

'Depth drilling' in global governance: A discourse theoretical approach to the mainstreaming of climate protection

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Abstract

More and more international organisations are starting to incorporate climate protection as an important policy goal. Strikingly, most institutions only rephrase existing activities in the terms of climate protection instead of changing them. The aim of this paper is to explore the logic of 'climate mainstreaming' and explain the paradoxical result of such a 'consistent inconsistency'. Departing from rationalist and global governance literature, this paper employs a poststructuralist approach that combines elements of governmentality and discourse theory. Drawing on the case of the WTO, it argues that mainstreaming follows from the underlying governmental discourses structuring the governance of climate protection across different policy arenas. Consistent inconsistency is possible because the governmentality of climate protection allows for merging a wide array of heterogeneous and partly contradictory practices into a unified discourse. Climate protection becomes an empty signifier. This claim is backed up empirically by a discourse analysis of the WTO.

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Introduction

While the scientific evidence on the severity of climate change is increasingly solidifying, more and more actors, institutions and organisations which are not part of the narrow institutional setting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) refer to climate protection¹ as an important policy goal and seek to integrate it into their own activities. For instance, such diverse institutions as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Energy Agency (IEA) or the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) all engage themselves in the recent discussion about global warming with a flagship publication, a major conference, a new policy section or a background study. This process can be called the *mainstreaming of climate protection*² in world politics³. But instead of a growing coherence of political reactions to climate change among international institutions, climate mainstreaming seems to have paradoxical results: The reference to climate protection spreads, but climate protection itself changes its meaning and becomes ambiguous. Institutions mostly rephrase existing activities and goals in the terms of climate protection, but in reality almost do not change them according to the challenges of global warming. For example, in its report on trade and climate change the WTO succeeds in framing climate protection as a matter of trade liberalisation, thereby neglecting the negative impacts of free trade like increased trade flows or economic growth that so far have led to growing carbon emissions (WTO and UNEP 2009). Arguably, climate mainstreaming results in a form of *consistent inconsistency*.

Transfer and diffusion of policies among governments and institutions is a recurrent theme in political science that has largely remained in the domain of comparative politics (for an overview see Holzinger and Knill 2008), but has not been a major issue of International Relations. Regime theory (Krasner 1983; Mayer et al. 1993; Young 1986) focuses on the effect of *single* institutions to explain changes in national policies. If it considers the interaction of institutions at all, it locates its causes outside the institutions in nation-states which strive for a coherent foreign policy environment (Gehring and Oberthur 2009). According to organisational theory, on the other hand, the drive for adopting new issues stems from inside an organisation which aims to legitimise its activities and broaden its resource base (Rosenau 2003). The global governance literature, on the other hand, tries to overcome this inside-outside distinction by ontologically reframing world politics as an ensemble of so called "spheres of authority" (Rosenau 1999: 295) which themselves combine various political levels, new modes of governance and coalitions of private and public actors (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006). Although such a perspective involves the relations and interplay between those spheres (Biermann and Pattberg 2008), attempts to model diffusion among different governance arrangements re-

¹ Although the *adaptation* to climate change is becoming increasingly relevant in international climate negotiations, the term *climate protection* refers here only to mitigation of climate change and, hence, narrows the subject of the paper.

² I have coined the term *mainstreaming of climate change* with reference to the idea of *gender mainstreaming* that seeks to integrate gender equality into other policy areas. It will be used throughout this paper to describe the empirical phenomena at hand without bearing upon a particular theoretical perspective. In a more narrow usage, climate mainstreaming denotes the integration of climate change into business balance sheets. This notion shall be neglected here.

³ Throughout this project, the term *world politics* refers to the totality of international (between states), transnational (non-state across borders) and supranational (formal authority above the state level) relations and institutions. On the contrary, *International Relations* describes the discipline of political science that deals with world politics.

main theoretically and empirically inconsistent. They either understand "coherence" as a top-down phenomenon which is driven by higher-order "secondary norms" (Zürn 2005) and attained through legal resolution of conflicts. Or they expect a sort of spontaneous order among those institutions (Rosenau 1999). Both approaches are not helpful for the problem at hand. Moreover, due to its consistently inconsistent condition, the existing logic of climate mainstreaming appears as far more complex than all of these simple models seem to suggest. Much of the observable phenomena are rather about language and meaning.

Hence, this paper employs an alternative – poststructuralist – theoretical approach to explore the logic of climate mainstreaming and explain the paradoxical result of consistent inconsistency: How is it possible that institutions avow themselves to climate change and stick to business-as-usual at the same time? It argues that consistent inconsistency is neither rooted inside nor outside the organisations but follows from the underlying governmental discourses which structure the governance of climate protection across different policy arenas. This argument will be deployed in two steps: First, the paper uses the governmentality studies (Foucault 1991, 2008) and discourse theory (Laclau 1990; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) to develop an alternative conceptual framework. It centres around hegemony in governmental discourses instead of examining observable interaction between institutions. Second, it subjects the framework to a plausibility probe (George and Bennett 2005: 75) in the case of mainstreaming climate protection into global economic governance. In the case of the WTO it shows that it is the particular character of the global governmentality of climate protection that allows for merging together a variety of diverse and partially contradictory practices in a unified discourse – climate protection is blurred and turns into an "empty signifier" (Laclau 1996).

