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FRAMING THE CLIMATE CHANGE DEBATE: A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The author constructs a classification of dilemmas in the debate on climate change. She notes that these dilemmas arise during a democratic political response to climate change. Given that climate change is one of the most significant challenges of the 21st century, it is necessary to analyse this phenomenon from as many research perspectives as possible. The comprehensiveness of climate change requires the simultaneous articulation of a policy response at three levels of analysis: individual, national, and a given international system. Although necessary, such an overarching and all-encompassing political approach is fraught with several dilemmas. The author intends to present the complexity of the political response to climate change by framing this debate through three dilemmas: ontological-epistemological, economic-ecological, and national-global. Thus, researchers and decision-makers who deal with individual aspects of climate change will be presented in one place, with theoretical and practical tensions manifested at three levels of analysis.

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Introduction

Climate change represents a relatively new challenge for international relations that did not occupy much attention in mainstream international politics prior to the turn of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. The governments treated environmental issues and concerns on a case-by-case basis, and generally saw them as difficulties that did not pose a threat to traditional areas of power and influence in international relations, such as foreign policy and military security.

However, the growing consequences of the increase in the global mean temperature have caused climate change to occupy the attention of both daily political tactics and the international strategic agenda, especially during the last twenty years. Temperature extremes, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, rapid loss of biodiversity (in terms of species numbers and genetic diversity), changes in hydrological cycles manifested as severe droughts and accompanying hurricanes, as well as many other far-reaching climate-induced disasters directly affect the bare existence of more than half of humanity. Such changes in natural ecosystems are deemed "conflict multipliers" and stand out as one of the most complex and urgent issues of our time, according to numerous reports from various United Nations (UN) agencies (Gaynor 2020; UNTFHS 2017). At the same time, climate change exhibits highly polarising and numerous politicising effects. As many scholars point out, politicians have taken over the climate discourse and interpreted its causes and effects at the expense of scientists (Chinn, Hart and Soroka 2020).

Following this dynamic, the social science authors try to approach and articulate the phenomenon of climate change from various perspectives. The body of research ranges from raising the question of guilt (Klein 2007; Crist 2007; Moore 2017) to framing a crisis of such magnitude as a chance to establish capitalism for the better (see Mazzucato 2021). But it is seldom possible to discuss why climate change is a difficult challenge for political articulation without prejudice and finger-pointing. One reason lies in the latent but still widespread "disciplinary hierarchy of the IR issue areas" that indirectly situates ecological and environmental problems in the "low politics" arena.[2] Political articulation is also hampered because the climate is invisible, unpredictable, and difficult to notice (Moser 2010, 33-36). Nevertheless, even the existing efforts to politically articulate the problem remain at only one level

[2] The division of "high" and "low politics" stems from E. H. Carr's famous "guns versus butter dilemma". As Norrin Ripsman (2006) notes, some realists assert that defence and national security issues deserve the label of "high politics" and are privileged above all other economic, political, and social issues of the state or so-called "low politics".

of analysis: individual, national, or international. To direct political and research attention to only one level of analysis feeds the impression that policy change solely at that level could yield results in the fight against climate change. This line of inquiry leads to an unintentional loss of sight of the pervasive nature of this phenomenon. Furthermore, it has political consequences on the vertical (from the individual, the state, to the international system) and horizontal levels (since it seeps into economic, legal, security, infrastructure, ethics, and other areas on a national level).

In this paper, I argue that if we strive to comprehend the phenomenon of climate change sustainably and proportionally, then we must be aware of the numerous dilemmas that manifest themselves in the political debate at the level of the individual, the state, and the international system. Hence, in the first section of the paper, I define and clarify the nature of dilemmas and the framing method used to construct them within the debate on climate change. By using the framing method to construct dilemmas, I classify them as ontological-epistemological, economic-ecological, and national-global in the second section of this paper. The author is aware that a classification constructed in this fashion is by no means exhaustive enough to explain all levels of analysis of phenomena of such biblical proportions. Nor does it tend to. It does, however, seek to situate in one place the main reasons for the particularly challenging articulation of a political response to climate change based on a broad review of the environmental governance literature.

