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Department of Geography
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‘Climate justice’ as adaptation of the human

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A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy at Durham University

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Thesis Abstract

Grounded in a methodology of discourse analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant-observation, this thesis examines 'climate justice' as a *discourse* articulating with other discourses, deploying certain imaginative geographies, and enfolding fundamental questions of power, race and identity in the 'international'. In a break with accounts that take a prescriptive or essentialist approach to 'climate justice', I argue that Judith Butler's conception of *performativity* is a framework allowing a full appreciation of the heterogeneity and contingency of 'climate justice. My first argument appraises the liberal 'international' as a racialised order of governance'. Specifically, it argues that 'climate justice' – in context-specific instances - embodies and perpetuates *whiteness,* understood as an historically and geographically differentiated form of signifying power. From here, I argue that some 'climate justice' discourses embodying 'international climate whiteness', which I understand as an historically contingent form of power that operates through a cluster of institutional arrangements, discourses and affects that serve the reproduction of a liberal international order. In my second argument, I demonstrate how the 'most vulnerable' are positioned as a mobilising device on whose behalf the less-vulnerable are to demand 'action' from their political representatives. Moreover, I argue that a primary instrument for the securing of this moral economy is the idea of a 'new narrative' of climate change; one that reframes it as a 'people-centred' as well as an 'environmental' issue. Third and final, I argue that over the past ten years, there has been a shift in international climate policy discourse towards seeing climate change in 'human' as opposed to simply 'environmental' terms. Further, I go beyond this observation to argue that an analysis of 'climate justice' discourse allows us to see how the 'human' - and humanism - are in the process of *adapting* to climate change.

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List of abbreviations

AFD	Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland)
AOSIS	Association of Small Island States
AWG	Anthropocene Working Group
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (UK only)
CAF	Cancun Adaptation Framework
CAN	Climate Action Network (International)
CBDR-RC	Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEE	Collaborative Event Ethnography
CIEL	Center for International Environmental Law
CJ	Climate Justice
CJD	Climate Justice Dialogue
CJF	Climate Justice Fund
CJNN	Climate Justice Now! Network
CJRF	Climate Justice Resilience Fund
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWS	Critical Whiteness Studies
DFID	Department for International Development
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment

GCA	Global Commission on Adaptation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GHF	Global Humanitarian Forum
GRT	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (UK only)
GSSP	Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IR	International Relations
ISC	International Stratigraphic Commission
ITUC	International Trades Union Congress
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MRF-CJ	Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
RLS	Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN	United Nations
WIM	Warsaw International Mechanism
WFCJ	World Forum on Climate Justice
WRI	World Resources Institute
WTO	World Trade Organisation
XR	Extinction Rebellion

Declaration

I, Matilda Jean Teresa Fitzmaurice, declare that this thesis represents my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree or diploma. I certify that the use of material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Statement of copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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Although mine is the only name on this thesis, all academic authorship is co-authorship. I cannot begin to list – let alone thank - everyone who made this PhD thesis what it is, but in these short paragraphs, I hope I can make a start. I hoped I would have something insightful to say in these acknowledgements, but all I can do is emphasise that the figure of the heroic, solo researcher and writer is an illusion. Responsibility for any errors in this thesis, of course, remains mine and mine alone.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

One bright afternoon in December 2019, while the 25th session of the UN climate talks was in its second week inside Madrid's IFEMA convention centre, UN Security expelled hundreds of climate justice protestors from the conference venue. While the High-Level segment sat in plenary, youth climate strikers had occupied the conference hall stage, clasped hands aloft, in order to contest what they saw as the absence of action and accountability at the heart of the international climate process (Leonard 2019, Joint CSO Statement 2019). They were joined by Indigenous leaders and other groups, some of whom filed out of the plenary hall and began chanting "step up, pay up" (ibid), before being removed by UN security personnel, not to be re-admitted for the rest of that day (Igoe 2019).

These protestors contested, and continue to contest, the UN climate talks not because they are a dry, privileged realm of technical expertise, but because they are saturated with political meaning and entangled in the extant global processes of policing, repression of dissent and racism. This episode underlines both the power and resonance of 'climate justice' as a mobilising tool and the systemic inequalities of the international spaces in which it circulates. After all, those expelled from COP25 on that day were overwhelmingly young, Indigenous and/or global South activists, while delegates from fossil fuel lobby groups and misguided governments continued to go about their business (Joint CSO statement, 2019). How could an institutional space ostensibly dedicated to the negotiation of an equitable climate agreement (and, indeed, in the name of an expansive 'humanity') endorse the expulsion of those holding it to account on this very promise? What about the protestors' words or actions was so threatening that they (who after all, had been admitted to the conference in the first place) had to have their access passes revoked for the day? Calling it an "unprecedented crackdown on dissent", a representative of the organisation 350.org wrote that there "could be no better symbol of [the] crisis we face" (Leonard 2019).

1.2 Introducing 'climate justice': chapter overview

'Climate justice', both the rallying cry of the COP25 protestors and the focus of this thesis, is a ubiquitous, contested and highly malleable signifier of climate change. Over the past two decades, it has come to evoke and stand in for almost any kind of social, ethical or political dimension of the accelerating climate crisis. From laid-off coal industry workers to school students striking for the climate, to fossil fuel divestment campaigns, to small island state representatives calling for '1.5 to stay alive': all these examples illustrate how 'climate justice' has become a marker of where the disintegrating boundary between the 'ecological' and the 'social' domains comes into view. In short, 'climate justice' is a reminder of the inseparability of 'nature' from 'culture'. While injustices affecting coal workers, school students and marginalised peoples are not wholly attributable to climate change, 'climate justice' functions as a site where these two concerns – ecological catastrophe and human inequality, or 'nature' and culture' - meet and interface. Across all its diverse significations, the crux of climate (in)justice, its unifying point, is that the world's poorest people bear the least responsibility for the climate crisis, a crisis from which they will suffer most.

Questions of who and what agitates in the name of 'climate justice', and with what effects, frame and give impetus to this thesis. In what follows, I examine 'climate justice' as a *discourse* that articulates with other discourses, deploys certain imaginative geographies, and enfolds fundamental questions of power, race and identity in the 'international'. In a break with accounts that take a prescriptive approach to 'climate justice', or that attribute to it a fixed essence, I argue that Judith Butler's conception of *performativity* is a productive conceptual framework that allows for a full appreciation of the heterogeneity and unruliness of climate justice (see Chapter 2).

This thesis argues that two important factors are currently overlooked in existing framings of climate (in)justice. First, it underlines how 'climate justice' functions as an allusion to *race,* or more precisely that climate change is not only an ethical problem, but also a political and economic one that reveals the international order as fundamentally *racialised.* Second, it argues that climate justice debates place at their centre neither levels of atmospheric CO_2, nor 'climate science', nor even 'the natural world', but the figure of the human. In other words, 'climate justice' enables the resignification of climate change as not principally a crisis of 'the environment', but of the *human*. In the round, this thesis explores the ways in which 'climate justice' reconsolidates, and functions as a proxy for, white humanism, and as a site of and for

the circulation of racial power. To this end, I parse out 'climate justice's reconsolidation of humanism as it unfolds across three distinct but interrelated registers: the liberal international as an order of governance, the category of the 'most vulnerable' to climate change, and the adaptation of the 'human'.

In this introductory chapter, I set out the contextual and theoretical parameters for the thesis. In the next three sections (1.3, 1.4, and 1.5) I situate 'climate justice' in relation to three conceptual areas: performativity, the international, and race and the crisis of humanism, before considering what makes this research important in our current moment (section 1.6). In the final sections (1.7, 1.8 and 1.9), I outline the project's research aims and objectives, followed by an overview of the thesis chapters, and finally, its contributions – both conceptual and methodological – to existing scholarly debates.

1.3 A brief history of 'climate justice'

The geographer Arun Saldanha notes that as intensified climate change has gone from being a future to a present threat, geology has become central to the vernacular notions newly prominent in public debate (2017: 229). Alongside 'carbon footprints' and 'geoengineering', Saldanha lists 'climate justice' among these notions. Arising principally out of the internationally networked 'anti-globalisation' (anti-WTO, anti-debt, anti-corporate) movements of the 1990s, 'climate justice' has since emerged as "both a field of political activism and a realm of scholarly debate and research" (Burnham et al 2013a: 239). Since the new millennium, it has filtered up to international climate policy, gender equality work and human rights[1] and environmental law (e.g., CIEL 2007; Mary Robinson Foundation/World Resources Institute 2013; ACT Alliance 2015, 2020), as well as into national policy arenas and debates (see for e.g., Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2014; Scottish Government 2021). Various understandings of 'climate justice' have been applied across areas of practice including adaptation, climate risk insurance and gender empowerment (e.g., Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice 2017, 2018; UNFCCC 2019;

[1] On 7th December 2005, on behalf of Sheila Watt-Cloutier and sixty-two other Inuit petitioners, the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) filed a petition with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, alleging that the failure by the United States to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions violated the environmental and cultural human rights of the Inuit. Despite the fact that the Commission rejected the petition without prejudice on 16th November 2006, as the first international legal action on climate change, Watt-Cloutier's petition was without precedent. While neither the petition text nor Watt-Cloutier's testimony mention the term 'climate justice', this case marks the Commission's first ever hearing on climate change and human rights, where Watt-Cloutier and her legal team were invited to testify, on 1st March 2007 (see CIEL 2007).

ACT Alliance 2020); while the devolved Scottish Government launched its Climate Justice Fund in 2012, the first dedicated fund of its kind in the world. It has become the subject of a burgeoning academic (both geographical and not) and policy literature, with interventions by sociologists and international relations scholars JT Roberts and Bradley C Parks (2007) and Henry Shue (1993, 2014) proving especially influential. At the time of writing, the study of 'climate justice' has been the founding principle of two new research centres in UK universities since 2010: the Centres for Climate Justice at Glasgow Caledonian and Reading universities. In this section, I provide a broad (rather than exhaustive) overview of the literature on 'climate justice', with the aim of identifying gaps and shortcomings within the dominant trends and tendencies.

The notion of 'climate justice' has not long been at the heart of international climate politics. The establishment in 1992 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which designates both the treaty and the Bonn-based organisation, was primarily centred on the *management of greenhouse gas levels* in order to "prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the *climate system"* (1992: 9, my emphasis). While a technocratic emphasis on system-wide stabilisation is strongly at evidence here, also enshrined in the treaty are the notions of 'equity', which denotes 'historical' versus 'current' responsibility for climate change, and 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities' (CBDR-RC). However, both have long been areas of contention in the UN-convened climate negotiations, as since 1992 there has been a transformation of the global economic geography of wealth, poverty, and greenhouse gas emissions. In particular, this implicates China and India, which have gained new capacities while retaining high levels of poverty and relatively low per-capita emissions (Climate Nexus, no date). 'Climate *justice',* meanwhile, has been yet more controversial. According to the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (MRF-CJ 2019), 'climate justice' was long regarded as a "taboo topic" in international climate negotiations, and associated with a small handful of countries including Bolivia and Venezuela. However, now, as the MRF-CJ has written, 'climate justice' has become "an approach to climate decision-making and action that is people-centered, rights-informed and fair", as well as a concept around which "different actors in the world of development, climate change and human rights" can coalesce (ibid). Notably, the term appears (albeit between quotation marks) in the text of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

As will be evident from the above, 'climate justice' is an essentially contested concept. It is the object of multiple competing claims; the 1999 CorpWatch report *Greenhouse Gangsters versus*

Climate Justice is widely considered to be the first published use of the term, while 'climate justice' has long been a rallying cry of radical climate movements around the world, notably those led by Indigenous peoples (Chatterton, Featherstone & Routledge 2013; Featherstone, 2013; Tokar 2013). The size and breadth of the academic literature, which has included contributions from geography, sociology, political science, law, philosophy and political ecology, reflect the diversity and unruliness of this term. For instance, normative principles are a common starting point for debates on 'climate justice'. In the main, philosophy-based discussions have revolved around questions of what constitutes a fair basis for a division of responsibilities, as well as for obligations to present and future generations (see Caney 2010). As Bulkeley et al (2013: 915) have noted, these debates tend to focus on outcomes and consequences rather than the transparency - or otherwise - of the processes used to achieve these outcomes (e.g., Gupta 2010), though they all assume the international is the appropriate scale for the resolution of climate change as a 'global problem'. Importantly, however, not all theorisations of 'climate justice' start from abstract ethical, normative or philosophical principles. Schlosberg and Collins (2014: 361), for example, suggest that the principles of 'climate justice' (sovereignty, ecology unity, the sacredness of 'Mother Earth' and the interdependence of all species) evolved directly out of the primarily US-based movement for *environmental justice*. They argue, moreover, that documents like the Bali Principles of Climate Justice (2002) demonstrate strong influence by the American environmental justice movement, such as the 1991 Principles of Environmental Justice (ibid 2014: 366).

Another significant, though internally differentiated, body of work articulates 'climate justice' through the geographies of the 'local' or 'urban' rather than the nation-state (e.g., Bulkeley et al 2013; Bulkeley et al 2014; Fisher 2015; Black et al 2016; Shi et al 2016; Ranganathan and Bratman 2021; Henrique & Tschakert 2020). Prominent within geography but also elsewhere, this work situates 'climate justice' in proximity to questions of not only distribution and procedure, but also rights, responsibilities and recognition. Having conceptualised 'climate justice' as a 3D pyramid (with distribution, procedures, rights, responsibilities and recognition as its faces), Bulkeley et al (2014) examine how justice was "articulated, practiced and contested" across five case studies of urban climate change interventions. Other work within this broad remit takes a different approach: Ranganathan and Bratman (2019) eschew vocabularies of rights and recognition in favour of rearticulating 'climate justice' through an explicitly abolitionist framework. They position structural environmental and housing-related racisms at the heart of 'climate justice', which in the context of majority Black neighbourhoods targeted for elite-driven 'resilience' interventions in Washington, DC. Despite these differences, however, this literature

arguably speaks to two common points. First, the assumption of the nation-state as the most relevant actor overlooks structural inequalities *within* the nation-state; and second, that climate change is not only "happening *to* cities, but rather is being produced *through* the city", in turn reproducing or challenging existing forms of uneven development and urban inequality" (Bulkeley et al 2014: 34, second emphasis added).

Yet further scholarship, focussing on international climate politics (Roberts & Parks 2007; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006, 2019; Burnham et al 2013a; Okereke 2010; Okereke & Coventry 2016; Shue 2014; Schlosberg & Collins 2014) positions climate change – and therefore climate justice – firmly as a matter of *international* concern. In addition to this, such scholarship has explored how contestations over 'justice' and 'equity' have shaped the international climate governance regime, as well as the extent to which there is space for (usually distributive) justice concerns within this regime. Some of this work contains useful resources for this thesis, above all a theorisation of 'climate justice' as a *discourse.* Bäckstrand & Lövbrand (2019) identify three distinct meta-discourses of climate policy: 'ecological modernisation', 'green governmentality' and 'climate justice'. They argue that since the Copenhagen summit in 2009, a radical discourse of climate justice has had a groundswell of momentum. The climate justice movement that articulates this discourse, they argue, mobilises against the inequitable power structures (including race, class, gender, nation, empire and capital) that undergird the climate governance regime and insists that climate justice is inextricable from global issues of trade, poverty, debt and North-South inequalities (2019: 526). Bäckstrand and Lövbrand's typology is effective and important insofar as it apprehends 'climate justice' as a discourse. It also situates 'climate justice' firmly in the *international.* Striking, however, is that this account associates 'climate justice' uniquely with radical activist movements. While they rightly acknowledge that the three discourses - including climate justice – are internally differentiated and overlapping (pointing out, for example, the climate justice movement's resonance with green governmentality in its calls for binding emissions targets and timetables (2019: 527)), it neglects to consider the mobility of 'climate justice' discourse, or its tendency to be taken up and reconfigured within institutional contexts.

To return to the geographical contribution to this literature, in a pair of review articles, Burnham et al (2013a & 2013b) helpfully note several tendencies that have characterised the geographic contribution to the 'climate justice' literature. First, they note that the principal framings of climate change (and who is responsible for it) within the public discourse, where they have not obscured justice concerns entirely, have lent themselves to an unhelpful conceptualisation of

'climate justice' as an inter-state matter; a conception that has itself been largely cemented around a rigid 'developed/developing' country binary. This presents a scalar challenge, as the overwhelming focus on states has served to veil injustices at sub-state levels. It is possible, for example, for a country to occupy the 'developing' state subject position while masking injustices perpetuated at the regional or local levels. Secondly, the authors highlight the domination of the CJ literature by distributive justice ('outcome' justice) and procedural justice ('process' justice) to the detriment of recognition justice, particularly in terms of recognition of social and cultural difference (though see Schlosberg & Collins (2014)). Thirdly and relatedly, they point out that the prominence accorded by geographers to the lens of 'vulnerability', drawn from research into the social dimensions of environmental and natural hazards, means that questions of social difference are apprehended, perhaps inappropriately, through this same framework. Furthermore, the only axis of social difference to have drawn significant attention within the 'climate justice' literature has been gender, but when done uncritically, a 'gender perspective' can risk flattening and individualising specific and individual vulnerabilities (see Arora-Jonsson, 2011; see also Bretherton 1998; MacGregor 2010; Di Chiro 2008; Kaisjer & Kronsell 2014). At least in the 'developing world', Arora-Jonsson argues, the construction of a universal female vulnerability paradoxically *conceals* gender as it takes women's vulnerability to be self-evident. Meanwhile, the figuring of women as either 'vulnerable' (global South) or 'virtuous' (global North) limit their possibilities for agency as well, it is hinted, as reproducing the legitimating global North self-image as having 'achieved' gender equality (2011: 748). To return to Burnham et al's argument, they state that more emphasis needs to be put on *race*, which they argue is a "fundamentally missing component in climate justice debates and research" (Burnham et al 2013: 245). Instead, "[r]efocusing on the racialized structural determinants and justice outcomes", they continue, "is critical in understanding how specific vulnerabilities and uneven distributions are produced" (ibid, 246). However, I venture that at least in this instance, this refocusing follows the path of a return to environmental justice scholarship on racism (and Hurricane Katrina specifically) which, despite its huge and obvious import, constrains discussion of race and racialised injustices inside the frame of the nation state. Refraining from analysis of the operation of race and racialised structures at the international level may also risk reproducing a central conceit of 'mainstream' International Relations scholarship: the positioning of race and racism as 'domestic' matters that have no import within the purified international realm: a problematic I return to later in the chapter. What is missing, in other words, is an attempt to tackle how race, as a socially constructed axis of difference (but one that is 'real' in

its material effects) articulates with the politics of ‘climate justice’ and circulates within the ‘international’.

In a marked contrast with gender, references to *race* in the climate justice literature are infrequent and oblique (though see Tuana 2019), and an important example of this is with climate and migration. Oftentimes, the climate justice literature reads ‘climate migration’ as a proxy for climate (in)justice. For example, Anja Mihr (2017) explicitly locates climate migration as the need *par excellence* for a conception of ‘climate justice’ that is grounded in human rights, gender equality, a multi-stakeholder approach and corporate social responsibility. Mihr’s argument attributes injustices to a lack of legal recognition for what she terms “climate victims” (51) at the domestic and international level, such as, for instance, a protected status for so-called ‘climate refugees’. In different terms, the solution appears as an appeal to an abstracted understanding of ‘human rights’, with little attention paid to historical or geographical contexts. However, Baldwin (2017a) argues that an uncritical labelling of ‘climate victims’ is problematic since it veers close to climate reductionism; a form of “reducing the future to climate” (see Hulme 2011). Baldwin also points to the Eurocentric and racialised geography of the ‘climate victims’ label, along with its assumption, first, that ‘climate victims’ are interchangeable with ‘climate migrants’, and second that it is in “poor and/or less democratic countries in Asia and Africa” that these victimised subjects will appear (2017a: 222). This intervention is important because it underscores how inescapably political questions of identity, race, Eurocentrism and power are implicated in apparently ‘universal’ conceptions of climate change, which are problematic as they may obscure more than they reveal. There are already in-depth analyses of how discourses of ‘climate migration’ (e.g. Baldwin 2013, 2016, 2017b; Bettini 2014) and ‘climate security’ (e.g. Telford 2018) are bound up with the construction of biopolitical, exclusionary logics. However, the question posed by this thesis is a different, and to date underexplored, one: in context-specific instances, might ‘climate justice’ discourse *itself* designate racialised figures of the Other? In other words, in its unceasing reproduction of categories of difference, ‘climate justice’ can be conceptualised as *performative.*

This sheds further light on the answers to the questions I posed earlier (what kinds of difference does ‘climate justice’ articulate, and how does ‘climate justice’ work to produce difference) are becoming clearer. In response to the first question, ‘climate justice’ articulates multiple categories of difference including race, class, gender, geography, sexuality and disability (though I focus primarily on race and secondarily on gender). However, seldom does it articulate with ‘race’ *in the terms of race:* rather, it makes recourse to proxy categories, of which the

'international', vulnerability, recognition, adaptation and the 'human' take centre stage in my analysis. In response to the second, I demonstrate that *signification* is a principal means through which difference is called into being, and that it draws upon devices including frames, norms, metaphor, making claims to historical events and figures (such as the Second World War and Eleanor Roosevelt), as well as claims to abstract concepts (such as freedom and the universal). In the next section, I unpack Judith Butler's conceptions of performativity and the frame, as well as the critical resources they offer for both my theoretical framework and the thesis.

1.3 Climate justice and performativity

Why is it productive to theorise 'climate justice' as performative? In the introduction to their edited volume *Governing the Climate,* Johannes Stripple and Harriet Bulkeley (2013: 1) argue that the process of climate change becoming part of everyday life (and thus relevant to the social sciences) has coincided with that of its loss of stable meaning. In response, they set out their intention to "recover and renew our understanding of climate change as a matter for the social sciences" (ibid). These two authors noted how climate change scholarship in the social sciences has tended to emphasise international processes and treaties, on the one hand, and the attitudes and behaviour of individuals, on the other (2013: 8). In a review of climate change literature in social science disciplines, they argue that despite recent broadening of this literature, it continued to take for granted core social and political categories, such as agency, authority and the state (2013: 7). One of the most influential 'new' theoretical approaches brought to bear on climate change has been 'governmentality' as elaborated by Michel Foucault (2008), which is the subject of Stripple and Bulkeley's volume.

Randalls' (2013) conception of "climate change multiple" is one such intervention. Unpacking this, Randalls explains how climate change is differentially "enacted" by different assemblages of actors, officials, discourses and models, in multiple different ways, including security, individualisation and economics (236). Crucially, these diverse enactments are often performative, meaning that they are not simply a matter of governments imagining worst-case scenarios (in the case of security) or a concerned citizen reducing their emissions using a smart meter (in the case of individualisation). Rather, the imagined worst-case scenarios *become real* through their enunciation (de Goede & Randalls 2009), and the smart meter is *productive* -

rather than expressive - of the concerned 'climate citizen' (Hargreaves 2013; Randalls 2013). Randalls sums up his conception of "climate change multiple" thus:

> *...these practices [security, individualisation and economics] do not seem to be different solutions to the same problem – climate change – but rather function as different ways of thinking, writing, doing, practicing and enacting climate change. In other words, climate change is not a singular entity that is then made governable in different ways; rather climate change is inherently multiply constituted through different assemblages of people, organizations, ecologies, and much more* (Randalls 2013: 240).

The most important takeaway from this is that the ontology of 'climate justice' is not that of a unified entity, but is rather always already multiple. Significantly, since the governance of climate change is not a cohesive project, these assemblages – along with their objectives – are not always commensurable with one another. This gives rise to the idea that *difference* is at the heart of the project of governing climate change. However, given that historically, the climate governance literature has not focused on difference or marginalised identities, it is appropriate and productive to turn to a different set of conceptual resources to help make sense of this difference. Such conceptual resources might include, for example, critical political economy, or a Gramscian analysis of class composition (e.g. Wainwright & Mann 2018). In this dissertation, however, I focus on Judith Butler's conceptions of performativity and the frame.

Why Judith Butler and performativity, then? As I mentioned above, the discourses of 'climate justice' under consideration in this thesis centres on the vulnerability of marginalised communities in the face of climate change, which are then subjected to sovereign logics of 'saving the Other'. Butler's work is attuned to the violence intrinsic to all processes of subjectification, as in order for a cohesive subject to be formed, certain narratives must be mobilised over and above others, which are suppressed or erased. Butler's theorisation of performativity, furthermore, pays explicit attention to signifying practices, which are the focus of my analysis, and is intellectually and ethically anchored within the subject formation of marginalised subjects, such as 'women', racialised or queer subjects. To bring this back to 'climate justice', Butler's conception of performativity enables us to see that to speak about marginalised subjects, and to delineate the conditions that govern their recognisability, are inherently power-laden acts (see also Butler 2010). Take, for example, the sub-title to Butler's

2010 book *Frames of War,* which is “when is life grievable?” In other words, under what conditions does a life come to be recognised as worth grieving, and protecting? In response to the ontological question ‘what is life?’, then, Butler argues that there can be no reference to ‘life’ outside of operations of power. Life is a matter of signification: it is produced through specific normative schemes and mechanisms of power, or frames. Butler expresses this here:

> *In particular, I want to understand how the **frames** that allocate the recognizability of certain figures of the human are themselves linked with broader **norms** that determine what will and what will not be a grievable life. My point, which is hardly new but bears repeating, is that whether and how we respond to the suffering of others, how we formulate moral criticisms, how we articulate political analyses, depends upon a certain field of perceptible reality having already been established. This field of perceptible reality is one in which the notion of the recognizable human is formed and maintained over and against what cannot be regarded as the human – a figure of the non-human that negatively determines and potentially unsettles the recognizably human* (2010: 64, emphases in original).

Frames, then, are performative in that they generate that which they purport to merely describe: in Butler’s terms, “specific ontologies of the subject” (2010: 3). These normative frames, however, have internal limits, which mean that their operation is always circumscribed, but also crucially without which the frames “cannot exercise their [its] crafting power” (Butler 2010: 4). Put another way, every normative act of ‘framing’ is founded on a paradox: the frame must reproduce if it is to operate, yet this reproduction becomes the site of potential political challenges or subversion (ibid, 24). While Butler did not write this essay in the context of climate change politics, the conception of the performative frame is useful for a critical analysis of ‘climate justice’ for the following three reasons. First, it captures how in a manner analogous to ‘life’, ‘climate justice’ is fundamentally excessive and emergent, meaning it can never be fully captured by the terms through which it might be articulated, such as, for example, a set of fixed political or normative principles. This means that performativity allows us to understand the significance of ‘climate justice’ in a spirit of anti-essentialism; in terms of what it does, rather than what it is seen to be (Lentin 2016: 44). Second, and relatedly, performativity is open-ended: if we understand our framings of political analyses as dependent on already formulated

systems of intelligibility, this provides an opening for these systems to be contested, resisted, and reformulated otherwise, in ways that cannot be predicted in advance (Butler 2010: 12). Third, I undertake my critique of 'climate justice' not with a motivation to discredit it or suggest it not be used, but in an ethic of immanent critique, in full knowledge of my entanglement with it and indebtedness to it. As Butler proposes in *Bodies That Matter:* "[s]urely, it must be possible to both use the term, to use it tactically even as one is, as it were, used and positioned by it" (1993: 29). The same ethic - of immanent critique - applies to the 'international', where I locate my study next.

1.4 Climate justice and the international

Having established performativity as a key conceptual premise for this thesis, it is now important to locate my study of 'climate justice' within the 'international'. As Bulkeley and Stripple write in their introduction to *Governing the Climate,* climate change has long been recognised as an inherently 'international' concern, which, given its 'everywhere' nature, can only be meaningfully addressed at the international level. While the UN Environment Programme was created in 1972, these two authors pinpoint the Toronto Conference on the Changing Atmosphere in June 1988 as the first international meeting, attended by government officials, industry representatives, scientists and environmentalists. Furthermore, this was the first meeting to inscribe *climate change* as a formal object of international institutional concern; serving to establish a firm foundation for a view of climate change as a "transboundary scientific problem that required an international solution" (Stripple & Bulkeley 2013: 3). 'Climate justice', similarly, is firmly tied to the international. Its trajectory has unfolded close alongside that of the international climate and other processes, with large mobilisations of environmental activists having assembled at meetings including the Rio Earth Summit (1992), COP6 (2000, the Hague), the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002, Johannesburg), COP13 (2007, Bali), COP15 (2009, Copenhagen), COP16 (2010, Cancun), COP17 (Durban, 2011), COP21 (2015, Paris) and COP25 (2019, Madrid) and COP26 (2021, Glasgow). These encounters have also, directly or indirectly, catalysed the emergence of organisations and coalitions aiming to compensate for the shortcomings of the UN-sponsored international process. In 2004, a group of representatives of organisations from around the world formed the Durban Group for Climate Justice, to the end of co-ordinating multiple critiques of carbon trading and offset instruments such as the UN's World Bank-funded 'Clean Development Mechanism' (Lang 2021). Following

the disappointment and anger among activists at the 'failure' of COP15 in 2009, the Morales government hosted the World People's Summit on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth at Tiquipaya, Bolivia in April 2010, which was heavily attended by representatives of more radical governments and civil society organisations from across the world. In the same year, Mary Robinson, the former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, established the eponymous Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice in Dublin, which would become one of the most prominent and influential (if mainstream) voices in what was then still the burgeoning discourse of climate justice.

Given what I have just outlined, it makes sense to study the ways in which 'climate justice' appears, and is articulated, within the international. However, while this is a worthy scholarly undertaking, it could be conducted in a way that supports an unproblematised definition of the 'international' as a neutral set of global institutions through which states can tackle common problems. Rather, I am eager to stress that the international is not an innocent analytical category but, as has been recognised by some within International Relations (IR), an historically and politically constituted concept built upon European racial and colonial oppression (e.g., Grovogui 2001; Shilliam 2006; Jones 2008; Thompson 2013; Anievas, Manchanda & Shilliam 2014), the disavowal of which is necessary for the disciplinary coherence of IR (e.g., Henderson 2013; Davis, Thakur & Vale 2021). In other words, the international is not simply a bundle of apolitical institutions and procedures, but a preeminent site for the exercise of gendered, classed and racial power, and especially *whiteness* as a form of signifying power (e.g., Gabay 2018). Furthermore, the international is one of the primary authoritative spaces within which climate change is articulated as an object of and for governance, and, as this thesis will demonstrate, 'climate justice' is similarly articulated as an amorphous 'solution' to the crisis of humanism that climate change instantiates. To bring together these two premises, then, the articulation of climate change and 'climate justice' as objects for and of governance within the 'international' is a performative and thoroughly power-laden process. This, I should add, is not to discount the important ways in which 'climate justice' is articulated through the scales of the national, the local or the urban (e.g., Bulkeley et al 2013; Bulkeley et al 2014; Chu & Michael 2018), but to confirm that the international is my area of focus. Finally, a critical point is that for the purposes of this dissertation, climate change represents not a technical or scientific problem to be resolved (as is the case for most of the 'international community'), but a crisis threatening to overwhelm the fundamental values to which it cleaves and that secure its intelligibility. This is important as it encapsulates how my research examines how the 'international' *itself* intervenes in the politics of meaning-making. Some of the areas in which such meaning-making takes

place include bureaucratic forms of rule, the authority of international law, a liberal capitalist economic order, and an historically and culturally contingent figure of the 'human', to which I turn in the next section.

1.5 Climate justice, race and the crisis of the 'human'

In light of climate change but also the rapid development of information technology, cognitive neuroscience and bio- and nanotechnologies, the durability of the 'human' in western humanism is increasingly in question within the humanities and interpretative social sciences (e.g. Braidotti 2013). For Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009), for instance, humanism is at the heart of the climate crisis. Chakrabarty's argument is that 'humanity' is no longer simply a biological, political or moral agent, but now a *geological* one, as expressed in the 'Anthropocene' concept (2009: 206). However, despite having become a geological species-agent, and having abstract awareness of this, we cannot *experience* ourselves as such. Rather, such experiential knowledge that would help us make sense of our current, universal crisis is impossible to acquire. In sum, because of anthropogenic climate change, the figure of the 'human' must now be simultaneously read on two contradictory registers: as political subject and as geological agent (Chakrabarty 2012: 14). In becoming such a dispersed force, it has become impossible to think about 'human' collective existence in ontological terms.

If we think with Chakrabarty, then, the climate crisis has become thoroughly 'humanised'. This can be seen in the evolution of climate governance: through the 1980s and 1990s, climate change largely signified a scientific and technical problem, governable and resolvable through international mitigation treaties and changes to individual consumptive behaviour (see Stripple & Bulkeley 2013: 3). In more recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition of climate change's entanglement with questions of human rights, human well-being and injustice (e.g., Centre for Climate Justice, no date). 'Humanity' is under existential threat from the climate crisis, meaning that alongside mitigation, there is an urgent need to *adapt* to the new world 'we' have created. But what does 'adaptation' mean? Who is expected to adapt, and on whose terms? In their book *Climate Leviathan,* Wainwright and Mann (2018) argue that the adaptation of capital and sovereignty to climate change is inevitable: the politically important question is that of the *forms* this adaptation will take. I draw much insight from this, but I reorient the discussion around the 'human'. My argument is that the human – and humanism - are already in

the process of adapting to the climate crisis, and that ‘climate justice’ is emblematic of this insofar as it is an attempt to salvage white, western humanism in the guise of recasting climate action as ‘human-centred’ (be this in the form of ‘saving’ or ‘empowering’ the Other). That both humanism and the human are adapting – and need to adapt – is undeniable. Crucially, however, adaptation is not an innocent process (and indeed, never will be), but a power-laden one that both consolidates existing regimes of differentiation and generates novel ones. This differentiation takes many forms, but this thesis focuses on racialisation, and to a lesser extent, gender. Nonetheless, existing modes of adaptation are not necessary but contingent (Nelson 2014, 2015; Braun 2013): other adaptations of the human always remain possible and, what is more, necessary. Following Braidotti (2013: 93), we might see this as a call to practice the critical posthuman method of “de-familiarization” as “organized estrangement from dominant values” (ibid, 104). Remaking the ‘human’ anew, she writes, “is the focus of collectively enacted, not-profit-oriented experimentations with intensity, that is to say with what we are actually capable of becoming” (ibid, 92).

Before addressing the contextual relevance of this research, there are some final connections I wish to establish between ‘climate justice’, race and the ‘human’. I am eager to stress that rather than being in opposition, the humanist values espoused by the liberal international order, and the racial oppression upon which this order is founded, are inextricably bound up together (see Baldwin, forthcoming). Returning to ‘climate justice’, as I showed earlier in the chapter, the term articulates with an enormous range of analytics, concepts, and movements, and is positioned at the intersection of multiple political and intellectual genealogies. In addition to the social and anti-globalisation movements of the 1990s, I suggest in this thesis that ‘climate justice’ is also inseparable from a broader post-Cold War political formation in the West, in which the facilitation of individual freedom, security and development becomes central to political and social interventions (e.g. Sen 2001; United Nations Development Programme 1994; Duffield 2007). This ‘neo-humanist’ formation aligns with what Braidotti (2013: 38) has called “reactive post-humanism", and epitomising this position are contemporary liberal thinkers such as Martha Nussbaum (1999) who has reasserted universal humanistic values as antidotes to the fragmentation, ethnonationalism and alienation precipitated by the globalisation of capital. As summed up by Braidotti, Nussbaum is of the view that the posthuman condition is resolvable through “restoring a humanist vision of the subject” (2013: 39). Against a post-Cold War backdrop, the defeat of Soviet-style communism and the triumphalism of liberal capitalism meant that paradigms such as humanitarian intervention, human security and human rights were seen to supplant and transcend the need for ideological, but also nation-based, political

commitments. Concurrently, the many violent conflicts of the 1990s, the complexities of the post-Cold War security environment, and the emergence of new, global threats such as HIV/AIDS and climate change all contributed to a sense of a need for human-, rather than nation-centred approaches to well-being, security and development.

Among the most enduring and politically important of such approaches is human rights, which as I indicate in this thesis, are central to 'climate justice' as it surfaces within the international. Prominent advocates for 'climate justice', such as the Mary Robinson Foundation, have made human rights-informed climate action a central demand, and, in the case of climate-related displacement, campaigning organisations have called to extend international legal protection and recognition to those forced to migrate due to climate-related events, such as extreme weather (e.g., Environmental Justice Foundation 2021). I will argue in what follows that, in a similar manner to Nussbaum, 'climate justice' advocates asserting 'human rights' as central to climate action constitutes an attempt to resolve the crisis of humanism the climate crisis portends. For human rights, as Alana Lentin (2004: 433) tells us, rest on a disavowal of racism's inseparability from both universalism and a specific idea of 'the human', or 'Man'. In contrast, Lentin explains that in its individualising view of 'humanity', human rights discourse "equates the admittance of 'race' as a factor with discrimination on racial grounds itself" (ibid, 439). This is problematic, as it means that human rights discourse conceals racism's operation "under the guise of historicist progress", which, in turn "relies on promoting the belief that 'race' has no meaning" (ibid). In short, human rights represent a failed attempt to resolve the problem of racism, while continuing to uphold the "irrefutable reciprocity" between racism, modernity and, I would add, the international (ibid, 441). As I will demonstrate in the coming pages, 'climate justice' provides an opportunity to make visible the intersections between these various threads.

Having explained the importance of rethinking 'climate justice' in terms of performativity, the international, race and the crisis of humanism, I now consider some of the conjunctural factors that make this research a timely project.

1.6 Current context and rationale for the research

While not all would agree, I consider this research important for the following reasons. In general, attention to immediate context, to conjuncture, is crucial. As Stuart Hall (1988: 163) insists, as observers we must be attentive to "how different forces come together,

conjuncturally, to create the new terrain on which a different politics must form up". Given the tumult and events since early 2020, especially the Black Lives Matter uprisings provoked by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis and ensuing calls to defund the police, but also the overrepresentation of Black people in Covid-19 fatalities in many countries, there has been renewed visibility of the enormous power of race and structural racism in global politics. In short, this act of violence, and the uprisings in response, defined conventional accounts of political order. Rather than being confined to the 'domestic' or 'national' realm, the Minneapolis protestors' cries for justice were replicated globally, with people taking to the streets in defiance of coronavirus stay-at-home orders the world over (e.g., Rannard & Webster 2020). As the veteran Black British journalist Gary Younge (2021) recently argued, the brutality of Floyd's murder sharply contrasts with the pandemic, which highlighted, in Younge's words, the "banality of societal inequalities: the familiar, quotidian, bureaucratic complicity that results in far more deaths, even if they are less dramatic".

Most recently, the lack of global South, Indigenous and climate-vulnerable country representation (especially activists) at COP26, despite the UK COP President's promise to host the "most inclusive COP ever" (Sharma 2021) drew criticism from Mary Robinson for being "too white and elite" (see Freyne 2021) and exclusionary in culture, costs and accessibility (e.g., Bloom 2021; Kottosova 2021). These events have clarified, to both a UK academic and political audience and beyond, the associations between climate change, race and whiteness, and as such, they are 'primed' for a sustained critique in this area. These connections have been made more obvious, at least in the UK context, to an academic and left-wing political audience due to the UK-hosted COP26 in November 2021.

In a broader view, critical observers have drawn attention to the creation of new avenues for accumulation built around a global economic consensus, concretised at COP26, on 'Net Zero' (e.g., McFarlane 2021; Beuret 2021; Blanden 2021; Gabor 2021). As Nicholas Beuret (2021) has argued, at stake here is no longer, primarily, a lack of 'action', but an undesirable type of 'action' designed to secure the adaptation of private capital to conditions of climate change, and far from the 'Green New Deal' vision of a publicly owned, democratised transition (Wainwright & Mann 2018; Christophers, Bigger & Johnson 2020). Furthermore, the undesirable economic conditions in the aftermath of the pandemic means pressure on governments to restore long-term private sector profits, and few signs – at least in the UK context – of government inclination to bargain with organised labour. In this context, the right-wing UK government has responded to the demands of the so-called 'green recovery' by promising guaranteed returns for private

investors - including from fossil fuel companies - in the UK energy sector through a 'leveraging' of public finance (Beuret 2021): a project Adam Blanden (2021) has called "national rejuvenation through financialised means".

Significantly, this is what Blanden has labelled "competitive green nationalism," designed to accrue private sector profits to a British 'nation' conceived as a collective of asset owners, pensioners, and investors (in the same terms, not incidentally, as the Conservative electoral coalition), to the exclusion of the working class and global poor (Blanden, n.p.). This comes at the expense of committing to solidarity with global South countries, whose attempts to attract and establish fixed capital will be undermined by promises of guaranteed returns on investment in global North countries. Furthermore, the intensifying rush by investment funds, banks and individual billionaires to purchase rural land as 'natural capital' for carbon offsets, which while not restricted to global South countries, is poised to further entrench racialised dispossession, which is already attributed to offset schemes such as REDD+ and the Clean Development Mechanism, or CDM (see McFarlane 2021).

Given this, I suggest that our current moment is a fruitful one in which to make a critique of the whiteness and raciality of international climate change, to an audience of IR and international climate governance scholars, as well as geographers. As a whole, my hope is that this dissertation will serve as a prompt for geographers, international climate governance and critical IR scholars to engage in a dialogue between climate change and scholarship on race and whiteness. The forms such a prompt could take will concretise as this thesis progresses, but I make a start on this below with the introduction of my research aims and questions.

1.7 Research aims and questions

As I discuss in Chapter 3, this research began with a fascination with the amorphous term 'climate justice', and a nagging feeling that it should not be taken at face value. Therefore, the overriding aim of this research is to critically interrogate the term 'climate justice' as it appears in international climate change discourse. As with any PhD thesis, the point of departure for this research was a set of broad questions, which are included below:

1. When and how did 'climate justice' come to be constituted as a distinct area of knowledge and practice within international climate change politics?

2. To what extent – and in what ways – do race, racialisation, and the international intercede in conditioning the politics of meaning around 'climate justice'?
3. How might the concepts of climate justice and the 'international' be rethought in a 'postracial' world historical moment characterised by intensified nationalism and white supremacy?

As will be evident from above, the first question is fundamentally one of genealogy: I am concerned to identify not a stable origin point, but rather, the contingent, historical conditions that made 'climate justice' possible. This is of necessity a partial and incomplete endeavour: the scope of my investigation takes in international climate policy discourses between approximately 2009 and 2019, and turns a special focus on the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice, an organisation that emphasised advocacy, education and thought leadership and in existence between 2010 and 2019. As will become clear in Chapter 2, my aim in posing this question is not one of arriving at a new or enhanced definition of 'climate justice', but to interrogate some of its diverse significations. The second question seeks to reposition/resituate 'climate justice' among a new set of conceptual terms, including performativity, race, whiteness, the international and the human. The political, intellectual, and ethical rationale for doing so is made apparent in the third question, which focuses attention on how intensifying climate change is coinciding with a sharp turn towards authoritarianism, racial violence, and far-right politics (see Malm & the Zetkin Collective 2021). The following section outlines how I will address these questions in each chapter.

1.8 Chapter Outline

In this introductory chapter, I have set out the empirical and conceptual parameters for the thesis. Chapter 2 outlines its theoretical framework. I begin the chapter by building on Wainwright and Mann's (2018) argument that climate change inaugurates a fundamental adaptation of the political, and as a re-composition of elite power. Subsequently, this thesis argues that a primary mechanism through which this adaptation is secured is *signification, and specifically, the signification of climate justice***.** In contradistinction to much of the existing literature, which tends to either attempt to define a normative, political or legal foundation for 'climate justice', or to identify empirical examples of it 'on the ground', this thesis apprehends it

as a ‘floating signifier’ brought into being through the play of signification. Here, I engage Judith Butler’s (1993, 2010) concepts of performativity and the ‘frame’ to argue that ‘climate justice’ is never singular or coherent, but always in ‘excess’. Butler (2010: 24) argues the structure of frames is “iterable”, meaning that they can only circulate due to their reproducibility. However, this reproducibility poses an inherent risk to the frame: it must reproduce itself to circulate, but reproducibility is always partial and introduces a risk of the breaking apart of the frame. It is in this ‘break’, then, that political possibilities reside. What this means for my analysis is that ‘climate justice’ is not signified in a unified or consistent way, but instead appears as indeterminate and contingent.

The second part of this chapter unpacks another dimension of the adaptation of the political identified by Wainwright and Mann: it draws upon work by Goldberg (1993) and Kundnani (2021) to argue that ‘climate justice’ also presides over the consolidation of racial power. Following on from this, this consolidation of racial power is key to the reconsolidation, under the Anthropocene, of the ‘human’ itself. In this chapter, I also set out my conceptualisation of whiteness, as well as of the categories of recognition, resilience and adaptation.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter, with its discussion conceptually anchored in three themes: change/transformation, ‘closed openness’ and finally, ‘universal/particular’. The chapter has two aims: first, to develop a methodological tool for researching ‘climate justice’ and second, to account for *how* my chosen methods have allowed me to do this. The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. First, I conceptualise the international conference as possessing what I call ‘closed openness’, with the dialectic between ‘closedness’ and ‘openness’ representing a recurrent thread running through the chapter. Subsequently, in keeping with this thread, I then outline in full the conceptual basis for my chosen research design: a mixed-methods approach consisting of a discourse analysis of climate justice texts, a multi-sited ‘conference ethnography’ and semi-structured interviews with ‘climate justice’ researchers, advocates, analysts and policymakers. Finally, I critically discuss the challenges of conducting this research, with special consideration given to ethics, emotion and positionality.

Chapter 4, the first analytical chapter, draws on materials from my discourse analysis of ‘climate justice’ materials from the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice international climate discourses between 2015 and 2019. In brief, it appraises the liberal ‘international’ as a racialised order of governance and the first of three registers through which ‘climate justice’s’ recuperation of the ‘human’ unfolds. Specifically, it argues that climate justice – in context-specific instances - embodies and perpetuates *whiteness,* which I understand as an historically and geographically

differentiated form of signifying power. Further, whiteness is bound to constant reproduction by attaching itself to formations that are not transcendent, but historically constituted (ibid). From here, I argue that some 'climate justice' discourses can be apprehended as embodying 'international climate whiteness'. I understand this as an historically contingent form of power that operates through – and draws its legitimacy from – a cluster of institutional arrangements, discourses and affects that serve the reproduction of a certain kind of international order: one based on individual rights, liberal democracy, the rule of law and a broadly neoliberal economic consensus. Importantly, all the above work to shield histories of colonialism and imperialism from view. Having set down this conceptual basis, I engage Sabaratnam's (2020) framework of "epistemologies of whiteness" and Dwyer and Jones' (2000) "white socio-spatial epistemology", which comprise a useful methodological framework for analysing international climate whiteness. Essentially, Robinson's pronouncements on 'climate justice' are symptomatic of the shock of the Anthropocene, which has revealed the fundamental flaws of the White humanism undergirding the international order. Yet, it cannot remake itself anew, as this would amount to an admission of its own role in generating the crisis of the Anthropocene in the first place.

Building on this argument, Chapter 5 examines a second register of 'climate justice': the category of the 'most vulnerable' to climate change. More precisely, working from vignettes from my ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with climate change/justice professionals from the same period, and analysis of relevant documents, I advance two arguments. First, I argue that the 'most vulnerable' are positioned as a mobilising device on whose behalf the less-vulnerable are urged to demand 'action' from their political representatives. Second, I argue that a primary instrument for the securing of this moral economy is the idea of a 'new, [compelling] narrative' of climate change; one that reframes it as not just an 'environmental' issue, but also a 'people-centred' 'human' and 'social' one.

In order to parse this out, this chapter takes as its object of examination the devices deployed by this 'new narrative', and this proceeds in four parts. First, I argue that 'climate justice' is constricted by two often contradictory forces: it must be 'new' and 'compelling' enough to distinguish itself from existing or antecedent narratives of climate change, yet it must remain non-confrontational enough to hold appeal for - and indeed, create - a broad coalition of support. Therefore, I demonstrate how this narrative is constrained by a (perceived) need for 'consensus', which in certain instances, contributes to a presentation of 'climate justice' as palatably liberal and unthreatening. Second, I explore the notion of 'voices from the frontlines' as a key animating device in this narrative, specifically in relation to its constitution and

consolidation of the ‘most vulnerable’ to climate change as a distinctive narrative of ‘climate justice’ that, in the instances I describe from my interviews and field notes, work to distance ‘climate justice’ from accounts centring historical responsibility and capitalist political economy. Third, utilising tools from critical scholarship on multiculturalism (Hage 1998) and Indigenous scholarship (Coulthard 2014), I argue that these devices can be considered within the frame of ‘recognition’ and more specifically, in the reduction of ‘climate justice’ to a recognition of ‘difference’.

In Chapter 6, I use further analysis of reports, speeches and policy papers in order to examine a third register through which ‘climate justice’ discourse unfolds: the figure of the ‘human’ in need of adapting to climate change. I also use this final chapter to make a broader argument: that over the past ten years, there has been a shift towards seeing climate change in ‘human’ as opposed to simply ‘environmental’ terms. Put differently, there has been a shift in what ‘climate change’ has come to mean: the ‘human’ has taken its place alongside rising sea levels, melting glaciers, endangered polar bears and even hockey-stick graphs as a primary signifier of climate change. However, rather than stopping at the observation that climate change has been recast as a ‘human issue’, I wish to pursue these ideas further, by not only showing that the ‘human’ has become emblematic of climate change, but that the ‘human’ - and humanism - are themselves in the process of *adapting* to climate change. I suggest that ‘climate justice’, in the iterations I discuss in this thesis, is emblematic of this adaptation insofar as it is an attempt to salvage liberal humanism in the guise of recasting climate change as ‘saving the other’. Having said that, however, this is not the only human figure that populates international discourses of climate justice and adaptation. My second example, the flagship report from the Global Commission on Adaptation (2019), which describes the “human imperative” for a global project of adaptation to climate change, couches this human-centredness in a very different register: that of a universal human capacity to “shape the future” (GCA 2019: 9). It casts the ‘human’ as an agent with a history of overcoming adversity and as limitlessly available for protecting the planet and enabling human flourishing. I suggest that we can understand this in terms of the autonomist Marxist concept of the “social factory” (Negri 1991), the phenomenon where, under post-Fordist conditions, the “activities of social reproduction become direct sources of value” (Nelson 2015: 462). To apply this insight in the domains of climate adaptation and resilience, human skills, experiences, tacit knowledges, social relationships and even intra-community or intra-family struggles become prized commodities for the unfolding global processes of adaptation and resilience to climate change.

However, there are also gendered assumptions underpinning the figure of the exemplary, 'adaptive' climate subject. In these conceptions, women figure as especially vulnerable to climate change, but also as holding the "keys" to adaptation (Robinson & Verveer 2015). In other words, fostering gender-inclusive and 'empowering' approaches to adaptation will not just be beneficial for women, but will also enhance climate adaptation itself (Robinson & Verveer 2015; Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice 2015; The Elders 2021). To examine this, I analyse a cluster of texts considering how to make poor women from vulnerable communities into agents of adaptation, to the end of pursuing 'gender-responsive' approaches to climate justice and the production of 'resilience'. Finally, I conclude with some reflections on how to think 'resilience' anew.

The conclusion (Chapter 7) draws all the arguments in the thesis together and considers each of my research questions in turn. Finally, I reflect on some limitations of the study, and suggest some potential directions for future research.

1.9 Research Contributions

My thesis makes substantial theoretical and methodological contributions. First, to my knowledge, there has to date been no primary research examining the activities of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, which is undertaken in this thesis. My research also takes an innovative theoretical approach by considering 'climate justice' as performative. In contrast to much existing literature, which either attempts to define a normative, political or legal foundation for 'climate justice,' or to examine how it is being articulated through national, local or urban geographies, this research apprehends it as a 'floating signifier' bound up with the play of signification.

Second, my thesis takes an innovative approach to ethnographic research, and I also write specifically about the challenges of conducting participant-observation at the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties. Given that within geography, there is not an established critical practice of examining the 'international' as a space (though see Legg et al 2015), this represents a notable contribution in this area.

This thesis contributes to, and continues, the longstanding tradition within geography of critical examination of climate change (e.g., Demeritt 2001; Hulme 2011; Bulkeley & Newell 2015, Swyngedouw 2010, 2013). While there is a solid base of research on climate change among

critical IR scholars (Burke et al 2016; Chandler, Cudworth & Hobden 2017; Chandler & Grove 2017; Chandler, Müller & Rothe 2021; Hamilton 2018; Conway 2019; Rothe 2019), there is currently little work in this vein that considers climate change alongside critical theorisations of race and whiteness (though see Tilley 2020 on race, extractive industries and plantation ecologies). Finally, it stands to contribute to a rich pool of recent scholarship within geography on race and climate change and/or the Anthropocene (e.g., Clark 2010; Clark & Gunaratnam 2019; Yusoff 2018, Bettini 2014; Last 2018; Gergan, Smith & Vasudevan 2020; Bosworth 2021), as well as on race and whiteness and how they produce ecologies and spaces of 'sustainability' (e.g., Slocum 2007), in addition to whiteness more broadly (e.g., Bonnett & Nayak 2003; Nayak 2007, 2011).

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Following on from the context and justification outlined in the introduction, this chapter develops a detailed theoretical framework for the thesis. I begin by situating the thesis in proximity to Wainwright and Mann's (2018) argument that climate change brings about a fundamental *adaptation of the political,* a process involving a recomposition of elite power. I use this chapter to argue that *signification* is a primary mechanism through which this adaptation is secured, and more specifically, I argue that the signification of 'climate justice' plays an important role in the adaptation of the political. Here, I engage with Judith Butler's (2010, 1992, 1993) concepts of performativity and the 'frame' in order to argue that 'climate justice' is *performative.* This leads me on to the 'international' as a primary site of the circulation of 'climate justice'discourses. Following critical scholars in International Relations theory, I present the international not as a set of apolitical institutions and procedures, but a preeminent site for the reproduction of *whiteness* as a form of signifying power. Not only this, however, it is also an authoritative space for political meaning-making around climate change. To bring together these two premises, then, the articulation of climate change and 'climate justice' as objects of and for governance is a performative and thoroughly power-laden process: a point I expand on further in my methodology (chapter 3).

Furthermore, in distinction from Wainwright and Mann's centring of the terrain of class struggle, this thesis also situates *race and whiteness* as some of the principal 'grounds' upon which the adaptation of the political plays out. This gives rise to the following questions: how does the frame operate *racially?* And how can performativity help explain how 'climate justice' functions racially? Here, I conceptualise race not as a vestige of an incomplete overcoming of a racist past, but as central to the social, cultural and political ordering of neoliberalism (e.g., Goldberg 2008; Kundnani 2021). Moreover, following Baldwin (2012; 2016) and Gabay (2018), for its part I conceptualise whiteness not simply as an identity based on skin colour, but a form of unstated signifying power with the capacity to lay claim to the purported 'universal'. To bring this together with 'climate justice' and performativity, I argue that there is an unspoken whiteness that operates as a "frame" (Butler 2010) which secures the meaning of 'climate justice' at the level of the international: an argument I develop more fully in Chapter 4.

The final part of the chapter reflects on how the 'human' is being reconfigured in the age of the Anthropocene, aided by Braidotti's (2013) conception of the posthuman and Goldberg's notion of the "anthroporacial" (2015) as an interesting, if incomplete, insight into the adjustments in the relationship between race, the human, and the Anthropocene. Put simply, climate change is bringing about an adaptation of the 'human', and this adaptation is a power-laden process that consolidates existing regimes of differentiation while also generating novel ones. I round off the chapter by reflecting on three examples of such discursive regimes (which I engage with in chapters 5 and 6): recognition, adaptation, and resilience.

2.2 'Climate justice' as adaptation of the political

This section's title is borrowed from Wainwright and Mann's (2018) book *Climate Leviathan.* Their account uses conjunctural analysis, a Gramscian method later elaborated by Stuart Hall (1987), which emphasises the "conjuncture" as the coming together, in Hall's words, of "often distinct though related contradictions, moving according to different tempos, but condensed in the same historical moment" (Hall 1988: 41). Following Gramsci, Wainwright and Mann argue that liberal hegemony is undergoing an 'organic' crisis in which the political categories of liberalism continue to hold sway yet have been exposed as fundamentally inadequate to our world historical moment of climate breakdown (2018: 97). This leaves political subjectivity and epistemology in an intractable bind: liberal common-sense cannot resolve the crisis, but it nonetheless remains indispensable as our conceptual inheritance that informs our understanding of the world. Wainwright and Mann's argument comes in marked contrast to, for example, Erik Swyngedouw's (2010, 2013) 'post-politics' thesis, which holds that climate change heralds the demise of a 'properly' antagonistic politics. In this formulation, climate change epitomises the neoliberal consensualisation of politics, in which political debate is reduced to technocratic discussion of how best to manage – rather than transform - conditions of unfettered market relations, globalising capital and rising inequality. A consequence of this is the nurturing of apocalyptic imaginaries, which Swyngedouw argues are integral to the new cultural politics that sustains capitalism. These imaginaries turn on a representation of climate change as a global humanitarian threat, at stake in which is a flattened-out, universal 'human' that, in its relinquishing of all internal conflict or difference, appears as a reactionary subject devoid of historical agency. In summary, the question, in Swyngedouw's words, is not one of

"bringing environmental issues into the domain of politics", but rather about "how to bring the political into the environment" (2013: 2).

While I share Swyngedouw's discomfort with how climate change articulates with neo-Malthusian and state-of-exception narratives (2013: 4), his assumption of the separability of 'politics' and 'the environment' is problematic. His claim - shared broadly by Zizek and Badiou - that climate change has brought about a "post-political" condition is reliant, I suggest, on a universalist conception of the political, as it assumes the demise of 'politics' in a uniform fashion everywhere. To this, I would add that this understanding of the political is reductive, and I argue this for the following reasons. In their critique of the 'post-politics' thesis, Wainwright & Mann (2018) insist that the political is not being eviscerated by climate change but is *adapting* to it. Specifically, they point out that always already enfolded in the post-politics thesis is a separation between the 'political' and the 'not political'. Accordingly, in a rebuttal of arguments that (1) the realm of 'politics' is receding towards its inevitable demise, and (2) that climate change has been irreversibly emptied of political content, Wainwright and Mann insist that climate change entails – and necessitates – a fundamental *adaptation* of the political (2018: 78). In other words, the political constitutes both "the ground upon which the dominant and dominated is worked out" *and* that upon which this domination must be unmade (ibid, 80).

This method of conjunctural analysis, and the political thought from which it draws, represent a rich, vibrant and politically vital resource for our current political condition. Wainwright and Mann's conception of the political as the site of navigation of the relation between dominant and dominated holds substantial empirical merit, as does their refusal to lose sight of how relations of domination appear and operate differently under distinct sets of historical conditions. However, I am concerned that as an account of the adaptation of the political put in motion by climate change, Wainwright and Mann's thesis is over-reliant on an analysis of class (re)composition to the detriment of other axes of difference that cut across and discipline the 'human'. For while climate change discourses have become thoroughly 'humanised', the figure of the 'human' is taken as a historical given within these very same discourses. It is for this reason that I gave my thesis the title 'Climate justice as adaptation of the **human**', as it represents an homage to Wainwright and Mann's contribution, while also reaching further out towards critical International Relations: an audience to which I hope to address my work. In particular, I reach towards IR scholarship such as that by Mitchell and Chaudhury (2020), where they argue that at stake in white futurist discourses on 'the end of the world' is not the 'end of the world' as such, but the end of whiteness and its accoutrements. The authors counterpose

these white futurist projections with rich interventions from BIPOC futurisms, which confront legacies of colonial dispossession and genocide while embracing plural subjectivities and mobilities, hybridity, and multiple, non-linear temporalities. Returning directly to the current argument, however, in my questioning of how the 'human' is taken as a historical given, posthumanism is where I part company with Gramscian Marxism, turning instead towards poststructuralist feminisms and new materialisms. In naming my thesis 'In the remainder of this section, I parse out the following questions: what happens in the turn towards anti-humanism? And what can poststructuralist feminisms and new materialisms tell us about the operation of *power* that Gramscian Marxism cannot?

