

A Passive Revolution?

Constructing a municipal alternative to carbon markets in British Columbia

by

Matthew Greeno  
BA, University of Victoria, 2008

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Faculty of Human and Social Development

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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**Supervisor**

Dr. Michael Prince (Faculty of Human and Social Development)  
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Dr. William Carroll (Department of Sociology)  
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## Abstract

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Using a Foucault-inspired critical analysis of discourse within a Gramscian framework of hegemony, this thesis analyzes how patterns of international climate change policy relate to climate policy in British Columbia (BC), Canada, and explores the patterns of resistance to carbon neutrality in a single municipality. The BC Carbon Neutral Government Strategy and the Provincial Crown Corporation responsible for stimulating the growth of the BC carbon-offset market are characterized by neo-liberalism ideology and dispossession. The District of Saanich's policy, which establishes a local and public form of carbon offset alternative, is characterized as a form of resistance. Saanich's policy represents a passive revolution. This thesis suggests that the discourse of ecological modernization exists within both the hegemonic climate policy structure as well as the alternative found in Saanich. This thesis also suggests that municipalities represent a political space in which a Gramscian war of position may be waged.

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A final thanks goes to the case study participants at the District of Saanich. They were the inspiration for this project. May they continue their good work.

## Introduction

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, climate change has become a policy issue for international, national, provincial/state, local governments, and organizations in civil society. Climate change is internationally recognized as the result of the build-up of a microscopic set of molecules referred to as carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e), or the more general “greenhouse gases” in the earth’s atmosphere. The concentration in the atmosphere of this set of molecules, which includes carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide among others, has been shown to have increased as a result of industrial society’s extraction and burning of fossil fuels (IPCC, 2007), the effects of which have profound impacts on the climate. In essence, humanity’s methods of production and consumption, our economy and ecology, are the cause.

More recently, actions of the British Columbia (BC) Government, Canada began to frame climate change policy issues as economic; it has created several policies with regard to the concepts of carbon trading and carbon neutrality (Province of BC, 2008a). An organization becomes carbon neutral by quantifying its carbon emissions and then paying per unit to offset those emissions. Basically, carbon neutrality is about buying and selling carbon; it is about creating a carbon market.

Market-based approaches to environmental policies like those addressing climate change show continuity with the market-based approaches to material inequality. Specifically, there is a similarity between the coalition created between workers and capital, and that created between environmentalists and capital. According to Iris Young (1990), the series of policies created in the 1930s collectively referred to as the New Deal

in the United States represented the striking of a deal between workers and capital. She describes the two sides of the deal as such:

Business and government accede[ed] to demands for collective bargaining rights, more leisure time, more pay, social security, and unemployment benefits, and similar measures to improve the material life and security of working people. In return the workers forfeit[ed] demands to restructure production... Everyone would agree that economic growth is the primary goal of government and business activity. (p. 70)

By the nature of the capitalist system, capital is accumulating or there are catastrophic economic problems, such as the most recent global recession beginning in the fall of 2008. The environmental movement has entered into a deal with capital, acceding to its primacy as a change agent. Capital's deal with environmentalists is about a transition to a *green* economy, meaning the decrease of carbon content in energy and limiting the ecological footprints of industry. The *green* economy refers to a new accumulation strategy for the capitalist economy based on decarbonization through carbon markets (Bumpus & Liverman, 2008), technological change, and vague notions about the integration of ecology into the capitalist framework and economic development (Hajar, 1995), for example, carbon taxes.

Environmentalists, like the workers before them, agreed that economic growth is the goal of government and business,<sup>1</sup> but in a different context than the workers. The

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<sup>1</sup> See the statements by David Suzuki and Greenpeace for example of two environmental groups endorsing the market related climate initiatives, be it Kyoto, carbon taxes, or specifically Cap and Trade schemes. Suzuki: <http://theyee.ca/Blogs/TheHook/BC-Politics/2009/04/18/Suzuki-attacks-NDP-plan-to-axe-carbon-tax-Globe/>

Canadian economic policy pattern over the last thirty years has tended towards the deconstruction of the welfare capitalist system to one more focused on supporting the flow of international capital and laissez-faire economics (Carroll & Little, 2001).

Whereas the workers' deal with capital occurred in the context of a capitalist economic depression, a rising communist bloc, state intervention and Keynesian economics, the environmentalists' deal evolved through a period of active betrayal of workers by capital through the deconstruction of the welfare state, the expansion and consolidation of economic policy influence in Canada (Carroll & Shaw, 2001), and the rise of neo-liberal hegemony.

Neo-liberalism, as an ethos, organizes society through market interactions. It suggests that markets are natural and function to maximize individual and collective utility. It theoretically doubles as a management system, and given free range over society, without the undue influence of governments, it maximizes the efficiency of resource use. The super-national nature of capital interactions is one of the defining features of neo-liberal capitalism, such that multi-national corporations now exercise considerable influence in political fields, operating with relative impunity with regard to the destruction of human life<sup>2</sup> (Chunn, Boyd & Menzies, 2002; Kovel, 2007). The ethos of neo-liberalism neglects to analyze the effects of its reliance on technical discourses in relation to gender (Philipps, 1996) as well as politics generally, the colonizing effects of

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Greenpeace: <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/archive/press-centre/press-releases/greenpeace-offers-qualified-s/> and, <http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/Blog/canada-climate-criminal/blog/38572/>

<sup>2</sup> The Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India, provides a disturbing case study of the how the interests of multi-national corporations interact with a community in the global south and, in the aftermath of disaster, how the corporation is able to become profitable while the people responsible never face criminal charges and the community is left to suffer the long-term consequences.

market relationships through what David Havey (2003) calls “accumulation by dispossession,” and the fraudulent dealings in relation to investment.

The neo-liberal approach to climate policy in BC has been reproduced at the local level through the Climate Action Charter. Local BC governments voluntarily sign onto the Charter promising to become carbon neutral (Province of BC, 2007b). Most local governments in BC have signed on to the Charter, but one local government in particular has taken on the call to carbon neutrality in a unique way. The District of Saanich created what it called the “Carbon Neutral Reserve Fund” (District of Saanich, 2010), and it quickly became an alternative to carbon offsetting.<sup>3</sup> Saanich “offsets” its carbon emissions by paying a regulated market rate into the Fund for each tonne of carbon it produces. Community residents can also give money to the Fund as charitable donations. The Fund provides money solely for projects within the municipality. Saanich uses its offset money for municipal projects to reduce the carbon impact of the District’s operations and the charitable donations are used for special projects within the Saanich community to help it reduce its carbon emissions. Whereas other municipalities, like the resort municipalities of Whistler, Harrison Hot Springs, and the City of Vancouver, have purchased carbon offsets via the carbon market to meet their commitment, Saanich has explicitly avoided the carbon market altogether. The District chose to use the money they would have spent on offsets to begin to reduce the emissions their operations produce.

The logic of Saanich’s carbon neutral strategy is at odds with the neo-liberal economic motives that produced the idea of carbon neutrality because it does not create a

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<sup>3</sup> Saanich recently began the process of officially changing the name of the Fund to simply “Carbon Fund” to reflect the fact that it is not used to fund carbon neutrality through offsetting.

carbon market. Ideologically speaking, this approach is an alternative to the dominant policy approach in BC of investing in climate change mitigation. Yet, it is unclear why this policy was created, and the differences in local versus provincial government logic towards the issue of carbon neutrality have yet to be drawn out. The purpose of this study is to understand historical, political, and social forces of the Saanich offset strategy and its dialectic relationship with the greater BC climate policy context using Gramscian and Foucauldian theory within a case study methodology.

### **Outline of this Thesis**

The analysis that follows is presented in five chapters. The first chapter discusses the neo-liberal context of global climate policy, as well as in BC. The second chapter delves into the theory, which this project will use to understand the connection between the larger international climate policy scenarios, and the provincial and local scenarios. That chapter contextualizes the project's analysis within the eco-socialist critique of capitalism. This chapter also places Foucault's analysis of discourse within a broadly Gramscian framework of hegemony and argues for an analysis that includes ideology and counter-hegemony. The third chapter discusses the methodology used in this study, which involves a critical analysis of discourse in documents and interviews within a case study methodology. The fourth chapter discusses the results of this project, including 1) the history of the Saanich Carbon Fund and a description of the Fund in terms of how it is used, 2) a brief description of the broader climate policy initiatives created by Saanich and Government of BC, and 3) a critical analysis of climate policy discourse in the Government of BC document and Saanich between 2007-2011. The fifth chapter concludes the thesis with a brief discussion about the possibilities for action based on this

document's findings. That discussion suggests that given the provincial climate policy scenario, municipalities may indeed be fertile ground for limited resistance of neo-liberal ideology.

## Neo-liberal Motivations in Climate Change Policy

A recent article in the journal *Nature Climate Change* provided an interesting analysis on the effects of the recent global economic downturn and subsequent recovery (at least in global terms) not because it provided a powerful critique of current economic ideology, but because it did not. Allow me to illustrate using their graphic:

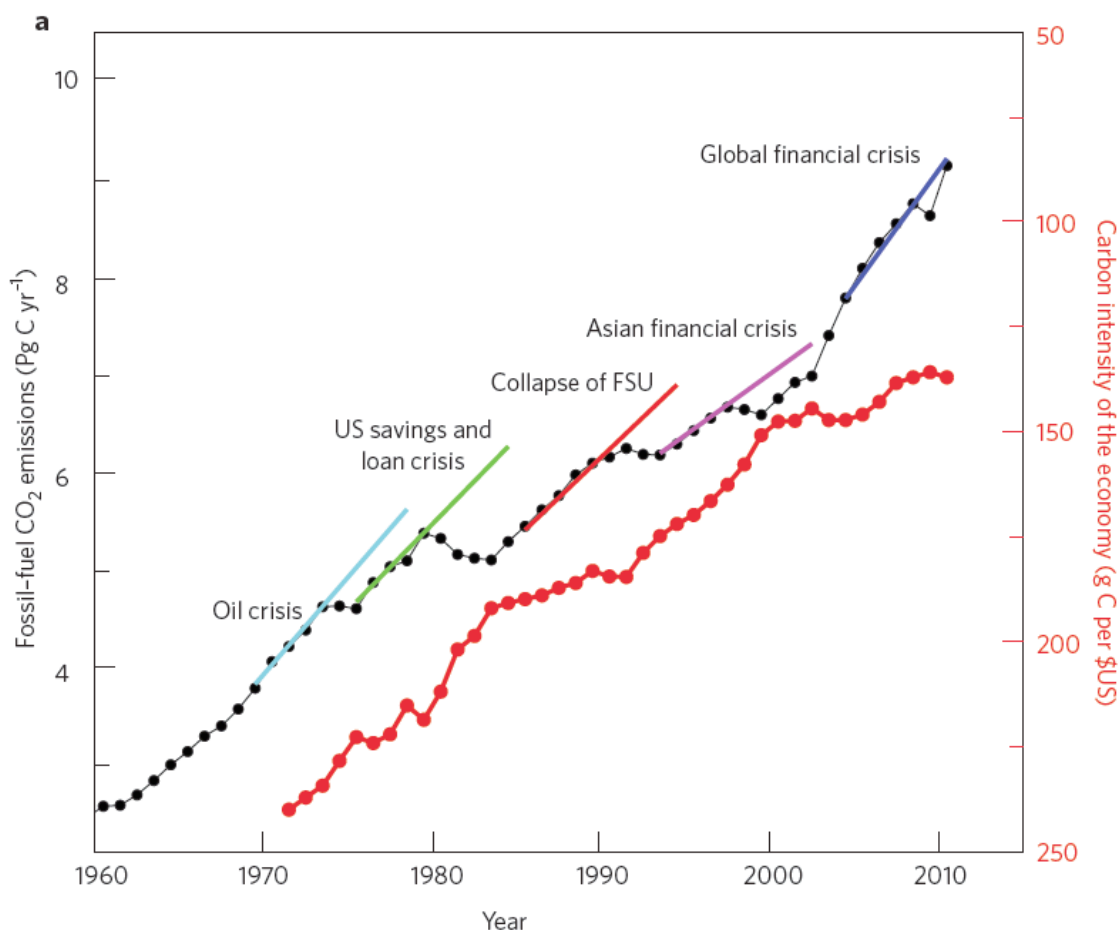


Figure 1: Carbon Emission and the Global Economy (adapted from Peters *et al.* (2011))<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Please note that the black series corresponding with the axis on the left of the graph shows the global emission of CO<sub>2</sub> per year in petagrams (billions of tonnes) not the cumulative CO<sub>2</sub>e concentration in the atmosphere. CO<sub>2</sub>e includes other greenhouse gases whereas the graph above shows only the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted into the atmosphere. Secondly, note that the red series corresponds with the right axis and shows an inverse scale of the carbon intensity of the global economy in grams of carbon per US dollar of economic output.

The analysis of Peters *et al.* shows two things: 1) the variation of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is closely tied to the declines of the global economy, and 2) the carbon intensity of the economy, which has been decreasing since the 1970s, has leveled off in recent years. The term *carbon intensity of the economy* describes the amount of carbon that is emitted through any and all activities that feed into the global economy. Everything that the human species does to create an economy on Earth be that growing food, manufacturing goods, transporting people, using a computer, has a carbon footprint. Some activities emit more than others, but the sum total of work (activities) divided by the amount of capital produced through that work is what is depicted by the red series on the graph above. This analysis is by no means conclusive, but yet it is important to consider because it implies that in relation to CO<sub>2</sub>, the main greenhouse gas, the global economy has ceased to achieve further efficiency gains, and if the trend holds, may even be becoming less efficient. If the carbon intensity of the economy continues along this trend it will have problematic implications for climate change mitigation, especially in the context of world economic growth.

The analysis implicates economic growth as a major factor in perhaps the most omnipresent example of environmental degradation, which is climate change. Every major dip in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is shown to be associated with economic downturn. These authors conclude that “although the [global financial crisis] was an opportunity to reverse some of the trends leading to increased CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the return to high emissions growth in 2010 may make the crisis a lost opportunity” (Peters *et al.*, 2011, p. 4). Speaking highly of the “green stimulus packages” of some countries that appeared in the wake of the global financial crisis, the authors take a normative standpoint by

implying that there is a correct way to develop the economy that would result in a disassociation of economic growth from emissions and of growth from climate change. The concept of sustainable development has been around for at least 25 years. The historical discourse surrounding that concept implies that Peters *et al.*'s argument is correct, but evidence over the course of those 25 years makes it difficult to accept. For example, as Peter Newell and Matthew Paterson (2010, pp. 14-15) indicate, despite efficiency gains in economies of the global north, growth has not been decoupled from energy use, or climate change, in large part because of increased consumption patterns globally and the migration of industry to the global south. In other words, the gains made through technological change are quickly overtaken through the processes of international economic growth.

Peters *et al.* (2011) offer one academic article among many that not only consents to but also helps to actively construct the neo-liberal hegemony in climate policy. Specifically, the authors suggest that a 'green' economy is the solution. They do not question the state of economic growth required by the economy and instead reflect an ideological extension of the problematic neo-liberal economic system. As will be shown, the implementation of the green economy follows the same patterns as neo-liberalism generally. Furthermore, the extension of neo-liberalism into climate policy brings with it the overarching concerns about the ideology itself.

### **The Kyoto Mechanisms**

Carbon neutrality is a key technology in reproducing neo-liberal ideology and power structures in climate policy; we can observe the concept's material beginning in the market mechanisms embraced through the Kyoto Protocol. The Protocol was designed

around a complicated international carbon trading system (UNFCCC, nd). The Protocol divided countries into two categories: developed and developing nations. The division of countries was also to parse out responsibilities, as it was deemed important at the time to allow developing countries to continue to develop less burdened by international commitments to carbon reductions. When the Protocol was created, developed nations participating in the Protocol were provided certain emissions credits, which represented the cap on emissions that participating nations were allowed to produce. In the European Union, where Kyoto's impact was largest, these credits were then distributed nationally as convoluted property rights to industries that tend to be the greatest emitters (Charman, 2008). Those industries that did not use all of their credits were allowed to sell these credits internationally at a profit. Carbon reductions became a new strategy for global capital accumulation.

The division of nations also allowed for a "spatial fix" to developed countries' emission problems (Bumpus and Liverman, 2008, p. 134). The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and the concept of Joint Implementation (JI) were major components of the international agreement. These two concepts functioned to push carbon emissions out of the developed worlds' accounting books and into those of the developing world, or in the case of JI, on to the accounting books of former Soviet Bloc countries. As with most commodities, reductions were cheaper when not produced in the global north. Therefore, to be most cost-effective, it makes economical sense for carbon reduction projects to be constructed elsewhere. The vast majority of projects to date have been

conducted in China and India<sup>5</sup> (UNEP Risoe, 2012). The CDM and the JI mechanism specified the kinds of projects that theoretically amount to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. These projects, which were sold to interested parties on the open market, are referred to as offsets. A recent document specified 184 possible classifications of projects spanning from bio-fuel integration in manufacturing processes to public transit to reforestation (UNFCCC, 2010). The theory of these projects seems sound, but they are undermined by operating under the auspices of capital accumulation and a newly formed “carbon market.” As Larry Lohmann put it, the greater carbon market “involves some of the most arcane and convoluted technical, legal and intellectual exercises ever devised in the service of perpetuating inequality and environmental folly” (Lohmann, 2006 p. 221). Put simply, Lohmann’s perspective is that carbon markets distort the meaning of “climate change” by making it about how to benefit capital rather than how to avert catastrophic climate change.

Many academic theorists have written about these issues with the CDM and other offset projects (Bachran, 2004; Charman, 2008; Lohmann, 2006; Patterson, 2010; Smith, 2007). The issues discussed in the academic literature are largely about the reduction claims or the dispossession of community resources through offsetting. Heidi Bachran (2004) framed these two problems as “Climate Fraud and Carbon Colonialism.” Both can be observed through different offset projects outlined by Lohmann (2006, pp. 302-328).

