enables the undeterred exploitation of resources by some states and its corresponding ecological consequences, a phenomenon Bosselmann (2004) termed ‘ecological aggression’. Yet, as Goeminne and Paredis (2010, 697) point out, “the physical-ecological” aspect of international relations “has often been neglected.” They argue that ecologically unequal exchange (Martinez-Alier, 2002) have since colonial times been “constantly in favor of the current industrialized nations.” Thus the concept of planetary ecological debt of the North is instrumental in “raising genuine normative, i.e. political questions about human development issues (Goeminne and Paredis, 2009, 698).”

The authors indicate that the idea of ecological debt is a call that has emerged from subaltern groups, NGOs and scientists in the Global South and is an empowering discourse for them that helps articulate sustainable development through a lens of environmental justice. Yet Adger et al (2001, 700) dismiss its relevance on the grounds that it is not sufficiently informed by a genuine understanding of vulnerability and adaptation on the ground, despite acknowledging “the multi-level nature of the political ecology of climate change.” As Goeminne and Paredis (2009, 698) aptly put it, “for most inhabitants of industrialized countries, it is a most unusual and uneasy way of looking at their own position.” Southern governments are actually often reluctant to explicitly push the concept of ecological debt during negotiations for fear of alienating Northern governments (Martinez-Alier, 2002). This is reflected in the way that the ‘rhetoric’ of ecological debt typically gets dismissed by Western negotiators and in Western media as ‘distracting and unconstructive’ (Parks and Roberts, 2010, 141; see also Vihma, 2011). But evidence suggests that “ecological unequal exchange is not just a perception; it is a social reality.” (Parks and Roberts, 2010, 139)

For some of my respondents, the idea of ecological debt was important also because it disrupts the idea of financial and technological transfers from Annex I to non-Annex I countries as charity, as it is typically portrayed. The Indian government has articulated that any funds to be received by developing countries including India for mitigation and adaptation of climate change should be seen as “entitlement not aid.” (MOEF, 2009b, 41). To see resource transfers as reparation rather than as aid is important because of the paternalistic interventions that typically accompany aid. Doty’s (1996, 128) pronouncement of how “foreign aid ... made possible new techniques within an

overall economy of power in North-South relations... [putting] in place permanent mechanisms by which the “third world” could be monitored, classified, and placed under continual surveillance” is relevant today in Annex I countries’ insistence that MRV mechanisms accompany any adaptation funds, including to emerging economies. This again confirms the idea that while creating new categories of developing countries, the West continues to make assumptions about the inherently corrupt and/or incompetent character of non-Western countries and their governments.

While these issues have not been taken up in political ecology and they should, work in political ecology can on the other hand help shed light on the dynamics in which Indian climate politics unfold. I want to emphasize two aspects in this section.

Firstly, the climate crisis is seen as an *opportunity* by most of my respondents for challenging the North-South status quo, as well as for some to examine domestic inequities within India and within the Global South. Drawing from Sundberg’s (2011) exposition of a posthumanist political ecology, such opportunity is enabled by the agency of GHGs. Sundberg (2011, 322) argued that “a posthumanist political ecology refuses to treat nonhuman nature as the thing over which humans struggle and instead builds on and enacts a relational approach in which all bodies are participants in constituting the world.” Highlighting the agency of nonhuman actors in shaping geopolitical processes, she suggested that rather than being objects of manipulation or backdrops amidst which geopolitical struggles carry on, non-human nature –including living and inert entities – “are integral to and constitutive of them” (Sundberg, 2011, 332). They do so by forming ‘collectives’ in association with human actors to influence these geopolitical struggles.

Their agency is embodied in collective enactment in association with other beings and socio-political mechanisms.

Following this logic then, I suggest that in the context of climate politics, climate justice collectives – including GHGs, (limited) atmospheric space, climate science, subaltern groups and their (elite) allies – band together to hold the Global North accountable for historic and continuing usurpation of environmental space. The crucial role played by federal environmental legislation in bolstering the strength of the nature-inclusive collective in Sundberg's (2011) case study is fulfilled in this context by the CBDR principle of the UNFCCC that enables a developing country politics against the richer Western countries (Chakrabarty, 2009). Challenging the validity of this provision will only serve to weaken the climate justice collective.

Secondly, a politics of scale is very much in play in India's climate politics. In emphasizing a *per capita* rights approach to environmental space or the global atmospheric commons, and then extrapolating this right to rationalize why the Indian *state* should not be presently subjected to caps on GHG emissions, my research subjects were essentially 'jumping scale' (Smith, 2000, in Neumann, 2009) from an individual level to the (inter)state-level.³⁸ This is accompanied by the (re)production of the much contested 'new regional' (Dodds, 1998) scale of Global South and Global North in discussions of responsibility for climate mitigation, where countries are implicitly assumed to neatly fit into one or other category. These politics are in some ways, a response to the politics of scale implicit in a Northern environmental agenda, where problems such as global climate change are portrayed as a problem of a mythic monolithic humanity wreaking environmental damage (Bookchin, 1990). Doing so

essentially homogenizes the human population in their contribution to the problem, which because it knows no geopolitical boundaries, is considered a global problem. By inference, then, all humans – and by extension, countries – are expected to play a part in addressing the problem. But in reality, not all humans and/or countries have contributed in uniform proportion to the problem. A rescaling of such an issue from the global level to the level of the individual feeds into neo-Malthusian fears of countries with large populations as the most potential threats to climate change. Therefore, while ‘emerging economies’ get bad publicity in Western media, India and China seem to take the cake despite other countries that occupy that status. As my respondents pointed out, the argument that everyone must contribute to this global problem that ‘humans’ have created, has the practical effect of freezing the status quo, as it is easier to prevent humans with less power from embarking on new emission-generating-activities than for those with more power to depart from their already-high-emission-generating activities.

Contributions to GHG levels in the atmosphere can be categorized according to several criteria, and one aspect of climate politics is to emphasize one over another. See Figures 2 and 3 for an illustration. For instance, in comparing the relative contributions of the US, India and China, the US is far ahead of India and China when considering cumulative contributions and per capita emissions. Yet when considering current total country emissions, China has overtaken the US already and India is not too far behind. Not surprisingly therefore, US negotiators emphasize current and future total emissions, whereas Chinese and Indian negotiators emphasize cumulative and per capita. For better or for worse, climate science weighs in favor of the latter as the long life span of the most common GHG, carbon dioxide, renders the role of cumulative emissions crucial (IPCC,

2007). Further, the emerging 'rights' approach to climate justice discourses enable an emphasis on the need to move towards per capita equity in emissions.

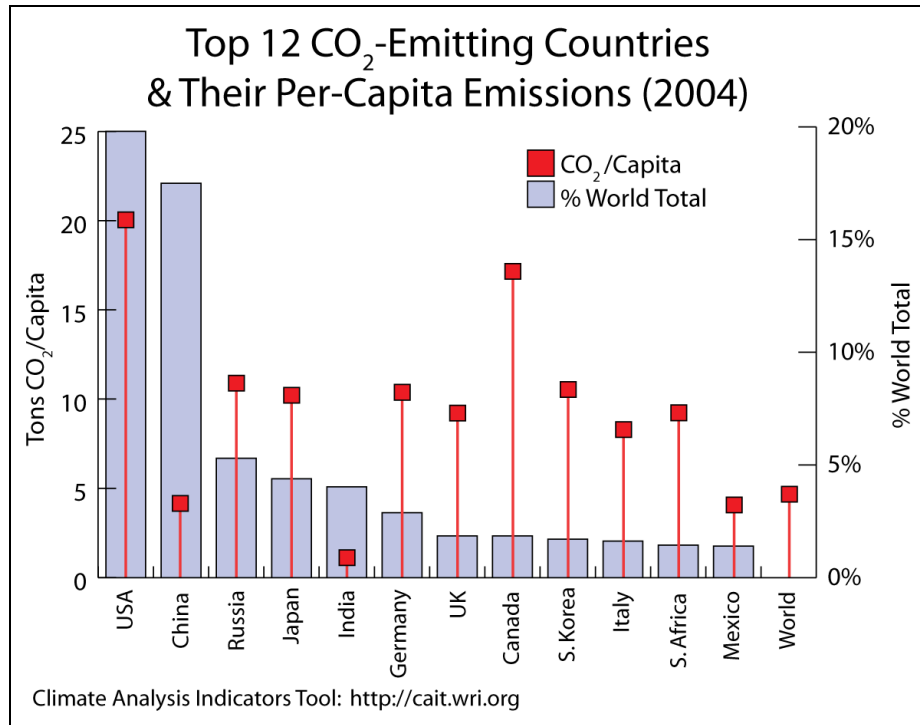


Figure 2: A graph illustrating differences between total emissions and per capita emissions for countries. Source: World Resources Institute

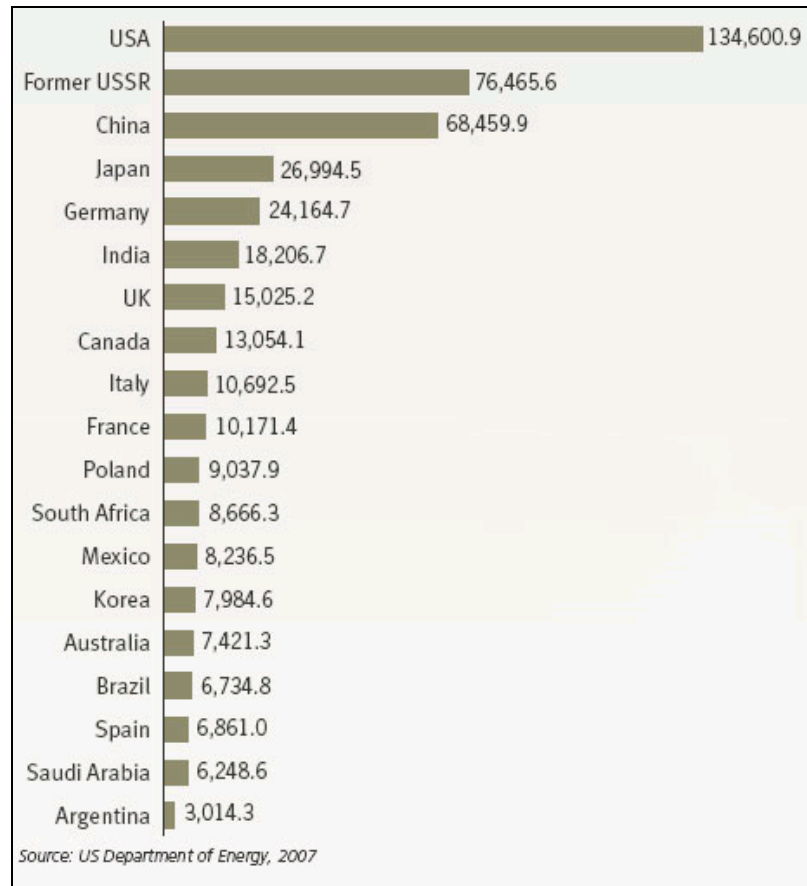


Figure 3: A graph illustrating cumulative contributions of carbon dioxide emissions (million tons) by countries during 1980-2005.

Source: Center for Science and Environment.

These dynamics not only affirm the political ecological understanding of scale as “socially constructed, historically contingent, and politically contested” (Neumann, 2009, 399), they also lend support to Rangan’s (2009, 30) argument that “scale is the means through which ecological (and related social and economic) change *is made* political.” As Jacobs (2001, 734) asserts, “scale can shape the ‘truth’ of an event.” Again, the crucial role played by GHGs in these politics of scale cannot be ignored, lending support to Neumann’s (2009, 403) observation in summarizing the political ecology of scale

literature, of “the centrality and inseparability of biophysical processes in the social construction of scale.” Conflicts over the choice of interpretive scale (Rangan, 2009) are inherently connected to evolving power geometries, both of which are integral to struggles over access to and control over limited resources (Swyngedouw, 2004).

India’s Postcolonial Climate Politics: A Counter-hegemony in the Making?

India’s positioning in the climate mitigation debates is inherently tied to its claims on ‘right to development.’ As the 2008 National Action Plan on Climate Change reflects (PMCCC, 2009, 1), India has an “overriding priority of economic and social development and poverty eradication.” It is quite clear from the document that India’s approach to development buys into modernization theory, where it sees itself as being “at an early stage of development.” Several postcolonial geographers and political ecologists among others have been fairly unified in their dual critique of capitalism and of a Westernized modernization as obstacles to social justice (eg. McEwan, 2003; Nash, 2002, 2004; Sachs, 2002; Sidaway, 2000, 2002; Neumann, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2004; Wainwright, 2010). While the critique of these systems is for the most part valid, I believe a distinction needs to be made between whether these systems are *inherently unjust* or if the particular ways in which they have developed historically and geographically have had undesirable, i.e. unjust outcomes. Blaut (1993, 201, 206) pointed out, for instance, that industrial capitalism was never the sole product of the West, yet it was *European colonization* that exacerbated the impacts of a particular form of this phenomenon – resulting in the Industrial Revolution and the consequent rise of capitalism at a global scale – with material consequences for today’s state of our highly unjust world. Castro

(1972, 31) similarly argued that the Industrial Revolution produced an international order where technologically advanced countries became more powerful than the technologically less endowed countries, and that the latter were seeking to alter this status quo through development, while the former were seeking to maintain the status quo. North-South climate politics are therefore inherently tied to this historically contingent process of the development of capitalism and modernization (Chakrabarty, 2009).

Bebbington (2004) and Rangan (2004) have similarly argued against a cursory dismissal of modernization or development and the accompanying valorization of romanticized portrayals of social movements that are based on indigenous alternatives to the development discourse. They insist that the ways in which marginalized groups make use of these discourses or systems are of greater importance. The goal of a resistance strategy is more important than its content for Bebbington (2004, 396), who goes on to say that “indigenous people may well incorporate the techniques of those who have long been their dominators, and yet do so in a way that strengthens an indigenous agenda pitched in some sense against the interests of those dominating groups.” This is at the core of Bhabha’s notion of hybridity – resistance as appropriation of colonial identities and discourses by the colonized (Kapoor, 2008). The idea “that politics, while always contaminated by hegemonic representations and institutions, can nonetheless be undertaken from within (the margins of) the hegemony” (Kapoor, 2008, 149) speaks to subaltern agency. It also points to spaces of possible subversion of colonial domination by using the colonizer’s tools (Jacobs, 1996). Denying the subaltern the opportunity to coopt and become a part of such hegemony is for Spivak (2010, 65) a ‘primitivist’ approach whose implicit effect is to “[preserve] subalternity.”

Questions raised about the ‘right to develop’ argument (eg. Norber-Hodge, 2008; Sachs, 2002), risk being guilty of such a primitivist and paternalistic approach that implicitly condones Northern consumption and affluence while denying similar aspirations to the emerging economies. Sachs (2002) finds fault with how the notion of environmental space has been called upon to bring the Global South up to par with the Global North, and argues that since the pursuit of development usually only facilitates the integration of the elite of the Global South into the “global circuit of capital and goods,” (24) “justice is about changing the rich and not about changing the poor” (33). Furthermore, the apparent limits of the earth’s carrying capacity further negates such pursuit of development for the more populous sections of the world that are likely to follow in the footsteps of the consumerist mentality of the industrialized countries, in his view. Sachs (2002, 30) therefore argues that “the demand for justice and dignity on behalf of Southern countries threatens to accelerate the rush towards biospherical disruption, as long as the idea of justice is firmly linked to the idea of development” (30). The aspiration for justice should therefore be decoupled from the pursuit of conventional development, and pathways for social improvement that are more benign to the earth should be pursued, both in the North and the South.

In Sachs’ (2002) analysis, we can find the perfect example of how a Northern environmentalist agenda serves as a guise or perhaps (unintended?) vehicle for the colonial othering of the Global South, thereby perpetuating Western exceptionalism in an unreflexive way.³⁹ Not only is it reminiscent of paternalistic attitudes towards the South,⁴⁰ it also participates in an implicit acceptance of an unequal status quo. Several scholars including Sachs (2002) have argued that countries of the Global South should

pursue a non-industrial decentralized model of development. There is a fundamental contradiction when a scholar residing in an industrialized country and who lives a life of relative privilege⁴¹ with immediate consequences for GHG emissions makes a pronouncement such as that.⁴² For even as the Global South is advised to ‘not make the mistakes’ the West did, most Western scholars continue to live lives of relative privilege made possible by the very system of industrialized development they critique or discredit. Thus “the ostensive imbalance between responsibility for the damage and obligation for repair” (Castro, 1972, 35) of the climate system is further prolonged.

Further, by suggesting that industrialization-as-development is thrust on the Global South by multinational corporations, commentators (eg. Byrne et al, 2002; Norberg-Hodge, 2008) are also guilty of stripping Southern subjects of agency, by implying that residents of the Global South would not aspire to higher standards of living on their own. In India’s climate politics, development serves as a ‘floating signifier’ (Laclau, 1990, in Doty, 1996) – a concept whose meaning has not been fixed and therefore serves to enable a politics of resistance, particularly in contesting the status quo. Whether this politics leads to a counter-hegemony is open for debate. The climate crisis has certainly given rise to discourses challenging the hegemonic conception of development. There are clearly visible elements of the discontents of centralized and industrialization-centered development that is predicated on economic growth within India, as my research showed. Several respondents explicitly articulated a Gandhian approach to development, as opposed to a consumptive approach leading to ‘luxury’ emissions. Yet it is also clear that this approach does not define India’s climate politics,

which is clearly oriented towards equalizing opportunities for economic growth and industrialization.

Although much critique of modernization-as-development in postcolonial theory is based on its colonial associations with the ‘civilising mission’ (Nash, 2004, 109), India’s claim to development is articulated within an agenda that promotes sovereignty, and therefore should be seen in a different light than development-as-aid promulgated by transnational development organizations. Speaking of the history of development in India, Rangan (2004, 374, 375) argues that this “has been used as a secular, democratic means for opening the political arena to the claims of various groups in civil society.” This discourse has been “constantly contested and renegotiated in the public realm,” and adopted by subaltern groups in their struggle for greater political and economic empowerment. Rangan (2004, 376) argues that “the discourse of development in India carries a broader symbolism of social justice and economic well-being ... It simultaneously creates the space for institutional participation and provides the language for radical critique. Social protests and movements in postcolonial India have typically not argued against development but have always been part of its process.”

Critiquing the post-developmental ethos of renouncing the very idea of development as a ‘totalizing and hegemonic discourse’ due to its (neo)colonialist history, Rangan (2004, 373) argues that “contemporary social movements in poor countries of the world ... are not *against* the idea of development, they are *part* of it.” Further, these movements ongoing struggles with their respective states for greater equity in access to resources and services “depends on using the legitimizing discourse of development often employed by the states” (Rangan, 2004, 374). Thus instead of abandoning development

altogether, Simon (2007) and Peet and Hartwick (1999) argue for a critical modernist approach to development that seeks to give due acknowledgement to the blatantly unequal life prospects in the world, and therefore object to the premature dismissal of the promise of the idea of development. For Simon (2007, 206) “for people near the top of the development pyramid to adopt an antidevelopment stance is politically and/or morally inappropriate if it means abandoning reflexive engagement with poverty.”

These perspectives enable me to approach the question of counter-hegemony in a different light than it is traditionally done. Using a Gramscian approach to counter-hegemony to the international relations context (Cox, 1983, Femia, 1987) I would argue that mainstream Indian climate politics, does not constitute a counter-hegemony to the prevailing world order because its effort for the most part seems to be to pursue a modernization approach to development emphasizing economic growth and industrialization. There are strong elements within Indian civil society that are questioning India’s pursuit of economic growth in the name of pro-poor development, and instead advocate more equitable decentralized forms of development. By Gramscian standards, this movement would initially need to become hegemonic within the country – through the development of a ‘historic bloc’ – if it is to eventually pose an effective counter-hegemony to the established idea of development-as-industrialization. NGO’s such as Navdanya could be seen to be leading such a movement, drawing support from other organizations such as CSE, but this approach to development is not yet mainstream in India, and certainly not within its bureaucratic structures.

India’s position in climate negotiations can best be described as a resistance to neo-colonial *dominance* by hegemonic states, particularly the US. (See Figure 4 for an

illustration.) For India's climate politics to be counterhegemonic in the traditionally understood sense, India might have to eschew its technocratic and centralized approach to development as reflected by its nuclear policy, for instance (Mathai, 2009). Pursuit of the Gandhian approach to development or 'swaraj' – emphasizing autonomous development based on self-governance and designed to meet its citizens' needs and aspirations – could represent a counterhegemonic movement. The climate crisis could serve as an organic crisis that produces the conditions for such a counter-hegemony (Cox, 1983). The official positions of the states of Maldives and Bolivia at COP15 and COP16 respectively hint at the possibility of such a movement. The championing of a Gandhian approach to development by some of my respondents may indicate the possibility of popular support for such a movement to be possible in India as well. The work of civil society organizations such as Navdanya and increasingly CSE advocates such an approach to development.



Figure 4: A mural painted outside a cafeteria in the Jawaharlal Nehru University campus. Photo by Shangrila Joshi, January 2009.

Such a true counter-hegemony adopts ‘third space’ as a strategy rather than ‘hybridization’ (Kapoor, 2008) and is more cognizant of and amenable to the ecological challenges posed by the climate crisis, than the Indian government’s resolute pursuit of large-scale industrialization that may even be inimical to the interests of the country’s poor and marginalized on whose behalf it claims the right to development and atmospheric space. Yet India’s counter-colonial strategy of resistance, i.e. its efforts to resist US dominance in global economic and environmental governance, and moreover, to seek to hold it accountable for its exploitation of the earth’s resources, also has value. Kapoor (2008) suggests that the postcolonial strategies of ‘third space’ and ‘hybridization’ need not be mutually exclusive and can be pursued in tandem. Gramsci himself seemed to allow for “an infinite range of strategies” of resistance to be possible (Femia, 1987, 55).

That being said, it is also equally important to not lose sight of what Gramsci called ‘*trasformismo*’ (Cox, 1983; Femia, 1987) – the potential of cooptation of leaders of subaltern groups by hegemonic powers, thereby weakening the formation of a historic bloc or a war of position and eventually a successful counter-hegemony – prompting Kapoor (2008, 144) to acknowledge that a hybridizing strategy “can be put to regressive as much as progressive use.” One of the biggest dangers of such *trasformismo* is that the politics of scale jumping may not be rescaled once the benefits incurred from CBDR are realized. The task for those interested in adding to the strength of global climate justice collectives is then to always be alert to this potential – without assuming its existence a priori – and to empower subaltern groups to hold authorities accessible to them, more accountable.

However, to accuse Indian intellectuals of *transformismo* simply because of their articulation of modernization-as-development is problematic. The embracing of such a path by the Indian state and many of its subjects could also be viewed as a hybrid condition. India's 'dual politics' of simultaneously pursuing a populist politics at home and gradually moving towards an internationalist⁴³ stance at formal negotiations (Vihma, 2011, 87) can also be seen as a hybrid strategy, although it may not be a deliberate one. Some of my respondents were clearly vague and ambivalent in their articulation of India's right to development, as I will elaborate in subsequent chapters. For Kapoor (2009), such ambivalence is characteristic of hybrid anti-colonial subjectivities. Further, the notion of hybridity problematizes the sharp difference noted between *transformismo* and a 'war of position' necessary for a counter-hegemony (Cox, 1983; Femia, 1987). To what extent does resistance to dominance by hegemonic states that uses 'hybridization' as a strategy pave the way for a genuine counter-hegemony against the dominant system that uses 'third space' as a strategy is an unanswered question at this time,⁴⁴ but it is probably safe to say that the two are not mutually exclusive, so that both may be pursued simultaneously.

Concluding Thoughts

I have argued that India's climate politics constitutes a postcolonial politics that is reminiscent of NIEO era demands for reforms in the global political economy that continues to favor countries of the Global North. India's politics seizes the strategic essentialism of the binary category of the Global South (or developing countries) – long thought to be a colonial binary – for the purposes of distinguishing its position in climate

politics from that of the Global North, exemplified particularly by the US. Specifically, Indian officials point to the historical responsibility of countries of the Global North in producing the GHGs over the past century and half, suggesting that the North has therefore occupied a disproportionate share of atmospheric space. They claim therefore that India, as a country of the Global South (or developing country), has a right to any remaining space. A mandatory cap on India's absolute emissions is seen as a way to solidify the currently unequal use of this atmospheric space. And although countries vary in their level of development as well as their contributions to GHGs within the Global North and the Global South, the institutionalization of the Annex I/non-Annex I binary in the UNFCCC and therefore the Kyoto Protocol strengthens their position. While climate negotiators from Annex I countries – and some of the more climate vulnerable non-Annex I countries – are keen to portray India as an emerging economy and a major emitter, and to attempt to break up the Annex I-non-Annex I binary, India's insistence on maintaining it clearly exemplifies that an association with the Global South is a key aspect of India's climate politics.