Here, it is appropriate to briefly trace the origin of these traditions of thought to the period following the Second World War. At this time, humanism had already been betrayed in its very tenets by European fascism, which had attempted the extermination of ethnic minorities and other groups regarded as 'degenerate', as well as the wholesale destruction of European critical theory. Meanwhile, the moral vindication of communism for its resistance to Nazism would eventually wane among political radicals and intellectuals in western Europe. The particularity of this conjuncture – the continued embrace of humanism in the wake of its most murderous betrayal – can be parsed out through the post-war feminism of Simone de Beauvoir, who remained steadfastly attached to humanist principles of philosophical inquiry. These principles necessitated and underpinned a common grounding among women; in accordance with the tenets of existentialism, if a woman is to take account of herself, she must also take account of the situation of *all* other women. In different terms, we might say that this is an incitement to speech on behalf of a universal womanhood. As Rosi Braidotti explains:

> *The theoretical premise of humanist feminism is a materialist notion of embodiment that spells the premises of new and more accurate analyses of power. These are based on the radical critique of masculinist universalism, but are still dependent on a form of activist and equality-minded Humanism* (2013: 22, emphasis added).

What Braidotti is addressing here is how feminists robustly criticised the masculinism of the 'revolutionary' left but remained complicit with the basic premise of its worldview: that it is possible *to find and speak 'the truth' about power,* which is always conceived as universal, unidirectional, and oppressive. It is perhaps ironic that despite its professed yearning for

collective freedom and emancipation, the political influence of the USSR among the orthodox left nurtured a doctrinaire attitude to the interpretation of Marxist texts and philosophy. The turn to poststructuralism and deconstruction was in direct reaction to this interpretative stranglehold and was pivotal for the development of anti-humanism. It is no coincidence that the epistemological and moral rupture of poststructuralism is typified by Foucault's announcement of the 'Death of Man,' as it questioned the arrogation by Marxism to (deliberately gendered) 'Man' of the status of the "motor of human history" (Braidotti 2013: 23). It is here that the complicity between the humanisms becomes clearer. Just as liberal, Enlightenment humanism regards the human-as-individual as perfectible, socialist humanism is similarly invested in the potential perfectibility of collective political arrangements, as well as claims about power. It is possible, in other words, to defeat the malign, obfuscating effects of ideology and arrive at a more accurate, 'objective' diagnosis of power. What this approach elides is that the thinking 'I' (and indeed, the thinking 'we') is itself an artefact of power, forged in and through its operation. Taking this approach to power alters, in a methodological sense, the act of theorising (Braidotti 2013: 27). Rather than functioning simply at the material level, Foucault's radical reordering of truth, knowledge, and power illuminates how power operates through *systems* of theoretical and cultural *representation* and, what is more, that these systems are neither rational, nor totalising, nor coherent.

Broadly speaking, then, post-structural analysis of the type used in this thesis locates the exercise of power on a different terrain than does Gramscian conjunctural analysis, and this lends itself to the approach – conceptual and methodological - I have chosen for the research. Undeniably, some formations of power lie outside of the absolute historicist purview. It is difficult to study the class composition of a particular set of historical circumstances without resorting to some degree of methodological nationalism, as strategies of the reproduction of elites and class formations will of necessity be different in the United States compared to, say, in India. By the same token, studying these formations of power necessitates a corresponding methodological approach involving an extended period of ethnographic research concentrated within one geographical area or institution such as, for example, *Imperial Nature,* Michael Goldman's (2005) study of the World Bank in its adaptation to the era of 'environmental sustainability'. In contrast, for me, the important question is this: what does locating my study within the 'international' allow me to do and say that a conjunctural, absolute historicist analysis would not permit? The 'international' is not one place, it does not have a consistent, continuous existence. It is brought into being through its repeated invocations and materialisations: in short, it is *performative.* It is to performativity that I now turn.

2.3 ‘Climate justice’, performativity and signification

Performativity is an important conceptual underpinning for this thesis. In contrast to the logical positivist view of language as essentially constative, John Austin (1975) named specific sets of statements as ‘performative’; observing that in contexts such as the making of a will or a marriage ceremony, “the issuance of the utterance is the performing of an action” (Austin 1975; cited in Loxley 2007: 8). Austin’s constative-performative dichotomy was reworked most significantly by Derrida, for whom it left unexplored the possibility of statements functioning in ways that were unanticipated. To remedy this, Derrida introduced the critical notion of *iterability* as something that both enables *and* constrains, which proved a radical break with existing understandings of our relationship to language. Iterability enabled Derrida to reconceptualise language not as inanimate or mechanical, but as interceding in “our purposes and meanings at their origin” (ibid); therefore forming the condition of *both possibility and impossibility* for a proper speech act.

Judith Butler (1988, 1990) draws on Derrida in their reworking of performativity, which poses a far going challenge to feminist theory and politics. Contextually, it is noteworthy that Butler’s uptake of performativity was motivated by politics and more specifically a concern for the position of feminist politics and philosophy in the final years of the twentieth century. Butler noted that at the core of a specifically feminist politics was (and, indeed, is still) the need for a stable subject of ‘woman’ to which this politics could refer and in whose name it could agitate. Politically, a crucial takeaway from performativity is that what is taken to be a pre-given abiding ‘subject’, ‘centre’, or ‘self’ is an ontological void. There is no pre-discursive identity that is *expressed, or revealed,* by the performance of a set of acts. Rather, it is a series of stylized performances that brings this identity into being: these acts “effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal” (Butler 1999: 180). To put this once again in feminist terms, there is no prior, given subject of ‘woman’ to whose will feminist politics gives expression. Rather, this subject has been forged through the intellectual and political activity of not only feminism but also patriarchal regimes of power.

In contrast to the performative as elaborated by Austin, Butler’s reworking of performativity is cognisant of the political and compulsive function of norms. This is what Michel Foucault meant when he insisted that power is ‘positive’ (productive): to compose a body is to confine it within an array of limits. Another way of putting this would be to say that these forms of ‘productive’

power “serve to constitute that which they merely claim to know” (Loxley 2007: 121). However, it does not necessarily follow from this that our identities, recognised and forged as they are through the disciplinary, classificatory and regulatory work of the discourses in which they are formulated, are singular or simple (see Loxley 2007: 122). Butler also takes up these arguments in *Frames of War,* which grapples with the discursive and visual fields of warfare in the post-9/11 world. Here, they reflect at length on the concept of the frame (both visual and textual), and how it is complicit in the production of lives as differentially valued, with some lives being expendable since they are not apprehended as ‘lives’ at all. To put this the other way around, life does not precede its recognisability *as a life,* and the frames do not simply organise our visual experiences but also generate “specific ontologies of the subject” (2010: 3). However, while frames wield significant power, they are also structurally vulnerable as they can never fully determine what is seen. This means that calling the frame into question is a political imperative to show that “the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable” (2010: 9). Furthermore, the frame generates the conditions of its own undoing. In producing a figure that is ‘living’ but not a ‘life’, normativity produces and is haunted by a “relentless double whose ontology cannot be secured” (ibid, 8). For Butler, while performativity does enact normalising and disciplining work, since the embodying of (gendered) norms is never fully determining, it also presents opportunities for the *disruption* of this work. Bringing this back to frames, their structure is “iterable”, meaning that they can only circulate due to their reproducibility. However, this reproducibility poses an inherent risk to the frame: it must reproduce itself to circulate, but reproducibility is always partial and introduces a risk of the breaking apart of the frame. It is in this ‘break’ that political possibilities reside.

What this has to do with ‘climate justice’ may so far seem unclear, but performativity represents a valuable resource for my study for the following reasons. First, performativity is politically important because it allows for contingency; problematising the attribution of essences, or stable definitions. Instead, it allows us to think not in terms of what a norm or frame ‘is,’ but what it *does.* In other words, it does not take any characteristics or attributes of ‘climate justice’ to be essential, avoiding the need for normative statements about what ‘climate justice’ is, has been, should be, or will be. This means that in what follows, instead of arguing that ‘climate justice’ ‘is’ ‘racist’, ‘is’ post-political, or ‘is’ pro-capitalist, I explore how context-specific instances of ‘climate justice’ *discourses* draw upon and interface with other (already existing, but themselves multiple and contingent) discursive resources including climate science, political economy, (neo)liberalism, recognition, and difference. This is important for methodological reasons, as

performativity lends itself to a discursive analysis insofar as it allows for focus on such context-specific instances of discourse, which I expand on further in chapter 3.

Furthermore, it is necessary to set this conceptual approach in the context of much existing research on ‘climate justice’, which as I showed in Chapter 1, is heavily normative and based on ethics, frameworks, and narrow sets of principles. Butler’s argument in *Frames of War* is about norms: the norms of warfare, which emerge through different framings. The confining of ‘climate justice’ around a particular set of norms (for example, human rights, recognition, or procedural or distributive justice) amounts to an exercise of power. As I demonstrate subsequently in the thesis, certain actors have the power to determine the norms in relation to which climate justice is defined. To directly address normative approaches to ‘climate justice', these are oftentimes grounded in frameworks such as those of John Rawls or Anthony Giddens, and they locate their analyses of the problematic of climate change as causative of human rights violations. In other words, ‘climate justice’ is defined ontologically in opposition to ‘climate injustice’. However, unlike in other cases (such as wars or genocidal regimes), it is seldom possible to identify the perpetrators of human rights violations linked to climate change. As such, the task facing researchers and practitioners is to adapt the global human rights regime to accommodate such challenges (Mihr 2017: 50). Questions that proponents of such an approach tend to ask include: who can and who should take responsibility for human rights violations, and be held accountable for the consequences of climate change (ibid, 49)? Holding such perpetrators accountable is a significant step on the road towards the “achievement” of climate justice, as Anja Mihr expresses:

> *Climate justice envisages international human rights standards that are governed and implemented in the most accountable, transparent and participatory way. The concept of justice aims to treat all people equally and to uphold their human rights in the face of the multiple threats that climate change may create* (2017: 49).

A circular logic is immediately evident here. For it to be tenable, climate justice must entail a commitment to human rights, and for these to be upheld, there must be justice: in other words, justice is human rights, and human rights is justice. Put another way, the answer to ‘climate injustice’ as a violation of human rights is more human rights. Consequently, there is no questioning of the terms through which the cause is articulated. To pursue this line of critique

further, we can turn once again to Butler. In their 1992 essay ‘Contingent Foundations’, Butler unpacks how there is always a pre-supposed subject position that is necessary for the articulation of normative politics. In other words, the ‘subject’ of politics is always assumed *a priori.* Butler’s riposte to this is that there is no subject that precedes its articulation, but that it *comes into being* through this articulation. Critically, the notion of an already-formed ‘subject position’ is a power-laden assumption in that it positions this subjecthood as universal and beyond critique: what Butler calls the “foundationalist move” (1992: 8). As summed up by Butler (1992: 7): “[t]o establish a set of norms that are beyond power or force” is itself a form of power that “sublimates, disguises and extends its own power play through recourse to tropes of normative universality”. Doubling back to ‘climate justice,’ then, I contend that the fact that ‘climate justice’ appears as always-already determined by liberal notions of justice and human rights is not only illustrative of a mechanism of normative power, but also spotlights a fundamental shortcoming of normative approaches to ‘climate justice’: a failure to interrogate the normative, political and historical weightiness of ‘justice’ and ‘human rights.’ Put more succinctly, ‘climate justice’ does not exist prior to power, but it is within the very exercise of power that it is imbricated and forged. Stating, for instance, that ‘climate justice is people-centred' instead of affording expression to an already existing ‘people’, is *constitutive* of the subjectivity of this ‘people’ that it merely purports to describe.

While I do not suggest that the existing focus on rights and ethics is ‘wrong’ or misplaced, I do argue that there is an ethical responsibility to advance understanding of how ‘climate justice’ is constructed (in the first place). In other words, the question most urgently at stake here is not one relating to a definition of ‘climate justice’, nor of whether (and how) it can be achieved. Rather, the question I am asking is: what does ‘climate justice’ do?

Finally, Butler’s conception of performativity is amenable to the spirit of ‘immanent critique’ and a recognition of our radical inseparability, as critics, from the terms and categories we seek to critique. What this means is that instead of making the category/term in question redundant, critique opens possibilities for the category/term to be signified in unforeseen ways. Put another way, that a term is constituted does not mean it is determined, but that this constitution is the very *precondition* for the term’s agency (Butler 1992: 15). Here, it is generative to read Butler alongside Wainwright and Mann, who locate the ‘political’ as the “ground” upon which “the relations between [the] dominant and dominated are worked out” (2018: 80). Butler’s theorisations of performativity and the frame can substantiate this, as they provide an account of how signification constitutes a domain in which relations of domination are negotiated, and in

which political possibility resides. As Butler tells us, to deconstruct “is not to negate or to dismiss, but […] to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorized” (ibid, 15).

2.4 The international

There is an overwhelming assumption that it will be in the ‘international’ sphere that climate change will be resolved and climate justice ‘delivered’. No one country can do this alone, and there is still much investment in the annual international climate talks as catalysing ambition and creating a favourable policy environment for business to put forward its climate plans and emissions cuts. To illustrate this argument, I will briefly revisit the story with which I opened this thesis. A significant part of the outrage about the protestors’ expulsion from COP25 stemmed from the fact that the UNFCCC had stripped the protestors of their attendance passes (known as being ‘de-badged’). This had symbolic power as it demonstrated their exclusion from wielding any kind of influence on the trajectory of the negotiations. While the UNFCCC Secretariat eventually reinstated their conference passes, and though most protestors were under no illusions about the timidity of the international climate talks, a sense of anger and grievance persisted; a sense of having been marginalised from the ‘international’.

What the COP25 incident also dramatically reinforced was an idea that the ‘international’ constitutes not a cluster of universal, neutral institutions that permits the participation by countries and organisations in global politics, but rather is freighted with a power to exclude those deemed to pose a threat. Importantly, these are both structurally racialised. By the same token, orthodox International Relations theorists have tended to conceptualise the ‘international’ as a privileged realm distinct and eminently separable from domestic politics. For example, Martin Wight, one of the foremost British IR scholars of the twentieth century, conceived the international as a “zone of exception” (cited in Davis et al 2021: 11), whilst the discipline writ large anchors its universal claims in the key concepts of the state, borders and anarchy and privileges certain kinds of knowledge over others. However, deferring to these concepts, and accepting IR’s predication on anarchy and the Westphalian state system that excludes colonial

societies, belies the systematic cleansing of race and colonialism from IR analysis of the international (ibid, 9). While race and imperialism are not the only categories excluded from the purview of most IR scholarship (see for e.g., Han & Ling 1998; Owens 2018; Richter-Montpetit 2018), they are the subject of this chapter section.

In short, it is critical to grasp that, despite appearances to the contrary, IR's apparently universal, value-free precepts, such as world peace, anarchy, and the state, are always already racialised. In the following paragraphs, I outline examples of what this means. Historically, the right to speak for, speak within and inhabit the 'international' has been restricted to a select few, usually white Euro-American men. Additionally, despite the discipline's 'founding myth' - namely, the safeguarding of world peace at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and later the founding of the League of Nations - its motivation was the generation of knowledge to facilitate the maintenance of colonial control by 'superior' races over 'inferior' ones, as well as to secure continued access to the riches of the "tropics" (Kidd 1898: 15). For example, in their study of the Round Table, a network of British imperialists in the 1900s, Davis et al (2021) demonstrate that the desired 'world peace' was in fact envisaged as "permanent imperial control under the British empire" (3). Three things are important here: first that this enterprise was legitimated through its association with the 'scientific method'; second that it facilitated the cultivation of a sympathetic 'epistemic community' that would ensure the continuity of such ideas about knowledge; and finally that central to it was race-thinking, and specifically "colonial, racialised, essentialist and hierarchical ideas of culture and civilisation" (ibid, see also p. 9). Crucially, while the envisaged permanent British imperial control ultimately did not materialise, the Round Table was instrumental to securing IR's status as an academic discipline anchored in rigor and objectivity. Many rich critiques have, however, contested this self-endowed disciplinary status**.** For example, Errol Henderson draws on early IR texts to argue that racism and white supremacy are inherent to the discipline's foundational precepts, namely anarchy. Henderson identifies the 'social contract', central to the dominant realist paradigm, as embedded within a broader "racial contract" (Henderson 2013: 79; see also Mills 1997). Drawing on Charles Mills (1997), he shows how social contract theory, and the idea of the 'state of nature' in particular, is inseparable from the context of European colonisation and settlement of the 'New World'. Relatedly, Krishna (2001: 401) notes how the discipline of International Relations' privileging of theory-building over historical analysis allows it to whitewash the "violence, genocide and theft" that were foundational to the "encounter between the rest and the West in the post-Columbian era". On the question of the state, Branwen Gruffydd Jones (2013) argues that the discourses of good governance and state failure, while appearing to be shorn of explicit racial reference, operate as

an underlying logic of hierarchy and difference that has legitimated western intervention since the Valladolid debates of 1550, where the humanity of the 'Indians' - and thus their fitness for enslavement – was a source of fierce contention. Drawing on Barnor Hesse's (2007) conception of epistemological racialisation, Jones convincingly underscores how while race appears silent in contemporary international thought, it is reinscribed and reproduced under new, context-specific guises, such as the lexicons of 'development' and 'modernisation' in the Cold War period, or *Foreign Policy'*s 'Failed States Index' (ibid, 74).

A conception of race as a diffuse relation of power recalls the insights of critical race theory (Hesse 2007; Goldberg 2009), which are also influential within the field of postcolonial/critical IR. With a nod to Ann Stoler, Thompson (2013: 45) suggests that both IR and comparative politics are afflicted not by racial amnesia but racial *aphasia,* which implies "a *calculated* forgetting, an obstruction of discourse, language and speech" (45, emphasis added). Writing against the grain of much constructivist work on norms in IR, Thompson is hesitant to approach race simply as an idea, pointing out that were this the case, the principles of race equality would enjoy universal acceptance. As such, Thompson insists that race be apprehended not only as ideational, but also as social and material (2013: 48). Central also to her argument is that race is *global*. This means both that it was born in the transnational realm, and that it has been mutually co-constitutive with and of all major modern transnational movements. These comprise not only 'obviously' racialised movements such as slavery, abolitionism and eugenics, but also ostensibly race-neutral ones such as suffrage, Keynesianism, human rights and terrorism. This assessment is important in how it centres connections and interactions. Rather than positing 'Europe' as the historical origin-point from which derive all ideas and developments, race is at once local *and* global: a set of power relations that manifests itself across intersecting geographic and temporal scales (see also Goldberg 2009: 15). Taken together, these and other critical interventions have looked afresh at the 'international' not as an innocent, ahistorical set of institutions, but as a *system of thought* historically and materially founded upon and within racialised subordination and dispossession. More fundamentally, they have helped to de-centre the privileged position of the nation-state in IR by establishing race as having originated in the transnational realm.

This work is valuable as it captures how the 'international' as a sphere or 'space' is premised upon the epistemological silencing of race (Persaud & Walker 2001: 374, see also Hesse 2007). However, the history of the 'international' has been one of a struggle to define it, and the dominant early twentieth century imaginary of the 'international' as marked by 'race wars' and

bloody conflict between ‘civilised’ states over ‘under-exploited’ resources has always been contested. Indeed, at the forefront of challenges to territorial conceptions of sovereignty and political organisation were trans-national and/or extra-territorial movements and intellectual currents (see Shilliam 2006; Younis 2017), many of which were anticolonial or anti-imperialist in character. For instance, WEB Du Bois’s “global color line” was a central principle of pan-Africanist anticolonial politics. Additionally, Shilliam (2006) has shown how Marcus Garvey’s founding of the Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914 constituted a challenge to the Westphalian model of sovereignty and a reclamation of the African continent for its exiled peoples. Further, Younis (2017) observes how despite rapidly strengthening nationalisms, the period between 1871 and 1914 also saw a proliferation of transnational racial affinities such as pan-Islamism, a period that also coincided with a burst of rejuvenated white domination and supremacism (Kidwai 1908; Younis 2017: 492).

Important to grasp here is that the dominant version of the ‘international’ asserted at any given juncture is only understandable in the context of broader prevailing institutional and intellectual currents. Amid the threat of a rising tide of anti-imperialist energy as represented by transnational affinities, it is worth asking: did the constitution of the ‘international’ serve to close down alternative political and geographical imaginaries following the trauma of ‘total war’? Indeed, it is crucial to contextualise the ‘international’ within a longer history of attempts to quash the appeal of Bolshevism and then state socialism among populations in the (formerly) colonised world, and as Jones concludes in her analysis, state failure discourse must be seen in the context of the deliberate charting of an “alternative non-revolutionary path of social and political change and progress” for newly independent states (2014: 72). At this fraught juncture, as Sunera Thobani (2007: 150) has observed, a sense of an “international crisis of whiteness” proliferated throughout the West (see also Baldwin 2012: 175; for a detailed discussion of post-war whiteness in Britain, see Schwarz, 2011). While this sentiment was propelled by the genocidal policies of the Nazi regime, the ravages of war and the resulting surge in immigration to ‘white’ nations, at stake also was the white world’s sense of *racial order.* The Nazi genocides had thoroughly discredited scientific theories of racial supremacy, which had hitherto enjoyed widespread respectability among white Europeans and had informed state policy in countries such as Canada (Thobani 2007: 151). Such racial science thus became impossible to defend publicly, contributing to a profound, though geographically differentiated, sense of dislocation of white identity (ibid, 152). While work of this kind has been immensely rich and varied, it has tended to neglect the role played by questions of the environment in structuring the relationship

between race and the international, which is where this research stands to make a substantive contribution.

Furthermore, there has been a missed opportunity here: this subsection of critical IR scholarship has not – to my knowledge - conversed with geographical scholarship on race and whiteness more generally. One exception to this is recent work by Clive Gabay (2018), which represents perhaps the foremost example of combining work on whiteness with a critical outlook on both IR and 'international relations' (though see Sabaratnam 2020). With a focus on pre- and post-2008 'Africa rising' narratives, Gabay makes an important observation: the idea that Western civilisation is the exclusive preserve of phenotypically 'white' people has, over the past century, grown increasingly unstable. However, this has happened *in spite of* Whiteness retaining its dominant position in the structure of the international order. Pointing out a mid-century shift away from a view of 'Africa' as trapped in a primitive, anterior time and towards narratives of a 'rising Africa' from as early as the 1940s, Gabay (2018: 24) counters the assertion, common to much of the postcolonial scholarship on Africa and the 'Western Gaze', that this continent has always been racialised as "Africa-as-deviant" or "Africa-as-behind". In contrast, Gabay's analysis brings into view another, no less racialised sensibility, prevalent in upbeat accounts of African economic buoyancy, which sees in Africa "a potential to save White vitality from a degraded West" (ibid). This is significant and extremely useful for my argument for three principal reasons. First, it shows how upper-case Whiteness[2] ('whiteness' as civilisational standard) has been progressively untethered from 'whiteness' as phenotypical marker, which reveals the unstable and protean character of both. Consider, for example, how groups whose admittance into both Whiteness and whiteness has always been contingent have, in the context of recent events, been re-racialised, such has been the case in recent years for people from eastern and central Europe in Britain. Indeed, the very category of the 'white working class,' which has been recuperated amid intensifying political turmoil in Euro-America since the events of 2016, is unthinkable outside of race (see Shilliam 2018). Second, it underlines how the anxieties associated with whiteness are not the exclusive preserve of the overtly racist Right. Third, and most importantly, it brings us closer to a conceptualisation of the 'international' as a space that is not only racialised, but structurally enabled by Whiteness (capitalised) as a set of apparently universal and ahistorical civilisational standards. Meanwhile, Sabaratnam (2020)

[2] In this thesis, I do not capitalise 'whiteness' unless I am demonstrating how another author makes a distinction between different valences of 'whiteness' (as, for example, Clive Gabay does when he distinguishes between upper-case Whiteness (as a set of civilisational standards) and lower-case whiteness (as phenotypical marker or skin colour). In all other cases, I refer to 'whiteness' in the lower-case, and 'phenotypical whiteness' when I refer specifically to skin colour.

questions the “discomfort” and “consternation” displayed at moments when IR’s collective disciplinary conversation turns towards race (9). She points to how the flourishing pool of postcolonial critique in IR has emphasised Eurocentrism and race but not whiteness, as well as to an under-engagement in critical IR with how whiteness shapes *contemporary* international epistemologies. I provide a fuller account of this in Chapter 4, but for now, it is appropriate to turn to my conceptualisation of race and racialisation.

2.5 Race and racialisation

As I established earlier on, this thesis is situated in proximity to Wainwright & Mann’s (2018) account of climate change as enabling the reconsolidation of class power, but that this account underemphasises the reconsolidation of *racial* power. Here, I want to acknowledge that this reveals a rift in my analysis: a bracketing of race from class. However, I stress that this is not a distinction I wish to reify. I acknowledge and fully subscribe to Stuart Hall’s insight that the structures through which labour is reproduced are not simply “colored” by race but work *through* race (Hall 2018 [1980]: 215). Given the above, then, I turn to Hall in order to bridge this gap in my political analysis. I suggest that a point common to Butler, Gramsci and Hall is a sense that all meaning, and all would-be hegemonic formations are incomplete and in the process of being worked out; in short, nothing can be taken as ‘given’ in advance. Politics, in other words, can be understood as the continuous struggle to secure the meaning of specific phenomena, but the significance or meaning of any one phenomenon is contingent, and so cannot be taken in advance as a ‘given’. Additionally, I read Gramsci’s insistence on the malleability and openness of politics as resonant with Butler’s conceptions of performativity and the frame: the frame is the locus of politics, the terrain upon which political identities are constituted and produced (Butler 2010). Finally, I take Gramsci’s attentiveness to historical specificity as consistent with a focus on questions of difference (Hall 2018 [1980]: 207).

This thesis is informed by work on race and whiteness drawn from both within geography and elsewhere, and it takes Stuart Hall’s (1997) conceptualisation of race as its point of departure. Hall’s argument is that since the mid-twentieth century, constructions of race have been detached from the domains of biology, genetics and anatomy. Just as the ‘truth’ of race cannot be derived from biology or genetics, the social characteristics of a person cannot be fixed in explanation in their racial identity (1997). Despite this however, physiological definitions of race

persist in the collective common sense. Having been shown the door, this conception tends, in Hall's (1997: 7) words, "to sidle around the veranda and climb back in through the window".

So how can the enduring persistence and power of race be explained? Hall argues that race is a "floating signifier" that operates more like a language than as a system of biological classification (Amin 2010). Acknowledging that this seems counter-intuitive given manifest differences between the physical appearances of individuals, not to mention the reality of racial violence, Hall explains:

> *The argument I want to make to you is that* race works like a language*. And signifiers refer to they* [sic] *systems and concepts of the classification of a culture to its* meaning making *practices. And those things gain their meaning, not because of what they contain in their essence, but in the shifting relations of difference, which they establish with other concepts and ideas in a signifying field* (Hall 1997: 8, emphasis in original).

What Hall means by this is that the meaning of race can never be determined in advance, or outside of, its relationships in a field of signification, and that this meaning can never be definitively fixed. In short, it is not essential, but relational. It has a "constitutive outside", whose "very existence the identity of race depends on" (Hall 1997: 8). This, however, does not mean that Hall is advocating for a "purely textual or linguistic position" (1997: 10) in which race only exists in the play of the text. Rather, it is possible to concede that some differences may exist, but that what matters are the *systems* within which these differences are made intelligible. Therefore, the great strength of Hall's conception is that it refuses the (false) equivalence sometimes made; namely that if one concedes that race is a social construction, it therefore cannot also be 'real' and indelibly inscribed onto bodies. Hall also demonstrates that these signifying systems have a history, and that they are rooted in the production of discourse/truth (especially scientific truth). 'Truths' exert an important function here, not in the sense of 'objectivity', but insofar as they lend fixity - and therefore authority - to something that cannot be secured. They "warrant and guarantee the truth of differences, which they discursively construct" (ibid, 13).

David Theo Goldberg (1993; 2009) has also made a substantive contribution to discursive understandings of race, especially with regard to the relationship between race and modernity. He identifies a peculiar paradox at the heart of modernity: its commitments are explicitly 'universal' in scope, yet it is precisely this that opens them up to being determined by "racial

specificity and racist exclusivity" (1993: 4). Race, as he influentially argued, is not an anachronistic vestige of a pre-modern era, but central to the social, cultural, and political ordering of liberal modernity. Accordingly, racism is *not* irrational or necessarily biologically based, hierarchical, ideological, or geared towards the domination of its referent object (ibid, 94). Neither is it a homogeneous phenomenon. Rather, racisms, to use Goldberg's words, "assume their particular characters, [and] have different entailments and ramifications in relation to specific considerations of class constitution, gender, national identity, region, and political structure" (ibid, 91). One example of a contingent reconsolidation of race is Goldberg's account (2009) of "racial neoliberalism", which brings about a wholesale transformation of the operation of race and racism. Namely, since the demise of what Goldberg calls "state racism" (embodied by the South African apartheid regime), race and its effects were privatised, going from questions of public law to personal morality (2008: 363). Contrary to widespread misconceptions, neoliberalism is not geared towards dismantling the state, but remakes it by redirecting its resources towards a different set of interests. State spending is rerouted towards those with existing capital to spare, whilst those 'uncooperative' populations who refuse to comply are subjected to policing, discipline and the threat of imprisonment or death. In the actual patterns of government expenditure, there is a shift away from comprehensive state welfare provision and a sharp increase in the outsourcing of state functions to private and charitable institutions, including the familial household (see Cooper 2017). In tandem with this is a core neoliberal idea: that sovereign individuals should be able to exercise their preferences as they see fit. This has immediate relevance for race. The decision taken by the vast majority of white people to live among other white people, for example, can be imputed not to any structural conception of discrimination, but to personal choice and the expression of individual self-interest (2009: 341). States may remove references to race in legislative documents, as was recently the case in Sweden (see Goldberg 2015). In concert with this conceptual 'disappearing' of race, *racism* becomes more restricted, yet also more diffuse. On the one hand, it is confined to only the most extreme fringes of opinion (so that only extremist individuals can be considered racist), yet racism also becomes reduced to the mere *invocation* of race (e.g., in specious charges of 'reverse-racism').

Furthermore, crucially, anthroporaciality should be seen as at the heart of neoliberalising postraciality. The 'Anthropocene', as will be shown subsequently, is contemporaneous with the increasing porosity of the 'human', as well as the rapidly blurring distinctions between the categories of 'human', 'animal' and 'machine' (see Braidotti 2013). This fundamentally alters the character of racism: it is decoupled from the human, and instead turns to face the future. In

other words, the register of race moves from past-oriented (as in racial historicism, racial naturalism) to future-oriented. It is also fitting to indicate here that while the continued utility and relevance of postcolonial analysis have long been questioned (e.g., by Dirlik 1997), the existential crises embodied by climate change and the Anthropocene mean it is being questioned anew. These crises, it is alleged, threaten to make postcolonial theory's fundamental attachment to humanism seem anachronistic (Jackson 2014). They raise the question of how a commitment to the 'human' can stand up given the growing currency of the 'posthuman' (see for e.g., Braidotti 2013). Although postcolonial theorists have begun to grapple with these questions (Chakrabarty 2009, 2012; Spivak 2012, 2015), it remains to be seen whether this 'stretching' of postcolonial critique is sufficient. For postcolonial theory, wedded as it is to a humanist project of dethroning a universal 'human' subject, the planet and nonhuman are not 'graspable' and exist "in the species of alterity" (Spivak 2012: 338). Indeed, Spivak issues a rejoinder to imagine an alternative vision of the global by reimagining "the subject as planetary accident" (2012: 339). Likewise, for Chakrabarty the Anthropocene introduces the human as a *geological* agent; a figure we must learn to think "non-ontologically" (Chakrabarty 2012: 13). In short, postcolonial theory struggles to encounter the planetary and the nonhuman as political co-conspirators with the human (see also Baucom 2020). Despite these struggles, this project is wary of its potential complicity in the de-legitimation of postcolonial theory. Instead, this project asserts the continued relevance of postcolonial theory on the grounds that mainstream narrativisations of the Anthropocene are complicit in the dehumanization of racialized and Indigenous communities, and postcolonial theory can – and should – be instrumental in bringing this to light. In other words, far from becoming superfluous in an age in which difference dissolves in the face of climate catastrophe, postcolonial theory becomes indispensable to challenging the elision enacted by the term 'human' and the problematic temporal displacement of the Anthropocene.

In a different register, scholars have long critiqued the presumed universality of the modern human, arguing that race was – and is - central to its constitution (McKittrick 2015; Wynter 2003). Situating his argument within the tradition of Black studies of not only critique, but as an archive of "alternatives" (2014: 3), Alexander Weheliye underlines the historical excision of race from accounts of dehumanisation in European philosophy, the most enduringly influential being Giorgio Agamben's figure of *homo sacer* and Foucault's biopolitics. *Homo sacer* can be killed but not sacrificed, which condemns him to a state of 'bare life' devoid of all accoutrements of political subjectivity. The function of modern politics, for Agamben, is the production of bare life (1998: 9) as "eradicating divisions among humans along the lines of race, religion, nationality, or

gender" (Weheliye 2014: 34). In his objections to this (2014: 8) Weheliye draws on work by Sylvia Wynter (2003), as well as Hortense Spillers' discussion of the flesh as 'raw material' (2007: 300) in order to show how Black people are figured as falling "outside the constitutive parameters of humanity". This is important for this research, as it addresses the ways in which the universality of the modern human has been assumed.

Despite all the disavowals, then, it is clear from these theorisations that nominally liberal, democratic societies are among those *most* defined by racial characterisations. Barnor Hesse (2007) addresses this through his concept of 'racialised modernity'. In short, he argues that the systems of thought within which 'race' was gestated and elaborated were both colonial *and* liberal, and it is to these systems that the discursive-spatial categories of 'Europe' and 'non-Europe' owe their existence. Importantly for Hesse, race was a category indispensable to the reconsolidation of 'Europe' as a secular and cultural construction (in around the 17th-18th centuries), which was contiguous with the dawn of modernity. Hesse focuses in on perhaps the most iconic philosopher of European modernity, GFW Hegel, who famously identified modernity with the spatial unit of Europe as the 'end of history'. In his reading of Hegel through Habermas, Hesse identifies modernity as marked by a particular subjectivity, which consists of four components: individualism, right to criticism, autonomy of action, and idealistic philosophy. He argues that these are all racial signifiers, an argument he expresses in the following passage:

> *Cast against the spatial imperium of the Western enterprise,* ***individualism*** *signifies both the 'European' demarcation of itself as a continent and its expansionism; the* ***right to criticism*** *conveys the justification of the anthropological 'European' gaze; the* ***autonomy of action*** *expresses the Westphalian colonial mandate of 'European' nation-states; and* ***idealist philosophy*** *inscribes the global legislative role of 'European' culture* (2007: 652).

This passage, and Hesse's entire argument, are highly productive in their insistence on race as having an effect beyond the corporeal: race has never 'just' been about skin colour. Indeed, raced bodies (those colour-coded as 'white', 'black', 'brown' etc.) have consistently been "indexed" to a range of phenomena including dispositions, climates, cultures, histories and religions (2007: 654). As we will see, this bears a striking resemblance to Gabay's (2018) insight about the "historical genius" of whiteness. Accordingly, among Hesse's most productive insights is his outlining of three types of racialisation evident in Hegel. First is *cultural:* the assignment of

colonial meanings and significations to different assemblages. *Governmental* racialisation, furthermore, refers to the social routinisation and naturalisation of regulatory power that is exercised by Europeanised over non-Europeanised assemblages (656). Third, and most importantly, *epistemological* racialisation is a mode of organising knowledges that is geared towards the valorisation of 'Europeanness' and the denigration of 'non-Europeanness'. Crucially, in the exercise of this power, all explanatory references to coloniality are excised; in other words, European coloniality disavows race rather than recognising and acknowledging it as its own creation. What sets modern racial meanings apart from their pre-modern analogues is, for Hesse, that they are endowed with a differential essence and an *unchangeability* that takes on institutional and representative form (Hesse, 2007).

This last point raises important questions. *In what forms* does racism persist within political and legal systems that expressly forbid race-based discrimination? How does "racist culture" continuously reinvent and transform itself across time and space, and what kind of discursive expression does it permit and support? Third, perhaps most weighty for my research, what does racism look like at a time when its explanatory, anchoring referent – a conception of 'nature' with which the Other can be identified, and against which the 'human' stably defined – has been displaced? As suggested by the name, "racist culture" includes ideas, attitudes, norms and values, but also literary and artistic expressions, media representations and architectural forms. Most important for my research is the idea that race is a chameleonic and parasitic concept that presents itself as ahistorical and, in Goldberg's words, "insinuates itself into and appropriates as its own mode more legitimate forms of social and scientific expression" (ibid, 107). In other words, domains that appear devoid of the racial are in fact saturated with it. In accordance with this, race is performative: meaning it is far more productive to investigate what it *does,* rather than what it may appear to *be.* It also suggests, following Dwyer and Jones, that there is a particularly pressing need to deconstruct those spaces, identities and formations that present themselves as most normative and self-actualised (2000: 212; see also Kobayashi & Peake 2000).

2.5.2 Whiteness

Furthermore, this thesis concerns itself with what light can be shed by the discourse and practice of 'climate justice' on the contemporary politics of whiteness. At first glance, whiteness appears to refer to a racialised subject position that is invisible and has attracted critical

attention from geographers, especially over the past two decades (Baldwin 2012: 182; Kobayashi & Peake 2000: 399). Many accounts of how whiteness has been treated in geography begin with work by Bonnett (1997) and Jackson (1998), who foreground whiteness as a serious object of geographic scholarship on race and racism. In a single sentence, this work points to how such research has, understandably, focused on the experiences of people of colour, while the ways in which *white* subjectivity constitutes racial discourse comparatively overlooked. For Jackson (1998: 99), the turn to viewing race and gender as rooted not in biology, but in history and politics, holds analytical power in that it can identify how they have been constructed differently across time and space, along with their material consequences. In addition, while conceding that geographers have generally not produced the most innovative research in this area (unlike, say, cultural and literary theorists), Jackson (1998: 99) highlights the merits of shifting analyses onto dominant groups, noting that it is they who have "traditionally exercised the power of definition". In a much-cited paper, Bonnett (1997: 194) observed that the effacement of whiteness as a 'racial' identity or subject position is remarkable, especially given the level of scrutiny directed at the various racialised groups 'encountered' by white people. At stake in this erasure, for Bonnett, is a privileging of whiteness as non-relational, which also permits the naturalisation of whiteness (195; see also Jones III & Dwyer 2000). Additionally, such a non-relational conception of whiteness allows whiteness as a category to sit outside of history and geography, frustrating careful analyses of the diverse ways in which it has been constructed across time and space (Bonnett 1997; see also Kobayashi & Peake 2000).

While these insights, pointing as they do to the naturalisation of whiteness and its effacement as a subject position, form an important starting point, they have been – and will be – pushed further here. Specifically, I ask which questions arise if we treat whiteness not as an identity or set of cultural practices, but as a form of power, and a form of power that works through repetition? It is instructive (here) to delve deeper into the relationship between whiteness and temporality. Baldwin (2012) has suggested that most existing geographic research on whiteness revolves around some notion of the past, serving to reproduce a teleological assumption of the future as "the terrain upon which white racism will get resolved" (Baldwin 2012: 174). In his review, Baldwin also provides a useful typology of existing treatment of race, splitting existing scholarship between, first: Labor studies and whiteness as economic value (see Roediger 1991); second, white identity as it is rendered in postcolonial scholarship; and third, the route

provided by so-called 'Critical Whiteness Studies' or CWS (Baldwin 2012: 174).[3] Through the outlining of this typology, Baldwin initiates a dialogue between studies of whiteness and of futurity, and invites geographers not to remain attached to the future as the presumed terrain of resolution – or absolution – of white racism, but to reflect on whether, and with what effects, governing through the future constitutes and reconstitutes various forms of whiteness (2012: 184). While clearly a racialised subject position, the relative silence around whiteness makes it appear invisible and ontologically prior to that which it repudiates, such as Blackness or indigeneity (see Baldwin, 2012; Bonnett, 1997). However, Baldwin (2012) contends that whiteness(es) are contingent and performative, and can only be understood in terms of their various "founding repudiations" (Baldwin 2012 180; see also Butler 1993). Crucially, whiteness does not solely function to denigrate its 'others' but also to generate support for their acceptance, accommodation and protection (Baldwin 2012: 179; Baldwin 2016). On this basis, and particularly given the degree to which race is featuring in geographical debates around the consequences of intensifying climate change (Davis & Todd 2017; Gunaratnam & Clark 2012; Smith & Vasudevan 2018; Gergan et al 2018; Yusoff 2018), it is appropriate to consider the discourses and practices of climate justice through the conceptual lenses of race and whiteness.

What kind of understanding of whiteness, then, does this research presuppose, and how does it align with performativity as my established conceptual framework? In this thesis, I understand Whiteness as a form of signifying power (Kobayashi & Peake 2000; Bonnett 1997, Jackson 1998; Hesse 2007; Inwood & Bonds 2016). This includes the power to draw lines, classify and categorise and draw distinctions (Jackson 1998). The protean character of whiteness and its shapeshifting ability to appear as (for example) a form of subjectivity or a set of cultural practices, are a function, I argue, of its power. One of my priorities in this chapter section is to extricate whiteness from the confines of vernacular discussions about 'white privilege' or 'white fragility' (e.g., DiAngelo 2018). While they have precipitously gained popularity in recent years, these concepts – and the representation-based responses they often presuppose - are limited and limiting (though see Guerra 2021). Importantly, whiteness is not reducible to the speech acts or conduct (manifestly racist or not) of phenotypically white individuals (though it can lay

[3] This current is highly fraught, particularly in its deliberations about the relationship of CWS to its own object (whiteness) and, indeed, whether the very existence of CWS serves to reify this object (see Wiegman 1999; Ahmed 2004, 2007). While critically important, a full elaboration of these debates lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

claim to these). Rather than an individual racial or cultural identity, whiteness is shaped by the exercise of power and "the expectation of advantages in acquiring property" (Roediger 1991).

To the end of engaging a more productive conception of whiteness, then, it is important to establish that whiteness is a form of *power* that works through *reproduction*. As a starting point, it is important to establish that racial domination is fundamentally mobile and supple, changing in accordance with economic and political structures (Sivanandan 1990). Of critical importance here is David Goldberg's (2009) account of "racial neoliberalism", referred to earlier. For Goldberg, racial neoliberalism is a political and economic condition under which racial statements or discourses are detached from any obvious reference to race. It is no longer a question of "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva 2017), but of "racism without racism" (Goldberg 2009). By the same token, race goes from being a prerogative of the state to one of individual preference, while political or sociological statements foregrounding racism as a structural problem are discounted. Some recent work from Kundnani (2021) can add colour to our understanding of how the 'privatisation' of racism works under neoliberalism. Kundnani argues that rather than being a remnant of neoliberalism's incomplete defeat of historical racial legacies, racial domination has its own forms that are peculiar to, and generated by, neoliberalism. The former position, which is one defended (albeit to varying degrees) by theorists including Wolfgang Streeck, David Harvey and Wendy Brown, sees racism as interacting with neoliberalism "from the past," impeding the universalisation of market-based forms of rule (Kundnani 2021: 52). Instead, a racialised idea of culture is key to understanding how neoliberalism manages its own limitations, and at the core of these limitations are the "surplus populations" it creates. After a close reading of Friedrich Hayek's theory of cultural evolution, Kundnani (2021: 64) explains that:

> *Ideologically, neoliberalism is haunted by the existence of these surplus populations. They signify* ***a limit to its reach, a failure to universalise, a space from within which resistance is generated*** *[…] Race enables the limits to the universalisation of neoliberalism to be naturalised and universalised: political opposition to market systems mounted by movements of the global South or racialised populations of the North is read by neoliberal ideology as no more than the acting out of cultures inherently lacking in traits of individualism and entrepreneurialism. Neo-racism does its ideological work by displacing the political conflicts generated by neoliberalism onto the more comfortable terrain of clashes of culture* (emphases added).

What Kundnani describes above is “neo-racism”, enabled by the resolution of political opposition to the universal market system through recourse to a racialised cultural conception of surplus populations. Importantly, this presupposes a specific cultural foundation – individualism, self-reliance, private property, and entrepreneurialism – which despite its particularism, is given the gloss of universalism and thus appears as unmarked. In other words, the logic of market rationality must be both ‘universal’ *and* fundamentally ‘Western’. However, the existence of the “surplus populations” he describes are a constant reminder of this unresolvable contradiction. Neoliberal racism constantly generates the conditions of its own undoing, and this can be productively read alongside Judith Butler on the frame. Just as the frame must break apart as it circulates (in Butler’s words, this “self-breaking becomes part of the very definition” (2010: 10)), racism – and I would argue, whiteness - creates the conditions for its own demise and is in constant motion, through the appropriation of acts of resistance to it (see also Sivanandan 1990). This move to appropriate, or capture, will reappear later in the chapter, when I consider resilience and adaptation (see sections 2.8.1 and 2.8.2). For now, however, I wish to emphasise what is at the heart of my conception of whiteness: that it is a form of power with the ability to lay claim to the ‘universal’. In the following paragraphs, I demonstrate how whiteness as a form of power can be said to circulate within the ‘international’.

In this thesis, I conceptualise ‘international climate whiteness as an emergent yet unmarked formation that attempts to resolve the intractable political conflicts between both limitless capital accumulation and the need to prevent further destabilisation of the climate system and the achievement of meaningful racial justice through an (albeit partial and contingent) embrace of the political discourses of ‘climate justice’ and ‘recognition’. I elaborate this fully in Chapter 4, but for now I provide the following background. This is something Baldwin (2016: 86) gestures towards in his conception of “white affect”, which “cultivates a racial sensibility through an affective proxy that makes no explicit mention of race”. The cultivation of this white affect enables the reconsolidation of climate change and migration as a problem of race. Importantly, though, white affect is not reducible to fear. As Baldwin (2016: 81) explains, what animates climate migration discourse is not a generic fear of a racial Other, but “a *desire* to preserve the apparent normalcy of an imagined social order that the monstrous, future-conditional climate change migrant threatens to overwhelm” (emphasis added). What this tells us is that whiteness does not predominantly turn on the dialectical mechanism of the self/Other relationship, but instead on the mobilisation of futurity: a desire to maintain existing social and spatial

arrangements. In my specific context of international climate whiteness, this takes the form of confining racism not only to the past, but to a minority of extreme actors, since acknowledgment of an intrinsically racial present would mean changing existing social and spatial arrangements.

Emerging here is a different picture of whiteness which, importantly, is not fully determined by skin colour. Rather, it is a geographically differentiated and historically constituted form of power, with the ability to lay claim to various subject positions, including that which purports to be universal (one embodying individualism, freedom, entrepreneurialism etc.) (Baldwin 2012, Bonnett 1997). However, as such it is unmarked and therefore remains invisible. This means that it is not only available to phenotypically White people: indeed, the capacity of some individuals racialised as not-white to embody whiteness, and to secure (even conditional) access to its accoutrements, is what characterises and enables the power of whiteness. In other words, as well as separation and containment, whiteness is paradoxically (also) about "reaching out to the Other" (Slocum 2007). Furthermore, it carries a material and psychical reward, akin to the "wages of whiteness", for those able to embody it (Roediger 1991). For example, the senior Black British and British Asian politicians in the UK's Conservative government derive much of their power from the fact that they embody whiteness without being white, which enhances their legitimacy and bolsters the government's - and the party's - claims to 'not-racism' (Lentin 2018). This is important because it gestures towards a novel form of racism: one that is no longer primarily characterised by instances of overt discrimination towards individuals racialised as not White. Instead, it strategically instrumentalises and exploits racialised individuals' own experiences of racism to lay claim to 'not racism', while turning the charge of racism round onto those critical of it: the so-called 'real racists'. In response to left-wing criticism of UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak's personal wealth, the Black cabinet minister James Cleverly said, "The left really don't like us BAME[1] people being successful" (cited in Okundaye 2020). This is a deliberate conflation of class and race: it frames what was simply a critique of Sunak's millionaire status as an insinuation of racism and it takes his wealth as a signifier of his proximity to whiteness. Accompanying this is an appropriation of the racism that Sunak, as a British Indian person, has no doubt experienced. As Okundaye (ibid) observes: "[a] right-wing economic agenda can be articulated through ostensibly race-conscious rhetoric". This is arguably a function of the decrepitude of whiteness. Amid crisis and the supposed deterioration of its habitual bearers (phenotypically white people), it now needs a reinvigorated subject to adopt its mantle. As argued convincingly by Clive Gabay (2018), whiteness is underpinned by its "historical genius" of individualism, liberal democracy, bureaucracy and neoclassical economic order; which we

might point out, has a resonance with Hayek's "genius of the West" (quoted in Kundnani 2021: 60).

To an important extent, geographies of whiteness build off postcolonial theory insofar as white identity finds expression through the "denigration of cultural others" (Baldwin 2012: 179; see also Said 2003), though postcolonial theory does not engage significantly with whiteness. However, as Baldwin also underlines, whiteness expresses itself not just through hostility towards and domination of these others, but also through acceptance, tolerance, and protection (see also Goldberg, 1993). Given this, critical inquiry pertaining to exactly *how* this materialises in international governance spaces pertaining to climate justice and climate change is an excellent way to develop geographical understandings of whiteness. A geographical intervention, 'White socio-spatial epistemology', can help flesh this out. Dwyer and Jones III (2000) demonstrate how whiteness, and white identity, come to appear as self-contained and non-relational. This is useful for my analysis insofar as it points to how whiteness claims the mantle of the universal: to lay claim to the 'universal' is to disavow the 'Other' (see also Butler 1992). Put another way, whiteness does not account for its origins through a constitutive relationship with an Other; rather, it regards itself as self-determining and self-sustaining, a function of historical time. Dwyer and Jones unpack this non-relational understanding of subjectivity through the proxies of distance and boundaries, and then spatial mobility. The first, drawing on James Baldwin's (1998) remarks on the spatialisation of unequal status under racial segregation, underscores how non-relational white subjectivity works in and through the built environment in the US (specifically Lexington, Kentucky) even after the dismantling of formal segregation. Dwyer and Jones give the example of how, in order for a white suburb to be reproduced as a "safe", "predictable" and "orderly" space, it is reliant upon the epistemological – as well as physical - containment of all that is "menacing", "volatile" and "disorderly" within the "ghetto" (2000: 214). The second thinks with bell hooks' reflections on the fears felt by Black subjects travelling through the whitened national territory of 'America'. This underscores how spaces are not empty or neutral containers, but instead are co-constitutive with white supremacy (Dwyer & Jones III, 217). In contrast, white subjects' easy mobility through local and national space stands as the exception rather than the norm, as the two authors neatly express using the tagline of an old advertisement for Mastercard: "Accepted wherever you end up". Critical from hooks' account is that this hostility is a product of the spaces themselves, meaning there is no need for white people to be present.

Yet, while Dwyer and Jones's analysis generates an astute elaboration of white socio-spatial epistemology as it is produced in and by both local and national space, it stops short of examining the purchase these questions might have in *international* space as a hierarchical system of thought that maintains a Eurocentric, racist *world* order. While in a different register and evidently not sharing in its epistemological and ontological commitments, this gap might recall the assumption regnant in liberal or neo-Kantian IR that the 'domestic' context can be neatly sealed off from the 'international'. To recap, then, the aim of this section has been to draw a specific geographical understanding of whiteness (white socio-spatial epistemology) into conversation with critical IR scholarship on whiteness (Gabay 2018; Sabaratnam 2020). The results of this will be brought most productively to bear in Chapter 4. For now, however, I proceed to a critical discussion of conceptions of the 'human' and humanism as they pertain to 'climate justice'.

2.6 The 'human' and humanism

In this thesis, I am drawing together a diverse set of theories, including post-structuralism and, as we will see, posthumanism and autonomist Marxism. My claim is that these literatures can be read together in a productive dialogue, and that a point where they intersect and resonate is that of *contingency,* or in a different theoretical vocabulary, *conjuncture.* A brief justification of this argument is in order. In first place, the idea of contingency is central to Judith Butler's conception of performativity insofar as there can be no advance prediction of how the 'frame' is broken, reproduced, and subsequently reconstituted. In Butler's example of the Abu Ghraib photographs, while these photos' display and circulation constitute the "public condition under which we feel outrage and construct political views to incorporate and articulate that outrage" (2010: 78), they do not determine the *specific forms* the outrage - or indeed, the political views - will take, or the ways these will be articulated. More fundamentally, as Butler writes in 'Contingent Foundations', contingency and a comprehensive, expanded 'universal' are not mutually substitutable notions. They write that:

> *It may at first seem that I am simply calling for a more concrete and internally diverse "universality," a more synthetic and inclusive notion of the universal, and in that way*

> *committed to the very foundational notion that I seek to undermine. But my task is, I think, significantly different from that which would articulate a comprehensive universality. In the first place, such a totalizing notion could only be achieved at the cost of producing new and further exclusions. The term "universality" would have to be left permanently open, permanently contested, permanently contingent, in order not to foreclose in advance future claims for inclusion. Indeed, from my position and from any historically constrained perspective, any totalizing concept of the universal will shut down rather than authorize the unanticipated and unanticipatable claims that will be made under the sign of "the universal." In this sense, I am not doing away with the category, but trying to relieve the category of its foundationalist weight in order to render it as a site of permanent political contest (1992: 8).*

In my reading of the passage above, Butler's claim is that there can be no conception of the 'universal' (however internally diverse and capacious) that does not reproduce the very notion of the 'foundation' they seek to critique. Therefore, I read this as an argument for a politics and ethics based not on a capacious universality, but on *contingency.* In second place, strongly influenced as they are by Spinoza and Deleuze and Guattari, posthumanisms see the human (and nature) as characterised not by "essences or stable forms", but in a state of constant reinvention, without a *telos* or a final cause (Braun 2014: 2; see also Braidotti 2013). In third place, as we will see later, Sara Nelson argues compellingly that contingency can be seen at the heart of the autonomist insistence that transformations to the mode of production are a response to resistance, rather than the other way around (e.g., Virno 1996). What this means is that there is not a necessary relationship between neoliberalism and, say, 'resilience', but a contingent or conjunctural one (see Nelson 2014).

The question of the 'human' animates, in various ways, all these sets of theory. In turn, critical examination of the 'human' in the context of climate change is inseparable from the putative onset of the 'Anthropocene' (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000; Lewis & Maslin 2015). In this section of the chapter, I provide an overview of some critical scholarship on the Anthropocene that keeps the politics of race in whiteness within its purview. Subsequently, I introduce an argument that the 'Anthropocene' moment has occurred in conjunction with a sustained questioning, within the humanities and interpretative social sciences, of the figure of the 'human'. Finally, I consider some of the forms this questioning has taken, before establishing their relevance for this research project.

2.6.1 The Anthropocene and the 'human'

Since at least the last decade, it has become commonplace to argue that human actions have steered the planetary environment into a new epoch, most often known as the 'Anthropocene'. The human imprint on the earth has been so extensive and profound that it registers in the geological record (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000; Lewis & Maslin 2015). Proposed by Crutzen and Stoermer in 2000, the Anthropocene was originally dated from the early eighteenth century in line with the invention of the steam engine and taking in a period when "the global effects of human activities [had] become clearly noticeable" (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000). While there has been no formal designation of the Anthropocene by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ISC) as a whole, its Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) supports locating a key stratigraphic marker in the mid-twentieth century to coincide with the 'Great Acceleration'. These processes underline how the confirmation of the Anthropocene designation is intensely political, as well as illuminating the role of the international in conditioning the making and unmaking of the world, not to mention the question of on whose terms it is discussed. However, the Anthropocene has registered as an urgent conjuncture only more recently, and the popularisation of the term has triggered a series of intense debates in the humanities as well as in the geo- and social sciences. For instance, Crutzen and Stoermer's initial periodization has since been contested. Comparing the Industrial Revolution and the Great Acceleration[4], Lewis and Maslin (2015) conclude that a GSSP (Global Boundary Stratotype Section and Point) marker, or 'golden spike', could be positioned at 1610. This date marks, first, the mixing of the previously separate 'Old World' and 'New World' biotas, or the 'Columbian Exchange'. It also marks a sharp decline in the human population of the Americas, and subsequent near cessation of farming and reduction in atmospheric CO_2, due to the arrival of the Europeans and the resulting genocide, disease, enslavement, war and famine (Lewis & Maslin 2015: 175). The authors note that this choice has political import, as it "implies that colonialism, global trade and coal brought about the Anthropocene" (ibid, 177) and that the date chosen "will affect the stories people construct about the ongoing development of human societies" (178).

[4] The 'Great Acceleration' is coterminous with the second half of the twentieth century and its intensified human imprint on the planetary environment as a result of population growth, increased GDP and FDI, energy consumption and telecommunications. These are reflected in increased global temperature and greenhouse gas levels, ocean acidification, terrestrial biosphere degradation and fish capture.

There has since been an energetic dialogue, both inside and outside geography, around how the coloniality of the Anthropocene is modifying and re-arranging the political (e.g., Clark 2010; Yusoff 2015, 2018; Gergan et al 2018; Davis & Todd 2017; Whyte 2016; Di Chiro 2017). These debates have focused on the evasion of questions of race in favour of the production of a universal humanity, as well as the ways in which the Anthropocene's temporal designation conceals histories of colonisation. Gergan, Smith and Vasudevan (2018) locate this whitening of the Anthropocene in the animating tropes of Hollywood 'cli-fi' and apocalypse films, concluding that "the global crisis heralded by the Anthropocene reveals deep-seated fears of […] the decline of [normative] white civilization". On the latter point, Zoe Todd and Heather Davis (2017) assemble a rich array of Indigenous scholarship to argue that far from a new development, the Anthropocene represents the continuation of five-hundred-year-old processes of dispossession and genocide, which were inextricably tied up with the settler-colonial drive to bring about a wholesale transformation of the environment. Building on this, they assert that in its erasure of difference and its severing of humanity from other relations, the Anthropocene serves an ideological function insofar as it enacts a "deliberate extension of colonial logic" (Todd & Davis 2017: 771; see also Whyte 2016). Meanwhile, in the context of recent debates around the 'geo' and political geology, Yusoff (2013) argues for a 'geologic turn' that "takes seriously not just our biological (or biopolitical) life, but also our geological (or geopolitical) life and its forms of differentiation" (see also Yusoff 2018).

Beyond heated debates about the Anthropocene's definition and temporal designation, responses to the 'moment' of its declaration have varied from optimistic statements about human capacities for innovation (e.g. Ecomodernist Manifesto 2015) to the techno-hubris of geo-engineering, to appeals to "learn to die", or at least to "think about death", in the Anthropocene (Scranton 2015; see also Franzen 2019; Wallace-Wells 2019). Further, in view of the so-called Anthropocene, scholars have begun to rethink analytical categories axiomatic to the humanities and social sciences, including nature, critique, matter, agency, history, capital and the political (e.g. Moore 2015; Stengers 2017; Latour 2004; Chakrabarty 2009, 2012; Gilroy 2017; Wainwright & Mann 2018; Wark 2015; Ghosh 2016). The category most pertinent to what follows, however, is the 'human'.

In view of climate change but also the rapid development of information technology, cognitive neuroscience and bio- and nanotechnologies, the durability of the 'human' in western humanism is increasingly in question within the humanities and interpretative social sciences (e.g. Braidotti 2013). A critical intervention into these debates has been Dipesh Chakrabarty's (2009, 2012)

'The Climate of History', which situates humanism at the heart of the climate crisis. Chakrabarty's argument is that 'humanity' is no longer simply a biological, political or moral agent, but now a *geological* one, as expressed in the 'Anthropocene' concept (2009: 206). However, despite having become a geological species-agent, and having abstract awareness of this, we cannot *experience* ourselves as such. Rather, the experiential knowledge that would help us make sense of our current, universal crisis is impossible to acquire. In sum, because of anthropogenic climate change, the 'human' must now be simultaneously read on two contradictory registers: as political subject and as geological agent (Chakrabarty 2012: 14). In becoming such a dispersed force, it has become impossible to think about 'human' collective existence in ontological terms.