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<sup>5</sup> Analysis of the CDM projects shows that, as of May 1, 2012, 67.5% of the all CDM projects occur within China and India, where China represented 42.7% and India represented 24.8% of projects. South America accounted for 10.3% with Brazil representing the majority of the projects (UNEP Risoe, 2012).

For example, a World Bank Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) and CDM project<sup>6</sup> in Brazil involved an otherwise profitable company, Plantar, operating large eucalyptus plantations and claiming the need for offset money to maintain its current business structure. That structure was based on harvesting the eucalyptus to make charcoal, which in turn was used to make pig iron for a number of industrial applications; the company was threatening to switch to coal, which is considered more carbon intensive, and then to leave its large plantation field unkempt. Plantar was able to claim this as a Prototype Carbon fund project because bio-fuels such as eucalyptus trees, regardless of how sustainably they are grown, are considered to be carbon neutral.

The Plantar project is a paradigmatic example of climate fraud. Firstly, all offsets must meet a criterion of additionality, which means that the projects that produce the offsets would not occur without the offset money. Projects are required to meet this criterion because the logic of the system is set up such that buyers want to mathematically remove carbon emissions from their books. Projects must prove that there was some financial barrier. Arguing that Plantar required the money to continue business as usual seems odd in the context of reducing the carbon footprint of an economy. Yet, a Norwegian consulting group successfully made the argument to the PCF decision makers, suggesting that burning coal was more cost-effective (Lohmann, 2006, pp. 304-306).

The second issue is calculating a carbon baseline that informs the scale of the reduction, which is especially convoluted in this case. The company had never used coal

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the PCF is an institutionally separate structure from the CDM. However, as indicated on the World Bank website, the PCF operates “within the framework of the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) or Joint Implementation (JI)” (World Bank, nd).

previously. Therefore, baseline data translates to the “most plausible” assumptions and estimations (Lohmann, 2006, p. 305). Lohmann describes the problem further:

[The baseline calculations are] essentially arbitrary. What’s more, even if Plantar could prove that it was avoiding the use of a quantifiable amount of coal... it would still have to prove that the coal would not be used somewhere else for 10, 50, 100 or 300 years. Or it would have to quantify the extent to which its local avoidance of fossil fuels was helping indirectly to build an alternative, non-fossil energy economy worldwide. In the end, it’s anybody’s guess how Plantar’s carbon credits are related to climate.

Lohmann troubles the notion that the reductions are real, distressing the validity of the process in its entirety.

In addition to the concerns over the calculation of baselines and claims of additionality, Patterson (2010) presents two more distinct problems. Drawing on Kevin Smith (2007), Patterson argues that there are major concerns regarding the ability of companies to accurately account for the amount of carbon that will be absorbed by forestry projects such as this, and second, there are concerns about the timelines. That is, carbon is theoretically absorbed, and therefore offset, over a number of years, but the emissions are occurring now (Patterson, 2010, p. 353). The fact that these projects’ real effects are so ambiguous could account for why the field of offset financing grew so quickly in the 2000s (Patterson, 2010, p. 354).

The neo-colonial aspects to these Prototype Carbon fund and Clean Development Mechanism projects are also quite striking<sup>7</sup>. As Bachran (2004) notes about the Plantar offset project:

Long-standing exploitative relationships and processes are being reinvigorated by emissions trading. Indigenous communities, fisher folk, and other marginalized rural Brazilian peoples were systematically removed from land during the colonial obsession with plantations (p. 8).

Lohmann (2006, pp. 311-320) provides further details indicating that areas previously used for food and smaller scale local production were, under the Brazilian dictatorship, leased to plantation companies. Now Plantar, a company which has had continuous problems with regulatory bodies for using child labour, has filled those areas with eucalyptus trees, and used the local population as a disposable workforce to apply harmful pesticides and fungicides, harvest the trees, and make the charcoal. Given the level of dispossession, little else is available to the locals other than sparse and dangerous employment with Plantar (Lohmann, 2006, pp. 316-317).

As Lohmann suggests, the carbon markets are arcane and exploitative. The UNFCCC document dedicated to specifying the methodology for 184 separate project classifications of CDM projects clearly displays this expert obscurity, which mobilizes biological, sociological, and economic disciplines all in the service of counting carbon for the open market. Furthermore, there are expensive international certification processes

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<sup>7</sup> While Plantar received money from the PCF for *not* switching to coal (World Bank, nd-1), it also received money from the CDM for replanting the trees it harvested, and would then harvest again, to make charcoal (UNFCCC, 2012).

(related to ISO 14065 and 14066) to guarantee the regulation of the carbon counting, and other aspects of CDM projects. Highly expert knowledge is required to understand the nature of the carbon market, and the technical discourses created diffuse the urgency of climate change as a worldwide policy issue and disable political discussion.

### **Ecological modernization**

Ecological modernization, a concept described in Maarten Hajer's (1995) influential work, reflects the enviro-capital coalition referred to in the introduction of this thesis. The discourse of ecological modernization generally refers to solutions to ecological dilemmas like climate change as "win-win;" pollution is the result of economic inefficiencies and therefore prevention pays (Hajer, 1995). Thus, there is no structural issue with our institutions that manage and promote capital accumulation. Rather, the ecological problems are a challenge to institutions such as private enterprise.

The history of the discourse suggests that the current state of environmental politics—those represented in the Kyoto mechanisms—is the result of a fundamental re-description of environmental problems from their development in the 1970s. Hajer studied the development of discourse in environmental politics. He pointed to three publications in the 1970s as the major canonized texts of the time. Those were the Club of Rome's *Limits to Growth* (1972), the special issue of *The Ecologist* later republished as *Blueprint for Survival* (1972), and E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973). All three present a grim picture for the trajectory of modern society, and present the issue as a matter of global survival. In fact, *Blueprint for Survival* and *Limits to Growth* use a computer model that predicted deteriorating global productivity in relation to ecological decline. However, there are also major differences between these texts. *Limits to Growth*

was written for an elite audience and provided a critique of global resource use with the increased application of global scientific management techniques as the solution; *Blueprint for Survival* and *Small is Beautiful* were written for more radical audiences as they presented a broader critique of modern society and suggested a decentralized and less technologically-focused form of governance (Hajer, 1995, pp. 78-94). These latter titles helped to provide a critique of technology and Western concepts of progress and helped drive radical social movements of the time.

By the end of that decade, in large part due to the economic crisis, environmental politics began to shift. Hajer (1995, pp. 94-95) outlines four reasons for the shift: the economic crisis, the professionalization of environmentalists, the emergence of issues like acid rain and diminishing ozone layer that did not easy translate into people's material lives, and the availability of an alternative discourse—all of which contributed to the transition. The alternative discourse Hajer describes in detail was created during the early 1980s by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the World Wildlife Fund and supra-national organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). These organizations, through their committees and conferences, produced a number of documents embracing the economic possibilities for reduction of environmental harm; technological change, preventative environmental management, and economic growth became intertwined and considered to be mutually reinforcing. This discourse mitigated the challenge to modernity and its institutions of nation-states, supra-national government, capitalism etc. Instead, this discourse constructed ecological dilemmas as

matters of inefficiencies in the system versus the more radical system overhaul suggested by environmentalists in the 1970s.

The newly professionalized environmentalists had migrated from the mind frame of critique in the 1970s to policy solutions. Issues like acid rain and global warming required complicated computer models in order to understand and thus justified more expert-based and largely depoliticized solutions. One of the most noted developments of the time was the Brundtland Report of the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), often referred to as *Our Common Future* (1987), which remains a canonized text in modern environmental politics. The Brundtland Report is widely cited as the document that generated the concept of "sustainable development," which is defined broadly as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"(WCED, 1987) The term "sustainability," which has become institutionalized and operates in the discourses of governments, businesses and NGO, can be sourced to the Brundtland Report.

Briefly summarizing the history of eco-modernization provides two observations about current-day environmental politics. Through the changes that occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s, anticipatory policies came to the forefront. Policy moved from the reaction-based environmental management and end-of-pipe technologies to preventing the pollution from being created in the first place. This is where we can see the emergence of climate mitigation policy constructions like Kyoto. The move to prevention also resulted in an opening of scientific claims with precautionary principle, which suggests that instead of positive proof of harm, policy makers should require proof that

harm is not done. The notion of prevention tied in profit through the idea of efficiency. Put simply, because energy use costs and pollutes, using less prevents and pays. The concept of efficiency does not even require the integration of pollution in order to be valuable discursively, and as such it is a very influential concept.

The second observation is that technocratic policies became prominent. However, “[working] with the grain of the time,” as Hajer (1995, p. 98) put it, these strategies became augmented with complementary economic policies. The technocratic approach suggested in *Limits to Growth* was hierarchical, rational and modeled after constructions of the nation-state that limited the operation of the free market. This approach was integrated into the increasingly dominant neo-liberal concepts of economic efficiency, commodification and individualization (e.g. the polluter pays principle). Any devolution of governance was from governments to the markets. These were the terms under which environmentalists could have a dialogue with corporations and policy makers.

### **Political Economy of Kyoto**

It remains an irony that the European Union and most other parties that were to eventually endorse the Kyoto Protocol market mechanisms initially rejected the concepts. As several authors have indicated, the carbon market concepts were actually the result of American influence (Lohmann, 2006; Paterson, 2009; Levy and Egan, 2003; Hovi et al., 2003). The story about the treaty creation lays clear the neo-liberal hegemonic influence on climate policy.

As an introduction to the political economy of the Kyoto treaty, I offer the historical event of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) employee Dr.

Jim Hansen's testimony before a congressional committee during an especially acute heat wave in 1988. Hansen, who had become an expert on the greenhouse effect through research on the planet Venus, testified that humanity was now beginning to witness the effects of ever-increasing fossil-fuel use on our climate. Prior to Hansen's work in 1988, it was believed that a reliable difference in global temperature would not be observed until sometime early in the 21st century. Politically, Hansen's testimony served to raise awareness about anthropogenic climate change among governments and civil society.

After Hansen's testimony, powerful automobile and oil companies quickly took stock of the situation (Levy and Egan, 2003). In Gramscian terms,<sup>8</sup> these companies represented a historic bloc that functioned to underscore the stability of accumulation in the Western world and provide legitimacy to the accumulation process. Despite the shift in the 1980s toward a financial regime of accumulation (Carroll and Little, 2001), what were largely manufacturing and petroleum extraction companies maintained significant influence. Fossil fuel use underscored their business; any limits on emissions threatened their markets. For environmental issues like ozone depletion, caused by chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), there was a simple solution—replace the CFCs with non-ozone-depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). But there was no easy replacement or substitution for the fossil fuel market.

In response to the growing awareness of climate change, the Global Climate Coalition (GCC) was formed in 1990, representing forty of the largest companies operating in the United States (Levy and Egan, 2003). The group began lobbying the American government and contesting the issue in North American civil society through a

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<sup>8</sup> Please see page 35 of this paper for more details on Gramsci's theory.

number of advertising campaigns. In the early 1990s, the group employed the now-infamous strategy of contesting the nature of the scientific consensus about human-caused climate change and the credibility of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The GCC actions formed the basis of corporate political strategy in the early through mid-1990s, though later large mergers were also a notable defensive strategy of corporations like Daimler-Chrysler and Exxon-Mobil that needed to diminish the burden of risky investments such as renewable energy and fuel cells (Levy and Egan, 2003).

As Levy and Egan (2003) show, the GCC lost the contest for international credibility. The struggle that took place largely in the North American political environment failed to remove emission targets from the international negotiation table in the lead up to the climate conference in Kyoto in December of 1997. By 1997, the IPCC had already reached a point of perceived integrity partially because industry was not considered to be a trustworthy source regarding climate science and partially because, as Lohmann put it, the IPCC approach is a marriage of the natural sciences and neo-classical economic theory (Lohmann, 2008). That is, the approach suggested that there was money to be made through climate mitigation. Kyoto exemplified ecological modernization.

During the lead-up to Kyoto, the American delegation argued that industrial countries should have flexibility in meeting their reductions targets. Interestingly, Brazil had originally suggested the creation of a Clean Development Fund, which industrialized countries would have to pay into in the event that they did not meet their reduction targets, and which had general support among participating nations (Lohmann, 2006, p. 51). However, the American negotiation team constructed a counter-argument that

revolved around the “flexibility” that trading carbon provides (Lohmann, 2006, p. 51). The international delegates at Kyoto accepted the American argument in the interest of having them sign on to the Protocol (Liverman, 2009, p. 293). Thus, the Clean Development Fund became what is now called the Clean Development Mechanism.

All the same, the GCC was able to affect the North American political climate. They achieved support from a number of American Congress members, the effect of which was the passing of the Byrd-Hagel bill (1997) prior to the actual Kyoto conference declaring that the US Government would not sign any protocol that contained hard emissions reduction targets. Thus, the American negotiators leading up to, during, and after the Kyoto conference were not trying to influence the treaty to a point at which it would be feasible to achieve US government acceptance. Instead, they were arguing for a treaty that would be conceivable for them to sign in the future, under different political circumstances (Paterson, 2009, p. 143).

The American position on climate policy reflects the dominance of the discourse surrounding neo-liberalism in North America. The inference is that the American negotiators, and the entire hierarchy influencing that negotiation, believed either a) that the more “flexibility” that existed around meeting the emission targets, the easier it would be to garner support for the treaty, or b) that more “flexibility” would actually result in the greatest emission reduction. Again, “flexibility” refers to market involvement and the maximization of utility. In classic neo-liberal terms, trading through open markets is the most efficient possible solution. This is especially interesting when juxtaposed with the Europeans, who initially argued for hard emission targets and against the primacy of emissions trading, which they suggested, would use the market to justify inaction on a

national level (Lohmann, 2006, p. 54). The European Union (EU) argued from the normative standpoint that domestic emission reductions should be the primary focus.

In the years following the creation of the Kyoto protocol, the EU's stance moved incrementally toward the American position. During the original Kyoto negotiations, the Europeans capitulated to the increasing prominence of market mechanism to keep open the possibility of American integration into the treaty. However, as Loren Cass explains, the convergence of pressure from members of European industry regarding the true cost of domestic emission reductions and the United States officially rejecting Kyoto lead EU governments to "promote emissions trading as a legitimate strategy to meet the Kyoto target. Emissions trading was reframed from an illegitimate attempt to shirk responsibilities to reduce domestic emissions into the best option to salvage the Kyoto Protocol without American participation" (Cass, 2005, p. 40). The juxtaposition also extended the actions of industry in Europe where, for example, Germany was able to secure a "voluntary" decrease in the carbon emission per kilometer and bring the promise of domestic reduction to the rest of the EU (Levy and Egan, 2003, pp. 820-821). At the turn of the century, the EU stepped into a clear leadership role in the commoditization of the climate.

Europeans companies also led a shift in their historic bloc. A prominent member of the GCC, British Petroleum (BP), issued a statement to civil society regarding the nature of climate science in 1997, effectively ending its participation in the Coalition. The statement included the following:

The time to consider the policy dimensions of climate change is not when the link between greenhouse gases and climate change is conclusively proven, but when the possibility cannot be discounted and is taken seriously by the society of which we are part. (Browne, 1997, as cited in Levy and Egan, 2003, p. 820.)

BPs statement evoked the precautionary principle, a concept applied to environmental issues at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and which suggests that instead of positive proof of harm, policy makers should require a policy proof that harm is not done. This defection set off the breakdown of the GCC and the reorganization of the many carbon-intensive companies around ecological modernization (Levy and Egan, 2003, pp. 821-824).

In many ways, the ongoing story of Kyoto is about legitimacy in governance. Under neo-liberal hegemony, markets and accumulation remain at the center of policy construction, but climate change poses a serious challenge. Not only do emission targets threaten the profits of carbon-intensive organizations, but the effects of climate change, be they drought, ocean acidification, extreme weather events, etc., threaten to undermine the political and environmental stability upon which capital accumulates more generally. Insurance companies, who “were particularly concerned by the rise in payouts to extreme weather events, and the possibility that such increases would rise and undermine the viability of their business” (Paterson, 2010, p. 358), are the prime example of those companies threatened by the changing climate; food producers are another. Around the time of Kyoto, many around the world began to question the legitimacy of what Paterson refers to as “carboniferous capitalism,” which refers to a political economy based around the consumption of fossil fuels (2001, p. 16). The notable exception is North America

largely because of the political gains made by industrial lobbies like the GCC in the United States, which has acted as a lead in maintaining the historic bloc of carboniferous capitalists in the wake of ecological modernization in the EU (Patterson, 2009)

The solution to the legitimacy problem was found in ecological modernization and the “ecological regime of accumulation” (Paterson, 2010). Paterson suggests, as I have above, that this struggle for legitimacy mirrors developments of the New Deal in the 1930s. Paterson writes,

On the one hand, accumulation depends on exploitative processes that extract surplus value from labour, and commodify all sorts of aspects of life (human and otherwise). On the other hand, capitalism frequently attempts to legitimize itself through essentially egalitarian notions of rights and utility. (Paterson, 2010, p. 349)

Within the struggle for legitimacy, the capitalist narrative attempts to guarantee universal benefit of those egalitarian notions. However, the narrative is incommensurable with the realities of capitalism, and continues to lead to crises of legitimacy. As Paterson (2010, p. 350) shows, when capitalists are confronted with crises regarding the nature of accumulation, as they were in the early 20th century with worker’s demands, they “attempt to create forms of accumulation which are regarded as ‘more’ legitimate.”

Capitalism as a system continually works to overcome the alienation experienced in relation to commodification and nature of wage labour, all while maintaining the necessary relationships of private ownership, exploitation, and imperialism required to make the system function. This pattern of alienation is the basis of the Marxist critiques

provided above. In general, the effects of capitalist accumulation are problematic for the vast majority of people and the environment—global disparity in wealth and ecological dilemma such as climate change are the result of our modern economic development. The sense that the system is somehow illegitimate as a result is not a new concept. Carbon markets are the latest in a series of responses to the sense of alienation and illegitimacy among civil society. However, market function to generate capital as their primary motive. The centrality of accumulation and the contradiction inherent exist in carbon markets.

