

The Green Publicity State: Constructing the Green Economy in

Ontario, Canada and Michigan, USA, 2007-2012

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Abstract: Argumentative discourse has been essential to the construction, re-construction, and hegemony of neoliberal ideas and policies, and in the assimilation of other discourses, including those around climate change, sustainability, and the environment (see Humphreys, 2009; Jessop, 2012). This paper argues that political elites do this constructive work by grafting emerging discourses, in this case, discourses associated with a “green economy”, onto familiar neoliberal discourse in ways that naturalize green neoliberalism as a common-sense approach to climate change. Here, I examine political arguments around the renewable energy industry in Michigan, USA and Ontario, Canada under Governor Jennifer M. Granholm (Democrat) and Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty, 2007-2012. It was found that political leaders represent policies informed by neoliberal ideology as the best means to solving not only ecological problems like climate change, but also socio-economic problems including unemployment and inequality. While Granholm and McGuinty received criticism for some of their policies, both were applauded for efforts to green their economies; indeed, McGuinty was named “Canada’s greenest premier ever”. This constitutes a successful green publicity state: a government that promotes itself as “green” by introducing corporate-friendly policies to create jobs in renewable industries, while cutting social programs and public sector jobs.

Introduction

Neoliberalism has been described as the “hegemonic ideology of our time” (Humphreys, 2009, 320; see also Sum, 2009; Schmidt, 2011; Springer, 2012). Argumentative discourse has been essential to the construction, re-construction, and hegemony of neoliberal ideas and policies, and in the assimilation of other discourses, including those around climate change, sustainability, and the environment (see Humphreys, 2009; Jessop, 2012). This paper argues that political elites do this constructive work by grafting emerging discourses, in this case, discourses associated with a “green economy”, onto familiar neoliberal discourse in ways that naturalize green neoliberalism as a common-sense approach to climate change. At the same time, this paper adopts a broadly political economic view of what constitutes neoliberal discourse: “the efficiency” of the free market, the rationality of tax cuts and “regulatory reform”, “the necessity” of deficit reduction and austerity, and the importance of “economic competitiveness” (see for example Cerny, 1997; Harvey, 2005; Humphreys, 2009; McBride and Whiteside, 2011; McBride, 2014).

Underlying this discourse is the idea that there is a limited role for the state. Thus, 40 years of rolling back the welfare state has been a prescription for “lean government”, and a result of it: tax cuts on corporations and high earners are deemed essential for business to compete in the market. Cuts to spending have included “state functions aimed at curbing socially and environmentally destructive effects of capitalist production” (McCarthy and; p. 276; see also Sum, 2009). However, despite discourses around a “free market”, neoliberal-minded governments must, and do intervene to open new markets, as in the commodification of carbon via tradeable permits (see Peck, 2010; Graefe, 2007; Humphreys, 2009).

Neoliberal discourses such as these have been grafted onto discourses of a green economy. For example, political elites frame renewable energy as a “win-win” for both the economy and climate change. However, sustainability scholars maintain that social equity and cultural diversity are fundamental to the construction of a green economy, as is ecological resilience and economic prosperity (see for example, Nieto, 1998; UNRISD, 2011; James, 2015). Thus, some scholars argue that deregulation and austerity have no place in the green economy, if it is to meet the long-term needs of people and planet (Jessop, 2012; UNRISD, 2011). This is because “issues of sustainability are always seen in relation to other core conditions of human social life” (James, 2015, xvi). So, while politicians may claim that a renewable energy sector will create a “win-win” green economy and good jobs, they may argue too of the necessity of cuts to regulation and social spending, which is inconsistent with principles of a sustainable green economy.

The cases: Michigan, USA and Ontario, Canada

This paper conducts a comparative analysis of the discourses of green neoliberalism in the neighbouring jurisdictions of Michigan, USA and Ontario, Canada. In manufacturing regions like Ontario and Michigan where the fossil fuel industry does not dominate the political discourse, renewable energy policies have helped spark a new manufacturing cluster emphasizing green energy technology, production, and storage (Hess, 2012). Both Michigan and Ontario have introduced legislation aimed at growing the renewable energy sector, attracting foreign investment, reducing greenhouse gases, and creating jobs. In 2008, Michigan Democrat Governor Jennifer Granholm signed the Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act (hereafter referred to as “CREE”). The legislation includes a Renewable Energy Standard, which required 10 percent of Michigan’s energy needs be supplied by renewable energy (RE) sources by 2015 (US Department of Energy, 2013 June 6). To meet the 10 percent target, large scale electricity producers Detroit Edison and Consumer Energy were required under the Act to increase their RE

capacity. Utility companies with two million or more customers were required to have 300 megawatts (MW) of green energy by the end of 2013, and 600 MW by the end of 2015 in order to meet Michigan's 10 percent RPS (*ibid*)¹. The exclusive use of typical RE sources like solar, wind, biogas, or hydro was not necessary for utility companies to reach these MW targets; Advanced Cleaner Energy Credits (ACECs) and Energy Optimization Credits (EOCs) are corporate tax and trading credits that could be used for compliance with Michigan's RE standards using other approved energy sources, such as carbon capture and storage technology (US Department of Energy, 2013 June 6). Up to 10 per cent of a utility's RE requirement could be met with one or a combination of these two credits (DSIRE, 2015 November 19).