Thinking with Chakrabarty, we can see the argument for how the climate crisis has become 'humanised'. For instance, the evolution of climate governance shows that through the 1980s and 1990s, climate change represented a scientific and technical problem, governable and resolvable through international mitigation treaties and the modification of individual behaviours (Stripple & Bulkeley 2013). In more recent years, however, there has been a growing recognition of climate change's entanglement with questions of human rights, human well-being and injustice (e.g., Centre for Climate Justice, n.d.). This development is at the heart of the analysis produced in this thesis. Chakrabarty's analysis, however, in my view while offering a compelling diagnosis of the predicament of the 'human', is otherwise limited. First, he effectively ignores questions of difference and how, if we think with Black feminism, the claim to a singular, coherent understanding of the 'human' is an implausible one to make (see, for example, Wynter 2003; Weheliye 2014; McKittrick 2015). Race, as Kay Anderson (2007) tells us, is inseparable from shifting conceptions of what constitutes the human. Neither does Chakrabarty consider climate change as working alongside other processes of transformation (as Braidotti does), or the possibility that the 'human' is already – in partial and differentiated ways - adapting to the Anthropocene condition that he diagnoses.

Of note here is the work of Braidotti (2013: 196), for whom "human embodiment and subjectivity" are already undergoing a profound adaptation (or, in her words, "mutation") For her, the 'human' is not an essence but rather a "shifting mode of being". In her bracing prose, Braidotti argues that the intensification of climate change and the exploitation of animals, as well as the convergence of nano- and biotechnology, information technology and cognitive neuroscience enables an opportunistic political economy that feeds on "the informational power of living matter itself" (2013: 61). What this means is the distinction between *bios* (the portion of

life traditionally arrogated to 'man') and *zoe* ('life' in the wider sense) no longer holds. To formulate the 'becoming-posthuman', Braidotti's starting point is the immanence, pragmatism and relentless generativity of 'life' itself (2013: 197). She draws heavily upon Spinozist conceptions of a monistic, relational and immanent subject, complementing this with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) emphasis on the vitality and self-organisation of matter, as well as *zoe,* a conception of life as a dynamic, generative force (Braidotti, 86). For Braidotti, this entails "*zoe*-centred egalitarianism": a materialist and grounded ethico-political response that is unsentimental in its impulse to de-segregate previously separated domains (2013: 60). This shift to *post-anthropocentrism* lends itself to a transition that allows for the possibility of pulling the human *and* the non-human into a condition of 'becoming'. Braidotti sums up her conception of the 'posthuman' as follows:

> *The posthuman nomadic subject is materialist and vitalist, embodied and embedded - it is firmly located somewhere, according to the radical immanence of the 'politics of location' that I have stressed throughout this book. It is a multifaceted and relational subject, conceptualized within a monistic ontology, through the lenses of Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, plus feminist and post-colonial theories. It is a subject actualized by the relational vitality and elemental complexity that mark posthuman thought itself* (2013: 188).

In short, at stake here is not only a view of the subject as immanent and monistic, but also a distribution of subjectivity and agency in which the 'human' figures not as dominant, but simply as one component among many. My motivation in outlining this here is not to suggest that Braidotti's posthuman offers a neat 'solution' to the crisis of humanism that climate change has precipitated (and a crisis Chakrabarty diagnoses), but rather a way of thinking productively about, and expanding upon, Chakrabarty's provocation. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to the categories and frames through which the 'human' is brought into being, the first of which is recognition.

2.7 Recognition and 'climate justice'

Recognition is a mainstay in political debates about justice (Taylor 1994; Fraser 2000; Fraser & Honneth 2003). In 'The Politics of Recognition', Charles Taylor critiques "difference-blind" liberalism in its pretensions to offer "a neutral ground on which people of all cultures can meet and coexist" (1994: 62). Specifically, this must be seen in the context of Canada as a multi-national and multi-cultural polity, whose Aboriginal and Québécois minorities, Taylor argues, should be granted recognition for their cultural distinctiveness and integrity. For Taylor, recognition is fundamental to the formation of identities, meaning that they can also be *deformed* - and human freedom curtailed - if this recognition is corrupted, or is otherwise not forthcoming. However, as Glen Coulthard (2014: 35) points out, Taylor's consideration of how recognition should be extended to Aboriginal communities in material terms is limited to "cultural rights" and "self-government", thus failing to properly address the political economy of colonialism. I focus more substantially on Coulthard's critique of recognition below, but first I briefly consider other relevant interventions on the topic, before considering recognition specifically in relation to 'climate justice'.

In a somewhat different political and intellectual tradition, Nancy Fraser (2000: 108) has issued a well-known critique of the "displacement" of redistributive struggles by questions of recognition. Writing at the turn of the millennium, she asks why so many movements have had recourse to the common grammar of recognition at – and she argues, because of – an acceleration of globalisation and a dramatic increase in economic inequality. Fraser's second argument (the first being that of displacement) cites globalisation's hybridisation and pluralisation of cultural forms, and issues a charge that instead of promoting multicultural interaction and understanding, recognition struggles tend to serve the simplification and "reification" of group identities (Fraser, 108). For Fraser, this is dangerous as it may result in the rejection of all minoritarian claims. However, she does not advocate jettisoning 'recognition' all together; but a rethinking of recognition as a question of "status" inseparable from economic class, so that it can be integrated with struggles for redistribution and accommodate the "full complexity of social identities" (Fraser, 109). In this context, it is also worth briefly reflecting on 'tolerance', which, like recognition, underwent a renaissance in the late-twentieth century as 'multiculturalism' rose high up the political agenda (see Brown 2008). In doing this, I do not claim that 'tolerance' and 'recognition' are mutually substitutable, but rather to highlight how undergirding both is a structure of domination. More precisely, the dominant body who is granting the 'recognition', or 'tolerating' has, by definition, the capacity to withdraw their recognition, or to become *in*tolerant.

Fraser's conception is among the most cited in work on 'climate justice' as recognition. Recognition has recently moved closer to the heart of conceptualisations of 'climate justice', at the urban scale as well as the international. For example, Bulkeley et al (2014) have pointed to how 'climate justice' tends to be viewed and represented as planar (organised around rights and recognition), to the relative exclusion of recognition. This also, the authors point out, has the effect of understating the extent to which recognition is interdependent with rights and responsibility. As an alternative to a planar view, Bulkeley et al propose visualising 'climate justice' as a pyramid, since this means that the different facets are intrinsically interrelated and refracted through one another (ibid, 34) Further, they suggest, persuasively, that recognition to a significant extent makes possible the realisation of other facets of 'climate justice', including procedural justice, as well as the distribution of rights and responsibilities (ibid, 39).

These debates raise important questions about recognition: namely, are all these 'recognitions' comparable, and if so, to what extent? Is the 'recognition' in the Paris Agreement the same as the recognition in 'climate justice', or 'recognition' as it is negotiated and contested by Indigenous peoples within the framework of the settler-colonial state? For despite the merits of arguments such as that from Bulkeley et al (2014), I argue that it involves some significant assumptions: notably, that the conditions for recognition – and as per Butler's addition, 'recognisability' - are always already present, and that the subjects of 'climate justice' are always already recognisable. But as we see in Butler (and I would argue, in Coulthard), recognition is not a universal, pre-discursive condition, but historically and contingently produced. Butler is adamant that 'life' is never fully captured by the normative conditions of its recognisability. The political implications of this are momentous; not only does it lay bare and permit us to interrogate the processes and norms that bring about the conditions for recognition, but also shows that recognition can take different forms. One of these forms is the focus of the following section, where I discuss the idea of recognition as "colonial".

2.7.1 The colonial politics of recognition

The Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard articulates a powerful rejection of what he calls the "colonial politics of recognition" (2014). In opposition to the hegemonic version of recognition, Coulthard argues that in its contemporary form, the politics of recognition "promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (2007: 438-439). In the Canadian context,

which is the setting in which Coulthard is writing, issues of cultural and political self-determination have increasingly been cast in the language of 'recognition' since around the 1970s (prior to 1969, federal 'Indian' policy in Canada was "unapologetically assimilationist") (ibid). Alongside this, there has also been an upswing of deliberation in ethics and political philosophy over the concept of recognition (e.g. Taylor 1992, 1994). Crucial to Coulthard's conception of the politics of recognition as 'colonial' is that it can bring colonised peoples to *identify* with the profoundly asymmetrical status quo that is either imposed on or granted to them by the colonising state and society (2007: 439). To demonstrate this, Coulthard draws on Frantz Fanon's challenge to Hegel's dialectic of recognition, in which he applies it to settings of colonial domination and argues that the terms of recognition are usually determined in the interests of the 'master' in Hegel's 'master/slave' dialectic. Therefore, Coulthard ultimately argues that the politics of recognition create "subjects of empire" rather than self-affirmative logics of emancipation.

Given that I do not want to 'uproot' Coulthard's theorisation – intimately embedded as it is within a context of Dene relations, politics and struggle that I have no authority to speak to – and appropriate it from its situatedness, Ghassan Hage's (1998) writing on the operation of race and whiteness in the politics of multiculturalism can complement Coulthard's insights. Hage's work, especially his book *White Nation,* which focuses on discursive practices of management of difference in the context of Australian 'multiculturalism', is productive in that it highlights the strategies through which potential threats posed by 'difference' are contained and domesticated. Crucial to emphasise here is that Hage shows that those who appreciate or enjoy 'diversity' are just as invested in the containment of 'difference' as those who are intolerant. The 'nation' becomes a space over which white Australians feel their claims of 'ownership' are natural. Hage uses the word 'fantasy' to describe tolerance – white people's fantasies of their countries as 'tolerant'. I consider this question, of the intersection between recognition and 'climate justice', in greater depth in Chapter 5. Before that, however, I move the discussion forward to the final sections of this chapter, which conceptualise adaptation and resilience.

2.8 Adaptation and resilience

As has been evident throughout this chapter, the concept of 'adaptation' features prominently in this thesis. In the previous section, I contended that the 'human' must adapt (and is already

adapting) to climate change (see also chapter 6). Earlier on in the chapter, I argued that along with recognition and the 'human', resilience and adaptation constitute 'proxy' categories through which 'climate justice' discourses articulate with race as a category of difference (see chapter 1). In their compelling argument, Wainwright and Mann (2018) do not stop at criticising how it is those with the fewest resources to adapt are those most often expected to do so. Going far beyond this, they argue that climate change has inaugurated a fundamental 'adaptation of the political', while also speculating as to what neoliberal capitalism's process of adapting to climate change (what they provisionally name 'Climate Leviathan') will mean for dominant conceptions of sovereignty. Indeed, they wager that 'adaptation' is "becoming the 'progress' of our time", akin to what latter represented for nineteenth-century bourgeois liberalism (2018: 98, emphasis in original). Meanwhile, 'resilience' provides a radical reframing of 'security' as an imperative for flexible adaptation. In this final section, I contextualise these debates about adaptation and resilience, with particular emphasis on how 'resilience' is widely considered to have been irredeemably depoliticised and neoliberalised. Finally, I engage autonomist Marxism (*autonomia,* in Italian) as recently taken up in geography by Braun (2013) and Nelson (2014, 2015), and argue that this offers a critical resource for thinking anew about the possibilities presented by adaptation and resilience.

2.8.1 Adaptation

Since the emergence of climate change as an international scientific and policy concern in the late 1980s, climate change has been seen in policy terms primarily as an issue of *mitigation.* This has meant that the imperative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, along with questions of how and by whom this should be achieved, have been at the heart of debates around climate change, which should be seen in the context of addressing long-standing developing country concerns about the impacts of climate change (Bulkeley & Tuts 2013: 647). However, this began to shift with the emergence of a multilateral adaptation regime in the mid-to-late 2000s. According to Warner (2012), adaptation constitutes the second of two distinct phases in the international governance of climate change since the creation of the UNFCCC. Mitigation, which ran roughly from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s, was based on legal sanctions for polluters, a regime embodied by the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the creation of technical and offsetting instruments such as emissions trading regimes and the Clean Development Mechanism. At this

juncture, adaptation had long been regarded as ‘taboo’: for developing countries, because of the risk that it be seen as capitulation to unrelentingly high greenhouse gas emissions, and for developed countries because it opened the door to discussions of historical responsibility and compensation (cited in Wainwright & Mann 2018: 74). However, around the time of the publication of the Stern Review (2006) and the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment Report (2007), there was a growing realisation among scientists and policymakers that climate change and its effects were already in train. This meant a significant change in emphasis towards planning for and financing adaptation, which constitutes the second distinct phase of international climate governance. A key player in this discussion was the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), which has advanced the idea of claiming compensation for irreversible climate changes since the late 1980s. For Warner (2012: 1062), this presented to industrialised countries a “specter of liability” and the requirement to pay “unsaid amounts of money” in compensation, which made this strand of argumentation controversial. As Warner also recalls of the discussions at the time, some potential outcomes were framed as beyond any possibility of adaptation, such as human migration, desertification and glacial melt. Therefore, avoidance, and the championing of the 1.5°C goal, was “the only acceptable approach” for least developed and other vulnerable countries (2012: 1063).

By the time of the Bali COP in 2007, disaster risk management and loss and damage had featured in the texts, but possible associations of this with compensation and liability were a cause for concern for high-emitting, industrialised parties (Warner 2012). Loss and Damage, which first appeared in the Bali Action Plan but was formally inscribed in the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) at COP19 in 2013, has been politically sensitive for industrialised countries, who attempted to have all mention of it removed from final texts, or subsumed it under other sections. This was a delicate balancing act: wealthy countries wanted to edge discussion of loss and damage out of the process, but they also needed the agreement of many developing country Parties in advance of the hoped-for legally binding agreement to be concluded at COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009. As is well known, though, negotiations at Copenhagen failed to produce a legally binding agreement, meaning that the legitimacy of the UN-sponsored process was in the balance in the lead-up to Cancun (COP16, 2010). As summarised by Warner (2012: 1067), there was pressure for a set of balanced outcomes with just the right level of ambition to “deliver enough concrete results to restore faith in the UNFCCC process”.

Broadly considered a success, COP16 produced several outcomes, the most relevant here being the Cancun Adaptation Framework (CAF). The CAF established adaptation as a priority at the heart of the UNFCCC process. Importantly, this also necessitated a shift in the political economy of international climate governance. There was no longer simply a need to develop mechanisms for cutting GHG emissions (though these remain prominent), but to mobilise resources to enable adaptation to a climate-changed world. Underlying this, first, was a novel temporal imaginary of climate change: instead of seeing it as a physical problem to be alleviated in the near-to-medium term future, emphasising adaptation implies a recognition that the effects of climate change was already materialising, especially in countries with the fewest resources to adapt. Second, it indicates a shift in the centre of gravity away from the 'global' to the local and the national, as well as from 'developed' to 'developing' countries (see Huq 2010). A critical point is that the discussion morphed from one of how best to minimise future GHG emissions, to one of how to leverage the necessary finance for urgent adaptation to climate change on a global scale. As the CAF states, adaptation is "a challenge faced by all Parties" but emphasised the need to reduce vulnerability and build resilience in developing country Parties (UN Climate Change, no date).

Concurrently with adaptation moving to the centre of debates around climate change, a broad and heterogeneous academic literature on adaptation flourished (e.g., Adger et al 2006; Warner 2012; Bulkeley and Tuts 2013). This work developed understandings of adaptation at multiple scales including the international and the urban. Building on this, a more 'critical' adaptation literature came into view (e.g., Cameron 2012; Symonds 2014; Eriksen, Nightingale & Eakin 2015; Chandler & Reid 2016; Mikulewicz 2019, 2020a, 2020b), which views adaptation as not simply a set of linear, objective technical processes or policy interventions, but "political all the way through" (Eriksen, Nightingale & Eakin 2015). For Eriksen et al, adaptation is a "socio-political process that mediates how individuals and collectives deal with multiple and concurrent environmental and social challenges" (523). They propose applying the concepts of subjectivity, authority and knowledge to the analysis of adaptation processes. Such processes, they argue, are not only contested, but *constituted* by and through these concepts. Adaptation outcomes are not pre-existing objects coloured by politics, but politics is "embedded in society's management of change" (ibid, 523). Drawing on Judith Butler, Eriksen et al's critique pushes against a view of adaptation as a linear and by implication politically neutral, response to changed biophysical processes (524).

Furthermore, Emilie Cameron (2012) has shown how in the Canadian Arctic context, adaptation and vulnerability are inseparably bound up with questions of power, colonialism and difference. Specifically, Cameron demonstrates how the vulnerability and approach to understanding the human dimensions of climate change produces a limited framing of Indigeneity as the 'local' and 'traditional', while also reproducing this as "a technical, contemporary, and local problem" resolvable through individual policy interventions (Cameron 2012: 107). This contribution is important because it encapsulates how the problem of human vulnerability to climate change is produced in a way that eschews questions of politics, global processes and histories of colonial dispossession and domination. Moreover, it is in keeping with Butler's (2010) argument about the power of norms and frames, and their capacity to render invisible that which is excluded from the frame (in this case, questions of politics and colonial dispossession).

2.8.2 Resilience

Originally formulated by the ecologist C S Holling in the 1970s as a critique of industrial-era environmental/conservation management practices, the concept of resilience has since been incorporated into areas of government policy as diverse as counterterrorism, financial regulation, urban planning, risk management and disaster recovery and recently, international climate adaptation through the mainstreaming of 'adaptive management' within international development (Pelling 2011; Walker & Cooper 2011; Nelson 2014; Driscoll-Derickson & Mackinnon 2015; Mikulewicz 2019). Resilience provides a radical reframing of the problem of security. In a world in which uncertainty, and unpredictable yet inevitable threats, are the default condition, resilience frames security as an imperative for flexible adaptation (see Walker & Cooper 2011). Holling's original theorisation, in the broad context of the crisis of Fordist Keynesianism, was a response to management practices that sought to stabilize ecosystem dynamics around an equilibrium (Nelson 2014: 4), such as in, for example, Herman Daly's 'steady-state' economy. In contrast, resilience "recognised that a system may move through multiple equilibria", meaning that a resilient system is able to "maintain its constitutive relationships in the face of disturbance" (ibid). Not only can such a system withstand and absorb disturbance, however, it may even benefit from it; a system breakdown is creative, rather than destructive. As Jeremy Walker and Melinda Cooper have pointed out, unlike orthodox political economy, which is predicated on a steadily progressive temporality, complex adaptive systems have inherent tendencies towards crisis - a point, they note, that Holling's ecological theory

shares with Hayek's neoliberal economics (2011: 157). They therefore conclude that 'resilience' cannot be contested on its own terms, but only by a "truly counter-systemic" strain of thought (ibid).

Walker and Cooper are far from alone in their view that it is impossible to contest 'resilience' on its own terms. In the past decade, a body of critique has coalesced around an evaluation of resilience as intrinsically – and irredeemably - neoliberal (Cannon & Muller-Mahn 2010, Methmann & Oels 2015, Reid, Mikulewicz 2019). To give just three examples, Cannon and Muller-Mahn (2010) point to a "dangerous" discursive shift from 'vulnerability' to 'resilience'. The 'danger' of this shift has two components. First, they argue that the roots of 'resilience' in ecosystems approaches means that it overemphasises natural, rather than socio-economic, systems (632). Second, they suggest that unlike vulnerability, it is difficult for 'resilience' measure to avoid a technocratic approach that, seemingly of necessity, collapses the distinction between natural and social systems, thus depoliticising "the causal processes inherent in putting people at risk" (633). In their examination of climate-induced migration, Methmann and Oels (2015) contend that it is the turn to 'resilience' that has fuelled and legitimated the depoliticisation and naturalisation of climate change, and eliminated the "political space for addressing the root causes of global warming" (63). According to the 'standard' critique of resilience, then, the resilient subject does not resist, or attempt to transform, the conditions of its suffering in the world, but instead *adapts* to them (Reid 2013: 363). Michael Mikulewicz's (2019) critique is that resilience "dehumanises" development and adaptation and renders them "postpolitical" (Mikulewicz, 267). He argues that resilience amounts to "techno-managerialism" (ibid, 269) that underplays the deep economic inequalities and the highly political nature of social life. Often, resilience also appears as meaningless, or at the very least an "empty signifier" (ibid, 277) that is left undefined. As a result, it tends to be used in a normative, rather than theoretical, way, and Mikulewicz suggests that it owes its traction to its attractiveness to donors, and often represents a byword for a "drive to open up new markets for both domestic and foreign capital accumulation" (ibid, 276). Let me not be misunderstood, as this critique is entirely legitimate. Nonetheless, I suggest that it reinscribes the rather generic line of calling for adaptation research and practice to become more 'human-centred" (Mikulewicz, 279), without interrogating what this presupposed 'human' denotes. This is precisely what this thesis, and Chapter 6 in particular, seeks to critique. Moreover, I argue that Mikulewicz reads the concept of 'resilience' in the wrong way: surely instead of flattening out the complexities of social and political life, resilience, committed as it is to motion and non-linearity, thrives on these (see Braun 2013)? In such critiques of resilience as merely a 'post-political' ruse that co-opts the

transformative potential of adaptation, resilience itself is emptied of all potentially subversive agency. This verdict as to the irredeemably 'neoliberal' character of resilience can be productively challenged by autonomist Marxism, which I demonstrate in the coming section.

2.8.3 Autonomist Marxism, adaptation and subjectivity

In this final section, I demonstrate how the autonomist tradition of Marxism offers us an alternative critical vocabulary in which to rethink 'adaptation'. Having developed out of Italian labour militancy and social experimentation in the 1960s and 1970s, autonomist Marxism is based on the principle of the primacy of labour power, as well as its autonomy from *both* capitalist relations of production *and* the institutional politics of parties and trade unions (Hardt 1996). For theorists in the autonomist tradition, the extended post-1968 'moment' in Italy presented a need to re-evaluate the categories of classical Marxist analysis (Nelson 2014; Hardt 1996). For instance, Paolo Virno (1996) describes the turn to neoliberalism as the basis for administering social and economic life as *counterrevolutionary*, a "reactive movement" (Nelson 2014: 2) in which the political and economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s were channelled into a new wave of capital accumulation in the 1980s and 1990s. This last point is important, as it underscores how the crises of Fordist Keynesianism were *not* purely of capital's own making. Rather, for autonomist Marxists, the post-Fordist mode of production is one in which the activities of social (and according to Sara Nelson (2014), ecological) reproduction are appropriated by capital as direct sources of value, broadening out the sphere of productive activity to include the "social factory" (Negri 1991). This is a decisive departure from the classical Marxist view of the evolution of capitalism as an unfolding of internal contradictions. For autonomists, in contrast, capital itself has no innovative capacity, but is reliant upon this "appropriation and redirection of the forms of resistance created by living labour" (Nelson 2015: 463).

What this means is that labour continually creates forms of resistance, to which capital is forced to consistently adapt and reorganise, and on which its continued evolution depends. This has momentous implications for the political-economic basis of responses to climate change, as it means that the relationship between neoliberalism and adaptation, or resilience, is not one of necessity, but of *contingency* (Braun 2013; Nelson 2015). As I suggested above, established critiques of 'resilience' as necessarily neoliberal (e.g., Mikulewicz 2019) pose a risk of

conceding to capital far more agency and dynamism that it in fact possesses. Therefore, I conclude the final chapter by emphasising the need for new imaginaries of 'adaptation' and resilience' that take seriously the primacy of resistance, and the ontological excess of human labour power (something Rosi Braidotti might well recognise in her conception of *zoe)*, in re-signifying 'climate justice' otherwise.

2.9 Conclusions

Keeping hold of the provocations I set out in the introduction, this chapter has developed the theoretical framework for the thesis. I began by situating the thesis in proximity to Wainwright and Mann's (2018) argument that climate change brings about a fundamental *adaptation of the political,* a process involving a recomposition of elite power. As such, I used this chapter to argue that a primary mechanism through which this adaptation is secured is that of *signification,* and specifically the signification of *'climate justice.'* Here, I engaged with Judith Butler's (2010, 1992, 1993) concepts of performativity and the 'frame' in order to argue that 'climate justice' is *performative.* This lead me on to the 'international' as a primary site of the circulation of 'climate justice' discourses. Following critical scholars in International Relations theory, I presented the international not as a set of apolitical institutions and procedures, but a preeminent site for the reproduction of *whiteness* as a form of signifying power. Not only this, however, it is also an authoritative space for political meaning-making around climate change. To bring together these two premises, then, the articulation of climate change and 'climate justice' as objects of and for governance is a performative and thoroughly power-laden process: a point I expand on further in my methodology (Chapter 3).

Furthermore, in distinction from Wainwright and Mann's centring of the terrain of class struggle, this chapter has also situated *race and whiteness* as some of the principal 'grounds' upon which the adaptation of the political plays out. This gives rise to the following questions: how does the frame operate *racially?* And how can performativity help explain how 'climate justice' functions racially? Here, I conceptualised race not as a vestige of an incomplete overcoming of a racist past, but as central to the social, cultural and political ordering of neoliberalism (e.g., Goldberg 2008; Kundnani 2021). Moreover, following Baldwin (2012; 2016) and Gabay (2018), for its part I conceptualised whiteness not simply as an identity based on skin colour, but a form of unstated signifying power with the capacity to lay claim to the purported 'universal'. To bring this together with 'climate justice' and performativity, I argued that there is an unspoken whiteness

that operates as a “frame” (Butler 2010) through ‘climate justice’ at the level of the international (an argument I develop fully in chapter 4).

The final part of the chapter reflected on how the ‘human’ is being reconfigured in the age of the Anthropocene, aided by Braidotti’s (2013) conception of the posthuman and Goldberg’s notion of the “anthroporacial” (2015) as an interesting, if incomplete, insight into the adjustments in the relationship between race, the human, and the Anthropocene. Put simply, climate change is bringing about an adaptation of the ‘human’, and this adaptation is a power-laden process that consolidates existing regimes of differentiation while also generating novel ones. I finished off the chapter by reflecting on three examples of such discursive regimes (which I engage with in Chapters 5 and 6): recognition, adaptation, and resilience.

Chapter 3: Methodology

We are left asking key questions after reading This Changes Everything: does 'everything' include the state, work, generalized commodification, profits, the family, local businesses, settler colonialism, Keynesian economics, and the inscription of the future as the image of the baby's face? Or does 'change' simply mean pressuring modest adjustments so that these institutions can persist in a post-carbon world? (Out of the Woods, 2015)

3.1 Introduction: two Kleins, three conundrums

What, exactly, is 'changed' by climate change? The above epigraph is from a review of Naomi Klein's 2014 book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate,* written by the radical eco-social collective Out of the Woods. In this commentary that engages questions of life, nature, work, family, political organisation and the boundaries of the political community, the Out of the Woods authors take seriously Klein's claim to have been forced into radical positions by the urgency of the climate crisis. Within the text, they note a duality, the presence of two Kleins. Dominant, they note, is the 'major', "idealist" Klein who rails against market fundamentalism and appears invested in a greening of Keynesian economics, small business and full employment, as well as in the logic of reproductive futurism (OOTW 2015: n.p).[5] However, in tension with this is the 'minor' Klein, of whom we snatch glimpses throughout the book. Where she appears, this "radical realist" Klein goes for broke: proposing blockade, occupation and mass insurrection, as well as a refusal of compulsory work as condition of political belonging. In short, climate breakdown really could 'change everything', and not a moment too soon.

I open with this provocation for two reasons. To begin with, in the spirit of being a 'reflexive' researcher (e.g., McDowell 1992; Rose 1997), it accounts for the origins of this thesis, as reading *This Changes Everything* was a major impetus behind it. Though I enthusiastically devoured the book, it also drew my attention to the unruliness and capacious promise of 'climate justice', as well as the affective investment in the term. It left me with numerous questions: surely there can be no guarantees that action on climate change could indeed complete the "unfinished business" of women's, civil rights and decolonial struggles, an

[5] For further discussion of the relationship of reproductive futurism to climate change politics, see Out of the Woods, 'The future is kids' stuff', 17th May 2015. Available at: https://libcom.org/blog/future-kids-stuff-17052015 [last accessed 04/08/2020]

outcome of which Klein appears confident? Could Klein's proposed coalition really hold? What would need to happen for it to do so? Most importantly, though, it gives expression to the three interrelated themes – or 'frames' to use Butler's (2010) language - that structure this chapter: change/transformation, closedness/openness, and the universal/particular. First, there is the question of whether it is incremental change or wholesale transformation that is required, in addition to the question of how – or if - these can be achieved. As we explored earlier, Chakrabarty (2009; 2012) has argued that climate change forces 'us' as 'humanity' to reckon not only with 'our' political agency, but also our *geological* agency. However, he also warns of an implacable bind: that the tools 'we' are wont to use (those of humanistic inquiry) are of little use in helping us know and come to terms with our new-found status as geological agent; a view to some extent shared by Wainwright and Mann (2018: 97) in their discussion of Gramsci. While Chakrabarty's thesis has been justly criticised (see for e.g., Jackson 2014, 2020), it nonetheless conveys the gravity and urgency of the need for transformation (indeed, the transformation of the very 'human' itself – see Chapter 6).

The second theme I engage here is 'closed openness', which I apply specifically to the space of the international conference. As I will show later, this draws from critical geopolitics, and specifically from Fregonese and Ramadan's (2015) argument about the material spatiality of hotels: that it renders them simultaneously 'open' and 'closed' (see section 3.4.2). The apparent contradiction of 'closed openness' also colours the everyday empirical experience of my research, as I explore in subsequent sections. This also speaks to ideas of the future: which possible futures does 'climate justice' leave open, and which does it foreclose? The third and final theme I explore is that of the universal/particular. Much like 'saving the planet' or 'greening the economy' (Goldstein 2018: 17-18), 'climate justice' can appear as a universal, unassailable project. Who could possibly oppose working towards climate justice for all? In addition to inevitably presupposing a stable, coherent definition of 'climate justice', these questions always beget a second one: *a better world for whom?* I engage with this theme primarily in the third section of the chapter, where I discuss in depth positionality, ethics and emotion: what are the ethics and politics of calling such a project into question?

This chapter is conceptually anchored in these three themes. It has two aims: first, to develop a methodological tool for researching 'climate justice' as *performative,* by exploring what performativity allows me to do, and second, to account for *how* my chosen methods have allowed me to do this. The chapter unfolds as follows. First, in sections 3.2 and 3.3, I conceptualise the international conference as possessing what I call 'closed openness', with the

dialectic between ‘closedness’ and ‘openness’ representing a recurrent thread throughout the chapter. Subsequently, in keeping with this thread, I then outline in full the conceptual basis for my chosen research design: a mixed-methods approach consisting of discourse analysis, multi-sited ‘conference ethnography’ and semi-structured interviews (sections 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6). Finally, I critically discuss the challenges of conducting this research, with special consideration given to ethics, emotion and positionality (sections 3.7 and 3.8).

3.2 Researching the ‘international’: performativity as methodological approach

After changing my field research plans significantly in the summer of 2018, I also reconsidered my approach to ‘climate justice’. From the desk-based research I had conducted thus far, I could see that ‘climate justice’ circulated and reproduced itself within the international. But what is the ‘international’? If it is a space, where is it? How does one go about researching in and around it? These questions, and more besides, strongly suggested that instead of the comparative country-based case study I had planned from the beginning, I had to devise an alternative, more innovative methodological approach. After discussions with my supervisors, I decided on the international conference as my primary site of empirical research.

As with ‘climate justice’, my methodological approach to the international is to understand it as *performative* (Butler 1988, 1999, 1993; Loxley 2007). The implication of this is that far from being an already existing, pre-discursive space, the international is brought into being by its continuous enactment and re-enactment, creating the impression of an abiding, pre-discursive essence. Judith Butler has elaborated performativity most famously in relation to gender and sexuality. Put simply, rather than a pre-given identity expressed, or revealed, by the performance of a set of acts, it is these performances that bring identities into being and give them an appearance of fixity. However, more directly relevant to this research is the notion of performativity as conceptualised in Butler’s *Frames of War.* As established earlier, Butler argues that there can be no reference to ‘life’ outside of operations of power. Rather, ‘life’ is *produced* through specific mechanisms of power, and Butler’s appeal to make these mechanisms visible constitutes an important methodological opening. However, equally significant is that ‘life’ always exceeds the terms that are used to define and delineate it**.** Butler succinctly illustrates this idea in *Frames of War:*

> *…to call the frame into question is to show that the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognisable. The frame never quite determined what it is we see, recognise, and apprehend. Something exceeds the frame that troubles our sense of reality; in other words, something occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things* (Butler 2010: 9).

Just like with Butler's frames, 'climate justice' always exceeds the terms used to define and delimit it, and can always be re-constituted differently. Even more significant, frames must be reiterated if they are to project any sense of ontological fixity, yet this also risks their being reiterated imperfectly, meaning that it is this very 'iterability' that generates opportunities for political intervention or resistance. Additionally, no single (re)signification of 'climate justice' is ever completely separable from other ones: these borrow from, approximate and bleed into one another. There is no fundamental difference that separates, for example, a 'liberal climate justice' on the one hand, and a 'radical climate justice' on the other. In empirical terms, this means that during my research, I could not always predict familiar 'patterns' of how 'climate justice' was (re)iterated. In other words, it defied easy categorisation.

To double back somewhat, this lack of stable essence was manifest in the international conference setting. Here, a picture is now emerging of how a repetition of constitutive practices create the illusion of an essential, abiding space. The heavily securitised perimeters, together with the ID checks on arrival, consistently reproduce the conference as a bounded space accessible only to the expert, the connected and the credentialed; as Wainwright and Mann have put it, it is "secured for diplomacy" (2018: 35). The bewildering technical vocabularies of the UN-sponsored climate process creates a privileged force-field around a small group of experts, politicians and policymakers whose decisions and compromises implicate and affect the whole of humanity. The international climate conference's progressive political commitments are quite literally spoken into existence, through exclamations of 'happy Gender Day!' and 'happy Human Rights Day!'. However, there is always also the potential for the carefully choreographed apparatus and events to be subverted or undermined, for despite efforts to contain the all-consuming, overwhelming heterogeneity of 'climate change' as an object, the international negotiations never quite succeed in doing so.

It is precisely this uncontainability that underlies the political importance of performativity as method. It is important to compare this methodological approach to that of much existing research on climate justice, which is heavily normative and based on ethics, frameworks and more or less narrow sets of principles and rights (e.g. Mihr 2017; Thorp 2014). While I do not suggest that the existing focus on rights and ethics is wrong or misplaced, I do insist that 'we' have an ethical responsibility to understand how 'climate justice' gets *constructed.* As such, in this thesis I seek not to define what 'climate justice' *is*, as it has no abiding essence. Instead, I attempt to track and scrutinise its contingent (re)iterations and (re)significations. This entails at least two things: first is that no one group, individual or definition can fully contain 'climate justice'. Indeed, attempts to do so may be reductive and politically risky. For example, defining 'climate justice' simply as in opposition 'climate *in*justice' is to presuppose that this injustice is solely, or primarily, caused by 'climate change' itself.[6] This risks de-historicising, erasing and naturalising myriad accumulated injustices (see Baucom 2020), a move that itself represents an epistemic injustice. Second, this contingency means that it may have been constituted, and reconstituted in reactionary ways. But this also means that there is always a possibility for it to be constructed otherwise. The next section fleshes out the framing of the research questions and the rationale for the research.

3.3 Rationale and research questions

Taking in the two and a half years between late 2017 and early 2020, this research represents a 'cut' into a still-unfolding historical process. The period since I began the project in 2017 has been characterised by many events, some of world-historical significance: the release of the IPCC's 'Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees' Report, the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, devastating tornadoes, the Amazon rainforest and Australian bushfires, a deadly pandemic that upended the established economic consensus, the heightened visibility of Black Lives Matter, and, most recently, a war that appears to have reinvigorated the appeal of defence multilateralism (NATO) as well as fears about the geopolitics of energy security. My point here is that my research is conversant with these events and processes in incipient and emergent ways. For instance, amid the rise of the authoritarian right in Europe, fossil fuels are being

[6] This is evident in statements such as "climate change […] causes human rights violations" and "climate is often a root cause of conflict" (Mihr 2017: 47, 51).

enlisted in ethnonationalist statements.[7] Such statements express animosity towards those considered not 'of the nation' such as refugees and asylum-seekers, but also the LGBTQ+ community (as in Poland, one of my field sites). In Chile in October 2019, large anti-government protests erupted in several cities, engulfing the country in its biggest political crisis since its return to democracy in 1990. The uprising was such that COP25, which Chile had offered to host following the withdrawal of Brazil, had to be moved to Spain at only a month's notice (Mathieson & Farand 2019). As the Covid-19 crisis continues apace, the prospects of, among other things, intensified surveillance, vaccine nationalism and increased self-segregation of the wealthy loom large. Yet, as with all crises, Covid-19 exposed the artifice and dispensability of much of what, just two years ago, was viewed as incontestable. Of what use is employer-provided health insurance in the worst joblessness crisis for a century? With so many white-collar workers now based at home, in whose interests would it be to rescue carbon-intensive lifestyles of commuting, consumption and financialised rentier economies[8]? In sum, my research was – and is – being rocked by an increasingly authoritarian and volatile world, and it is in this spirit that I make the arguments I do. Having contextualised this, I proceed to addressing my original research questions:

1. When and how did 'climate justice' come to be constituted as a distinct area of knowledge and practice within international climate change politics?
2. To what extent – and in what ways – do race and racialisation (and the international?) intercede in conditioning the politics of meaning around 'climate justice'?
3. How might the concepts of climate justice and the 'international' be rethought in a 'postracial' world historical moment characterised by intensified nationalism and white supremacy?

[7] See Philip Oltermann (2019) German elections: AFD finds rich seam in city clinging on to coal. *The Guardian,* 30th August. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/30/german-elections-afd-finds-rich-seam-in-city-clinging-on-to-coal [last accessed 31st July 2020]. In this article, an AFD (Alternative fur Deutschland) candidate in the coal-rich Lusatia region is quoted saying that she did not want women's rights to be "dragged back to the middle ages" by refugees.

[8] See Hettie O'Brien (2020) What's behind the headlines demanding a return to the office? *The Guardian,* 1st September. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/01/office-workers [last viewed 02/09/2020]. See also Jodi Dean (2020) Neofeudalism: The End of Capitalism? 12th May, *Los Angeles Review of Books.* https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/neofeudalism-the-end-of-capitalism/ [last viewed 07/09/2020].

As will become clear, I did not intend to assess whether the statements made by climate justice advocates are 'correct' or not. Neither did I seek to ascribe to 'climate justice' any kind of stable essence, definition, or origin: I do not claim to know what climate justice 'really is'. Instead, this research took a genealogical approach (Foucault 1977), asking: against which backdrop of historically contingent conditions and circumstances did 'climate justice' emerge and become prominent?

To answer these questions, I decided on a mixed-methods approach that combined the analysis of documents with interviews and a multi-sited 'conference ethnography'. The purpose of what follows in this chapter is to create a dialogue between my theoretical preoccupation with questions of the universal and the international, on the one hand, and my mixed-methodological approach to the research, on the other. Therefore, this section provides a detailed account of each method in turn, starting with the conference ethnography.

3.4 Sites of the international: conference (auto)ethnography

In Chapter 2, I set out in theoretical terms how the 'international' is central to my arguments about climate justice. As such, the planning of my empirical research posed some critical questions: what does thinking 'internationally' mean in methodological terms? In what settings is 'climate justice' (re)iterated, made, unmade and remade? What role do race and racialisation play in this process of signification, and from which position could I best observe this? Through conversations with my supervisors, I quickly settled on a suitable research site: international conferences. These conferences are where people, places and things connect. They are power-suffused domains in which the boundaries and alliances between communities are (re)negotiated and different kinds of knowledge are constructed and (de)legitimated. They are also sites of reproduction of hegemony and consensus-making (Craggs & Mahony 2014). Importantly, though, these processes are not transparent or abstract; despite their universalising and world-making ambitions, they are always multiplicitous, fractured and unfinished (see Hodder 2015: 40). As Anna Tsing (2005: 1) reminds us, global processes are not self-evident or straightforward, but rather "charged and enacted in the sticky materiality of practical encounters".

The above provides a clear argument for enacting a mobile, multi-sited ethnography of international-facing climate conferences, grounded in an understanding of 'the international' as

not transcendent, but possessing a distinct historical geography. However, since I had no prior experience of the global climate policy and governance fields, my ethnographic research doubled as an experience of *learning to be a participant* in the – expansively defined - 'international climate space'. As I hope to demonstrate in this chapter, it was inhabiting this 'outsider' position that led me to the three themes that frame this chapter: change/transformation, open/closed and universal/particular. With this fact in mind, what follows is not an 'objective' account but a situated, embodied one *constructed* out of a mixture of field notes, pages of annotated text, scribbles, photographs, drawings, memos, news articles and other materials. At this stage, it is important for me to clarify the role the participant-observation component played within the broader research project. Rather than 'an ethnography' in which immersive, observational fieldwork formed the primary method and dominant component, what I have conducted is a mixed-methods piece of research, in which my ethnographic research materials and interview transcripts develop, complicate and add colour to the knowledge generated by the primary method, which was discourse analysis of institutional texts. What this produced is not, therefore, an ethnography of the UN climate conference, but rather a textured, situated account of how performativity functions through 'climate justice' in the international. In the following section, I outline my chosen *modus operandi* for carrying out the research and offering some critical reflections on the method. First, however, to contextualise my choice of international conferences as research sites, I offer a brief, non-exhaustive overview of relevant literature from within social science disciplines.

3.4.1 Conferences and the international in the social sciences

In recent years, international conferences have been objects of critical analysis in geographical, sociological and political studies research (e.g. Farbotko & McGregor 2010; Death 2011; Eastwood 2011, 2019; Craggs & Mahony 2014; Legg 2020; Hodder et al 2015; Hodder 2015). Using poststructuralist analytics of power to consider the 'mega-conferences' in Johannesburg (2002) and Copenhagen (2009), Carl Death's influential article questions accounts viewing such events as mere "talkshops" or distractions from the 'real' business of global politics. Rather, he proposes that the theatrical aspects of summitry are "essential to the manner in which summits govern the conduct of global politics" (2011: 6). In other words, this contribution underlines the importance of researching megaconferences not just in terms of their 'success' or 'failure', but as *performances* that serve to reify distinct worldviews, relationships and subjectivities. In their

consideration of “mega-events” Boyle and Haggerty (2009) problematise Foucault’s strictly dichotomous separation between ‘spectacle’ and ‘security’, given that the spectacle, in the form of exhibitions, art galleries and museums, has historically been indispensable to the demonstration of sovereign power to a mass audience. In this process, they point to three dynamics: the rise of a precautionary logic among security planners, a “semiotic shift” in which “security iconography is integrally bound up with the production of contemporary urban spectacles”, and finally the generation of “security and surveillance legacies” that circulate and extend beyond the immediate spatial and temporal sites of the event itself (2009: 257). While their argument is a specific analysis of the 2010 Vancouver Winter Games, Boyle and Haggerty’s description of mega-events as “high profile” and “deeply symbolic” (ibid) could also apply to large global summits. Furthermore, their account is instructive for clarifying the role of the international climate summit (which, given the increasing visibility of climate breakdown, is only becoming more prominent), along with its afterlives, in driving the global recalibration of security, surveillance and technology in the post-9/11 era. In sociology, Eastwood (2011) points out that discussions of global governance often remain theoretical and therefore lacking the specificity of field research in identifiable locations. In her research, she uses ethnographic data from UNFCCC meetings to aid in articulating the “complexities and intricacies of what is at stake in discussions surrounding civil society participation in global governance” (10).

Moving back to geography, Farbotko and McGregor (2010) consider the relationship between conferences and emotion in their revisiting of the ill-fated Copenhagen summit. Here a delegate representing the Pacific Island nation-state of Tuvalu broke down in tears in the conference plenary, which provoked discomfort. This unease, they argue, fleetingly exposed the intertwining of science and emotion in climate change politics, as it laid bare the efforts the COP authority invested to affirm the COP as a rational, dispassionate space (2010: 163). This, in turn, suggests that even (and perhaps, especially) tightly scripted events can be re-scripted in unexpected ways, revealing possibilities for transformative change. In a more expansive vein, Craggs and Mahony (2014) demonstrate how conferences operate as sites of knowledge creation, public performance, legitimation and protest. Further, these authors contend that geographers are well positioned to offer insights into conferences, given their critical purchase on the concepts of visibility, performance, and space. However, others counter that critical engagement *with the international* is not at evidence in most sub-fields of geography. One exception to this is a 2015 special issue of *Political Geography* (Featherstone 2015; Hodder 2015; Hodder et al 2015), which articulated that despite a new scholarly and political agenda of rethinking the international in light of this century’s urgent political, environmental and economic

crises, geographers have contributed little to this project. The issue editors (Hodder et al 2015: 6) attribute this to the preponderance of national frameworks within the discipline, as well as its domination by Anglophones, which generates an assumption that Anglophone geography is co-extensive with 'international' geography. These authors also note a tendency among political geographers to use the term as an adjective rather than treating it as a political category "worthy of interrogation in its own right" (2015: 3). This issue's articles are a diverse set of intricate historical-geographic interventions, temporally situated between 1900-1950, that explore themes from subaltern maritime networks of solidarity to the international institutionalisation of neoliberalism.

Despite the timeliness and enormous richness of this special issue, its contribution remains limited. Its focus on the coming into being of 'the international' in the inter- and post-war period means that its engagement with it is archival and historical, rather than ethnographic. This is a pattern replicated throughout geography, where the international (and particularly environmental) conference seldom features as an ethnographic research setting (though in sociology see Eastwood (2011, 2019). However, in addition to Eastwood's work in sociology, the Collaborative Event Ethnography (CEE) method has been used to great effect within studies of global environmental governance, and more recently, feminist political ecology (Campbell et al 2014; Corson, Campbell & McDonald 2014; Zanotti & Marion Suiseeya 2020). The early proponents of CEE (Brosius & Campbell 2010; Campbell et al 2014) conceptualised mega-events as ethnographic field sites for team-based research, often done over multiple years, partly in response to the growing political importance of sites of global environmental governance, such as the Convention on Biodiversity, the World Conservation Congress and of course, the Conference of the Parties. An integral part of this is seeing such sites not as discrete and singular, but as "critical historical junctures", as well as "bundles of social relationships and power dynamics" (Corson, Campbell & McDonald 2014: 28-29). Importantly, CEE sees such sites not simply as expressive, but argues that they *configure* the fields in which they are situated. Having situated my research in relation to this work, I go on to elaborate what I call the 'closed openness' of the international conference.

3.4.2 The 'closed openness' of conferences

An important motivation behind my decision to focus my participant-observation on international climate conferences was to remedy the under-theorisation of the 'international' by geographers,

and especially political and cultural geographers. More specifically, it speaks to a desire to reframe both the conference *and* the international, despite appearances, as spaces of *exclusion.* In this section, following a pathbreaking intervention by Sara Fregonese and Adam Ramadan (2015) on the geopolitics of hotels, I suggest that conferences are characterised by a 'closed openness'; by which I mean they are simultaneously open and closed. Taking the provision of hospitality as their starting point, Fregonese and Ramadan (2015) argue that the openness of the hotel is carefully controlled. On the one hand, since all hospitality is conditional, the hotel is a *closed* space, with access dependent on ability to pay as well as adherence to certain socio-cultural norms. They have also long been known as "soft targets" for terror attacks (2015: 800), which has produced enhanced apparatuses of security at their thresholds and around their perimeters. Yet, such securitisation cannot go so far as to compromise the hotel's fundamental *openness*. Indeed, it is this very openness that explains hotels' perception as soft targets. What is more, hotels' flexible built environments mean they can serve various needs in times of crisis[9], such as hospitality and emergency care and as infrastructures of peacebuilding. The fundamental point here is that this delicate balance between openness and closure positions hotels as "actively entangled in relations of power and politics", shaping "dynamics of political encounter, inclusion and exclusion, and possibly violence" (2015: 797).

While not comparable in every respect, international conferences maintain a kind of rhetorical openness. I argue that this argument applies in particular to United Nations conferences. As events organised and overseen by an 'international' body with almost universal membership among countries, such events can claim to transcend national fissures and boundaries. Once inside the domain of the UN climate conference, other conflicts and disagreements (supposedly) cease to matter, in accordance with the norms of diplomacy. Furthermore, these conferences claim to address issues that transcend intra-human disagreement and national difference, positioning all people as belonging to one global 'public'; one international community united in 'our' mission to act on climate change. This has been extended out to include the actual public. Ahead of COP24 in Katowice, the UN announced its 'The People's Seat' initiative, which invited members of the global public to convey their views to the conference via a combination of polling, digital technology and the involvement of prominent climate change advocates. In his praise of the initiative, COP24 President Michal Kurtyka insisted that the conference was

[9] Indeed, convention centres are similarly multifunctional, especially during crises. In March 2020, after hosting COP25, Madrid's IFEMA exhibition centre was transformed into a giant field hospital during Spain's coronavirus epidemic, which was among Europe's deadliest. The hospital, which closed on 1st May 2020, had been a symbol of the country's fight against Covid-19.

committed to fostering “openness, listening and the full participation of civil society in global efforts to tackle climate change” (UN news 2018).

However, despite their self-presentation as spaces of free discussion and debate, conferences are in a material sense *closed.* Most obviously, this closure affects those who are not invited or cannot attend, whether due to prohibitive costs, disabilities, caring responsibilities, fears for personal safety or myriad other reasons (Oliver & Morris 2020). The ‘People’s Seat’ participation initiative mentioned above exemplifies the closedness of the UN climate process as much as its ‘openness’: while creating the impression of public interaction with the proceedings, it continued the privilege the voices of national governments and other powerful figures. Indeed, the fact that the People’s Seat Address, the culmination of the campaign, was given by David Attenborough positioned him (a white man from the global North) as a representative of an undifferentiated ‘people’. Furthermore, coincident with the People’s Seat address was the launch of ‘ActNow’, a Facebook Messenger bot activated through the central United Nations Facebook page. As a UNFCCC press announcement put it, ActNow.bot will “make it easier than ever for people to understand what actions they can take personally in the fight against climate change. ActNow.bot will recommend *everyday actions* – like taking public transport and eating less meat – and track the number of actions to highlight the impact that *collective* action can make at this critical moment in our planet’s history” (UNFCCC 2018, emphases added). As indicated by my italics, this conflates multiple individual actions with collective action, while no structural change takes place. Consequently, once again the individual is directed to examine their own lifestyle, which is decoupled from larger structures and processes. To return to the theme of change/transformation, if ‘the people’ are being asked to change, who or what is being exempted from having to do so?

Conferences also appear open insofar as they are spaces for free deliberation and discussion, but there are limits to what forms this kind of ‘free expression’ can take. For instance, the UNFCCC’s Conferences of the Parties meetings have a Code of Conduct applicable to ‘Observers’ from the civil society and NGO sector (UNFCCC, 2003). When, in the second week of COP25, UN Security removed hundreds of mostly young participants from the venue following an unauthorised protest, the Secretariat justified its actions on the grounds that “[i]nterfering with the movement of participants at any time or location within the venues is not permitted” (UNFCCC Joint Press Statement 2019). In other words, in the terms of openness and closedness, we might conclude that the protestors were ejected because their actions compromised the openness of the event for its prioritised participants: those belonging to

national Party delegations. In the next section, I will further unpack how the dynamic of 'closed openness' was made manifest through my everyday experiences and practices in the field.

3.4.3 Conducting a conference ethnography

Table 1: Table of events attended throughout the research (October 2018 to January 2020)

Event	Location	Date	Duration
Climate cities network international conference	Barcelona, Spain	October 2018	4 days
Climate migration workshop	London, UK	October 2018	1 day
Climate justice knowledge exchange	Glasgow, UK	November 2018	1 day
24th Session of Conference of the Parties*	Katowice, Poland	December 2018	14 days
World Forum on Climate Justice (conference for academics & practitioners)	Glasgow, UK	June 2019	3 days
25th Session of the Conference of the Parties	Madrid, Spain	December 2019	7 days**
Development and Climate practitioners' workshop	Madrid, Spain	December 2019	2 days
Post-COP briefing	London, UK	January 2020	1 day

*Since I was refused admission to COP24, I attended the parallel civil society conference instead.

**COPs always run for two weeks, with passes available to registered attendees for the first week, the second week or both weeks. My pass only admitted me for the second week.

During my episodic participant-observation, I listened to keynote addresses and panel discussions, watched films, participated in small-group discussions and other interactive activities, met formally with interviewees, and engaged in small talk with those around me. My note-taking strategies varied somewhat, but typically I would take copious 'jotted' notes, the detail of which I would flesh out later. I was careful to indicate where I had quoted people's

statements word-for-word by either putting these statements between quote marks or marking them with ‘V’ (for ‘verbatim’), but wherever possible I would do both. If I picked up on comments from those sitting around me because they seemed interesting or revealing, I concealed the identity of these speakers. Depending on the type of space I was in, I wrote notes either on my phone, on a laptop or in a specific notebook. Each mode of recording notes brought its own set of advantages and drawbacks. The phone was most useful for taking quick notes, or when I had no flat surface to write on. The phone had the additional benefits of avoiding scribbled handwritten notes that would later be difficult to read, as well as metadata such as time- and date-stamping, which ensured that notes could be correctly contextualised. However, this does not hold for all situations. For example, sometimes it seemed rude to be typing on my phone, whereas a notebook and pen conveyed engagement and interest. Similarly, the type of events I attended meant that using a laptop was commonplace and inconspicuous. This also meant it was easy, if I wanted to type up some notes, to ‘sit out’ of some conference sessions as many other delegates would be doing the same.

Of course, tech is never ‘just tech’: as Richard Gorman (2017: 224) notes, smartphones function as “social ties”. Gorman also reflects on the recent shift towards taking notes using smartphone notation apps, arguing that such tools shape not only the style and content of notes, but also the field and the actants within it. He questions the idea that smartphones are universally socially acceptable, instead insisting that they are entirely contingent upon place. For instance, at a conference in late 2018, I recall looking around and seeing that Alina (my ‘gatekeeper’) was on her phone. At least at this point, this conveyed that this was acceptable. Indeed, while in Gorman’s research context (a community farming project) his smartphone made him conspicuous, in my research environments such technologies were unexceptional. Furthermore, the rules of consent did not apply in the same way, as conducting research at large events means it is impossible to obtain consent from all those present. Consequently, I deliberately keep some material out of electronic notes, most notably full names, and store all such notes on a local, password-protected device.

Taking photographs of my surroundings was also an important ethnographic ‘technology’. For example, rather than spending time writing down visual descriptions of my surroundings, photographs produced useful ‘shorthands’: one photo could replace hundreds of words of description. This meant I could be more attuned to the non-visual aspects of the spaces I inhabited (such as sounds, temperature, smells and the general atmosphere). While I did take a digital camera with me on some research trips, I quickly found it much easier – and possibly

less intrusive – to use my phone. Like digitally produced notes, these photographs were automatically date- and time-stamped, making organisation of research materials easier.

After each episode of fieldwork was completed, I wrote up an informal 'report', in which I detailed the context of the event, the kind of activities I undertook there, and initial ideas of major themes drawn from my fieldnotes. These reports were by no means the 'last word' on the themes constructed out of my field materials, but rather a kind of extended "analytic memo[s]" (Strauss 1987: 8) written alongside the process of data analysis, which were themselves generative of new questions and prompted returns to this or older data, right up until the end of the writing process (ibid, 18). Additionally, Crang and Cook (2007: 133) also insist that 'data collection' and 'analysis' cannot be separated from one another and that they take place in the same extended 'field'. The process of producing these fieldnotes as 'analyse-able' material was not, however, a 'pure', transparent one: 'writing up' fieldnotes inevitably involves a significant degree of construction and standardisation. In other words, this data was not 'found' but 'made'. As voiced by Crang and Cook (2007: 131-132), the data was 'made' through a mix of "odd conversations, first-hand experiences, fact-finding, referrals, collected bits of paper, sketching and photography, web-searching, reading and so on". As such, supplementary but integral to my field diary were photographs, short videos, leaflets and hand-drawn maps. The following section draws out in more detail the discomfort I experienced in this field setting.

3.4.4 "Constant impression management": discomfort in an open-and-closed field

My ethnographic research was often weighted with an intense feeling of discomfort, much of which stemmed from feeling 'out of place' in my research settings. This kind of "lingering in the space-times of research", as Hitchen (2019: 121) expresses, is never without dissonance. Hitchen (ibid: 121-122) explains in detail the actions she took to buttress her sense of safety and of legitimately existing within her research site, and many such strategies and experiences align with my own. In her words: "Lingering can also generate a *perceived sense* that we, as researchers, are on the threshold of acceptability within research encounters" (ibid 120-121, emphasis in original). The following excerpt from my COP25 fieldnotes speaks to this:

> *I [also] find the setting for this fieldwork exhausting. The long days, the poor sleep I've had in recent days, the masses of people everywhere,* ***the feeling that everyone is***

> ***looking at me****; the COP rookie, who doesn't even know what she should be focusing on. I can feel a strong urge to* ***avoid looking like I'm out of my depth and overwhelmed.*** *I feel compelled to* ***look busy****, as this is how* ***everyone else*** *looks. There is no darkness, no* ***stillness,*** *no* ***unpluggedness,*** *no quiet here* (field notes, 9th December 2019, emphases added).

As I expressed here, I felt obligated to "look busy", which in this situation meant briskly typing on a laptop. This functioned as a space of safety for me during this field research. Not only did it allow me to sit quietly and retreat inwards, it also gave the impression I was busy 'doing something' (like I imagined "everyone else" was) and not "out of my depth" or "overwhelmed" by an environment in which there was little space for withdrawing or 'being unproductive' (as suggested by my word choice of "unpluggedness"). This speaks directly to the theme of closed openness, as specific objects (such as the laptop, or the security pass) were needed to buttress my sense of being 'credible' and 'in place'. Where I experienced anxiety and distress in relation to the research process, recording these feelings in field notes served as a way of coping with them, suggesting a therapeutic function. Another instance of this occurred when I first arrived at the COP25 venue to register and collect my badge: a critical marker of (dis)belonging in this context. Having completed registration, I was unsure of where to go next, as my pass would not be activated until the next week. I spotted a water cooler and decided to have a drink "while I could look around and decide what to do next, without looking like I didn't know where I was going – *it seemed like no-one else was behaving aimlessly and I certainly didn't want to"* (fieldnotes, 2nd December 2019, emphasis added). Again, as above, the water justified my apparent purposelessness: instead of thinking I was lost, onlookers would assume I was just pausing for a drink. This also reinforces the desire I felt to demonstrate my credible status to others who, I always imagined, felt more secure in their credibility than I did. Simply put, I associated knowing the way around an unfamiliar space with appearing as an experienced COP participant with proven credibility; a concern that would rear its head again in my interviews (see section 3.6). Yet, as Hitchen rightly identifies, this is about *perception.* There is no guarantee that having or doing the 'right' things will attenuate such fears, as they merely transfer to another object. As I noted on the same day: "[h]aving a badge doesn't quell anxiety: you simply start wondering whether your accreditation is valid, and whether the UNFCCC would ever know – or care – that you had been added to an organisation's list by a sympathetic friend" (fieldnotes, ibid).

This ‘out-of-placeness' took on a different guise in less intimidating spaces and encounters. For example, I felt a sharp pang of unease when a research participant, who I was meeting for the second time, greeted me with a casual hug and I reciprocated. I attribute my discomfort in these situations to not knowing what my own position was: had I crossed the threshold and outstayed my welcome, or was I simply responding normally to the hospitality being extended to me? The following field note excerpt comes from the climate cities conference at the beginning of my fieldwork, when, at a restaurant after an event, I was sitting next to two of the network’s employees, Karine and Oriana (pseudonyms):

> *[i]t is at this point that I begin to feel slightly uncomfortable. I am an outsider who has only just met the members of this group, but the particular social context of this occasion has drawn me into a relationship of what feels like easy familiarity with Karine and Oriana […] Oriana invites me to taste the wine the table have just ordered, and shows me photos of the neighbourhood she has just moved to. These feelings of discomfort are compounded by this, and the fact that the beer and wine are flowing freely, which makes them* ***let their guards down*** *and means the conversation* ***lapses into the personal rather than the strictly professional****. As an outsider, I am consciously engaging in constant* ***impression management;*** *entering into a condition of mild* ***tipsiness and satiety*** *seems inappropriate in the company of people I have only just met* (fieldnotes, 30th September 2018; emphases added).