The example of global economic governance seems to be a promising case for testing the plausibility of the discourse theoretical framework since it represents an extreme case. Economic and ecologic interests are commonly perceived as being antithetic. Trying to understand how economic institutions avow to ecologic goals might be particularly enlightening because, due to this opposition, the mechanisms that allow to do so should be most obvious. The paper employs interpretive discourse analysis (Milliken 1999) of flagship publications, press releases and official statements of the WTO.

A post-structuralist approach to climate mainstreaming

As outlined, the main assumption of the global governance literature is that there is a distinct sphere of governance in world politics. However, for its theoretical and empirical insufficiencies, this idea can only serve as a heuristic vantage point for analysing climate mainstreaming. Indeed, it discloses a new ontological space of *governance* at the global level. Although this is a valuable contribution, it is not able to equip this space with suitable concepts for understanding the consistently inconsistent condition of climate mainstreaming. Thus, it seems to be helpful to stick to this new ontological dimension but fill it with a different content.

Global governmentality

A first device to do so is Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality which was an outcome of his critique of the so called "juridico-sovereign" (Foucault 2001: 28) concept of power still being dominant in political theory. However, this model of power – a transferable entity, tied to a sovereign centre, obvious and repressive – that was characteristic for the medieval state in modern times has increasingly been replaced by a more oblique and indirect use of power

Foucault identified as *government*. The latter has to be understood in its 16th century sense which comprised the three meanings of *to direct*, *to comport oneself* and *behaviour in general*. Today, it would best be understood as "the conduct of conduct" (Foucault 1982: 220) and so points to a combination of external and internal guidance. To govern, thus, is defined as "any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies [...] that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs [...]" (Dean 1999: 11). The various attempts to shape conduct condense in *regimes of practices* that seek to govern in a rather structured and coherent way, as for instance the educational or the social security system do. Hence, such a decentralised and bottom-up perspective draws the attention away from the state towards the various *regimes of government* which become the new unit of analysis.

As the Foucauldian coinage *governmentality* suggests, regimes of government are permeated by a certain mentality. They draw on theories, philosophies, forms of expertise or values that are themselves social and cultural products and become reproduced in the processes of government (Dean 1999: 16). Knowledge, in this sense, constitutes the use of power, and power, in turn, produces knowledge; they form an immanent complex of "power-knowledge" (Foucault 1990: 98). Governmentalities structure regimes of government in that they, inter alia, define its art (how to govern), ethic (why to govern), epistemology (what to know for governing) and the ontology of the respective field of problems (what to govern).⁴

Nonetheless, the focus on knowledge in government does not result in pure idealism since it is interested in how thought becomes translated into practices and procedures in specific social institutions. An analytics of government employs a framework consisting of three analytically separated but coherent aspects (Dean 1999: 18): *Rationalities* represent the programmes of government in that they provide language and concepts to speak about the problem at hand, define its condition and causality, and prescribe the desired means of governing (Rose and Miller 1992: 178-79). *Techniques* are the specific ways of acting, intervening and directing; the materialised procedures, mechanisms and technologies realising its rationalities (Rose and Miller 1992: 183). And *subjectivities* are the forms of conduct put forward by government, the types of persons, actors and agents addressed (Dean 1999: 23). A governmentality perspective, hence, analyses the discourses of government that are interweaved with certain regimes of practices, linking the linguistic and the non linguistic aspects of those discourses.⁵

Albeit developed in a specific historic context, the concept of governmentality can also be used to make sense of current transformations at the global level. Foucault has shown that throughout history the ubiquitous practices of government have been centralised by the state – a process, he termed the "governmentalization of the state" (Foucault 1991: 102-04). This historicity of the conjunction of state and government discloses its contingency. Therefore, it could well be reversed, so that the currently diminishing role of the state could be read as a *governmentalization of world politics*: The sovereign nature of international relations is superseded by processes of government diverting into various regimes of practices at the global level. Such a "governmental reading" (Neumann and Sending 2007: 694) of current transfor-

⁴ These dimensions have been inspired by Dean's 1999: 17 framework of self-governance and adapted to the context of governing the climate. Alike, in the next paragraph Dean's aspect of "visualisations" is neglected here for the sake of parsimony.