Another aspect of India's climate politics is to highlight that its per capita emissions are much lower than those of countries in the Global North, particularly the US. Again highlighting mean emissions supports the claim that India's development state is one that belongs in the Global South, so it should be treated as a developing country in climate negotiations. India's official position declares that the country's foremost priority is to pursue economic growth and industrialization and to eradicate poverty (MOEF, 2009; PMCCC, 2009). The pursuit of large scale industrialization means India cannot afford a cap on its emission levels at this time. There have been critiques from within

India that an emphasis on economic growth and industrialization have not necessarily contributed to eliminating poverty and social inequities in India. Consequently there are voices in India that demand an approach to development that is decentralized, non-industrial and focused on livelihood security rather than economic growth and modernization.

It may be argued that India's climate politics does not constitute a Gramscian counter-hegemony against the Global North, as its government seeks to pursue a development path that follows rather than challenges the capitalist-industrial model established and ruled by powerful countries of the North. India's climate politics is more geared towards challenging Northern dominance in the global political economy – also reflected in its usurpation of ecological or atmospheric space – than towards challenging the global political economy created by the North. As such, it constitutes a hybrid approach to counter-hegemony, situated somewhere between a dependency and a modernization approach to development, where modernization-as-development is sought in India's terms. The climate crisis has provided an opportunity for the Indian bureaucracy to revive an NIEOesque North-South postcolonial politics. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent it gives strength to the fledgling counterhegemonic movement within India that seeks to pursue a more equitable and less emissions-generating approach to development.

CHAPTER III
UNDERSTANDING INDIA'S REPRESENTATION OF
NORTH-SOUTH CLIMATE POLITICS

A Brief Introduction to the North-South Question

A North-South lens to understanding and analyzing global inequality has been challenged for various reasons, most of which have to do with transformations in the Global South. The terms Global South, Third World, periphery or developing countries refer most commonly to a certain set of countries that are often contrasted with developed or industrialized countries or the Global North. The term Third World in International Relations refers to a self-defined coalition of countries seeking to advance certain norms and interests in world politics, and arose most prominently out of the 1955 Bandung Conference (Isbister, 2006; Thomas-Slayter, 2003; Williams, 2005). The North-South terminology gained prominence in the context of the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) during the 1970s (Jha, 1982). These terms will be used interchangeably for the purposes of this paper.

For many scholars, the Third World has ceased to be a meaningful or relevant category in global politics due to its association with the Cold War (Berger, 2004; Slater, 1997; Williams, 2005). The Third World was the product of the Non-Aligned Movement, a group of countries that refused to side with either the First World representing Western capitalism or the Second World representing Soviet-style socialism during the Cold War. Since the origins of the Third World are tied to the politics of the Cold War, its relevance is often assumed to have waned after the collapse of the Second World, even to the point

of being “intellectually and conceptually bankrupt.” (Berger, 2004, 31) The fading currency of the Third World has consequently led to the questioning of the relevance of a North-South divide (Therien, 1999), and a pursuit of new geographies of wealth and poverty across divides (McFarlane, 2006).

A second approach to questioning the validity of the Third World is based on transformations of the global economy since the 1980s (Williams, 1993). The understanding is that widespread neo-liberalization of developing countries have increased the economic differentiation and fragmentation of the Global South, thus destabilizing the traditional core-periphery or North-South configuration of the world (Therien, 1999; Williams, 2005). There are a number of interpretations of this: the gaps between the North and the South are narrowing, countries are graduating from the South to the North (Broad and Landi, 1996), and the South is no longer as poor or dependent on the North (Therien, 1999). In 1974 the Bretton Woods institutions had rejected the United Nations’ call for a NIEO based on these arguments, and prescribing instead an emergent US-led globalization project requiring structural adjustment and good governance (Slater, 1997; Therien, 1999). The need for the latter arose from the conviction that domestic factors such as corruption would negate efforts to alleviate poverty through structural transformation (Ould-Mey, 2003).

A related approach has been to invoke the heterogeneities within both the South and the North to challenge the legitimacy of such broad groupings (Eckl and Weber, 2007; Slater, 1997), especially with reference to the stellar economic performance of countries of East Asia (Therien, 1999) but also the observation of typically Southern troubles in the North (McFarlane, 2006; Payne, 2004) or the “Third Worldization of

certain regions in the developed world.” (Toal, 1994, 231) To some the North-South construction is misleading because the world isn’t divided into an over-consuming North and under-consuming South, as this binary hides a far bigger “planetary middle class.” (Conca, 2001, 68) The North and South therefore cannot be defined by their collective needs anymore, prompting some to replace the singular Third World with Third Worlds (Escobar, 2004) or Third, Fourth and Fifth Worlds (Williams, 1993).

Others argue that use of the North-South frame serves to reify the unequal power differentials between North and South through the implicit acceptance of the Western view of the South as well as the institutionalization of the North’s paternalistic and interventionist role towards developing countries through international agreements (Eckl and Weber, 2007; Escobar, 2004; Massey, 2001; Slater, 1997). The cooptation of Third World states (Berger, 2004) and their consequent association with a decrepit modernity (Escobar, 2004) is seen to take away from their radical agenda and instead, enable the disciplining of the poor therein (Escobar, 1995, cited in Williams, 2005). Escobar (2004) therefore sees self-organizing social movements as the only hope for effectively challenging the US-based imperial globality and global coloniality.

Critical geopolitical scholars have problematized the North-South binary by drawing attention to issues of state-centrism, identity politics and sovereignty (Dodds, 2001; Toal, 1994; see also Berger, 2004; Eckl and Weber, 2007; Simon and Dodds, 1998; Therien, 1999). Toal (1994a, 231) argued that “a critical geopolitics is one that refuses the spatial topography of First World and Third World, North and South, state and state,” suggesting that “we live in a condition of geopolitical vertigo” instead. The task of critical geopolitics then is to highlight “the precariousness of these perspectival identities

and the increasing rarefaction of geopolitical identities." (ibid) Others have pointed out that the geopolitical vertigo Toal spoke of was itself the product of a largely Euro-American centric worldview (Dodds, 1998, 78).

Despite these critiques, the North-South geopolitical imagination continues to be regarded as a useful construct in policy and academic circles, especially at the environment-development interface (Simon and Dodds, 1998). Contemporary scholars continue to refer to inequality along a North-South divide (eg. Kapoor, 2008; Najam, 2004; O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003; Potter, 2006; Slater, 2006; Williams, 2005). Many do so implicitly even as they critique these binaries (Williams, 2005), a phenomenon Jones (2009, 176) terms the "paradox of categories." The reasons given for why the North-South frame of reference remains relevant include: a reminder of the linkages between geopolitics and development (Simon and Dodds, 1998), and a reminder of abiding core-periphery dynamics (Potter, 2001; Slater, 2004; see also Broad and Landi, 1996; Ould-Mey, 2003) and imperialism that is reminiscent of past colonial relationships (Power, 2006; Slater, 2006).

In response to the issue of heterogeneity, some scholars argue the South or the Third World should not be seen as a monolith, but rather as a diverse entity that fluctuates between acting in unity and maintaining plurality according to the geo-political context (Broad and Landi, 1996; Williams, 2005). It is also helpful here to recall what Toal said in response to charges of the meaninglessness and polysemy of the term geopolitics. He argued that implicit in such charges is a troubling assumption that "words and concepts have stable, assured identities which refer unproblematically and

unambiguously to a fixed set of referents” (Toal, 1994a, 260) and urged for geo-politics to be seen not as “a singular, all-encompassing meaning or identity.” (ibid, 269)

While some countries of the South may be perceived to have graduated to the North, some caution that such graduation is only partial – usually economic (Hansen, 1980) – and that the self-identification of nations as members of the South owes to “a sense of shared vulnerability and a shared distrust of the prevailing world order rather than a common ordeal of poverty.” (Najam, 2004, 128) For some, the similarities within the North and South outweigh their internal differences. The South for Anand (2004) represents the common experiences of people who have been victimized by a colonial and imperial past. This legacy has not only left countries of the South economically weaker and more vulnerable to the vagaries of a globalized capitalist economy (Williams, 2005), but ensured its continued subjugation through an unequal international system where the South’s voice wields less influence (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003; Therien, 1999). The Southern bloc or the Third World coalition therefore makes sense when seen in the context of the dominance of industrialized states in global diplomacy and politics, as the coalition allows developing countries with relatively marginal influence increased leverage in global negotiations (Hansen, 1980; Williams, 2005).

Proposals for structural reforms in the international economic system that emanated from the South have typically been met with tremendous resistance from Northern governments and institutions. Such proposals have either been rejected on the grounds that the South is not a valid category, or answered with palliative and status-quo-preserving measures such as the giving of aid for basic human needs for poverty alleviation (Guthman, 1997; Harvey, 1996), or countered with attempts at cooptation of

the South's strongest states through graduation or integration. These states' resistance to such attempts implies a group identity within the South despite its heterogeneity (Therien, 1999).

Questioning the validity of the South as a meaningful category does little to change the status quo of the current asymmetric world order. An important question that arises then is to what extent doing so makes academics complicit in perpetuating the status quo. The ahistorical representation of territorial space (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995) and the traditional absence of ethical concerns (Therien, 1999) in international relations seems to favor the perpetuation of these unequal power relations. Given that the way we represent space is "deeply symbolic of how we define what is right and wrong and whom we identify with and against," (Agnew and Corbridge, 1995, 79) the North-South geopolitical imagination is seen as a necessary intervention as it elicits a historical memory and an ethical dimension to international relations (Power, 2006; Slater, 1997). Toal (1994a, 230) urged geographers to read such a geopolitical imagination as a Lacanian imaginary, one that is "truly imaginary" with a significant divide between the real and the imagined. Toal's conviction that the Third World was devoid of any reality or material aspect admittedly drew upon a Western "imaginary ego-image" of the Third World. As such, this conviction privileges a Western (academic's) panoptic view of the Third World, and effectively silences alternative understandings of the concept. How would discourses about the Third World or Global South look when the gaze considered is that of Third World subjects? And if these subjects constitute the so-called elites, would their perspectives be necessarily invalid?

One aspect of critiquing the North-South framework from a critical geo-politics approach has been to problematize the Third World elite, in particular by highlighting their manipulation of identities and political concepts. The term Third Worldism has been used to signify such ideological posturing (Berger, 2004). Here the implication is that identification with Third World solidarity is rhetorical, a charge others argue has yet to be verified (Roberts and Parks, 2007; Williams, 2005). Further, such a problematization has been typically based on a homogenizing and caricature of this 'elite' entity. Research on the agency of Third World or Southern subjects has been limited (Dodds, 2001; Williams, 2005). Analysis of the imaginary has instead been confined to structuralist accounts of the interests of these states. As such, changes in the global security and economic structures are seen to undermine the basis of Third World unity (Williams, 2005).

Williams (2005, 53) argued that the Third World or Global South is not a fixed category that represents some structurally determined political solidarity. Rather, it is an "imagined community of the powerless and vulnerable." Critical geopolitics scholars have suggested the need to examine the reproduction of such imagined communities through research on "popular and elite forms of geopolitical reasoning." (Dodds, 2001, 473) Thinking about categories not as "pre-given things-in-the-world but, rather, the result of [the] contingent and ongoing process of linking up locations of difference" (Jones, 2009, 180) is particularly helpful. Doing so helps us see categories such as the Global South or Third World as complex and dynamic rather than static and fixed. Further, this process is inchoate and therefore needs to be continually renegotiated, rearticulated and reproduced (ibid). The geopolitical imaginaries of the Global South and

North are also categories that survive through constant reproduction by individuals. It is individuals – policy-makers and other elites engaged in policy negotiations and discourses that substantiate a binary distinction among states as developed or developing, North or South, and West or Third World. Placing such agency on individuals helps us see such these categories as subjectively produced rather than as objective fact. Given the power politics inherent in the process of categorization (Jones, 2009), examining why these categories are contested by some and defended by others may be equally, if not more important than analyzing their validity. Yet, research on the perspectives of these individuals has been virtually non-existent (Dodds, 2001; Williams, 2005).

Past research has provided insight into the reproduction of the Third World or Global South through the institutionalization of norms in the climate negotiations (Williams, 2005). I further this understanding by examining the ways in which Indian statespersons and civil society representatives reproduce these identities and binary divisions in the context of climate policy negotiations. Before we move on to the next section, the two main ideas I hope readers will take away from this section are: 1. the geo-political imaginaries of the Global South and North should be understood as fluid and dynamic categories rather than static and fixed ones. 2. These categories are not a given but rather a social construction that is continually renegotiated and reproduced. This paper provides insight into one aspect of this process.

The North-South Aspect of Global Environmental Politics

The increasing salience of global environmental concerns and the role that some developing countries play in alleviating them (DeSombre, 2002; Rajan, 1997; Therien,

1999) is said to have opened up new possibilities for North-South diplomacy (Therien, 1999; Williams, 1993), offering greater bargaining power to the South in global environmental politics (Anand, 2004; Dodds, 1998), or traditionally less powerful states in international relations (DeSombre, 2002). While the continued relevance of the Third World category for global environmental politics has been argued from a structuralist perspective (Miller, 2005), of greater relevance for this paper is the discursive construction of the North-South divide in global environmental politics. The construction of this divide has been a key aspect in the realm of global environmental negotiations, and this negotiating framework has created the space necessary for the reproduction of these spatial imaginaries (Williams, 2005).

In global environmental politics, the Group of 77 plus China (G77) is the negotiating entity representing the Third World or Global South (Vihma, 2010; Williams, 2005) and is defined by a “self-definition of exclusion” in global politics (Vihma, 2010, 2). The G77 has been referred to as an entity that represents a “new regionalism” in global politics wherein its aim is not only to influence the North’s environmental and political agenda but also to demand that “the North confront its responsibilities to the wider world.” (Dodds, 1998, 729) Scholars have identified a set of shared interests identified by this group of countries to be distinct from those of developed ones: a concern for explicitly linking global environmental concerns to development needs; seeking financial resources for environmental programs above and beyond official development assistance; technological assistance; capacity building; and a longer time-frame for implementation of new regulations (Najam, 2002; Williams, 2005), but also in their emphasis on “the question of responsibility for environmental degradation.” (Dodds,

1998, 728) The institutionalization of these interests and their underlying norms of sustainable development and common but differentiated responsibility, has contributed to the maintenance of the idea of difference between the North and the South (Williams, 2005).

These interests have been institutionalized through global negotiations at various points in time. The limits to growth ideology that grew out of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment is considered a substantial source of North-South discord, where the North's global environmental agenda was seen as a threat to development in the South (Conca, 2001). The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was a major event that established explicit linkages between environment and development issues, and where differential obligations of developing and developed countries were articulated. The international environmental treaties that followed have had "significant North-South equity implications" drawing upon the 'polluter pays principle' as well as "differential obligations for developed and developing states", and provisions for technology and financial transfers (DeSombre, 2002; 10). Even before UNCED, the 1987 Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer (Montreal Protocol) created a precedent for differential treatment towards developing countries in the context of negotiations over the atmospheric commons (Rajan, 1997). It instituted a financial transfer mechanism, the Multilateral Fund that developed countries contributed to, and a time lag to large and rapidly industrializing developing countries such as China and India. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal also created a space for a North-South frame for debates and negotiations where Third World states articulated a common

position despite their heterogeneity in levels of development (Miller, 1995). Most recently, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has provided the space for a distinctly North-South environmental politics. There are three distinct phases to climate change negotiations: pre-1992 leading up to the UNFCCC, pre-1997 leading up to the Kyoto Protocol, and the current period often characterized as post-Kyoto (Williams, 2005).

The UNFCCC articulated several principles to guide the attainment of its overarching objective of greenhouse gas stabilization that allude to ideas of equity, sustainable economic development for developing country parties, common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. The texts of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (see Chapter I) make two things clear: a clear demarcation between the responsibilities of developed and developing country Parties, and the prioritization of economic growth and sustainable development for the latter. Such articulation of differentiation of responsibilities and capabilities is compatible with the North-South framing championed by some scholars who speak of contraction and convergence (Agrawal et al., 1999, 2001), ecological debt or ecologically unequal exchange (Martinez-Alier, 2002; Srinivasan et al., 2008) and climate injustice (Roberts and Parks, 2007) based on disparities at the level of states. Some have critiqued such “elite control of the framings of problems” (Newell, 2005, 72) and insisted that “a focus on race and class may require different analytical categories.” (ibid, 90) Others critique Southern leaders’ obsession with a high-growth paradigm of development for not being compatible with environmental sustainability or effective climate mitigation (Bello, 2007; Sachs,

2002). Although noteworthy, it is outside the scope of this paper to consider these critiques in greater depth.

The Spatial Politics of Assigning Responsibility for Climate Mitigation

The politics of climate change are complex given the uneven distribution over space and time of the causes and consequences of climate change, as well as the capacity to deal with it (Agarwal et al., 1999, 2001; Barnett, 2007). In the North-South politics of climate negotiations, the North is seen to have historical responsibility for much of the cumulative greenhouse gases in the global atmospheric commons (Desombre, 2002). In this section, I will examine the politics of the contestation and reproduction of these categories in the context of climate negotiations.

The main governmental actors in the climate regime constitute the EU, the US, and the G77, comprised of 130 countries including China, and the OPEC, AOSIS and LDC groups (Barnett, 2007). The EU and the US belong to the Global North or Annex I and the G77 is more or less synonymous with the Global South or non-Annex I in most analyses. The US position in climate negotiations have long been firmly predicated on the meaningful participation of the major developing countries, particularly India and China. This has been a major factor in the US' reluctance to sign the Kyoto Protocol. The US Senate voted 95-0 on the 1997 Byrd-Hagel Resolution, which made a commitment to rejecting any international agreement that expected Annex I Parties to take on mandatory targets but not developing countries (Desombre, 2002; Najam et al., 2003). I argue that this position implicitly refuses the validity of the categorizing scheme of the Kyoto Protocol along North-South lines. The G77, albeit with some points of internal discord,

have similarly firmly demanded that Annex I nations take the lead in accepting aggressive emission reduction targets, based on historical responsibility as well as their own rights to development (Barnett, 2007; Williams, 2005).

Although not a homogenous group, the *G77* articulates a set of common positions, underlined by two overarching themes: a sense of shared vulnerability and an emphasis on principles of equity; and four normative principles: common but differentiated responsibility, sustainable development; increased funding (in addition to overseas development assistance), and transfer of technology (Williams, 2005). Three major areas of conflict within the coalition have been identified: differences that arise from differential levels of development and therefore GHG emissions, access to energy sources, and reductions with some success, while the AOSIS have been demanding more ambitious targets including from the South due to their acute vulnerability to sea-level rise (Barnett, 2007; Rajan, 1997). These differences within the *G77* bloc have led some to question the validity of this negotiating bloc (Vihma, 2010) or to claim that “(t)he geopolitics of the UNFCCC cannot be explained merely as a matter of the differences between the ‘North’ and the ‘South’.” (Barnett, 2007, 1367) Others claim that the differences among developing countries are in the context of short-term interests and that a set of key long-term Southern interests can be identified that have remained stable for at least a decade (Najam et al., 2003).

According to Najam et al (2003, 226), these interests are: the creation of a “predictable, implementable and equitable architecture” for mitigating climate change for “all nations” based on “current and future obligations”; enhancing the (adaptive) capacities and resilience of communities and states, particularly the most vulnerable ones;

and an emphasis on sustainable development as a core component of a climate regime. The authors call upon negotiators of the South to take on a more proactive role in bringing these interests to the forefront of discussions about an equitable and long-term regime architecture with appropriate roles for all states, rather than their erstwhile approach to rejecting immediate targets at all costs. Underlining this reactive approach is an intense distrust of the North's agenda in the negotiations (Najam et al., 2003; Rajan, 1997; Roberts and Parks, 2009) precipitated in part by the latter's failure to meet past commitments and obligations (DeSombre, 2002).

While developing country negotiators understand and accept the inevitability of future mandated commitments for their countries (Agarwal et al., 1999; Bello, 2007; Najam et al., 2003), they have consistently resisted discussing future targets at negotiations (Najam et al., 2003). This resistance arises from the conviction that the problem has been caused by the economic growth process of the "early industrializers." (Williams, 2005, 61) The focus on equity is thus related to the right of developing countries to pursue "economic development without undue constraints," (ibid) which translates into the right of poor countries to increase their GHG emissions. Some argue that countries of the North are responsible for the bulk of historical and current emissions and therefore have a moral responsibility to contribute more towards addressing the problem (Williams, 2005) while others point out that the South also has a responsibility, albeit smaller than that of the North (Bello, 2007).

Although the G77 is comprised of widely disparate entities (Barnett, 2008), the logic of this coalition derives from the strength it provides to traditionally marginalized countries (Najam et al., 2003), particularly in the context of UNFCCC negotiations where

the veto system gives de facto power to powerful Parties (Barnett, 2007). India, China, Mexico and Brazil are the states that have been most actively engaged in forging a common G77 position (Williams, 2005). These are ironically states that are increasingly viewed as emerging economies and major emitters. Under the UNFCCC, these countries continue to enjoy the status of developing countries as the UNFCCC does not define the category (Williams, 2005).

The COP-15 saw the emergence of subgroups such as BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China), ALBA (the Bolivarian Alliance of Latin American countries), the African Group (53 member states of the African Union), in addition to AOSIS (the alliance of 42 small island states, including some non-G77 members such as Tuvalu and Singapore, OPEC (group of 12 Oil Exporting Countries) and LDCs (the group of 49 least developed countries). In light of the ensuing politics of the Copenhagen Accord, some have argued the *raison d'être* for the G77 and therefore the South has ceased to exist and that climate politics are now characterized by an “‘elephant in the room’ – an awkward balance between the political expediences of alliance and the prevalence of multiple voices of self-interest within the G77 in the climate debate.” (Vihma, 2010, 3)

Despite the conflicting demands and interests of the sub-groups though, there is an abiding source of solidarity: “unanimity within the G77 on the inadequacy of Northern action on climate change,” (ibid, 8) “the collective sense of an “unjust world order” (ibid, 8, 9) as well as “a logic of mutual dependency” (ibid, 2) between emerging superpower China and the rest of G77. It therefore remains to be seen whether the divisions within the G77 in the context of the Copenhagen Accord are detrimental to the viability of the

G77 as a negotiating bloc or simply an extension of the heterogeneity that has always existed.

Towards a State-Centric Critical Geopolitics of Climate Change

One of the aspects of the class-based critical geopolitics critiques of the North-South framing is its inherent state-centrism. While some scholars routinely articulate the separation of states along these two broad categories (Najam, 2004; Williams, 2005), others find fault with the predominant use of such a “spatial imaginary” that posits states and world regions as the entities on which to categorize GHG emissions as well as impacts of climate change (Barnett, 2007, 1363). Thus the geopolitics of climate change is seen to be severely constrained by a ‘territorial trap’ (Agnew, 1994) that serves to privilege states as ‘climate hegemon’ – even as their regulatory power is declining (Conca, 2001) – while diverting attention away from other equally important loci of action at smaller scales that are crucial to states’ ability to act on climate change (Barnett, 2007, 1372; Haas, 2008).

IPCC reports, for instance, have been seen as showing a bias towards the international scale in determining biophysical vulnerability, acknowledging only recently that vulnerability could be differential within nations (O’Brien and Leichenko, 2003; Najam et al., 2003). Similarly the UNFCCC is critiqued for privileging the international scale, whereby “developing countries” are determined to be the losers and therefore deserving of compensation, whereas vulnerable groups within developed countries are not (O’Brien and Leichenko, 2003, 99; Liverman, 2009). Some scholars are particularly critical of the framing of climate change as a national security issue and argue for the privileging of

human livelihood security at individual and community levels (Barnett, 2007; Liverman, 2009). The implication seems to be that climate policies based on spatial configurations at larger scales are necessarily counter-intuitive to climate vulnerabilities at smaller scales.

