

## THE GREEN PUBLICITY STATE

THE GREEN PUBLICITY STATE<sup>1</sup>: SUSTAINABILITY, AUSTERITY, AND THE ‘GREEN  
ECONOMY’ IN MICHIGAN AND ONTARIO, 2007-2012

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TITLE: The Green Publicity State: Sustainability, Austerity, and the ‘Green Economy’ in Michigan and Ontario, 2007-2012

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**Lay Abstract:** The “green economy” has become a popular idea over the last decade. The green economy is a term that refers to expanding the renewable energy industry including solar, wind, and hydro energy, as well as energy retrofitting of existing buildings and the electric car industry. Political leaders argue that by growing the green economy, we can create thousands of good jobs and reduce climate change.

But the green economy is not necessarily sustainable. This is partly because “sustainable development” is not a matter of just making the economy stronger at any cost, with a potential added benefit of reducing climate change. Sustainable development means that less people live in poverty, different cultures are protected, and the environment is preserved in ways that it can meet the needs of every generation of future human beings. It also means that climate change must become a priority for government over economic growth, and that technology is not the solution to every environmental problem. However, even after all the social and economic problems that became worse during and after the Great Recession in 2008-2009, the green economy is being designed using the same kinds of policies that emphasize what business wants rather than is needed to halt climate change and reduce poverty. How then are leaders able to make this kind of green economy seem like a new, great idea? Is this green economy actually sustainable?

This thesis examined these basic questions by comparing policies introduced in the Province of Ontario and the State of Michigan for growing a renewable energy industry, as well as policies that could lead to greater or less sustainability. We put these various policies into categories to ‘measure’ how sustainable they are. Then we examined the arguments made by political leaders in Ontario and Michigan to see how they framed the green economy to make it seem like common sense for a better, more sustainable future.

We found that although renewable energy can lead to more sustainability by reducing the greenhouse gasses we produce, the policies introduced by leaders between 2007 and 2012 emphasized meeting the needs of business rather than the needs of the environment or the poor. And these are in fact the kinds of policies that governments used before the Great Recession – policies that made society worse off for the last 30 years – so there is nothing new about them, even if there are a little bit ‘greener’. We also found that Governor Jennifer Granholm and Premier McGuinty made very similar arguments about the benefits of the green economy, while at the same time minimizing the downsides of their business- focused approach. Governor Rick Snyder, also of Michigan, has had no interest in the green economy, and has emphasized business policies almost entirely. Though Granholm and McGuinty had similar arguments and visions for their green economy by building a renewable energy sector, the premier was able to make arguments that the green economy was necessary for climate change, and he was able to introduce stronger policies against climate change, like shutting down all of Ontario’s coal plants. This is because premiers have more institutional power than governors. It is also interesting that even though McGuinty had more power than the governors, he still chose many of the same policies as Governor Snyder.

**Abstract:** In Michigan and Ontario, the “green economy” has been touted by government as a “win-win” solution to reducing greenhouse gasses and replacing thousands of manufacturing jobs lost before and during the global financial crisis. Some scholars, however, argue that despite economic and climate crises, there is little new about the policies being rolled out in advanced industrialized states; instead, political elites adopted business-as-usual policies after 2009 that offer little hope for greater social, economic, or ecological sustainability. In this green “publicity state”, political elites engage as much, if not more, in the politics of environmental discourse than in policymaking for a greener, more sustainable society. This thesis thus explored the research questions: To what extent have policymakers in Ontario and Michigan evoked argumentative imperatives that neoliberal policies are *the* way to create green jobs, increase socio-economic equality, and/or halt climate change? To what degree can policies in Ontario and Michigan be classified as ‘sustainable’? Does the policy rhetoric match the policy reality? In what similar and different ways do public policies get framed, communicated, and constrained by underlying neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that then limit the policy options that governments see as possible? In what ways does this contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism? To answer these questions, we examined the public policies and political rhetoric of renewable energy in Michigan and Ontario under the administration of Governors Jennifer Granholm and Rick Snyder, and the Ontario Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty between 2007 and 2012. The theoretical framework for this paper was constructed using Gramscian and critical discourse theories which maintain that ideological and economic hegemony manifests, and is constantly being reproduced, through political discourse. First, we conducted a comparative analysis of green economy policies, as well as a sample of additional social, economic, and fiscal policies that could contribute to greater or less sustainability in the two jurisdictions. These were then categorized according to a typology of green economy imaginaries. Second, Michigan State of the State speeches and radio addresses, and Ontario Budget speeches and Speeches from the Throne delivered during the period of study were analyzed using Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) critical discourse analysis for political argument. It was found that political elites construct imaginaries of the green economy using various argumentative claims in ways that often do not coincide with policies and/or policy outcomes. In this study, Granholm and McGuinty often used argumentative claims around renewable energy in ways that naturalize green neoliberal approach to sustainability, while greenwashing less ‘green’ policies; take credit for making their jurisdiction ‘greener’; deflect and assign blame for a shrinking economy; and position the green economy as a ‘win-win’ to unemployment and/or climate change. Despite labelling himself a “good, green Republican”, Governor Snyder did not engage in green economy policymaking or framing, instead pursuing a ‘classic’ neoliberal policy agenda. Furthermore, the arguments political elites are further constrained by both the existing economic regime and political institutions: a premier in a majority government has significantly more power to make bold argumentative claims and introduce policies than a state governor. This is evident in the fact that although their rhetoric around the green economy as a means to increasing jobs was similar, McGuinty was able to also frame the green economy as a means to reducing greenhouse gasses and introduce a bolder piece of renewable energy legislation than Granholm.

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## List of Abbreviations and Symbols

ACEC	Advanced Clean Energy Credit
AGC	Applied Green Capitalisms
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
CARE	Clean Affordable and Renewable Energy
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CELA	Canadian Environmental Law Association
CER	Certified Emission Reduction units
CPE	Cultural Political Economy
CREE	Clean Renewable and Efficient Energy Act
DSIRE	Database for State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
ENGO	Environmental Non-Governmental Organization
EOC	Energy Optimization Credit
EOR	Enhanced Oil Recovery
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
ETS	Emissions Trading Scheme
EV	electric vehicle
FIT	Feed-in-Tariff
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEA	Green Energy Act
GEEA	Green Energy and Economy Act
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GHG	Greenhouse gasses
GND	Green New Dealism
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LCR	Local Content Requirement
MBT	Michigan Business Tax
MEDC	Michigan Economic Development Corporation
MW	Megawatt
MLCV	Michigan League of Conservation Voters
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NDP	New Democratic Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OBA	Open For Business Act
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPA	Ontario Power Authority
OPG	Ontario Power Generation
PPP/P3s	Public Private Partnerships
RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standard
RE	Renewable Energy

REC	Renewable Energy Credit
RES	Renewable Energy Standard
RERZ	Renewable Energy Renaissance Zone
RESOP	Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program
RTW	Right to Work
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework on Climate Change
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WEF	World Economic Forum
WOA	Water Opportunities Act
WTO	World Trade Organization

## Chapter 1: Introduction

“This idea, coupled with ‘sustainable development’ is that the ‘green economy’ will generate more growth, create more employment, resolve environmental problems, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It is a magic solution for all problems. But it is a magic solution that preserves that which is fundamental: the logic of capital accumulation” (Edgardo Lander, Professor of Social Sciences, Universidad Central de Venezuela in Caracas, in ‘Capitalism as Pathology: the Illusion of the Green Economy’, 2012 November 22).

Neoliberal policies associated with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression may be contributing to an arguably more severe crisis: the one that’s warming our planet. Climate change has made millions homeless, jobless, and poor (ILO, 2012). Unprecedented carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere are contributing to unpredictable weather patterns including more and worse tornadoes, heat waves, floods, and droughts, all of which impact livelihoods, health, and wellbeing in the Global South and the Global North (see ILO, 2010; World Bank, 2010). Indeed, the economic costs of climate change are significant: doing nothing to cut global greenhouse gasses (GHGs) will cost an estimated 5-20 percent of global GDP by 2050, compared to one percent of GDP if the world leaders take immediate and decisive action (Rosemberg, 2010). While some climate deniers have argued that global warming is part of the earth’s natural cycle and/or not caused by humans (see McCarthy, 2014 November 17), climate change – like the 2008 global financial crisis – is indeed a human-caused tragedy that can be undone with human-made solutions.

Many governments have attempted to find ways to mitigate the effects of these crises, and in the case of climate change, even prosper. Governments claim that policy should produce a ‘win-win’: a win for the economy and a win for the environment. This has manifested in policy discourse as the ‘green economy’. When imagining this greener world, some leaders may proceed with caution and apply lessons from the Keynesian and neoliberal periods, both of which have contributed to environmental problems, including urban sprawl and pollution (O’Connor, 1998, 248; see also Luke,

2009). In other words, politicians might want to reconsider whether investing in mass infrastructure projects; trading carbon credits; reducing corporate tax revenue and public spending; privatizing public assets; and/or emphasizing ‘voluntary’ measures and deregulation are the best means to a ‘green economy’.

As it turns out, the paths already taken may be the path forward, regardless of the rhetoric of sustainability and progress. This dissertation thus examines the ways that political elites have used a range of discourses around ‘green economy’ to make claims that their policies are the means to a new, sustainable, and prosperous society in ways that naturalize old ideas like ‘neoliberalism’. It does this by analyzing policy arguments, and is most interested in those arguments that suggest a particular vision of the green economy – usually a neoliberal one – is *the* best and/or only alternative to ensure sustainability of the economy, the environment, and society as a whole. Examining green economy discourses is important because since the latter part of the 2010s the green economy has increasingly been advocated by powerful political elites, as well as environmental and labour groups, as a leading path to sustainable development and growth (see Jessop, 2012) – whether the green economy they imagine is truly sustainable or not.

This idea of ‘greening’ growth has been championed by international organizations including the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which maintain that economic growth, inspired by green principles, can lead to individual prosperity, social inclusion, and ecological resilience. The World Economic Forum’s description of ‘green economic growth’ illustrates this best:

“Greening economic growth *is the only way* in which sustainable, inclusive development can be achieved that will satisfy the basic needs of nine billion people and provide them with equal rights to *material prosperity*. A key challenge is the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions to avoid the catastrophic impacts of global warming. Another imperative is the need to *increase natural resource productivity* to meet unprecedented demands for clean water, food and urban development” (World Economic Forum, n.d., emphasis added).

How the WEF frames the green economy is significant, because scholars argue that organizations like the World Economic Forum have influence over ideas, discourse, and policy transmitted across the global political economy (see Gill, 1992; Carroll and Carson, 2003). Indeed, scholars argue that at all levels from the international to the local, powerful economic and political actors work to naturalize ideas and make them seem like ‘common sense’ (see Atkins, 2014) in order to promote widespread ‘consent without consent’ of the business agenda (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; see also Rose, 2010). It might be inaccurate, however, to claim that all policymakers are intentionally spreading a neoliberal hegemony; instead they believe that privatization, deregulation, and the free market are the best solutions to modern problems. But in believing in neoliberalism’s ideological superiority, government must constantly construct arguments that neoliberal-inspired policies are the right, and indeed, *the only* course of action to counteract climate change and avoid future economic crises. In so doing, policymakers have attached promises of green jobs and investment in renewable energy to the neoliberal agenda, which appeals not only to labour and environmental groups but also to thousands of people out of work in places hit hard by economic crises like Michigan and Ontario. The green economy is thus constructed in the political discourse as a win-win solution to complex problems, one that works not simply within the capitalist system, but is empowered by it:

“It (the green economy) is being narrated at present as capitalism’s best hope to create jobs, restore growth, and limit climate change - a magic formula or a magic bullet...but it also, precisely because it is a floating signifier, because of its productive fuzziness, it creates the possibilities of false alliances, of mis-readings of takeovers, of colonization and so forth. It has a certain incoherence and it’s vulnerable to capture by the most powerful political and economic forces” (Bob Jessop, UNRISD Conference, 2011 October 10-11).

In the foundry cultures<sup>2</sup> of Ontario and Michigan, where pride in one's work and prosperity have emerged alongside the manufacturing and auto sectors (Garreau, 1981), a 'green economy' that promises to restore good blue collar jobs with green collar jobs is a powerful argumentative claim particularly since the global financial crisis (GFC) (see Smitherman interview, September 2014; see also IPSOS Reid, 2009 March 9; Rosenthal, 2011 October 15). Indeed, some one million manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario and Michigan combined since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mowat Centre, 2014 July 29; Gantert, 2014 October 14). The green economy is thus linked in the discourse to good jobs, greater economic and social equality, and a stable climate. Because of these 'triple wins', the argument is that there is something 'new' about this green economy that makes it ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable.

Not all are convinced. Some scholars argue that infinite economic growth is incompatible with finite resources and a warming planet (Jacobs, 2012 October, 4; see also Parés and Sauri, 2007; James, 2015). Other writers insist that slow to no growth is necessary to reduce greenhouse gasses and social and economic inequality (see Tanuro, 2013; UNRISD, 2011 October 10-11). However, any 'low-growth economies' imagined thus far are deeply rooted in capitalocentric logic, which makes it relatively easy for capital to reassert itself (Jessop, 2012, 23; see also Jessop, 2013; Parés and Sauri, 2007). Indeed, the increase of environmental regulation in the 1970s prompted many environmental organizations to also pursue economic-driven solutions to ecological problems, such as emissions trading and green consumerism (see Barron's 2005 reading of Watts, 2002). As a result, social, environmental and labour organizations who prescribe a green economy often do so within the

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<sup>2</sup> In Garreau's (1981) 'Nine Nations of North America', the foundry region has historically been characterized by a sense of pride as the engine of economic growth in the United States and Canada as manufacturers of steel and the automobile. Since the 1970s, however, self-identity as hard-working blue collar families has been eroded by de-industrialization and an increasing 'rust belt' identity, as factories close and move overseas, and good manufacturing jobs are lost.

capitalist mode of production (Barron, 2005; see for example Blue Green Canada, 2012), and often support industries like nuclear energy and the auto industry (Löwy, 2005) that are, arguably, unsustainable. So while writers like O'Connor (1998) maintain that “there is a kind of war going on between capital and environmental movements” (p. 247), there appears to be a great deal of agreement among capital, politicians, labour and environmental organizations that a neoliberal green economy is *the* solution to economic and climate crises. As Engler (1995) points out, labour has “failed to provide an alternative to capital’s vision of the individual in the market” (p. viii).

The pervasiveness of ‘green capitalist’<sup>3</sup> narratives draws attention to several problems with the way green economies are being constructed in Ontario and Michigan. Since the fallout of the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, climate change mitigation goals have been eclipsed by the green economy’s potential for continued economic growth (Jessop, 2012, 5; see also Peters, Eathington, and Swenson, 2011 November; Hess, 2012; ILO, 2012). In term of unemployment, Ontario and Michigan have been particularly hard hit among North American jurisdictions: Ontario lost some 300,000 manufacturing jobs (Mowat Centre, 2014 July 29) and Michigan has lost as many as 800,000 to one million (Gantert, 2014 October 14) to de-industrialization and globalization over the last decade. Wage inequality grew in both Ontario and Michigan between 2001 and 2011 (Employment and Social Development Canada, 2011; McNichol, Cooper, Hall and Palacios, 2012 November 15; Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March). Among Canadian provinces, Ontario has made the deepest cuts to social programs, has the highest rate of involuntary part-time work, the highest tuition costs, and has one of the highest rates of income inequality between the rich and poor (Ontario Common Front, 2015; see also Monsebraaten, 2012 August 29; Lewchuk, Clark and de Wolff, 2008). Nor does addressing climate change appear to be a priority: Ontario and Michigan have experienced record-

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Green capitalism’ refers to imaginaries and discourses grounded in capitalist logic, including New Dealism and neoliberalism. This distinction is explained further in the coming chapters.



breaking temperatures in winter and summer over the last decade, and neither jurisdiction is dealing with some of the major contributors to climate change within its borders: Michigan still relies on coal for energy and ‘fracks’ for natural gas; and Ontario gets more than 50 percent of its energy from nuclear power<sup>4</sup>.

So while the ‘green economy’ is often described as a new approach to ‘modern’ problems, a closer look suggests that its implementation may be largely construed of business-as-usual policies for dealing with causes and complications of the capitalist system through which it operates (Brand, 2012). This raises questions about the way ‘sustainability’ features in arguments about the green economy. If the economy and the environment are being ‘decoupled’ by way of new and advanced technologies, including those for renewable energy and advanced manufacturing while ensuring continued economic growth and ecological sustainability, it may lend support to the argument that “the concept of sustainability too often has been approached either from a strict environmental logic or from a neoliberal view in which capital accumulation is seen as the way to solve socio-environmental problems” (Parés and Sauri, 2007, 160). But if it is true that capitalism without growth is a contradiction in terms (see Jessop, 1993 on Schumpeter; see also Lander, 2011) – then a green capitalist economy may never be truly sustainable (Foster, 2002; Foster and Magdoff, 2011; Lander, 2011). For example, although American growth and infrastructure projects after the Great Depression resulted in an economic boom that decreased economic inequality, these same projects also dramatically increased greenhouse gas production, resource exploitation and degradation of the natural environment (for a more detailed discussion, see Chapter 3).

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<sup>4</sup> While nuclear power is a low emitter of GHGs the nuclear cycle, which includes uranium mining, production, cooling, de-commissioning and nuclear waste disposal is GHG intensive and poses a significant threat to people and planet that can last hundreds of thousands of years

This leads to the question of whether the green economy is as sustainable as political leaders claim, or whether it is in part an ideological project that legitimates government and (re)naturalizes the free market; expands the role of private interest; promotes unlimited economic growth, and secures public support. And as ‘radical’ as it may be for policymakers to agree that climate change is a serious global problem that requires ‘drastic’ policy solutions, it may indeed be less radical and drastic than overhauling the economic system (Kirby, 2014). Thus for capital, and the capitalist state, climate change is the lesser of two evils.

It is therefore important to critically examine ideas about what is ‘green’ and ‘sustainable’:

“To write realistically about the conflict between ecology and capitalism requires, at the present time, a form of intellectual resistance – a ruthless critique of the existing mode of production *and the ideology* used to support its environmental depredations” (Foster, 2002, 25, emphasis added).

In that spirit this thesis conducts a comparative case of the neighbouring foundry states of Ontario and Michigan and asks:

*Research Question 1:* To what extent have policymakers in Ontario and Michigan evoked argumentative imperatives that neoliberal policies are *the* way to create green jobs, increase socio-economic equality, and/or halt climate change?

*Research Question 2:* To what degree can policies in Ontario and Michigan be classified as ‘sustainable’? Does the policy rhetoric match the policy reality?

*Research Question 3:*

In what similar and different ways do public policies get framed, communicated, and constrained by underlying neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that then limit the policy options that governments see as possible? In what ways does this contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism?

Answering ‘how’ questions such as these can help us understand the ways that imaginaries of ‘green’ market economies are naturalized and allow us to challenge labour and environmental groups to advocate for policies that re-imagine these imaginings (Panayotakis, 2010; Shear, 2010; Lander, 2011; see also Barron, 2005). To understand how policymakers are constructing discourses that knit the green economy to neoliberalism, this research investigated argumentative discourses around a range of policies or initiatives in Ontario and Michigan, which included, but was not limited to, those argued to have the potential to create jobs in green industries: The Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009; and the Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy Act, 2008.<sup>5</sup> However, because ‘green’ policies (and the discursive construction of arguments for these policies) do not occur independently of the wider policymaking environment, this study also examines argumentative claims around a range of fiscal, social, and economic policies introduced by Michigan and Ontario political leaders between 2007 and 2012.

### **Neoliberalism, the Green Economy, and Sustainability**

“No country is going to undertake actions on climate change...that are going to deliberately destroy jobs and growth in their country. We are just a little more frank about that” (former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, June 10, 2014<sup>6</sup>).

The estrangement of climate policy and job growth has been sponsored to varying degrees by politicians, economic elites, environmental groups, and labour over the last four decades (Peters, Eathington, and Swenson, 2011). In recent years however, a discourse of compromise has emerged: the ‘green economy’. For those who support it, the relationship between climate mitigation and job

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<sup>5</sup> Ontario introduced its Water Opportunities Act in 2010, which is aimed at increasing R&D and jobs in water technology in the province; while the act may be referenced in the research, full analysis of data involving the Water Opportunities Act is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>6</sup> See Chase, S. and McKenna, B. (2014 June 10). Canada ‘more frank’ about climate change, Harper says. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/canada-more-frank-about-climate-change-pm/article19087212/>

creation is more optimistic than expressed by Stephen Harper (above). Advocates of a green economy argue that economic growth is compatible with the goals of ecological sustainability, including mitigating and adapting to climate change. While the green economy has been imagined differently across nation states, cities, provinces, and regions, there is consensus among proponents that the green economy can achieve ‘sustainability’.

Similarly, neoliberalism has not manifested identically across political boundaries (Harvey, 2005) and geographies (Peck, 2010). However, there appears to be convergence around specific principles that all varieties of neoliberalism tend to adhere (see Simmons and Elkins, 2004; Kothari, Minogue and DeJong, 2002). Neoliberals generally agree that the free market is the solution to a range of social problems, including inequality, unemployment, and climate change. Neoliberalism maintains that as a result of giving corporations plenty of room to earn profits— through deregulation, privatization, and free trade – wealth will ‘trickle down’ to everyone else<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the neoliberal view of policy problems and solutions shifts responsibility for unemployment, education, healthcare, and social assistance from society onto the individual who, it is presumed, has the same opportunities as every other individual regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and/or socio-economic status (see Fanelli and Thomas, 2011). More centrally to the subject of this thesis, neoliberals largely maintain that environmental problems and crises like climate change can be managed through market mechanisms, voluntary agreements, and/or technology, while concurrently promote encouraging economic growth (Carter, 2007; see also UNRISD, 2012). Carbon trading is a recent example of a market-based response to climate change that has been sponsored by international organizations, such as the UN Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), and pursued by

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<sup>7</sup> “Trickle down” was first coined by humorist Will Rogers following the Great Depression, and not neoliberal advocates; however, the concept has since been associated with the laissez faire, supply-side economics of Reagan, Thatcher, and Mulroney

national and regional governments, such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) and the Quebec-California Cap and Trade program<sup>8</sup>. Critics have cautioned about making too significant a political investment in ‘market-based solutions’:

“All too often the phrase ‘market-based solutions’ works as a kind of coded communication. In effect, it signals to corporations that the government will not take any measures that could interfere with their business model. Rather than impose meaningful restrictions on emissions or the extraction of fossil fuels, market-based solutions focus on changing behavior by creating the right set of incentives. But without strong penalties to go along with those incentives—a stick alongside the carrot—market-based solutions simply end up creating profitable new markets without addressing the underlying economic drivers of climate change” (Ravensbergen, 2013 August 30).

There are alternatives to market-based solutions to economic and environmental problems (see for example, Nieto, 1997; O’Connor, 1998; Foster, 2002; James, 2015). These alternatives reason that economic and environmental crises are symptoms of bigger problems associated with the capitalist mode of production and consumption. For example, holistic sustainable development stands in contrast to the green economy in that it privileges neither the economy nor the environment at the expense of social needs. Rather, economic, ecological, social, and cultural sustainability are achieved through the full inclusion of the poor and marginalized in society (see Krueger and Gibbs, 2007). Sustainability is thus driven not by the pursuit of profit – even if profit is the result of ‘greener’ industries like renewable energy – but the pursuit of social equality. In other words, ecological sustainability is achieved through the pursuit of environmental justice; economic and social sustainability are achieved through the pursuit of social justice; and cultural sustainability is achieved in the pursuit of inclusion. Sustainability thus “brings back ‘the social’ into the centre of contention, displacing economics as the focus of all understanding while still taking it seriously” (James, 2015, xvi). And while there is much political rhetoric that the market is the only means to solving society’s

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<sup>8</sup> In April 2015, Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that Ontario would enter into the cap and trade program with Quebec and California. At the time of writing, there was no date for when Ontario’s participation would take effect.

problems – problems that now include climate change – there are alternative proposals that maintain that the market will only perpetuate inequality and global warming (Robbins, 2004).

And yet, there appears to be widespread acceptance that neoliberal policies are the best way to ensuring a sustainable future. This is interesting, given that neoliberalism was not an inevitable evolution in the global political economy; rather, significant effort was put forth to shift capitalism from a Keynesian to neoliberal model (Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010). UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan (and shortly after Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney) were skilled at crafting a neoliberal logic that seemed like common sense, even to the working class. This logic came to be associated with a set of 10 recommendations dubbed the ‘Washington Consensus’, which has informed policy discourse for more than three decades:

1. *Fiscal discipline*: no running of large deficits over the long term;
2. *Re-ordering public expenditure priorities*: switching expenditures from non-merit subsidies to basic healthcare and education;
3. *Tax reform*: combine a broad tax base with moderate marginal tax rates;
4. *Liberalizing interest rates*;
5. *A competitive exchange rate*;
6. *Trade liberalization*;
7. *Liberalization of inward foreign direct investment*;
8. *Privatization* of public goods and services
9. *De-regulation*: easing barriers to entrance and exit;
10. *Property rights*: access for the informal sector to gain property rights at ‘acceptable cost’ (Williamson, 2004).

As public awareness of environmental problems increased, however, neoliberalism took an ‘ecological modernisation’ narrative (Hajer, 1995), which holds that technological innovations can mitigate harmful environmental effects and make production more efficient, while not interfering with profit. The idea of a ‘green economy’ is in part a manifestation of this narrative, gaining strength in the 2000s with the convergence of several global problems: attrition of manufacturing jobs in the Global North, food price volatility, natural disasters, rising oil prices, sharp increases in

inequality, and most recently, the global financial crisis (Benson, Bass, and Greenfield, 2014 February). With the failure to reach a global consensus on climate change at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2009, the green economy became a key discussion point for state-based action at Rio +20, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first UN Conference on Sustainable Development (ibid). The outcome document, ‘The Future We Want’ maintains that the green economy, as it is currently unfolding across advanced industrialized states, can achieve sustainability *within* the existing capitalist system, despite a range of competing, well-conceived alternatives (see for example, Nieto, 1997; O’Connor, 1998; Foster, 2002; James, 2015).

The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) describes this ideological struggle around the ‘green economy’:

“A number of transition paths are currently being envisaged. But the question of which *ideas and values* will prevail, and shape policy and practice partly depends on which worldviews inform public opinion and policy processes” (2012, p. 3, emphasis added).

But as more and more ‘green economies’ appear characteristic of green market imaginaries (of neoliberalism and to some extent, New Dealism), the debate seems near settled. And while scholars working with the UNRISD appear to reject the idea that economic, social, and environmental justice can be served within the constructs of capitalism, this does not necessarily translate across the UN system. For example, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has defined the green economy partly in market-based terms:

- Adjust prices to reflect the internalization of external costs, encourage sustainable consumption, and implement policies that promote the greening of business and markets more broadly;
- Implement tax reforms that support environmentally-friendly and sustainable practices;
- Expand public support for sustainable, more energy-efficient infrastructural development to conserve and boost natural capital;
- Enhance research and development programs focused on green technologies (eg. clean energy);

- Target public investment to create programs and forge alliances that promote self-sufficient ecologically and socially-sound economic development; and
- Implement policies that harmonize social goals with existing or future economic policies (Brand, 2012, 29).

Indeed, some have argued that the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been overly cautious in how it frames global warming, and too focused on market-oriented policies as the means to containing it. For example, in spring 2014 the IPCC released its second of four planned reports on the impacts of climate change, which, like “every recent IPCC report, is super-cautious to a fault and still incredibly alarming” (Romm, 2014 March 30). Despite asserting that food security, farming, human work, and even peace and security will be (and already are) affected by climate change, the IPCC makes its predictions based on business-as-usual practices, rather than adopting a worst-case scenario approach (ibid). By applying conservative risk categories like ‘Reasons for Concern’, and weak language that climate change is ‘projected to compromise normal human activities, including growing food or working outdoors’ (ibid) the IPCC may aid in the maintenance of the status quo. Indeed, few UN agencies (aside from the UNRISD) suggest structural change to the global political-economic order<sup>9</sup>. Instead, policy recommendations for a green economy – even one that pays attention to social goals – emphasize existing economic policies, the power of technology to solve problems, ‘sustainable consumption’, and the free market to adjust environmental costs (Brand, 2012). So while there may be some variation in green’ or ‘greening’ economies of the world, these green economies may be projects within the wider neoliberal agenda, rather than an effort to halt climate change, create good jobs, and reduce social and income inequality.

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<sup>9</sup> The UNRISD released a paper in 2011 entitled “Beyond the ‘Green Economy’: System Change, Not Climate Change?” that suggested systemic change is needed.



Some thought that neoliberalism would eventually see its day. Following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008-2009, there was belief among some scholars on the Left that neoliberalism might fall like the Berlin Wall (see Peck, 2010). This would make room for new ‘ecological-economic imaginaries’ (see Jessop, 2012) that might create a new political, economic, and social order. This was not an unreasonable expectation: large-scale crises can serve to dislodge a range of ideas of what ‘is’, and make room for new ideas of what ‘can be’ (Harvey, 2005; Jessop and Sum, 2012; Jessop, 2012; Shear, 2010). However, neoliberalism has proved to be stubbornly resistant, and has been re-affirmed again and again following economic crises (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, 2012). Part of that resistance is due to its adaptability to varying ideological frameworks across multiple geographies (Peck, 2010). One of these frameworks is the green economy, which may be assisting in, and further defined by, the ongoing reanimation of neoliberalism (see Barron, 2005). This is because ‘green economy’ – like ‘freedom’, equality’, and ‘sustainable development’ – is a relatively vague and elastic set of ideas and discourses that can take on the shape of whoever has the power to define it (UNRISD/Jessop, 2011 October 10-11). Thus, if those in power favour neoliberal policies, then discourses of the ‘green economy’ may be used to assist in the revival of, and public consent for neoliberalism, particularly during these times when jobs are scarce and global warming threatens all aspects of social life (see James, 2015).

Leftist scholars and activists, as well as marginalized populations such as indigenous groups and farm labourers, have called for rejection of any ‘green economy’ that aims to create a ‘Green Washington Consensus’ (UNRISD/Mueller and Bullard, 2011 October 10-11) in favour of an alternative economic structure that “criticizes both capitalist ‘market ecology’ and productivist socialism, which ignored the earth’s equilibrium and limits” (Belem Ecosocialist Declaration, 2007). These voices, however, remain marginalized. Moreover, environmental non-governmental

organizations (ENGOS) including Greenpeace and the Sierra Club, and labour groups like Blue Green Canada, have embraced capitalist policy responses (see Barron, 2005) in response to a political climate that is largely antagonistic to the environment (Kirby, 2014), while members of other groups, such as the Conservative movement in the United States, have claimed that anthropogenic climate change is a fallacy (see McCright and Dunlap, 2003, 2011).

It is thus of theoretical and empirical importance to examine the ways that political elites make argumentative imperatives for the green economy as a means to good jobs, economic growth, climate change mitigation, greater prosperity, and overall sustainability. This is particularly relevant in foundry jurisdictions like Ontario and Michigan where unemployment was high before and/or after the GFC, since the green economy has been linked in the political discourse to the creation of good, green jobs that will replace those lost in the manufacturing sector. Furthermore, it is of interest to examine the ways that green market discourses contribute to the re-naturalization of neoliberalism and make privatization, deregulation, and austerity seem like common sense.

This thesis proceeds from here as follows. First, an overview of, and justification for a comparison of the two cases is provided. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical and methodological framework used in this research program to investigate ideological hegemony—expressed as policy arguments and frames—of green economy imaginaries in Michigan and Ontario. Chapter 3 constructs a typology of green economy imaginaries to serve as a measure of the sustainability of public policies in the two jurisdictions. Chapter 4 examines a wide range of policies (fiscal, social, economic, and environmental) introduced in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012, and then compares these against the green economy imaginaries discussed in Chapter 3. The purpose of these two chapters is to help determine the degree to which policy action matches political rhetoric (see Kozolanka, 2014b, 60) around sustainable development. This disparity between what a politician

says and what he or she actually does has contributed to the theory that governments engage in persuasive and deliberate communication in ways that reinforce corporate and state interests and maintain the status quo (ibid), and that government often spend less time developing new policies and more time publicizing policy ideas (ibid; see also Rose, 2010). Chapter 5 examines the results of the semiotic analysis – the meaning of various words in the context of Ontario and Michigan political speeches – with the purpose of identifying trends in the ways words naturalize (green) neoliberalism. Chapter 6 breaks down political speeches made by Michigan Governors Jennifer M. Granholm and Rick Snyder and Premier Dalton McGuinty, into their argumentative claims; Chapter 7 examines the results of the argumentative discourse analysis of speeches in both jurisdictions. These two chapters aim to show how political leaders have used argument to frame the green economy, support or reject specific policy measures, and/or make wider claims of sustainability. Chapter 8 re-examines the research questions and explores some of the similarities and differences in the ways policy elites promote their version of the green economy in Ontario and Michigan. It also serves to explore uses for the current study and opportunities for further research, in areas such as hegemony and ideology; political economy; political communication, and public policy studies.

### **The Cases: Province of Ontario, Canada and State of Michigan, USA**

Michigan and Ontario are ideal comparative cases for a study of ideas and the green economy because powerful actors in both jurisdictions have branded a variety of policies as solutions to economic recession and/or climate change that will bring thousands of ‘green jobs’ and reduce fossil fuel energy use, and largely over the same period of time (2007-2012). Subnational jurisdictions have had more coherent green industrial policies than national governments because substantial job loss has created localized demand for new industries, and new industries demand access to manufacturing labour and high tech university research (Hess, 2012). In regions like Ontario and Michigan where the fossil fuel industry does not dominate the political discourse, renewable energy

policy – which has included financial incentives and support, networks, and research and training – has helped spark a new industrial cluster emphasizing green energy technology, production, and storage (ibid). In 2008, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed the Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act; one year later in Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty signed the Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009. Both of these policies have been represented by policy elites as tools for growing the renewable energy sector, attracting foreign investment, reducing greenhouse gases, and creating jobs.

These, and related green-sector policies serve as capstones for the green economy. In practice, however, we need to consider if the complete range of policies implemented in Ontario and Michigan is consistent with the economic-ecological imaginaries that policymaker's project in political discourse. Scholars have conducted analyses of 'green economies' at various political levels; however, few if any have conducted comparative research on green economy discourse in subnational jurisdictions. And while Michigan and Ontario have received some financial injection from federal governments for green economy investment, particularly as part of economic stimulus following the GFC, provinces and states have also invested in the green economy within their borders. More importantly, it is at the subnational level that various policies are rolled out, and where subnational governments believe the effects of these policies are felt most in terms of employment and/or social inequality. It is also at the subnational level, in federal systems, where cities are regulated, which includes local efforts to reduce GHGs: policy proposals for increased transportation in US municipalities have been thwarted by states that reject business tax increases to help pay for them (Adler, 2014 April 7). It is therefore of academic value to understand the ways in which policy elites in Ontario and Michigan have used argument to shape a particular vision of the 'green economy'.

Equally important is that: 1) both jurisdictions have large manufacturing sectors that have been fractured by economic globalization, and thus have had large numbers of job losses<sup>10</sup>; 2) they are close competitors for investment across sectors, including auto, forestry, and renewable energy; 3) union density in manufacturing is declining in both jurisdictions, although historically both have had relatively higher numbers of unionized employees<sup>11</sup> (see also US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013 January 23; Uppal, 2011 October 26) both have baseload energy needs provided by controversial sources (Ontario more than 50 percent from nuclear<sup>12</sup>, and Michigan more than 60 percent from coal); 5) both have boundaries that include four Great Lakes, and have similar natural environments, which have experienced similar consequences of climate change (for example, water level changes in the Great Lakes), and have collaborated on research and/or conservation efforts (Vannijnatten, 2003); and 6) neither jurisdiction has historically had strong industrial policies. Moreover, both must operate within the constraints of federally-negotiated trade agreements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The provisions of trade agreements extend to policies in subnational jurisdictions; for example, the local content requirement requiring the partial use of Ontario materials and workers to qualify for feed-in-tariff payments was stripped from Ontario's Green Energy Act in 2013 after both the WTO Dispute Resolution Body and the Appellate Body ruled against it.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Canada's manufacturing industry lost 278,000 jobs between 2000-2007, which reduced the sector's share of employment from 16 percent to 12 percent. This share declined to 10% in 2009, losing 188,000 more jobs. The US lost 4.1 million or a quarter of its manufacturing jobs between 1998-2008. (Statistics Canada, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Michigan is in the top seven states that have more than half of the total unionized employees in the United States. Ontario is in the lower half of Canadian provinces regarding union density; however, Ontario's union membership was at 26.5% in 2010 compared to 16.5% in Michigan that same year. It is likely that Michigan's new right to work law (2012) will impact union density in both jurisdictions.

<sup>12</sup> Though nuclear is often cited by proponents as clean energy, the full nuclear production cycle, which includes its disposal, and the risk associated with nuclear disaster pose significant threat to people and the environment (see Greenpeace, n.d.)

<sup>13</sup> In November 2012 and May 2013 respectively (see Trew and Sinclair, 2013; Lipsig-Mummé and McBride, 2014)

There are, of course, institutional differences between Ontario and Michigan that can contribute to the shape and form of the green economy. For example, Michigan operates under a bicameral ‘presidential’ system with term-limited governors; Ontario functions under a Westminster parliamentary system with a unicameral legislature, and no limit to a premier’s term. Term limits have been identified by interviewees in Michigan as problematic for influencing public policy, particularly for actors with few financial resources.

In Michigan, there have been two governors for the period of study: Democrat Governor Jennifer Granholm (2002-2010) and Republican Governor Rick Snyder (2010-onward). In Ontario, there has been one premier, Dalton McGuinty, who was in office from 2003 through 2012. Though Kathleen Wynne became Liberal party leader (and premier) after McGuinty’s resignation in 2012<sup>14</sup>, she did not officially become premier until February 2013. Thus, Premier Wynne’s time in office does not align with the time frame of this study. However, because important policy decisions initiated by McGuinty came to fruition under Wynne – in particular, the end of the local content requirement for FIT eligibility and the closing of the last coal-fired energy plant – argumentative analysis was conducted on Premier Wynne’s first Speech from the Throne in 2013.

Moreover, Michigan’s two-party system may contribute to more polarized politics than Ontario’s three-party system, despite similar preferences for the ‘free market’; indeed, all parties in Canada including the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) have generally been moving towards the political right, in that they support and adopt liberal economic policies as solutions to a range of public problems (Johnston, 2008), while parliamentary logic promotes stronger party discipline than in presidential systems. Such political differences between Michigan and Ontario may affect the relative power that governors and premiers have in forwarding particular policy agendas, and hence

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<sup>14</sup> Premier Wynne later won a majority government in June 2014 after NDP Leader Andrea Horwath triggered an election over the Liberal budget

may affect how leaders frame their policies in speeches and debates. Furthermore the Ontario New Democratic Party (ONDP) has, over the last two decades, increasingly engaged at the level of incremental politics and defensive policies that look more like a Liberal platform than a social democratic one (Dobbin, 2014 March 24). In the 2014 Ontario election, Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath was criticized for rejecting what some considered a socially-progressive Liberal budget and purportedly running on an election platform to the right of the Liberals. The rejection of Tim Hudak and the Conservative platform in the 2014 election, however, suggests that Ontarians have little interest in Tea Party policies, such as the ‘right-to-work’ legislation passed in Michigan under Governor Snyder in November 2012.

The management of public finance is also structured somewhat differently in the two jurisdictions, which might impede or enable some policies. Generally speaking, Ontario can run budget shortfalls, while Michigan is constitutionally bound to balancing the state budget every year (Constantelos, 2010). This minimizes the wiggle room for governors to run temporary budgetary deficits, and must therefore either increase tax revenue to meet increased demand for social services, or cut public spending in one area of government to transfer it to another. Furthermore, Michigan’s balanced budget provision, which is part of the state’s constitution, requires equalization of revenue and spending by October 1 of each year, or the government must shut down (Michigan experienced one such shutdown in 2008). The balanced budget provision, however, does not apply to state capital budgets<sup>15</sup> and by the end of 2012, the state’s debt was one of the highest in the country at \$124.5 billion (“10 States with Enormous Debt Problems: Report”, 2012 August 28).

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<sup>15</sup> According to National Association of State Budget Officers (2014) this exemption allows states to spend on long-term expenditures such as infrastructure and transportation

These institutional differences place different constraints on the behaviour of political elites in Ontario and Michigan (see Chapters 4; see also Constantelos, 2014), as well as the argumentative claims they make for or against a green economy (see Chapter 7). On the other hand, the commonalities between Ontario and Michigan – shared geographies and industrial histories; shrinking manufacturing sectors; and policy measures aimed at stimulating green sectors and green jobs, might lead to similar argumentative claims regardless of party ideology or system of government. Thus by comparing Ontario and Michigan, we can examine the degree to which there has been convergence and/or divergence in green economy discourses and policy initiatives between neighbouring jurisdictions.

Political elites have increasingly argued over the last two decades that economic growth and environmental sustainability are compatible. Many argue not only that the economy and the environment are compatible, but that a green economy can create thousands of jobs, increase prosperity, and contribute to greater sustainability. Despite these arguments, we shall see that many of the policies proposed by government elites do not align with goals for sustainable development. This creates an enigma – where policy reality and political rhetoric collide in the politics of the green economy—that this thesis sought to explore. Thus, if policy introduced in Ontario and Michigan between 2007 and 2012 does more to serve the needs of capital than the needs of people and planet, then argumentative claims advanced by political elites that suggest greater economic, social, and/or ecological sustainability can be deemed empty and/or misleading rhetoric. But first, a theoretical framework for the exploration of this puzzle, using ideas from political economy and political communication must be established. In the next chapter, we examine theoretical propositions that might explain how political elites can and do use language to manufacture public consent for green neoliberalism and attach it discursively to job creation and environmental sustainability.



## Chapter 2: Theoretical and Methodological Framework

“The monetary stakes aren’t nearly as big as you might think. What makes rational action on climate so hard is something else – a toxic mix of ideology and anti-intellectualism...So the real obstacle, as we try to confront global warming, is economic ideology reinforced by hostility to science. In some ways, this makes the task easier: we do not, in fact, have to force people to accept large monetary losses. But we do have to overcome pride and willful ignorance...” (Krugman, 2014 June 8).

### **Why – and how – to study discourses of ‘green economy’ in policymaking**

To examine the policies and policy arguments around the green economy in Michigan and Ontario, a hybrid analytical approach of two closely-related, theoretical approaches to power and discourse was applied. Specifically, this thesis draws on the critical traditions of political economy and political communication to examine how policymakers evoke argumentative imperatives for neoliberal policies as the only means to a ‘green economy’ that creates jobs, increases socio-economic equality, and combats climate change. For this study of political rhetoric and policy reality, a hybrid model made the most sense, since political economy is poised to answer questions about the power of ideas and interests (see Graefe, 2007), while critical political communication theory is better suited to examine power at the level of discourse (see Kozolanka, 2014a; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012).

Thus, relying on theories in critical political economy (Gramsci, 1971; O’Connor, 1998; Harvey, 2005; Jessop, 2004; 2009; 2012;) and political communication (Rose, 2010; 2014; Kozolanka, 2014a; 2014b; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012) this research investigates the proposition that political elites employ narrow ideas of a ‘green economy’ in ways that help reproduce neoliberal capitalism and manufacture public consent for policies that may not necessarily be sustainable (Springett, 2003; Lander, 2011; for manufacturing consent see Gramsci, 1971; Herman and Chomsky, 1988). It has been argued that this is achieved by advancing arguments that reflect the attractive features of capitalism-based green economy imaginaries – such as individual prosperity – while avoiding political discourse and public debate on the negative correlations between capitalism, climate change

and environmental degradation, and social inequality (see Klein, 2014). Corporate interests have been integral in defining sustainable development in terms of economic growth in operations both at home and abroad, and in ensuring that sustainability policy sustains the capitalist production model (Springett, 2003). Moreover, where criticism might be expected – labour and environmental organizations – green economy discourses have been adopted either in an effort to be included in the policy discourse, or because these organizations also fail to envision a world beyond capitalist prescriptions (Michigan NGO interview, 2014 May; Ontario NGO interview, 2014 February). Thus this thesis also explores the development of sustainable development discourses (see Springett, 2003) in these two jurisdictions, and maps this rhetoric against reality: public policy.

Although the study of public policymaking has often been suspicious of the role of ideas, ideas have increasingly gained traction in public policy analysis in the last 20 years and in debates about what contributes to policy continuity, policy change, and the policy process itself (Béland and Cox, 2011). For many scholars, ideas are an important explanation of both policy stability and policy change (ibid). Indeed, the key argument in ideational research is less whether or not ideas matter but how they matter: “By specifying what kinds of ideas serve what functions, how ideas of different types interact with one another, how ideas change over time, and how ideas shape and are shaped by actors’ choices, social scientists can provide greater analytic purchase on the question of exactly how ideas matter” (Mehta, 2011, 25, emphasis added). Asking ‘how’ questions is thus empirically relevant if social scientists are to understand the ways ideas shape policies, programs, and long-term plans, and to identify those places where hegemonic ideas are naturalized in everyday life.

Moreover, not only can an idea influence policy – but so too can the *perception* of an idea (ibid). If government believes it must cut corporate taxes to remain ‘competitive’ in a global economy, then it may “act in a manner consistent with this prediction” (Hay, 2002, 202; see Finlayson, 2004, 536).

Likewise, if political leaders think that a ‘green economy’ is compatible with unrestricted production and consumption, then they are likely to advance policies that adhere to this model. This means that existing ideologies and beliefs can place parameters on policymakers as to how to best address social, economic, and environmental problems, despite evidence – increasing poverty and erratic weather patterns, for example – to the contrary. Ideas, strategically advanced in policy arguments, can therefore construct problems and solutions for the policy agenda, and frame assumptions for, or against, policy change (Béland, 2009, 702).

Well-articulated ideas by political and economic elites can also reduce public resistance to new or persistent ideas. They are tools for the construction of new institutions and policies and can stabilize and institutionalize new ideas (Blyth, 2002, 152-162). Indeed, ideas may be the ultimate tool of power in advanced industrialized states, whereby the majority subjects itself to minority rule. The seemingly unregulated power of economic and political elites is remarkably accepted by Canadians and Americans as a natural condition, even after a financial crisis that left millions jobless, without savings, and at the mercy of austerity. Indeed, policies advanced since the GFC have been largely no different than those neoliberal policies that led to the financial crisis – except that austerity became more severe (Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014). And as we shall see, many ‘new’ policies aimed at growing a green economy are remarkably characteristic of neoliberalism. Ideas therefore do not simply discover the world - they help construct it (Béland, 2009; Hay, 2002).

Scholars in political science have attempted to incorporate ideas into theories of policymaking. Discursive institutionalism, for example, considers policy change an ongoing process owed in large part to the exchange of ideas and the logic of communication (Schmidt, 2011). Unlike rational choice, historical and even sociological institutionalism, discursive institutionalism focuses on “how ideas are generated, debated, adopted, and changed as policy makers, political leaders, and the public

are persuaded, or not, of the cognitive necessity and normative appropriateness of ideas” (ibid, 57-58). Moreover, discursive institutionalism separates material interests into material reality and those interests that are constituted by ideas and discourse (Schmidt, 2011, 58). Interests are not some objective reality, but are instead subjective responses to perceived interests (ibid). From this perspective, rational approaches oriented towards institutions and/or interests largely analyze material interests as objective and exogenous; discursive institutionalism investigates the ideas that agents have, related to what they perceive to be in their interest (ibid).

But while discursive institutionalism explains the role of ideas better than ‘traditional’ institutionalisms, it largely fails to consider how markets and the state have become entangled *in ways that* privilege the policy discourses of elites over the general public, and influence the policy agenda (Saurugger, 2013, 896). Indeed, there are better approaches to the study of ideas that maintain there is a dialectical relationship between ideas and material interests (Hay, 2002, 205-208). As noted previously, critical theories of political economy and political communication may serve best to examine the role of ideas, communication, and power in shaping public discourse and public policy. Specifically for this study, political economy provided the framework for examining policy reality (those green and/or neoliberal policies introduced during the research period of study), which was then contrasted against policy rhetoric of the ‘green economy’ using critical political communication theory and methodology, with the goal of understanding the ways in which sustainability discourses continue to naturalize neoliberal capitalist policies in an era of climate change and socio-economic inequality across race, class, and gender.

### **Political Economy: Cultural and Environmental Perspectives**

Marxist political economists are often criticized for prioritizing material interests at the exclusion of ideas (see criticism of this argument in Graefe, 2007). While this may be the case for some traditional Marxist scholars, it is largely a narrow understanding of political economy today (ibid).

According to Mosco (2009), there are four general characteristics of political economy: 1) “it gives priority to understanding social change and historical transformation; 2) is firmly rooted in an analysis of the wider social totality, in particular the relationship between the political and the economic and their relative autonomy; and is concerned with the links between society’s political economy and the wider social and cultural field; 3) is concerned with moral philosophy, which clarifies the moral positions of economic and political economic perspectives; and 4) is concerned with praxis, or the ability for people (workers for example) to change and shape the world”(p. 40-52). These characteristics of political economy orient the activist-researcher toward problematizing what is often considered ‘normal’ arrangements of the human condition, such as capitalism.

Indeed, Marxist-inspired political economy has typically aimed to understand and problematize the role of the capitalist state and private interests in shaping society and disciplining labour. State action is limited by the interests of capital; this has been increasingly so with the expansion of free trade, the privatization of public assets, and the introduction of global financial markets. Moreover, despite rhetoric from private interests that markets are self-regulating, markets require ongoing intervention by the state to succeed (Graefe, 2007; see also Dobbin and Dowd, 1997). Policy is therefore often implemented in the interests of capital, and policymakers from the political Right and Left increasingly maintain that in so doing, the resulting economic growth will trickle down to produce more jobs and greater individual wealth. Critics of these neoliberal policies, however, point out that they have not only failed to reduce social and economic inequality, but rather have increased inequality (Picketty and Saez, 2013). The continuity of these neoliberal policies, rather than being the consequence of success, may therefore reflect structural power, which political economy is poised to analyze (Graefe, 2007).

Power can be both structural and ideational. A central theory of the power of ideas belongs to Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci theorized that ideas and the communication of ideas have hegemonic power, whereby the minority – the political and economic elite – rule the majority not by brute force but through the naturalization of somewhat unnatural ideas, such as the hierarchical wage-labour relationship between employer and worker. Ideas are thus a form of ‘soft power’ (Nye, 1990) transmitted to the public via a host of discourses including advertising, instruction, history, culture, and persuasive argument. Ideas thrive when backed by financial and political capital; similarly, capitalist elites (and the capitalist state) need ideas to sustain their rule, particularly following economic crisis. This is because, as Gramsci proposed, 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 in society” (Lewis, 1992, 280 in reference to work by S. Hall, 1982). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1982) maintains that the constant articulation of ideas does not deny that the dominant class has more political and economic power, and therefore more success at winning ideological battles than the rest of society; nor does it deny some determinacy at the base because of this power: “but material control of the base is not enough; the ideological hegemony of the dominant class must be developed and maintained through existing ideologies – at the level of superstructure” (Lewis, 1992, 281; in reference to S. Hall, 1977). This is one way public policies that may benefit only a few (deep cuts to corporate tax rates, for example) can be framed as being to the benefit of everyone, and how austerity can be framed as necessary for sustainability of the economy and/or the environment.

Thus, policy may be widely seen as an extension of everyday common sense when accepted by a range of actors in civil society (Gramsci, 1971). Indeed, Gramsci maintained that ideological hegemony is not only the result of efforts by the ruling elite, but also “rests on coalitions and

compromises that provide a measure of political and material accommodation with other groups, and on ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests” (Levy and Newell, 2002, 86). Civil society groups including environmental organizations, labour unions, think tanks, and universities assist in ‘manufacturing consent’ for pursuing goals favoured by the economic elite (ibid; see also Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Carroll, 2004, 213). So while powerful actors like the DeVos Family in Michigan have become a source of funding for right-wing think tanks aimed at promoting the advantages of neoliberalism (Kroll, 2014 January/February) smaller environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOS) with very different intentions often use similar language to ensure they are part of the conversation rather than excluded from it. In so doing, however, these groups may help reinforce, rather than challenge, neoliberalism, green or otherwise. Thus, widespread faith that ‘trickle down economics’ will create millions of good, green jobs, increase middle-class prosperity and reduce GHGs by expanding the productive economy is a form of manufactured consent that has been reinforced by civil society actors.

As might be evident, manufacturing consent requires in part the use of language (Gramsci, 1971). Language is a type of human labour that can, for example, work to maintain or challenge unequal socio-economic conditions, promote or dispel myths against climate science, and contract or expand the meaning of green economy (see Ives, 2004, 177 in reference to Gramsci, 1971). This is because “language is not a non-productive realm of communication or merely the transmission of information. On the contrary, language is continually involved in human production and is also the product of human activity itself” (Ives, 2004, p. 174). In policymaking, language is used by political elites to shape the direction and content of policy, while securing broad public support. Civil society groups must therefore use language to challenge rather than support the ideological hegemony of

economic and political elites (Levy and Newell, 2002) in ways that define green economy by how it meets the needs of the environment, the poor, and marginalized groups.

Gramsci understood that by recognizing how language is used to naturalize capitalism and manufacture certainty in its capacity to meet the needs of the majority is an important step toward emancipation from it (Ives, 2004). Economic vocabularies of neoliberalism have been critiqued by cultural scholars as intentional political constructions. For example, some political elites have swapped ‘customer’ for ‘citizen’, which has changed the way we think about the economy and our position in society (Holborow, 2007; Massey, 2013a; 2013b). The word ‘work’ is typically understood in narrow terms involving some kind of transaction for money at the exclusion of voluntary labour (Massey, 2013 June 11). Other words characteristic of neoliberal ideology include ‘investment’, and ‘growth’, which refer not only to finance or GDP, but have been used by both neoliberals and social democrats to reframe social policies including education (Massey, 2013 June 11). Finn (2000) argues that part of corporate strategy has been to dominate the political discourse with terms like ‘big government’, ‘debt/deficit crisis’, ‘competitiveness’ and ‘welfare cheats’ “forcing those on the left to debate key issues in the language of the right” (p. 4). This language has also been adopted in political speeches by government (see Chapter 1). Furthermore, words that communicate values like ‘fairness’ often do not refer to collective responsibility or wealth re-distribution, but rather to endorse cuts to corporate taxes and public sector jobs. And terms like ‘climate change’ and ‘global warming’ have become ideologically divisive in the United States because economic elites in the fossil fuel industry wish to create confusion among the public, despite scientific consensus that the world is warming and human beings are the cause (see for example, Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012).

When examining the influence of ideas in policymaking, it is important to keep in mind that public policy is often the result not only of the economic superstructure, but also a series of



“institutionalized compromises between social forces” (Graefe, 2007 p. 26; see also McBride, 2014).

This suggests that specific policies aimed at stimulating a green economy, for example, are partly shaped by actor agency, which certainly includes powerful actors like government and capital, but potentially also a well-organized working class. This secures political economy as a ‘political sociology’ among theoretical approaches to policymaking (Graefe, 2007); therefore, culture, communication, and ideas – particularly that of the working and capitalist classes – is of interest to this sociology of politics. If job losses and climate change are identified as problems, determining which ideas are being argued as the cure – and why and how they are being argued – should be of interest to the political economist.

But there is a problem with this approach to examining structure and agency in the policies and politics of a green economy: political economy’s emphasis on social class and capitalist accumulation has created theoretical and pragmatic blind spots when it comes to the environment (Bryne, Glover, and Martinez, 2002). For example, the pursuit of socio-economic justice and the prescription of continued industrial growth have often been privileged by Marxist scholars to the exclusion of environmental justice (see Mosco, 2009). Ecological political economists have attempted to repair these blind spots, by incorporating “the natural totality of organic life” into the notion of social totality (Mosco, 2009, 84).