### **British Columbia's Climate Compromise**

Taking the lead from the international climate agreements, the BC Government has constructed the majority of its climate initiatives around the market. The first pillar of its policy structure is the BC carbon tax. Conceptually, the tax attempts to internalize within the market the environmental harm that results from current trends of energy use in BC; taxing the problem creates negative feedback, so individuals will elect not to do whatever is taxed, and the problem will diminish. However, in isolation, taxing a problem does not always result in prevention. For example, taxes on alcohol or cigarette consumption show the failure of price signals to prevent consumption (Stanford, 2008, pp.178-179). One of the reasons for this is because there is a substantial social component to consumption. Another major concern about carbon taxes is the effect of the tax on different income levels. A tax can either be progressive, in that it affects higher incomes proportionally more, or regressive, in that the tax burden falls proportionally more on lower income individuals. The BC carbon tax has been shown to be a regressive tax in that the least wealthy 20% of the population will proportionally pay the highest cost while the

wealthiest 20% of BC citizens will benefit the most (Lee and Sanger, 2008, p. 12). The regressive nature of the tax is a result of the BC Government's decision to make the carbon tax "revenue neutral" through initiatives that include tax cuts (Lee and Sanger, 2008).

It is difficult to understand why an environmentally motivated carbon tax would be constructed as "revenue neutral." However, when we observe the trends towards neo-liberalism governance in Canada, the motivation becomes clear. Neo-liberalism represents an ideological shift towards open and unrestricted market economies less inhibited by the actions of the state, and toward private enterprise. William Carroll and William Little (2001) show convincingly that beginning in the 1980s, there was a transition in Canadian public institutions towards privatization and the elimination of publicly funded services. The transition included a shift away from an employment- (or people-) focused financial policy to one focused on inflation. Governance in Canada, which was previously oriented to a communitarian capitalist regime, became focused on "free decision-making capacities of individuals" within the confines of a market economy (Carroll and Little, 2001, p. 47). Through discourse around deficits and free-trade in the 1980s and 1990s, Canadian identity was recreated and international capital investment and free market logic became dominant over citizenship as neo-liberalism established a "limited hegemony" in Canada (Carroll and Little, 2001).

The revenue neutral BC carbon tax is best understood as neo-liberal in two ways: a) it focuses on the actions of the individual through increasing the price of fuel thus preventing carbon emissions through market price signals; and b) through mechanisms like tax cuts, the money is removed from the public sphere and put back in the hands of

individuals who can use the money to invest in whatever private enterprise they choose. Revenue neutrality of an environmentally motivated carbon tax thus seems the result of the limited hegemony of neo-liberalism. The revenues from the tax could have been used within the public sphere to offset the regressive effect of the carbon tax on low-income individuals and, for example, to increase access to public transit, or toward development of low carbon energy sources (Lee and Sanger, 2008, p. 16). However, based on the neo-liberal ideology, the Government of BC decided to put money back disproportionately in the hands of wealthy individuals and created a regressive carbon tax.

The Pacific Carbon Trust is the second institutional pillar of BC climate policy (Moffat 2009). The Trust was created in 2008 by the BC Government with an investment of \$25/tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e that was produced in the 2007-2008 fiscal year through official government travel (Province of BC, 2007a). Later that year the Government of BC created legislation regulating its own operations. The public sector organizations were required to begin by cataloguing their emissions, then reducing their emissions, and finally offsetting what they could not reduce (Province of BC, 2008a). This legislation formed BC's Carbon Neutral Government strategy, which is tied directly to the Trust. To date, public sector organizations have been universally unable to reduce their emissions to zero, so in order to achieve yearly carbon neutrality on an ongoing basis, public sector organizations are required to pay the regulated market rate—which is \$30 as of 2012 (Province of BC, 2008a) to the Trust for every tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e that they did not reduce, thus providing the PCT with its with ongoing funding. In the first year, \$18,244,575 was transferred from the budgets of school, universities, hospitals, ministries, and crown corporations to the PCT, where that money would be used to pay otherwise profitable

hotels, cement plants, forestry companies, and other private organizations to undertake projects that would *theoretically* only exist because of funding from the PCT (Province of BC, 2011).

The mandate of the Trust is to “deliver quality BC-based greenhouse gas offsets to help clients meet their carbon reduction goals and to support growth of this industry in BC” (Pacific Carbon Trust, 2012b). The guidelines of the first part, established to ensure the “quality” of BC carbon offsets, are entrenched in the Emission Offsets Regulation of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act. This aspect of the mandate helps the Trust mimic the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and set itself apart from the voluntary carbon market, which is often considered to produce lower quality offsets. The assurance of “quality” is meant to guarantee the authenticity and validity of an offset.

Any project for the Trust must meet its guidelines for determining “quality.” There are 6 guidelines (Pacific Carbon Trust, 2010):

1. The offset project must occur within the borders of BC.
2. The offset potential must be determined to be real and quantifiable according to an independent third party that is certified by the International Accreditation Forum with regard to the regulation of CO<sub>2</sub>e calculations (ISO regulation 14064-3) before it will even be considered as a possible offset project by PCT.
3. The offset project must abide by the principle of “additionality” in that the returns received from becoming a PCT offset project “helps the project to overcome, or partially overcome, obstacles to carrying out the project” (Pacific Carbon Trust, 2010, p. 8).

4. The offset project's emission reductions must be reported by the project developer and verified by an independent third party that is again certified by the International Accreditation Forum with regard to the regulation of CO<sub>2</sub>e calculations (ISO regulation 14064-3).
5. It must be confirmed that the offset project's emission reductions have never been considered in another offset project, and hence that the reductions are only counted once.
6. The project developer must prove clear ownership of the offset project emission savings.

The “quality” enshrined in the Trust's mandate privileges the knowledge produced through quantification, which suggests that climate change is only defined numerically. It is true that climate change has been largely defined as such through climate science and complicated computer models. It is little wonder that the definition of advancements in climate policy is a technical process requiring the verification by expensive authorities as required by the Trust. As Hajar (1995, p. 11) suggests, conceptualizing ecological dilemmas in such a technical way “requires an almost unprecedented trust in experts and in our political elites, at the same time as this trust is continually undermined by scientific controversies and political indecision.” These include the political and scientific controversies described by authors cited above (Bachran, 2004; Charman, 2008; Lohmann, 2006; Patterson, 2010; Smith, 2007).

The reification of expert authority affects the applicability of offsets. For example, a “viable” project must be a particular size. The Trust suggests that “it is difficult to make small projects economically viable” (Spence, 2010) and that it requires a

“significant [number of] offset tonnes” (Moffat, 2009) before it will invest. This is a result of the substantial cost of certification and verification. Initial certification is suggested to cost approximately \$20,000 per offset project or project group, and yearly verification per project or project group is suggested to cost another approximately \$20,000 (Golder Associates, 2009). This privileges the authorities’ position in the definition of climate change as well as the position of larger economic players in their ability to mitigate and to profit from doing so. The extension of this logic means that the BC government’s carbon neutral strategy, and the PCT by extension, entail a kind of accumulation by dispossession. The PCT uses what would otherwise be capital applied to public education, health, or governance generally, to fund large emitters. In fact, a substantial number of the initial projects were focused on hotels, which were for the benefit of people who explicitly do not live in that community.

The PCT is largely a reproduction of the UN’s CDM bureaucracy in concept. Both are based around offsets and require guarantees of “quality,” and indeed have a specific vetting process to guarantee said “quality.” With both it is impossible to avoid the questions regarding the validity of the projects. But the character of the PCT is different. Notably, the offsets are required to occur in BC. The concept of the “spatial fix” suggested above<sup>9</sup> does not fit, nor does the logic of the offsets as articulated through the UN negotiations. In fact, as a result of being a geographically defined market it may be said that the PCT’s mandate is to specifically provide more costly offsets than the CDM or any of the voluntary offset markets. However, the BC government was clear that the PCT was established in order to stimulate the development of the carbon market in

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<sup>9</sup> See page 9 of this paper.

BC (Province of BC, 2008a). Through various initiatives such as the Western Climate Initiative, BC is attempting to integrate the BC carbon market into international markets, thus following the neo-liberal pattern of privileging the flow international capital; doing so is assumed to enable carbon reductions, though that is a dubious assumption.

The Climate Action Charter, announced in the fall of 2007, was an initiative of the BC Government that expanded the Carbon Neutral Government strategy to municipalities. This, in turn, expanded neo-liberal ideology through carbon offsetting, but it was not a coercive policy measure. The Charter was a voluntary initiative to municipalities elected to agree; furthermore, it was “not intended to be legally binding or impose legal obligations on any Party” (Province of BC, 2007). This was an exhortation to municipalities to be part of the solution, or for the Province and municipalities to “work collaboratively,” as the Charter describes. Those municipalities that signed on to the Charter committed to a solution that entailed being carbon neutral in terms of their operations by 2012.

Though the majority of municipalities signed on to the Charter, the Province of BC introduced an incentive in 2009 for to those municipalities who had yet to sign on. It is a rebate program called the Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP). CARIP provides the same carbon tax rebate to municipalities that “revenue neutrality” offers to tax payers. The municipalities pay the carbon tax just like any consumer of fossil fuels, which ends up in the general revenue of the Government of BC. The carbon tax money that the municipality indicates that is has paid through a tax form submitted to the Government of BC is refunded to the municipality. This incentive is only issued to those municipalities who are signatories to the Climate Action Charter. Up to the point

where incentive was introduced, 70% of the municipalities had signed on the Charter.

Currently, Charter signatories account for 95% of all BC municipalities (Province of BC, 2012a).

## **Conclusion**

Despite Kyoto-esque policies being implemented in select areas around the world such as in BC, internationally the Kyoto protocol has failed to achieve supra-national consensus as signatories like Canada and the United States did not act on or even ratify the treaty.

The failure was compounded at the Copenhagen Climate Conference in December 2009, which reflected the inability of both the market and states to deal with climate change.

Governments could not work within the Kyoto protocol's framework of carbon reduction, arguably because countries like Canada are too linked with capitalist industry generally, and the petroleum industry specifically. The "carboniferous capitalism" pattern is especially strong in relation to North America industry (Patternson, 2001). This pattern has held, with the Government of Canada officially pulling out of Kyoto in 2011.

Following the Copenhagen Climate Conference, a group of academics met at the London School of Economics to produce a report calling for a departure from Kyoto climate policy (Prins *et al.*, 2010). Within climate change policy there are two sometimes interrelated goals: adaptation, which refers to efforts to deal with the effects of climate change, and mitigation, which refers to efforts to prevent climate change. The Kyoto protocol focused largely on mitigation. Prins *et al.* (2010) suggested a focus on adaptation. Their report had three main tenets: a) to create policy with the aim of improving human quality of life that had the co-benefit of reducing carbon emissions instead of the other way around; b) to fund green energy projects with the end goal of

providing cheap renewable energy for the entire world; and c) to actively create climate adaptation policy instead of focusing on policies of climate mitigation.

The Prins *et al.* (2010) policy prescription, though divergent from both carboniferous capitalism and eco-capitalism, is based firmly within the context of capital and capitalist growth scenarios. It focused specifically on fossil fuels and the need for investment in reducing human harm as a result of climate change and in the research and development of an alternative source of energy. Jim Stanford (2008) provides a similar approach absent of any inherent contradiction between sustainability and the logic of capitalism. Despite the need for continual economic growth and the many flaws of the capitalist system, he suggests that it could be made environmentally sustainable. The problem is pollution, which is defined as an unwanted industrial by-product (Stanford, 2008). As opposed to Prins *et al.* (2010), Stanford expresses doubt about the capitalist system in terms of equity and sustainability, but acknowledges the potential for investment in ‘green’ technology and environment rehabilitation that would help mitigate pollution and satisfy the condition for growth within a capitalist economy. He states further that this “campaign against pollution would imply a significant expansion of government, public investment, and regulation—all justified by the urgent collective need to slow and stop climate change” (Stanford, 2008, p. 186).

The problem is that capitalism has not created global or even national sustainability or equity. It has created cheap energy relative to the income of some, and pushed many of the environmental problems onto the developing world. Furthermore, during the last 300 years of capitalism, the world has experienced significant ecological degradation, of which climate change is only one example. Capitalism has made the

planet less productive (Leff, 1995), and given its structure, it is highly unlikely to achieve ecological equilibrium.

## Theory

### Eco-socialism

The perspective found in this thesis comes from reflecting on the eco-socialist critique of capitalism (Foster, 1999; Kovel, 2007; Kovel & Löwy, 2001; Leff, 1995; Löwy, 2005; O’Conner, 1998). As with other forms of socialism, eco-socialism requires a productive system based around use-value, or the utility of commodities, as opposed to exchange-value, or the price of commodities. However, eco-socialism also argues further that use-value be based in an ecologically rational productive system.

Contesting a specific policy like a carbon tax from this perspective does not suggest that such a tax is a bad environmental policy. In fact, it is entirely reasonable to expect some kind of engagement with market mechanisms of policy change given the current context. Any question about carbon tax policy is based within a broader capitalist hegemony and has conceptual limits. Carbon taxes are financial mechanisms and therefore if such a policy is agreed to as reasonable, then we are left only with questioning the tax’s equitability: is the tax progressive? Such policy questions are not usually the territory of eco-socialism. As a hegemonic alternative, eco-socialism theorizes any policy that is based within capitalist growth scenarios as problematic. Suggesting that such environmental policy would be successful is like suggesting that economic growth could be completely decoupled from resource use.

Humanity’s relationship with the environment and the ecosphere is theorized as socially mediated through production. This relationship must be made ecologically

rational if equilibrium with nature is to be achieved. As a force of human ecology, capitalism drives the ever-expanding engines of industry toward a ceaseless growth. In fact *capitalism* and *growth* are synonymous. This human-derived growth has helped construct the mounting ecological dilemma now facing the globe.<sup>10</sup> As Joel Kovel (2007) put it:

[There is] an emerging and still incomplete realization that our all-conquering capitalist system of production, the greatest and proudest of all the modalities of transforming nature which the human species has yet devised, the defining influence in modern culture and the organizer of the modern state, is at heart the enemy of nature and therefore humanity's executioner as well (p. vii).

The eco-socialist perspective is that capitalism cannot achieve equilibrium with nature for three reasons: "1) [it] tends to degrade the conditions of its own production; 2) [it] must expand without end in order to exist; and 3) [it] leads to a chaotic world-system increasingly polarized between rich and poor, which cannot adequately address the ecological crisis" (Kovel 2007, 38). These three conditions outline what Kovel calls an "anti-ecological" relationship between humanity and the productive forces in nature. Climate change is the most present manifestation of the ecological dilemma brewing under this relationship.

Humanity's relationship with nature is a social one, meaning that the concept of nature has nearly infinite expressions. Yet from an eco-socialist perspective, nature

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<sup>10</sup> For discussion of the increasing rates of extinction among amphibians and other organisms, see Wake and Vredenburg (2008) who argue that we are facing a mass extinction of amphibians and a possible planet-wide sixth mass extinction.

occupies an ontological position as a productive force. In other words, all life exists in its own right and does not require humanity to substantiate that existence, though human ecology, manifested in the conditions of production, has altered and in many cases irrevocably damaged the state of that life. For example, a classic Marxist perspective is that humanity has a metabolism with nature that has been significantly altered by the effects of soil science (Foster, 1999), among other incursions of technology. There is a great rift in this metabolism, which was previously based on interaction and locally linked ecological cycles. The rift is caused by urbanization, causing the need for fertilizers and other petrol-chemicals to create a world food supply. As John Bellamy Foster (1999) describes, modern cities failed to:

recycle human organic wastes back to the land, as well as the associated break in the metabolic cycle and the net loss to the soil arising from the transfer of organic products (food and fiber) over hundreds and thousands of miles. It was these developments that made the creation of a fertilizer industry necessary. [With] the creation of centralized feedlots, and the replacement of animal traction with farm machinery... [it was] no longer was it necessary to grow legumes, which had the beneficial effect of naturally fixing nitrogen in the soil, in order to feed ruminant animals. Hence, the dependence on fertilizer nitrogen increased, with all sorts of negative environmental consequences, including the contamination of ground water. (p. 400.)

This has led to, for example, the incredible pollution of the Gulf of Mexico through excess fertilizer run-off.

This is not to suggest that ecological systems would remain constantly stable without humanity's presence. Instead, this suggests that there is attributable ecological alteration and damage that is a result of this stage of human history. Virtually no area remains untouched by our current singular economic system, with the overall effect of capitalist expansion leading to the underdevelopment and exploitation of the capitalist periphery (*e.g.* the global south) (Leff, 1995).

### **Gramsci, Foucault and Post-modernity**

This section describes the two major theorists' ideas used in this paper: Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault. This section endeavors to characterize each theorist and briefly discuss the concepts that are applicable to this project. The concepts of ideology and hegemony are used to augment the Foucauldian concepts of discourse and power and create a broadly Gramscian project. The combined analysis of hegemony that results provides an effective mean to analyze the discourse and ideology involved in the creation and activation of a practical municipal offset strategy.

### **Gramsci and Hegemony**

Neo-Gramscian theory provides the basis of this project. Notions of hegemonic and oppositional forces draw the lines between groups and help identify their political difference. Gramscian theory of hegemony based on the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, concentrates on "broad transformative strategies and practices for replacing the rule of capital with a democratic socialist way of life" (Carroll, 2010, p.169). For Gramsci, transformative strategies were represented by the communist revolutionary politics of Italy in the 1920s. However, these strategies did not succeed in Gramsci's time as a result of the rise of fascism and the general decline of socialist

headway in politics after the failure of the socialist revolution in Germany following World War I.