The point is well made that attributing emissions to corporations and individuals leads to more accurate assessments of responsibility (Barnett, 2007), or that differences in aggregated emissions are more pronounced when categorized by wealth rather than states (Baer, 2006; Leichenko and O'Brien, 2008). Barnett (2007) is therefore perhaps right to conclude that the spatial politics of climate change is far more complex than simplistic state-centered geopolitical analyses would allow. Caution should be exercised in making such critiques lest an advocacy for local level vulnerabilities divert attention away from pervasive inequities at larger scales, including at the level of states and groups of states. In the context of climate change, there are relative winners and losers and these exist “at all levels, from individuals to regions, nations, or groups of nations (ie, advanced countries/developing countries).” (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003, 94) Since the determination of winners and losers from climate change is contingent upon scale of analysis, the choice of one scale over another becomes a political issue. Also, because the identification of winners and losers from climate change influences compensation matters, these politics are becoming increasingly contentious (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003). While critical scholars are understandably concerned about sociopolitical and ecological vulnerabilities to climate change at the individual and community levels, they should not fall into the so-called local trap of assuming that attending to this more intimate scale is necessarily more effective (Brown and Purcell, 2005).

Separate from but related to the issue of vulnerability is that of causality (DeSombre, 2002). Self-identification as victims on both respects have given developing countries more bargaining power, but some caution that such self-identification may be financially motivated (ibid; O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003). Such self-identification by some of the larger developing countries and their claims over compensation and temporary immunity from mitigation responsibilities have been countered by charges about their potential future emissions (DeSombre, 2002). Yet, while the total emissions of the major developing countries are projected to be at par with those of developed ones in the near future, it is argued that the per capita emissions of the North will continue to be disproportionately high, resulting in a situation where the least responsible will likely continue to be the most vulnerable (Najam et al., 2003).

States have obligations to protect citizens' civil rights and the provision of social conditions that enable individual freedoms, and the imposition of additional pressures emanating from global environmental change affects their ability to carry out these obligations (Biermann and Dingwerth, 2004). In fact, states do have a role to play in contributing to human / livelihood security such that human security could be a national security issue. Further, while "the precise role of states in both mitigating and adapting to global environmental change is still in question," an outright dismissal of its relevance is premature at best (ibid, 12). There may be valid reasons to believe that political and other representatives of states could be corrupt and may manipulate the rhetoric of a North-South divide, but to assume that to the effect of dismissing the relevance of the state in global environmental affairs is also premature.

Negotiations under the UNFCCC occur between representatives of political states as Parties to the Convention (DeSombre, 2002). Focusing exclusively on smaller scales of action – such as the privileging of city-level initiatives – may lead to a trend akin to the individualization of environmental responsibility (Maniates, 2001) at the detriment of ignoring structural constraints on effective climate mitigation at larger scales. Consequently, for the purposes of this paper, although I agree that the impacts of climate change will be felt differentially within states, and while sub-national efforts are important, I undertake a state-centric examination because pervasive difference and inequities exist at this scale. Developed states have traditionally enjoyed greater power politically, economically as well as in knowledge structures that has an impact on global environmental negotiations (Williams, 2005).

Several scholars have cautioned against the prospect of an unholy alliance among the elites of the North and South (Barnett, 2007; Bello, 2007; Norberg-Hodge, 2008). “It is the national elites that spout the ultra-Third Worldist line that the South has yet to fulfill its quota of polluting the world while [the] North has exceeded its quota. It is they who call for an exemption of the big rapidly industrializing countries from mandatory limits on the emission of greenhouse gases under a new Kyoto Protocol.” (Bello, 2007, 6 of 8) Although containing unverified assumptions, this statement does stimulate a critical examination of this so-called Third Worldist argument.

To conclude this section, a state-centric climate geopolitics is challenged both on the basis of the inaccuracy of aggregating emissions by state, as well as on the basis of the state’s inability to represent the interests of the most climate-vulnerable populations. Calls are therefore made for a “more empowering and critical geopolitics” that takes a

“more subaltern and class-based view” that places the burden of action on the political and economic choices of people in developed countries (Barnett, 2007, 1372), or places hope in alliances between global civil society and Southern environmental and social movements (Bello, 2007). Where that leaves the question of emission targets for states is unclear. This chapter questions the assumption that a critical geopolitics of climate change must be defined by a critique of state-centrism or geopolitical imaginaries in order to be ‘critical’ and suggests that states can and should be expected to play a more enabling role in meeting the needs of their most vulnerable citizens.

India’s Place in the North-South Politics of Negotiations to Mitigate Climate Change

India has played a key role in the North-South politics of climate negotiations. The Indian government played an instrumental role in the development of a common position for the South as the G77 representative during the landmark UNCED in 1992 (Jakobsen, 1998). This position included the following stipulations: global environmental concerns should not impinge upon programs for economic development or influence trade policies; and developed countries should take primary responsibility for corrective action in global environmental pollution (ibid).

In climate negotiations, Indian negotiators have been instrumental in crafting the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and the insertion of factual statements in the text that attribute historic emissions of GHGs to developed countries (ibid). Other efforts that were not incorporated in the framework convention were proposals for a convergence of country emission levels around a common per capita level (Paterson, 1996) and to ensure that the UNFCCC’s funding mechanism would not be

dominated by a North-dominated institution (Jakobsen, 1998). Indian participation in a range of global environmental negotiations has been characterized by a remarkable consistency around the nature of Indian interests regarding state sovereignty, North-South economic equity and exercising more power in international affairs (Rajan, 1997). The Indian position has been typically seen to be compatible with Third World/Southern interests, and it is not surprising to see India referred to as a leading member of this coalition (ibid). But even with the alleged bargaining power afforded by the nature of global environmental problems to the Global South, the ability of Indian and other Southern negotiators to define the agenda of the negotiations has been thought to be compromised due to structural inequalities (Jakobsen, 1998; Rajan, 1997).

India's championing of the North-South frame of reference is particularly intriguing because its place in the Global South is increasingly questioned from without (eg. Khor, 2007; Sowers, 2007). Although under the KP, India falls under the non-Annex I group of countries and is therefore exempt from mandatory commitments to reduce GHGs, it has in recent years come under tremendous pressure to accept more ambitious plans for emission reduction. The official Indian position in climate negotiations in the context of burden-sharing for mitigation has long emphasized the historical responsibility of Annex I states. Indian officials and negotiators have consistently resisted the increasingly frequent discussions of current and future emissions of emerging economies and discourses of differentiation within non-Annex I. A 2009 study of domestic climate politics in India called India's characterization as a major emitter unfair given the country's development challenges. It categorized Indian sentiment around climate debates into three groupings: growth-first stonewallers, progressive realists and

progressive internationalists (Dubash, 2009). He advocated for a convergence of public opinion in India towards the latter two approaches, but argued that this relied on trust-building measures between North and South, and a move towards global convergence of per capita equity (ibid).

Another study of India's participation in international climate negotiations has noted that India's approach has moved away from a defensive one based on a traditional neocolonial rhetoric to a more proactive internationalist approach since 2007 (Vihma, 2011). This is attributed to the fact that the climate discourse is expanding beyond the few agencies exerting most influence on India's positions, namely MOEF, CSE and TERI (Jakobsen, 1998; Rajan, 1997); and the formation of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change as well as the appointment of Jai Ram Ramesh as MOEF minister. India's announcement of GHG intensity targets around the time of the COP-15 as well as its participation in the BASIC group has also contributed to the notion that India is ready to shed its so-called obstructionist stance in climate negotiations (Vihma, 2011).

My own interviews with key Indian negotiators and officials from MOEF, TERI, CSE and other Indian institutions revealed overall, a strong conviction that India should be exempt from emission targets. Even those few respondents who felt that the gravity of the impending crisis may necessitate all countries to undertake mitigation measures, were hesitant to agree to absolute emission targets for India in the face of development concerns. Consequently India seems unwilling to budge from its basic original positions. The following sections reveal the extent to which India's position in contemporary negotiations to mitigate climate change are influenced by the stronghold of North-South imaginaries, notwithstanding academic critiques of this framing or observations of the

country's growing economic might. To summarize, the North-South imaginaries are perpetuated in two ways: one, by insisting that despite its growing economic prowess, India is still a developing country and it faces challenges typical of a country of the Global South; and two, by upholding the legitimacy of the distinction between developed and developing countries institutionalized as Annex I/non-Annex I in the UNFCCC and KP.

Self-identification as a Developing Country

On Proposals for Non-Annex I Differentiation Between Emerging Economies and Others

All the individuals interviewed unflinchingly referred to India as a developing country. Often comparisons were made to the US, developed countries, industrialized nations, the West or the North. When asked about its emerging economy status, many were quick to point to various statistics such as income levels and access to energy sources that highlight the predominance of poverty, in order to justify that India was still a developing country. Arguing that the distinction between developed and developing countries was a legitimate one, Chair of the National Steering Committee of Climate Action Network, South Asia (CAN-SA) and Oxfam official, Aditi Kapoor said, “Developed countries are countries which have used fossil fuels basically to come to living standards that they are not enjoying, and developing countries are those where they have not used fossil fuels to that extent, which is why the carbon emissions are far low than developed countries.” (Interview, COP-15, 12/09)

A TERI official similarly argued that “the ground realities say developed and developing countries are different. And when I say developing country I still consider

India and China developing country.” (Interview, 12/08) Questions about calls for differentiation and India’s portrayal as an emerging economy were typically met with disbelief bordering on indignation: “It is absolutely ridiculous that countries of this position should take on commitments as countries like Japan. This is protectionism disguised as climate change concern.” (Interview, Secretary, MOEF, 12/08) And “we don’t know where this comes from, because the framework convention talks of only Annex I and non-Annex I. The Bali Action Plan talks of developing and developed countries. [Talks of differentiation have] absolutely no place, as far as we are concerned, in the climate change negotiations.” (Interview, Dr. S.K. Sharma, Advisor, MOEF, 12/08) The differential circumstances in the national situations, it was argued, “could be captured in the nationally appropriate actions. But, the nationally appropriate actions cannot be determined externally. It has to be determined by the countries oneself.” (ibid)

Others noted that while graduation of countries of the South is to be expected, countries such as India and China get picked on because of their size and their population, despite their relatively lower per capita emissions. Comparisons with countries such as Singapore and the Maldives (with higher GDP rates than India) were sometimes made, in efforts to demonstrate the heterogeneity of the Global South, and the implausibility of singling out India and China as emerging economies for differentiation. An MOEF secretary emphasized that when the G77 does not recognize such differentiation, any discussion by others is moot.

There was also a sense that India’s image as an emerging economy was falsely painted by the Western media. “Anyone who says that there is no North and South, is basically either reading too much of international press, which basically show that India

and China are going to overtake the Western world.” (Interview, Chandra Bhushan, Associate Director, CSE, 01/09) Similarly the “hype created about the Indian middle class ... is not a new politics” he said, pointing out that similar arguments were made at Rio Summit negotiations (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, COP-15, 12/09). While acknowledging the growing current and projected future emissions of India, he emphasized that older emissions matter more in climate change, suggesting that India’s historical contributions of GHG emissions were meager. Further, India’s excessive poverty and development needs meant that its limited resources had to be prioritized for more pressing issues and not for climate mitigation.

The motives for differentiation were viewed with intense suspicion, as a bargaining or delaying tactic and as a divide-and-conquer strategy. In the words of one negotiator: “We feel that the Annex I Parties are not pursuing an honest environmental agenda. We believe that they are pursuing an economic agenda, and a strategic agenda, in the guise of an environmental agenda.” (Interview, Dr. Pradipto Ghosh, TERI, 12/08) The US and Japan were seen to be the Parties most keen to blur the distinctions between the developed and developing countries by portraying China and India as major emitters.⁴⁵ Their push for differentiation was perceived to be motivated by economic motives, as emission targets for these large countries would force their industries to adopt patent-protected technologies developed in the US and Japan.

Although there were differences in the interests and situations of countries of the Global South, including between India and China, MOEF Minister Jai Ram Ramesh emphasized the importance of coordinating common negotiating positions and presenting a united face, and added that India supported the G77 position of upholding the

UNFCCC, the KP and the BAP. Addressing Tuvalu's proposal of amending the KP (reflecting AOSIS demands for tougher targets for select developing countries) that created a rift within the G77 group during COP-15, Bhushan argued that while their intentions were sound, these demands were unrealistic and "are unintentionally taking the pressure off of the developed world and putting the pressure on the developing world." (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, COP-15, 12/09) He further shared that there was a politics to these demands as Tuvalu was being represented by an Australian lawyer.

North-South Inequality, Inequities within India and National Sovereignty

In the context of ongoing neocolonialism aided by international mechanisms such as the WTO that typically benefit developed countries, often at the expense of developing countries (O'Brien and Leichenko, 2003), many saw climate change as an opportunity to challenge the status quo of the prevailing world order: "climate is a classic case of equalization in the world; ... economic equalization, ... which I don't think northern countries are willing to reconcile... The world is becoming multi-polar... And I think it's good for the world." (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 01/09) Respondents noted that the rising GDPs of some developing countries were insufficient to obliterate their subservient relationship vis-à-vis the North: "Third World countries [continue to be] dumping grounds for polluting industry owned by Northern corporations." (Interview, Reporter, 12/08) And despite the high growth in industrialization in countries such as India and China, it was pointed out that their products and services are mostly exported to Annex I countries (Interview, Shirish Sinha, WWF India, 12/08). Therefore if the "differential treatment to developing countries is done away with, [the] net effect would be to freeze

current distribution of global wealth to current levels.... condemn[ing] developing countries to current levels of poverty, misery and deprivation”. (Interview, Dr. Kamal Chenoy, JNU, 12/08)

The following words spoken by an Indian bureaucrat in the context of debates over the NIEO with the US, represents India’s abiding desire in changing this economic status quo:

The functioning of the UN during the last three decades and more has brought ... the near abolition of colonialism. But economic domination of the old era has persisted. The economic patterns that exist continue to reflect the old controls. These we want changed. And the affluent and industrialized countries of the world do not want the status quo to be altered. Our effort has been to persuade the North. Some of them are idealistic and not totally negative. Others are not prepared even to think in terms of a consensus that can bind both the North and the South. It may appear that in the short-term we of the South have little leverage vis-à-vis the North. But in the long run, the meek but determined South cannot but gets its fair share of the good things produced by Mother Earth. We do not wish to supplant the present rule makers. We only wish to cooperate with them so as to ensure that the rules are not weighted against us for all time to come. We must take their legitimate interests and proper concerns into account. But they too must not pretend that we have no interests and cannot be permitted to express any concerns. (Jha, 1982, 72-73)

My interviews reflected a similar sense of marginalization of states – including India’s – in global economic and environmental affairs. In light of critiques of the state-

centrism of the North-South binary, I asked about the growing gaps within India and within nations of the Global South. Many reacted defensively: “How countries address their problems is the sovereign right of a country. That has got nothing to do with negotiations.” (Interview, Deputy Secretary, MOEF, 12/08) Most interviewed acknowledged that India should pursue domestic mitigation actions as per NAMA but were insistent that these should be outside the purview of international MRV, unless supported by international financial and technological transfers. Such surveillance and scrutiny on voluntarily assigned targets were seen to be intrusive and unacceptable (Participant observation, Jai Ram Ramesh, MOEF, COP-15, 12/09). The compromise on national sovereignty in the context of funded projects was already a break from India’s traditional stance (Interview, Reporter, 12/08). Defending India’s stance on rejecting international MRV for voluntary mitigation measures, Ramesh pointed out that the US does not allow international verification of biological weapons, and India’s position should not be judged any differently. Further, he added that “there is no place on earth where the domestic MRV is as boisterous, as aggressive, and as intensive as it is in India” and that India’s accountability is to its parliament rather than to the international community.

In response to a 2007 Greenpeace India Report suggesting that Indian climate officials were hiding behind the poor in demanding to be absolved of mitigation responsibilities, several interviewees remarked that it is the Annex 1 nations that were hiding behind the emerging economies as a delaying tactic or to conceal their own failures in meeting assigned targets. Heterogeneity in country emissions, vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities within the South were therefore more or less subsumed in a

broader context of a sense of marginalization and difference vis-a-vis the North in world affairs. In response to questions about class differences within India as well as within the North, some interviewees pointed out that there can be no comparison between the poor in India and the poor in the US, or between the numbers of rich in the two places, and the emissions thereof.

My research revealed a complicated picture of the perception of the relationship between internal inequities within Indian and international inequities. While one respondent pointed out that the government position does not rely on populist arguments about the socioeconomic needs of India's poor, but instead explicitly emphasize India's need for environmental space to develop their economy; others linked the prospect of emission targets for India to the shouldering of this burden by the poor in India, instead of the rich: "From our perspective in Center for Science and Environment, if India today takes a commitment, without any support to provide energy to its poor, the poor will remain in the stone age, that's our major concern." (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09) Another respondent suggested that the extent to which India's development policies were geared towards meeting the stated objectives of poverty alleviation was questionable, thus potentially weakening the emissions-poverty linkage in the rationale for India's position. More research needs to be done to examine the extent to which the socioeconomic needs of the poor are dependent on emission-generating activities.

Some pointed out that the hands of the government officials in Delhi were tied by the interests of their constituents. They were essentially representing the Indian citizens including the most vulnerable to climate change, and so were answerable to them, rather than "an international community which has no overall stake in the government."

(Interview, Reporter, 12/08) If the government accepted a binding commitment at this time, “it [would] be thrown out the next day.” (Interview, Chenoy, JNU, 12/08) The point made was that an outside or international community had no place or right to critique India about their internal inequities. Such arguments were seen as yet another mechanism that the powerful North used to keep the South in place. Because similar judgments were not typically made on the more powerful countries, the Indian officials felt such arguments were patronizing: “We wish to be part of the dialogue. And I think India has tried to do that. ... It cannot be that a certain European code of conduct is imposed on India and we just follow that.” (Interview, Sharma, MOEF, 12/08) Most argued that internal inequities and the issue of mitigation responsibility for states were entirely separate matters. And while some civil society members interviewed acknowledged that national emission reduction targets should be decided upon by an international community, others argued that the behavior of powerful states such as the US necessitated India to act parochially.

Comparing and Contrasting India with US/Annex I

Most of my respondents defended India’s identity as a developing country by pointing out how different it was from developed countries of the West or North: “When I say India is a developing country, I say that people have still not ... got the very basic things which are taken for granted in developed countries – education ... right to health, shelter, basic necessities like food.” (Interview, Prabhat Upadhyaya, TERI, 12/08) He added that developed states are much more financially capable of taking care of the needs of their poorest citizens. Even if there was a recognition that India’s economy was

booming in certain areas, it simply could not compare with the Western world, whether in terms of technological prowess or economic status, especially in per capita terms (Interview, Greenpeace India official, 12/08). And yet, while such comparisons were made, some wanted to emphasize that they did not even want India to ever reach income levels as in the US. Several respondents invoked Gandhi and emphasized the difference between luxury emissions and subsistence emissions, suggesting India's future emissions would fall under the latter category.

One interviewee compared India and the US in excruciatingly stark terms of human equality (or lack thereof). He turned the equity-within-India argument on its head when he argued that argument was hollow if it weren't matched by efforts to remove inequity at an international level.

You either have a concept of every citizen is equal or, they're not. Or there is some amount of difference that you agree. Then you need to admit to that, that an average American or an average US citizen is at a different level than an average Indian citizen. If you accept that, if you get that internationally accepted obviously the convention goes to redux, but you do have a new concept in ethics. But, the entire convention is based on the fact that every citizen is equal.

Everyone's right should be protected by each and every government, internationally and nationally. (Interview, Reporter, 12/08)

Most interviewees discussed the unfulfilled commitments on part of Annex I countries, both in reducing their emissions, as well as in delivering the promised financial and technological flows. The continued validity of the Global South is fed by a strong perception of the Annex I's inability or unwillingness to do its part to fulfill its historical

responsibilities enshrined in previous agreements. It was considered rather incredulous that as the most powerful economy and the biggest culprit, when the US was not willing or able to take on emissions targets, how or why should India? This quote from the CSE director is quite representative of most interviewed:

(Sounding very irked) “On what basis should India accept the target? When the developed world, or the Annex I countries are finding it so difficult to meet even their Kyoto target. I could have understood that if they would have done more than what Kyoto had asked them to do. ... So their own track record is extremely bad. US has increased its emission by 20 % from 1990. Australia has increased. Everyone else has increased. Now you say that, you know, we have not met but we want you to take commitment. I find it completely inappropriate. On what basis should India do it? When you have yourself found it so difficult to do it. And that is I think fundamental question of climate change that a lot of people should understand. Noone in the world has learned to create a non-carbon economy. Think about it, if they are finding it so difficult, to reduce, India, where 400 million people don't have access to electricity, how do you expect India to reduce its emission? 50% of Indian population doesn't have access to electricity. If you, being so much rich, you have not been able to decarbonize your society, think about India. How much more difficult it will be for India to do it, without any assistance. (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09)

From the point of view of the Indian officials interviewed, the stalemate in the negotiations is largely because the Annex I countries had not stepped up to the plate and taking the lead with dealing with the problem they had created. It was frequently

suggested that instead of pointing fingers at the emerging economies, we should be focusing on the unmet Annex I obligations. Discussions about including the emerging economies were therefore seen as an excuse for diverting attention away from their inability to meet their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol.

If Annex I countries had made a genuine effort at meeting their prior obligations, some believe the pressure on India to perform would have been more credible: “I think India is sitting pretty right now because it has a very easy thing to throw back at their face saying, you know, but you had the first phase of Kyoto to prove yourselves. Now if you haven’t done so much, how do you expect anyone else to do anything?” (Interview, Reporter, 12/08) There is therefore a strong perception that India’s position is safe on account of Annex I inaction. And yet, many pointed out that unlike the US, India was in fact taking responsibility according to their capabilities, and was making inroads in alternative energy projects such as wind power. “India doesn’t have either the capacity or the culture to do what United States has been doing for last almost a decade, staying out of international agreements.” (ibid) Irrespective of other states’ (in)action, most interviewed argued that India should take mitigative actions voluntarily, but that it should not commit to mandatory targets unless all players do, and unless it receives technological and financial support.

Development Needs and Role of the State

India’s developing country status was often seen to be connected to its need for economic development and growth. According to an Indian Youth for Climate Network (IYCN) member, the climate debates should be viewed from a “development point of

view,” in which the focus of the debates would be “discussing how to bring the countries who are less developed right now at the same level.” The problem today, according to him, “is that development itself has become a hindrance,” which is “the biggest challenge India faces right now.” In his view, equitable development across the world would be more conducive to viable solutions for climate change. One respondent summed up the perspective of many interviewed,

See the basic premise of the climate debate has been on right to development and right to equality and growth and a better lifestyle. Sitting in US, and in other countries, without doing anything on your own, it's much easy to say that okay, India and China should be seen differently, right? It's easy to say that. Why should you see India and China differently, is my question. What India and China is trying to do is improve the quality of life of the people! I mean, ... if you look into numbers much more clearly you will find large number of much more poor people in India, still, without access to even basic facilities. ... should these country therefore stop providing access to better quality of life to these people? No! So therefore, how do we accept the whole argument of differentiation at all to happen? (Interview, Sharma, MOEF, 12/08)

Until a certain level of development is achieved, the consensus is that India could not take on emission reduction targets or a peak year for emissions: “We will not agree to a concept of a peaking year for India, because we have a huge backlog of development still awaiting us, particularly in expanding rural electricity supply.” (Participant observation, Ramesh, COP-15, 12/09) Often development was equated with economic growth or industrial and infrastructure development. While many explicitly articulated a

need for sustainable development, it was clear that the approach to sustainability was defined by a faith in ecological modernization. While the need to delink emissions from economic growth or to pursue a low carbon growth path – with the help of financial and technological transfers – was frequently emphasized, industrial growth was often assumed to be a necessary condition for alleviating poverty and meeting energy needs for the poorest, and rarely were they seen to be competing interests.

Such industrial development and economic growth was often – although not always – deemed necessary in order to provide for the basic needs for the majority of the country's mostly poor population. These basic amenities (taken for granted in developed countries) included education, right to health, shelter, food, access to modern fuels. This framing of the desire for industrial growth in the language of basic needs is interesting when seen in the context of the US agenda of advancing a similar discourse alongside the active rejection of calls for an NIEO in the 1970s (Hansen, 1980).