One year after the CREE, Ontario Liberal Premier Dalton McGuinty signed the Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009. The Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009 (GEEA) was the first legislation of its kind in North America. The heart of the act was the feed-in-tariff (FIT) program. To stimulate investment and jobs in RE technology, research, and manufacturing in Ontario, the FIT paid premium rates per kilowatt hour for electricity produced using renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, biogas, biofuel, geothermal, tidal, and water² (*ibid*). The GEEA also includes a Micro FIT program for electricity under 10 kilowatts (KWh), such as solar panels on homes and small businesses³. As of 2012, the FIT had helped attract more than \$27 billion in private sector investment and 30 new clean energy companies (Blue Green Canada, 2012, 11). After seven years and five revisions, the Liberal government under Kathleen Wynne decided to wind down the FIT, citing increased energy conservation and a new cap and trade program as means to reducing greenhouse gasses in the province. In December 2016, Ontario's Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) accepted its final FIT contract applications.

Both the CREE and GEEA included mechanisms to help create local green jobs; indeed, McGuinty saw job creation in part as a necessary means to securing public support for the high costs of electricity associated with a feed-in-tariff (George Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014). To qualify for FIT payments, applicant companies were required to demonstrate the use of local materials and/or workers in their renewable energy projects, which could include jobs in manufacturing, construction, and maintenance as well as "soft services" such as accountants, lawyers, and advertisers (Smitherman, September 4, 2014). When Japan filed a trade dispute under the GATT III:8 (a) for discrimination against foreign firms in 2011, the WTO ruled that Ontario's domestic content requirement for FIT contracts was invalid under international trade law (WTO DS412, 2013 May 6; Walkom, 2013 June 5). The Canadian government countered, arguing that the local content requirement (LCR) was subject to exemption because the electricity produced by Hydro One was for public procurement (Sinclair and Trew, 2015). The WTO Dispute Resolution Body ruled against Canada, maintaining that Hydro One and municipal suppliers "profit from the resale of electricity" and in competition with other suppliers (*ibid*, p. 21).

Under the CREE, electricity producers and RE firms could earn 10 percent or 0.1 MW towards one bonus Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) credit for using Michigan-manufactured equipment and in-state workers to build their facilities, respectively (Michigan Legislature,

¹ A 2MW wind turbine generates electricity to power approximately 400 homes (Kenward, 2011 July 14).

² For example, as of 2013, solar rooftop mount is 54.9 cents for ≤10 kW (down from 80.2 cents in the original scheme), and 48.7 cents for > 500 KW (down from 53.9). Wind is 11.5 cents for all KW sizes (down from 13.5 cents in the original scheme)

³ To further help stimulate RE demand, the Ontario government set provincial GHG reduction targets at six percent below 1990 levels by 2014, and 15 percent by 2020.

Public Act No. 295, 2008; see also Teurck, Bachman, and Head, 2012 September 24). Companies could then put their RECs toward meeting the state's renewable energy targets. But in June 2013, the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled against Michigan's modest effort to stimulate a locally-sourced renewable energy industry, arguing that "Michigan cannot, without violating the commerce clause of Article I of the Constitution, discriminate against out-of-state renewable energy" (Martis, 2013 June 18).

So, while the World Trade Organization has constrained nation-states like the US and Canada (and as an extension, subnational jurisdictions like Michigan and Ontario) from taking measures to stimulate local green jobs, federal courts have also made similar competition rulings against individual states like Michigan. These constraints may contribute to similarities in the ways the two jurisdictions link argumentative claims for the green economy with job creation.

However, there are institutional differences that may contribute to different argumentative discourses in the two jurisdictions. Michigan operates under a bicameral, presidential-style system with term-limited governors; Ontario functions under a Westminster parliamentary system with a unicameral legislature, and no limit to a premier's term. Michigan interviewees for this study argued that term limits make influencing public policy more difficult for actors with few financial resources, than if there were no limits on gubernatorial service. Democrat Jennifer Granholm served two terms as governor: 2002-2006 and 2006-2010. Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty was premier from October 2003 through January 2013, ending his tenure after three terms and nine years by stepping down as party leader. Furthermore, the Ontario premier held a majority government until October 6, 2011, whereas Governor Granholm faced a Republican-dominated state legislature for all but two years of her tenure. Because the fusion of the executive and legislative branches in a Westminster system gives a premier more institutional power than a governor, McGuinty's two majorities gave him room to make bold arguments about the green economy that would have been difficult for his Michigan counterpart.

Theoretical framework

To examine policy discourse around the green economy in Michigan and Ontario, this paper draws on critical approaches to communication studies. Critical political communication is well suited for examining power at the level of discourse. Antonio Gramsci theorized that ideas, and the communication of ideas, have hegemonic power, whereby the political and economic elite rule the majority not by brute force but through the naturalization of otherwise unnatural ideas, such as the hierarchical wage-labour relationship between employer and worker. This is one way that policies benefitting the few can be framed as benefitting everyone, and how austerity can be framed as necessary for sustainability.