⁵ Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 107) have accused Foucault for indefensibly distinguishing between discursive and non-discursive practices. While this might hold true for the earlier Foucault, the outlined governmentality approach apparently does not keep up this distinction, hence making it compatible with the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe.

mations assumes that there is government in world politics which is constituted through different discourses of government or global governmentalities. Like a governance approach, it establishes a new ontological space at the global level but endows it with a more profound content. In this sense, while global governance sticks to describing the surface of actors and their interactions, a governmentality approach takes after a 'depth drilling' into the underlying principles of government.⁶

However, although being strong in analysing the concrete aggregate states of government by focussing on its underlying discourses, a governmentality perspective is weak in accounting for the laws of motion of these discourses. It does not provide sufficient concepts to explain the transformation, spread, competition and hegemony of particular mentalities. This is why a governmentality perspective on its own cannot account for consistent inconsistency in climate protection. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe can help to overcome these shortcomings as the second device to fill the new ontologic space at the global level.

Discourse theory

Discourse theory postulates that all social and political processes have to be understood as discourses. This implies both an *anti-essentialist ontology* and an *anti-essentialist epistemology* (Torfing 2005: 13). As to the latter, while there is a real world out there, truth about it is not an external feature of this world, but it can only be generated in discourses since "the very possibility of perception, thought and action depends on the structuration of a certain meaningful field which pre-exists any factual immediacy." (Laclau 1993: 431) This perspective entails a materialist conception of discourse that does not distinguish between the discursive and the non-discursive. Following Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic, meaning of a sign is not seen as substantially defined but only established in relation to all other signs in the system of language. The sign *father* can just be understood in relation to *mother* and *child*, and not because there is something 'fatherly' about the sound-image *father*. Language is a purely relational system of differences and signs are always contextual. Reality, thus, is only accessible through discursive representation. Knowledge about society cannot be accessed directly or identified neutrally, but is always-already embedded in relational and purely differential system of signification.

The anti-essentialist ontology, on the other hand, postulates that no pre-given or determining essence provides a stable, closed and fixed social structure. In fact, social life has to be understood "as playful determination of social meanings and identities within a relational system which is [only] provisionally anchored" (Torfing 2005: 13) Discourse theory, thus, states that all discourses are contingent in nature. Following from the absence of an underlying structure, identities and the relations between them are not stable; they are always ambivalent and threatened by the richness of context. Meaning operates on a terrain of a constant play of signification that undermines discursive structures and makes any permanent fixation of meaning impossible, a terrain which Laclau and Mouffe call "field of discursivity" (Laclau and

⁶ For the advantages of a Foucauldian approach to the study of world politics see Lipschutz 2005; Merlingen 2006; Methmann 2009; Okereke et al. 2009; Rosenow 2009; Sending and Neumann 2006; Walters and Haahr 2005; White 2007; Ziai 2003. Nonetheless, there is a controversial debate about whether or not there is such a thing as a "global governmentality" (Joseph 2009; Neal 2009).

Mouffe 1985: 111).⁷ For instance, the discursive context of *family* that constitutes the meaning of *father* is not given by nature. What counts as a family is a historically variable and contested concept. Contingency, thus, means that a discourse "is a field of simply relational identities which never manage to constitute themselves fully, since relations do not form a closed system." (Laclau 1990: 21) Stable relations of difference are always a temporary product of a radical act of construction, making discourses historicist and contingent entities. The basic unit of a discourse is that of articulation defined as "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse." (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 105).

In order to delimit and discursive space and construct such a hegemonic discourse it is necessary to establish *empty signifiers* (Laclau 1996): discursive elements that have been emptied from their actual content and provide for the unity of the discourse. According to Laclau and Mouffe, establishing a discourse is "to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. We will call this privileged discursive points of this partial fixation ,nodal points:'" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 112)

But since discourses are purely relational and differential systems of signification without an underlying ground that would provide for such nodal points, these have to root in the discourses itself. Discourses allow for two basic operations: Elements can either be articulated according to a *logic of equivalence* and a *logic of difference* (Laclau 2005: 70). The latter constitutes meaning as a relational system of differences, stressing the autonomy and dissimilarity of discursive elements without detaching them completely (*father* is a discrete unit in a family, but exists only in relation to *mother* and *child*). But because every signifier enters into a differential relation with every other signifier, a logic of difference alone cannot constitute society. Social life would be a uniform dispersion of differences without any structure. In order to allow for stable discursive formations, it is necessary to exclude certain elements. But the construction of boundaries is impossible to achieve through logics of difference since every item outside the limits then just becomes another difference and – since discourses are systems of differences – is again part of the discourse. Thus, it is necessary to interrupt the flow of differences and construct a radical otherness, an absolute outside. This is accomplished through the introduction of a logic of equivalence among the elements of a discursive formation that stresses the similarity of its elements. However, this is not possible with reference to their inherent properties (since signs are relational and not essential), so that it is necessary to construct a chain of equivalence with another signifier. Because this master-signifier- or nodal-point-to-be which has to be equivalential to the whole discursive formation but initially also is in differential relation to all other elements, these differential relations have to be cancelled out. And as difference is nothing else than meaning, as a result this master signifier is 'discharged' of any content. It becomes 'more equal than equal', an "empty signifier" that only represents "the pure being of the system" (Laclau 1996: 38) and the non-being of those elements that are not part of the system. Therefore, for a discourse to become hegemonic it is necessary to construct an empty signifier that stabilises the discursive formation – a constructed and fragile stability that is rather "a horizon and not a ground." (Laclau 2005: 71) The