Several interviewees remarked on the Indian state's accountability towards its citizens, thus establishing a direct link between national mitigation commitments and the individual Indian citizen, and validating the state-centrism in North-South differences. A strong link was generally perceived between the acceptance of emission reduction targets without financial and technological support, and India's ability to alleviate poverty. According to one government official, the government of India had an obligation to provide access to affordable energy to all its people. For a state with limited resources and competing priorities, taking emission cuts would be tantamount to denying its citizens their basic rights (Interview, Ajay Mathur, Director, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, 1/09). The government also had a responsibility of redistributive justice

(Interview, MOEF official, 12/08). When prodded about what she meant by development, she said:

Developing means, a level of development required to serve basic needs. Through industrialization, education, domestic energy consumption... all these need consumption of energy and GHGs. When it comes to climate change it is the carbon space we are talking about.... The word developing does not necessarily imply that a certain goal of being like a certain set of countries is being pursued. Every country can decide what its development goals are. For India, it is about attaining a basic standard of living, access to health care, education, drinking water, etc. it's not that it is trying to be like the West. Not at all!

When seen in this light, concerns about the tendency of Third World state economies to be developed “to satisfy external interests rather than internal needs” (Miller, 2002, 129) need to be more carefully evaluated. Equally interesting are realist statements coming from environmental activists who acknowledge the need for economic growth and development in India (albeit sustainable). Many seek to distinguish India's aspirations from the model pursued by industrialized countries. India wished to pursue leapfrog development, aided by the developed world. Further, India was perceived to have a right to such development (Sunita Narain, Down to Earth editorial).

Economic development was seen as not only necessary for poverty alleviation, but to enhance the state's adaptive capacities including infrastructure for adaptation to climate change. Likewise, sustainable development was looked at as not simply a low-carbon growth model, but also as a way to increasing the state's capacities to cope with climate change. Dr. Chandrashekhar Dasgupta (TERI), a key negotiator, argued that the

focus, particularly for developing countries should be on adaptation rather than on mitigation. For the purposes of both adaptation and mitigation, it was argued that India could not be placed in a category of developed countries because it was one of the most vulnerable, and it did not possess the capacities or capabilities required for mitigation. The vulnerability of the Indian state further arises from the fact that a sizeable population is economically poor and or dependent on monsoon-fed agriculture. The only way to enhance these capacities was seen to be through rapid and sustained economic development. So development for basic needs and development for adaptation were seen to be inherently connected (Interview, 12/08).

The inverse relationship between causality of the problem and vulnerability towards it further reinforces the distinctions between developed and developing countries. Global warming is seen to be a problem precipitated by developed countries, the main victims of which are developing countries: “While the problem has manifestly been caused by developed countries, and it is their overuse of fossil fuels resources, that are aggravating this problem. We consider that it is farfetched and certainly not at all conducive to environmental justice to ask developing countries to curb their growth to address a problem which they have not created, and which they’re suffering from.” (Interview, Dr. Pradipto Ghosh, TERI/PMCCC, 12/08) The perception that poorer countries are going to be the worst sufferers of climate change and that India’s socioeconomic vulnerability was caused by the Global North were particularly strong. The point made frequently was, why should an average Indian citizen that had no role to play in the creation of the problem have an obligation to contribute to the solution by compromising his or her right to economic development? Vulnerability was understood

not simply as an outcome of the impacts of climate change, but this combined with the socioeconomic capabilities to cope with these impacts.

Deference to UNFCCC

Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities

A reinforcement of India's identity as a developing country went hand in hand with a keen interest in upholding the UN framework convention as a standard text that should be strictly adhered to. In part, the strength of this conviction arose from the notion that the convention that prescribed different obligations for different categories of countries was itself the outcome of intense negotiations. Efforts to do away with this convention were therefore viewed with suspicion and frustration. One negotiator emphatically defended the Annex I/non-Annex I distinction in the convention thus: "In negotiations, what matters is the mandate.. the mandate has made this categorical distinction of Annex I and non Annex I.. In international negotiations we can't say whatever we like, we have to go by the mandate." (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08)

Another vehemently defended the UN's binary categories thus:

Why the differentiation first of all? You see ... there are two categories of the countries: Annex I and non-Annex I, which in the convention itself, we had agreed in 1990 that there are only two groups. Those who are listed as countries in Annex I, and those who, are not listed. ... either you are a developed country or you are a developing country. There is no need to create any further categories of countries ... And the United Nations system does not recognize it. They already defined, the developed and developing countries, and the least developed

countries. It's a UN system, it is not my system. (Interview, Sharma, MOEF, 12/08)

There was a strong sense that India does not have a need for reduction commitments, according to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Because these agreements had been arrived at after intense negotiations and discussions, there was no place for disputes or further debate. "So are we saying that we are abandoning this principle? We have all agreed to what is this so far. Let us not disturb the basic principles, which we have agreed in the convention. We are not reinventing the wheel. Every time we discuss, we cannot have a new parameter to discuss. ... You have taken in Kyoto Protocol your commitments. The question [is] have you ... fulfilled those or not? And if you have not, you are required to ... We should respect what decisions we have taken already!" (ibid)

Another respondent similarly suggested that there was not enough time to discuss new obligations for developing countries: "It took 15 years to work this one out, I don't think we can wait for another new convention to work out a new basis." (Interview, Shirish Sinha, Head, Climate Change and Energy Program, WWF India, 12/08) Pointing to the victories in 1992, regarding institutionalizing a clear distinction between developed and developing countries, a negotiator said that credit goes to the unity of the developing countries' negotiating bloc: "United, the developing countries have been able to hold their own" in spite of the relatively smaller delegations of most developing countries and suggested that efforts to push differentiation may be a ploy to break this unity (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

In addition to institutionalizing the difference between developed and developing countries, the UNFCCC also explicated social and economic development as the “overriding priority of developing country Parties,” a point often reiterated by those interviewed. Further, mitigation actions on the part of developing country parties were to be enabled by financial support, transfer of technology and capacity building, key features of Southern interest in global environmental negotiations (Najam, 2003).

Respondents often pointed out the importance of historical responsibility and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities enshrined in the UNFCCC that acknowledges that developing countries should be expected to grow and increase their share of emissions. Similarly, the KP and BAP received tremendous support among my respondents. The KP had specific legally binding emission reduction targets for Annex I countries, and the BAP had secured a commitment from Annex I countries to financially and technologically support nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMA) adopted voluntarily by non-Annex I countries. Efforts to deviate from these earlier agreements were tantamount to “going back on their word, which is completely inappropriate in international relations.” (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 12/08) Further, the negotiators interviewed were adamant that talk about discussion of commitments from non-Annex I countries at the COP-15 were misplaced and emphasized that the purpose of the negotiations in Copenhagen was to discuss Annex I commitments for the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol (although things would take a different turn in Copenhagen and in Cancun) (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

Asked about the limits of the categories North and South, or developed and developing, a few interviewees did acknowledge the need for a critical evaluation,

pointing to Singapore, South Korea and some Middle Eastern countries as those that may not fit easily in the South. The criteria for inclusion in this category were often associated with poverty levels and access to basic services such as clean drinking water, health facilities and energy services. India, on the other hand, undoubtedly belonged in the South. Some government officials conveyed the sense that they were not aware of the increasing perception that India was not a developing country like the others, and that higher mitigation expectations were expected from it as an emerging economy and major emitter – one MOEF official was shocked and offended to see in the interview consent form my reference to India’s negotiating position as “controversial.”

Civil society members with transnational networks were not as oblivious. In a Down to Earth editorial, Sunita Narain spoke of “current moves in climate change negotiations which demand countries such as India –till now seen as victims of the carbon excesses of the already industrialized world – must now take full responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” thus acknowledging the world’s changing perception of India, especially in the context of contribution to climate change. However, CSE continues to be engaged in framing the issue along the developed-developing binary: “Copenhagen was the nadir of climate negotiations. In Copenhagen there emerged a new coalition of the willing – countries wanting to bring the US on board on climate negotiations at every cost. The result was the now infamous Copenhagen Accord, which aims at changing the terms of the framework convention by removing the distinction between the developed and developing. Under this deal, the concept of historical emissions has to be set aside. All past records of pollution, of say the US, would be wiped clean.”⁴⁶

Discussions to replace the Kyoto Protocol with something much weaker like the Copenhagen Accord were therefore seen as attempts to do away with the historical responsibility of Annex I countries. Narain feared that if the Copenhagen Accord were accepted: “There will no longer be a distinction between countries that created the problem and so must take the first step to cut emissions—create ecological space—and countries that still need that space to grow. All of us will be equal in the world of polluters.... Since developing countries such as India are now growing in terms of emissions, the heat will be on them. The burden of a costly transition will shift to the developing world.” (Narain, Down to Earth editorial) For those who question India’s status as a developing country, a key negotiator clarified that the differential responsibilities arise from a specific context rather than perceptions of the level of development of countries: “the Annex I / non-Annex I distinction has nothing to do with developed / developing, but with level of CO₂ emissions in the 1990s.” (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

Historical Responsibility

While many that were interviewed acknowledged India’s growing economy and contribution to current and future emissions, the prevalence of the historical responsibility of industrialized countries, coupled with the scientific understanding of global warming as a problem of cumulative GHGs, contributed in large part to a clear conviction on the part of those interviewed that India clearly belonged in the South.

As far as Southern negotiators are concerned, they very strongly believe that the problem has been created by the developed world. And historical emission, they

are very strong on this. ... From the Southern perspective it is very clear, in saying that, the problem has been created by you, you have not achieved even the modest target, given by Kyoto Protocol. Now you are asking us to reduce. What right do you have, to ask us to reduce? So that is the Southern perspective. It's a very clear politics. (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09)

An emphasis on the historical responsibility of Annex I states did not necessarily mean that non-Annex I countries were demanding that we not worry about the future: "Of course when India talks about historical responsibility, nobody is saying forget the future. We are just saying don't forget the past." (Interview, Ambuj Sagar, IIT, COP-15, 12/09) Nor are they demanding the license to pollute: "As far as historical emissions go, at no point in time is any of these countries saying that they will not mitigate. What they are saying is, you accept and take on the responsibility, of what you have done, and we will take on the responsibility to make sure that we will not go your way in the future. So at no point in time has India been heard saying that we will go the American way and we will do exactly what America or Europe has done. Everybody realizes that that can't be done. That argument flies in the face of what actually the countries are saying." (Interview, Aditi Kapoor, Oxfam India / CAN-SA, 12/09)

It was infuriating to many I spoke with that developed countries had not acknowledged the fact that they had created the problem. And even if they did accept this, they might feign ignorance: "They might say that we didn't know that global warming is happening, which I find completely fallacious. Simply because from 1950 onwards there was very clear scientific evidence that carbon dioxide levels are

increasing. And when the UNFCCC process started from 1989 we had the platform. There was a very clear indication.” (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 12/08)

This lack of ownership of causality was evident in Yvo De Boer’s address at the final plenary at COP-15 where he dismissed the notion of historical responsibility, encouraging Parties to instead focus on capabilities (Participant observation, Plenary address, COP-15, 12/09). This is probably by far the starkest distinction between a Northern and a Southern position on climate debates. While discourses about emerging economies are focused on the rising capabilities of certain developing countries, these countries are unwilling to let go of the importance of historical responsibility, and see the two as equally important aspects of a fair climate treaty. What you make of historical responsibility strongly determines what your stance is on some key Southern proposals. Take for instance, the argument for transfer of technology. The importance of this for India to pursue a low-carbon path to development was huge for most interviewed. Some argued that more advanced greener technologies, currently owned by Northern countries, should be “shared as a common treasure, common heritage” or “common human heritage technology” apposite to the severity of the climate crisis (Interview, JNU Professor, 12/08). Others suggested a revision of the Intellectual Property Rights regime to explore the possibility of making such technologies into ‘public goods’ – a global technological commons parallel to the global atmospheric commons. Such proposals are unlikely to receive enthusiastic support from states that are inclined to ignore the existence of a historical responsibility on their part, and that also stand to lose financially from such arrangements.

Regardless, the concept of historical responsibility was key for those interviewed. The North's responsibility was not limited simply to taking aggressive measures to limit their emissions and enhancing the South's capabilities for mitigating and adapting to climate change, but also to provide compensation for producing the conditions where the South's capabilities were compromised. In Narain's words, "Our [India's] problems are the making of the rich world." (Down to Earth editorial) The rich countries, therefore, are expected to fund India's use of alternative forms of energy generation such as solar energy that are prohibitively costly.

*Representation and Reproduction of Global South Reflected Against an Unfair North
(Annex I) Where US Looms Large*

At the face of increasing discussions about differentiation within non-Annex I nations and questions about the validity of the Global South as a meaningful category or the G77 as a negotiating bloc, many interviewed were defensive about the continued validity of these categories. An awareness of the heterogeneity within these categories was certainly present. A few respondents acknowledged the inevitability of redefining these categories amidst discussions of differentiation according to level of development, yet most of these folks believed India should continue to be regarded as a developing country for the purpose of climate negotiations. It was countries such as Singapore, UEA or South Korea that were out of character as developing countries. And even when differentiation based on economic development made sense, the idea of a distinct North and South prevailed from a cultural and political standpoint. According to one respondent:

The sheer number of people, the sheer status of economy, economic status, the culture, everything does say that there is a difference, between North and South, though cultural globalization is happening, economic globalization is happening. You will find a strata of people in India which are much more nearer to Americans, than to Indians, but I still believe, politically, there is a division of world in terms of North and South. Where the division is getting blurred is in economic status. So for example, Gulf countries are become very rich, and therefore this talk about South Korea, Singapore, and some of the Gulf countries have become very rich, do they still fall in Global South? I believe culturally they do fall in Global South. But economically ... some of the Gulf countries have surpassed the developed world. So, in terms of economic, there is a blurring of that boundary line, ... and all of these are very small countries. South Korea, Gulf, Singapore. These are very small countries compared to what India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh are, or Africa. So, economically there is a blurring of division, but it is related to only very small and few countries. It's not the case still with large majority of the South. They are still very poor. They are far below the per capita income of, of the developed countries. And culturally, there is a South and there is a North. That we need to understand. (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09)

Another argued that categories such as “emerging economies” were misleading, especially for India, because “we are talking about large numbers of people living below the poverty line. Large numbers of ecological insecurities that [are] hindering our development!” (Interview, Sharma, MOEF, 12/08)

On the other hand, the non-Annex I was a category based on intense negotiations as a result of groups coming together because they had similar problems and common interests. The disparity within G77 is considerable, and sub-groups have emerged over time, such as OPEC, African group, AOSIS, and most recently BASIC in Copenhagen. While these subgroups as well as individual countries occasionally adopt individual positions outside of the G77 framework, they have also continued to support the common G77 position and stick together as a formidable negotiating bloc. This is especially the case for negotiations over the atmospheric commons such as with the Ozone and the climate negotiations. In the words of one interviewee “there must be something going right for them. There must be a larger principle that’s playing in their favor right now.” (Interview, Reporter, 12/08)

While different subgroups and countries may have different rationales for supporting G77 in UNFCCC negotiations, one apparent reason seems to be institutionalization of a clear distinction between Annex I and non-Annex I countries and differentiating responsibility for climate mitigation along this divide. Whatever the internal differences within G77, upholding this distinction as well as the Kyoto Protocol is apparently a useful strategy as it continues to shield member countries from mandatory commitments. So although Tuvalu proposed to amend the Kyoto Protocol at COP-15, it was very clear in emphasizing that its intent was not to replace the Kyoto Protocol but to strengthen it.

The cohesion of G77, or the validity of non-Annex I or the Global South received overall support, notwithstanding a select few respondents. One JNU professor of International Relations acknowledged that the categories North and South are “under

tremendous questioning now” especially in regards to global environmental issues (Interview, 12/08). Another had quite the opposite view. While acknowledging that “there are disparities of income in both North and South” he emphasized that “for a variety of reasons including the existence of a welfare state” there was a North and a South where

the North has much higher standards average standards of living.... And in terms of the wealthy elite, India has the largest number of billionaires – someone has written – in the world. But if you look at the entire corpus of wealth, the top five percent of India, it’s much less than the corpus of wealth the top five percent in the States or Britain or France or Germany, have. So there is no comparison. The point is well taken that everyone in the South is not poor. That’s true. But it is also a system, where large parts of the South, the poor are getting poorer. That’s not the case in the States, or in Northern countries. So there are elites, and there is poverty, but the kind of mass poverty [is not there]. (Interview, Chenoy, JNU, 12/08)

For him the term developing referred to per capita income or GDP, or the status of social infrastructure, welfare measures. While the term underdeveloped countries was deemed patronizing, developing was not.

Understanding India’s Representation of the North-South Dichotomy in Climate Politics

This article supports Roberts and Parks’ (2007) claim that climate negotiations are impeded by structuralist worldviews that perceive the world as divided into a powerful

and profligate North and a vulnerable South, as well as a lack of faith that the former is committed to put its full force behind the climate crisis as it rightfully should. Indian stakeholders in the climate mitigation debates certainly reflect such worldviews. By discursively reproducing the North-South binary in global environmental politics, Indian actors are engaging in a representational practice (Doty, 1996) that seeks to highlight the historical responsibility of the North for the climate crisis.

While India's identity as an emerging economy was not lost on those I interviewed, most of them were adamant that this was a misleading image, given the country's significant challenges particularly in enabling widespread access to energy and developing the infrastructure necessary for climate adaptation. Although some of the linkages made between the prospects of internationally determined emissions targets for India, and India's ability to meet these domestic obligations, were not necessarily indisputable, what is indisputable is the conviction among the Indian intelligentsia that India is a developing country, and its place is in the Global South. This conviction contradicts the portrayal of India in Western media as well as in geopolitical analyses of climate politics.

A key aspect of such a self-identification is a pervasive sense of comparison with the North, represented by the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the US. While the validity of the Global South category may be challenged, often justifiably, the power of the imaginary remains formidable, and strongly influences the Indian negotiating positions. The continued use of these imaginaries may not be productive for the purposes of ongoing climate negotiations because of the apparent cultural parallax⁴⁷ (Nabhan, 1998, 266) in relation to these imaginaries between those who argue for and against them.

The use of historically contingent and less fluid categories Annex I/non-Annex I may be more fruitful for the negotiations process, with the understanding that these categories are subject to change over time.

The historical responsibility of Annex I for climate change – not yet addressed fully – is a strong contributor to such an abiding imaginary of the Global South. The lack of trust that emanates from these unfulfilled obligations also contributes to some of the more parochial/nationalistic and short-sighted perspectives that make the Indian position seem more reactive than proactive. If India has been reactive, it has been largely to US hegemony. It is clear that the power of the hegemon – in climate change and other economic policy negotiations, as well as its profligate consumption enjoyed by a majority of its citizens – weighs heavily on the minds of Indian officials, cementing the imaginaries of an overconsuming North versus an underconsuming South, despite the recognition of a growing global middle class (Conca, 2001). True, wealthy Indians may overconsume, but the sheer numbers of the poor enable the imaginary of an India that easily fits into the imaginary of the South. As some have indicated (Barnett, 2007; Burkett, 2009; Vihma, 2010), Annex I acceptance of accountability for historical emissions will go far in enabling the currently disgruntled statespersons of the South to see beyond this imaginary and engage in a constructive process of identifying emissions targets based on evolving conditions.

My respondents were keen to keep the discussion focused on the historical responsibility of Annex I countries in addressing climate change, and by doing so were embodying a key Southern interest and strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1993) of the function of the Global South (Dodds, 1998). The roots of a North-South global politics

goes back to the NIEO era. Although the proposal never came into fruition, the desire for subverting the North-South status quo has persisted. The prospect of global ecological crisis that requires the cooperation of the Global South has enabled the resurgence of the issue of North-South inequities. Consequently, international distributional justice has been a key aspect of North-South environmental politics, reflected in the South's claims to development and emphasis on holding the North accountable for contemporary environmental crises (Conca and Dabelko, 2010). India's participation in the climate negotiations needs to be looked at in this historical context.

Following Doty (1996) and Jones (2009), I suggest in conclusion that the Global North and Global South are categories that are discursively reproduced as well as contested in global politics. From a structuralist standpoint, the validity of these categories has been debated to good effect. But it is equally important to examine the politics of the representational practices that actors in climate negotiations engage in. The North's historical responsibility for climate change bolstered by the US' uncelebratory role in the climate negotiations contributes strongly to an imaginary of the Global South. A change in the stance of Annex I states regarding accepting mitigation responsibility therefore seems necessary to enable a productive conversation about differential mitigation roles within the non-Annex I category of states.

CHAPTER IV
USING AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LENS TO EXAMINE
INDIA'S CLIMATE POLITICS

In recent years there has been a growing interest in using an environmental justice (EJ) frame to examine debates in climate change (Anand, 2004; Ikeme, 2003; Martinez-Alier, 2002; Schlosberg, 2009; Shiva, 2008; Ziser & Sze, 2007). Meanwhile, there is also a significant literature on climate justice that implicitly draws on the concept of EJ (eg. Brown, 2011). Very little work has been done, however, at the intersection of discussions on environmental justice with North-South politics in the context of climate change, with the exception of Anand (2004), Athanasiou (2010), Ikeme (2003), Martinez-Alier (2002), Robert and Parks (2008) and Sachs (2002). Work at this intersection is crucial because some of the core arguments in the two areas of discussion are common, particularly as they relate to development. Most of the work done at this intersection tends to frame the discussion in a North-South framework. Yet several scholars have challenged the validity of this binary framing (eg. Barnett, 2007; Berger, 2004; Norberg-Hodge, 2008; Shiva, 2008; Toal, 1994; Vihma, 2010). This chapter seeks to push the North-South EJ argument further by exploring the implications of this argument made in an international context for the domestic context. I do so by focusing on the Indian intelligentsia's discourses on climate change and EJ, on which very little scholarly research has been done.

As an industrializing country with a relatively strong economy (Dreze and Sen, 2002; Rothermund, 2008) and emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs), India increasingly occupies an uncertain or contested terrain in the category of 'developing countries'

(eg.Sowers, 2007; Vihma, 2010), as evidenced in part by the politics of the US negotiating team in recent UNFCCC meetings. This is true especially in the context of negotiations on mitigation commitments. Vihma (2011) characterizes India as a key actor in global climate governance⁴⁸ due to its emissions profile, economic performance, and leadership role in the Global South. Yet there has been very little work that focuses on Indian perspectives on climate politics (with the exception of Dubash, 2009; Jakobsen, 1998; Rajan, 1997; Vihma, 2011), and none in the geographical literature. The use of EJ concepts to address these debates by key Indian actors makes it imperative to critically assess the implications of these ideas in examining global climate politics. Chapter III addressed the Indian intelligentsia's discursive reproduction of the North and South geographical imaginaries in the context of climate negotiations. In this chapter I show how these imaginaries strongly influence their conception of EJ in global climate politics, and critically examine these justice claims.

Brief Overview of Environmental Justice Literature in a Global Context

From its origins as a grassroots movement opposing the discriminatory assignment of the burdens of pollution and risk associated with waste and industrial sites within the United States, the realm of EJ scholarship has now expanded to include discussions of global environmental inequality (Mohai et al, 2009). Simultaneously, the scope of EJ is also becoming broader, encompassing not only questions of spatial distribution of environmental goods and bads, but also questions of participatory justice, recognition and identity (Walker, 2009; Walker & Bulkeley, 2006; Ikeme, 2006). While the EJ literature is not a cohesive body of work – given the wide variety of perspectives

and approaches from which scholars approach the concept – some note a gradual evolution in EJ scholarship from a focus on place-based localized struggles to broader systemic political struggles that demand changes in the norm of commodity production and development (Hobson, 2004; Low & Gleeson 2002), and that enables the minimization or prevention of risk for all (Alastair, 2004). The need to contextualize EJ amidst historical and contemporary social processes rather than focusing exclusively on spatial distribution has also been widely acknowledged (Pellow, 2002, in Hobson, 2004). The increasing salience as well as broadening of the concept of EJ in recent years enables an understanding of climate change not just as an issue of ecological concern, but one that encompasses human rights as well as historical and current global inequalities in access to resources, recognition and meaningful participation.

In their review of two decades of EJ scholarship, Mohai et al. (2009) identify three main factors that contribute to the contentious nature of EJ claims: an unclear link between social justice issues and ecological sustainability, difficulties of proving disproportionate impact, and difficulties in initiating measures that genuinely address systemic inequalities. These issues are relevant to ongoing climate discourses.