But hegemony is not a static or permanent condition. Rather, it is "a continual process of articulation – of striving to frame various definitions of reality within one particular ideological formation of the dominant society" (Lewis, 1992, 280 in reference to S. Hall, 1982). Economic vocabularies of neoliberalism have been critiqued by cultural scholars as intentional political constructions. For example, political elites have swapped "citizen" for "customer", changing the way that we think about the economy and our position in society (Holborow, 2007; Massey, 2013a, 2013b). Finn (2000) argues that part of corporate strategy has been to flood the political discourse with terms like "big government", "debt crisis", "competitiveness" and "welfare cheats", thereby "forcing those on the left to debate key issues in the language of the right" (p. 4). This neoliberal discourse helps limit the policy choices political elites perceive are available to address a given problem. For example, Gibson (1999) found that the pursuit of neoliberal

policies in Ecuador was correlated with periods of environmental deterioration, and stagnation with environmental improvement. If stagnation is debated within the discourse of “consumer demand”, then environmental regulations targeting consumption may be perceived by policymakers as incompatible with monetary policy – even if the regulation of consumption holds potential to stimulate new growth in waste management and the sharing economy. Restricting policy debate to the discourse of neoliberalism may therefore limit possible solutions to those that conform to neoliberal ideology.

Kristen Kozolanka (2014) reminds us that a key role of the capitalist state is to legitimate itself as a state in a capitalist society (Kozolanka, 2014a), acting on behalf of society as a whole and for the benefit of all (see O’Connor, 1998). This is practiced in part through political rhetoric, which includes speeches. Jonathan Rose (2000) explains that political rhetoric “is a form of communication that has at its core an argument designed to elicit behavioral or attitudinal change in the audience” (p. 7). Whatever the form of political communication— advertising, speeches, or campaigns – their ‘raison d’être’ is persuasion via argument (ibid)⁴. But argument in political communication is not neutral representation of fact (p. 21); indeed, “the function of government communication is to develop and propagate large myths to ensure social cohesion of society” (p. 27). In other words, explains Rose, “the state, perhaps by definition, has always been involved in creating and re-creating consent and hegemony” (p. 28). It may be the state’s aim, then, to make two contradictory ideas like neoliberalism and sustainability seem compatible and common sense. Hall and O’Shea (2013) explain common sense ideas as

a compendium of well-tried knowledge, customary beliefs, wise sayings, popular nostrums and prejudices, some of which – like ‘a little of what you fancy does you good’ – seem eminently sensible, others widely inaccurate. Its virtual is that it’s obvious. Its watchword is, ‘Of course!’ It seems to be outside time. Indeed it may be persuasive precisely because we think of it as a product of Nature rather than of history (p. 9).

One example is the discourse of the “Common Sense Revolution” and the logic of the New Right in Ontario (see Kozolanka, 2007; 2014). For what was dubbed by Premier Mike Harris as common sense seems hardly sensible: cutting social assistance, healthcare, and pensions; reducing thousands of teachers, nurses, and civil servants; and introducing workfare requirements for employment insurance appears to have hurt workers and their families, not helped them (ibid).

Thus, to maintain a position of power, political and economic elites must work together to create a seamless vision of the world, that the path society is taking is the right, and only one. In fact, influencing public opinion, says Rose (2010) has become more important to policymakers than improving the lives of citizens: “Governments that engage in marketing are saying that they are more interested in chancing public opinion than the foundation on which the opinion rests. Why change the economic conditions of citizens if you need only change their perceptions of economic conditions?” (p. 271).

Researchers in environmental communication have made valuable contributions to understanding the ways in which environmental problems and solutions have been framed to reinforce, rather than challenge, the existing order:

Environmental communication scholars critique and raise awareness about existing dominant discourses that are harmful to the environment. In doing so, they look, not only

⁴ Rose’s understanding of political rhetoric is based on Aristotle’s work on public communication as a form of persuasion

at communication that is directly about the environment, but that has an impact on the environment – such as *neoliberal discourse of free trade* that indirectly cause enormous environmental damage (Milstein, 2009, 346, emphasis added).

Policy elites and industry lobbyists often aim to control word meaning around environmental problems or issues. For example, the coal industry successfully lobbied the US Environmental Protection Agency to change the word “waste” to “fill” in regards to mountain top removal, which essentially made a formerly illegal act legal under EPA regulations (Cox, 2007, 10). President Donald Trump, who has denied that climate change is either caused by human action or that it’s a serious threat, has promised to bring back coal jobs by cutting President Obama’s “ridiculous rules and regulations” (May 5, 2016, as cited in Schulman, December 5, 2016⁵). Moreover, political elites control public release of information about environmental issues. Under Prime Minister Stephen Harper, federal scientists were required to submit speeches and papers for review by communications personnel before being released to the media; President Trump ordered the National Parks Service to stop tweeting after releasing side-by-side photos of 2009 and 2017 inauguration crowds on the West Mall – which the NPS maintains. This kind of control over public communication of information regarding the environment has itself been considered a crisis of public dialogue (Cox, 2007).