Dilemmas, Paradoxes, and Framing Methods

The literature usually dubs examples of political effects that run counter to the intentions or expectations of decision-makers as "paradoxical" (Beahrs 1992, 755). As a result, when we, social science researchers, try to analyse and comprehend a phenomenon that is contrary to rational assumptions, we often encounter and employ the term "paradox".[3]

As sociologists note, "a paradox is a form of linguistic expression which presents an apparent contradiction but which, when analysed more fully, leads to a deeper insight into a process, a state of affairs, or a phenomenon" (Fredericks and Miller 1990, 348). Against this backdrop, research through paradoxes has "heuristic value in demonstrating the dialectic nature of social inquiry" (Fredericks and Miller 1990, 347). On the other hand, although linguistically close to a paradox, a dilemma is defined as "an argument in which

[3] Although in its original philosophical understanding, this word implies a contradictory statement for which a simple judgment cannot be made whether it is true or not (e.g.: I am a liar).

two equally balanced but opposing and unacceptable alternatives to some action are offered as the conclusion" (Fredericks and Miller 1990, 348). Contrary to the paradox, the dilemma unrolls a situation where it is possible to employ one of the opposed strategies to solve a problem. However, neither of the chosen paths answers whether it would have been better if we had chosen the alternative. Hence, the dilemma remains unsolved. In short, dilemmas summarise puzzles for decision-makers and social researchers in the form of "enduring problems in world affairs that are difficult to resolve" (Chasek, Downie and Brown 2018, 3). Decision makers and social researchers can envision alternatives to a problem but cannot decide which alternative is better or has a higher priority.[4] Thus, the observed problem or dilemma persists, and the absence of timely action causes side effects in other domains. It is relevant for this paper to show how choosing one alternative in terms of climate change causes consequences in other areas of importance for the well-being of humans and other living species. To present such alternatives as integral parts of social dilemmas, I will use the method of framing.

People of different geographical, political, cultural, racial, class, and other determinants construct frames to understand specific political issues and processes (Dewulf 2013). The frames of one group of people may differ diametrically from how another group will construct a frame around the same issue. It leads to a discrepancy in understanding the core of a particular political matter. Therefore, when studying how individuals or groups of people view specific issues, decisions, or events from several perspectives at the same time, we imply a framing method in the social sciences (Dewulf 2013, 321–323). In this paper, I am mostly interested in political framing, which has a striking effect on the initial understanding of a particular phenomenon. In this regard, Rachel Wetts provides a helpful distinction of political framing, which I will use throughout the paper's second section. Wetts (2020, 1342) claims that political frames guide our cognition in several ways: "…by providing a simplified description of the problem (diagnostic framing); by advocating a particular type of ameliorative action (prognostic framing); by providing justification for action (motivational framing); and by constructing groups as friends or foes of the public good (identity framing)". Framing mainly influences the preferences and decisions of people in conditions of uncertainty (Dewulf 2013, 321), which broadly characterises the debate on climate change.

[4] For example, the leadership of some developing countries decides to exploit massively their natural resources in order to lift a larger percentage of the population out of poverty in the short term, but in the long term, it threatens the quality of life and even the survival of the majority.

Framing helps to understand why choosing one perspective over another often implies frustrations or losses for those who see a particular phenomenon from a completely different angle, and precisely for this reason, this method proves valuable in classifying dilemmas that arise around climate change issues.

Ontological-Epistemological Dilemma

A growing body of tangible evidence of humanity's dramatic impact on the surrounding ecosystem has sparked global concern about a "business as usual" lifestyle. In this regard, Clive Hamilton poses a hypothetical question in which humans are both a subject and an object of change globally. Namely: "(…) how we have become potent enough to change the course of the Earth yet seem unable to regulate ourselves (…)" (Hamilton 2017, vii).