Increasingly, scholars of EJ see an inevitable relationship between social justice and ecological sustainability (Agyeman et al, 2003; Bosselmann 2004; Byrne et al, 2002; Harris, 2000; Low & Gleeson, 1998; Shiva, 2008; Walker & Bulkeley, 2006). Some (eg. Hobson, 2004) point to the lack of rigorous empirically grounded and evaluative studies providing evidence that they are correlated. Concerns about the ‘environment’ being simply a backdrop for social conflict have led scholars to offer the concept of ‘ecological justice’ as an antidote (Baxter, 2004; Dobson, 1999)⁴⁹. Yet as research in political

ecology has demonstrated (eg. Sundberg, 2011; Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2004), the biophysical environment is more than a backdrop to societal struggles. Rather, “all socio-political projects are ecological projects and vice versa.” (Harvey, 1996, 174) I therefore concur with Low & Gleeson (1998, 2) who suggested : “the struggle for justice as it is shaped by the politics of the environment ... has two relational aspects: the justice of the distribution of environments among peoples, and the justice of the relations between humans and the rest of the natural world. We term these aspects of justice: environmental justice and ecological justice. They are really two aspects of the same relationship.” Walker and Bulkeley (2006) suggest that the environmental justice discourse enables us to view environmental and social dimensions of sustainability as inherently linked, particularly when scholars go beyond surface manifestations of inequitable distributions and seek to uncover the root causes of unequal social relations and experience of the environment.

The two other sources of contention in EJ research highlighted by Mohai et al. (2009) also hold true in global climate politics. One is the difficulty of delineating disproportional impact as well as causality, and the other is the political resistance to initiating measures that genuinely address systemic inequalities. Climate change accompanies multiple injustices regarding who created the problem, who will be affected most and who is most able to cope with these impacts. Yet to clearly articulate the parameters by which to categorize these dynamics has proved to be a daunting task, and one that is not free of contradictions (eg. O’Brien and Leichenko, 2003). Making claims to justice is an inherently political process (Harvey, 1996). The plurality of EJ coupled with contestations over choice of scale, temporal and spatial categories leads to

conflicting understandings “of the spatiality of distributional inequality,” giving rise to conflicts over the spatialities of patterns of responsibility and patterns of outcome (Walker, 2009, 622).

Similarly, the recognition of systemic inequities in the world system as one of the key barriers to achieving international cooperation in addressing climate change (Roberts and Parks, 2007) has not led to political action in addressing these inequities. Quite the opposite – arguments about ecological debt suggesting that the Global North owes the Global South a debt accrued due to the historically inequitable appropriation of the earth’s resources or environmental space (Agarwal et al, 2002; FOE, 2005; Martinez-Alier, 2002; Srinivasan et al, 2008) have been met with indifference from negotiators of those countries that have the most historical contribution to the problem in cumulative and per capita emissions (Vihma, 2011). Instead of any discussion of financial reparations, transfer of funds are discussed in the language of aid and ‘debt forgiveness’ which for Caney (2006, 122) is a widely held misconception of the idea of global justice. Given the controversial nature of discourses of historical responsibility, there have been attempts to link environmental justice to the idea of human rights. The right here is seen as a right to environmental security, which as Martinez-Alier (2002, 115) defines, is “the guaranteed access to natural resources and environmental services for all, not just for the rich and powerful.” As discussed below, when the rights discourse is used to advocate for a ‘right to development’ though, it becomes controversial. Sachs (2002) has countered arguments for increased development in the South using a ‘limits to growth’ argument, emphasizing instead a challenge to consumerist lifestyles in the North.

Climate Justice

Schlosberg (2009) has identified an evolution in the climate justice literature from a focus on historical responsibility, to equity-based arguments to most recently a rights based approach. The notion of historical responsibility was originally championed both by authors residing in developing countries (Agarwal et al, 1999; Ikeme, 2003) but also some Western philosophers and economists (Shue, 1999, 2009; Neumayer, 2000). Although not discussing ‘environmental justice’ per se, Shue (2009, 1) argued that historical responsibility in the context of climate change means “the acceptance of accountability for the full consequences of industrialization that relied on fossil fuels... The contention of the proponents of the application of historical responsibility to climate change is that the nations that have controlled the process of industrialization, and have benefitted the most from industrialization, should restore the playing field to a level position by bearing most of the costs that are resulting from the accumulated greenhouse gases injected into the atmosphere by industrialization.”

A per-capita equity argument for climate justice emphasized current equality rather than past responsibility (Baer et al, 2000; Jamieson, 2001; Singer, 2002). In this approach, everyone is entitled to an equal share of the global atmospheric commons as a sink for GHGs. These two arguments are also explicit in the 1992 UNFCCC text that was finalized after much negotiation. The preamble to the framework convention states: “The largest share of historical and current global emissions of greenhouse gases has originated in developed countries. Per capita emissions in developing countries are still relatively low, and the share of global emissions originating in developing countries will grow to meet their social and development needs.” The principle of common but differentiated

responsibilities (CBDR) was accordingly articulated which required Annex I states to stabilize and reduce their GHG emissions, and to facilitate financial and technology transfers to developing countries to enable them to take actions that involved incremental costs. (UNFCCC, 1992)

The per capita equity and historical responsibility arguments combined, are compatible with the idea of ecological debt outlined earlier, that demands compensation for past and ongoing responsibility for climate change. According to Martinez-Alier (2002, 116, 118), “the South argues that the North has produced and is producing a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gases. The North’s greenhouse gas production runs counter to environmental justice, and gives rise to environmental liabilities.” The North therefore owes the South a ‘carbon debt’ which is a debt accrued “because of disproportionate use of carbon sinks and reservoirs, without any payment.”

This idea has been quite controversial not least because it is perceived to be politically untenable, impractical or guilt-inducing (eg. Roberts, 2009). Consequently, the link between climate change and human rights is increasingly made (UNHCHR, 2010). Simply put, the ability of humans to support themselves with dignity is a basic human right (Sachs, 2008). Although some find a human rights approach problematic due its association with the neo-liberal economic agendas of the 1990s (Redclift, 2005), others argue it is preferable to the basic needs centered approach in international development (Sachs, 2008). Shue (2009) argued that “a universal right to an absolute minimum for survival with a decent life” is an assumption on which the differential allocation of the carbon budget could be made without controversy regarding various philosophical theories of justice. For Caney (2006), this extends to the right to not suffer those

consequences of climate change that undermine their basic interests, such that if a person's rights are violated, the culprit would have to compensate the violated. While the task of determining who the culprits are can be a tricky one, it is increasingly acknowledged that whether we adopt a rights-based approach or a compensatory approach, the costs of addressing climate change should be borne by the wealthy industrialized states (Shue, 2009) or that a transfer of wealth from the North to the South is in order (Ikeme, 2003).

Controversy arises when the notion of human rights extends to the discourse of rights to development that is seen as synonymous with the right to produce emissions. A distinction is often made between the right to produce livelihood emissions versus the luxury emissions enjoyed by affluent societies (Martinez-Alier, 2002). Baer et al (2009) extended this idea to argue for a 'greenhouse development rights' (GDR) framework designed to preserve the right of each human to a dignified level of sustainable development. Based on current energy usage, past responsibility and current mitigation/adaptation capacities, they set development thresholds for individuals and countries, which if crossed, requires the country in question to contribute to a global climate fund. Others (Comim, 2008; Harcourt, 2008; Sachs, 2002; Salleh, 2011) are not comfortable with the idea of such an approach, especially when the idea of development is understood in terms of the Western model of industrial development. Salleh (2011, 25) claims it has technocratic, neo-colonial and assimilationist undertones. For Bell (2010, 241), the carbon egalitarianism inherent in such an approach is troubling due to its singular and oversimplified focus on carbon emissions.

A capabilities approach to EJ (Comim, 2008; Holland, 2008; Schlosberg, 2009) perhaps addresses these concerns best by advocating an ecologically sustainable and holistic approach to human development. Drawing on the works of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, these authors derive a capabilities approach to justice that seeks to go beyond an exclusive focus on distribution of amenities⁵⁰ to a consideration of political participation of communities and individuals in influencing ecological and livelihood securities. By doing so, it strengthens the relationship between social and ecological dimensions of justice, based on the belief that “the process of the injustice to human and natural systems is identical – both are either depleted of capabilities, or are interrupted in using their capabilities to construct a fully functioning life or life system” (Schlosberg, 2009, 16). For Comim (2008, 347), capability is the ‘evaluative space’ for consideration of environmental justice, just as resources, utilities, incomes or primary goods may be for others. Viewed this way, the erosion of capabilities to withstand or adapt to the impacts of climate change is as important as – if not more than – a simple distribution of emission rights.

The capabilities approach to environmental justice therefore seems well suited to inform a just framework for global climate policy that seeks to protect the most vulnerable communities from the worst consequences of climate change while ensuring that the legitimate pursuit of development stays within ecologically sustainable limits. This approach reorients the focus of climate policy discussions to the local scale, especially on marginalized and vulnerable communities, and offers a holistic approach to environmental sustainability rather than an exclusive focus on the atmosphere as a sink. There is, however, a disconnect between such a capabilities approach to environmental

justice and ongoing discourses of equity and justice around mitigation responsibility for countries that this chapter seeks to address.

India's Claims to Justice, Development and Atmospheric Space

In this chapter, I focus on the ideas of justice and equity that emerge from a range of Indian actors on climate discourses and reflect on them. My conversations and participant observation in India and Copenhagen reveal that the Indian intelligentsia commonly appeal to the per capita rights and historical responsibility approaches in framing the problem of climate change, and advocate both a polluter pays principle that identifies developed countries as financially accountable for climate mitigation and adaptation, and a 'contraction and convergence' (C&C) principle that allows developing countries to increase their emissions to an agreed upon level (G.C.I., 1996). Equity and justice are seen to be essential components of an effective climate agreement. NGOs such as CSE have been framing the issue using terms such as climate justice, ecological debt and ecological space for more than a decade now.⁵¹ My interviews for the most part reflected the North-South framing observed in the literature on international EJ. Although I encountered reluctance on part of some of my respondents (mostly from state officials) to address questions about EJ in the domestic context, others emphasized these concerns, in addition to – rather than instead of – North-South inequities. An in-depth account of my empirical data follows. I use actual last names and affiliation, except for those respondents who requested that their identities be kept confidential.

Spatial Imaginaries and Environmental Justice as Spatio-temporal Distribution

Historical Responsibility Within a North-South Frame

North-South imaginaries strongly influenced my respondents' vision of international environmental justice, where developed countries were seen as perpetrators and developing countries as victims of climate change.

While the problem has manifestly been caused by developed countries, and it is their overuse of fossil fuels resources, that are aggravating this problem, we consider that it is farfetched and certainly not at all conducive to environmental justice to ask developing countries to curb their growth to address a problem which they have not created, and which they're suffering from (Interview, Dr. Pradipto Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

Figure 5 illustrates this point well. Most respondents strongly believed that agreements based on climate justice and equity should take historical responsibility seriously. With the industrial era as the key historical period of reference, responsibility for contemporary climate change was squarely attributed to industrialized countries. The existing science of climate change that recognizes the cumulative nature of global warming validated the relevance of historical emissions (of the previous century) relevant to today's discussions.

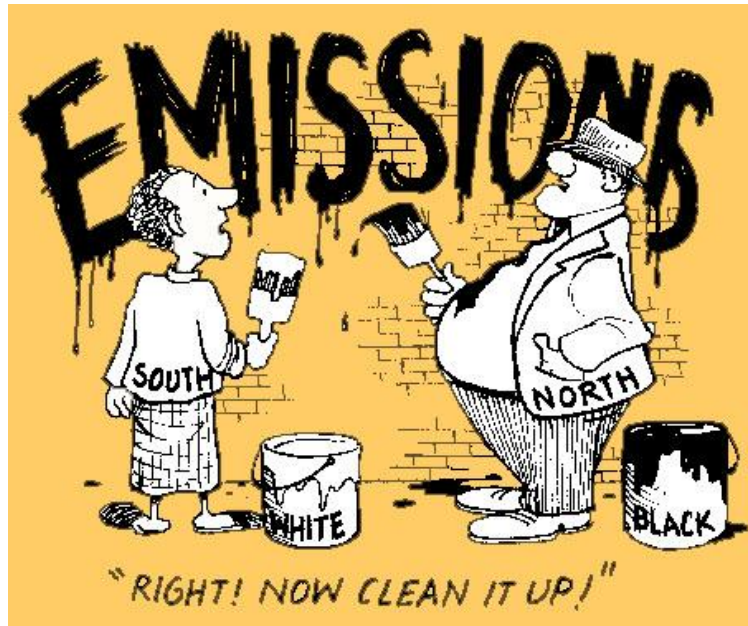


Figure 5: A cartoon representing the unequal burdens on the Global North and South

Source: Center for Science and Environment

A mismatch between causality and projected harm further amplified the differences in cumulative emissions of countries, reinforcing the North-South binary: “People who have created this problem are not going to suffer from this problem, as much as people who have not. So poor are likely to suffer, developing countries are likely to suffer more from the developed ones... Climate change is not the problem created by developing countries” (Interview, Chandra Bhushan, CSE, 1/09). “Different countries have contributed in different proportion to the problem, but ...those countries are most vulnerable which have contributed less. This is the irony. So those who are responsible for creating the problem, are less affected, are less vulnerable” (Interview, TERI official, 12/08). In CSE’s fortnightly magazine Down To Earth (DTE) editorial, Narain went further to claim that India’s constraint “is the making of the rich world.”

The polluter pays principle was seen to be central to environmental justice. “At an international level, environmental justice is Annex I countries stepping up to the plate and taking the lead with dealing with the problem that they created... Since they are responsible for creating carbon stock, they are responsible for taking the lead” (Interview, Ajay Mathur, BEE, 1/09).⁵² Not only did these countries fall short of their UNFCCC commitments of taking mitigative action, and providing support to non-Annex I countries – they refused to even accept accountability for creating the problem (Interviews, Bhushan, CSE, Prabhat Upadhyay, TERI) and consequently an obligation to compensate for damages.

Respondents were furious that international discussions were focusing on the increasing current and future total emissions of India and China at the detriment of forgetting historical emissions. “As far as North is concerned, their whole stand is, that even if we reduce, if developing countries increase, it will negate our emission reduction. Their politics, they are coming from that perspective. ... that even if we reduce, and India and China increases, it will negate the kind of emission reduction that is required will not be achieved” (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09). Several flaws were pointed out in such an approach. Seasoned negotiator Chandrashekhar Dasgupta of TERI pointed out that anthropogenic GHGs have been emitted for a long time with no repercussions. The problem arose due to the excessive generation of GHGs by “some countries since the industrial revolution” (Interview, Dasgupta/TERI, 12/08). Therefore although highly populated India’s total emissions are currently large, “when you look at climate change and what is causing it, we should look at CO₂ stocks in the atmosphere, and not just flows... We should look at the portion of atmospheric space occupied by historical and

current emissions of a country” (Interview, Mauskar, MOEF, 12/08). The Prime Minister’s special envoy on climate change Syam Saran clarified in a press conference in Bonn, Germany, that an emphasis on historical responsibility is “not a demand of developing countries or India, this is something which is incorporated in the UNFCCC itself which recognizes the historical responsibility of developed industrialized countries.”

Furthermore, the mitigative actions of emerging high emitters were deemed insufficient to contain GHG levels at acceptable levels without matching efforts by their more industrialized counterparts. According to Indian economist Arvind Pangariya, because India’s proportion of global emissions were puny compared to the “richer world’s,” “mitigation by India in two or three decades is neither necessary nor sufficient to arrest global warming and its consequences ... the stock of carbon in the atmosphere in two to three decades will continue to be dominated by emissions accumulated over the past century. Therefore, insofar as the impact of human activity on global warming, rains, floods, sea levels and hurricanes in two to three decades is concerned, the die is already cast” (DTE). Several respondents reported a loss of confidence and faith in the declaratory statements of developed countries about taking action if everyone is on board, because of the lethargy exhibited in the past dozen years since global warming science was established. Their sense was that Annex I negotiators used such arguments to persuade emerging economies/emitters to accept more than their fair share of the mitigation burden despite having acknowledged differentiated responsibilities in the past.

Members of CSE came down heavily on the Copenhagen Accord on the grounds that it “rejects the principle of historical responsibility towards climate change” and

consequently principles of equity in burdensharing⁵³: “No longer does the industrialized world need to first reduce emissions and make space for countries such as India to grow. No longer need the rich world pay for our efforts to avoid growth in emissions.” Rather it was seen as a mechanism that would legitimize “the right to pollute” while freezing “inequity in the world for perpetuity” (Sunita Narain, DTE editorial). The NGO was also critical of the Indian government’s support for the controversial agreement: “The Copenhagen Accord that India plans to sign here will instantly forgive industrialized countries’ historical responsibility for climate change, eliminate the distinction between developed and developing countries, prevent effective action to curb global warming, and fatally undermine efforts to renew the Kyoto Protocol. This will be disastrous for the climate, and for India’s most vulnerable communities.” Although India will be one of the top three emitters by 2015, most of my respondents described it as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Discussions of India as an emerging country and its questioned status as a developing country were seen as unjustified (Interview, Sanjay Dube, ICF, 1/09).⁵⁴

Although acknowledging that considerable inequities exist within India and the Global South, the significant differences in material welfare – as suggested by per capita indicators – between developed and developing countries belied the internal heterogeneities, and therefore were considered to be valid units of analysis in discussing environmental justice (Interview, Professor Kamal Chenoy, JNU, 12/08; also Aditi Kapoor, Oxfam India, CAN-SA, 12/09).

Per Capita Equity

The idea of environmental justice as per capita equity in GHG emissions – subsistence or otherwise – was also frequently expressed in the interviews. This usually took the form of a common sense notion that all human beings should have equal access to the earth’s resources, including the global atmospheric commons: “In our view, every inhabitant of planet earth has equal right to atmospheric resources” (Interview, Dasgupta, TERI, 12/08). According to Rajashree Ray of MOEF, climate justice or equity meant per capita equal entitlements to the common atmospheric resource (Interview, 12/08). The concept of equity in the current context couldn’t be totally separate from considerations of historically inequitable distribution of resources: “We consider that the fundamental environmental justice is equal per capita rights of global environmental resources after taking into account the fact of historic asymmetries in the use of these global environmental resources” (Interview, Ghosh/TERI, 12/08). In that sense, some suggested that per capita historical emissions would be a more accurate indicator of comparing differences in emission levels (Interview, Reporter, 12/08). In regards to the impacts of climate change, environmental justice or equity was taken to mean that “everybody is as safe as the other person, or as vulnerable as the other person” (Interview, TERI official, 12/08). This speaks to the subject of capabilities for adaptation to climate change, something that is not easily quantifiable or fully understood (IPCC, 2007, 73).

Per capita equity is consequently more often discussed in terms of access to measurable indicators of human well-being. For Bhushan of CSE, every living human being has a right and every state has the responsibility to ensure the provision of the basic material goals of having three meals a day, better education, health, living till the age of

75 or more, a decent house, decent warm clothes, a mode of transportation, whether public or private. Table 2 provides a comparison between the US and India for some of these amenities and services for the reader's benefit. The differences are indeed striking and clearly unjust, lending strength to Narain's assertion that "every citizen of India has as much right to a car as every citizen of America, where vehicle numbers are obscene: some 800 vehicles for 1,000 people against our measly 7 per 1,000 people." (DTE)⁵⁵

While the right to own a car may be perceived as a dubious right, right to mobility via access to public transportation, or access to electricity are needs that are difficult to argue against. Claiming that over 450 million Indians do not have access to energy services, Ravi Singh of WWF India reasoned that these people will need to have access to affordable energy services. Consequently, India could not accept emission limits when such conditions prevail: "What India can do, what the government has basically said, is that we will not exceed the per capita requirements" (Interview, Singh, WWF India, 12/08). Ray (MOEF) similarly argued that India does not require targets to stay within the 2.5 per capita emissions that was widely considered an acceptable standard. A compilation of several climate modeling studies in India concluded that India's per capita emissions were "expected to be well below those of the developed countries" even if developed countries pursued ambitious mitigation measures and India pursued aggressive GDP growth (Ramesh, in MOEF, 2009, 3).⁵⁶

Table 2: Comparing India with the US

Indicators	India	US
Human Development Index (2010)	Ranked 119 of 169	4 of 169
Population (mid-2010)	1.2 billion	309.6 million
Population living below US \$1.25 and US \$2.00 per day (2005)	41.64 % and 76% respectively	n/a
Population facing 3/10 indicators of deprivation (2008)	55.4 %	n/a
GDP per capita (2008 PPP)	\$3,354	\$46,653
Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (2006)	1.3 tons	19 tons
Motor vehicles per 1000 population (2000-2005)	18	787
Population affected by natural disasters, per year (2009)	55,557 per million	7,322 per million

Source: (Compiled from) Population Reference Bureau World Population Data Sheet and
UNDP Human Development Reports

Per capita entitlements to the atmospheric commons are typically made by aggregating this per capita allotment by country, thus apportioning the global emissions budget among states on the basis of their populations. Greenpeace India came down heavily on such an argument in a 2007 report titled ‘Hiding Behind the Poor’ that revealed significant disparities in per capita emissions within India (Ananthapadmanabhan et al, 2007). The insinuations of the report – that the Indian government was using the low emissions of the country’s poor as a shield – were often met with passionate counterarguments. The Reporter, for instance, pointed out that the hiding-behind-the-poor argument was dishonest if it were employed to evade the underlying reality that comparing the average Indian to the average American yields tremendous inequities in access to resources. So if India is inequitable within, resources to India’s poor should flow from the North rather than from India’s elite. Given stark differences in per capita equity worldwide the fairness of such a demand can hardly be questioned, as long as they are not truly rhetorical and intended to fill the coffers of India’s elite. Another respondent suggested that the ‘hiding behind the poor’ phrase carried an unreasonably negative connotation, since not drawing attention to the low per capita levels of emissions would be unfair to the poor who do not have a voice (Interview, Aditi Kapoor, Oxfam India / CAN-SA, 12/09).

Rights Based Approach to Environmental Justice

India’s Right to Atmospheric Space

Historical responsibility and per capita equity combine to lead to the argument that India, a country with little historical as well as current per capita emissions, has the

ability to claim rights to any remaining allowable use of the atmospheric commons, also referred to as ecological/environmental/atmospheric carbon space during the interviews. Space in this context is seen both in a material context – as a sink for GHGs – as well as in an abstract sense – in the context of activities (eg. economic growth) that are allowable within ecological limits.

Narain/CSE uses the analogy of a cup of water filled to the brim, to explain the concept of atmospheric space as well as contraction and convergence, suggesting that new claimants to the cup can only find room if the earlier occupiers vacate some of the space they wrongfully occupied. With limited atmospheric space remaining to be distributed, she argues that the GHG budget needs to be distributed “equally between nations which have already used up their common atmospheric space and new entrants to economic growth ... so that growth can be shared equally” (DTE). To the extent that GHG emissions are linked to economic growth, capping emissions without fair distribution would place the burden of adjustment squarely on the developing world. Yet it is also true that this space is rapidly shrinking, practically non-existent, if the acceptable carbon budget is indeed 350 ppm, rather than the former figure of 450 ppm. Moreover, the analogy of the cup of water is somewhat imperfect, in the sense that when the acceptable carbon budget is reached, newer emissions do not ‘overflow’ – except in a metaphorical sense to account for the impacts of climate change that will be felt by human and ecological systems – the atmospheric cup does seem to be capable of being filled beyond its brim, notwithstanding the consequences for entities it is linked to. This is one of the unfortunate reasons why short-sighted human-political systems have continued to ignore the warning signs while continuing business-as-usual. If it is indeed

true that there is no space really available, then the question may arise – what are the developing countries – including India – really fighting over?