This “publicity state” (Kozolanka, 2014a) however, is not a monolithic entity; rather, it is “a relation and a process (that) reinforces Gramsci’s understanding that hegemony is not fixed or absolute but can be mitigated or challenged by the counter-publicity of other social and political actors” (Kozolanka, 2014a, 10). And while the interaction between media, political elites, and the public is important in maintaining this “publicity state”, the political economic structure is foundational to this condition: “Ultimately, the upper hand does not lie with the media or politics per se, but instead more broadly with the underlying forces of capital that structure such a nation state” (ibid, p. 16). In a green publicity state, then, political elites use “green economy” arguments to legitimate neoliberal policies that may not as much be in the interest of sustainability as they are in the interest of capital.

Analytical framework and methods

Data for analysis was collected from the following political speeches: State of the State speeches delivered by Governor Jennifer Granholm between January 2007 and January 2010; Governor Granholm’s weekly radio addresses between 2007 and 2010; Throne and Budget speeches delivered by the Ontario Liberals⁶ between January 2007 and December 2012; and the 2010 post-Throne speech by Dalton McGuinty. To triangulate findings from the speech analysis, interviews were also conducted with former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman under Dalton McGuinty and a high-level staffer in Jennifer Granholm’s administration, and with one blue-green labour organization and two environmental groups in each of Ontario and Michigan.

Speeches were analyzed first using NVIVO 10 to identify the most frequently-used words, which were then arranged into a set of four word clusters: environment words, value words, economy/fiscal words, and work words. Individual words can be powerful tools in political

⁵ <http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/11/trump-climate-timeline>

⁶ Though Throne speeches are delivered by the lieutenant governor of Ontario, they are written by and on behalf of the governing party and are thus considered a speech of the premier

speeches; each word or short phrase can have a different meaning, depending on the user and/or its intended audience. For example, the word “climate” typically referred to “climate change” in Ontario Throne and budget speeches; in Michigan State of the State speeches, “climate” was associated with creating optimal conditions for business investment. Understanding what frequently-used words mean for each political leader, in the context of their political speeches, provided a foundation for the analysis of specific policy arguments in regards to the solutions, circumstances, goals, means-goals, values, and alternatives.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) provide a practical framework for analyzing political arguments. A complete political argument typically includes a solutions claim; circumstantial premises; goals premises; means-goal premises; values premises; and alternative solutions. A *solutions claim* is a grand narrative for the direction of a given society, which may be inspired by a perceived or actual event, problem, and/or new opportunity. It points the way forward, promises a brighter future, and establishes the tone for a series of arguments that will guarantee its fulfilment (see Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 144). *Circumstantial premises* identify specific problems and assign specific causes. The slogan “Make America Great Again” is a good example of a claim that is both solution and circumstance: the Trump Administration will restore the United States to some period in time when the US was “great”, before “they” screwed it up. Circumstantial arguments are also made by political elites to frame positive outcomes as the result of their policies, programs, or actions. Arguing that the creation of new jobs was the outcome of a corporate tax cut is an example of a circumstantial premise. *Goals premises* are a set of objectives that lead to the realization of a society’s grand vision for itself. A goals premise does not identify a specific action, but is often a vague objective that, on the surface, seems widely desirable. The goal of “prosperity for every family” seems reasonable enough, but without clarifying what is meant by “prosperity” or “family” it is unclear who such a goal would ultimately serve. A *means-goal premise* is an “if-then” argument: if, *and only if*, we adopt these specific policies can we achieve our goals (ibid, p. 89). Means-goals claims are often associated with specific policies, but they can also be imperatives for a course of action. Political leaders also align means-goals premises with different objectives, as evident in the “win-win” discourse aligning economic growth with environmental sustainability. Because the means-goal premise asserts that “there is no alternative”, it is one of the more powerful argumentative claims. The *values premise* petitions with peoples’ needs, wants, fears, memories and desires to earn support and legitimacy for policy choices. In the Great Lakes region, where well-paid jobs have been shed by the hundreds of thousands, political elites evoke discourses around “hard working folk” and frame policies that cut jobs in the public sector as “common sense”. Finally, *alternative policy options* are claims acknowledging, and discrediting a political opponent’s policy proposals. The aim of this argumentative claim is to appear to have carefully deliberated over all possible policy choices, before choosing the best one; however, it is often used to legitimate a pre-determined course of action with little consideration of the alternatives.