Gramsci's major theoretical preoccupation was to understand the part played by civil society in revolutionary political strategy. A determinist reading of the *Communist Manifesto* (2002), for example, suggests that simply by virtue of the exploitation of labour, the working class would become conscious of its exploitation, start the revolution, and create a socialist system of politics. Politics is not that simple, and certainly was not so simple for Gramsci. As a political prisoner of the fascist regime in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Italy, Gramsci endeavored to understand the reason why swaths of working class people would consent to the suppression of communists and to a government that was hostile to the working class. To that end, Gramsci theorized the concept of hegemony that represents a state in which "spontaneous consent [is] given by [civil society]... to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12). The implication is that in order for transformative strategy to be operable, the group proposing the transformation must already possess some manner of hegemony.

Civil society serves at least two conceptual functions in Gramsci's work. As Levy and Egan (2003, p. 806) observe:

As the ideological arena in which hegemony is secured, [civil society] represents part of the 'extended state' ... However, the relative autonomy of civil society turns the ideological realm into a key site of political contestation among rival social groups and ideas.

Civil society under hegemony represents the political stability of the state, the basis on which the state can operate legitimately, but it also is a terrain on which political battles are fought. Securing hegemony means fighting battles over major institutions, such as education, manufacturing, the media, and in Gramsci's conception, ending in a battle for the state.

New types of intellectuals are crucial to the development and securing of hegemony. Gramsci observed that traditional intellectuals could be described by their social function as purveyors of knowledge, and that the function of many intellectuals was to provide a conceptual basis for the elite's economic and social domination. However, the "intellectual" as a concept could be stretched to include those outside of that traditional social function. Gramsci observes that current social structure is based on the capitalist entrepreneur as the central kernel of society and that these actors create the need for other functionaries and technicians. He describes these functionaries as *specialized* in terms of their societal role. Beyond each person's specialized role, everyone has the ability to be an intellectual. According to Gramsci, each person "has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought" (1971, p. 9). As such, a *specialized* functionary in modern life can become *directive*, meaning political without losing their specialization. Functioning inside societal institutions, yet connected to the working class, these *organic* intellectuals worked to spread revolutionary politics in a "war of position" with the dominant class.

Gramsci saw himself as a revolutionary.<sup>11</sup> His end goal was the transition to a socialist way of life through the construction of an alternative social formation. The concept of hegemony allowed Gramsci to theorize about the “war of position,” which is opposed to a “war of maneuver” or a more outright conflict (Gramsci, 1971, 229). The war of position, while representing a more passive physical resistance, represents a more active conceptual resistance. A war of position embodies the important “long-term strategy” of movement through an attempt to sway the various institutions within civil society toward the movement’s ideology (Levy & Egan, 2003, p. 807). As Levy and Egan suggest: “as in a game of chess, power lies not just in the playing pieces, but in the configuration of forces, and each set of moves and counter-moves presents fresh possibilities to prise open the seams of a historical bloc” (2003, p. 807).

The war of position, and revolutionary politics, is generally contrasted by the Gramscian concept of the “passive revolution,” which refers to change, specifically in the elite structures, but which maintains the rule of capital in the absence of mass involvement. As Carroll observes,

for [Gramsci], the key instance was the *Risorgimento* that brought to Italy a deeply problematic political unification, over the heads of the masses. In our time, neoliberalism played a similar role in the crisis of Fordism and the welfare state which by the late 1970s registered in falling rates of profit and rising state deficits. (2010).

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<sup>11</sup> According to Peter Thomas (2011), a noted Gramscian scholar, Gramsci emphasized politics as central to constructing a worldview, he was oriented toward practical solutions to economic organization, and finally he conceptualized a revolutionary party, not a social democratic and incremental party.

As suggested in the previous chapter, climate policy follows the same pattern. The passive revolution leads to reform without transformation, and in the context of climate policy the passive revolution represents the “greening” of capitalist development.

The passive revolution I refer to represents the sustainable development paradigm and relates closely to the concept of ecological modernization. As suggested above, ecological modernization began to form in the 1970s and emerged as substantive discourse in the late 1980s around development goals that integrated economic, social, and environmental criteria. As Hajer (1995) intimates, ecological modernization organizes development so that environmental “sustainability” pays. Ecological modernization functioned as a positional alternative and provided the basis for the politics of emission reductions (Levy and Egan, 2003; Liverman, 2009; Patterson, 2009). Multi-national corporations opposed to emissions reductions lost the battle for credibility with IPCC in the lead-up to the Kyoto protocol negotiations and many corporations joined the numerous nation-states adopting the position of ecological modernization. Because the rule of capital and growth remained very much central Levy and Egan (2003, p. 823) observed:

Gramsci’s concept of ‘passive revolution’ is particularly apt to describe the way in which major firms and states have made significant accommodations without ceding their dominant market and political positions. The nascent historical bloc is based on a reconfiguration of the alliances among firms, states, NGOs, and assorted professionals, primarily scientists and economists, and a realignment of economic, organizational, and ideological forces.

The passive revolution associated with environmentalism and climate change follows the same trajectory as the previous incarnation of capitalism and does not resolve the conflict between classes that Marx originally drew attention to. Instead, the passive revolution of ecological modernization arguably stabilized the legitimacy of the current social formation (Patterson 2010).

Despite being historically imbedded, the concept of Gramscian hegemony is useful for analyzing modern politics surrounding climate policy. Hegemony provides a theoretical grounding for this project as an investigation into the District of Saanich's offset strategy as oppositional to the rule of capital in climate policy. This project supposes that through this policy, Saanich is creating a strategic space within a neo-liberal policy context where the rule of capital is failing. However, my research does not infer that Saanich is playing an active role in a consciously conceived socialist project through its offset strategy. Though it is clear that Saanich is creating an alternative by displacing the rule of capital, it does not seem plausible to place Saanich within Carroll's (2006) "counter-hegemonic bloc," which involves connections between various subaltern groups and actions of transformative politics. The topic of the research is only a single policy choice, not a greater policy vision of social justice for the municipality. The research is intended to be interpretive of Saanich's alternative vision of climate policy. What the policy means for a counter-hegemonic movement is a focus of this project.

Mark Stoddart's *Wilderness or Working Forest?: British Columbia forest policy debate in the Vancouver Sun, 1991-2003* (2004) provides a theoretical approach useful for this project. In this work, Stoddart (2004) applied a "Gramscian/Foucauldian" hegemonic analysis to news articles about forestry policy. Stoddart based his

methodology in part on a paper by William Carroll and Robert Ratner (1994) that suggested that a neo-Gramscian analysis of hegemony provides a material-based pluralist analysis of “social and political struggles that are signaled by contemporary social movements, while advancing a broadly defined socialist project” (p. 21). Stoddart’s approach is interesting specifically because of the addition of Foucauldian theory. This body of theory, produced by French historian Michel Foucault, provides a post-modern or post-structuralist perspective and diverges from Marxism in many ways. Despite the theoretical issues, which will be discussed below, the use of Foucauldian theory in an essentially Marxist project is apposite.<sup>12</sup> As Stoddart (2004) suggests:

while Foucault's model of power/knowledge may be a useful analytical tool for examining how power is produced, exercised and challenged in a specific research site, Gramscian theory draws our attention to the need to link the politics of discourse with political and economic relationships in the world beyond the text. (p. 68)

As with Stoddart’s work, this project will use theoretical tools found in Foucault’s later work to carry out a broadly Gramscian examination of neo-liberal hegemony within environmental policy in British Columbia.

### **Foucault and Power**

A main element of Foucauldian theory is a rejection of truth in favor of notions of power. As Foucault (1980a, p. 131) states, “truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by multiple forms of constraint.” The constraints are power in the form of knowledge

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<sup>12</sup> This perspective has also been useful for at least two other authors identified by Stoddart (2004): Paul Routledge (1996) in his study of social movements and Steven Gill (1995) in his examination of what he called the trend of the “market civilization.”

activated through discourse. This is not to suggest that saying something makes it true, but rather that whole systems of knowledge and truth come to power through argument, not only among the “powerful,” but also among whole societies. In any given field of scholarship, there are criteria that need to be met for valid knowledge creation. The scientific method is an emblem of these criteria for Western society in general, and in the case of this study, economized knowledge counts as highly valid as well. Foucault uses the term *power* not to denote a subject who has power. “In reality,” said Foucault, “power means... a more-or-less organized, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 198). Instead of placing power in a metaphorical seat, such as that of a sovereign authority, he conceptualized it as a network through which power circulates and is contested.

Foucauldian work is distinctly historical, but not the kind usually associated with the academic discipline of history (Poster, 1985, pp 70-94). The concept of progress has been pervasive in that discipline, and still today there are many histories that recreate the narrative of modernity and its continual and linear progress. Foucault attempted to write the history of social thought, not that of progress. Foucault writes complex histories and does not follow a rational trajectory of modernity, suggesting the each historical development is superior to the last. Instead, he focuses on the disjuncture in historical discourses that leads to a reorganization of political forces. In writing a history of social thought, Foucault’s main goal is to critique, showing the radical shifts in ideas such as rights and science to illustrate the nature of power/knowledge in relation to specific actors.

Foucault theorized an intimate connection between power and knowledge. Certain actors in society, such as the scientist or the doctor, are imbued with power to establish truth through the scientific method. However, their authority is arguably derived historically based on the societal reverence of science within the greater discourse of modernity, and not some inherent ontological reality they are able to reveal as a result of the knowledge they embody. The object of Foucault's work is not to critique the past, but rather, as Colin Gordon said, it is to critique "the status of the present" (1980, p. 241). Specifically, Foucauldian scholars question the rationality of the present by asking how certain present-day institutions are possible. Present-day institutional discourses have specific limits, and the point is to understand, through a process of historical research, how the limits were derived.

Foucault further suggests that the coordinated cluster of relationships that power represents are organized around "regimes of truth" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 132). Foucault describes the regimes as "mechanisms and instances, which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned" (Foucault, 1980a, p. 131). Here he refers to societal constructs as large and pervasive as the notion of rights that individuals in Western societies are presupposed to possess. Concepts like rights or science, among others, contribute to the construction of the relations that reach into everyday activities of people without authority ever having to be exercised to enforce those rights. Power, therefore, is not necessarily imbued in those institutions that enforce rights in a judicial sense. It exists within and among those individuals that make up the cluster of relations and produce power relations. Foucault's analysis does not attempt to

understand how the power of an institution operates, but rather how the regime of truth operates.

The notion of power/knowledge is applicable to the analysis of market relationships and the resistance to those relationships in local settings. Power/knowledge provides the vocabulary necessary to describe the effects of a shift towards eco-modernization of discourse in the Province of BC as well as the District of Saanich. It provides a nuanced understanding about the authorities created through organizational roles and the knowledge that becomes valid as a result. Specifically, economic, quantitative, and mechanical knowledge becomes highly valid. Indeed the solutions to climate change are imagined in those terms. However, power/knowledge also facilitates an understanding of the terms by which a municipality, which is under the direct judicial control of the Provincial Government of BC, can successfully create and implement an alternative policy.

### **Ideology, Counter-hegemony and Discourse**

Foucault presented unique concerns regarding ideology that differ from the perspective taken throughout this project. As an analytical construct, ideology outlines various expectations of the social environment. Hall (1986) defines ideology as:

the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works. (p. 29)

There is a dominant form that ideology takes, but whatever its form, it is constantly being contested. It is similar to the Foucauldian conception of discourse, but there are major differences. Foucault suggested that ideology was not valid as an analytical concept because the discursive events we call ideological are caused by “the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge—methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research” (Foucault, 1980c, p. 102). In other words, what we refer to as ideology is not the result of one person, or even a small group actively constructing strategy, but rather the result of various processes that construct valid knowledge in, for example, the sciences. Foucault explains further that, “power, when it is exercised... cannot but evolve, organise [sic] and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge” (Foucault, 1980c, p. 102). The ideological formations are an effect of the strategic appropriations of the knowledge by powerful discourses. Foucauldian methodology instead attempts to draw out how the limits of a particular discourse’s rationality came into being, and what those limits are.

Hall disagrees with the rejection of ideology. Hall (1986, pp. 29-32) suggests that there are indeed theoretical concerns regarding the way problematic ideas are internalized by the masses. Hall discusses Louis Althusser’s (1969) re-conceptualization of capitalist ideology as a more discursive structure than the original Marxist construction as a “false consciousness” of the working class. Althusser and his followers’ revisions “provided precisely the exit points through which many abandoned the problematic of the classical Marxist theory of ideology” (Hall, 1986, p. 32). A student of Althusser—Foucault is the main example of a theorist who abandoned the problematic of ideology through this

debate. There are especially acute concerns surrounding the concept of false consciousness and distortions of ideology within Marxist theory. The concepts leave unexplained how some are able to know, while others still possess “false” ideas. Hall asks:

Are the “distortions” simply falsehoods? Are they deliberately sponsored falsifications? If so, by whom?...And if ideology is the product or function of “the structure” rather than of a group of conspirators, how *does* an economic *structure* generate a guaranteed set of ideological effects? The terms are, clearly, unhelpful as they stand. They make both the masses and the capitalists look like judgmental dopes. (Hall, 1986, p. 33)

Hall indicates that false consciousness could not apply to society. As such, he revises the concept of ideology by invoking the idea of a moment in the circuit of capital (*e.g.* the purchase of an apple from a local store owner). Because our everyday experiences take the shape of market relations, we end up viewing only these surface relationships, not the macro relationships of production. From such everyday experiences we derive and define the notions of freedoms, equality and property (Hall, 1986, p. 35), all of which have powerful political implications. In fact, concepts like freedom may become defined exclusively by the market in a macro sense as a result of our experience of those micro relationships<sup>13</sup>. Hall makes a simple point: it is not about true and false, but rather “‘partial’ and ‘adequate’” understandings (Hall, 1986, p. 38).

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<sup>13</sup> The notion of the interconnections between micro and macro relationships are credited to Pamela Moss and conversations with other colleagues in a recent graduate seminar.

Hall's revision affects the notion of resistance to the dominant ideology. Hall relates his conception with Gramsci's *war of position* and counter-hegemony. In basing the notion of ideology in everyday life, he suggests that an ideology cannot exist apart from the physical existence of everyday life. An ideology cannot "become materially effective unless and until it can be articulated to the field of political and social forces and to the struggles between different forces at stake" (Hall, 1986, p. 41). In other words, it needs to be articulated as a viable alternative. The micro moments of transaction, like the purchase of an apple, become fractals for our understanding of capitalism on a macro level; as consumers, we imagine that this is what capitalism is. Just as a micro moment in the circuit of capital is connected to the larger economic construction, an alternative ideological construction must have a relatable connection with the everyday (Hall, 1986, p. 41). It has to *make sense* in relation to the current social formations of individual's lives.

Lisa Philipps's (1996) observations about ideology further the application of the concept. She states,

the concept of ideology is helpful in unpacking this relationship between fiscal discourse and larger patterns of social and economic inequality. It best captures the way that technical discourses elide their own politics, asserting their own neutrality while at the same time advancing particular norms about how society should be ordered. (1996 p. 151)

In a feminist study of Canadian fiscal policy in the 1990s, Philipps (1996, p.141) showed that "technical discourses tend to deny the normative content of fiscal law and policy

and...disqualify political opposition to the prevailing fiscal order as irrational, ideological and inept.” She relates these concerns to scientism and scientific forms of knowledge and truth, which attempt to embody a deep objectivity. This view of truth, which pervades Western society, makes notions of legitimacy inaccessible for those who refuse to refer to a subject objectively. When observing the ideological patterns in politics, which attempt to construct or reconstruct social realities, efforts to strategically manipulate political structures become more obvious. In fiscal frameworks mathematics, statistics, and a general numerical reality are reified as objective truths, and flow into market relationships. This discourse provides little room for critique where political issues become “facts of arithmetic” as opposed to nuanced decisions about the world we want to create.<sup>14</sup> Because of the air of objectivity and de-politicization, these forms of truth are difficult to challenge politically. Philipps (1996, p. 153) explains that “women's own accounts... do not carry the same authority as those of a professionally or scientifically trained expert who inevitably reinterprets the women's experience through the lens of the expert discourse.” The same norms of financial formulation of reality that suppress women’s experience are involved in the construction and limiting of climate policy.

Numbers are relevant in policy debates, just as research is generally relevant in decision-making, but how the information gets framed is critical. In terms of climate change, emission numbers are appropriate to guide political decisions, but they should

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<sup>14</sup> In describing technical discourses Philipps (1996) quotes former Canadian Finance Minister Paul Martin from the parliamentary debate on the 1995 Throne Speech, who explained that the Canadian budgetary concerns of the times, which resulted in large budgetary cuts to social program disproportional to the amount of government revenue those programs originally received, were “facts of arithmetic” and not “inventions of ideology.”

not be considered objective. Quantification is a political process of defining the value of a unit. As Deborah Stone (1997) points out, numbers are just as much about what not to count as they are about what to count, and as such they represent an implicitly specified and politically derived reality. Numbers that are put forth to characterize the way something works come with implicit and definite boundaries. Numbers serve a political purpose, and can be manipulated to suggest that reality is ordered a certain way. In many cases these metrics are twisted to serve capital accumulation. Hence, the thought that carbon figures somehow represent an objective truth neglects the normative decisions that went into those numbers in the first place.

As described above, this project's first theoretical diversion from Foucault is the inclusion of ideology. This project also diverges theoretically from Foucault's anti-hegemonic stance, which I will now discuss. As Colin Gordon (1980, p. 256) indicates, "Foucault never locates his theoretical enterprise 'on the side of' resistance... [and] he also consistently refuses to assume the standpoint of one speaking for and in the name of the oppressed." Foucault, despite writing very critically, maintained a philosophical standpoint that there exists no complete interpretation, meta-theory, or correct form of resistance. He argued that a resistance should not look for validation from a theory. Otherwise, it risks engaging in the development of yet another power/knowledge network. Instead, the methodological stance suggests that a movement is valid in its own right, independent of its integration into a larger theory of social change.