The disturbance of the extremely sensitive climatological equilibrium causes immeasurable environmental, economic, and political consequences. Researchers estimate that the costs to national economies due to climate-induced disasters will only increase in the coming period if radical measures to curb climate change are not initiated as soon as possible (Sanderson and O'Neill 2020). Hence, it would seem logical for the discipline of International Relations, primarily interested in questions of survival, power, and coexistence, to pay at least as much (if not more) attention to the planetary ecological crisis (Castro-Pereira and Saramago 2020, 3; Keohane 2015, 19). Instead, the focus remains on a country's military and economic power to improve its relative strength in comparison to other countries' capabilities. The lack of attention to the problem of climate change is not surprising for many different reasons. At the level of the individual, these reasons encompass what I call the ontological-epistemological dilemma.

In the debate on climate change, I find two interconnected ontological-epistemological dilemmas that make achieving a democratic political response challenging. First, there is a dispute over whether climate change exists at all. On one side of the debate are the majority of scientists and some politicians who point out that climate change is the biggest problem in modern society. On the other side, which is becoming an increasingly important political force, politicians dispute a global increase in mean temperature. This side of the debate, or alternative within the dilemma, irresistibly deepens the socio-political gap as it groups its identity against traditional authorities, such as scientists, who warn of the dangers posed by climate change. The second ontological-epistemological dilemma arises from those who do not dispute the fact of climate change. The first alternative within this dilemma exclusively takes the interests of humans as its basis for understanding politics. I will call this alternative humanistic because its diagnostic and prognostic framing of climate change remains on the trail of

anthropocentric politics, a mighty contributor to climate change. The second alternative, post-humanistic, relates mainly to a narrow circle of scientists who advocate for a deviation from anthropocentric politics.

The post-humanistic alternative encompasses what Anna Tsing refers to as "kinds-thinking". Tsing explains how people befall into the paradox of kinds-thinking, which artificially simplifies the world into closed, hermetic types (Carter and Harris 2020, 14). Starting from Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, the conception of the world in Modern times was (or still is) based on the clear separation of humans as "the only rational beings" from nature and the non-human world that surrounds them (Peter 2021, 93-100). The idea that humans are separate from nature and, as such, superior to it in a way that they can understand, describe, limit, and use it at their discretion has had a tremendous impact on the conception and shaping of individual mindsets and, hence, the ontologies and epistemologies of Western science. Consequently, politics or the political, as a *differentia specifica* to human action, is (was) practically impossible to understand through non-human frameworks. Although this debate stems from the traditional philosophical question of whether Humans are an essence separate from nature or a part of it, the direction traced by Tsing points out that people, "by thinking as a kind", deny the political voice of other living beings and processes (Carter and Harris 2020, 14-15).

That is why a new direction in international relations starts with the post-humanistic approach and advocates that these non-humans be equally listened to, given that they can possess solid political agency in the form of devastating consequences they can produce (Burke and Fischel 2020, 33-36). This "listening" would be made possible through education and socialisation by advocating an ontological position that implies how and why humans are (the only) part of nature. It is necessary to bridge the gap between ontological separation and unbreakable interconnectedness (Vargas Roncancio et al. 2019, 4-5). Such a path would provide a way out of the devastating consequences of anthropocentric politics, and the natural world would cease to be regarded only as a "stable background to the dramas emanating from sovereign states and their international relations" (Harrington 2020, 54). Moreover, David Chandler (2018, 20) points out that the new "ontopolitics" must be structured in such a way that "the nature of entangled being" is at the heart of politics rather than the concepts and goals of humans as subjects. Therefore, the alternative that would enable a window of opportunity to overcome the ontological dilemma is to transform politics and political representation at the ontological level and not merely at the procedural level (Burke and Fischel 2020, 47).

Although many politicians acknowledge that the drastic effects of climate change point to an apocalyptic scenario, post-humanists warn that framing this threat has been achieved by renouncing the political voice to other living beings

and natural processes. So, the proposed solutions come from the position of "epistemological domination" (Vargas Roncancio et al. 2019, 5). Such solutions only deepen the Cartesian division and continue the path of modernization that has caused the dynamics of climate change in the first place. Furthermore, the question arises whether people can even imagine a solution that is fitting and proportionate to the change we are facing or whether the evolutionarily built-in prejudice deceives us that the "solution is on the horizon" (Weber 2015, 561-572). Political-behaviour psychologists claim that many cognitive biases lead us to overcome immediate threats and ensure humans' survival and development as a species. However, these cognitive biases now appear counterproductive to understanding and acting upon such a complex and long-term phenomenon as climate change (Wilburn-King 2019). Nevertheless, the humanist versus post-humanist ontological-epistemological dilemma opens up only when both sides of the debate do not dispute the reality of climate change. Still, the most important and pressing concern is "who" and in what way "should speak for the future of Earth" (Lövbrand et al. 2015, 211-218).