James O’Connor’s (1998) work helps orient political economy towards environmental sustainability by identifying a second contradiction of capitalism: the crisis of the *conditions* of capitalist production. This includes the environment – water, air, land, forests, and climate – as well as the working conditions that result from a changing environment, including poor air quality, water scarcity, and above average temperatures. The capitalist system is incapable of preserving the natural (re)sources it uses for profit, nor can it contain the costs of using them; thus, the degradation of the conditions of production squeezes profit (Foster, 2002).

As Gibbs and Krueger (2007) explain:

“In this view, the tendency toward ecological crisis is just as endemic to capitalism as a falling rate of profit or over-accumulation” (p. 96).

So while the first contradiction of capitalism, the tendency toward crisis due to inequalities in income and wealth, manifests on the demand side the second contradiction manifests on the supply side (O'Connor, 1998). Both result in a crisis of capitalism.

Moreover, as a theory of the state, ecological Marxism identifies the necessary and often willing hand the state provides to capital in exploitation of the forces of production and conditions of production. Capital impairs its own production conditions in a variety of ways. Climate change, for example, is inducing drought, floods, and extreme temperatures, in addition to putting strain on the health of workers. A wide range of public policies – labour, education, health and welfare policy; and water, energy, and land policy – regulate capital's access to labour power and natural resources respectively (O'Connor, 1998). When the state fails to protect the environment, it diminishes the productive power of the conditions of production (O'Connor, 1998). Moreover, it is the state's task to legitimate the capitalist productive forces and conditions of production. By acting as the mediator between nature and capital, the state makes these conditions of production a site for discursive construction of the 'environment' and 'natural resources'.

### **Political Communication: The Politics of Ideas**

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' (O'Connor, 1998). This is practiced in part through political discourse, which includes speeches. Political speeches are a type of rhetoric. 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)<sup>16</sup>. But argument in political communication is not neutral or an ‘innocent’ representation of fact (p. 21); indeed, it is “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 austerity 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 wildly inaccurate. Its virtue is that it is 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).

In Ontario and Michigan, the common sense-ness of neoliberalism has been sold to varying degrees by the repeated use of a variety of terms, including ‘corporate welfare’, ‘lean government’, ‘fiscal responsibility’, and ‘competitiveness’; leaving those neoliberal policies that contributed to global financial crisis largely uncriticised. But while common sense ideas are presented as coherent threads of thought, they are ‘strangely composite’; ‘bits and pieces’ of ideas that are pulled from varied ‘base ideologies’ as well as sources that are often part of pop philosophies, which are vaguely traceable and relevant. Thus, common- sense hegemonic discourses are often ‘fundamentally contradictory’ (Gramsci, 1971). Few examples are more exemplary than the so-called ‘Common Sense Revolution’ in Ontario under Conservative Premier Mike Harris, and the logic of the ‘New Right’ (see Kozolanka, 2007; 2014). For what was dubbed by Harris as ‘common sense’ seems hardly sensible at all: cutting corporate taxes and public sector spending, including social assistance, healthcare, and pensions; reducing teachers, nurses, and positions in the civil service; and the introduction of

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<sup>16</sup> Rose’s understanding of political rhetoric is based on Aristotle’s work on public communication as a form of persuasion

workfare appears to have hurt workers and middle and working class families, not helped them (ibid). This ‘everydayness’ of neoliberal policies contributed to the re-regulation of daily life not only at the provincial level, but also in Ontario’s cities (Keil, 2002). And it seems too that political elites have introduced conflicting frames of ‘sustainable austerity’ in ways that make it seem as though cuts to social spending, corporate tax rates, and a variety of regulations including those that impact the environment are compatible with goals of a ‘sustainable’ or ‘green’ economy.

Thus to maintain a position of power, political and economic elites must work to create a seamless vision of the world, that the direction society is taking is the right, and only one. 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 changing 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). This is more than self-marketing by government to sway public opinion; rather, it is the deliberate use of persuasive communication as a legitimization function, and to maintain power and control under the rhetoric of the public good (Kozolanka, 2014).

This ‘publicity state’, as Kozolanka (2014a) calls it<sup>17</sup>, 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 interactive relationship between media, politics, and the public is important in maintaining the publicity state, Kozolanka asserts that the political economic structure is foundational to this condition: “Ultimately, the upper hand does not lie with

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<sup>17</sup> Kozolanka credits the work of Schiller (1973), Blumer (1990), Godring (1995), and Miller (2005) in the development of her work on the publicity state (see Kozolanka, 1994, 10-11)

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 post-global financial crisis, government would thus use persuasive communication in ways to make and legitimate claims that it is creating a ‘greener’ state or society through renewable energy and energy efficiency policies, despite policies of austerity, deregulation, and privatization. This “recontextualization” or “colonization” by neoliberalism (see Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 83) of the environment makes neoliberal-inspired policies seem like common sense solutions to climate change.

Indeed, this brand of manufactured certainty or consent (see Michaels, 2005; Herman and Chomsky, 1988) that simply ‘greening’ neoliberal policies will address income inequality, job losses, and climate change may thus be more important to policymakers than introducing policies that will actually address structural problems like unemployment and poverty, or the capitalist system itself. Thus the green economy image may in part be a publicity project that government is moving towards a greener society, with more and better ‘green’ jobs and lower GHG emissions, despite continued or increased deregulation, privatization, and austerity. It is a project that includes images of green hard hats, blowing wind turbines, and fields of solar panels that propagate the idea that the ‘green economy’, as it is currently being imagined by policymakers, will save both planet and people.<sup>18</sup> But if certainty is not possible in the science of climate change, as some policymakers maintain,<sup>19</sup> then it is not possible in an inaccurate and often clumsy process of policymaking. Therefore, the certainty with which policymakers have advanced neoliberal policies as *the* solutions to climate and/or

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<sup>18</sup> For more on the relationship between ideas, hegemony, and the creation of modern myths, see Barthes (1972)

<sup>19</sup> Lute (1998) argues that “in scientific discourse, uncertainty is common place, and a ubiquitous element of scientific work. Indeed, it is a precondition for ongoing scientific research. However, while scientists often readily acknowledge some degree of uncertainty in certain areas of their work, this can be construed quite differently in policy discussions. When the term is appropriated into the policy discourse around a high-stakes and hotly contested policy issue, it serves to undermine the basis for action. In the case of global warming, the issue of uncertainty can become the best argument for inaction available” (Lutes, 1998, 163).

economic crises may be manufactured by policymakers that aim to preserve, rather than remake the neoliberal capitalist system.

Research on manufactured uncertainty examines the intentional propagation of confusion by corporate and political elites regarding a particular policy problem, motivated by profit and/or ideology and with the aim of derailing policy solutions, such as regulation or taxation (Michaels, 2005). For example, when faced with profit losses the tobacco industry committed itself to manufacturing uncertainty regarding the health effects of smoking, going so far as to testify in federal court that cigarettes were neither addictive, nor cancer-causing (*ibid*). It is only in the last two decades that medical research on smoking has been widely accepted.

In the case of climate change, climate scientists have exercised caution and ethics when publishing their findings – and have still managed to agree at a rate of 97 percent that climate change is real, getting worse, and caused by human activity (NASA, n.d.) And yet, the remaining three percent is being used by some elites as evidence of a lack of scientific consensus. Indeed, policymakers have manufactured uncertainty around climate change. In Michigan (and across the United States), members of the Republican Party have been more likely to deny climate change and/or minimized its causes and effects, when compared to members of Democratic Party (see for example, Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter, n.d.2). Moreover, some argued that the IPCC Climate Change report released in March 2014 was watered down by government officials (Clark, 2014 April 26; see also Bertini, 2014 April 28). This suggests that public uncertainty of whether or not climate change is happening may be thanks in part to party ideologies and the influence of powerful interests like big oil and coal, rather than scientific evidence (see Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012). Returning to Rose's (2010) provocative question then, why implement aggressive climate change policies when government can communicate uncertainty around the causes of climate change? To be sure, it is

likely that some political elites in Michigan and Ontario do indeed care about climate change. But since public acceptance of the reality of climate change has historically been higher in Canada than in the United States (see LaChapelle, Borick and Rabe, and 2014 March 3)<sup>20</sup> and since Democrats are more likely than Republicans to be concerned with climate change (Sierra Club- Michigan Chapter, n.d.; Borick and Rabe, 2010 March 3), there are likely differences in how Governors Granholm and Snyder, and Premier McGuinty, represent the green economy and the policies they deem necessary to achieve it in the political discourse, even if the actual policies they prescribe are quite similar. Thus, we may see some divergence in the leaders' argumentative claims, as they work to appeal to the beliefs and priorities of their different constituents.

Researchers in environmental communication have made valuable contributions to understanding the ways in which environmental problems and solutions have been framed in ways that reinforce the existing capitalist 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 at communication that is directly about the environment, but also at communication that is not necessarily about the environment but that has an impact on the environment – such as neoliberal discourses of free trade that indirectly cause enormous environmental damage” (Milstein, 2009, p. 346).

Cox (2007) has argued that environmental communication is a crisis discipline, in that inaction on environmental and climate change problems can drastically and negatively change the conditions for human life and biodiversity. Policy elites and industry lobbyists often aim to control word meaning, or semantics, around environmental problems or issues in ways that shape public opinion. For example, coal lobbyists successfully lobbied the EPA to change the word ‘waste’ to ‘fill’ in regards to mountaintop removal, which essentially made a formerly illegal act legal under EPA regulations (ibid, p. 10). Other researchers have examined the ways ‘green’ language is being used by

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policymakers to spur national pride (see Peter, 2004). Moreover, in both Canada and the United States, scientists have been required to submit speeches and papers to federal communications personnel in order to dull language surrounding climate change before being released to the media or public (Cox, 2007, p. 11 in reference to Revkin, 2006). This kind of control over public communication of information regarding the environment is thus itself a crisis of public dialogue (ibid).

Understanding the ways in which a ‘green economy’ is being neo-liberalized and naturalized by the publicity state is important for civil society groups to mount an effective counter-discourse. Central to Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is the notion of ‘critical morality’, which demands that scholars address not only questions of why domination occurs, but also why that form of social organization is wrong or unjust, and how it is maintained (Ives, 2004, p. 341-342). Indeed, Gramsci did not expose capitalism’s injustices to change the way *capital* thought, but rather “he wanted his audience, who were also his subjects, to believe it *could and should* be otherwise (emphasis added, p. 342). If capitalist hegemony is not by brute force but rather, by popular consensus it may therefore not be an inevitable circumstance – and civil society has an important role in emancipation from it:

“Civil society, in Gramsci’s view, has a dual existence. As the ideological arena in which hegemony is secured, it represents part of the “extended state,” complementing the coercive potential of state agencies. However, the relative autonomy of civil society from economic structures and from state authority turns the ideological realm into a key site of political contestation” (Levy and Newell, 2002, p. 86-87).

Thus, Gramsci tasks the researcher not only with exposing sites of ideological hegemony in the political discourse, but also with informing civil society of its role in contributing to, and resisting ideological hegemony.

Theories of critical political communication and ideological hegemony maintain that the state not only uses persuasive argument as a tool to legitimate its policies and authority but that publicity is one of the state’s “central organizing principles” (see Kozolanka, 2014a, p. 13 in reference to



O'Shaughnessy, 2004, p. 173). Thus, we can use our theoretical framework to examine the ways that policymakers have invoked argumentative imperatives that neoliberal policies are the best and only means to creating jobs, increasing equality, and/or mitigating climate change, while maintaining the widespread idea that neoliberalism is natural, austerity is necessary and both are common sense. Further, our theoretical framework informs the critical examination of political rhetoric of the 'green economy'; knowledge from ecological political economy informs our comparative analysis of public policy in the two jurisdictions. This will help us determine whether Ontario and Michigan have indeed taken meaningful steps toward greater ecological, economic, and/or social sustainability, or if they are green publicity states.

### **Methodological Framework and Research Methods**

Methodologically, the study of 'ideas' can be a challenge. Ideas are not always evident but can be 'out there' and unknown, even to the person from whom the idea is traced. However, since ideas are typically transmitted through language (as well as images and symbols) it is possible to study ideas as they are made known (Fischer, 2003, 140; Finlayson, 2004, 537; see also Sum, 2013). Finlayson advanced a useful example of the power of language in the spread of Marxist ideology: was it that "class structure and political conjuncture produced.... lots of people ready to be Marxists"? (Finlayson, 2004, 537). Or could it be that pamphlets strategically written by Kautsky and Bebel reduced Marxism to three simple propositions (of progress, disrupted by greed of the capitalist, to be restored by the heroic proletariat), making Marxism accessible to large numbers of people (ibid, in reference to work by Sassoon, 1996)? The example does not discount important political-economic structures; instead, it is meant to illustrate that "the question of ideas in politics is always a question about the efficacy of particular political communications, the strategic deployment of which is fundamental to political activity" (Finlayson, 2004, 538). In other words, the strategic and

highly selective ways of presenting an idea, through language and political argument for example, may have as much value in public uptake as the idea itself.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) helps operationalize the study of political ideas in a practical way (Finlayson, 2004). The CDA of Norman Fairclough has been advocated by some scholars for the analysis of ideas in general (Finlayson, 2004), as well as scholars of cultural political economy (CPE) with an interest in both the grand and the everyday discourses that naturalize capitalism (see Jessop, 2004, 2009; Jessop and Sum, 2012). CDA is most concerned with the analysis of argumentation and persuasion, which are the most common forms of expressing ideas in political discourse (Rose, 2000; Chilton, 2004; Finlayson, 2004; Fischer, 2003; Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012; Kozolanka, 2014). Broadly speaking “a policy argument is an oral or written statement that advocates adopting a policy or justifies the decision to adopt [or reject] a policy” (Ball, 1995, 3). Argument does not have to be true to be considered legitimate; indeed, the art of political argument is in convincing large numbers of people that a particular idea is the right one regardless of empirical evidence of what constitutes the problem or solution (Hay, 2002; see also Rose, 2000). In other words, argument is a part of the process for naturalizing ideas like the ‘green economy’, neoliberalism, and austerity. But as pointed out, while argument can be used by powerful interests as a way of maintaining power by creating a sense of ‘common sense’ policies; it can also be a tool of other classes for a ‘passive revolution’ through civil society institutions towards economic change (Shear, 2010; see also Gramsci, 1971). Therefore the study of an idea as it is argued can help identify how ideas can be reproduced or reconfigured to meet current economic, political or social conditions, as well as identifying those factors that sustain the idea (Finlayson, 2004, 540). Thus CDA helps guide our analysis of the political arguments made in support of neoliberal policies and austerity, as well as various policies of the green economy.

The analytical framework for this thesis is adapted from work by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) and Jessop (2004; 2009). Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) maintain that political discourse, which includes government speeches, are made up of a series of practical arguments and deliberation that make claims regarding the merits of a particular course of action. These “plausible arguments” differ from deductive and inductive arguments in that they are based on presumption; as such, these arguments are subject to criticism (ibid, p. 39, in reference to Walton, 1991, 1992, 1993, 2001, 2006, 2007):

“Being able to *defeat an argument* is much less significant than being able to *rebut its claim*, given that *a claim can be true or false independent of the quality of the argument that allegedly supports it*. Basically, we suggest, questioning whether the action being proposed will have negative consequences that will undermine the stated goal (or other goals the agent wants to pursue, or other agents’ goals) is the only really interesting critical question, as it is the only one that can rebut the argument’s claim (and also defeat the argument’s validity)” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 63-64, emphasis in original).

Refuting an argumentative claim, however, does not ascertain a superior alternative; rather analyzing political argument is a means to deeming invalid one or more claims, particularly when a political elite makes a strong assertion that a policy is, or set of policies are “necessary and sufficient” (ibid, p. 65). These kinds of rationalizations by the speaker can serve as a form of manipulation in political discourse (ibid, p. 116). Thus, plausible arguments made by political elites within the context of policies introduced since 2007, particularly those used in the construction of economic-ecological imaginaries, are up for critique (ibid, p. 39).

Before analyzing argumentative claims, Chapter 5 examines the meanings of specific words used by political elites in Ontario and Michigan in ways that naturalize green neoliberalism. This preliminary analysis was important because the same word in an excerpt of political discourse can have multiple meanings, depending on the context and user. For example, the word “climate” is associated with temperature, and in environmental discourse, with global warming. But “climate” is also used by

political elites in reference to a jurisdiction's ability to attract private sector investment, often as part of an argument for lowering taxes and regulatory barriers (see Chapter 5). Moreover, words and phrases that have similar meanings<sup>21</sup> can elicit different responses. Using the same example, “global warming” is more typically associated with urgency, certainty, and “personal threat” by the public than “climate change” (see Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, 2014 May, p. 4).

To identify key words for semiotic analysis and organize them into word clusters, this chapter uses NVIVO 10 to conduct a content analysis of the speeches. According to Krippendorff (1989) content analysis

“seeks to analyze data within a specific context in view meanings someone – a group or a culture – attributes to them. Communications, messages, and symbols differ from observable events, things, properties, or people in that they inform about something other than themselves; they reveal some properties of their distant producers or carriers, and they have cognitive consequences for their senders, their receivers, and the institutions in which their exchange is embedded” (p. 8).

This means that the meaning – or semiotics – behind different words has a certain degree of power to shape not only what people think about, but how to think about policy problems and solutions (see Walgrave and Van Aelst, 2006). Frequency is one way to determine how important a word is to a particular speaker and in a particular policy context. Using a computational text analysis (similar to NVIVO) to determine word frequency, Laver, Benoit, and Garry (2003) determined the relative importance of words in British economic policy documents. While it may be argued that this method cannot communicate substantive information, when examined within the context of a few specific texts on a specific policy area frequency can identify the relative importance and contextual uses of key words, directing the researcher to deeper semiotic analysis:

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<sup>21</sup> The terms “climate change” and “global warming” have different technical meanings; however, they are used interchangeably by the media and the public (Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, 2014 May).

“For a given virgin text dealing with a given policy debate in a given political context at a given time-all of these things crucially defined by our selection of a set of reference texts-our approach works because particular words do, empirically, tend to have policy-laden content. Thus, in post-Thatcher Britain, those using the word ‘choice’ in relation to education or health policy, for example, tended to be advocating greater choice of schools or health providers and correspondingly less central control” (ibid, p. 330).

To then interpret that word’s deeper meaning requires that it be examined in the discursive context within which it was used. This has been particularly useful in the study of politicians’ values, attitudes, and ideas, as well as agenda-setting in politics more broadly (ibid). For example, if a politician repeatedly uses the word “transition” in speeches on the green economy, then what “transition” means is of interest to the researcher to determine what he/she believes constitutes a “transition” – and what does not. This allows for some assumptions to be made as to what policies a given politician believes a green economy should include, while shaping a citizen’s imaginary of what constitutes a ‘green economy’.

We then conduct the work of analyzing political argument in Chapters 6 and 7. Chapter 6 categorizes arguments made by Ontario and Michigan leaders in government speeches according to their argumentative claim; Chapter 7 analyzes these argumentative claims using the logic of interpretative policy analysis (Fischer, 2003, see below). According to Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) practical political arguments include a solutions claim; circumstantial premises; goals premises; means-goal premises; values premises; and alternative solutions (which are addressed and ‘discredited’ in the argument).

A *solutions claim* is a grand narrative advanced by a political leader as a vision for a better society. A solutions claim might be called an “imaginary” (see Jessop, 2009, 2012, 2013) because it is a vision not of what is, but what can be. A solutions claim may be inspired by a particular incident, an ongoing problem, and/or a new opportunity, and it frames or sets up a story by the government as

to what general course of action is needed to improve social, economic, and/or ecological conditions (ibid, p. 144). Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair's Third Way imaginary is an example of a solutions claim for a "modern Britain" (see analysis of Blair's 1998 speech in Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012), as is the Common Sense Revolution under former Ontario Premier Mike Harris (in office 1995-2002). This thesis examined solutions claims around economic and economic-ecological imaginaries associated with greening the economy, which politicians have deemed a 'win-win' for economic growth and climate change.

*Circumstantial premises* make a case for what the problems are in a given jurisdiction and what caused these problems in the first place. In this thesis, circumstantial claims made by political leaders are typically regarding the global financial crisis, unemployment, climate change, and socio-economic inequality. Circumstantial premises can also identify specific actions that led to improvement in current or past conditions. For example, one political leader might claim that reducing the corporate income tax rate increased foreign direct investment, which led to greater employment. A positive circumstantial claim can be used to argue for continuation or expansion of a particular policy. Finally, circumstances (real or imagined) can condition the range of goals that a policymaker allows him- or herself to consider (ibid, p. 44).

*Goals premises* are arguments in favour of specific objectives. The goals premise makes an argumentative claim that a particular goal, or set of goals are necessary for the realization of the imaginary as identified in the solutions claims. In goals premises, a leader outlines target objectives that will lead to well-being for all citizens. This might include claims for a "green society", "greater wealth" or "prosperity and security" for future generations (see Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, p. 88; 104) Goals premises do not prescribe policies per se (this is the purpose of the means-goals

premises), but instead advance claims for goals that are difficult to argue. Indeed, it is hard to refute an argument for prosperity and security; this makes the goal premise a useful tool for naturalizing green neoliberalism, and preparing a path for argumentative claims that certain policy measures are necessary and common sense.

These policy measures are specified in the *means-goal* premises (p. 89) A means-goal premise is a cause-and-effect, or an ‘if-then’ argument: if, and only if, we adopt these specific means or measures, will we reach our goal objectives (ibid, p. 89). The means-goal premise is thus one of the most powerful argumentative claims because it asserts that ‘there is no alternative’ to the measures proposed by the political elite. We can examine the discursive relationship between goals premises and means-goal premises using the example of job creation. If creating ‘thousands and thousands of jobs’ (see State of the State speech, 2008) is framed as a goal in the political discourse, it might be advanced by one political leader that the best means to growing jobs is by stimulating the renewable energy sector using a feed-in-tariff. On the other hand, an opposing politician might argue that only by reducing regulations and the corporate tax rate can businesses grow and add new jobs, while yet another policymaker may argue for a combination of both. Furthermore, political leaders can align the means-goals premises of two different and competing goals. This is most evident in imaginaries promising a ‘win-win’ for the economy and the environment. For example, a political elite might argue that reducing greenhouse gasses and creating jobs both require increased privatization measures, since the private sector is often deemed more efficient than the public sector in capitalist discourse.

Successful policy ideas also resonate with deeply held cultural, social and economic assumptions (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012; see also Heclo, 1986; Peet and Watts, 1996). The *values premise* serves the function of manufacturing certainty for a particular course of action without evidence,

since it links peoples' needs, wants, memories, and desires to "common sense" terms and phrases in the political discourse. For example, "hard-working people" are often pitted against "union bosses" by right-leaning politicians aimed at stirring internal disagreements within the working and/or middle classes. In the foundry cultures of Ontario and Michigan, where good jobs and prosperity for average families were once readily available in a large manufacturing sector, discourses emphasizing this proud tradition can be used to encourage legislative and public support for a wide range of measures that policymakers claim will help rebuild the manufacturing sector. In addition, values premises can be tied to the environment. Citizens of nation-states and subnational jurisdictions often identify with the land, water, and biodiversity found within their borders, which political leaders often incorporate into the political discourse.

Finally policymakers often refer to *alternative policy options* proposed by opponents, in an effort to appear as though they have carefully deliberated over all possible solutions to a given problem. However, this type of argumentation is often used to legitimate a pre-determined course of action and with little consideration of the alternatives. For example, a finance minister may argue that government procurement was considered as a means to increasing green energy use, but then quickly list its faults before introducing what he maintains is a better solution, such as a market-driven policy.

It is important to note that while this research program follows very closely the framework for political discourse analysis laid out by the aforementioned scholars, it differs slightly in the analytical location of what is called the 'imaginary' (Jessop, 2004; 2009). While Fairclough and Fairclough consider the imaginary to be revealed as part of the goals premise, the analytical framework in this research replaces the solutions claim with an imaginaries claim, while the goals premise stand in part as practical reflections of the imaginary. This is because through the process of analyzing political



speeches by Ontario and Michigan leaders, this researcher found that imaginaries were typically introduced first as solutions and then reiterated in the goals claim. According to Jessop and Sum (2012) the imaginary is a vision not of what *is*, but what *can* be. Ideas expressed as economic imaginaries are selective, subjective, and strategic in an attempt to remake and reproduce capitalism (see also Sum, 2009; Jessop, 2012). The green economy can be considered an ‘ecological-economic imaginary’ since it is a vision of economic growth and environmental sustainability (Jessop, 2012; see also Peet and Watts, 1996). This addition of the ‘ecological’ makes a study of the green economy analytically more interesting by directing attention to the nuances and variation in economic and ecological ideas of the green economy in the two jurisdictions, both of which are dealing with similar problems: mass manufacturing industry and job losses, and the effects of climate change on shared topography and bodies of water, including the Great Lakes. Thus the following framework was therefore systematically applied in the empirical chapters to evaluate political argumentation in relation to the green economy in Ontario and Michigan: 1) imaginaries/solutions claims; 2) circumstantial premises; 3) goals premises; 4) means-goals premises; 5) values claims; and 6) alternatives claims.

In Chapter 7, the text within each argumentative claim is analyzed using critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012; see also communicative strategies below); the content and semiotic analyses in Chapter 5 served as guideposts for identifying key political arguments regarding the environment and/or the economy (broadly defined), as well providing insight into the meaning of words in argumentative claims. Semiotics is important, because words can vary in meaning depending on who is using it, and the context within which it is being used. A good example is the word ‘climate’: in green economy discourse, we might expect the use of this word in regards to

global warming. However, in the speeches analyzed in this thesis ‘climate’ was more frequently used in arguments for a “competitive business climate”.

Policymakers use a range of communicative strategies within policy arguments, including framing, which Campbell (1998) describes as “a dynamic process of struggle using symbols by opposing actors” (p. 396). Nisbet (2009 March-April) identifies a typology of eight frames used in climate change arguments: 1) social progress; 2) mortality and ethics; 3) Pandora’s box/Frankenstein’s monster/runaway science; 4) public accountability and governance; 5) middle way/alternative path; 6) conflict and strategy; 7) scientific and technical uncertainty; and 8) economic development and competitiveness<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>It is this latter frame of economic development and competitiveness that has been employed most widely in recent policy arguments; indeed, this proved to be the case in this study (see Chapters 6 and 7). Thus we can examine the ways in which political elites apply economic competitiveness frames to arguments that make the ‘free market’ and austerity seem necessary, or the *only* way to a green economy that will create ‘good jobs’ and/or slow climate change. According to Nisbett, there are two positions in the economic competitiveness frame: first, that climate change action will have economic consequences; and second, that climate change action can result in economic

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<sup>1</sup> Social progress frames climate action as a means to improving quality of life, or human relationship with nature. Morality and ethics pits climate change as a matter of right or wrong, and a respect or disrespect for ecological limits. The Pandora’s box/Frankenstein’s monster frame often urges the precautionary principle in the face of potential catastrophe and/or emphasizes fatalism – no way out. This strategy, however, can invoke a sense of hopelessness that results in less public response. Public accountability and governance emphasizes transparency, participation, and the public interest, while engaging with debates over the use of science – or increasingly, the lack of science – and expertise in policymaking. Middle way/alternative path frames climate policy solutions as a compromise between polarized ideas. Conflict and strategy is typically a journalistic tool, presenting winners and losers among policy elites in the climate change debate. Scientific and technical uncertainty arguments aim to frame evidenced-based climate science as contradictory, problematic, or incomplete; any decision to take action requires further debate and more ‘proof’. Information is often ‘cherry picked’ to select that which fits, and does not fit, a desired policy argument. This continues to be an important strategy among Republicans, as members turn to the same strategy playbook they have since the G.W. Bush years (ibid).

opportunities (Nisbet, 2009 March-April). Both positions turn climate change into an opportunity, linking policy action, such as green energy, with jobs and economic growth. The second position has become popular in the blue-green movement as well as in policy circles. However, while the economic competitiveness frame has been effective in uniting supporters of the green economy in government and civil society, it might limit policy solutions to climate change that do not explicitly contribute to ‘economic growth’.

Frames can also be used to diffuse hegemonic ideas within and across national borders. Market capitalism is a macro-level frame that transformed the world’s economic system (Campbell, 1998). To promote this idea, free market champions in the US negatively framed industrial policy as ‘socialist’, drawing on deep-seated fears of the USSR; and the Reagan Administration framed potential corporate tax hikes as harmful to ‘traditional American family values’, where women would be forced to go to work and thus the rate of divorce would increase (Campbell, 1998, 395). In Michigan and Ontario, policy elites often present green/sustainable economy arguments in ways that resonate with the deeply rooted manufacturing foundry cultures. The loss of good manufacturing jobs may be lamented by policymakers, but this may be coupled with a promise that those ‘good old days’ will return with the green economy.

### **Methods of Documentation Data Collection and Analysis**

Data was collected for the semiotic and discourse analysis from political speeches and special addresses delivered by political leaders in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012. State of the State speeches are delivered once per year, typically at the beginning of the calendar year by the governor. Throne Speeches are delivered at the opening of each session of the provincial legislature. Though the Speech from the Throne is delivered by the lieutenant governor and not the premier of Ontario, it is considered a document of the premier since it is written by his or her office. Michigan

budget speeches are delivered once per year, but not typically by the governor; in Ontario the budget is delivered by the Minister of Finance, once per year. The speeches analyzed in this study were:

Michigan State of the State speeches, 2007- 2013<sup>2</sup>; Radio Addresses by Governor Jennifer

Granholm, 2006-2010; “Ensuring our Future: Energy and the Environment” speech by Governor

Rick Snyder, December 2012; Ontario Speeches from the Throne, 2007-2012; Ontario Budget

Speeches, 2007-2012; and the 2010 “Open Ontario the World” Address by Premier Dalton

McGuinty. Premier Kathleen Wynne’s February 2013 Speech from the Throne was also included in the analysis, despite the fact that the time period of study is only through December 31, 2012.

Including the Wynne speech allowed for the making of some predictions about the direction of the new Liberal government in the empirical (Chapter 6 and 7) and concluding (Chapter 8) chapters.

Moreover while it was the McGuinty government that advanced the Green Energy Act and tied FIT payments to Ontario labour and materials, while pushing forward an end to coal use in the province, it was ultimately under Kathleen Wynne that Ontario’s local content requirement was removed from FIT eligibility and Ontario’s last coal plants were closed.

Interviews were conducted with politicians and NGO representatives in Ontario and Michigan between January and August 2014. The interviews were used to help triangulate and corroborate results from the semiotic and discourse analyses. Three interviews were conducted with American NGO representatives from Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club of Michigan, and Blue Green Alliance in Washington, DC. Three interviews were conducted with Canadian NGO representatives for the Ontario research from Blue Green Canada, the Sierra Club of Canada, and DeSmog Canada.

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<sup>2</sup> Governor Snyder delivered the State of the State speech early in 2013 on January 16; thus it was included in this study to ensure a comparable amount (to that of Governor Granholm) of data was available for analysis

It is important to note that Michigan legislators were significantly more accessible and willing to be interviewed than Ontario legislators. In Michigan, eight politicians interviewed for this study included both Republican and Democrat members of the Michigan House and Senate and one former policy advisor. Indeed, despite concerted effort over several months to get interviews with Ontario legislators, only one – a prominent cabinet minister in the McGuinty government – was willing to participate in this study<sup>3</sup>. This may help substantiate claims that Canadian politicians are increasingly less accessible to public inquiry (see for example, De Souza, 2014 December 26), including those in provincial politics.

### ***Analyzing the Reality: Public Policies***

Policies introduced in Ontario and Michigan between 2007 and 2012 were categorized within a typology of sustainable development imaginaries constructed from a review of the literature and researcher reflection on primary data. Though there were nuances within each imaginary – for example, such as in ‘varieties of neoliberalism’ (see for example, Glendinning, 2015 March) – it was possible to make generalizations based on similarities of ideology (imaginaries, circumstances, goals) and policies (means-goals). Policies that were categorized in this typology included so-called ‘environmental’ or ‘green’ policies like water protection and renewable energy incentives, as well as social and economic policies, including austerity measures. This was important because green or sustainability discourses (and the various usages) should not be isolated from the wide range of policies introduced by state or provincial government.

The sustainable development typology was therefore constructed to provide a measure of the degree to which a policy was sustainable, and what kind of sustainability (economic, environmental, social,

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<sup>3</sup> The time period for interviews with Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) was in May-June 2014, just prior to the Ontario provincial election. This may help explain why it was difficult to secure interviews at that time. However, efforts were also made to contact MPPs in the governing and opposition parties by phone and email in the summer 2014. Former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure George Smitherman was interviewed in September 2014.

and/or cultural) it represented. More importantly, categorizing public policy within a typology of sustainable economies was necessary to validate or discredit argumentative claims made by Ontario and Michigan political leaders in their speeches. For example, if a set of policies were framed in the political discourse as a sustainable means to economic growth, the researcher could only make conclusions that this was political rhetoric if the policies had already been determined to have little in common with sustainability. Thought of another way, the analysis of political speeches would have produced some interesting results regarding the ways that political leaders frame arguments to influence the policy process, but without conclusions about the character of the policies they propose– the smoking gun, if you will – any conclusions that policies were not what policy leaders claimed would be mostly conjecture. The process for, and results of the policy analysis and categorization are outlined in greater detail in Chapter 4.

### ***Analyzing the Rhetoric: Political Speeches***

There were three parts in the analysis of political speeches. First, a broad quantitative and qualitative analysis of key words and phrases was conducted using NVIVO 10. NVIVO 10 was used to identify the most commonly-used words in all political speeches. A word cluster analysis identified various contexts of usage of these common words; this helped identify the most common words and phrases used in the political arguments of this study. The most commonly used political words were then divided into four categories: value/justice words; job/employment words; green/environment words; and economy/trade words. Words in each of these categories were then analyzed using Jessop's (2009) prescription for semiotic analysis, which explores what words actually mean in a certain context, and how they are used. For example, while 'trade' has been positively employed as an opportunity by Premier McGuinty in regards to Ontario's economy, it was used more commonly by Governor Granholm to refer to bad circumstances, such as 'un-fair trade policies' that have disadvantaged Michigan businesses. This process was conducted for each of the most commonly

used words to determine how political elites frame arguments around characteristics of a green/sustainable economy identified in chapter three. Doing this promoted a broad interpretation of the kinds of arguments political leaders have used to advance their policies.

Second, a closer discourse analysis of speeches delivered during the period of study (2007-2012) was conducted using the analytical framework informed by Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) as described above. Reconstructing arguments and deliberation in policy discourse focused on the following components of argumentation: the imaginary; circumstantial premises; goals premises; means-goal premise; value premises; alternative options. (see *ibid*, p. 88). The analysis of the various premises of argument extends beyond the descriptive. First, it was used to explain the ways in which policy elites frame arguments to favour their chosen policies, even if these policies appear ecologically neutral or benign; doing so helps identifies how policy elites naturalize neoliberalism and capitalism more generally after crisis (Jessop, 2011). Second, the breaking down of argument into its components is a necessary step for analysis of the power of argument, and “the interaction between agency and structures and of the relationship between language and power” (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 155). Linking the agency of policymakers to the structural power of capital helped to identify how hegemonic ideas around the green economy are shaped in part by the structures that support them. And analyzing argument helps identify how the language of ‘common sense’ is used to further entrench neoliberal capitalism.

Thus, the CDA prescribed by Fairclough and Fairclough can best serve the analysis of political speeches because it allows us to examine the ways that our three politicians used various types of argument around the green economy to justify policy and naturalize ideas like neoliberalism. Moreover, in a comparative study of subnational jurisdictions in two different nation states like

Ontario and Michigan, CDA helps to identify some of the similarities made in political arguments despite differences in political and electoral systems. Our comparative examination of public policy serves to enrich our analysis of political argument because it provides more concrete evidence that the latter may be more rhetoric than fact.

### **Time Period for the Study**

The time period for this study (2007-2012) was selected to examine policy ideas just before, and after the global financial crisis. Job creation has been at the centre of political and public discourse in the two jurisdictions, where traditional manufacturing has been hurt by neoliberal policies and the economic crisis. In the United States, 2.3 million jobs were lost in 2008 and early 2009 (Elwell, 2013 April 18), and by August, the unemployment rate hit 14.2 percent in Michigan (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013 September 7). In Canada, some 431,000 jobs were lost between October 2008 and July 2009, and though many jobs were eventually recovered, 20 percent – representing almost exclusively the manufacturing sector – were not (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté, 2013 April). Ontario shed 300,000 manufacturing jobs over the last decade, with almost half – 120,000 – lost between 2007 and 2010 (Mowat Centre, 2014 July 29). And despite economic ‘recovery’, another 50,000 Canadian manufacturing jobs were lost between January 2011 and February 2013 (Uppal and LaRochelle-Côté, 2013 April).

Consequently, job creation has been a high priority of citizens and government, and the green economy is one way for achieving that goal.<sup>4</sup> Further, there had been spike in public awareness of, and concern with climate change in the few years preceding the GFC (Anderegg and Goldsmith,

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<sup>4</sup> The ‘green economy’ has not been the only economic imaginary in Ontario and Michigan; since the 1990s, economic diversification strategies in Canada and the United States have included the ‘knowledge’ and ‘creative’ economies (see Gertler, Florida, Gates, Vinodrai, 2002; Powell and Snellman, 2004). Green economy discourses have overlapped discourses around alternatives like the knowledge economy since the mid-2000s as climate change and the manufacturing job losses were problems to which green jobs seemed to be at least part of the answer (see for example, Canadian Labour Congress, n.d.).



2014). Following the economic crisis in 2008, however, public concern for the climate waned (ibid) and shifted towards jobs and the economy. Therefore it is likely that climate change mitigation has become a distant second to economic growth (and job creation) in policy discourse<sup>5</sup>.

In the next chapter, we build a typology of green economy imaginaries with which to examine and categorize public policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012. It is in this stage that we can begin to question the degree of sustainability of policies of the ‘green economy’ era in the two jurisdictions, and whether or not there is justification for bold policy rhetoric that a new, sustainable society is not far away.

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<sup>5</sup> For example, a 2009 IPSOS-Reid poll found that 71 per cent of Canadians agreed that it was more important for government to focus on jobs and economic growth than climate change; 45 percent believed that serious climate action should be set aside until after economic recession

### **Chapter 3: Constructing a Typology of Green Economy Imaginaries: Green Neoliberalism, Green New Dealism, and Holistic Sustainable Development**

Policymakers have touted the green economy as a new solution to climate change and economic recession<sup>6</sup>. The green economy, they say, can reduce economic insecurity by creating well-paid jobs; it can simultaneously curb climate change by increasing our use of renewable energy. While this claim is potentially true, the green economy unfurling in North America may not have escaped the business-as-usual policy context that led to the global financial crisis in 2008-2009, and the ongoing climate crisis where business activities are left unregulated and ‘voluntary’. Yet the range of ecological-economic imaginaries suggests that a green economy can be more than that: it can redistribute wealth and reduce socio-economic inequality; increase political accountability and ensure participatory decision-making; eliminate garbage and waste; clean the water, air, and land; and even end hunger and poverty (see James, 2015; UNRISD/Mueller and Bullard, 2011 October 10-11).

Constructing a typology of environmental-economic imaginaries is thus a useful first step in the analysis of green economy ideas and discourses in Michigan and Ontario. Identifying categories and characteristics of green economy imaginaries sets up conditions for a rigorous comparison of a range of public policies introduced in the two jurisdictions. These include those that are commonly associated with a green economy like renewable energy, but also those that have the capacity to make Ontario or Michigan more or less sustainable, including fiscal, development, social, and regulatory policies. Doing this helps paint a general picture of the narrow range of ‘green economy’ emerging in the two jurisdictions; more importantly it provides a basis for a critique of discourses around the green economy advanced by political leaders between 2007 and 2012.

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<sup>6</sup> As will be shown in chapters 6 and 7

## IMAGINARIES OF A GREEN ECONOMY

“However for the global economy to recover from its present financial crisis in a way that is both socially as well as environmentally sustainable and which will reduce inequalities worldwide will require a radically different end goal for nations’ economies... Yet present day politicians are still hoping to return to business as usual i.e. maximum economic growth through ever greater resource and energy use, and increasing world trade and financial flows. This is not an option for the future survival of a planet that will require the reduced use of energy and resources” (Hines, n.d., 4).

The imagining of a green economy has been varied since the term ‘sustainable development’ was popularized by the United Nations in 1987. However, much of what has been imagined continues to mimic modern socio-political-economic organization. Specifically in democratic states, the central organizing structure has been market capitalism, which has predominantly taken the form of neoliberalism (and varieties of<sup>7</sup>) over the last 30 years. Moreover, critical scholars have argued not only that neoliberalism – typified by privatization, free marketization, and deregulation – persisted after the global financial crisis but that austerity measures may be further entrenched in neoliberal culture (see Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014).

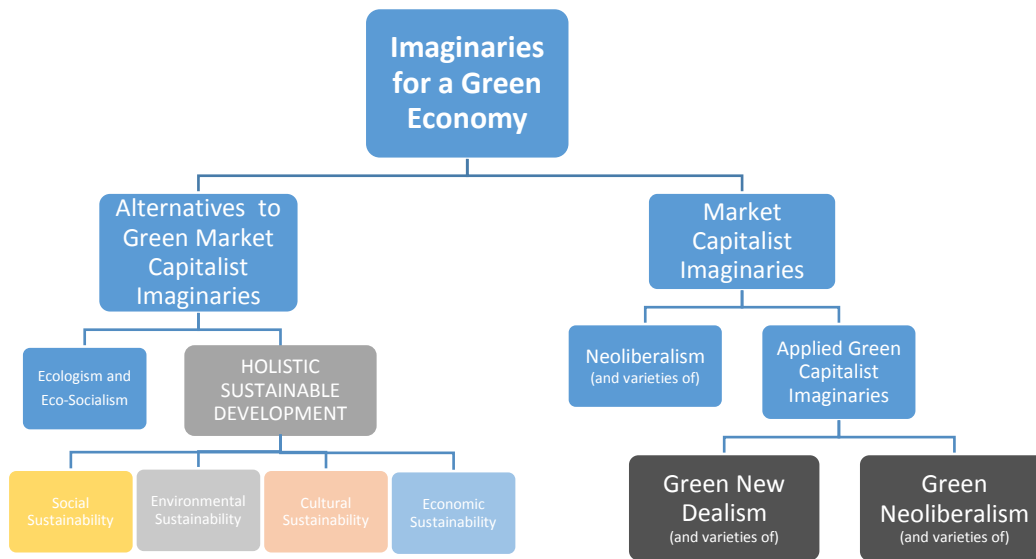
But increasing public pressure to address ecological issues like climate change has led to the construction of what I refer to as ‘Applied Green Capitalisms’: Green Neoliberalism and Green New Dealism, the two dominant discourses of the green economy. While it may seem misplaced at first to categorize Green Neoliberalism and Green New Dealism with ‘classic neoliberalism’ or even together, it will be shown that these imaginaries are more similar than they are often represented in the literature. These two imaginaries can be placed on a traditional left-right spectrum according to the degree of market intervention and socio-economic transformation they envision. Generally speaking, green neoliberalism supports the ‘business as usual’ practice of minimal intervention in the market place to stimulate private sector growth in green sectors, while Green New Dealism imagines

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<sup>7</sup> Varieties of neoliberalism arguments will be explored later in this chapter

a revival of New Deal and welfare state policies to stimulate green growth and strengthen unions. Neither imaginary, however, puts climate change at the centre of policy making, nor advocates for significant change to the current capitalist structure.

**Figure 1: Imaginaries for a Green Economy**



The fact that green neoliberalism and Green New Dealism are the most articulated and practiced imaginaries in policy politics is not because there is an absence of alternatives; indeed, alternatives to market capitalist imaginaries have been described in the scholarly and grey literature (see for example, J.K. Gibson-Graham, 2006; O'Connor, 1998; Wright, 2010; Pepper, 1993; Nieto, 1997; Dobson, 2007; Magee et al, 2013). Moreover, re-imaginings of social organization that can meet the long-term needs of the environment have been advanced by ecologism (Dobson, 2007) and eco-socialism (see Pepper, 1993; O'Connor, 1998), as well as holistic approaches to sustainable development (see James, 2015; see also below). Each ecological-environmental imaginary examined in this chapter is defined by a set of underlying principles and related policy instruments. While these are not water-tight categories, , and there are indeed varieties, or degrees of greenness (see Jonas and

While, 2007) within and between economic systems, our typology provides a framework for examining the range of policies pursued in Ontario and Michigan.

In Chapter 4, these imaginaries will be used to categorize public policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012. The criteria for categorizing policies in our green economy typology are the *logic* that shapes an imaginary, the *goals* of each policy, and the *means* for achieving these goals. Policy logic is understood here as the ideology and/or rationale behind a given policy. For example, the logic of economic competitiveness is associated with neoliberalism (see Sum, 2009). Goals are the outputs that each policy is expected to achieve. One example of a policy goal is job creation in the renewable energy sector. Means are the measures or instruments that are used to achieve policy goals. Reducing corporate tax rate is an example of a means to greater foreign direct investment. The logic, goals, and means for each policy were determined by the types of arguments made in support of these policies; the means were further determined by the policy instruments and tools chosen to achieve particular goals (see Linder and Peters, 1990). In the latter chapters, I reveal the results of the discourse analysis of Ontario and Michigan political speeches to determine how policymakers framed arguments around a green economy, in order to compare the political rhetoric against the policy reality (see Kozolanka, 2014a)

While the goals of each imaginary are sometimes similar, often they are not. This is because the logic behind the various means and goals of the ecological-economic imaginaries is often based on capitalism, and in recent decades, neoliberal capitalism. To be sure, it may be easier for political elites to implement imaginaries inspired by neoliberal capitalism; similarly, it would be more difficult to implement imaginaries that are perceived as being beyond the realm of political possibility. So while there may be distinctions between imaginaries in the means (such as policy instruments) for *achieving* goals, the logic behind these means – for example, that the private sector should drive green

jobs – and the desired results, or goals, of those means– for example, private sector investment in renewable energy - suggest a closer relationship between imaginaries than actually exists (see Jessop, 2012a). For example, if unfettered expansion of infrastructure (or the ‘built environment’) has been a key contributor to climate change (O’Connor, 1998; Luke, 2009), there is little difference between private industry constructing new facilities using ‘energy efficient’ technologies, and public infrastructure projects that use ‘sustainable materials’: both approaches to the ‘green economy’ net an increase in GHG emissions, and both are informed by the logic of capital accumulation and/or commodification. And as Harvey (1996) reminds us, capitalist commodification is ‘inherently anti-ecological’ (p. 155).

The construction of our typology proceeds as follows: First, we explore the logic of green market capitalisms and their influence on thinking around sustainability. Second, we examine the goals, means, and logic for two common manifestations of green market capitalism: green neoliberalism and Green New Dealism. Third, we briefly consider eco-socialism and ecologism as alternative imaginaries for a green economy and their relationship to imaginaries of holistic sustainable development. Finally, we examine the means, goals, and logic of the four dimensions of a holistic approach to sustainability – economic, environmental, social, and cultural – and their implications for public policy. Holistic sustainable development is viewed in this research as the ‘practical ideal’, in that it both imagines comprehensive sustainability, while being reducible to four pillars against which policies can be measured. However, while holistic sustainable development is indeed an alternative in green economy policymaking, the overwhelming majority of public policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario are characteristic of Market Capitalist Imaginaries, specifically Green New Dealism, Neoliberalism, Green Neoliberalism.

A few policies were categorized as market capitalist imaginaries with characteristics of one or more pillars of sustainable development. (See tables 1-3 at the end of Chapter 4.) This is because though the logic, means, and goals of a given policy may indicate one of the market capitalist imaginaries (neoliberalism, green New Dealism, or Green Neoliberalism), there is potential for some policies to contribute to greater economic, ecological, social, or cultural sustainability. However, this is the exception rather than the rule; thus, sustainable development is dealt with only briefly in this chapter.

Furthermore, it is important to note the inclusion of ‘green-less’ neoliberalism in our typology of sustainable economy imaginaries; this is because not all policies introduced before and after the global financial crisis have been inspired by ideas of ecological sustainability. The inclusion of neoliberalism(s) is thus useful when politicians advance arguments that, for example, austerity measures are necessary for the ‘sustainability’ of business and good jobs. So while it is important to examine the logic of Green Neoliberalism and Green New Dealism – we must also recognize the relationship they have with neoliberalism, and the parental relationship that market capitalist imaginaries has with all three.

### **The Logic of Applied Green Capitalisms**

The idea of a ‘green economy’ is not new. The term entered language in the 1970s, and has been associated with a plethora of social, economic, political, and environmental goals (Peters, Eathington, and Swenson, 2011 November). But from the start, ‘green economy’ was largely defined in capitalist terms, making it an uphill battle for those who view the green economy as the basis for systemic change:

“It’s (the green economy) being narrated at present as capitalism’s best hope to create jobs, restore growth, and limit climate change. A magic formula, a magic bullet....but also precisely because it’s a floating signifier, because of its productive fuzziness it creates the possibilities of false alliances, misreadings of takeovers, of colonization and so forth. It has a

certain incoherence and is vulnerable to capture by the most powerful economic and political forces” (Bob Jessop, UNRISD Conference, 2011 October 10-11).

Applied Green Capitalisms (AGCs) of ‘green economy’ emphasize international trade as a means to generating economic growth, and reifies the unequal relationship between worker and employer. More specifically, AGCs emphasizes: commodification of nature for exchange value; marketization and trading of pollution (including GHG emissions); greening of products and services; and individual action and responsibility (through green consumerism, recycling, carbon offsets); technology for efficient use of energy that in turn increases production (see Foster, 2002, 99). Furthermore, AGCs promote conservation of nature and the use of alternative energy. This naturalist perspective could, and still can, be found across all political stripes despite variations in climate change acceptance and denial. For example, much of the early conservation of US lands is owed to the establishment of the US Forest Service by Republican President Theodore Roosevelt (National Parks Service, United States, n.d.). ConservAmerica, a US organization that supports such policies as the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Clean Water Act is a Conservative (Republicans, independent conservatives) organization (Republicans for Environmental Protection/ConservAmerica, n.d.). However, from this perspective conservation has often emphasized nature as a means to human leisure activities (national parks) and protecting property rights less than conservation of nature for its own sake, and nuclear power is a form of clean energy<sup>8</sup> (see *ibid*).

Thus, a variety of understandings of what constitutes ‘green’ or ‘sustainable’ have been adopted under the applied green capitalist imaginaries over the last couple decades. Much of this builds on the ‘ecological modernisation’ narrative (Hajer, 1995; see also Swilling and Anneck, 2012; Nugent,

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<sup>8</sup> Proponents argue that because it releases no carbon at the point of energy release, nuclear power is a green form of energy. However, critics maintain that uranium mining, plant production, and use of water, as well as the life cycle of uranium, contribute significantly to GHG emissions. Furthermore, the ongoing threat of nuclear plant explosion to current and future generations makes nuclear power unsustainable (see for example Sovacool and Cooper, 2008)



2011), which proposes that technological advances can solve most environmental problems; energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, for example, can reduce GHG emissions enough to halt climate change. Ecological modernisation discourse speaks of a ‘triple bottom line’: financial value must also produce social and environmental value (Swilling and Annecke, 2012; in reference to Elkington, 1998). Policymakers using the language of ecological modernisation thus emphasize the role of technology and voluntary actions by the private sector in controlling global warming.

‘Green growth’ has increasingly been used in the policy discourse, and is more self-explanatory than ecological modernisation (ibid; see also OECD, 2011 May 25-26). Generally speaking, green growth is described as “economic growth (growth of gross domestic product or GDP) which also achieves significant environmental protection” (Jacobs, 2012, October, 4). The use of the word ‘significant’ is important, since different uses of ‘green growth’ vary in what is considered a significant (positive or negative) environmental impact or benefit (ibid). The ‘standard’ version assumes “that economic growth can occur even when environmental impacts are significantly reduced” (p. 7) and reflects ecological modernisation’s emphasis on technological innovation. This definition has roots in calculations made by Holdren and Ehrlich (1974) that despite rising population and economic growth, the environmental impact can be reduced if technological improvement was significant enough to contain it (as cited in Jacobs, 2012, October, 7). Such technological improvements include recycling waste, applying sustainable farming practices, and using renewable forms of energy (ibid).

The ‘strong’ version of green growth, on the other hand, maintained that:

“Environmental protection was not just compatible with continued economic growth: it could positively promote it. So far from slowing the economy down, policies to make it greener could be a driver of higher output and rising living standards. And they could do so in the relatively short term, not merely in the long” (p. 8).

For example, renewable energy policies can help create local jobs and stimulate foreign direct investment; carbon trading creates new financial markets; and reducing corporate waste, sharing

supply chains and selling ‘greener’ products can cut costs and increase market share amid increasing consumer demand for environmentally-friendly products and services.

More importantly, ‘green growth’ largely removes the social dimension in sustainable development and ecological modernisation discourses, apart from conviction that the best prescription for social well-being is for wealth to ‘trickle down’ from the capitalist class. But following the United Nations’ Rio +20 Conference on Sustainable Development, which concluded that global inequality had largely increased, governments and international organizations began using the term ‘inclusive green growth’ in an effort to bring social goals back into the discourse (Benson, Bass, and Greenfield, 2014 February). However, ‘inclusive green growth’ remains narrowly focused on the productive economy, with measures of success emphasizing GDP growth and profit margins (ibid). More importantly,

“green growth does not explicitly address equity issues and for the most part assumes that trickle-down economics will improve the living standards of the poorest”; it “aims at resource efficiency and more sustainable patterns of consumption and production but is not informed or guided by ecological limits”; and it “tends to put more emphasis on economic tools, market instruments and metrics, rather than some of the legislative changes that will be required to level the playing field” (ibid, p. 6).

In other words, (green) growth policies favour big business as distributors of wealth; purveyors of social and environmental goals; and leaders in global and state governance. This particular capital-centric imaginary has been favoured by organizations like the OECD, which uses economic cost of inaction and the promise of prosperity as key arguments for policy action. ‘Green’ prosperity, supporters suggest, can be achieved by greening key sectors like energy, tourism and agriculture; establishing pricing and trading carbon credits; liberalizing trade of green goods and services; investing in technological innovation; and greening the production and consumption. Furthermore, creation of new markets can stimulate demand for green technologies, goods and services, while ‘creating potential for new job opportunities’ in green sectors (OECD, 2011, May 25-26, p. 9). This

green growth model does not fully exclude the pursuit of social goals: carbon markets and taxes can be useful tools for wealth redistribution (OECD/Martinez-Fernandez, Hinojosa, and Miranda, 2010 February 8). And indeed, the OECD concedes that for the green economy to be realized some regulation of business activity is needed, in conjunction with ‘corporate social responsibility’ measures and technology-innovation support policies (Brand, 2012). However, this capitalist imaginary has been used largely by elites to appear as though they are including criticism of the model of environmental destruction, while leaving the underlying assumptions of capitalism unchallenged (Lander, 2011). And as had already been pointed out, voluntary measures and technology-dependent policies are a manifestation of capitalism and would thus be eliminated if they inhibited profit and economic growth.