Along similar lines, Richard Day (2005) suggests that instead of trying to re-constitute hegemony, social movements should deny the logic of hegemony altogether. This perspective, like Foucault's, embraces dispersed anti-hegemonic resistances in

efforts to create social change. However, as Carroll (2006, p. 32) suggests, this is “not so much wrongheaded as it is incomplete...refusing strategy, leadership, organization, the state.” The state, for example, is part of the givenness of our historical terrain, and therefore it may become necessary for a social movement to engage it. Carroll (2006, p. 32) explains further, “[the] insights [of anti-hegemony]...need to be integrated into a strategically coherent form.” This is the kind of necessary coalition work that feminist Bernice Johnson Reagon (1983) speaks about in relation to the various forms of subalternity when she suggests “we are pretty much come to the end of a time when you can have a space that is ‘yours only’” (Reagon, 1983, 344). Exclusive spaces are meant to be a sanctuary and are created through the political act of identity; they are created as an attempt to mitigate the power dynamics that permeate the social relationships. Her point is that, if the goal is to create change or to resist oppression, then you need to create those difficult connections between movements. There need not be one strategy to rule them all. Indeed such a concept would ignore the Foucauldian insight regarding truth and discourse. However, there does need to be an attempt to build what Carroll (2010) calls a “multi-frontal war of position.”

The focus of this thesis is a policy that is largely standing on its own as a form of resistance. It may be reabsorbed into the great discourse around climate policy in BC or it may disappear altogether. The concepts of counter-hegemony and coalition-building are important because Saanich, and indeed all municipalities, represent fertile ground on which a war of position may be cultivated. Specifically, the perspectives of coalition-building and counter-hegemony suggest that the Saanich alternative policy vision could be integrated into the standpoint of those who oppose the neo-liberalism more generally.

The Saanich policy should enjoy popular support as a simple and functional policy that provides an interpretable logic, and opposes the neo-liberal ideology embodied in carbon offsets.

## **Conclusion**

I have attempted above to construct a version of Foucauldian discourse theory that would, for the purposes of this project, fit within the Gramscian problematic of hegemony.

Approaching climate policy through Gramsci and Foucault in this way stems from the doubt established in an eco-socialist analysis of capitalism, and the “anti-ecological” relationship it produces (Kovel, 2007). The application of a Gramscian analysis of hegemony provides the opportunity to compare the discourse of neo-liberal climate policy with the discourse and ideology involved in the creation and activation of Saanich’s offset strategy. Foucault provides post-modern insights into truth and power relations in society. Integrating his perspective into Gramsci’s theory of hegemony makes it possible to engage with eco-modernization through the concept of power/knowledge and draw connections to the larger structure of neo-liberal capitalism. Specifically, this combined perspective highlights the areas of conflict and ideological variation, as opposed to highlighting the continuity, between Saanich and the Province of BC.

Understanding discourse is critical to this case study. This research about Saanich’s carbon neutral strategy relates directly to Tim Richardson’s discussion about how “power appropriates knowledge, and weaves it into discourses” for the purposes of policy making (1996, sect 1, para. 3). Though policy discussions are normally considered rational applications of truth and knowledge, concepts of truth and knowledge become based on the deployment of power when viewed through Foucauldian discourse theory.

## Method

This research employed a critical analysis of discourse within a case study methodology to examine the coalition between environmentalists and capital. Documents relating to carbon neutrality in BC and Saanich and in-depth interviews with the individuals involved in the creation and deployment of the Saanich carbon neutral strategy provided the data for this thesis. This method endeavoured to characterize and understand the structure of the provincial and municipal climate policies of the Provincial Government of BC and the District of Saanich. This included comparisons between the Province's Carbon Neutral Government strategy and the District's Carbon Fund strategy. Simultaneously, this method sought to explore the role of discourse and knowledge in the creation of policy.

### Case Studies

Research in a case study is defined by what the case is instead of being defined by an a priori hypothesis or research question (Stake, 1978), as is the case with post-positivistic experimental research. Robert Stake (1978, p. 7) discusses case studies as a “bounded system” in which the boundaries of the research topic must always be part of the researcher's considerations. Stake's perspective allows for case studies to be more interpretive as opposed to the binary false/not false of the post-positivist perspective. However, case studies do not dictate a specific methodology; as Stake (2000, p. 435) put it, a “case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied.”

Within the bounded system there is an interest in the particular, and the particulars of a case may be used instrumentally to “provide insight into an issue or to redraw

generalization” (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Understanding a specific case requires investigation into its particular history, informants who know about or were involved, and the physical setting, among other aspects of the bounded system in question (Stake, 2000). The purpose of employing a case study for the proposed research is to provide an in-depth description of a specific aspect of the District of Saanich. Though the specific interest of this research is in the Saanich’s offset strategy, the case study includes the dimensions that influenced that policy (i.e. information provided through the interview by the key informant about Saanich’s approach to climate policy generally, and the history and the stories of the other interview participants, reflections on the interviews, and the discourse surrounding climate policy in BC).

A case study is a fitting strategy to compare the connections between the hegemonic environmentalist-capital coalition in BC and Saanich’s climate neutral strategy. The Saanich policy is dialectically related to the coalition, which functions through the market relationships of capitalism. Whereas the enviro-capital coalition is viewed as a necessary union within environmental politics to create environmental progress, the Saanich policy circumvents market relationships. The enviro-capital coalition follows the same historical trajectory as the current neo-liberal incarnation of capitalism, engaging in the ever-expanding drive to create new commodities with the monetization of the carbon cycle. The Saanich policy does not, and instead actively attempts to create a source of revenue that will decarbonize Saanich’s operations while acting as an example to the community. Further, Saanich invests in programs to reduce the community’s carbon footprint. As such, Saanich’s approach is a different way of recognizing the issue.

The ideological variation of this policy may represent a predisposition towards transitioning from capitalism and thus, in some small part, a path to a future that is not ruled by capital. As Bertell Ollman (1998, p. 344) suggests, the socialist future is hidden within capitalism and even with aspects of society that do not have anything particularly socialist about them, and by examining dialectics, such as the dialectic relationship that exists between Saanich and the Province of BC, the path to a progressive future becomes slightly clearer. Investigating further will provide an understanding of the dissonance of this offset strategy.

### **Discourse, Foucault, and Interviews**

In order to understand Saanich's motivations, the research asked how power is involved in climate policy making in BC. Neo-liberal strategies of policy making in BC have been well documented (Banes, 2004; Carroll & Little, 2001; Philipps, 1996; Teghtsoonian, 2003; Teghtsoonian, 2009). This project sought to examine the discourse of carbon neutrality in BC for elements of neo-liberalism and establish the connection between power/knowledge within that discourse, as well as differences between the BC Government and the Saanich site of discourse.

The research does not entirely depend on an analysis of discourse. Looking critically at the discourse should provide an understanding about how the dominant neo-liberal discourse is resisted through Saanich's climate neutral strategy. This project was also interested in the functioning of the policy. Therefore, the second critical element of the research was to understand how the Saanich alternative is embodied. It was important to get deeper into the policy's creation and activation via interviews with the individuals who constructed and deployed the policy. Through individual interviews, the research

could achieve a greater depth of understanding about this enigmatic case than would be possible using discourse analysis alone.

Interviews are interpersonal creations (Kvale, 1996). This is especially true with qualitative interviews (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011, p. 112). It is important to not assume that interviews will be objective representations of a topic. The researcher is greatly involved in the creation of knowledge through interviews. Therefore, the concerns about research bias involved in interviewing need to be navigated with care. One critique about interviews comes through an article by Andrea Fontana and James Frey (2000), who discuss “gendered interviews” (pp.657-660). The basis of the critique is that “the sex of the interviewer and that of the respondent do make a difference” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 658). This perspective does not only refer to the importance of gender in interviewing but also acts as a window through which to consider various forms of subalternity and its importance in knowledge creation. Gendered interviewing means being conscious of the hierarchy that exists within interviews, where the interviewer is typically dominant and the respondent subordinate (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The critique extends to the way interviews are constructed, suggesting that interviews aimed at objectivity are a masculine approach reinforcing patriarchal power dynamics. The more feminist approach, on the other hand, is to develop a more genuine rapport with the respondent. The concern of gendered interviews is reciprocity and reflexivity in the interview process. The intent of this research was to draw from Fontana and Frey’s (2000) critique by being conscious of the hierarchy established through interviews and researchers’ influence in interview situations through the practice of reflexivity.

This research project employed a critical analysis of discourse. This analysis, as described below, draws on post-1969 Foucauldian discourse theory in relation to notions of genealogy (Foucault, 1980a; Gordon, 1980; Hooks, 2005) with a focus on the context of policy creation (Richardson, 1996). This methodological approach applies notions of power deployment through knowledge used to justify the creation of specific carbon neutral policy.

The concept of genealogy in Foucault's later work was an extension of archaeology (Gordon, 1980). The notion of archaeology, derived from Foucault's earlier work, is "the study of forms of knowledge and rationality at the level of their material manifestation as bodies of discourse composed of finite sets of effective oral or written utterances" (Gordon, 1980, pp. 243-244). The method is historical and past discourses form the rules of discursive formation, or in other words, the inherent logic of the argument. According to Gordon, Foucault expanded this critique to show that there existed a regularity of a discourse beyond his previous topic-specific work that was "enforced through social practices of appropriation, control and 'policing,'" and that there were articulable discursive programmes that construct a world view in western society (1980, p. 245). The added genealogical project broadens the field of Foucauldian theory and forwards a concept of interconnected power/knowledge, as well as notions of subjugated knowledge, which are hidden by broader forces of power.

In terms of method, it is important to note that, as Derek Hook suggests, Foucault doesn't offer a standardized methodology from which to draw, but instead "a set of profound philosophical and methodological suspicions toward the objects of knowledge that we confront" (2005, p. 4). Thus, his method uses a variety of conceptual tools in

analysis and applied several “methodological precautions,” or in other words, what to avoid, but not on a methodology *per se* (Foucault, 1980a). Hook draws out three “principles” of Foucauldian genealogical analysis of discourse, which are useful for defining the method used in this project. First, Hook notes that, as indicated in the previous chapter, discourse is historical. Analysis occurs by interrogating present concepts through history and revealing the conditions under which the concepts formed. Second, genealogical analysis treats discourse as knowledge. Analysis on this aspect occurs through attempting to understand how truth claims are made and what counts as “reasonable knowledge” (Hook, 2005, p. 9). Third, genealogical analysis examines the material results of discourse. How is the discourse implemented and how does the text refer to that implementation? For Hook, the last principle is the most important. The analysis must refer to the discursive effect in the world in order to be relevant. Each of these three elements are addressed through the findings of this project.

Colin Gordon (1980) provides some vocabulary used to further define the method in this project. The vocabulary drawn from Foucault includes the concepts of *strategies* and *technologies* of power (Gordon, 1980, p. 246). Technologies of power are the material effects of discourse. Our example is the technology of carbon neutrality, which, as we have seen, operates to produce specific results of dispossession. Strategies of power operate differently. They represent the appropriation of discursive concepts to create new possibilities within a regime of truth. As Gordon indicates, “discourse is not a medium for strategy but a resource” (1980, p. 251). In functional ways, power strategically appropriates discursive concepts to alter the technological effects.

It is important to note that in this methodological frame, *power* appropriates, not people. Power refers to the effects of networks of people. As such, “it is not that these effects lack an agent but that they lack a programmer” (Gordon, 1980, p. 251). However, this project argues for a reconceptualization, via Stuart Hall, of Foucault within a Gramscian framework. As such, the concept of strategy will be used in two ways. The first is in the Foucauldian sense articulated above, and the second is in the Gramscian sense in relation to counter-hegemony. As indicated above, the project takes a slightly different view on agency through the concept of ideology. In discursive technologies, there does in many ways “lack a programmer.” In other ways, there is in fact an articulable ideological strategy at play. This is the case for both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic movements. Without providing the space for active rational strategy, counter-hegemonic struggles are rendered anti-hegemonic. That is, in order to more fully conceptualize resistance we need to make room for the possibility of programmed resistance.

## **Research Design**

The research design involves three elements: analysis of discourse in a) the documents associated with carbon neutrality policy in the BC government, b) the documents associated with carbon neutrality in the district of Saanich, and c) text from the interviews with the individuals involved in the creation and implementation of Saanich’s Carbon Fund. Three prominent public documents will be examined: *Climate Action Plan* (2008a), *British Columbia: Climate Action for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2010), and *Carbon Neutral BC: Transforming BC’s Public Sector* (2011). These documents span a period since September 2007 when climate policy became a major issue in BC. However, it

should be noted that, while all three documents were analyzed, the *Climate Action Plan* formed the basis of much of the analysis, as it was the document with the most depth, while the others provided mostly redundant descriptions and discursive frameworks. The analysis of the District of Saanich documents from a similar period will be used as a counterpoint. These include Saanich's *Climate Action Plan* (2009) as well as their *Official Community Plan* (2008). These five documents provided the data for the initial stage of the critical analysis of discourse in BC climate policy and importantly, the basis for the understanding of the Provincial Carbon Neutral Government Strategy.

The analysis of discourse in the documents was performed prior to the interviews and helped frame questions for the interviews. The important historical element of the analysis was derived largely from Hajar's (1995) seminal work on ecological modernization in discourse of environmental politics. The documents were coded using a simple format of statements of interest with regard to either descriptive statements about programs or initiatives, or statements of arguments. The latter formed the majority of the data for discourse analysis, while the former provided an understanding of the implementation of the discourse.

The individual interviews were an extension of the analysis of discourse and were in part designed to consider the ideology revealed through the interviews. Other aspects of the interview covered some of the demographics of the respondent, the respondent's role with Saanich; and the respondent's understanding of Saanich's history of climate policy in the case of the key informant. Each interview was conducted using an interview guide and was recorded with an electronic voice recorder. Soon after each interview, the recorded data was transcribed and analyzed individually. The data from interviews

included field notes taken during the interview and a memo written as soon as possible after the interview. The memo served as an expansion on the field notes regarding the non-verbal interactions with the respondent and elements of the setting, and help start the iterative process of analysis. Reflexive data was also captured throughout the research process in a research journal, helping to fine-tune the interview process. The interviews were analyzed using the same method of coding as the documents, which helped construct the Saanich Carbon Fund as a discursive creation, as well as a functioning policy.

Including interviews in this case study helped allow for richer descriptions of the implementation of the Saanich strategy and provided significantly more depth with regard to the discourse surrounding the policy. In fact, though the Saanich documents provided the undercurrent of the climate policy in the District, the interviews provided the main source of the discursive structures. Without the data from the interviews, the discourse surrounding the Fund would have to have been largely inferred from the other policy structures. This is because the Fund is a very small part of the Saanich documents, accounting for a total of two small paragraphs.

A type of snowball sampling procedure was employed to initiate interviews, which means that the first respondent was asked to recommend other respondents. Though snowball sampling is a common procedure to access a network of people, there are some concerns (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). These concerns include “verifying the eligibility of respondents,” “controlling the types of chains and the number of cases in any chain,” and “pacing and monitoring referral chains and data quality” (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981, p. 144). The theme of concerns referenced above is controlling the

selection of respondents. The researcher is responsible for the research goal, but due to the nature of snowball sampling and interviewing, some of that control passes to the individuals involved in the project.

I implemented the above procedure by contacting an employee of the District of Saanich and providing that person with a very broad outline of the project. The individual I spoke with is someone with whom I have had previous conversations and meetings in a professional context. We spoke briefly and he suggested several people as interview candidates. In total four others were mentioned, three of whom immediately seemed relevant. The fourth person mentioned discussed was an individual working outside the organization, which I deemed outside the bounded system of the case study. As such the sample size for this project is small, in the end resulting in three individuals (n=3) who were contacted and agreed to participate in the study. One of the participants represents the project's key informant. Most of the information flowed through this individual. That Saanich employee introduced me to each of the other participants by email, and functioned to choose the relevant people to speak with. For ethical reasons, the names, roles, and histories of those individuals were not included in the description and analysis.

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning I prepared an interview guide (see appendix 1) with specific questions I wanted to ask, but the interviews did not rigidly follow the questions in their written structure, nor the order the questions were written in. These semi-structured interviews also included an interview strategy, which took the form of a memo written the day of the interview. The interview strategy represented the intention of the interview in balancing focus with flow, as well as the iterative nature of conducting successive interviews.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Because this project involves human participants, the research required a review by the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at the University of Victoria. The basis of application to the HREB was the use of informed consent prior to any interview, confidentiality and the protection of the individual's identity, and protection from harm during the project. Because this research proposed to study public officials from an identified BC municipality, extra steps were taken to remove relevant but revealing information to protect individual identities. For example, it is impossible to report details of a respondent's work with Saanich.

Ethical considerations apart from the HREB process are based on this research assuring on-going consent. The main purpose of the research will be to document the ideological construction that gave rise to this policy and to understand the context of the policy as well as the discourse embodied. As such the concerns with power will be addressed through discourse analysis of documents and through an overarching analysis of the ideologies of the respondents. Further, to deal with the concern of reinforcing hierarchy and accuracy, a copy of the transcript and the analysis of the interview were sent to each of the respondents shortly after the interview. This allowed the respondents to clarify anything they had said, or to object if they felt the analysis misrepresented their experience. As a following consideration, pieces of the results section were sent to the participants individually to allow them to comment on my use of their interview transcripts. Clarifications were then made where requested and no conflicts with the transcript or analysis were reported.

## Results

The organization of this chapter is in three parts. The first part introduces the movement toward eco-modernization policies by the BC provincial government. The second part will establish the District of Saanich's history in relation to climate policy and describes the Saanich Carbon Fund as an operating policy. The third section will draw out the discourse of Saanich and the BC government for comparison. It will position the BC government's climate policy discourse in relation to ideology and hegemony while also establishing the positional difference of the discourse in the District of Saanich. The municipal discourse aligns closely with the provincial discourse in a number of ways, but diverges on aspects that make it important for this project. The Saanich carbon neutral strategy, which is represented as the embodiment of the discourse surrounding it, represents resistance to the hegemonic neo-liberal climate policy. In Gramscian terms, the policy difference represents passive revolution, meaningful ideological variation, and a strategic move toward a viable non-market based approach to climate policy within a limited sphere.