Within the debate on climate change, the situation is further complicated if two ontological positions are in an essential collision before even discussing humans' role in climate change. There is a political articulation that denies the existence of climate change in general. The essential opposition in this regard implies that one side of the debate arises from the fact that, due to excessive anthropogenic CO2 emissions, the mean global temperature is rising unpredictably. The other rejects the scientifically proven fact either as a whole (warming exists) or in detail (due to anthropogenic CO2 emissions). Such ontological divergence is very prevalent throughout democratic societies.

Although environmental issues in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were primarily of interest to intellectual elites, and conservatory circles were often racist (Kashwan 2020), today's situation has changed drastically. Environmental activism has grown into a mass movement equal to other progressive policies and, in recent times, has even led them (Falkner 2012, 503-505). But at the same time, a movement that promotes climate scepticism and distrust of traditional authorities who have previously informed the public, such as public broadcasting, professors, doctors, scientists, and centrist political representatives, has grown on an equal footing (Milman and Harvey 2019). Widespread climate scepticism is not uniform, nor does it come from a single source, but results from a complex interaction of different socially shaped beliefs (see Haltinner and Sarathchandra 2021). Precisely because of that, it is very tricky to address it politically.

Ontological divergence makes it virtually impossible to discuss climate change because, as Bruno Latour (2018, chapter six) points out, abandoning the common world creates an "epistemological delirium". If what can be learned

by rigorous scientific methods is fundamentally debatable, then the way of acquiring state-of-the-art knowledge will have legitimacy only in one segment of society. There it unlocks the possibility of the existence of several common worlds and opposite ways of comprehending and experiencing these worlds. Such a socio-political dynamic fosters polarisation within democratic societies and indicates an emerging crisis. At this point, it is illustrative of how Barack Obama, who has perceived climate change as the greatest threat to modern society from the very beginning of his presidency, assumes we have entered an "epistemological crisis" that will be a long-term problem (Goldberg 2020). He bases this conclusion on many observations regarding a new manner of political debate in the United States: "… I can have an argument with you about what to do about climate change. I can even accept somebody making an argument that, based on what I know about human nature, it's too late to do anything serious about this – the Chinese aren't going to do it, the Indians aren't going to do it – and that the best we can do is adapt. I disagree with that, but I accept that it's a coherent argument. I don't know what to say if you simply say, 'This is a hoax that the liberals have cooked up, and the scientists are cooking the books. And that footage of glaciers dropping off the shelves of Antarctica and Greenland are all phony.' Where do I start trying to figure out where to do something?" (Goldberg 2020).

Numerous researchers agree it is impossible to imagine a robust and proportionate response to climate change without a broad consensus on basic scientific conclusions that have undergone rigorous peer reviews (Jaffe 2018, 458). However, Latour explains that climate scepticism provoked such a significant earthquake that we can compare it only to the so-called science wars. As a result, "we cannot simply just go back and state that climate change is 'just a fact'…" (de Vrieze 2017, 159). According to Latour, science has never been immune to political bias (de Vrieze 2017, 159). He even goes further in claiming that it is difficult, or to say practically impossible, to extract impartial data on issues with substantial political implications. However, this claim does not imply that it is impossible to produce sound and proper science. It rather conveys a subtle hint to prompt scientists to declare their interests and values (de Vrieze 2017, 159; Kofman 2018). Such a value-oriented epistemology might not be a panacea for climate change. Still, it could provide a fighting chance to formulate necessary political action otherwise unlikely in the current social polarisation.

The examples of anthropocentric ontopolitics and emerging political practices of debate in the US can help us discern and summarise all the weight of the ontological-epistemological dilemma at the level of the individual. In this regard, to get a broader picture of the difficulty of inventing and articulating a political response to climate change at the national level, it is essential to analyse

the dilemma that puts the relationship between economy and ecology in a comparative perspective.