First, evident from the above is my sense of dissonance: why was Oriana inviting me, a person she had just met, to look at photos on her smartphone (a highly personal object)? Besides this, my use of the language of ‘being on one’s guard’ is revealing as the setting was not, objectively, an intimidating one. Rather, it suggests that this sense of an awkward encounter says more about me (and my assumptions about the separability of the ‘personal’ and the ‘professional’) than about the setting itself. What also strikes me from this excerpt is my reluctance to eat or drink alcohol – even in small amounts - while in this setting. While this was in part related to awkwardness about paying the bill, more important for me was to avoid allowing my bodily presence to be altered – relaxed - through the consumption of food and alcohol. I feared that as an “outsider”, becoming ‘too relaxed’ might leave Karine and Oriana with an unfavourable impression of me and my professionalism as a researcher. This discomfort, in part about the

extent to which the other can be truly revealed to us, is reminiscent of Lacan's argument that the Other as a source of meaning can never be fully assimilated through identification (see Evans 1996). This alterity corroborates Judith Butler's conception of the frame, and the fact that it "never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside […] that troubles our sense of reality" (2010: 9). Having outlined my rationale for and experience of conference ethnography, I now turn my focus to the discourse analysis component of the methodology.

3.5 Discourse analysis

There is an argument that discourse analysis undergirds all other text-based methods, as it is the foundation of how interview transcripts and ethnographic field notes are analysed. As Gordon Waitt (2010) explains, in the most fundamental sense the aim of discourse analysis is to "investigate why particular lines of argument (constructed in and as discourse) have become taken as truths, while others are dismissed […] in other words, it seeks to uncover the mechanisms, cultural and social, that "maintain or rupture structures or rules of validity of statements about particular people, animals, plants, things, events, and places" (Waitt 2010: 218).

The international climate change community is to a profound extent constructed and advanced through texts, notable among which are the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992), the Brundtland Report ((1987), originator of the concept of 'sustainable development'), the Kyoto Protocol (1997), the Paris Agreement (2015), and notable IPCC reports (2007 and 2018). Indeed, the conclusion of the annual COP meetings hinges on the completion of the relevant decision *texts.* Furthermore, given that unanimity is a cornerstone of the UNFCCC, there must be complete agreement. A marker of progress in the negotiations is the declining number of square brackets in the negotiating texts, which designate areas of disagreement[10]. Moreover, tiny changes to a small piece of wording can be hugely consequential. At the pivotal COP17 in Durban in 2011, an EU-led plan to bind all countries to emissions cuts was derailed by India's insertion of the words "legal outcome" into the negotiating text, which almost brought

[10] In 2018, the website Carbon Brief tracked the progress of the negotiating texts of the 'Paris rulebook' using an open-access spreadsheet. From this document the viewer can see which texts were finalised and which are still subject to disagreement. Available at: https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop24-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-katowice and https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1g2lqK_tx_lOJdJR-5lbriPAbKqM-Uravr89tQTtGeGU/edit#gid=0 [last accessed 17/08/2020]

the talks to collapse (Vidal & Harvey 2011). After all, the finished text will go around the world and set the agenda for the coming years, so it is a primary mechanism through which the continuing 'optimism' is secured (see section 3.8)**.** Commenting on the Paris Agreement and Pope Francis's *Laudato Si* (both of 2015), the writer Amitav Ghosh (2016) suggests that their publication can be understood as a "vindication" of climate science research, as well as a worldwide acceptance of the reality of anthropogenic climate change (date: 151). Highly pertinent to this section of the chapter, Ghosh also reminds us how these texts were "brought into being through the craft of writing, with meticulous attention being paid to form, vocabulary, and even typography" (2016: 150). While they have effected real change in the world, for Ghosh there is much to be gained from reading these documents *as texts* (ibid).

As Jason Dittmer (2009) identifies, the two major strands of thought within discourse analysis are "structuralist" and "post-structuralist", and these differ significantly on their understanding of the relationship of 'discourse' to 'truth' (also Barret 1991). In opposition to the former (most often associated with Marxism, the Frankfurt School and Gramscian thought), "post-structuralist" approaches are anchored less in political economy than in power and representation**.** Here, the relationship of discourse to truth and subjectivity is the reverse: subjects (both individual and collective) are not pre-discursive but *products of power, constituted in and through discourse* (see also Barrett 1991). Of critical importance here is power's operation in "capillary" form, meaning that it does not emanate from a single source. Yet more important, however, is that power functions most effectively at the very limits of its reach. The power of discourse lies not in the fact that it is imposed, but the genius of the capillary form is that discourse does not *feel* like a form of power. Michel Foucault, one of the most influential proponents of discourse analysis as method, does not dispute the existence of absolute truth, but rather is interested in the process by which the status of 'truth' becomes secured. However, the 'flexibility' of a Foucauldian approach is that it allows for the existence of multiple truths, but also for the fact that some truths are more powerful than others. Discourses, in their determination of the limits of what can be thought and said, also determine by whom this can be said.

Discursive structures are sets of statements that determine and delimit what gives meaning to concepts, objects and places (Waitt 2010: 233). They are "a subtle form of social power that fix, give apparent unity to, constrain and/or naturalise as common-sense particular ideas, attitudes and practices" (ibid, 233). However, while these discursive structures operate to give a sense of fixity and 'naturalness' (often to the prevalent status quo), the actual discourses that compose these structures are also intrinsically multiple, unstable and contradictory (ibid). This means it is

crucial to be attentive to the ways in which certain kinds of knowledge becomes accepted as legitimate, trustworthy and authoritative at the expense of other kinds (ibid). As such, knowledge-making practices and the spokesperson communicating the knowledge are critical to account for.

Moreover, questions of authorship are critical because discourses do not only determine and restrict what can be said, but *by whom* this can be said, and who can speak with authority (Waitt 2010: 226). The researcher must always ask themselves how their topic of interest is constituted (and reconstituted) and maintained within a specific set of social networks (to the exclusion of others). “The key point is that all texts are the outcome of an uneven power-laden process, fashioned within a particular social context” (Waitt, 226). Texts need to be anchored in a particular historical, political and geographical context (ibid), and this context includes the historical and geographical position of the author, as well as the when, where and why of the material’s production. Finally, and Foucault himself fully appreciated this point, it is important to recognise that audiences are not passive recipients of the meanings (co)produced by textual materials. To the contrary, they are always influenced by existing discourses, assumptions and cultural representations. As such, this means that texts do not have singular or unidirectional meanings – every ‘audience member’ will interact with the text in their own way, contingent on their individual assumptions about the topic and personal and political affiliations. This point is relevant to intertextuality – meanings are co-created in concert with other texts and discourses that are present (Waitt 2010: 222)

3.5.1 Data collection and analysis: the construction of an archive

The approach I took to the discourse analysis was that of constructing and curating a ‘climate justice’ *archive.* Methodologically, this idea of archiving was a generative one for me, as it served as a reminder that such analysis is a situated and *productive* act. What I mean by this is that in conducting discourse analysis, the researcher is not passively accumulating a disparate set of texts, the political meanings of which exist prior to their collection. The construction of an archive, of whatever kind, is never an ‘objective’ or ‘neutral’ process, but itself an operation of power, and the stories it will tell are necessarily situated and partial. Some of the materials in my archive derived from already-existing ‘archives’ such as the Mary Robinson Foundation website. This is a large archive, searchable chronologically, thematically and by document type, and

containing eight years of Foundation reports, position papers, press statements, media coverage of the Foundation's work and lecture transcripts from 2010 to 2019.

The texts composing an archive can take an almost unlimited number of forms: treaties, position papers, policy documents, speeches, press releases, social media posts, organisation annual reports, pamphlets, blog posts, press articles, and many more. This diversity is reflected in *my* document archive, which I have recorded in the thesis Appendix. Importantly, field notes and interview transcripts *are also texts,* and therefore all the same caveats apply to these as apply to other texts. Field notes "exist as a form of representation, reducing the events, actants and places observed to textual accounts that can be reviewed and re-consulted; fieldnotes are the 'raw' material of observation, objectifying events that are situated, ambiguous and fleeting" (Gorman 2017 p. 223). Texts are useful for getting a sense of the context behind events (and interviews are useful as a companion method – for eliciting more detail on this context from interviewees, which also has the advantage of being more 'situated' than texts). Documents also served as a way of finding and recruiting informants for interview, so in this way the two methods informed and reinforced each other.

Discourse analysis is a method known for its lack of prescription. In recognition of this, Waitt (2010: 236) offers the following breakdown of the mechanics of conducting Foucauldian discourse analysis:

1. Choice of source materials/texts

2. Suspension of pre-existing categories, or becoming reflexive;

3. Familiarisation, or absorbing oneself in and reflecting critically on the social context of the chosen texts;

4. Coding (once for organisation and again for interpretation)

5. Power, knowledge and persuasion (investigating the texts for effects of "truth");

6. Rupture and resilience (looking out for inconsistencies within the texts)

7. Silence, which denotes both 'silence as discourse' and discourses that silence

Foucault is firm on the need to suspend pre-existing categories and preconceptions, as these: "…must be held in suspense. They must not be rejected definitively, of course, but the tranquillity with which they are accepted must be disturbed; we must show that they do not come about by themselves, but are always the result of a construction the rules of which must be known and the justifications of which must be scrutinised" (quoted in Waitt, 224). This is important because pre-existing categories do not simply 'exist' but always come from somewhere. This holds equally true for the researcher's preconceptions as for those of the author(s) of the text(s) – and these often differ significantly. A useful strategy for this is elaborated by Dowling (2016): the researcher must first acknowledge *why* they chose the topic they did, as well as their initial ideas about the topic. This is the process of locating oneself in the research (Waitt 2010: 225).

Though I coded some texts electronically, I found it most productive to code by hand, using colours to distinguish codes and making a note of the dates of the first coding, then subsequent analyses. When coding, for each label the researcher should start a list of codes, but as coding is an iterative process, the initial descriptive codes will almost certainly *change.* However, it is important to remember that analytical codes always involve abstraction or reduction, so they are best thought of as interpretative themes rather than descriptive codes. The initial stage in my coding process was to code for context: the actors, events and other texts they referred to, audience, authors, medium of circulation; akin to what Waitt calls the conditions of their "social production" (Waitt, 225).

Finally, discursive structures are embedded within social networks, so they are fragile, inconsistent and continually ruptured. These structures may be bolstered and reproduced by some texts and/or authors of texts, but also undermined and challenged by others (Waitt, 235). Finally, it is also important to be attentive to *silences within texts.* As Gillian Rose (2001) reminds us, "silences are as productive as explicit naming; invisibility can have just as powerful effects as visibility" (cited in Waitt 2010: 235-236). Which voices are silenced in the texts of interest? Who is in a position to speak, and whose voices are constructed as authoritative? Privileged discourses operate to silence different, alternative or dissenting understandings of the world. For Foucault, if a silence surrounds a topic, this silence is a mechanism of social power (see Waitt 2010: 236). These questions also colour the encounters experienced in research interviews, my third and final method.

3.6 Interviews

Interviews formed a central plank of my mixed-methods research design. Most fundamentally, qualitative interviews – semi-structured or unstructured – allow individuals to express themselves and their lives in their 'own words' (Bennett 2002). Widely considered to be "reflexive" and "empowering" (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 678), interviews lend themselves well to the feminist principles of handing power and control 'back' to participants, particularly those who suffer marginalisation both within and outside their communities, as well as taking seriously the intimate and the everyday as sites of knowledge and agency (ibid, see also for e.g., Valentine 1993; Pain 2014; McGlynn et al 2020). In my research, semi-structured interviews were invaluable for filling the gaps - complexity, hesitation, uncertainty or nuance - inevitably left by documents and my analysis of them. Interviews make personal what is otherwise textual, they are alive while the text is docile, they offer surprises and challenge our expectations. Unlike more 'fixed' texts such as published documents, interviews help the researcher attune to differences and contradictions, all of which help enrich the data (Bennett 2002). Relatedly, they also constitute a means of personalising the issues under discussion for participants: indeed, in this respect they proved unexpectedly rich sources of insight (more on which later). This had the unforeseen consequence of alerting me to the affective dimensions of their work and professional role. For example, in one interview, my interlocutor spoke passionately and at length of climate justice and "building a better world", finishing with "that's why I dedicated my career to it all those years ago" (CC interview, July 2019). However, interviews also present risks, such as the danger of overlooking their built-in politics and epistemological baggage. Interviews are not neutral, but privilege atomised individual experiences. They are also time- and place-bound, often only "scratching the surface" (Crang & Cook 2007: 73). They may simply not be useful. Follow-up interviews, which resituate the encounter within a broader frame (see Kitchin & Tate 2013) are a strategy of which in hindsight, I should have made more use. There is also the temptation to 'mine' interviews for "apposite extracts" (Silverman 2013: 54), which overlooks the importance of sequence and obscures how interviewee responses are situated "in the flow of prior talk" (ibid). With these risks in mind, I transcribed all interviews in full and try to quote long extracts over short ones, without compromising participant confidentiality.

Between October 2018 and January 2020, I conducted twelve[11] semi-structured interviews (see Table 2), the duration of which ranged from 30 minutes to an hour and 45 minutes**.** As can be

[11] One interview was with two participants, and I interviewed one participant twice, which in total adds up to twelve interviewees across twelve interviews.

seen from the table, a large proportion took place over the phone or Skype, attesting to the dispersed arrangement of my participants. Meanwhile, those I conducted in person took place in various locations, due to the itinerant nature of my research: in participants' offices, in hotel lobbies and coffee shops, and at conferences or other events. This 'multi-sitedness' lent colour and texture to my interviews, traces of which remain in my recordings and which I recorded in my transcriptions: the whirring of coffee machines and the bang-thud of handles being emptied of spent coffee grounds; interruptions from colleagues or passers-by asking if the next seat was free punctuating the flow of a conversation. This reminds us that we are not the sole authors of our speech. Rather, what becomes spoken is the concatenation of "diverse competing affective forces"; we exist amid a tangle of collectives that make up both ourselves and our speaking environments (see Bissell 2015: 161). Meanwhile, my practice of recording observations during, before and after research encounters meant that my remote interviews felt no less textured than those that took place in-person. While the technology used here can create moments of disjuncture and deprive interlocutors of shared senses (Longhurst & Adams-Hutcheson 2017), remote interviews proved indispensable for my research, with some of my most successful interviews taking place on the phone. Indeed, as Longhurst and Adams-Hutcheson discuss, Skype interviewing has distinct advantages, including the creation of healthy distance and affording interviewees more control over when to "quit" (2017: 152). It allows interviews to participate from a setting of *their* choice, be it their home, office or elsewhere (ibid).

Table 2: Table of interview participants

Job Title	Pseudonym	Interview date	Location*/medium	Cited in thesis
Municipal officer (sustainability)	MY	October 2018	Barcelona**/in person	No
Activist	JO	December 2018	England/in person	No
National co-ordinator	PS	December 2018	Vienna/online	Yes
Executive and Climate Justice project lead	CG & AL	December 2018	Frankfurt/in person	No
Federal government employee	KR	April 2019	Washington, DC/in person	No
Think-tank researcher	RS	April 2019	Washington, DC/in person	No

International Programme Director	IPD	April 2019	Washington, DC/in person	Yes
Director of International Climate	ICID	May 2019	Washington, DC/online	Yes
Climate solutions consultant	CC	July & September 2019 [two interviews]	United States/online	Yes
Institute director	RP	December 2019	Bangladesh/in person	Yes
Academic researcher	ST	January 2020	Scotland/in person	No

* In most cases, this refers to where the research participant was based, except where noted with**. In this case, I have used the location where the interview took place, to protect the anonymity of the participant.

3.6.1 Participant Recruitment

I recruited interview participants through a combination of purposive sampling, desk-based research and word-of-mouth recommendations. Oftentimes, my participant recruitment and sampling of documents for analysis tracked onto each other, as it was through consulting documents that I would find out about who had authored which texts (a good indicator of who to interview) and which organisations had worked together. In addition, my access to research participants was frequently mediated by existing professional contacts, who recommended their colleagues as potentially useful interviewees. For example, I was able to connect with key informants thanks to Durham PhD colleagues who had previously worked for them, and who kindly agreed to put us in touch. Having people I knew 'vouch for' me in this way was essential for building trust as it meant that these participants would know that I was a genuine, credible researcher, and they would be more likely to agree to talk to me than if I had approached them myself. This serves as a reminder that gatekeepers do important 'work' in the research process, which can be both helpful and unhelpful.

Another factor shaping my recruitment of interview participants was my ethnographic research at conferences and other climate justice-adjacent events. When I participated in the city network international conference in Barcelona in October 2018, I drew on the insider knowledge and advice of an employee I had already contacted by email (Alina – a pseudonym) and who acted similarly to a 'gatekeeper'; sending around copies of my research information sheet and suggesting relevant people to interview. Here, while I was not dependent on Alina for access to

the conference, she helped my research in less tangible ways, such as providing background information on the organisation, suggesting which sessions it might be most helpful for me to attend, and introducing me to her colleagues. Furthermore, when I attended – or rather did not attend (see section 3.7.1) - COP24 in December 2018, this was at the beginning of my fieldwork, so I had had few opportunities for networking. Therefore, here I recruited purposively, compiling a list of relevant organisations from the UNFCCC database of registered NGOs and sending out a 'scoping' email explaining who I was, and inviting them to a meeting during the conference[12]. Broadly speaking, this approach was not successful: most of these emails went unanswered, while some delegates regretted that 'climate justice' was not their area of expertise. These efforts garnered only two positive responses, both of which I followed up. Arriving in Katowice, however, I found that it was easiest to connect with like-minded people through word-of-mouth and chance encounters. At COP25 in Madrid in 2019, I was invited onto the delegation of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD), a well-known research centre based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As such, my membership of this delegation afforded me access to further prospective interviewees. In all the above cases, I found that a significant benefit of recruiting research participants at conferences was that I could speak to them informally in the first instance, meaning there was time to build trust and rapport prior to the formal interviews. Since participants had busy conference schedules, these usually took place later and often on the phone or Skype.

3.6.2 Interview procedure

In all cases, I used a semi-structured interview design. This allowed me to broadly determine the direction of the conversation, while also permitting participants to express themselves and discuss matters I had not anticipated (see Bennett 2002). As such, I anticipated that no two interviews would be the same, so accordingly I compiled a unique guide for each one, each tailored to the interviewee and based on prior desk-based research. What unified these interview guides, however, was that they all included the question "what does climate justice mean to you?" This was a question framed broadly enough so that participants could respond to it as they saw fit. I tended to start my interviews by asking the interviewees about their

[12] This process of recruitment was also a process of trying to negotiate admission to COP24, which is only possible as a delegate of a registered organisation, meaning that in my research, recruitment and access were inextricably tied together.

background, including details about their current role and any previous similar roles. This helped me put both myself and my participants at their ease, particularly if we had never met before. It also meant I acquired a sense of where the interviewees were 'coming from' in professional terms, such as for how long they had worked in the sector.

Due to their busy work schedules, I invited interviewees to determine the time and place of interviews, or, if conducted virtually, the time and medium (phone or Skype). With some exceptions, the interviewees I chose had packed schedules, so some conversations were as short as 30 minutes. While this meant I had to be selective in my choice of questions, it did not result in poor-quality conversations. Rather, since I found research interviews highly mentally draining, shorter conversations allowed me to better regulate my energy levels. Excepting the one that took place in a coffee shop and those (4) that took place during conferences, most in-person interviews were conducted in interviewees' offices or workplaces. While this appears as a common-sense choice as it is convenient and quiet, it is no less imbued with mobile, multidirectional power relations: it may position the researcher as guest and the interviewee as host, but it is also a familiar space, implying that interviewees might avoid speaking frankly in the presence of their colleagues. Moreover, accessing some office settings (such as government ones) was intensely anxiety-provoking, and the physical effects of this anxiety would carry over into the interview. By contrast, although it could be noisy and disruptive, I felt more at my ease in a more 'public' environment, as I felt it put the interviewee and myself on a more equal footing. On top of this, the coffee shop setting meant that I could offer to buy the participant a coffee as a token of thanks for their time.

While I emphasized that this was optional, every interviewee agreed to be audio-recorded, which I did either on my smartphone (in an emergency) or on a battery-powered audio recorded (my preference). After each interview, I transferred the audio files to my desktop computer, or to my university-owned laptop if I was away from the office at the time (both of which are securely password-protected). I would transcribe the recordings in the subsequent days and weeks, and admittedly, sometimes months. However, I quickly learned the advantages of prompt transcription: namely that the conversation would be much fresher in my mind, and that I would have a better recall of the non-verbal aspects of the interview, including changes to the tone of voice, intakes of breath, pauses, laughter and speech habits. This was particularly imperative for remote interviews. Additionally, while I did have the benefit of audio recordings, interview transcripts are more fleeting and impermanent than they first appear. For instance, recording a response in a transcript simply as "hmmm" discloses very little: does it signal interest or

scepticism, sympathy or enthusiasm, ambivalence or amusement? Though prompt transcription can largely mitigate such ambiguity, the polyvocality of speech means it can elude classification and comprehension. This recalls David Bissell's (2015: 149) argument that speech is less the "willed self-expression of a discrete, individual subject" than a concatenation of the "affective, material forces of our environments". All interviews were transcribed and coded for context, then for themes, in line with my strategy for analysis of other texts (Waitt 2010). After each interview, I made contextual notes including the date of interview, date of transcription, location and medium of interview, as well as reflective notes, such as how I thought I came across to the interviewee, how they responded to me, anything that struck me about them, and how I felt before, during and after the meeting). As an illustration, below is an excerpt from the notes made following an interview with a climate consultant:

> *Of particular note: informant's use of 'we'. Since he now works as an independent consultant, he most likely wasn't referring to an organisation or any such tangible collective, but more to a loose grouping of people engaged in a particular project, or to humanity in general, or whether he was interpellating [sic] me into this 'we'. He also made frequent use of 'they', and did a lot of implicit distancing of himself [sic] from 'too many people' or 'some groups', but it wasn't clear how this 'they' related to his 'we'* (fieldnotes, July 2019).

As is evident from the above, taking notes immediately after the research encounter was complete meant that I would record patterns or insights while they were still fresh in my mind, while keeping a record in this way enabled me to create an early starting point from which the analysis of the interview could proceed. In a similar vein, I also took notes on the demeanour of participants. For instance, I noted that one interviewee had probably been interviewed many times before, as he was "very deliberate and articulate in his responses". This interviewee also had a habit of pausing before replying, which reminded me of "people being interviewed on the TV or radio". In addition, an interviewee's response to a challenging question from me prompted me to write: "...he is used to being interviewed – ability to turn questions to suit his point of view – not letting himself be pigeon-holed into one single viewpoint" (all above quotes from fieldnotes, July 2019). These notes suggested to me the possibility that I needed to be more assertive in interview situations, and less afraid to challenge. In such contexts, I did my best to hold in my mind an insight from Crang and Cook (2007) who remind us that "the stories they

[research participants] tell are often not simply made up on the spur of the moment. Many will have been told, retold and refined on a number of occasions, in a number of places and with a number of different audiences" (70). This reminder resonated especially at the end of one interview in 2019, when, as the conversation was winding down, the interviewee abruptly asked "anything else?" (RP interview, December 2019). At the time, I reflected in my field notes that his anecdotes were "well-honed, as though he has recounted them many times before" and that "it seemed difficult to get beneath this layer of practised anecdotes" (field notes, 12th December 2019). Though this could have meant I did not access what he 'really thought,' this is itself a finding, as it suggests that owing to their status, some research participants have, from prior experience, an expectation of what researchers 'want to hear' from interviews. This is an instance where one or more follow-up interviews could have made a difference. The operations of different forms of power in these encounters are the focus of the following section.

3.6.3 Questions of power and expertise in 'elite' interviews

Throughout the research ('data-gathering') process, I tended to refer to my interviews as 'elite interviews,' despite the many questions surrounding this term (e.g. Smith 2006). This was mostly down to the fact that, objectively speaking, my research participants occupied a more 'powerful' position than I did. First, in almost all cases they were influential professionals with established careers, whereas I was a PhD student whose career prospects hinged on the success of doctoral research. This undoubtedly affected the questions I asked: since my participants had competing demands on their time, I felt a need to 'get to the point' and only ask questions that were strictly relevant to the interview. However, this may imply that I was not open enough about my own views to participants, potentially putting undue onus on *them* to disclose. This is a delicate balance to strike in interpersonal research encounters (Bennett 2002).

Additionally, unlike myself, most of my interviewees worked, and had years of experience in, the domain of international climate policy, a privileged arena with its own specialised (and highly alienating) vocabulary and unique forms of social capital. The fact that I did not possess this 'insider' expertise and capital risked our common ground being limited and uneven. This was a divide that I made sustained efforts to bridge, often in terms of emotional labour. For example,

during an interview with the international climate director at an influential research organisation, the director and I shared the following exchange:

> ***ICID:*** *[…] I wasn't at the Montreal COP* ***[2006]****, it was the um, last COP in fact that I have not attended up through today [Chuckles].*
>
> ***Matilda:*** *Really?*
>
> ***ICID:*** *Yeah, uh, I'm not sure for better or worse, but [Laughs]*
>
> ***Matilda:*** *[Laughs]* (ICID interview, May 2019)

This comment could refer either to an idea of the COP as an 'ordeal', and the fact that he had sat through so many of them, or the number of years he had spent in the international climate arena, measured through COPs, or both. Here, I read the 'COP' (the shorthand by which the annual UN-sponsored climate talks is known in climate policy circles) to function as a site of tacit shared experience and social capital (as my supervisor had suggested it would). Together with his comment, the director's laughter suggested an assumption that I also had first-hand experience of a COP (which at this point, I did not) and that this experience was a shared resource that could be drawn upon to generate a rapport. Indeed, it seems unlikely he would have laughed if he had suspected that I would not have joined in. Later in this same interview, my eagerness to demonstrate my knowledge and experience, and therefore my credibility as an 'expert', is evident:

> ***Matilda:*** *Well this is the kind of acrobatics that they do in, in the UNFCCC as well, because I remember at Katowice, were you at Katowice* ***[COP24, 2018]*** *last year?*
>
> ***ICID:*** *Yeah.*
>
> ***Matilda:*** *Um yeah, I remember there was a lot of argument over whether they were gonna accept the IPCC report, and the language ended up being 'we acknowledge it, we don't embrace it' or something, you know.*
>
> ***ICID:*** *I think it was 'we welcome the timely…'*

Matilda: *Yeah it was 'we welcome the timely completion of the', yeah that was it I remember now [Laughs]*

ICID: *[Laughs] One of the more obvious absurdities in the negotiating texts.*

Matilda: *Yeah [still laughing]* (ICID interview May 2019)

For context, I was referring to the fate of the IPCC's 2018 Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 Degrees, which was to be a key scientific input at Katowice later that year. However, after hours of negotiations, the talks were blocked from 'welcoming' this crucial report by powerful oil-producing countries, who argued that simply 'noting' the findings would be sufficient[13]. At this moment, I was eager to show not just my knowledge of the outcome of COP24, but also that I was *au fait* with the reality of how the negotiating process, with all its compromises and unique absurdities, worked. This, I felt, would help buttress my claim to authoritative expertise, levelling the ground between myself and my more knowledgeable interlocutor.

This is not, of course, to imply that I 'possessed' *no* power in these encounters: as the researcher, I retained the monopoly of interpretation, meaning the participants had no control over how I would interpret their words or how I would write about them. In any case, a flat, unidirectional understanding of power, which one either 'has' or 'does not have', is unhelpful in this context. Instead, I am far more persuaded by a Foucauldian analytic of power, according to which power is diffuse and mobile, rather than a fixture of discrete individuals or organisations (see Smith 2006; Foucault 1978). This analytic allows for the complex enmeshing of axes including gender, class, race, age, nationality, sexuality and professional status, which could interact in sometimes unexpected ways. For instance, since most of my participants were (or at least presented as) men[14], I felt acutely aware of how my gender, nationality, professional status and age impacted on how my participants perceived and interacted with me. However, research participants also have multiple and overlapping identities. As well as being practitioners, several of my participants had also been in academia[15], a fact that troubled the 'researcher/researched' binary. This shared experience also allowed for the building of rapport,

[13] These oil producers were the US, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, but this was enough to mean that the UNFCCC could not, as a body, welcome the report (see Stefanini & Mathieson 2018).
[14] Indeed, this means that my research served to amplify certain kinds of voices and thus reproduced existing power relations.
[15] This meant I could assume a basic level of knowledge (such as what a 'research interview' is, what 'PhD research' is, and what the writing-up and process involves) which it would be impossible for me to assume in many research contexts.

trust and solidarities, and occasionally I was taken aback by the generosity participants showed me. For example, towards the end of one interview, my interlocutor said to me: “I wish you all the best […] with your work also. I know it’s a very tough job to get these things on paper” as well as expressing sympathetic familiarity with the pressures of academic writing (PS, December 2018).

3.7 Challenges

As with all empirical research, conducting this fieldwork entailed operational, ethical and personal challenges. In this section I critically discuss these in turn: beginning with access, before moving to positionality and finally the ethics of representation and critique.

3.7.1 “Both transparent and opaque”: negotiating access

One significant challenge was access. My email invitations to interviews often went unanswered, and by the time I emailed the Mary Robinson Foundation to request an interview, I was told that there was no-one available because the Foundation had been wound up and the staff had moved on to different posts. Gaining access to conferences also presented challenges, as there were barriers related to both registration costs and events becoming oversubscribed, especially for an outside observer without a membership or professional connections. Above all, however, access was most difficult in the context of the two UNFCCC conferences I covered in my research: COP24 (2018) and COP25 (2019). Above all, it was here where the dual character of conferences – being both open and closed – became most apparent.

Some background on this will be necessary. The COP – or Conference of the Parties – is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention, and on which all member states that are Parties to the Convention are represented. Since 1995, the Parties have met annually in order to examine their emissions inventories and other national communications, which are oriented towards meeting the Convention’s overriding objectives: the stabilisation of atmospheric

greenhouse gas levels and the prevention of dangerous anthropogenic climate change (UNFCCC, 1992). The COP presidency rotates among the five UN-recognised regions[16], with the host rotating accordingly. Representatives of 'Observer' organisations make up one of three categories of participants attending UNFCCC meetings (the other two being Party representatives and members of the press). Besides a small number of intergovernmental bodies, the vast majority of Observer organisations are NGOs; as of 2018, 2,200 NGOs and 130 IGOs had observer status (UNFCCC, 2019). Since the UNFCCC negotiations and official side events are not open to the public, the only way I could gain access was through an accredited observer organisation[17].

This process of obtaining admission was highly burdensome. In my research diary, I observed that the UNFCCC is "both transparent and opaque" (research diary, 31st October 2018): while all its outputs are available to read online in six languages, and in its international authority it takes up the mantle of universal, enlightened rationality, its conferences and meetings are exclusive and securitised, and retrieving documents from the online database is difficult without knowledge of the correct search terms. Whether intentionally or by omission, the UNFCCC seemed to make itself "unnavigable" to outsiders (research diary, 31st October 2018).

These reflections resonate with Lauren Martin and Oliver Belcher's (2013) account of "ethnographies of closed doors". Writing about their own research within US government agencies, Martin and Belcher aptly describe their experiences as "illiberal processes within nominally liberal states" (403), especially given the US's comprehensive free information laws. They argue that the liberal/illiberal dichotomy is inadequate for explaining the actions of states that are formally 'liberal', as this ascribes to opaque state agencies a coherence and intentionality they frequently do not possess. To frame the violence enacted by these institutions

[16] These are Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Eastern European Group (EEG), Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) and the Western European and Others Group, or WEOG (UN Climate Change 2019b).

[17] An organisation that does not already have an observer accreditation may apply for one. This one-off process takes approximately 18 months, with a deadline of 31st August for admission to the following year's COP. In order to be eligible, organisations must "furnish proof of independent judicial personality", meaning that the application must be made by the organisation as a whole, and not by individual departments, institutes or other affiliate groups. Organisations must also submit the following materials (at a minimum): a letter of application from the head of the organisation; a copy of the document "detailing the mandate, scope and governing structure of the organisation" (for example a constitution); a certificate of incorporation, registration or establishment of the organisation issued by the relevant national government authority; proof of the organisation's non-profit and/or tax-exempt status; a financial statement for the most recent accounting year; a list of all donors and other funding sources covering the previous two years; two most recent annual reports, and a list of networks of which the organisation is part, or other organisations to which it is affiliated (UNFCCC, 2017a). Provisional admission is granted three months before the COP, and this is formalised at the COP itself (UN Climate Change, 2019).

in conspiratorial terms is to miss the fundamental point that liberal state institutions are oftentimes chaotic, provisional, or simply incompetent. Additionally, the affordance (or refusal) of access serves to reproduce state agencies as authoritative, intentional actors outlined with coherent boundaries.

Though they describe state rather than international agencies, Belcher and Martin's arguments have purchase in my research context. Since Durham University was not an accredited observer at the time of my field work, I decided to approach other UK universities that were, by consulting the list of 'Admitted NGOs' on the website. However, this list was not user-friendly. First, it had no 'filter' function that would have enabled me to search the list by country or type of organisation, giving me no choice but to comb through the entire list of over 2000 entries. For each entry, the list includes the organisation name and type, country, website, and a contact telephone and email. However, it was often difficult to view the contact emails, which made the process of contact-gathering cumbersome. Second, exasperatingly, such searches frequently yielded out-of-date email addresses or broken web links, suggesting the list was updated infrequently. These frustrating experiences amount not so much to a tangible *denial* of access as what Belcher and Martin call a "non-event, a deferred decision, a question ignored in the hope of its disappearance" (2013: 408). In my aim to secure a "COP badge", I tried sending unsolicited emails to observer organisations (which were almost universally ignored[18]), as well as drawing on existing professional and personal networks. When I did receive responses, I would hear from organisations that they had been offered fewer places than expected, which went to members or employees first and forced organisations into making arbitrary decisions as to who would participate. Ultimately, despite these efforts, I did not obtain access to COP24, in which, I soon learned, I was far from alone. As Belcher and Martin ask: "If research access is not denied or withheld by a specific action, if closure is the result of overwork, neglect, or incompetence rather than coherent policy, how do we understand the openness/closure of state agencies?" (2013: 409).

This denial of access to COP24 restricted my empirical research to the open-access civil society area, across the street from the venue. While initially a disappointment, this turned out to be one of the most successful instances of participant observation I undertook. The Greenpeace-run 'Climate Hub' ran a varied programme of talks and events, and it was a bounded, relatively easy space to inhabit as a researcher. Meanwhile, its quieter atmosphere and proximity to the venue

[18] For this reason, I am even more grateful to those who did respond and agreed to share their knowledge and experiences with me.

attracted large numbers of COP participants, who watched and participated in events, socialised and took advantage of the coffee and cheap vegan food sold at the bar. It was here that I learned that I was far from alone in having failed to gain admission to the conference, as well as of the diverse methods people used to get access. This was one of the frequent instances in research where a denial of access is a finding in and of itself, and one that creates new, unforeseen possibilities. It can return us directly to performativity and Butler's account of the frame, for what this tells us is that attempts at containment ultimately end in failure, as they always produce an excess that is ultimately *uncontainable* (2010: 8).

3.7.2 Positionality: the fraught politics of 'outsiderness'

As we know from Donna Haraway (1991), there is no 'objective', disembodied observer, or producer of knowledge, and to pretend otherwise amounts to a "god-trick" (191). Rather, we are all differently situated at the intersections of multiple trajectories and relations of power. However, it is important to point out that 'positionality' is not 'one thing' but multi-faceted, dynamic, and shifting. Throughout my research, I reflected on several aspects of my own positionality that merit critical reflection and discussion here.

First, I found it difficult to negotiate my position as a researcher in my encounters with 'elite' informants, as they had superior contextual and technical knowledge of international climate policy and I felt compelled to convey my credibility to them. This was a source of visceral anxiety (see Todd 2020) as I was uncertain of how to conduct myself in interviews. I felt intimidated by the extensive professional expertise of the research participants, so I was disinclined to openly question what they told me, especially since I felt they were doing me a favour by participating in my research. This became a concern, as I wondered whether my lack of challenging them meant they would not take me seriously. It also occurred to me that I might have come across to interviewees and other research interlocutors as a naïve, out-of-touch academic interested only in lofty, theoretical pursuits. For example, I would sometimes struggle to explain my research to people I met in the field, and I clearly recall a conversation with a World Resources Institute (WRI) analyst during a climate and development conference, in which I told her I was doing PhD research on climate justice. Her response, which was "climate justice and what? Adaptation? Resilience? […]" (and to which I responded something along the lines of

‘um, just climate justice’) made me question whether my viewpoint and those of my interlocutors were incommensurable. She, apparently, could not see the value of researching ‘climate justice’ as a concept on its own and this made me wonder whether she (and those around her) did not think I was doing ‘proper’, recognisably rigorous research.

Furthermore, researchers’ reception by participants and interlocutors is inescapably, though contingently, conditioned by intersectional identities such as gender, age, race and nationality (e.g., Johnson 2020). As a young, white, cisgender, middle-class British woman, I occupied both an insider and an outsider position in research contexts. First, my embodied presence within my field sites was highly gendered. My field notes are littered with anxious references to my clothes, makeup and general appearance to an extent that may not affect cis men researchers. I consciously used makeup as ‘war paint’ during fieldwork, recording in my COP25 fieldnotes that: “[p]utting my makeup on this morning felt like wallpapering over so many cracks […] I may not *feel* confident, professional, or polished, but I can make myself *look* that way” (field diary 9th December 2019). In this way, makeup was a gendered practice that guarded against feelings of vulnerability and helped me perform self-assuredness, in line with the expectations of international conference participants. My age, another area in which I felt vulnerable, is clearly conditioned by gender: I feared that being perceived as young(er) would mean research interlocutors would take me less seriously. When around people who were mostly non-British, I felt self-consciousness about my nationality in the geopolitical context of Brexit and the UK’s ever-accelerating lurch to the right. However, as acute as my feelings of exclusion and ‘outsiderness’ were, I closely fit the profile of *insider.* As a cis white woman, I am anxious to avoid making easy statements about the universality of gender-based oppression (see Ahmed 2010: 67). I knew with reasonable certainty that I could freely loiter and observe in potentially sensitive locations, and that I could broach sensitive topics and express myself without being branded “angry” or “aggressive” (see Lorde 2019[1984]). This is strikingly at odds with how marginalised groups experience white femininity as threatening, or indeed potentially life-endangering. In short, just as with ‘insiderness’, claims to ’outsiderness’ are not static but inescapably political, and conditioned by intersecting identities and context. These instances, though, are resonant with the themes of this chapter and the rest of the thesis, especially whereby the international reproduces a specific version of the human (the objective, dispassionate observer invested in enlightened rationality), and of humanism.

3.7.3 Ethics and representation: ethics of critique

Cleaving most strongly to the 'universal/particular' theme, this section describes a broad ethical qualm I carried with me throughout the research. Climate change is commonly viewed as a 'universal' problem that transcends all others, and as its urgency and severity ratchet ever further up, the stakes are ever higher. As climate denialism has receded, climate science has, among liberals, secured the status of indubitable 'common sense'. Concurrently, the concept of 'climate justice' has rapidly gained traction and is enjoying broader approval than it ever has before: Bill McKibben (2020) recently declared that "climate justice is *the* issue that defines our future". This means that as a project, 'climate justice' benefits from a certain protective legitimacy: who would oppose or call into question the goal of 'climate justice' for all? In his fascinating analysis of the early 2010s 'cleantech' scene in New York City, Jesse Goldstein (2018) explores start-up entrepreneurs' financial and emotional investment in "the promise of technological salvation" (3). This imaginary, what Goldstein calls "planetary improvement" functions as a "new green spirit of capitalism" that legitimates the generation of cleantech 'solutions' as a profit-making enterprise while leaving intact the structures that undergird our present ecological instability. Critical for Goldstein is the hubris behind this impulse to planetary salvation: to what 'planet' is this referring, and for whom? (ibid, 2).

Despite appearances, the idea of 'saving' an unqualified planet is not universally relevant but a product of the anxieties of a specific sociocultural imaginary. However, the unprecedented urgency of the climate crisis has popularised a new narrative: that of 'climate emergency'. The function of the 'emergency' is to maintain a state of exception and to discourage dissent. In my everyday research activities, I would negotiate doubts over the ethics of critically interrogating 'climate justice': surely, given the rapidly unfolding catastrophe of climate change, now is the time for pragmatic and focused action, not unproductive theorising? In my attempts to maintain a critical distance from 'climate justice' as a political project, was I not contributing to the perpetuation of the inequalities and suffering against which I claim to agitate? Is there a particular ethic necessary to critiquing 'planetary' enterprises such as this? Can a venture that claims to be working for a 'universal' good be anything other than colonising or imperialising? My critique of 'climate justice' involves calling into question the very terms in and through which climate justice constitutes itself, including 'human rights', but in a context of human rights violations, I feared that my research would encourage reactionary agendas bent on the unpicking of the human rights protections.

But is this a reason to self-censor? Perhaps, as Judith Butler (2003) suggests in a different context, this ethical dilemma says less about me than it does about the state of a public sphere in which the distinction between legitimate criticism and cynical, self-serving attacks is comprehensively blurred. On Larry Summers' thinly veiled warning that criticisms of Israel may be antisemitic "in their effect if not their intent" (p. 101), Butler argues that this discursive movement attributes overwhelming power to a single interpretation (namely, that criticism of Israel *does* amount to antisemitism). Summers' "in their effect if not their intent" introduces uncertainty, since whether a critical comment about Israel will be received as antisemitic is an unanswerable question. Importantly, these injunctions exercise a double function: they do not only prevent one from speaking, but they are also *performative* in that they set a boundary for what can be thought and said within a given public arena. In Butler's own words: "[t]he threat of being called 'anti-Semitic' seeks to control, at the level of the subject, what one is willing to say out loud […] More dramatically, these are threats that *decide* the defining limits of the public sphere" (127: emphasis original). Indeed, given the power of the political, military and finance capital establishments to shape what climate change is made to mean, to refrain from critique in this area is not an ethical option. This speaks to questions of accountability in research, and to whom we consider ourselves accountable in the design, implementation, writing and then dissemination of our research. Finally, the terms through which we describe, interpret and come to know the world cannot be decoupled from the conditions under which they are produced. In this vein, do we have an ethical obligation to ensure we understand where these terms come from?

3.7.4 Ethics and representation of participants

As I conducted my empirical research, I quickly learned that rather than a closed, accomplished fact 'tied up' through institutional ethics procedures, research ethics are an ongoing process and practice, which always present unanticipated questions and dilemmas. To take a perennial researcher concern as an example, there is always a question about how meaningful participant consent can be secured during participant-observation, but I have tried to mitigate this by being stringently careful about concealing identities. In terms of my own identity that I presented to participants, I was always open about my positionality as a researcher, but I cannot guarantee

that every event participant was aware of my presence, or of what it means to be a 'PhD researcher'. Having said this, some events (such as the World Forum on Climate Justice) attracted many academic attendees. This, along with the fact that many had conducted social research themselves, meant that their positionalities frequently troubled the binary between 'researcher' and 'researched'.

Furthermore, the openness of research ethics carried over into questions of access. Since I was conducting research across multiple sites, I had to renegotiate access multiple times. The cost of attending one event was potentially prohibitive due to high registration fees, and it is likely I could have negotiated free entry by offering to work for the organisers (for example, in a volunteer role as a conference steward. However, upon a consultation with my supervisors, we decided that it would be difficult to critique an organisation to whom I was beholden, so this idea was discarded, and I secured funding to pay the costs instead.

Finally, on some occasions, my research focus on the politics of race and whiteness in climate discourse was a source of anxiety about how I presented my research to participants, but also my representation of them. For instance, some interview participants raised questions about what I understood by 'racism', in a way that suggested to me that they were concerned about being labelled as 'racist'. In response, I explained to them that I was interested in racism as a structure, rather than isolated instances of prejudiced or intolerant behaviour. Prior to beginning the research, I had had difficulty knowing how to frame my participant information sheet; torn between wanting to provide detail on my interest in race in the text, and not wanting to unduly influence my participants' responses. Following feedback from the departmental ethics panel advising that the sheet might be too leading for the participants, I modified the emphasis so they would not feel compelled to talk about race. My negotiation of these questions is ongoing, and I have considered the possibility that due to the sensitivity of the subject, researching race in this context may be best done without interviews.

3.8 Emotional geographies of climate change

As I discussed above, there are specific ethical challenges presented by critiquing climate action as an unassailable project. Perhaps, as we pass from an era of anticipating climate change to one of living with and through it, the ethical spirit in which we conduct our research needs to change. As Goldstein (2018) writes in the coda to his book, the time to plan for

avoiding climate change has passed. There is, he writes, “no longer time to save what ‘we’ have from the implications of what ‘we’ have already created: new natures, irrevocably *transformed*, perilously destabilized, and increasingly unable to be controlled” (159, emphasis added).

This is also emotionally fraught, and navigating the emotional politics of this was a constant challenge in my research. For a start, the emotional intensities peculiar to the COP interacted with the emotional demands of empirical fieldwork. These included ‘imposter syndrome’, frustration at not getting access or interviews, guilt about not achieving ‘enough’, and feeling overwhelmed by the demands of the research and an ability to ‘step outside’ of it. Moreover, however, there are emotional geographies peculiar to UN climate conferences. For while delegates and observers arrive amid a surge of optimism, and official social media accounts briskly publish upbeat, purposeful updates on the progress of the negotiations, there remains a lingering sense of doubt as to the likelihood of an effective agreement, as well as an ‘existential’ pessimism that anything that *is* achieved by the UNFCCC is far too little, too late, and that runaway climate change is already ‘locked in’, regardless of the outcome of the talks. This emotional and cognitive dissonance also takes a toll on the participants. In a conversation with Katie, an activist I met in Katowice in Poland in December 2018, we talked about how spending time in the Climate Hub bred feelings of restlessness, but also stasis, pessimism and hopelessness. In themselves, these observations are an argument for conducting ethnographic, situated research within these settings, as without being physically present in the space, I would not have developed these insights.

These facts, to me, draw attention to questions of how, despite this scepticism and pessimism, the UNFCCC procedures persist, year after year, on the same terms, with their popularity never seeming to decline. This raises the question of what purpose the COP ritual serves, the power it has in determining or shaping the meaning of climate change, and about the optimism that keeps alive delegates’ hopes and investments in the negotiation process. This tells us much about the political work of optimism in the realm of climate change politics, and indeed, of the psychic function it serves in maintaining a specific version of humanism, and the human. These are questions into which the rest of the thesis chapters delve in more depth.

3.9 Conclusion

I set out with two objectives for this chapter. First was to outline and develop a methodological tool for researching both ‘climate justice’ and the international as performative (the methodology); and second, to account for how my chosen methods allowed me to do this (the methods)**.** In doing so, I have also innovated methodologically by conducting a multi-sited ethnography across several international conference sites, as well as by offering a novel conceptualisation of the international conference site as possessing a ‘closed openness’. In addition to this, I have provided a situated, reflective account of how I used my chosen methods in my research, as well as of the access and ethical implications associated with these.

Chapter 4: International climate whiteness

4.1 Introduction

In January 2020, I attended a public briefing on the COP25 outcomes, at the central London office of a well-known research organisation. There was a panel of contributors followed by questions from the audience, which primarily consisted of researchers, press and related non-governmental organisations. Everything proceeded without incident until the questions, when one audience member angrily reproached the panel for being 'all white', (an assumption, given the fact that one of the speakers did not identify as such). Despite being corrected, the questioner continued to speak over the panellists until the chair insisted that he stop, implying that he might have to leave the event (field notes, 15th January 2020).

The tension in the room was palpable. With justification, the audience member obviously resented what he saw as the arrogant privilege of whiteness; its capacity to adopt the mantle of every domain, of which climate change is no exception. However, the unnamed and unmarked character of whiteness means that such banal instances of it tend to go unremarked: incidents like the one described above are the exception, rather than the rule. There has, of late, been a heightened sensitivity to the whiteness of international climate politics. Race is heavy with meaning and significance in this context, and in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd and the ensuing uprisings for Black lives around the world, this weightiness feels greater still. In the spring of 2020, large institutions (including universities) were quick to release statements expressing their support for Black Lives Matter and their solidarity with the protestors. However, despite gestures and efforts at better representation, whiteness remains dominant, yet invisible. This incident holds up a mirror to international climate politics as a politically and epistemologically white space. While it was only a small moment of tension during a panel discussion, it pointed to an upswing in the salience of race and whiteness as forces for political meaning-making within international climate change. It also underscored how two questions, first that of the future long-term liveability of the planet, and second that of who is judged 'human' enough to continue living on it, are tightly bound together. However, even while race *is* being increasingly acknowledged within international climate spaces, the exclusion from these spaces of racialised subjects throws into sharp relief the whiteness of those permitted to remain. Therefore, I suggest in what follows that there is much to be gained from thinking with, through, and against the international as a site of and for whiteness.

I begin my argument by setting out a distinctive theorisation of whiteness. Rather than simply a cultural identity, a phenotypical characteristic or an individual source of 'privilege', I conceptualise whiteness as an historically constituted form of representational power that is unnamed and unmarked, yet mobile and supple. Furthermore, the suppleness of whiteness is such that it can take up the mantle not only of exclusion, but also of accommodation and acceptance. This is in line with the overall theoretical premise of the thesis – Butler's conception of performativity – for two reasons. First, as Alana Lentin (2016: 44) reminds us, performativity allows us to understand the significance of whiteness "in terms of what it *does* rather than in terms of what it is taken to *be"* (2016: 44, emphases added). Second, whiteness is bound to constant reproduction by attaching itself to formations that are not transcendent, but contingent and historically constituted (ibid). From here, I argue that some 'climate justice' discourses can be apprehended as embodying 'international climate whiteness'. I understand this as an historically contingent form of power that operates through – and draws its legitimacy from – a cluster of institutional arrangements, discourses and affects that serve the reproduction of a certain kind of international order: one based on individual rights, liberal democracy and the rule of law, a broadly neoclassical economic consensus, the promise of 'sustainable development' and a spatial order rooted in the nation-state and a guarding against 'disorderly' migration. Importantly, all the above work to shield from view histories of colonisation and imperialism. Having set down this conceptual basis, I engage Sabaratnam's (2020) framework of "epistemologies of whiteness" and Dwyer and Jones' (2000) "white socio-spatial epistemology", which together comprise a useful methodological framework for analysing international climate whiteness. I then move to discussing the case of the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice (MRF), which I contend is an exemplar of 'climate justice' discourses embodying international climate whiteness. Except where explicitly noted, documents from the MRF's archive provide the material for the analysis I describe in this chapter.

The first section of the analysis is framed around the "epistemologies of immanence" (Sabaratnam 2020) that characterise international climate whiteness. First, I explore how comparisons, made by Mary Robinson and the Mary Robinson Foundation, between climate action and the post-World War II settlement within some 'climate justice' discourses are both indicators and reinforcers of the whiteness of the international order as it is presently constituted. In other words, 2015 is taken to have an epochal significance comparable to that of the immediate post-World War Two period. This move articulates a direct lineage between the anticipated Paris Agreement and the transformations of global politics after the Second World

War, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, this process is incomplete, and will not be completed without substantial international action on climate change, which is itself unachievable within the current global economic order. Essentially, Robinson's pronouncements on 'climate justice' are symptomatic of the shock of the Anthropocene, which has revealed the fundamental flaws of the White humanism undergirding the international order. Yet, it cannot remake itself anew, as this would amount to an admission of its own role in generating the crisis of the Anthropocene in the first place. The constant comparison with the post-war period is a function of this denial, operating similarly to what Lentin (2016) calls "frozen" racism. This refers to an instance of isolated, "pure" racism that, suspended in historical time, allows racial speech under the guise of supposedly 'post-racial' debates about "cultural incompatibility, secularism versus religion, or sovereignty and security" (Lentin 2016: 35); a list to which we could easily add the discourses of climate change adaptation, or migration. The point is that the moral triumph of the post-war transformations - and in some eyes, the war itself - allows international climate whiteness to position racism as having been overcome, and to maintain its own integrity and legitimacy.

I frame the second section around Sabaratnam's (2020) notion of "epistemologies of ignorance". Through document analysis, I explore the frequency with which climate justice is discursively linked to development, and in particular the positioning of 'climate justice' as a concept with the potential to draw together the fields of development and climate action (e.g. Anderson 2013; Scottish Government 2013). In brief, I suggest that the 'promise of climate justice' stood to contribute as much to the creation of a new, unifying consensus around climate change in the international. The idea of "epistemologies of innocence" provides the backbone for my third and final set of arguments. In this section, I argue that the central paradox of the liberal international is that its history coincides with that of the Anthropocene. In other words, knowing that it is on the decline, the liberal international is attempting to position itself as able to resolve a crisis for which it is responsible. In this, I argue that the raciality and exclusion of the liberal international order are underplayed, and that 'climate justice' is put in the service of reinscribing the whiteness of the international order. In line with Wekker's (2016) conception of "white innocence", the leaders of the 'white' West are remembered for their moral respectability and professions to good faith, while their role in creating the climate crises, as well as their determination (for example) to pursue Cold War geopolitics, are concealed from view. First, however, I set down the foundations for my analysis by establishing my conception of Whiteness.

4.2 Whiteness and neoliberalism

To establish the foundations for this analysis, I understand whiteness as a form of signifying power (Kobayashi & Peake 2000; Bonnett 1997, Jackson 1998; Hesse 2007; Inwood & Bonds 2016). This includes the power to draw lines, classify and categorise and draw distinctions (Jackson 1998). The protean character of whiteness and its shapeshifting ability to appear as (for example) a form of subjectivity or a set of cultural practices, are a function, I argue, of its power. An integral part of a critical discussion of the power of whiteness is to pull it out of the confines of vernacular discussions about 'white privilege' or 'white fragility' (DiAngelo 2018). While they have precipitously gained popularity in recent years, these concepts – and the representation-based responses they often presuppose - are limited and limiting (though see Guerra 2021). Importantly, whiteness is not reducible to the speech acts or conduct of phenotypically white individuals, which may or may not be manifestly racist. Nor can whiteness by 'neutralised' or 'balanced out' by the presence of a suitable number of 'non-white' individuals, as hinted at in the story with which I opened this chapter. Rather than an individual racial or cultural identity, whiteness is shaped by the exercise of power and "the expectation of advantages in acquiring property" (Roediger 1991).

How, then, to engage a more productive conception of whiteness, and one that both fits with the international politics of climate change and makes use of the conceptual resources of performativity? As a starting point, it is important to establish that racial domination is fundamentally mobile and supple, changing in accordance with economic and political structures (Sivanandan 1990). Of critical importance here is David Goldberg's (2009) account of "racial neoliberalism", a political and economic condition under which racial statements or discourses are detached from any obvious reference to race. It is no longer a question of "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva 2017), but of "racism without racism" (Goldberg 2009). By the same token, race goes from being a prerogative of the state to one of individual preference, while political or sociological statements foregrounding racism as a structural problem are discounted. A recent intervention from Arun Kundnani (2021) can flesh out our understanding of how the 'privatisation' and 'culturalisation' of racism work under neoliberalism. Kundnani argues that racism is not a remnant of neoliberalism's incomplete defeat of historical racial legacies, but that racial domination has its own forms that are peculiar to, and generated by, neoliberalism. The former position, which is one defended (albeit to varying degrees) by theorists including Wolfgang Streeck, David Harvey and Wendy Brown, sees racism as interacting with

neoliberalism “from the past”, impeding the universalisation of market-based forms of rule (Kundnani 2021: 52). Instead, as Kundnani demonstrates, a racialised idea of culture is key to understanding how neoliberalism manages its own limitations, and at the core of these limitations are the “surplus populations” neoliberalism itself creates.

Kundnani undertakes a close reading of Friedrich Hayek’s theory of cultural evolution, at the heart of which he locates an unresolvable contradiction. For Hayek, the universal market system presupposes a specific cultural foundation, consisting of individualism, self-reliance and private property. However, despite its particularism, this cultural foundation is given the gloss of universalism. This is the contradiction at the heart of the logic of market rationality: it must be *both* ‘universal’ *and* fundamentally ‘Western’. How can a ‘universal’ market system account for its consistent failure to properly universalise? For Kundnani, this is a function of a racialised conception of ‘culture’. When neoliberalism is confronted by “surplus populations” who refuse to embody the values of individualism and entrepreneurialism, this failure is explained away through a naturalised and dehistoricised account of these populations as *culturally* deficient (Kundnani 2021: 64). This is the ideological achievement of neoliberal racism, which is secured through a projection of neoliberalism’s intractable political conflicts onto “the more comfortable terrain of clashes of culture” (ibid). Neoliberal racism, therefore, constantly generates the conditions of its own undoing, and this can be productively read alongside Judith Butler on the frame. Just as the frame must break apart as it circulates (in Butler’s words, this “self-breaking becomes part of the very definition” (2010: 10)), neoliberalism creates the conditions for its own demise and is in constant motion, through the appropriation of acts of resistance to it (see also Sivanandan 1990). This dynamic of ‘capture’ and appropriation is one to which I return in Chapter 6, in the context of climate change adaptation and autonomist Marxism.

While ‘whiteness’ is not an operative concept in Kundnani’s analysis, I suggest it is a productive term through which to understand the cultural foundation underlying Hayek’s ‘universal’ market system. As will become clear in the remainder of this section, this is the underpinning of my conception of ‘whiteness’. More specifically, the most important conceptual offering I make in this chapter is a theorisation of ‘international climate whiteness’. I apprehend this as an emergent yet unmarked formation that attempts to resolve the intractable political conflicts between both limitless capital accumulation and the need to prevent further destabilisation of the climate system and the achievement of meaningful racial justice through an (albeit partial and contingent) embrace of the political discourses of ‘climate justice’ and ‘recognition’ (see

Chapter 5). This is something Baldwin (2016: 86) gestures towards in his conception of "white affect", which "cultivates a racial sensibility through an affective proxy that makes no explicit mention of race". The cultivation of this white affect enables the reconsolidation of climate change and migration as a problem of race. Importantly, though, white affect is not reducible to fear. As Baldwin (2016: 81) explains, what animates climate migration discourse is not a generic fear of a racial Other, but "a *desire* to preserve the apparent normalcy of an ingrained social order that the monstrous, future-conditional climate change migrant threatens to overwhelm" (emphasis added). What this tells us is that whiteness does not predominantly turn on the dialectical mechanism of the self/Other relationship, but instead on the mobilisation of futurity: a desire to maintain existing social and spatial arrangements. In my specific context of international climate whiteness, this takes the form of confining racism not only to the past, but to a minority of extreme actors, since acknowledgment of an intrinsically racial present would mean changing existing social and spatial arrangements. One specific instance of this is the oft-made comparison between the international climate action effort (especially the Paris Agreement) and the mobilisation during and after the Second World War. I explore this fully later in the chapter.

Emerging here is a different picture of whiteness and critically, as I explored in Chapter 2, it is not fully determined by skin colour. As Clive Gabay (2018: 2) tells us, it is important to retain a distinction between "Whiteness" as structure and 'whiteness' as "phenotypical presentation", since some phenotypically 'white' groups (such as Jews, Poles and Irish) have historically been deprived of the social advantages afforded to other phenotypical whites (ibid). In the spirit of this, I gesture towards a conceptualisation of whiteness as an historically constituted subject position with the ability to remain unmarked and therefore invisible (Baldwin 2012, Bonnett 1997). This means that it is not only available to phenotypically white people: indeed, the capacity of some individuals racialised as non-white to embody whiteness, and to secure (even conditional) access to its accoutrements, is what characterises and enables their power. In other words, as well as separation and containment, whiteness can also, paradoxically, consist of "reaching out to the Other" (Slocum 2007). Furthermore, it carries a material and psychical reward, akin to the "wages of whiteness", for those able to embody it (Roediger 1991). To develop this point, let us recall the example, discussed in Chapter 2, of the senior Black British and British Asian politicians in the UK's Conservative government, who derive much of their power from the fact that they embody Whiteness without being phenotypically 'white'. This enhances their legitimacy and bolsters the government's - and the party's - claims to 'not-

racism' (Lentin 2018), all while enabling the government to legitimate discourses that are manifestly racist. To take just one example, in June 2021 the Home Secretary Priti Patel, who has a British East African Asian background, affirmed England football fans' right to boo their team, who were planning to 'take the knee' in protest at racism at their opening European championship match against Croatia. Patel stated that she did not support people "participating in that type of gesture politics", citing the "devastating" impacts of Black Lives Matter protests on UK policing (cited in Stone 2021). Patel's eventual condemnation of the racism directed at Black English players following the team's defeat in the final was criticised by the player Tyrone Mings, who stated that she had previously "stoke[d] the fire" of racism (cited in Elgot 2021). In Patel's defence, one of her government colleagues cited the racism with which Patel herself had been targeted (see Elgot 2021). At evidence here, then, is the way in which this type of "not racism" strategically instrumentalises and exploits the existence of racism, while turning the charge of racism round onto those critical of it.