⁷ The philosophical foundations of this perspective have been formulated as a critique of linguistic structuralism. Concepts as "plural text" (Barthes 1974), "the permanent sliding of the signified under the signifier" (Lacan 1977) and "undecidability" (Derrida 1976) all point to the fact that discourse and meaning can never be closed and fully constituted.

construction of an empty signifier as nodal point is what Laclau and Mouffe have termed "hegemony" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 134).

Hegemonic closure of discourses always gives rise to social antagonism and power relations. The construction of a hegemonic discourse always presupposes the exclusion of certain elements which are constructed as a radical other. Power is inherent to all discursive formations (Laclau 1990: 33). On the other hand, as unity is fragile and contingent, the power relations always impend to break open and give rise to social antagonism. Hegemony comes at the cost of the constant threat of its own subversion. Antagonism, in this sense, means that "we are faced with a ,constitutive outside'. It is an ,outside' which blocks the identity of the ,inside' and is nonetheless the prerequisite for its constitution at the same time." (Laclau 1990: 17) A situation in which there is an invasion of the outside into the discourse is termed *dislocation*. It occurs when disruptive events cannot be explained or represented in the existing discursive order. Dislocation appears in the form of a "structural, or organic crisis, in which there is a proliferation of floating signifiers." (Torfing 2005: 16) Dislocation is followed by hegemonic struggle about the integration of those floating signifiers into the dominant discourse. Because it is necessary to make new decisions on a "terrain of undecidability" (Torfing 2005: 13), dislocation gives rise to indeterminate human action. Thus, the subject of the discourse is "nothing but the distance between the undecidable structure and the decision." (Laclau 1990: 30).⁸ In sum, the various concepts that centre around the notion of discourse – articulation, nodal point, hegemony, logic of equivalence and difference, empty signifier, power, antagonism, dislocation and the subject – make up the toolbox for analysing change and continuity in discourse. If a governmentality perspective highlights how government is interweaved with discourses, discourse theory can trace the mutations of these discourses: how they emerge, spread, transform, become hegemonic and decline. Climate mainstreaming, from this perspective, appears as the notion of climate protection that turns into an empty signifier and so succeeds in becoming a hegemonic discourse. And since this comes at the cost of ambiguity, it would explain consistent inconsistency.

Climate mainstreaming from a discourse theoretical perspective

This section applies the theoretical framework to the field of climate mainstreaming. First of all, it renders the kernel of global climate governance, the international climate regime, in the terms of governmentality and discourse theory and argues that climate protection has been established as an empty signifier in world politics. This 'emptiness' can be explained as a function of four distinctive discursive patterns: *global management*, *scientific uncertainty*, *economic rationality* and *flexibility*. Subsequently, it shows that these patterns enable the mainstreaming climate protection into global economic governance. This claim will be clarified in the case of the WTO's climate discourse.

The global governmentality of climate protection

The history of climate change appears as a history of growing discursive dislocation. Global warming takes the shape of a floating signifier that tends to rupture the existing hegemonic order and thereby reactivates various other signifiers that seemed to be deeply sedimented.

⁸ Accordingly, Laclau and Mouffe position themselves *between* individualist and structuralist theories which see agents as either unrestrained or "mere bearers of the structure" (Torfing 2005: 17).

This dislocatory character of climate change can be fixed to at least three aspects. First, it undermines the genuine modern narrative of infinite progress. Climate change is located within the wider discursive field of environmental destruction that since the 1970s systematically linked environmental degradation to capitalist patterns of production and consumption and put issues as limits to growth and renouncement in consumption on the agenda. The need to significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions especially questions the model of fossil fuel based growth that still overwhelmingly dominates the world economy. Second, the gap between the scientific demands for climate change and actual political action sensibly widens and escalates the public perception of political stalemate – triggering distrust in existing global governance arrangements. Third, the discourse on climate change in many countries has increasingly taken the character of a catastrophic narrative promoting the perception of an ever aggravating and still not tackled problem (Weingart et al. 2000).