Under applied green capitalist imaginaries, commodification of labour and of nature is extended to pollution. This assumes that pollutants like carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, which are the current leading anthropogenic greenhouse gasses, can be reduced and/or controlled through market-based mechanisms. For example, the Kyoto Protocol introduced three flexible market mechanisms designed to reduce GHG emissions while keeping costs down (Hepburn, 2007). The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) was a cost-effective solution for Annex 1 countries to achieve their emissions targets by buying Certified Emission Reduction (CERs) units (Sutter and Parreño, 2007). These units could be purchased from developing countries with UN-endorsed CER projects that promise to help countries develop their economies sustainably. Additionally, the Joint Implementation (JI) allows for the transfer of Emission Reduction Units across Annex 1 jurisdictions. All three solutions rely on commodification, and the ‘Coase theorem’<sup>9</sup> to the tragedy of

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<sup>9</sup> Generally speaking, the Coase Theorem promotes the allocation of private property rights to solve tragedy of the commons problems, such as pollution.

the commons: privatize the environment by assigning property rights (Hepburn, 2007, 379). But while almost 75 percent of projects helped reduce greenhouse gas emissions, less than one per cent of CERs have promoted socially sustainable development in host countries (Sutter and Parreño, 2007). Moreover, market mechanisms like the CDM have characteristics of modern imperialism, whereby advanced industrialized nations buy their way out of past and current GHG development decisions that developing states are told not to make (see Bumpus and Liverman, 2008).

Emissions trading schemes have been adopted by coalitions of regional jurisdictions as an effort to reduce GHGs. In January 2013, California and Quebec signed North America's first emissions trading market. While the effort is commendable, only two jurisdictions of nine have participated thus far<sup>10</sup>. The most well-known emissions market is the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) in the European Union. Introduced in 2005, the EU-ETS covers some 45 percent of the EU's total emissions and was designed to reduce the region's GHGs by 21 percent by 2020<sup>11</sup> (European Commission, 2013). Simply put, carbon trading allows companies with high carbon outputs to purchase 'credits' from companies with low carbon outputs, to meet EU carbon reduction goals assigned under the Kyoto Protocol. Twenty-eight EU countries (plus Iceland, Leichenstein, and Norway) participate in the ETS, which includes steel companies, oil refineries, and pulp and paper factories; however, air and transportation industries are notably absent (ibid, see also Hepburn, 2007).

As we shall see, the logic behind the various means and goals of the Green New Dealism and Green Neoliberalism are based on Applied Green Capitalisms; so while there may be distinctions between

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<sup>10</sup> The original eight were California, Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Manitoba. In April 2015, the Ontario Wynne government announced its intent to enter into the carbon trading market with Quebec and California by 2017. The Government of Manitoba followed suit on December 7, 2015, signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Ontario and Quebec at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France.

<sup>11</sup> Over 1990 levels

imaginaries in the means (such as policy instruments) for *achieving* goals, the logic behind these means – for example, that the private sector should drive the economy– and the desired results, or goals, of those means– for example, private sector jobs - suggest a closer relationship between ecological-economic imaginaries than policymakers would have the public believe. Green Neoliberalism and Green New Dealism can be seen in part as environmental frames validated by a promise to reduce GHGs, create good jobs, and increase economic competitiveness, while simultaneously petrifying the ‘naturalness’ of capitalism.

Indeed, even though proponents of market-driven solutions to climate change do not use terms like ‘green capitalism’, their policies have been criticized as such (Luke, 2009; Lander, 2011), and green capitalism remains embedded in terms like ‘green growth’ that are more acceptable to the public (see Romm, 2014 September 16). Indeed, Republican strategist Frank Lutz focused his efforts on replacing ‘capitalism’ with terms like ‘economic freedom’ and ‘free market’ since the former has polled with the public as ‘immoral’ (ibid).

But Barron (2005) explains the danger of limiting political discourse and range of policy ideas to those that fit within the ‘green capitalist’ imaginary, and that imaginary’s ultimate destiny to fail in protecting people and planet:

“Making a place for nature and the maintenance of natural resources within capitalism is appealing because it seems to be better than nothing, and comes at a time when many people are increasingly desperate about the state of the environment....However, green capitalism essentializes natural resources as actors in an economic marketplace driven by the need for profit and growth because it creates a set of circumstances in which nature must earn the right to exist in the world market economy (McAfee, 1999)...Ultimately, green capitalism fails to actually protect the environment or the laborer, leading to environmental destruction and exploitation” (p. 71).

### **Applied Green Capitalist Imaginary: Green Neoliberalism**

Building on the logic, goals, and means-goals of market capitalist imaginaries and green thinking, green neoliberalism in North America is characterized by the promotion of a global free trade

regime through bilateral free trade agreements (Jessop, 2012); environmental deregulation; corporate tax cuts and abatements for green (and other) industries; ‘deficit hysteria’ (see Hennessey and Stanford, 2013 March); austerity measures to cut public spending (ibid), which includes funding to social programs like unemployment, health and education, and programs monitoring climate change and environmental conditions; increased use of public-private partnerships for environmental monitoring; corporate voluntary measures over carbon taxes and carbon emissions trading; reduced opportunity for public participation in decisions related to the environment; and over-dependence on technology for climate change mitigation in order to ensure continued economic growth. The neoliberal imagination of a green economy relies on private sector investment, which includes green sectors like renewable energy, energy efficiency, and electric car manufacturing and technologies. On the surface, many of the goals of this green economy are good, for example less pollution, and more and better jobs. Rather, it is in the *means* to achieving these goals that makes an imaginary characteristic of green neoliberalism.

The ‘international architecture’ for the green economy taking shape overwhelmingly favours neoliberal policies (Benson, Bass, and Greenfield, 2014; Eckersley, 2014 February). “Green Economy: A Transformation to Address Multiple Crises” was released in 2009 as an inter-agency statement of the United Nations system, and backed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The document outlines the importance of addressing ecological threats, including climate change and energy, as well as creating ‘decent’ jobs following the global financial crisis, and includes recommendations for education and job training, as well as ‘adequate healthcare’, and financial support for developing countries, as well as national economic stimulus. Further, it suggests that stimulus plans should avoid lock-in-to business-as-usual patterns of consumption and production. But despite this rhetoric, the approach it suggests is a tell-tale indicator of the UN’s general

preference for neoliberal capitalism: ‘trade needs to be revived’ and ‘measures that could result in new protectionism’ should be avoided (see arguments by Lander, 2011). Only the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), which is not one of the signatories to the above mentioned document, recognizes and rejects ‘green neoliberal’ solutions to environmental and social problems: ‘it (is) madness to try to solve a crisis – the socio-ecological crisis – that was the direct result of capital’s need for infinite growth by once again kick-starting precisely capitalist growth’ (UNRISD, 2011, 3).

Indeed, despite the role of neoliberal policies in triggering the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, neoliberalism has not become a relic of the past (Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014). Peter Hall’s (1993) argument suggests that this can in part be attributed to well-constructed ‘policy paradigms’, whereby ideas like monetarism under Thatcher could change the trajectory of UK economic policies. Others maintain that coercion by economically-strong states and international financial institutions resulted in the vertical imposition of similar neoliberal policies across dissimilar states, with little consideration of context, culture or feasibility (Weyland, 2005, 269; Harvey, 2008; see also ideas of ‘new constitutionalism’ by McBride, 2003). But some researchers maintain that the idea of a singular neoliberalism is largely a construction of critical scholars and activists: there is not a global neoliberal economic order. Instead, the process of deregulation, privatization and liberalization has resulted in ‘varieties of neoliberalism’ rather than a single uniform, hegemonic project (Birch and Mykhnenko, 2009). Conceiving neoliberalism this way can be a good thing to a certain extent; without a single hegemonic order, humans are capable of overcoming neoliberalism if that is what they consider to be the source of their oppression (Glendinning, 2015).

But as Peck and Theodore (2007) point out, though there are variations in how neoliberalism has been up taken across geographies by various regions and states and not necessarily a global

ideological order per se, there remains consistency across ‘neoliberalisms’ in state authorization of the creation and liberalization of markets (p. 178; see also Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010). Thus, it is maintained here that despite some variation in policies and discourses, neoliberalism has largely been a hegemonic ideological project of powerful political and economic interests.

If there has been any structural change since the GFC, it may be that neoliberalism has prompted possibly more unsustainable policies than before. This is because during recession “industry can and does more nakedly resist and erode environmental protection regulation in the interest of ‘national’ economic interest. It undermines the strength of worker opposition to economic and ecological exploitation” (Pepper, 1993, p. 219). This further supports the argument that neoliberalism, particularly following economic recession, is characterized by greater environmental and financial deregulation, in part by seeking greater concessions from the working and middle classes.

To attract private investment, green neoliberals maintain to varying degrees that financial incentives, including corporate tax cuts, subsidies, and tax abatement should be provided to green industries even if at loss to government revenue. The logic is that corporations are attracted to the jurisdiction with the lowest tax rate, and will invest tax savings back into new technologies and sectors that will drive the creation of good, green jobs and the ‘trickle down’ of financial wealth. But as a 2014 OECD report maintains, this myth of trickle-down economics may be untrue: “Income inequality has a negative and statistically significant impact on medium-term growth. Rising inequality by 3 Gini points, that is the average increase recorded in the OECD over the past two decades, would drag down economic growth by 0.35 percentage point per year for 25 years: a cumulative loss in GDP at the end of the period of 8.5 percent” (OECD, 2014 December, p. 2). Moreover, redistribution through social welfare does not lower economic growth (*ibid*). However, though the



OECD has used rhetoric of social inclusivity, the reality is that it still measures growth by GDP, and this is reflected in the policy measures that it advances (see Merolli, 2015). And while subsidies like Ontario's feed-in-tariff may seem, at first, incongruent with neoliberal thinking, they have been implemented in part based on neoliberal logic: subsidies increase the privatization of energy production and decrease government responsibility (George Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014), and subsidies for renewables are far outpaced by fossil fuels, which have a more substantial lobbying base than renewable energy.

Moreover, neoliberals see education in green technology and manufacturing as an important driver for investment and jobs in an emerging green economy; however, they continue to view post-secondary education in any field (green or otherwise) as an individual cost, rather than a universal right. One distinction has been in the provision of subsidized training programs for 'in-demand' technical fields, which under Michigan Governor Granholm included green jobs in renewable energy and energy efficiency. In Ontario, the Second Career program provides full-paid training and living expenses up to \$28,000 for laid-off workers in a range of in-demand fields, which includes training in photovoltaic (solar) and thermal installation. However, this green jobs training is currently only offered through a privately-owned career college in Newcastle, Ontario.

In addition, government investment in social programs has been much more the exception than the rule. Austerity measures that cut healthcare and social assistance are deemed necessary by policymakers pre-occupied by 'deficit hysteria' (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013). Austerity measures and deficit reduction strategies are 'anti-green' because they fail to protect the poor from environmental and social injustice; for example, cuts to health monitoring of waste sites impacts the poor, who typically live closest to these areas. And as deregulation is a hallmark of neoliberalism (see Harvey, 2005) environmental regulation is at risk of being weakened for profit. This is not to say

that governments do not enact new environmental policy; indeed, all policymakers in this study enacted some piece of environmental legislation during their tenure. However, green neoliberals will show little hesitation to weaken environmental legislation if it stands in the way of private investment.

Public Private Partnerships, or P3s, are a leading fiscal policy instrument for the assertion of the neoliberal agenda. After a brief slowdown following the 2008 financial crisis, P3s have regained strength with policymakers as an alternative to public sector spending (Loxley, 2012). P3s typically take two forms: 1) private industry provides capital for a public project; or 2) private industry provides operational services to a public project (ibid). A P3 project can involve a tangible good, like the expansion of a highway or bridge, or a social service, such as patient transfer. The logic is that P3s reduce the fiscal burden of large scale projects on government and taxpayers. However P3s are like another form of austerity: costs are cut by the privatization of jobs and public assets (ibid). Moreover, given the lack of transparency and accountability around P3s, and given that large sums of money are spent by government promoting P3s suggests that the public-private partnership model is “highly political, and driven by largely ideological motives”(ibid, 30). The prevalence of P3s only promises to increase after the GFC, as governments seek new ways to cut costs and offset financial risk (IISD, 2011). While some argue that P3s are better equipped to increase social development and reduce climate change (see Cai and Paradis, 2013 November 8), others maintain that P3s more likely to devolve significant authority to private actors at the expense of democratic participation and the democratic process (see McBride and Whiteside, 2011).

And in terms of sustainability, there effectiveness remains in question:

“IISD<sup>12</sup> is of the view that PPPs are yet to deliver on its potential for long-term sustainability and that a substantial rethinking of the business and contracture models are needed to ensure that it moves in this direction in the future. This includes not only a greater integration of sustainable procurement and sustainable investment principles into PPP agreements and contracting processes, but also a consideration of the potential for PPP procurement to serve as a vehicle and catalyst for green growth across many sectors of the economy” (Colverson and Perera, 2011 October, p. 3).

Finally, the green neoliberal imaginary maintains the logic of the individualization of financial gain and the socialization of financial cost (Panayotakis, 2010). Bailouts by national and subnational governments for banks, mortgage corporations, and auto companies cost taxpayers billions following the financial crisis, but the ‘benefits’ for workers have yet to be realized. Moreover, economic stimulus for the green economy – most prominently the \$24.5 billion specifically allocated for renewable energy and energy efficiency in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act by President Obama (see American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, n.d.)– led to the US Congress approving massive cutbacks to public sector jobs, and government spending in unemployment and affordable housing. Indeed, despite these ‘socialist’ provisions provided to industry deemed ‘too big to fail’, income inequality has remained constant: 95 percent of income gains since 2009 went to the top one percent of earners (Piketty and Saez, 2013). Thus, even though government provided stimulus and a range of financial incentives to green industries, and even though profits in the private sector recovered (and subsequently increased) after the global financial crisis, harsh austerity measures continued in Canada and the United States. This is part of the logic of green neoliberalism: public sector investment (such as incentives and tax cuts) for privately-owned green industries and an unregulated market will create conditions that help decrease greenhouse gasses and increase

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<sup>12</sup> International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

privately-owned green businesses to profit; these profits will be used by industry to create good, green jobs.

### **Imaginary: Green New Dealism**

One economic-ecological imaginary that proponents claim can bring about greater social equality and ecological resilience is that of a ‘Green New Deal’ (Luke, 2009; Shear, 2010; Nugent, 2011; Jessop, 2012). This imaginary has largely come out of the ‘blue-green’, or labour-environmental collaborative movements, as well as social democratic parties in Western countries, and is fashioned after Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ following the Great Depression (Luke, 2009). Green New Dealism (GND) in North America emphasizes: strong regulation for worker safety and the environment including regulated use of natural resources (forestry); decent, unionized, well-paid jobs; increased collective bargaining via new or existing unions (eg. UNIFOR, USW) for workers in green industries; just transition policies (including funds for education, training, and unemployment insurance) to enable workers in ‘brown industries’ to transition to ‘green industries’; increased subsidies (including feed-in-tariffs) for renewable energy industries and eliminating subsidies for the fossil fuel industry; increase public transportation and local electric car production using low carbon technology; taxing carbon as a means to increasing government revenue and spending; and greater participation in decision making (see Green Economy Network, 2015 May).

After clashing priorities for most of the 1990s, some labour and environmental organizations came to the conclusion that they could achieve similar goals by advocating for renewable energy: reducing fossil fuel production while investing in renewable energy and energy efficiency could reduce GHGs and create jobs. In Ontario and Michigan, where jobs in traditional manufacturing have been shed by the hundreds of thousands (see Chapter 1), the blue-green alliance has found some support among political parties, but particularly among social democrats and green parties (see for example, New Democratic Party of Canada, 2013; Green Party of Canada, n.d.). Most blue-green proponents

of a GND maintain a Keynesian approach, which uses fiscal and monetary adjustments to create sufficient aggregate demand to ensure full employment, is needed to jumpstart a green economy.

Keynesianism has also been called “embedded liberalism to signal how market processes and entrepreneurial and corporate activities were surrounded by a web of social and political constraints and a regulatory environment that sometimes restrained but in other instances led the way in economic and industrial strategy” (Harvey, 2005, p. 11). A green, embedded liberal approach would include a re-regulation of the financial sector, as well as the introduction of a carbon tax or an emissions cap and trading system, and green industrial policy.

Moreover, a Green New Deal demands greater social equality and inclusion through public investment, community building and the creation of “decent” work (Green New Deal Working Group, n.d.). According to the ILO, ‘decent work’ (in green jobs or otherwise) provides a living wage, paves the way for social and economic advancement, and strengthens individuals, families and communities; decent work is also safe, secure, and steady (ILO, 2010, 2013.). This is true for both newly-created green jobs, and traditional jobs in, for example, manufacturing, that require a ‘just transition’ for workers during a shift from a ‘brown’ to a green economy (ibid). Finally, a GND emphasizes the protection for workers in the informal sector (Benson, Bass, and Greenfield, 2014) and increasing formal employment arrangements rather than precarious work situations, organized within, and protected by unions or worker cooperatives (ILO, 2013).

Of course, policies advanced by GND proponents emphasize adoption within the capitalist system. For example, while carbon trading has been proposed to reduce GHG emissions, this kind of commodification of pollution has become a tool of capitalists who are more than happy to use the mainstream green movement to maximize profit (Panayotakis, 2010). Some scholars argue that this GND imaginary has also been adopted by green parties: neither the United States Green Party nor

the Green Party of Canada call for the emancipation of labour and/or the end of the division between the means of production and workers (Kovel, 2002). GND imaginaries share much in common with Green Neoliberalism: regional competition for investment; faith in renewable energy and efficiency technologies to reduce emissions enough to curb climate change – without changing much else about the socio-economic structure (Nugent, 2011). Under President Obama, policies framed as a type of Green New Deal for Americans neither protected American jobs from the global trade regime, nor made significant investments in green technologies (Luke, 2009).

Indeed, Roosevelt's 'New Deal', on which much of GND thinking is based, aimed to ensure that never again would there be a 'Great Depression'; regulations and taxes were introduced to constrain the ways and means with which capitalists could pursue their goals (Resnick and Wolff, 1987). But it is important to note that the New Deal did not change the class structure of production; capitalist owners remained in control of their enterprises (ibid). Capitalists thus used profit surpluses to weaken and erode regulations and taxes of the New Deal (ibid). Moreover, the 'New Deal' did the climate no favours: huge infrastructure projects led to greater suburbanization, consumerism, and an obsession with the automobile (O'Connor, 1998, 248; see also Luke, 2009). And since the GND focuses on greening work, industry, and infrastructure, halting climate change at 2 degrees Celsius will come too slowly to offset the general lack of global climate action to this point (Luke, 2009). Arguably worse is that 'Green New Deal' rhetoric may be less policy action and more about political strategy:

“Although it is comforting for some on the Left to consider these shifts as some sort of Green New Deal, such changes are not necessarily transformational, socially-progressive or even innovative. Essentially, this strategy is little more than hitting the ‘reset’ button on contemporary industrial society by digging up a nearly 80 year old episode in hit-or-miss economic experimentation as a metaphor for moving forward in the twenty-first century” (Luke, 2009, 23, emphasis added).

### **Alternatives to Market Capitalist Imaginaries**

Despite the prominence of market capitalist imaginaries – neoliberalism, Green Neoliberalism, and Green New Dealism – there are alternatives to viewing the environment as an add-on to business-as-usual practices including liberalization, deregulation, and austerity; they are briefly outlined below. However, it is important to note that although there are voices in the scholarly and activist communities who envision variations of these alternatives, there was limited evidence in the policy records of green market alternatives in this study. Thus, the purpose of describing alternative imaginaries is to help us identify when and how political leaders use rhetoric associated with these alternatives in their arguments for a green economy that is largely based on green market capitalist principles, and the similarities between imaginaries within the green market capitalist paradigm.

### **Ecologism and Eco-Socialism**

One of most dramatic policy prescriptions for sustainable development has been advanced by scholars of ecologism. Dobson (2007) argues that ecologism stands apart from environmentalism in that the former is a new ideology or worldview, while the latter is largely a movement to green the existing economic order. For example, Global North environmentalism has been criticized by realist political ecologists for uncritically accepting positivist definitions of environmental degradation by powerful actors (Forsyth, 2001). Further, ecologism is considered by some scholars to be equal to, but distinct from, other politico-economic ideologies like liberalism and socialism. According to Dobson (2007), ecologism begins with the assumption that we live on a finite planet and therefore there are limits to growth; therefore human well-being cannot be measured by GDP. A ‘green state’ is not merely an ideological Utopia, but rather is a democratic construct built from the ground up<sup>13</sup> (Eckersley, 2004). Moreover, ecologism resists the temptation to immediately prescribe technology

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<sup>13</sup> Eckersley (2004) addresses what she considers the three main obstacles to a ‘green state’: the anarchic character of the system of sovereign states; the promotion of capitalist accumulation; and the democratic deficit of liberal democratic states (p. 15). In so doing, she manages to identify specific strategies for growing a green democratic state.

as the solution to all the world's problems, since technology is often used to legitimize continued production and consumption. Using technology to harness alternative sources of energy, such as the sun and wind, is therefore only a means, and not an end, to a sustainable society; energy conservation should be the first goal of energy policy. And since liberalism and socialism are grounded in world views around industrial society, which emphasise private, or public ownership of the means of production, ecologism is distinct by maintaining that production itself should be problematized. Some socialists, however, have been leery of this position, arguing that by shifting the lens away from the means of production, political ecology tends to ignore class inequality. However, more leftist political ecologists maintain the domination of nature is “managed and mediated by privileged social classes” (Eckersley, 2004, 10) and that capitalism is part of the problem, and not the solution; therefore, a critique of capitalism must be part of the political ecologist's research program (Dobson, 2007; see for example, Sarakar, 1999)).

Eco-socialism envisions a post capitalist ‘red-green’ society. Like Green New Deal advocates, eco-socialists view neoliberal globalization as a ‘return to the pure logic of capital’ – unregulated and unrestrained (Kovel, 2002) permitting not only exploitation of labour, but also of air, water, and land. But whereas ‘Green New Deal’ policies advocate largely working within the existing economic system, an eco-socialist imaginary maintains that the only way to end climate change, social exclusion, inequality, and the exploitation of labour is through significant structural change; in other words, an end to capitalism. An eco-socialist imaginary does not however, prescribe a political ‘socialism’ without democracy, like that of the former USSR, or an economic socialism in which the means of production were as ecological damaging as they were in capitalist states (O'Connor, 1998). Rather, this imaginary draws on the strengths of public – rather than private – ownership of production in promoting full employment, slowing growth, and production for use value, in a



politically-democratic system (ibid). An eco-socialist imaginary therefore rejects the idea of regulating the capitalist system.

### **Holistic Sustainable Development**

While these imaginaries are thought-provoking, the implicit and explicit criticism by policymakers and activists is often that they are not actionable or practical in the immediate future. Paul James (2015) points out that it is not enough to aim for ‘sustainability’; doing so only further confines imaginaries and policy to the ‘ideological tensions of the present’, including capitalism and socialism (p. 4). Instead, it requires determining what is ‘good’ and ‘positive’ sustainability and what is sustainability that merely preserves the status quo (ibid).

Models of holistic sustainable development build on these socially-oriented approaches, while offering practical (and politically achievable) policy responses to the problems of climate change, poverty, and race, gender, and class inequality. The United Nations has been a leader in identifying sustainable development at the level of international governance. In September 2015, the UN adopted its post-2015 development agenda, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere;
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture;
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economy growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries;
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable;
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns;
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts;

14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development;
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss;
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (United Nations, 2014).

Notably for this study, the SDGs are applicable not only to developing states, but also to highly developed nations like Canada and the United States. This is because unlike the Millennium Development Goals, the SDGs emphasize changing existing patterns of development as well as improving the human condition. Thus, whether in developing or developed states, “sustainability assessment is now thoroughly on the agenda” (Magee et al, 2013).

In addition, the UN Global Compact Cities Programme identifies four ‘Circles of Sustainability’ for cities: the political, which includes ethics, accountability, justice, and governance; the ecological, which includes water, air, and the built environment; the economic, including exchange, labour, and wealth redistribution; and the cultural, which includes gender, beliefs, and identity (UN, n.d.; see also James, 2015). Similar to the SDGs, the Circles of Sustainability is a holistic approach to sustainability, because “issues of sustainability are always seen in relation to other core conditions of human social life” (James, 2015, xvi).

Thus, despite what proponents of applied green capitalist imaginaries may suggest, sustainable development consists of four, not two dimensions of sustainability. Here, we use the framework identified by Nieto (1998), who maintains that there are four basic principles of sustainable development, each with implications for public policy: ecological sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability, and cultural sustainability. Broadly speaking, ecological

sustainability recognizes and respects limits to the use and reproduction of natural resources, and holds all of humanity responsible for the welfare of the environment and climate change (ibid). The natural environment does not exist for production, consumption and exploitation of the wealthy, but rather for the benefit of all human and non-human life. Thus, perfect ecological sustainability demands slow, to no economic growth.

Cultural sustainability emphasizes community, capacity building and empowerment; public dialogue and engagement; and the preservation and reproduction of diverse values and ideas (Hawkes, 2001; United Nations, 1992). Thus, convergence of ideas around neoliberalism(s) de-values cultural diversity and sustainability, particularly among indigenous groups. Sustainability in this sense consists of content (such as values), practices (processes of culture) and manifestations, or results of culture (ibid, p. 33). Cultural sustainability is measured not by policy makers but by the community itself (ibid).

Economic sustainability has much in common with eco-socialism. An economy that is sustainable ensures responsible and limited use of natural resources; this means that non-renewable and/or environmentally harmful resources like fossil fuels and uranium (for nuclear power), remain in the ground. Further, it rejects the pursuit of ‘individual prosperity’ since this contributes to greater inequality and exploitation of nature and workers by an economic elite. While there is no perfect set of policy prescriptions for achieving economic sustainability, it is clear that any set of policies that increase inequality across race, gender, and/or class is not sustainable for the majority. Thus, a sustainable economy cannot be based on a capitalist model, because capitalism is inherently destructive to people and planet (Harvey, 1996).

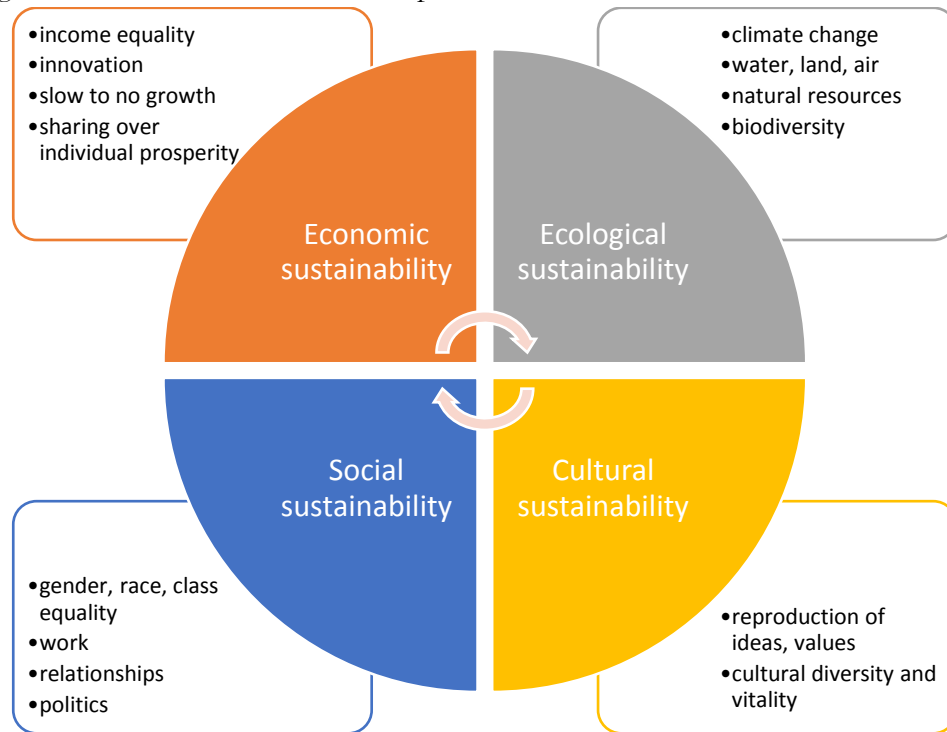
Finally, social sustainability extends the meaning of ‘needs’ from food, housing, healthcare to include education, social relationships, leisure, political life, and ‘gender-sensitive redistribution’ of work

(Littig and Grießler, 2005). Indeed, work is considered a central organizing structure of society because it is a means to meeting one's various 'needs' (ibid, p. 71), as well as means to greater sense societal contribution and personal fulfilment. Furthermore, social sustainability has been increasingly used by scholars as a meta-frame for sustainable development (see for example, Hawkes, 2001; Magee et al, 2013). The framing of all four pillars of sustainability as social dimensions is particularly important because it helps avoid the pitfalls of the triple bottom-line approach (social, economic, and environmental) whereby social issues become an add-on (ibid), much in the way it has in green economy discourse. In green neoliberal imaginaries, the economic is given independent significance rather than an interactive component in relationships between people and with the built and natural environment (ibid). Arguably worse may be the one-pillar approach historically adopted by some ENGOs, whereby the environment is prioritized and social and economic problems serve largely as a source of blame for environmental degradation and climate change (Littig and Grießler, 2005). Thus, a four-pillar approach to sustainable development helps restore its intended meaning as defined in the Bruntland Report (ibid) while minimizing the opportunity for private interests to equate 'green growth' with sustainability and environmental sustainability with social purpose<sup>14</sup>.

From the examination of these green economy imaginaries we can see that a holistic approach to sustainable development requires the equal valuation of social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions. In other words economic growth cannot be privileged at the expense of social justice, nor can environmental sustainability be achieved without addressing socio-economic inequality. And if we accept that these dimensions together contribute to greater sustainability, then it stands to reason that a 'green economy' too must be designed around these principles.

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<sup>14</sup> For similar interpretations of holistic approach to sustainable development, see Duxbury, Gillette, and Pepper, 2007; New Zealand Ministry of Culture and Heritage, 2006).

**Figure 2:** The Logic of Holistic Sustainable Development

Author construction of figure based on work by Nieto, 1998; United Nations, 1992; also Pepper, 1993; O'Connor, 1998; Hawke, 2001; Littig and Grießler, 2005; Duxbury, Gillette, and Pepper, 2007; Magee et al, 2013; Angus, 2013 July 2; McFadden and McFadden, n.d.; James, 2015

But despite ecological and financial crisis, a holistic to approach sustainability has not been adopted by OECD governments, or their subnational counterparts, or integrated into trade regimes including the NAFTA and WTO. And as some scholars have argued, neoliberalism has become further entrenched (Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014) as policymakers make the full gamut of neoliberal policies seem like the natural response to economic, social, and environmental problems. This is not to say that OECD governments are failing to work toward greater sustainability. Indeed there have been a variety of encouraging responses to climate change by OECD member states. For example, Denmark's onshore and offshore wind farms are currently meeting nearly 50 percent of the country's energy needs with plans to reach 100 percent capacity by 2050 (see "Wind power generates 140% of Denmark's electricity demand", 2015 July 10). Moreover, the renewable energy industry is creating some 5,000-6,000 new jobs in Denmark each year ("Denmark leads the charge in

renewable energy”, 2014 May 2). In North America, the single largest effort to reduce greenhouse gasses has been in the Province of Ontario: the Liberal government eliminated all coal-fired energy plants in 2014 (Leahy, 2014 April 19). However, it is important to point out that although renewable energy is an important means to reducing the effects of global warming, the constraints of the global economic regime, and the wider trend in OECD countries toward business-as-usual policies, may do more to counteract social, economic, and ecological sustainability than achieve it.

Moreover, approaches to sustainability that seek to reform the existing economic model have been sidelined by some labour and mainstream environmentalists (Ontario and Michigan NGO interviews, May - August 2014). This suggests a significant gap in understanding of the historiography of capitalism by those who could challenge dominant thinking that capitalism is ‘natural’ and without beginning or end. This certainly gives political and economic elites a significant advantage in naturalizing applied green capitalisms, given that even potential challengers in the NGO community often begin with an assumption that capitalism is a natural state, and/or that capital’s power makes capitalism impossible to overcome. Thus despite political rhetoric around sustainable development (see Chapters 6 and 7) the actual implementation of policies and principles in Ontario and Michigan unlikely. For our purposes, it is in knowing what an economy based on holistic sustainable development would look like that we can identify false frames and argumentative imperatives made by political elites for policies that are inspired by principles of green market capitalist thinking.

Our examination of green economy imaginaries can thus help us determine congruence between political rhetoric and public policies introduced between 2007 and 2012, and more specifically the degree to which policies and rhetoric are characteristic of green market capitalist imaginaries. In the next chapter, we compare and contrast public policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario against

these various imaginaries to determine what kind of green economy is unfolding in the two jurisdictions.

## Chapter 4: How Green Is Your Economy?

This chapter analyzes public policies contributing to a green economy – broadly defined by the goals and means of the imaginaries of the previous chapter – in Michigan and Ontario. Specifically, this chapter examines renewable energy, ‘green jobs’, and/or environment/climate policies implemented by Governor Granholm, Governor Snyder, and Premier McGuinty between 2007 and 2012. Policies directly associated with the green economy, as well as a range of other Michigan and Ontario fiscal, economic, social, and labour policies with the potential to contribute to greater, or less, sustainable development in the two jurisdictions were then categorized according to the green economy typology constructed in Chapter 3. The various policies were categorized based on an evaluation of their instruments and mechanisms (the results of which are available, but not included in this study). If policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario since 2007 are indeed representative of the neoliberal approach to a green economy as we suspect, we can then get down to the work of critiquing policy arguments that portray the green economy as new, sustainable, and/or inclusive for Michiganders and Ontarians. An overall pattern of neoliberal policies conditions (and therefore limit) what is happening in the green economy portfolio, and the discourse surrounding the green economy makes the neoliberal approach to green economy seem natural and common sense.

### **Policies for a Green Economy: Environmental and/or Economic Policies in Michigan and Ontario, 2007-2012**

#### ***Michigan’s Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act, 2008 and related policies***

Michigan’s Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act (CREE), 2008 had the explicit purpose of reducing greenhouse gases and stimulating growth – and jobs – in the renewable energy sector (see Granholm and Mulhern, 2011). The legislation includes a Renewable Energy Standard, which requires 10 percent of Michigan's energy needs be supplied by RE sources by 2015 (US Department of Energy, 2013 June 6). Under the Act, solar, wind, and hydro qualifies as renewable energy under



Michigan's RE standard<sup>15</sup>. The Act also includes a cost cap on electricity, to prevent extreme changes to consumer cost due to the development of RE. Further, the legislation incorporates several RE bonus credit schemes, which positioned Michigan as a US leader in attracting clean energy manufacturing and R&D (ACORE, 2013 October). Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) are given to electricity producers when they produce more green energy than required under the Act. But while these credits can theoretically be banked by producers for future trade, this will remain unlikely until total renewable energy production is greater than the RES production minimums as prescribed in the CREE (*ibid*).

To meet the 10 percent target, large scale electricity producers such as Detroit Edison and Consumer Energy are specifically required under the Act to increase their RE capacity. Utility companies with two million or more customers are 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*)<sup>16</sup>. But the exclusive use of solar, wind, or hydro is 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 can be used for compliance with these RE standards using other approved energy sources, such as coal plants that use carbon capture and storage technology (US Department of Energy, 2013 June 6). Up to 10 per cent of a utility's RE requirement can be met with one or a combination of these two credits (DSIRE, 2015 November 19).

Perhaps one of the more interesting applications of the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) is to grow Michigan jobs. The act provides 10 percent or 0.1 MW of one bonus credit for: 1) electricity

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<sup>15</sup> Any forms of coal and nuclear power are ineligible for Advanced Cleaner Energy Credits and Energy Optimization Credits under the CREE (Teurck, Bachman, and Head, 2012)

<sup>16</sup> A 2MW wind turbine generates electricity to power approximately 400 homes (Kenward, 2011 July 14).

producers using Michigan-manufactured equipment; and 2) RE firms that use in-state workers to build their facilities (Michigan Legislature, Public Act No. 295, 2008; see also Teurck, Bachman, and Head, 2012 September 24). In other words, companies that use Michigan workers and materials could earn credits toward meeting their renewable energy targets. Then in June 2013, the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled against Michigan's efforts to stimulate in-state renewable energy industry: "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 global trade regime has constrained nation-states like the US and Canada from taking measures to stimulate home-grown green jobs (such as the WTO ruling against Ontario's local content rule in the FIT), the US Court has made similar competition rulings against individual states like Michigan – serving to further stunt the Act's ability to stimulate renewable energy investment and jobs in the state. Thus, subnational jurisdictions may face barriers to exploring alternatives to neoliberalism not only because of trade agreements signed by their nation states, but also by restrictions applied within, and by the nation-state itself.

In November 2012, Proposition 3 was put on the ballot. Proposition 3 called for an amendment to Michigan's constitution requiring that the state source 25 percent of its energy from renewable resources by 2025. Opposition was led by Clean Affordable and Renewable Energy (CARE), a consortium of utilities companies, the chamber of commerce, trade groups, some unions, and political leaders that raised some \$24.3 million to fight the legislation on the grounds that it would increase electricity bills (Anders, 2012 November 6). Groups in favour of the 25 by 2025 amendment, which included the group Michigan Energy Michigan Jobs, renewable energy companies, the UAW, and environmental organizations and former Michigan Governor William Milliken –raised just \$13.6 million to promote the amendment (ibid). Despite the fact that the

amendment capped rate increases at 1 percent per year to meet the costs (ibid), the initiative was defeated with full support of Governor Rick Snyder (ibid, see also Abbey-Lambertz, 2012 November 7).

Granholtz also expanded Michigan's Renaissance Zones Act, 1996 by adding 15-'Renewable Energy Renaissance Zone' (RERZ) designations in 2006. Renewable energy industries that set up in any of these 15 zones receive a 15-year tax abatement scheme, including state business tax, education tax, personal and property tax, and local income tax, which would be reduced by 25 percent each year over the last three years of the abatement term (US Department of Energy, 2013 June 6). Qualifying firms included manufacturers, and research and development groups that produce systems or components of systems used to create energy or fuel, that also have a plan to create local jobs (ibid). For Granholtz, tax incentives and abatements were a necessary component for growing a green economy in Michigan: "I think she felt very strongly that that [tax credits and abatements] was a mechanism to draw business here to develop that economy. I think she felt strongly that we needed to create incentives to build that industry here" (former Democrat legislator, May 2014). But tax abatement policies – sometimes referred to as 'corporate welfare' – eliminate state revenue that would otherwise have been collected from new and expanding businesses; thus Governor Granholtz placed greater burden on individuals for tax revenue, which would presumably be compensated by thousands of good, green jobs. Indeed, Michigan provided more corporate subsidies between 1999 and 2010 than any state in the rustbelt: 30 cents of every public dollar in Michigan has been provided not only to the Big Three automakers, but also other major corporations like LGChem, Dow Chemical, and General Electric (Story, Fehr, and Watkins, 2012 December 1).

Governor Snyder eliminated most tax abatement and tax credit programs, including those for the RERZs, claiming that his government would not pick winners and losers with state funds (Pruss, 2011 January 14). Snyder has argued that reducing corporate taxes and tax credits gives businesses

the capital to invest and expand, which leads to demand for, and creation of, more local jobs.

However, Snyder's government still spends at least \$6.6 billion on corporate incentive programs, including \$1.02 billion on ad valorem tax abatement for industrial/commercial properties, and \$56.5 million in tax credits for Michigan Advanced Battery Credits to stimulate the electric and hydrogen cell auto industry (Story, Fehr, and Watkins, 2012 December 1); thus, there is some willingness on Snyder's part to continue Granholm's support for green industries, if doing so will stimulate economic growth in Michigan. Arguments made by Snyder in favour of corporate incentives are explored in Chapter 6.

### ***Ontario's Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009***

The Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009 (GEEA) was the first legislation of its kind in North America. Its main goal was to diversify the economy and create jobs. The GEEA is a parcel of new and amended policies, including the Clean Water Act, 2006 and the Environmental Protection Act (Government of Ontario, 2009 May 14). The heart of the act is in the Green Energy Act (GEA), 2009, which includes the feed-in-tariff (FIT) program. To stimulate investment and jobs in RE technology, research, and manufacturing in Ontario, the FIT provides premium rates paid per kilowatt hour for electricity produced using renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, biogas, biofuel, geothermal, tidal, and water<sup>17</sup> (ibid). The GEA also includes a MicroFIT program for electricity under 10 kilowatts (KWh), such as solar panels on homes and small businesses. To further stimulate demand, the Ontario government set provincial GHG reduction targets at six percent below 1990 levels by 2014, and 15 percent by 2020. 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).

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<sup>17</sup> For example, as of 2013, solar rooftop mount is 54.9 cents for  $\leq 10$  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)

The idea for the Green Energy Act did not originate with the Ontario government. A group of NGOs united under the ‘Green Energy Act Alliance’ drafted the legislation long before 2009. According to George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure in the McGuinty government and arguably the political champion of the GEA, there were specific conditions that led to the legislation’s adoption. First, is what Smitherman calls a ‘domino decision point’: Dalton McGuinty’s commitment to close all coal-fired plants in Ontario. By ending Ontario’s reliance on coal for energy, McGuinty had to find energy alternatives. Renewable energy, as well as the continued use of nuclear power was to be included in the supply mix. For many environmental organizations including Greenpeace and Sierra Club, nuclear power is unsustainable, since the entire nuclear life cycle (uranium mining, production, plant building, and decommission) not only contributes to GHG emissions, and expelled nuclear fuel cells are radioactive for tens of thousands of years. From an economic standpoint, nuclear is unsustainable as well: the operating costs of Ontario’s nuclear plants are as much as four times the market price for electricity<sup>18</sup> (Clean Air Alliance, 2012). Second, Smitherman inherited momentum from his predecessors Dwight Duncan and Donna Cansfield, who had introduced competitive pricing for renewable energy through the Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program (RESOP). The second condition, Smitherman maintains, was the 2008 global financial crisis and “the unfettered collapse of the North American auto industry, which for Ontario was obviously seismic” (Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014). Following loss of manufacturing plants and jobs, Ontario was looking to fill gaps in manufacturing and create jobs. Being a frontrunner in renewable energy technology and services was viewed as one way to make that happen.

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<sup>18</sup> The Pickering A Nuclear Plant is 8.53 cents/kW compared with an average market price of 2.03cents/KW (Clean Energy Alliance, 2012)

But unlike in the Ministry of Health where expenditures (for example, hospitals and clinics) are funded by government budgets, energy programs like the FIT are funded by the *rate base*. In other words, the FIT is funded by the rate payers – Ontario consumers of energy – not government fiscal coffers. This important detail of funding may have made GEA legislation a relatively easy choice for the Liberals –despite the politically controversial nature of increasing consumer electricity costs – compared to a FIT program funded through provincial budget: “For the most part, these (green energy) policies were big and they were impactful and they were political and they were important, but they were without a fiscal implication on the government’s books” (Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014). In other words, Ontario’s green energy policies remained consistent with neoliberal fiscal priorities.

Critics of Ontario’s GEA have argued that the energy sector – and renewable energy in particular – would be better served by opening it up to even greater competition. For example, as solar energy costs have been dropping significantly over the last five years, solar power has become more cost competitive with other forms of energy including natural gas. This view, however, presumes that the use of renewable energy should be driven by the profit motive, rather than the ‘climate motive’ – getting GHGs under control is necessary for both environmental and economic sustainability. But from the perspective of the former Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, the FIT is itself a free market mechanism:

“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 NDP 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...If someone is building a wind project or solar project and it comes in over budget, they bear the responsibility for that, not the government. There’s no provision for them to appeal for a cost overrun...even if it was a not-for-profit or a co-op project the proprietor bears the risk. So I think that’s an intensely entrepreneurial product” (Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014).

Smitherman's logic behind the FIT's design seems characteristic of the Liberal Party's preference for privatization and competition since the 1990s (see Kozolanka 2014b; Fanelli and Thomas, 2011). Indeed, market incentives have become an integral part in neoliberal policy prescriptions, though it seems more likely to come from those political elites who identify with centre left ideology (see Albo, 2001). If the hallmarks of neoliberalism are individualized economic risk (see Fanelli and Thomas, 2011), privatization, and regulatory conditions that advance the interests of capital, then the GEA could be described as a product of green neoliberal thinking. Indeed, rather than mandate that renewable energy made in Ontario for Ontarians be produced by a crown corporation (in this case, Ontario Power Generation) the McGuinty Liberals gave private companies generous public incentives (specifically, the feed-in-tariff) to make profits in renewable energy. Thus, it should hardly be surprising that companies followed the money to Ontario.

But as Smitherman explains, the promise of jobs and growth for Ontario was as much a driver, if not more, behind the GEA than the sustainability of green energy: "We didn't do it for the goodness of sustainability where we say 'let's buy a bunch of solar panels and wind turbines from anywhere but here. Screw that. That dog wasn't gonna hunt. So that's why we had a policy that we said we will lead and we will benefit from that leadership. And I think over time we will'" (Smitherman interview, September 4, 2014). Thus, the Liberals included a local content requirement, whereby as much as 60 percent of equipment, materials, and/or labour for solar projects and 50 per cent for on-shore wind projects had to be sourced from Ontario in order to qualify for premium electricity payments (Canadian Press, 2013 May 29; Ontario Power Authority, n.d.). In this way, the FIT could also be characterized as a product of Green New Deal thinking. Indeed, "the FIT has been credited as a critical part of Ontario's job creation strategy" (Green Energy Act Alliance and Shine Ontario, 2011, 6). By the end of 2011, some 20,000 Ontario jobs had been created in the RE industry (Government

of Ontario, 2011 July 25) and, it was projected that 49,267 jobs would be created by the RE sector in Ontario by 2018 (Green Energy Act Alliance and Shine Ontario, 2011, 9; see also Blue Green Canada, 2012). Moreover, most of Ontario's green jobs are relatively well paid – over \$20 per hour (Pollin and Garrett-Peltier, n.d.). It is this part of the GEA that is characteristic of Green New Dealism.

The local content requirement did not specify the type of work that could be counted for FIT eligibility. Instead, companies could count 'soft service' jobs, such as accountants, lawyers, and advertisers toward the local content requirement (Smitherman, September 4, 2014). Moreover, when Japan and the European Union 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). Perhaps worse, the Appellant Body ruled in the appeal that because the LCR applied to the production of electricity generation equipment, and because this equipment was not in competition with the electricity it produced, the equipment could not be considered a "law, regulation, or requirements governing the procurement by governmental agencies" (ibid, p. 23) protected under the GATT III:8(a) procurement exclusion provision. Thus "in a clear instance of ignoring the forest through the trees, the Appellate Body painstakingly parsed each term of the exclusion, considerably narrowing the protective scope and thereby frustrating the clear sense of the provision as a whole. In Ontario, the distressing result is that the ruling further



undermined support for one of the most innovative green energy policies in North America during a period of rapidly rising GHG emissions and dangerous global climate change” (p. 23).

Ontario conceded and the local content requirement was eliminated from future FIT contracts in July 2014 (ibid, p. 26). The impact of the global trading system on the FIT demonstrates the constraints on government in taking steps to encourage green investment and green jobs through local content provisions. Even when the Ontario Liberals implemented policies resembling Green New Dealism— a provision the McGuinty government deemed was necessary in order to ask ratepayers to rely more on renewable energy and pay more for their electricity – the World Trade Organization had the power to force Ontario to remove the LCR, an integral component for job creation, from the FIT. However, it was possible for Ontario to circumvent the WTO and the GATT in the FIT and/or future renewable energy programs. Sinclair and Trew (2015) point out that had Ontario used more traditional procurement methods it would have circumvented a trade case against the local content requirement. For example, rather than compensate private companies with generous feed-in-tariff payments for using Ontario materials and workers to build generation equipment, the government could have applied the LCR to the procurement of generation equipment specifically for a government entity like Hydro One (p. 27). Another alternative would have the Ontario government mandate the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) to supply more renewable energy and apply an LCR in the production of electricity: “This return to a more traditional, public sector energy procurement model would also be fully consistent with Canada’s and Ontario’s current obligations under the WTO’s Agreement on Government Procurement” (ibid).

Perhaps most telling about these alternatives is the fact that although the inclusion of a local content requirement is indeed characteristic of Green New Dealism, the FIT relied on the private sector, rather than the public sector to build generation equipment, which opened the legislation up to trade

disputes and led to the removal of the LCR. The FIT's design was thus a choice ultimately made by the Liberals. By applying ideas consistent with neoliberalism to build their green energy program, the Ontario Liberals opened the LCR to defeat by the neoliberal trade regime, because the LCR failed to comply with the rules of the game. Had the Liberals used a traditional procurement model characteristic of a Green New Deal approach, they would likely have won their trade case or avoided the WTO altogether.

Furthermore, Ontario's renewable energy industry has been challenged under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In February 2011, Premier McGuinty cancelled offshore wind eligibility for FIT payments, and put a two-year moratorium on any offshore (Great Lakes) wind energy development in Ontario. McGuinty maintained the moratorium was imposed to allow for more environmental impact studies; however, both critics and insiders argued that it was a political move to placate a growing number of anti-wind protesters, just eight months out from another election (Canadian Press, 2011 February 11; also blue-green representative interview, 2013, July 16). The premier's action provoked a \$475 million NAFTA Chapter 11 lawsuit against Canada (see *Windstream Energy LLC vs. Government of Canada*, 2012 October 17) while putting 1900 promised jobs in Hamilton on hold (MacLeod, 2012 January 18.). And in April 2013, Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli announced that offshore wind would continue to be off limits in Ontario for an undisclosed period of time (Reeves, 2013 April 20). As one commentator explains:

"Two years ago Ontario was in a position to lead the world on freshwater offshore wind development. Today, the government is being sued for billions of dollars for turning its back on this potential" (Hamilton, 2013, March 9). As a result, Ontario lost opportunities for partnering with companies like Siemens "when it turned its back on wind" (Hamilton, 2013 March 9; blue-green representative interview, 2013, July 16).

McGuinty's moratorium on offshore wind development put Canadians on the hook under investor-state arbitration law in the NAFTA, and eliminated the potential for 1,900 jobs in Hamilton (MacLeod, 2012 January 18).

According to Smitherman, this was not the first time the McGuinty government had fallen short with its green jobs numbers. As he explained, the original job numbers for the GEA included plans for extending high voltage transmission lines into Northern Ontario. But after the plans were scrapped – and after northern communities like Sault Ste. Marie had already invested in opportunities for selling renewable energy transmission – the official job numbers announced by the provincial government (30,000) remained unchanged. And then in 2010, Ontario committed to a \$9 billion deal with Samsung Renewable Energy to build four manufacturing plants and produce 2000 MW of wind, and 500 MW of solar energy, receiving premium rates for 20 years under the FIT. In return, the company promised some 16,000 jobs by 2015 (Brady, 2011 September 1). The deal was widely criticized by the opposition for favouring a single, multinational company over several, smaller RE manufacturers (Canadian Press, 2011 September 8). But in June 2013 the Ontario Government slashed a portion of the green energy deal with Samsung. Under the new agreement, the province would purchase \$6 billion in electricity from Samsung wind farms, down by \$3.7 billion to ‘bend the cost curve for ratepayers’, according to Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli (Leslie, 2013 June 20). In response, Samsung adjusted its investment in green energy component plants down from \$7 billion to \$5 billion, effectively reducing direct and indirect jobs from 16,000 to 9,000 (ibid). Of those 9,000 jobs, just 900 full time manufacturing jobs will be preserved, guaranteed only until 2016 (Leslie, 2013 June 20; Morrow, 2013 June 20)<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> In July 2012, ‘FIT 2.0’ version was launched as a policy response to the various challenges and criticisms of the original FIT program. In a move away from large electricity contracts by multinational firms, the FIT shifted its priorities to: 1) applicants with 50 percent interest from community-based, First Nations-based, projects, or projects of public institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and universities; 2) projects that emphasize community participation in the FIT process and project management (Ontario Power Authority, n.d.).

## **Environmental and Climate Policies**

Climate policies typically include setting emissions reduction targets and implementing measures to reduce GHG emissions. These measures can include market-oriented mechanisms like cap and trade programs; regulatory policies like carbon taxes; and GHG absorption policies, such as expanding greenbelts as carbon sinks. Often, climate policy is categorized by government as that which mitigates, or helps society adapt to, climate change. However, viewing climate policy from this perspective fails to recognize the value of climate policy beyond reduction of, or resilience to, greenhouse gas emissions: carbon taxes can be used for wealth re-distribution in the form of tax credits<sup>20</sup>, or it can be applied directly by government to fund social programs like unemployment insurance, social assistance, education, and healthcare. Environmental policies encompass a wide range of issues, including the protection of plant and animal biodiversity and habitat; the clean-up of toxins; the expansion of natural spaces; and environmental safety of public services including waste and water use.

## ***Michigan***

Governor Granholm was cautious when initiating policies with implications for climate change, given the political and economic climate in Michigan at the time. However, according to one source who worked closely with her in government, Granholm saw the Clean Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act not only as an economic and job growth opportunity but also as a means to reduce GHGs and climate change (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014). For Granholm, the CREE was a means to a diversified and competitive economy that would increase private investment and local jobs, which was a priority among legislators and Michiganders before and following the global financial crisis. That the CREE could also help reduce Michigan's overall output

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<sup>20</sup> The BC Low Income Climate Action Tax Credit is paid to taxpayers four times per year and is adjusted by 2 percent based on size of family and family net income; the maximum amount for July 2015-June 2016 is \$115.50 per adult, and \$34.50 per child in a family of three or more (Government of British Columbia, n.d.).

of greenhouse gasses was genuinely important to Granholm, even if climate change action did not factor into the ‘to-do’ list of many senators and representatives in the Michigan legislature. In 2007, she established the Climate Action Council, which released its Climate Action Plan for the state in 2009. Furthermore, in an effort to reduce Michigan’s GHGs by 45 percent in 12 years, Granholm announced new requirements in 2009 for new and expanded coal plant developers to consider cleaner energy alternatives by seeking a strict application of SC165 of the US Clean Air Act. That same year, Granholm ordered Executive Directive 2007-23 – “Promoting Environmental Justice” to identify and redesign public policies that discriminate against marginalized populations in ways that impact their health and environmental conditions (Government of Michigan, 2007). Moreover, while most of her actions to reduce GHGs and create jobs were targeted at her state, Granholm also supported, and continues to this day to advocate for the adoption of a national clean energy policy (similar to that of China) to make the United States a global leader in renewable energy technology and manufacturing.

Governor Snyder’s record on the environment and climate change has been relatively weak when compared to his predecessor but strong compared with other Republican governors. One ENGO representative contextualized Snyder’s environmental record this way:

“In other states, just south of here, [like] Indiana we’ve seen efforts to repeal clean energy legislation by Republican governors. We haven’t seen a malicious attack on clean energy from [Snyder] at all. And that’s where it’s all a matter of relativity. He could easily be dubbed the strongest environmental governor in the state or country. That doesn’t mean he’s strong on environmental issues. It’s a pretty weak pool to compare to” (ENGO representative interview, May 2014).

While the Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV) endorsed Snyder in the Republican primaries in 2010, they gave him an overall grade of ‘C’<sup>21</sup> after measuring policy actions in his first two years in office including land conservation, clean air and energy, budget, transportation, Great Lakes, and toxic and hazardous chemicals (see Michigan League of Conservation Voters, 2013). For the 2014 Michigan gubernatorial race, the non-partisan MLCV shifted its support from Snyder to Democratic challenger Mark Shauer. Furthermore, the Sierra Club’s scorecard gave Snyder “a failing grade on energy, environment (and) good government policies” (Sierra Club-Michigan Chapter, n.d.2). Of 44 ‘key decisions’ made by Snyder regarding the environment, the governor “signed 19 bills into law that were direct attack on environmental protections. He signed nine bills designed to protect the environment and vetoed one bill attacking environmental protections” (ibid). The latter, House Bill 4326, or the ‘No Stricter Than Federal’ bill was voted down in the legislature; however, Snyder vetoed the results to ensure that Michigan could indeed enforce protections on the environment (in particular, the Great Lakes) that exceeded federal regulations.

