Central Question

Why have the most vulnerable countries given their consent to a package of agreements that scientists overwhelmingly say will lead to a destabilized climate, threatening their very survival? In *Power in a Warming World*, we the three authors bring decades of combined experience as negotiators, researchers, and activists to address this core paradox.

*Power in a Warming World* combines analysis of where climate politics has been and a political economy framework to track its future. Climate politics have been transformed in many ways since the ‘train wreck’ at Copenhagen in 2009. The book spins out six scenarios as power continues to shift and as the world warms. The Book argues that a focus on incremental market-based reform has proven insufficient for challenging the enduring power of fossil fuel interests, and will continue to be inadequate without a bolder, more inclusive and aggressive response.
Our Approach

We explore the global political economic arena to tease out four major developments:

- A fundamental reorganization of North-South interests
- A wounded & widely discredited global political economic doctrine, i.e. neo-liberalism
- An ecological system in crisis posing new limits on growth
- Exacerbating forms of social inequality; and new forms of transnational social mobilization and engagement

In this process, we draw substantially upon the scholarship of Italian social theorist Antonio Gramsci to offer a strategic view of power relations, attentive to how global political, economic and ecological developments shape politics at a smaller scale, and how the reverse takes place.
Figure 2.2
CO₂ emissions from fossil-fuel use and cement production in the top 6 emitting countries and the EU

1000 million tonnes CO₂

Industrialised countries (Annex I)
- United States
- Russian Federation
- European Union (EU27)

Developing countries
- China
- India

Uncertainty

Global Power Shift – Changing Powerscape

• In Ch-2, we review the literature & draw upon relevant scholarship on Power, which manifests in several dimensions: Overt, Covert, institutionalist, Structural & Discursive; but none is sufficient to explain inaction on CC or offering explanations of potential turning points.

• We argue that a fifth lens, building upon ideas of Gramsci - a ‘strategic’ perspective on power, offers a more promising direction, with its three components:
  • A ‘strategic’ view of how hybrid coalitions (state, market and CS actors) mobilize to shift balance of forces on a given issue
  • A ‘layered’ view that considers the fragmented governance institutions in which such coalitions engage; and
  • the ‘historical’ dimensions of world order within which such struggles are embedded.
Beyond the North-South Divide?

Ch-3 focuses on mobilization of state coalitions: how shifts in power took shape in the pivotal negotiations since Copenhagen.

We argue that these negotiations were the beginning of a new equation of power, instead of the conventional North-South divide. Since 2000, a fragmentation of country blocs emerged along new lines. Copenhagen provided a world stage where a new alignment of five countries (US & BASIC) got opportunity to keep open their int’l dev space (old & new emission powers).

Critically, the shifts involve the “hegemonic crisis” of the formerly undisputed leader- the US, the emerging ‘Chinese model’ of dev, and coordination of various econ interests that are integral to CC, & a new identity of vulnerability by MVCs.

So these negotiations were far more about territorial fights to establish new alignments of power in a rapidly transforming geopolitical order, than just about mitigating CC.
Ch-4 takes us to negotiations in Cancun, Durban, Doha and Warsaw in the following four years. We ask: after the Copenhagen debacle, how was low-income state consent produced during the following years to an emissions reduction framework that is both highly inadequate and starkly inequitable? Drawing upon our theoretical framework, we argue that consent was produced through three interlinked processes: Material & Institutional Concessions, Norm Alignment and Structural Conditioning.

We demonstrate that the material concessions have resulted in few gains for low-income states, & they have been instrumental in securing stability of the climate regime. Overall, this analysis provides insight into the processes by which int’l environmental inequality has been reproduced in contemporary climate politics.
Manufacturing Consent (contd)

Norm alignment is defined as an incomplete but continuing process by which states with competing class interests come to some agreement on what are legitimate terms of consent - how elite interests adopt, co-opt and align with existing hegemonic structures, thereby diffusing radical challenges to power.

Third, while material concessions and norm alignment shape the terms of consent, a neo-Gramscian perspective also points to ways in which agency of the MVCs is constrained by historical structures of inequality - ‘structural conditioning’ limits MVC efforts to influence policy, extract substantive concessions & withhold their consent.

Robert Cox (1983) argues, “Hegemony is like a pillow: it absorbs blows and sooner or later the would-be assailant will find it comfortable to rest on”
The Politics of Adaptation

Ch-5 directs attention to CC adaptation politics

We ask, with very little progress having been achieved in two decades of negotiations on reducing emissions and with some major CC impacts now inevitable, what types of political conflicts are emerging around the issue of funding for adaptation?

We identify three related points of contention between countries on both sides of the North-South divide. We call these conflicts:

“The Gap” in raising the funds

“The Wedge” in who is prioritized to receive funds, &

“The Dodge” in utilizing just governance institutions
In Ch-6, we engage with scholarship that argues that a new class of business interests, which defines CC mitigation in their own financial interest, is our best hope to address CC.

As there has been fragmentation of business actors in CC politics, there is little evidence that the obstructionist forces of fossil fuel industries (FFIs) have waned in power. FFIs still compete with renewable energy on a highly uneven field, subsidized by the very govts that negotiate climate treaty.

We argue that the change needed will not be designed by business coalitions with their eye on new carbon markets. Existing investments made by FFIs in exploration and refining products are simply too high, their profits too astronomical, their instrumental and discursive power too great to easily let go off their advantaged position & grip on power.
In Ch-7, we discuss civil society (CS) role in CC politics. We argue that the literature on CS has not fully accounted for the causes of their failure to substantially influence mitigation action. We highlight three main deficits.

First, despite diversification of actors involved in the process, resources and links to power still rest overwhelmingly in the hands of professionalized NGOs taking a more reformist and market-based approach.

Second, CS has failed to take a coordinated and viable strategy for building strength in domestic contexts to realize influence at key ‘hinge’ moments in the negotiations.

And third, CS has primarily devoted its attention to the U.N. climate processes, while often neglecting other less accessible, but highly relevant, int’l gov frameworks, including international trade & human rights regimes, financial institutions, and scientific bodies.
Contesting Climate Injustice & Future World

Ch-8 focuses on efforts of particularly marginal and vulnerable movements to gain rights in CC regime.

We explore the engagements of several distinct transnational advocacy networks in the UNFCCC process, which have succeeded in getting recognition, representation, capacity building & rights realization.

This brings us to the final part of our book (Ch-9 ..). Here we look ahead at the potential six scenarios for taking action in the coming years, and importantly, to discuss what might provide the catalyst we need to prevent catastrophic warming.

We see opportunities and some positive signs while developing some of the scenarios, and point out key decision points determining the direction we as a global society will head toward.
In final, **Ch-10**, we argue that a transformed approach by CS is our best hope for realizing an equitable, sustainable and effective int’l climate treaty, and advancing global climate justice.

CS now has a **dual** existence – as part of `extended state’ & as `key site of political contestation’ We introduce the concept of ‘linking movements’ & specify 3 changes that we think will be necessary for pushing the process forward.

- Existing efforts need to go beyond incremental policy reform.
- Expanded coalitions must offer solutions that resonate with the ideological beliefs and perceived material interests of a broad cross-section of society. Antonio Gramsci refers to this as a counter-hegemonic force capable of forming a new historic bloc.
- The **third** dimension of linking movements is the ability to link actions across the commodity chain of industries.

In sum, we need a globalized movement that goes translocal & transnational, to solve the most intractable problem’ of CC.