Economic-Ecological Dilemma

Historically, the development of humanity, the economy, and energy consumption have grown progressively over the last two centuries. These three factors show a high degree of correlation at the international level (Steinberger, Lamb, and Sakai 2020). However, it is more difficult to indicate whether there is a direct causal link between them and whether advancements in one indicator facilitate the progress of the other (Steinberger, Lamb, and Sakai 2020). Regardless, in this paper, I presuppose that environmental issues link inextricably to economic and social issues as defined by goals 1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, and 15 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNDESA 2021).

The contemporary political economy, with its growth indicators, predominantly directs the actions of states and policymakers. But within the discipline, environmental problems are perceived as "the unintended consequences or side effects of one's actions that are borne by others (and for which no compensation is paid)" (Chasek, Downie and Brown 2018, 14). Furthermore, the complexity and all-permeating nature of environmental problems make it difficult to accurately, or at least approximately, calculate a particular policy's ecological costs. At the same time, economic benefits are often obvious, precise, and confident (Chasek, Downie and Brown 2018, 45). Suppose our idea of a desirable society's direction is measured principally through an increase in abstract indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP) or foreign direct investment (FDI). In that case, the biosphere is merely a stable background on which it is possible to constantly exceed the limits of economic growth, with only minor negative externalities. Such motivational framing of environmental issues through an economic prism achieves a justifying effect, meaning that the probable environmental destruction could have developmental economic potential.

Although burning fossil fuels has shaped and built modern states, raised millions out of poverty, and extended life expectancy, it is beginning to point to the opposite trend at the beginning of the 21st century. Accumulated ecological destruction has materialised through widespread deforestation, overfished waters, and an atmosphere oversaturated with carbon, chlorine, and fluorine compounds, causing increasingly frequent and unpredictable changes in the form of hurricanes, droughts, and the high acidity of the world's seas and oceans, as well as an unrestrained migration of invasive species. Changes of such proportions spill over into a stormy socio-political debate because, with their distinctly

interdisciplinary character, they infringe on the political credo of many countries. Namely, what is the foundation of a good and quality life in a community?

Assume that we leave aside the previously mentioned problem of ontological divergence and focus on the traditional political confrontation of conservative versus progressive policies (that include policies aimed at combating climate change). Then, we can single out conflicting alternatives that arise in the economic-ecological dilemma of the climate debate. The first alternative within the dilemma resorts to the diagnostic framing that environmental measures are very expensive for the economy. This alternative then groups part of the electorate against policies that would mitigate climate change. Political protagonists of this alternative threaten that many working-class people will lose their jobs in the so-called dirty industry that supports many families. The second alternative, which builds an economic-ecological dilemma, comprises the viewpoints of international organizations and activist associations that advocate for measures to combat climate change but avoid criticising the structures and economic growth that contribute to this dynamic.

Within the economic-ecological dilemma, one could often come across the idea of preserving the environment as a policy contrary to economic progress. As a result, there is an unfounded belief that more determined or radical action to curb climate change would be equal to the political suicide of those who need to pursue those policies (see Colvin et al. 2019, 28-29). In addition to the discouraging and depoliticizing effect, reducing the climate debate to the choice between environmental protection and lifting the population out of poverty leads to scepticism among a significant part of the electorate regarding green policies, even though many scientific associations argue that such a political choice is false and ungrounded (Brown and Ahmadi 2019).

Still, discrediting scientific evidence of global warming and antagonizing environmental policies versus job preservation has been a decades-sponsored idea by influential Republican lobbyists in the United States (Collomb 2014). Scepticism about scientific evidence on climate change caused by anthropogenic emissions, promoted by the oil sector, has often been described as a clash between "corporate America", advocating a strict *laisser-faire* libertarian economy, and the federal government's desire to regulate these affairs (Collomb 2014). Although the interest of the powerful and wealthy oil sector in resisting carbon taxation forms the crux of climate scepticism, this scepticism has recently taken hold among the middle and lower classes of American society. The polarisation of society in the form of a status quo economic scenario versus the need to take urgent measures to mitigate the effects of climate change coincides with the most pronounced polarisation of American society in recorded history (Dimock and Wike 2020). Thus, politicians

who advocate for climate change mitigation policies are even more radically positioned on the left side of the traditional political spectrum.