This is where the idea of contraction becomes important. Not only did India have a right to occupy remaining space, the developed world had an obligation both to retract from that space and to compensate for past overuse. According to Bhushan of CSE:

Therefore when I say it is an issue of environmental justice, I essentially mean that the principle of polluters pay principle, must be central to the whole debate of climate change... because developed world has become rich based on carbon based economy. They've used... far more environmental space than what they're entitled to. So now it is the time they should reduce their emission... there has to be dematerialization in the West. So I think climate debate is very important, the concept of contraction and convergence is very important. It basically tells you that everyone has minimum entitlement. If you have exceeded that entitlement then let's come down, and those who are below it can go up. (Interview, 12/08)

Yet he also acknowledged that short of a “massive revolution” such dematerialization was not forthcoming, leading him to vouch for the more practical middle ground – institutionalized with the Bali Action Plan (BAP) – to attain net emission reductions “by providing financial and technological support, so South doesn't grow dirty like you have.” “So we are not saying that we will follow exactly the same path. But what we are saying is, to follow a different path, we have to be enabled” (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

Ghosh went further to argue that the developed world had usurped global resources to the extent that not enough is left for the others to pursue growth, thus

compromising the capabilities of the less developed world. They therefore need to be held responsible for this harm caused, by creating mechanisms of compensation. Such compensation, it needs to be clarified, is distinctly separate from the notion of aid or charitable giving. For Narain, historical emissions constitute a ‘climate debt’ of industrialized countries to the rest of the world.⁵⁷ Ghosh refrained from using expressions such as climate debt, but acknowledged that “the broad idea is the same.” This debt arises from their encroaching upon the atmospheric commons without restraint: “The tragedy of the atmospheric common[s] has been the lack of rights to this global ecological space” (Narain, DTE). Rights and entitlements to the atmospheric commons for countries are seen as crucial in order to enable clear delineation of future responsibilities to reduce emissions – including for India.

India’s right to the atmospheric commons therefore translates to a right to economic growth that is delinked from emissions,⁵⁸ funded by compensation – in the form of payment of debt – from major (past and present) emitters. This aspect enables the view that the crisis of climate change co-exists with incredible opportunities to change the status quo of the world order, while decarbonizing growth in developing economies and making the transition to alternative energy paradigms. The Indian position on climate negotiations therefore demands that any obligatory mitigation actions demanded of it be matched by a corresponding transfer of financial and technological resources. “We expect funding and technology transfer,” Ray/MOEF said, adding that very little was actually happening in that front. Therefore while a switch to renewable energy was a desirable goal for India (Interview, Ray, MOEF, 12/08), any consequent crises on affordability and accessibility had to be averted. The additional cost of using the

necessary technologies “should be met by Annex I” or “the global community” so that “the price of energy to people shouldn’t change.” (Interview, Mathur, BEE, 1/09) The commonplace assertion that “the earth is under danger, therefore everyone must act!” belies the fact that “to act you need resources. And if you want to act instantaneously these resources do lie in certain societies” (Interview, Reporter, 12/08).

On the basis of a 2009 study examining the GHG mitigation capacity of Indian industry, CSE concluded that “if India gives up its demand for an [equitable] agreement, it will not be able to afford the cost of transition to low carbon growth,” particularly after 2020.⁵⁹ According to Narain of CSE, an equitable agreement would entail transfer of resources using a rights based approach: “It should agree on a fund for adaptation, based not on charity, but the right to development of the poor and the victims of climate change.” Further, an equitable agreement not only “accepts the right to development of developing countries [but] creates a framework to pay for the expensive and unaffordable transition to low-carbon economies of the future.” (DTE)

Environmental Justice as Right to Development

For many of my respondents, as for Narain, the right to atmospheric space was also synonymous with the right to development. While the terms ‘development’ and ‘economic growth’ were often used interchangeably, and ‘development’ itself had multiple connotations, I argue that two distinct arguments are actually being made, as a following section will clarify. Whereas the right to (development as) economic growth is typically attributed to the Indian state, the right to (development as) wellbeing is typically attributed to the average Indian citizen. The attribution is often implicit. In other words,

development is understood in two ways – at an individual level and at the level of the state, as in development of the Indian economy. These are two different things. These two rights – although interrelated – draw upon different aspects of environmental justice, and therefore should be separately examined for conceptual clarity.

According to a member of the Indian Youth for Climate Network (IYCN), the climate debates should be viewed from a “development point of view,” in which the focus of the debates would be “discussing how to bring the countries who are less developed right now at the same level.” The problem today, for him, “is that development itself has become a hindrance [which is] the biggest challenge India faces right now.” In his view, equitable development across the world would be more conducive to viable solutions for climate change. And until India achieved a certain level of development, it could not accept absolute emission reduction targets, as this would compete with more pressing priorities.

The implication of this frequently made argument is that development and emission-generating activities were inherently connected. Further, a direct link was often assumed between the right to development of the Indian state and of the Indian citizen. Drawing on the Indian state’s accountability towards its citizens, several respondents shared the perception of a strong and direct link between the prospects of emission reduction targets for India and the wellbeing of the individual Indian citizen. For instance, Mathur of BEE argued that since the Indian government had an obligation to provide access to affordable energy to all its people, given limited resources and competing priorities, accepting an emission cap would be tantamount to denying Indian citizens this basic right. One way to reduce emissions is to transition to alternative

sources of energy. While this was perceived favorably in theory, available options were seen to be limited and prohibitive in cost, and would impede the government's ability to provide affordable power and other services to the masses.

For instance, if India needed 100-200 billion dollars to produce 20,000 MW solar energy by 2020, Bhushan pondered “do I spend 200 billion dollar on 20,000 megawatts, or do I spend that money on education, on health , on water supply, or even on providing electricity cheaply?” (Interview, CSE, 1/09) Eventually, mitigation is important for India, but not in a way that leads to “diversion of scarce resources from the overriding priority of poverty eradication” (Interview, Dasgupta, TERI, 12/08). Linking these concerns of the state to the individual citizen, one respondent (Reporter) argued that the average Indian citizen who had no role to play in the creation of the problem should not have an obligation to contribute to the solution by compromising his/her right to development. The corollary of this argument is that countries with higher per capita emissions needed to accede space: countries that have reached the minimum per capita allotment “should leave space for others to reach development” (Interview, Ray, MOEF, 12/08). But the per capita emissions approach does not necessarily translate to development at the per capita level except when looking at very narrow indicators. This approach likely translates better to economic growth at the state level. So this assumption that the state's economic growth will inevitably lead to development for its citizens feeds the assumption that development and emissions are inseparable. More research needs to be done to examine these assumptions.

The need for development was considered crucial not only for discussions on mitigation commitments, but for adaptation as well. A few respondents argued that

developing countries should prioritize adaptation rather than mitigation measures because India was a developing country with low per capita income where “huge amount of economic development in terms of human resource development and economic growth ... has yet to occur” (Interview, Mathur, BEE, 1/09). India’s premature focus on mitigation “would leave future generations in our country without any meaningful capacity to adapt to climate change” (Interview, Dasgupta, TERI, 12/08).

India was considered one of the most climate vulnerable countries that did not possess the capacity/capabilities required for mitigation. India’s vulnerability was understood not simply in biophysical terms, but this combined with socioeconomic capabilities, compromised due to widespread poverty. “Rapid and sustained economic and sustainable development” was seen as the only way to enhance basic capabilities as well as climate adaptation. Such “development must have priority not only for poverty eradication, but because it is essential for the purpose of building up adaptive capacity” (Interview, Dasgupta, TERI, 12/08). Infrastructure development was considered crucial for developing countries, where infrastructure is “either lacking or flimsy and undeveloped.” Such infrastructure development was deemed necessary to build the capabilities of states to withstand the impacts of climate change.

Consequently, there was “no question of trade off between climate change and development for a developing country” (Interview, Dasgupta, TERI, 12/08). Development was the “overriding priority” (Interview, Ray, MOEF, 12/08) for developing countries, as validated by UNFCCC, even to the point of superseding climate change considerations: “Climate change considerations as far as developing countries are concerned, are subordinate, to the imperative of development and poverty eradication”

(Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08). If the common but differentiated responsibility principle of the UNFCCC were abandoned, “it would be a disaster” because the “net effect would be to freeze current distribution of global wealth to current levels.” This would “condemn developing countries to current levels of poverty, misery and deprivation.” (Interview, Mauskar, MOEF, 12/08). According to Shirish Sinha of WWF India, “Climate change or no climate change, India needs to follow a development path where [there is] growth, and make life better for citizens!” (Interview, 12/08)

Characterizing India as “a very new country, since Independence, in achieving level of development,” Bhoopinder Bali of WWF India also indicated that it was preposterous that India be asked to accept emission limits, given the fact that Annex I countries have not been able to meet their Kyoto targets, and “no way should or will India” commit to such limits (Interview, 12/08). Also reinforcing India’s impetus to pursue development, an anonymous IYCN member said: “You know, like it or not we’re gonna develop,” adding that not supporting development is at the moment tantamount to being anti-nationalist. But he also acknowledged that there was no clear definition of what development meant: “Does development meant richer, more companies, industries coming up, or does development mean the poor guy getting food? You know, that’s a very interesting question that needs answers.” (Interview, 1/09)

Analyzing Perceptions of Development

Given the apparent emphasis on the right-to-development approach to justice, what exactly respondents meant when they referred to the elusive/broad concept of ‘development’ becomes an important question. The purpose of my emphasis on analyzing

perceptions of development is to facilitate an examination of the oft-made linkage assumptions described earlier.

Development for basic needs

Many of my respondents expressed a strong conviction that the Indian government had a responsibility to provide a decent standard of living to its citizens, for which development was a prerequisite. For my respondents, often this took the form of poverty alleviation, per capita income/GDP, welfare measures/social infrastructure, or provision of basic services or facilities. These basic amenities included food, drinking water, education, health care, shelter, roads, transportation (public or private), electricity and modern fuels. The lack of access to these amenities was seen as the greatest injustice (Interview, Mathur, BEE, 1/09). These amenities in turn were considered development indicators that helped determine “a level of development which is the essential and the basic minimum for every human to live in dignity” (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09).

Responding to post-developmental arguments, he added: “I think those who try and romanticize poverty have [a] lot of food in their stomach. Then only you can romanticize poverty. And so you can sit in Cambridge and Oxford and romanticize poverty. So I believe there is certain material goal, which is about meeting the basic necessity.”⁶⁰ Respondents were sure to point out that the afore-mentioned basic amenities were taken for granted in developed countries. Yet they would emphasize that India’s pursuit of development should not be taken in a teleological sense of following the Western model of development. Rather, “every country can decide what its development

goals are... It's not that [India] is trying to be like the West. Not at all" (Interview, Professor Sangita Bansal, JNU, 12/08).

It was widely believed that a large part of the Indian population lacked access to these basic facilities, despite the high growth rates and competitiveness in certain sectors. A certain degree of energy consumption and GHG generation was considered inevitable in order to meet these needs. As an anonymous TERI official argued, "if India pursues development, emissions are bound to increase." But like many others, he was confident that India's per capita emissions would not exceed those of developed countries, leading to the conclusion that India need not take on binding commitments. A direct connection was therefore made between the subject of emission targets for India and the government's duty to meet the basic needs of its citizens: "What India and China [are] trying to do is improve the quality of life of the people!" (Interview, Sinha, WWF, 12/08). The prospect of emission caps was therefore seen by most respondents as premature and threatening to the pursuit of this goal. By linking prospects for emission targets for the state to the wellbeing of the individual citizen, my respondents were 'jumping scale' – a practice of making political claims by switching between levels (Smith, 1993, in Brown and Purcell, 2005) that I elaborated on in Chapter II.

Economic growth and industrialization

Economic growth was seen both as a means to an end and an end for India. On one hand, it was seen as a precondition to achieving the country's goals of meeting the basic needs of its citizens. On the other, it was also defended as a valid right on its own, necessary for economic equalization between states.

One of the striking aspects about considerations of development that emerged from most of the interviews was support for India's right to a neoliberal development paradigm based on economic growth, even from environmental activists that typically are stringent critics of the government.⁶¹ Many sought to distinguish India's aspirations from those pursued by industrialized countries. India wished to pursue 'leap-frog development,' aided by the developed world. While the need to delink emissions from economic growth or to pursue a low carbon growth path – facilitated by financial and technological transfers – was frequently emphasized, industrial growth was often assumed to be a precondition for alleviating poverty and meeting basic needs for the poorest, and rarely were they seen to be competing interests. One could sense an element of resignation to the neoliberal development paradigm:

For decades, we have been lectured to, by the multilateral financial institutions, about growth being the necessary precondition for poverty alleviation... If we have to put curbs on GHG emissions given that at present we don't have clean technologies that are anywhere close to the costs and the scale of fossil fuels, it means that we are clamping down on our energy use and thereby our economic growth. And in that circumstance, it is not possible for us to alleviate poverty in our countries (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08).

Economic growth was thus deemed a necessary precursor to addressing widespread poverty and meeting basic needs in India. Ray of MOEF went further in sharing his view that environmental justice in a domestic context was the "eradication of poverty through industrialization, education and domestic energy consumption."

(Interview, 12/08) He equated these activities with pursuit of a level of development required to serve basic needs.

Environmental NGOs seemed to take a critical realist approach to environment and development. Despite locking horns in domestic affairs, their views on global climate politics converged with that of the state: “climate change is intimately related to economic growth... no country has been able to de-link its growth from the growth of emissions” (Narain, DTE). When even wealthier countries hadn’t been able to decarbonize their economies, it was incredulous to expect that a country such as India where half of the rural population did not have access to electricity, would be able to do so (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09). Placing economic growth in comparative perspective, Ghosh of TERI argued: “All that we’re saying is, that just as [industrialized countries] did not face constraints to their growth, we must not face constraints to our growth.” Not too surprisingly, this line of argument fits well with industry interests. An industry representative argued that India should not take commitments because the stakes for India are very high – taking limits would impose severe cuts to industry: “We are a growing economy, industry does not want set back on economic growth.” (Interview, FICCI official, 12/08)

The National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) was similarly explicit about scale jumping, i.e. establishing a clear link between national economic growth and social wellbeing: “Maintaining a high growth rate is essential for increasing living standards of the vast majority of our people and reducing their vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.” (PMCCC, 2008, 2) The report goes on to argue that “large-scale investment of resources in infrastructure, technology and access to energy” will be

required to meet this goal. Further, “only rapid and sustainable development can generate the required financial, technological and human resources” required for climate adaptation (PMCCC, 2008, 13). Yet as scholars have pointed out, the association between economic growth and social wellbeing is often an erroneous one (Bidwai, 2010; Lele, 1991; Dreze and Sen, 2002), and that delinking development from industrialization is critical to achieve social and ecological justice (Salleh, 2011; Shiva, 2008).

Ecological modernization

While many respondents emphasized the need to pursue a low-carbon growth model of sustainable development rather than the path of development taken by developed countries, it was clear that the approach to sustainability was defined by a faith in ‘ecological modernization’ (Hajer, 1995), whereby the emphasis on economic growth did not have to change.

MOEF official Ray explained that India had no desire to pursue aggressive development, and that it was intent on utilizing lessons learned by developed countries and pursuing a responsible path of sustainable development. He opined: “what you need is balanced development with environmental objectives in place.” (Interview, 12/08) Such balance would be achieved by increasing the pie of solar and other alternative energy forms and lowering the use of coal, or using coal more efficiently. A Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) consultant who was interviewed under conditions of anonymity similarly applauded India’s efforts to reduce dependence on coal⁶² by investing in wind, solar and nuclear energy, lamenting that technologies such as integrated gasification and carbon sequestration storage were too expensive. Shifting to

“a greener economy” with a focus on “renewable and green forms of energy such as solar panels” was important to IYCN member as well. Energy efficiency and reducing the environmental impact of energy use were important for Mathur of BEE. Greenpeace India’s focus was also geared around fuel efficiency, including a successful 2005 campaign seeking to replace bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs. MOEF official Mauskar similarly emphasized energy efficiency measures, and research and development of renewable energy that could be undertaken without diverting resources from development priorities. He added that emerging economies such as India were willing to grow sustainably and efficiently, as long as technologies and finance are made available by the developed world.

Ecological modernization therefore emerged as the key approach to minimizing negative environmental outcomes of development. Development tended to be necessarily associated with economic growth or provision of basic needs, and both were linked to the production of GHG emissions. Reduction in emissions was therefore conceptualized predominantly in terms of energy efficiency or technological innovations. Yet as Salleh (2011, 25) argues, an ecological modernist vision of environmental reform is “not at all that different materially from the industrial capitalism that it seeks to correct,” and that it primarily serves the interests of the transnational ruling and middle classes, leaving out the interests of the industrial meta-class comprising of peasants, indigenous communities and women care-givers. Further, she adds that the assumption that technological solutions can effectively address ecological problems is “a problematic intellectual leap.”

Critical views

To be sure there were voices in India – some of which emerged in my interviews – that sought to challenge the dominant discourse on development, or to suggest alternatives. Typically, the government was critiqued for pursuing a path of development that was ecologically unsustainable and socially inequitable, in spite of professing a commitment to sustainable development in theory. These critical views might constitute a ‘critical realist’ perspective, a fourth category in Dubash’s (2009) classification, reinforced by Vihma (2011). To generalize, these arose from individuals who understand the ongoing climate discourses in the domestic and international fora and are in support of taken voluntary mitigative action, but are not necessarily in positions of power to directly influence policy change. They can be said to inhabit the margins of climate-policy making in India.

Shiva (2008, 40) has been a stringent critic of discourses that emphasize growth and industrialization as a precondition for addressing poverty. Denouncing this as a reductive, mechanistic and self-serving paradigm pushed by corporate interests in the South, she argues such a path necessarily impoverishes people and nature. She has also been critical of the Indian position on climate mitigation, claiming that “India is hiding ostrich-like in the sand.” Rather than emulate a nonsustainable industrial-capitalist development paradigm that is necessarily inequitable and condones short-sighted solutions to climate change, she advocates for a move towards holistic development enabled by self-organized and decentralized economies. She suggests that corporate alliances between the North and the South have complicated the differences between them, such that the new divide is between corporations and vulnerable communities both

in the North and South. A paradigm of equity that posits the North's overconsumption of resources and energy as the model to be emulated by the South for her is a non sequitur.

Several respondents were similarly critical of the Indian government's approach to development. JNU Professor Chenoy, who had been part of the anti-dam movement, critiqued the Indian government's neoliberal approach to development as both ecologically unsustainable and unkind to vulnerable populations. Characterizing India as a country that is pursuing rampant growth at the expense of the environment, he suggested that the government would pay lip service to the idea of sustainable development, but was actually "vigorously bound to an unsustainable growth pattern" and was "essentially aping itself on big capitalist governments" such as the US on their argument that growth is inevitable. Further, India's investments in arms and nuclear weapons were not "signs of a country which wants to go into sustainable growth at all" but rather of one that has ambitions to be "a great power." He critiqued Indian diplomats for the "mismatch between what they say they're going to do and what they actually do."

Another respondent believed that the Indian government is so beholden to the big corporate players – Tata, Jindal, Mittal and the like⁶³ – that they are bound by their short-term vision of profits here and now (Interview, Greenpeace India official, 12/08). According to Bidwai (2010), India has succumbed to "a horrible criminal crony capitalism, where the government gives hundreds of billions in tax write-offs to companies but is very reluctant to spend anything on health and social welfare." For an anonymous TERI official, lack of a holistic policy exhibiting genuine complementarity in the country's economic and environmental policies was to blame for why the rhetoric of sustainable development was not being translated into action.

A few respondents invoked Gandhi in critiquing the currently dominant approach to development in India, making a distinction between “basic necessity which can be fulfilled for everyone” and large scale luxury that necessarily deprives underserved populations from access to environmental or economic resources (Interview, Bhushan, CSE, 1/09). Gandhi’s vision of development emphasized trusteeship, cottage industries, slow evolution, sharing, and was “far more sustainable, than other paths of industrial revolution kind” (Interview, anonymous JNU Professor, 12/08). He suggested that India was pursuing easier options under pressure to seek quick results in raising per capita income and standards of living. Consequently, there has been rapid economic growth, increases in production and consumption, and change in lifestyles and overall material progress. But he argues that all this has happened at the cost of uneven and unsustainable development. “And sometimes, implications to environment and how it is changing your climate are not really a priority for any government which is on a fast pace.” Critiquing the ‘catching-up model of development’ (Mies, 1999) being pursued by developing countries, he argued for a “far more open minded discussion on what is development, what is sustainable development”⁶⁴ (Interview, anonymous JNU Professor, 12/08).

While most respondents (including a few of the above) concurred with the official Indian position of rejecting absolute GHG reduction targets for India in the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol, a select few had a different, more critical view. They suggested that India would benefit from appropriate emission caps as they would force industry to pursue a more ecologically benign path to development, and would also strengthen India’s moral position when critiquing the inaction of Western countries. The politically populist idea of per capita rights to emissions was thought to be inadequate in light of

India's environmental indicators. The CDM consultant thought "developing countries [were] winning the wrong race" by overtaking the developed world in total emissions. These responses reflect emerging calls from climate justice activists, particularly from the meta-industrial class as Salleh (2011) puts it, that seek to replace the environmentally untenable model of development with eco-centric ones.

CSE's Narain similarly critiqued India's GHG intensity targets as a low-hanging, low-cost option. Although elsewhere professing India's right to development and atmospheric space, Narain also urged India and the world to "re-invent what it means by growth and development" and "seriously rethink and rework its economic model for the future." This was necessary because "options for serious emissions reduction are limited in the industrial model we belong to or want to inherit." Cautioning against the allure of simple techno-fixes and energy efficiency measures in combating climate change, she argues what is needed for the transition to a low-carbon economy is changes in behavior and lifestyles, and redistribution of economic and ecological space at a global scale, such as by limiting and taxing carbon dioxide emissions from "cars of the rich."

Questioning fundamental assumptions about growth, she argued that asking what leads to happiness, employment and wellbeing for everyone would initiate a shift beyond GDP as the primary indicator for assessing wellbeing. Like Shiva (2008), she advocated for a move away from the economic growth model of development that is focused on industry and services, and towards a more decentralized small scale, livelihood security approach to development. This would require "strengthening participatory democracy and ensuring local communities' rights over their resources, and investing in infrastructure for local livelihoods." To her, ensuring a sustainable productivity of natural

resources for local people is a greater priority area than the prevailing ‘green’ rhetoric that emphasizes low-carbon growth through renewable energy. A revised strategy for development that entails investments in decentralized water and energy systems would be ecologically prudent and socially equitable, and would create more climate-secure and less economically vulnerable communities.

Narain’s remarks concerning India’s right to development are seemingly contradictory. While critiquing the ‘old economy’ paradigm of development India is set to follow, she also forcefully argues for the importance of sharing growth and ecological space, and consequently India’s right to increase emissions: “the problem is the world has decided it will not share growth: the rich nations will not reduce and make space for late entrants such as India to first emit and then clean up.” Although critiquing the techno-fix approach to combating climate change, she places considerable faith in leap-frogging “to a low carbon economy, using high-end and emerging technologies.” The emphasis on India’s right to growth while recognizing the implausibility of the economic growth model of development is puzzling. Perhaps she means that while the world needs to make the transition to the ‘new economy,’ the burden of this difficult transition should not fall on the developing world, while the industrialized world continues to have its cake and eat it too: “India needs the ecological space to grow. Simultaneously, the world also needs to reinvent its growth model to be low-carbon. But all this must be understood in terms of cost to the economy.” So her argument seems to be that while in an ideal world, all countries – including India – would wean themselves off a fossil-fuel based economy, in the less-than-ideal world we live in with stark contrasts in resource use, India’s citizens

have as much a right to limited resources – in this case atmospheric space – as any other country.