### **Moving BC Toward Eco-modernization**

In 2007, the Government of BC joined the ranks of a number of government actors working on climate policy. The policy move was somewhat sudden, given that the governing Liberals in BC<sup>15</sup> had expressed little interest in climate policy previously.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The Liberal Party of BC is a provincial political party that espouses free trade and market-based solutions in line with neo-liberal governance strategies. Despite sharing a common brand, the provincial Liberals share no explicit organizational tie to the federal Liberal party of Canada.

<sup>16</sup> AirCare is the main example of BC's policy about "air pollution." The main function of this program was designed to mitigate smog in Vancouver and the Fraser Valley specifically. The program does not operate outside of the lower-mainland.

The discourse of climate change knit together events such as the large Kelowna wildfires in 2003, the pine beetle infestation in the interior of BC, and the strong windstorm in Victoria.<sup>17</sup> The initial response in 2007 committed the province to reducing the CO<sub>2</sub>e production to 33 percent below 2007 levels by 2020, and by 80 percent by 2050 (Province of BC, 2007a). To meet these goals, the Government of BC created numerous initiatives that cross the spectrum of policy instruments. The majority of these initiatives were created with the budget of 2008. The Government of BC created regulatory and exhortation programs including training for homeowners and businesses through LiveSmart BC, regulations concerning municipal greenhouse gas targets, forestry management changes through the Forest for Tomorrow initiative, and tax expenditures through PST exemptions to reduce purchasing cost of less carbon-intensive energy (such as bio-diesel and ethanol gasoline) for individuals, to name a few. One of the most important regulatory steps that the Government of BC made was to mandate that its own operation become carbon neutral by 2010 and remain carbon neutral thereafter (Province of BC, 2008a). Carbon neutrality was to extend over all educational and health organizations across the province, as well as all government ministries. The initiative was extended to local governments through The Climate Action Charter (Province of BC, 2007b).

The 2008 provincial budget created the BC Carbon Tax, which taxes fuels based on the amount of CO<sub>2</sub>e those fuels release when burned. The BC Carbon Tax is designed to increase over 5 years from its initial rate of \$15/tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e in 2008 to a maximum of \$30/tonne in 2012 (Province of BC, 2008a). This tax provided the basis for the pricing of

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<sup>17</sup> Pictures of these events were featured in the Climate Action Plan (Province of BC, 2008a), which is one of the three key Provincial Government documents analyzed in is project.

CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and the offsets of those emissions (carbon offsets) and served as one of two pillars to the Government of BC's climate policy of mitigation. The budget also created the Pacific Carbon Trust (PCT), a crown corporation created as the exclusive provider for public sector carbon offsets and the second pillar to the Government of BC's climate policy of mitigation (Moffat, 2009). The PCT represents the official formation of the newly minted BC carbon offset industry and of official "carbon neutrality" in BC. These measures have been designed to integrate BC into the international carbon cap and trade system currently being developed through the Western Climate Initiative (WCI) with a number of other states and provinces in North America (Province of BC, 2008b). That said, as of 2012 the WCI process has stalled with only the province of Quebec and the state of California currently participating in the new trade network.

The market integration and the original zealotry of the effort are most notable with BC climate policy shift. Analysis of the policy will show that the initial discourse is focused quite intensely on the opportunity to modernize the market, make it greener, and to exercise better management of the environment through the market. The provincial documents that make up part of the subject matter of this project employ the "win-win" language of ecological modernization and to the challenge that climate change represents to existing markets. It bears mentioning that, as with all discourses, the Provincial discourse around climate policy is not monolithic, nor is it completely market based, globalized, or standardized. The Provincial Government documents attempt to integrate a number of separate projects and initiatives into what I think is best referred to as the BC eco-governmentality. Specifically, the ideas of biking and walking through the "LocalMotion" program, the anti-idling programs, low-carbon choices in the home-

energy systems, education and engagement of youth in relation to “low carbon lifestyles,” and even carbon offsets initiatives among others. The way these different ideas are pieced together in climate policy denotes an individualized worldview, which transition into what Stephen Gill (1995) referred to as the market civilization. A number of scholars have discussed these concepts in relation to Foucauldian governmentality including Warren Magnusson (2011), Angela Oels (2005), and Maarten Hajar and Wytse Versteeg (2005). However, research into this specific area of Foucauldian theory diverges from the main connection between Gramsci and Foucault articulated in the second chapter of this thesis. This project endeavors to draw out the link that neo-liberal hegemony has to climate policy in BC. The effects of eco-governmentalities are a separate theoretical project that should be pursued in a separate project in the future.

Similar to the Provincial Government, Saanich Climate Policy developed generally between 2007 and 2010. The most recent Saanich Official Community Plan (OCP) (2008) passed through municipal council in 2008. The plan’s overarching framework of “Environmental Integrity,” “Social Wellbeing,” and “Economic Vibrancy” drew upon the discourse of eco-modernization in the Bruntland Report (1987) and included a substantial number of policies relating to parks and open areas, such as increasing urban density and protecting rural land use, protecting local ecosystems, supporting provincial climate targets, energy efficiency and environmental building design, among others. The OCP made specific reference to the Bruntland Report in its introduction, advocating “sustainable development” in Saanich. For Saanich staff developing the Climate Action Plan, the OCP was important, giving a green light to move forward. As key informant from Saanich said,

the community consultation showed that the residents cared about climate change which then gave us the green light to move things further along and to be a little more aggressive in our Climate Action Plan.

The Saanich Climate Action Plan takes the lead from the District's OCP in a number of ways. For one, it is considered to be the second in a series of three documents, the final of which is the Climate Change Adaptation Plan, which was passed by council in late 2011 (District of Saanich, 2012). Secondly, this plan picks up many of the policies found in the OCP such as maintaining the urban containment boundary, increasing the density of development, building energy efficient buildings and improving the efficiency of existing buildings, and attempts to develop the concepts into more specific terms. The Saanich Plan breaks its actions into four sections: transportation, buildings, waste, and energy alternatives. Each section contained reduction targets for the community and a separate target for municipal operations where the actions taken by the municipality "lead by example." The Plan suggested generally that the actions described in it, "will provide the community with a reference point to make informed decisions about how to reduce energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels" (Saanich CAP, 2010, p. 18).

Leadership within the community is the main focus.

The discourse revealed by the policy documents and interviews is markedly similar to that in the Province. It contains many of the same eco-modernization elements, including a concentration on technology and inefficiencies, and ideas of transformation through current institutions. Saanich remains a local counterpart of the Provincial policy in these ways. The District expresses environmental change through largely the same discourse; however, municipalities remain essentially local in character. As Magnusson

(2005) observes, municipalities possess a certain level of self-governance and do not exist as strictly “creatures of the Provinces.” Their existence is intertwined with everyday life in relation to the municipal facilities it operates, the roads it maintains, the development of business centres it allows, etc. The municipality has implemented eco-modernization but because it is focused on the local, it has created something divergent.

### **Saanich and the “Carbon Fund” Alternative**

Incorporated in 1906, the municipality of Saanich is currently one of the largest in the country in terms of population and area.<sup>18</sup> It encompasses commercial, residential and suburban areas, as well as a significant portion of rural land. It is the largest of 13 municipalities that make up the Capital Regional District and contains a fairly stable population size, with most of the regional population growth occurring in the more strictly suburban municipalities in the region (Saanich, 2008). The municipality contains several local institutions that are major employment centres, including Vancouver Island Technology Park (VITP), the Pacific Horticultural Centre, the Glendale Garden and Woodlands, Camosun College’s Interurban Campus, the University of Victoria, and Camosun’s College Lansdowne Campus.

Municipal government in the District is notably stable. As one participant described, “we have had the same mayor for 17 years. We have had a pretty consistent council with a slight change once and a while...The approach has been consistent for a

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<sup>18</sup> The legal status of the land is still in question. Saanich is located on Vancouver Island in Coast Salish Territories (VIPIRG, 2012), on land that has not been ceded to the Canadian nation-state, nor the Province of British Columbia through a legal treaty. This fact, of course, has implications beyond the scope of this project, but given the nature of this project in relation to concepts of the local and of resistance, it is important to recognize that the territorial land claim has yet to be worked out through colonial government structure, which forms the topic matter of this project.

very long time.” The participant argued that this stability helped the municipality get on with their work. Their approach to governance is to be “quietly progressive.” The participant explained further:

We don’t necessarily go out to the media. Generally when we [do] talk to the media it’s, “I will talk to you for background, not for attribution. If you would like a quote for whatever it is your doing, talk to the mayor or council.”

This is not to say that the stability of the municipal government actively attempts to hide initiatives. Describing the lead-up to the announcement of the Fund, the participant explained,

There would have been a press release, the mayor would have been involved, some media in the local papers, that sort of thing. There are certain things that you want to get some profile on and you want to use that as part of the scheme to move it forward.

The stability of the politics and the approach to publicizing the District’s activities allowed for the District employees to be creative, argued the participant. The Fund is an example of that creativity.

The key informant explained that the history of Saanich’s Climate policy dates back to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities’ (FCM) 20% club. The key informant explained, “that was probably the first time that Saanich, and I think other municipalities, had a real discussion about reducing carbon emissions.” This indicates that the FCM played a role in expanding climate policy. The 20% Club, originally a FCM venture, merged in 1998 with the Canadian section of the Cities for Climate Protection program,

operated by ICLEI (the International Council for Local Environmental Initiative), to create the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) (Gordon, 2010, p. 4). It was also in 1998 that Saanich joined the 20% club, and according to the key informant, this was a major transitory moment in the Saanich discourse around climate policy. The PCP mirrored the intention of the Kyoto protocol but removed the mandatory reduction requirements set out in the protocol (Gordon, 2010, p. 12). Instead, the PCP set the target for its member municipalities to reduce their corporate emission by 20% by the 10th year of membership (FCM, 2012). PCP also defines success of its members by a milestone framework (FCM, 2012):

1. Creating a greenhouse gas emission inventory and forecast;
2. Setting and emission reduction target;
3. Develop a local action plan;
4. Implementing the local action plan or set of activities;
5. Monitoring progress and reporting result

As of late 2011, Saanich was “in the process of finalizing our submission [to the FCM] to get milestone 5 for both community and corporate,” according to the key informant.

The key informant explained that the next major step occurred in 2007 when the District put together a submission for a climate change planning project to the Gas Tax Innovations Fund, which is funded by the Federal Government of Canada and administered by the FCM. The submission included three integrated planning projects: Climate Action Plan for climate change mitigation, an Adaptation Plan for the resiliency of local community, and an environmental management system for Saanich operations. Around the same time a large-scale energy retrofit project in Saanich was being

completed. Saanich accomplished the project through an Energy Services Contractor (ESCO), which takes payment for the design and the work, and which guarantees modeled energy savings upon the project's completion. According to the key informant, the ESCO models indicated that a guaranteed energy savings would amount to approximately \$82,000/year. These events preceded the creation of the Carbon Fund but help to frame its construction.

The Fund itself was established in 2007, after the Gas Tax Fund submission and around the time of the ESCO completion. It was established around a number of events including the Fourth Assessment Report from the IPCC, the updating of the Saanich Official Community Plan (OCP), and the movement of the Provincial Government towards eco-modernization. Importantly, the Fund concept was established through Saanich council prior to the Provincial announcement of Climate Action Charter, which gave the municipality an advantage. They had already begun institutionalizing a process by the time other municipalities were requested to become carbon neutral. It was the Charter that pushed the technology of carbon neutrality onto municipalities.

Money was set aside for the District to use for emission reduction projects; this was originally named the Carbon Neutral Reserve Fund, but later became known as the Carbon Fund. According to the key informant, "it was a decision made in preparation to becoming carbon neutral in 2012 with the Climate Action Charter Commitments." Saanich anticipated that the provincial government was moving toward requiring that municipalities offset their emissions. The key informant explained further:

The intention was that we are going to put this money into projects. [We] knew that right from the start...If we have to buy carbon offsets then we have the fund here set up to purchase them, and we have integrated it in financially into our operations. Meanwhile over the next 3 or 4 years we are going to do projects with that money anyway...[the money] was meant to be spent.

The District used the opportunity to set up the carbon accounting systems and to set aside what would be money going to carbon offsets (*e.g.* the Pacific Carbon Trust) to fund internal emission reduction projects. The District's intention was to offset when necessary.

According to one participant, through personal connections and work with the province, the Director of Planning "identified that we are starting to go down this road where there may be some offsetting and maybe we want to think about taking a little bit more of a leadership role." The idea of leadership led the District to act early, which allowed them a strategic advantage. The participant noted that, though there was a lot of momentum building during this period, "there wasn't a lot of discussion about how." The Province of BC legislated large greenhouse gas reduction targets early, then established the initiatives through which it intended to meet those targets. The interregnum between is the period when the Fund was conceived.

The Fund was conceived to be fairly simple. Under guidance of the Financial Director, the carbon footprint was calculated through each department and the different contributions tracked. Each department produces CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions from a variety of activities including but not exclusively, fuel combustion and electricity use in buildings occupied by specific departments, fuel combustion in vehicles used by specific

departments, flights taken by members of specific departments, and paper use in specific departments. All these activities have an associated CO<sub>2</sub>e footprint, which is then translated into a cost to each department by multiplying each metric tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e emitted by a dollar amount. The cost per tonne was determined via a consultant to start at \$15 and the money derived from each department was set aside. More recently the fund has been further capitalized with 1) an increase in the per tonne of carbon footprint amount contributed and 2) the Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP) money<sup>19</sup>, which is the carbon tax money that the municipality indicated it paid, refunded to the municipality through the Provincial Government, and which is only issued to those municipalities who are signatories to the Climate Action Charter.

The projects that are approved to receive funding are determined “relatively informally,” according to one participant. The participant explained further, “We... look at projects and people can come forward and say ‘I would like to do this.’” The Fund’s main coordinator examines possible savings from the projects in conjunction with other technical staff and they determine the financial cost and carbon benefits of those projects. The key informant describes the logic of determining a project:

When we look at a project in terms of using the fund, [we estimate] how much money [we] can provide from the fund. Somebody from a department, from recreation says, we’re going to get the electric Zamboni, we want to get the electric Zamboni. How much money can you provide to make this happen? To replace a regular propane Zamboni, it’s \$100,000. An electric one is \$160,000 so the green cost, the clean cost, the zero emissions cost to go to electric, which is

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<sup>19</sup> See pages 29-30 for details regarding the Climate Action Charter and CARIP

almost zero emissions here is \$60,000... If we got rid of propane, the amount of propane that they used in that process equals 10 tonnes of greenhouse gas. That means that it is costing us from the Carbon Fund about \$6,000 a tonne. Most projects have been between \$5 and \$6,000 a tonne. It's an interesting study in itself.

Another participant explained that \$6000 per tonne was used as the general guideline as the amount that a project is eligible to receive. Importantly, \$6000 is the initial amount provided per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e reduced yearly through a project. If the calculations are extended over the life of most projects, the cost per tonne is reduced to somewhere closer to \$300.

Some of the important examples of Carbon Fund projects include the electric Zamboni purchase, the solar hot water installation at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre, and several projects done at the Saanich Fleet Centre. The projects at the Fleet Centre all pertained to building energy efficiency, which represents many of the obvious project choices when large organizations start looking at reducing emissions. One of the first projects was a simple one to reduce energy use and heat loss. One participant explained,

We put in remote control door openers in our Fleet Centre. The guys, when they are doing it by chain they don't want to do it. So... give the guy a remote.

[participant mimics the use of a remote control] Oh ya. The door is always closed.

We save a huge amount of fuel.

This project was conducted in conjunction with the lighting and heating systems. Again quoting another of the participants at length:

We had three furnaces. One of them did the office area, and two of them did the fleet bays. Those needed to be replaced. They were originally oil and had been changed out to gas, so they weren't exactly the most efficient. When it came time to replace them, we had the option of just putting in three new furnaces, or changing it out so we had a furnace that ran the office space and radiant tube heating through the different truck bays with their own individual controls. So now, instead of one of the maintenance staff there working on a vehicle during a sort of off-shift, an evening or weekend, they can turn on that bay that they are working in instead of having the whole furnace running for the facility... They have noticed a huge comfort level increase and a big decrease in our utility costs. That was a perfect application of it, because they go from the straight three furnace replacements to the radiant tube. There was an extra cost involved with that, and the Carbon Fund was able to help with that part of it, and now we have seen a big reduction in our gas usage in the building and an increase in occupant comfort.

We did that on the doors, then the lights, then the heat. They all compliment each other. We have better lighting levels out of the lights we put in. They are really happy with that. It is much brighter and much more efficient. It's something designed for that high bay sort of situation. They are really happy in there.

To summarize, the Saanich staff described the Fund as a simple alternative to carbon offsets that is helping them to realize their mitigation related climate goals and facility upgrades.

The District also created a much smaller community section of the Fund, which is capitalized by community donations through an website based carbon calculator.

According to the key informant, so far the community donations have been used for a project “in partnership with Wild BC to provide Climate Change curriculum to grades 7s, 8s, 9s at two schools...that will lead to climate action projects for their students to do.”

Originally set up as an offset alternative that the greater community or indeed anyone other than Saanich could donate to, the community portion has been only partially successful. The key informant indicated that, “the community side of things has been in fits and starts.” Promoting that side of the fund resulted in a few donations from residents from Saanich and other municipalities in the CRD, but the limited success may be a result of the novelty of giving money to municipalities for such projects. The community side has not been exceptionally successful in raising money, though it does represent an interesting offsetting alternative given the type of project invested in, and the possibilities that the alternative model suggests. Specifically, organizations that would otherwise invest in offsets could perhaps use this as an alternative to invest in community emission-related projects. The District intends to pursue this as strategy and promote it further as an alternative to carbon offsets.