The popularisation of the economic-ecological dilemma in the form of a binary choice between "clean air" and "blue-collar jobs", has found a foothold in the European parties of the new right as well. The new right parties framed the dilemma through the relationship between the elite and the masses in the 2019 European parliamentary elections (see Vojvodić 2019, 130-136). Since climate change is an abstract, complex, and non-linear phenomenon, it was mainly conveyed to the lay public from a technocratic-expert point of view. Hence, there was a communication gap between people and scientists. Populist leaders filled in the gap by simply discrediting global concerns about the effects of climate change as an elitist project alienated from people's daily needs (Latour 2018, chapter eight). The views of former US President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, as well as former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, are on that track. The political stances of these prominent decision-makers will have far-reaching socio-political consequences. Furthermore, the geographical prevalence of climate scepticism leaves the impression that it is becoming a significant political counterweight to global concerns about climate change. Bruno Latour contends that if individuals view climate change as a concept propagated by an elite unaware of the people's genuine needs, policies and resources aimed at further preventing climate change will not be voted on or readily accepted. Accordingly, if the efficiency and sustainability of the democratic response are imperative, it is vital to study progressive and regressive attitudes, political support for environmental policies, and climate scepticism as interdependent elements (Latour 2018, chapter eight).

The second alternative within the dilemma, namely the international organizations and civil society associations that have adopted the Green Agenda, perceive the economic-ecological dilemma qualitatively differently. In their framing of action on climate change, the economy and ecology are completely reconciled concepts that are not at the poles of the debate. Climate change is considered a chance, especially after the coronavirus pandemic, to "build back better" (Bodewig and Hallegate 2020) or to spark a green transition of economic development (OECD 2017) in a process that should "leave no one behind" (UNDP 2018). Strikingly optimistic and metaphorical language is in sharp contrast to the reports of these and other partner organizations. They warn of "extreme weather conditions" (IPCC 2018, 181), "climatological turning points", and the fact that the planet's atmosphere is more saturated with carbon dioxide than it has been in the last 800 thousand years (Freedman 2013).

Even international financial institutions look for models to invest private capital in a more ecologically and ethically responsible way, believing that

further economic growth in the current state of the climate is achievable. Multinational companies driven by "a sense of purpose", as BlackRock's CEO nicely put it, can manage their impact on the environment while pursuing "long-term value creation" if they invest with ESG or environmental, social, and governance goals in mind that will be "increasingly material to corporate valuations" (Fink 2018).[5] A similar idea to utilise the ESG model, but with different execution, was proposed by the European Commission in the form of the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), which is designed to "increase a company's accountability, prevent divergent sustainability standards, and ease the transition to a sustainable economy" (Council of the EU 2022). The core aim behind ESG-oriented growth is that, given the ever-increasing stakeholder focus on eco- and climate-friendly products, private capital can channel and lead positive and necessary social change in an era of decreasing political ability to act on climate change. But, without strong and decisive political leadership to combat climate change at a national level, the perspective of private capital on what constitutes ESGs might "lie in the eye of the beholder" (Goldstein and Farrel 2022).

The strategic perspectives, research, and recommendations of international organizations and agencies are invaluable because they have extensive databases and regularly monitor and update their findings on a large sample of countries. However, such an expert "post-political discourse" neglects social values and identity issues, which are important factors for effective social mobilisation at a national level (Wetts 2020, 1339-1345). Also, that kind of discourse avoids criticism of the structures that contribute the most to the deterioration of air quality, water, and biodiversity. It is symptomatic that in the United States, where there is abundant documentation on polarisation around climate change, it is precisely the post-political discourse that is widespread (Wetts 2020, 1345). Rachel Wetts (2020, 1340-1345) emphasises that this is not only the case in international environmental agencies, but also in activist associations. Thus, such an approach frames a very controversial issue that directly provokes the interests of powerful institutions and individuals as "devoid of political struggle". Consequently, some authors argue we should personify climate-induced threats and formulate them through questions of identity and common myths and stories shared by the community (Barasi 2018).