But what does this mean for my conceptualisation of whiteness? Here, it is important to link back to Gabay's argument about the distinction between 'Whiteness' as structure and 'whiteness' as phenotype. In his analysis of White imaginaries of 'Africa', Gabay affords a prominent role to *anxiety* in the self-reproduction of whiteness; persuasively arguing that the superiority inherent to Whiteness as a system of power is, historically, beset with anxieties about the vitality of the phenotypically 'white race' and its ability to "perpetuate itself as the boundary-keeper for Western civilisation, the apogee of Whiteness" (2018: 31). Crucially, these anxieties about the vitality and conduct of phenotypical whites have, across the decades, manifested as an investment in 'Africa' as a site for a White "nostalgic self-affirmation", the nostalgia of which, Gabay notes, stems from the "self-affirmation of a mythologised historical genius now looking for an outlet beyond a failing Western iteration of Whiteness" (2018: 33). At the heart of this genius, for Gabay, is individualism, liberal democracy, bureaucracy and neoclassical economic order, which, we might note, is resonant with Hayek's "genius of the West" (see Kundnani 2021: 60).

As we can see from the above, Gabay's account captures something extremely useful: that whiteness can take up the mantle not only of exclusion, but also of accommodation and acceptance, albeit under qualified conditions (see also Baldwin 2012: 179; Slocum 2007). An obvious example of this is 'climate and migration' discourse, much of which is motivated by humanitarian concern for the rights of these would-be migrants. The important point is that an

impulse to accommodate racial Others is no less 'white' than one based on exclusion. Relatedly, while anxieties about whiteness may appear to be the preserve of the extreme Right, they are not the only ones who deploy and mobilise these (Gabay 2018: 238). This means it is important to examine how whiteness is affirmed and perpetuated not only by extremists, but by liberal and progressive imaginaries. But Gabay's analysis is also attuned to something even more significant: a formation that could be called 'international whiteness.' What is at stake in this formation is evident: the supremacy of liberal, representative democracy, an economic system based on 'free trade' between deregulated and privatised national economies, and an international political order steered by primarily White, Anglophone polities. Importantly, this is an historically specific expression which gained legitimacy through, as I will show later, its *adaptation* to the post-1945 world order. In the following sub-section, I draw upon work by Sabaratnam (2020), and Dwyer and Jones III (2000) to formulate a methodological framework for interrogating 'international climate whiteness'.

4.2.1 Conceptualising 'international climate whiteness': a methodological framework

In the remainder of this chapter, I further this contribution by extending it to 'international climate whiteness': an historically specific expression of whiteness that gained legitimacy through its own adaptation to the post-World War Two order. A picture of what might be at stake in this formation is starting to emerge: a 'greened' rules-based international order, a de-carbonised economic order, but one still governed by the regimes of deregulation, public-private partnerships, and private property relations. The governing assumptions of international climate whiteness are those of 'sustainable development,' while the climate risk and insurance sectors preside over the conversion of vulnerable people and 'climate-vulnerable' economies into speculative assets for the financial sector. On climate-related mobilities, the 'migration-as-adaptation' discourse prevails, in which a reasoned, scientifically informed regime of management advocates for the protection of would-be 'adaptive' migrants' rights and welfare (e.g., Government Office for Science 2011), while also creating a new global 'surplus' pool of 'maladaptive' migrants. This is manifestly not 'turn them back' rhetoric, but it nonetheless draws lines demarcating an 'adaptive' (useful in neoliberal terms) group from a 'maladaptive' (surplus in neoliberal terms) one.

As I demonstrate below, the Mary Robinson Foundation typifies this embodiment of whiteness. It encompasses human rights, a commitment to sustainable development, and a politically and analytically thin understanding of gender equality. It appeals for transformative solutions, but stops short of calling for a substantially transformed global economic order, or even a 'Green New Deal' (which are rapidly gaining ground even in politically moderate circles). It remains within the lines of the norms governing the international climate negotiations, and avoids the language of compensation, historical responsibility or climate reparations (all political non-starters at the international level). The Foundation has worked closely with organisations including the World Resources Institute, Irish Aid, Oak Foundation, Rockefeller Philanthropic Partners and Irish humanitarian agencies such as Concern Worldwide and Trocaire. Robinson has given speeches in her capacity as President of the Foundation at prestigious universities such as Imperial College and the London School of Economics, think tanks and festivals. It has led on numerous special projects, including the Hunger – Nutrition – Climate Justice Conference in Dublin (with Irish Aid, summer 2013), the Leaders' Forum on Women Leading the Way (2014), the Climate Justice Dialogue (starting 2013, with the World Resources Institute), the 'Troika+ on Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change' (2011 onwards) and 'Incorporating Human Rights into Climate Action' (2016, with the Center for International Environmental Law[1]). The Foundation also helped secure several resolutions on climate change and human rights at the UN[19] (MRF-CJ 2019). In short, we can apprehend 'international climate whiteness' as a historically contingent form of power that operates through – and draws its legitimacy from – a cluster of institutional arrangements, norms, discourses and affects that privilege an international order based on individual rights, liberal democracy and the rule of (international) law, a broadly neoliberal economic consensus, the promise of 'sustainable development' and a spatial order rooted in state sovereignty and a guarding against 'disorderly' migration. Importantly, all the above work to conceal histories of colonisation and imperialism, as well as their role in constituting the international order.

Having established the relations between climate change, whiteness and international order, we now need to develop a methodological framework through which to analyse it. To this end, I combine Meera Sabaratnam's recent work on 'epistemologies of whiteness' with Dwyer and

[19] According to the MRF-CJ, there are ten resolutions or binding decisions through the United Nations, and the European Parliament, which are directly informed by 'climate justice'. These include: Human Rights Council Resolution 26/27 (Human rights and climate change), Human Rights Council 29/15 (Human rights and climate change) and Human Rights Council Resolution 35/20 (human rights and climate change approaches) (see MRF-CJ 2019: 8).

Jones's (2000) conception of 'white socio-spatial epistemology'. Here, Sabaratnam (2020) pushes beyond Eurocentrism as an epistemologically limiting logic prevalent in IR, instead pursuing a systematic analysis of how canonical IR theory texts are systematically White. One of her most powerful arguments is how the literature on race and Eurocentrism cannot fully explain the functioning of *whiteness* within IR theory. She argues that examining whiteness rather than 'the West', as is customary in the discipline, is to incorporate a more comprehensive understanding of global racial formations and their relationship with IR theory, as it confronts power structures rather than keeping a narrow focus on the provincialism of IR theory. By complementing existing theorisation of whiteness and Eurocentrism with Critical Race Theory, Sabaratnam knits together a systematic account of Whiteness as a type of 'subject-positioning' that functions through articulation and interpellation.

Sabaratnam's framework sets out three epistemologies that buttress and underpin whiteness in discourses within both IR theory and international politics. These are ignorance, immanence and innocence. 'Epistemologies of ignorance' draws from Charles Mills' (2007) concept of "global white ignorance", which is itself based on his idea of a "racial contract". This amounts to a tacit agreement among those racialised as White to excise White supremacy from normative or political conversations about the organisation of social order. A critical point here is that this ignorance is not a series of random oversights, but necessary for the reproduction and maintenance of a social order organised around the protection of whiteness and white interests. Secondly, drawing from a strong foundation of critique established by Hobson (2012) and Bhambra (2007), 'epistemologies of immanence' propagate the claim that modernity is immanent or endogenous to 'the West', which is regarded as autogenerative and whose "own genius and social conditions" propelled a "rapid but autonomous" form of modernisation in political, economic, social, technological and cultural spheres. This is crucial because it makes 'the West' appear to have achieved everything it has purely on its own merit, meaning a severing of the link between the Western dominant position and its conditions of possibility. Finally, 'epistemologies of innocence' seek to redefine racism as exceptional, unintentional and inadvertent. Here, Sabaratnam cites Wekker (2016), for whom the trope of white innocence is central to white subject-positioning through the professing of good intentions, good faith and moral respectability. The power of this lies in its separation of white-racialised people from histories of colonial and imperialist domination ('it has nothing to do with us') and contemporary racist discrimination and violence ('we're not racist (but)'). Here, the only 'real racists' are those who call for racial segregation or who have neo-Nazi sympathies. Taken together, I argue that

these three epistemologies interact in the service of the reproduction, not just of white subject positions, but also of 'international climate whiteness' as a mode of signifying power. As I set out in Chapter 2, the concept of 'white socio-spatial epistemology' can complement this analysis, and I provide a recap on this next.

The concept of "white socio-spatial epistemology", developed by Dwyer and Jones III (2000) and which draws on Black feminism, is a valuable complement to Sabaratnam's framework. They explore how whiteness does not account for its origins through a constitutive relationship with an Other, but rather regards itself as self-determining; a function of historical time. Dwyer and Jones unpack this non-relational understanding of subjectivity through the proxies of distance and spatial mobility. The first underscores how this subjectivity works in and through the built environment in the US (specifically Lexington, Kentucky) even after the dismantling of formal segregation[20]. It gives the example of how, in order for a white suburb to be reproduced as a "safe", "predictable" and "orderly" space, it relies upon the epistemological – as well as physical - containment of all that is "menacing", "volatile" and "disorderly" within the "ghetto" (2000: 214). The second thinks with bell hooks' reflections on the fears felt by Black subjects travelling through the whitened national territory of 'America'. This underscores how spaces are not empty or neutral containers, but instead are co-constitutive with white supremacy (Dwyer & Jones III, 217). Critical from hooks' account is the point that hostility was exuded *by the spaces themselves.* White *people* did not have to be physically present for the space to present a threat. This is relevant to the argument in this chapter in that it shows that whiteness is not reducible to phenotypically 'white' individuals, but comes to be embodied by spaces and institutions (see also Ahmed 2007). Whiteness does not remain the 'property' of individuals, as Sabaratnam and Dwyer and Jones both show, but rather it becomes a property of certain spaces, structures pre-subjective encounters (Tolia-Kelly 2006) and becomes integral to how the world is known, and limits alternative possibilities for how the world may be experienced and known in the future.

As a framework, white socio-spatial epistemology has enormous merit, especially insofar as it shows how whiteness is critical to maintaining the stability of the 'the United States' not as a timeless, neutral territory but rather as a *spatial hierarchy* historically produced by the

[20] As Joshua Inwood and Anne Bonds (2016) have pointed out, despite all the merits of Dwyer and Jones's account of white socio-spatial epistemology, it cleaves to a binary understanding of race in the US as Black/White. This underplays both the existence of other racialised groups (including Native peoples, Latinx, Asian, African and Pacific Islander communities) and the US's status as a settler state.

subordination of racialised people. It shows how terms (such as 'ghetto', 'housing project' or 'suburb',) while not 'racist' in and of themselves, become indelibly coloured with racial associations. For example, in the vocabulary of international climate whiteness, 'vulnerability' is taken only as a function of climate change, rather than as an historical process, with all references to forces other than climate change excised (e.g. Mihr 2017). In turn, it also captures how whiteness is established as a source of authority that is *unmarked,* meaning that it may be presented as objective and value-free. This opens us up to the possibility that while taking on a veneer of neutrality, certain metaphors, historical comparisons, epistemological logics are in fact 'white'. It is now important to contextualise the predominant focus of my analysis: the Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice.

4.3 Contextualising the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice

The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (hereafter MRF, or the Foundation) was a Dublin-based organisation in operation between 2010 and 2019. It was established by Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland between 1990 and 1997, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights between 1997 and 2002, and a UN Special Envoy, first for the Great Lakes region of Africa (2013-2014), then on climate change (2014-2015), and then on El Niño and climate (2015-2016) (The Elders 2021). Her eponymous Foundation was dedicated to education, advocacy and 'thought leadership' and aimed to provide a space for facilitating action on climate change that put the most vulnerable people and their voices at the centre (see MRF-CJ 2011c), and to facilitate the hearing of these voices within relevant international forums. In effect, the Foundation's mission, in the run-up to 2020, was to further the mainstreaming of 'justice' and 'equity' within the international climate process, which at that time was dominated by scientific and technical discussion (Robinson, 2019). As a whole, the organisation's leadership wanted to popularise, in educational and other settings, an idea of climate change, development and social justice as interconnected.

A major driver behind the establishment of the Foundation in 2010 was the fundamental injustice of climate change: that the people on the frontlines of the climate crisis have contributed least to the causes of climate change (MRF-CJ 2019: 2). Informed by this, the Foundation worked to put social justice and people – especially the world's poorest people – at the heart of climate policy decision-making (ibid, 3). To pursue this, it aimed to influence policy development at the international level, using its credibility and capacity to facilitate and convene

dialogues, especially between grassroots organisations, policymakers and world leaders, but also between disciplines and fields of expertise (ibid, 5). The MRF has led on numerous special projects, including the Hunger – Nutrition – Climate Justice Conference in Dublin (with Irish Aid, summer 2013), the Leaders' Forum on Women Leading the Way (2014), the Troika+ on Women Leaders on Gender and Climate Change (2011 onwards) and 'Incorporating Human Rights into Climate Action (2016, with the Center for International Environmental Law[21]). In 2013 along with the World Resources Institute, the MRF co-initiated the Climate Justice Dialogue project (CJD), which aimed to mobilise political will for an "equitable and ambitious" climate agreement in 2015 (Climate and Development Knowledge Network, no date). As a non-governmental organisation, the MRF also secured observer status at the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP). All this was with a view to increasing the space for, and understanding of, "climate justice" (once effectively an unmentionable topic) at the international level of policymaking (MRF-CJ 2019: 3). Though the MRF closed in 2019, Robinson remains a strong advocate for climate action, and she has long been a much-admired figure in the human rights law and conflict resolution communities. Furthermore, Robinson continues to attract audiences for her work on climate justice. She chaired panels at COP25 in 2019, and alongside Princess Esmeralda of Belgium, she was a keynote speaker at the virtual second World Forum on Climate Justice (organised by the Centre for Climate Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University) in September 2021. The MRF-CJ's definition of 'climate justice', a hitherto undefined term in the international policy context, has proven influential. Its 'Principles of Climate Justice' informed the creation of two dedicated 'Centres for Climate Justice' in the UK (Glasgow and Reading), as well as of an accessible repository of knowledge and information on 'climate justice'. The MRF-CJ's influential definition of 'climate justice' informed the working definition used in the Scottish Government's climate justice policy (see Burlace et al 2021: 27-28), and is reproduced in full, together with the Principles of Climate Justice, in Table 3.

Despite her extensive legal and human rights work, Robinson was a relative latecomer to climate change. She told an arts festival audience in 2019 that the first COP she ever attended was Copenhagen in 2009, and that she was alarmed by the lack of attention the negotiations paid to human rights questions, and this was a catalyst for the creation of the MRF-CJ in 2010

[21] In 2016, the MRF-CJ conducted a survey (2016c) to assess the extent of countries' reporting of the links between human rights and climate change in two international processes under the United Nations (the UNFCCC and the Human Rights Council) over the five-year period from 2010 to 2015. The MRF and CIEL then collaborated to produce an online resource presenting the survey's findings, which includes a map tool searchable by country (MRF/CIEL, no date).

(Robinson 2019). Robinson's recognisability as a former Head of State, her previous UN leadership and her abilities in convenorship and bridging divides between distant or opposed groups and communities were factors in her leading the Foundation (CC interview, September 2019). Shortly after the Foundation was established, it formulated a set of 'Principles of Climate Justice', which, agreed upon at a meeting at the Rockefeller Brothers' Foundation's Pocantico Center in July 2011, have proved highly influential in both policy and academia (e.g. Mihr et al 2017; Centre for Climate Justice no date; Burlace et al 2021). Appearing in order, these principles are set alongside the MRF-CJ definition of 'climate justice' in Table 3:

Table 3: Principles and definition of 'climate justice' (MRF-CJ)

Principles of 'climate justice'	Definition of 'climate justice'
• "Protect and respect human rights" • "Support the right to development" • "Share benefits and burdens equitably" • "Ensure that decisions on climate change are participatory, transparent and accountable" • "Highlight gender equality and equity" • "Harness the transformative power of education for climate stewardship", and finally, • "Use effective partnerships to secure climate justice".	"Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centred approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly. Climate justice is informed by science, responds to science and acknowledges the need for equitable stewardship of the world's resources" (MRF-CJ 2019: 26).

While these principles were codified in 2011, Robinson was thinking in these terms as early as 2006, when she gave the IIED's Barbara Ward Lecture at Chatham House, London, on the theme of climate change, human rights and justice (Robinson, 2006).

In the remainder of this chapter, I bring my conceptualisation of 'international climate whiteness' to bear on Mary Robinson Foundation documents. First, I critically assess the MRF's privileging of the post-Second World War period as a reference point for the origin story of the liberal international, particularly as it is situated in relation to 2015 as a "landmark year", and how these temporal markers can be thought of as White. To be clear, I am not arguing that these temporal markers are themselves 'White' or 'racist' but rather that they come to signify an arrangement of values that are associated, historically, culturally and politically, with Whiteness. These include innocence, co-operation to safeguard a peaceable international order, the occupation of the universal, and its primacy over the particular. The primacy of these markers in the signifying practices I discuss here actively shape mainstream imaginaries of the international and contribute to its whitening. The arguments that follow are grounded in an analysis of several texts produced by the MRF-CJ over the course of its existence. I retrieved these texts through the Foundation's website, which is no longer updated but remains fully accessible online. This is a large archive, searchable chronologically, thematically and by document type, and containing eight years of Foundation reports, position papers, press statements, media coverage of the Foundation's work and lecture transcripts from 2010 to 2019.

One text is the transcript of a 21-minute TED talk, given by Mary Robinson from Monterey, California in 2015. This talk, which has been viewed over 1.3 million times, was part of the TedWomen Festival. A recording is on the TED website but there are also transcripts of it in 25 languages, indicating the global reach of both TED talks and Mary Robinson. Taking place mere months before the agreement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the pivotal Paris climate summit, Robinson's talk explicates the link between climate change and human rights, especially those of the most vulnerable, in her signature warm style. The talk situates us in the lead-up to the Paris summit in December 2015, for which there were great hopes for the eponymous Agreement. It is also approaching the conclusion of the Millennium Development Goals in 2016. What this means is that a new approach was due to be agreed in the domains of both development and climate change, and there was a sense that strong forward momentum would be needed in order to catalyse as much ambition as possible. As Robinson herself expressed in a lecture only weeks previously, this was not the time to "manage expectations or get cold feet", but rather "the moment to catalyse a transformation" (2015: 11).

Another text, the MRF report from 2019, was the last published entry on its website. 'The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice 2010-2019: A Legacy' provides an overview of how the

Foundation met its objectives and realised its vision, formulated in 2010 as "By 2020 global justice and equity will underpin a people-centred developmental approach to advancing climate justice and more effectively addressing the impacts of climate change" (MRF-CJ 2019: 6). This document also showcases the impact of the Foundation's work to date by repeating the baseline study from 2011, then repeated in 2015 and 2018. This was designed to assess the position of climate justice within broader discourse(s) around climate change and policymaking. At the end of the document, there is a list of climate justice-themed declarations adopted by major international organisations "as a direct result of the Foundation's engagement and activities" (MRF-CJ 2019: 22). These texts provide the foundation for the discussion that follows. In both, Robinson refers to the international as a benevolent (or at least neutral) institutional space that holds great potential for the amelioration of climate change and the securing of justice, but also as under threat from both climate change itself and an international failure to tackle it. This is significant because climate change signals the undoing of the white international order, as I discuss below.

4.4 "I thought about Eleanor Roosevelt": white immanence and liberal international order

It is apparent when reading Mary Robinson Foundation documents is that they are as invested in transforming the international order as they are in 'climate justice'. This results in frequent comparisons between what is at stake in ongoing climate negotiations and the post-war settlement, which produced (or at least prefigured) much of the institutional architecture in place today. This is a place in which Sabaratnam's "epistemologies of immanence" can be seen in operation. International organisations, including the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions, are positioned as originating out of the chaos and destruction of the World Wars. Here, the Second World War functions as the emblematic signifier of the West's commitment to the defeat of fascism in Europe. In 2015 in a keynote speech at the inaugural Law and Climate Governance Day during the Paris climate summit, Robinson locates Paris, and France, as the birthplace of 'freedom' and 'human rights', as well as the ground upon which they were defended. Prominent here is Eleanor Roosevelt, a key figure in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. As Robinson stated in the speech:

> *She* [Roosevelt] *chose to discuss it in France and at the Sorbonne because it was here that the rights of humankind and the principles of liberty, fraternity and equality were*

> *born and nourished. It was here that the Declaration of the Rights of Man were proclaimed and that the principle of human freedom was developed and defended. Today it is equally apt that we are here in Paris where the roots of human freedom were sown and richly nourished to discuss how the rule of law,* [sic] *is applied to climate change and, by association sustainable development. When I speak about the Climate Agreement being negotiated here in Paris, I often point to the UN Charter and the need to reflect its values in the Agreement to be adopted at COP21* (MRF-CJ 2015a: 2).

This quoted text does significant work. First, it brings into view and reproduces a Eurocentric historical geography, in which progress is driven by conferences, legal documents and the mobility of White people around the Euro-American hemisphere. Second, it appeals to the audience as inheritors of the universalist, liberal tradition, constructing their subject positions as epistemologically White and European. Third, and most significant, freedom, human rights and dignity originate from 'Europe', with 'Europe' as the primary agent of interest. This positions 'freedom' and 'human rights' within a uniquely European, Enlightenment-derived genealogy, which includes the French Revolution, but also the rise of universalist conceptions of human rights. This evidences an epistemology of immanence in accordance with Sabaratnam's (2020) understanding: 'Europe' is the originator of abstract concepts and ideas that are understood to drive history forward, while non-Europe appears only in the context of climate change and its associated human rights violations (more on which later). In other words, freedom, equality, and human rights come from 'Europe', but 'Europe' is immanent to itself. We can also recall Dwyer and Jones on "white socio-spatial epistemology", which holds that a non-relational understanding of subjectivity is a hallmark of whiteness. For them, whiteness naturalises itself as self-determining, rather than as constituted by an Other (2000). If we apply this to the passage under analysis, we can see that 'freedom' appears not only as property and prerogative of 'Europe', but also as detached from *unfreedom,* its underside, its Other, its condition of possibility. This suggests two implications: first, that political traditions and geographical constellations more distant from Enlightenment liberalism – such as feminism, socialism or anti-colonial struggles - have made no contribution to conceptions of human freedom; and second, that the Enlightenment tradition of freedom is free-floating, detached from its historical conditions of possibility including transatlantic slavery, settler colonialism, and the modern, racially bordered nation-state. These structures are, as anti-colonial scholars of IR and critical race theory tell us, are constitutive of and thus inseparable from the genealogy of European modernity. For example, Shilliam (2008) tells us how the Haitian Revolution, and with

it the creation of the first post-slaveholding independent state of modern times, spotlights the "contentious, often ignored, and generally under-theorized" co-constitutive relationship between slavery, race and modernity (p. 780). For her part, Lentin (2004) demonstrates how human rights discourse not only fails to problematise Whiteness as an historical and normative burden on the ideal vision of 'humanity' but is also inextricable from the "regime of racial historicism governing the practices of western states towards non-whites and non-Europeans" (439). The post-Second World War period, and with it the discourses of 'human rights' and 'development,' pull significant weight in the MRF-CJ discourses on 'climate justice.' Therefore, in the remainder of this section, I focus directly on the comparison between the post-war period and the post-2015 climate settlement in order to demonstrate how this reproduces 'international climate whiteness'.

4.4.1 1945 and 2015 as 'landmark years'

As we began to explore above, the MRF (and indeed, Mary Robinson herself) displays great investment in the liberal international order as an engine for the advancement of 'climate justice'. This is most strikingly evident in the Foundation's texts in the approach to 2015. For instance, when concluding a lecture at London's Imperial College in the build-up to the Paris climate summit, Robinson stated the following:

> *2015 is the year to catalyse a transformation – away from business as usual and to a more inclusive, sustainable and just alternative. This is because 2015 is the year the world agrees on a new development agenda to succeed the Millennium Development Goals, a new legally binding climate agreement to avoid dangerous climate change and the resources needed to implement both agendas on the ground in all countries* (MRF-CJ 2015b: 3-4).

Quoting the Universal Declaration on Human Rights on the universal right to a "social and international order" conducive to the enjoyment of universal rights and freedoms, Robinson also states that:

> *We haven't yet created this social and international order* – and any hope of creating it in the future would be wiped out by uncontrolled climate change*. But I think we could*

> *create an international order where all people realise their rights if we grasp the opportunities 2015 presents […]*
> *I look forward to working with you all this year to make sure that we harness and deliver this moral responsibility to act. Now is not the moment to manage expectations or get cold feet - 2015 is the moment to catalyse a transformation – and to achieve the social order the Universal Declaration aspired to. Now is the time for climate justice* (MRF-CJ 2015b: 11, emphases added).

First, Robinson is invoking a conception of the past as a basis for political action in the present. Her aspiration is not simply to find technical 'solutions' to climate change, but to create a new "social [and international] order". This passage also unambiguously binds these two dates, 1945 and 2015, together and forges a relation of contiguity between them: in 2015, there is a chance to conclude the 'unfinished business' from 1945, when the Charter of the United Nations, presaging the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, was agreed. In this way, a direct lineage is constructed between the Declaration (the first ever universal statement of human protections and entitlements) and what would become the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet this process is incomplete, as the social order to which the Declaration aspired has, by Robinson's own admission, not been achieved, and will not be achieved without substantial action on climate change: as suggested by the term "wiped out." There is a paradox at play here. On the one hand, Robinson's descriptions of the post-war humanitarian settlement are laudatory, yet there is also recognition that this process is fundamentally incomplete: climate change threatens to dramatically undo it. In other words, a necessary precondition for both the protection of human rights and the mitigation of (the effects of) climate change is a stable international order, without which dystopian, chaotic futures could prevail. Here, Robinson stands for an order of governance that promises to secure human rights via a stable international order. Yet, climate change signifies the undoing of that order, and thus the undoing of a key mechanism that anchors international climate whiteness in place.

The comparison between 1945 and 2015 as 'landmark' years in the production of the liberal international order is made even clearer in Robinson's 2015 TED Talk, in which she states that 2015 "is a year that is similar in its importance to 1945, with similar challenges and similar potential" (Robinson 2015: 5). However, I suggest that these pronouncements (re)produce the liberal international order as White. Here, I recall conceptions by Dwyer and Jones (2000) of 'white socio-spatial epistemology' and Sabaratnam (2020) of 'epistemologies of Whiteness'. As a reminder, Dwyer and Jones explore how whiteness constructs itself not as relational but as

self-determining, a function of historical time. This theorisation captures the ways in which whiteness is established as a source of authority that is *unmarked;* it is timeless, transcendent and is not called upon to justify itself. Furthermore, white socio-spatial epistemology helps us conceive of *the* international *itself* as a white space, in which White subjects enjoy easy mobility. For instance, Robinson herself was able to pivot to become a voice of authority on climate change, despite having no background in climate science or environmental law, by her own admission. Meanwhile, racialised subjects are confined in place (for instance, the figure of Anote Tong, president of Kiribati) who occupies the subject-position of climate 'victim' and 'canary in the coalmine' for climate change, and Constance Okollet, who is there as a 'testifier' of the slowly encroaching catastrophe of climate change. Considering recent events, it also bears noting that the international climate negotiations are a White space, in which (epistemologically, if not phenotypically) White subjects benefit from free circulation and association, while young Black or Indigenous activists endure harassment and physical removal from it (see Leonard 2019). As Guerra (2021: 32) points out, a condition of "political normalcy'" is "a prerogative of white privilege". Robinson clearly gestures towards an implied state of "normal politics" before the destabilisation and dislocation of climate change. According to Robinson, for world leaders, "it would have been unimaginable that a whole country could go out of existence because of climate change" (Robinson, 2015).

Allusions to the Second World War persist even after the 2015 'moment', and despite the increasingly obvious fact that the Paris Agreement had failed to meet expectations. Indeed, these moments and sentiments repeat themselves: a 2019 blog article by the World Resources Institute stated that "the world stands at a crossroads" (n.p.). The MRF-CJ 'Legacy' document opens with a retrospective glance over the violent twentieth century, which culminated with the all-out bloodshed and destruction of the two World Wars, and subsequently followed by the global post-war settlement. It is instructive to quote the whole passage here:

> *During World War 1 [sic], and again during World War II, the world learned how brutal life can be. We vowed never again. We created the United Nations, we adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and we agreed on the common values that bind the people of the world together and that can ensure mutual respect and bring peace. We need to call on those shared values now in the face of climate change, aware as we are of our interdependence as global citizens, and use our shared values to shape a*

> *safer, fairer, more diverse and respectful world for present generations and those to come.*
> *Climate justice reflects this intergenerational approach. It is based on hope, on respect for human rights and on the belief that by working together we can create a better future for present and future generations* (MRF-CJ 2019: no pagination).

What can this tell us about the whiteness of the international? To begin with, it has one eye on the past, and the other on the future. Both 1945 and 2015 allude to times in which an era-defining challenge confronted the international community. Like 1945, 2015 appears as the start of a new epoch in global politics. The comparison is very telling. The events following 1945 initiated a wholesale transformation of the international order: the Nuremberg Trials, the Bretton Woods economic settlement, the Marshall Plan for Europe the creation of the United Nations corpus of institutions, a redrawing of borders and the associated mass movement of people within Europe following the surrender of Nazi Germany, the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the creation of the state of Israel, and a wave of decolonisation of European colonies in Asia and Africa, which produced dozens of newly independent states.

Furthermore, both years were marked by immense pressure on world leaders to set economic and political orthodoxy aside if there was any hope of confronting challenges on such a truly global scale. However, what sets 1945 and 2015 apart is that the former came *after* the all-destructive war and genocide, whilst the settlement in 2015, it is hoped, would be preventative; while climate change is already in motion, it is still imagined that the worst is yet to come. Critical observers of both international climate politics and the growing alarm over the coming 'climate breakdown' have noted how the Second World War is invoked by those calling for a transformation. To give just one example, Tooze (2021) observes that the rhetoric of war, and of wartime mobilisation, have become commonplace in climate politics. However, Tooze also notes the 'convenience' of appealing the Second World War, since this inevitably refers, in his words a "'good war' fought by democracies, ending in spectacular victory and inaugurating a golden age of economic growth and the welfare state" (ibid). Instead, those who take a historical approach to climate change, such as Malm (2021, cited in Tooze), prefer to draw an analogy with the First World War and its aftermath, which marked widespread outbursts of racist violence, the rise of fascism and the birth of multiple ensuing crises. While it is perhaps inappropriate (and in any case, impossible) to ascertain the motivations behind such comparisons, they should nonetheless give us pause. The articulation of these two world-

historical moments, which align with the onset of the ‘Anthropocene’, on the one hand, and the birth of the liberal international order, on the other, will be the focus of my analysis in the final section of this chapter.

Additionally, the excerpt quoted above explicitly links the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to “climate justice”, via the creation of common or shared values. It refers directly to the birth of the liberal, humanitarian international order in the aftermath of unprecedented disaster: two global wars. I suggest that Sabaratnam’s conception of “epistemologies of immanence” can be seen in these patterns of meaning-making around the World Wars and climate change. The World Wars are implicitly racialised markers that betray a narrativising of the twentieth century from a White, ‘Western’ standpoint (except the liminal experience of Japan). While these are made to stand in for a universal, objective perspective, the World Wars are defining events of the last century from a distinctly White perspective. While this was certainly not Robinson’s intention, this reference taps into a rich seam of Second World War nostalgia, which is a rich resource especially for the reactionary right. Supporters of the campaign to leave the EU frequently invoked the Second World War as a case for Brexit, justified either with reference to Churchill’s supposed opposition to British membership of a European bloc, or through unfavourable comparisons of the EU with the Third Reich, in terms of its putative imposition of laws on a sovereign British nation (Shirbon 2016). Such pronouncements either made no mention of empire, or they insisted that Brexit was an opportunity to renew cultural and commercial ties with the Commonwealth nations. Such arguments tend to gloss the British Empire as an enterprise of cross-cultural exchange; for example, writing in a tabloid newspaper, Boris Johnson (2018) exclaimed of Commonwealth citizens that they are “joined with us by ties of friendship, history and the English language. They share our values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law”. Furthermore, in the aftermath of both the 2016 presidential election and the Brexit referendum, mainstream political discourses leaned heavily on the figure of the ‘left behind’ and ‘white working-class’ Briton, who (sometimes by implication and sometimes not) was framed as having been neglected by a liberal establishment supposedly in thrall to racial and cultural minorities (see Shilliam 2018). Most importantly, this is useful insofar as it can point to how racism is confined to a certain class, and with it a certain type of (working-class) whiteness, which is then pathologised and framed as an obstacle to the full realisation of a ‘rational’ and ‘enlightened’ international order. Put another way, this is an embodiment of whiteness as a power to draw lines: in this instance, lines confining racism to the past, or assigning it to a particular group. In the same way that,

following the Second World War, racism was confined to the Nazis (see Lentin 2004), it was confined to the 'unruly' working classes after the Brexit and Trump votes (see Bhambra, 2017).

Before closing this section, I cite one final instance of the comparison between 1945 and 2015. Just as in the example above, there is discursive equivalence established between the Paris Agreement and the UN Charter, and for the need for the former to reflect the values enshrined in the latter:

> *I was very conscious of this [basic unity and co-operation between people] as I took part this year in commemoration of the end of the Second World War in 1945. 1945 was an extraordinary year. It was a year when the world faced what must have seemed almost insoluble problems -- the devastation of the world wars, particularly the Second World War; the fragile peace that had been brought about; the need for a whole economic regeneration. But the leaders of that time didn't flinch from this. They had the capacity, they had a sense of being driven by never again must the world have this kind of problem. And they had to build structures for peace and security. And what did we get? What did they achieve? The Charter of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, as they're called, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. A Marshall Plan for Europe, a devastated Europe, to reconstruct it. And indeed a few years later, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Robinson 2015: 5).

Robinson's use of 'we' here serves to construct the subject positions of those in her audience as White. It also serves the reproduction of the liberal international order, as well as the motives of those overseeing its construction, as essentially benevolent, when it was rooted to a significant extent in the exigences of Cold War geopolitics. The final section of this chapter will flesh this argument out in more substantial detail.

In summary, I have shown through the analysis presented here that values like freedom, equality and human rights are seen as immanent and inherent to both Europe and the 'international, while the mutually co-constitutive relations between European modernity, slavery, and colonialism are disavowed. Furthermore, the consistent comparison between 1945 and 2015 (as a shorthand) is, I have argued, not coincidental but symptomatic of an ability to confront the incompatibility between the international order, racial injustice, and the shock of the Anthropocene. In the following section, I turn my focus to the relationship articulated by the MRF

(and some other organisations) between ‘climate justice’ and development, taking as my starting point the statement that “climate solutions are sustainable development solutions”.

4.5 “Climate solutions are sustainable development solutions”: whiteness and development as trajectory

> *The build up to 2015 is significant both for climate change policies and international development. By 2015 the design of a new climate change treaty building upon the Kyoto Protocol should be ready. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process concludes in 2015, along with the multilateral discussion on what will follow them.* If climate justice can be brought centre stage in these negotiations it could catalyse more integrated development and climate policy (Anderson 2013: 2, emphasis added).

The text above comes from a 2013 policy briefing from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), titled ‘Climate justice and international development: policy and programming’. Immediately obvious from this text is that 2015 was a pivotal year not only for climate policy, but also for the international development agenda. Not only was the international community negotiating a new climate change treaty, but it was also formulating the replacement for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) process, which would be Agenda 2030. As we already know from the introduction to this thesis, with its bottom-up, country-driven approach, the Paris Agreement departed significantly from its predecessor (the Kyoto Protocol). Likewise, in comparison to the MDG agenda, which was primarily the responsibility of ‘developing’ countries and which prioritised extreme poverty eradication, its successor framework – the Sustainable Development Goals – consists of seventeen “global” goals, meaning they apply to all countries, ‘developed’ or ‘developing’, and are to bring them together in a “global partnership” (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs). In brief, 2015 marks a global change in approach to climate as well as development policy. Returning to the text quoted, above, most important is the final sentence: that climate justice was considered advantageous for this reframing of both climate change and international development, and above all their integration. This is the point of departure for the section that follows, which examines how ‘climate justice’ is framed as a question of development, and how this furthers the reproduction of whiteness and the epistemology of “white ignorance” (Sabaratnam 2020).

First, to contextualise the discussion that follows, it is appropriate to provide a brief outline of recent shifts within the international development landscape following the global financial crisis. As a starting point, Mawdsley et al (2014) argue that the year 2011-2012 represented a "paradigm shift" in both the global development agenda and in discursive constructions of 'foreign aid', with the 2011 Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness a key moment in the development of a new paradigm of "development effectiveness" (2014: 31). The role of the private sector, economic growth and productivity are elevated within this new conception of development. Prior to this, in the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the 'Paris Agenda' was the dominant paradigm for what was known as 'aid effectiveness'. This was in part driven by the re-articulation of the 'development/security' nexus, especially after the 9/11 attacks, and in part by political leaders' wish to seem enlightened and ambitious, as with the UK Government's creation of DFID as a separate ministry in 1997 (Noxolo 2012). At the heart of this was an orientation of foreign aid towards poverty reduction, which is reflected in the MDGs (launched in 2000) and was seen by some to embody a shift away from the 'Washington Consensus' approach to development prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s, though the extent of this break has been questioned, since the MDGs remained steadfastly neoliberal in orientation (e.g., Gabay & Death 2015). At the heart of the 'Paris Agenda' paradigm were two principles: first, that of greater 'developing' country ownership and responsibility for their own poverty reduction strategies, and second, a global commitment to outcome-based measures and targets (MDGs). This entailed an expanded definition of 'development' to include, for example, health and gender equality. The MDGs also attracted engagement from some usually reluctant development partners, such as China and Saudi Arabia.

The 'Paris Agenda', though, was beset by internal and external pressures. In particular, the global financial crisis and changes in political leadership in some key countries encouraged a discourse of "national interest" and "value for money" within foreign aid (see Noxolo 2012: 32). There was also an enormous growth in the number of development actors and partners (both state and non-state), as well as development programmes, which complicated the global picture. What is more, as Mawdsley (2018: 192) puts it, the shift is explained through the slogan "from billions to trillions": the vast amounts of finance required to realise the SDGs far outstrip what traditional aid donors are prepared to provide, meaning that that private sector is making rapid and deep inroads into what came to be known as "development effectiveness". Furthermore, the private sector actors seeking partnerships with development institutions are in large part from the finance sector, including venture capital, hedge funds and global

accountancy firms, and undergirding all of this is a shift away from direct poverty reduction and towards "the central analytic of *economic growth"* (Mawdsley 2018: 192). To bring this back to the SDGs, the critical point here is that they serve as a normalising narrative for this shift to 'development finance' as well as transforming the UN and other multilateral institutions into interfaces to facilitate the deepening of "state-private capital hybrid formations" (Mawdsley 2018: 193). In short, the arguments that follow should be seen in the context of a growing rapprochement between environmental sustainability and international development (as embodied by the SDGs), which is itself facilitating a penetration of the private sector, and above all finance, into the multilateral development institutions.

These dynamics are pertinent to the identification, as seen in this section's epigraph, of climate action and development as mutually sustaining and generative. Here, too, the 2015 date is made pivotal, as it marks the renewal (or otherwise) of the multilateral climate governance regime, as well as that for global development. Anderson mentions a high-level UN report that looks ahead to the post-2015 development agenda, which states that "[w]ithout tackling climate change, we will not succeed in eradicating extreme poverty" (UN 2013: 55). This immediately establishes the stakes as extremely high, by positioning climate change as the single most important factor determining the future of global development (ibid, executive summary). Furthermore, I pointed out above that in the IIED text, there is an apparent hope invested in the concept of 'climate justice' as a potential *catalyst* for the integration of development and climate change policy, and the "streamlining" of these agendas which at the time were separate, creating "overlap and confusion" in the implementation of projects on the ground (UN 2013: 5). Here, we can see 'climate justice' functioning as a means to an end, rather than a specific end in itself. However, the proposal in this briefing goes further than what has already been discussed, for its second part is dedicated to explaining how to operationalise 'climate justice', which the briefing (2013: 2) defines as "recognis[ing] the rights and needs of the climate-vulnerable poor, demanding that the resources for tackling climate change (climate finance) are equitably distributed, and promoting participation in decision making by vulnerable groups, including women and youth" in the context of private sector investment. More specifically, with the Scottish Government's Climate Justice Fund acting as a test bed, 'climate justice' appears as a means through which to demonstrate that the pooling of public and private finance can "support climate resilience in developing countries" (Anderson 2013b: 1). In sum, importantly, I argue that at evidence here is an attempt to render 'climate justice', an amorphous term with an "ontology [that] cannot be secured", as measurable and compatible with existing agendas

(Butler 2010: 8). If we briefly recall Judith Butler's conception of the frame, the power of norms (such as 'climate justice is a development issue') lies in the fact of their *constitution* of the subject. Norms, when reiterated, "produce and shift the terms through which subjects are recognized" (ibid, 3-4). In the next section, I bring Sabaratnam's (2020) concept of "epistemologies of ignorance" to bear on this 'normalisation' of 'climate justice' as development.

4.5.1 "A collective journey": development as universal trajectory

In the previous section, I argued that the discursive integration of 'climate justice' and 'development', as a function of power, has a disciplining effect on the concept of 'climate justice'. In this section, I build on this argument by fleshing out how 'development' is represented in this context. As will become clear, I offer two contentions: first, that 'development' features as severed from its historical antecedent (colonial administration), and second, I point to how it is presented in the terms of a universal trajectory, or a "collective journey" (MRF-CJ 2016). In making these arguments, I keep Sabaratnam's elaboration of "epistemologies of ignorance" close at hand. Importantly, Sabaratnam's conception of "ignorance" draws from that of Charles Mills (2007), for whom "global white ignorance" is not accidental but *necessary* for the maintenance of the White-dominated political order. Thus, ignorance refers not to a lack of knowledge, but a studied, consistent refusal to recognise knowledge to which one has access.

First, as discussed above, international development looms large in discussions of 'climate justice' in this context; indeed, the second of the MRF's 'Principles of Climate Justice' is "support the right to development". Elaborating on this principle, the Foundation's website states that while exacerbating global economic inequalities, climate change also represents "an opportunity" for tackling them: a "new and respectful paradigm of sustainable development" (MRF-CJ, n.d.). Envisaging this paradigm, the website text continues, will necessitate the scaling-up and transfer of "green technologies" and support for "low-carbon resilience strategies for the poorest" to facilitate their inclusion in the global agenda to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It may strike the reader that that this is not explicitly framed around the reduction of global inequalities through the redistribution of wealth or compensation, but around technological innovation and a focus on helping the poor become 'resilient' to climate change. In this way, the role played by mainstream international development itself in entrenching global

economic inequality, as well as racialised hierarchies of human beings, is erased. This is in keeping with “white ignorance”, which is secured through framings that, in Sabaratnam’s words, “obscure, exclude or exceptionalise the central role of racialised dispossession, violence and discrimination in the making of the modern world” (2020: 12).

Furthermore, an examination of “white ignorance” can also be brought to bear on how in this specific context of ‘climate justice’, there is a neat detachment of ‘development’ from its history as colonial administration (see Kothari, 2006), and a brief example can help flesh this out. As I mentioned earlier, in 2012 the Scottish Government created a Climate Justice Fund (CJF), the first of its kind in the world. Part of the Scottish International Development ministry, the CJF was established with a budget of twelve million pounds over five years, and has contributed funding to projects in Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Rwanda on water management and resilience, agricultural practices and irrigation services to increase crop yields, tree planting and income diversification for farmers (Scottish Government, n.d.). At COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, the First Minister announced a tripling of the fund, to thirty-six million pounds, from 2022. On the Scottish Government’s international development web page, titled ‘Global Citizenship: Scotland’s International Development Strategy’, the visitor’s eye is immediately draw to a portrait of David Livingstone, under ‘Partner Countries’. The Scottish Government, the website reads, takes a “partnership approach” to international development, which I do not discuss in detail here (for this see Noxolo 2006), but it is worth nothing that some of these are described as “relationships going back over 150 years” (Scottish Government, n.d.). Through their association with Dr Livingstone, Malawi and Zambia are described as having “long and historical connections” to Scotland. Bringing this back to the examination of ‘climate justice’, these countries are also the ‘partner countries’ for the Scottish Government’s Climate Justice Fund. The most important point here is the fact that it is possible, in this context, to refer to “a relationship going back over 150 years” without any mention of colonialism or racial hierarchies, is a function of “white ignorance”, as well as Goldberg’s (2015) conception of “postraciality”, as a condition under which the public celebration of a figure such as Livingstone is detached from the historical conditions of its possibility.

The second argument I make pertains to “white ignorance” and universal visions of ‘development’. While there is a rich and varied corpus of scholarship that critiques the Eurocentric assumptions underpinning and sustaining ‘development’, but in keeping with my theoretical focus on postcoloniality, here I engage an argument by Robbie Shilliam (2012), a

critique of Amartya Sen's celebrated conception of "development as freedom". In brief, Shilliam shows that animating Sen's conception is an idea, akin to Adam Smith's concept of "Providence", that there is a universal force of 'progress' propelling everyone along. Although this idea of a progressive force was not always a universal one (Adam Smith's conception of Providence appears, at least in his writing on slavery, as parochial), some human beings would never be capable of realising their freedom, even through the market. This vision, however, becomes universal in Amartya Sen's 'development as freedom', in which Sen takes runaway slaves as evidence that they chose to realise their freedom through market relations. In general, while Shilliam acknowledges that Sen's work contains a small opening for decolonial thinking, his overwhelming argument is that Sen renders the struggle for freedom as "profane incorporation into an extant universal history already written by masters" (Shilliam 2012: 345). I should add that there is no suggestion that the MRF sees development in the dominant neoliberal sense of quantitatively assessed economic growth. To be precise, the MRF insists on the "right to development", meaning that low-income countries must be allowed to 'develop', but cannot do so in the same way as wealthier countries did historically, through intensive extraction and reliance upon fossil fuels. Rather, development overwhelmingly appears as a "collective journey shared by all the nations of the world", which is likely conditioned by Agenda 2030's insistence that 'development' is to be pursued by all countries, not only low-income ones. This sense of a universal trajectory is reinforced by the use of terms such as "pathways", "paths" and "tracks" within MRF-CJ documents. The continuities between colonial administration and development co-operation (pointed to for, example, by Uma Kothari (2006)), no longer appear so clear-cut in the age of universal development goals, so the whiteness of 'development co-operation' is perhaps more plausibly deniable, especially given the pluralisation of actors involved (e.g. Mawdsley et al 2014). However, using the example that follows, I argue that cleaving to Sabaratnam's conception of "epistemologies of ignorance" can illuminate the whiteness underlying the MRF-CJ's investment in the international order.

As I established earlier, the Mary Robinson Foundation's conception of 'climate justice' displays great investment in the essentially progressive character of the liberal international order, and this can also be seen in Robinson's engagement with the concept of 'development'. In August 2016, Robinson gave the Madeleine Allbright Global Development Lecture, in which she strikes an optimistic note, citing the UN Declaration on Human Rights and stating that 'we' currently live in the "most peaceful, most prosperous, most progressive era in human history":

> *When I look at the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights I have similar thoughts –we have come a long way. We have shared values as an international community that bind us together and hold us accountable to each other. We have found ways to co-operate, we have lifted many lives out of poverty, we have avoided conflict and we have secured peace. But we are not all the way there yet – and recent events remind us of how fragile that progress is. How hard we need to continue to work – to both protect and accelerate that progress, while sharing it more fairly – so that all people have equal opportunity* (MRF-CJ 2016: 2).

Despite acknowledging the events of the time, and the "violence, justice and natural disasters", as well as the "suffering, hate and intolerance" that dominated the news agenda in the summer of 2016, Robinson maintains a relentless positivity about the potential for global development to reduce poverty and realise human freedom. This sentiment carries throughout the speech, as can be seen below:

> *In recent years the narrative on climate change has changed, from one of doom and gloom to one of purpose and opportunity […] This change in narrative – as climate technologies have been developed and the benefits of sustainable development have been better understood – is one of the reasons why an ambitious agreement was possible in Paris last year* (MRF-CJ 2016: 5).

There are several points to note here. First, this anticipates my argument in Chapter 5, about there having been a "changed narrative" on climate change and a shift in focus towards "opportunity". Second, it brings together climate action and sustainable development. Additionally, in the same speech, Robinson voices a concern that I addressed in the previous section: that climate change risks undoing the hard-won gains made by development. This is a similar statement to the one she makes about the international order. The international community is seen as having made historic progress in increasing prosperity, preserving peace and avoiding conflict. However, this progress is a fragile and uneven one that can be easily reversed, not only by political turmoil and rising persecution of minorities, but also by a failure to properly mitigate and adapt to climate change. To return directly to international development and its centrality within 'climate justice', Robinson identifies the Sustainable Development Goals as cause for hope, which for her is what allows for progress. She states that:

> *I see evidence for that hope in the transformational vision spelled out last year in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It calls for a* collective journey shared by all the nations of the world *to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources* (MRF-CJ 2016: 3).

Robinson speaks highly of the universal applicability of the Sustainable Development Goals (in terms of 'no country has achieved sustainable development') but continues to refer to countries that are "still developing". This speaks to a sense of a universalising, totalising 'trajectory' that all are expected to follow. Here, we can recall Shilliam's argument about the trajectory of freedom as having already been "written by the masters", as well as how the SDGs embody such a universal trajectory, with space neither for divergences from this pathway, nor for a reckoning with the history and politics of what it means to be engaged in 'development', along with all its attached "presumptions of cultural and racial superiority" (Sabaratnam 2020: 21).

4.6 White innocence, the Anthropocene and the liberal international

As I set out earlier, the upheaval of the 'Anthropocene' has destabilised and posed an existential challenge to political formations based on white, western humanism. Not only this, but it is the very institutions that uphold the international system that are responsible for the breakdown, beyond recognition, of the 'natural' world. This recollects the argument by Chakrabarty, outlined in Chapter 2, that the shock realisation of the 'Anthropocene', or humanity's becoming-awareness of itself as a geological agent, has severely qualified the humanist vision of a "global, collective life" (2009: 2010) based on reason. Chakrabarty is not, of course, advocating for the abandonment of all questions of rights and justice, but articulating an idea that humans now exist in two incommensurable modes: as a subject of rights and a geophysical force (so neither subject nor object, but a form of agency that is entirely "non-ontological"). Mimicking Fanon, Chakrabarty suggests that "the idea of the human needs to be stretched beyond where postcolonial thought advanced it" (2012: 15).

In other words, western humanism no longer recognises itself and has no choice but to respond. The question, though, of *how* it responds is the critical one. An interesting element in Chakrabarty's argument is that the point of departure for his discussion of climate change is the 2007 IPCC Report, which he credits for pulling humanity's focus towards global warming and away from 'globalization'. However, in doing so, he anchors the basis for his claim within the very site he seeks to problematise: that of the humanist vision of a "global, collective life" founded upon reason, of which the IPCC is arguably the embodiment. This sets the stage for the argument I offer in this section: that the climate crisis is inseparable from the international order that, having brought this crisis into being, is attempting to resolve it. Furthermore, I argue that that this can be teased out methodologically through Sabaratnam's conception of "white innocence".

What, then, does the principle of 'climate justice' mean in a moment when the entire edifice of the liberal international is crumbling under the weight of a crisis of its own making? After all, 'International law' oversaw the ramping up of greenhouse gas emissions and the resulting global warming, as well as the production of racialised hierarchies of the human (Bâ 2021). However, somehow it implicitly retains the status of 'innocence.' International law has always distinguished those with 'civilisation' from those without it (see Tzouvala 2020), yet for most of the 'international community' there is no question that this the basis upon which the changes need to be made. When establishing her narrative on climate change in the 2015 Ted Talk, Robinson invites a comparison of two nation-states: Ireland, and Kiribati:

> *And I was aware that at the time of my presidency, Ireland was a country beginning a rapid economic progress. We were a country that was benefiting from the solidarity of the European Union. Indeed, when Ireland first joined the European Union in 1973, there were parts of the country that were considered developing, including my own beloved native county, County Mayo. I led trade delegations here to the United States, to Japan, to India, to encourage investment, to help create jobs, to build up our economy, to build up our health system, our education – our development* (Robinson 2015: 2).

Immediately after this, however, the narrative takes a more sober turn:

> *What I didn't have to do as president was to buy land on mainland Europe, so that Irish citizens could go there because our island was going underwater. What I didn't have to think about, either as president or as a constitutional lawyer, was the implications for the sovereignty of the territory because of climate change. But that is what President Tong, of the Republic of Kiribati, has to wake up every morning thinking about* (ibid, 2).

While a nation develops and builds up its prosperity through engagement in the 'international' (e.g. through global trade and multilateral co-operation), climate change seriously threatens the undoing of the conditions of its recognition as a nation state according to international norms (sovereignty, territorial integrity). However, the solution to this existential crisis is to construct further international architecture: in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and in 2015, the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. Even the imminent evisceration of the territorial integrity of 'vulnerable' island nations, it seems, is not enough to make the international climate elite amenable to the dismantling of the capitalist economic regime sustained by the international (Robinson 2015). Yet, the idea of the space of the international not being neutral and innocent is unthinkable – and unsayable – for whiteness. This insight is in keeping with the theorisation of white socio-spatial epistemology (Dwyer & Jones 2000), which shows how a thoroughly White space can simply appears as neutral, and fractures and inequalities as innocent.

One way in which white innocence plays out is in the framing of Anote Tong and Kiribati. Here, the annihilation of an entire country is presented as an exceptional, unprecedented event, and climate change as a destroyer of worlds is exceptionalised, as though there is no precedent of such transformative destruction, while the presentation of an event as 'unprecedented' has an ideological function (see Davis & Todd 2017). Furthermore, Anote Tong and Kiribati are central to the establishment of Robinson's whole argument about climate change and international action to address it. As well as reproducing the orientalist trope of 'sinking islands' (Farbotko 2005, 2010), Robinson's positioning of Kiribati makes it a conduit to talk about climate change writ large. However, this is not only the island as metaphor (DeLoughrey 2012), but the figure of the vulnerable human, who is made to stand in for the climate crisis. Furthermore, this de-historicises the vulnerability of these countries in so far that is only ever mentioned as a function of climate change, thus cutting it off from the historical political and economic conditions of its production. A country such as Kiribati or the Maldives 'is' not vulnerable to climate change in any essential sense; rather, it is *made* vulnerable to climate change.

To be sure, Robinson does not only mobilise these representational practices for poor people and global South countries. She also invokes Eleanor Roosevelt and in doing so, makes her a symbol of liberal universalism, human rights and the international, as I demonstrated above. But when she does so for global South figures, they only feature as having been dispossessed by climate change. On the other hand, figures like Constance Okollet and Anote Tong can only *react* to circumstances beyond their control. While I go into this in more detail in chapter 5, suffice it to say for now that the ability to make a vulnerable, racialised person into a symbol of the climate crisis is a testament to the signifying power of whiteness. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2012: 179) tells us, metaphor does not simply draw together two separate entities, but "validates and naturalizes" this new connection. Not only this, however, but at the heart of the signifying power of whiteness is the authority to draw lines: lines that demarcate what constitutes the 'unprecedented' or the 'exceptional'; that determine what is written out of – yet is foundational to - the triumphant story of the liberal international order.

As I explored above, the power of whiteness is that it can lay claim to moral respectability. While it may acknowledge its missteps, the focus remains on its essential good faith; any undesirable outcomes are an unfortunate, unintended consequence of its well-intentioned actions (see Sabaratnam 2020: 14). Furthermore, I also established that the upheaval of the Anthropocene has posed an existential challenge to the political formations based on white, western humanism. Not only this, but it is the very institutions that upheld the international system that are responsible for the breakdown, beyond recognition, of the 'natural' world.
To return to the Pacific Islands, the counterexample of Enewatak (or 'Bikini') Atoll can complicate the presented narrative of white innocence. Part of the Marshall Islands and formerly part of 'German New Guinea', Enewetak Atoll was the site of 23 nuclear tests conducted by the US between 1946 and 1958. Before the resettlement of its residents in 1948, they were left on the atoll's islands with insufficient means of subsistence between 1946 and 1947. While around 100 former residents were able to return to Enewetak in 1972, radiation levels remained too high for inhabitation to be safe. Women were experiencing stillbirths, miscarriages, and genetic abnormalities in their children, while trees and plants growing there absorbed large quantities of caesium. Enewetak was the most contaminated place on Earth: over the course of 67 nuclear tests, the Marshall Islanders were exposed to over 8 billion curies of iodine-131. This is comparable only to Chernobyl, which released 50 million curies (see DeLoughrey 2012).

The reader might wonder why this is relevant. It was happening at the same time as the drafting and preparation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the implementation of the famed 'post-war settlement':

> *And just as we've been looking back this year – in 2015 to 1945, looking back 70 years – I would like to think that they will look back, that world will look back 35 years from 2050, 35 years to 2015, and that they will say, 'Weren't they good to do what they did in 2015? We really appreciate that they took the decisions that made a difference, and that put the world on the right pathway, and we benefit now from that pathway,' that they will feel that somehow we took our responsibilities, we did what was done in 1945 in similar terms, we didn't miss the opportunity, we lived up to our responsibilities. That's what this year is about* (Robinson 2015: 7).

Again, established here is a strong relation of discursive equivalence between 1945 and 2015. This positions 1945 as the high point of internationalism, the start of a promised 'new era' of harmonious international co-operation and protection of individual and collective rights, with a renewed need for the same kind of leadership to deal with the challenges of 2015. The international community appears here not only as innocent, but as virtuous. This recalls Sabaratnam's formulation of "white innocence" as moral respectability and good faith ("put the world on the right pathway"). What is not articulated here, however, is the inseparability of the climate crisis from the international order that, having brought this crisis into being, is attempting to resolve it. I develop this point in the next, and final, section of this chapter.

4.6.2 Anthropocene, world order and whiteness

So far in the chapter, I have argued that 'climate justice', as taken up in discourses of liberal internationalism, embodies and reproduces whiteness, in accordance with Sabaratnam's (2020) "epistemologies of whiteness" (immanence, ignorance and innocence), and Dwyer and Jones's (2000) concept of "white socio-spatial epistemology". These final paragraphs articulate more explicitly the relationship between the announcement of the 'Anthropocene' and the decline of the liberal international order, by illuminating how both are being refracted through a re-emboldened transnational politics of whiteness.

My starting point is the year 1945, which as demonstrated above, takes on a special significance in the Mary Robinson Foundation's account of climate change as it pinpoints the

birth of the liberal international order, which, it is assumed, will be the site for the resolution of climate *injustice.* However, the year 1945 also marks the beginning of the period named the 'Anthropocene', while the seven decades from 1945-2015 is continuous with the so-called 'American century'. Accordingly, this was also a seventy-year period defined by liberal internationalism**;** the UN's formalisation of universal human rights, the post-war economic settlement that oversaw the transformation and rehabilitation of capitalism typified by the Bretton Woods institutions: the very architecture Robinson lauds in her speeches. Critically, contemporaneous with this was the tumult of decolonisation, together with the discrediting of scientific racism and the celebration of human difference in the 'race-neutral' terms of culture.