Discussion: The Green Publicity State in Action

Both McGuinty and Granholm argued that government incentives were necessary to stimulate investment in a renewable energy sector and create green jobs that were less vulnerable to offshoring. As we have seen, Michigan’s approach to growing a local RE sector included a Renewable Portfolio Standard, which required that private utilities meet 10% of their energy demands with renewables by 2015, as well as various tax incentives, including cuts, credits, and

abatements – policies characteristic of neoliberalism (Lauber and Toke, 2007). The Ontario feed-in-tariff was the first of its kind in North America, inspired in part by the successful FIT policies in Germany. However, while the German FIT was based on ordoliberal ideology and designed to create opportunities for smaller producers in the market over time (ibid), the Ontario FIT was designed for foreign direct investment and rapid rollout, resulting in lucrative payments to multinational companies for renewable energy production. And despite arguments from Conservatives that the growth of renewable energy would be best served through market competition, the former minister of energy and infrastructure argued that the FIT was an exemplary case of free market policy:

“What’s more free market than a feed-in-tariff? Oh my goodness, a feed-in-tariff is way better than competition. You know...the NDP⁷ policy is renewable energy produced by Ontario Power Generation. I supported the Green Energy Act, which was about independent power producers. This to some people was the transfer of billions of dollars of revenue from a public enterprise- the OPG – to the private side” (George Smitherman interview, September 3, 2014, emphasis added).

The former minister’s remarks offer some insight into how the McGuinty government saw the FIT: part corporate incentive and privatization opportunity, a neo-liberalized idea of best practices for stimulating a renewable energy sector. Had the policy been implemented via Ontario Power Generation⁸ for public procurement as the NDP suggested, however, the requirement that companies use local workers and materials to qualify for FIT payments might not have been subject to – and a causality of – a World Trade Organization dispute (see Sinclair and Trew, 2015).

But the Ontario Liberals were confident making argumentative imperatives for a green economy. Before and after the global financial crisis, the McGuinty government claimed that the pursuit of a green economy did not require a choice of either/or, but instead was a “win-win”. Different argumentative claims, indicated here in bold typeface, were used to link economic growth and sustainability:

Solutions claim: “Ontarians understand that we don’t have to choose between the environment and the economy – that in fact, we can grow our economy by making it green” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 9, lines 25-26).

Means premise: “We know that the new, clean-technology products and services we will develop will not only create good, Ontario jobs for our families, but a cleaner and better planet for all” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 17, lines 4-7).

Means-goal premise: “Mr. Speaker, in the same speech in which he spoke of child poverty, the Premier urged another important priority for Ontario: the need for a climate change plan to create an Ontario that is less dependent on carbon – a greener Ontario.... the Premier will present a climate change plan that “will allow Ontario to take full

⁷ New Democratic Party of Ontario, a left-of-centre political party represented at both the provincial and federal levels of government

⁸ Ontario Power Generation is a crown corporation owned by the Government of Ontario. It is responsible for providing more than half of the province’s electricity

responsibility for the defining challenge of our generation” (Budget Speech 2008, p. 17, lines 1-4; 17-19).

Means-goal premise: “The (budget) plan will strengthen long-term economic productivity, while stimulating investment and job growth today, and move us to a greener, more sustainable future” (Budget Speech, 2008, p. 1, lines 19-21).

Governor Granholm, on the other hand, framed climate change less as a problem and more as an opportunity, and renewable energy as a solution to Michigan’s jobs crisis:

Solutions claim: “Any time you pick up a newspaper from here on out and see the terms ‘climate change’ or ‘global warming’ just think ‘jobs for Michigan’” (State of the State, 2008, p. 5, lines 18-20).

Circumstantial premise: “There is no question that these (green) jobs are coming to our nation. The only question is, where? I say, we will win these jobs for Michigan and replace the lost manufacturing jobs with a whole, new, growing sector” (State of the State, 2008, p. 5, lines 26-27).

Circumstantial premise: “Why alternative energy? Because – to borrow a line from Wayne Gretzky – if you want to win, ‘don’t skate to where the puck is – skate to where the puck is going.’ The puck is going to alternative energy” (State of the State, 2008, lines 16-18, 5).

Circumstantial premise: “On this Earth Day - and every day - in Michigan, we're working to protect our environment, and to reduce global warming and end our dependence on expensive foreign oil by encouraging home-grown renewable energy sources that will make our state greener and create jobs here at home” (Radio Address, April 18, 2008, emphasis added).

To be sure, McGuinty viewed renewable energy as an opportunity to replace some of Ontario’s lost manufacturing jobs: former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman confirmed that the creation of jobs was deemed essential to win public support for higher electricity costs associated with the feed-in-tariff (FIT). Moreover, that McGuinty frequently framed climate change as a serious environmental problem indicates a degree of assurance that the electorate was receptive to such argumentative claims. Indeed, the terms “climate change” and “global warming” were used more frequently in Ontario political discourse, and without qualification or skepticism: climate science is accepted by all Ontario political parties. In Michigan, however, Granholm used the terms much less frequently, and she avoided making argumentative claims about a direct link between human action and the warming climate. The manufacturing of skepticism around climate science in Michigan has not required, nor included, outright denial of scientific data by Governor Granholm, but rather minimalizing the relationship between human activity and climate change in the political discourse. Excluding “climate change” from the discourse and/or downplaying anthropogenic causes creates uncertainty regarding the need for climate change policies, while naturalizing the idea that during times of

economic recession and high unemployment, economic growth must come before the environment (see Humphreys, 2009).