Moreover, Proposal 3 was defeated with heavy support from Snyder and lobbying by Consumers Energy and Detroit Edison. However, because Proposal 3 called for an amendment to the Michigan Constitution, it may have been less popular with voters across the political spectrum than had it been a regular bill. Given that constitutional amendments at the state level have proven difficult to undo<sup>22</sup>, it is not wholly surprising that voters were reluctant to accept the change.

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<sup>21</sup> The MLCV did not produce a scorecard for Governor Granholm

<sup>22</sup> In California in 1978, a constitutional amendment by referendum was passed that assessed property values at 1975 value and capped annual tax increases thereafter at 2 percent. This has contributed to an ongoing revenue crisis for state services and programs.

### *Ontario*

Several large pieces of legislation with implications for the environment were passed by the McGuinty government. First was the Greenbelt Act, 2005, which designated one of the largest expanses of urban greenbelt in the world. Ontario's greenbelt helps limit urban sprawl, acts as a natural carbon sink, and is an area for small-scale farming to provide local food. Ontario had also regularly drafted climate change mitigation and adaptation plans for the province to reduce GHGs, including plans for energy efficiency and public transit. These plans were backed up with strong funding commitments for key sectors, including \$11.5 billion for rapid transit in the GTA and Hamilton; \$200 million in loans and \$20 million in grants over three years for municipalities to reduce GHGs (2007) in addition to funds committed for renewable energy sector and job growth (Pembina Institute, 2009 January). In 2012, the David Suzuki Foundation gave Ontario a good grade for its climate change action plans and initiatives relative to other provinces, all of which they saw as evidence of their good, green record (David Suzuki Foundation, 2012 March).

However, the McGuinty government has made its share of poor decisions when it comes to the environment and natural resources. In 2011, the Ontario government made significant changes to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) 2007, which exempts various industrial practices, including logging in caribou habitat (Greenpeace, 2011 June, 2). Furthermore, the McGuinty government consistently failed to provide First Nations' 'free, prior and informed consent' on projects impacting First Nations' lands in the Boreal Forest, nor did it provide adequate solutions to job losses and mill closures by a declining forestry sector (ibid).

Premier Kathleen Wynne introduced the Local Food Act, 2013 aimed at stimulating increased local food production and jobs in the agricultural sector. However, changes weakening the ESA appear to be on the agenda under Wynne as well.

Analysis of public policy and interviews conducted in Ontario and Michigan suggests that legislation protecting the natural environment may depend on the degree of its economic impacts. For example, if there is minimal impact on economic goals like private sector investment, then environmental regulation may be more likely to pass in the legislature. If, however policy conflicts with economic actors – such as the logging industry – then environmental legislation may be weakened or not advanced at all. This means that environmental legislation in Ontario and Michigan may too be subject to the logic of green neoliberalism.

### **Other Types of Policies: Labour, Economic, and Social Policies**

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, there were a range of additional policies examined in this study. In Chapter 3, we saw that a green economy that follows principles of sustainable development would require changes to many different policies that together can achieve greater economic stability, social inclusion, and environmental resilience. We consider here some of the most prevalent policies introduced in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012 in five categories: economic, fiscal, social, and labour policies, and austerity measures. These policies, in addition to those examined in the sections above, were then categorized according to our green economy imaginaries typology. Policies were assigned to an imaginary based on their logic, goals, and means-goals (see chapter 3) as determined by the following factors: changes (increases or decreases) in spending; net impact on taxpayers/citizens/workers/families; and/or the climate/environment<sup>23</sup>; and resemblance to ‘classic’ characteristics of market capitalist policies, eg. deregulation and privatization in neoliberalism. The table identifies three imaginaries of market capitalism relevant to a green economy: neoliberalism (free from any green influence), green neoliberalism, and Green New Dealism. Our fourth category, Sustainable Development, is divided into its four pillars: economic,

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<sup>23</sup> As reported by non-governmental organizations (social and environment) and think tanks



environmental, social, and cultural (see Chapter 3, figure 2). This was done for analytical transparency, to show that every effort was made to find evidence of sustainability in the public policies reviewed in this study. Indeed, despite that all policies are, not surprisingly, defined by the capitalist economic model, a few policies had characteristics akin to one or two pillars of sustainable development. The results of the analysis are in the tables on the next page.

Table 1: Dalton McGuinty, leading policies with implications for a sustainable economy, 2007-2012

GOAL	MEANS-GOALS (POLICIES)	LOGIC	Market Capitalism Imaginaries			Sustainable Development <sup>24</sup>			
			Neo Liberalism	Green Neoliberalism	Green New Dealism	EC	EN	S	C
Develop a green economy in Ontario	Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009; Feed-in-tariff program	Creating incentives like FIT will increase investment, which will increase jobs (emphasized consumption rather than conservation)		X	X	Y	Y	N	N
Develop a blue economy in Ontario	Water Opportunities Act, 2010	Demand for water will increase demand for water technology; Ontario has supply		X		Y	Y	N	N
Mitigate Climate Change	Shut down all coal plants in Ontario	Coal is leading source of GHGs which is \$\$ cost for environment and healthcare			X	Y	Y	N	N
Save Ontario's auto sector	\$13.7 billion in bailout provided for GM and Chrysler by province and feds	Automakers are too big to fail; protect worker jobs	X			N	N	N	N
Increase private sector investment across sectors	Open for Business Act, 2012	Reducing regulatory barriers makes Ontario competitive for investment	X			N	N	N	N
	Deregulatory changes to Endangered Species Act; caribou habitat	Regulation hurts Ontario's logging industry	X			N	N	N	N
	\$750 million over four years in new business tax relief	Cuts to corporate tax rate attracts new investment	X			N	N	N	N
	Austerity measures including cuts to programs and public service (in part recommended by Drummond Report)	Deficit reduction increases provincial credit rating; social spending cuts necessary with less tax revenue	X			N	N	N	N
	30% of university tuition; second career	Education increases attractiveness of workforce			X	N	N	Y	N
Protect Natural Environment	Toxic Reductions Act, 2009	Reduce pollution/use of chemical substances; public funding provided to assist industry transition to greener substances		X		N	Y	N	N
	Great Lakes Protection Act (introduced)	Great Lakes are source of water, tourism, health		X		Y	Y	N	N
Increase Energy Security	Refurbish Darlington Nuclear Plant	Nuclear is a 'clean' source of energy		X		N	N	N	N
Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change	Annual Climate Change Reports; set GHG levels	Climate change will impact a range of activities in social life		X		N	Y	Y	N

<sup>24</sup> EC=economic; EN=environmental; S=social; C=cultural

Table 2: Jennifer Granholm, leading policies with implications for a sustainable economy, 2007-2010

GOAL	MEANS-GOALS (POLICIES)	LOGIC	Green Market Capitalism Imaginaries				Sustainable Development			
			Neo Liberalism	Green Neoliberalism	GND		EC	EN	S	C
Diversify Michigan's Economy by growing a green economy	Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act, 2007	10% RPS increases demand for renewable energy that can create jobs; emphasized public private partnerships		X			Y	Y	N	N
	Accepted \$15B in ARRA funds from federal government in part for green jobs initiatives	Obama made green economy and jobs a presidential priority; states can grow green economies			X		Y	Y	N	N
	Free land through Michigan Land Banks	Incentive creates 20 green jobs for every free piece of land		X			N	N	N	N
	Michigan Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones	Providing tax abatements for 15 years encourages RE industries to set up in designated zones with poor investment potential		X			Y	N	N	N
	\$330M in tax credits for advanced battery manufacturing	Increasing supply chain for e-car industry increases jobs		X			Y	N	N	N
	\$1.5 billion for Green Sectors Skills Alliance	Public-private partnership for growth in green jobs sectors		X			N	N	N	N
Mitigate Climate Change	Tighter regulations for new coal plants	Coal is a leading producer of GHG emissions			X		Y	Y	N	N
Increase Individual Prosperity	Increases minimum wage from \$5.15 in 2006 to \$7.40 by 2008	People need wages that keep up with inflation			X		Y	N	Y	N
Save Michigan's Auto Sector	Supported Bush and Obama auto industry bailouts; asked Obama for more bailout funds	Auto companies are too big to fail; auto jobs are too important to Michigan to lose			X		N	N	N	N
Maintain tax revenue	Eliminated SBT; replaced it with MBT	Simplify corporate taxation but continue providing govt revenue	X				N	N	N	N
Increase Private Sector Investment	Cut 99 corporate taxes over her tenure	Cutting corporate taxes increases Michigan's competitiveness	X				N	N	N	N
Meet balanced budget provision in Michigan State Constitution	Austerity measures, including cuts to education	Cuts to spending are better than increases in tax revenue; businesses need the extra money to re-invest in jobs	X				N	N	N	N
Protect vulnerable citizens from environmental degradation	Executive Order 2007-23 'Promoting Environmental Justice'	Government must prevent the trend that racialized minorities are more susceptible to environmental injustice			X		Y	Y	Y	Y
Cut social spending	Eliminated 11,000 public sector jobs	Government can still operate efficiently	X				N	N	N	N
Increase Energy Security	Clean, Renewable, and Efficient Energy Act, 2007	Renewables increase energy security in sustainable way		X			Y	Y	N	N

Table 3: Rick Snyder, leading policies with implications for a sustainable economy, 2011-2013<sup>25</sup>

GOAL	MEANS-GOALS (POLICIES)	LOGIC	Green Market Capitalism Imaginaries				Sustainable Development			
			Neo Liberalism	Green Neoliberalism	GND		EC	EN	S	C
Increase private investment and competitiveness	Cut 1,200 net regulations	Regulations are a barrier to investment	X				N	N	N	N
	eliminated the MBT; replaced with 6% flat tax that reduced corporate tax by \$1.6 billion; led to \$220 million net shortfall (difference made up by increasing personal income taxes)	Tax cuts make Michigan competitive for investment	X				N	N	N	N
	Right-to-Work legislation	Workers should not be 'forced' to be part of unions	X				N	N	N	N
	Supported the defeat of Proposal 3, the 20 percent RPS by 2025 <sup>26</sup>	The use of renewable energy should not be made a constitutional requirement	X				N	N	N	N
	\$56.5 million in tax credits for Michigan Advanced Battery Credits	Stimulate electric and hydrogen cell industry		X			Y	N	N	N
	P3s for entrepreneurship/start-ups; micro loans with Huntington Bank (2014); P3 with Goldman Sachs	Public-private partnerships offload costs and responsibility onto the private sector; private sector more efficient than public	X				N	N	N	N
Increase Opportunities for Individual Prosperity	Reduce social assistance; tie social assistance to job search skills training (PATH)	Hard working Michiganders want a hand up, not a hand out	X				N	N	N	N
Cut public spending	Allows Chapter 11 bankruptcy of Detroit (under appointment of EM Kevvyn Orr)	Cities in debt must restructure; elected officials may not be in position to do that	X				N	N	N	N
Protect the Natural Environment	Vetoes No Stricter than Federal regulation rule Great Lakes	The Great Lakes are a source of investment, tourism, water, and identity for Michiganders			X		Y	Y	N	N
Increase Energy Security	Supports oil sequestration and fracking	Michigan has been fracking responsibly for years		X			N	N	N	N

<sup>25</sup> Some policies initiated under Governor Snyder in 2013 were included to provide a better indication of his policy patterns, comparable to that for Governor Granholm (2007-2010)

<sup>26</sup> In 2015, Governor Snyder suggested that he would support an up to 24 percent RPS for utilities by 2025; however, no official decisions had been made at the time of writing (see Greene, 2015 March 13)

## **How Green Are Their Economies? Neoliberalism, Green Neoliberalism, Green New Deal, and Holistic Sustainable Development**

In this chapter, we analyzed a range of public policies against our green economy typologies to examine the research question: To what degree can policies in Ontario and Michigan be classified as ‘sustainable’? The tables make a good case that, although some public policies in Ontario and Michigan have the potential to contribute to greater sustainability, the majority are characteristic of green market capitalist imaginaries, in particular neoliberalism and green neoliberalism. Governor Granholm and Premier McGuinty were under the influence of green neoliberal thinking, and to a lesser degree, Green New Deal thinking as they planned their green economies. However, Dalton McGuinty (and his successor, Kathleen Wynne) implemented more aggressive policies than Granholm. This difference may be attributed to the institutional power he had as a premier in a majority government, compared with Governor Granholm who was subject to a divided legislature and limited by the separation of powers inherent to a US presidential-style system. Even so, a set of policies that nominally create investment and/or jobs in green industries should not have the ideological power to green-wash the larger set of policies that cut spending to healthcare, education, and social assistance, while cutting billions in corporate taxes. Governor Snyder, on the other hand, was influenced by neoliberal logic sans green suggesting that a green, sustainable economy was not on his radar as a solution to job losses, let alone climate change, in Michigan. Given that the policy agenda for all three leaders was defined by economic growth, deregulation, privatization, and austerity, the green economy in these two jurisdictions are socially, ecologically, and economically unsustainable.

But as the next chapter will illustrate, that kind of green-washing is exactly what can be found in the words and phrases of political leaders in Michigan and Ontario. Thus, we can begin to answer another research question: Does the policy rhetoric match the policy reality?

## Chapter 5: The Meaning of Words in Political Discourse

The policy review conducted in Chapter 4 provided a high degree of certainty that the green economy in Michigan and Ontario is being constructed using neoliberal principles, is minimally concerned with environmental, social and/or cultural sustainability, and is therefore only ‘light green’ (see Jonas and While, 2007, 130). In this chapter, we begin our examination of the policy rhetoric used by political elites to naturalize and make sensible the neoliberal approach to green economy.

Before conducting an analysis of argument in political speeches (in chapters 6 and 7), it is necessary to conduct a semiotic analysis of individual words and phrases. Words and phrases are powerful tools in political speeches. Each word or phrase can have different meaning depending on who is using the term, who is hearing it, and/or who is reading it. For example, the word ‘climate’ typically referred to climate change in Ontario Throne and budget speeches; in Michigan State of the State speeches ‘climate’ almost never referred to climate change, but instead to conditions for business investment. Semiotics maintains that words themselves are not things, but signs or symbols that can represent things (Littlejohn and Foss, 2005). Understanding what individual words mean in a given context and by different policy leaders can therefore provide foundational knowledge for the analysis of specific policy arguments in regards to the imaginaries/solutions, circumstances, goals, means-goals , values, and alternatives.

Four word clusters associated with green economy discourse were examined:

**Environment Words:** green; renewable; conservation; climate; sustainability/sustainable

**Values Words:** fair; choice; value; common (sense); share; afford(able); vulnerable

**Economy/Fiscal Words:** competitive/competition; competitiveness; growth; cuts; diversify; reinvent; regulatory; customer; investment; transition; tax;

**Work Words:** unemployment/employment; job; work; union; industry

While there were words that had higher frequency in the content analysis (see table 4 at the end of this chapter) than many of those in the word clusters, words that were repeatedly used by at least two political leaders were included in the semiotic analysis (see Table 5).

It is important to note that not every word in a word cluster contains the same amount of information, nor does it examine the use of words for all three politicians. Indeed, sometimes the one term like ‘green jobs’ is repeatedly used by one leader, and not at all by another. Indeed, the absence, or limited use of a word can be meaningful as well. Thus, the goals of the analysis in this chapter were to identify patterns in, and compare meanings of words used by Governor Granholm, Governor Snyder, and Premier McGuinty, in order to inform our analysis of argumentative claims. The results help inform the critical discourse analysis of policy arguments in the two chapters that follow.

## **ENVIRONMENT Words**

### *The Meanings of “Green”*

“Green” did not make the top 50 word frequency list of all political speeches analyzed for this study (see table 6). Neither did “environment”, “alternative”; “renewable”, “climate”, or “water”. This is interesting, given that “energy” was #36. This suggests that despite the seriousness of climate change, the political leaders examined in this thesis have downgraded climate change in the discourse. They have done this by excluding environmental words from their speeches, and/or limiting the use of environmental words to refer almost exclusively to jobs, investment, and economic growth. In this thesis, environmental words are often used in ways that naturalize neoliberal discourse.

The word green was used largely in relation to concepts of green growth, including “green technology”, “green jobs”, “green energy”, “green spaces”, “green economy”, “green society”, “Green Energy and Green Economy Act”, “green-collar jobs”; “green revolution”, “green workforce”, and “green infrastructure”. Though it was expected that “green” would be more

frequent in 2007-2008 just before the significant impacts of the global financial crisis were felt widely, the prevalence of ‘green’ did not change significantly after the GFC. Most references to “green jobs” were in relation to the private sector, which included the energy sector (renewables and efficiency), as well as the auto, water, and technology industries. In other words, green was not used in regards to public sector jobs in conservation and environmental regulation. Further, “green jobs” typically referred to medium-, to high-skilled work in manufacturing and technology innovation, not labour intensive or blue-collar jobs. In total, the word “green” was used just 33 times in all 35 speeches analyzed in this study. This suggests that policymakers expected that voters’ priorities were on job creation of any kind, and not necessarily green jobs, following the global financial crisis. On the other hand, the limited use of the word “green” suggests policymakers may indeed have a narrow imagining of the green economy as a response only to climate change and/or jobs – and not a set of policy solutions to problems like social inequality and environmental injustice.

The word “green” was used twice as often by the McGuinty government than Governor Granholm. While both Granholm and McGuinty referenced “green jobs”, technology, industries, and energy, only McGuinty referred to a ‘green society’, suggesting he was both willing and able to construct an imaginary for sustainable development. For McGuinty, green was therefore used to signify not only economic and environmental well-being, but also social well-being. However, given that his policies largely fit the green neoliberal imaginary, McGuinty appears to have used “green society” in the discourse as a means to increasing political support and in ways that help naturalize green neoliberalism.

Granholm used the phrase from “the rustbelt to the greenbelt” to support her preferred image of the Michigan economy as one in transition from traditional manufacturing to green manufacturing. ‘Green’, however, was a less useful word for her in part because of opposition party backlash;



indeed, in interviews with Michigan legislators, we found varying degrees of willingness among Democrats to engage Republicans in discussions of climate change. Climate change is a divisive political issue in Michigan; this is less the case in Ontario. Thus the negative reaction to climate change discussion by some Michigan Republicans appears to condition the behaviour of some Democrats, but not the other way around. This is not to say Granholm never used the word ‘green’; she used the term “green jobs” in her radio addresses. But she was careful to limit linking those jobs as means to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

During his first gubernatorial election campaign in 2010, Rick Snyder campaigned as a “good, green Republican” (Stanton, 2010 July 16), receiving endorsement from Republicans for Environmental Protection, and as the Republican candidate from the non-partisan Michigan League of Conservation Voters (MLCV interview, May 2014). Snyder had outlined a 10-point plan for Michigan, which included plans to protect Michigan’s environment and tackle invasive species in the Great Lakes (Stanton, 2010 July 16). As previously noted Republicans have a long history of conservationism, best exemplified by the creation of the national parks system under President Theodore Roosevelt (Republicans for Environmental Protection, n.d.) But despite his self-frame, Governor Snyder did not use the word “green” in any of his State of the State speeches. In his special Energy and Environment speech in December 2012 (“Ensuring our Future: Energy and Environment”), he referred only to green infrastructure and green spaces, and did not use green jobs, green economy, or green energy. Moreover, it appears as though Snyder had little use for “green” after winning the election and his policy record on the environment contributed to MLCV retracting their support for his second-term campaign in 2014 (MLCV interview, May 2014).

*The Meanings of “Renewable”*

The word “renewable” was less a semiotic challenge than “green”; in most cases, Granholm, Snyder, and McGuinty used “renewable” to refer to energy that is not a product of fossil fuels, does not produce significant GHG emissions, and is from a renewable power source like solar, wind, water, or biogas. Thus, the word “renewable” was used to refer to “renewable energy jobs” and “renewable energy”; in Michigan, perhaps because it is less politically sensitive than “green” among opponents. Governor Snyder was also more comfortable with the term “renewable” than “green”; his Energy and Environment speech considered “renewable energy” an important source for Michigan’s jobs and environment. The root word “renew” was used to indicate a period of revival and transition after the global financial crisis: for instance, the “ReNew Ontario Plan” (post-Throne speech 2010); and “renewing our schools” (State of the State, 2009). It suggests that policy will restore Ontario and Michigan to a time when the economy was stronger.

*The Meanings of “Conservation”*

The word ‘conservation’ was used differently between Michigan governors and Ontario premiers. In Ontario, conservation largely referred to *conserving* (using less of, saving) resources, such as energy and water, as well as creating a “culture of conservation”. But the word “conservation” has been increasingly tied to economic benefit; both energy and water conservation is part of Ontario’s strategy for expanding its manufacturing industries. Conservation in this sense fits with Green New Deal imaginaries, since expanding technology production – even if it is through conserving energy and water – is emphasized. Both Michigan governors largely used conservation in regards to spaces, such as conservation areas or water bodies, or in “conservancy” groups and organizations. There is no evidence of the use of ‘conservation’ in terms of saving energy or water. This suggests that they may not make an argumentative connection between conserving and economic benefits, but instead by producing something ‘green’, such as electric cars and renewable energy.

*The Meanings of “Climate”*

It was expected that this analysis would confirm that policies aimed at growing green sectors (such as energy or EVs) would also be regularly linked to “climate change” or “global warming” in the discourse, particularly if one of the leading reasons for greening the economy is to help fight GHGs. Therefore, if “climate change” or “global warming” is largely absent from the policy discourse it was likely left out intentionally. In Governor Granholm’s State of the State speeches, “climate change” is used only once. Its use is most telling about the governor’s positioning of the green economy:

“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.’ Because of the need to reduce global warming and end our dependence on expensive foreign oil, the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries will create millions of good paying jobs” (Granholm, State of the State Address, 2008).

Indeed, Granholm was careful to use “climate” largely in reference to economic rather than environmental conditions, and in ways that would resonate with out-of-work Michiganders. In the example above, the governor identified climate change as an opportunity, not a problem. Borick and Rabe (2010) argue that a person’s partisan beliefs (as well as personal experiences with weather change) are important indicators of whether someone believes the climate is warming: persons that identify themselves as a Republican are less likely to believe in climate change than persons who identify themselves as a Democrat. However, while Borick and Rabe argue that Republicans (including legislators) are more likely to be skeptical of anthropogenic climate change, they do not consider the role of a Democratic governor – who believes the climate is changing – in reinforcing that skepticism. By not using the terms “global warming” and “climate change” in any active sense (for example, as imperatives for policy), Granholm may have contributed to political and public malaise toward climate change policy in her state. In other words, by limiting the use of “climate change” to the topic of job creation, Granholm helped those persons suspicious of climate change continue to be dismissive of it.

But the word “climate” is not missing from Granholm’s speeches; indeed, she uses that word quite often. The semiotics of the meaning of the word “climate” however is quite different than its use in the term “climate change”. Climate, for Granholm, typically signifies conditions for investment, such as the “business climate”. She seeks to have a more “robust business climate”, a “stronger business climate”, and a “healthy business climate” that will encourage new investment in the Michigan economy. But policies that increase corporate subsidies and decrease corporate taxes and/or regulations suggests that for Granholm a healthy business climate requires the provision of financial incentives by the state.

Snyder typically avoids answering any direct questions about the causes of “climate change” (Pearson, 2014 January 14); indeed, in his 2012 Energy and Environment speech, he carefully states that: “People may not agree about why climate change is happening, but it is certainly affecting Michigan” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012). The next lines referencing “climate” in his speech emphasizes the economic benefit of climate change:

“Water is in demand by farmers for irrigation use, and by Michigan residents and businesses who want clean, safe water, 100 percent of the time. Climate change will make Michigan’s water resources all the more valuable – and we need to be ready” (Snyder State of the State 2012).

Similar to Granholm then, Snyder defines climate change as an opportunity on which Michigan can, and should, capitalize.

Dalton McGuinty also uses the word “climate” to signify the business environment, made more competitive through legislation like the Open Ontario Act, 2010. However, he has also used “climate change” to describe anthropogenic change to the earth’s climate, and the need for decisive action to slow GHG emissions. Climate change is referenced in speeches as well as in particular policy packages, such as the Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009, and Ontario’s climate action plans. But unlike Snyder, McGuinty defines climate change as both a threat to, and a result of

human beings. The McGuinty government maintained that when it announced the closure of coal-fired plants, it was specifically to fight “climate change”, which was popular among environmentalists but less so among coal plant workers (see Power Workers Union, 2013 November 18)<sup>27</sup>. For McGuinty, policy measures to mitigate ‘climate change’ were often framed as one of his triumphs.

### *The Meanings of “Sustainability”*

It might be expected that as climate change has increased, “sustainability” would be a common term in policy discourse. Indeed, Governor Snyder used variations of the word sustainability on two occasions; however, each instance was in reference to fiscal policy: “sustainable funding” (“Ensuring our Future” speech, 2012) and “unsustainable financial model” (State of the State, 2011). This indicates that Snyder is most concerned not with ecological sustainability, but with ‘sustainability’ of the economy, and did not link the two.

“Sustainability” was used just eight times by Granholm, but 43 times by McGuinty. For Granholm, sustainability typically signified persistent effort and/or results, either by the government or by the people of Michigan to create jobs in the state “because of our sustained efforts to keep and attract [new investment]” (Granholm State of the State Speech, 2006). She also used “sustainable” to link economic goals with environmental action: “[natural resources industries] depend wholly on a sustainable environment for their very existence” (State of the State, 2004). And she has used the word to mean stability and continuity: “a faster sustainable recovery in the housing market” (Budget Speech, 2010); “he has a sustainable future” (State of the State, 2010); and “Michigan has been unable to sustain consistent revenue growth” (Granholm Budget Address, 2010). Like Snyder,

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<sup>27</sup> The coal-fired plant in Lambton County was to be converted to biogas and create some 200 temporary jobs; however, it was determined in 2013 that the cost was too high to follow through on those plans. However, the Thunder Bay plant will begin converting to bio-gas in 2015, which will result in 3,500 jobs.

Granholm does not use “sustainability” to refer to ecological sustainability, but rather economic sustainability.

For McGuinty, “sustainability” is a trigger word in his speeches; he used it often to frame his policies, implemented and planned. He used “sustainable” to refer to environmental policies, and to link the environment to social goals: “a greener, more sustainable future” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2008). He also used the word to link the environment to economic goals: “a greener, more sustainable economy” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2008); “an economy even more competitive, innovative and sustainable” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2009); and a “planet that we know of that sustains life” (Speech from the Throne, 2007).

However, McGuinty also uses sustainability to indicate a necessity for change. This has referred to sub-urban growth: “stopping sprawl that cannot be sustained” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2004), but also to frame austerity measures as necessary: that public sector workers make concessions and “do their part to help sustain public services” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2010). So rather than sustainability representing a *change of the goal* – specifically, slower growth and social equality, and environmental justice – it is used to justify austerity measures as *the means* to avoiding what is implied could be potentially much worse: a full collapse of Ontario’s social services.

## VALUE Words

### *The Meanings of “Fair”*

“Fair” is a common word in political discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). It has often been used to signify equal opportunity to individual prosperity and social wealth, including education, healthcare, and unemployment insurance. In the neoliberal era, “fair” has also been used to indicate or criticize the impact of free trade agreements not only for nation states and corporations, but also workers and the poor. And in the age of austerity, “fair” has increasingly been used by policymakers to justify cuts to social services, and drive a wedge between private sector and public sector workers.

Granhholm used “fair” to justify austerity measures and concessions from public sector workers; however, she also used “fair” to demand increased access for working and middle class Michiganders to healthcare and education. Furthermore, Granhholm used “fair” to implicate free trade agreements for Michigan’s competitive disadvantage in the global market. For Governor Snyder, “fair” has been used to justify cuts to corporate taxes and regulations. He criticized “regulation that is unfairly complex”, calling instead for “regulatory fairness and simplicity”, and “well thought out regulations and taxes”. Fair, to Snyder, refers to both the ease and cost of doing business.

“Fair” is by far the most common values word in Premier McGuinty’s political speeches. He used “fair” to suggest that Ontarians must equally share the costs of austerity, including cuts to public services. To be sure, “fair share” did not mean *equal share*. McGuinty often used “fair” to encourage wider public support for cuts to public sector jobs, pay, and/or benefits. Moreover, for both Granhholm and McGuinty the word “fair” was used to demand greater transfers from the federal government: Granhholm called on fairness from Washington in the allocation of ARRA money and bailouts for the auto industry; McGuinty called on Ottawa to increase transfers to the Ontario to coincide with the province’s economic decline relative to other provinces.

The two governors both made claims that changes to taxation and/or regulation were “fair”.

Granhholm argued that “the tax changes I will propose are simple, fair and progressive” (State of the State, 2007), while Snyder asserted that “a good tax system has three basic elements: simple, fair, and efficient” (State of the State, 2012).

Obviously then, “fair” in the Michigan and Ontario political discourse does not mean equity. Indeed words related to the word “equality” were only used three times by Granhholm, and never by Snyder.

McGuinty used “equal” to imply an equally shared cost of healthcare expenses and benefits by Ontarians. More significantly however, McGuinty used “equal” to illustrate cause and effect of individual action: hard work equals good results. In this way, he individualizes success and failure – which is consistent with neoliberal ideology.

*The Meanings of ‘Choice’:*

“Choice” is used by policy elites to claim that there is no alternative to a particular policy direction – as in “there is no choice” – as well, as assert that a particular policy is the best choice among several. “Choice” can also be used to distinguish one’s policy from the policy or set of policies of opponents as the better solution particularly in regards to budgetary decisions (see Liberal Budget Speeches 2011, 2012).

In the neoliberal period, “choice” is often used to justify privatization. Governor Snyder uses the idea of ‘choice’ to frame charter schools as a good alternative to publicly-provided services; similarly, he used ‘choice’ to argue that private healthcare insurance, not Obamacare, is better for the people of Michigan. Furthermore, renewable energy is an important component in the energy mix to give Michiganders “electric choice” (“Ensuring our Future” Speech, 2012). In this sense, renewable energy is a “choice” that keeps costs competitive, rather than as a means to reducing greenhouse gasses. Governor Granholm’s 2007 State of the State speech is titled “Our Moment, Our Choice: Investing in Michigan’s People.” In it, she argues that choosing to invest in renewable energy is a no brainer: renewable energy will bring good jobs to Michigan. More widely, Granholm uses ‘choice’ to insist that the decisions she must make for Michigan are both hard – for example, investing in secondary education, but cutting spending elsewhere – and *necessary*. Premier McGuinty did not use “choice” in any significant way.

*The Meanings of ‘Value’:*



‘Value’ is typically used in two ways in political discourse: 1) to represent financial worth; and/or 2) to express significance of shared beliefs and ideals like “freedom”. For example, “freedom” is often represented differently – at least, at the ideological level – by Democrats and Republicans. While Republican ideology understands freedom as the pursuit of individual prosperity requiring minimal government intervention, Democrat ideology maintains that government must intervene to reduce barriers to individual success (such as class and gender). Furthermore, politicians make *value claims* (more closely examined in Chapters 6 and 7) to indicate a shared set of ideals with citizens. For example, Granholm often referred to Michigan’s industrial history to earn support for public policy:

“To restore our state’s economy, we need to tap the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship that fostered the development of our domestic auto industry more than 100 years ago” (State of the State, 2009).

McGuinty often used “value” to justify cuts to spending: “providing enough ongoing value to Ontarians” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2004); “the best value and service to people” and “better value to taxpayers” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2011). Like Granholm, he also used “value” to indicate a kinship with Ontarians and promote policy “that is informed by the values and strengths and the ambitions” of Ontarians (“Open Ontario” Speech, 2010) that respects “our most timeless values: fairness and compassion” (Speech from the Throne, 2005). In other words, policies introduced by the McGuinty government coincide with Ontarians’ values.

*The Meanings of “Common (Sense)”:*

The word “common”, when used alone, often serves a similar purpose to “value”: it indicates a shared set of purpose, values, and/or identity. It also is used to suggest that particular policies for the collective good. But the word “common” is most powerful in political discourse when used in conjunction with the word “sense”, as in “*common sense*”. Policy labeled as ‘common sense’ is represented as reasonable, practical, and simple: any person would make a similar decision given the same knowledge. Policy deemed as ‘common sense’ is represented as the obvious choice: in these

hard times, we all know we have to “tighten our belts” (see State of the State, 2003; 2007). However, even if policy is not the first or obvious choice, it is still the most rational, and sensible one –one that any rational person would realize. Common sense framing asserts not only that ‘there is no alternative’, but that all other alternatives are nonsense at best and harmful at worst.

Moreover, framing one or two policies as ‘common sense’ solutions over-simplifies complex social problems, such as unemployment and climate change. “Common sense” can thus serve to naturalize policy ideas that may be the *least* sensible in how they impact the majority of people– such as reducing unemployment benefits when unemployment is high. Such is the case with neoliberalism, even after the global financial crisis: it appears to still be “common sense” to cut corporate taxes and to cut social spending in order to cut the deficit and create jobs. This simplification of social problems and solutions using ‘common sense’ language may neutralize alternatives. For example, if the goal of public policy is framed as necessary for economic and job growth – rather than halt climate change – it may indeed seem too sensible to stimulate private investment at any cost.

Governor Snyder illustrates how policies are framed as easy and obvious: “It’s a no brainer. This is common sense” (State of the State, 2013); and “I believe that the greatest key to our success is Michigan this past year was due to a philosophy of relentless positive action. No blame, no credit, common sense, solve the problem, step forward” (State of the State, 2012). “Common sense” was also used by Snyder to frame a wide range of policies as constructive: “No blame, no credit, common sense, solve the problem, step forward, re-invent Michigan and be proud to say we’re creating a path and making a better place for all of us today and for our kids and their kids” (State of the State, 2013). However as we have seen in Chapter 4, there are several policies initiated under the Snyder Administration that do not seem common sense or constructive; that is, of course, if climate change or decreasing income inequality is a leading goal of public policy. Indeed, even though

Snyder was particularly concerned with meeting the needs of the private sector, which the policy record suggests, it remains puzzling that he would argue that the same types of policies implicated in the global financial crisis are still common sense for Michigan.

Governor Granholm used the term “common sense” to justify spending cuts, “reform” government and the public sector, and get Michigan’s “fiscal house in order” (State of the State, 2008). However, she also used common sense discourse to construct an argument that Michigan’s economic and social problems could not be solved by spending cuts alone, and that government spending was also needed. She urged the legislature to use ‘common sense’ and ‘courage’ to invest in tourism, Medicare, and education, suggesting that while it may be easy to choose to cut spending in times of economic crisis, it takes greater courage to spend for longer-term benefits. Granholm even referenced her Republican mother’s common sense advice to “not to be penny-wise and a pound-foolish” (State of the State, 2010). However, given the imbalance of power between Republicans and Democrats in the Michigan legislature throughout most of her tenure, gaining support for spending was more often a struggle than not. Perhaps because of this tension, Granholm’s use of common sense discourse often reads like a scolding, when compared to the matter-of-fact tone used by Snyder.

For Premier McGuinty, use of “common” and “sense” was more prevalent as individual words rather than a two-word phrase – “common sense”. One likely reason for avoiding the term was the legacy of harsh austerity during the “Common Sense Revolution” implemented under Conservative Premier Mike Harris<sup>28</sup>. After Harris resigned as party leader on April 14, 2002, the Conservatives

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<sup>28</sup> Between 1995 and 2002, Common Sense Revolution austerity policies implemented by the Harris government cut thousands of jobs in education, healthcare, and the provincial public service; axed funding to hospitals and cut social assistance rates by 22 percent and introduced ‘workfare’. In 1997, Ontario teachers held the largest walkout in North American history, but to no avail: after two weeks, Harris declared the strike illegal leaving little changed. By far the

(under Ernie Eves) were defeated 18 months later in an election that gave the McGuinty Liberals its first minority government. Thus, McGuinty was wise to reject the term, instead attempting to justify austerity measures as necessary for the “common good” and that “common values” guide the Liberal government’s policy decisions.

*The Meanings of “Share”:*

“Share” refers to having commonalities with other members of a group, as in shared hopes or shared dreams for one’s state/province: “I know you share a deep and abiding love for Michigan”(State of the State, 2007); and “rooted in the values we share” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2007). “Share” can also mean ‘equity’:

“Those who came before us met the challenges of their day to build Michigan anew. They... -built prosperous manufacturing industries and formed great unions to share that prosperity, created, in the wake of war, an unprecedented middle class” (Granholm Inaugural Speech, 2007).

But “share” was more commonly used by all three leaders not in regards to sharing in wealth, but in sharing the burden of economic recession. This included sharing or consolidating services between departments in order to reduce costs (see State of the State, 2007). Furthermore, Granholm maintained that “we’ll ask some businesses to begin to pay their fair share, while some paying too much will pay less” (State of the State, 2007).

Furthermore, both Granholm and McGuinty used sharing language to justify cuts to public sector jobs and benefits, whereby public sector workers had to share the burden of economic recession, just like workers in the private sector. This included cuts to benefits and pensions, and/or loss of employment.

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worst environmental failure under the Harris government was the 2000 Walkerton water crisis, in which seven people died and hundreds became sick from E.coli. Harris was blamed in part for privatizing provincial water testing in 1996.

*The Meanings of “Afford(able)”:*

Granholtz argued that the “affordability” of government spending is somewhat inconsequential when it comes to providing Michiganders with education, which she saw as essential to the success of Michigan’s economy. The language of affordability was often about what Michigan could not afford to do, for example, allowing other states with better-educated citizens to attract new businesses and create jobs. For Granholtz, affordability meant covering basic needs of education and healthcare for Michiganders, who might “once in a while afford a Wings or Pistons’ game” (State of the State, 2006).

McGuinty often referred to affordability in his speeches: affordable housing, affordable and reliable energy, affordable electricity, and affordable tuition. However, while there were times when the Ontario government argued that Ontarians could not afford any more reductions to services (Budget Speech, 2013), the cost of both tuition and electricity increased under McGuinty.

For Governor Snyder, affordability was directly tied to the cost of a commodity. For example, renewable energy can be “reliable, affordable, clean, and domestic” (Environment and Energy Address, 2012). This suggests that Snyder measures whether or not a policy is beneficial based on its financial cost, rather than its potential to increase social equity or reduce climate change.

*The Meanings of “Vulnerable”:*

Granholtz vetoed several bills in her last two years that would have made deeper cuts to education and healthcare. However, she also suggested that her own cuts to spending and taxes had done limited, or no harm to the most vulnerable Michiganders:

“I’m proud that we stood strong and defended vulnerable people during our fiscal crisis last year. Thanks to so many of you, no senior, no person with a disability had their Medicaid coverage taken from them. And no child was cut off health care” (Granholtz Budget Address, 2010).

McGuinty suggested that the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens would best be served by greater 'efficiency': "To continue to protect the most vulnerable, we will drive reforms to our benefit programs to create a more efficient, integrated system that helps low-income Ontarians get back to work" (Ontario Budget Speech, 2012). Thus, 'reforming' social programs and making them more 'efficient' – which appears to be code for reducing spending – is ultimately a benefit for the poor.

## **ECONOMY/FISCAL Words**

### *The Meanings of "Competitive/Competition/Competitiveness":*

The most commonly used words by our political leaders are in the economy/fiscal category. The high frequency of these words in Michigan and Ontario political discourse suggests that despite the rhetoric, environmental priorities were lower than economic priorities; moreover, when environmental goals were positioned as a priority, they were framed and/or operationalized in terms associated with green neoliberalism and Green New Dealism. Granholm used the word "competitive" or "competition" in every State of the State speech analyzed in this study. Further, she blames the global economy for Michigan's difficulty in stimulating growth: "We boldly wrestle with a competitive and often heartless beast called the global economy" (State of the State, 2003). At the same time, she legitimates policy proposals by linking them to the need to be "competitive" for investment in order to create jobs in Michigan; these include business tax credits and tax cuts:

"My fellow citizens, I will continue to engage you - as I have for the last 13 months - in this discussion about shared priorities and scarce funds....What business would locate in a state that isn't working to keep costs down and taxes competitive?" (State of the State, 2004; see also State of the State, 2010).

Thus, competitive for Granholm has also meant cutting costs – for example, at Michigan's Department of Corrections (State of the State, Feb 6, 2007); however, she also sought help from Washington to ensure Michigan's manufacturing sector was competitive through stronger national pension and healthcare programs (State of the State, 2006).

Snyder's use of the word "competitive" was typically associated in the discourse with tax reform; this included personal property tax reform for industrial, and "low volume" businesses; severance tax reform; and regulatory reform, which

"eliminated 1000 rules last year on a net basis" because "that's how you create an environment that's conducive to business, while still protecting our citizens that will generate jobs", and unemployment tax reform, which will be "saving our employers over a billion dollars over the next seven years which will allow them to create more and better jobs for our citizens" (State of the State, 2013).

McGuinty linked competitiveness to the green economy: "A competitive economy is a green economy" (Speech from the Throne, 2008). As we have seen, building a competitive and green economy, for McGuinty, required not only renewable energy policy packages like the Green Energy Act, but a wide range of policy measures aimed at stimulating private investment, including corporate tax cuts: this is the way modern, globally competitive jurisdictions do business (see Ontario Budget Speech, 2009). A green economy is thus "as sustainable as it is competitive" (ibid), suggesting a green neoliberal imaginary.

McGuinty's discourse linking competitiveness to tax cuts has been consistent throughout his tenure; however, before 2008 he was more likely to link competitiveness also to social services like education and healthcare. Indeed, healthcare is often framed as a *competitive advantage* (Ontario Budget Speech, 2004) presumably when compared with American states like Michigan with no universal healthcare. Both Granholm and McGuinty framed healthcare and education as tools for individual and state/provincial competitiveness, despite that the governor and the premier cut spending to social spending at various points in their tenure.

#### *The Meanings of "Growth":*

Some economists, environmentalists, and social justice advocates have questioned whether or not our current economic growth model is sustainable. While this debate may be of limited interest to

some politicians, the effects of a global warming on economic growth are real: one study found that the impact of climate change on the US economy is six times higher than current mitigation policies can absorb (Moore and Diaz, 2015). To recall, the World Economic Forum best describes this conceptualization of, and imperative for, green economic growth:

“Greening economic growth *is the only way* in which sustainable, inclusive development can be achieved that will satisfy the basic needs of 9 billion people and provide them with equal rights to *material prosperity*. A key challenge is the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions to avoid the catastrophic impacts of global warming. Another imperative is the need to *increase natural resource productivity* to meet unprecedented demands for clean water, food and urban development” (WEF, n.d., emphasis added).

Granholt discursively linked sustainability and growth early in her administration: “So, we will continue to cast off the dated idea that economic growth and a healthy environment are enemies. Both must flourish and each serves as a powerful force to improve our quality of life and attract good jobs to our state” (State of the State, 2004). This makes economic growth a means to ecological resilience, and a necessary requirement for the creation of employment.

Before the GFC, Premier McGuinty used the word “growth” to indicate a strong Ontario economy, particularly when compared to other jurisdictions: “In sectors ranging from financial services to biotechnology to digital media and other advanced technologies, Ontarians are experiencing growth that far outpaces that of our closest competitors” (Speech from the Throne, 2007). After 2009, however, “growth” was used by the premier to indicate that the economy was his priority: “That’s why, in its next budget, your government will lay out a plan to return the budget to balance. Your government will not put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon. Nor will it proceed with spending as if there is no deficit” (Speech from the Throne, 2010). Indeed, the means to a stronger economy demanded reducing growth in social spending: “Mr. Drummond will challenge all those elected to this legislature to bring forward their best ideas to help your government balance



the budget, control spending growth and deliver for Ontario families” (Speech from the Throne, 2011).

*The Meanings of “Cuts”:*

Granholtz chose to make deep cuts to business taxes (93 in total), which led to her cutting more state spending than any Michigan governor before her (Mulhern and Granholtz, 2011). Though she refers to “painful cuts to balance the budget”, she also applauds the cuts as measures to stimulate private sector investment and create jobs: “we have cut waste and tightened our belts”; “cut the size of government”; “reform government to cut costs”; “cut the size of government”; made “pro-job tax cuts”; “cut state spending”; and “stimulate business by cutting their taxes” (see State of the State speeches, 2002-2010). Indeed, as early as 2007 Governor Granholtz framed cuts to social spending as “painful” but “necessary”:

“I’ve cut spending for four straight years to balance the budget with 40 percent less revenue than my predecessors. The truth is another round of budget cutting alone cannot solve the fiscal crisis; in fact, a cuts-only solution would destroy the state’s ability to recover. Again this year, my budget will call for hundreds of millions of dollars in spending cuts, many of them painful. But those cuts are necessary to be able to afford the investment that will grow our economy” (State of the State, 2007).

Premier McGuinty also frames spending and tax cuts as necessary measures, whether that be for deficit reduction, job creation, or foreign investment. His narrow focus on deficit reduction is summed up in the 2012 Budget Speech: “That is why, for every dollar in new revenues outlined in the 2012 Budget, there are four dollars of savings and cost-containment measures”. Like Granholtz, he argues that a cuts-only solution might “put economic growth at risk by cutting too much, too soon” (Speech from the Throne, 2010). Indeed, though McGuinty asserted that “across-the-board cuts do not work” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2011), critics maintained that austerity was harsh under McGuinty (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March 18).

*The Meanings of “Trade”:*

The most prominent user of “trade” in the discourse is Governor Granholm. For Granholm, ‘trade’ is the location of blame for lost jobs and investment in her state: “trade policies sucking jobs overseas”; “trade policies that dismantled factories here”; “enact fair trade policies, not trade policies that help other countries”; “it must be fair trade. Fair to businesses...”; and “to stand up for robust trade, lots of it, but fair” (see State of the State, 2007, 2008, 2009). Moreover, she implicates the federal government under George W. Bush for Michigan’s failure to survive in the global economy: “Washington that refuses to enforce trade laws and stands idly by” (State of the State, 2007). Thus, while “trade” is a relatively neutral or positive word for Snyder and McGuinty, it is a negative word for Granholm.

*The Meanings of “Diversify”:*

The word “diversify” belongs to Granholm. She uses it in every speech, and *always* in reference to the economy; she typically suggests that diversification requires expanding into new sectors (including alternative energy, and advanced manufacturing) and new markets (she travelled abroad several times in search of new investors); it also requires that Michigan do whatever it takes to win new investments that will both diversify the state’s auto-based economy and make use of existing workers and industries. This suggests that Granholm views Michigan’s unemployment partly as the result of poor economic planning, rather than a lack of skilled people or available resources. Snyder appears to have partly agreed with Granholm’s analysis and solution, noting that Michigan was “doing the smart thing and diversifying into renewable energy” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012).

*The Meanings of “Reinvent”:*

The word “reinvent” is not necessarily an economy word. However, it has been used to capture imagination around a new and improved economy, particularly in Michigan<sup>29</sup> and almost exclusively

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<sup>29</sup> ‘Reinvent’ will be given more attention in the following chapter analyzing Michigan policy arguments.

by Governor Snyder. While Granholm periodically used the word in her speeches, “reinvent” belongs to Snyder: Reinventing Michigan (and “relentless positive action”) is one of his administration’s key brands. Indeed, Snyder used “reinvent/reinventing” in every speech analyzed for this study. He uses it to talk about a process: “reinventing”; as a noun: “a serious reinvention”; and as a verb: “reinvent Michigan”, and “reinvent our wetland”. He also uses it to brand his administration’s deregulation efforts: the “Office of Regulatory Reinvention”. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter 6, ‘reinvent’ is used often in Snyder’s lexicon and branding.

#### *The Meanings of “Regulatory”:*

As just mentioned, the Office of Regulatory Reinvention, according to Snyder, aims to make it easier for business to do business in Michigan: “we did good work” (State of the State, 2013). Thus, Governor Snyder’s use of “regulation” or “regulatory” is often in conjunction with words like “cut” or “streamlined”.

McGuinty also saw regulation as a barrier to business; his Open Ontario for Business Plan, 2010 loosened a range of Ontario’s regulations (Fanelli and Thomas, 2011) including environmental regulation. In this way, “regulation” or “regulatory” has been used in conjunction with “fair” and “reform” to mean positive, modern change: a “modernized” regulatory environment; “regulatory reform that foster fair...”; “tax cuts and regulatory reforms”; and “reduce regulatory burden by 25 percent” (Budget Speech, 2009). In other words, by using “fair” in conjunction with “regulatory”, McGuinty was able to maintain the idea that deregulation is common sense.

#### *The Meanings of “Customer”:*

No other politician in this thesis used the word “customer” like Governor Snyder. “Customer” is associated with neoliberal discourse, because it maintains the idea that the relationship between the citizen and the state is based on a series of transactions (see Kozolanka, 2014a). For Snyder, government is a service provider, and Michiganders are the customers: “this is about serving a

customer, our citizens” and “to give them great customer service” (State of the State, 2013). And ‘it’s about going to the customer, serving them in their neighbourhood’ (ibid). From Snyder’s perspective, this viewpoint would make sense: as a former CEO, Snyder viewed the state of Michigan like a business. A key difference of course, is that Snyder was elected – not hired:

“We can have different perspectives but ultimately, we're hired by the citizens and the people of the state of Michigan and our responsibility is to give them *great customer service and to give them the best customer service*, is not dwelling on our differences, our different perspectives and those kinds of issues, it's really stepping up to say ‘How do we work together, with respect, to make sure we do the best job possible?’” (State of the State, 2013, emphasis added).

*The Meanings of “Investment”:*

“Investment” has become the new word to talk about government spending: to invest is wise, to spend, particularly in times of economic crisis, is not. Granholm, for example, used the term ‘investment’ to advance proposals for greater government spending in education and healthcare, and to propose the “Michigan Jobs and Investment Act, 2005” (see State of the State, 2007). Premier McGuinty also spoke about “investments” in education and public health in his speeches as a means to greater competitiveness. And Granholm and Snyder used “invest” to describe government spending in terms of education, infrastructure, and “smarter energy investments” in energy efficiency (“Ensuring our Future” Speech, 2012).

However, by using the term “investment” in regards to social services, political leaders can construct an argument that spending must result in some kind of economic return. This framing of government spending in terms of investment excludes policies and plans that do not have clear and fast economic benefits, including climate change mitigation and social assistance.

Interestingly, both Granholm and McGuinty used “Investing in People” in the title of speeches

before the global financial crisis (Ontario Budget Speech, 2005; State of the State, 2007). But in 2008, investment discourse in Ontario shifted away from public spending and toward attracting private investment (and jobs) increased in Ontario: government was “attracting investments to Ontario” (Ontario Budget speech, 2008); implementing measures that “attracts other jobs and investments to the province” (ibid); and cutting the “tax rate on new business investment in half” (Ontario Budget speech, 2011). Investment was tied more explicitly in the discourse to employment – “we are investing \$32 billion in job-creating...” (Ontario Budget, 2010) and the private sector: government will “make resources available for strategic investments that will boost economic growth” (Ontario Budget speech, 2013) and “make us a magnet for foreign investment and job creation” (Speech from the Throne, 2011).

Thus, public investment increasingly emphasized incentives to attract business, including renewable energy to create “hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed in tariff” (Speech from the Throne, 2010), and water technology to attract “more clean water expertise and investment to our province” (Speech from the Throne, 2010).

*The Meanings of “Transition”:*

“Transition” was a favourite buzz word of Governor Granholm. She used it to indicate her desire to shift Michigan from a primarily auto economy – “as we work to transition Michigan from one economic era to another” (State of the State, 2008) - to a diversified economy that includes renewable energy, clean technologies, and electric automobiles, as well as emerging areas including life sciences, and national defense. At the end of her tenure, Granholm maintained that her Michigan was a “state in transition” (State of the State, 2010). Using the word “transition” in speeches can help neutralize critics of an economy in decline by asserting that the state’s economy is improving and that state government is taking action.

*The Meanings of “Tax”:*

“Tax” is a powerful word in political discourse, and its frequent usage suggests that it is a priority of policymakers. Moreover, “tax” is almost exclusively a negative word in Michigan and Ontario, unless it was associated with “cuts”: Indeed, “tax cuts” appear to be a source of bragging rights as we see with Governor Granholm, when she claimed that she had made “the most sweeping reform of business taxes in thirty years” (State of the State, 2008; see also “Cuts” section above). Indeed by 2007, she had already signed 93 cuts to business taxes into law (State of the State, 2007). Other uses included promising not to increase personal and corporate tax rates and framing tax as a deterrent to new private investment. While Ontario had experienced relative growth before the GFC, Michigan’s economy had been in decline for nearly 10 years. This may have made it easier for Granholm and Snyder to label corporate tax reductions as “pro-job tax cuts”; this language was echoed in interviews with Michigan Republicans and some Democrats. Moreover, Granholm, Snyder and McGuinty argued that they needed to “modernize the tax system” or implement “tax reform”, which typically meant eliminating regulations and/or cutting the corporate tax rate. And while Granholm was careful to balance her argument that “taxes alone are not the answer” (State of the State, 2007) to Michigan’s problems – her actions suggest that tax cuts were a big part of her economic recovery plan.

As we have seen, McGuinty paired “fair” with “tax”, as in “a fairer, more competitive tax system” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2007). Snyder framed changes to state tax code in a similar way: taxes were “outdated”; “complicated”, and “uncertain”; they need to be “simple, fair” (“Ensuring our Future” Speech, 2012). Interestingly, this framing was predominantly used in reference to the corporate tax rate. This suggests that Snyder and McGuinty believed that corporations were wronged by the tax formula and/or tax rate (compared with average taxpayers, perhaps) and/or that these corporations could find ‘fairer’ tax systems in competing jurisdictions.

## **WORK Words**

### *The Meanings of “Unemployment” and “Employment”:*

Employment words in the Michigan and Ontario speeches emphasized what employers want and need – flexible workers, “affordable” wages – rather than the needs of employees, such as job security, decent work, and living wages. It was also used as a measure of policy success and failure: “the Michigan Energy Corps put thousands of unemployed Michigan citizens back to work this year, weatherizing homes, schools, and other public buildings....” (Granholm, State of the State, 2009). Governor Snyder frames some of Michigan’s out-of-work citizens as “structurally unemployed”, and aims to “give the structurally unemployed opportunities they didn’t otherwise have” (State of the State, 2014). Structural unemployment, for Snyder, refers to a condition of the normal economic cycle; Granholm on the other hand saw structural unemployment as a relatively new phenomenon: the result of unfair globalization.

The McGuinty government used “unemployment” just once to frame the Liberals as job creators: “The proof of that is the fact that Ontario has 420,000 more good, high-paying jobs now than it had just four years ago, and Ontario has the lowest level of unemployment in five years” (Speech from the Throne, 2007). Following that, the Liberal government left “unemployment” out of their speeches until 2013, when Lieutenant Governor David Onley delivered a Speech from the Throne for the Wynne government, highlighting her government’s effort to help students find (unpaid) work: “To address the serious issue of youth unemployment, your government will join forces with high school educators, colleges, universities, training partners and employers to establish opportunities for young people to enhance their skills; find placements, internships and co-op programs; and gain valuable, real world experience” (Speech from the Throne, 2013). Thus, unlike in Michigan, the term “unemployment” is used with caution in Ontario.

*The Meanings of “Work”:*

Unlike “(un)employment”, Michigan and Ontario political elites used “work” frequently in their speeches. “Hard work” and “hard working” were used in ways that would resonate with the manufacturing culture of the region. These are the values that “has(sic) always defined Michigan: Hard work. Strong families. Proud communities” (State of the State, 2008), while the goal of policy is to ensure that ‘hard working people will have good jobs’ (State of the State, 2004; see also State of the State, 2009). Granholm also uses “work” to refer to her own efforts: she made government “leaner” to “make Michigan work better”, and no other political leader will “out work her” to bring jobs to Michigan.