In 1950, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) published a statement titled 'On the Race Question', which identified racism as "one of the social evils which the new Organization was called upon to combat". This statement roundly rejects the idea of race as "one of the pivots of Nazi ideology and policy," before closing with the words "[f]or every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, because he is involved in mankind" (UNESCO, 1950). In other words, the UNESCO statement names the end of biologised, unapologetic white supremacy, confining it to a monstrous past. However, the statement is unabashedly forward-facing. In post-war European discourse on race, within which UNESCO's statements occupied a prime position, race appears as a pseudo-scientific concept that could be easily disproven on scientific grounds, rather than a political idea to be confronted. This is typified by the 1950 UNESCO statements on race, which as Lentin convincingly argues (2004: 435) popularised a tradition of anti-racist practices that has avoided the "theorization of the racial nature of the European state". In the words of David Goldberg, race has been buried, but "buried alive" (cited in Lentin 2008: 497). Importantly, furthermore, this 'burying' of race has left us unable to speak about it, and racialised people without a language "in which to express their negation" (Lentin 2008: ibid). Despite this banishment of 'race', *racism* continued to pervade the late twentieth century international order under the guise of 'race-neutral' terms of 'culture' and 'ethnicity'. These, as Lentin shows, are amenable to the historicist racism that animates the politics of assimilation, which would facilitate the entry of 'inferior' cultural groups into the processes of modernisation and 'development' through participation, first, in the international community, and second, through West-bound immigration (Lentin 2004: 437). Nonetheless, anti-racism in the UNESCO tradition treated racism in Europe as an aberration, and Europe as having "closed the door" on that "regrettable" period of its history (Lentin 2008: 497).

My point here is to emphasise the following: that the international order that oversaw the silencing of race, on the one hand, and that which enabled the climate crisis, on the other, are one and the same. However, by 2015 - the year in which the Paris Agreement was triumphantly announced to the world - this order had begun to break down. The European Union, perhaps the paradigmatic example of post-war liberal internationalism, was hit with four interlocking crises: the Greek debt and bailout crisis, the Mediterranean 'refugee crisis,' the rise of authoritarian populism, especially in Poland and Hungary, and the United Kingdom's vote to leave the bloc in 2016. Of these four crises, the first two dealt a deadly blow to the EU's cherished self-image as a guardian of the values of liberal humanism, namely solidarity and human rights. The latter two served to legitimate illiberal impulses (such as mistrust of 'experts' and hostility towards migrants, LGBTQ+ people and other minorities), as well as to re-animate reactionary talismans such as sovereignty and nostalgia for empire or a mythicized national past. These are defined in opposition to liberal internationalism, which is viewed as overbearing, bureaucratic and 'anti-democratic'. Meanwhile, Trump's election in 2016 served as the signifier *par excellence* of nostalgia for the mighty US empire in decline. Despite being nominally committed to 'freedom', the Euro American-led 'international order' has shown itself incapable of protecting the necessary geological conditions for meaningful and expanded human flourishing and, increasingly, human *survival.*

The "methodological whiteness" (Bhambra 2017) of the 'lie' that has sustained our conception of Euro-America over the seven decades to 2015 is evident. First, the underpinning of American exceptionalism, the idea that it has had an uninterrupted record of liberal democracy since its founding, is only intelligible if 'America' is imagined as white, since racial slavery, the civil war and reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation, the dispossession and denial of suffrage to Indigenous peoples, the incarceration of Japanese Americans during the Second World War, and the disenfranchisement of African Americans until the mid-1960s (to name but a few) all militate against an understanding of the United States of America as a multiracial democracy. Furthermore, the images of the 'good life' that have come to define 'America' are entirely W/white: suburban living, homeownership, a car-dependent lifestyle, the nuclear family, a solidly middle-class job, a meat-heavy diet and ample consumer goods and electronics. Of course, it is precisely this consumption-based 'good life' that is overwhelmingly responsible for sustaining fossil fuel industries and therefore the climate crisis (see Daggett 2018).

Europe, meanwhile, is imagined as the origin of modern civilisation, including reason, science, democracy and – as Robinson herself stated in her Paris speech – freedom. While it bears the stain of mass bloodshed and total warfare, it poses as having redeemed itself; first from the religious wars of the seventeenth century by the Treaty of Westphalia (and accordingly, the modern states system), and second from the two World Wars by the post-war settlement and what would eventually become the European Union. However, 'Europe' continues to be dogged by reminders of its 'racist past'; ongoing – and renewed - violence directed at Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) and Jewish communities[22], and the surveillance and policing of further 'foreign' Others (namely Muslims, but also of Black people in and from Europe). Europe, and with it the European Union, also allowed tens of thousands of people (from the Middle East, Afghanistan, north and west Africa and elsewhere) to drown in the Mediterranean Sea under the pretext of not wanting to 'encourage' migration.

Finally, the convulsions of Brexit and Trump set shockwaves through the global international order. In addition, both have a mutually sustaining relation to whiteness, and in particular imperial nostalgia (though needless to say, both sides (remain/leave, and Trump/anti-Trump) have their own distinctive raciality). Brexit and Trump both played to the disaffected white national subject, who may or may not be one of neoliberalism's 'winners' but who interprets the liberal multicultural consensus as "identity politics" (see Bhambra 2017: 217) that deprioritises them as a white citizen and thus as an injury to the 'national majority'. Additionally, the benefits of national belonging (jobs, social security benefits, healthcare, housing, education and overall prosperity) are distributed according to proximity to the white national ideal, and are therefore thoroughly racialised. The slogans 'Make America Great Again' and 'Take Back Control' exemplify this, as well as the different ways in which these dynamics played out in the two countries. In the case of Britain (so defined because the status of Northern Ireland was entirely excluded from consideration), a crescendo of Eurosceptic discourse generated and consolidated, over a period of decades, a sense that due to its membership of the EU, 'Britain' had relinquished sovereign control over its own laws and borders. Therefore, the Leave

[22] For example, on 9th October 2019, a far-right gunman attacked a synagogue in the eastern German city of Halle during Yom Kippur, using a home-made gun. During his trial, the assailant denied the Holocaust and laughed when the Holocaust was mentioned in court. In March 2019, Brenton Tarrant, another far-right gunman, had killed 51 Muslim worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand (see BBC News 2020). Furthermore, Part 4 of the UK government's flagship Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill (2021) contains trespassing laws that, in criminalising nomadic lifestyles, threaten the "cultural annihilation" of GRT communities in the UK. According to representatives of GRT advocacy groups, the Bill's changing of trespass from a civil to a criminal offence would criminalise GRT parents, leaving their children vulnerable to "forcible assimilation into settled culture" (see Brentnall, 2022).

campaign – now infamously – promised that the money recuperated from paying for EU membership would be diverted to an affectively resonant, truly 'national' institution: the *National* Health Service. This is itself paradoxical, given the level of the service's dependence on migrant workers and on 'frictionless trade' within the European single market, as well as protection from private healthcare providers. In summary, the dates 1945 and 2015 bookend the project of White (American) liberal internationalism, 2015 marks its desperate attempts to re-work itself as it realises that it has destroyed the world it is seeking to preserve. Dipesh Chakrabarty's argument on climate change and western humanism is relevant here: the shock realization of the Anthropocene means that Western humanism is struggling to come to terms with – and find a way of being – that which it knows it has already become: a geophysical force with agency far beyond the scope of politics or biology. However, despite being nominally committed to 'freedom', the Euro American-led 'international order' has shown itself incapable of protecting the necessary geological conditions for meaningful and expanded human flourishing (and, increasingly, human *survival).* An important question, then, pertains to what kind of response is needed to respond to two historically produced – but inextricably linked – sets of circumstances: the appearance of the 'human' as a geophysical agent, and the silencing of 'race'.

4.7 Conclusions

This chapter has apprehended the liberal 'international' as a racialised order of governance. Specifically, it argued that climate justice – in context-specific instances - embodies and perpetuates *whiteness,* which I understand as an historically and geographically differentiated form of signifying power. Further, whiteness is bound to constant reproduction by attaching itself to formations that are not transcendent, but historically constituted (ibid). From here, I argued that some 'climate justice' discourses can be apprehended as embodying 'international climate whiteness'. I conceptualised this as an historically contingent form of power that operates through – and draws its legitimacy from – a cluster of institutional arrangements, discourses and affects that serve the reproduction of a certain kind of international order: one based on individual rights, liberal democracy, the rule of law and a broadly neoclassical economic consensus. Importantly, all the above work to shield from view histories of colonisation and imperialism.

Having set down this conceptual basis, I engaged Sabaratnam's (2020) framework of "epistemologies of whiteness" and Dwyer and Jones' (2000) "white socio-spatial epistemology",

which comprise a useful methodological framework for analysing international climate whiteness. Essentially, Robinson's pronouncements on 'climate justice' are symptomatic of the shock of the Anthropocene, which has revealed the fundamental flaws of the White humanism undergirding the international order. Yet, it cannot remake itself anew, as this would amount to an admission of its own role in generating the crisis of the Anthropocene in the first place.

The horizon of 'climate justice' is potentially infinite. It gestures towards fundamental questions about how the world is organised, how power and agency are distributed among humans and nonhumans alike. To paraphrase Naomi Klein, it could "change everything". However, in formulations such as those I have just analysed, 'climate justice' is reduced to a question of how to stabilise the international order to manage climate change. One thing is clear: that the white liberal international – and internationalism - are being rapidly dismantled by the forces of fascism, capital, and climate crisis. Finally, the arguments I have just presented force a reckoning with difficult questions. Can the 'international' ever be rehabilitated? Could it ever stand for anything other than colonising universalisms? Can spaces for mutual care and political organising be forged that bypass this colonising impulse and that do not re-inscribe existing hierarchies and regimes of dehumanisation?

Chapter 5: 'Changing the narrative': climate justice, the most vulnerable and the politics of recognition

"...These voices from the frontlines are the ones we really need to listen to" (fieldnotes, 6th December 2018).

5.1 Introduction

The epigraph above comes from my field notes from Katowice, Poland in December 2018, where I observed events on the fringes of the COP24 climate talks. This event was a panel discussion dedicated to climate justice and climate litigation and organised by Greenpeace International. One of the panellists was a representative of a Saami youth organisation involved in an unprecedented legal case against the European Union's member states, and the panel chair thanked her for her contribution, before making the comment above. It is interesting for many reasons: who are the 'we' doing the listening? Which voices will these 'voices from the frontlines' supersede, or take precedence over? Indeed, who could *disagree* with such a statement? In short, it speaks to the theme of this chapter: consensus, vulnerability and recognition. These arguments address two research questions: (1) how climate justice discourses come to be constituted in proximity to the 'international' and (2) how, in specific, contextualised moments, they are conditioned by the politics of (racial) difference.

In Chapter 4, I argued that while contingent, 'climate justice' has been constituted in proximity to the 'international' as a White order of governance, which I demonstrated through an analysis of Mary Robinson Foundation documents. Building on this, this chapter draws out two further frames through which 'climate justice' discourses are articulated in proximity to race: vulnerability and recognition. More precisely, working from vignettes from my ethnographic fieldwork, interviews with climate change professionals and discourse analysis, I advance two arguments: first, that the 'most vulnerable' are positioned as a mobilising device on whose behalf the less-vulnerable are urged to demand 'action' from their political representatives; and second, that a primary instrument for the securing of this moral economy is the idea of a 'new narrative' of climate change; one that reframes it as not just an 'environmental' issue, but also a 'human-centred' one (see Chapter 6).

To parse this out, I identify and examine the devices deployed by this 'new narrative', and this proceeds in four parts. First, I argue that 'climate justice' is conditioned by two distinct forces: it

must be ‘new’ and ‘compelling’ enough to distinguish itself from existing or antecedent narratives of climate change, yet it must remain non-confrontational enough to garner a broad coalition of support. Therefore, second, I demonstrate how this narrative is constrained by a perceived need for ‘consensus’, which in certain instances, contributes to a presentation of ‘climate justice’ as palatably liberal and unthreatening. Third, I explore the notion of ‘voices from the frontlines’ as a key animating device in this narrative, specifically in relation to its constitution and consolidation of the ‘most vulnerable’ to climate change as a distinctive narrative of ‘climate justice’. Fourth, utilising critical tools from scholarship on multiculturalism (Hage 1998) and Indigenous scholarship (Coulthard 2014), I argue that these devices can be considered within the frame of ‘recognition’ and more specifically, in the reduction of ‘climate justice’ to a recognition of ‘difference’.

Here, I also reiterate an important point about anti-essentialism. In line with the framework of performativity that underpins this thesis, I understand ‘climate justice’ and ‘climate justice discourses’ to be inherently contingent. As such, in what follows, I do not seek to make ontological statements about what climate justice ‘is’, ‘has been’, or ‘will be’. By making these arguments, I am not claiming that climate justice ‘is’ ‘racist’, that it ‘is’ post-political or that it ‘is’ pro-capitalist. Rather, I am exploring how specific, contextualised instances of climate justice discourse(s) draw upon and interface with already existing discursive resources of (among others) climate science, political economy, (neo)liberalism, recognition, diversity and difference, all of which are themselves multifarious and radically provisional. First, however, I ground the analysis that follows in the overall theoretical framework of the thesis, before providing some background on the Climate Justice Dialogue.

5.2 Recalling Butler’s frame: consensus, vulnerability, recognition

In the opening paragraphs of their essay ‘Precarious Life, Grievable Life’, written in response to 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their aftermath, Judith Butler sets out the following:

> *...the frames through which we apprehend or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power […] On the other hand, the problem is ontological, since the question at issue is:* ***What is a life?*** *The ‘being’ of life is itself constituted through selective means; as a result, we cannot refer to this ‘being’ outside of the operations of*

> *power, and we must make more precise the specific mechanisms of power through which life is produced* (Butler 2010: 1, emphasis in original).

In the passage quoted above, Butler captures what is at stake politically in their theorisation of performativity and the frame, as well as extending a political and methodological injunction: to identify these mechanisms of power and to make them visible. I take this as my starting point as I bring to light and examine what I consider to be three specific mechanisms of power, as well as norms that structure the 'frame' of climate justice: 'consensus', 'vulnerability' and 'recognition'. First, in addition to being politically saturated, frames are inevitably *socially* produced, even if, in Butler's words, our "recruitment" into these framings of reality is largely a matter of "passive reception" (2010: xii). Making life 'grievable' (or indeed, 'ungrievable') is, in other words, an inescapably collective enterprise. To recall an earlier discussion, circulability is at once the condition of the frame's reproduction *and* that of its subversion. Meanwhile, looking ahead to this chapter, which in large part concerns itself with 'narratives', it is important to start by establishing that a 'narrative' is also a frame, and that narratives, like frames, *produce* the subjects (for example, of 'climate justice') they purport to describe. But what happens when, in attempt to establish a solid foundation for politics (in times of crisis, such as climate change), the contingency of the subject is disavowed? In 'Contingent Foundations' (1992:10), Butler addresses this move through the idea that the 'success' of wars hinges on the triumph of a certain kind of heroic, transcendent subject. Countering the insistence that there must be an *a priori* subject of politics, Butler writes that "[t]o claim that politics requires a stable subject is to claim that there can be no *political* opposition to that claim […] To require the subject means to foreclose the domain of the political" (Butler 1992: 4, emphasis added). This, again, is about defining the limits of the public sphere. We might say, then, that 'consensus' for Butler entails "setting limits on the speakable" (Butler 2003: no pagination). Putting the subject under political scrutiny, Butler reminds us, is not to negate the notion of the 'subject', but to ask questions about how it comes to be constructed. Doubling back to 'climate justice' and consensus, the "compelling narrative" I mentioned in the introduction represents an attempt to create a singular meaning of 'climate justice'; a meaning that is governed by liberal norms including vulnerability, recognition and postraciality. This act of creating a singular meaning, as we know from above, also works to foreclose the possibility of alternative meanings of 'climate justice'.

Vulnerability, another of the norms I interrogate in this chapter, looms large in social scientific research on climate change. When the IPCC's First Assessment Report was published in 1990,

vulnerability was regarded primarily in terms of exposure to physical impacts of climate change at the level of sectors, regions and countries, with comparatively little attention paid to social drivers, or the unevenness of exposure to risk (Thomas et al 2018: 1). Rather than an unchanging state, vulnerability is now widely understood within the social sciences as a "multidimensional process" conditioned by social, political, economic and historical forces operating at multiple scales (ibid). Vulnerability is also at the heart of Butler's theorising in *Frames of War,* insofar as frames are themselves 'vulnerable' to reversal or subversion. In Butler's analysis, vulnerability shares important characteristics with 'precariousness' and 'precarity'. As Butler tells us, there is nothing that can alter the condition of human precariousness, for human life can be put at risk, or expunged, at any moment. It implies a dependency on and exposure to others, both known and unknown (2010: 14). There is, however, a distinction between 'precariousness' as a generalised condition of life and 'precarity' as a politically engineered state in which failing systems of social and economic support render certain populations especially exposed to injury, violence, disease or death (Butler 2010: 25). These populations are in the position of having to appeal for protection to the very same entity from which they need protection: the state. What is more, categorising a population or populations as 'vulnerable', as will become clear in this chapter, can have a naturalising and de-historicising effect: their vulnerability becomes not a function of politics, but of nature. Vulnerability itself, though, designates something slightly different, and Butler further explores this in 'Survivability, Vulnerability, Affect'. Here, they position torture as the exploitation of bodily vulnerability, but seek to avoid making 'vulnerability' reducible to 'injurability'. Rather, vulnerability is best described as a body's condition of exposure and proximity to others. In the context of poetry written by Guantanamo detainees subjected to torture by US military personnel, much of which was subsequently destroyed, Butler suggests that this vulnerability can be a condition not only of suffering, but also of responsiveness. They write that:

> *This reveals two separate truths about the body: as bodies, we are exposed to others, and while this may be the condition of our desire, it also raises the possibility of subjugation and cruelty. This follows from the fact that bodies are bound up with others through material needs, through touch, through language, through a set of relations without which we cannot survive. To have one's survival bound up in such a way is a constant risk of sociality – its promise and its threat. The very fact of being bound up with others establishes the possibility being subjugated and exploited – though in no way*

> *does it determine what political form that will take. But it also establishes the possibility of being relieved of suffering, of knowing justice and even love* (Butler 2010: 61).

Crucially, here, vulnerability is reciprocal; a social condition in which one's survival but also pain, cruelty, suffering, justice, desire and love, are possible only through our relations with others. This condition, however, is obscured from view by the operation of frames that produce some populations as eminently 'killable' and then 'ungrievable', as well as by the conflation by modern warfare of two literal 'frames': the lens of the bomber pilot and the television screen. In 'Contingent Foundations', Butler characterises this conflation as "a fantasy of transcendence […] a disembodied instrument of destruction...infinitely protected from a reverse-strike through the guarantee of electronic distance" (1992: 11).

Finally, 'recognition' is central to Butler's argument about grievable versus ungrievable life. For to be grieved, the life must be 'recognised' (or at least, 'recognisable') as a life. A dialectical term extensively theorised by Hegel, in the past four decades recognition has become a mainstay in political theorisations, especially of multiculturalism, tolerance and difference (e.g., Taylor 1979; Fraser 1997; Honneth 1996; Fraser & Honneth 2003; Brown 2008; see also Coulthard 2014). Recognition depends on norms, and always mediates in our capacity to name and discern the subject (2010: 4). However, Butler makes important distinctions between recognition, 'apprehension' and 'intelligibility', as well as between recognition and 'recognisability'. Apprehension, for them, is a 'pre-conceptual' mode of knowing that is not yet recognition, whereas 'intelligibility', après Foucault, refers to the establishment, by general historical schemas, of the domains of the knowable (2010: 6). Bringing these points together, norms of recognisability precede recognition in the sense that they "prepare or establish a subject for recognition […] and make possible the act of recognition itself" (2010: 5). These norms of recognisability are themselves conditioned and produced by broader schemas of intelligibility (ibid, 7).

We have already established that recognisability precedes recognition. But how can we understand recognisability? And what does it entail? First, it is not a quality attributable to individual humans, as claiming recognisability as a universal quality or potential would render this inquiry unnecessary. As we shall see later, we can make this point about how some 'climate justice' literature attempts to conceptualise it *as recognition* (e.g., Bulkeley et al 2013; Bulkeley, Edwards & Fuller 2014), thus presupposing a universal condition for recognisability, or that the

subjects of 'climate justice' are always already recognisable, whoever they happen to be. The purpose of pushing critically into this, then, is not merely to include more people within existing norms of recognisability, but to construct plural, more egalitarian ones (see Butler 2010: 6). Meanwhile, the conditions for recognisability are always variably and historically constructed, and herein lies the possibility for new political openings. Life, as Butler is keen to stress, always exceeds the normative conditions of its recognisability (2010: 4). Later in the chapter, we will augment this analysis with insights from Hage (1998) and Coulthard (2014), who offers a radical opening for refusing what he calls "the colonial politics of recognition". First, however, I contextualise the analysis that follows.

5.3 Context: The Climate Justice Dialogue

Here, it is important to provide some context on the 'Climate Justice Dialogue'. The Climate Justice Dialogue (CJD) was a project co-convened and facilitated by the Washington, DC-based World Resources Institute and the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, headquartered in Dublin, Ireland (which I introduced in Chapter 4). The CJD was initiated in the intervening period between COP17 in Durban (2011) and the Paris Summit (COP21) in 2015 and, according to the relevant page on the MRF website, aimed to "mobilise political will and creative thinking to shape an ambitious and just international climate agreement in 2015" (MRF-CJ, no date). Established to facilitate this was a High-Level Advisory Committee of the Climate Justice Dialogue[23], for which the MRF provided the Secretariat, and for which then-director of the WRI, Dr Andrew Steer, and Mary Robinson herself served as co-chairs (MRF-CJ/WRI 2013: 2). Meanwhile, climate change had decisively burst into the global public consciousness with the publication of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (2007), which had serious and enduring implications for the human rights, security, and livelihoods of people across the globe. This meant also that climate change - and its associated effects - had the potential to endanger economic development, roll back hard-won progress made in poverty reduction, and even to catalyse the migration or displacement of millions of people, of which the vast majority are in the

[23] The full list of 'supporters of the Declaration of Climate Justice' is: Andrew Steer (WRI), Mary Robinson (MRF-CJ), Nnimmo Bassey (Oilwatch International), Sharan Burrow (ITUC), Luisa Dias Diogo (former PM, Mozambique), Patricia Espinosa (Mexican diplomat), Bharrat Jagdeo (former President, Guyana), Pan Jihua (academic, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), Ravi Kanbur (professor of economics, Cornell University), Caio Koch-Weser (vice chairman, Deutsche Bank Group), Ricardo Lagos (former President, Chile), Festus Mogae (former President, Botswana), Jay Naidoo (chair, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition), Marvin Nala (campaigner, Greenpeace East Asia), Kirit Parikh (academic and minister of state, India), Sheela Patel (chair of Slum Dwellers International), Hans Joachim Schellenhuber (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research), Henry Shue (University of Oxford), Tuiloma Neroni Slade (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat), Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (former chair, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues) and Dessima Williams (diplomat, Grenada).

global South (Cameron, Shine & Bevins et al 2013: 4). Thus, the future of international development looms large in climate justice: what follows should be seen in the context of the culmination of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expired in 2015 having achieved highly uneven levels of success and amid fears of the potential for accelerating climate change to overwhelm the progress that had been secured. In January 2016, the MDGs were superseded by the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which unlike the MDGs apply to all countries (not just those classified as 'developing'), and takes a comparatively holistic and integrated approach to development. It is also contextually significant that both the international development and climate change regimes went up for renewal at the same time, along with the (2015- 2030) Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Both the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 (the SDGs) were agreed in 2015, while since this research project began, the IPCC (2018) has warned that drastic action must be taken before 2030 in order to keep global temperature increases to 1.5 rather than 2°C (IPCC 2007). Additionally, the turn of the decade was marked by an intense discussion about the future of international development co-operation (Kamwengo 2020). For instance, the Busan Declaration, produced by the Busan High Level Form for Aid Effectiveness (2011), established South-South development partnerships and other new forms of development co-operation. In general, the emergence of a new tenor of international development and climate governance: one that reflected a turn to a more de-centralised, differentiated and multipolar world.

Another important contextual factor for what follows was the Durban COP (COP17) in December 2011. The first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol was due to expire in January 2012, and minus a new climate agreement, a second commitment period needed to be agreed. COP17 and its conclusion were marked by an acrimonious conflict that culminated in the European Union (EU) allying itself with the AOSIS (Association of Small Island States) countries in order to counter the so-called BRIC countries (China, India, Brazil etc.), with the former ultimately prevailing (ICID interview, May 2019). This debacle exposed and entrenched deep fissures in the formerly (and formally) homogeneous bloc generally known as the 'developing' countries (and often represented by the Group of 77 and China). Furthermore, 'developed' countries overwhelmingly object to the presentation of 'developing' countries as a singular bloc in international climate negotiations. They protest that in view of the meteoric economic growth (and concomitant levels of greenhouse gas emission) attained notably by India and China, these states should no longer be able to lay claim to the status of 'developing' countries, as well as all the financial and technical support associated with this. In distinction

from Kyoto's bifurcated system, under which some countries were not legally obliged to reduce their emissions, the EU argued for a singular, unified framework under which all countries' commitments would carry equal legal weighting (see for e.g. Okereke 2010; Okereke & Coventry 2016 for useful accounts of these changing dynamics). This set the stage for the eventual Paris Agreement: the outcome of Durban would be for all countries to agree to a legally binding agreement implicating all emitters by 2015, with this deal brought into force by 2020 (Levi 2011). While the resulting text is replete with ambiguities and potential loopholes, the resolution of the deadlock was presented as the EU having boldly 'stood its ground'. Finally, this is co-extensive with a more general loss of faith in the UN-sponsored international climate regime. While the failure to reach a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen is a well-documented one, the outcome in Durban in 2011 also provoked disillusionment, especially on the part of some 'developing' countries, who felt that the Durban outcome lent insufficient emphasis to the principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). As will become apparent in subsequent sections, this disillusionment with the international climate process was a significant factor shaping the construction of a 'new narrative', which I consider in the following pages.

5.4 "A compelling narrative": 'climate justice' as consensus

For understandable reasons, the imperative to act in accordance with climate science is front and centre in 'climate justice'. At the forefront of the MRF-CJ's 'Principles of Climate Justice', for example, is a commitment to being informed by, and responding to, climate science (MRF-CJ 2019). Despite this, 'climate justice' turns to a critical degree on the mobilisation of a "compelling narrative", and it is through this narrative that the consensus necessary for decisive action on climate change is to be achieved. Such formulations, I demonstrate, express a need to 'repackage' climate change, which has long been perceived as a purely environmental or technical question, as a compelling *story* in order to mobilise a broad coalition of interests and actors including, to quote from one paper on the issue, "citizens, consumers, civil society, faith-based organizations, small businesses, corporations, and governments at all levels" (Shine et al 2013: 18).

It is important for me to expand on this point in more depth. The following resource under discussion is a Working Paper (2013) co-authored by the Mary Robinson Foundation and the World Resources Institute. Published as part of the Climate Justice Dialogue, this paper is

mainly devoted to the question of how best to apply the equity principles of the UNFCCC in the service of a new climate agreement (what would become the Paris Agreement in 2015). However, a substantial section is dedicated to shaping narratives and mobilising different domestic constituencies to demand progress on climate change. Below is the opening paragraph of this section:

> *Applying the equity principles of the Convention to the design of a new agreement is just one part of the role climate justice can play in ensuring an equitable and ambitious new climate regime. Without political will countries will not be prepared to contribute their maximum effort to the global problem and without demand from citizens and key constituencies, political leaders will not be pushed to do their fair share. To mobilize demand people need to be moved by* ***a compelling narrative –*** *one which goes beyond* ***well-researched graphs, scientific facts, and threats of disaster*** *– to connect them to a global and long-term problem in a personal way. A human-centered narrative is vital to building momentum in key countries and pushing decision-makers to elevate climate action to the top of the political agenda* (Cameron, Shine & Bevins 2013: 18. Emphases added).

Front and centre in this passage is the need to propel the international climate process forward, which, hamstrung by a lack of trust and political will, needs a 'push' from below. Importantly, what is of interest to me is the clear message that the key to 'winning hearts and minds' is not more detailed scientific information or knowledge about the 'reality' of climate change (see Clark and Gunaratnam 2019). Not only will no progress be made without such a mobilising effort, but the international process won't get out of the starting blocks without this pressure. This is about appealing to individuals' and groups' sense of morality and justice, through the mobilisation of *stories,* which will give the distant and abstract phenomenon of climate change a "personal" resonance. However, for this "compelling narrative" to work as hoped, this presupposes a certain cohesiveness, while the question of who will be (inevitably) excluded from the narrative is not mentioned here. As we know from Butler, the act of constructing a frame always implies an exclusion *from* the frame, an excess, something that "does not conform to our established understanding of things" (2010: 9). By the same token, a narrative is not merely "compelling", but "compelling" *for someone.* This raises the question of what becomes of the stories deemed 'uncompelling' or 'unconvincing', as well as that of the audience for this narrative. The subject-positions of those writing, as well as those being addressed, are evident here: both author and

audience are interpellated as White and Western, yet the idea of 'compelling' is presented as universal, as though there were no difference between what is compelling for one constituency as compared to another.

Additionally, this text expresses a need to motivate groups who normally do not engage with climate change, and at the heart of this is an emphasis that at stake in this are not simply "well-researched graphs" or "scientific facts", but also a need to avoid presenting climate change primarily in terms of "threats of disaster". This represents a challenge to some assumptions about the 'post-politics' of climate change as advocated by some theorists (e.g., Swyngedouw 2010, 2013; Badiou 2008), for whom climate change is boiled down to a set of apolitical technical or apocalyptic narratives in the service of the reconsolidation of class power. Here, we see a different type of narrative emerging: one that is human-centred and "mobilize[s] concerned citizens to act" (Cameron, Shine & Bevins 2013: 18).

Furthermore, these are not the only advantages to adopting a justice- and human-centred narrative on climate change. Rather, this presents other possibilities, as is also expressed in this same text:

> *There is an opportunity for the climate community to learn from these narratives and movements. A new set of climate narratives centered on people, justice, a positive future, and opportunities could serve as an additional pressure point on the road to 2015 to complement the work of the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report on the science of climate change, the UNFCCC periodic review on the emissions gap, and the evolving evidence base on green growth and competitiveness. If governments can be persuaded to do more by the volume of demand domestically, their negotiators will come to the negotiations with a mandate to be more ambitious* (ibid 2013: 19).

This passage underscores clearly how integral to forging a 'compelling narrative' about climate change is not only by 'making people care' through stories, but also by turning climate change into a cause for optimism around "green growth", "competitiveness" and, even more ambiguously, "opportunities" and "a positive future". I will delve deeper into the status of capitalism in this narrative later in the chapter, but for now, this is where the function of 'climate justice' as a point of *consensus* becomes clearer.

While the text I have been discussing so far is from 2013 and is a product of the Climate Justice Dialogue project, which, as we know, was a collaboration between the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice and the World Resources Institute. However, there is evidence that Mary Robinson (then director of 'Realising Rights: The Ethical Globalisation Initiative') was thinking in the terms of a 'new narrative' on climate change as early as 2006. The passage below is from the IIED's inaugural Barbara Ward Lecture, which Robinson delivered at Chatham House in 2006. In this address, she set out the case for human rights advocates to reconceive climate change as a "rights issue" (2006: 5). The passage quoted below provides a sense of the direction this 'new narrative' would take:

> *While there are many institutions addressing the challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I want to focus on the current and future impacts of climate change, which will fall hardest on poor countries and poor communities. We face an uphill task today to get countries – particularly powerful countries – to accept the necessity for a multilateral approach to addressing global issues, whether trade, aid, or human security.* ***I believe that, as with these other issues, we can no longer think about climate change as an issue where the rich give charity to the poor to help them cope with its adverse impacts. Rather, this has now become an issue of global justice that will need a radically different framing to bring about global justice*** (Robinson 2006: 2, emphasis added).

This is a significant passage in that it positions climate change as a process that exceeds and overwhelms the existing frameworks through which it was understood. No longer is it sufficient, in other words, to simply optimise strategies to reduce the GHGs being released into the atmosphere, or to subject the process of funding action on climate change to a one-sided logic of 'charity'. Therefore, "justice", "human security" and helping the most vulnerable appear as 'gaps' in need of being filled, while institutional attention has overwhelmingly been on the reduction of emissions. Moreover, clearly stated here is the need for a "radically different framing", as climate change can no longer been seen purely as a techno-scientific issue, but as an "issue of global justice". However, always present here is the need to cultivate supporting coalitions in key national political contexts (in other words "powerful countries"), which raises important questions: for whom is this consensus, and what is being consented to? What kind of consensus is at stake here: is it 'for' the most vulnerable, or one the national delegations will be able to 'sell' to voters and taxpayers in their own countries? Another of the ways in which this

shift towards a “compelling narrative” plays out is in a turn to individual, personalised stories or framings, which are the subject of the following section.

5.4.1 “Everyone wants to listen to these three families”: climate change and the construction of an international ‘people’

Another facet of this ‘consensus’ I noticed throughout my field research was a naturalised association between climate change, truth and personal stories or experiences, as distinct from institutional or elite accounts. This is discursively linked to a perceived need to bring the reality of climate change ‘home’ to a primarily affluent, Western audience. In these instances, **‘**climate justice’ is associated with the “grassroots” and “local movements”: a publication by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) asserts that “[c]limate change is no longer solely an issue for high-ranking diplomats and international politicians” (Schumacher 2018: 26). The above section heading is from a representative of Greenpeace Germany (GPDE, in my fieldnotes) who was speaking at a panel discussion in the Climate Hub on ‘Climate Justice and Climate Litigation’ one evening in the first week of COP24, in Katowice in December 2018. A young Saami woman had just given a short speech about the Saami Youth Association’s involvement with an unprecedented strategic climate court case against the EU28, and it is worth quoting from my fieldnotes at length:

> *The Saami woman from Sweden is next. The question the French[-sounding] woman asks her to start off is: “what is effective climate action, and why did you take the EU to court?” She replies that the existing protection is not adequate to protect us [them] (meaning the Saami) from dangerous climate change in our [their] region:* **“we see it, every day”***. She says she comes from a reindeer-herding family, and tells the audience that a small lake, that she has wanted to swim in since she was a child, is now dry, and that this made her get scared. “I’m sorry”, she says. She stops talking, obviously holding back tears, and sobs. She carries on, clearly still fighting back the tears. Reindeer herding is “our cultural heritage”, she says, and [that] climate change is affecting how her community use their traditional knowledge “because we can’t see the patterns of nature anymore”, and that “this is so much bigger than just ‘climate change’ for us” […] The next speaker (a woman from Greenpeace Germany [GPDE in my fieldnotes]) says to the Saami woman: “thank you very much for those moving words,* **these voices from the**

frontlines are the ones we really need to listen to" (Excerpt from fieldnotes, 6th December 2019, emphases not in original).

There are several striking features to note here. The event was co-organised by Greenpeace's Climate Justice and Liability Campaign and Climate Action Network (CAN) International, which are consistently two of the most visible 'civil society' actors at the COP. There is a foregrounding of 'authentic' and 'popular' knowledges in implicit opposition to the expertise of conventional 'experts', though this may be paradoxical as they are relying on the expertise of specialised lawyers to argue their cases in court. This is epitomised by the section of the text cited in bold above. Its use of the metaphor of the 'frontlines' (notably also a war metaphor), which I have seen in multiple other climate change/climate justice contexts, reinforces the oft-repeated statement that 'climate change will hit the poorest hardest'; the naturalisation of climate justice as a sanctioned space for talking about difference in relation to climate change, a point I expand on later (see section 5.7.1). However, as a shorthand, the notion of 'frontlines' is also conveniently universal, which acknowledges the inequities inherent in climate change without straying too far into the domain of 'particularity'. In doing so, it potentially occludes how these 'frontlines' are differentially inhabited. The naturalisation of the legitimacy of popular knowledge and bearing witness is also exemplified through "we see it, every day". Even more striking is a tacking back and forth between the legitimacy of quotidian, 'popular' knowledge, on the one hand, and reassertions of abstract universals, such as constitutional rights endowed and guaranteed – or not – by the sovereign state, on the other. To return to the event, where the representative of Greenpeace Germany begins her contribution discussing a case being brought by three families against the German federal government, then 'introducing' them:

The speaker continues: "it's far from being an issue just for the countries of the global South" […] One [of the families] lives on a North Sea island and is increasingly threatened by sea level rise. The second has an organic cattle farm north of Berlin, and their cattle are suffering from the increasingly intense heat and drought. The third and final family have a generations-old fruit orchard close to Hamburg, which is being impacted by insects hitherto unknown as far north as they live. The speaker emphasises that the German federal government is **"violating these peoples' constitutional rights"** (fieldnotes, 6th December 2018).

Here, this featuring of the three German families might be read as an attempt to present a more 'familiar' victim of climate change to an audience, presumed to be from the global North. Furthermore, an interesting juxtaposition can be seen of the popular legitimacy and homely detail of these peoples' stories with their seeking empowerment as rights-bearing individual citizens of a sovereign state. On the one hand, "everyone wants to listen to these three families" appears both as a descriptive and normative statement: who *wouldn't* want to listen to families' testimonies of how climate change threatens their (notably rural, agrarian) livelihoods? On the other hand, the onus is repeatedly put on the state and its institutions to maintain their constitutional obligations within the liberal political framework and their seeking solutions as rights-bearing individual citizens of a sovereign state (governments as "having a duty to protect us" – p. 38 in fieldnotes). They are also doing the 'right things': taking the matter through the courts and fighting on the terms of the sovereign state (constitutional rights), instead of, for example, blockading pipelines or destroying fossil fuel infrastructure. This is Butler's 'frame' in action: climate justice is being 'normalised' - in the sense of being made into a 'norm' - as a legal matter. Having established the argument that 'climate justice' functions as a "compelling narrative", I now turn my focus to the disciplinary devices that secure this narrative in place.

5.5 Climate justice as a "taboo topic"

Throughout my research, I saw references to 'climate justice' as being a 'taboo' within the international climate politics. The implication here seems to be that the MRF-CJ views itself as the appropriate actor to detoxify 'climate justice' and undo its taboo status. The MRF's Legacy Report explicitly states this, and I quote from it below:

> *As a direct result of the Foundation's activities since 2010 climate justice has gone from being* ***effectively a taboo topic*** *to being an approach to climate decision-making and action that is people-centered, rights-informed and fair. It is supported as a concept by a growing academic literature and in practice by new funding streams from governments and philanthropy. It is now a concept and language that different actors in the world of development, climate change and human rights coalesce around to* ***find commonalities rather than differences*** (MRF-CJ 2019: 25. Emphases added).

This conveys the idea that over the past decade, 'climate justice' has moved through a trajectory. Having started out as an idea whose influence, it is implied here, was restricted to a fringe and therefore unmentionable by those situated in the mainstream, 'climate justice' has been *re-signified* in a manner that is legible – and indeed, acceptable – to most of academia, governments and philanthropic funders. Yet more than this has materialised, however: in uniting actors from across the hitherto separate domains of human rights, development, and climate change, 'climate justice' has assumed the status of common ground: grounds for consensus that allows, it seems, the engine of international climate politics to be pushed forwards ("to find commonalities rather than differences"). Rephrasing this slightly, we might ask: on what is this consensus grounded? I consider the idea of 'common ground' later in this chapter, when I consider vulnerability (Section 5.6). In short, my argument in this section is that the status of 'climate justice' as a unifying narrative is secured through two 'disciplining' devices: an avoidance, first, of the 'extreme' language and tactics favoured by activists; and second, a reluctance to position capitalism and economic growth as incompatible with 'climate justice'.

5.5.1 Avoiding the extreme

In June 2019, I attended the World Forum on Climate Justice (WFCJ), a three-day conference hosted by the Centre for Climate Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University. The WFCJ had a line-up of well-known and respected keynote speakers (including Mary Robinson and the Marxist academic Patrick Bond) and attracted participants - both academic and not - from all over the world. The deliberately broad theme of the event was "changing the narrative", and the thematic overview on the event was framed around "unpack[ing] difficult and challenging conversations" (World Forum on Climate Justice 2019). Let us first take the following paragraph, published on the WFCJ's website, which is hosted by the publishing conglomerate Elsevier:

> *It is evident that the climate is changing and that it is doing so at an unprecedented pace. While its manifestations such as droughts, floods or sea-level rise will affect everyone on the planet, not everyone will be impacted in the same way. The rapidly growing socio-economic inequalities across the globe will result in an ever-more disproportionate burden on the poorest and the politically and socio-economically marginalised. Addressing this widening disparity and the resulting climate injustice requires a concerted, collaborative effort to open and address often difficult and*

> *challenging conversations on how our societies and economies are affected and how these can be addressed/tackled [sic]* (WFCJ, 2019).

What does this tell us? First, we might point out that at least in this excerpt, there is no mention of greenhouse gas emissions in themselves. Therefore, instead of being about mitigating emissions and the causes of climate change, the spotlight is on the social dimensions, impacts and consequences of climate change and, above all, how this affects the poorest and most marginalised people and communities.

However, during the initial stage of the event I struggled to establish what this meant. I could not pin down the implications of this, and what it would mean. By and for whom was this 'narrative' (assumed to be singular, rather than a plurality of 'narratives') being articulated? (field notes, 20th June 2019). What should be the nature of this change? What was the original narrative deemed in need of 'change'? Though I eventually realised that this meant a shift in narrative towards climate change as a 'human issue' rather than a purely technical or scientific one (which I unpack further in Chapter 6), the fact that this for a long time appeared unsubstantiated is revealing. Further, I was puzzled by the description of the conversations as "difficult and challenging", as from what I experienced at the conference, to me they mostly did not appear as such. This tells us two things: first, it recalls the importance, to 'climate justice' advocates, of 'narratives'; and second, to the paradox that the 'narrative' in question here must be enough of a radical departure from previous narratives, but also broad and palatable enough to attract a broad coalition of support. Forging this narrative requires 'disciplining' devices: and this section of the chapter discusses some of these.

First among these devices is the avoidance of the language of a certain kind of activism or radicalism on the grounds that it promotes a politically unpalatable or unproductive variant of 'climate justice'. For instance, the MRF-CJ's 2011-2014 Strategic Business Plan specifically cites "some extreme interpretations of climate justice" as obstacles to promoting the Foundation's work (2011: 15). While the exact nature or originators of these "extreme interpretations" are never mentioned, these appear to be a reference to some Latin American states (Bolivia and Ecuador) whose respective governments were, according to the Foundation's own baseline study (MRF-CJ 2013), among the sole national actors to invoke the language of 'climate justice' at the time. Evidence from my interviews can lend further support to, and flesh out, this observation. For instance, in July 2019 I interviewed a climate consultant

(anonymised here simply as CC), who started working independently after many years of prior experience in both the public and private sectors. His response to one of my questions sheds some light on the trade-offs required for effective advocacy on climate issues. I asked him what he considered to be his specific role, and he responded that in order to keep an audience but also maintain "credibility", one must keep a delicate balance between being a convincing advocate and a credible analyst (CC interview July 2019).

This suggests that being an advocate on an issue like 'climate justice' entails a careful balancing act. On the one hand, an excess of analysis (at the expense of advocacy) risks a failure to engage an audience, thereby squandering an opportunity to generate a meaningful "impact". On the other hand, too much advocacy without analysis equally compromises one's ability to have an "impact", this time raising the possibility of not being taken seriously *enough*; which is strongly indicated by the word choice "credibility". Later in the same interview, I asked CC about what he thought of the role of social movement activity – which had seen a huge groundswell in 2019 - in pressing for change. At this moment, I had in mind specifically the Fridays for Future movement, initiated by Greta Thunberg outside the Swedish parliament in late 2018, in which children are encouraged to refuse to attend school on Fridays in protest at their governments' inaction on climate change. However, CC responded saying that "I assume you're talking about Extinction Rebellion". He followed this up with a suggestion that he did not approve of Extinction Rebellion's (XR) tactics: *"*I'm […] not a fan of Extinction Rebellion, and the reason for that is because I don't think gluing your hands on the pavement outside of BP is really going to achieve anything" (CC interview July 2019). CC then went on to explain that he was sceptical about XR on the basis that being composed of people mostly sympathetic to either the left or centre-left, the appeal of XR (along with other comparable groups, movements or constellations) would not extend to those who do not share these political views:

> ***CC:*** *[And] I think it would be far more productive if* ***we*** *spent more of our time trying to reach out to people who don't agree with* ***us,*** *and trying to educate them, because* ***we*** *haven't done enough of that* (CC interview July 2019, emphases added).

In other words, to avoid a situation in which activists or advocates simply 'preach to the converted', those wishing to attract broader support for climate action will have to reach out beyond their immediate political 'comfort zone', as 'most people', it is assumed, do not agree

with a strategy of direct action or civil disobedience. I was surprised and taken aback by this response, firstly because of CC's assertion that XR is populated mainly by those on the (far) left. In fact, at least in the UK, Extinction Rebellion has been subject to numerous critiques from those on or around the left for its claims to occupy a space situated beyond 'conventional' left-right politics, as well as some of its chosen tactics (it has had comparatively little influence in the US) (see Out of the Woods 2019; Trafford & Ranawana 2019; Wretched of the Earth UK 2019) and the perceived middle-class bias among its activists (see Townsend 2019). The accuracy of the comparison to XR aside, however, what CC seemed keen to express was the relative unproductivity of direct action tactics, and how these indicate a supposed tendency among climate change advocates to speak only to 'our'selves, instead of trying to engage with others ("because *we* haven't done enough of that"). This is not to downplay the immense importance of coalition-building work in this context, but rather to underscore how direct action is positioned as counter-productive to the aim of constructing a broad consensus. A similar tendency is visible in discussions about the relationship between 'climate justice' and capitalism, which I will consider next.

5.5.2 Climate justice and capitalism

As I argued above, 'climate justice' is shaped by what I call 'disciplining devices', which seek to determine that which can and cannot be spoken. In practice, this generates tensions, and a recurring tension I noticed throughout my field research was the relationship between 'climate justice' and capitalism. At the World Forum on Climate Justice in June 2019, I had post-session conversations with participants who voiced their disappointed surprise that the event had not involved more critical discussion of capitalism. For example, during the closing panel, one delegate admitted that while he had "learned a lot" and been "inspired", he would have liked to have seen "more discussion of system change, from a political economy perspective" (direct quotes from fieldnotes, 21st June 2019). In this section, I use ethnographic field note excerpts to underscore how this apparent reluctance to engage in critique of capitalism functions as a further 'disciplining device' in the construction of a "compelling narrative" on 'climate justice'.

As the quote from my field notes above suggests, few of the 'climate justice' advocates I encountered in my research cited capitalism as a major barrier to achieving 'climate justice'. In contrast, it was common to either refrain from discussion of capitalism (in favour of, for example, issues of climate finance, adaptation or resilience), or to position a reformed, decarbonised,

capitalist economic structure as compatible with a commitment to ‘climate justice’. Oftentimes, the latter view was presented in a spirit of ‘everyone can win’ (business included) from making a substantial commitment to climate action. Some examples of this can be seen in my field diary entries from the World Forum on Climate Justice. It was the second day, and I was sitting in a plenary session listening to keynote speeches. In a roundtable discussion on how to connect ‘climate justice’ with a ‘Just Transition’, a Scottish Government employee explained that it is “possible to grow an economy and transform [away from fossil fuels] in a way that is just and fair […] I think it is possible to have both” (fieldnotes 20th June 2019). Another participant, a senior executive at Scottish Power, had earlier formulated a similar ‘everyone can win’ narrative when he insisted on the potential benefits of climate action: “If we do this properly, climate change isn’t a burden, climate change is an opportunity” (fieldnotes 20th June 2019). Later in the same plenary session, the Scottish Power executive declared that “I don’t know if I’m an evil capitalist, but I am a capitalist – I love competition, I love markets” before adding that the competition he favoured was “competition within a strict framework [of regulation]” (ibid). At this point, the audience’s scepticism towards the executive felt palpable. The conference chair seemed to have anticipated this; when she took questions from the audience, she jokily said “I was sure there were going to be lots of questions from the audience” (fieldnotes ibid, emphasis in original).

For me, the presence of the energy company at this event had the effect of conveying a message that a concern for ‘climate justice’ is entirely compatible with an ‘investment’ (both financial and otherwise) in capitalism. This is not to suggest that the executive saw himself as a ‘climate justice’ actor, and so my point here is not to underscore the apparent ideological ‘irony’ or ‘inconsistency’ of someone who presents as an advocate for climate justice declaring their support for capitalist modes of production and exchange. Rather, it is to highlight the implications of there being a discursive and political space at a climate justice-themed event in which an explicitly pro-capitalist viewpoint was thinkable and sayable. In other words: is the goal of “changing the narrative” to create an environment in which everyone is welcome, even committed capitalists? If we briefly recall the Mary Robinson Foundation’s Legacy report (2019), the Foundation’s most significant accomplishment was its *reframing* of ‘climate justice’ (once a “taboo topic”) as a concept and a language around which “commonalities rather than differences” can be found. Thinking about the ethnographic vignettes presented above in these terms, it is once again clear that at stake here is the production of a consensus which, as Butler

(2003) tells us, is an inevitably power laden process, and one that "sets limits on the speakable".

As I stated above, 'climate justice' is often framed in terms of the need for a transition towards "a new type of economic growth" (Cameron et al 2013: 17). This gestures towards a broader pattern: a shift in emphasis *away* from a 'negative' conception of 'climate justice' as focusing mainly on historical responsibility, and a concurrent movement *towards* a 'positive' iteration that appears to marginalise historical questions in favour of 'building a better world'. This is encapsulated by one interviewee, who in response to my question 'what does climate justice mean to you?' bluntly stated that "...a lot of people use climate justice to point fingers and say 'you broke it, you fix it'" (CC interview, July 2019). This fits into the wish to avoid divisiveness - the idea that assigning blame (or perhaps even responsibility) is now 'unhelpful' and has outlived its usefulness. This recalls the original observation by the MRF-CJ of 'climate justice' as a "taboo topic", suggesting a need to chart a path that avoided language unacceptable to wealthy countries (such as compensation, or reparations) but also find a new way of framing the problem that re-enlivens the push for action on climate change and also, critically, sets the international process back on track.

5.6 Vulnerability

In my discussion of 'crafting consensus' and 'avoiding extremes', I wrote about the construction of climate justice 'narratives', specifically the idea that 'climate justice' constitutes a "compelling narrative" essential for garnering support from multiple key constituencies. However, often unspoken in discussions like this is the need for a 'ground' upon which this consensus is to be built. It is not possible, of course, to build a consensus on nothing, but if this 'ground' is to be emptied of 'extreme' or 'taboo' content, what is the content of it to be? To parse this out, let us briefly recall Wainwright and Mann's argument in *Climate Leviathan* about the 'adaptation of the political'. Here, rejecting the increasingly commonplace idea that climate change inaugurates a 'post-political' condition, they point out that the very ability to talk about 'post-politics' or 'true' politics is itself a result of irreducibly political processes. Subsequently, they define the political as the very *ground* upon which the struggle over what constitutes 'the political' takes place, and upon which "the relation between the dominant and dominated is worked out" (2018: 79-80). Drawing on this, then, I argue in the following sections that it is the 'vulnerable', and the

recognition of this vulnerability, which constitute a ground for the construction of ‘climate justice’ as consensus.

In the next two sections, I draw attention to how the category of ‘vulnerability’ becomes central to the discourse of ‘climate justice’. As will become clear, what I mean by this is that the need to ‘give voice’ to and ‘empower’ those most vulnerable to climate change is brought to the heart of climate justice, and even more significantly, made into the condition for successful international mobilisation on climate change. In this way, in line with Wainwright and Mann’s understanding of the ‘political’, the positioning of the ‘most vulnerable’ can be understood as a sovereign act of *recognition.*

The figures of the people and communities ‘most vulnerable’ to climate change figure prominently from what I saw in my fieldwork, and in documents I analysed over the course of my research. Indeed, a senior member of an influential climate change research organisation told me that during the Durban COP (COP17) in December 2011, the European Union had deliberately sided with the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) bloc. This was to provide a counterweight to the attempts, by India, to insert the words ‘legal outcome’ into the negotiating text. India claimed that it was being asked to sign up to the EU-proposed climate deal without knowing what it contained, or whether it would be fair to poorer nations. There was a great deal at stake in these talks, for if they collapsed before the Kyoto Protocol’s successor could be agreed upon, the Protocol would, in effect, have been ‘dead’. The fact that Canada, Russia and Japan had already stated that they would not accept new Kyoto commitments (indeed, Canada was to withdraw from the protocol the day after the conclusion of COP17), intensified pressure on the only powerful states prepared to continue with it: the EU member states, and a small group of others including Switzerland and Norway (see Vidal & Harvey 2011b). It is productive to quote the interview transcript here. For context, the interviewee (anonymised here simply as ICID) had been telling me about what he had called the “weird flashpoint” during the COP17 negotiations:

> **ICID:** *Um, and there was in particular a sort of blow-up moment towards the end of Durban between India and some of the islands, and the question was, you know, is this gonna be a treaty-based thing, were developing and developed countries gonna be treated effectively the same, etc.*
>
> **Matilda:** *Mhmmm.*

ICID: *Um, and that led to a sort of emergence of a different* ***valence*** *of climate justice, which had to do with the impacts that the particularly vulnerable were facing.*
MF: ***Right,*** *I see okay.*
ICID: *And that wasn't just a developed-developing kind of question, it wasn't these market mechanisms [sic] kind of question, it was a 'who's going to bear the brunt of the impacts' […] Now that is reflected I would say mostly […] at least as an illustrative example, I guess, a really important illustrative example, with the […] Mary Robinson Foundation for Climate Justice* (ICID interview, May 2019. Emphases in original).

Expressed in the excerpt above is an apparent shift in the accepted meaning of 'climate justice' towards the question of the most vulnerable, which, according to the interviewee, came about following the tensions at COP17 between larger and smaller 'developing' countries. It is important, though, to point out that further down, the interviewee told me that this framing of 'climate justice' constituted a "minority stream" in comparison, namely, to what he called the "TWN [Third World Network] variant", which put far greater emphasis on the "responsibility […] of developed countries in particular to take action on emissions" (all quotes from ICID interview, May 2019). However, as the conversation progressed, more was revealed about the MRF-CJ's decision to frame 'climate justice' around the 'most vulnerable'. In this part of the discussion, ICID had introduced a new actor, a network of international organisations with a large grassroots membership called the Climate Justice Now! Network, set up following the Bali COP in 2007 (see Down to Earth 2008; Tokar 2013), which he abbreviates to 'CJN':

ICID: *so CJN has kind of been* ***the main*** *inner carrier I guess for climate justice, but the other one I think is, it's reflected by the Mary Robinson, um, Foundation. I do think there was politics in terms of you know, the Mary Robinson Foundation articulating what it was focusing on as climate justice in a way that was meant to push back a little bit on, well, maybe more than a little, on CJN […]*

Matilda: *Really?*

ICID: *So, CJN very much oriented around developed versus developing, who's going to actually do the mitigation, you know, do you have offsets that are appropriate, offsets*

> *pushing responsibility in the wrong places, are they going to cause harm with REDD, that kind of thing. I think that, um, the Mary Robinson Foundation, some of those other uses of climate justice, were meant to um, sort of reorient attention* ***to*** *the question of impacted communities, right, in a way that was very* ***deliberately*** *meant to be distinctive [sic] from what CJN was doing* (ICID interview, May 2019. Emphases original).

There is something important captured in this quoted interview section. The interviewee, a long-term denizen of the UN climate talks, told me that the Mary Robinson Foundation's focus on the 'most vulnerable' was a deliberate framing with the aim of distancing it from some other groups advocating on the platform of 'climate justice' (such as the Third World Network, and the Climate Justice Now! Network), which has long emphasised historical responsibility. This is significant, as it strongly suggests that the MRF-CJ chose the framing to position itself not only as having a unique contribution to the debate, but also to popularise an understanding of 'climate justice' that is more amenable to the cultivation of an international consensus, and that could constitute a suitable rallying point for restoring the credibility of the international climate process.

Having explored the rationale behind the MRF's framing of 'climate justice' in terms of the most vulnerable, it is important to consider in which terms this vulnerability is described. To this end, I consider the following document, which outlines the Climate Justice Dialogue's 'Declaration on Climate Justice' (DCJ). Under a heading titled 'Giving voice', we see the following:

> *The world cannot respond adequately to climate change unless people and communities are at the centre of decision-making at all levels – local, national and international. By sharing their knowledge, communities can take the lead in shaping effective solutions.* ***We will only succeed if we give voice to those most affected, listen to their solutions, and empower them to act*** (DCJ 2013: 1).

Later, under 'Transformative Leadership', we see the following:

> *At the international level and through the United Nations, it is crucial that leaders focus attention on climate change as an issue of justice, global development and human security. By treating people and countries fairly, climate justice can help to deliver a strong, legally binding climate agreement in 2015. It is the responsibility of leaders to*

> *ensure that the post-2015 development agenda and the UNFCCC climate negotiations support each other to deliver a fair and ambitious global framework by the end of 2015. Local and national leaders will implement these policies on the ground, creating an understanding of the shared challenge amongst the citizens of the world and facilitating a transformation to a sustainable global society* (DCJ 2013: 2).

And finally:

> *Climate justice places people at its centre and focuses attention on rights, opportunities and fairness. For the sake of those affected by climate impacts now and in the future, we have no more time to waste* (ibid).

First, clearly at stake in the desired transformation to a "sustainable global society" is the construction of a new narrative that reframes climate change as an issue of "justice, global development and human [not national] security" in order to educate and constitute an expansive global public ("the citizens of the world"). Furthermore, of note here is an unspoken assumption on the part of their participants that it is *they* who should define 'climate justice' and call it into being. They assume it is *they* who should be saying that climate justice is about the most vulnerable, and setting the terms of the discussion. For while they frame their mission around enabling the voices of the 'most vulnerable' to be heard, it is still incumbent upon *them* to create and order the space in which this process of deliberation and exchange takes place. Put another way, while no doubt well-intentioned and while they do emphasise the importance of 'making voices heard', these organisations nonetheless arrogate to themselves the role of constituting the terms upon which these debates unfold, and the eponymous 'dialogue' conducted. In brief, they decide on the terms in which this discussion is articulated and framed (Butler 2010; Coulthard 2014. This is conveyed in the Climate Justice Dialogue document (2013) in phrases such as *"we* will only succeed if *we* give voice to those most affected, listen to their solutions, and empower them to act" (2013: 1, emphases added). Here, we can see how the 'empowering' of those most affected by climate change becomes the ground upon which a successful global response will be enacted. Moreover, the use of 'we' here is also striking. This 'public' is no doubt an expansive one (rather than just the members of the CJD, it encompasses a wider global public concerned about climate change). However, there remains a divide between 'we' and 'the most vulnerable'; in other words, it the reader is left in no doubt that the 'most vulnerable' *are not "us"*. Therefore, clearly visible here is a sovereign framework of 'us' and 'them', but this is not the sovereign logic of war (where the 'them' is the enemy to be

defeated), and neither is it the us/them framework of 'charity', where the 'them' is the 'victim' in need of rescue. Rather, this discourse marks itself out as foregrounding the agency of the most vulnerable and making them visible not as 'victims', but as *agents* with a wealth of knowledge and their own potential "solutions", but who without 'empowerment', cannot get these solutions out in the world. This is important, because it shows that performativity, and the power of the frame, do not simply enlist people into 'climate justice' discourses as *objects* (as we see, for example, in Mihr's "climate victims") but also as *agents;* as, for instance, in figures of 'empowered', 'resilient' rural women – a tension I unpack further in Chapter 6.

Not only this, however, but the effect of statements like this is that the hitherto marginal figures – the most vulnerable, the islander fisherfolk, the Indigenous communities, etc, - are now placed at the heart of the climate action imperative. This centring – and recognition - of the 'most vulnerable' in relation to climate change also pre-dates the Climate Justice Dialogue – it has been central to the MRF-CJ since its inception, and appears in a paper from which I quote below, published by the World Bank. The paper argues that human rights as an approach to climate change action have moved "from the margins to the mainstream" in international debates about climate change:

> *Heightened vulnerability to climate change provides a bond between seemingly unrelated communities across the world. From the farmers in the Sahel to the tourism workers in the Caribbean, the fishermen in the Maldives and the Inuit hunters in the Arctic, climate change is experienced as a daily reality and a far-reaching challenge to their survival* (2011: 7).