However, though their argumentative claims for a green economy differed, interviewees from within the two leaders' administrations confirmed that both McGuinty and Granholm viewed climate change as a serious problem, and renewable energy as a solution to both greenhouse gas emissions and unemployment. Thus, both argued for aggressive action to win renewable energy investment. Before the global financial crisis in early 2008, Granholm makes her case:

Circumstantial premise: “We are in the early stages of a *green industrial revolution*. Everywhere across this nation and the globe, companies are racing to meet the demand for products that save energy and reduce use of foreign oil. *This is a unique opportunity for Michigan, and it couldn't come at a better time*, given the challenges our manufacturing sector has faced. And that's why I am working hard to make sure that *Michigan is ready to capitalize on it*” (Granholm Weekly Radio Address, April 18, 2008, emphasis added).

Means premise: “Michigan *will do whatever it takes to compete and win* those alternative energy jobs and replace those lost manufacturing jobs” (Michigan State of the State Address, 2008, p. 7, lines 29-30, emphasis added).

Means premise: “Alternative energy companies have watched closely as 25 other states have set aggressive goals for their alternative energy use. We have to meet and beat other states' goals here in Michigan if we are going to attract those companies here” (State of the State, 2008, p. 7, lines 3-8).

And in Ontario:

Means-goal premise: “A competitive economy is a green economy, Mr. Speaker, and so we are increasing funding to fight climate change” (Budget Speech, 2008, p. 10, lines 21-22).

Means premise: “Only a strong and growing economy will help create a *green society*. Only a strong and growing economy will yield a better quality of life for all of us. Building a powerful Ontario economy is our top priority – so Ontario will act” (Budget Speech 2009, p. 1, lines 8-14, emphasis added).

Both leaders conjoined discourses of economic competitiveness with imperatives for renewable energy. This discourse of a green “competition state”, is a thread in neoliberal ideology, and a response to what political elites see as “global realities” demanding that they compete for investment in a free market (Cerny, 1997). At the same time, government cites this need to compete for investment – and in this case, jobs – as justification for market-interventionist policies that favour corporations (ibid), like the long-term tax abatements provided by Granholm to companies that promised to create renewable energy jobs in “Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones”. In the first passage, Granholm claims that a “green industrial revolution” is already underway, but that Michigan will need to fight hard to “compete and win” the resulting jobs. By

framing renewable energy as a key sector in a new industrial revolution, the governor invokes Michigan's long history of prosperity and millions of good jobs - legacies of the first wave of industrialization in the Great Lakes region.

Similarly, the Ontario premier claimed that "a competitive economy is a green economy".

However, McGuinty diverges from the Michigan governor by claiming that such an economy will result in a "green society" and a "better quality of life". By framing the green economy as a means not only to economic growth but also social good – however vaguely defined – McGuinty shows willingness to invoke the Bruntland Report's concept of sustainability⁹ in his public speeches. At the same time, he argues about the necessity of austerity, deficit reduction, and cuts to public sector jobs and benefits, which directly contradicts his social claims.

Indeed, the McGuinty government decreased spending across several ministry portfolios throughout its tenure, claiming in the 2008 Budget Speech that it had not only eliminated the deficit inherited from the Conservatives, but that it projected a surplus. With the advent of the financial crisis, however, the Ontario Liberals, like other governments around the world, engaged in deficit spending, which included approximately \$4.5 billion in bailout to automakers General Motors and Chrysler. Within a year, McGuinty was arguing that deficit reduction and cuts to public sector jobs were necessary means to economic recovery:

Means-goals premise: "Although the economy is recovering, *we cannot simply rely on economic growth alone to eliminate the deficit. Our government has a strong track record of fiscal prudence and discipline*" (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 9, lines 5-8, emphasis added).

Means-goals premise: "Your government is on track to *reduce the Ontario public service by 5 percent* by March 2012. Reducing the size of the Ontario Public Service by an additional 2 percent will save a total of \$500 million. Your government will also find \$200 million in savings at major agencies by 2014... Any new spending that is not part of your government's current plan will need to come from savings elsewhere" (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 8, lines 2-10, emphasis added).

Means-goals premise: "Any reforms must lead to better value for money through improved efficiencies and greater productivity. The government will not consider tax increases or privatize public healthcare. And finally, your government will not pursue austerity measures that harm our economy" (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 9-10, lines 30-5, emphasis added).

Words like "reform", "efficiency", "productivity" and "streamlining" are common in neoliberal argument, associated with shrinking government services and the public sector as "necessary" cost-cutting measures. Indeed, cutting spending is itself framed as a "win-win" because government will learn to provide better public services with fewer resources – better "value for money" (Speech from the Throne, 2011; see also State of the State speech, 2007). Although McGuinty argued that his government would not pursue austerity, he qualified the claim with a loophole: "that harm our economy". This created space for McGuinty to justify austerity

⁹ The Bruntland Report was produced by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. The report argued that the pursuit of development must not be at the expense of future generations, and that social equity and justice be valued equally as ecological resilience and economic prosperity.

measures viewed by his government as having little impact on economic competitiveness and/or growth. The Liberals reframe this logic in an argument for cutting the deficit:

Means-goal premise: “We are thoughtfully examining the choices we can make today... We will balance the budget. *The right choices create confidence among investors and the markets*” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2012, p. 22, lines 5-7, emphasis added).