The attempts to deal with the dislocatory character of climate change gave rise to a global regime of government. As a reaction to the first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1990, UNFCCC was adopted by 192 states 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Negotiations under the UNFCCC resulted in the adoption of the Kyoto protocol in 1997 which obligates industrialised countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2% between 1990 and 2012. Currently there are intense negotiations about a successor agreement to be agreed upon at the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Copenhagen in December 2009. The institutional architecture emanating from the UNFCCC proves to be the most complex and intense of all international regimes. However, the climate regime is only the kernel of a far more comprehensive institutional landscape that has emerged around the issue of climate protection – comprised of actors from transnational civil society, city networks, business initiatives, private research institutions or consumer initiatives (Newell 2008; Pattberg and Stripple 2008). All together, these institutions make up the sphere of global climate governance – or in Foucauldian terms: a global regime of the government of climate change. However, as the global figures of carbon emissions are still climbing, all these attempts could not help to remedy the dislocatory character of climate change.

This institutional landscape is embedded in and interweaved with a multiplicity of governmental discourses structuring the attempts to govern the climate. All these different institutions and actors put forward a certain understanding of global warming; they justify various ways to deal with climate change, employ particular means and appeal to different types of actors. Hence, global climate governance appears as both source and effect of a multifaceted global governmentality of climate protection. For instance, Oels (2005) argues that both a green governmentality and an ecological modernisation discourse are involved in the international climate regime. Green governmentality is "a system of geo-power, eco-knowledge and enviro-disciplines." (Oels 2005: 194) Climate change is conducted according to the idea of "planetary management" (Oels 2005: 195), which rests on extensive expert knowledge and global interventions. Ecological modernisation, on the other hand, "believes that a free market setting and limited government incentives will spur technological innovation that solves the ecological crisis in a cost-efficient manner." (Oels 2005: 196) Economic thinking and flexible mechanisms make up the basis of climate protection. With the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, there seems to be a remarkable shift from green governmentality towards ecological modernisation (Oels 2005: 201). In a similar vein, Bäckstrand and Lövbrand show that there were contesting governmental discourses – green governmentality and ecological modernisation – that rendered the tackling of the forest issue in the climate regime in different ways and were predominant at distinct times (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006: 68). However, despite their con-

flicting nature, both discourses support and mutually reinforce each other: "[T]he green governmentality discourse has provided the scientific and administrative rationale for measuring, monitoring and certifying carbon removals. [...] In contrast, ecological modernisation operates as a legitimising discourse - a blueprint for action." (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006: 68-69) Also Oels (2005: 195) admits that "[ecological modernisation] still draws extensively on the apparatuses of [green governmentality], but progressively recodes them in economic terms." The field of governmentality, thus, not only seems to be fragmented but also held together by underlying discursive structures.

Consequently, this paper proposes to subject the global governmentality of climate change to a more coherent reading and stresses the mutual reinforcement of its different elements – notwithstanding its conflicting and fluid character. Both green governmentality and ecological modernisation appear as devices that provide core pillars of a governmental discourse of climate protection. Together, they form an assemblage that allows for governing climate change in a certain way. With the reference to the aforementioned dimensions of governmentality, it is possible to identify four major strands: climate protection as *global issue*; as an *object of scientific inquiry and uncertainty*; as to be regulated through *flexibility*; and as justified by *economic calculations* (see Table 1). These strands are mutually supportive though sometimes contentious in nature.

Ontologically, climate change is defined as an inherently global problem (Adger et al. 2001: 701). This assumption stems from the idea that greenhouse gas emissions and rising temperatures do not stop at national borders. Thus, the various causes and consequences of climate change are transformed from local phenomena into global problems (Roe 1998: 117). Global warming, therefore, becomes "a common concern of humankind" (UNFCCC 1992: 1) that has to be tackled with a consensual and concerted effort of all nations. Such a problem definition leads to global management and governance: "Through a [...] ,global gaze' [...] nature is approached as a terrestrial infrastructure subject to state protection, management and domination." (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006: 55) Thus, the preferred subjects of political responses are states, international agreements and supra-national organisations (Lutes 1998: 158) – in a joint effort of all relevant actors.

Epistemologically, climate protection draws its authority from science and is constituted around the constant need for further research (Adger et al. 2001: 698). On the one hand, this is a consequence of the ontological globalism of the problem, since global management presupposes thorough knowledge about the interrelationships of global climate and ecological systems with society. Global surveys and satellite surveillance (Litfin 1998) or large scale computer modelling and data processing (Henman 2002) are put forward as conditions of any successful action on climate change. On the other hand, climate research is always fundamentally flawed with scientific uncertainty (Lutes 1998: 162). Although both the basic causes of the greenhouse effect and the fact that climate change is human-induced are mainly uncontested now, uncertainty remains about time-scale and extent of warming as well as its regional impacts. The paradoxical effect is that deeper knowledge and more sophisticated computer models even increase the degree of uncertainty because an ever more complex set of variables and causalities is taken into account (ibid.).