At evidence here is the creation of a new geographical imaginary, and one that brings together disparate 'marginal' people under the badge of 'vulnerability' to climate change. As well as arguably having a homogenising effect, this statement also conceals other potential areas of commonality by pushing climate change to the forefront. As Arora-Jonsson (2011) has argued, glossing all 'women' as 'vulnerable', paradoxically, works to *conceal* gender as it naturalises this vulnerability. Furthermore, as we see in more detail later in the chapter, to act in the name of climate change is to appropriate the position of the *universal:* while all 'difference' against which the universal is set can be labelled as 'particular', meaning it is dismissed as of secondary importance. Climate change, in other words, claims the mantle of universal agency, while race,

class and geography are expected to be dealt with by the 'big sweep' of climate justice. Meanwhile, let us examine further how this same paper expands on the category of the 'most vulnerable', who are at the heart of its argument:

> *The world's most vulnerable people **live on the margins** and climate change will **push them closer to the edge.** Although they have the dubious honor of being the first to suffer the myriad impacts of global warming, 'last and least' accurately describes their position in international discussions on climate change. They have contributed least to the growing concentrations of CO2 and other greenhouse gases in our atmosphere and so have the least responsibility for the crisis we now face. They are least likely to be heard at the negotiating table as they lack the political weight of the major emitters. As a result, their vulnerability goes **unnoticed** and their voices go **unheard*** (Cameron 2011: 8, emphases added).

This passage immediately raises the following question: "unnoticed" and "unheard" by whom? By the same token, it implies that this suffering and vulnerability go *unrecognised,* and that the act of recognition is an indispensable precursor to relieving their suffering and remedying the injustice. Furthermore, while I by no means intend to underplay the dangers faced by the world's poorest people, striking here is the use of a metaphor (of the "margins" and being pushed "closer to the edge"). This, as I demonstrated in Chapter 4, is one of the mechanisms through which whiteness (as a subject position and form of power) is reconstituted. Not only this, however, but this metaphor works to reproduce dominant spatial imaginaries of certain peoples, and ways of being in world, as 'marginal'. If we recall how Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2012), writes about metaphor, she tells us that it serves not only the articulation of a connection between two objects, but also the *naturalisation* of such a connection.

What follows is a quote on what is at stake in the turn towards a 'new narrative' on climate change and human rights. Speaking to how 'climate justice' is presented as a 'compelling narrative (see section 5.4) with a longer and broader reach than other ways of talking about climate change, it follows an argument that the acrimony and disappointment following the COP15 summit in Copenhagen illustrate how deep and wide the gulf is between the challenge of climate change and the global response:

> *In addition to the growing sense of frustration, vulnerable populations are also sensitive to the notion that the world's attention, which was drawn to climate change in the middle of this decade, may now be beginning to look elsewhere. The ecological argument, which has driven the sustainable development agenda since the early 1970s, no longer seems sufficient to mobilize the public at large, nor persuade crucial decision makers to make the kinds of compromises that are necessary to secure a climate deal* (Cameron 2011: 11).

Having established that the purchase of the "ecological argument", dominant in the 1970s, has expired, this passage appears to reflect an anxiety that the economic and financial crises of 2007-8, and all the upheavals and unrest in their aftermath, have drawn international attention away from climate change. This perfectly sums up the 'consensus' argument – the ecological argument has hit its limits because it is not powerful, or resonant, enough to build a consensus. Instead, attention must be refocused elsewhere, and here we clearly see how "vulnerable populations" are called into being as a 'ground' upon which this consensus is to be crafted.

5.7 Recognition

In this chapter, I have so far critically examined the notion of "crafting consensus" on climate change. However, often unspoken in discussions like this is the need for a 'ground' upon which this consensus is to be constructed. Of course, it is impossible to build a consensus on nothing. But if this 'ground' is to be emptied of "extreme" or "taboo" content, what is the composition of it to be? In this section, I briefly recontextualise 'recognition' as it pertains to climate justice, before examining how it appears in, and shapes 'climate justice' discourse.

As mentioned in the introduction, recognition has recently moved closer to the heart of conceptualisations of 'climate justice', at the urban scale as well as the international. For example, Harriet Bulkeley et al (2014) have pointed to how 'climate justice' tends to be viewed and represented as planar (organised around rights and recognition), to the relative exclusion of recognition. This also, the authors point out, has the effect of understating the extent to which recognition is interdependent with rights and responsibility. As an alternative to a planar view, Bulkeley and her co-authors propose visualising 'climate justice' as a pyramid, since this means

that the different facets are intrinsically interrelated and refracted through one another (Bulkeley et al 2014: 34). Further, they suggest, persuasively, that recognition to a significant extent makes possible the realisation of other facets of 'climate justice', including procedural justice, as well as the distribution of rights and responsibilities.

Despite the merits of this argument, it involves two big assumptions. The first of these is that the conditions for recognition – and as per Butler's addition, 'recognisability' - are always already present, and that the subjects of 'climate justice' are always already recognisable. But as we see in Butler, recognition is not a universal, pre-discursive condition, but historically and contingently produced. Butler is adamant that 'life' always exceeds the normative conditions of its recognisability. The political implications of this are momentous; not only does it lay bare and permit us to interrogate the processes and norms that bring about the conditions for recognition, but also shows there can be other forms of recognition. The second assumption is that as a mechanism, 'recognition' inevitably militates against - rather than securing – existing power structures. An example will help flesh out this point. In her analysis of the research around the potential adaptive capacities of Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic, Emilie Cameron demonstrates how underpinning scholarship on the 'human dimensions' of climactic change in the region is a definition of Inuit communities as *vulnerable.* She argues that the definition of these communities' 'vulnerability' as deriving from their "local" geographies and "traditional" status serves to consolidate the "political and intellectual formations that underwrite a new round of accumulation and dispossession in the region" (2012: 104). As Cameron explains, at stake in this are the terms and scales upon which Inuit 'vulnerability' is understood, as well as the terms upon which the Inuit are able to speak about climactic change. For instance, she points out the complete absence of 'colonialism' as term or concept in the 'vulnerability and adaptation' literature, as well as that of the political origins of both climate change and Inuit vulnerability (ibid, 109). What this means is that the production of knowledge of these communities' 'vulnerability' serves not the end of facilitating adaptation to climactic change, but rather that of solidifying existing forms of power. As can be seen from this example, vulnerability to climate change plays an important role in underpinning the *recognition* of marginalised groups. In the rest of this chapter, I use several examples to underscore how 'climate justice' is constituted as a discursive domain within which vulnerability and difference can be recognised.

5.7.1 ‘Climate justice’ as location of difference

In this thesis, I am making a cut into the question of climate justice and difference. The final part of this chapter builds on this by arguing that ‘climate justice’ plays a role in the organisation and governance of difference. In my research, I found that references to difference – many oblique, but also many direct – abound in climate justice discourses. Specifically, I problematise the idea that ‘climate justice’ is the site upon which questions of difference (such as gender, race, class and nationality) are addressed and negotiated (e.g., Bäckstrand & Lövbrand 2019). Rather, I suggest that in some context-specific instances, the discursive constitution of ‘climate justice’ serves the *reproduction and containment* of this difference. In making this argument, I draw on for e.g. critical analyses of the politics of multiculturalism, including Coulthard and Ghassan Hage’s (2000) *White Nation,* as well as David Theo Goldberg’s theorisation of the ‘postracial’ (2015). I will discuss two examples of this below, both taken from research interviews I carried out between April and July 2019. The first one unambiguously positions ‘climate justice’ as inimical to questions of difference, as well as the struggle against fossil fuel infrastructure as separate from, and taking precedence over, struggles for racial justice. Contrastingly, the second one is not only quick to note the importance of difference to ‘climate justice’ but constructs it as a space in which questions of difference and inequality can be addressed and resolved.

In some instances, the impulses animating ‘climate justice’ can be read in terms of those animating the “postracial” (Goldberg 2015). From the accounts research participants gave me, it is evident that race and racism were prominent – if not always named - features in the conflicts they and others around them negotiated. For example, during my research I spoke to a senior member (here anonymized as ‘IPD’) of a climate change education and advocacy organisation. IPD’s organisation had at the time recently moved into a new area of its advocacy work, of which a central plank entails training activists in climate change-related advocacy and leadership skills. This involves instruction in areas including climate science, grassroots organising, public speaking and strategies for media engagement. In the preceding year, IPD’s organisation had recently completed a large training event, in a major city in what was a new geographical area of focus for them. Our conversation in the interview had centred on the dialogues and relationships between environmental justice (as a long-standing set of struggles in the United States) and ‘climate justice’, until IPD told me the following story:

> ***IPD:*** *So when we were in* [redacted: city name] *one woman was saying, like, 'we [her] were fighting against coal plants in West Virginia' and people were tossing all sorts of racial slurs at her. And the organisers - the white organisers that she was working with – were saying, 'oh don't worry about that, keep your eyes on the prize, we're trying to shut down this coal plant'. That would* ***not be the case*** *if it were an environmental justice matter because it would be specific* ***to that community,*** *and that environmental justice problem would be intertwined with that community, it would be, it would be a factory pollution, a water pollution, it would be* ***about*** *the racial injustice that was happening. So when someone came in and called you the n-word, it's gonna be,* ***intrinsically linked*** *to the action at hand. Here, it was not intrinsically linked, and they were basically saying 'put your social issue aside, we're focused on this larger, global, reducing-fossil-fuels issue'. And she said '****no,*** *like, why should I have to put aside myself* ***as a human*** *in order to do this think which I think is inherently human, which is help, really, the* ***country and the world.***
>
> ***Matilda:*** *So to make sure I understand correctly, they didn't appreciate her bringing, sort of, racial politics into it or...what didn't they appreciate?*
>
> ***IPD:*** *I think they felt like it would* ***get in the way*** *of the larger issue* (IPD interview, April 2019. Emphases in original).

As is evident from this part of the conversation, 'climate change' (the "larger, global, reducing-fossil-fuels issue") appears in this anecdote as eminently separable from 'social issues' such as racism. I should be clear here: these were not IPD's words, but he was reporting a conversation he had had with someone else. The imperative to "shut down this coal plant" was figured as the primary injustice and target, whilst the mention of the "n-word" slur ties this story into a broader, hemisphere-wide history of expropriation and transatlantic slavery. However, the racial injustice the activist was experiencing is made to assume a secondary position, much further down the 'list' of wrongs. What is more, the prospect that these two injustices (the coal plant and the racial abuse) might have been connected makes no appearance. To return to the 'postracial', according to Goldberg (2015), under this condition, race is radically divorced from the "social fabric of the natural order of things" (44). Under postraciality, race and racism have become objects that can, plausibly and with little pushback, be denied. If we recall an argument by

Gordon and Newfield (1994), under contemporary racial rule, it is 'talking about race' that perpetuates racism, and not the fact of racial domination itself. In other words, racism becomes not a problem of structures, but of unwarranted speech. This is evident in IPD's story: by talking about race, the Black climate justice activist, is cast as the problem, rather than the racism she is experiencing. Moreover, the implication in IPD's words here is that 'climate justice' as an analytical and political frame cannot take these sedimented, historical issues into account (or at least, has trouble doing so). Instead, we might venture to say that in this context, it displays an inability to perceive structural oppressions.

The relationship between 'climate justice' and difference did not always manifest in this way, however. Far from excluding any notion of social difference, I also heard from climate justice professionals that adopting a narrative of 'climate justice' made it easier to speak about the relationship between climate change and inequalities. Here, I return to my interview conversation with the independent climate consultant (CC), who told me the following towards the end of our exchange:

> ***CC:*** *And [I] would say the great value of climate justice is that it does provide a very different type of narrative, that allows us to reach out to people who haven't previously been part of this community. So, rather than talking about ice caps and polar bears, climate justice gives you an opportunity to talk about people of colour, and women, and Indigenous people, and marginalised groups within society, and low-income populations.*
>
> ***Matilda:*** *Okay* [showing I am listening]
>
> ***CC:*** *It gives you an opportunity to talk about a proper diagnosis of the climate problem as it relates to* ***human*** *systems, and not just environmental systems. It also gives you an opportunity to outline a vision of the future, which is one where we have shared prosperity rather than inequality; one where we have economic development and job creation, rather than sacrifice. So I think climate justice is a really important narrative device to enable us, to certainly broaden the community of people who are engaged and activated on this issue, and that's one of the reasons why I for example decided to commit my career to it all those years ago* (CC Interview, July 2019. Emphasis added).

In the above extract, clearly at stake is the generation of a new and substantially different narrative of climate change. Here, 'climate justice' figures as a convenient "narrative device" that enables "us" to reach out and engage with groups who have not historically been active in this area. Critical to this, furthermore, is a "vision of the future", in other words, to envisage a possibility of *positive* climate-changed futures of "shared prosperity", "economic development and job creation" rather than dystopic ones of "sacrifice" or impending disaster. However, what is most striking in this excerpt is the positioning of 'climate justice' as a sanctioned location for the discussion and negotiation of *difference,* which is rendered in terms of discrete identities separated from their contexts. If we put this another way, unlike other, former narratives of climate change, 'climate justice' represents a discursive space in which difference (racial, geographical, gender, class) can be *recognised.* In this final section of this chapter, I dig deeper into the politics and implications of recognition.

5.7.2 Contesting climate justice as 'recognition'

As we saw in the previous sections, at the heart of 'climate justice' as a "compelling narrative" is the *recognition* of vulnerability and difference. But what does 'recognition' imply? First, essential to acknowledge in a critical examination of 'recognition' is that it is not enacted within a political vacuum. For example, importantly, organisations such as the MRF-CJ and the WRI are *not* neutral observers of the unfolding processes and tragedy of climate change. By contrast, at stake in their position as communicators and observers is their 'white' subjectivity. By the same token, the MRF's self-description as 'convenors' suggests that they offer a neutral terrain for debate upon which the viewpoints and concerns of the 'most vulnerable' on climate change can be made hearable. Put another way, we might suggest that the visceral urgency of the climate crisis has the effect of making the 'international' an 'innocent' position from which to speak and act. In this section, I show how critical accounts of recognition and difference are productive in drawing out the politics of 'recognition'.

The Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard articulates a powerful rejection of what he calls the "colonial politics of recognition" (2014). In opposition to the hegemonic version of recognition, Coulthard argues that in its contemporary form, the politics of recognition "promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonial power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (2007: 438-439). In the Canadian context in which Coulthard is writing, issues of cultural and political self-determination have increasingly

been cast in the language of ‘recognition’ since around the 1970s, as prior to 1969, federal ‘Indian’ policy in Canada was “unapologetically assimilationist” (ibid). Alongside this, there has also been an upswing of deliberation in ethics and political philosophy over the concept of recognition (e.g. Taylor 1992, 1994).

Crucial to Coulthard’s conception of the politics of recognition as ‘colonial’ is that it can bring colonised peoples to *identify* with the profoundly asymmetrical status quo that is either imposed on or granted to them by the colonising state and society (2007: 439). The result of this is that the fundamental inequities of power at play in colonial relationships remain unmodified and unchallenged (ibid, 439). To demonstrate this, Coulthard draws on Frantz Fanon’s challenge to Hegel’s dialectic of recognition, according to which, instead of developing in isolation, are formed through dialogue and struggle with others. However, applying this to the settings of colonial domination, Fanon argues that the terms of recognition are usually, in Hegel’s master/slave dialectic, determined in the interests of the ‘master’. Fanon’s experiences of racism, on which Coulthard draws, belie the notion that ‘recognition’ is universally affirmative of ‘humanity’. In contrast, Fanon’s famous passage in which he describes a small French child pointing at him and exclaiming ‘look mama, a Negro’, encapsulates how the other’s recognition, to quote Coulthard, “imprisoned him [Fanon] in an externally determined and devalued conception of himself” (2007: 444). Therefore, Coulthard ultimately argues that the politics of recognition create “subjects of empire” rather than self-affirmative logics of emancipation.

I am wary, however, of inadvertently drawing a false equivalence between the context of Coulthard’s argument and my own. I therefore proceed with the caveat that I do not intend to appropriate or decontextualise Coulthard’s insights, embedded as they are within a context of Dene relations, politics and struggle, the specifics of which to which I have no authority to speak. In order to broaden out my analysis, I show that Ghassan Hage’s (1998) writing on the operation of race and whiteness in the politics of multiculturalism can complement Coulthard’s insights. Hage’s work, especially his book *White Nation,* which focuses on discursive practices of management of difference in the context of Australian ‘multiculturalism’, is productive in that it highlights the strategies through which potential threats posed by ‘difference’ are contained and domesticated. Specifically, Hage shows that those who appreciate or enjoy ‘diversity’ as just as invested in the containment of ‘difference’ as those who 'intolerant’. The ‘nation’ becomes a space over which white Australians feel their claims of ‘ownership’ are natural. Hage uses the word ‘fantasy’ to describe tolerance – white people’s fantasies of their countries as ‘tolerant’.

In the remainder of this section, I suggest that some of Hage's arguments about recognition can be seen in a 2017 event dedicated to climate justice and philanthropy, involved in which were the Climate Justice Resilience Fund (CJRF), the Oak Foundation, the MRF-CJ and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. This meeting took place "on the margins" of the UN General Assembly meetings in New York City in September 2017, and the participants were hosted by Wellspring Advisors in their Manhattan offices. When analysing the report from this workshop, it appears that the philanthropic sector has begun investing – or is at least considering investing – in the field of 'climate justice', and the role of this event was, as the effects of climate change intensify and become manifest, to identify a role for the philanthropic sector in this rapidly changing world. An Oak Foundation representative explained why her organisation had created programmes relating to 'climate justice' and why it had chosen to focus this work on three constituencies: youth, women and Indigenous peoples. To cite the text from the report:

> *Oak chose these constituents because they are* ***both the most vulnerable to climate impacts*** *and* ***have the greatest ability to catalyze new and innovative thinking in terms of coping with impacts and creating solutions.*** *This reflects a real shift from a charity-based model of giving to 'victims of climate change' to one that emphasizes agency, and the belief that local communities are best positioned to develop their own solutions to the problems they face* (MRF-CJ 2017b: 4, emphases added).

First, this expresses in plain terms the idea that 'most vulnerable' to climate change are also, potentially, the most exemplary adaptable subjects (an argument I draw out in chapter 6). Further, I suggest that this shift away from a "charity-based model of giving to 'victims' of climate change" is analogous to the one Hage (1998) points out from 'intolerance' to 'tolerance'. The context for this is changes in Australian society: an apparently linear progression from the isolated country of the 1950s' 'White Australia' policy, to the assimilationism and Anglo cultural superiority of the 1960s, to the supposedly tolerant, multicultural one from the mid-1970s onwards (Hage 1998: 83). What interests Hage specifically is that this is presented as having been a smooth, easy transition from intolerance to tolerance, with the assumption that the society will continue to become infinitely more 'tolerant' into the future. To return to the excerpt above, then, we can see the confidence with which it is affirmed that 'we' have gone past the stage of seeing climate-vulnerable people as 'victims in need of charity', and that they are now afforded *recognition* as agents best positioned to develop solutions to their own problems (2017b: 4). This implies a fundamentally different treatment of the 'vulnerable' figures embodied

by women, youth and Indigenous peoples: the Climate Justice Resilience Fund's three chosen constituencies (CJRF, no date).

Furthermore, for Hage, another assumption nursed by those living in putatively 'tolerant' societies (such as Australia) is that this 'tolerance' *is indeed abundant,* while 'intolerance' manifests itself in irrational, sporadic outbursts that are, mercifully, rare. This can be seen following outbreaks of nationalist or racist attacks when politicians insist that such actions do not represent the views of the 'majority', which is assumed to be 'tolerant' (Hage 1998: 79). Even more important, though, is that a capacity to be 'tolerant' implies, by definition, a capacity to be 'intolerant'. Building on this, Hage shows that the idea that tolerance is passive, or simply a form of 'letting be' (what he refers to as "the tolerant society as white fantasy") is without foundation. Instead, tolerance does not just imply 'acceptance', but also the power to position the 'Other' within specific boundaries. Here, I take up this conception in order to suggest that the international, imagined as 'diverse and just', might also approximate a 'white fantasy'. To this end, I consider the passage – taken from the same 2017 report – below:

> *Crucially, this mirrored a fundamental shift in climate change philanthropy generally that followed the failure to produce a framework convention at the UNFCCC meeting in Copenhagen in 2009. Funders realized that* ***rational scientific arguments do not move people to act on climate change,*** *and moreover that* ***the environmental community cannot carry this issue on their own.*** *Two important and related course corrections relevant to climate justice are 1) a more concerted effort to work across sectors, race, cultures and class is required, and 2)* ***the well-being of people and communities*** *must be at the center of any argument about addressing the problem of climate change* (p. 4, emphases added).

Moreover, once in its place at the heart of a new global agenda for just climate action and sustainable development, 'climate justice' is positioned as enabling us to imagine and build a new, better world:

> *This new agenda envisages a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity. Working together on climate*

> *justice allows us to build on what we have achieved to date, and* ***forge a bright future for generations to come*** (p. 2, emphases added).

First, this corroborates the argument I made earlier that further scientific evidence is no longer "compelling" enough to catalyse ambitious action on climate change. Here, again, we see that the well-being of "people and communities" will be at the forefront of these efforts. Furthermore, this is unequivocally future-oriented; it pays no heed to histories or historical events. It is stripped of any (or at least, any obvious) language of historical responsibility, or of any reckoning with historical injustices. Rather than compensating for past injustice or oppression, this is substituted for the "opportunities" presented by "the benefits of the transition to a world powered by renewable energy" (both p. 2). Put somewhat differently, climate change provides both an impetus and a justification for looking to a future unburdened by the legacies of a problematic history. This document also reinforced others I have analysed insofar as it acknowledges a lack of attentiveness to – indeed, *recognition* of - questions of race, class and 'cultures'. Building on Hage's argument that discourses of 'multiculturalism' and 'tolerance' reconfigure the nation as an innocent, "purified" (1998: 23) space, we might consider in what ways does the quoted passage above configure *international* space? I suggest that it does so as a single territory, albeit one characterised by an unthreatening "cultural diversity", which we might read as a move to position a heterogeneous (and potentially disorderly) group of 'others' within specific boundaries. What's more, however, in its envisioning of a "world of universal respect for human rights and dignity", we might suggest that the 'international'- like the 'tolerant' nation of Australia that has supposedly transcended its racist history - appears unburdened of its problematic past.

In this section, I have combined insights from Coulthard (2007) and Hage (1998) in order to demonstrate that the politics of 'recognition' are at the heart of international climate justice discourses. Moreover, I have suggested that Hage's critical account of "the tolerant society as white fantasy" can illuminate the ways in which the 'international' is positioned as an unproblematic, innocent space from which to act on climate change. To close this chapter, I briefly consider how Coulthard's arguments build on the central theoretical framework for this thesis. As we know from Butler, recognition and recognisability are not ~~a~~ universal, pre-political states, but are contingently and iteratively produced, meaning that the conditions and norms according to which recognition can occur can be re-signified differently. Correspondingly, as Coulthard is keen to stress (2007: 453), recognition does not inevitably lead to subjection,

meaning that the solution is not to dismiss the recognition paradigm out of hand. Though far be it for me to assert how those most vulnerable to climate change would negotiate and contest these terms, and much less to prescribe what an alternative model of 'recognition' might and should look like, Fanon – and Coulthard – emphasise that those in historically produced positions of dispossession can set in train the process of emancipation *themselves.* This, as Coulthard tells us, is through "recognizing *themselves* as free, dignified and distinct contributors to humanity" and acting in accordance with their own values, and on their own terms (Coulthard 2007: 454). This poses the question of what such a self-recognition, or "transformative praxis" (ibid, 449) might look like in the context of an international response to climate change.

5.8 Conclusions

This chapter has argued that questions of 'vulnerability' and 'recognition' are at the heart of international 'climate justice'. By unpacking a set of texts, some ethnographic field notes and interviews, I have demonstrated that 'climate justice' in some instances leans heavily on the mobilisation of a "new" or "compelling" narrative, which in turn has meant a shift away from a view of climate change as a mainly scientific or 'environmental' problem, and towards a new conception of it as a social and political challenge.

Building on this argument, in this chapter I have examined a second register of 'climate justice': the category of the 'most vulnerable' to climate change. More precisely, working from vignettes from my ethnographic fieldwork in 2018 and 2019 , interviews with climate change/justice professionals from the same period, and analysis of relevant documents, I advanced two arguments: first, that the 'most vulnerable' are positioned as a mobilising device on whose behalf the less-vulnerable are urged to demand 'action' from their political representatives; and second, that a primary instrument for the securing of this moral economy is the idea of a 'new, [compelling] narrative' of climate change; one that reframes it as not just an 'environmental' issue, but also a 'people-centred' 'human' and 'social' one.

To interrogate this in more depth, this chapter has taken as its object of examination the devices deployed by this 'new narrative', and this proceeds in four parts. First, I argue that 'climate justice' is constricted by two often contradictory forces: it must be 'new' and 'compelling' enough

to distinguish itself from existing or antecedent narratives of climate change, yet it must remain non-confrontational enough to hold appeal for - and indeed, create - a broad coalition of support. Therefore, I demonstrate how this narrative is constrained by a (perceived) need for 'consensus', which in certain instances, contributes to a presentation of 'climate justice' as palatably liberal and unthreatening. Second, I explore the notion of 'voices from the frontlines' as a key animating device in this narrative, specifically in relation to its constitution and consolidation of the 'most vulnerable' to climate change as a distinctive narrative of 'climate justice' that, in the instances I describe from my interviews and field notes, work to distance 'climate justice' from accounts centring historical responsibility and capitalist political economy. Third, utilising tools from critical scholarship on multiculturalism (Hage 1998) and Indigenous scholarship (Coulthard 2014), I argue that these devices can be considered within the frame of 'recognition' and more specifically, in the reduction of 'climate justice' to a recognition of 'difference'.

I round off here by reflecting on whether it is possible to rethink the categories of 'vulnerability' and 'recognition'. Concerning the former, what might the self-affirmative, "transformative praxis" of which Glen Coulthard speaks look like in the context of an international response to climate change? On the latter, how could such an international response advance a new conception of vulnerability, one that does not reproduce the idea of a universal 'human', but one that can capture our radical responsiveness and exposure to others? The status of the 'human' figure within 'climate justice' discourse is the subject of the final empirical chapter.

Chapter 6: Climate justice, adaptation and the 'humanisation' of climate change

"I came to climate change not as a scientist or an environmental lawyer, and I wasn't really impressed by the images of polar bears or melting glaciers. It was because of the impact on people, and the impact on their rights – their rights to food and safe water, health, education and shelter".

(Mary Robinson, 2015)

"Historically, the world has talked about climate change primarily as an environmental issue. We focus on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere, rising seas, climbing temperatures, and other hard data. While this narrative is important, it's missing a critical component – people"

(Yamide Dagnet & Wendi Bevins, 2013)

"And yet the term [human] enjoys widespread consensus and it maintains the re-assuring familiarity of common sense. We assert our attachment to the species as if it were a matter of fact, a given. So much so that we construct a fundamental notion of Rights around the Human. But is it so?"

(Rosi Braidotti 2013: 1)

6.1 Introduction

As the three epigraphs above underline, the 'human' is a taken-for-granted organising principle for most social and political endeavours. The statement by Mary Robinson, from a TED Talk in the lead-up to the Paris climate summit in December 2015, shifts the centre of gravity of climate action away from the physical environment towards a threatened 'human' figure. In their blog post under the banner of the World Resources Institute's 'Climate Justice Dialogue' project, Dagnet and Bevins make a similar move: underscoring that while urgent, prevailing science-driven narratives on climate change lack attentiveness to its impacts on human beings. Braidotti, meanwhile, points to how despite the primacy enjoyed by the 'human' - and humanism - since the mid-twentieth century, it has recently been thrown open by a series of interlocking crises and transformations. In their different registers, these epigraphs point to the centrality – but also the contestedness – of the 'human' in the twenty-first century.

But what does it mean to say that climate change has been 'humanised'? Over the past ten years, there have been significant shifts in what climate change has come to mean. Prior to this,

since the establishment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 1989, climate change was treated as chiefly a problem of the physical environment in need of mitigation through science-focused, technical solutions: a tendency epitomised by Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006). In the face of opposition from politically motivated, highly organised and lavishly funded climate denialism, the rallying cry for the climate insisted on the *facticity* of climate change (encapsulated in the slogan 'climate change is real') to the exclusion of questions of politics (Goodrich 2019).

Meanwhile, it has become a commonplace in both geoscience and cultural theory to argue that 'humanity' has steered the planetary environment into a new epoch: the 'Anthropocene'. Such is the extent of humanity's impact on the Earth system that it registers in the geological record, in the form of a precipitous drop in CO_2 levels following the colonisation of the Americas (Lewis & Maslin 2015). The reflection of 'anthropos' in its name reflects the distance by which 'human' activities have outstripped all other forces shaping life on this planet. It is therefore unsurprising that within the humanities and interpretative social sciences, the 'Anthropocene' has initiated a new bout of critical reckoning about the predicament and future of 'the human', among other categories that order social and political thought (e.g., Chakrabarty 2009, 2012; Gilroy 2017; Braidotti 2013). Oftentimes, these arguments point to an imminent 'crisis of humanism' (see Baldwin 2017), but this also presents a paradox: the 'human' is looming large in the very moment of its putative existential crisis; a crisis that is not only of its own making, but that has grown out of that which enabled human development in the first place. As Chakrabarty (2009: 208) tells us, the "mansion of modern freedom stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil fuel use".

It is on this question of the 'human' that this chapter intervenes. Notwithstanding events such as the release of the latest IPCC report (AR6), I argue that a large area of climate change discourse in the international is no longer primarily geared around the levels of CO2 in the atmosphere, or even an idea of the need to protect 'nature'. Rather, in the past decade, *the human* has become much more visible in the ways in which the meaning of climate change is produced and conditioned. If a crisis is a crisis by virtue of its unnameability, we might venture that 'the human' functions as a term by which the climate crisis acquires meaning.

In Chapter 5, I explored how 'climate justice' has been remade according to the terms of liberal consensus, organised around the avoidance of political 'extremes', a broad acceptance of capitalist political economy, and a recasting of the problematic of 'climate justice' as recognition of difference and the protection of the vulnerable (e.g., MRF-CJ 2013; Cameron 2011;

Cameron, Shine & Bevins 2013). Building on this, I use this final chapter to make a broader argument: that over the past ten years, there has been a shift towards seeing climate change in 'human' as opposed to simply 'environmental' terms. Put differently, there has been a shift in what 'climate change' has come to mean: the 'human' has taken its place alongside rising sea levels, melting glaciers, endangered polar bears and even hockey-stick graphs as a primary signifier of climate change. However, rather than stopping at this observation, I wish to pursue these ideas further. In Chapter 2, I introduced Wainwright and Mann's (2018) thesis of the 'adaptation of the political'; in other words, the argument that our political future hinges upon how capital and sovereignty adapt to climate change. My point, then, is not only that the 'human' has become emblematic of climate change, but that the 'human' - and humanism - are themselves in the process of *adapting to* climate change. I suggest that 'climate justice', in the iterations I discuss in this thesis, is emblematic of this adaptation, and I parse this out through an in-depth exploration of three examples. First, in the report *Anatomy of a Silent Crisis (2009),* there are two 'humanities': one universally imperilled by climate change and identified with the 'international' as a global humanitarian project (see Chapter 4), and the other - the one that dominates in this report - is vulnerable and a potential 'climate change migrant' whose suffering is 'silenced' and who must be "empowered" by the international community to adapt (GHF 2009: ii). Broadly put, this discourse is a self-recuperative one for the international community: it laments the crisis of the human, then recasts this 'human' as a silenced Other in need of saving by the 'international community' itself. The discourse here is certainly still in the register of 'human security', as opposed to 'national security' or 'resilience', as identified by Methmann and Oels (2015). However, the report does not rule out the potential for conflict induced by migration, for example due to resource shortages (GHF 2009: 9, 12, 46, 52).

Having said that, this is not the only human figure that populates international discourses of climate justice and adaptation. My second example, the flagship report from the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) (2019), describes the "human imperative" for a global project of adaptation to climate change. It couches this human-centredness in a very different register: that of a universal human capacity to "shape the future" (GCA 2019: 9). It casts the 'human' as an agent with a history of overcoming adversity and adapting to changes in environment and, on the condition that sufficient resources are put in place, as limitlessly available for protecting the planet and enabling human flourishing. I suggest that we can understand this in terms of the autonomist concept of the "social factory" (Negri 1991), the phenomenon where, under post-Fordist conditions, the "activities of social reproduction become direct sources of value" (Nelson 2015: 462). As Paolo Virno (1996) has argued, neoliberalism is "counterrevolutionary": instead

of being the originator of innovation, it responds to and appropriates human self-organisation and innovations that make up the “social factory” and channels these back to fuel its own reproduction. To apply this insight in the domains of climate adaptation and resilience, human skills, experiences, tacit knowledges, social relationships and even intra-community or intra-family struggles become prized commodities for the unfolding global processes of adaptation and resilience to climate change.

The human, therefore, is not simply adapting to climate change, it is undergoing a transformation to facilitate the adaptation of prevailing socio-economic structures to climate change. However, there are also gendered assumptions underpinning the figure of the exemplary, ‘adaptive’ climate subject. In these conceptions, women figure as especially vulnerable to climate change, but also as holding the “keys” to adaptation (Robinson & Verveer 2015). In other words, fostering gender-inclusive and ‘empowering’ approaches to adaptation will not just be beneficial for women, but will also enhance climate adaptation itself (Robinson & Verveer 2015; Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice 2015; The Elders 2021). To examine this, I analyse a Mary Robinson Foundation policy brief from 2015 on how to make poor women from vulnerable communities into agents of adaptation, to the end of pursuing ‘gender-responsive’ approaches to climate justice and the production of ‘resilience’. But a question remains: ‘resilience’ of whom, and what? That the ‘human’ needs to adapt – and is already adapting – to climate change is undeniable. But that it is happening in the broadly neoliberal ways I describe above is not inevitable: other adaptations of the human are possible, and necessary. Therefore, I conclude the chapter by reflecting on possibilities for extricating ‘resilience’ and ‘adaptation’ from the grip of the neoliberal political-economic consensus on climate change, and for imagining them anew.

6.2 Performativity and adaptation

Where I wish to advance this argument in what follows is through an exploration of how international climate justice discourses are *performative.* In line with the conception devised by Butler (2010), I argue that in context-specific instances, ‘climate justice’ as a political concept is productive of the ‘human’ that it appears to merely describe. This means that that ‘climate justice’ discourses do not simply draw attention to the existence of an *a priori* ‘human’ who is

vulnerable to climate change, but rather that they *bring this 'human' into being* through the repetition of signifying practices (Butler 1992, 2010). There is, then, no 'human' that can be referred to outside of operations of power (2010: 1). However, this iterability is both the condition of a norm's possibility *and* that of its interruption. In a previous chapter, I described Judith Butler's conception of the 'frame' as a set of norms through which a life comes to be recognised *as a life* (ibid, 3). To recall this earlier discussion, the framing of the 'human' must circulate in order to maintain and reproduce itself, but it is in this very need to circulate and reproduce that the possibility of a breaking with the 'frame' appears (ibid 9, 11). What this means for my analysis is that the 'human' figure is not signified in a unified or consistent manner, but instead appears as ambivalent, indeterminate and contingent. However, if I am to successfully argue that this reframing of climate change as a 'human' crisis points to how it is the 'human' itself that is undergoing adaptation, other theoretical resources and vocabularies are required to make this claim. The rich tradition of autonomist Marxist theorising, which has been used to great effect by Braun (2013) and Nelson (2014, 2015) in rethinking the critical potential of 'neoliberal' environmental governance, is what I turn to here.

Having developed out of Italian labour militancy and social experimentation in the 1960s and 1970s, autonomist Marxism asserts the primacy of labour power, as well as its autonomy from *both* capitalist relations of production *and* the institutional politics of parties and trade unions (Hardt 1996: 2). On this basis, autonomist Marxists undertook a re-evaluation of the categories of classical Marxism (Clough & Blumberg 2012; Nelson 2014; Hardt 1996). For example, for Paolo Virno (1996), the turn to neoliberalism as the basis for administering social and economic life was a moment not of 'revolution' but of *counterrevolution,* in which the political and economic crises of the 1960s and 1970s were channelled into a new wave of capital accumulation in the 1980s and 1990s. However, rather than provide a comprehensive overview of autonomist theorising, my aim here is to show how the politically fraught question of adaptation presents an opening for a dialogue between autonomism and Butler's conception of performativity.

Sara Nelson's (2014, 2015) fascinating application of autonomist Marxism to the trajectories of both resilience and ecosystem services is productive in articulating this point. In her work, Nelson seeks to build on autonomist Marxism, noting that this scholarship did not arrogate the same excessive productivity and creativity to the non-human world as it did to human labour (2015: 465)**.** An important takeaway from Nelson's analysis is that a qualitative shift towards 'ecosystem services' and 'resilience' as technologies of neoliberal environmental governance

meant that nonhuman natures could begin to be seen not as static volumes of 'resources', but as *natural capital* that can circulate globally in information or financial circuits, unburdened by essences or material limits (2015: 461). Building on this, my argument in this chapter is that an analogous shift has taken place with human capacities for adaptation and resilience.

In short, Nelson contributes an augmented critical account of how capitalism operates as an apparatus that appropriates the dynamism of living labour (both human and nonhuman) and redirects these into the "production and reproduction of capitalist forms" (Clough & Blumberg 2012: 344). What this means is that labour continually creates forms of resistance, to which capital is forced to consistently adapt and reorganise, and on which its continued evolution depends. This is critical, because it reveals an affinity between capital's constant adaptation and reorganisation *in response to* labour's resistance, on the one hand, and the reproducibility of Butler's conception of the 'frame', on the other. Let us recall, for a moment, what they tell us about the reproducibility of frames:

> *The frame that seeks to contain, convey, and determine what is seen (and sometimes, for a stretch, succeeds in doing precisely that) depends upon the conditions of reproducibility in order to succeed. And yet, this very reproducibility entails a constant breaking from context, a constant delimitation of new context, which means that the 'frame' does not quite contain what it conveys, but breaks apart every time it seeks to give definitive organization to its content. In other words, the frame does not hold anything together in one place, but itself becomes a kind of perpetual breakage, subject to a temporal logic by which it moves from place to place. As the frame constantly breaks from its context, this self-breaking becomes part of the very definition. This leads us to a different way of understanding both the frame's efficacy and its vulnerability to reversal, to subversion, even to critical instrumentalization* (2010: 10).

As we can see from the above the breaking apart of the frame is, paradoxically, indispensable to its very definition, but is also what generates its vulnerability to subversion, or, in Butler's exact words, "critical instrumentalization". In other words, the effects of the frame's cycle of circulation, breakage, and re-composition, and the ways this takes place, cannot be predicted in advance, as Butler's example of the Abu Ghraib photographs underlines (ibid, 78). This, I argue, has a powerful resonance with the autonomist thesis that human – but also nonhuman - labour

power is ontologically excessive and not exhaustible through its capture as surplus value (Nelson 2015: 465, Casarino 2008). Having initiated this dialogue between the autonomist Marxist account of living labour and Butler's conception of the frame, I proceed with my argument about the adaptation of the 'human' to climate change.

6.3 The Anthropocene and the crisis of the 'human'

In this section, I take forward the dynamic of adaptation that I established above, and proceed to the question of the 'human'. To this end, I make the case for seeing the recent popularisation of the 'Anthropocene' as indicative of how the 'human' is looming large in its very moment of existential crisis.

Since at least the last decade, it has become commonplace to argue that human actions have steered the planetary environment into a new epoch, most often known as the 'Anthropocene'. The human imprint on the earth has been so extensive and profound that it registers in the geological record (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000; Lewis & Maslin 2015). Proposed by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000, the Anthropocene was originally dated from the beginning of the 18th century in line with the invention of the steam engine and taking in a period when "the global effects of human activities [had] become clearly noticeable" (Crutzen & Stoermer 2000). While there has been no formal designation of the Anthropocene by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ISC) as a whole, its Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) supports locating a key stratigraphic marker in the mid-twentieth century to coincide with the 'Great Acceleration'. These processes underline how the confirmation of the Anthropocene designation is intensely political; shining a light on the power of the 'international' in conditioning the making and unmaking of the world, as well as the political question on which the terms of the international are discussed. However, the Anthropocene has registered as an urgent geohistorical event only more recently, and the popularisation of the term has triggered a series of intense debates in the humanities and social sciences, as well as in the geosciences.

Beyond heated debates about the Anthropocene's definition, responses to the 'moment' of its declaration have varied from optimistic statements about human capacities for innovation (e.g., Ecomodernist Manifesto 2015) to the techno-hubris of geo-engineering, to appeals to "learn to die", or at least to "think about death", in the Anthropocene (Scranton 2016; see also Franzen 2019; Wallace-Wells 2019). Further, in view of the so-called Anthropocene, there has been a

renewed bout of reckoning in the humanities and interpretative social sciences as to the predicament of a number of categories axiomatic to social theory and inquiry, including nature, life, critique, matter, agency, history, capital and the political (e.g., Moore 2015; Stengers 2017; Latour 2017; Chakrabarty 2009; Gilroy 2017; Weinstein & Colebrook 2017; Wainwright & Mann 2018; Wark 2015; Ghosh 2016). The category most pertinent to what follows, however, is the 'human' (Chakrabarty 2009, 2012; Braidotti 2013; Gilroy 2017).

Ever since Donna Haraway's cyborg blurred the boundaries between machine, human and animal, advances in biotech and cognitive science together with feminist and science studies and artificial intelligence have pushed at the limits of the 'human'. Scholars working at the interface of posthumanism, animal studies and information technology draw on a rich seam of philosophical moves to understand the human 'otherwise', including by Nietzsche, Heidegger and Deleuze (Anderson 2007: 3). Among the most renowned articulations of this argument is from the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, who argues that irreversible, anthropogenic climate change collapses the distinction between 'natural' and 'human' history. As such, following climate scientist Naomi Oreskes, Chakrabarty underlines how 'humanity' is no longer simply a biological, political or moral agent, but now a *geological* one, as expressed in the 'Anthropocene' concept (2009: 206). 'Humanity', he continues, has long failed to understand how the process of acquiring political freedom has, historically, dovetailed with that of acquiring geological agency. However, relatedly it is not sufficient to read climate change solely as a crisis of the management of capitalist globalisation, though Chakrabarty insists that such readings are not obsolete. This, together with the universality of the climate crisis, encourages "species thinking" (2009: 213), which is evident in the writing of the scientist originators of the 'Anthropocene' concept, but which, belonging as it does to the register of 'deep time', has no purchase in political-economic accounts of globalisation. Critically, the 'species' point reveals, for Chakrabarty, an unassailable paradox. Despite having become a geological species-agent, and being aware of this in an abstract sense, we cannot *experience* ourselves as such; we cannot, as is customary with earthquakes, storms or other geophysical or meteorological phenomena, "send somebody out to experience in an unmediated manner this 'force' on our behalf" (2012: 12). As such, this experiential knowledge, that would help us make sense of our current, universal crisis (the knowledge of ourselves as geological species-agent) is impossible to acquire. In sum, in an era of anthropogenic climate change, the figure of the 'human' must now be simultaneously read on two contradictory registers: as political subject and as geological agent (2012: 14). In becoming such a dispersed force, it has become impossible to think about 'human' collective existence in ontological terms. In Chakrabarty's words: "Our thinking about

ourselves now stretches our capacity for interpretative understanding. We need nonontological ways of thinking the human" (ibid).

The implications of this argument are clear: while humanistic inquiry remains indispensable as an analytic through which the uneven geographies and political economy of anthropogenic climate change can be revealed, climate change has also laid bare a profound, existential crisis of the human figure on which this tradition of thought depends. In short, I intervene here to argue that these theorists have a point in common: rather than attempt to restore the 'human' that underpins the humanities and social sciences, they are arguing that this conception of the 'human' must *adapt* to a 'posthuman' and 'post-Anthropocene' world. Of note here is the work of Rosi Braidotti (2013: 196), for whom "human embodiment and subjectivity" are already undergoing a profound adaptation (or, in her words, "mutation") For her, the 'human' is not an essence but rather a "shifting mode of being". In her bracing prose, Braidotti argues that the intensification of climate change and the exploitation of animals, as well as the convergence of nano- and biotechnology, information technology and cognitive neuroscience enables an opportunistic political economy that feeds on "the informational power of living matter itself" (2013: 61). What this means is the distinction between *bios* (the portion of life traditionally arrogated to 'man') and *zoe* ('life' in the wider sense) no longer holds. To formulate the 'becoming-posthuman', Braidotti's starting point is the immanence, pragmatism and relentless generativity of 'life' itself (2013: 197). She draws heavily upon Spinozist conceptions of a monistic, relational and immanent subject, complementing this with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) emphasis on the vitality and self-organisation of matter, as well as *zoe,* a conception of life as a dynamic, generative force (Braidotti, 86).

To recap, so far in this chapter I have laid the groundwork for the analysis that follows. First, I identified 'adaptation' and the 'human' as categories central to recent developments in international climate change discourse. Subsequently, I put Butler's conceptions of performativity and the frame into conversation with autonomist Marxist theorising, to the end of highlighting productive affinities between the reproducibility of the frame, on the one hand, and capitalism's adaptation to the dynamism of 'living labour', on the other. Leading on from this, I revisited the question of the 'Anthropocene' and argued that increasingly visible in the humanities and interpretative social sciences is a move towards rethinking the 'human', which, I explored with reference to contributions on this question by Dipesh Chakrabarty and Rosi Braidotti. In the three sections that follow, I engage in sustained analysis of three registers of the 'human' in climate adaptation discourse.

6.4 "It has a human face": the Global Humanitarian Forum and *The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis*

The *Climate Change: The Anatomy of a Silent Crisis* report (hereafter *Anatomy*), was commissioned by the now-defunct Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF) and published in the summer of 2009. The report's introduction was written by Kofi Annan, and the list of advisory panel members is drawn from a pool of authoritative 'international' actors, including American economist Jeffrey Sachs[24], IIED fellow Saleemul Huq, former UNEP director Klaus Topfer and the late IPCC chair Rajendra K. Pachauri, while Mary Robinson, Muhammad Yunus and Amartya Sen served on its Board (see Mariana V. Vardinoyannis Foundation, no date). The GHF operated in Geneva between 2007 and 2010, when it closed, citing financial difficulties. This report can be set against the backdrop of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report, which projected the continued escalation of temperature extremes, heatwaves and heavy rain and predicted that earth and sea temperatures would also continue to rise (IPCC 2007). Despite the impassioned arguments and pleas it makes, underlying this report is also a powerful sense of *uncertainty***:** while knowing that the (human) impacts of which it speaks are present, they are nonetheless still "difficult to assess with great accuracy because they [it] result[s] from a complex interplay of factors" *(Anatomy* 2009: 6). Furthermore, the timing for *Anatomy's* publication was pivotal. Launched just six months before the UN climate summit in Copenhagen, it issued an impassioned appeal to political leaders and international negotiators to secure an ambitious agreement for the post-2012 period. In making this case to its international scientific, political and policy audience, the report places at its heart the impact of climate change on *people.*

In view of this unique approach, the *Anatomy* report makes a case for deeper and more effective integration between the climate, development, humanitarian and disaster risk reduction sectors, with an overriding focus on how successful climate change adaptation is in the interests of, and undergirds, all these communities of practice. Following an impassioned introduction by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the report's main body is split into four chapters. In turn, these elaborate the current human impacts of climate change, then critical areas of impact (these being food security, health, poverty, water, displacement and security). A third chapter is devoted to the world's poorest, who are both most exposed to climate change and least

[24] Jeffrey Sachs has a reputation among critical geographers for being a proponent of environmental determinism, which since the 1990s has been rehabilitated and repackaged as "ecology of underdevelopment" (see Correia 2013).

responsible for it, while the fourth sets out the "global challenge" at stake in terms of how the development, climate and humanitarian communities should respond, with the primary focus on adaptation. I will return to 'adaptation' in the final two sections of this chapter, but for now it is on the question of the 'human' that I stay. The following short section fleshes out precisely what I mean by the remaking of climate change as a 'human issue'.

6.4.1 Climate change as 'human issue'

From reading the introductory chapter of *Anatomy,* the reader is quickly made aware of the unique contribution made by this report: the spelling out of the impending crisis of climate change in *human terms***.** In two respects, *Anatomy* represents a departure from the framings of climate change that were dominant at the time. First, it distances itself from the tendency present in the scientific and policy literature to write about climate change in a solely 'environmental' register. This included not only a tendency to focus on physical events in the medium-to-long term, but also to divorce these events from their effects upon *human society*. Second, it breaks with the framing of climate change as a threat to 'security', which emerged around the '2007 turn' (see Telford 2018). This framing centered the potential for resource scarcity – and eventually, violent conflict - thought to be posed by an influx of so-called 'climate refugees' or 'climate change migrants' (e.g., Campbell et al 2007; German Advisory Council on Global Change 2008; Detraz 2017).

Therefore, with the figure of the 'human' at its centre, the heart of this report is a powerful and passionate argument, one might say, in favour of a humanistic – as opposed to only scientific or technical – approach to climate change. Importantly, while the report does elaborate on the 'environmental' impacts of climate change, such as weather-related disasters, desertification and rising sea levels, it nevertheless frames these in terms of their humanitarian implications, including food security, poverty, disease and health, water scarcity, displacement and security (*Anatomy,* 22). Furthermore, it presents these impacts as precipitating a "chain reaction": when rising temperatures are added in, people in a water-scarce region will suffer food insecurity and bad health. Their eventual probable migration then generates social unrest, thus further compounding these issues and scarcities *(Anatomy,* 9). In other words, climate change is made meaningful through the lens of the 'human'. However, as the following section shows, this 'human' figure is a deceptively simple and ambivalent one. On the one hand, I argue that *Anatomy* flattens out 'humanity' and throughout the report it remakes climate change as a site

for the universalisation of the 'human'. On the other, the particularity of this 'human' is made clear: the 'human' figure in which the report has most investment is that of the 'most vulnerable' to climate change. What is more, I argue that by characterising the plight of those most vulnerable to climate change as one of 'silence', this report particularizes this 'human' and her suffering in a way that de-historicises this suffering and undermines her agency. In short, the report includes two 'humans': first, the 'universal' human synonymous with Europe and modernity, and then the 'particular' human, which has historically always been the subject of racial discourse.

6.4.2 The 'universal human'

In positioning itself around its unique contribution, *Anatomy* constructs its object (the human) as an undifferentiated, unified whole in order to decisively set it off against the non-human, 'environmental' world which, in and of itself, this report scarcely mentions. An example is at evidence below:

> *In industrialized countries, climate change is still considered a solely environmental problem. It is seen as a distant threat that might affect our future. A viewpoint reinforced by pictures of* ***glaciers and polar bears*** *– not human beings* (Anatomy, ii. Emphases added).

Interestingly, this is not the only instance of this formulation that has been published in this context. In a talk for TED's annual 'Festival of Women', climate justice campaigner Mary Robinson articulated a very similar idea, using the same two 'foils' of the polar bear and the melting glacier; indeed, Robinson's words feature as an epigram for this chapter. But why glaciers and polar bears? As large, 'charismatic' species, polar bears have long been emblematic of conservation-focused climate change discourse in the global North. As Julie Cruikshank wrote in 2005, despite having previously been considered "frozen" and "largely inert", glaciers have now become a "new kind of endangered species, a cryospheric weather vane for potential natural and social upheaval" (6). Nonetheless, this report deliberately displaces the inhumanity of the glacier and the vulnerability of the polar bear in favour of the compelling (yet ambivalent) figure of the 'human'.

Another strand of this report's universalising of the 'human' is visible in its appeals to the international community. Specifically, it envisages a robust such community with the ability to guarantee the future of the human: according to the report, the outcome that must be achieved at Copenhagen "is in the interests of every human being alive today" *(Anatomy,* p. iii). It bears noting that at this point, the 'human' is still presented as a unified whole, unmarked by the deep cleavages of gender, race, class, nationality or geography. Put another way, the economic inequalities that enable a powerful minority of the world's population to shield themselves from the disorder of climate change (implying that a binding international agreement is emphatically *not* in the interests of all human beings) are kept from view. And additionally, climate change still figures not just as a 'crisis' but as a "challenge" for humanity. "Humanity", according to the closing of Kofi Annan's foreword, "is facing a rare challenge. But it is a common challenge. *There are no sides in the fight for climate justice" (Anatomy*, v. Emphasis added). As above, the understanding of 'climate justice' as a common human concern serves to present a flattened-out version of the problem. In other words, climate change becomes a generically 'human' crisis, rather than one situated within and powered by regimes of fossil fuel extraction, which are themselves racially and patriarchally constituted.

The report's dire warnings about the implications of not reaching a sound international climate agreement, however, have yet to reach their apogee. I argue that they do so in the excerpt quoted below:

> *Copenhagen needs to be the most ambitious climate agreement ever negotiated. The alternative is mass starvation, mass migration, and mass sickness. If political leaders cannot assume responsibility for Copenhagen, they choose instead responsibility for failing humanity* (Anatomy, p. iii).

According to this, the stakes for the Copenhagen summit are extremely high. If political leaders in the forum of "global society" (*Anatomy,* 82) do not act to secure climate justice, they will bear responsibility for a global humanitarian catastrophe without historical precedent. For what is at stake here is no longer the 'environment', but the fate of 'humanity' itself. In other words, the 'human' is in existential peril, and the 'international' is there to act in its service. However, this means a failed climate agreement is no longer a simple embarrassment or setback, but a *betrayal of 'humanity'*. What I suggest here is that this argument has another powerful effect: it

consolidates an idea that the 'international' has always had full normative jurisdiction over the 'human'. In contrast to how *Anatomy* presents it, the 'human' is not a category that stands outside of time and space, but rather was very recently composed. Indeed, the first statements confirming the fundamental *equality* of all human beings, regardless of race or other socio-culturally defined differences, came less than 80 years ago, with the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UNESCO Statements on Race (see my argument in Chapter 4). As scholars of international theory tell us, the colonial logics to which the 'international' owes its existence mean there was never a universal conception of the 'human', and the apparently universal one we have today is still inadequate (Shilliam 2021, Wynter 2003). What this means is that the 'universal' human is the European one masquerading as universal, and it was this version of humanism that relied, for its own self-realisation, on technologies of race and forms of colonial exploitation. One of the principal ways race has historically operated is through the analytic of the 'human', which disciplines and organises people, as Alexander Weheliye has argued, across and into categories of "human", "not-quite-human" and "not human" (2014: 4). This last thought presages my next argument, which is that the 'humanity' produced by the *Anatomy* report, while universalised, is also profoundly particularised and ambivalent.

6.4.3 'Human' figure as ambivalent and particular

In addition to hard-hitting text, the *Anatomy* report makes considerable use of photography: the report is replete with images of climate-vulnerable people, mainly in Asia and Africa (see MacGregor 2010). The back cover, in monochromatic black and white, represents a desolate landscape, complete with what appear to be dark clouds rolling in overhead. It also includes the following passage, which it is instructive to reproduce in full below:

> *Climate change is here. It has a human face. This report details the* ***silent crisis*** *occurring around the world today as a result of global climate change […] Long regarded as a distant environmental or future problem, climate change is already a major constraint on human efforts. It has been* ***creeping up on*** *the world for years, doing its deadly work by aggravating a host of other major problems affecting society, such as malaria and poverty. This report aims at breaking the* ***silent suffering*** *of millions (Anatomy* report back cover, emphases added).

What does this passage convey about the ‘humanisation’ of climate change? First, it underlines how global climate change becomes a privileged site for the universalisation of the ‘human’. This human, to begin with, is not broken apart or differentiated in any way. The subject imperilled by climate change is simply ‘human’, as are the collective endeavours it impedes. Indeed, the identification of climate change with the human reaches its most intimate possible point: it has a “human face”. It is not simply that ‘we’ have *recognised* that this is happening. Rather, this identification is stronger than that: a figure of the ‘human’ has become a *primary signifier* of climate change. By implication, this means that climate change is no longer distant (either in a temporal or affective sense); no longer faceless or unreachable in terms of being in a location irretrievable to ‘human experience’. It has become firmly lodged within the frames of reference of human experience.

Secondly, let us note for a moment the emphases in this section of text. I suggest that this paragraph, taken from *Anatomy’*s back cover, exemplifies the tendency named in the report’s title: to render climate change as a ‘silent’ crisis, while the suffering experienced by those structurally most exposed to it is also regarded as ‘silent’. Through this ‘silence’ motif, the text portrays the climate crisis as having approached the world unnoticed, in the sense that no-one had – or indeed, could have - foreseen it. This speaks to my argument in Chapter 4 about the white epistemologies of innocence and ignorance that underlie and sustain climate action as an international project. Moreover, the fact that climate change does “its deadly work by aggravating a host of other major problems [in society]” also validates my first observation that climate change has not *itself* been a distinct phenomenon, directly observable to the human eye, but rather a ‘threat multiplier’ that intensifies existing vulnerabilities (see Ghosh 2016). The question I wish to articulate, however, is the following: *for whom* is the rendering of these peoples’ suffering (plus the crisis itself) as ‘silent’, and what does this achieve? It is clearly not for this group themselves: indeed, it may be that ‘silence’ is not *the* (or even a) prism through which they understand their experiences. Ironically enough, furthermore, these subjects are not even ‘silent’ in the report: the document is richly scattered with their stories and witness testimonies. This emphasis on ‘silence’ has a homogenizing effect, as the victims of this “silent crisis” are not cast in terms of the complex positions they occupy in relation to climate change as well as existing histories, geographies, and politics. Instead, they become *victims* of an undifferentiated ‘crisis’ around which there is, putatively, a wall of ‘silence’ (on the gendering of this vulnerability, see MacGregor 2010). Further, naming it the “greatest ongoing silence in

human history" *(Anatomy* p. 2) implies that climate change can – or could – ever be separated from other ongoing, interweaved crises.

Let me underline here that I am not unduly exaggerating this argument. It is not the case that the report made one cursory mention of how the question of the 'human' impacts of climate change have so far been marginalised. Quite the contrary: the 'silence' motif runs deeply through this text[25]. Rather than impute any intentional, ideological motivation to this, I suggest that the report is following the uncritical discourse of liberal humanism, by recasting climate change in terms of saving the 'Other'. The utterance "climate change is a silent crisis" is useful since as a statement, it can be neither verified nor falsified. It appears at once both anodyne and hard-hitting. What I mean by this is, first, that while it purports to speak in generic 'human' terms, the particular – and particularised - human is unavoidably the racial subject. Second, this genre of statements, such as 'climate change hits the poorest first and hardest', or 'climate change will cause more people to migrate' are not innocent statements of 'fact', but are rather performative, and enact political work in the world insofar as they constitute subjectivities and generate 'truths'. The next section of my analysis hints that the *Anatomy* report does not simply see the 'human' of climate change – the subject of 'climate justice' - as a silenced victim, but as a potentially 'resilient' subject.

6.4.4 The temporality of climate change and the turn to resilience

As I demonstrated earlier, the *Anatomy* report is emblematic of a temporal shift from seeing climate change as an 'environmental' threat far off in the future, to a 'human crisis' situated in the present. This point about temporality is an important one, as it provides a link between the arguments I have just presented, and those in the final two sections of this chapter. In short, the most important point about this is that the idea of "resilience" is starting to appear in relation to climate change and vulnerability. Since climate change and its impacts are already in train,

[25] The category of "trapped populations" (those who involuntarily stay in place when there is environmental change) fulfils an analogous function in the UK Government's Foresight Report (2011), *Migration and Environmental Change: Future Challenges and Opportunities.* According to this text, it is such populations, unable to diversify their incomes and livelihoods through migration, who "will increasingly be the **silent victims** of environmental change" (Government Office for Science 2011: 41, emphasis added). My thanks to Andrew Baldwin for making me aware of this parallel.

actions taken in response (to this) cannot be postponed to the medium-term future, but must begin now.

Regarding the then-imminent Copenhagen summit, however, there is an ambivalence about it: it is presented as crucial for cementing an ambitious post-2012 climate settlement which, it is argued, cannot be achieved without a 'fair, binding and global' agreement in Copenhagen. Yet there is also an acknowledgment that despite high expectations for the summit, "the earth's atmosphere will increase in temperature to very close to two degrees regardless of how ambitious Copenhagen is" *(Anatomy,* p. 78).