The claim that the best policies make Ontario competitive by putting markets and investors first demonstrates that McGuinty continued to constrain his thinking within neoliberal ideology. To further support his claim, McGuinty suggests that there was careful deliberation by his government before deciding where to cut spending:

Alternative options: “Doing so requires balanced and *thorough choices. This approach requires lower growth rates in other program expenses*” (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 10, lines 6-8, emphasis added).

In fact, the Liberals cut millions in spending before and after the global financial crisis. Between 2009 and 2012, social spending decreased by one per cent of Ontario’s GDP, with deep cuts to social assistance, employment insurance, and public sector jobs (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March). By 2013, Ontario had the second highest rate of income inequality among Canadian provinces and territories (ibid).

Granholtm inherited a state that had long been losing jobs, companies, and taxpayers to other jurisdictions, including Mexico and the southern US states. As such, she too employed familiar neoliberal discourse in her argumentative claims:

Circumstantial premise: “None of us can change the past. But given the hand we've been dealt, the combination of cuts, reforms, and revenues is not an option. They are an *absolute necessity* to put Michigan on the road to economic recovery” (State of the State, 2007 address, p. 2, lines 14-16).

Means-goals premise: “We will continue wage our war on waste and find new efficiencies that allow government to *work better for less*” (State of the State, 2007, p.7, lines 14-15, emphasis added).

Means-goals premise/alternative options: “Included were *tough but necessary* changes to retirement and healthcare benefits for state employees” (State of the State, 2010, lines 15-16, emphasis added).

Words and phrases like “absolute necessity” were used in the arguments of both leaders to assert that there were no alternatives to austerity. Here Granholtm makes a circumstantial claim that “cuts, reforms, and revenues” are compulsory responses to external conditions beyond her control. In the third passage, Granholtm used “tough but necessary” to frame cuts to retirement and health benefits as pensive and prudent, even though such policies decrease long-term economic security for public sector workers. Below she uses an alternatives claim to frame her tax cuts and reforms as measured and balanced, compared with the proposals of her opponents:

Alternative options: The Naysayers will claim that changes in our tax system will send business packing. Even when the facts show that taxes aren’t the reason we’re losing

jobs. They'll say there's no limit to how much we can cut spending. Even when they can't tell you who they'd cut or who will feel the pain. And never mind the changing nature of our economy; the Naysayers have only one solution: cut business taxes. OK, I've signed 93 business tax cuts into law since becoming governor. Even before the legislature eliminated the Single Business Tax, the tax rate in Michigan was the lowest it's been since the business tax was adopted. *If cutting business taxes was all it took to get jobs, we'd have all the jobs we need in Michigan*" (State of the State, 2007, p. 14, lines 14-26, emphasis added).

And then a values premise to support her argument for spending cuts:

Values premise: "Sure, the choices we face in the budget are tough, but is there a single family in Michigan that would choose to make ends meet in hard times by first sacrificing the needs of the children? As is often the case, *common-sense* and good values go hand-in-hand" (State of the State, 2010, p. 5, lines 33-36, emphasis added).

By linking phrases like "make ends meet", "common sense", and "good values" to the financial concerns of working-class parents, Granholm uses a values claim to suggest that her budget would not hurt Michigan's most vulnerable populations. However, she was notably indiscriminate in her spending cuts: by 2007, Granholm had already cut \$4 billion in budget deficits.

But the governor frequently made argumentative claims on the merits of increasing state revenue for one social good:

Means-goal premise: "We cannot create an environment more conducive for jobs and economic growth by only cutting spending. We must invest in things most critical to attracting business investment. One of the most important needs of a 21st century business is having a 21st century talent pool. And that means education. Education directly correlates to job creation" (Granholm State of the State, 2010, p. 4, lines 1-5).

Having a workforce that was trained to design, create, research, manufacture, and install new technologies was viewed by Granholm as essential to a Michigan green economy. She repeatedly used her radio addresses to highlight the correlation between training, renewable energy investment, and jobs:

Means-goals premise: And if we continue to put in place progressive policies that encourage renewable energy development, and if we continue to provide our workers with the *training they need*, and if we continue to expand the funding available for research and development, we will continue to celebrate jobs announcements in wind, solar, biofuels and more (Radio Address, October 17, 2008, emphasis added).

Similarly, McGuinty linked education with economic competitiveness and the green economy:

Means-goals premise: "When we improve the quality of public education, when we provide our young people in particular *with the skills they need to succeed, we get the best workers, who land the best jobs, who in turn build the strongest economy*, which funds everything we want to do together" (Budget Speech, 2007, p. 3, lines 6-9, emphasis added).

Means-goals premise: “*Prudently investing in training and infrastructure creates jobs now and improves productivity in the future. The innovation initiatives in this Budget ensure that Ontario will continue to be on the cutting edge of new technology. They will propel us to a greener, more sustainable economy*” (Budget 2008, p. 14, lines 6-10, emphasis added).