Snyder particularly favoured the word “work”; he used it 58 times in his 2014 State of the State Address: let’s “find common ground, and let’s work to bring Michiganders together”. Moreover, Snyder claimed that the Healthy Michigan program is for “low-income but hard working Michiganders that deserve healthcare coverage” (State of the State, 2014). Clearly, this suggests that Snyder does not view healthcare as a universal right; indeed, there are some non-hard working (lazy) Michiganders who do not deserve healthcare. Similarly, he argued that tax relief should go to “hard working folk”, the “hard working Michiganders who get up every day, they pack their lunch to go to work, they work hard all day” (p. 45). In other words, there are some that deserve social services or assistance in Michigan – those who are working – and some – the unemployed – who do not. This view assumes not only that unemployment or poverty is the fault of the individual, but that providing services to these people encourages dependency.

Perhaps the most contentious use of the word “work” by Snyder was not in a speech but in a piece of legislation: “Right to Work” was signed into law by Governor Snyder in December 2012. Indeed, the term “right to work” is itself a product of political framing aimed at weakening unions (Klein, 2012 December 12). By emphasizing the liberal idea of economic freedom, “right to work”



maintains that union dues are an unnecessary financial burden that should be paid ‘by choice’ despite the fact that the union – not the employer – secured worker wages and benefits (ibid). Moreover, union dues are not necessary to work in a union shop (Klein, 2012 December 12). And though interviews with some legislators and NGO representatives suggested that Governor Snyder did not favour RTW legislation – that he was out of useable vetoes for one year and had to go along with his party – Snyder claimed that he would sign the legislation if he had to do it again (Woods, 2014 February 8).

McGuinty used “work” for various purposes, including publicity (government is “working hard” to help Ontario families) and unity (Ontarians are “working together”). Furthermore, McGuinty used “work” to indicate government effort toward cutting the deficit, as in doing the “necessary work we have already undertaken” to cut (Ontario Budget speech, 2011).

*The Meanings of “Job”:*

Job creation was the most common argument in favour of a wide range of policies in Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012. The actual term “green jobs” was not used by McGuinty or Snyder; instead, McGuinty referenced jobs in a green economy, while Snyder only referred to ‘jobs’ in a general sense. (There was no significant link in the discourse to the renewable energy sector.) Governor Granholm, on the other hand, used the term, but only in her radio addresses (on 15 occasions). Indeed for Granholm, “green jobs” was both a measurement of success (“I was proud to announce even more green jobs for Michigan”) and a promise that (“we continue to build on Michigan’s manufacturing strengths to transform our state into a center for renewable energy and generate thousands of new green jobs”). The term was also included in the title of a worker training program known as the “Green Jobs Initiative”, which was funded in part by federal ARRA stimulus. One of the most telling quotes is from Governor Granholm in 2008 on the relationship between job creation and climate change action:

“When you hear ‘climate change’, or ‘global warming’, just think ‘jobs for Michigan’” (State of the State, 2008).

For Granholm, a green job was the most important unemployment strategy for Michiganders who lost their jobs due to decline of the manufacturing sector. Moreover, a green job was synonymous with good, middle class work. All of the political elites in this study spoke of creating good jobs, which included “quality jobs”; “high skilled jobs”; “well-paid jobs”; and “new economy jobs”. This kind of framing suggests that creating jobs was not enough: good jobs had to pay more than minimum wage. However, there was no indication in the content or discourse analysis that “good jobs” meant those that were unionized, provided healthcare benefits, or long-term job security. Nor did “jobs” or “green jobs” refer to employment in the public sector; instead job growth always referred to the private sector. This was also true for jobs linked in the discourse to the ‘green economy’, including those in the renewable energy value chain, electric/hybrid auto manufacturing, and energy efficiency. In other words, the positive association of the word “job” was in relation to the private sector. This is important because it indicates a political preference for private sector over public sector employment; this preference would lead to a different package of policies than if the goal was to grow jobs in the public or not-for-profit sectors. Paradoxically, though the leaders often framed public sector jobs as unnecessary and costly, they provided generous tax cuts to private sector investors as a means to create jobs, but at the expense of government revenue. Indeed, Granholm has said that she will “go anywhere or do anything to bring good jobs to Michigan” (State of State, 2008).

Governor Snyder never used the term ‘green jobs’ in his speeches. Instead, ‘job’ was paired with ‘killer’ in reference to Governor Granholm’s Michigan Business Tax. Aside from this, Snyder’s use of ‘jobs’ is similar to that of Granholm: good and better jobs are in the private sector. And like his predecessor, Snyder blamed forces that were beyond his administration’s control: the loss of 75,000

jobs was because “our state shrank” (State of the State, 2013).

Like the Michigan governors, Premier McGuinty framed job creation as the result of policies that make Ontario an attractive place to invest – supporting the argument that government intervention for the private sector is a necessary component of neoliberal capitalism. McGuinty’s Open Ontario Plan, 2010 was aimed at making it easier for businesses to get around regulation including environmental assessments (Canadian Environmental Law Association, 2010 May 8) that according to the Ontario government “is designed to create jobs and open Ontario to new investment” (Ontario Budget Speech, 2010). This included a competitive “tax plan for jobs and growth”, which frames corporate tax cuts as a necessary component in creating jobs. Further, the Open Ontario Plan goal was to make Ontario “competitive” for investment to not only to create new jobs, but also to retain existing jobs by keeping industry from leaving Ontario (Ontario Speech Budget, 2011). Finally, the green economy in Ontario was extended to include water: McGuinty saw water as another opportunity to create a wide range of jobs. The goal of the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 was in part to create “good, well-paid Ontario jobs selling Ontario-made water technologies” (Ontario Speech Budget, 2010) particularly with the increasing global demand for water. Investment in water technology thus provides Ontario with yet another opportunity to capitalize on environmental crisis.

#### *The Meanings of ‘Union’:*

“Union” was used just 13 times total, and in reference to labour only 8 times; it was used by Granholm (7 times) and McGuinty (1) in that context. Governor Snyder used “union” only in his addresses regarding Right to Work legislation, and only in regards to union dues; there was no positive connotation associated with ‘union’ in his speeches. Unions may therefore not be considered a necessary component of the new green economy, and thus would be difficult for politicians or labour to maintain that their policies are contributing to the emergence of a Green

New Deal in Ontario and Michigan. This will be explored in greater detail in the next two chapters.

*The Meanings of “Industry”:*

“Industry” has been used to refer to traditional manufacturing and emerging industries in Michigan and Ontario’s economies. This includes industries of the green economy: the “clean energy industry” (State of the State, 2010; “Open Ontario” Speech, 2010), “wind-energy industry” and “advanced battery industry”(State of the State, 2010); the “green auto industry” (State of the State, 2009); the “solar energy industry”; the “renewable energy and energy efficiency industry” (State of the State, 2008) and the “clean water industry” (Open Ontario speech, 2010). References have also included the greening of the auto industry through electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vehicle R&D manufacturing (see Ontario Budget Speech, 2007; Granholm Radio Address, 2008 September 19). Thus, political elites may make references to a range of industries as evidence of their efforts toward economic diversification.

**Conclusion**

The semiotic analysis in this chapter should make a few things evident. At the most basic level, neoliberal words and phrases are commonplace in political discourse. This does not, however, suggest that words characterized as ‘neoliberal’ were introduced in the English language with the expressed purpose of communicating neoliberal ideology. Rather, many words have been adapted, and it is only in context that they can be understood as neoliberal. This is why our semiotic analysis did not just examine one of our cluster words, but instead the word and the phrase that defines it.

Furthermore, words that might be neutral or positive in other contexts have come to have meaning in the communication of neoliberal ideology. For example, “fair” was typically associated in our political speeches with reducing the corporate tax rate, and/or cutting benefits, pensions, or even jobs for public sector workers as a means to being ‘fair’ in a time of austerity. “Tax”, a necessary means to funding social programs, can arguably no longer be used by political leaders in a positive

sense; as such, it may be increasingly difficult to represent tax. Indeed, tax was labelled a “job killer” by Governor Snyder and many Republicans in the Michigan legislature (Michigan legislature interviews, May, 2014). Thus, for governments looking to raise revenue, new terms may need to be found.

References to words associated with environment, in particular “climate”, were few in the discourses of the Michigan governors. Instead, Granholm and Snyder almost exclusively used the word “climate” to signify conditions –increasing taxes and tax credits, and/or decreasing deregulation – for private investment. When Granholm did refer to “climate change” in her State of the State speech and radio addresses, it was linked to “thousands and thousands of jobs” in renewable energy. In this way, Granholm associated climate change with the green economy and green jobs, which helps fuse ‘green’ discourses with neoliberal and New Deal discourses. Though Snyder called himself a “good, green Republican” during his first gubernatorial race, there is no evidence in his speeches that he used “green” again. By avoiding “climate change” in the political discourse, Granholm and Snyder may have contributed to lower public awareness of, and/or concern for climate change.

McGuinty, on the other hand, was more at ease than the governors using terms like “green”, “climate change”, and “sustainability” in reference to environmental issues. In fact, he used these terms not only to refer to renewable energy jobs and but also to make wider claims that Ontario was moving towards a more sustainable society. However, while much of his environmental discourse was suggestive of sustainable development, the discourse he employed about making Ontario “competitive” does not resonate with principles of sustainable development, but rather neoliberalism. In this way, McGuinty may have been more willing to use terms associated with climate change and ecological sustainability than Granholm and Snyder, but he was equally as willing to use the language of neoliberalism.

Indeed, in Table 4 (below) we see evidence of the political leaders' preferences for economy words as well as the notable absence of words associated with the environment. And though McGuinty used environment words more frequently than the governors (see Table 5) the frequency still appears relatively low for a six-year timespan. Thus, the environment is downgraded in, and/or naturalized through neoliberal rhetoric, indicating that ecological sustainability and climate change may only be as important so long as it does not interfere with economic activity.

In the following two chapters, we use what we have learned by examining the meaning of words and phrases in neoliberal discourse and carefully examine the specific political arguments advanced by politicians. We do this to come to some understanding of just *how* politicians are naturalizing (green) neoliberalism and/or the green economy, and make their policies seem like common sense.

**Table 4:** Top 50 Most Frequent Words – All Speeches, 2003-2013, compiled January 29, 2014

Ranking	Word	Frequency
1	Michigan	1433
2	Ontario	1303
4	government	977
7	budget	807
9	jobs	657
15	economic	471
16	economy	457
17	education	456
18	Work	454
20	Services	425
21	Public	408
22	Tax	384
23	Need	378
30	School	323
31	Now	303
32	Billion	301
34	Business	280
36	Energy	273
38	Today	271
39	Every	267
40	Create	265
41	Growth	259
42	Children	256
43	Must	254
45	Future	248
47	Support	245
48	Families	241
49	great	239
50	Continue	238

**Table 5:** Word Frequency Query –Green, Environment, Sustainable by Leader, 2007-2013

Leader	Word	Frequency
Granhholm	Green	10
Snyder	Green <sup>30</sup>	3
McGuinty	Green	18
Granhholm	Environment <sup>31</sup>	5
Snyder	Environment <sup>32</sup>	44
McGuinty	Environment <sup>33</sup>	9
Granhholm	Sustainable/Sustainability <sup>34</sup>	2
Snyder	Sustainable/Sustainability <sup>35</sup>	3
McGuinty	Sustainable/Sustainability <sup>36</sup>	13

<sup>30</sup> ‘Green’ was used by Snyder only in his Energy and Environment Speech, 2012

<sup>31</sup> This includes references to the natural environment and the business environment

<sup>32</sup> This includes 32 references to environment in the Energy and Environment Speech, 2012 and references to the business environment in other speeches

<sup>33</sup> This includes references to the natural environment and the business environment

<sup>34</sup> Does not include ‘sustain’, ‘sustained’

<sup>35</sup> Does not include ‘sustain’, ‘sustained’

<sup>36</sup> Does not include ‘sustain’, ‘sustained’

## Chapter 6: Argumentative Claims

“...in the passage from a state in which actions are guided by an overarching notion of the public good to a state in which individual entrepreneurs ‘freely’ pursue their private goods, values like morality, justice, fairness, empathy, nobility, and love are either abandoned or redefined in market terms” (Fish, 2009 March 8).

In Chapter 4, we analyzed public policies against our green economy typologies to examine the following research question: To what degree can policies in Ontario and Michigan be classified as sustainable? We found that although some public policies in Ontario and Michigan have the potential to contribute to sustainability, most policies are characteristic of green market capitalist imaginaries, in particular neoliberalism and green neoliberalism. Given that these imaginaries are defined by economic growth, deregulation, privatization, and austerity (see Chapter 4) the green economy in these two jurisdictions may be unsustainable, despite the introduction of legislation to stimulate green sectors like renewable energy. Thus, we can begin to answer the research question: Does the policy rhetoric match the policy reality?

In this chapter, we categorize parts of arguments made by Ontario and Michigan leaders in government speeches according to its argumentative claim. Chapter 7 then analyzes these arguments (informed in part by our semiotics analysis in Chapter 5) to help answer our remaining research questions: In what similar and different ways do public policies get framed, communicated, and/or constrained by underlying neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that then limit the policy options that governments see as possible? In what ways does this contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism and austerity in an era of rapidly increasing climate change and inequality? And to what extent have policymakers in Ontario and Michigan evoked argumentative imperatives that neoliberal policies are the way to create green jobs, increase socio-economic equality, and/or halt climate change?



To recall, political arguments include an imaginaries/solutions claim; circumstantial premises; goals premises; means-goal premises; values premises; and alternative solutions. An *imaginaries/solutions claim* is a grand narrative advanced by a political leader as a vision for a better society, which may be inspired by a particular incident, an ongoing problem, and/or a new opportunity. It frames or sets up a story by the government as to what general course of action is needed to improve social, economic, and/or ecological conditions (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012, 144). *Circumstantial premises* aim to identify *the* problems in a given jurisdiction as well as its causes. On the other hand, circumstantial arguments are made by political elites to frame their efforts as the cause of positive outcomes. The *goals premise* makes an argumentative claim that a particular goal, or set of goals is necessary for the realization of the imaginary as identified in the solutions claims. Goals premises do not prescribe policies, but instead advance claims for goals that are difficult to argue, which helps normalize goals such as individual wealth and economic growth, as opposed to societal well-being. A *means-goal premise* is a cause-and-effect, or an ‘if-then’ argument: if, and only if, we adopt these specific means or measures, will we reach our goal objectives (ibid, p. 89). Political leaders can align the means-goals premises of two different and competing goals, which is most evident in imaginaries promising a ‘win-win’ for the economy and the environment. The means-goal premise is thus one of the most powerful argumentative claims because it asserts that ‘there is no alternative’. The *values premise* helps manufacturing certainty for a particular course of action without evidence, since it links peoples’ needs, wants, memories, and desires to “common sense” terms and phrases in the political discourse. *Alternative policy options* are those proposed by opponents to which policy makers refer, and then discredit, in the discourse, in an effort to appear as though they have carefully deliberated over all possible solutions to a given problem. This type of argumentation is often used to legitimate a pre-determined course of action and with little consideration of the alternatives.

We begin by categorizing the argumentative claims of Governor Jennifer M. Granholm, followed by the claims of Governor Rick Snyder and Premier Dalton McGuinty respectively. We conclude with a brief review of argumentative claims made in the first Throne speech made by Liberal government under Premier Kathleen Wynne.

### **Michigan: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm**

#### ***Imaginarities/Solutions Claim***

An imaginary is a vision of the future. According to one former Democratic legislator, “for Governor Granholm, a part of her agenda for sure and focus and legacy that she wanted for herself was around a green economy” (Democrat legislator interview, May 2014). Imaginaries expressed in political discourse, aim to inspire, demonstrate resolve, and express certainty. Inaugural addresses are good sources for political imaginaries, as newly elected leaders lay out the vision for their state:

“We must apply ourselves fearlessly to this foundation to build the Next Michigan. I believe in the Next Michigan - I lay claim to it. Claim it with me. Believe in the Next Michigan, a place that we sense but do not yet fully know. BELIEVE in the Next Michigan where opportunity to grow and to live a good life exists for all our citizens - the rich and the poor, the young and the old. BELIEVE in the Next Michigan where every child can go to college and every parent is a partner in expecting that child to learn; where our knowledge and innovation and imagination are celebrated and produced and sold right here. BELIEVE; come with me to the Next Michigan, where *every displaced worker has the opportunity to open their own business or be retrained to a new future* - a state where ‘no worker is left behind.’ Follow me.

“BELIEVE in the Next Michigan where our cities are electric - alive with people and culture and energy and jobs. BELIEVE in the Next Michigan where every citizen has access to affordable health care. BELIEVE in the Next Michigan where our love of our land and our water will *produce clean and green technology, alternative energy* - the state that combines university brilliance with agricultural bounty to break our nation's dependence on foreign oil. BELIEVE in a compassionate Michigan where our citizens have a responsibility to one another. That we are put here in God's country to serve not just ourselves, but we are here to serve each other. That we are a better state and a better people when we act as family to one another.

You know the Michigan that is. Believe in the Michigan *that will be*” (Inaugural Address, Jan. 1, 2007, p. 1, lines 26-32, p. 2, lines 1-16, emphasis added).

Granholtm advances an ambitious agenda in her short, 1000-word speech. Despite the brevity of an inaugural address, Granholtm is sure to include the green economy in her imaginary for Michigan. In her first term, she had already been working with renewable energy producers, utilities providers, and the auto industry – for example, by offering tax abatements and introducing the 10% RPS target – to increase green growth and jobs in her state. However, although the green economy was her dominant imaginary, it was not her only vision: Granholtm wanted to avoid the trappings of a single-industry economy. Economic diversification and post-secondary education and training were keys to getting Michigan working again:

“To create new, good jobs, we have set a bold course of action to *diversify our economy* and to give our people the skills and education they need to not only cope in a changing world but to thrive in it. Our commitment to *diversifying our economy* and *educating our citizens* must be strong and unwavering, because my friends, *there simply is no other course*” (State of the State, 2008, p. 1, lines 18-22, emphasis added).

In the above passage, Granholtm echoes Margaret Thatcher’s “there is no alternative” frame in her solutions claim for Michigan’s jobs crisis: there is no other course but to diversify Michigan’s economy and educate citizens to meet demand for skilled workers. But what does the governor mean by diversification? As we saw in the previous chapter, the word “transition” indicates a shift from a single industry economy – one that emphasizes the auto sector – to a “new” economy with a diverse industry base that would replace jobs lost with jobs in emerging industries. It is an economy that requires a new approach:

“The old Michigan economy, which provided a middle-class standard of living for so many, is gone. We are now transitioning to a new economy – an economy requiring knowledge, *speed, and efficiency*” (State of the State, 2010, lines 48-50, emphasis added).

It is important to note that Granholtm makes no guarantees that the middle class lifestyle, in large part made possible by the auto-sector economy, will be revived in the new Michigan. Indeed,

Granholtm asserts that this economy will remake the state in such a way that it is practically unrecognizable:

“I assure you, from a great 20th century state will rise an even greater 21st century state. It will not look the same. It will demand different skills, knowledge, investment. It will demand more, much more from those [elected officials] on this platform, and from you, the citizens who *hired* us. We will rise to that challenge. We will reshape and enlarge our great state. I am ready and eager to lead you into the Next Michigan” (Inaugural address, 2006, p. 3, lines 17-21, emphasis added).

Granholtm frames her role as governor as a hired employee rather than an elected official. Her job, as she sees it, is to make Michigan competitive for investment in a highly competitive world.

Renewable energy is her lead industry for expansion, but she has other plans as well:

“The *nation is moving to a new energy future*, but if we are willing to think strategically and act boldly, like we have in other sectors, Michigan can lead job creation in this area too. While this new energy sector represents our single best hope for new investment and new jobs, Michigan’s diversification strategy has also targeted other emerging sectors from the life sciences to advanced manufacturing to homeland security” (State of the State, 2010, p. 4, lines 28-32, emphasis added).

Moreover, she assures Michiganders that the auto industry will continue to be significant in the new economy, particularly as it innovates in clean energy technologies:

“But let me be clear – diversifying our economy does not mean deserting our major industry. We are justifiably proud of the American automobile industry, and we are prouder yet to be its home. And when pundits and ill-informed politicians take cheap shots at our auto companies and auto workers, we will continue to call them out and take them on. We will be armed with the facts about the incredible transformation this industry is undergoing and the great products it produces now and the awesome products in the pipeline. And we *will* keep Michigan positioned as the global center of an *increasingly green auto industry*” (State of the State, 2009, p. 4, lines 21-27, emphasis added).

Granholtm imagines the auto sector as part of the green economy as well: she invested significant time and public money promoting the expansion of advanced battery technology in her state.

Moreover, these “cheap shots”, as Granholtm describes, includes criticism of auto bailouts as well as union workers, who are often framed as the reason many businesses along the auto supply chain left Michigan for right-to-work states and lower wage countries like Mexico. Granholtm disagreed with

this critique, and indeed, not only did she defend the auto sector bailouts she requested (unsuccessfully) more money from President Obama. Granholm makes no argument in defence of unions in her speeches; however, despite her weak discursive position on unions, Granholm regularly acknowledges that the means to a better Michigan is ‘good jobs’:

“We must guide our state from one era to another – all the while preserving a way of life that has always defined Michigan. Hard Work. Strong families. Proud communities. And most of all, good jobs....” (State of the State, 2008, p. 1, lines 18-20).

Indeed, good jobs would help sustain Michiganders as the state transitioned ‘from the rustbelt to the greenbelt’ (see State of the State, 2008; Radio Address, 2008); such a transition required decisive action:

“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).

In her weekly radio addresses, Granholm regularly claimed that the green economy was a major part of her diversification plan; this may be because radio speeches were the governor’s means to speaking directly to Michiganders, while State of the State speeches were delivered to an often hostile mix of Democrats and Republicans in the Michigan legislature:

“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*” (Radio Address, April 18, 2008, emphasis added).

By linking the state’s problems to a period in time, Governor Granholm suggests that Michigan’s struggles are caused by cyclical, rather permanent conditions within the economic system.

Thus, Granholm imagines a green economy that will address *symptoms*, like low wages and unemployment, rather than *root causes* of the manufacturing sector’s decline. There is little doubt that

Granholtm was constrained by her institutional circumstances: US trade agreements and the Michigan legislature bind a governor's power and make it difficult to amend public policy in a way that drastically changes course. And even though Granholtm lays blame on the trade agreements and powerful interests for Michigan's economic conditions, as we will see in the next section, the means she asserts are necessary to deal with these interests are in step with the global trade regime she critiques.

### **Circumstantial Premises**

To recall, circumstantial premises are claims about which external and internal factors led to current conditions. Between 2007 and 2010, Governor Granholtm frames Michigan and Michigan's industry as victims of the worst economic crisis in 70 years. One example:

“Let me be clear: Our world has changed, utterly. The old Michigan economy is gone. Anyone who believed that Michigan would just naturally rebound without making deep and lasting change had a rendezvous with reality in 2009. The year that just ended was a dividing line – the finale of what Time magazine has called the *‘Decade from Hell’*. GM, Chrysler and over 50 suppliers declared bankruptcy. A million Michigan jobs lost over the last decade. Record foreclosures. The worst national economic *downturn* since the Great Depression. *And Michigan was at the epicenter of it all*” (State of the State, 2010, p. 2, lines 26-32; p. 3, lines 1-3, emphasis added).

Michigan was among the hardest hit US states by the economic crisis, following 10 years of sharp decline in manufacturing as corporations left the state for lower-wage locations in the United States and Mexico. Indeed, despite a range of tax incentives Governor Granholtm promised corporations if they stayed in the state, many of Michigan's biggest companies, including long-time manufacturer Electrolux, shut their doors, citing Michigan's higher costs to do business (see Graholtm and Mulhern, 2011). Regardless, Granholtm deflects blame for Michigan's unemployment and overall decline away from corporations and onto the ‘economic downturn’ – suggesting a cyclical rather than chronic condition of capitalism. In February 2007, before the economic crisis erupted on Wall Street, Granholtm addressed a distinctly Michigan crisis: the crisis in the auto sector. It was a crisis,

she pointed out, caused by factors beyond her jurisdictional responsibility, but one that Michigan could overcome by becoming ‘competitive’:

“This moment demands bold action for one simple and undeniable reason. The world around us has changed, and it is not changing back. In this fiercely competitive world, every day that Michigan is not advancing, we are retreating. You know the new reality. Our auto industry – the anchor of our economy – has been battered as never before. Jobs have been outsourced by the tens of thousands to low-wage countries. Trade agreements go unenforced. Industrial giants and small manufacturers have declared bankruptcy, shedding workers and *slashing* wages” (State of the State, 2007, p. 1, lines 21-29, emphasis added).

In 2008, Granholm started to tie the decline of the auto industry with a looming global crisis in her discourse:

“And while we are confident that this course will lead to better days, on this day, our fellow citizens are angry. For the past decade they've watched our major industries shed jobs by the hundreds of thousands. And while our state struggles, our nation's economy is slowing. *The threat of recession is real*. Across our nation and here in Michigan, families are seeing their homes foreclosed. Gas prices have soared. Insurance rates are up. The cost of sending a child to college is rising every year” (State of the State, 2008, p.1, lines 26-32, emphasis added).

But as the economic crisis intensified, she could no longer avoid acknowledging what every Michigander already knew:

“As we gather this evening to take stock of our state, I will not sugarcoat the severity of the crisis we face. This past year has been brutal. Like few others in our history. The nation’s financial system teetered on the brink of collapse. *Our auto companies fought for their very existence*. And as the bottom fell out of the national economy, *the job situation in Michigan has gone from bad to worse*” (State of the State, 2009, p. 1, lines 15-19, emphasis added).

### ***Blame: The Global Trade Regime and ‘Other’ Politicians***

Granholm framed the loss of Michigan’s auto sector jobs as a result of causes external to the state and/or her administration. She was comfortable blaming oil executives for Michigan’s shrinking auto industry, but not the auto industry itself; she also laid blame on poor political decisions made by previous governors, hedge fund “con men” on Wall Street, and President George W. Bush for not enforcing trade agreements that impacted American industries:

“And while our state struggles, our nation’s economy is slowing. The threat of recession is real. . . . And people are angry. *Angry at the oil companies. Angry at the con men who stoked the sub-prime crisis. Angry at a government in Washington that refuses to enforce trade laws and stands idly by as our jobs disappear*” (State of the State, 2008, emphasis added).

Again, Granholm’s condemnation of the Bush Administration stemmed from a deeper criticism of the global trade regime and its ripple effects on Michigan workers:

“We must transform a state whose proud economy has been built, piston by piston, for over 100 years upon a manufacturing platform that is now being *eroded by global forces beyond our control*. We have seen, and we have fought alongside entire communities that have been hollowed out *by the ravaging pull of cheap labor from distant lands*” (Inaugural address, 2007, p. 2, lines 3-7, emphasis added).

And again in 2010:

“Over the last 10 years, we’ve lost 78 percent of our auto-manufacturing jobs. We all know the reasons – *trade policies that dismantled factories* here and built them in Mexico, the auto industry meltdown, the banking crisis, the mortgage crisis, and on top of all that, a severe national recession” (State of the State, 2010, p. 9, 20-23, emphasis added).

Granholm argued that a compounding problem for Michigan, which required “painful cuts” to state services, was the shrinking tax base:

“Like Michigan businesses large and small, and like Michigan families, state government *has had to learn to do more with less*. Since I came into office in 2003, *one out of every three dollars in state revenues is gone*. As a result, we have made painful cuts to balance our budget and again face a significant shortfall” (State of the State, 2010, p. 4, lines 17-20, emphasis added).

While the exodus of state residents was framed as a factor in Michigan’s revenue shortfalls, there is no mention in her discourse of the relationship between declining social services and tax cuts provided to corporations as a means to stimulating new investment. And as we have seen in Chapter 4 there were no new policies, nor arguments made by Granholm to recuperate some of the lost revenue by reinstating corporate tax rates to pre-2002 levels.



***Climate change as opportunity: The Green Economy' is coming and bringing jobs with it***

Governor Granholm envisioned Michigan's green economy driven by three sectors: advanced

battery manufacturing for hydrogen powered and electric cars; energy efficiency and retrofitting; and renewable energy. She devoted significant time to selling the merits of the green economy in her speeches and radio addresses, asking Michiganders to have foresight:

“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).

For Granholm, the timing and conditions were ideal for state investment in alternative energy, which offered a way out of Michigan's unemployment problems; indeed, the green economy was an economic and jobs plan. Granholm saw other benefits to investing in renewables as well: less dependency on foreign oil and reducing GHGs (Michigan policy analyst interview, May 2014). Here again, she promises countless, well-paid jobs:

“Because of the need to reduce global warming and end our dependence on expensive foreign oil, the renewable energy and energy efficiency industries *will create millions of good paying jobs*” (State of the State, 2008, p. 5, lines 21-23, emphasis added).

Granholm credited American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus earmarked for renewable energy initiatives in her circumstantial premises, as a means to helping Michigan grow its green economy. Indeed, after Obama was elected she argued that “Michigan now has a friend in the White House who shares our agenda” (State of the State, 2009, p. 3, lines 1-3). But she made it clear to both Republicans and Democrats in the state legislature that she would not allow stimulus to increase the size of Michigan's government. Rather, she would continue to “reform” government throughout and beyond the economic crisis:

“When that stimulus package is signed by the president, I'll come back to you with the specifics for Michigan. But let there be no confusion about this: *If anyone thinks we should use the stimulus package to create a bigger government in Michigan, they should think again. I have a veto pen and I will use it.* The president's economic recovery plan is a one-time opportunity, not a

permanent funding stream. *One-time money will not weaken our long-term resolve to keep our fiscal house in order.* We must reform our government to meet the needs of our new economic realities long after the stimulus funds are gone” (State of the State, 2009, p. 3, lines 16-23, emphasis added).

Granholt’s promise to keep Michigan’s “fiscal house in order” was not unique to this instance; indeed there are several examples where she argued that decisions made by previous Michigan lawmakers made it ‘necessary’ to cut spending (see State of the State, 2007, 2008). However, she often followed up with an argument that cutting spending alone was not the way out of Michigan’s ongoing economic crisis:

“And we know Michigan's fiscal policies in the 90s turned a billion dollar surplus into a huge deficit, leaving our state unprepared for the economic tsunami it's faced in this new century. 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, p. 2, lines 10-16).

Indeed, because Granholt saw the United States as in the “early stages of a green industrial revolution” (Radio Address, April 18, 2008), she often argued that public spending on education and training was necessary to ensure green jobs went to Michigan and not competing countries or American states:

“This new [renewable energy] industry, so critical to our national security, and our environment already has other states clamoring for this opportunity. Michigan cannot afford to wait” (State of the State, 2007, 4).

Michigan is thus framed as being in competition with other jurisdictions for investment and green jobs. Moreover, persons who worked under Granholt confirmed that not only did she view alternative energy as a means to creating jobs in Michigan, but that she genuinely saw alternative energy as a means to reducing GHGs and halting the progression of climate change (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014; former state legislature staff member interview, May 2014). However, Granholt used the term “climate change” just once and “global warming” only twice in her State of the State speeches and in very narrow terms:

“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).

In her radio address on Earth Day 2008, Granholm did identify global warming as a problem, albeit using a set of vague verbs and adjectives that leave little room for follow up or genuine obligation:

“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).

Thus, Granholm frames climate change more as an opportunity than a problem in Michigan. And when President Obama announced funds for renewable energy in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act, Granholm was quick to point to evidence that her administration had already taken important steps toward a green economy in the Great Lakes state:

“We, in Michigan, will use that recovery plan to accelerate our own. We are not starting from scratch. We have *already* made renewable energy a key focus of our economic development strategy. We’re already transforming education and training. And we’ve already made tough choices in our budget. So, while Michigan’s budget situation is difficult, it pales in comparison to many states’ now drowning in red ink. While other states will use this federal recovery funding simply to survive, Michigan will use it to move further and faster into a better future” (State of the State, 2009, p. 3, lines 12-15, emphasis added).

### **Goal Premises**

Goal premises consist of specific aims for a particular imaginary before identifying the means that will be used to achieve them. Granholm identifies broad goals for Michigan, which are quite similar in the 2008 and 2009 State of the State addresses:

“I said we had to focus on four things: jobs, protecting our citizens, health care, and education” (State of the State, 2008, p. 7, lines 31-32).

And in 2009 State of the State Address:

“(Our goal) is (to create) good paying jobs; educating and training people to fill those jobs; and protecting our families during the worst economic crisis in more than a quarter of a century” (p. 2, lines 28-30).

For the green economy specifically, Granholm identifies several key goals. The first goal was to make Michigan a competitive jurisdiction to invest and do business in renewable energy, electric and hydrogen-powered cars, and energy efficiency and retrofitting. Indeed to do this, Michigan must not simply act like a business; rather, it must *be* a business:

“Michigan must do as *any successful business does*. To compete, we need to *capitalize* on our natural advantages. For us, it's our geography and our history. Auto ingenuity. And our solar edge. Wind. Woods. Water. Workforce. Even waste. If we do this right, Michigan can be the alternative energy capital of North America, and create thousands and thousands of jobs” (State of the State, 2008, p. 6, lines 26-30, emphasis added).

Here, she foreshadows a means-goal argument that if, and only if, Michigan capitalizes on its natural resources and operates like a corporation can the state become a leader in renewable energy and create jobs. This goal is linked to Granholm’s second objective: to transition Michigan from a single industry driven by fossil fuels – specifically, the auto industry and its value chain – to a diverse economy that includes green sector industries, thereby “moving Michigan from the rustbelt to the greenbelt” (see for example, Radio Address, n.d., State of the State, 2008).

The third goal, which she suggests is an outcome of the first and second goals, is to create ‘thousands and thousands of good jobs’ for the working and middle class, particularly for those who lost jobs from the auto supply chain in new green sectors (see for example Radio Address July 30, 2010; State of the State, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010). Green jobs are such a focus of Granholm’s administration in fact, that she mentions it 15 times in her radio addresses alone. Whatever needed to be done to get those jobs, she would do it:

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

The last goal of the green economy – arguably a distant fourth– is to make Michigan a ‘greener state’ (see Radio Address, April 18, 2008) the meaning of which, as we have seen in the last chapter, is vague:

“Our investments, together with Recovery Act dollars, are producing green jobs and making Michigan's economic future brighter... and greener” (Radio Address, n.d.).

Moreover, the word “green” is absent from all of Granholm’s State of the State addresses; she never referred to a “green economy” in the state legislature.. But while Granholm’s goals for Michigan did not change with the intensification of the economic crisis, they were augmented with a new objective: helping Michiganders survive:

“Any *honest* assessment of our state’s economy has to recognize that things are likely to get worse before they get better. But if there is one thing I want you, the citizens of Michigan, to know this evening, it is this: Things will get better. Michigan will weather this economic storm because our people are resourceful and resilient and because our battle plan is focused on the three things that matter most: fighting for more good paying jobs in Michigan; educating and training our people to fill those jobs; and protecting our families during the worst economic conditions in more than a quarter of a century” (State of the State, 2009, p. 1, lines 27-31, emphasis added).

### **Means-Goal Premises**

The means-goal premises are the ‘hows’ policymakers argue are necessary to achieve policy goals. It is the ‘if, and only if, we follow this plan of action’ can we achieve the goals that will build our new imaginary. Through the means-goal premises policymakers rationalize policies to make them seem necessary, in order to avoid, overcome, or even benefit from existing circumstances. The means-goal premise is therefore the best indicator of incongruence between the imaginaries and circumstantial arguments policymakers make and the policies they believe are, or hope to sell to the legislature and the public as *common sense*.

Governor Granholm deemed a range of measures necessary for the realization of the green economy that would result in thousands of good, green jobs and revive the middle class. Several

measures were argued necessary for Michigan's 'competitiveness' for private investment in green sectors. As we have seen, Granholm envisioned the green economy as a race among US states, and she wanted Michigan to win:

"There's no question that these 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).

In Chapter 4 we saw that beating other US states to the green economy meant establishing a Renewable Portfolio Standard:

"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. That's why I am asking the Legislature to set ambitious alternative energy goals for Michigan - produce 10 percent of our electrical energy from renewable sources by the year 2015 and a full 25 percent by the year 2025" (State of the State, 2008, p. 7, lines 3-8).

Further legislative action would incite the state's largest utilities companies to invest in renewables, which would result in a windfall of jobs:

"As soon as this Legislature acts on a comprehensive energy package, Consumers Energy and DTE will begin to jointly invest up to \$6 billion in Michigan - much of it to build wind turbines and wind farms to produce electricity and to help businesses and homeowners install energy saving technologies. \$6 billion. 17,000 jobs" (ibid, p. 7, lines 15-18).

But selling increased regulation and funding for post-secondary training like the Green Jobs Initiative to a Republican-dominated legislature required framing renewable energy as absolutely necessary to Michigan's job growth:

"There is no way to overestimate the importance of setting state renewable energy use goals when it comes to creating jobs.... It's not often the Legislature gets to cast a vote that will create that many jobs. But you have that opportunity right now. *For the sake of our people, I urge you to get it done*" (State of the State, 2008, p. 7, lines 10-11; 19-20, emphasis added).

Governor Granholm also saw cutting public spending as necessary; indeed, she cut social services during her first five years in office (chapter 4; see also Granholm and Mulhern, 2011). However,

after 2008, spending cuts may have been more easily framed as common sense': if Michigan couldn't afford public spending before the global financial crisis, how could the state afford to spend afterwards? Indeed, Granholm argued not only that cutting spending was necessary, but that state government would also "work better":

"Since I became governor, I have resolved more than \$4 billion in budget deficits. To bring new jobs here, we will continue to 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).

Another way to offset state budgetary shortfalls – caused in part by lower corporate revenue – was by reducing the number of jobs in the public sector. Once again, Granholm likens Michigan to private industries:

"With state revenues at their lowest levels in 46 years when adjusted for inflation, like the private sector, Michigan has to continue to reduce the size and cost of the state workforce" (State of the State, 2010, 17-19, p. 1).

Recall from Chapter 4 that Granholm cut some 11,000 jobs during her tenure (Granholm and Mulhern, 2011). For those public sector employees who did not lose their jobs, there were other mandatory changes to their conditions of employment:

"Included were *tough but necessary* changes to retirement and healthcare benefits for state employees" (State of the State, 2010, lines 15-16, emphasis added).

At the same time, Granholm makes an effort to frame her policy decisions as moderate when compared to governors in other states:

"I'm proud that we've been able to balance every budget without having to resort to borrowing, selling off state assets, or other extreme measures that other states have done" (State of the State, 2010, lines 66-68).

Further, Granholm argues that ‘modernizing’ the tax system – in part by eliminating the Single Business Tax surcharge and replacing it with the Michigan Business Tax (MBT) will

“help businesses compete, invest, and create jobs” and has been “suggested by almost every economist and expert” across political stripes (State of the State, 2010, line 66-70).

Referring to ‘economists and experts’ as an endorsement for the MBT appears to be an effort by Granholm to win over the public and a hostile Republican legislature: nearly all Republicans interviewed in this study referred to the MBT as a “job killer” (Michigan GOP interviews, May 2014). Indeed, the MBT was eliminated by Governor Snyder during his first year in office and replaced with a 6 percent flat corporate tax rate.

In addition to changes to the tax code, Granholm’s green economy would be fueled by financial incentives that Granholm saw as necessary to incite the private sector to invest in Michigan, (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014). This included tax abatements for qualifying businesses in Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones (RERZ, see chapter 4) as well as public-private partnerships:

“Tonight I am announcing that we will begin an aggressive, three-year effort to attract even more alternative energy companies to Michigan through *more than \$100 million in combined public-private investments*. This will include the green technology companies that *will make Michigan a leader in building the products that reduce the emissions that cause global warming*” (State of the State, 2007, p. 6, lines 11-13, emphasis added).

Because the governor rarely referenced mitigation as a goal of green economic development, it is interesting that she does so in this context. But as her argumentative claims suggest, climate mitigation will not be the result of an aggressive carbon tax and GHG targets, but the outcome of a business agreement between government and private industry. These public private partnerships (P3s) have become hallmarks of the neoliberal period (McBride and Whiteside, 2011).



But the fulfilment of Granholm's green economy imaginary did not exclusively demand neoliberal means. Indeed, the governor recognized the value of spending on education and training, even if education was ultimately to service the needs of the private sector:

“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 21<sup>st</sup> century business is having a 21<sup>st</sup> century talent pool. And that means education. Education directly correlates to job creation” (State of the State, 2010, p, 4, lines 1-5).

Granholm identifies a skilled workforce as an important incentive for businesses to set up in Michigan; however, Michigan workers would need some assistance from government to get trained in a range of green economy careers in renewable energy technologies, manufacturing, and installation. Granholm often emphasized that the purpose of education is “to make sure Michigan's children could compete with anyone in this new economy” (State of the State, 2010, p. 8, lines 7-8) a claim that holds that education is more a means to employment than individual learning or a social good (see literature on ‘competition state’, eg. Cerny, 1997).

And while Governor Granholm often blamed corporate “greed” for Michigan's unemployment in her speeches she continued to socialize the costs of lost revenue through austerity measures, while continuing to frame ‘the common good’ in terms of the individualization of opportunities and benefits – for all those who have the means to grab them:

“(Our state) has an army of determined citizens who have had the courage and resilience to remake themselves and in so doing are helping us day-by-day to remake Michigan” (State of the State, 2009, p. 10, lines 20-22).

The values premise more closely examines this argumentative strategy of appealing to Michigan's collective memory and pride as a blue-collar, hard-working, auto state to gain public and legislative support for the goals of, and means to a transition to a diversified and ‘greener’ economy.

## Values Premises

Values premises aim to resonate with the public's values, beliefs, and memories in order to justify policies and encourage broad support. For example, Granholm often emphasized frugality as a Michigan value to help justify spending cuts, including transfer payments to municipalities:

“In Michigan, we love our hometowns and our school home teams, but *we also like saving a buck* whenever we can... It's simple. When they (municipal governments) show us they're consolidating or sharing, we'll "show them the money” (State of the State, 2007, p. 7, lines 19; p. 8, line 1, emphasis added).

Granholm situates herself and her family within these values claims in an effort to resonate with the Republican-dominated legislature, while maintaining that frugality without prudence is nonsense:

“In addition to urgency, the budget decisions you face this year would benefit from a good dose of *common-sense*. My mom can pinch pennies with the best of them, but she also taught me not to be penny-wise and pound-foolish. In our budget, we need to make *common-sense investments* that help create jobs right away... And Mom's a Republican, by the way” (State of the State, 2010, p. 5, lines 5-11, emphasis added).

Sensible Michiganders, she argued, know that any cuts to household or government spending, no matter how necessary they seem, should not come at the expense of those they love most:

“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).

Michiganders also identify with the natural environment as part of their proud heritage as a Great Lakes state. In this example, Granholm pairs Michigan's natural assets – “wind, wood, and water” – with the state's human assets: its “workforce” (State of the State, 2008). Together, these assets make Michigan a top competitor for investment and jobs in the global economy:

“We have steadily focused on the unique attributes that give Michigan a competitive advantage. No state has the skilled workforce we do. Nobody has the capacity and the

manufacturing know-how we have. Nobody has the natural resources – the forests, the diverse agriculture, the water – that we have” (State of the State, 2010, p. 3, lines 21-24).

Thus, Michigan’s value to investors is not only in its hard-working, skilled people, which it can be argued many other states also have, but also in what makes it different than Arizona, Florida, Iowa, or Washington: its natural resources, which includes the Great Lakes.

### **Alternatives: Acknowledged and Discredited**

Alternative policy options advanced by political opponents are often acknowledged in the discourse by political leaders to *appear* as though they have considered a range of policy proposals and that, after careful deliberation, the policy he or she proposes is the best choice for the greatest number of people (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). By the end of her tenure, Governor Granholm was in good practice of rebutting opposing arguments for more spending and tax cuts as a means to greater job growth:

“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).<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, Granholm argued that Michigan had to continue cutting spending as a means to reducing the deficit, not even a year beyond the global financial crisis:

“A recent national survey showed that since 2001, Michigan has done more to restrain general fund spending than any state in the country. Already, I’ve cut more than any governor in Michigan history. And the budget I present to you next week will cut even deeper” (State of the State, 2009, p. 3, lines 36-38).

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<sup>37</sup> While 2007 was not part of the study, the logic Governor Granholm offers against tax cuts in this argument from her 2007 State of the State speech made it the most colourful example of an argument against policy alternatives.

And all these cuts were necessary – including those to social services and public sector jobs:

“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, p. 2, lines 14-16).

And the following year:

“Last year, we made difficult decisions to get our fiscal house in order. The process was anything but pretty. But in the end, we made cuts, added new revenues, and we enacted money-saving reforms... all to protect the things we deeply care about: healthcare, education, and public safety” (State of the State, 2008, p. 4, lines 16-19).

So though Granholm often argued that there was a negative relationship between spending cuts and the well-being of Michiganders, she introduced nearly 100 tax cuts for businesses while simultaneously cutting social spending long before the effects of the global financial crisis subsided in her state.

Reflecting on Granholm's argumentative discourse, we can make some observations relevant to our research questions. First, Governor Granholm used argument to claim that through various incentives, credits, and tax cuts Michigan could attract a renewable energy industry and create thousands of green jobs. However, her argumentative claims around these policies made no promise of greater socio-economic equality or of reducing the causes and effects of climate change. Indeed, she was careful to frame climate change almost exclusively in economic terms, which may contribute to a neoliberal imaginary of the green economy whereby action on climate change is desirable so long as it does not interfere with economic growth and austerity measures that are necessary as a means to economic sustainability. This may minimize the opportunity to imagine the green economy as a means not only to economic prosperity, but also social equality, cultural vitality, and ecological resilience. We explore these ideas further in our analysis in Chapter 7.

## Argumentative Discourse: Governor Rick Snyder

“Good government can be sold to a community just as any other commodity can be sold. I often wonder whether the politicians of the future, who are responsible for maintaining the prestige and effectiveness of their party, will not endeavour to train politicians who are at the same time propagandists” (Bernays, 1928, as cited in Kozolanka, 2014, 3).

From the beginning of his administration in 2011, Rick Snyder had a clear picture of the imaginaries, goals, and means he believed were necessary for Michigan. The clarity of the self-declared “good, green Republican’s” vision was made possible in part by how he understood his role as governor:

“I’ve been *hired* to represent all of the people of the State Michigan, and to move us all forward together....I wasn’t hired to just be the governor of state government. I was hired to be governor of the entire state of Michigan” (Inaugural Speech, 2011, p. 2, lines 14-15; and p. 3, lines 3-4, emphasis added).

As he understood it, Snyder had been “hired” to do a job rather than elected to office, and had limited interest in the politics of governing (ENGO representative interview, May 2014). He continued to claim throughout his first term that his long-time experience outside the political arena, as an accountant and venture capitalist, made him the right choice for governor of a state with significant financial problems:

“I don’t believe in playing traditional politics. I’m not a career politician. When you look at these things – I’m a CPA by training...” (State of the State, 2014, p. 44, lines 2-5).

Governor Snyder approached his job the way any CEO would fix a troubled company: he would cut spending and restructure. Measures included Right to Work legislation; introducing self-reporting measures on public services like “Bureaucracy Busters”; reducing public services to cost-benefit analysis and results-based measures on a ‘dashboard’; introducing the Financial Manager’s Act<sup>38</sup>; cutting \$1.6 billion in corporate taxes and regulation; shifting from a job training to a job search

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<sup>38</sup> Emergency managers have the power to over-ride mayoral and council decisions, change local budgets without council approval, and initiate municipal bankruptcy proceedings (Cramer, 2011 December 6).

model for unemployed workers; and reducing legacy costs such as public employee pensions. Thus, he would indeed “reinvent Michigan”. What that reinvention would look like, however, was not as positive as he claimed.

### **Imaginaries/Solutions Claim**

“Let today be the birth of a new chapter in Michigan’s history. Let today be the birth of the era of innovation and the *Reinvention of Michigan*” (Inaugural Speech, 2011, p. 4, lines 7-9, emphasis added).

Unlike Granholm, Governor Snyder did not include a green economy in his imaginaries for Michigan. Instead, he made broader claims about how he would “reinvent” the state. Indeed, Governor Snyder used “reinventing” or “reinvention” repeatedly in his speeches as part of his personal brand and vision. However like Granholm, he makes a distinction between what he deemed to be a weaker Michigan of the past, and a stronger Michigan of the future:

“2011 was focused on dramatic policy improvements over a broken model of the past. We’ve set a bright course for the *future*. 2012 is about finishing that work, the work left over from 2011, tackling a limited number of unaddressed challenges and really make this year about *good government*. *It’s not about big government or small government. It’s about good government. Government doing the right things for the right reasons.* Let’s fully implement what we have already started and giving you, *our citizens, great customer service*” (State of the State, 2012, p. 11, lines 14-19, emphasis added).

Governor Snyder identifies “good government” – distinguishing it in the discourse from “big government or small government” – in his imaginaries claims. Since Snyder views his relationship with Michiganders as one between business and customer; “good” government must provide, as he regularly claimed, “great customer service.” To fulfill this responsibility, Snyder imagined a Michigan economy built around new technology and “innovation”:

“In my first state of the state address I spoke about the need to Reinvent Michigan with job one being jobs. Tonight is a continuation of that journey. In the 1800s, we have the natural resources era, Michigan 1.0. In the 1900s, we had the industrial era, Michigan 2.0. This century, it is time for the era of *innovation*, Michigan 3.0. We are on that path. We are getting it right and we are getting it done” (State of the State, 2012, lines 26-31, emphasis added).

While the technology sector factored into Snyder's imaginary for an innovative Michigan, he only once referred to alternative energy in his Energy and Environment Special Address and never in his State of the State speeches:

“They won’t get us to where we need to be for Michigan 3.0 – a future that includes new data centers, new mining operations, new industries, and above all, more and better jobs...We need to make sure that new sources of power – whether they are *natural gas, wind* or *biomass* – have a superhighway that can get their power to the places that need it” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 5, lines 34-40, emphasis added).

In this instance, he imagined a diversified energy portfolio that provides greater energy security to Michigan's businesses, rather than as a means to green jobs. Thus, the economic growth Snyder imagined for his state required concurrent growth in capacity, which included more and better power generation, and a trained workforce. For Snyder, this would contribute to Michigan rebounding as the “comeback state” (see State of the State, 2011; 2012). While the governor readily imagined economic sustainability in Michigan's future, he was cautious in how he framed goals for ecological sustainability:

“What we need to do is identify those actions or decisions that are *adaptable*. These are solutions that are good for Michigan, not just in one possible future, but in many possible futures. We have a lot of opportunities to take action today – action that is ‘no regrets’ *even if things turn out differently than we predict*” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 1, lines 12-15, emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that while Snyder claimed that he does not play “traditional politics”, the language he uses to balance climate science with climate denial suggest otherwise:

“How do we know what the right decisions are? The hard part is that *we don't know exactly what our future will hold* and what challenges to our energy and environmental futures we face. But that is no excuse for standing still or failing to be proactive” (Ensuring Our Future, 2012, p. 1, lines 9-11, emphasis added).

And later in the same speech:

*“People may not agree about why climate change is happening, but it certainly is affecting Michigan”* (Special Address, 2012, p. 16, lines 21-22, emphasis added).

So while Snyder acknowledged the existence of climate change, he failed to identify causes or solutions. In the next quote, Snyder anchors one of his brand phrases – “relentless positive action” – to a naturalizing idiom – “common sense” – which helps set up arguments for what he will argue are the “necessary” means for a better Michigan:

“So let’s work together, let’s use *relentless positive action*. No blame, no credit, *common sense*, solve the problem, step forward, *re-invent Michigan* be proud to say we’re creating a path and making a better place for all of us today and for our kids and their kids” (State of the State, 2013, p 14, lines 22-25, emphasis added).

### **Circumstantial Premises**

As previously mentioned, governors use the State of the State speech to address successes and failures of the previous year, identify current circumstances, and outline plans for the year to come. Snyder is quite clear from the beginning of his tenure on what believed were the circumstances that created Michigan’s economic and jobs crisis:

“All of us know we’re in *a crisis unmatched in the 60 plus years of our state*. This is a crisis that we’ll solve by working together; by adopting an attitude of *relentless positive action*. We have a multitude of problems that *we’ll solve in a systematic fashion through honesty, hard work and teamwork*. The solution will take time. There are no quick fixes or magic solutions. We have a government sector with an *unsustainable financial model*. This mortgaged our children’s future with over 54 billion dollars in pension and benefit liabilities. We have far too many young people who are not leaving school with the education they need to succeed in the future. We have an *economic climate* - it has left too many people unemployed, underemployed or forced to leave the state” (State of the State, 2011, p. 1, lines 24-32, emphasis added).

In Chapter 5, we saw that Snyder only used “sustainability” words in association with government fiscal policy (see also State of the State, 2012). Moreover, the green economy did not factor into his goals for Michigan; thus we cannot expect that he would construct means-goals arguments with sustainability in mind. What he did regularly refer to in discourse, however, is “relentless positive action”: unceasing, systematic action that presumably would cost and impact Michiganders equally.



The following year, Governor Snyder identified what he considered some “wins” for Michigan families and the circumstances that made it all possible:

“Working together, we passed a financially sound budget. *We had to address a \$1.5 billion deficit that demanded tough decisions* and I appreciated all the shared sacrifices that people made. Michigan is just like a family. In tough times, we have to *find ways to live within our means*” (p. 4, lines 17-21, emphasis added).

One of the circumstances (and means) Snyder argued contributed to a better Michigan was Right to Work legislation. To recall, Snyder signed ‘Right-to-Work’ (RTW) legislation in December 2012, arguing that it would make Michigan competitive for investment and create jobs. Indeed, the confidence of the Michigan executive office in RTW was so high, that the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)<sup>39</sup> took out a full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal. In the ad, RTW was tied to the popular ‘Pure Michigan’ brand that had, until that time, been reserved exclusively for promoting tourism:

“It’s a new day for business in Michigan. Michigan is the newest Right-to-Work state. This once-in-a-generation transformation has Michigan poised to become a preferred place to do business. Michigan has also redesigned incentive programs, streamlined regulatory processes, approved legislation to eliminate personal property taxes, and launched a new flat 6 percent business tax, giving the state its most competitive position in decades. The perfect storm of opportunity, resources, and passion is *Pure Michigan*” (see Wall Street Journal, 2013 January 8).

The ad resulted in significant backlash from unions, environmental groups, and critics; it is perhaps unsurprising that RTW was not included as a “win” in the governor’s 2013 State of the State speech delivered eight days later.

Moreover, right-to-work legislation stands in opposition to principles of Green New Dealism, which assures the right to organize and obtain decent work (see ILO, 2011). Snyder’s antagonism toward

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<sup>39</sup> MEDC is a public-private partnership

unions and environmental groups is indicative in some of the conditions he claimed led to Michigan's current conditions:

“The old approach let the bureaucracy and *special interests* control the agenda too much” (State of the State, 2011, p. 2, line 32).

From the examination of the whole speech, it is evident that “special interests” did not include business lobbyists (see Chapter 7); instead, organizations like environmental and social groups, unions, and other civil society groups were implicated as having much influence over the political agenda. Moreover, Snyder argued that like the American Civil War, there was no precedent for Michigan's economic crisis; thus Michigan must ‘think anew and act anew’:

“President Abraham Lincoln was looking to America's future during the darkest times of the Civil War when he said: ‘The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew’” (Inaugural Speech, 2011, p. 2, lines 3-6).