### **The Discourse of BC Climate Policy:**

The participants interviewed underscored Saanich’s role as part of the provincial climate solution. Overall, they wanted to communicate their acceptance of offsets as a possible solution, despite the fact that Saanich has taken a successful and different approach. As the key informant indicates,

We just think [that carbon offsets are] not the right fit for local governments and our municipality at this time, the way things are set up... When you weigh the options, the Carbon Fund is the better option for us right now... We don't want to make it seem like we think carbon offsetting is bad, because it is an important part for our businesses and our community, if we are going to reduce our carbon footprint 33% by 2020. Businesses need to be doing things like that as well.

The participant establishes that municipalities are different from businesses. The alternative that the Saanich Carbon Fund represents is not for everyone. Businesses may in fact benefit more from offsetting, whereas the municipalities do not. So long as there are projects to be done locally and no state mandate requiring municipalities to offset, then the Fund will continue to operate as it is. However, the District is ambivalent toward the effectiveness of offsets. Referring to offset projects with Encana, the key informant asked, "do we want to support oil and gas and transfer money over to them?" Another participant expressed "you pay into these funds and you don't know where they necessarily go, whereas with something like [the Fund] we see it. We know we have done these different projects, we can report back to the staff on them." Another participant explained:

What we have argued for is just a bit of flexibility so that we can [provincially] do both. We can be part of the broader solution but still have a mechanism to self-fund our own local projects too. That creates that awareness and that positive momentum and all that stuff.

The sense is that there is a reasonable expectation that if organizations are expected to reduce their emissions and aim for some kind of numeric balance point (carbon

neutrality), then the policy mandate should allow for “flexibility.” Again, given the organizational capacity to produce a substantial amount of carbon funding through the simple dollar per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e produced calculation, then they should be allowed to spend that money on projects of their choice. It is ironic that an argument about flexibility is being effectively articulated here. The original marketization of climate policy during the Kyoto process occurred through an argument about flexibility. The negotiators from the United States used this discursive element to inject concepts of trade into what was essentially an international Carbon Fund.

The Province interprets flexibility differently. In its discourse, the market is imbued with the ultimate flexibility, specifically in relation to Cap and Trade and carbon offsets. The Province indicates that Cap and Trade systems “give companies more flexibility in achieving emission reductions at the lowest possible cost” (Province of BC, 2008a, p. 46). Furthermore, “[it tends] to speed up innovation and accelerate greenhouse gas reductions by putting market mechanisms behind the effort.” Note that the same logic used by the Province was used in the institutionalization of carbon offsets through the UN’s Clean Development Mechanism. Carbon offsets purchased in the global south, it was argued, would provide the most effective possible carbon reductions at the lowest capital cost to developed nations (Lohmann, 2006, p. 51).

Despite the discursive resistance involved in the Carbon Fund, the logic of neo-liberal carbon neutrality has installed itself to an extent in Saanich. The original name of the Fund was changed from “Carbon Neutral Reserve Fund” to simply the “Carbon Fund” because, as the key informant pointed out, “the Fund does not meet the principals of carbon neutrality... It’s not a one-for-one reduction.” Another suggested, “it felt like

we were calling it something that it couldn't be." So the District staff involved started calling it the Carbon Fund. The Saanich staff did not want to contest the definition of carbon neutrality, and as suggested above, did not want to be seen to damn the approach. By referring to it as the Carbon Fund, their intention was to establish it as an "offsetting alternative."

In both discursive constructions of the Fund, size matters. Because of the relationship this discourse has with finance and quantification, conceptual size imposes limits on practice, or in a Foucauldian sense, the material effects. The key informant illustrated this with an example of a small business that exists in multiple provinces, leases a number of business spaces across the country, and has a relatively small carbon footprint equivalent to less than \$20,000. When faced with the option of reducing their carbon, they could buy a hybrid car that might sit at one particular office and not necessarily be well-utilized by the company as a whole, or they could, as a business, buy carbon offsets. The implication is that the money would be spent better elsewhere. This does not necessarily mean that offsets are more effective at reducing carbon emissions. As suggested above, there is an ambivalent attitude in Saanich regarding the effectiveness of offsets. Instead of referring to effectiveness, the point is more that offsetting is good for marketing a business. As the key informant explains, "its great for your business, it shows that you are committed to making your effort to reduce your carbon footprint." Thus, for businesses, and especially ones that want to promote themselves as "green" offsets are perhaps the better choice.

On the other side of size, there are certain projects that are out of the range of the Fund. One participant suggested that:

There is a financial imperative. Local municipalities, everybody is driven by budget. Say you have a Hydro budget for your buildings, and you know that by improving your HVAC system and doing some window work, you can get a return on that investment over  $X$  number of years through reduced Hydro bills. Would you fund that internally and could you do that, and what is the mechanism to do that? We've used the Fund as the mechanism to do that. It funds reasonably-sized stuff, fairly small. Its not like we are going to use it to fund a geothermal, you know. We look at those, but we haven't seen an opportunity where we think it might work.

The Fund is not conceptualized as a carbon reduction capital savings fund, whereby money could accumulate until there was enough to pay for multi-million dollar energy systems. The Fund fits discursively within an accounting structure where economics and environmentalism meet. As in eco-modernization discourses, generally financial and accounting information are considered highly valid forms of knowledge. Despite the disagreement in methods with the Provincial carbon neutral government strategy, the Saanich strategy has similar discursive boundaries.

That said the discourse around the Carbon Fund contests certain neo-liberal discursive boundaries found in the Provincial climate policy documents. The Provincial discourse suggests the following:

[BC is] ideally positioned to capture a share of the clean energy technology market. We are leaders in fuel cell technology, we generate clean hydropower,

and we have world-class biomass resources from which a range of bio-products can be developed.

We also have exciting opportunities to leverage the carbon storage potential of our forests. They have always been among our greatest natural resources. Now we have incentives to explore new ways to maximize their value. For example, they could play a key role in carbon trading—a fast-growing sector of the global economy, worth an estimated \$30 billion in 2006.

If we fail to act on climate change, we will miss these opportunities. We will also see our greenhouse gas emissions continue to soar, with potentially devastating impacts on our environment and our communities. That is why B.C. has developed this Climate Action Plan. It sets the course for a prosperous, successful and sustainable future in which B.C. can compete and win in the new low-carbon economy. (Province of BC, 2008a, p. 10)

In this excerpt from the Climate Action Plan, the Province specifically refers to international trade and the new accumulation regime associated with the *low-carbon* economy. This discourse reimagines the provincial resource base in the context of the global market connecting the living forests, the forests decimated by pine beetles in the form of “biomass,” and the renewable electricity supply of large hydro-electric resources. The institutions associated with international trade, including specifically those associated with carbon trading, are the mechanism through which the province will become sustainable and prosperous. The Saanich discourse does not purport to be “harnessing market forces” as the Provincial discourse does (Province of BC, 2008a, p.

3). Though the Saanich discourse does not deny that climate change is global, it refers to the importance of local reductions.

The initial Provincial Climate Action Plan displayed a zealous fever for the market transformation presented in the above excerpt. One particularly interesting effect of the neo-liberal discourse of eco-modernization is the way that BC forests are reimagined:

Through photosynthesis, forests take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it. Absorption is the greatest where trees are young and growing vigorously, and tapers off as they mature.

Once trees die and start to decay, their stored carbon dioxide is released back into the environment. However, if trees are harvested sustainably and manufactured into building products, the carbon dioxide remains stored and the forest regenerates with young trees that absorb even more carbon dioxide. This achieves a net reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. By contrast, events such as wildfires and the pine beetle epidemic reduce our forests' capacity to act as a carbon sink – making effective forest management more important than ever.

In general, attention to climate change has people seeing our forests in a whole new light. Given that a healthy growing forest can sequester an average of 120 tonnes of carbon per hectare annually (or enough CO<sub>2</sub> to fill 120 average homes), B.C.'s 60 million hectares of forest could become a chief ally in advancing the Province's Climate Action Plan. (Province of BC, 2008a, p. 51)

This excerpt represents the commodification of the carbon cycle and the construction of new value associated with the BC forests. The power that results from the discursive

crossover between the science of climate change and that of biology proves productive. Though this excerpt indicates specifically that management of beetle-killed forest should change, it also reconsiders old growth as less beneficial for the climate, ignoring the ecological, or the possible cultural value of old growth. The implication that older trees should be cut down and replaced with newer more productive trees activates the working forest aspect of the history around the “war in the wood” in BC that occurred in the 1990s and early 2000s (Stoddart, 2004). Specifically, the forests on crown land are a resource to be harvested, replanted, and managed.<sup>20</sup> The strategic appropriation of the working forest discourse into the broader discourse of eco-modernization transfers the rule of capital. The management process is augmented with notions of carbon trading and carbon offsets.

The implementation of the recolonized forest produced unexpected results. Take for example the two major sequestration projects funded by the PCT: the Darkwoods and the TimberWest projects. For Darkwoods, the PCT provided money to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for the “long-term care of Darkwoods ensuring that this national treasure will continue to be conserved for its ecological and carbon values” (Province of BC, 2011, p. 21). Darkwoods are a forestry management project. The TimberWest project, on the other hand, saw the PCT invest in an “Improved Forest Management project that will result in the conservation of select old growth stands on TimberWest's private land” (Pacific Carbon Trust, 2012a) What is striking in comparing these two

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<sup>20</sup> Developments in BC in the last 10 years relating to the beetle-killed forests included an increase in harvesting and milling. A leaked Government of BC cabinet document, which was precipitated by the destruction of a mill in Burns Lake, BC, revealed that the current rate of harvesting is proceeding at an unsustainable pace. The owner of the destroyed mill, Hampton Affiliates Ltd., was demanding a guarantee of wood supply over the long term in order to rebuild the mill. To solve that issue, the Province of BC considered expanding logging into previously protected old-growth forests and habitat preserves (Macleod, 2012). This approach is at odds with the suite of eco-modernization policies described here as the BC government is considering actively discounting the sustainability of harvesting to meet the Hampton Affiliates demands.

projects is that through the logic of offsetting, a for-profit forestry company is treated exactly the same as a not-for-profit organization with a conservation mandate. Both are essentially paid to not cut trees down. Though the specific differences between the management practices of Timberwest and the Nature Conservancy remain to be seen, these organizations operate very differently and with contradictory purpose. One organization profits from resources/wealth extracted from the commons, whereas the other has an established mandate to conserve nature. The values of these organizations are disparate. Indeed one of the largest protest in Canadian history took place in the woods of Clayquot Sound on Vancouver Island during one summer in the early 1990 as a result of the disparate values of timber companies and environmental conservation group. The fact that carbon offsets treat these two groups the same despite the value difference has concerning implications for the environment movement. Furthermore, Encana, an Oil and Gas company, also received offset funding. The idea that Encana and an environmental conservation group would have the same net positive effect on the climate is absurd. Carbon offsets construct them as equals in the competition to profit from emissions reductions. Of course, this does not even address the methodological and scientific critique that could be applied to these projects.

The Provincial Climate Action Plan justifies its perspective in several key documents including the IPCC's fourth assessment report (2007) and the Stern review (2007) out of the United Kingdom, which represent "canonized texts," in the sense that Richardson (1995) describes. These texts have a level of authority that few documents possess. However, the Stern review was not taken as a whole, but rather as pieces. The Government of BC observed the following message: "the UK government recently

commissioned an independent review on the economics of climate change. The Stern Review concluded that ‘the benefits of strong, early action considerably outweigh the costs’” (Province of BC, 2008a). The Provincial government accentuates the call for early action. The form of this early action was an admittedly broad response of regulatory and exhortatory programs and initiatives, but most of which were measures discursively tied to, if not explicitly part of, markets. The Stern report focused exclusively on the market in relation to the environment stating that “climate change presents a unique challenge for economics: it is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen” (Stern 2007). The “strong and early action” referenced in the Climate Action Plan refers to actions to install new markets and augment existing ones: this refers to the two pillars of climate policy in BC, the PCT and carbon market stimulus, and the BC carbon tax. However, there is a major disjuncture that should be noted. The report’s recommendation hinged on a model of economic cost and benefits. The model suggested that a huge capital investment of 1% of GDP per year should be invested in climate mitigation strategies in order to maintain world economic growth. In BC this would equal roughly 2 billion dollars per year, which is more than 8 times the investment in “climate action” in 2008, which was at the peak of interest and investment in BC climate policy.

The discourse in Saanich reflects the need to make changes on the ground in the municipal facilities. The improvement projects that the Carbon Fund finances are internal and thus the municipality is responsible for managing them over the serviceable life of the equipment. Any investment is valued over the long term. As such the Stern report is viewed differently. The key informant described the Stern report as such:

[The report] showed that it was around \$250 or \$300/tonne that was what the true cost of carbon reduction is... The \$25/tonne is a nice little addition to a wind farm somewhere. That only pays for a fraction of their project costs when you think about it, it 10% really, of what it costs to make that project happen.

The Stern report's model suggested an unusually high cost of carbon. In the quote above the participant stresses the cost of carbon in dollars/tonne and relates the high cost referenced in Stern to the estimated cost of carbon extended over the life of projects experienced in Saanich. There is a strong sense that tangible reductions are the most important and that indeed the actual reductions are more costly than the regulated cost of carbon in BC indicates. Given the framing of their Climate Action plan, the intention seems to be to learn by doing and to improve their operations in small ways that might translate into the community.

Both discourses interpret the text differently, and I do not purport that there is one true interpretation of such a report. In fact, as Hajar (1995) suggests generally, the power of the discourse of the Stern report is its multi-interpretability. In a Foucauldian sense, the use of Stern is a strategic appropriation in both cases. Drawing out the differences is important as it reflects that these two discourses diverge largely based on the Saanich concentration on the local.

One participant described the Province as removed, on a different position than municipalities in terms of policy. That participant explained further that, "we always say that the Province... doesn't really get the reality of what's happening on the front line."

The implication is that, though the goals are agreeable, the methods do not always translate into the local reality. The participant explained further that,

what we were talking about was to let us do our thing and we can move towards that goal, give us some flexibility. If you just simply say our approach is that it is the Trust that is going to do all this and so really we are just going to charge you whatever the going rate is per tonne and mandate that you are going to have to disclose your inventory and what your footprint is in this way at this time of the year, really there is no incentive for us to do anything...[We're] filling out a form and writing a cheque... We sort of get disengaged then. Politically you can say we are part of the solution and, you know, we are neutral. Ok. On a bigger scale maybe in that we are putting that money into funding larger scale projects, maybe that works. I don't know... But in terms of engaging local community, you lose something there.

The participant indicates that offsetting does not engage the municipality or the community. It converts resources to capital and then removes them from organizations trying to act as leaders in the community. In this mode, the participant went on to discuss the concept of “taxpayer sensitivity” in the context of increasing pressure. In the broader context, the participant suggested, “there are pressures on other areas like public safety—police and fire costs continue to go up significantly each year. [But still,] we need to spend some more money on climate adaptation. We've really got to do that.” Specifically in the context of efficiency projects, another participant suggested, “[we] would love to put in the new latest technologies, but quite often, given public funding, we are supposed to the best job we can with the lower amount of funding.” To function as a local leader in

the discursive framework of eco-modernization, an organization requires the capital specifically set-aside in order to engage in the largely technological shift. The Fund is a solution and represents, as one participant described, “a good catalyst publically, because it is something that people could point to,” or as the key informant put it, simply “dedicated funds going directly to carbon reductions.” The implication is that the municipality could not be expected to play the same role in the community unless it had such a fund. Infrastructure costs imposed on municipalities certainly gives some weight to this discourse. The FCM (2008) estimated that an infrastructure deficit of more than 100 billion dollars exists in Canada today.

The Province’s conception of leadership as a government refers in large part to becoming carbon neutral, describing their strategy as “setting an example” (Province of BC, 2008a, p. 24). Speaking specifically about the PCT, the province suggests,

[its] initial mandate... is to offer credible, low-cost offsets to meet public sector demand for offsets necessary to meet its targets for a carbon-neutral public sector. Once up and running, the trust may also sell offsets to individuals and many B.C. businesses. (Province of BC, 2008a, p. 25)

Carbon neutrality in the public service is designed to initiate the BC carbon market. The effect the neo-liberal discourse has on leadership is even broader. The Provincial document *Carbon Neutral BC* (2011), describes the concept of carbon neutrality in the public sector through the various capital projects conducted. These projects could be described as occurring in spite of the more than 18 million dollars being transferred to the

Trust, and from there to large businesses, but instead the document indicates that there were substantial positive effects from this policy:

Readers will see how a strong conservation culture is taking root in schools, hospitals, colleges and public sector organizations across B.C. Building on the momentum of 2008 and 2009, we are beginning to see measureable returns that can be invested back into the organizations. (p.1)

The document continues by suggesting that individual behaviour is somehow affected by buying offsets:

Employees are taking action in many ways from improved driving habits to recycling and composting, to changing commuting behaviours to turning off lights and reducing paper use. Organizations foster behaviour change through education, events and person-to-person conversations. This personal connection is often through green or sustainability teams. Three-quarters of all public sector organizations have committed staff that act as agents of change in motivating climate action. They personalize the message, champion local programs and are a continual source of ideas. (p.3)

The rational link between the numeric balance point and a shift in consciousness is a difficult leap. In a Foucauldian sense, the BC Liberal government is forced into making these claims. Based within a discursive construction that reifies international market and that considers the effects of capital to be good, it is difficult to suggest otherwise.

Similarly, the District Carbon Fund is forced into particular expression based on the concepts of reduction being paramount: local reduction projects, technocratic and fiscal governance. The key informant appositely observed about the logic of the Fund:

I would say, [we] have built the logic around it, which is maybe not the right way to go but you learn these things, and in the learning process we started out with just setting aside the money to be a carbon offset but the more we look at it, and the more we think about it, we think, there are a lot of good things about this.