Decision-makers and researchers can perceive a tense political answer to climate change at a national level through the prism of the economic-ecological dilemma. The dilemma antagonises society with two distant alternatives. The first alternative opens up a field of political struggle that favours economic

[5] BlackRock is a multinational investment company and the world's largest asset manager.

growth over ecology, despite all scientists' warnings. The second alternative describes how international professional organizations and environmental initiatives offer solutions that promise to reconcile economic growth with the preservation of natural ecosystems. But their neutral, non-confrontational stance chooses not to question the power of capital based on non-renewable energy sources. Therefore, they cannot influence a significant mobilisation of society that would provoke a more radical political response. That is why it is vital to monitor the climate-related dynamics between countries, as well as because a global agreement could potentially have a reciprocal effect on changing the behaviour of individual actors at the national level.

National-Global Dilemma

Most researchers and decision-makers agree that there is a need for a global policy response that coordinates the behaviour of states in an anarchic international system, especially given the intensity, comprehensiveness, and cascading effects of climate change. This level of analysis permeates the dilemma of how diverse and divided societies and states live on a naturally inseparable, intertwined, and unique planet (Corry and Stevenson 2017, 1).

The relation between "planetary singularity" and "social multiplicity" is the foundation of global environmental governance (Corry and Stevenson 2017, 1-2). This relationship reveals many dilemmas that open up for researchers and decision-makers regarding the impactful actions against climate change that certain countries need to implement. I will summarise them under the joint title of the national-global dilemma, which comprises two difficult-to-solve problems of world politics: first, the initial positions of the global North and South; and second, the nature of the international legal self-binding agreement in the anarchic international system.

The most intellectually demanding dilemma is how to bridge the gap between the global North and South, a traditional point of divergence that has principally eroded the climate debate since the early 1970s. Namely, do middle-developed and underdeveloped countries have the right to follow the Western development model that is based, among other things, on deforestation, extraction, and combustion of non-renewable energy sources? Differently put, well-off countries are in a privileged historical position to challenge the development path of exploitation of the commons for the less fortunate. We can follow the argument on this line from the famous speeches of Indira Gandhi that "poverty is the worst kind of pollution", and that developed countries "should not use environmental arguments to prevent the ambitions of the poor and postcolonial to develop" (Dalby 2016, 46-47). Moreover, the 1971 Faunex report laid the groundwork for what the South's argument in the climate debate

would be for over forty years: "(…) They are problems which affect the greater mass of mankind…In [industrialized] countries, it is appropriate to view development as a cause of environmental problems… In [the southern] context, development becomes essentially a cure for their major environmental problems (…)" (quoted in Chasek, Downie and Brown 2018, 311).

Although the global North countries feel the effects of climate change to a large extent, they are an absolute nightmare for the countries of the global South. Those most affected by the increase in global mean temperature contributed the least to this process. The ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement, the only universal international instrument on climate change, must be conducted in such a constellation of power and starting positions. Thus, the global response to climate change through a self-binding agreement constantly depends on the tactics of individual countries that primarily pursue their national interests.

The north-south dilemma is not the only one that unfolds at the level of international relations when we talk about the necessity of a global response to climate change. The failure of the Kyoto Protocol and the adoption of the Paris Agreement changed the nature of the signatories' obligations. Some of the world's most powerful countries (and the world's largest emitters of CO2) have managed to replace the "top-down" regulatory approach proposed in Kyoto with a more flexible "bottom-up method of voluntary pledges" in Paris (Falkner 2017, 37-38). On this point, there is a debate in the literature on global environmental governance as to whether smaller-scale negotiations can provide better guarantees for responding to climate change than the universal international agreements emphasised since the 1992 Rio conference. Bilateral climate agreements between the United States and China in 2014 showed that the two largest economies usually discuss climate change mitigation measures outside multilateral negotiating platforms (Falkner 2017, 38). The notable 2010 agreement between Norway and Indonesia, designed to "reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD)", efficiently and quickly provided the first significant funds for forest conservation and served as a model for many later bilateral and regional climate arrangements (Keohane and Victor 2011, 11). Robert Faulkner explains this tendency does not mean bilateral and minilateral platforms will completely replace the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process. Instead, it indicates the restoration of a balance between the "solidaristic" and "pluralistic" logics of climate cooperation (Falkner 2017, 14). In other words, the global response to climate change will constantly oscillate in a difficult-to-resolve national-global dilemma.