What Snyder comes to propose as solutions (which we have seen in his policy record in Chapter 4) is not new at all: less corporate taxes, less regulation, and more austerity measures were a large part of policy recommendations by previous governors. Thinking and acting anew also excluded decisive action on climate change. Thus, what the governor maintained was ‘new’ thinking and ‘new’ action was new only, perhaps, in that it was a *more* intense application of neoliberal logic than what was standard before the global financial crisis.

To recall, climate change received little attention from Governor Snyder as a circumstance that required measurable policy action (see Chapter 4; see also Michigan League of Conservation Voters, 2012). He never used the terms “global warming” or “climate change” in his 2011-2013 State of the State speeches, but it could not be avoided in his Energy and Environment speech. For Snyder, though the causes of climate change may be debatable, the effects on Michigan are real:

“People may not agree about why *climate change* is happening, but it is certainly affecting Michigan. Historically low – maybe all-time low- water levels in Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, last year’s drought and limited ice cover, and overall changing weather patterns across the country have stressed our lakes and groundwater. Water is in demand by farmers for irrigation use, and by Michigan residents and businesses who want clean, safe water, 100 percent of the time. *Climate change* will make Michigan’s water resources all the more valuable – and we need to be ready” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 16, lines 21-26, emphasis added).

Thus, Snyder diluted the causes of climate change in his most important environmental speech, even though he makes note of its impact on the state. In the next excerpt, the governor fails to make a discursive link between climate change and changing conditions in Michigan’s tourism industry:

“‘Pure Michigan’ is working well. Now we just need more snow” (State of the State, 2012, p. 3, lines 9-10).

Snyder’s remark was followed by laughter in the legislature, suggesting that climate change may not have been considered a serious threat to Michiganders and their livelihoods by many lawmakers.

Though Snyder was careful not to identify human activity as a cause of climate change he was, like Granholm comfortable taking credit for what he considered positive changes in Michigan’s economy. In 2012, he claimed success of his own mantra of ‘relentless positive action’ despite arguing that no one person is responsible for Michigan’s improvement as he saw it:

“We must maintain the sense of urgency that we shared all last year. We must finish what we started. I believe the greatest key to our success in Michigan this past year *was due to a philosophy of relentless positive action. No blame. No credit.* Just finding common ground and solving problems” (State of the State, 2012, p. 13, lines 33-37, emphasis added).

But though Snyder credits “relentless positive action” for Michigan’s improving economic conditions, one interviewee pointed out that “there has been a general improvement in our [Michigan] economy. It’s also easy to point to a general national trend on that; it’s just as easy to attribute that to policies that President Obama put in place. I have a hard time giving the governor [Snyder] credit for that turnaround” (NGO representative interview, May 2014).

### **Goal Premises**

In his first inaugural address, Snyder identified four specific goals that would “reinvent Michigan” and make it ‘the comeback state’:

“For the reinvention of Michigan going ahead, at a minimum we need to commit to the four following objectives: Number one, we will be a globally competitive leader in innovation. Number two, we will create more and better jobs. Number three, we will create a bright future for our young people. And finally, we will do this together, and not leave some behind” (Inaugural address, 2011, p. 3, lines 24-28).

These goals are similar to those of Governor Granholm, and Snyder continued to identify them as important drivers of policy throughout his first two years in office. Furthermore, Snyder is clear to associate these goals with four objectives, or “grading principles of good government”:

- “Deliver outstanding customer service to our citizens
- Deliver real results for real people
- Continue to deliver on both short and long-term financial responsibility
- Recognize the state government’s role is to be a team player and not a solution on our own” (State of the State, 2012, p. 12, lines 4-28).

It is important to note that there is no indication that sustainability, ‘or meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (see UN Bruntland Report, 1986) would (or will be) a directive in Snyder’s plans for Michigan’s economy. However, he did identify two goals related to energy and the environment in his special address later in 2012. The first was the diversification of the energy supply to ensure competitive costs and availability. The second was the problem of invasive species in the Great Lakes:

“This (invasive species in the Great Lakes) is not an issue on which Michigan can afford to sit idly by, even when others ignore the costs. This is not an issue where we can wait and see if the risks are worth it. We know there are measures we can be taking today to reduce the risk of new invasive species entering the Great Lakes. We can and we must manage the ones that are already here so they do not devastate our precious Lakes” (Energy and the Environment speech, 2012, p. 15, lines 3-8).

Indeed, combatting invasive species in the Great Lakes is so important to Snyder that he calls on the federal government to make it a priority as well:

“If the federal government won’t protect Michigan’s commerce and the integrity of the Great Lakes, then we will remind it of its obligations. The federal government is required under the federal Endangered Species Act to take actions that protect Michigan’s native mussels and other endangered species from invasive species not just the Lakes’ ecosystem as a whole, but these protected species....Legally, it is not an obligation that can be avoided because it costs a lot or is inconvenient” (“Ensuring our Future”, p. 15, lines 34-40).

Despite Snyder’s declarations that he would champion Great Lakes issues, the Michigan League of Conservation Voters gave the governor a C+ on his mid-term report (MLCV, 2012) and an F on his 2013-2014 report for his efforts, or lack of efforts, protecting the Great Lakes, which included weakening wetland protections and approving a permit for a sulfide mine within 200 feet from Lake Superior (see MLCV, 2014, p. 5).

### **Means-Goal Premises**

#### ***‘Relentless Positive Action’***

It is in the means-goal premises that Snyder describes the kinds of policies that “relentless positive action” requires, beginning with eliminating the deficit:

“Working together we passed a financially sound budget. *We had to address a \$1.5 billion deficit that demanded tough decisions and I appreciate all the shared sacrifices that people make.* Michigan is just like a family” (State of the State, 2012, p. 4, lines 17-20, emphasis added).

Here, he suggests that cutting the deficit was a burden equally carried by Michiganders. However, as we saw in Chapter 4, and as interviewees confirmed, Snyder’s 6 percent flat tax drastically reduced the state’s revenue, which in turn required more cuts to social assistance and pensions. In the neoliberal period, balancing the budget has become increasingly difficult, as increasing “tax” has become a hostile phrase (see Chapter 5), while reducing the corporate tax rate is “necessary” to stimulate private investment. This is in contrast to policies that aim to increase wages alongside inflation and raise corporate taxes to help pay for social programs. For example, there has been

considerable debate among political parties regarding eliminating subsidies on oil and instead subsidizing renewable energy, and/or introducing a carbon tax as a means to reducing greenhouse gas and funding social programs. However, even after the GFC and amid drastic shifts in the Earth's climate, most policymakers in North America reject increasing taxes of any kind and embrace the idea that cutting corporate tax rate is the best means to (individual) prosperity.

### ***Growing the Economy***

As noted in the previous section, Governor Snyder emphasized tracking and measuring changes in Michigan using economic metrics. His “Michigan Dashboard” is framed as a means to achieving the goals he has set out for Michigan:

“True success is based on achieving real results for real people. *We're going to have tough, hard measurements.* Our achievements or lack of progress will be evident...” (p. 2, lines 4-6, emphasis added).

And

“We will measure and measure, and measure and that is how we will succeed” (State of the State, 2011, p. 2, lines 18-19).

Reviewing policy successes and challenges, as determined by metrics in the MI Dashboard, becomes a hallmark of Snyder's speeches, and indeed the dashboard itself is difficult to critique: tracking the impact of public policy does make sense. But examination of the MI Dashboard confirms that climate change is not a priority of the Snyder Administration: despite the governor's claims that state activity, including economic growth, finance, and employment, will be tracked through “tough, hard, measurements” there is no clear measurement for tracking and/or reducing the state's greenhouse gasses.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the words “environment” and “climate” were used by both Michigan governors to refer to conditions for business investment. Snyder argued that cutting regulations was a necessary means to attract investment to the state. With the establishment of the

Office of Regulatory Reinvention in 2011, he made several arguments that deregulation was common sense for the growth of Michigan's economy. Consider the following two examples:

“So far we have rescinded nearly 400 obsolete, confusing, and burdensome regulations. We need *a regulatory environment that is conducive to business growth* and job creation while making sure we are properly protecting our citizens” (State of the State, 2012, p. 10, lines 35-38, emphasis added).

“We did good work there through the Office of Regulatory Reinvention and the work of this body working together. If you look at it, we eliminated over 1,000 rules last year on a net basis. We've roughly eliminated ten rules for every new rule we've added. *That's how you create an environment that's conducive to business*, while still protecting our citizens that will generate jobs” (State of the State, 2013, p. 3, lines 26-30, emphasis added).

Similarly, Snyder maintained that Granholm's Michigan Business Tax negatively affected the business climate:

“As many of you heard me say, the Michigan Business Tax was *just plain dumb*. In addition to failing all three principles<sup>40</sup> it was *a job killer* that imposed an *unfair double tax burden* on our best job creators, our small and medium business people” (State of the State, 2012, p. 5, lines 1-4, emphasis added).

But while critics argued that the MBT would hurt small and medium businesses, these firms would in fact pay less tax, while profitable firms and firms operating in Michigan with little property or payroll in the state would pay more (Guilfoyle, 2008, p. 11). Regardless, Governor Snyder repealed the MBT, replacing it with the 6 percent flat tax – reducing government revenue by \$1.5 billion (Evangelista, 2011 February 8). What is peculiar is that like his predecessor, Snyder argued that spending cuts would lead to better services: “We will provide better services, for less money” (State of the State, 2011, p. 4, lines 4-5).

This argument suggests not only that the Snyder administration would improve public services, but that it would do so despite a reduction in revenue. However, public services deemed “better” as a

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<sup>40</sup> In the previous paragraph, Snyder identified his three principles of a good tax system as “simple, fair, and efficient” (p. 4, line 34).

result of greater “efficiency” in state government has not lead to greater security for working and middle-class Michiganders (see Chapter 4). Indeed, the governor increased taxes on the working and middle classes, and made cuts to a wide range of social programs (see for example, State of the State, 2011; State of the State, 2012; “Ensuring our Future”, 2012). This included reducing unemployment benefits from 26 to 20 weeks (Watson and Marcus, 2013 November 9); increasing strict time restrictions for cash welfare, thereby cutting aid for low income families<sup>41</sup> (ibid; see also Seitz-Wald, 2011 August 31); and increasing the tax burden on people making less than \$17,000/year (Somanader, 2012 February 2).

While some in the Michigan legislature maintained that cutting spending and taxes were necessary to balance the budget and/or incite business investment (Michigan legislature interviews, May 2014), others in Michigan’s environmental and social justice community agree that policies cutting unemployment benefits and pensions, while increasing taxes on the working class, are contradictory to principles of social sustainability (Michigan ENGO representative interview, May 2014).

### ***Climate Change and the Environment***

Snyder made arguments for specific policy solutions to manage problems associated with the Great Lakes, including pollution and invasive species, with a value-added component of increasing green space:

“Green infrastructure is one area where an investment can resolve a water-related problem and create recreational space, all at the same time. It also helps address non-point source pollution –pollution that doesn’t come out of a pipe but affects our waters. We need to focus on creating and recreating green spaces – parks, rain gardens and even swales and ponds - that can absorb storm water. This will lower our costs while protecting our beaches and the health of the Great Lakes – *a real win-win*” (“Ensuring our Future”, p. 17, lines 4-10, emphasis added).

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<sup>41</sup> Stricter time limits for social assistance were first implemented by Governor Granholm in 2007.



While Snyder signalled concern for water pollution in this speech, less than two years later he approved a permit for a sulfite mine located adjacent to Lake Superior (MLCV, 2014). The fact is that issues of sustainability, for Governor Snyder, remained largely tied to economic growth:

“In the fall, I give a special message on energy and the environment. We need to be more strategic in focusing on the intersection of job creation, affordability, science, and sustainability. We need to continue Michigan’s leadership in protecting the Great Lakes, one of the world’s greatest assets” (State of the State, 2012, p. 11, lines 26-30).

Energy security and affordability for residents and businesses of Michigan have also been a concern to Governor Snyder. While the governor maintained that energy security includes access to renewables, it also would require the continued use of natural gas extracted through hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking”. Snyder argued that despite its controversy, fracking for natural gas was safe, sustainable, and an important means to energy and jobs in his state:

“Michigan’s natural gas production has never once had an incident where groundwater was polluted by hydraulic fracturing, even those we’ve been doing for decades. That’s in part because Michigan has strict regulations on drilling and wastewater management. These regulations have been *no-regrets* decisions. We have many successful companies that *have safely* produced oil and natural gas in Michigan, while protecting Michigan’s waters. That’s a great example of how Michigan has made protecting the environment a key part of our energy decisions in the past...” (“Ensuring our Future” 2012, p. 2, lines 19-23, emphasis added).

Another energy source that was argued by Snyder as safe and sustainable is enhanced oil recovery (EOR) from Michigan’s existing oil wells. Exploring EOR is a means to cultivating greater business, which he refers to here as “economic gardening”:

“This experiment has been success and is a great example of a *win-win* for the environment and the economy of Michigan. We need to do more to make sure this industry, which is a great example of *economic gardening*, can grow in Michigan” (“Ensuring our Future”, p. 4, lines 40-43, emphasis added).

Interestingly, Governor Snyder references *mitigation* only once in his Energy and Environment speech, and not in regards to climate change. Instead, he spoke of ‘wetland mitigation banks’. A

wetland mitigation bank is an offsite compensatory replacement for wetlands under land development, in an effort to satisfy mitigation requirements under section 404 of the US Clean Water Act (Ruhl and Salzman, 2006). Rather than protect or restore existing wetlands, developers can either create a wetland ‘bank site’ in another location, or contribute a fee to fund wetland mitigation projects. While attaching a financial cost to wetlands seems like a sensible solution to development, “the practice allows a developer to compensate for resource losses by purchasing ‘credits’ from another landowner—the wetland banker—who has created or enhanced wetland resources elsewhere” (ibid, p. 7). In other words, wetland mitigation banks hold limited guarantee that a new wetland will be established in an area essential to wildlife and/or human livelihoods, or that a wetland will be replaced at all. Governor Snyder expresses his enthusiasm for the approach:

“Right now, when a construction project eliminates an existing wetland, Michigan law focuses too much on putting replacement wetlands on the same site. A better way is to expand our use of wetland mitigation banks. In a wetland bank, high quality, spectacular wetlands can result from many different developers choosing to pool their resources and collectively replace their wetlands” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 17, lines 21-26).

While Governor Snyder used ‘mitigation’ just once and in a very specific context, he used ‘adaptation’ more frequently in a range of contexts; however, what exactly adaptation means remains vague:

“What we need to do is identify those actions or decisions that are *adaptable*. These are solutions that are good for Michigan, not just in one possible future, but in many possible futures” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 1, lines 12-14, emphasis added).

“*Adaptability* has to be the foundation of every energy decision we make. Building on that foundation of adaptability, there are three pillars that every decision must stand on: excellent reliability, an affordable price, and a protected environment” (ibid, p. 1, lines 17-20, emphasis added).

The implication of his words is that adaptation is necessary, but without providing some certainty about why adaptability is needed - minimized by phrases like ‘possible futures’ – his words have

limited actionable impact. On the other hand, changes to existing environmental policies demands efficiency and leadership from the ORR:

“The Office of Regulatory Reinvention, in conjunction with DEQ [Department of Environmental Quality] and *stakeholders*, has developed and issued recommendations to ensure that Michigan’s environmental regulations are simple, fair, and *efficient*” (Ensuring Our Future, 2012, p. 19, lines 11-13, emphasis added).

Thus environmental regulations should not interfere with the business environment.

### Values Premises

#### ***Hard Work, Individual Prosperity, and Pride in the Great Lakes***

Like Governor Granholm, Snyder often references the Great Lakes to inspire citizen pride:

“Water, and especially Great Lakes water, has always been essential to Michigan. It defines us. We have one-fifth of the world’s fresh water supply. We have more coastline than any state except Alaska. And with our local communities leading the way, water is central to our place-making efforts across the state. You can’t go anywhere in Michigan without seeing communities reconnecting with their waters” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 13, lines 34-39).

Not only are the Great Lakes something for Michigan to be proud of, they are also part of a valuable set of natural assets:

“It means thinking about what services we want from our environment now and well into the future. It means using *data and knowledge* to guide our decisions about *investment* in our state’s ecological and natural *assets*. These systems form the basis of life and the basis for quality of life that has defined us and the state from the beginning” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 8, lines 34-37, emphasis added).

Like the measurements in the MI Dashboard, the natural environment should serve an economic purpose to have value. This positioning is most evident in the governor’s arguments regarding state land management:

“In the past, we approached environmental protection in a reactive and relatively piecemeal fashion. While we have enjoyed some great *results* in a collection of public parks, forests, beaches and recreation areas, these *assets do not necessarily work together ecologically or economically*...It is unclear if this collection of state owned lands is providing for the many collective *values* that Michiganders hope to receive: camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, sense

of place, timber harvesting, forest products and biodiversity” (ibid, p. 8, lines 13-15; lines 22-24, emphasis added).

Thus Snyder emphasizes an instrumental, rather than intrinsic value of nature, whereby nature must ultimately serve a purpose of human productivity to have worth (see Nelson, Bruskotter, Vucetich, 2015). To be sure, some political elites may only frame nature this way, as a means to discursively engaging critics of state-held land. But a recent survey conducted by Nelson, Bruskotter and Vucetich (2015) found that 82 percent of respondents believe nature is valuable for its own sake, rather than any instrumental purpose it can serve. Given Snyder’s environmental record and cost-benefit approach to governing, it is likely he believed a re-evaluation of state land holdings was indeed in order.

As with Granholm, Snyder framed the auto industry as a source of state pride. In his 2013 State of the State address, Snyder made an argumentative claim that the auto sector was one of three major industries in the state:

“Just to talk about some of our major industries, as I call it, everybody talks about the 'big three' of autos; I call it the 'other big three'. Our big three industries are autos, agriculture and tourism. All are hitting on full cylinders and it's a wonderful thing to see. I went to the Auto Show just this week. The auto industry is back in our country, over 14 million units sold. But, one number you may not know is right here in Michigan. This last year over 2.25 million units of those 14 million units were assembled right here in Michigan and we should be proud of that. (State of the State, 2013, p. 2, lines 5-10).

The auto sector is indeed Michigan’s longest and most successful industry, creating jobs and prosperity in the state for some 70 years. But it is important to note that despite \$2.2 billion in economic activity generated by the renewable energy sector (former legislative staff member interview, May 2014), there was no mention of it in Snyder’s values claims around the economy.

This suggests that Snyder did not imagine the renewable energy sector as an economic driver for Michigan’s economy, nor did he consider the green economy significant enough that it could invoke a shared sense of pride among Michiganders.

### **Alternative Options Acknowledged and Discredited**

As we saw in Governor Granholm's speeches, political leaders advance alternative policy measures in the discourse and then quickly discredit them, appearing as though they have deliberated over all possible options and chose the best conclusion. Recall Governor Snyder's attempt in his imaginary claims that "good government" is distinct from typical arguments for "big" or "small" government:

"The work left over from 2011, a limited number of unaddressed challenges and really making this year about good government. It's not about big government or small government. It's about good government. Government doing the right things for the right reasons. Let's fully implement what we have already started and giving you, our citizens, great customer service" (State of the State, 2012 p. 11, lines 14-19).

In his next argument, however, he absolves the state of any responsibility to the citizen, which is an inherent logic of 'big government':

"The *state government's role is to be a team player and not a solution on our own*. We need to continue to serve as catalysts for success in having all of us work together and win together. As I have often said, our role is not to create jobs but to create an environment that encourages job creation" (State of the State, 2012, p. 12, lines 33-38, emphasis added).

Paradoxically, Snyder argues that government is a "team player" by creating the conditions for business investment and job creation and stepping back. It is an argument that represents government as hands off in a 'free market' economy; however as we have argued, such an economy does in fact require the hand of the state to reduce corporate taxes, regulation, and unions. Indeed, Governor Snyder was so sure that Michigan was a model state of decision-making that he recommended the US government take lessons from the Great Lakes state:

"We need to continue to deliver on both short and long-term financial responsibility. This year we became a positive role model for the rest of the country on this topic. We closed a large deficit and started paying down our long-term liabilities. We were a clear contrast to the federal government in the debt ceiling crisis. I encourage them to look to Michigan as the place for answers" (State of the State, 2012, p. 12, lines 23-28).

From the review of Governor Snyder's argumentative claims, we can draw some early conclusions regarding our research questions. Snyder's argumentative imperatives for neoliberal policies were never for creating green jobs or as a means to greater socio-economic equality or to halt climate change – these priorities of holistic sustainable development were not priorities of his administration. Instead, he made argumentative imperatives for corporate tax cuts, deregulation, and austerity measures as necessary means to increasing private sector investment and jobs. And unlike in Granholm's argumentative claims, there is no evidence that Snyder felt constrained by neoliberalism– it is his preferred *modus operandi*.

However, Snyder made argumentative claims around climate change and the environment that may contribute to the naturalization of a green neoliberal imaginary for the State of Michigan. As we saw in how he framed land and wetland management, minimized the relationship between human activity and climate change, and emphasized instrumental over intrinsic value of nature, while arguing for greater environmental deregulation and right-to-work legislation, Snyder's arguments fit precisely inside the green neoliberal imaginary. Thus, while the green economy may not be a relic of the Granholm era, it certainly is not part of the reinvention plans of Governor Snyder.

## **Argumentative Claims in Ontario**

### **Argumentative Discourse: Premier Dalton McGuinty**

#### **Imaginarities/Solutions Claim**

A Speech from the Throne differs from a State of the State speech in that it tends to outline a plan for the upcoming legislative session, rather than taking full stock of the previous year. Part of the reason for this distinction is that the Throne Speech, while delivered by the Lieutenant Governor of the province, is a speech by the executive branch – the Premier and his cabinet – who are also members of the legislative branch; thus they can introduce policies and enact them with relative ease, particularly under a majority government. In the State of the State speech the governor typically reviews the challenges and successes of the year that passed, and while he or she can present their policy plans for the coming year, he or she must ultimately work through the House of Representatives and the Senate, made more difficult for a Democrat governor with a Republican majority in one or both houses of the legislature and vice versa. Here, McGuinty describes the purpose of a Throne speech:

“A throne speech typically paints the big picture – laying out plans for the next session or mandate...And it is traditional to use a wide brush, to paint with broad strokes, with the broadest of them all reserved for the conclusion of the speech” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 11, lines 14-15).

A Speech from the Throne is therefore not as specific as a budget speech (delivered by the finance minister), which outlines recent and proposed changes to revenue and spending that are, it is typically argued by the government, absolutely necessary to advance the best course of action for the province. It is important to remember, therefore, that how the government frames its imaginary and presents arguments for certain policy measures, may often be incongruent with the actual policies it proposes.

Unlike the Michigan governors, the McGuinty government was comfortable talking about climate change in its imaginary for Ontario:

“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” (Budget Speech, 2007, p. 17, lines 1-4).....the Premier will present a climate change plan that “will allow Ontario to take full responsibility for the defining challenge of our generation” (ibid, p. 17, lines 17-19).

And making discursive links between economic growth and environmental action:

“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).

In the 2007 Throne Speech, McGuinty foreshadows the introduction of Bill 150, the Green Energy and Economy Act, which received Royal Assent in 2009. But as we saw in Chapter 4, the GEA was already on the government radar, as an updated version of Ontario’s Renewable Energy Standard Offer Program (RESOP). This was in large part a result of reports, campaigns, and lobbying by the Green Energy Act Alliance, which included organizations like Environmental Defence, Pembina Institute, First Nations Energy Alliance, David Suzuki Foundation, and the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association (Smitherman interview, September 3, 2014). The Green Energy Act was framed by the Alliance as a timely opportunity for Ontario to be a leader in North America, and ‘out hustle’ – as Granholm often put it – the competition in the United States:

“Ontario is in a position to take advantage of the relative lack of market development and manufacturing for renewables in North America. Although there are several jurisdictions in the US (Michigan, New Mexico, California, Minnesota and Iowa) who are actively speaking to manufacturers and promising legislation, very little has been finalized or confirmed. **It is NOT too late for Ontario to take the lead in North America**, enact sound legislation and attract manufacturing, but Ontario must act quickly and aggressively” (Green Energy Act Alliance, 2008 October 26, emphasis in original).

By the middle of McGuinty’s tenure, the green economy was imagined by the Liberals as a next step for a well-managed, forward-thinking province that wanted to create jobs and growth, while taking climate science seriously:



“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).

At the same time, however, the Liberal government was slow to recognize in the 2008 Budget Speech an impending global financial crisis. While there was likely intentional effort by the government to keep the province’s market outlook positive as news spread of the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States, this lends credence to the argument that political elites use speeches as signalling devices to the market:

“Our economy today remains as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves and it outperformed expectations this year” (Budget Speech, 2008, p. 1 lines 7-8).

And while the Liberals acknowledged that there had been some decline in Ontario’s economic performance, this had been minimized by Ontario’s staple industries, such as natural resources:

“Resilience in the face of adversity speaks to the strength of Ontario’s fundamentals and reminds us that while some sectors are struggling, many more are prospering” (Budget Speech, 2008, p. 1, lines 11-13).

Whether attempting to boost investor confidence or deny a problem, the Liberals projected a surplus of \$600 million and a sixth consecutive balanced budget. Furthermore, the Ontario government asserted that it was not alone in its projections: the private sector expected ‘modest’ economic growth in 2008 that would strengthen to 2.8 percent by 2010 (ibid). However, despite Ontario’s ‘prosperity’, the provincial government cut revenue, regulations, and social spending even before the financial crisis (see Fanelli and Thomas, 2010). Here the Liberals frame deregulation as necessary for businesses to thrive:

“This year, we will also modernize business and financial regulations and streamline approval processes – to help reduce red tape for hard-working Ontario business people” (Budget Speech 2008, p. 9, lines 28-30).

And as Ontarians began experiencing the impact of the global recession, the Liberal government made an interesting shift in the political discourse: they extended the green economy imaginary to one of a “green society”. This suggests that economic growth was indeed a component of Ontario’s sustainability planning. However, while “green society” may suggest a more inclusive imagination of sustainable development – one that might include better public services and good, decent jobs – the realization of the green society demanded nothing less than more economic growth:

“We know that only a strong and growing economy will create the new jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Only a strong and growing economy will allow us to maintain and enhance our public services. 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).

In other words, the green society was not the *means* to a better quality of life, but rather *a result* of economic growth. And as we have seen in the policy record, the pursuit of this imaginary required not just a feed-in-tariff, but also lowering corporate income taxes and cutting regulatory ‘red tape’ that were framed as hindrances to economic growth. But with the loss of his majority in 2011, McGuinty had to work harder in the political discourse to justify his government’s vision for Ontario. This meant that the Liberals had to make stronger circumstantial claims regarding the economic crisis. In the 2011 Speech from the Throne, the Liberals used the same quote from Abraham Lincoln’s Civil War speech that Snyder had, to frame the economic recession:

“As we seek opportunities for the future, we are reassured by history. For it teaches us that, through the ages, societies have faced challenges similar to ours and, with ingenuity, resilience and compassion, prevailed. As Abraham Lincoln once said: ‘The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate in the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. *As our case is new, so must we think anew, and act anew*’. These are serious times. And they demand that all members of this House devote themselves

to a *serious plan*, and a common goal”<sup>42</sup> (Speech from the Throne, November 22, 2011, p. 10, lines 6-15, emphasis added).

For McGuinty, as it was for Snyder, the Lincoln passage helped lay claim that Ontario faced exceptional economic circumstances that would require exceptional solutions. It is interesting to note that the line that immediately followed the Lincoln excerpt was excluded by both McGuinty and Snyder:

“It is not ‘Can any of us imagine better?’ but ‘Can we all do better?’ Object whatsoever is possible, still the question recurs, ‘Can we do better?’ (State of the Union, 1862, emphasis added).

Thus, to simply imagine a better state is not good enough. Overcoming significant challenges (in Lincoln’s case, Civil War) requires decisive action, even if it is unpopular and difficult. The reunification of the United and Confederate states did not justify granting permanent slave rights to the South. Similarly, the global financial and climate crises demanded nothing less from government than policies that could end widespread inequality and halt climate change. Instead as we have seen, McGuinty applied the same neoliberal logic as he had before 2008: corporate tax cuts, deregulation, and even austerity are all necessary to stimulate Ontario’s economy.

## **Circumstantial Premises**

### ***Good economic policy***

Like the governors, McGuinty used political speech to deflect criticism from his government and shift blame on changing economic circumstances to external factors. In this instance, the premier makes a circumstantial claim regarding the causes of unemployment:

“Like Ontarians, your government is clear-eyed about the challenges posed by a high dollar, high commodity prices, and the always intense – and sometimes intensely unfair – competition faced by our manufacturers, foresters, and farmers” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 5, lines 11-13).

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<sup>42</sup> For full Lincoln speech see <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29503>

In other words, inflation and trade policies, not the Liberal government, increasingly put Ontarian businesses at an economic disadvantage. On the other hand, McGuinty maintained that his government was responsible for creating more manufacturing jobs than those that were lost to these external factors:

“Your government understands that we are all in this together, and even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many” (ibid, p. 6, lines 25-25).

And by 2011, McGuinty was claiming that Ontario had overcome the effects of the GFC, citing a 91 per cent recovery of jobs lost during the economic recession. And he presented indicators that Ontario’s worst problems were over:

“Five consecutive quarters of growth, high business investment and a resurgent manufacturing sector are all evidence that the global economic downturn is behind us” (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 1, lines 3-5).

### ***Climate Change as a Serious Problem - and Opportunity – for Ontario***

The McGuinty Liberals viewed climate change as real problem on which they wanted to take real policy action. Because the premier saw climate change as a problem – and because he had won two consecutive majority governments – he was enabled to take action on climate change using a variety of policy measures. Even before the Green Energy Act, McGuinty declared that Ontario would cut GHG emissions by 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% below by 2020, and 80% by 2050 (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 9). Eliminating all coal-fired plants in the province and shifting more power generation to renewable energy sources were the most prominent actions taken by the McGuinty government toward reducing Ontario’s greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, mitigating climate change was not the only cause for McGuinty’s green economy imaginary. The green economy imaginary would make Ontario more competitive for business investment:

“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).

This argumentative framing of the green economy is quite different than arguments advanced by Governor Granholt. Whereas Granholt must frame the green economy as a means to creating jobs, McGuinty was able to frame the green economy as a positive outcome of fighting climate change. Indeed, the premier often argued that global environmental issues presented opportunities on which Ontario, with its educated population, manufacturing sector, and rich natural resources, could capitalize, beginning with green energy:

“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).

Moreover, McGuinty argued that another emerging opportunity of the green economy was blue:

“The next frontier in the green economy is water. More specifically, water, technologies, and services to help people around the world conserve their clean water and clean up their polluted water. We know that over the course of the next 20 years, demand for water will exceed supply by some 40 percent. We also know that at present, this *represents a 400-billion-dollar, global industry* that will double every five or six years. So *it represents a tremendous global challenge and tremendous Ontario opportunity*” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 2, lines 10-18, emphasis added).

Water was thus the next environmental problem on which Ontario could capitalize given the circumstances: an increasing global crisis of clean water:

“In the next 20 years, worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40 percent greater than current supply – a crisis in the making if the world does not act. Already Ontario is beginning to provide solutions...(your government) will build on our strong foundations of water expertise – and *make our province the clean water capital of North America*” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 7, lines 13-14, emphasis added).

McGuinty imagined a blue economy much the way he imagined a green economy: an opportunity for significant economic growth in Ontario. While Governor Snyder foreshadowed the economic opportunities for the Great Lakes State in his speeches, McGuinty actually introduced legislation with the explicit goal of stimulating growth in water technology, specifically the Water Opportunities Act, 2010. And to McGuinty, Ontario had no equal:

“We built an economy supporting a quality of life for our families that is the envy of the world. And as we begin the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – as our world faces unprecedented economic, environmental, and social changes – one thing remains clear. The world needs Ontario. The world needs what we have to offer” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 3, lines 5-11, emphasis added).

While the premier was genuinely concerned with climate change— his policy actions aimed at reducing GHGs met up with his policy arguments – there was incongruence between the way McGuinty framed the circumstantial premises the led to Ontario’s economic problems and the policies he proposed to deal with them. A compounding problem, he maintained, was stimulus spending following 2008:

“An economic decline of this nature, plus the need for an aggressive stimulus plan, means that we now project a deficit of \$14.1 billion in 2009-10. Mr. Speaker, history has shown that *governments cannot simply spend their way out of a recession*. Returning Ontario to a balanced budget will take time and *require difficult decisions*” (Budget Speech, 2009, p. 3, lines 8-13, emphasis added).

Thus stimulus spending may have been (temporarily) necessary, but it was also part of Ontario’s problem. The result was a set of circumstantial premises that maintained that government stimulus is inherently negative and unnatural, steering Ontario away from a ‘right’ path. And rather than examine the historical impact of neoliberal policies on social and economic inequality in the province (see for example, Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March), McGuinty remained certain of exactly what policies were needed for Ontario to restore economic balance and be competitive.

### **Goal Premises**

In 2007, Premier McGuinty framed prosperity as both a responsibility of, and an opportunity for, all Ontarians:

“To truly succeed as an economy and as a society, *we need everyone at his or her best*. That is what *opportunity* for all is about. *It does not mean more prosperity for some and more poverty for others*” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 7, lines 10-12, emphasis added).

Here, the premier implies that an Ontario where people equally contribute and benefit from economic growth is a goal of his government. This would require setting another goal: growing Ontario's jobs. As the premier of a manufacturing province that was losing jobs to low-wage countries like Mexico and right-to-work states like Alabama (and then Michigan in 2012), job creation was high on the McGuinty government's to-do list. McGuinty argued that it was more important than ever to expand a green economy in the province:

“Ontario's economy must become even more competitive, innovative and sustainable” (Budget Speech, 2009, p. 5, lines 23-24).

A green economy would create jobs that were less threatened by competition from other jurisdictions:

“Your government will soon welcome hundreds of new, clean energy investments in Ontario through its feed-in tariff program—which is attracting the interest of the world's investors and entrepreneurs” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 6, lines 7-9).

The FIT did indeed set Ontario apart from other jurisdictions in North America, attracting investment and creating thousands of jobs (see McBride and Lipsig-Mummé, 2015). And despite economic crisis, Ontario's water, technology, minerals, and skilled workforce continued to give the province a comparative advantage:

“Without a doubt, our world has changed. The challenges facing Ontarians in that new world are unprecedented. But Ontario families have every right to be hopeful about their future. Because our world needs Ontario” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 16, lines 9-12).

Furthermore, the premier committed to clear targets that would reduce Ontario's greenhouse gasses:

“Your government will move forward with Ontario's plan to combat climate change by working towards meeting Ontario's goal of reducing the emissions that contribute to climate change by 6% below 1990 levels by 2015, 15% below by 2020, and 80% below by 2050. It will achieve this, in part, *by making our energy cleaner and greener*, moving forward with the province's first long-term electricity plan in a generation. Your government will *replace coal, double renewables, double conservation, and modernize nuclear capacity*” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 9, lines 16-24, emphasis added).

At the same time, however, Dalton McGuinty made claims that eliminating Ontario's deficit was also an on-going and necessary step to ensure Ontario's economic competitiveness. Indeed, from the beginning of his premiership in 2003, McGuinty made the deficit one of his top priorities, which served as an indicator of impending austerity (see Fanelli and Thomas, 2011):

“As the finance minister will outline in his upcoming fall economic statement, the bottom line is maintaining a *strong fiscal position* for Ontario supported by a growing economy that is as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves” (Speech from the Throne, 2007, p. 5, lines 19-21, emphasis added).

Again, as the McGuinty government laid out its budget plans in the years following 2009, it framed stimulus spending and Ontario's deficit as “necessary”, but *temporary* (and in the long-term, *negative*) conditions to counter the effects of global recession on economic growth and employment in the province:

“Mr. Speaker, *we did what was necessary to put our province on a stronger competitive footing* and create more opportunities for Ontarians. As part of the global effort to stimulate the economy during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, *our government, like those everywhere, ran a deficit*” (Budget Speech, 2011, p. 5, lines 16-20, emphasis added).

Moreover, McGuinty maintained that every industry, government, and individual is *equally* responsible for strengthening the economy:

“And while no single industry or not individual government is responsible for this global crisis, each of us has a responsibility to act” (Budget Speech, 2009, p. 3, lines 1-2).

But despite this emphasis on shared responsibility, the burden of reducing the deficit would not be shared equally by Ontarians (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March).



### Means-Goal Premises

Before 2008, the McGuinty Liberals continued to emphasize two key policy priorities: reducing the deficit inherited from the Conservatives, and building a green economy. Indeed, despite restricting and/or cutting spending as a means to deficit reduction, the Liberal government argued that spending on education and infrastructure was necessary for a green economy:

“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).

Following the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, however, and after Ontario invested \$34 billion to stimulate its stagnated economy, eliminating a new deficit was once again atop of McGuinty’s policy agenda. Accomplishing these goals would be fairly simple and straightforward, the Liberals argued, because they had proven experience:

“So now, we are applying *the same prudent, proven and responsible approach* that saw us through the global recession to the challenge of the deficit” (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 7, lines 6-7, emphasis added).

But the McGuinty Liberals significantly over-stated the extent of Ontario’s deficit to the public. In his report, TD economist Don Drummond projected a deficit of \$30 billion when in fact it was closer to \$11.9 billion in 2012-2013 (Hennessey and Stanford, 2013 March). And yet, McGuinty argued that hiring Don Drummond was one of the best actions the government could take toward eliminating Ontario’s deficit while *still* funding social services. Drummond was dubbed an “expert”; therefore McGuinty expected the legislature to recognize the validity of Drummond’s recommendations, which included significant austerity measures, and accept his methods, measures, and ideological framework as common sense:

“That report will make recommendations on ways to *eliminate the deficit* and ensure that Ontario has the fiscal capacity to support strong schools and hospitals, even as worldwide economic growth slows. Your government looks forward to that report and discussing its

findings in this Legislature. It is hoped that Mr. Drummond's report *will spur a mature, thoughtful debate* that contributes toward your government's overall objectives. Mr. Drummond will challenge all those elected to this Legislature to bring forward their best ideas to help your government balance the budget, control spending growth and deliver for Ontario families" (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 8, lines 15-23, emphasis added).

While the McGuinty government would claim to have examined a range of alternatives for creating jobs and "a better quality of life" in Ontario (see values premises below), these were limited to policies that would stimulate business:

"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.* And when we make investments in a strong, well-trained and healthy workforce, it creates confidence among the businesses that want to set up shop and create jobs here in Ontario. The McGuinty government's plan will create a stronger economy, a better quality of life, and a better future for all Ontario families" (Budget Speech, 2012, p. 22, lines 5-17, emphasis added).

Thus, the "right" policy choices do not only cut the deficit: they reassure business that Ontario can and will meet their needs, by providing 'fair' taxes and regulations, and access to skilled and educated workers. As we saw with the governors, education and healthcare are framed by McGuinty not as social goods but elements of 'human capital'; these attract investment and increase prosperity for individuals and the province as a whole. Indeed, the Liberals promised that reducing corporate taxes would not be without compensation for the average Ontarian:

"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).

This argumentative claim made by the Liberals confirms the government's faith in the neoliberal logic of trickle-down economics, whereby cutting corporate taxes frees up capital for business to invest in the economy and create more jobs. Moreover, it places greater burden on workers (now gainfully employed in the private sector) to fund social services through their taxes. To be sure, public sector jobs were not included in McGuinty's "best jobs" category, despite the fact that public

sector employment provides women with better pay and benefits than the private sector (Sanger/CUPE, 2011 December). The public sector is also a means to growing a green economy and green jobs that are more secure from challenges under trade law (see Sinclair and Trew, 2015). However, the Liberals argued that cutting public sector jobs was “necessary” to tackle the deficit, suggesting that deficit reduction, not unemployment, was at the top of the government’s policy agenda:

“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).

Another measure widely adopted by governments after the GFC to make capital “feel safe” was to secure private industries with public money, as the Ontario government (and the Canadian and American governments) proved willing to do when it bailed out the auto industry (see Chapter 4). This was coupled with renewed promises of greater corporate “tax reform”. Indeed, even before the worst effects of the GFC had passed, the McGuinty Liberals argued that continuing to *reduce* corporate tax rates was essential to stimulate a green economy, while funding quality social services:

“Once fully implemented the (business tax) reform would cut Ontario’s tax rate on new business investment in half, making Ontario one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the industrialized world for new investment. Overall, this is the most important tax reform we can make to inspire growth across all sectors and kick-start the rebuilding of our manufacturing and resource industries. The result of all of this will be a stronger economic to spur job growth, *create a green economy*, and provide us with quality public services as we come out of the global recession” (Budget, 2009, p. 11, lines 13-22, emphasis added).

As we saw in Chapter 4, the McGuinty government included a feed-in-tariff in the Green Energy Act to stimulate private sector investment in renewable energy, and a local content requirement to stimulate local green jobs (until it was removed in 2014 comply with the WTO ruling). However, the

FIT too is a market-based mechanism that shifted accountability and profits to the private sector.

Recall the following argument by former Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman:

“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 NDP 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).

### ***More Austerity Measures***

Government cannot provide strong social services to its citizens without redistributive, progressive taxes to fund them. Thus, what the McGuinty Liberals claimed regarding austerity was a modern policy paradox:

“Building a stronger province requires us to abide by the values that have made Ontario great, and protecting the gains we have made, together. So in meeting the challenges before us, your government will be guided by key principles. It will protect health care and education as the most important public services. Reforms will not compromise quality. It will also reject across-the-board reductions because these would mean deep cuts to health care and education. *Any reforms adopted must lead to better value for money through improved efficiencies and greater productivity. The government will not consider tax increases or privatize public health care. And finally, your government will not pursue austerity measures that harm our economy*” (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 9, lines 24-27; p. 10, lines 1-7, emphasis added).

In the last line, the McGuinty government made a claim – that it would not pursue austerity measures – it failed to keep (Chapter 4; see also Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March). But they were wise to provide a discursive loophole: they would “not pursue austerity measures that *harm our economy*”. Indeed, the McGuinty government assured the public that incentives like the FIT, reducing regulatory “barriers” to investment, and “modernizing the tax system”, would help stimulate employment and growth; these were the same brand of policies that arguably contributed to greater socio-economic inequality in OECD member states (OECD, December 2014). Again, the

Liberals maintained that they had a history of fiscal responsibility, a necessary skill to rebuild

Ontario's economy:

“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).

And in 2012:

“Right now, the single most important step the Ontario government can take to grow the economy is to balance the budget” (Budget Speech, 2012, p. 6, lines 11-12).

One particular legislative act that was indicative of the Liberal's re-alignment with neoliberalism was

Bill 68, the Open for Business Act (OBA), 2010. The OBA was framed not only as a necessary

means to growing a stronger Ontario economy, but also a bold new measure in a changing world:

“Because growing our economy, and growing stronger, requires that Ontario *be open to change*, open to opportunities, open to our new world” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 4, lines 25-26, emphasis added).

According to Premier McGuinty, the OBA would help create “600,000 new jobs and...\$47 billion in new business investment” (“Open Ontario” speech, 2010, p. 1, lines 22-23). Thus, only by being

‘open to change’ could Ontario experience increased economic growth, which would trickle down in the form of jobs for average Ontarians. Indeed, being open to these opportunities for investment

“would build a new foundation for growth and jobs and prosperity, the kind of prosperity that will ensure we can contribute to enjoy a good quality of life here in Ontario, supported by good quality public services” (Post Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 1, lines 15-19).

The neoliberal approach to economic growth, however, has had the opposite effect: more austerity is positively correlated with decreases in the corporate tax rate (see Crotty, 2012). Moreover,

deregulatory measures, like the exemption of the logging industry from cariboo habitat protection measures under the Endangered Species Act, contributes to less, not more, ecological resilience in

Ontario; while policies with the explicit goal of mitigating climate change (like the Green Energy

Act) are made less sustainable if the majority of government policies emphasize unfettered economic growth (see Carter, 2007).

### Values Premises

Values premises are not mutually exclusive of other argumentative premises. Indeed, values premises are often embedded in other argumentative claims as means to strengthen an argument. Here, the Liberals present their green economy imaginary in a way that is both nostalgic and proud:

“At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ontario was there for the transition from buggy whip to the automobile, helping our country compete and our world move faster. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ontario will be there for the transition to a *new, clean economy*, to help our nation and our world move more efficiently. *We will continue to build the world's cars* – and they will be the more efficient cars the world needs” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 4, lines 4-9, emphasis added).

Like Michigan, Ontario's identity has been shaped in part by its history as automakers and suppliers, and both Granholm and McGuinty were taking steps to green the auto sector. Similarly, Ontario's natural environment –the Great Lakes, the Canadian Shield, and the vast Boreal Forest– has shaped the province and, McGuinty argued, Ontarians' ability to persevere through difficult times:

“Because even in tough times Ontarians have always looked to their future. Where others see a world that threatens, Ontarians see opportunity that beckons. *We carved our province out of a harsh land. Our people endured, and they thrived*” (Speech from the Throne, 2010, p. 2, lines 19-25, emphasis added).

The Great Lakes are a unique source of pride for the province, as well as a source of enterprise, just as it is for the people of Michigan. And by protecting the Great Lakes from pollutants, invasive species, and the impacts of climate change Ontario can reap economic benefits:

“Your government also knows that Ontario's wealth is not just economic. It is found in our abundance of natural beauty and resources, and we all have a duty to protect it. That is why your government will follow through on its goal to become the continent's water innovation leader by 2015 and work with environmental experts and community groups to develop and introduce a Great Lakes protection act. These and other measures enhance the affordability

and quality of life in Ontario. That in turn attracts the world's top talent and new investment in jobs and growth" (Speech from the Throne 2011, p. 7, lines 19-25).

The impact of nature speak in soldering economic and environment goals cannot be underestimated. For example, policies framed as protecting the environment can be an effective means for quieting critics of unfettered economic growth; this may particularly be the case with environmental organizations that, over the last three decades, have watered down some of their criticisms of large-scale development to be heard at the decision-making table (see Chapter 1).

### **Alternative Options Acknowledged and Discredited**

Though political leaders attempt to persuade the legislature and the public that their particular policy is the best solution to a given problem, policies proposed by other legislators are often acknowledged by political leaders, if only to appear to have engaged in deliberation (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). Regarding the green economy, the McGuinty Liberals maintained that "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" (p. 14, lines 6-10). Following its majority loss in 2011, the McGuinty government spoke more directly to alternatives in the Throne speech:

"It (the government) will reject across-the-board reductions because they would mean deep cuts to healthcare and education. *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).

Certainly, framing is important here: austerity measures that the Liberals deem *are not* harmful for economic growth are fair game. In this next argumentative claim, the government maintains that it had come to a conclusion on how the province would eliminate the deficit: selective austerity:

“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).

And then in the 2011 Budget Speech:

“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*. And when we make investments in a strong, well-trained, and healthy workforce, it creates confidence among the businesses that want to set up show and create jobs here in Ontario” (ibid p. 22, lines 5-14, emphasis added).

In these examples, the McGuinty Liberals make an argumentative claim that they had deliberated over the full range of policy choices available – policies that would lead to a stronger Ontario – and then proceeded to choose the best policies among the alternatives. Confidently claiming a best policy or set of policies and discrediting others, however, requires a well-defined goal; as we have seen in the examination of arguments, the Liberals often claimed that “building a powerful Ontario economy is our top priority” (Budget Speech, 2009, p. 1, lines 8-14). Thus, policies that do not clearly contribute to this goal are more easily discredited.

Considering again our research questions, we can reflect on the argumentative claims made by the McGuinty Liberals. First, it is clear that there is a notable difference between Snyder and McGuinty, and even Granholm and McGuinty in the framing of the green economy. The McGuinty government spoke regularly and candidly about climate change as an environmental and, to some degree, a social problem, and about the responsibility of government to address its causes and effects. But addressing climate change was not merely a matter of conscience, but more one of common sense: Ontario could prosper from it. While Granholm also saw the green economy as a means to reducing GHGs, the Liberals did not need to minimize the green economy’s impact on climate change in the discourse to make it ‘sellable’.

However, it is interesting that even though he had a majority government and legislative power, McGuinty often chose policies and made arguments that were similar to Governor Snyder and



Governor Granholm, including those that frame austerity as necessary to ensure economic sustainability. We explore that further in the following chapter.

### **Premier Kathleen Wynne**

Though Premier Wynne delivered her first speech as premier in February 2013 – just beyond the timeline of this study – a brief examination of that speech using concepts of argumentative discourse analysis yields some interesting questions and hypotheses for further study. Generally speaking, the overall tone of her first speech is cautious, which is not surprising, given the circumstances – Dalton McGuinty resigning as premier – that led to her leadership. For example, Premier Wynne was careful to not explicitly address the cancellation of plans to construct new gas plants, or any other mistake, by the McGuinty government, while providing evidence of her government's resolve for change:

“Your new government believes that Ontario is a place of endless possibilities. Of *flaws* and perfections” (Speech from the Throne, 2013, p. 1, lines 25-6, emphasis added).

And again in the concluding paragraphs:

“Your government will tackle *its flaws* and celebrate the perfections of its people” (ibid, p. 13, line 13).

Certainly, Wynne could not avoid the circumstances that led to her leadership in her speech, but she avoided addressing specific issues or naming McGuinty or his cabinet ministers. But while Wynne aimed to distinguish her government from her predecessor's, their similarities are evident in what she identifies as her top priorities:

“The central objectives of your new government will be *fiscal responsibility, economic growth, and increased employment* – the bedrocks on which it will build” (ibid, p. 3, lines 2-3, emphasis added).

Fiscal responsibility would be achieved through a range of measures, including continued austerity:

“Your new government will *restrain program spending* to reduce Ontario’s debt-to-GDP ratio, while recommitting itself to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18” (p. 3, lines 7-8, emphasis added).

Regarding environmental sustainability, Premier Wynne pointed to the end of coal energy in the province (a McGuinty policy), which is “the single-largest climate change initiative currently underway in North America” (p. 5, lines 19-20). Moreover, after criticisms that the McGuinty Liberals had failed to pursue energy conservation as part of its climate change plans (see for example Hamilton, 2012 November 9), Wynne incorporated conservation into the government’s plans to reduce GHGs and energy costs, while also increasing energy security and green jobs:

“And because *conservation* is the cheapest source of energy available, Ontario will continue to be a leader in smart-grid technology and energy conservation, and see the creation of new-economy jobs through the deployment of leading energy efficiency technologies in our homes and in our businesses” (p. 5, lines 15-18, emphasis added).

Indeed, in the weeks before announcing her candidacy for leader of the Liberal Party, Kathleen Wynne, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, made a swift move for clean energy: she signed legislation that gave more power to municipalities in energy and water conservation programs (Hamilton, 2012 November 9). However, the premier would later direct Energy Minister Bob Chiarelli to continue with refurbishment plans for Ontario’s 10 nuclear energy units at Darlington and Bruce despite recommendations by environmental groups that importing hydro from Quebec would not only be better for the environment, but better for Ontario’s bottom line (see Gibbons, 2014 July 20). So, though Wynne backed away from the McGuinty government’s plan to buy new reactors, her decision to rebuild the province’s existing nuclear units was a move toward *unsustainability* for both the environment and Ontario’s taxpayers (ibid).

In the next chapter, we reveal the results of our comparative analysis of political arguments before drawing some final conclusions.

## Chapter 7: Argumentative Claims Analysis

With our work of categorizing argumentative claims complete, we can more closely examine the meaning and effect of arguments advanced by our three leaders. Here we take a bird's eye view of our political arguments and examine the research questions: in what similar and different ways were public policies framed, communicated, and constrained by underlying neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that then limited the policy options government saw as possible? And in what ways does this contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism? Recall that an *imaginaries/solutions claim* is a grand narrative advanced by a political leader as a vision for a better society; the *goals premise* claims that a particular goal, or set of goals are necessary for the realization of the imaginary as identified in the solutions claims; a *means-goal premise* is an argumentative claim that if, *and only if*, we adopt specific means or measures, can we reach our goal objectives; the *values premise* serves the function of manufacturing certainty for a particular course of action without evidence, by linking peoples' needs, wants, memories, and desires to "common sense" terms and phrases; and *alternative policy options* are acknowledged and discredited in the discourse by policy elites to appear as though they have carefully deliberated over all possible solutions to a given problem. As in the previous chapter, we examine the arguments beginning with Governor Granholm, followed by Governor Snyder and Premier McGuinty, with some analysis of the first Throne speech by Premier Kathleen Wynne.

### Governor Jennifer M. Granholm

#### Imaginaries/Solutions Claim

For Granholm it was clear that Michigan's most chronic illness was unemployment, caused by the volatility of a single industry –specifically, the auto sector – now subject to global trade. This, in turn, shaped how the governor imagined Michigan's future. Indeed, Granholm argued that unemployment is a systemic problem, aggravated by unfair trade rules. While her criticism is well-

placed, it falls short of pointing to the role of private interests in asserting that trade rules bend in their favour. Moreover, framing unemployment as the result of external causes is often a means for politician's to deflect criticism of their policies. (All three leaders used this same strategy.)

But Granholm also saw climate change as a serious problem, one that was affecting Michigan's economy and employment including tourism, in which shorter ski and snowmobile seasons, and changes to fish food chains and habitats were directly impacting the state's 157,000 tourism jobs (Karetnikov, Ruth, Ross and Irani, 2008). By identifying the green economy in her imaginary for the state, Granholm linked Michigan's economy to the need to transition to clean energy, which supports claims made by interviewees that Granholm saw climate change as a significant issue for Michiganders (Michigan interview, former policy analyst, May 2015).

However, Granholm's repeated arguments that she would "win" green economy jobs for Michigan suggests that she may not have recognized the public sector's potential for growing green jobs in her state. Instead, it is quite clear that Granholm imagined a green economy driven by the private sector, attracted by public sector incentives. By framing the state's transition via a 'green industrial revolution' (Radio Address, April 18, 2008) Granholm limited her own imaginary for her state to one based on the same production-consumption model implicated in the current environmental crisis (see Pepper, 1993), rather than the lower-carbon model prescribed by some climate scientists. Thus, Granholm's use of 'transition' discourse referred to growing private sector job opportunities in specific sectors like renewable energy, rather than a structural *transition* from a high-growth, production-based economy to a low-growth, low carbon economy.

But Granholm did imagine a shift from a single-industry economy to a more diversified economy with the hope of 'preserving a way of life' in her state, reviving jobs and growing the middle class (see also Radio Address, Labour Day, 2008). Granholm maintained that the middle class standard of living, that grew out of an expanding auto industry and New Deal massive infrastructure projects

was possible again in Michigan. However, while this framing suggests that Granholm may have had a Green New Deal imaginary for Michigan, it also prioritizes the needs of industry over the needs of workers. Indeed, Granholm frequently failed to acknowledge the conditions that protected Michiganders from low paid work and exploitation by the manufacturing industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: unionization and tighter regulations on industry. As we saw in Chapter 4, the Green New Deal approach does not address the effects that New Deal expansion and infrastructure projects had on the environment and climate.

Michigan has been defined in part by well-paid, secure jobs, historically provided by the auto sector and the industries along its value chain. Granholm's imaginary is 'blue-green', because she imagined jobs making hydrogen-powered cars and renewable energy as equivalent substitutes for blue-collar workers. Indeed, Granholm saw Michigan's 'world class workforce and manufacturing capacity' (Radio Address, October 17, 2008) as the state's ace-in-the-hole when it came to attracting green investment and jobs (ibid).