As to the *ethic* of government, climate protection is justified by the logic of economic calculation (Adger et al. 2001: 702). Especially under conditions of uncertainty, the scientific framing of environmental problems gives rise to an economic rationale for political action (Rutherford 1999). It stresses the importance of techniques like cost-benefit- and risk-benefit-analyses. Whether or not to take action in a particular area of climate protection is decided on the nor-

mative grounds of economic calculation, i.e. action is to be taken if the likely costs of climate change exceed the costs of climate protection. Such economic thinking "privileges efficiency and cost-effectiveness as the dominant virtues." (Lutes 1998: 165) Moreover, it renders climate protection as a win-win-situation: Economic growth and sustainable development can easily be reconciled because the greening of the world economy creates new markets, business opportunities and jobs. Especially green technologies are conceived as the motor of both climate protection and economic profits. Thus, the subjects of climate protection are the "individuals and companies who find cost-effective ways to reduce their emissions." (ibid.)

The economic rationale comes along with a certain *art* of climate protection that is marked by the idea of flexibility. According to the neo-classical logic, optimal climate policy is defined as promoting market mechanisms, decentralisation, benchmarking and competition. That means to focus on the actual carbon emission reductions but to leave open the way how they are achieved. Hence, this discursive structure privileges to focus on the output of a particular climate project and not on its content. This is especially expressed in the flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol which establish the carbon market as the core regulatory principle of action against global warming. They have become a widely accepted model for emission reductions throughout global climate governance. According to this *art*, climate protection – albeit a global effort of all humankind – is best spurred by the competition of all for the best solutions. These four discursive structures are not the only relevant narratives in the international climate change regime. Although they have a long-standing history in the climate change debate (Brunner 1991), they have been increasingly challenged by other narratives such as North-South justice, regional adaptation or the security implications of climate change in recent years. However, these are still marginalised or colonised by the four outlined patterns. For example, Bäckstrand and Lövbrand (2007) argue that a discourse of "civic environmentalism" has been displaced by green governmentality and ecological modernisation. Frimann and Linner (Frimann and Linnèr 2008) show how the scientism narrative has undermined discussions about equity and development in the climate change regime and turned them into technical issues. Moreover, these competing patterns are not as deeply embedded in the institutional structure of the UNFCCC as the outlined features of climate governmentality. Therefore, this paper alleges that those are still the most dominant narratives in the climate change regime.

These patterns of global governmentality serve to render climate protection as an empty signifier. They serve as devices that facilitate the construction of a chain of equivalence among a wide range of ambiguous practices, institutions and actors vis-à-vis climate protection. For example, the narrative of science makes actors appear as aware of climate change as long as they undergo a process of scrutiny of their potential contribution to global warming even without reducing their carbon emissions. This is possible because already the study of relationships and conditions in the field of climate change is seen as essential part of any solution. Moreover, in light of scientific uncertainty actors can defer own action although they claim in principle to support climate protection. Alike, the narrative of globalism enables actors to downplay their own possible contribution in light of the many other actors and institutions that would have to contribute as well for action to be effective. On the other hand, flexibility makes it possible to link such diverse and sometimes contradictory practices such as carbon sequestration, renewable energy, stopping forest clearance, stubbing woods in order to grow energy plants ("biofuels") and a lot more together in a chain of equivalence. Economic calculation, finally, helps to render even dubious practices as legitimate because they 'pay off' and hence help to combine economic and ecologic sustainability. In sum, the generality of these four discursive devices enables the expansion and stabilisation of the climate protection dis-

course, i.e. allows it to become hegemonic and remedy the discursive dislocations triggered through climate change. What is decisive is that, in turn, the meaning of climate protection is blurred – or emptied of its dislocatory and critical character. Accordingly, it is easily possible for any actor to avow itself to climate protection without radically having to alter its behaviour by drawing on these four discursive devices. This is not to say that virtually anything can become equivalent with climate protection, but that the discourse ties together a variety of heterogeneous and partially contradictory elements. And it is the character of the governmentality of climate protection as an empty signifier that permits its mainstreaming into other policy areas. This thesis will be explored in the following case studies.

The World Trade Organisation and Climate Change

The World Trade Organisation, founded in 1995 as successor of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), pursues the aim of "reducing obstacles to international trade and ensuring a level playing field for all, thus contributing to economic growth and development." (WTO 2009a) It both serves as a forum for negotiation about trade liberalisation and a legal framework for trade dispute settlement. Although the ideas of growth, free trade and development have been dislocated by climate change and have often been framed as in opposition to ecological goals, the WTO actively engages in the climate change debate. At the UNFCCC COP 13 in Bali 2007, director-general Pascal Lamy conferred with several trade ministers to discuss the potential synergies of trade liberalisation and climate change. This process led to the joint publication of a report on "Trade and Climate Change" together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) which explores the various links between both issues (WTO and UNEP 2009). In sum, this report backs the idea of a mutual supportiveness of trade liberalisation and climate protection: "The relationship between international trade [...] and climate change, would be best defined by a consensual international accord on climate change." (Lamy 2009b) Apparently, the WTO appears as a prime example of mainstreaming climate protection into global economic governance.