This implies that irrespective of the international community's efforts, some climate impacts are already baked-in, and the possibility of putting a complete 'stop' to global warming has receded. While in previous human generations, the kernel of 'humanity' was mastery *over* 'nature', the best 'we' can hope for now is to guard ourselves *against* a resurgent and newly unpredictable 'nature'. In other words, the world has changed for good with our arrival in the 'Anthropocene' (though the *Anatomy* report does not use the term). Commensurate with this is an admission that the international standard of 'sustainable development', which had dominated global development and environmental policy since the late 1980s (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) is no longer adequate and must be revised:

> *Since climate change will only intensify, it is imperative that the concept of sustainable development as we know it today is redefined. Resilience in the face of climate change must be added as an additional pillar to the concept of sustainable development. Development must not only be sustainable, but also climate-proof* (Anatomy, 78).

On a theoretical level, I suggest this has proximity to a shift in both international development and climate change adaptation: these are now tied not so much to 'security', as was the case in the 'development-security nexus', as to *resilience* (Reid 2013). In a world in which uncertainty, and unpredictable yet inevitable threats, are the default condition, resilience frames security as an imperative for flexible adaptation. Holling's original theorisation, in the context of the crisis of Fordist Keynesianism, was a response to management practices that sought stabilisation of ecosystem dynamics around a stable equilibrium (Nelson 2014: 4), such as in, for example, Herman Daly's 'steady-state' economy. In contrast, resilience "recognised that a system may

move through multiple equilibria"; meaning that a resilient system is able to "maintain its constitutive relationships in the face of disturbance" (Nelson 2014: 4). Not only can such a system withstand and absorb disturbance, however: it may even benefit from it. To bring this to a human societal context, Holling recognised that the dynamics of social, economic or political systems were every bit as complex and unpredictable as those of natural systems.

Importantly, this is tied up with the temporal shift I pointed out earlier: that climate change is an immediate, rather than distant, threat. As soon as it is acknowledged that climate change is not a far-off future threat but is affecting our conditions of life in the present, it is no longer a problem to be solved, but is instead a new ontological condition for which new strategies for thought and living must be devised. As Chandler and Pugh (2020: 67) have put it: "[for] as long as climate change was viewed as a problem to be mitigated, adapted, managed, controlled or 'solved' in some way, the Anthropocene would be constituted as a problem to be faced in the future *rather than as our present condition*" (emphasis in original).

According to the well-established critical narrative of resilience (which I outlined and discussed in Chapter 2), then, the resilient subject does not resist, or attempt to transform, the conditions of its suffering in the world, but instead *adapts* to them (Reid 2013: 363). In this way, the defining condition of the resilient subject – the 'new human' of the Anthropocene – is not stasis, but a perpetual state of transformation (Baldwin, Fröhlich and Rothe 2019). This is most at evidence as an undesirable development in *Anatomy's* repeated references to 'climate migration', which it regards as undesirable but inevitable if substantial action is not forthcoming: "If we do not act, people will either die or they will move. Millions of people are already on the move today because of climate change" (Anatomy 2009: 81). As we already know from Baldwin (2013) and others, the 'climate migrant' is variously and contingently racialised, whether as an exemplary neoliberal subject able to sustain 'adaptive' migration and economic development (see Bettini 2014), or through naturalisation as a threat or a victim driven solely by biophysical, rather than political, forces (Baldwin 2013: 1480). However, I suggest that this turn towards resilience hints at the presence – or potential presence – of a very different figure of the 'human', which I identify and parse out in the following two sections.

1.5 "People want to shape their future": *Act Now* and the Global Commission on Adaptation

In their paper on anarchist and autonomist Marxist geographies, Nathan Clough and Renata Blumberg write that central to the autonomist hypothesis is the view that: "Resistance is primary and [that] capitalism operates largely as an apparatus of capture that directs the energy of living labor into the production and reproduction of capitalist forms" (2012: 344). As I outlined in Chapter 2, this premise, central to the autonomist "trajectory" (Clough and Blumberg's preferred term to 'tradition') of Marxism, is critical in its inversion of the assumed relationship between capitalism and living labour. As a brief recap, classical Marxism attributes to capital the power to innovate, whilst autonomist Marxism holds that capital has no creative capacities of its own but is *parasitic* on the social and creative labour of people. This insight is incredibly productive for analysis of adaptation to climate change. In the following two sections, I analyse two specific examples of adaptation discourse to highlight that it casts the 'human' not as a silenced figure in need of saving, but as an *agent* with a history of overcoming adversity and adapting to changes in environment and, provided that sufficient resources are put in place, as limitlessly available for protecting the planet and enabling human flourishing. However, this bold and creative agency is also mediated by intersecting categories of difference, which I demonstrate in the second section.

Before continuing, I concede that autonomist Marxism seems an unlikely route to take into a critique of the 'human', which, as I have already emphasised, is an artefact of colonialism, racialisation and patriarchy (see for e.g. Braidotti 2013, 2022; McKittrick 2015; Murphy 2017; Weheliye 2014; Wynter 2003, 2015), especially given autonomism's comparable lack of attentiveness to environmental and issues and colonial critiques (see Nelson & Braun 2017). There is, I realise, a risk of reproducing the silencing of those people and organisations who *already offer* anticolonial anti-racist and counter-hegemonic engagements with 'climate justice'. However, I wish to briefly reflect on the centrality of *social reproduction* to the work of Silvia Federici (2004), who is both a proponent and a critic of autonomism, at least in its more masculinist iterations. In their recent book, Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018) puts social reproduction squarely at the heart of questions of racism and racial capitalism, and this may allow us a starting point from which to bridge the gulf between autonomism and anti-racist critiques of the human. As Bhattacharyya (2018: 42) tells us: "[t]he hidden and unvalued work that surrounds and precedes waged labour, and which allows waged labour to be possible, is a matter at the heart of how humanity comes to be divided and allocated differential value." In other words, the

labour of social reproduction sits at the core of how 'humanness' is allocated across different groups of subjects (see also Di Chiro 2008: 278; Weheliye 2014). The purpose of this diversion was not to reject criticisms of autonomist Marxism's inattentiveness to questions of nature and coloniality, or to absolve it of responsibility for them, but to suggest a route to thinking these two traditions of theorising together, though not, of course, without tension.

The first instance of adaptation discourse I analyse is a report titled *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience* (hereafter *Adapt Now).* This is a flagship report published in September 2019 by the Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA), an initiative co-managed by the World Resources Institute (WRI) and the Netherlands-based Global Center on Adaptation. Chaired by the former UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon, the World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva and co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Bill Gates, the GCA has as its objective to "accelerate adaptation by elevating the political visibility of adaptation and focusing on concrete solutions" (2019: no pagination). The Commission consists of 34 commissioners and is convened by 20 countries, including historically big emitters like the UK, new high emitters like China and India and small island nations like the Marshall Islands[26], with the aims of pushing adaptation up the global agenda and propelling bolder action.

The central plank of the argument in *Adapt Now* is that if done well, climate adaptation provides a "triple dividend", meaning that it can avoid economic losses, bring economic gains, and incur additional social and environmental benefits. Relatedly, it seeks to popularise and consolidate the message that adaptation is not an optional extra but an essential investment, without which the costs of climate change – and the associated losses of life, assets and livelihoods – would be far greater. In short, there is no advantage in further delay. As the report puts it: "Adapting now is in our strong economic self-interest" (2019: 3). *Adapt Now* presents a set of research findings on investing in adaptation: it states that a global investment of $1.8 trillion in five areas between 2020 and 2030 could return net benefits of $7.1 trillion (ibid). The five areas under consideration are early-warning systems, climate-resilient infrastructure, improved dryland agriculture crop production, protection of mangroves, and enhanced resilience of water resources (ibid). The report also contains a broader focus over seven areas - or in the report's language, seven "key systems" - which provide the organising framework for its chapters: food

[26] The full list of convening countries is Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Germany, Granada, India, Indonesia, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Netherlands, Senegal, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

security, the natural environment, water, cities and urban areas, infrastructure, disaster risk management and finance.

Additionally, *Adapt Now* draws from the vocabulary of 'revolution' to illustrate the pace and scale of change required for successful adaptation which, it also insists, must co-exist with mitigation in any global response (2019: 10). To this end, it makes the case for three "revolutions". First is a revolution in understanding, which involves increasing the visibility of risks, since once risk – as well as who and what are at risk, and why - is made visible, it can then be priced in decision-making. It also involves an understanding of which solutions work, which, the report notes, include the recognition of all forms of knowledge (now a standard addition to publications of this type), including the "traditional knowledge" held by communities and Indigenous peoples, particularly when used in combination with "modern scientific and technological tools" (2019: 16). The second revolution should be in planning: at the centre of which is the "mainstreaming" of climate risk in the public and private sectors to ensure that resilience is factored in at system level. Furthermore, there is perhaps an irony here: both the public and private sectors are called upon to overhaul their planning processes for better management of uncertainty, which the report anticipates as a defining condition of any future operating (and indeed, global) environment. In other words, since it is currently not known (and will not be known for a long time) whether the world will be on a pathway to 1.5 or 4°C of warming, the only response is 'planning for uncertainty'. But how can risk be 'made visible' in an environment of intense climatic unpredictability? For example, 'nature' and ecosystems are framed as "services" and "humanity's first line of defense" against climate change (p. 31) and the social and environmental benefits of adaptation are also called "non-market benefits" (p. 14). This is not so much a separation of the 'natural' and 'human' spheres, I suggest, as an 'enlisting' of the systems of nature and nonhuman life as services to humanity's adaptation to climate change.

6.5.1 Adaptation, innovation and human ingenuity

Most importantly for my argument, *Adapt Now* is generative of a 'human' subject who is fundamentally adaptive, proactive and resourceful. The report's foreword, written by GCA chairs Kristalina Georgieva, Ban-Ki Moon and Bill Gates, opens like this:

A young woman in Bangladesh hears a siren of an incoming typhoon and moves her family to safety. A farmer in Zimbabwe uses a new variety of maize that is more resistant to drought. In Denmark, engineers redesign city streets to make them less prone to flooding. A business executive in Indonesia uses data and maps on water risk to inform his investments. An urban planner in Colombia paints roofs white to deflect dangerous heat.

This is what climate adaptation looks like. Examples like this are taking root and beginning to spread. Of course, not all communities have the same capacity to adapt, and those in fragile areas and living in poverty are most vulnerable.

The world has a moral responsibility to respond in a way that improves lives and livelihoods for all. To end poverty and achieve the sustainable development goals, we must drastically cut emissions and adapt to a warming world. The sooner we act, the better off we will be.

Adaptation is an economic imperative as well. This report finds that investing in adaptation, and in the innovation that comes with it, can unlock new opportunities and spur change across the globe. Adaptation can provide a triple dividend: it avoids economic losses, brings positive gains, and delivers additional social and environmental benefits.

Adaptation can bring out bold ideas and inspire innovation beyond what people currently think is possible. Most of all, we need political leadership that shakes people out of their collective slumber.

[…]

We have reason for hope. Throughout history, people have adapted to change. In turbulent times, they have found ways to reduce risks and create new opportunities. With ingenuity and resourcefulness, people have overcome the most extraordinary challenges - from eradicating disease to rebounding from the devastation of war. We need this courageous spirit today (*Adapt Now* 2019: 1).

In general, the report expresses a tremendous amount of investment in adaptation, which – seemingly on its own – is anticipated not only to generate “better growth and development”, but also to “save lives, protect nature, reduce inequalities, and create opportunities” (2019: 2). At

first blush, the report is deliberately not framed around a binary division between an 'adaptive' global North and a 'maladaptive' global South; rather, it frames adaptation as universal: as ultimately "no one and place will be spared" (2019: 9) it is a common challenge to all of humanity, and an expansive, capacious endeavour that transcends the boundaries of human imagination. It also bears noting that overall, *Adapt Now* is shot through with a positive, upbeat vocabulary. Oftentimes this alludes to forward motion; for example, "rebounding from the devastation of war", "inspire innovation", "spur change across the globe, "unlock new opportunities", "we will seek to transform", "jump-start" and "galvanize". Presented at the beginning of this passage is a deliberately diverse group of people all taking steps to be exemplary adaptive subjects, while many of the cases involve use of technological innovation: data, early warning systems and drought-resistant crops. As the narrative goes, regardless of identity, geography or livelihood: without adaptation, 'humanity' is under threat from runaway climate impacts. Furthermore, the foreword constructs adaptation as necessarily entailing "innovation", though there are no details of what kind of adaptation is meant, and by and for whom. While there is brief recognition of the fact that not everyone has the same 'capacity' to adapt, an optimistic tone prevails. Bold ideas and innovation are front and centre, along with the idea that the imperative to adapt to climate change can push at the limits of the existing horizons of human possibility.

This last point is important: conveyed in this part of the text is the principle that despite adversity, 'humanity' can always transcend the supposed limits of its capabilities, for example in eliminating diseases and recovering from wars and other disasters. Indeed, in empirical terms this is arguably an exaggeration, as the only disease humanity has ever successfully eradicated is smallpox (though polio is not far behind). Nonetheless, the virtues of "ingenuity", "resourcefulness" and "courage" appear as a unique 'human genius', with humans framed as shrewd managers of risks and creators of opportunities and with a great deal of store set by a putative "courageous spirit" as crucial to helping people adapt. This is reinforced later in the report where it states that "[p]eople want to shape their future, not be victim to it" (ibid, 9). In their rightful and 'proper' place, then, humans are active creators and shapers of futures, not passive, beleaguered 'victims' of events. It is unmistakeable and inescapable, therefore, that the adaptive subject is resourceful and innovative (indeed, heroic). Despite the report repeatedly championing this "courageous spirit" and 'human capacity to adapt', it also acknowledges that the unprecedented seriousness and scale of challenge now urgently confronting 'humanity'. This suggests that the ongoing, entangled crises will test humanity's indomitable resourcefulness to its very limits; meaning that without a specific agenda of rapid, grand-scale

adaptation, human progress cannot continue. However, despite this sober recognition of the scale and urgency of what needs to be done, as well as of the stark inequalities in access to resources for adaptation, there seems to be no question that everyone *could* adapt if enough resources were committed. The overall tone remains upbeat and optimistic: "we can do it" (2019: 2). Into which conceptions of human subjectivity does this feed? Indeed, "we can do it" suggests a unified human purpose or motivation, as well as an infinitely elastic capacity to for adaptation. However, this last point reveals an apparent contradiction. Despite the upbeat sentiment about the need to 'be bold' and to transcend the limits of human possibility in order to adapt to climate change quickly and at scale, there is no suggestion of a need to transform the structures of the systems under which "we" live. Here, we can return to Wainwright and Mann's argument about the adaptation of sovereignty to climate change, and 'Climate Leviathan' as the most probable form this will adopt. Further, Brett Christophers et al's (2019) observations about how mechanisms of climate finance "stretch", rather than compress, scalar configurations of risk might be helpful here: is what we see here a "stretching" of the presumed sociality of adaptation to encompass every human being on earth? Supposing this were the case, who – or what – is adapting: the vulnerable 'human', or the system itself?

6.5.2 'Women and girls' as exemplary adaptive subjects

Meanwhile, though *Adapt Now* produces adaptive human agency as a universal human genius, the adaptive subject anticipated to be most vulnerable – but also the most adaptable - is a gendered figure. As an example, let us take one of the paragraphs heading the report section titled "A human imperative", which I reproduce below:

> *Climate change has disproportionate impacts on women and girls. Climate impacts on women are compounded by existing biases within many of the institutions tasked with providing development and adaptation support. Agricultural institutions underinvest in seeds, climate services, and insurance packages that are for crops disproportionately tended by women; financial institutions design lending packages that are inaccessible to women despite a plethora of evidence that women are more reliable borrowers; and urban planners ignore women's needs for access to services, educational institutions, and employment opportunities (Adapt Now* 2019: p. 11).

Here, the report depicts the 'human' most vulnerable to climate change as unmistakeably gendered. Such pronouncements are instrumental to constructing "women and girls" as a disproportionately vulnerable and under-serviced group, but also hints at their potential to become highly diligent adaptive subjects (see also Bretherton, 1998 on the 'women as saviours' trope). For example, it implicitly valorises women's position as subjects easily governable through debt ("more reliable borrowers") yet still under-served by institutions, with the reader left to surmise that a reliable financial subject will also be one more willing and pliant for climate adaptation. What is more, the 'solutions' implicit here involve taking out loans (therefore the accumulation of debt) and finding "employment opportunities" (the precise nature of which are left unspecified). Indeed, the implication is that women will show the most adaptive – as opposed to maladaptive - responses to climate change, such as relocating to a city for paid employment in the formal or informal economy. This emphasis on 'solutions' and enhancing the provision of 'services' to women and girls, however, presupposes the problem as one of women's 'access' to institutions, rather than one of the institutions themselves. In a similar vein, the report frames the challenges facing women and girls – and their disproportionate vulnerability – as one of "biases" rather than one of systematic economic marginalisation, or even socio-cultural discrimination (p. 11). Such individualised gender analyses also feature in adjacent sectors. In relation to 'gender-smart' and 'climate-smart' agriculture, for instance, Kalpana Wilson and Amanda Shaw (2019) have shown that emphasis on women's access to 'resources' such as seeds, technologies and markets to increase their productivity "marginalizes gendered questions of land rights, intra-household inequalities and the political economy of hunger" (378). There is little more to be said here, as *Adapt Now* does not itself focus at any length on questions of gender. Other policy-facing documents, however, do centre the feminised figure of the climate-vulnerable – but also hyper-adaptable – subject. On this note, I now turn to a specifically gender-focused discussion, starting with a MRF policy brief (2015) titled 'Gender and Climate Change – A Double Injustice'.

6.6 Gender and 'adaptation as justice' in the "social factory"

As I explored above, the most striking aspect of the *Adapt Now* report is that it is indicative of the ways in which human ingenuity, resourcefulness, courage and creativity are harnessed as inexhaustible resources for the adaptation of the world – and of capital – to climate change. This is the autonomist Marxist thesis in action: the 'human' serves the needs of adaptation not only through its formal, remunerated labour, but also through the "capture" of its less tangible, but no less valuable, assets and qualities (Clough & Blumberg 2012). However, there are instances where the 'capital' ripe for capture takes on a specifically gendered form: the social and emotional labour of women. In this final section, I demonstrate how within some adaptation discourse, gendered labour is harnessed to the explicit ends of enhanced climate adaptation and resilience, which are also identified with 'climate justice'.

Of course, with my earlier caution about the limitations of autonomist Marxism in mind, I acknowledge that I am not the first to make these arguments. There is a broad and rich tradition of literature on social reproduction, gender inequality and sustainable development (e.g. Bretherton 1998; Di Chiro 2008; MacGregor 2011; Kaisjer & Kronsell 2014; Foster 2017; Murphy 2017), as well as critical accounts of the gendering of environmental politics and climate change discourses in general (e.g. Arora-Jonsson 2011; Di Chiro 2017; Sultana 2014; Detraz 2017; Mollett 2017; Sasser 2017). The feminist IR scholar Charlotte Bretherton (1998) offered a pathbreaking discussion of the trope of 'women as victims' within global environmental policy, in addition to an important broader critique of how efforts to 'put gender on the agenda' of global environmental politics have resulted in the "addition of women", as well a reduction of 'gender' to 'women'. Perceptions of the relationship between women and environmental issues, Bretherton argues, fall into three discursive categories: 'women as victims', 'women as saviours', and 'women as the problem.' MacGregor (2010) builds on this in her critique of the gendering of 'vulnerability' in Gender, Environment and Development (GED) research. While acknowledging the contributions of the GED research, as well as its materialist-informed empirical research, MacGregor argues that it falls short in the following respects. First, it reproduces an unhelpfully and needlessly narrow understanding of 'gender', or as MacGregor puts it, *"gender-means-women"* (228, emphasis in original). Second, the positivist approach taken by GED research means that it privileges climate change impacts that are material and quantifiable, leaving little space for the (especially critical) voices of the women themselves. Third, and most significant, MacGregor critiques the gendering of 'vulnerability' in gender, environment and development discourse; arguing that it constructs rural, global South women as "one-dimensional objects" who "rarely enter the discussion except as climate victims" (ibid, 227). The feminist framework of intersectionality has also played an important role in the social

reproduction, gender and feminist political ecology literature. As Kaisjer and Kronsell (2014: 417) have written, intersectionality "sketches out a pathway that steers clear of traps of essentialisation, enabling solidarity and agency across and beyond social categories". For instance, Sharlene Mollett (2017: 156) has posited "postcolonial intersectionality" as a way of sidestepping the reification of 'gender' as white; instead taking seriously the complex entanglement between racialised and gendered power in environmental change. My purpose in this brief aside was to acknowledge and outline the rich theoretical resources that feminist scholarship has brought to bear on this theme, and I stress that my decision to engage with autonomist Marxism does not amount to a rejection or a dismissal of these.

6.6.1 Agents of change

Much of the discourse around gender and climate adaptation consistently renders women as vulnerable to climate change, but also as having a unique capacity to bring about change in their economic and social milieux. What this means, therefore, is not only that the meaningful participation of women inevitably strengthens climate action, but that it also serves the ends of 'justice'. For instance, one of the Mary Robinson Foundation's core objectives was to make the imperative of climate action compatible with that of gender equality, and Robinson herself is a renowned advocate for women's empowerment. As the Foundation's dedicated Principle of Climate Justice, 'Gender and Climate Change – A Double Injustice' states: "Women's voices must be heard and their priorities supported as part of climate justice. They are critically aware of the importance of climate justice in contributing to the right to development being realised and can play *a vital role as agents of change within their communities"* (MRF-CJ 2015: 4, emphasis added). This framing was still at evidence in 2019, when I sat in on a COP Presidency High-Level event, co-hosted by Germany and organised to coincide with Gender Day. Titled 'Towards ambitious and gender inclusive climate action and biodiversity preservation', the speakers emphasised the unique biodiversity knowledge possessed by women and the need for women's participation in decision-making and implementation, with one speaker stating women are "agents of change, not objects of change" (fieldnotes, 10th December 2019). But if women are "agents of change", by implication the communities are comparatively resistant to change or even conservative, especially in terms of gender relations and the need to make changes in response to climate change. Here, we see how women's social and emotional roles – much of which is what we could call 'cajoling labour' - to enact change within their communities, is

appropriated in the drive to manage and adapt to climate change. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the figure of the adaptable human is so often rendered as female, as women have already been sustaining capital's relentless pursuit of accumulation through their reproductive, caring and social labour. For example, the MRF-CJ brief I mentioned above opens with the following statement:

> *Too often, women are categorised as vulnerable with little acknowledgement that they can and already are offering solutions – they offer hope for successful adaptation and low-carbon development through their critical knowledge, experience and the unique role they play in agriculture, food security, livelihoods, income generation and management of our natural resources. Enabling women's participation is not only the right thing to do, it is the* ***smart*** *thing to do* (MRF-CJ 2015: 7; emphasis added)

This is unambiguous: women should be seen not as 'victims', but as potential powerhouses of climate adaptation. The problem is that this potential goes 'unrecognised' and their voices 'unheard'. Also striking is the arrogation of substantial *unpaid labour* - of farming, feeding, ensuring food security and protecting and managing "our" national resources - to women, though here this is not framed in these terms. Moreover, this policy brief clearly highlights the factors keeping women out of meaningful participation in social milieux that are implicitly – or indeed explicitly – depicted as conservative:

> *Women's ability to meaningfully participate in decisions that affect their lives hinges on a multitude of factors and barriers to participation ranging from structural […],* ***political marginalisation, restrictive cultural norms and informal discriminatory practices*** (ibid 2015: 8, emphases added).

At first blush, these environments do not appear brim-full of the creative, innovative practices of life and sociality from which capital and adaptation draw their energy. But women's extra-formal and "immaterial" labour (Lazzarato 1996: 133) constitutes a wellspring of potential for this, and this goes right down to the micro, individual family level. The activities of this kind of immaterial labour force us, as Maurizio Lazzarato explains:

> *to question the classic definitions of work and workforce, because they combine the results of various types of work skill: intellectual skills, as regards the cultural-informational content; manual skills for the ability to combine creativity, imagination, and technical and manual labour; and entrepreneurial skills in the management of social relations and the structuring of that social relation of which they are a part* (1996: 136).

The final part of this definition puts us firmly within touching distance of what we are analysing here. In the spirit of a feminist analysis of the adaptation of the human, we might productively extend Lazzarato's notion of "immaterial labour" to encompass the labour women perform to persuade men in their communities to accept a transformed basis for gender relations. As well as their critical knowledge and experience of agriculture and protecting natural resources, poor women from vulnerable communities also have the web of social and affective relations in which they are enmeshed. Paolo Virno (1996) points out how 'professionalism' has become indistinguishable from "generic sociality", and that it is the entrepreneurial self-sufficiency and taste for experimentation beloved of the radical Italian social movements that have, under neoliberalism, been "put to work", or "brought together in the capitalist organization of production" (1996: 249). Women have long been at the 'coal-face' of this appropriation, as Federici (2020) and others identify: the 'Wages for Housework' movement of the 1970s derived, after all, from women's determination to make visible the labour of social reproduction upon which the formal economy so depended. As she also notes, it is this very refusal of unpaid housework, and the heteronormative gender relations accompanying it, that precipitated the massive growth of the service-sector economy. In other words, women's desire to escape the home fed directly into a renewed bout of capital accumulation, which commercialised many of the jobs (cleaning, food preparation, care and sexual services) women previously did for free (Federici 2020). Returning to our own context, we might go as far as to say that power relations within individual family units, including women's expectations as to their role in decision-making, are being remade as a source of 'energy' for adaptation to climate change.

6.6.2 Adaptation, empowerment and autonomy

A Salvadorean case study explored in the MRF policy brief (2015) exemplifies this. This document characterises the rural region of Guadalupe as having a culture of 'machismo' inconducive to either women's leadership or effective adaptation to climate change, which is already significantly affecting El Salvador. Guadalupe, then, conforms to the image of a politically and culturally conservative milieu in need of progressive change, which is fostered through the project's provision of empowerment and 'gender sensitivity' training for women and men, respectively. To quote from the policy brief again, focusing on Julia Antonia Menjiva, a 50-year-old mother of 12 from Guadalupe:

> *Julia, along with people from other rural families in Guadalupe, is being helped to carry out actions that will enable her to adapt to the impacts of climate change, adopt agro-ecological production practices, and achieve food security and increased income for her family. The needs assessment for the project identified the need for behaviour change in relation to men's negative attitude to women's rights. As a result the project focuses on* ***promoting more equitable decision-making within families.*** *This involves* ***training to improve women's levels of self-esteem, consistent communication to encourage active involvement, and complementary work with men to promote a culture of respect for women's empowerment and autonomy*** (ibid 2015: 10, emphases added).

Women like Julia do not have 'labour' or 'capital' in the formal sense that are ripe for capture: indeed, Julia was illiterate when the brief was written (ibid p. 11). However, they do have a mesh of family and community relationships, applied agricultural knowledge and local know-how, as well as a desire for change. These forms of social capital closely approximate the terrain of "knowledges, languages, information, affects, and social relationships" identified by Hardt and Negri (1991) as an abundant social "common". This also spells out, in no uncertain terms, the centrality of gender relations to adaptation: enhanced adaptation or resilience are not possible without a change in male attitudes to women's rights, and of the distribution of power within individual families. Here, we might also recall Michelle Murphy's (2017) argument about the 'Girl Effect' in post-Cold War development discourse, in which the figure of the investable 'girl' was caught in a "cloud of anticipatory calculations" (114).This refers to the dense web of affective, biopolitical and economistic hopes that coalesced around the figure of the 'girl' as not only a saviour of national – and global – economies, but the dependable, investable 'Other' of

the racialised, potentially dangerous (and often Muslim) young male (Murphy, 123). For example, in Julia's community, there was previously a pig slaughterhouse that polluted the local river, and she and others used their newly acquired advocacy skills and empowerment to contest it:

> *Julia and her colleagues have been powerful agents for change in the community. One of Julia's victories included the closing of a pig slaughtering house that over the course of many years had been polluting their river […] Closing the slaughterhouse was a huge win for the women, proving that their efforts in advocacy and their capacity to make their voices heard could have tangible effects. This victory has encouraged women to continue advocacy actions to improve the management of the natural resources* (ibid, 11).

Here, we see that training Guadalupe's women in empowerment and advocacy gave rise to a wide range of possible political outcomes, including the fostering of certain kinds of 'activist' subjectivities. Without stating it explicitly, Julia and her colleagues are presented as a reservoir of untapped potential for transformation, the direction in which this could go being unknown. This aligns closely with what the autonomist thesis describes: the autonomous self-organisation of Guadelupe's women, and their desire to participate in the decisions that affect their lives, are harnessed towards the aims of natural resource management and greater community resilience.

The story of Celia Reyes, a woman from a rural community in Chile, is another instance of this dynamic of 'capture'. The scenario is similar: while Celia possesses little in the way of capital or specialised technical knowledge, she does have intimate knowledge of her family's needs and consumption practices, which if combined with a modest injection of training and resources, can be repurposed to serve the ends of 'resilience'. In the words of the report: "by combining the knowledge of her family's needs with exposure to new technologies Celia was able to build resilience to climate change at a local level" (ibid, 14). By combining her own distinctive knowledge with technical skills and knowledge gained from the partner organisations, Celia could join with her community to tackle two major issues they were facing (desertification and water shortages) through a rainwater harvesting project. She was also able to use the water harvested to irrigate fruit trees and water plants in her greenhouse, resulting in healthier, home-grown food for the family. We might call this a 'net gain': not only does this mean a saving in the

family budget, but Celia could also sell surplus at the local market; making this an additional source of income which enhances the family's resilience to climate impacts, as well as integrating them into local circuits of economic exchange. Meanwhile, via the project Celia had access to workshops that taught women to build solar ovens and energy-efficient stoves. She was then able to combine these technologies with her existing knowledge of the family's energy consumption to access the benefits of low-carbon development (pp. 15-16). As the policy brief expresses: the inclusion of women "in climate decision-making at all levels is not only the right thing to do, it will also lead to climate actions that are more successful and better for people and planet" (2015: 21).

Despite the seven years that have elapsed since 2015, this narrative is still prevalent. While the MRF wound up in 2019, Mary Robinson was a highly visible figure at COP26 in Glasgow. In November 2021, she gave a keynote address at a side event, hosted by the Centre for Climate Justice at Glasgow Caledonian University, on justice, equity and gender-sensitivity in climate finance. The theme of Robinson's address was women's unique positions and roles in adaptation and resilience to climate change, which she approaches through a broadly climate justice-focused lens. The poorest people in the world will be unable to adapt without substantial injections of dedicated adaptation finance, and this finance must be available to the most vulnerable people and distributed in an equitable and 'gender-responsive' way. According to Robinson, despite (and more importantly, because of) the disadvantage they face in having to feed, clothe and care for their families, women are "uniquely positioned as fierce agents of change in responding to the climate crisis". Accordingly, there is a growing recognition that "women drive adaptation, they drive resilience, they drive solutions" (2021: n.p.). The marginalisation of women's needs, skills and talents, as Robinson goes on to say, is "not only unjust; it is also setting us up for failure. Applying a gender lens to climate finance is both the right thing to do and will lead to climate action that is better both for people and planet" (ibid). In short, the idea is that a 'gender-responsive' approach to climate finance which will redirect women's everyday experience, knowledge and relationships towards the production of adaptation and resilience will be universally beneficial.

However, important silences and gaps remain here, which the theoretical basis for the analysis can bring into view. First, unspoken in these discourses of human-centred adaptation is its reliance upon an enormous amount of free or underpaid labour, which, as we know from the analysis above, is overwhelmingly assigned to women. Closing her analysis of ecosystem services and their re-definition of value-producing labour, Nelson asks how this labour might be

valorised “beyond and against capital” (2014: 475). This is critical question, as it gestures towards possibilities for just adaptation. Second, while the examples I examined (above) make no overt reference to race or racial difference, the attributes of these women, including their poverty, rurality, lack of formal education, conservative social contexts and, of course, their vulnerability to climate change, reproduce them as racialised subjects.

Finally, the third gap to which I wish to draw attention recalls Butler’s frame, and especially how a frame’s production is “perpetually haunted by its ontologically uncertain double” (2010: 7). In other words, who or what falls outside the frame of the exemplary adaptable subject? What of the women who complicate these categories and distinctions, whose family relationships do not conform to heterosexual norms, who refuse to engage with such climate adaptation initiatives, or who are unable – or indeed, unwilling – to be “fierce agents of change”?

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter has made the case that in the past decade, the figure of the ‘human’ has become much more visible in the ways in which the meaning of climate change is produced and conditioned. Maintaining the conceptual framework that has undergirded this thesis so far, I have shown that ‘climate justice’ discourses contingently and variously generate specific figures of the ‘human’, and that this process of generation has resonance with the dynamics of adaptation and capture of life’s vitality by capital, which are at the heart of autonomist Marxism (Virno 1996; Braun 2014; Nelson 2014). I have also argued that an important element of the rise of the ‘Anthropocene’ concept is that the climate crisis, among other transformations, has thrown Western, humanistic understandings of the human into question (see Chakrabarty 2009, 2012; Braidotti 2013). What this means is that the human must adapt – and indeed, is already adapting – to climate change.

However, this adaptation of the human is not an innocent enterprise. First, through an analysis of the Global Humanitarian Forum’s (2009) *Anatomy* report, I argued that it is generative of two distinct ‘humanities’. The first of these is one universally imperilled by climate change and identified with the ‘international’ as a global humanitarian project (see Chapter 4). The second ‘humanity’, however, and the one most at evidence in the report, is vulnerable and a potential ‘climate change migrant’ whose suffering is ‘silenced’ and who must be “empowered” by the

international community to adapt (GHF 2009: ii). In brief, in this section I have contended that this discourse is a self-recuperative one for the international community, meaning that it laments the crisis of the human, then recasts this 'human' as a silenced Other in need of saving by the 'international community' itself. This dovetails with my argument in Chapter 5 that 'climate justice' narratives simultaneously centre the 'most vulnerable' *and* position them as those whose voices "go unheard" (DCJ 2013). As a whole, this argument underlines the following tension: those who are 'silenced' are the very people also called upon to tell the world their stories, and to make their voices heard.

In the second example, I demonstrated how the *Act Now* report (2019) humanises climate change in a very different register: that of a putatively universal human capacity to adapt and "shape the future" (2019: 9). I argued that it casts the 'human' as an agent with a history of overcoming adversity and adapting to changes in environment and, on the condition that sufficient resources are put in place, as limitlessly available for protecting the planet and enabling human flourishing. Furthermore, building on work by Nelson (2014, 2015), I suggested that this signification of the 'human' can be understood through the autonomist Marxist conception of the "social factory" (Negri 1991), the phenomenon where, under post-Fordist conditions, the "activities of social reproduction become direct sources of value" (Nelson 2015: 462). Bringing these two arguments together, then, I have suggested that the coinciding of the shift to adaptation and resilience in international climate policy and the 'humanisation' of international climate change discourse be seen in light of the appropriation of social and interpersonal resources of communities, to secure the *adaptation* of capital to climate change, albeit in an altered form.

Finally, staying with the autonomist theoretical vocabulary of Virno, Lazzarato and Federici, I produced an analysis of how discourses of climate justice and adaptation implicate processes of gendering and racialisation in the production of adaptation and resilience. Specifically, it examined the oft-repeated claim that while they are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change, the diverse social roles of women mean they represent vast, untapped adaptive potential. Therefore, my analysis brought to light the ways in which women's unpaid labour (such as the management of natural resources) and social capital (such as community relationships and tensions) are redirected and transformed into assets for adaptation to climate change. I want to round off this conclusion by reflecting on a few questions: in the spirit of the autonomist thesis (Nelson 2014; Read 2004), could a view of 'resilience' and 'adaptation' as *contingent* contain more radical possibilities for being human? Could it inaugurate a new mode

of being for the ‘Anthropocene’, one that radically embraces the openness and contingency of futures while also taking seriously questions of difference? Thinking with Sara Nelson, what could it mean to rethink ‘adaptation’ “in common”?

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I revisit the objectives and questions that framed this thesis. To this end, I recall each research question turn in order to examine and synthesise the research findings, while also considering these in the context of political developments since I began the research for this thesis.

Finally, I reflect on the contributions made by the thesis, to both critical geographies of climate change and International Relations scholarship, as well as the shortcomings of the thesis, before setting out some potential avenues for future research.

7.2 Research Findings

1. When and how did 'climate justice' come to be constituted as a distinct area of knowledge and practice within international climate change politics?

In this research, my aim was neither to seek out the 'original meaning' of climate justice, nor to attribute to it a single, coherent origin point or story, nor to make prescriptive claims about what 'climate justice' means, or should mean. Rather, genealogy addresses the question of 'what makes these things possible'? At the heart of genealogy, as espoused by Nietzsche and then Foucault, is contingency: any prevalent set of historical conditions could have been otherwise. This, we might say, is resonant with Wainwright and Mann's commitment to conjunctural analysis insofar as it foregrounds absolute historicism. What this meant in practical terms was that, rather than 'going back to the start' and tracing a linear 'history' of 'climate justice', I was able to take a 'cut' into a specific, limited period of the 'history' of climate justice: the period between approximately 2010 and 2019. Therefore, this thesis has presented an account of the discourse of 'climate justice' as it was articulated by a cluster of internationally-oriented organisations, with the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice at its centre.

In hindsight, the idea that 'climate justice' could be seen as "a distinct area of knowledge and practice" was a misnomer, since an important finding of my research is that 'climate justice' is being integrated into other areas of knowledge and practice. Significantly, these include – but

are not limited to – adaptation, development, resilience, and disaster risk reduction, as well as pulling them out of their disciplinary siloes and bringing them together. Related to this, moreover, was a broad agreement (in the international climate policy context) that climate change had become too serious for the environmental community to 'carry' on its own, and that further scientific evidence for climate change was no longer sufficient to mobilise world leaders, as well as the public, to "care" about climate change. Crucially, my research shows that this fed into a desire to craft a new consensus that, in intensifying the political pressure on leaders in wealthy countries to act, could pave the way for an ambitious new global climate agreement in 2015 (the Paris Agreement) and restore credibility to the international climate regime. Furthermore, another finding is that the idea of 'climate justice' is contested, and that it had long been considered "taboo" in international climate policy circles. As I learned during my interviews, 'climate justice' was already being invoked, but in terms that were deemed unpalatable and undesirably polarising. So as an alternative, a new strand of 'climate justice' (discourse), centred on development, human rights and the recognition of the 'most vulnerable', was popularised largely by the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice, and this strategy was 'deliberately' (this is a word used by the interviewee who told me this) intended to sit it apart from other organisations and groups advocating for 'climate justice'.

2. To what extent – and in what ways – do race, racialisation, and the international intercede in conditioning the politics of meaning around 'climate justice'?

In Chapter 4, I set out some of my most notable research findings in relation to this question: the relationship between 'climate justice', whiteness and the international. In brief, 'climate justice' can tell us something novel and important about how whiteness circulates and functions in and through the international. My analysis in Chapter 4 is revelatory of how whiteness operates as a form of power, and some of the ways it does this include metaphors, claiming of historical figures and periods, and the capacity to draw lines and condition the politics of meaning of climate change. In Chapter 5, I showed that 'race' as a category of difference infrequently appears in its own terms, but rather through multiple proxy signifiers including vulnerability, recognition, resilience, adaptation and the 'human', with the effect of constructing a 'new narrative' that would be instrumental in driving a new consensus around climate change, as I also explored in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, I argued that over the past ten years, there has been a

shift towards seeing climate change in 'human' as opposed to simply 'environmental' terms. Put differently, there has been a shift in what 'climate change' has come to mean: the 'human' has taken its place alongside rising sea levels, melting glaciers, endangered polar bears and even hockey-stick graphs as a primary signifier of climate change. However, rather than stopping at this observation, I wish to pursue these ideas further: my point was not only that the 'human' - and humanism – are themselves in the process of *adapting* to climate change. The three examples of this that I analysed all demonstrated, to greater or lesser extents, that this 'humanisation' of climate change is inflected by proxy categories of racial difference, including adaptation, adaptability, poverty, rurality and gender. However, and this is on the point about the absorption of difference as a condition of capital's adaptation to climate change, a question remains about whether this really is simply about the role of race, whiteness and difference in shaping that which climate change is made to mean, but also the implications of this for how adaptation to climate change is beginning to take shape.

3. How might the concepts of climate justice and the 'international' be rethought in a 'postracial' world historical moment characterised by intensified nationalism and white supremacy?

I started this project in 2017, when the shock and disbelief (on the part of some) at both the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump was still fresh. In August 2017, just weeks before I began the research, white supremacist groups participated in the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. Here, a self-identified white supremacist killed 32-year-old Heather Heyer, and injured 35 others, by deliberately ramming his car into a crowd of counterdemonstrators. In short, at this juncture there was a crescendo of avowedly – and seemingly proudly – racist intensity across Britain and the United States. Yet, the overall attitude nonetheless seemed to be that ours was a 'postracial' present.

We might also think about this in terms of another major argument articulated in this thesis: that climate change has undergone a process (not a totalising one, but differentiated) of 'humanisation'; in other words, adaptation to a new lexicon of 'human crises, 'human stories', justice and social concerns. Relatedly, I argued that adapting to climate change are not only societies, economies, markets, and political systems, but the figure of the 'human' itself. Furthermore, the arguments I made in Chapter 6 can shed light on how the 'climate justice'

motif has been, and may continue to be, enlisted in the adaptation of capital to climate change (e.g., ACT Alliance 2020, MRF-CJ 2015). More specifically, within the domains of climate adaptation and resilience, it has provided insight into how human skills, experiences, tacit knowledges, social relationships and even intra-community or intra-family struggles become prized commodities for the unfolding global processes of adaptation and resilience to climate change.

Finally, my thesis has used the concept of *performativity* to show that 'climate justice' is emergent, excessive and contingent, and my research has argued for a need to hold 'climate justice' open in this way. In the spirit of this contingency, I am eager to stress that like 'climate justice', the international is not immutable but may and must be re-signified, and thus reconstituted, differently. More specifically, I have used Judith Butler's argument in *Frames of War* to illuminate how 'climate justice' is framed around a particular set of norms (for example, human rights, recognition, or procedural or distributive justice), and that this amounts to an exercise of power. As I demonstrated subsequently in the thesis, certain actors have the power to determine the norms in relation to which climate justice is defined. Throughout the thesis, I contended that the fact that 'climate justice' appears as always-already determined by liberal notions of justice and human rights is not only illustrative of a mechanism of normative power, but also spotlights a fundamental shortcoming of normative approaches to 'climate justice': a failure to interrogate the normative, political and historical weightiness of 'justice' and 'human rights.' Put more succinctly, 'climate justice' does not exist prior to power, but it is within the very exercise of power that it is imbricated and forged.

7.3 Limitations, contributions and avenues for future research

To conclude this chapter, this final section reflects on the theoretical framework underpinning the thesis, before outlining its contributions to critical climate change scholarship in both Geography and IR, and possible directions for future research. First, I acknowledge and explore some of the limitations of the research.

7.3.1 Limitations

It is important that I concede that that the idea that 'climate justice' is a highly malleable term, prone to adaptation to a neoliberal, 'green growth' agenda is unsurprising. In acknowledgement of this, I do not wish to claim that this, in itself, constitutes a highly original contribution. There are, moreover, other objections to my work that could be raised, so I address these in the following section.

First, some might object to how I have placed 'climate justice' practitioners in proximity to questions about race and whiteness, as though I am making an accusation that individuals or organisations are, in some way, 'racist' or 'intolerant' in their ideas, actions or motivations. However, it is important to stress that not only do I make no such accusations, but also that doing so would undermine (the spirit of) the critique I have just made. Reducing whiteness to an undesirable individual trait, behaviour, or identity damages rather than furthers possibilities for anti-racist politics. Moreover, while I am aware of the potential dangers – both for me and others - of occupying the subject position of critic of unspoken whiteness, and how easily the focus can be displaced from the substance of the critique to the figure of the critic[27] as though, as Ahmed

[27] An example here provides a cautionary tale. In mid 2020, a furious and at times vitriolic row broke out over an article that had been published in *Security Dialogue* centering on accusations of racism. The article, written by Alison Howell and Melanie Richter-Montpetit, asked whether securitisation theory, an influential school of constructivist IR thought developed at the University of Copenhagen, was "racist". In response, Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan, the founders of the 'Copenhagen School' and whose work was the primary object of the critique, alleged that Howell and Richter-Montpetit had quoted selectively, inappropriately and out of context from their books and represented their theory in bad faith. They even argued that this amounted to professional misconduct. Decrying a "catalogue of methodological and conceptual errors" as well as the putative "deepfake methodology" of Howell and Richter-Montpetit's article, Wæver and Buzan furiously refuted any suggestion that their theory was founded upon racist thought.

While any allegations of misrepresentation and academic misconduct are moot, the securitisation theory row illustrates the unique toxicity of responses provoked by any critical discussion of racism. It also shows how close is race to the forefront of people's minds, and just how preoccupied those committed to interrogating the politics of the 'international' are – whether their motives are in good faith or otherwise – with questions of race. It also sharply demonstrates the extent to which (particularly junior scholars, women scholars, and scholars of colour) scholars run the risk of vilification if they engage in any systematic critique related to racism. The ease with which the argument came to be articulated in terms of 'accusations' and 'individual racists', in addition to the assumption of the existence of a disinterested majority of 'non-racist' academics, are striking. The implication was that being neither racist nor anti-racist, these colleagues occupied a privileged neutral ground, with their reputations endangered by spurious 'accusations of racism'. According to Buzan and Wæver, the accusation of racism is a uniquely weighty one, constituting the most serious charge an academic can face. Tellingly excluded from this frame was any acknowledgment of the corrosive effects of sustained racist oppression on racialised IR scholars, or any other racialised people. As is so often the case, 'accusations' of racism were framed as more injurious, more damaging than racism itself. Further absent was any recognition that an interrogation of a theory's indebtedness to racist systems of thought could be anything other than personal. Above all, it shows how utterly inseparable are questions about the

(2012: 16) puts it, “the talk about divisions is what is divisive”, I do not wish to yield too much to the impulse to cater to ‘white fragility’. In the spirit of this, following Ahmed in ‘A Phenomenology of Whiteness’, we might ask what could be accomplished by a critique of whiteness that refuses to ‘promise’ anything, and refusing to allow for a re-centring of the white subject by asking the question ‘what can white people do’?

Another possible – and entirely legitimate – objection is that of ‘whose climate justice’? I concede that I have not discussed anti-racist or anti-colonial ‘climate justice’-oriented organisations, coalitions and movements, of which there are many[28] and with which I opened the thesis. While these were beyond the scope of this research, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge and draw attention to them and the risks they take resisting a crisis that is not of their making, and a resistance in which they have long been fighting. After all, Ken Saro-Wiwa of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, was put to death by the Nigerian state in 1995 for his non-violent activism in defence of Ogoniland, and the Ogoni people, from the multinational petroleum industry. Moreover, it bears mentioning here that an analysis beginning with grassroots, anti-colonial groups in the global South would arrive at entirely different conclusions.

By the same token, this thesis lacked some critical reflexivity around the geographical scope of its inquiry, which is largely limited to the UK, Europe and North America. While I was – and am - wary of the ‘methodological nationalism’ that can come with a focus on a single national case, in my focus on mainstream climate change politics in the global North, I have perhaps inadvertently reproduced a similar bias: perhaps akin to what Gurminder Bhambra (2017) has named “methodological whiteness”. This is for me to continue to grapple with beyond this thesis.

7.3.2 Theoretical contributions

space of the international (and how the resources and people present within it are governed) from questions of race and racism.

[28] A far from exhaustive list is as follows: the global Black Lives Matter movement, The Wretched of the Earth, the Indigenous Environmental Network, movements such as those in Flint, Michigan and the Standing Rock Sioux, the RAVEN Movement for Indigenous Justice, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, Pacific Climate Warriors and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network.

In this thesis, I have put a diverse range of theories into conversation, including post-structuralism, posthumanism and autonomist Marxism. My claim is that these literatures can be read together in a productive dialogue, and that a point where they intersect and resonate is that of *contingency,* or in a different theoretical vocabulary, *conjuncture.* I justified this reading as follows.

First, the idea of contingency is central to Butler's conception of performativity insofar as there can be no advance prediction of how the 'frame' is broken, reproduced, and subsequently reconstituted. In Butler's example of the Abu Ghraib photographs, while these photos' display and circulation constitute the "public condition under which we feel outrage and construct political views to incorporate and articulate that outrage" (2010: 78), they do not determine the *specific forms* the outrage - or indeed, the political views - will take, or the ways these will be articulated. More fundamentally, as Butler writes in 'Contingent Foundations', contingency and a comprehensive, expanded 'universal' are not mutually substitutable notions. Rather, as Butler puts it, "from any historically constrained perspective, any totalizing concept of the universal will shut down rather than authorize the unanticipated and unanticipatable claims that will be made under the sign of 'the universal'" (1992: 8). In my reading of the passage above, Butler's claim is that there can be no conception of the 'universal' (however internally diverse and capacious) that does not reproduce the very notion of the 'foundation' they seek to critique. Therefore, I read this as an argument for a politics and ethics based not on a capacious universality, but on *contingency.*

Second, strongly influenced as they are by Spinoza and Deleuze and Guattari, posthumanisms see the human (and nature) as characterised not by "essences or stable forms", but in a state of constant reinvention, without a *telos* or a final cause (Braun 2014: 2; see also Braidotti 2013). Third, as we will see later, Sara Nelson argues compellingly that contingency can be seen at the heart of the autonomist insistence that transformations to the mode of production are a response to resistance, rather than the other way around (e.g., Virno 1996). What this means is that there is not a necessary relationship between neoliberalism and, say, 'resilience', but a contingent or conjunctural one (see Nelson 2014).

Furthermore, I conceptualised racism in terms drawn from Goldberg, Lentin, Kundnani and others: namely, that racial domination is fundamentally mobile and supple, changing and

adapting in accordance with political and economic structures (Sivanandan 1990). I also engaged Arun Kundnani's (2021) argument that rather than being a remnant of neoliberalism's incomplete defeat of historical racial legacies, neoliberalism engenders its own peculiar forms of racial domination. However, *nature* is at the heart of questions of race, and Goldberg's intriguing, but incompletely explored, notion of "anthroporaciality" (2015) raised, for me, the following question. What do racism and racialisation look like in an era in which their explanatory, anchoring referent - a conception of 'nature' with which the Other can be identified, and against which the 'human' defined - has been displaced?

7.3.3 The adaptation of the human

A major contribution of this thesis is that it points out the 'humanisation' of climate change and conceptualises 'climate justice' as an adaptation of the political. However, outside of textual analysis, it does not offer an in-depth exploration of the concrete effects this is having, for example, in specific cases of the adaptation of capital affecting how the 'human' is constituted. This would be a productive avenue for future research, to follow the example of Sara Nelson (2015) (on resilience and ecosystem services), as well as Brett Christophers, Patrick Bigger and Leigh Johnson (2019) (on insurance risk pools and green bonds), who have done important work, but do not foreground the 'human' specifically. One area of climate policy that has enjoyed burgeoning success recently is that of 'Nature-based solutions', which could be a generative line of enquiry to follow, especially in relation to the geographies of labour and financing that enable these schemes.

Furthermore, this thesis has underscored why on its own, repeating the refrain that 'climate change hits the poorest hardest' is politically limiting and insufficient. While, for example, the *Anatomy* report is quick to acknowledge this uncomfortable reality, despite the claims made therein, it nonetheless contains little transformative content. My analysis, then, may evidence the limitations of 'mainstreaming' the position that climate change is a 'justice issue': it allows for those involved in international climate action to pay lip service to 'justice' language', while eschewing any substantive commitment to redistribution (for example). This contribution of the research reveals a tension meriting further interrogation: that of whether the 'humanisation' of climate change is merely a different framing, intended to galvanise a new set of stakeholders and constituencies, or whether it heralds a more fundamental transformation, in which the

absorption of difference drives the adaptation, of both finance capital and the political, to climate change. This is not a tension I have been able to resolve in this thesis.

Another tension I want to briefly reflect upon is the potential to take further the question of what anthropogenic climate change means for reconceptualising the 'human'. In this thesis, and especially in Chapters 2 and 6, I suggested that Braidotti's conception of the 'posthuman' can go some way beyond Chakrabarty's argument for the need for "non-ontological ways of thinking the human", not least since Braidotti's argument is animated and sustained by a feminist ethics and politics. However, given her repudiation of poststructuralism, deconstruction and psychoanalysis as bases for posthuman subjectivity (2013: 188), there is a tension between Braidotti's and Butler's accounts of subject formation, which it would be remiss of me not to point out. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, contingency (rather than a view of the subject as given) provides an area of convergence between Braidotti and Butler, and this convergence is one I will continue to parse in future research. This will necessarily involve deeper thinking about 'climate justice' and above the question of what a focus on Braidotti (rather than Chakrabarty) can contribute to the project of rethinking 'climate justice', race and the human.

7.3.4 Climate change, race and whiteness

Finally, this thesis has made an intervention into the role of race, and racialisation, in conditioning the politics of meaning around climate change in a world-historical moment marked by intensifying nationalism and white supremacy. Here, I briefly revisit a concept I coined in the thesis, and which gives Chapter 4 its title: 'international climate whiteness'. This term is productive because it establishes and names the mutually constitutive relationship between climate change, whiteness and the international order. It gives expression to how apparently discrete discourses – sustainable development, for instance, and the need to guard against 'disorderly' climate-related migration, or geographical imaginaries underpinned by the territorially bounded nation state – can be understood to be undergirded by 'whiteness' as a civilisational code. In order to build a methodological framework, I turned to IR scholar Meera Sabaratnam's (2020) conception of "epistemologies of whiteness", but her justification for employing the vocabularies of 'race' and 'whiteness' rather than those of 'Eurocentrism' and 'the West' (as is customary in International Relations) is also instructive. She argues that to do so is to incorporate a more comprehensive understanding of global racial formations, rather than reproduce a critique of the 'provincialism' of IR theory, which is valuable but now well-worn in

the discipline. Additionally, built as it is on a conception of whiteness as an historically constituted subject position which remains invisible to those who inhabit it, my account of international climate whiteness leaves space for understanding how those who are racialised as phenotypically non-White can secure access – however conditional – to its accoutrements.

Furthermore, international climate whiteness recalls the pathbreaking argument made by many scholars more distinguished than me: that the 'international' is not a cluster of value-free organisations or mechanisms through which nation states participate and interact, but an historically and politically constituted concept built upon European racial and colonial oppression (e.g., Grovogui 2001; Shilliam 2006; Jones 2008; Thompson 2013; Anievas, Manchanda & Shilliam 2014). As I also emphasised in Chapter 4, the formation of international climate whiteness is not fixed but contingent – it describes the functioning of racialised power at a specific historical juncture (the Euro-American-dominated 'international' of the early 21st century). What this means is that some components may fade in significance, giving way to others. Similarly, I argued that 'international climate whiteness' also allows space for the instability of whiteness, resisting the temptation to become complicit with the object of its critique (see Ahmed 2007: 159) and its adaptability to new conditions. This concept and its adaptability may soon be put to the test. For example, I identify neoliberal economics as central to the civilisational code underpinning international climate whiteness, but there are signs that the global neoliberal economic order may be breaking down, in the context of the massive state intervention in economies forced by the Covid-19 pandemic, a failure to survive the damage created by the 2008-2009 financial crisis, or, indeed, an inability to re-incorporate the 'surplus populations' of its own making (Kundnani 2021). What happens to international climate whiteness as the memories of not only Trump's election and the Brexit referendum, but also those of the Paris Agreement as the high point of climate multilateralism, fade, and the world moves into a post-pandemic era characterised by accelerating climate breakdown, global energy crises and ongoing war in Ukraine?

This last point raises the question of ongoing crises. Given how much we know about the disproportionate exposure of racialised 'minority' groups to death, or serious illness, from Covid-19, it will be important for researchers to examine the racialised politics of climate adaptation in the context of the aftermath of the pandemic. This is particularly urgent now, as the world contemplates the possibilities for a potentially dramatically more just – or indeed unjust – political and economic order in the aftermath of Covid-19 and in the face of imminent climate destabilisation, especially since, pre-pandemic, many hopes for the world economy were pinned

on a large wave of growth in the global South (see Tooze 2021). Could it be that far from issuing a ‘wake-up call’ about the vulnerability of the world’s poorest people, the pandemic may offer a precedent for leaving them to their fate? The idea that due to age, illness, or otherwise unspecified ‘vulnerability’, Covid victims ‘would probably have died anyway’ could yet appear in reactions to climate-related events. This is coinciding with a rapidly accelerating erosion of rights of all marginalised ‘minorities’, from racialised groups in the age of ‘anti-wokeness’ to the recent attempts in some US states to ban transgender children and teenagers from accessing gender-affirming care (see Yurcaba 2021), together with the increasingly obvious collusion of anti-trans ‘gender critical feminism’ with the internationally networked far-right (see Doyle 2022). This latest disturbing – yet predictable - development underscores the need for further research into the intersection between climate change and other categories of difference, including sexuality and expanded notions of gender (for an introduction to these debates see Butler 2017; Houlberg 2017).

Moreover, the discursive politics of race and climate change merit further examination as the effects of climate change become more manifest. For instance, though the Mary Robinson Foundation is no more, in her capacity as chair of The Elders, Mary Robinson stated that the UK-hosted COP26 was too “too male, too pale, too stale”. Quoting Robinson, The Elders’ Twitter account tweeted: “The UK government committed to hosting an inclusive COP, but this has not been borne out. We are missing some of the most vital voices: indigenous [sic] people, people from the Global South and those on the frontlines of this crisis” (The Elders 2021b). Given this keying of international climate discourse into popular vocabularies of race and whiteness, it is not difficult to see how ‘climate justice’ could be dragged into the ongoing ‘culture war’ around so-called ‘wokeness’, and the productive avenues of discourse analysis this could present for researchers.

Finally, scholars have already noted the emergence of incipient ‘fossil fascisms’ (e.g., Malm & Zetkin Collective 2021; Mann 2022) as a possible adaptation of the political to climate change; one that Wainwright and Mann (2018) speculatively call “Climate Behemoth”. As Mann (2022) has put it, the extreme right’s attachment to fossil capitalism is such that “the larger its role in politics today, the more likely climate catastrophes become”. Such research could take many forms, not least explorations of the potential for right-wing backlash against decarbonisation, or examination of far-right ecological movements. Indeed, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and potential disruptions to oil and gas supplies have re-ignited fears about energy sovereignty and security, leading some countries, such as Denmark, to announce a

phase-out of Russian gas, and others, such as Germany, to recommit to substantial defence spending. Meanwhile, the war has also put in question national commitments to net zero targets and fuelled longer standing trends of 'fossil nationalism'. For example, the former UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage recently announced that he would campaign for a referendum on the UK's net-zero proposals on the basis that they would "destroy British jobs, while making us poorer and colder" (Vote Power Not Poverty, 2022). As an alternative to imported gas, the Power Not Poverty campaign calls, in a manner reminiscent of the pro-Brexit campaigns, for "a future based on self-reliance, provided to us by our own Treasure Island – the UK. It's time to capitalise on our own British [shale] gas and to put British people back in control of their own energy future" (ibid).

As a final word, in this project I have tried to bring the concept of 'climate justice' into a critical dialogue with a new set of terms. While by no means will it constitute the final word on the subject, I have the modest hope that it will catalyse a new set of generative conversations.

Appendix: Document Analysis Database

Name of organisation	Number of documents
Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice	20
Mary Robinson (speeches, media articles)	3
MRF-CJ/World Resources Institute	3
World Resources Institute	3
World Bank	2
World Bank (World Bank Papers Series)	1
International Institute for Environment and Development	5
CorpWatch	2
Climate Alliance	5
Scottish Government	4
Friends of the Earth	2
Global Humanitarian Forum	1
Global Commission on Adaptation	1
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	3
ACT Alliance/Bread for the World	1
UK Government Office for Science	1
Rosa Luxemburg-Stiftung	1
Environmental Justice Foundation	1
United Nations	1
United Nations Development Programme	1
UN Climate Change Secretariat	1
UNFCCC	1
UNESCO	1
IPCC	1
World Forum on Climate Justice	1
Other (press)	23
Other (information websites)	8
Other (blogs)	4
Other (social media)	2
Other (statements)	1

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