Critical but contradictory and conflicted responses on India's responsibility to mitigate

Many responses to the question of whether India should take on specific mitigation commitments were quite ambiguous. The few respondents who started to say that given the gravity of the situation, perhaps all countries – developed or otherwise – should pitch in, typically changed their tone later as the conversation progressed, and concluded that it would be unjust to impose emission reduction targets on India at this time. The Reporter who suggested that the prospect of climate catastrophe necessitates all countries to take action later suggested that countries with weaker economies could not act even if they wanted to, which is why financial and technological assistance from the North was crucial. The IYCN member who had started out pointing to the futility of North-South debates in the context of impending climate calamity, and the common responsibility all countries had to mitigate climate change, hesitated to declare that all countries must accept emission targets, on the grounds that North and South have differential mitigation capacity. The Greenpeace India official had likewise argued that given the nature of the climate crisis, “it is ethically wrong to debate which country should take which amount of reductions. It should be each and every country’s involvement.” Despite denouncing the right-to-emissions argument as elitist, made by those in India who are cushioned from the immediate impacts of climate change, he also thought specific levels should depend on the socioeconomic conditions of the country. The anonymous TERI official helpfully explained that while an immediate reaction to the

acknowledgement of the climate crisis may be that everybody should take responsibility, “at a much nuanced level, I’m not very sure if India should take or not. Because then what would happen [is] that when you take reduction targets, then you will have to go for advanced technologies. But you don’t have those technologies, so that could disturb the whole macro-economic balance.” Therefore although India’s vulnerability to climate change is significant and it might seem logical to expect India to mitigate, “whether it can do it or not or under what conditions is a different and most important question. I think these are unanswered questions.” (Interview, anonymous TERI official, 12/08)

Even after critiquing the Indian government for its reactive stance in climate negotiations, and for eschewing responsibility for growing total emissions by emphasizing per capita emissions, the CDM consultant couldn’t help but acknowledge that given the socioeconomic context of India, to ask India to accept mitigation targets was unfair, and that India couldn’t afford the state-of-the-art technologies⁶⁵ required to cut emissions. Without financial and technology transfers, “how can a country like India, which has to feed such a big mass of population, be able to compromise on the development?” Yet she also argued that countries should at least adopt the more affordable emission reduction strategies for the avoidance of local impacts of climate change. “That’s why, I have divided opinion on this, I don’t have like one opinion... I could look from this side and that side.” Eventually on the question of whether India should take mitigation responsibility, there is simply no clear non-ambiguous answer from anyone interviewed, unless it was an emphatic no.

This ambiguity and complexity arises from the complex interlinkages between development at the individual and state scales as suggested before. Earlier I discussed

capabilities of individuals and communities to withstand the consequences of climate change and how this was linked to the country's responsibility to enhance those capabilities. But the frequently repeated emissions-economy linkage also points to the strong conviction that countries – not only individuals or societies – have (or not) capabilities to mitigate GHG emissions. By this token, arguments for strengthening the adaptive capacity of the Indian state via infrastructure development may not necessarily be a case of scale jumping.

While India's responsibility to mitigate is often countered on account of the need to cater to the basic capabilities of the Indian masses as well as to the capabilities of the climate vulnerable, these are not the only bases on which mitigation requirements for India are rejected. Whether suggested as a means to provide development for the masses or as an end in itself, the need to pursue industrialization and economic growth is also unmistakably advanced. It is for this latter need that emission targets seem to matter. I have trouble believing that centralized large scale industrialization geared towards economic growth is a necessary condition for catering to basic capabilities connected to food and livelihood security. However, while from an ecological sustainability perspective, it might be difficult to defend India's right to economic growth and emissions, from an economic justice perspective at an international level, it is not.⁶⁶ As Bhushan of CSE suggested, climate change negotiations are for some motivated more by economic than environmental concerns, which is why many of respondents were suspicious of the arguments coming from Northern negotiators and even environmentalists. So when not considering the environmental implications of this argument, the Indian stance on climate negotiations seems to be justified on the grounds

of economic justice vis-à-vis the Global North. However, we certainly do not need to stop at the international level.

Domestic Implications of International Environmental Justice Argument

Even if environmental justice were understood simply as economic justice in the backdrop of an environmental conflict, an insistence on consistency across scales renders it amenable to ecological justice. As the 2007 GreenPeace report ‘Hiding behind the poor’ suggested, ‘climate injustice’ could be found within India just as it was happening at a global scale (Ananthapadmanabhan et al, 2007). However, the topic of inequities within India was typically brushed off as an issue of national sovereignty that would be dealt with internally. “Equity within India is a national policy matter, not a multinational matter... These constraints should be separate from climate negotiations” one MOEF official told me. Likewise, most of my respondents had nothing to say about how India was different from other countries in the Global South and what that meant for mitigation responsibility for India. When asked about India’s status as an ‘emerging economy,’ the knee-jerk reaction was to defensively point to various statistics to justify why India was a developing country, appealing to statistics such as average per capita income. Yet if the government’s position on not accepting emission limits is based on relatively low per capita emissions, whether the benefits that accrue from not accepting emission limits go to the country’s poor or its elite is certainly a valid question. Bidwai (2010) thought India’s right to development argument was hypocritical as the economic growth it has already experienced has not translated to the improvement of quality of life or standards of living at a wide scale. As Williams and Mawdsley (2006, 663) also showed, ample

instances of environmental injustices exist within India, with respect to distribution, participation as well as recognition. They pointed out that the Indian state “remains a key actor in producing India’s geography of environmental justice in distributional terms.”

Under condition of anonymity, the CDM consultant heavily criticized India’s focus on per capita equity and demands for international environmental justice suggesting that India had not earned the right to make such a claim: “if India is bragging about the low per capita emission, it has to do something for the people who are carrying that burden of emissions... Per capita emissions will make sense only when per capita revenue will also be distributed.” Since these people are also more vulnerable to droughts, floods and landslides that are intensified by climate change, she thought it ironic that they were getting nothing out of the KP’s flexible mechanisms such as CDM of which India is a prominent beneficiary. She added “the same argument that India or China is having against the developed countries – that we are not responsible for the climate change problems that are there, it is because of you guys emitting so much emissions during your industrial revolution – same thing is happening in their backyard. These poor people are not responsible for the industrial developments that are happening in India.” The gist of her argument is that India or any other country cannot argue for environmental or climate justice in an international context, if it is not applying similar principles of environmental or climate justice within its domestic context. In her view, India has not catered to internal environmental justice concerns to be able to make this argument in an international context.

In his critique of the Indian government’s development policies, the anonymous TERI official attributed the marginalization of vulnerable populations to institutional

paradigms dictated by IMF conditionalities, WTO and World Bank requirements.⁶⁷

However, he believes climate change has provided an opportunity to bring the concerns and wellbeing of these vulnerable populations at the forefront of the negotiations, as the resilience and adaptive capacity of vulnerable populations have entered the dominant climate discourse. Consequently he believes “the biggest opportunity that climate change has provided is to reform, revitalize the overall development agenda” by placing people at the center, an approach that was sorely lacking in the WTO and other international negotiations. On the other hand, this optimism is countered by the observation that countries such as India and China have been limited in their imagination and approach to negotiations by an exclusive focus on global initiatives and global financial mechanisms, with little discussion of domestic policy design. While acknowledging the measures taken, he cautions that “the same issues that are being raised at international arena are not getting same attention or same emphasis at domestic level.” (Interview, TERI official, 12/09)

Chandra Bhushan of CSE had a different take on the matter. For him challenging the status quo internationally was a precondition to addressing basic needs in India. He acknowledged that there are equity issues within India in a similar manner as in an international context: “You have rich in India, who have access to electricity, who have access to oil, and they have car and they fly, they have all the amenities and you have poor of India who don’t have even access to electricity.” He argued that the consequences of reduction commitments for India would be borne by India’s poor by foregoing their access to electricity, as India’s rich were not going to reduce their emissions, and because alternative energy was either politically or financially untenable: “if India today takes a

commitment, without any support to provide energy to its poor, the poor will remain in the stone age, that's our major concern." Therefore "I think if you freeze emission right now, in India, ... you freeze inequity not only internationally but even within the country." The approach here is therefore to accept as a given domestic inequities, but to seek redress through challenging inequities at a global scale. The implication is that if the needs of India's poor are to be met, the responsibility to enable this does not belong to India's rich but to other countries where these basic needs have largely been met.

While this seems like a fair assessment, it is impossible for an outsider advocating for international equity to not be concerned about domestic equity, for as Bidwai (2010, 7) argues, "if we are to come up with a solution that is acceptable for as many people as possible, we need an approach that embraces equity internationally and domestically." Shiva (2008, 45) similarly argues that equity has to be defined "on the same ecological parameters locally and globally." Many of my respondents, however, reasoned that domestic equity issues were sovereign matters beyond the purview of international negotiations and debates, and that policies and programs were already in place to address such issues. While acknowledging domestic inequities, respondents argued that this cannot be used to oppose measures to reduce inequities within states (eg. Reporter), but also that such inequities are not unique to India: "India has a much lower level of inequality, income inequality and consumption inequality than the United States has" (Interview, Ghosh, TERI, 12/08). Yet, it is a valid question to ask how a government whose rationale for claims to a right to the atmospheric commons and the right to grow is based at least in part on low per capita emissions could justifiably evade questions of inequities in emission levels between different socioeconomic levels in India.

The IYCN member's response was that while the Greenpeace report had some truth to its assertions, the government had no obligation to address such questions if it didn't want to, and especially if they don't come from within the country, as governments are accountable to their constituents and not to others. Following this logic, it is then up to the Indian citizens to hold the government accountable to their 'scale jumping' in climate politics, such that the benefits that accrue to the state from not accepting emission targets necessarily be rescaled to the per capita level. Chenoy of JNU held a different view, arguing that the debate on emission responsibilities should be an international topic of discussion and that individual states should adhere to international standards that ensue. However, he also added that in practice when powerful countries such as the US do not follow such an ethic, other countries are forced to defend their sovereign interests as well.

Eventually, what emerges as the key principle to guide considerations of justice in climate politics is consistency (Interview, anonymous TERI official, 12/08). He was troubled by how the popularity of the term 'equity' in international negotiations was not being carried over to the domestic environmental and economic policy arenas – where the focus tended to be more on industry and growth than on the vulnerable people. “This kind of reversal I don't think is right... The key to the ethical approach to any subject is consistency, at every rate.” He argued that while India's rationale for refusing reduction commitments rested on the need to alleviate poverty, whether the development policies are designed to do so is an unanswered question.

Conclusion: The Promise of Environmental Justice – Scaling Up, Scaling Down

My research indicates that the conceptualization of environmental justice in the context of climate change among the Indian intelligentsia appears to be primarily one of economic justice between industrialized countries and the rest in terms of their use of the atmosphere as a sink for greenhouse gases. The implication is that ensuring equity in economic prosperity within states is key to strengthening countries' capacities to mitigate and adapt to climate change. However, a contradiction emerges when we consider that India's economic prosperity has not translated directly to increased well-being of its marginalized and underserved populations. Therefore economic justice between states may not be sufficient – although necessary⁶⁸ – in strengthening India's capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The climate crisis therefore not only provides an opportunity to challenge the status quo at the international scale but at local and regional (and perhaps other) scales as well. It seems to be sending a sign that inequities in the social arena are not conducive to ecological sustainability. To take advantage of this opportunity-in-crisis though, the politics of scale needs to be laid bare, and those who use scale jumping as a strategy to maximize benefits for the state need to be held accountable for rescaling benefits to the level of the individual citizen.

The right-to-development approach to EJ that is central to the justice claims of the Indian state is not problematic in itself, but the rendering of multiple meanings of development lends this approach to critical scrutiny. If environmental justice were to be more than economic justice in relation to use of the environment as a resource, and if it were to encompass ecological considerations, we are forced to reconsider what we mean by development. Can a right-to-development approach to EJ be persuasive if the

development being sought weren't socially just and ecologically sustainable? Perhaps not. Likewise, if the economic justice argument is not consistent across different scales, it would not be convincing. India's claim for justice at the international scale would be more convincing if it were willing to seriously consider a similar argument in the regional (within Global South) and domestic contexts, and if it shows a desire to wean itself from an industrial model of development that is necessarily centralized, large-scale and based on perpetual growth. The capabilities approach to development and EJ outlined in the introduction seems promising in this regard, as it takes into account social resilience to climate change, and necessitates an empowered public in defining what development or climate resilience means to communities. It further enables a discussion of development that is inclusive of ecological resilience of communities. The capabilities approach therefore seems compatible with the ideas of some of the non-mainstream perspectives emerging from Indian civil society.

To say this is not to deny the continued relevance of the historical responsibility and per capita equity arguments outlined in the KP. Acknowledging the obligations that arise from accepting historical responsibility and inordinately high per capita emissions of countries that have already made significant contributions to global warming (Athanasίου, 2010; Ziser and Sze, 2007) – is a necessary part of addressing the blatant differences in the living standards of people in the world – and for creating mechanisms that cater to the needs of those who will be most severely affected by climate change, and that are not motivated by the illusion of charitable giving (Caney, 2006). The linkage between emissions targets for countries and capabilities of individuals and communities within is a complex one, and needs to account for basic capabilities including energy

needs, as well as the multiple dimensions of adaptation needs. These assessments are relevant not only for emerging economies but for all countries, including powerful industrialized states, and could form the basis for determining financial accountability for mitigation and adaptation (Holland, 2008).

Salleh (2011, 24) suggests that the climate crisis “demands a new cultural reflexivity from those classes, races and genders that benefit from the hegemony of the [Global] North.” Her intent with this suggestion seems to be to critique neoliberal market solutions to climate change. At the same time, it is also important for scholars based in the Global North to extend this introspection and ask whether our critique of the South’s much aligned ‘dreams of development’ might make us complicit in the maintenance of the status quo. For while it is easy to critique other people’s right to luxury emissions, it is nonetheless true that we continue to enjoy those luxuries ourselves, relatively free from similar scrutiny. See Figure 6 for an illustration of this point.

This study has provided me with an opportunity to use India’s claims to critique domestic environmental injustices in India. Likewise, a self-reflexive approach leads me to extend this argument and bring the focus back to the already industrialized world that should undoubtedly carry the greater burden for mitigating climate change. It also leads me to be cognizant of some of the material benefits of residing in the Global North that I – as an immigrant from a Global South location – appreciate and therefore sympathetic to the Southern elite’s desires to pursue them. These considerations are important in addressing some of the stringent anti-developmental or post-developmental critiques of global climate politics. Such a self-reflexive approach also creates opportunities to redefine development by delinking it from industrialization not only in the Global South

but in the Global North as well. In the absence of this discussion, a genuine contraction and convergence in the widely disproportionate resource use and capabilities does not seem forthcoming.

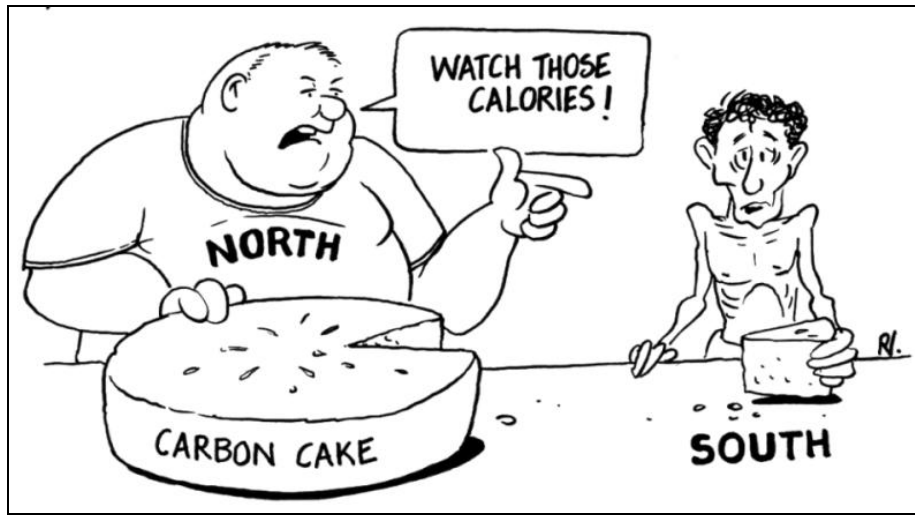


Figure 6: A cartoon representing the practice of un-reflexive and paternalistic criticism of the South by the North

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

This dissertation showed the enduring influence of the North-South imaginaries in contemporary climate politics, despite scholarly critique of these categories being an inaccurate portrayal of global inequality. I have argued that a constructivist perspective allows us to better understand their abiding power. In the case of India's climate politics, North-South imaginaries strongly shape the conceptualization of what a just climate agreement would constitute. I have demonstrated this by showing how the understanding of environmental justice among climate policy-making circles in India closely mirrors the articulation of international environmental justice along the North-South divide. I push this concept a bit further in my dissertation to argue that claims for North-South environmental justice should be matched by efforts to pursue distributive justice within domestic contexts. My research indicates that this has not been the case so far. One of the key reasons why this is the case is that the conceptualization of environmental justice in the context of climate change among the Indian intelligentsia appears to be one of economic justice between states of the North and South. There is an assumption inherent in this conception that if countries pursue economic growth and industrialization, the benefits will trickle down to the citizens, thus making their lives better. I argue that an approach to development that emphasizes the capabilities of individuals and communities would be more compatible with the pursuit of justice at multiple scales, not just international. However, I also argue that India's efforts to challenge North-South economic inequities is also valid in its own right – particularly in light of the unaddressed

historical responsibilities of Annex I countries – and can best be understood as a formerly colonized country’s resistance to dominance by neocolonial powers.

My empirical research confirmed my conceptualization of the triple injustices of climate change from a distributive justice standpoint: inequality in problem creation, in facing the consequences of the problem, and in the capacity to deal with the problem. These evident injustices, coupled with the allegedly heightened bargaining power of developing countries – due to the global nature of atmospheric environmental problems such as ozone thinning and global climate change – enable a discourse that challenges longstanding inequities in access to resources, or levels of development in other words. Drawing upon work in posthumanist political ecology, I have argued that the climate crisis has emboldened members of the Global South to US dominance in global negotiations. On one hand, the discourses of challenging the North-South status quo, and of emphasizing the historical responsibility of the Global North for ecological crises reflects that the climate crisis is creating conditions for the North-South discourse of the NIEO era to reemerge. On the other hand, these national discourses create an opportunity for highlighting domestic environmental injustices, as the 2007 Greenpeace India report ‘Hiding behind the poor’ has done. Thus I believe that the North-South EJ discourse does not necessarily conflict with a subaltern politics in the Global South.

The climate crisis thus creates opportunities for marginalized constituents at multiple scales to demand distributive justice. Since India’s position on climate change of not accepting a cap on emissions is based in part on a per capita equity argument, the state can therefore be held accountable to its poorest citizens on whose behalf such an argument is made. On the other hand, the climate crisis also enables entrenched powers to

reinscribe the unequal status quo. This can be seen in global politics where responsibilities to mitigate climate change are thrust upon those states that have not historically contributed to the problem. India's climate politics can be seen as a resistance to such efforts.

Despite acknowledging the gravity of the climate crisis, most Indian officials argued that India's obligation to undertake mitigation measures were not the same as those of Annex I countries. This does not translate to a license to set aside responsibility to mitigate climate change, as India has made considerable voluntary commitments to mitigate domestically. However, it continues to be adamant about not accepting absolute mitigation targets at the present time claiming it has more pressing priorities, including adapting to climate change. This position might seem confusing and contradictory to a casual observer. I have therefore argued that India's position in climate negotiations cannot be fully understood unless viewed from a postcolonial perspective – a perspective that recognizes that European colonialism has fundamentally shaped the contemporary world order in the global political economy. The abiding power of the North-South imaginaries is a result of this colonial legacy, as some scholars have rightly pointed out.

The increasing economic and political clout of some countries that continue to self-identify as developing can be seen as an effort to destabilize the North-South hierarchy. This observation contradicts some aspects of postcolonial theory that determine binaries such as North-South and core-periphery to be necessarily derogatory to the latter half of the binary. I have argued that not everyone in the Global South sees such an identity as insulting. Quite the contrary. Self-identification as a 'developing' country helped my respondents make the case that justice was due to them. Affiliation

with the Global South along a North-South binary was therefore seen as empowering rather than insulting. The emphasis on reinforcing the North-South binary by preserving the Annex I/non-Annex I distinction in the climate regime at the face of efforts to differentiate non-Annex I can be seen as a ‘strategic essentialism’ whereby the unity of the Global South is seen as crucial for effective opposition to the hegemony of the most economically powerful countries. The imaginary of the Global South therefore serves the function of emphasizing the historic inequities between countries that have been shaped by the process of colonization. While in the current context, new configurations of power are emerging, they do not serve to erase history. At best, the new configurations enable the view of marginality in a relational context.

A postcolonial lens therefore allowed me to see the core critical geopolitics critique of the North-South binary as a critique originating from the vantage point of the privileged. As such, charges that Third Worldism is a rhetorical tool of the Southern elite can become a disciplining tool for the North in countering status quo-challenging ideas from the South. Academics can be complicit in this. I have drawn upon postcolonial theory to be cognizant of my ability as a Western scholar to be complicit in the maintenance of the unequal status quo between North and South. In this dissertation therefore I have refrained from doing so by giving voice to my interview subjects and not dismissing their arguments as elitist.

I have also noted that in its current form, mainstream Indian climate politics does not constitute a counter-hegemony in the Gramscian sense of term, as it does not seek to circumvent the hegemony of a capitalist mode of growth and development ruled by the Global North. Its politics can be characterized more as a resistance to dominance of the

North, particularly the US, in global economic affairs. There seems to be a fledgling movement arising from parts of Indian civil society that seeks to challenge the government's unrelenting focus on economic growth and industrialization and emphasize decentralized systems focused on enhancing livelihood security. However, with aspirations for modernist development and energy-consumptive lifestyles among the Indian middle classes, the likelihood of this movement to become hegemonic within India is doubtful at present. The climate crisis may well create the conditions for such a transition to take place. Yet those voices in India that make these demands often call for such a paradigm shift to take place globally and not just in India.

There is no denying that it is certainly desirable for India – and in fact, all countries, developed or developing – to take significantly more aggressive measures to mitigate climate change. It would be blasphemy to suggest anything else, given the prospects for impending calamity. Some observers argue that India should take on mitigation responsibilities for its own sake instead of waiting for the developed world to take the lead.⁶⁹ But that would leave unanswered the compelling questions raised by Agarwal and Narain about inequitable burden sharing implied in environmentalist discourses emanating from the Global North. Environmental problems have long been attributed to a monolithic 'humanity', thereby concealing the fact that some groups have contributed to these problems more than others. Although India is a major emitter, its claim that more economically and technologically capable countries of the Global North have a greater responsibility to mitigate, is for me difficult to deny. I agree with Dubash (2009) that India has been unfairly targeted as an obstacle to a global agreement on climate mitigation.

It is perhaps not too surprising that India (and China) that enjoy this dubious honor are both growing economies with large populations. Fears of the ‘overbreeding Orient’ had given rise to a host of population control policies in India among other places during the 1950s and 1960s. Similar fears – this time, of being outcompeted by the emerging economies – seem to be emerging in the context of the global climate discourses in this country. Most troubling is a seeming complicity of environmentalist and critical academic discourses with the questionable and unethical US position on climate change. The normative dimension of my dissertation is to urge academics studying these issues to be cognizant of such complicity and to accordingly be self-reflexive in their analyses.

Such self-reflexivity is not just an intellectual exercise. As a scholar based in the Global North, I believe I have a responsibility to call attention to the greater obligation the Global North has in mitigating climate change, as (even) my (modest) lifestyle generates more GHG emissions than the would-be victims of climate change in the Global South. (See Figure 7 for an illustration of different per capita emissions among the Indian classes compared to average US per capita emissions.) Although my dissertation draws attention to the scale jumping of the Indian government in making claims of right to development, and points out the possibility of abusing the North-South EJ argument, I certainly cannot limit myself to doing that. Indian discourses on climate politics go further than claiming low per capita emissions in order to demand the right to pursue economic growth. I believe that Indian discourses on climate politics play an important function in emphasizing the historical responsibility of the Global North in creating the climate crisis, and therefore in seeking to hold it accountable. They also draw attention to

the real challenges of balancing obligation to mitigate as well as the obligation to strengthen adaptive capacity.