However, the report also represents a prime example of the consistently inconsistent nature of climate mainstreaming. It succeeds in covering the cleavages between trade and climate change that could undermine the equivalential relationship between economic and ecologic goals. Firstly, the expansion of international trade leads to an increase in global transport volumes, resulting in growing carbon emissions. At the same time, economic growth spurred by increasing exports might lead to rising levels of carbon emissions. Finally, the rigid prohibition of trade discrimination under WTO law may narrow the scope for national political action. All of these aspects could well serve to construct an antagonistic relation between trade and climate change. But although all of them are dealt with within the report, it infers the outlined positive relationship. Climate change, in this view, does not question the basic propositions of the trade regime.

It is the function of climate protection as an empty signifier that allows for integrating climate change without contradictions into the WTO agenda. All of the four outlined patterns come into effect. First of all, the narrative of globalism is a strong and recurrent discursive pillar of climate mainstreaming. For instance, as to the growing carbon emissions that might result from trade, the report states that

climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the *international community*. Mitigating global warming [...] will require [...], above all, *unequivocal determination* on the part of policy-makers. With a challenge of this magnitude, *multilateral cooperation* is cru-

Table 1: The governmentality of climate protection

| dimension | ontology | epistemology | ethic | art |
|--------------------|--|---|---|---|
| governmentalities | green governmentality | | ecological modernisation | |
| discursive pattern | global management | scientific uncertainty | economic calculation | flexibility |
| rationality | climate change is a global problem; concerted and consensual action as necessary solution; all relevant stakeholders have to participate | more detailed and profound knowledge about interaction between societies, climate and ecologic systems necessary; action only on basis of science | climate change as matter of costs and benefits; there is a rationally calculable optimum of climate protection; climate policy can create win-win-situations for business and environment | flexibility in means of climate protection; measure climate protection only according to its output of greenhouse gas emissions; prefer decentralised solutions |
| technique | global management and governance; international organisations and agreements | assessment of greenhouse gas emissions; calculation of dangerous thresholds and tolerable limits; computer modelling; global surveillance | cost-benefit- and risk-benefit-analysis; economic calculations; valuation of society and environment | flexible mechanisms (emissions trading, clean development mechanism); benchmarking; technological innovation |
| subjectivity | humanity as a unitary actor; leaders of state as global managers; | informed politician; scientist as provider of neutral knowledge | investors and entrepreneurs | rational calculating individual, 'best practitioner' |
| example | UNFCCC | IPCC | Stern Report | Kyoto Protocol |

Source: own table

cial. (WTO and UNEP 2009: V; emphasis added)

From this perspective, the role of the WTO in curbing carbon emissions is qualified, and its own possible contribution to climate protection diminishes:

A multilateral agreement with binding commitments establishing the framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for post-2012 and beyond should be the main instrument for addressing climate change. (WTO and UNEP 2009: 141)

And without such a global agreement for tackling the global challenge of climate change, focusing on trade rules and WTO action would create false hope:

If [trade measures] could do the job, I can assure you, the world would have never embarked on the long road to Copenhagen! [...] It is precisely because no form of unilateral action can solve climate change [...] we need to bring everyone onboard. (Lamy 2009a)

Therefore, this general argument makes all responsibility of the WTO subject to concerted global action against climate change: "Climate first, trade second." (Lamy 2009a) No matter whether or how WTO rules might be causing a potential threat to a stable climate, these can only be addressed in a global and comprehensive climate agreement.

Besides this general qualification, also the narrative of scientific uncertainty plays a major role in maintaining consistent inconsistency. Before being able to take action, it is necessary to grasp the relationship between trade and climate change much better:

Certain climate change mitigation measures intersect with existing WTO rules and recent discussions in various fora have brought to the fore *the importance of better understanding the various linkages between trade and climate change.*" (WTO and UNEP 2009: V; emphasis added)

As to the fact that trade opening leads to growth and thereby to increased carbon emissions, the report thus proposes a more complex account that differentiates between scale, composition and technology of economic activities that all might be affected by trade. In sum, it states that

although most studies to date have found that the scale effect tends to outweigh the technique and composition effects in terms of CO² emissions, *it remains difficult to determine in advance* the magnitude of each of these three effects, and therefore estimating the overall impact of trade on greenhouse gas emissions can be challenging. More ex post studies in this area would be helpful to fine-tune the analytical framework." (WTO and UNEP 2009: 141; emphasis added)

In other words, although it is likely that trade leads to growing carbon emissions via increasing economic activity, we still do not know whether trade might also facilitate the adoption of new technologies or the shift to more climate friendly branches. Therefore, any action restricting free trade in the name of climate protection would not be backed up by scientific facts and, hence, not be legitimate. In sum, the global management and scientific uncertainty narratives serve as viable means to deny the antagonistic relationships between trade and climate change and hence exclude it from the official discourse of climate mainstreaming.