Municipal governments answer to their voters. In an organization like District of Saanich, which has a vested interest in stability from the point of view of staff and politicians, it makes political sense to spend the money locally. The key informant indicated, “when I talk to Saanich residences, we don’t get anybody who wants us to buy carbon credits, I don’t get anybody disagreeing with the Carbon Fund.” The important point here is that direction is taken from local residents, not capital. The key informant continued, “my feeling from the community, staff and directors, council and the mayor, is that they like the concept of the Fund. You are not sending your money somewhere else.” Municipal organizations exist, at some level, as an expression of the local interest. Using a metaphor of a publically traded for-profit corporation, the key informant indicated that,

Saanich residents are shareholders in our operations...They have a vested interest in it, and a say in how we conduct things. But when you are a shareholder in [a corporation], you have bought stock, not for them to do something good in the world, but they have bought stock, generally, to make money.

Saanich is driven by their budget, as one participant suggests, but the major difference is that they do not exist for the sole purpose of making their shareholder money. Instead, they exist to serve the interests of the community, which in this case is discursively constructed as the reduction of the community's CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis presented in this chapter shows the deployment of a win-win discourse of ecological modernization in both the District of Saanich's carbon neutral strategy and the carbon natural government strategy of the Province. Modernity and notions of system inefficiencies form the basis of action and a vague sense of radical change through existing institutions. Both discourses are strategic in the appropriation of the eco-modernization discourse, which has been shown to have the flexibility to involve markets to a greater or lesser extent. However, the District, while imagining its role using similar terms as the Province, does so with different effects. The technologies of discourse are altered and explicit notions of trading for carbon reductions are removed.

As shown, the Saanich documents examined and the Saanich employees interviewed constructed the District as "part of the solution." As members of the coalition with capital, the District expressed ambivalence towards carbon offsets. The creation of the Carbon Fund represented a clear alternative to the dispossession of carbon offsets, albeit an alternative that is limited in terms of its practice, and leaving room for the application of carbon offsets, the validity of which is questionable. Indeed the Saanich participants provided some indication they did not trust these processes. But importantly, through acting as a municipality focused on the carbon interests of the community, the District subverts the rule of capital.

## Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to describe and analyze the effects of ecological modernization on British Columbia in relation to the provincial government and BC municipalities. The main focus of this thesis was the alternative policy vision found in the district of Saanich. The thesis used interviews and document analysis to reveal an ideology that varied from the ideology found in Province of BC documents relating to climate policy. As a result of a concentration on local reductions and leadership, the District of Saanich created a policy that circumvents the rule of capital and prevents the dispossession that is usually associated with carbon offset and carbon neutrality.

I came to this topic with a vague suspicion that, despite all the political gains that have been made towards effective climate policy, nothing has changed. This is a profoundly pessimistic way of framing the concerns about the progress of environmental sustainability. My suspicion was proven wrong by empirical results, but that does not necessarily eliminate the suspicious feeling.

In the initial discussion about this topic, this thesis framed the concerns regarding the efficacy of the environmental movement in relation to climate change as an issue of the environmentalist-capital coalition. The coalition I refer to is metaphorical. As Kovel (2007) observes, capital is an idea and it is only allowed to function as it does because people become slaves to its logic. This is the classical Marxist interpretation of capital. It exploits and creates a contradiction between its base, which is the workers that produced the wealth, and the superstructure of capitalist society with all the wealth imbued in it. However, as several articles have shown (Carroll and Little, 2001; Oels, 2004; Philipps, 1996), there are particular elements that represent the modern form of capitalism. The

modern incarnation of capitalism is typified by the deconstruction of the Fordist welfare capitalist system to one more focused on supporting the flow of international capital and laissez-faire economics. Further, it represents the active betrayal of workers by capital. This is the economic ideology under which environmentalists have come to engage with capital. The coalition represents a marriage of neo-classical economic thinking with environmental thinking. This is exemplified by scholars like the ecologist Simon Levin (2006), who proposes policy solutions like the pricing of ecosystem services, and who elevates economic growth to a discursive status of necessity. Another embodied example of the coalition is “Jeremy Leggett, formerly of Greenpeace International, [who secured the] support of banking and insurance companies whose assets could be at increased risk from climate-related property damage” (Levy and Egan, 2003, p. 822). In terms of this project, however, the member of the coalition is the District of Saanich.

A major concern regarding this coalition echoes beyond the field of climate policy. As Philipps (1996) shows, neo-liberal capitalism tries to reinterpret and subjugate feminist worldviews, and indeed any worldview that utilizes experience as the basis of knowledge production. Environmentalists have aligned with the structure producing those effects. Neo-liberal ideology is hidden by quantification and, unless rendered adequately clear by critical analysis, remains hidden. There are also policy implications in the field of health care where the importance of an independent and “good citizen” who does not overly burden the system are constructed (Teghtsoonian, 2009). The notion of independence is based in neo-classical economics: the rational individual driven to maximize *his* own utility.

While I came to this topic with an admitted pessimism, I also came to analyze an organization that gives some measure of hope that even minor variations make some measure of difference. As I write I am attempting to become, as Dorothy Smith (1999), suggested, a participant in the social relations I explore—it is part of the Gramscian praxis I am attempting to invoke. Smith (1999, p. 8) suggests that the goal is not to explain their behaviour, but to explain to “them/ourselves the socially organized power in which their/our lives are embedded and to which our own activities contribute.” While I am more interested in explaining the relationship to the collective “ourselves” of academia in this document, it is constructed to advocate for a relevant engagement of municipalities through the experiences and discourse articulated in Saanich. This policy should be promoted and endorsed on those terms.

Firstly, this policy has been shown to be a functional but limited way to resist neo-liberal hegemony in climate policy. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it *has* thus far effectively resisted that hegemony. This policy has been validated in a recent communiqué from the province of BC regarding the requirements under the Climate Action Charter.<sup>21</sup> Instead of needing to meet the same carbon neutrality requirement that public sector organizations meet, municipalities now need to only be “making progress toward carbon neutrality.” This represents the strategic victory of the Carbon Fund concept. This policy should be suggested to all municipalities as a way a meeting their Climate Action Charter commitments. As Saanich has discursively shown, this policy can be constructed as creating multiple benefits for municipalities, including providing

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<sup>21</sup> The communiqué was sent to all municipalities in August of 2011, according the project’s key informant.

needed funding for infrastructure upgrades which double as efforts toward their climate migratory goals.

Drawing on Ollman (1998) and the socialist future hidden within capitalism, this policy starts to represent a small step in Ollman's "dance of the dialectic." The ideological subversion of this policy may represent a predisposition towards transitioning from capitalism and thus, in some small part, a path to a future that is not ruled by capital. In Gramscian terms, this policy does not represent a classic war of position, but rather a passive revolution in relation to a specific policy within a political space where there has been decreased attention on pushing the growth of neo-liberalism in climate policy. However, this policy could represent a war of position if it were picked up in a broader discussion about carbon neutrality in BC. This is possible with at least one other municipality, Dawson Creek, adopting the concept of a Carbon Fund. However, that municipality also chose to purchase offsets in order to make a larger statement with regard to climate change. That municipality's specific direction notwithstanding, there is interest in this policy, according to Saanich participants, from several municipalities, and a number of public sector organizations. The concept of a Fund *instead* of an offset is, in a small way, an approach to begin reconstructing the debate around climate change around more radical concepts, such as the discursively useful notion of the commons (Carroll, 2010). Drawing on the inherent value of primary schools, hospitals, universities, and municipalities' recourses and their relationship to our immediate and daily existence may allow a partial radicalization of public discourse through this debate.

Furthermore, this policy engages organic intellectuals of the current environmental movement, the vast majority of whom are indeed members of the enviro-

capital coalition, but I believe partially critical ones. Here I refer to the sustainability coordinators, the working professionals part of environmental organizations, as well as those who belong to organizations that lack a person hired specifically for that role but who have an active interest in ‘greening’ their organization. In relation to this policy specifically, the organic intellectuals are the employee(s) in municipalities responsible for managing the commitments under the Climate Action Charter. As members of the environmental coalition, these individuals perceive their role as one that transforms internal and external organizational relationships. Indeed there is evidence of this in Saanich, where the key informant suggest that the role of sustainability coordinator there is to “push the boundaries out further and then planning and engineering will become more comfortable with saying, yeah, we looked at these issues and we can try this now.” The main issue currently is that in other locales, the policy is organized around markets.

Kees van der Pijl (2009) defines the applicable concept of the cadre class, which he describes in terms of international relations and the rule of states by elites. He outlines the importance of enlisting the support of a middle class group of “managers, technicians, and professionals,” which he refers to as a middle class cadre, in order to maintain hegemony. The notion of the cadre provides a useful extension of the Gramscian concept of the *organic* intellectual, which refers to a specialized functionary in society that becomes active in revolutionary politics. While there are miles between the politics of an individual being enlisted to maintain hegemony and revolutionary politics, the cadre serve a similar political function in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic terms. Organic intellectuals would form the basis on which counter-hegemony is established, albeit under a more democratic and pluralist form of politics. What is crucial here is providing

these practicing cadre with an alternative viewpoint, a different discourse, from which their practice can draw.

Currently it seems that most municipalities in BC will pay the Trust for the privilege of calling themselves carbon neutral, simply because it is the easiest way to meet their Climate Action Charter commitments. However, concern about carbon offsets in BC is growing from civil society groups like the Tax Payers Federation of BC and the Pembina Institute, which has successfully advocated for a Saanich-like fund to be created for School Districts in BC (Province of BC, 2012b). If these developments continue, the municipal cadre may find themselves asking why their municipalities are dispossessed of their resources.

I contend that municipalities represent fertile ground on which a war of position could be waged. As opposed to nation-states, which are currently constructed as protectors of the economy first, and as administrative social agents second, municipalities embody local authority. Along these lines, Warren Magnusson (2011) suggests observing the world as a collection of urban environments, each with its own political dynamics and self-organized governance, instead of as a collection of nation-states. Magnusson outlines several key observations including that: a) political authorities within urban environments are diverse, including more than just municipal governments, b) order and governance is self-organized and influenced by the idea of a sovereign state, but not dictated by the state itself, and c) order is always temporary. Observing urbanism as a way of life suggests that governance and order are most usefully viewed as local occurrences.

This notion of governance fits well within the construction of hegemony articulated in this thesis. Gramsci's view of securing a viable counter-hegemonic bloc involved obtaining the support of various institutions and culminating with a revolution for control of the state. If we expand Magnusson's premise that governance and order are essentially local phenomena, then municipal governments may be considered the state. While municipal governments are neither sovereign nor the only relevant urban institution, they represent an important location for political transformation.

Describing municipal governments as I have above is admittedly idealistic. Environmental activist Murray Bookchin (1987) discussed municipal governments similarly, but re-imagined those governments as more directly democratic institutions, similar to those that existed in ancient Greek city-states. He admitted the difficulty of attempting to transform municipal government into such a form. Specifically, there is a decline of civic participation in many Western cities and rising superficial consumerism. Even so, for Bookchin, municipal government remains *the* space for ecological-political transformation to occur, because of its connection to the local environment and the democratic possibilities that operating locally opens up.

I have argued above that Saanich discourse around carbon neutrality represents a different and more critical discourse under which the staff are able to interpret their roles. Furthermore, the practice that it informs is simple, functional, and relevant in current politics. This policy, and the relative discontent with carbon offsets as they are constructed, represents a discursive opening to better integrate the professionalized environmental movement and the struggle for local sustainability into the broader struggle against neo-liberal capitalism.

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## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

### *Substantive Frame to Be Read to the Participants:*

Today I am interested in speaking with you a bit about how you became part of the organization, your role with climate policy at the District, and your view of the differences and similarities between the greater policy vision set forth by the province and the direction taken by Saanich.

### **Individual involvements**

- What has your role been with Saanich?
- How long have you been with the District?
- How did you come to work with Saanich?
- What is your professional background?
- When did you start working on environmentally related issue?
- When did “climate” first enter the picture?

### **History of Saanich Climate Policy (only included in the key informant interview)**

- Can you describe some of the beginnings of the carbon emission related policies in Saanich?
- Did some of the early policy push by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities influence the Districts effort?
- Do you know of any people that were particularly influential along the way?

### **The Fund**

- What is the goal of the fund?
- How does the fund fit into the greater policy vision of carbon neutrality as outlined by the Province?
- What’s different about Saanich?
- Is there a reason why Saanich did not put the money into regular offsets?
- How does the Carbon Neutral Reserve Fund mitigate these problems?
- Have you had indications from the province about their thoughts on the Saanich policy vision?
- Why was the community donation aspect initiated?

## Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form



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### *Participant Consent Form*

#### **Climate Policy at the District of Saanich**

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Climate Policy at the District of Saanich that is being conducted by Matthew Greeno.

My name is Matt Greeno and I am a graduate student in the department of Studies in Policy and Practice at the University of Victoria. You may contact me if you have further questions at:

E: [greenomatt@gmail.com](mailto:greenomatt@gmail.com)

P: 250.589.8514

As graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Studies in Policy and Practice, Master of Arts. The Research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Susan Boyd. You may contact Susan at 250-721-8203.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to understand the carbon emission reduction strategy at the District of Saanich as compared to the BC Provincial Government's strategy. This research is based partially on an analysis of documents, and through your participation in an interview will concentrate on your involvement in creating and/or implementing the Saanich carbon emission reduction strategy. The objective of the interviews is to achieve an understanding of the people involved with the strategy and to comprehend their perspective of the strategy.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because climate policy is a burgeoning field and the policy of interest in Saanich is unique in its approach. Understanding the discourse and the organizational context around which this policy was created will provide greater understanding about how to create similar policies in other communities.

#### **Participants Selection**

You are being asked to participate in this study through a self-selected sample. That is, I received your name from a colleague of yours who suggested that you might be interested in speaking with me about this project. Your participation is requested because I believe have valuable knowledge about the subject.

#### **What is Involved**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a conversing with me about your background, your role at Saanich, and your thoughts regarding the District's carbon reduction strategy. I will take a digital recording and written notes of the conversation. A transcription of the conversation will be made and provided to you for review. This will allow you the chance to revise any statements made, or decline consent to participate, prior to reporting. The actual conversation should last about an hour and will be conducted at your convenience.

#### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause minor inconvenience through the time associated with the interview.

**Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the state of knowledge about the climate policy construction and implementation.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study the data from your interview will be deleted and any notes will be destroyed.

**Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity your name and the specifics of your work with Saanich will not be reported on. I will use pseudonyms when writing quotes and will attempt to de-personalize the quotes by constructing a thematic analysis as opposed to an analysis by interview. However, as a public official whose name is readily identifiable with the District and its operations your anonymity will be somewhat limited. Further, one of your colleagues assisted in identifying you as a possible participant and is thus aware of your possible participation.

**Confidentiality**

Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by my keeping the notes from the interview in a locked filing cabinet at my home and by keep the transcript of your interview in a restricted access folder on my password protected computer.

**Dissemination of Results**

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: Thesis presentation/other academic presentations, publishing in an academic journal, providing a copy of the final document to the study participants.

**Disposal of Data**

Data from this study will be disposed of after 2 years, whereby any electronic files of the interview will be deleted and any paper notes shredded.

**Contacts**

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include the research and supervisor referred to above.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***

## Appendix 3: Key Informant Participant Consent Form



University  
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and Practice Program

### *Participant Consent Form*

#### Climate Policy at the District of Saanich

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Climate Policy at the District of Saanich that is being conducted by Matthew Greeno.

My name is Matt Greeno and I am a graduate student in the department of Studies in Policy and Practice at the University of Victoria. You may contact me if you have further questions at:

E: [greeno.matt@gmail.com](mailto:greeno.matt@gmail.com)

P: 250.589.8514

As graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Studies in Policy and Practice, Master of Arts. The Research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Susan Boyd. You may contact Susan at 250-721-8203.

#### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this research project is to understand the carbon emission reduction strategy at the District of Saanich as compared to the BC Provincial Government's strategy. This research is based partially on an analysis of documents, and through your participation in an interview will concentrate on your involvement in creating and/or implementing the Saanich carbon emission reduction strategy. The objective of the interviews is to achieve an understanding of the people involved with the strategy and to comprehend their perspective of the strategy.

#### **Importance of this Research**

Research of this type is important because climate policy is a burgeoning field and the policy of interest in Saanich is unique in its approach. Understanding the discourse and the organizational context around which this policy was created will provide greater understanding about how to create similar policies in other communities.

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You are being asked to participate in this study through a self-selected sample. That is, I received your name from a colleague of yours who suggested that you might be interested in speaking with me about this project. Your participation is requested because I believe have valuable knowledge about the subject.

#### **What is Involved**

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a conversing with me about your background, your role at Saanich, and your thoughts regarding the District's carbon reduction strategy. I will take a digital recording and written notes of the conversation. A transcription of the conversation will be made and provided to you for review. This will allow you the chance to revise any statements made, or decline consent to participate, prior to reporting. The actual conversation should last about an hour and will be conducted at your convenience.

#### **Inconvenience**

Participation in this study may cause minor inconvenience through the time associated with the interview.

**Risks**

There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

**Benefits**

The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the state of knowledge about the climate policy construction and implementation.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. Participants should not feel any obligation to participate due to a previous relationship with the researcher. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study the data from your interview will be deleted and any notes will be destroyed.

**Anonymity**

In terms of protecting your anonymity your name and the specifics of your work with Saanich will not be reported on. I will use pseudonyms when writing quotes and will attempt to de-personalize the quotes by constructing a thematic analysis as opposed to an analysis by interview. However, as a public official whose name is readily identifiable with the District and its operations your anonymity will be somewhat limited. Further, one of your colleagues assisted in identifying you as a possible participant and is thus aware of your possible participation.

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Your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected by my keeping the notes from the interview in a locked filing cabinet at my home and by keep the transcript of your interview in a restricted access folder on my password protected computer.

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Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you agree to participate in this research project.

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature*

---

*Date*

***A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.***