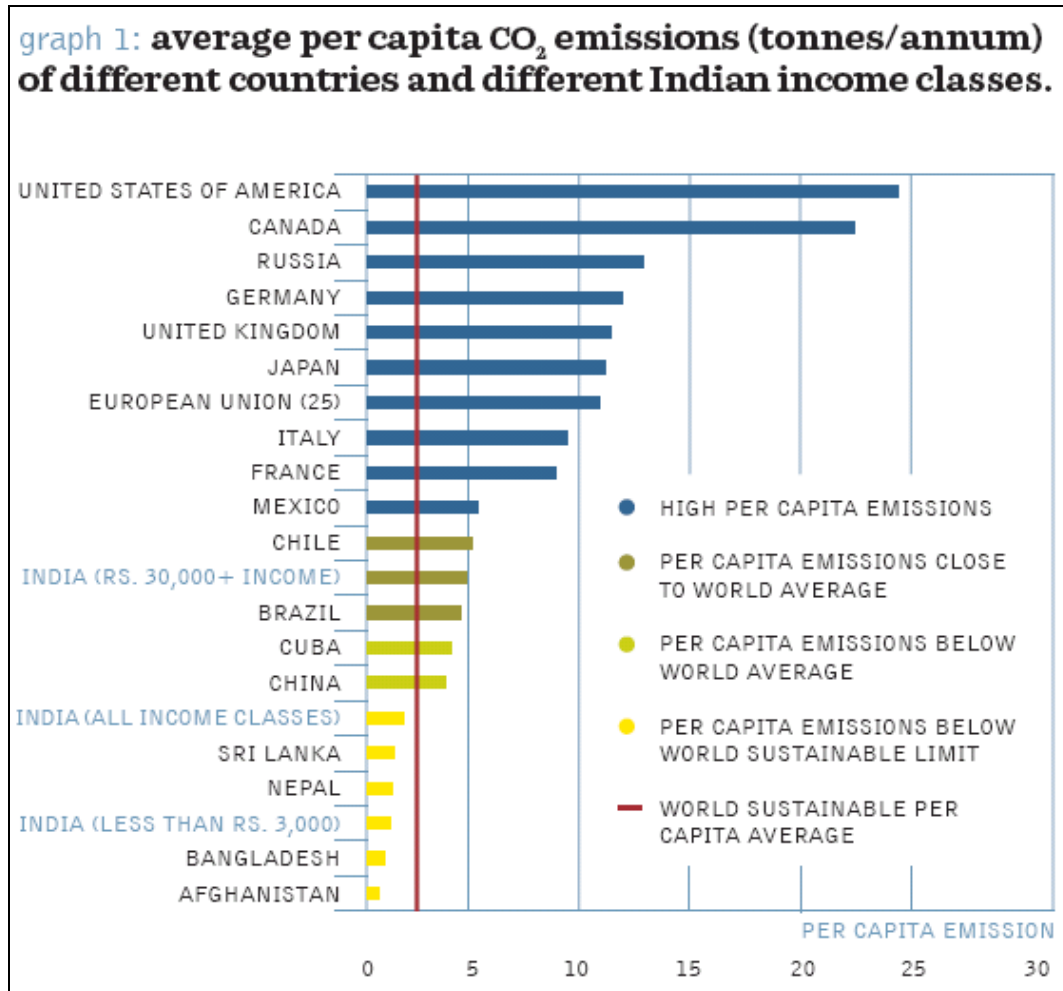


Figure 7: A graph illustrating differences in per capita emissions among countries and among income classes in India. Source: Ananthapadmanabhan et al, 2007, p. 2

The sustainable livelihoods focus of many critics of the right-to-development approach while commendable (eg. Norberg-Hodge, 2008; Sachs, 2002), and in line with the capabilities approach to environmental justice, could also fall prey to a similar

complicity with the powers that be. It is eerily reminiscent of the ‘basic needs’ approach advocated by the US in response to calls for a NIEO four decades ago. No wonder Indian environmentalists blame the North’s environmental agenda as a ruse for neocolonialism. Further, they may be guilty of extolling romanticized notions of Southern environmentalism that essentialize the subaltern. Analyses of climate politics that conclude with a call to abolish capitalism (eg. Wainwright, 2010) seem similarly inadequate. As Chakrabarty (2009) aptly suggests, “while there is no denying that climate change has profoundly to do with the history of capital, a critique that is only a critique of capital is not sufficient.” Largely absent from such thinking is the idea that it is a particular form of capitalism that developed in close association with European colonialism that created conditions for the Industrial Revolution and for the formation of a world order with a powerful core and a dependent periphery.

Contemporary climate politics has provided the traditionally marginalized countries with a tremendous opportunity to challenge the status quo beset by colonialism. Even if North-South differences have become more complicated and complex due to neo-liberalization of the global economy and growth of transnational corporations, it is too early to say that these differences have been eliminated. Notwithstanding ultra-imperialisms and internal colonialisms, broader North-South power imbalances remain, in the form of unequal access to resources and services, and unequal power in global environmental governance. The task for a postcolonial political ecology that chooses to embrace the North-South framing of difference – rather than ignore it with the implicit assumption that it is not valid – is to work towards eliminating the differences between them.

Here the questions raised by Isbister (2006) are particularly poignant. He suggests that even the most well-meaning people in North America or Western Europe are oppressors in a way in a global context – although they may see themselves as being the little guy trying to get by and struggling against powerful forces. With exceptions, most North Americans and Western Europeans constitute the world’s privileged and have questions they are accountable to answer, he suggests:

Does our material comfort require others to be poor? Are we making world poverty worse, or are we part of the solution? Will an attack on world poverty require sacrifices from us? What kind of sacrifices? These are questions that most people in the developed world would prefer to avoid (Isbister, 2006, 26).

If this argument is correct, and I believe it is, it would mean that instead of making the sacrifices that the Global North needs to make, picking on India only serves to deflect attention away from our own obligations. Several questions come to mind: How can a US-based scholar who can take for granted the material benefits provided by the erstwhile hegemonic state defensibly judge Indian policymakers for wishing to pursue a capitalist and industrial development model, without being guilty of hypocrisy? When we continue to enjoy a Northern standard of living, but argue that the Indians (and the Chinese for that matter) should pursue an alternative small-scale development paradigm because there is no space left for them to grow, are we not implicitly condoning American exceptionalism (Reminiscent of George Bush Jr.’s famous dictum: “the American way of life is non-negotiable,” also in play when arguments are made that the US simply cannot make international commitments until passed in Congress) while being threatened by the widespread use of cars per family in those two countries?

Such neo-Malthusian fears are reminiscent of the fears of population explosion in these two countries that brought about a concerted campaign to address this ‘problem’ back in the 1970s. What are the implications of imposing a Euro-centric critical development perspective to ‘unenlightened elites’ in developing countries that ‘we’ often hold responsible for the plight of their poor? Could our focus on vulnerable communities unwittingly contribute to validating the current power differentials among states by locking in the status of some countries as perpetual benefactors – the givers of aid – and condemn others to the receiving end?

It is true that Indian representatives must be held accountable to the citizens they represent, and it is also true that India wields more power within the Global South. Questions about internal inequity within India (or within the Global South), as well as the contradictory image of India as a rising superpower with extensive poverty, were left largely unanswered or swept aside as a national sovereignty issue. And it is precisely because there were no convincing answers to these questions that India’s place in the Global South is increasingly questioned from without. As Dubash (2009) has suggested, an inadequate emphasis on this aspect considerably serves to weaken India’s moral position on North-South inequities. Yet the potential flaws in India’s position do not obscure the valid points most of my respondents raised about North-South inequities and the unmet obligations of the Global North in mitigating climate change. This fact serves to eclipse the other critiques that are made of the Indian position, at least in the minds of Indian officials.

It may be true that debates over burden sharing belie the imminent catastrophe that awaits all, North and South, and therefore to engage in this discussion is useless.

However, to not engage in a discussion about the fair allocations of states' relative obligations to mitigate climate change based on historical responsibility and current capabilities, and to let political expediency shape the outcome of a global climate agreement would mean an implicit acceptance of Hardin's (1968) doctrine that injustice may be preferable to the ruin of the commons.

Drawing on the ethico-political ethos of a Gramscian political ecology, I have taken the position that as a scholar residing in one of the most industrialized and affluent countries of the world, it would be hypocritical of me to deny India the right to pursue economic growth and modernization in the name of development. By exclusively focusing on sustainability in the global South, we may be contributing to planetary sustainability, but without attending to the biggest threat to it – our own levels of consumption and affluence – our efforts are rendered moot. Scholars of postcolonialism and Gramscian political ecology have emphasized the importance of giving voice to and our responsibility to act for the other (Clayton, 2001; Jacobs, 2001; Mann, 2009). The ethico-political ethos professed by both these fields means the task for a postcolonial political ecology is not only to engage in work that is “*about* ethics or morality, but that also, and at the same time, *is* ethical and moral” (Mann, 2009, 342). Evidence of this may be sought in whether such work contributes to “an anticolonial effect” and whether they are “connected with contemporary political claims for reparation and recognition” (Jacobs, 2001, 731). By privileging Indian (albeit elite) voices in global climate politics, and by arguing that challenging inequities between countries of the Global South and countries of the Global North is no less valid than challenging inequities at other more celebrated scales, I believe my dissertation contributes to such an anticolonial effect.

Limitations and Future Directions

My analysis and conclusions are drawn from a fairly small sample of the Indian population. Although two of my respondents were among the four key negotiators representing India at UNFCCC negotiations during COP-15, and several of my other respondents were high-ranking officials in government and non-governmental organizations associated with India's climate policy and position, I cannot claim that I was able to representatively capture thinking on climate negotiations in India. I was not able to interview all of India's negotiators, nor was I able to interview members of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change or some other high level officials who I had originally wanted to interview. I made up for this limitation in part by attending public events where these individuals spoke and relying on their speeches at these public events. Personal obligations made it necessary for me to be 'in the field' in Delhi for only a period of 6 weeks. Although I feel that I was able to amass ample interview and textual material during that short period of time, and was able to complement this research with additional interviews and participant observation at COP-15 in Copenhagen, there is no denying that more interview and more time in the field would certainly have contributed to the richness of my material.

Although I tried to get a mix of views by interviewing members of the Indian intelligentsia that were outside the core climate policy-making circles in India – and some of the more critical views on the state's position were received from these respondents – I was undoubtedly limited in my reach here as well. All of my respondents can be said to be India's elite to some degree or the other. They were all relatively privileged in India, and most certainly belong to the middle class or above. The views of those who are

arguably most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change were not directly captured by my interviews. I might qualify this limitation by suggesting that the purpose of my research was to understand India's position in international negotiations. It might be safe to assume that for the most part the ongoing global discourses may not be legible or accessible in a meaningful way to India's most vulnerable or marginalized citizens.

There is an overwhelming amount of literature on climate politics from multiple disciplinary perspectives. While I tried to capture some of that diversity in my chapter on environmental justice, I acknowledge that I had to leave out more than I could possibly cover. By incorporating literatures from geopolitics, international relations, environmental justice, postcolonial geographies and political ecology, I have given my dissertation significant breadth. In part my interdisciplinary program warrants such interdisciplinary work, and in part, the nature of the research topic warrants it. In part my own thinking patterns necessitated that I incorporated these various elements that I saw as interconnected. But the downside of this is that I have perhaps sacrificed depth for breadth.

Further, my arguments are often painted in broad strokes. What I mean is that I hone in on the need to examine global inequality in a broader context or scale than is normally envisioned by critical geography scholars. In developing the argument for why work in this realm matters and should not be neglected, I have in turn paid scant attention to the complexities generated by the heterogeneity of both the Global North and the global South. I may be guilty of presenting the Global North and the Global South in a rather homogeneous way. Surely I do not believe any social category can be homogeneous. But because of the need to draw attention to a neglected realm of

contemporary inquiry, particularly in critical human geography, I have adhered to the ‘strategic essentialism’ of these broad categories. Having said this, I want to go back to my qualifying argument that class-based analyses are crucial. Just because I have spent a great deal of time writing this dissertation to argue why it is not the only important aspect of a critical analysis, it does not mean I think it is insignificant. It just has not been the focus of this study, driven in part by my limited knowledge of Marxist literature. It is my hope that future work in this vein will build on and further refine my examination of state-based North-South inequalities, to reveal how this axis of differentiation intersects with class and potentially other axes of differentiation, particularly in analyses of mitigation and adaptation measures taken to address climate change.

CHAPTER VI

NOTES

¹ that it will not accept a binding commitment to limit or a peak year for its greenhouse gas emissions currently, and that it is owed financial and technological support from Annex I countries for mitigation and adaptation.

² In this dissertation I refer to postcolonialism as the understanding that the unequal power structures of the colonial era have continued even after colonization formally ended in most parts of the world. On the other hand, the post-colonial condition depicts the period after colonization formally ended and Independence was formally achieved. For India, this happened in 1947.

³ I acknowledge that not everyone in the Global South is poor or that everyone in the Global North is rich and privileged. However, barring exceptions, citizens of the Global South tend to be relatively marginalized in the global political economy compared to those of the Global North. Global migration patterns seem to be a good indicator of countries that constitute the Global North and South.

⁴ China succeeded the US in being the country with the highest total annual GHG emissions, in 2007. Similarly, India is projected to be one of the top emitters over the next decade.

⁵ which is a measure of GHG reduction per unit economic growth, rather than a measure of absolute reduction.

⁶ Indicating a less defensive/ reactive and a more proactive approach where India shows willingness in cooperating with international mechanisms for undertaking common responsibility for mitigation.

⁷ According to Jarosz (2004, 920), the sub-field of critical human geography represents “a diverse set of ideas and practices committed to emancipatory politics within and beyond the discipline.”

⁸ With the exception of Simon and Dodds (1998); Slater(2004) ; Power (2006).

⁹ When scholars undertake qualitative research programs in distant lands, it is customary to acknowledge issues of power differentials during fieldwork. Yet the scholar’s positionality often does not figure into the core research questions. Some scholars – including political ecologists – have begun to move their attention away from distant locales and bring their research closer to home. Yet when this move is motivated by the ethical dilemmas raised by power differentials during fieldwork, it still does little to engage with the power differentials between Western(ized) academic and Third World subaltern.

¹⁰ I must clarify that I do think the class problematic is important. However, I disagree that it is the only important axis of differentiation. A helpful way of looking at North-South differences from a class perspective is to think of residents of the Global North as first class, and those of the Global South as second class, in the context of power dynamics in the global political economy.

¹¹ Lemanski and Lama-Rewal (2011) warns against the treatment of ‘elites’ as a monolithic category based on research in India. They suggest that a range of actors and interests exist in the social category commonly referred to as the elite.

¹² drawing largely on Said’s (1978) treatise, although as Gandhi (1998) suggested, Orientalism is only the first – albeit influential – phase of postcolonialism. Other postcolonial insights such as hybridity can be used to problematize this understanding of binaries.

¹³ Insights from postcolonial and political ecology theory can be used to problematize this claim.

¹⁴ The assumption here is that capitalism and class analysis is essential to pursuing distributional justice.

¹⁵ Williams and Mawdsley's (2006) work in environmental justice in postcolonial India can be seen as an attempt to do such work.

¹⁶ Although by their own admission, the issue of North-South power asymmetry is a relatively unexamined subject.

¹⁷ She acknowledges differences within North and South, but argues that the similarities within them outweigh their internal differences, and gives them a common goal to work towards.

¹⁸ The point made here is not that China's contributions to GHGs should be blamed on Western influences, but rather to point out how Western environmentalism, as the authors describe it is invested in externalizing the blame for climate change to countries that constitute a geopolitical threat to the US economy.

¹⁹ The 1997 Byrd-Hagel resolution (95-0) that prevented the US from accepting a cap on emissions without similar commitments from India and China is an excellent example.

²⁰ This is in stark contrast to the Kyoto Protocol's categories of Annex I and non-Annex I for countries that are and are not, respectively, assigned mitigation commitments to reduce GHG emissions.

²¹ Hybridity refers to the embodiment of more than one – at times shifting or self-contradictory – identity that serves to destabilize hegemonic authority (Kapoor, 2008); Hybridity is “the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (Roos and Hunt, 2010, 9).

²² According to the UNDP's 2010 Human Development Report, India's Human Development Index is ranked 119th of 169 countries, compared to the US' 4th rank. 41.6% of the Indian population were understood to be living under the income poverty line of \$1.25 a day between 2000-2008.

²³ A similarly enabling theoretical perspective was elaborated by Jones (2009) who described the process of defining and contesting categories as a political one that is replete with uneven power dynamics; and that is never complete and is always evolving.

²⁴ Based on Hardin's (1968) treatise on the ‘tragedy of the commons,’ the earth's atmosphere has come to be referred to as a global commons that carries out the essential ecological function of a sink for absorption of GHGs.

²⁵ Coinciding with the (neo)colonial era when Britain and later the US have been hegemonic in the international order (Cox, 1983).

²⁶ Later in the dissertation, I take into consideration how acknowledgment of my positionality necessarily influences the conclusions I arrive at.

²⁷ Williams and Mawdsley (2006) similarly critique the romanticization of the ‘environmentalism of the poor’.

²⁸ This understanding of scale is similar to Jones' (2009) argument about the socially constructed and contested nature of categories.

²⁹ Affiliated with TERI at the time of interview, Dasgupta continued to represent India in climate negotiations until at least COP-15.

³⁰ The increased economic benefits that would accrue to developing countries from circumventing a cap on emissions – much bemoaned particularly by the Bush administration – is seen by Indian constituents as a deserved concession in light of historical inequities in resource use. Between 1992 and now, the circumstances of several developing countries including India have changed in the sense that they have

become contenders in the economic realm as well as in their contribution to global emissions. This has provided fuel to longtime US efforts to push a ‘common responsibility’ discourse in climate negotiations.

³¹ By which I mean that they should be held accountable for their rejection of *national* emission caps based on low *per capita* GHG emissions – their obligations to those in India that bring the per capita emissions down should not be forgotten.

³² The refusal to accept an absolute cap on or a peak year for emissions has been a core and non-negotiable Indian position in climate negotiations. Another key facet of the Indian position has been demands for transfer of financial and technological resources for any mitigation activities India undertakes. Some elements of change in India’s core positions seem to have been made during 2009. At the helm of the Copenhagen meetings, India made commitments to reduce its GHG intensity by 20-25% from 2005 levels by 2020. However, as pointed out by many scholars (eg. Dubash, 2009), GHG intensity targets are practically meaningless as they do not necessarily decrease the actual output of GHG emissions.

³³ This refers to the increasingly shrinking capacity of the atmosphere to absorb additional GHGs without causing DAI.

³⁴ An MOEF official explicitly expressed that he took offence at how in my IRB ‘consent form’ I had characterized India’s official position in the climate negotiations as ‘controversial.’

³⁵ As mentioned in preceding chapters, my respondents were adamant that the negotiations in Copenhagen were to discuss Annex I commitments for the second phase of the KP, whereas the Western media has routinely portrayed COP-15 as post-Kyoto negotiations. This portrayal also reflects US (and other Annex I) negotiators’ attempts to do away with the binary distinctions of the KP and calls for differentiation within non-Annex I.

³⁶ The authors differentiate between public ecological debt (of countries) and private ecological debt (of companies), see p. 695

³⁷ My respondents saw linkages in the concept of the atmospheric commons to the idea of a global technological commons, suggesting that if climate change is a problem big enough to require cooperation from all states, then perhaps it is a problem big enough to surpass the constraints posed by intellectual property rights.

³⁸ Indian negotiators are also suspicious of and resist Northern proposals of emphasizing sectoral emission targets.

³⁹ Implicitly suggesting that those residing in the West are first class and those elsewhere are second class, entitled to less than we are. Jacobs (1996, 2-3) attributes such ‘racialized othering’ to the need for colonial powers to “anxiously [reinscribe]” the binaries of “a ‘demonized Other’ versus legitimate ‘metropolitan Self’ ... in the face of their contested or uncontainable certainty.”

⁴⁰ Many of my interview respondents, not too surprisingly, bristled at the righteousness of the paternalistic Western academic or environmentalist perspectives that chastise India for its coal-fired power plants, its internal inequity issues or seek to place it in a different category due to its growing economy. Interestingly and unfortunately, such perspectives are seen to be complicit with the US negotiation position that has done a pathetic job of ‘hiding behind the emerging economies’ in attempting to deflect attention away from its own obligations. This apparent complicity is troubling because it implicitly condones Northern consumption and energy use while painting China and India as the problem, a case of Orientalism in the guise of environmental concern.

⁴¹ Some examples that come to mind that have immediate relevance to GHG emissions are: 24 hour access to electricity, hot water, private automobiles for the average American citizen.

⁴² In my view it is impossible to be immune to charges of hypocrisy when living materially privileged lives but arguing others should not aspire to the same.

⁴³ Indicating a less defensive/ reactive and a more proactive approach where India shows willingness in cooperating with international mechanisms such as MRV for undertaking common responsibility for mitigation.

⁴⁴ Although Cox (1983) would argue that the latter comes before the former.

⁴⁵ During COP-13 in Bali, the US, Japan, Canada, the EU and Russia pressured developing countries to take on more obligations to mitigate, including binding commitments. On the second last day of COP-15, the US presented a proposal that sought to abandon the distinction between developed and developing countries and to categorize countries for mitigation purposes based on emissions, energy use and levels of development (Khor, 2008).

⁴⁶ Sunita Narain, Op-Ed Environment “Politics of Climate Change”, The Tribune, Dec. 7 2010, p. 9.

⁴⁷ A similar argument is made by Isbister (2006) in relation to ‘whites’ and minorities in the US, in their ability to see eye to eye in matters of marginalization and access.

⁴⁸ For a brief but informative history of international negotiations leading up to COP-16 in Cancun, see Brown (2011).

⁴⁹ This concept seeks to differentiate between an anthropocentrically oriented environmental justice and a biocentrically oriented ecological justice.

⁵⁰ That follows from a Rawlsian notion of justice as distribution of goods and services (Holland, 2008).

⁵¹ As Jakobsen (1998) has pointed out, CSE along with TERI have been India’s most influential NGOs that in shaping India’s early international position in climate negotiations. Vihma (2011) notes that there is no one traditional Indian position on climate negotiations anymore as the current constituents of India’s key players are divided into stonewallers and realists versus progressive internationalists. India’s position in climate negotiations is in flux under international pressure.

⁵² He emphasized (like Ghosh, TERI) that Annex I/II has nothing to do with developed/developing, but rather on the basis of global CO₂ emissions established in the 1990s.

⁵³ Executive Director of the South Centre, Martin Khor, had similar criticisms (TWN 2010).

⁵⁴ As I show in more depth in the preceding chapter, India was seen as clearly belonging to the Global South, despite its high growth rates in the past decade. Respondents emphasized that it would be premature to declare that India had joined the ranks of industrialized countries. Various statistics would be summoned to make this assertion: 70% of population using biomass as their only source of energy, 80% of population living below 2 dollars per day, etc. (Ghosh/TERI).

⁵⁵ Although she also later argues that the car in itself is a problem, and should make way for efficient and affordable means of public transportation. She suggests the right to mobility, rather than the right to own a car should be the right right.

⁵⁶ According to the five studies, the average per capita emissions of India (across the five studies) would be 2.1 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020, and 3.5 tons in 2030 (MOEF, 2009).

⁵⁷ A discussion paper published by TERI also articulated historical responsibility for climate change as “financial obligations in the form of climate debt.” (Srivastava et al., 2009, 2).

⁵⁸ As opposed to a ‘right to pollute’ argument as is often assumed by commentators.

⁵⁹ The study showed that Indian industry could meet the government's emissions intensity reduction targets till 2020, but after that, technology options would become prohibitively costly, thus impacting growth.

⁶⁰ This association of the development discourse with the concept of basic needs is somewhat reminiscent of the US agenda of advancing a similar discourse alongside the rejection of calls for an NIEO in the 70s (Hansen 1980). The difference is that this emphasis is originating within the Indian intelligentsia.

⁶¹ One respondent (Reporter) chalks up such a focus on economic equalization on part of environmental NGOs in India, to quite a different conceptualization of environmentalism in the South than in the North where the focus is on preservation of natural resources.

⁶² citing 70% of energy generation is from domestic coal of low calorific value.

⁶³ These are big names in the Indian steel industry.

⁶⁴ while acknowledging the challenges of converting academic discourses into practice on the ground.

⁶⁵ owned by the developed countries that should have been passed down according to the Kyoto Protocol but has not.

⁶⁶ To criticize India's and China's aspirations for economic growth and prosperity for a US-based scholar is for me the epitomy of hypocrisy (see also Roberts and Parks, 2007).

⁶⁷ Others (Greenpeace India official, Chenoy/JNU) similarly identified corporate control of the Indian government as being the key problem.

⁶⁸ If it is exploitation of the weaker by the more powerful that enables ecological destruction, a corollary could be that economic justice between states might pave the way for doing away with such exploitative relations (between countries, between humans and environment). But we surely cannot stop there. Economic justice within states is also necessary to prevent exploitative relations within states (and by extension between humans and environment) because if everyone is equally empowered to protect and defend their livelihood security, the environment as a resource for such livelihood would be in turn protected.

⁶⁹ Inherent in this argument is the assumption that if India were to revolutionize its economy and quit industrial development in favor of decentralized small farms today, then its populations would not face the threats of climate change. Clearly we know this wouldn't be the case.

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