Granholm's imaginary capitalize on fond memories of the 'good old days' – defined by middle-class wages and pensions for hard-working Michiganders in the manufacturing sector – while minimizing the last 30 years of deregulation and free trade that have contributed to the shrinking of the manufacturing sector over time. Further, neoliberal policies that have included deep cuts to corporate taxes and social services have shrunk the welfare state, which has further reduced the economic security of Michiganders, particularly during periods of high unemployment. Thus by further endorsing neoliberal policies, Granholm contributed to less, not more economic and job security for Michiganders.

### **Circumstantial Premises**

#### ***Blame: The global trade regime and ‘other’ politicians***

As we saw in chapter 6, Granholm argued that ‘global forces’, including trade agreements, have caused Michigan’s current employment crisis. Moreover, Granholm argued that Michigan’s record high unemployment was beyond the control of business as well; instead, trade policies left Michigan corporations with few choices but to find low-cost means of doing business. Framing the global regime this way deflects blame for unemployment and poverty from the choices made by politicians and corporations, as well as from the economic structure itself. Furthermore, it limits discussion and inquiry as to which economic interests pushed for a free trade agenda in the first place. In so doing, the governor set the tone for a series of what will seem like logical arguments to do whatever it takes to make Michigan economically ‘competitive’.

Because so many Michigan jobs were lost during her tenure, it is reasonable that Granholm would frame the bulk of those losses as the result of circumstances beyond her control, including the global trade regime. Blame for this “race to the bottom” on the global trade regime is not misplaced (see Peck, 2010). However, if Granholm viewed Michigan companies largely as victims of, rather than contributors to economic recession that had no choice but to pack up for low-wage countries, which her circumstantial claims suggest, then the *means* for creating new jobs would prioritize the needs (or demands) of business.

Moreover, Granholm never placed responsibility on the auto industry or the billions in bailout money provided by the US government, which perpetuates the neoliberal capitalist cycle of socializing loss and individualizing gain (Panayotakis, 2010). Granholm maintained that public spending, *not* bailout funds and tax cuts, was unsustainable. This is evident not only in the cuts she made to social programs, but also in the 11,000 public sector jobs she eliminated in her state (see Chapter 4). But while it seems sensible that government should cut spending when revenue decreases, it too shuts down discourse about alternative courses of action, such as raising taxes on

higher income groups, increasing public sector jobs to stimulate consumer spending, and/or decreasing Michigan state and local subsidies for low wage companies like Walmart<sup>43</sup> (Good Jobs First, 2007).

And without placing some of the blame on American companies' for putting high profit margins ahead of the needs of American workers and families, and without taking some blame for her own actions, Governor Granholm made the kind of neoliberal policies that contributed to the global financial crisis seem like part of the solution to unemployment, rather than part of the problem. In other words, neoliberal policies remained necessary to stimulate the green economy that Granholm imagined: a green economy based on 'winning' private sector investment for 'green sectors' rather than based on sustainable development. It is important to recognize that some of the decisions made by Granholm may, in part, have been the result of constraints on her power as governor, particularly by a very partisan, Republican-dominated legislature (see Constantelos, 2014). Moreover, the combination of Michigan's balanced budget provision with steady cuts to corporate taxes restricted government spending. However, the implication of Granholm's argumentative claims is that government can only increase jobs and prosperity in the state if it meets the needs of the private sector (lowering taxes and decreasing regulations on business activities, for example). In this way, Granholm perpetuated the myth that neoliberal policies benefit all Michiganders.

***Climate Change as Opportunity: The 'Green Economy' is coming and bringing jobs with it***  
As we saw in Chapter 2, framing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies as

opportunities for economic growth and job creation is not new; it is widely practiced by politicians and communication strategists (see for example Nisbet, 2009). However, during times of high unemployment, public concern for climate change appears to temporarily decline (see Kahn and Kotchen, 2011). It was not until 2014 that newspaper coverage of climate change appeared

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<sup>43</sup> Subsidies for Wal-Mart since 2001 have include economic development subsidies, free land, and property tax appeals.

recovered to pre-recession numbers (Fischer, 2015 January 2). By framing mitigation and adaptation strategies largely as opportunities for job growth rather than necessary environmental action, political elites limit serious discussion of climate change to periods of economic growth, while minimizing the magnitude of the climate crisis. And given the volatility of the neoliberal economy (see Peck, 2010), any effort to halt climate change will be disrupted and/or stalled for the sake of ‘the economy’.

While Granholm briefly acknowledged in the discourse the need to reduce global warming, she provided no explanation as to why climate action was necessary for Michiganders and/or Americans. Indeed, of all three leaders Granholm had the least institutional power; thus Granholm would have had to present arguments that green economy policies, including renewable energy policy and jobs training programs, were part of Michigan’s economic diversification and employment strategies, while minimizing its potentially positive impact on climate change. Despite this framing, interviews confirmed that Granholm saw the green economy as means not only to economic growth and job creation, but also as a means to reducing GHGs. However, as the policy record in Chapter 4 shows, public policy may be limited to those that fit neatly within an ecological-economic imaginary, in which the green economy is a means to economic growth and jobs, rather than a means to socio-economic equality and ecological resilience.

If Granholm made a conscious decision to frame climate change as an opportunity and avoid framing it as a problem –which the discrepancy between the interview data and discourse analysis suggests – then she may have inadvertently limited the green economy to only that which addresses unemployment in her state. Interviewees who worked the legislature at the same time as Granholm maintained that climate change was an important issue for the governor, and yet she consistently excluded climate change from, and/or minimized it in the political discourse. For example, by claiming that “In Michigan, Earth Day is Jobs Day” (Radio Address, April 18, 2008) Granholm



reduced Earth Day to an economic discussion. In so doing, it is likely that the governor contributed to greater trepidation among ENGOs already concerned that framing climate change as an environmental issue would fail to resonate with the greatest number of policymakers. Indeed, environmental organizations and labour groups interviewed for this study have adopted the language of growth + sustainability to varying degrees, in part in an effort to be included at the policy table (Michigan and American NGO interview, May 2014). So while it may at first seem like common sense for ENGOs to adopt the same economic frames as government, doing so may contribute to the exclusion of new ideas for mitigating and adapting to global warming that diverge from the economic growth model.

Moreover, some legislators are resistant to proposing regulations to mitigate climate change that reduce consumption (such as energy conservation) and/or are not correlated with economic growth (see quote by Harper, p.174). Thus, by making circumstantial claims about climate change almost exclusively in terms of its potential to increase private sector investment, Granholm maintained the capitalist logic that growth is compatible with sustainability. In other words, while economic growth may be compatible with green market capitalisms – Green Neoliberalism and Green New Dealism – it is incompatible with a holistic approach to sustainable development, which has the potential to drastically reduce greenhouse gasses and socio-economic inequality.

Another argument advanced by Granholm was that renewable energy would contribute to greater energy security. Moreover, Granholm tied the absence of a national energy strategy in the discourse to America's jobs crisis. For example, when constructing an argument for a national energy policy the governor contrasted the United States with China. China, she argued, has a strong national energy policy, which includes renewable energy; as a result, China was creating thousands of jobs that could belong to Americans (see Granholm, 2013 February). This is characteristic of New Deal

thinking: highly-regulated national programs that contribute to infrastructure projects and jobs.

However, since a national energy policy has not been implemented in the United States, Granholm's argument was more idealistic than it was realistic.

### **Goal Premises**

Recall that the goals premises are the specific objectives political elites identify as part of the realization of their imaginaries, which will sustain or improve economic, social, and/or ecological conditions. In Chapter 6, we saw that Governor Granholm repeated a similar set of goals throughout her State of the State speeches. Her key goals were to diversify the economy, make Michigan 'competitive' for private investment (which included education and training), and create 'good' jobs for Michiganders. For Granholm, diversifying Michigan's single-industry economy did not only include a green economy; however, it was the leading project in her economic diversification strategy. Furthermore, these goals were often linked in Granholm's discourse to another goal: 'prosperity' for Michiganders and their families, now and in the future. Granholm typically identified education as an important component in securing prosperity for Michiganders, since education can be a means to better employment for individual workers, and a better-educated workforce has the potential to attract more private investors.

Finally, Governor Granholm repeatedly argued in favour of another goal for her administration: cutting what she, and all political leaders in this study, referred to as 'government waste'. While reducing government spending is not necessarily a poor policy decision, the means to achieving these reductions can be cause for scrutiny. Indeed, the *means* to achieving Granholm's goals – diversification, competitiveness, prosperity, and 'fiscal discipline' – or the goals identified by any political elite for that matter, should be of most concern to the public and the scholarly critique of policy agendas. This we explore in the next section on means-goal premises.

It is important to consider what Granholm *did not* identify in her speeches as goals of the green economy. For example, reducing income inequality was not identified by Granholm as a goal of Michigan's green economy. Neither were strengthening trade and public sector unions or creating green jobs in the public sector. And reducing GHGs to 20 percent of 1990 levels by 2020, as recommended by the IPCC, was not identified by Granholm as a goal of her green economy. And as we have just discussed, limiting the imaginary of Michigan's green economy to job creation and investment in emerging green sectors, while excluding social and economic equality and climate change mitigation goals, limits the proposed means to achieving it. Imagining the green economy within the constraints of a productive and private-sector driven economy pre-determines the kinds of policies that are proposed as the means to achieving those goals.

Granholm's political speeches were written with the Michigan legislature and public in mind: in so doing, specific goals that she personally felt were important, like climate change were omitted. But as we have seen, by avoiding listing climate change mitigation as a goal of the green economy in her speeches, Granholm may have limited the ways that both the legislature and the public imagine the green economy and its goals (such as greater socio-economic equality, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and greater ecological resilience) to those that create jobs and stimulate private sector investment. Indeed, we maintain here that it is in the means-goal premise that the neoliberal character of Granholm's green economy becomes most evident.

### **Means-Goal Premises**

To diversify the economy and "win" private sector investment, Granholm maintained that she would do whatever was "necessary". To recall from the previous chapter, the governor spoke of 'winning jobs' rather than 'creating jobs' (as does Governor Snyder and Premier McGuinty). This discursive tactic is used by political elites to make a distinction between policies for stimulating private sector jobs from public sector jobs – jobs that neoliberals argue are unsustainable for long-

term economic growth. Indeed, even amid the global financial crisis Granholm maintained that her “motto will continue to be that I will go anywhere and do anything to bring jobs to Michigan” (State of the State, 2009, p. 7, lines 38-39). And she meant it: Granholm made nine overseas trips to Asia and Europe offering a range of tax incentives to companies for investment in the renewable energy, and electric and hydrogen-powered auto industries. As we saw in Chapter 4, these incentives included the 10 percent Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), as well as cuts to 99 corporate taxes, reforms of 22 regulations that helped “cut the red tape” (State of the State, 2008, p. 5, line 3), and the provision of 15-years of tax abatement for private investors to set up their business in Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones. Through these tax- and regulation-cutting measures, Granholm promised that she would “out hustle” other states and provinces and secure green investment and jobs for Michigan.

But despite these incentives, Granholm admitted that even long-time Michigan companies like Electrolux still left the state for Mexico, taking jobs with them (Granholm and Mulhern, 2011). In other words, despite argumentative claims that corporate tax measures would bring companies to Michigan,<sup>44</sup> these measures apparently did not go far enough to keep some of Michigan’s most ‘loyal’ companies in the state. When asked whether it was necessary for Granholm to provide so many tax credits and cuts to attract the clean energy industry, one former legislative staffer replied this way:

“Probably not. I think that’s a pretty valid critique of her in my opinion. I think there’s a certain component of those tax cuts and tax breaks and subsidizing that’s important....we can give industry a tax incentive to come and locate here, but that does not guarantee the success of that company. But yeah, I think there were other approaches she could have used” (May 2014).

Moreover, though the Granholm administration framed the 10 percent RPS as a bold step forward toward greening Michigan’s economy, the state had the capacity to supply 32.5 percent of its energy needs from renewable sources (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2014 March). Instead, Michigan

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<sup>44</sup> There is an emerging, but small e-car industry in Michigan; however, it is unclear the degree to which auto bailouts, stimulus money from the ARRA, and/or efforts by Granholm had an effect on this growth.

spent \$1.2 billion to import coal from other states in 2012 alone (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2014 March). This further suggests that Granholm's green economy was about jobs and private investment, not climate change.

Immediately before and after the GFC, when the need for unemployment and public services was particularly high in North American jurisdictions, cuts to taxes were justified as the means to more jobs. Cuts to public sector jobs, on the other hand, were disassociated from the condition of unemployment in the political discourse. Instead, cutting the public sector was framed as a means to “root(ing) out inefficiencies” in government (State of the State, 2007). In Chapter 4, we saw that Granholm cut 11,000 public sector jobs over the course of her tenure, and had cut more public spending than any other governor before her (Granholm and Mulhern, 2011). When unemployment is already high, it is odd that government would argue that eliminating public sector jobs is necessary; however, this is a common argument in the neoliberal era. Indeed, while labour economists have argued that good wages and the middle class grow an economy (see for example Reich, 2014 September 28.), neoliberals maintain that corporations create economic wealth, which then trickles down in the form of jobs. Public sector jobs are thus a drain on the economy not a means to growing it. To ‘create’ more jobs in the private sector, government must be ‘competitive’ by eliminating corporate taxes and regulations which, neoliberals argue are disincentives for investment and growth. The problem with this circular logic is that it ignores the fact that cuts to deregulation and tax are unnecessary, since neither has created the windfall of jobs and prosperity elites claim (see for example OECD, 2014 December 9). Indeed, private sector investors have largely held onto their tax savings rather than invest in new equipment, new facilities, and new jobs (see for example, Klinger, 2015 February 25). Regardless, eliminating public sector jobs was framed

by Granholm as necessary in tough economic times where ‘every’ member of society needs to make sacrifices for the good of the state (see State of the State, 2009).

Fewer public sector workers in Michigan meant that some services had to be cut, and/or that state employees had to work harder for less net pay. In 2007 – a full year before the GFC – Michigan’s remaining government workers were serving one million more Michiganders than in the 1970s (State of the State, 2007). Furthermore, government workers were subject to benefit cuts, which were also framed by the governor as ‘tough but necessary’. By framing cuts to benefits this way, the governor suggested that there were no alternatives to her actions, while at the same time providing costly financial incentives to the private sector. And while the argument that reducing public sector jobs and benefits may seem like common sense to workers who lost jobs in the private sector, cutting public sector employment can be counter-productive to economic recovery:

“In the short term, reducing government employment, particularly during recessions, adds workers directly to the unemployment rolls. In addition, fewer workers translates into fewer paychecks, which dampens consumption and further spreads through the economy, magnifying the effects of the recession” (Greenstone and Looney, 2012 August 3).

Thus, Granholm’s arguments indicate that rather than explore alternatives for economic recovery in her state, she would continue to implement policy measures characteristic of neoliberalism.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Granholm has also used the means-goal premise as an opportunity to frame her policy measures as both responsible and a sign of restraint. At the same time, she naturalized austerity by comparing the measures implemented by her government against the actions undertaken by other states, while asserting that ‘we still have to cut more’: some \$566 million (State of the State, 2008). Terms like ‘lean government’ and ‘fiscal discipline’ were frequently used by Granholm in her means-goals claims as necessary to create investor confidence and stimulate economic growth, even before the recession. Indeed, there appears to have been an

increased use of these terms by the political leaders in our study in ways that equated ‘responsible government’ with cutting government size and spending. On the other hand, Granholm fails to make a discursive connection between “necessary” cuts to corporate taxes and austerity. This suggests that either the governor was well aware of the power of leaving some things unsaid with voters, or that she genuinely believed in the necessity of both.

Another means to economic recovery and diversification that Granholm identified in her means-goals claims was public-private partnerships (P3s). In the neoliberal period, P3s have been increasingly favoured by political elites, in part because the private sector absorbs a significant portion of the cost of a project; however, the private sector also collects the profits. Furthermore, since the private sector is deemed to be more “efficient” and having greater expertise than government, P3s have increasingly been seen as means to better products and/or services than those that government could provide. But while P3s are held to download some of the financial cost on the private sector, they also upload more political power to the private sector (see McBride and Whiteside, 2011). Moreover, P3s struggle to integrate long-term social and environmental sustainability in their project goals (Colverson and Perera/IISD, 2011 October) since their bottom line is measured by profit. Thus, Granholm’s argument that P3s were good for Michigan’s economy is also anchored in neoliberal ideology, which maintains that business can do most anything better than government.

In her argumentative claims, Granholm was clear that education was an important means to getting Michigan working again. As we saw in Chapter 4, this included providing training to displaced workers for careers in green energy technology through the Green Jobs Initiative. But a green jobs workforce was not only the vision of Granholm: President Obama made green energy and jobs an important piece of his recession recovery efforts. To recall, the American Reinvestment and

Recovery Act, 2009 funded most of Granholm's green jobs initiatives (as well as a wide range of public works and renewable energy projects) with monies earmarked by President Obama specifically for green jobs training. Once ARRA funds were depleted, however, most pilot education and training programs in Michigan (except the Michigan Promise Zones<sup>45</sup> in ten economically distressed communities) were discontinued. Without in-state government revenue, jobs training programs were only as stable as stimulus. This suggests that, during our time period of study, post-secondary education was valued most by Michigan legislators as an incentive for private companies looking to invest in a location with a well-trained workforce: training private companies do not have to fund.

Granholm argued in 2010 that she would veto any further cuts to education. The governor would have been less concerned with aggravating the Republican-dominated legislature given that it was her last few months in office. But Granholm had agreed to several cuts to education spending during her tenure, due to limitations she faced as a Democrat in a Republican-controlled House and Senate (see Constantelos, 2014), as well as her own commitment to "fiscal responsibility".

It is important to note that "fiscal responsibility" under the Granholm administration *did not* include increasing taxes on corporations and/or high income earners, expanding social security, or reducing corporate subsidies. Moreover, the replacement of the Single Business Tax with the Michigan Business Tax did not increase government revenue in Michigan (Guilfoyle, 2008). So while she often called on Michigan state legislators to "put narrow ideologies aside and put the common good ahead" (Tenure Summary, 2012, lines 38-39) and while there are indeed differences in the degree to

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<sup>45</sup> The Michigan Promise Zones program was established by Governor Granholm in 2009. Economically- stressed school districts in Michigan applied for a 'Promise Zone' designation in order for their students to qualify for a \$4000 college tuition grant. Though the designation of a 'Promise Zone' has continued, the Michigan legislature voted to defund the program shortly after it was established. The program continues, but tuition funding is provided by private donors.



which the Democrat governor and Republican governor rolled out neoliberal policies and how they represented their policies in the argumentative discourse (as we shall see in our examination of Snyder's discourse below), Jennifer Granholm employed narrow ideas inspired by neoliberalism to inform her policy decisions, and her green economy, both before and after the GFC.

### **Values Premises**

Values premises are argumentative claims that reference shared histories and experiences, cultural similarities, and/or principles as means to gaining public and legislative support for policy proposals. One of the most frequently used terms or concepts in values premises is 'common sense'. To recall from Chapter 2, Hall and O'Shea (2013) explain 'common sense' ideas as:

“A compendium of well-trying 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 wildly inaccurate. Its virtue is that it is 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).

Each of the three political leaders in this study used “common sense” or variations of this term to promote their policy agendas. For example, Granholm argued for the consolidation of services in local school boards because it was “common sense” to cut back on duplicated services as a means to saving the state money. However, because Granholm had little partisan support in the legislature (recall that there was a Democrat-led House for only two years in her eight, and never a Democrat-controlled Senate), she often used common sense language likely to seek agreement from Republicans to *not* cut more social spending. Granholm also used “common sense” to set up a values argument that jobs could not be created only by cutting public spending: government must invest in training and education as well. Furthermore, she attempted to validate this claim by associating it with Republican ideology: “mom is a Republican by the way”. So while Granholm used values premises to validate some of her austerity measures, she also uses values arguments to sell the legislature on public spending or at least, avoid further cuts to education and training.

Appealing to good “values” is not unique to arguments against spending cuts: the same kinds of arguments are made by politicians to promote cutting public spending and corporate taxes. But Governor Granholm aimed to draw a line in the sand: despite the cuts she made to social spending – and she made many – she argued that there must be a limit if the ultimate goal is economic growth and prosperity. In these kinds of arguments Granholm indicates that she was, on some occasions under pressure from the legislature to cut spending, rather than it necessarily being what she wanted or her choice. In other words, the fact that she made values appeals in the legislature as a means to arguing for restraint or compromise from Republicans suggests that Granholm did indeed believe that government could go too far with spending cuts and hurt economic growth.

Despite Michigan’s long history with auto sector unions, neither unions nor the collective bargaining process factor into the governor’s values arguments. Even in her radio addresses, in which she speaks to Michiganders directly, Granholm referred to ‘good jobs’ but not ‘unions’. Unions are excluded from Granholm’s green economy arguments too: green jobs are ‘well paid’, or ‘good’, but not necessarily unionized; rather, green jobs in this imaginary will be driven by the demands of the private sector, most of which, it is fair to assume, are against unionization of the workplace. Nor does the governor connect Michigan’s natural environment, and the protection of that environment, to the green economy in the discourse. In so doing, Granholm isolates conservation – perhaps the most important means to protecting the environment and reducing GHGs – from Michigan’s green economy imaginary, further limiting policy proposals for a greener economy to those that can *produce* something, such as e-cars, renewable energy, and energy efficient technologies.

### **Alternatives Acknowledged and Discredited**

Political leaders often invoke argumentative claims that, after careful deliberation over all possible alternatives, they came to the best decision for everyone, even if that decision was ‘hard’. Austerity

measures were often framed by Granholm (and McGuinty) as a choice she did not always want to make but *bad* to make nonetheless. Though Governor Granholm never used the term ‘austerity’ she argued that the decisions she made (either by supporting legislation or refraining from using her veto powers) were necessary. Recall the following excerpt from Chapter 6:

“Last year, we made difficult decisions to get our fiscal house in order. The process was anything but pretty. But in the end, we made cuts, added new revenues, and we enacted money-saving reforms... all to protect the things we deeply care about: healthcare, education, and public safety” (State of the State, 2008, p. 4, lines 16-19).

So while there likely is some deliberation involved in decision making, we have seen that political elites limit the policy alternatives they consider to those often based on existing, old, or even bad ideas. Governor Granholm had to regularly acknowledge proposals advanced by her adversaries in the Republican Party who used political discourse to combat criticism from the legislature that she was not cutting *enough* spending in Michigan. At the same time, however, she claimed that after examining all the alternatives, the only – and indeed, the best – decisions she could make were the same choices we had seen from Governor Granholm both before and after the GFC: regulatory reform, corporate tax cuts, cutbacks to the public sector jobs, and to social services – decisions that are characteristic of the neoliberal period.

### **Argumentative Discourses of Rick Snyder**

Governor Rick Snyder was always clear in the political discourse as to how he saw government and his role as governor: government was a business and service provider and his job was to act as the Chief Executive Officer. Indeed, Snyder frequently referred to Michiganders as ‘customers’, and framed the public sector’s key responsibility as providing ‘great customer service’. By understanding himself as a CEO rather than a politician, Rick Snyder entered the governor’s office with the pre-conceived conviction that the business model was the best means to serving Michiganders and the state of Michigan. To recall, Snyder referred to the Granholm’s Michigan Business Tax as a “job

killer” even before announcing his candidacy for governor (see for example, State of the State, 2011). Snyder believed that the best way to serve individual Michiganders was by providing conditions for business growth – and his identity as a business man would help signal to business that their needs were the governor’s top priority.

We saw too that Governor Snyder was proactively engaged in brand management, more so than Granholm or McGuinty<sup>46</sup>, whose brand identities were often defined by media, supporters, and critics; this suggests that Snyder was well aware of the value of branding in political communication. Snyder used two phrases regularly in his State of the State speeches: ‘Relentless Positive Action’, and ‘Reinvent(ing) Michigan’. Used independently or together (as in ‘relentless positive action to reinvent Michigan’), these phrases provided Snyder with a consistent message across all his speeches. Unlike Granholm, who sometimes wavered in how she framed the necessity of spending cuts, there was no question that when Snyder used “reinvent” in his speeches, he truly meant the reconstruction of Michigan’s tax codes, regulations, social spending, and labour unions.

### **Imaginaires/Solutions Claims**

Unlike McGuinty and Granholm, Snyder did not propose a green economy as a solution to Michigan’s economic problems. Indeed, aside from his 2012 Special Address on the Energy and Environment, the green economy makes no appearance in Rick Snyder’s political speeches, and there is little connection between renewable energy, energy efficiency, and/or e-car technologies in Snyder’s jobs strategies for Michigan. This is interesting, given that his predecessor put ongoing effort not only into framing the green economy as a key strategy in Michigan’s economic recovery and competitiveness, but also into creating incentives that would attract renewable energy and advanced battery companies to the state. If Snyder shared Granholm’s vision for a green Michigan economy, it would have been relatively easy for his administration to adopt or adapt that vision,

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<sup>46</sup> See Chapter 7

despite not agreeing with Granholm on most other policy matters. Since there is no policy or discursive evidence of Snyder adopting Granholm's green economy imaginary, and since Snyder failed to support the 20 percent Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) by 2025 ballot initiative without providing viable alternatives to growing the renewable energy industry, it is fair to conclude that he had no interest in the small, but stable green economy he inherited.

Instead, Snyder argued that a stronger Michigan is possible only by providing the "right" conditions for business investment. This as we have seen is a common argument in neoliberal thinking, which maintains that government must not intervene in the market and instead allow the more "efficient" private sector to earn profits that will result in more economic growth and more jobs. However, far from the laissez faire claims of liberalism, neoliberal governments do in fact intervene significantly in the market by eliminating regulations, privatizing public sector services, and cutting the corporate tax rate.

In regards to the environment, Snyder made limited references in his imaginary and solutions claims. However, in his Energy and Environment speech he advocated for the precautionary principle in policy-making: better to fare on the side of caution when making decisions that might negatively impact the environment. But he was careful to argue that the trajectory of that future, which included the influence of climate change, was not certain. In the two instances Snyder did imply that climate change was a human-caused problem, he also asserted there was no certainty as to what the effects of climate change might be. Interestingly, NGO representatives interviewed for this study confirmed that Snyder does indeed believe there is a relationship between human activity and global warming, and that he may be the "strongest environmental governor in the state or country" (ENGO representative interview, May 2014). However, "that doesn't mean he's strong on environmental issues. It's a pretty weak pool to compare to" (ibid). And as we have seen, Snyder did little to combat climate change in his state (ibid).

It is concerning when political leaders minimize evidence or express uncertainty regarding climate change in their speeches, since speeches are in part a means to setting the policy agenda. Scientific studies have established there *is* cause for certainty: 97.2 per cent of climate scientists agree that the climate change is the result of human activity (Cook et al, 2013) and that the planet is warming at an unsustainable rate (see for example, UNEP, 2011). These mixed messages by political elites are supported in part by corporate campaigns aimed at creating public uncertainty around climate science (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012), as well as right wing media and politicians most commonly within the Republican Party (Schulman, 2015 January 10; also NGO representative interview, May 2014-). So in making argumentative claims that the causes of climate change are uncertain, even if he does believe otherwise, Governor Snyder exacerbates climate skepticism among legislators and the public, and minimizes the need to take immediate and decisive action to combat it.

That Governor Snyder has minimized climate change aligns with findings that 50 percent of Republicans in the US Congress, and 72 per cent – nearly three quarters – of the US Senate Republican Caucus reject climate science (Schulman, 2015 January 10). Our interview findings suggest a similar conclusion, plus the fact that Governor Snyder is considered an environmentalist among Republican governors is telling of the Republican Party's general resistance to taking action against climate change. However, this generalization does not account for variations in party ideology: Michigan Republicanism varies from the Tea Party philosophy of no regulation, to a more progressive approach (former Democratic legislator interview, May 2014). Nor does such a conclusion consider that rejecting climate science in the discourse may have less to do with personal disbelief and more to do with the role of private interests in shaping climate policy (see Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012). But framing the sources and effects of climate change as uncertain is

particularly problematic in the battle for public opinion, when 52 percent of all Americans believe that change in the earth's climate is part of a cyclical, natural phenomenon (IPSOS-Mori, 2014).

Despite the fact that Snyder minimized the causes of climate change in the discourse, he argued in his Energy and Environment speech that policies aimed at protecting the environment will at best be a “win-win” for both the environment and the economy, and the very least will ensure “no-regrets” because the needs of the environment will not come at the expense of economic growth.

To recall, the ‘win-win’ argument is an important in the construction of environmental-economic imaginaries, whereby policymakers suggest that the environment and the economy can benefit equally from public policy. Indeed, this argumentative claim was used by political leaders in this study to demonstrate commitment to both, while appealing to labour and environmental groups who often report that getting some kind of formal commitment from political leaders to the environment is better than nothing (Ontario and Michigan NGO interview, May 2014).

In Chapter 6, we saw that Governor Snyder's argumentative claims regarding the environment were most frequently about the Great Lakes. Indeed it can be argued that for Snyder, the Great Lakes *were* his climate change demanding policy action. Water availability and safety, as well as invasive species like Asian carp and zebra mussels were initially his administration's top environmental-economic priorities. The Great Lakes, Snyder has argued, are essential to Michigan's well-being, since they are a source not only for industries like tourism and farming, but also provide drinking water to millions of people in Michigan and other US states. Snyder used his imaginary of a healthy Great Lakes system to introduce plans that can conserve and treat water, as well as streamline the decision-making process that “when we have a drought and need to make choices, we will be able to make them fairly and quickly” (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 16, lines 38-39). In this way, Snyder acknowledged that weather patterns including those induced by climate change, can have a negative impact on Michigan's productive economy (*ibid*). But as we have already argued, it would be

incorrect to label the governor an environmentalist regardless of his self-narrative as a ‘good, green Republican’ in the 2010 gubernatorial race.

### **Circumstantial Premises**

In Chapter 6, we saw that Snyder used the 1856 abolition speech by Abraham Lincoln to make a claim that the global financial crisis was a new type of crisis that required bold action. Lincoln did indeed “think anew and act anew” by ordering that the abolition of slavery was a condition of surrender by the Confederate states. Though the Civil War threatened the integrity of the federation, Lincoln knew that ending slavery was the right, and only way toward a more equal society, even if it came at great political and personal threat. Snyder used the Lincoln quote to frame the circumstances around the economic crisis as exceptional, requiring bold policy choices. But as we have seen, neoliberal capitalism is prone to, and has undergone a series of economic crises (see Harvey, 2005; Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014) and neoliberal thinking has driven policymaking in North America for more than 30 years. In other words, there was nothing new about this latest crisis of capitalism, nor was there anything unique about the neoliberal policy responses proposed by governments that perpetuate economic crises in the first place.

Unlike Granholm, Snyder did not have to make argumentative claims about the origin of the global financial crisis, since his administration did not begin until 2011. However, the Republican governor did offer some explanations for Michigan’s struggling economy. Despite the fact that he claimed he would lay “no blame” and “no credit” for Michigan’s circumstances, we saw in Chapter 6 that Snyder placed some of the blame on “special interests”. Special interests as a label has been increasingly employed in neoliberal discourse to brand environmental and labour groups as having too much power and influence over public policy oddly, however, while excluding corporations and industry lobby groups. Snyder did this too by declaring that these special interests would no longer be allowed to control the public agenda. We know that Snyder does not consider corporate interests



in this category however, because policy was often tilted in their favour – lower taxes, deregulation, and an emphasis on public-private partnerships (see Chapter 4).

Indeed, Snyder laid blame for Michigan's slower growth on "job killing" taxes and "antiquated regulations", leaving industry the blameless victims of poor policies by his predecessors. But "special interests" including oil, gas, and other industries have had significant influence over economic and climate policy in the United States (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2012). That powerful industries and lobbyists are largely excluded by Snyder as special interests, while non-profit organizations are targeted, lends support to political economic theories of a tightly interwoven relationship between capital and the state.

### **Goals Premises**

Governor Snyder declared that his goal was to "reinvent Michigan". This became Snyder's mandate as he outlined a series of what seemed at first to be reasonable objectives. These included "outstanding customer service" and "results" for Michiganders; financial responsibility and "good government"; and making the state a "team player and not a solution on its own". He also identified loftier goals to 'create a bright future for young people' by 'doing it together and not leaving some behind'.

As with Granholm, Snyder's goals are vague, but seem sensible: good government, financial responsibility, and a bright future for youth should be goals for any political leader. However, with further examination of Snyder's argumentative claims, we can see that this way of framing goals is consistent with neoliberal logic, which maintains that what is ultimately best for citizens' social and economic wellbeing is the expansion of the private sector. This, in turn, requires government's full cooperation and support: less regulation and lower taxes. This way of consolidating political and business thinking was unique in Snyder's argumentative claims: if government is largely a business like any other, then the means to achieving government goals require business solutions and

transactions. Indeed, to Rick Snyder it is the “government sector with an unsustainable financial model” (State of the State, 2011, p. 1, line 23).

Environmental goals factor minimally in Snyder’s plans, despite the fact that “energy and environment” measures are included in the Michigan Dashboard (see below). Energy security and reducing invasive species in the Great Lakes are identified as goals in his Energy and Environment speech; his leadership on the Council of Great Lakes Governors and Premiers demonstrates that he does have some concern for the long-term health and quality of the Great Lakes. However, any concern for the environment does not extend to climate change: Governor Snyder never mentioned the reduction of greenhouse gasses in his goals, nor did he introduce any other policy that could have significant impact on the causes and effects climate change. Renewable energy was framed largely as a means to greater energy security, not a strategy for mitigating climate change. By not including climate priorities in his goals claims, Snyder minimized the seriousness of climate change and reduces any need for policy. And what a political leader says is as impactful as what he does not. In other words, if climate change mitigation and adaptation are not identified as goals by the Snyder administration, then how can it be important to the state?

In the analysis of political argument, the means-goals premises are perhaps the best indicators of a political leader’s vision, plans, and ideological influences. Indeed, it is in Snyder’s prescriptions for “reinventing” Michigan that the role of neoliberal logic in his leadership becomes most evident.

### **Means-Goals Premises**

As in other argumentative premises, Governor Snyder used repetitive messaging to identify the means-goals he argued were necessary to “reinvent Michigan”. In all of his speeches, Snyder used the phrase “relentless positive action”. Indeed, “relentless positive action” is a triumph of framing for Governor Snyder, because it is both ambiguous and indicative: who isn’t willing to work hard to

change Michigan in a way that, in the end, is better for future generations? And because Snyder used the terms “relentless positive action” and “reinvent” consistently in his speeches, he constructed a message that was recognizable and had resonance, similar to “Just Do It” for Nike and “Open Happiness” for Coca Cola. Furthermore, Snyder used the term “common sense” in conjunction with his brand phrases. This was effective because he tied “common sense” and similar terms to problems and policies the average Michigander would agree with, such as fixing Michigan’s potholed roads, and continuing the Pure Michigan Business Connect program started by the Granholm administration, which is essentially a buy local policy (see Chapter 4).

This use of “common sense” makes more ambiguous means-goals framed by political leaders as the “obvious” choice, seem credible. For example, “right to work” legislation was framed by Rick Snyder as a means to greater job creation in the state (see Woods, 2014 February 9; see also MEDC, 2013). Indeed, the term “right to work” frames anti-union legislation as common sense: who doesn’t want to have the right to work, and on their own terms? (Klein, 2012 December 12). But as RTW<sup>47</sup> critics have explained, this is far from the case:

“The term ‘right to work law’ is a genius of framing...The genius of the “right-to-work” laws is that it makes it seem unusual that you have to agree to follow the terms of the contract that your prospective employers has negotiated with his employees. In fact, what’s unusual is that “right-to-work” laws allow you to opt-out of one part of that contract -- the part that your fellow employees have negotiated. You still have to follow all the parts your employer added” (Klein, 2012 December 12).

Furthermore, what Governor Snyder actually meant by providing “great customer service” to Michiganders (see for example, State of the State, 2013, p. 7, line 13) is based on a neoliberal idea of efficiency: less government cost, and more private sector authority. This is supported by simplifying language around specific policy measures. For example, while a “flat tax” may be simple to

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Right to Work’ legislation makes joining an existing union (and paying unions dues) voluntary by new workers and/or as a condition of hiring. RTW legislation is criticised by unions and workers’ rights groups because it weakens and/or eliminates unions, thereby reducing workers’ bargaining power for wages, benefits, and health and safety with their employer.

understand – and certainly, a 6 percent flat tax is easier to explain to the average taxpayer – it has been far from fair: Governor Snyder’s flat tax has led to increased taxes on pensioners and decreased tax credits for the working class (see Oosting, 2013 April 1), while decreasing the amount of government revenue for unemployment and social assistance available to an historically high number of Michiganders in need over the past decade.

Another way to achieve goals associated with “good government”, Snyder argued, was by grading and measuring the means. To this end, the accountant-turned-governor created the Michigan (MI) ‘Dashboard’. The MI Dashboard has been framed as a common sense tool that is accessible to all Michiganders: “You don’t have to be an economist or scientist to understand it” (State of the State, 2011, p. 2, line 9).

The MI Dashboard identifies approximately 5-10 measurements for government performance in nine ‘key’ areas: state economic performance; education; health and wellness; infrastructure; talent (work/employment); public safety; financial health; seniors; and energy and environment (midashboard.michigan.gov). Each measurement is given a ‘thumbs up’ (increasing), a ‘thumbs down’ (decreasing), or an arrow (slight change) to indicate changes within a particular measure; measures, and indicators of success or failure of each measure, was determined by the Snyder administration<sup>48</sup>. While the dashboard has the potential to increase government transparency, it is also indicative of an inherent bias in what the Snyder administration determined should be ‘measured’, as well what the determinants would be of success or failure. For example, one indicator of success or failure in the ‘Talent Dashboard’ is ‘workers in the private sector versus the public sector’, which the MI reported was 85.8 percent in January 2014 (ibid). The logic of this measurement is explained in the dashboard: “The focus here is to increase the percentage of

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<sup>48</sup> For example, the residential and business cost of electricity per kilowatt hour and the number of out-of-state visits to Michigan parks are indicators of the success or failure of energy and environment dashboard; the percentage of workers in the private vs. the public sector is an indicator of the talent dashboard.

Michigan's workforce employed in the private sector. An increased share of jobs in the private sector indicates greater efficiency in the public sector and greater effectiveness in supporting growth within the private sector” (see Michigan Talent Dashboard January 2014).

Thus, we can see that what a government identifies as a key measure of “progress”, and what it identifies as indicators of “success” or “failure” of that measure, serves as a cursor of the ideological parameters within which a government constrains its policy agenda. Furthermore, words like “efficiency” are indicative of neoliberal influence in MI dashboard measurements. For example, since a key measurement of employment is percentage of workers in the private sector (see above), then it would be logical to conclude that *public sector* workers are considered liabilities, not assets to the economy by Governor Snyder (see Government of Michigan, 2014 January).

As discussed in the review of Snyder’s goals premises, the environment does not factor significantly in the MI dashboard. Indeed, for the purposes of this study, the Energy and Environment Dashboard measures are most telling: : measurements for greenhouse gasses are noticeably absent, which once again points to the conclusion that climate change was (and still is) of little concern to the Snyder Administration. The dashboard does include one measure for air quality standards; however, the logic behind the measure is that air quality is only as important as it is to child and senior health (particularly those with chronic breathing illnesses). And though Snyder acknowledges Michigan’s 10 percent Renewable Portfolio Standard in his Energy and Environment Speech (“Ensuring our Future”, 2012, p. 7), there is no measurement in the Energy and Environment Dashboard of renewable energy production or energy conservation as a percentage of total energy use in the state. And as we saw in Chapter 4, renewable energy has been a low priority for this administration: in November 2012, the governor firmly opposed Proposal 3 that would make constitutional the use of 25 percent of renewable energy in the state by 2025. While Snyder has argued that it is wrong to make an RPS binding under Michigan’s constitution, he has been vocal

about imposing constitutional amendments on the US government, like the balanced budget provision in Michigan (see Chapter 6). Thus, Snyder supports constitutional amendments that impose tight regulations on fiscal policy but not on energy or the environment.

### ***Deregulation and Tax Reform***

Snyder often argued that deregulation was a necessary means to greater business growth in the state.

Snyder proudly claimed that there had been a 1,000-net decrease in regulations under his administration (see State of the State, 2013) and that his government had “eliminated roughly 10 rules for every new rule we’ve added” (ibid, p. 3, lines 28-29).

This argumentative claim against regulation was flexible: since Snyder framed economic growth as ‘necessary’ and the causes of climate change “unclear”, he was able to promote deregulation of business activities while at the same time sidelining demands from the environmental community for stronger regulations of GHGs.

Indeed, Snyder saw regulation as a “barrier” to business investment, poisoning his argumentative claim against regulation as an ‘if-and-only-if’ scenario whereby attracting business is dependent on cutting “red tape”. This observation is further corroborated by the *absence* of language around *increasing* regulation in the governor’s speeches, as well as emphasis on the individual responsibility (see State of the State, 2012) and “self-sufficiency” of Michiganders (Energy and the Environment, 2012, p. 3, line 38). Neoliberal governments understand social security this way: private sector investment is the only “sustainable” means to prosperity because it creates jobs and economic independence for individual Michiganders, which in turn minimizes the need for government ‘handouts’.

In addition to arguing for increased deregulation, Snyder often made argumentative claims for “tax reform”. Indeed, the term “tax reform” has been used by all political leaders in this study to signal a change in how much tax is collected and from whom; in these cases, tax reform has largely referred

to reducing corporate income tax rates. Snyder justified cutting corporate taxes, including Granholm's Michigan Business Tax, using three principles, or measures of a 'good tax system': "simple, fair, and efficient" (State of the State, 2012, p. 4, line 34). In Chapter 5, we saw that "efficient" has become a frequently used word in neoliberal discourse, which has come to mean "costs less" and resulting in less services. Similarly, the word "choice" has become a clever twist on neoliberal logic: universal healthcare was framed by Snyder as interfering with a citizen's democratic right to shop around and "choose" their healthcare in the same way travellers shop around for flight deals on Orbitz (see State of the State, 2012). These and other words have been repurposed to gain public support for a range of tax and regulatory cuts that often seem in conflict with the public interest.

### ***Climate Change and the Environment***

By referring to climate "science" in his Energy and Environment speech, Snyder indicates that he likely does, in fact, concur with 97.4 percent of scientists that climate change is caused by human activity. Indeed, one interviewee in this study clearly stated that Snyder accepts the fact that human beings have increased the greenhouse gasses that are warming our world. Moreover, all NGO representatives agreed that Snyder is a "moderate" compared to most Republicans in the state legislature. But as we have seen, Snyder proved unwilling to explicitly make that claim. This is interesting, given that Snyder once argued that he "didn't play traditional politics". We know that climate change was not a policy priority of the Snyder administration; however, he may have constructed ambiguity around the causes of climate change in his discourse as a means to communicating with a conservative, Republican legislature. In so doing, however, Snyder allocates equal validity to ideologically-driven opinion and scientific fact. This also lends support to findings that Republicans are more likely to reject climate science than Democrats.

Governor Granholm promised reliable, affordable energy in her political discourse, but it was often framed as a product or potential outcome of *renewable energy*; on the other hand, Governor Snyder's goal was made energy security and affordability, which he argued could be achieved through a range of energy solutions, including coal, enhanced oil recovery, and fracking for gas. This is one way the two governors' approaches to energy policy are distinct: by pursuing renewable energy and stronger regulation around coal, Governor Granholm demonstrated a commitment to a clean-energy economy and climate change mitigation, while Governor Snyder's means-goals prioritized energy cost and availability over climate change or environmental action.

Snyder often used the term “no-regrets” to frame his argumentative claims. “No-regrets” is inspired by the precautionary principle, which maintains that “... where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation” (Canadian Environmental Law Association, 2005 March). Snyder used “no-regrets” to frame Michigan's experience with, and regulation of, hydraulic fracturing regulation. While it is true that industries have been fracking in Michigan for several years, increased concerns with environmental and health risks of fracking have led other states to increase regulation, introduce moratoria on hydraulic fracturing, or like New York, ban the practice altogether (see Lustgarten, 2014 December 17). Moreover, the fracking process is exempt from Michigan's water use limits, and the US Environmental Protection Agency is prohibited from regulating fracking under the Safe Drinking Water Act (Sierra Club- Michigan Chapter, n.d.1). Despite his frequent criticism of the federal government, Snyder defaulted to Obama's support for natural gas production: “a recent presidential order recognized the benefits of natural gas as a reliable, affordable, clean and domestic part of our energy future” (“Ensuring our Future”, p. 7, lines 1-2) to suggest bipartisan support for the practice.



Snyder also made an argumentative claim for oil sequestration as a means to energy security in Michigan. Oil sequestration using carbon dioxide has supporters and critics; the latter includes the Sierra Club of Michigan, who argue that Snyder's Public Act 82 increased the pursuit of oil at the expense of alternative sources of energy while increasing environmental risk (Zipp, 2014 April 1). While the state collects oil and gas royalties to fund Michigan's Natural Resources Trust Fund, which is used in part to improve and grow areas for natural outdoor recreation in the state (Gray, 2014 December 9), Public Act 82 collects less tax from oil recovery companies (Zipp, 2014 April 1) than from conventional oil and natural gas companies; this in a state that had, just two years before, experienced one of the largest oil spill in US history, with some one million gallons of Canadian diluted bitumen sinking to the bottom of the Kalamazoo River (see McGowan and Song, 2012 June 26). The different tax rate between "traditional" and sequestration methods of oil recovery indicates the value that the Snyder administration places on oil sequestration as a means to energy security in the state.

Moreover, Michigan's so-called "strict" regulations do not prohibit radioactive fracking waste from other US states from being disposed of in Michigan (Valentine, 2014 August 20), nor do state water use regulations outlined in the Great Lakes Compact (signed by Governor Granholm) apply to hydraulic fracturing (Clean Water Action, n.d.). So while fracking regulation on wastewater management and drilling may be dubbed "no-regrets" decisions by Snyder – meaning, it seems, that such regulations do not negatively impact economic growth – other regulations around fracking such as water use are notably weak, missing, or wholly exempt industries like oil and gas (Sierra Club-Michigan Chapter, 2011 May 17). This suggests that while some of Michigan's fracking regulations may indeed prevent harmful effects on the environment, stronger regulations (like the anti-fracking regulation introduced in New York state in 2015) that might more greatly assure

ecological sustainability but interfere with economic growth will likely not be considered a “win-win”, or “no-regrets”: policy by the governor.

Snyder also argued that the use of wetland banks was a means to mitigating the impact of development on Michigan’s wildlife. The wetland bank approach to conservation, however, may contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism. For example, entrepreneurial wetland ‘bankers’ may look for the best price but not necessarily the best location for a new wetland development in order to earn wetland credits (Ruhl and Salzman, 2006). Moreover, wetland banks may have significant negative impacts on humans living in urban areas where wetlands are being removed:

“Wetlands provide important ecosystem services to human populations, such as flood mitigation, groundwater recharge, water filtration, and sediment capture. These benefits, while unquestionably of economic value if measured in terms of the adverse impacts that would occur were they removed or the cost to replace them with technological substitutes, usually are not valued in the marketplace” (Ruhl and Salzman, 2006, 8).

This scenario becomes more likely as wetland banks are moved from urban to rural areas, where land costs are lower. Although the governor did link the changing climate to the deteriorating health of the Great Lakes– which appears to have been the environmental issue closest to his heart – Snyder has largely paid lip service to the Great Lakes, (NGO representative interviews, May 2014). ).

### **Values Premises**

As we saw in the previous section on Governor Granholm, the Great Lakes basin is a defining characteristic of Michigan and a source of identity for Michiganders. Governor Snyder strongly identifies with the Great Lakes, and referenced this shared identity in his values claims. However, like public sector employees in the MI Dashboard, “nature” may be seen as an asset or liability depending on the purpose it serves. To recall, Snyder claimed that while Michigan’s freshwater coastline is a means to place-making for many Michigan communities, public land will require

further study to determine whether or not it has “value”. While this value can include using land for camping, fishing, and hiking, as well as for forestry and timber products, the argumentative claims made by Snyder suggests that nature must ultimately demonstrate some kind of return on investment. There is little question whether governments have made a shift towards privatization of public land management; indeed, contracted service providers manage many of Michigan (and Ontario) parks. But in this case, Governor Snyder claimed that if public lands do not serve Michigan’s “collective values” (fishing, camping, and hunting, for example), then it is worth considering whether or not Michigan should continue to own these pieces of land. In other words, Snyder used values claims that resonate with a sense of being a Michigander (as fishers, hunters, and campers) to argue in favour of privatizing publically-owned land that does not provide for these “collective values”. Privatization is a signature of the neoliberal era; this argument for the privatization of nature may be one of Snyder’s best examples of green neoliberal thinking.

### **Alternatives Acknowledged and Discredited**

Governor Snyder broached the classic partisan debate of small government versus big government by advancing the idea of “good government”. Of course, what is deemed “good” in political discourse is often subjective and ideological. Governor Snyder tried to distance himself in his speeches from partisan politics (“I am not a career politician. I am an accountant by trade”), and paint himself as simply being “hired to do a job”: indeed, he may be less a Republican and more a CEO. His repeated emphasis on providing Michiganders with “good customer service”, the various reforms he made to state government including deregulation, cuts to public spending and corporate taxation, and interference in the democratic process with the appointment of an emergency manager in Detroit indicates a strong preference for the business model and a very limited government. Thus, “good government” does in fact mean “small government” to Snyder, regardless of how he framed it in the political discourse.

In quoting Abraham Lincoln, Snyder suggested that his administration was taking radical – ‘relentless’ – positive action in Michigan. But since the governor used the same neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that had been applied by previous Michigan governors, not only was he failing to think ‘anew’, he may have ensured that it will only be a matter of time before Michigan experiences another economic recession, the kind to which neoliberalism is prone (see Harvey, 2005).

### **Argumentative Discourses of Dalton McGuinty<sup>49</sup>**

Dalton McGuinty’s premiership spanned the administrations of both Jennifer Granholm and Rick Snyder, forming two consecutive majority governments in 2003 and 2007, and a minority government in October 2011 until he resigned as leader of the Ontario Liberal Party in January 2013. Labelled “Canada’s greenest premier ever” by University of Ottawa professor Stewart Elgie (2013 February 25) McGuinty enjoyed a range of accolades over his 10 years in office from members of the environmental and labour communities for policies that could reduce GHG emissions and create jobs. This included phasing out coal-fired plants; the Move2020 public transit project; the establishment of the Ontario Greenbelt, one of the largest protected urban green spaces in the world; and the Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009 (see David Suzuki Foundation 2012 March; Blue Green Canada, 2012). These were positive policy decisions toward reducing greenhouse gases, particularly when compared with the various policies supported or vetoed by Granholm and Snyder and to McGuinty’s predecessor, Conservative Leader Mike Harris<sup>50</sup>. But like the two

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<sup>49</sup> There will be a brief examination at the end of the chapter of select policy issues and discourse under Kathleen Wynne. As previously mentioned, Kathleen Wynne has overseen the cancellation of the local content rule in the GEA in 2013 after the World Trade Organization as discriminatory against foreign producers, and the closing of Ontario’s coal fire plants – both legacies of the McGuinty era.

<sup>50</sup> Ernie Eves served as premier for 18 months between Harris and McGuinty. Eves was credited by one interviewee in this study with introducing the idea to closing all coal-fired plants in Ontario.

governors, McGuinty prioritized deficit reduction from the beginning of his tenure, taking aim at the \$5.6 billion deficit he inherited from the Progressive Conservatives (see Fanelli and Thomas, 2011).

Moreover, policies categorized as ‘environmental’ or ‘economic’ are not necessarily the best course of action against climate change and unemployment. So while writers like Elgie credit McGuinty (as well as former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney) with the introduction of a range of environmental regulations, he does so using a narrow lens of what sustainability means, thereby overlooking the neoliberal-inspired policies introduced by the premier that increased economic inequality and reduced corporate taxes in an effort to make Ontario ‘competitive’. Thus Elgie and some environmental and blue-green organizations may have interpreted McGuinty’s greenness against a very narrow imaginary of sustainable development akin to the ‘green growth’ model (see Chapter 1). If the McGuinty government represented the green economy in Ontario as a ‘win-win’ solution, it may be with an understanding akin to neoliberalism, which prioritizes the reduction of corporate taxes and regulations to attract private investment, as well as ‘greener’ policy prescriptions including publicly-funded incentives (such as Ontario’s feed-in-tariff) for private production and profit. Moreover, over the five-year timeline of the study, the ‘green momentum’ of the McGuinty government began to decline as austerity measures increased after the GFC. A common political argument is that the global financial crisis made increased austerity “necessary” and anyone with “common sense” would agree. In other words, the neoliberal model of the green economy promoted by the McGuinty government became less green and less sustainable after the global financial crisis with increased corporate tax cuts, austerity measures, privatization, and deregulation.

Furthermore, it can be suggested that because policy imperatives for environmental protection – such as changes to the Environmental Bill of Rights under the Open For Business Act, 2010, were watered down to “cut red tape” for private investment after the global financial crisis, the premier

prioritized the needs of the economy over the environment. And while the Ontario Water Opportunities Act, 2010 has been lauded by some in the environmental community for emphasizing water conservation, it can also be viewed as creating opportunities for the private sector to profit from a global shortage of clean, drinkable water.

### **Imaginaries/Solutions Claims**

Entering into a second majority government in 2007, Premier McGuinty had a renewed mandate from Ontarians. One of McGuinty's most prominent imaginaries for the province was the "green economy". McGuinty argued that a green economy was not merely the idea of elected politicians and NGOs, but as self-evident to all Ontarians: the environment and the economy were compatible and mutually beneficial, and that a green economy could grow jobs and transition the province toward a "greener, more sustainable future". However, this argument was often paired in the discourse with claims that a green economy must be driven by the private sector, which required a range of tax cuts and financial incentives like the FIT. The Liberal government made no arguments in favour of a public-sector driven renewable energy sector, which may have insulated the local content requirement from challenge, and ultimately defeat in the WTO (Sinclair and Trew, 2015). This way of imagining the green economy indicates McGuinty's preference for green market capitalisms, which in McGuinty's case were largely shaped by, and contributed to greater naturalization of green neoliberalism in Ontario.

However, because the McGuinty government also funded climate-related programs not directly associated with economic growth, such as climate change education in schools, and committed to ending coal-fired power in the province, it is fair to assume that McGuinty was indeed concerned with climate change as a problem in and of itself. Unlike Governor Granholm however, McGuinty was comfortable referring to "climate change" throughout his 10-year tenure as premier. This may be because Canadians have been more likely to believe in anthropogenic climate change than

Americans, many of whom maintained that climate scientists manipulate data for their own gains (see Lachapelle, Borick, and Rabe, 2012). It is also likely an effect of his institutional power: as we have previously stated, a premier with a majority government has significantly more power than a state governor.

Moreover, Ontario experienced a relative period of economic growth in the first half of the 2000s, particularly when compared with Michigan, which had been in steady decline from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus green economy discourse by the Ontario Liberals was likely less threatening to both labour and business, making it an easier sell in the province; on the other hand, Granholm faced significant resistance to the green economy from stakeholders and thus, her argumentative claims around its validity had to be much more compelling. Even though Granholm, like McGuinty, viewed the green economy as an important means to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (George Smitherman interview, September 2014; Michigan policy analyst interview, Michigan, May 2014) naturalizing the green economy imaginary required much more work discursively by the governor than her neighbouring premier.