Finally, the interested public and numerous researchers, activists, and politicians consider that the Paris Agreement negotiated in this fashion is neither sufficient nor adequate to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels. However, in the current geopolitical reality, great powers are

increasingly communicating through traditional, bilateral formats, and there is ever more talk about the "return of nationalism" to the domain of world politics (see Mansbach and Ferguson 2021). The Paris Agreement, therefore, seems to be the highest reachable threshold. Such a middle ground, albeit modest, provides an opportunity to overcome the national-global dilemma by offering an alternative that simultaneously responds to the rhetoric of the global South and is embraced by the world's largest CO2 emitters. Ultimately, by popularising the need to respond to climate change through holistic and joint action by all, the global agreement has the potential to reversely influence changes in the behaviour of national politicians who resort to simplified choices between the economy and the environment.

Conclusion

The paper explains three dilemmas that summarise the tensions at the level of individuals, the state, and the international system when dealing with the omnipresent climate change phenomenon.

The ontological-epistemological dilemma presented the philosophical and cognitive positions of voters and decision-makers and how these logical-mental starting points intentionally or unintentionally articulate extremely anthropocentric policies that additionally contribute to the devastating consequences of climate change. It also outlined how climate debate in Western societies resembles echo chambers due to ontological divergence and "epistemological delirium".

The economic–ecological dilemma unveiled a political situation in which there is a simplified choice between the need for economic development and the necessity of preserving natural ecosystems, which is often resorted to by populist politicians, especially in divided societies. It shows that it is "easier" to win votes by encouraging the *status quo* business scenario and further extracting natural resources on a horizontal political level. Additionally, oil lobbyists provided generous sponsorship for such political framing. The non-confrontational discourse that is "devoid of political struggle" and prevalent in numerous international agencies and environmental associations has also left its mark on this dilemma.

The national–global dilemma reflected the tensions between the national interests of the global north and south countries and the need for the world to face the dynamics of climate change through the cooperation of all constituents of the international system. This dilemma draws attention to the fact that the Paris Agreement envisages a new way of regulating the behaviour of signatories. The unique, legally and self-binding nature of regulations has enabled a substantially "voluntary" approach to climate change mitigation when the possibility of significant political action is diminishing.

The author tried to show the necessary political layering that accompanies the response to climate change by showcasing all three levels of analysis that are not clearly separated from one another but are mutually conditioned and entangled. However, this does not imply that the author considers it impossible to construct and mobilise such a political response. On the contrary, recognising the tensions embedded in the dilemmas, the author believes that the debate on climate change is becoming more constructive and richer in nuances. She considers it to be of critical importance for the sustainability and representativeness of policy responses.

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УОКВИРЕЊЕ ДЕБАТЕ О КЛИМАТСКИМ ПРОМЕНАМА: АНАЛИЗА НА ВИШЕ НИВОА

*Апстракт***:** У раду се конструише класификација дилема које настају када говоримо о демократском суочавању са процесом климатских промена. С обзиром на то да су климатске промене један од највећих изазова 21. века који прети одржању начина живота који познајемо, неопходно је да се анализира из што је могуће више истраживачких углова. Свеобухватност овог феномена захтева да се одговор артикулише истовремено на нивоу појединца, државе и датог међународног система. Премда неопходно, такво политичко нијансирање прожето је бројним дилемама које су тешко решиве. Намера је рада да се на једном месту прикаже сложеност политичког одговора на климатске промене уоквирењем кроз три дилеме: онтолошко-епистемолошку, економско-еколошку и национално-глобалну. Претпоставка је да ће истраживачима и доносиоцима одлука, који се баве појединачним аспектима климатских промена, на тај начин бити сликовитије приказане тензије које се испољавају на сва три нивоа анализе.

Кључне речи: климатске промене; животна средина; дилема; уоквирење; међународни односи; политика; скептицизам.