Education as means to employment and attracting new investment, and not valuable in and of itself is part of the commodification of education over the last three decades (see Patrick, 2013). Despite their rhetoric, both McGuinty and Granholm left office with tuition fees among the highest in their respective countries (see Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2013 March 26; Associated Press, 2010 December 8). Indeed, Granholm’s 2010 executive budget cut \$100 million in spending for higher education and \$164 million for K-12 (Government of Michigan, 2009, February 12). Moreover, a majority of Michigan’s green jobs training programs ended when earmarked funds in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009 by President Obama were depleted.

Conclusion

Kozolanka’s (2014a; 2014b) work on the publicity state suggests that political elites exert significant effort towards persuading the public and other legislators of the superiority of their policies (see also Rose, 2010). A range of policies associated with neoliberalism – including deregulation, privatization, and the expansion of free markets – are framed in ways that reinforce the existing neoliberal order (Kozolanka, 2014a, 2014b). In this paper, I introduce the term “green publicity state” to describe how political elites use argumentative discourses in ways that naturalize green neoliberalism. Political elites do this constructive work by grafting emerging discourses of the green economy onto familiar neoliberal discourses. Argumentative claims citing economic competitiveness, fiscal prudence, tax reform, lean government, and austerity, common to political discourse over the 40 years, are either embedded in, or used in conjunction with arguments for greening economic growth; here, we examined arguments for a renewable energy industry. In so doing, political leaders represent policies informed by neoliberal ideology as the best means to solving not only ecological problems like climate change, but also socio-economic problems including unemployment and inequality.

While Granholm and McGuinty received criticism for some of their policies, both were also applauded for their efforts to green their economies; indeed, McGuinty was named “Canada’s greenest premier ever” (Elgie, 2013 February 25). This constitutes a successful green publicity state: a government that promotes itself as “green” by introducing corporate-friendly policies to create jobs in renewable industries, while cutting social programs and jobs in the public sector. Like liberal feminism prioritizing the economic security and individuality of white, middle class women, this green economy ignores the social and economic structures that prevents inclusive sustainability. By conjoining political discourse around “green economy”, “green jobs”, and “renewable energy” with policy imperatives for “economic competitiveness”, “fiscal discipline”, and “good government”, Granholm and McGuinty contributed to the re-naturalization of the logic of neoliberalism and the naturalization of green neoliberalism in their jurisdictions after global financial crisis.

However, there is variance in the ways that the governor and premier used climate change as an argument for the green economy. Governor Granholm was cautious making claims about climate change: renewable energy was an answer to Michigan’s lost manufacturing jobs, and climate

change was the problem that created its demand. Moreover, though interviewees confirmed that Granholm believed in anthropogenic climate change, there had been limited consensus and/or willingness by Michigan Republicans to accept climate change as a human-caused crisis. On the other hand, Premier McGuinty argued for climate action not only as means to economic development; closing the province's coal-fired plants and establishing a large urban greenbelt were important steps to mitigating climate change. To be sure, his conviction was buttressed by eight years of a majority government; however, there was no mandate that he specifically adopt greener measures. And while political parties in Ontario may argue for different solutions – as former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman pointed out – they accept climate science. So, while McGuinty made bolder arguments than Granholm, and had considerably more political room to deviate from the neoliberal script than his Michigan counterpart – he did not.

Consistent with Gramscian (1971) analysis of the way public consent is obtained, the argumentative claims made by McGuinty and Granholm may serve to increase public support for neoliberal responses to climate change. Indeed, there is support among environmental and labour groups for this version of the green economy. One explanation is that ENGOs have been excluded from the policy table in the past, and are willing to compromise on broader values to have input in future climate and environmental policy (Ontario NGO interview, March 2015; Michigan NGO interview, May 2015). Other ENGOs fully reject that an alternative to green neoliberalism is even possible (Ontario NGO interview, March 2015). Moreover, labour may view the green economy as means to replacing thousands of jobs lost in manufacturing over the last decade, but seems willing to forgo demands for pensions and unions (Ontario blue-green interview, March 2014) In this way, these organizations assist in the naturalization of green neoliberalism.

Because of the embeddedness of the language of green neoliberalism, and the common-senseness of this version of green economy in the two jurisdictions, this paper may contribute to theoretical knowledge on ideological hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) and the publicity state (see Kozolanka, 2014). Ideological hegemony maintains that widespread acceptance of the capitalist system is not the result of brute force, but through a well-funded and on-going ideological project of the state and capital that naturalizes capitalism and make it seem like “common sense”. Here I used Fairclough and Fairclough's (2012) framework for analyzing arguments that naturalize green neoliberalism. While scholars have linked neoliberal policies to the global financial crisis (see for example, Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014), political elites continue to argue that privatization, deregulation, and the free market are the only means to good jobs and a strong economy, and that austerity is necessary to restore balance to the economic system. Green economy discourse is not necessary to re-assert neoliberalism. However, grafting argumentative imperatives for renewable energy incentives and investment onto familiar economic discourses contributes to the naturalization of a neoliberal approach to greening the economy, while helping regain public support for policies that do more to target corporate investment than tackle climate change.

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