Another ecological-economic imaginary advanced by Premier McGuinty was what has been referred to as the “blue economy” (see for example Henderson and Parker, 2012). With the increasing global shortage of clean, drinkable water, blue economy advocates have argued that these conditions have created a range of opportunities for stimulating economic growth and jobs in water treatment technologies (ibid). Ontario was already a recognized leader in water treatment and technology (ibid) before the introduction of the Water Opportunities Act (WOA) in 2010, with some 22,000 working in the water industry (Lucas, 2013 July 15). The lead objective of the WOA is to encourage economic growth and employment for communities across Ontario; however, increasing water conservation and water quality in the province is also an important aim of the legislation (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, 2011). However, indigenous communities like the

Neskantaga First Nation remain under a 20-year long boil water advisory (Levasseur, and Marcoux, 2015 October 14) and unemployment is exceptionally high (Assembly of First Nations, 2014 April 30). Moreover, the Government of Ontario has yet to address water waste by the industrial sector (Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, 2011). The absence of strong regulations against corporate water use may contribute to the naturalization of private property rights in public commons resources like water, and ultimately reinforce green (or in this case, blue) neoliberalism.

Despite the global economic crisis in 2008-2009, the green economy remained a constant imaginary for the Liberals, as did McGuinty's overall imaginary of the province – as an economic engine for the foundry region and a global provider of goods and services. Because the McGuinty government projected a surplus even as late as 2008, it was easy for it to argue that Ontario's economy was growing and sustainable at the beginning of the GFC, despite indication of economic trouble in other jurisdictions like Michigan. Indeed, the Liberals were so confident that in the 2008 budget speech they promised \$750 million over four years in new business tax relief; a \$190 million, retroactive (to January 1, 2007) Capital Tax cut for manufacturing and resource firms; and \$433 billion for Ontario manufacturers and forestry companies to purchase new equipment (see Chapter 4). How the government achieved six years of balanced budgets before the GFC – while eliminating the deficit inherited from the previous Conservative government – is left ambiguous in the McGuinty Liberals' speeches; however, it is fair to suggest that the range of austerity measures and corporate tax cuts (such as those listed above) rolled out before and after the GFC deserves some of the credit. This imaginary around deficit reduction waned only temporarily: after injecting stimulus funds into Ontario's economy to combat the effects of the economic crisis, the McGuinty Liberals were quick to assert that only by eliminating the deficit could Ontario be an economic leader once again.



### **Circumstantial Premises**

Just before the GFC, McGuinty represented the circumstances around rising commodity and dollar prices as part of a normal cycle, rather than an inherent problem with the economic system. While McGuinty credited “unfair” trade rules for some of Ontario’s economic problems including unemployment, he was more cautious with his wording than Governor Granholm, who as we have seen explicitly implicated trade agreements for Michigan’s problems on at least three occasions in her speeches.

Regarding Ontario’s economy, McGuinty was quick to frame his government’s policies as factors in business growth in the province. What is missing from his arguments, of course, are the negative circumstances that accompanied this ‘growth’: higher tuition fees for students, longer wait times in hospitals and cuts to nursing staff, tighter restrictions for social assistance, insufficient affordable housing, and overall lower wages for workers<sup>51</sup> (see for example, MacKenzie, 2006 April 18).

Moreover, the Ontario government decreased corporate taxes – a significant source of government revenue – and increased austerity measures in the years between 2007 and 2013. In other words, what McGuinty did before the GFC – cutting taxes and spending – he resumed again, perhaps more harshly, before the crisis was even over. Thus the circumstantial argument the premier advances that business growth is a key indicator of Ontario’s ‘success’ minimizes the role of other factors associated with the welfare state in the security of middle class, working class, the poor, women, and racialized Ontarians. This is not to say that the premier never made circumstantial claims that Ontarians were better off because of his government’s spending on education and healthcare, but rather that he over-emphasized the role of the private sector in the long-term security of average Ontarians. In this way, he contributed to the idea that only business can create the right circumstances for Ontario’s prosperity.

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<sup>51</sup> Adjusted for inflation

Another circumstantial claim advanced by the premier was in regards to the role of technology in the green economy; technological innovation will create good jobs and make the planet cleaner and better for everyone. This argument is based on the premise that clean energy technology will mitigate the effects of growth and result in less pollution. At the same time, advanced technology will create thousands of jobs in new fields like renewable energy. While this argument seems to make sense, it is based on an ecological modernization imaginary that valorizes technology as the circumstance that allows guilt-free economic growth (see Chapter 1; see also Hajer, 1995). Indeed, it is an argument that is tough to disagree with: if not advanced technology, what else can create jobs while not only caring for the environment, but improving it? As we have seen in Chapter 2, however, some scholars and activists problematize defaulting to technology as a means to solving environmental problems, as opposed to, for example, reducing consumption and economic growth. Further, the premier's argument depends on the logic of capital accumulation: producing more technology results in more consumption that creates more jobs. This approach to the green economy is, in the long-term, unsustainable: environmentally, socially, and economically (see Krueger and Gibbs, 2007; James, 2015).

Furthermore, the premier argued that despite global recession and a worsening climate, Ontario was poised to not only overcome such challenges, but also to profit from them. To recall, McGuinty used the same passage in the Lincoln Civil War speech as Governor Snyder:

“As we seek opportunities for the future, we are reassured by history. For it teaches us that, through the ages, societies have faced challenges *similar to ours* and, with ingenuity, resilience and compassion, prevailed. As Abraham Lincoln once said: ‘The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate in the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. *As our case is new, so must we think anew, and act anew*’. These are serious times. And they demand that all members of this House devote themselves to *a serious plan*,

and a common goal”<sup>52</sup> (Speech from the Throne, November 22, 2011, p. 10, lines 6-15, emphasis added).

But the actions the premier recommended were far from bold, or new. Indeed, the irony is that while McGuinty argued that the “dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate for the stormy present” the course of action he prescribed was drawn from the same dogma that contributed to widespread socio-economic inequality and, arguably, the increased production of greenhouse gasses: the dogma of neoliberal capitalism. Moreover, McGuinty maintained that even though stimulus spending and auto bailouts were necessary (and temporary) measures to stimulate Ontario’s economy, they were also the circumstances that ultimately impeded private sector investment and growth in the province. As such, one year after injecting stimulus into Ontario’s economy, the premier would call for renewed “fiscal discipline”, including deficit reduction and austerity (see ‘Means-Goals’ below).

The McGuinty Liberals had a majority government; thus the premier had considerable “room to manoeuvre” (see Weiss, 2005) when prescribing policies to lead Ontario out of recession, particularly when compared with the limitations on Governor Granholm. The separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches limit a governor’s power, and several interviewees pointed out that a major constraint on Granholm was the Republican-dominated legislature (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014; former state legislature staff member interview, May 2014). When asked why Governor Granholm did not increase corporate taxes, or why wind energy on Lake Michigan kept getting blocked, one former Democrat legislature declared: “because there was a Republican senate” (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014, May 2014). This suggests that despite weaker party discipline in presidential systems, party ideology often does in fact affect how policymakers frame problems and solutions, and ultimately how they vote on legislation.

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<sup>52</sup> For the full Lincoln speech see <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29503>

## **Goals Premises**

There is one important distinction between the goal arguments made by the Michigan governors and the goal arguments made by the Premier of Ontario: Dalton McGuinty explicitly identified climate change mitigation and adaptation as goals of the green economy. McGuinty was clear that the main purpose of the green economy was to stimulate private investment and jobs via the renewable energy sector, just as Granholm had done; however, unlike Granholm the premier explicitly claimed that reducing Ontario's greenhouse gasses and the resulting impacts on climate change was also a goal of the green economy. However, the fact that McGuinty named climate change mitigation in his goals premises does not mean that McGuinty was more concerned with global warming than Granholm. What it does suggest, and as we have pointed out, is that as a premier with a majority government, McGuinty had considerably more institutional power than Granholm and thus more flexibility in how he constructed his argumentative claims around climate change.

But the inclusion of climate change mitigation and adaptation as goals of policy was more prevalent in throne and finance speeches before the period of this study (2003-2007). This suggests that as with Michiganders, the priorities of Ontarians shifted to economic growth and job creation during and immediately following 2008-2009. Indeed, McGuinty's argumentative claims focused largely on economic goals – GDP growth, job creation, private investment, and deficit reduction. This lends support to findings that in times of high unemployment and economic uncertainty, citizens of both Canada and the United States prioritize the economy over the environment (see for example IPSOS-Reid, 2009 March 2; Newport, 2009 March 19; Scrugs and Benegal, 2012; see also LaChapelle, Borick, and Rabe, 2012).

Thus, one of McGuinty's primary goal arguments, both before and after the GFC, was that the province must do whatever necessary to be "competitive" for investment and jobs, and "maintain a strong fiscal position". As McGuinty's policy record and the argumentative claims of Granholm and Snyder have shown, this meant reducing the corporate tax rate and eliminating those regulations or

‘red tape’ that political elites claim are barriers to investment. In a period when unemployment is high, the argumentative claims for “competitiveness” are key contributors to the re-naturalization of neoliberalism; the uncertainty caused by unemployment may have served to validate political claims that the only way to create jobs was to give the private sector whatever incentives it claimed it needed to invest, and thus create more jobs. This was true of the green economy: the Liberals maintained that the only way to ‘sell’ the high-cost of renewable energy to the public (caused in part by generous FIT payments to the RE industry), was by promising that it would result in thousands of green jobs (Smitherman interview, September 2014). But in countries with a strong social safety net and active labour market policies<sup>53</sup>, the uncertainty that accompanies long-term unemployment is mitigated, without requiring government to bend to the demands of capital. Thus, it is not so surprising that in jurisdictions with weaker social assistance and unemployment policies political elites can make argumentative claims that the only way out of economic crisis is by providing businesses with tax cuts, abatements, and/or regulatory environments that promote investment. From the perspective of unemployed workers, it is argument that may be designed to seem like common sense – even if it means greater austerity.

Opportunity in Ontario has been determined by individual ability rather than universal access, where “prosperity” is promised through trickle down wealth, which as we have seen was recently deemed by the OECD as counterproductive to economic growth (2014 December). Thus the goals claims Premier McGuinty made in his speeches were based on a neoliberal interpretation of opportunity, individualism, and wealth, despite the fact that he framed his vision as one of shared prosperity in a “green and sustainable society”. This imaginary and the goals he identified are based on the status quo – a status quo that is both unequal and unsustainable (see James, 2015).

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<sup>53</sup> Denmark is best known for its flexicurity model, which protects unemployed workers with a strong social safety net, and ongoing skills training in a flexible labour market

### **Means-Goals Premises**

The means-goals premises are made up of arguments that ‘if and only if’ we take specific actions can we achieve our goals, or as Margaret Thatcher put it: “there is no alternative.” The McGuinty government made convincing means-goals arguments regarding the building of a green, renewable energy economy in Ontario. As discussed in Chapter 4, the most important piece of legislation was the Green Energy and Economy Act that, despite economic recession, the Liberals passed in 2009. The public cost of implementation and FIT payments, the government reasoned, would be offset in the public’s mind by the 50,000 jobs<sup>54</sup> they projected would be created, in part by the generous FIT rates and the local content requirement (Smitherman interview, September 3, 2014). Thus, the means to creating jobs, stimulating investment, and reducing greenhouse gases in Ontario was by stimulating the renewable energy sector with long-term financial incentives provided to the private sector via a feed in tariff, and by tying eligibility for those FIT payments to the use of Ontario materials and workers. Indeed, supporters have claimed that the FIT is the most important step taken by a subnational jurisdiction in North America to reduce greenhouse gases and create good, green jobs (see for example, Clean Energy Canada, 2014). Furthermore, the Liberals argued that the means to reducing GHGs was to close all coal plants in the province, which has also been credited as one of the best effort for reducing GHGs on the continent (ibid). The closing of Ontario’s coal plants suggests that when the premier argued that cutting greenhouse gasses was a goal of his government he meant it. Thus, as Snyder is comparatively a “greener” governor among other Republicans in the United States, McGuinty may indeed be the ‘greenest premier’ among his counterparts in other provinces; that is, if ‘greenness’ is measured by policies that will reduce greenhouse gasses.

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<sup>54</sup> Of that 50,000, 75 percent or 30,000 jobs would be in short-term construction jobs (see Hussain, 2011 December 6)

Because a premier has more institutional power than a governor, and because McGuinty had a majority government until October 2011, he had greater flexibility than Granholm and Snyder to introduce bold policies that would not only green the economy, but lead to a greener, more sustainable society as he claimed. For example, McGuinty had fiscal and executive flexibility to imagine a Green New Deal and introduce a carbon tax that could further fund renewable energy development. Instead, McGuinty focused on deficit reduction through austerity and creating a competitive business environment by weakening regulations and lowering corporate taxes. These were choices he made constrained not by institutional structures but by neoliberal understandings of the economy and the state. As such, McGuinty validated green imaginaries based on neoliberal ideas. By linking his means premises to his means-goals premises for the green economy in the political discourse, he further entrenches the neoliberalization of ecological goals.

This narrow interpretation of the green economy by political elites, as well as by some environmental and labour groups, has allowed green neoliberal thinking to dominate the discourse around sustainable development in Ontario. The premier's actions indicate that he was equally, if not more concerned with the province's "competitiveness" for private investment than with "greening" Ontario. McGuinty's means-goals arguments for being competitive before and after the GFC included, as we have seen, decreasing corporate income tax, and reducing "red tape", while strengthening Ontario's "fiscal position" meant eliminating the deficit inherited from the Conservatives. Moreover, shortly after injecting stimulus into Ontario's economy in 2008-2009, the Liberals were once again fixated on eliminating the deficit and cutting corporate taxes (and thus provincial revenue), making argumentative claims that austerity measures were necessary.

While the Liberals did invest in some areas of education and healthcare, they also made significant cuts spending because they were fixated so intently on the deficit (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March). As we saw in Chapter 6, McGuinty typically claimed that education and healthcare spending

was to ensure “a well-trained and healthy workforce”, which serves as a reminder of Ontario’s comparative advantage (over US states, for example) in providing publicly-funded healthcare; simultaneously that Ontario’s relatively lower cost for post-secondary education, when compared with similar US states, increases the size of an educated and skilled workforce. This argument for education as a private commodity was used also by Governor Granholm, and is a distinct shift away from education as a public good, which was a guiding principle of the universal post-secondary education system in California in the 1960s –until that system that was abruptly ended by Governor Ronald Reagan and replaced with a tuition-based funding model (Bady and Conczal, 2012). In this way, education and healthcare serves the needs of business, rather than the needs of society.

In the neoliberal era, “deficit hysteria” (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March) among governments has led to a general trend of 30 years of austerity. In Ontario, deficit hysteria affected the Liberal government little more than a year after it had injected stimulus money into the fragile economy. Stimulus spending was an action taken widely by national and subnational governments, not just in Ontario or Michigan. It is thus interesting that these governments, and the economists (like Don Drummond in Ontario) they consulted with or hired to restructure public finances, quickly shifted focus to deficit reduction while re-instating the same kinds of policies that led to a global recession. Indeed, since neoliberal– privatization, deregulation, and free trade – are prone to system failure (Harvey, 2005) one might expect that political elites would refrain from advancing argumentative claims that such policies continue to be best for the social good. That the Liberals advanced these means-goals arguments suggests that, despite global recession and increasing climate change, they believed that neoliberal logic is correct; it also suggests that government is, as some scholars have argued, beholden to capital (see McBride, 2014).



McGuinty asserted that his government had the knowledge and experience to lead Ontario out of economic recession, and that the policies they would introduce were “prudent, proven, and responsible”. The Liberals argued that because they had eliminated the deficit inherited from the Conservatives, they were well equipped to manage Ontario’s current problems. “Ontarian’s resilience” would be tested, the Liberals conceded, but eliminating the deficit, through more austerity, was absolutely “necessary” if Ontario was to remain competitive for investment. Leaders in both Michigan and Ontario used populist phrases like “tighten our belts” to help make austerity measures resonate with families who have themselves had to make difficult spending cuts in times of economic hardship – arguably made “necessary” by 30 years of flat wages and a weaker welfare state.

Furthermore, neoliberal arguments for deficit reduction and economic competitiveness makes an easy target of the public sector, which is deemed too costly to the public purse, particularly when private sector businesses must decrease wages and benefits of regular folks. Thus, the McGuinty government justified cuts to public sector jobs as “fair” with support from the economic elite, who target public sector unions for wreaking havoc on public finances (Schmidt, 2012 May 1). But unlike in Michigan, where Right to Work legislation passed with the approval of Governor Snyder, Ontarians rejected extreme neoliberalism with votes: the election platform by the Ontario Conservatives that included cutting 100,000 public sector jobs as a means to private sector investment and jobs was beyond what could successfully be framed as ‘common sense’. This suggests that there may be a limit to the kinds of measures politicians can frame for the public as ‘necessary’, particularly in the case of drastic and immediate policy change. However, in the broader lifespan of neoliberalism – which has included 30 years of incremental cuts to social services and the public sector – austerity appears to have become naturalized. Thus while there is rarely a means-goal

argument as black and white as the 100,000 jobs cut, the long-term effects of austerity have been much the same.

Furthermore, McGuinty called on Ontarians to be brave and “open to change”, which he claimed would benefit the province in the long run. But some of the changes McGuinty recommended were not necessarily better for the average Ontarian. The Open for Business Act, 2010, for example, aimed to cut “red tape” regulation; encourage more privatization of government assets, and further reduced taxes on corporations (Fanelli and Thomas, 2011). Indeed, while the McGuinty government argued that the OBA would strengthen employment and environmental regulations, it weakened the right to public comment and participation in the environmental approval process on a range of new businesses, a process that was previously protected under Ontario’s Environmental Bill of Rights (ibid; EcoJustice, 2010 May). The opportunities that the OBA would provide were to encourage business investment with a possibility, not a guarantee, of economic growth and jobs. Given that corporations have held onto their tax savings – totalling \$745 billion since 2001 – rather than invest back into the Canadian economy (see Stanford/CCPA, 2010), it can be argued that policies like Ontario’s Open for Business Act were crafted based on ideological preferences rather than evidence. The result of policies like the OBA would be a “made-in-Ontario” plan that makes the province “*as prosperous as it is inclusive*” (Budget Speech 2008, p. 14, line 18-19, emphasis added); and one that will “strengthen long-term economic productivity, while stimulating investment and job growth today, and *move us to a greener, more sustainable future*” (p. 1, lines 19-21, emphasis added). Paradoxically, the plan was not unique to Ontario at all, but rather a page out of the same neoliberal playbook used by Michigan and other jurisdictions in a race for private investment.

As we saw in Chapter 3, social equality and cultural vitality are goals of holistic sustainable development, as well as ecological resilience and economic prosperity. But these argumentative claims advanced by the McGuinty Liberals – that Ontario was becoming “inclusive” and “green” –

are incongruent with the range of policies introduced by the government in the period of study.

Instead, McGuinty's policies were characteristic of green market capitalisms, in particular Green Neoliberalism.

Because policies that increase consumption, production, privatization, and deregulation cannot lead to greater sustainability (see for example O'Connor, 1998), it is fair to conclude that the Ontario government was engaging in 'green publicity' as much, if not more, than it was in introducing policies that would move the province towards a "greener, more sustainable future" as it often claimed. In other words, the political rhetoric does not match the policy reality.

### **Values Premises**

Given that Ontario and Michigan have similar industrial histories, Premier McGuinty used values frames similar to those used by Governor Granholm. For example, both McGuinty and Granholm used language that would appeal to the hard-working, blue-collar persona of workers of the North American foundry (see Garreau, 1981). As we saw in Chapter 6, McGuinty used this values claim to construct a discursive bridge between Ontario's auto history and what he argued would be the province's future: building e-cars for the next generation. By linking Ontario's automotive past and present with a future in clean cars in the discourse, McGuinty appealed to the sense of pride among workers and owners along the value chain of the automotive sector in Ontario; more importantly, he encouraged workers by claiming that the manufacturing sector would again be prosperous – even in a clean or low-carbon economy.

In 2010, this would be a particularly meaningful argumentative claim for the 800,000 Ontario workers who lost their job in the manufacturing sector over the previous decade. Similar values arguments were also made regarding the renewable energy sector: Ontario's tradition of manufacturing and its well-trained workforce made the province ready for the next 'greener' phase of manufacturing, building parts for wind turbines and solar panels, and refurbishing electricity

grids. These value claims, in both Ontario and Michigan aimed to help workers imagine the green economy, one that would provide good, well-paid jobs. In this sense, McGuinty and Granholm framed the green economy as a new source of pride and self-identity for Ontarians and Michiganders respectively, who would “build the efficient cars that a low-carbon world needs”.

These values claims contributed to support from blue-green organizations, which saw the needs of workers being incorporated into government policies and plans. However, the support from blue-green organizations of this “light green” (see Jonas and While, 2007) New Dealism may contribute to widespread acceptance of the green growth model as a means to sustainable development.

Furthermore, this can limit debate regarding the “greening” of production and consumption as a long-term solution to climate change, and replacing the car culture with low-cost public transit, more accessible to a wider range of socio-economic groups. In other words, if the green economy, imagined in terms of green market capitalisms, is good enough for workers (and environmental organizations as well) than it may indeed be “just green enough” (see Curran and Hamilton, 2012) to pass as “sustainable development” among legislators and the public.

### **Alternative Options Acknowledged and Discredited**

Prior to 2011 (before McGuinty lost his majority), there was little evidence of policy deliberation by the Liberals in the political discourse (see Chapter 6). Perhaps unsurprisingly, not one of the political leaders claimed that, since neoliberalism has proven prone to economic crisis, new policies that diverge from neoliberal logic should be explored. All three continued to constrain their policy alternatives to a neoliberal understanding of the economy and state. Of course, this may be because despite global economic crisis, international financial organizations and state governments made no significant changes to how they did business after 2008-2009, and subnational governments are in part creatures of the nation-state. But the resistance to examining alternatives to neoliberalism by the governors and the premier may also be because it is how they truly do imagine the future for their

jurisdiction – green or otherwise. In McGuinty’s case, the public was assured that cutting corporate taxes and regulation, as well as austerity was the normal economic framework to which the province needed to return as quickly as possible – and at whatever cost. Moreover like Granholm, McGuinty shifted blame for the global financial crisis away from corporations and governments, despite the fact that “the US and UK governments were (are) largely culpable for the subprime crisis, and most importantly, the transformation of the mortgage crisis into the global financial crisis” (Lee, Clark, Pollard, and Leyshon, 2009, 723). Thus if government (and the private sector) is a blameless victim, then there is no reason why government should change the ways they do business.

After losing his majority in 2011, however, McGuinty constructed argumentative claims that after careful deliberation the Liberals had rejected policy proposals that were “harmful” to Ontario’s economy and Ontarians. For example, the McGuinty government argued that it “will not pursue austerity measures that harm our economy” (Speech from the Throne, 2011, p. 10, line 4). However, we saw that shortly after 2009 the Liberals hired TD economist Don Drummond to recommend a series of austerity measures, despite the fact that critics argued a quick and drastic return to “deficit hysteria” was harmful to economic growth and social stability (see Hennessy and Stanford, 2013 March). Moreover, McGuinty continued to implement austerity measures during his third term as leader of the minority Liberal government, until his exit from politics in January 2013. Thus, while McGuinty made argumentative claims after 2011 that his government had deliberated over the policy choices available to them, there appears to have been no change in the policies he recommended for Ontario’s recovery over the course of his tenure.

### **Premier Kathleen Wynne**

Kathleen Wynne oversaw several major policy changes related to the green economy in her first year as premier, most of which were legacies of the McGuinty government. To recall, Wynne first became premier in February 2013 not by general election but rather after the resignation of Dalton

McGuinty as leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario. However, the Wynne Liberals were re-elected to a majority government in June 2014 after an election was triggered by NDP Leader Andrea Horwath. Of the various policies Wynne fulfilled, the most prevalent were the closing of Ontario's last coal-fired plant in Thunder Bay in April 2014 and the removal of the local content requirement from the Green Energy and Economy Act, 2009.

First, Wynne presided over the end of coal-fired energy generation in Ontario in, which was described as “the single largest regulatory action in North America” to reduce GHGs (International Institute on Sustainable Development/Sawyer and Gass, 2014 February; see also Speech from the Throne, 2013, p. 5, lines 19-20). The Thunder Bay generating facility, the last operating of five Ontario coal-fired plants, officially stopped production on April 15, 2013. While the first commitment to eliminate coal energy in Ontario was made by PC Premier Ernie Eves in 2002, and supported by ongoing pressure and research by the Ontario Clean Air Alliance (Leahy, 2014 April 19), it was the McGuinty government who took ownership of the task at the legislative level. However, the Wynne government made its own contributions by pushing up the coal plant closure dates by nearly a year; introducing the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2013 that would prohibit future use of coal; and releasing a discussion paper on cap and trade industrial emitters (International Institute on Sustainable Development/Sawyer and Gass, 2014 February). At the same time, Wynne had to manage significant backlash from the Ontario legislature and the public regarding McGuinty's expensive energy blunders, including the Samsung ‘Sweetheart’ Deal<sup>55</sup> and the cancellation of natural gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga that will cost the province as much as \$1 billion (Morrow and Howlett, 2013 October 8). As we saw in the previous chapter, Wynne was

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<sup>55</sup> Samsung promised to invest \$6 billion (reduced from \$9.7b in 2010) in new manufacturing plants for green energy components, and wind and solar projects in Ontario, in exchange for Ontario's commitment to purchase 1,369 MW (reduced from 2,500 MW in 2010) in renewable energy from Samsung (Canadian Press, 2013 June 20).

careful to distance her Liberals from McGuinty in the discourse, while making promises that her government would do better for the economy and the environment.

Second, Wynne oversaw the removal of the local content rule from the GEA. After losing the WTO trade dispute case in November 2011 and the appeal in May 2012<sup>56</sup>, the requirement that tied eligibility for Ontario FIT payments to the use of local workers and/or materials was officially eliminated from the GEA in 2014. The ruling signaled to other jurisdictions that any effort to offset the financial and political cost of stimulating renewable energy through feed-in-tariff payments could not include measures for increasing local jobs if they interfered with the international trade regime (McBride and Shields, 2013). And though a variety of direct and indirect green jobs were reportedly created by the GEA<sup>57</sup>, Ontario could no longer demand that companies use Ontario materials or workers in order to qualify for generous payments paid by Ontario taxpayers. In a setback against ecological sustainability, the clean economy in Ontario would now have to accept materials made in, and shipped from Japan, the EU, China, and the United States.

Aside from legacies of the McGuinty era, Kathleen Wynne had her own agenda for environmental and economic sustainability. Wynne introduced the Local Food Act, 2013, aimed at encouraging local food production and consumption, and agricultural jobs in Ontario, which would in turn reduce Ontario's net production of GHGs. The act was pre-empted by a \$30 million 'Local Food Fund' by the Wynne government to support projects aimed at growing Ontario's food sector.

Wynne also proposed a budget that would provide \$29 billion in transit spending (public transit and

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<sup>56</sup> The WTO case was defended by the Government of Canada on Ontario's behalf

<sup>57</sup> Exact numbers have varied from 2,000 direct jobs to 30,000 direct and indirect jobs, depending on the modelling preferences by those aimed to prove or disprove the GEA's ability to create green jobs in Ontario (see Winfield, 2013 July).

road infrastructure); \$1 billion to develop the Ring of Fire<sup>58</sup> mineral deposit; and establish an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

But the Wynne government would ultimately maintain the course of action started by the McGuinty Liberals, which included continued restriction “of overall spending increases to 1 percent below GDP growth until the provinces debt-to-GDP ratio returns to the pre-recession level of 27 percent” (p. 3 lines 9-10). While the Wynne Liberals argued that “Ontario’s true potential cannot be reached through austerity alone” (Speech from the Throne, 2013, p. 3, lines 13-14) Ontario’s fiscal policy would not be re-written, but rather re-affirmed by the Wynne government. However, Wynne’s commitment to greening Ontario became evident in her transportation policies: a \$1 billion commitment in 2015 for GO Transit expansion and Light Rail Transit (LRT) in the City of Hamilton, paid for however, by the partial privatization of Hydro One (Craggs, 2015 June 11). This particular policy is an example of a hybrid capitalist imaginary of sustainability, whereby infrastructure projects are funded by the privatization of public assets.

While “green jobs” are not explicitly mentioned in the 2013 Speech from the Throne, Premier Wynne made argumentative claims that job creation was a key goal for her government. The means-goals she argued were necessary for job growth, however, followed a similar logic to that of McGuinty: education, training, and healthcare are comparative advantages for private sector investment. Indeed, the aim of public policy was to “strengthen the earning potential of all men and women in this province – whether they live in cities or small towns, the north or the south – and enable everyone to have a good job and a secure paycheck” (p. 3, lines 22-24). Through this logic,

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<sup>58</sup> The Ring of Fire is a massive chromite mining and smelting development project in northern Ontario estimated to be worth \$120 billion in total economic activity. The project has been criticized for its poor environmental review process and inadequate consultation with First Nations. Tony Clement (PC) has equated the Ring of Fire with the Alberta Oil Sands in terms of its economic impact (Tencer, 2013 September 19).



educated and highly skilled workers, first and foremost, attract businesses to Ontario. This is not an inherently poor argument: Germany has increased jobs in technology by providing highly skilled education to workers, despite the fact that China can provide labour at a cheaper cost (see Chapter 4). But as we have seen, viewing education as a means to winning investment for jobs does not reimagine the relationship between worker and capital but maintains a weak circumstantial premise of individual equity; indeed, the premier maintained that her government “will encourage a fair society, where all the people of Ontario have good jobs and strong communities” (p. 2, lines 18-19, emphasis added). To recall, the word ‘fair’ in neoliberal discourse does not mean ‘equity’, but rather opportunity to earn more according to one’s effort. But without taking policy action to lower tuition costs, reduce out-of-pocket healthcare expenses, and eliminate ‘workfare’-type programs, it is hard to imagine how each Ontarian – in particular, the poor– has the same access to opportunities to those with greater individual wealth.

This narrow interpretation of equity, in particular, between worker and employer, is further evident in the premier’s proposals for arbitration and collective bargaining in the public sector. While Wynne’s arguments initially suggest that she would approach labour negotiations with less hostility than McGuinty, she instead argued that her government will build a “*sustainable* model for wage negotiation”, one “that the brightness of our shared future is not clouded by the indisputable economic realities of our time” (p. 5, lines 23-26, emphasis added). Sustainability, in this argumentative frame, emphasizes the needs of employers – including both private sector business and the Government of Ontario – in part at the expense of workers, whereby labour negotiations can only be ‘sustainable’ if the economic costs to employers are not too high. To be fair, the premier increased the minimum wage to \$11/hour and has called for future increases to be tied to inflation (CBC News, 2014 January 31). However, this is far from the \$14/hour social justice groups have argued are necessary to raise Ontarians above the poverty line, which Wynne claimed would hurt

businesses and jobs (ibid). This circumstantial argument, however, minimizes the key role of consumers in stimulating economic growth in favour of the neoliberal logic that business, not the middle class, creates jobs. Moreover, the premier's framing of economic sustainability in terms of the "realities of our time" suggests that the needs of business continue to trump the needs of Ontario's working families, who have seen their wages stagnate and the quality of their social services decline because of austerity measures rolled out across Ontario over the last three decades.

There were indications that the Wynne government was committed to tackling climate change. In April 2015, the premier announced the Government of Ontario's intention to enter into an existing cap and trade program with Quebec and California. Unlike British Columbia's carbon tax, of which the revenue is redistributed to British Columbians (with variances based on income) revenue generated from the cap and trade will be invested by the government: "The carrot is that the money that is realized from cap and trade is going to be reinvested into a green economy, into a sustainable economy and into a sustainable province" (Premier Wynne in Artuso, 2015 April 22). However, given the Liberals policy record over the last 12 years, it is difficult to imagine a "sustainable economy" in Ontario that is based not only on ensuring economic prosperity, but ecological resilience and social equality as well.

## **Conclusion**

This analysis of the argumentative claims outlined in Chapter 6 suggests that there are several similarities and differences in how the Michigan governors and the Ontario premier(s) imagined and argued economic growth and recovery before and after the GFC. First, Governor Granholm and Premier McGuinty argued that the green economy was the key to creating good jobs. However, Premier McGuinty had more power than Granholm to make strong argumentative claims for the green economy as a means to addressing climate change, while Granholm framed climate change

only as an opportunity for job creation, rather than a problem unto itself. Governor Snyder, on the other hand, did not make a discursive link between climate change and job creation; thus, the green economy was not key to his economic recovery or job creation arguments. Though this is in part because the Republican governor had more legislative support than Granholm (former Democrat legislator interview, May 2014; see also Constantelos, 2014), the fact that Granholm advanced green economy arguments within a hostile legislative environment suggests that her personal commitment to combatting climate change and creating green jobs was a driving factor in the imagination and realization of the green economy in Michigan.

McGuinty, on the other hand, had considerably more room to introduce and pass legislation particularly during the years of his second majority government (2007 and 2011). Indeed, the policy record and argumentative claims analysis shows that he had the will and power to introduce aggressive policies to reduce GHGs and grow a renewable energy sector, such as the Green Energy and Economy, Act, 2009, which included the feed-in-tariff, and close all coal-fired plants in the province.

Despite this comparatively stronger political power, however, McGuinty chose similar policies and made similar argumentative claims to those of Granholm and Snyder regarding economic growth, and the need to cut corporate taxes and regulation, and implement more austerity measures as a means to being economically “competitive”. Though there are important variations in how the three leaders approached the problems of unemployment and climate change, the similarities in the ways that our three political leaders – Democrat, Republican, and Liberal – argued for privatization, deregulation, and/or lower corporate taxes as a way out of economic recession are greater than their differences. This ideological convergence has likely hastened during the neoliberal period, in which capital has been further empowered by a global trade regime and regional trade agreements that

protect their interests. The green economy is taking on a similar tone, as ‘progressive’ pieces of legislation like the GEA are structured around private sector investment, and nature must have instrumental value in order to survive. Alongside consistent messaging for economic competitiveness and deficit reduction, governments on both sides of the Michigan-Ontario border contribute to the re-naturalization of neoliberalism, green or otherwise.

In the final chapter, we examine the findings of this analysis in relation to our research questions and the implications this has for the theory and practice of political communication research, before concluding with proposals for further scholarly study.

## Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

James (2015) argues that “the more the language of sustainability is used, the more it seems to be directed at rationalizing unsustainable development” (p. 5). This research study examined how political leaders in Ontario and Michigan have used ‘green economy’ discourses in ways that have contributed to the re-naturalization process of neoliberalism before and after the global financial crisis, and make policies associated with neoliberalism, green or otherwise, seem like common sense.

I used academic and grey literature to help construct a typology of green economy discourses against which to measure a range of policies introduced by the governments of Michigan and Ontario between 2007 and 2012. I then categorized these various environmental, economic, fiscal, and social policies according to the following green economy typologies: Green Neoliberalism, Green New Dealism, and holistic sustainable development. I also categorized policies that were characteristic of ‘classic’ neoliberalism that had not been influenced by green economy thinking. The purpose of this categorization process was to determine the types of policies that had been introduced in the two jurisdictions during the period of study, in order to critically examine the political discourse, particularly argumentative claims that public policy was sustainable, green, unique, and/or necessary to create jobs and a strong economy.

In Chapter 5, I conducted a content analysis using NVIVO 10 of some of the most frequent words used in political speeches by Governors Granholm and Snyder, and Premier McGuinty, which I used to construct clusters of words around four themes: environment/green, value/justice, economy/fiscal and work/employment. The words were then examined using semiotic analysis to gain insight into what these frequently-used words mean in the context of political discourse by each political leader. The purpose of the semiotic analysis was to ensure an accurate interpretation of the meaning of words in the context of the political speeches examined. The semiotic analysis was then followed by an analysis of political arguments (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012) of State of the State

speeches, special addresses related to the environment and economy (radio addresses by Governor Granholm, and the Special Address on “Ensuring our Future: Energy and Environment” by Governor Snyder); and Throne and Budget speeches by the McGuinty government. We then used an adaptation of Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) method for analyzing argumentative claims in political discourse. This methodological framework includes the *imaginaries/solutions claim*, or the grand narrative political elites declare is *the* vision for a better society; *the circumstantial premises*, in which political leaders assign blame or accept credit for current economic, social, and/or ecological conditions; the *goals premises*, which identify specific objectives for the realization of the imaginary; the *means-goals premises*, or the policies and measures political elites claim are absolutely necessary to achieve goals; the *values premises*, which uses hopes, dreams, values, and pride to encourage legislative and public support for a policy agenda; and *alternative options*, in which political elites claim they have deliberated over all the policy alternatives, which they quickly discredit. The argumentative analysis identified and critiqued the similar and different ways that political leaders naturalize neoliberalism in political speeches. The goal of this analysis was to provide evidence of the use of green and/or ‘common sense’ discourse in the (re)naturalization of neoliberalism, to compare and contrast this naturalization in different jurisdictions, and to identify possibilities for counter arguments.

Through this process, I attempted to answer the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** How have policymakers in Ontario and Michigan evoked argumentative imperatives that green neoliberal policies are *the* way to create green jobs, increase economic equality, and/or halt climate change?

It was found that Ontario and Michigan political leaders have used carefully-selected words and political argument to manufacture certainty that the problems they identify are *the* problems, and that the policy solutions they propose for these problems are not only obvious (to everyone with ‘common sense’) but in the best interest of all citizens. Most, of the policies prescribed in Ontario

and Michigan just before and immediately following the GFC are market-based neoliberal solutions including those policies aimed specifically at stimulating a ‘green economy’. Indeed, policies supporting the growth and development of a green economy have been framed as an important part of the solution to the problems of economic recession, unemployment, and/or climate change. In particular, Premier Dalton McGuinty frequently advanced argumentative claims that the green economy was a means to climate change mitigation and a more sustainable society, as well as an economic growth strategy; Governor Granholm, on the other hand, largely distanced climate change arguments from her argumentative claims for a green economy, and focused almost exclusively on its potential to create jobs. McGuinty also constructed arguments that the green economy was a means to job creation as well; indeed, his government maintained that the promise of jobs was imperative to gain support from Ontarians for the higher electricity costs associated with the feed-in-tariff (FIT). In contrast to both Granholm and McGuinty, Governor Snyder made no arguments for the green economy as a means to Michigan jobs and economy. However, the manufacturing of skepticism around climate science in Michigan has not required, or included, outright denial of scientific data by either of the two governors, but rather minimalizing the relationship between human activity and climate change in the political discourse. In other words, how much of a problem is climate change if the Michigan governors fail to fully identify it as such?

Despite these differences in applying green economy arguments, all three leaders used similar language and argumentative claims regarding the *absolute necessity* of corporate tax cuts, deregulation, privatization, and austerity to the economy and the lives of people, regardless of whether or not emphasis for growth was on a green economy. Indeed, these argumentative claims were made with greater force by McGuinty and Granholm following 2008-2009, as if they viewed the public’s continued acceptance of the neoliberal capitalist model, which critics argued caused the Great Recession, crucial to economic recovery.

Governor Snyder left little question of his support for the neoliberal model, in either his arguments or his policy. He constructed argumentative frames that assured the public of his faith in the business model, and his qualifications to run Michigan like a business. This, he argued, required cutting the corporate tax rate by making it a “flat tax”; eliminating “inefficient” regulations, and “barriers” to business, and ultimately cutting spending. His repetitive use of branding messages like “relentless positive action” may have contributed to greater resonance of Snyder’s message among the public<sup>59</sup> even if the actual policies have, arguably, benefitted capital at the expense of the average Michigander. But it is important to point out that the argumentative claims he made in the period of study are consistent with how he represents himself. Thus, while Snyder may hide less behind green rhetoric than Granholm or McQuinty, he takes every opportunity to make argumentative claims that cutting deregulation and corporate taxes, and austerity are necessary, “common sense” measures to growing Michigan’s economy and jobs.

Thus, Snyder is somewhat of a yardstick against which to measure the argumentative claims of McQuinty and Granholm, who frame themselves as liberals, particularly when compared with their conservative counterparts; this is precisely because Snyder does not use green rhetoric to mask his neoliberal agenda. And aside from argumentative claims for a green economy, the language used by McQuinty and Granholm is very similar to that used by Snyder. And in the era of neoliberalism, there are indeed more similarities than differences in policy decisions made by political parties, including those in different nation states – despite argumentative claims that suggest otherwise. This ideological convergence contributes to the resolve of political elites for prescribing

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<sup>59</sup> In November 2014, Governor Snyder won his second gubernatorial race; however, he won with only 50.92 percent of the vote, and by just 4.07 percentage points over Democratic Party candidate Mark Schauer (Oosting, 2014 November 6).



privatization, deregulation, and tax cuts, even if logic may suggest that the time for alternatives to neoliberalism has come.

Moreover, argumentative claims made by McGuinty and Granholm that corporate incentive policies and higher electricity prices were necessary to stimulate the renewable energy sector, as well as promises that local ‘green jobs’ that were less vulnerable in the international trade regime may have assisted in (re)naturalizing neoliberalism in part by making it ‘green’. This further suggests that even so-called ‘green’ or ‘sustainable’ policies have been largely indistinct from neoliberal thinking in Michigan and Ontario despite argumentative claims made by the two leaders that the green economy will lead to a better society.

**Research Question 2:** To what degree can policies in Ontario and Michigan be classified as ‘sustainable’? Does the policy rhetoric match the policy reality?

Political leaders have introduced policies that are ‘sustainable’ as defined within the constraints of market capitalist imaginaries, which includes both green neoliberalism, Green New Dealism, and neoliberalism. In other words, what is considered a sustainable policy measure appears to begin and end with economic growth. Whether or not Granholm, McGuinty, and Snyder actually believed, at the end of the day, that their policies were sustainable or whether framing policies as such is simply a form of greenwashing<sup>60</sup> is not fully clear. This is because neither Granholm nor McGuinty responded to requests for interviews. Furthermore, because it was unlikely that Governor Snyder would agree to be interviewed for this thesis during the months leading up to his second gubernatorial race in November 2014, it was decided that interviews conducted with Michigan

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<sup>60</sup> Greenwashing is the practice of portraying a product, service, or policy as more environmentally-friendly than it actually is, as a means to increasing profits and/or garnering public support. The term ‘greenwashing’ is borrowed from ‘whitewashing’, which refers to efforts by politicians to cover “unpleasant” facts or truth (EnviroMedia and the University of Oregon, n.d.)

House and Senate representatives, as well as Michigan NGOs would be sufficient sources of triangulation data.

- a. Policies introduced by Governor Granholm and Premier McGuinty aimed at stimulating the renewable energy sector were paired with some kind of green jobs training programs for unemployed workers, particularly those who lost jobs in the shrinking manufacturing sector. This consideration of ‘just transition’ principles, in addition to the incentive programs attached to the renewable energy (and auto) sectors are the closest any policies have come to being Green New Deal in the two jurisdictions.
- b. While some policies had characteristics of economic and/or environmental sustainability, most policies introduced by Granholm and McGuinty fit within the green neoliberal or neoliberal imaginaries. Governor Snyder’s policies were almost exclusively characteristic of ‘classic’ neoliberalism without the influence of green thought; however, there was little in his argumentative claims that the substance of his policies would be otherwise.
- c. Policies not explicitly linked to the green economy, but that were indicated in the political discourse as measures for strengthening the economy had little resemblance with principles of sustainable development. Sustainable development, in this study, refers to development that contributes to greater social equity, cultural vitality, economic security, and ecological resilience (see James, 2015). Rather, all three political leaders similarly implemented neoliberal policies as means to ‘economic competitiveness’. While this is not surprising, it is interesting that our political elites made argumentative claims that these measures would not only make the state more competitive, but would also lead to greater inclusivity, equity, and in McGuinty’s case, a greener society given that many writers concur that neoliberal policies and sustainability are incompatible (see for example O’Connor, 1998; Lander, 2011; Tanuro, 2013). Further, argumentative claims made by these leaders that neoliberal policies and

austerity are ‘new’, ‘necessary’ and/or ‘common sense’ dismisses the evidence in the policy record that shows otherwise, and are thus misrepresentative framings. Despite global financial crisis and high unemployment, subnational governments framed deficit spending, not neoliberal capitalism, as unnatural, and the economic recession as an anomaly that stands apart from the policies and economic system that contributed to it. Subnational jurisdictions, like the nation-states they inhabit, introduced business-as-usual policies that in the political discourse were made to seem natural.

**Research Question 3:** In what similar and different ways do public policies get framed, communicated, and/or constrained by underlying neoliberal understandings of the economy and state that then limit the policy options that governments see as possible? In what ways does this contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism?

- a. In Chapters 6 and 7, we saw that political elites contribute to the naturalization of green neoliberalism by framing the green economy as a solution to unemployment, and in McGuinty’s case, climate change. But as we have seen, it was often argued that the means to these jobs required corporate tax cuts, deficit reduction, and “regulatory reform” to stimulate business investment. In turn, this would require shared ‘sacrifice’ in the form of austerity, since the means government claimed were necessary for economic growth ultimately cut revenue needed to adequately fund social services. In Ontario, the green economy was also framed as means to reducing greenhouse gasses and to leading the province toward a “greener, more sustainable future”. Furthermore, this kind of green economy requires that the province/state provide a range of publically-funded incentives to be economically competitive and attract corporate investment (such as Ontario’s feed-in-tariff and Michigan’s Renewable Energy Renaissance Zones). Thus, green economy arguments made by

Granholm and McGuinty for these measures are informed by neoliberal logic, which maintains that the state must provide whatever is necessary to ‘win’ investment, such as tax cuts, tax incentives, and less “red tape”. While there may be some truth to this claim, it also suggests that political leaders continue to constrain their thinking to neoliberal ideology, and that the relationship between the state and capital remains strong (see Kozolanka, 2014) – even after a global crisis of neoliberal capitalism. Consistent with Gramscian (1971) analysis of the way public consent is obtained, these argumentative claims may serve to increase public support for green neoliberal responses to climate change and unemployment.

Furthermore, there is some support among environmental and/or labour groups for the green economy, as it is discursively and politically constructed as an economic- (and to a lesser degree) ecological imaginary within the existing capitalist superstructure. This may be in part because some ENGOs feel they have been excluded from the policy table and want some say in the direction of climate policy. Other ENGOs fully reject the idea that change to the neoliberal capitalist model could ever be possible (Ontario NGO interview, March 2014). In this way, some ENGOs assist in the naturalization of green neoliberalism.

- b. By equating Green Neoliberalism with employment, growth, and ecological resilience in the discourse, Granholm and McGuinty greenwashed their policies and/or failed to realize that the majority of policies introduced during their tenure depreciate principles of sustainable development. Far from being transformative, green policies, like those aimed at stimulating renewable energy and green product manufacturing, were addendums to existing neoliberal policy frameworks. This way of ‘adding in the green’ is similar to the ‘add women and stir’ approach to public policy, in which gender concerns are added to existing economic and policy frameworks, instead of reconstructing them to reflect feminist theory (Hankivsky,

2005; see also Newman and White, 2006; Abu-Laban, 2008; Griffin Cohen and Pulkingham, 2009). Only Governor Snyder did not expend significant effort to greenwash his policies in his political speeches. From the perspective of environmental sustainability, his policy rhetoric did not exceed the reality of the policies he implemented. However, the governor repeatedly used argument in ways that manufacture certainty that jobs and social sustainability (defined by individual prosperity) would result from ‘fiscal discipline’ (see Williamson, 1989) requiring cuts to spending, deregulation (including environmental regulations), and flattening the corporate tax rate. Thus, while Snyder engaged minimally in green economy discourse, his argumentative claims that neoliberal policy measures were absolutely necessary for better jobs, strong economic growth, and a brighter future for Michigan’s youth contributed to the re-naturalization of neoliberalism and the idea that there are no alternatives to economic growth that can meet all of society’s needs.

- c. Manufacturing public uncertainty around climate change may not require explicit denial of climate science. As the analysis of Granholm’s and Snyder’s speeches suggests, excluding “climate change” from the political discourse as a primary goal for policy, and/or downplaying the scientific link between human activity and climate change can create uncertainty regarding any need for climate change policies, while naturalizing the idea that during times of economic recession and high unemployment, economic growth must come before environmental policy action.
- d. Finally, it is important to point out the significant difference between Michigan and Ontario legislators in their willingness to be interviewed for this study. Republicans and Democrats in the Michigan House of Representatives and Senate were willing to share what they thought the “green economy” means, and what policies they believed were needed to make Michigan more ‘sustainable’ – even among those who largely defined ‘sustainability’ in terms of fiscal

and economic policy. In Ontario, despite efforts to speak with legislators, (by contacting their constituency offices and provincial ministries), I found only one person within my target group willing to speak: former Liberal MPP and Energy Minister George Smitherman<sup>61</sup>. Smitherman was indeed a key interview because of his extensive experience and leadership with the green energy portfolio in Ontario. However, consistent with reports that Members of Parliament in Ottawa are increasingly inaccessible for interviews (see for example, Linnitt, 2015 March 24), the Ontario government too may be limiting engagement with the public. Indeed, the limited input from Ontario legislators<sup>62</sup> is a weakness of the study. However, because the study was informed largely by documentation analysis (of policy and political speeches; using comparative, semiotic, and discourse analyses) and not interviews (which were used for triangulation purposes) the findings in this study remain compelling.

The findings contribute to theoretical knowledge on ideological hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Chomsky, 1989), the publicity state (see Kozolanka, 2014), and political discourse analysis (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012). 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’. We used Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) theoretical framework for analyzing argument as a means to manufacturing consent (see Herman and Chomsky, 1988) for green market capitalisms, in particular, green neoliberalism; findings in this thesis suggest that political elites do indeed use argument in ways that naturalize neoliberalism, green or otherwise. While scholars have linked neoliberal policies to the global financial crisis (see for example, Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014),

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<sup>61</sup> I am grateful to Mr. Smitherman for his willingness to participate and his candour.

<sup>62</sup> Members of the Ontario Liberal, NDP, and Conservative parties were contacted for this study

political elites continue to argue that privatization, deregulation, and corporate tax cuts are the best and/or only means to economic growth and jobs, and that austerity is necessary to prevent another collapse of the economic system. Regarding the green economy specifically, this thesis suggests that the green economy in Ontario and Michigan is largely an extension of the neoliberal narrative. Green economy discourse is not necessary to re-assert neoliberalism; the analysis of Governor Snyder's argumentative claims attests to that. However, the green economy may be as much, if not more, a means for political elites to win support for neoliberal policies and continued economic growth, than a strategy to aggressively tackle climate change. Furthermore, Gramsci argued that ideological hegemony also "rests on coalitions and compromises that provide a measure of political and material accommodation with other groups, and on ideologies that convey a mutuality of interests" (Levy and Newell, 2002, 86). While this thesis does not, nor did it seek to offer a definitive answer on this matter, interviews with blue-green groups and ENGOs suggest that civil society groups may water down some environmental goals and targets in order to have a voice at the decision-making table regarding the fate of workers and/or the climate.

Building on Gramscian theory, Kozolanka's (2014a; 2014b) work on the "publicity state" suggests that political elites exert significant effort persuading the public and other legislators of the superiority of their policies, more so than in drafting public policy (see also Rose, 2010). Successful publicity benefits the image of the party in power, while drawing minimal negative attention or criticism (Kozolanka, 2014b, 49). In this thesis we introduced the term, "green publicity state" to indicate a government's effort to publicize itself as environmentally-conscious and/or driven by goals to green the economy, as a means to encouraging support for a range of public policies, and/or in the absence of aggressive policies to deal with environmental problems like climate change. Political elites in Ontario and Michigan engaged in a specific type of publicity that naturalizes the logic and language of green neoliberalism, by conjoining discourse around "green

economy”, “green jobs”, and/or “sustainability” with neoliberal argumentative claims for “economic competitiveness”, “fiscal discipline”, “customer service” and “good government”. While Granholm and McGuinty garnered their share of negative comments regarding their policies during their tenure, they were also applauded for the efforts to green their economies. This constitutes a successful green publicity state: a state that promotes itself as “green” using renewable energy policies, while simultaneously cutting the corporate tax rate and business regulations, and rolling out deeper cuts to social programs.

We were able to examine the workings of the publicity state using Fairclough and Fairclough’s (2012) methodological framework for analysing argument in political discourse. This framework identified and described the various argumentative claims made by political elites: the imaginaries/solutions claim, the circumstantial premises, the goals premises, the means-goals premises, the values premises, and alternative options. In applying this framework to our analysis of political speeches in Ontario and Michigan, we discovered that political elites use circumstantial premises not only to assign blame for societal problems (*ibid*), but also *to take credit* for solving or improving economic, social, and/or ecological conditions. In this thesis, political leaders used circumstantial claims to argue that their policy actions helped rectify problems created by the policy actions of their predecessors (Granholm on previous governors and President G.W. Bush and Snyder on Granholm; and McGuinty regarding former Conservative Leader Mike Harris), and/or that the policies they implemented before, or after the global financial crisis minimized the effects of the crisis in their jurisdiction (Granholm and McGuinty). The circumstantial premises are thus not only a means to blame others but also assign credit to oneself.

Finally, while comparing the policies of two subnational jurisdictions (including two from different nation-states) and conducting discourse analyses on political speeches is not methodologically



inventive, using both methods together for the purposes of strengthening the argument is. By first comparing policies in Ontario and Michigan and measuring them against our green economy imaginaries before conducting the political discourse analyses, we provided evidentiary support for our findings that the political rhetoric does not match the policy reality. Thus, the comparative examination of public policy strengthens validity of the comparative discourse analysis of policy arguments and addresses criticisms that theories of social constructivism are relative and without material substance.

Governors Granholm and Snyder, and Premier McGuinty may have believed that at least some of the policies for which they advocated in the legislature were ultimately in the best interest of the public. And we concede that any good intentions of political elites may be limited in part by real and perceived constraints on their policymaking ability. One very real limitation is that of political institutions. Ontario's Westminster system of government empowered Dalton McGuinty to make decisions and advance arguments not easily afforded to Governors Granholm and Snyder under a presidential system of government with its checks and balances (see also Constantelos, 2014).

Furthermore, the state is not independent of capital but is instead capital's ally at the least, and captive at the worst (see work by Peck, 2010; McBride, 2014; Kozolanka, 2014a). This is evident in part by the willingness of the premier and the governors to provide incentives such as lower taxes and deregulation to entice business investment that are costly to social services, as well as investor-state arbitration clauses in federally-negotiated trade agreements that put the interests of capital ahead of the public. Indeed, it can be argued that the trade case against the local content requirement in Ontario's Green Energy Act is not attributable to states per se, but rather to private interests within states who complained that they were at an unfair disadvantage compared to Ontario producers. So when the McGuinty Liberals promised Ontarian's "green jobs" to compensate for the higher energy costs that came with the FIT (see Smitherman interview,

Chapter 4, p. 60), they likely did so aware of existing WTO regulations against “discriminatory treatment of imported products in favour of domestic products” (see WTO, n.d. TRIMS, Article III: 4). In this way, the McGuinty Liberals demonstrated a willingness to push against existing regulations, when the payoff – in this case, green jobs and economic growth – was worth it. Thus when a political leader in a subnational jurisdiction believes that the benefits of an imaginary (in this case, the green economy) outweigh the challenges, he or she may be willing to experiment with, and introduce new policies, despite knowing full well the terms and parameters of federally-negotiated trade agreements and the global trade regime. But as we have seen, despite having the executive and legislative power that comes with a majority government, the McGuinty Liberals proved unwilling to use a traditional procurement model in the design of the feed-in-tariff, which would have very likely insulated the local content requirement from challenge (and defeat) under the WTO (see Sinclair and Trew, 2015).

As a result of the analysis and findings in this study, further research might be conducted on the relationship between discourses of the green economy and the competition state. As we have seen, the green economy in Ontario and Michigan was often framed in terms of its value for economic competitiveness (see Sum, 2009); similarly, competition state discourses are often used to justify a range of public policies, including education, healthcare, energy, and jobs training policies. Other research might more closely examine the role of environmental organizations and labour in naturalizing green neoliberalism, and the degree to which NGOs can resist some of the argumentative claims of the state and instead contribute to defining them.

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