The economic and flexibility narratives, on the other hand, help to establish a positive relationship between free trade and climate change. A core category in this regard is the introduction and dissemination of climate friendly technology through trade. Following a page-long discussion about the potentially negative effects of trade on climate change the report states:

As discussed in the previous section, the technique effect can be a major mechanism through which trade opening can lead to mitigation of climate change. More open trade can increase the availability of goods and services that are more energy efficient. (WTO and UNEP 2009: 61)

This argument turns the spread of technology into a win-win-story that can help to reconcile growth, trade and climate protection because it opens new business opportunities and the necessary flexibility at the same time:

Contrary to some claims, trade and trade opening can have a positive impact on emissions of greenhouse gases in a variety of ways including accelerating the transfer of clean technology and the opportunity for developing economies to adapt those technologies to local circumstances. [...] In addition there is evidence that more open trade together with actions to combat climate change can catalyse global innovation including new products and processes that can stimulate new clean tech businesses." (WTO 2009b)

After all, technology becomes the key that links free trade and climate protection and covers all possible remaining antagonisms. Thereby, it draws on the two other main narratives of the governmentality of climate change – economic calculation and flexibility – to constitute an equivalent relationship between both issues. On the one hand, the positive cost-benefit-assessment of technology transfer provides the main economic reasoning for connecting trade and climate protection in such a way. On the other hand, free trade in technology complements the flexibility idea of the climate discourse. If it is up to each country in which way it reduces its carbon emissions as long as these measures deliver the desired results, then a plurality of available means has to be ascertained so that the benefits of flexibility can be attained. Hence, the spread of environmental technologies becomes the necessary condition for the functioning of flexibility.

Thus, climate protection even becomes a core reason for completing the Doha Development round, the main WTO agenda that has been stuck between developing and developed country's interests for several years now. It can

put the trade agenda to the service of climate agenda through one of the most obvious ways possible, and in an area in which the international community already has a political mandate. I am referring here to the opening of trade to environmentally-friendly goods and services in the context of the Doha Round. (Lamy 2009b)

In conclusion, it is fair to say that the WTO governmental discourse on climate protection draws heavily on the four patterns of the governmentality of climate change to construct a homogeneous and coherent mainstreaming discourse that, nonetheless, enables it to stick to its common agenda. The global management and scientific uncertainty arguments serve to ban antagonistic relationships from the discursive field, while economic calculation and flexibility establish a logic of equivalence between free trade and climate change. The inconsistent nature of climate mainstreaming is constituted by the specific rendering of climate protection in the climate regime.

Conclusion

This paper sets out the task of exploring the mainstreaming of climate protection at the global level and explain its consistently inconsistent condition. In the theory section it outlines a poststructuralist approach that draws on theories of governmentality and discourse to understand the logic of climate mainstreaming. The application to climate mainstreaming in global economic governance tests the added value of such a theoretical framework. The case of the World Trade Organisation shows that the global governmentality of climate protection has been introduced as an empty signifier that facilitates both climate mainstreaming and consistent inconsistency. Its particular characteristics – global management, scientific uncertainty, economic calculation and flexibility – allows the WTO to avow themselves to climate protec-

tion while more or less sticking to its business-as-usual at the same time. Due to the well-established perception of economic and ecologic goals as opposing, it might come as no surprise that economic institutions and actors are not actively seeking an ambitious role in climate protection. It might even be self-evident that they have interest in 'greenwashing'. However, the interesting part of the results is that these actors actually manage to appear as part of the solution to climate change and that it is precisely the character of the global governmentality of climate protection as an empty signifier that enables them to do so. In other words, it is the governmental discourse of global climate governance itself that allows for the paradox of consistent inconsistency.

As this paper focuses on developing the theoretical framework, the application is only a plausibility probe and should be deepened and improved further. On the one hand, further studies should both include more institutions and actors in the respective policy area (International Monetary Funds, World Bank, International Labour Organisation) to get a more representative picture. On the other hand, one could object that it goes without saying that the mainstreaming climate protection into the economic sphere involves flexibility and economic calculation narratives. This is why the inclusion of other policy areas such as development or security policy would be promising. Finally, analysis so far has focused on the static results of mainstreaming and should be complemented by an examination of both the processes through which mainstreaming occurs and the subjects that play a relevant role in it. In-depth interviews of relevant policy-makers in mainstreaming-institutions would be an appropriate tool for that. However, already these preliminary results question the practical design of the international climate regime and the involved notion of climate protection. Besides, they also point to the importance of discourse and language for the study of global governance. If one is to explore the condition of present transformations in world politics, it is not enough to stick to describing the surface of actors and institutional architectures. In fact, one has to undertake a 'depth drilling' into the underlying structures of meaning and practice. This reveals that regimes of government are constituted by discursive interaction and always subject of political contestation – contestation not in the sense of an obvious 'clash of institutions' or a challenge by dominant actors, but as a struggle about the very content, purpose and meaning of global climate governance.

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