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Articulating post-apocalyptic environmentalism: global civil society and the struggle for anti-colonial climate politics in the climate movement

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ABSTRACT
This article examines the dynamics of the climate movement's (CM) engagement within global civil society (GCS), focusing on how this relates to its evolving commitment to anti-colonial climate politics and the wider, ongoing tensions between actors from the Global North and South within the movement. Here, this article contributes with a theorization on how counter-hegemonic and anti-colonial social movement alliances can be forged in GCS, building from neo-Gramscian, post- and decolonial concepts. This theorization builds on a study of the COP26 Coalition's efforts in Glasgow in November 2021, exploring how the coalition strategically utilized post-apocalyptic environmentalism to amplify Southern and anti-colonial perspectives within the broader CM and to carve out a space for such perspectives within GCS. However, this study also highlights how GCS spaces are shaped by a neo-colonial global hegemony which fosters structures of Northern epistemic dominance which often function to de-legitimize, exclude, or co-opt non-Western knowledges and movements within GCS.

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1. Introduction

The climate movement (CM) is often referred to as a 'movement of movements', something which highlights its broad ideology, global reach, and history of internal division. In addition to the much-discussed cleavage between the reformist Climate Action Network (CAN) and the anti-capitalist Climate Justice Movement between 1995 and 2015 (Bond, 2010; Cassegård & Thörn, 2017; de Moor & Wahlström, 2019; Hadden, 2015; Tramel, 2016), it is crucial to note continuing tension between environmentalist actors in the Global North and South. Initiatives such as the Bali Principles for Climate Justice, the Cochabamba Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, the International Rights of Nature Tribunals, as well as various examples of Indigenous activism and the 'environmentalism of the poor', have pressured Northern activists to consider the disproportionate plights faced by the South (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014; Cassegård & Thörn, 2022; Dawson, 2010; Dhillon, 2018; Nixon, 2011). Scholars like Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020), Sealey-Huggins (2017), and Sultana (2023) have accentuated such claims, arguing that

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climate struggle requires commitment to decolonization. Recently, this pressure from the South has resulted in increased attention toward Southern perspectives in the North (Grosse & Mark, 2020; Malm, 2021; Zantvoort, 2023), with leading social movements organizations (SMOs) like Extinction Rebellion (XR), Fridays for Future (FFF), and Ende Gelände adopting anti-colonial rhetoric, after having been criticized for their past insufficient efforts (cf. Evensen, 2019; Wretched of the Earth, 2019).

In this article, I examine how this turn to Southern and anti-colonial perspectives in the CM plays out on a *global* level, in the CM's participation in *global civil society* (GCS). With this, this article develops the theory of GCS, combining it with elements from postcolonialism and decolonialism. Whilst GCS was a common theme in studies on the global justice movement of the 1990s and 2000s (e.g. Kaldor, 2003; Lipschutz, 1992; Löfgren & Thörn, 2007), the concept has received little recent attention and scarce theorization in relation to coloniality. Here, I address this under-theorization by theorizing globalized social movements as articulations enveloped within GCS and conflicts within this space as shaped by the politics of (de)coloniality. Analysing the adoption of anti-colonial perspectives in the global CM, I theorize how Northern dominance within GCS both engenders and conditions the CM's struggle over (post-)colonial power structures: on the one hand, the CM acts within the space of GCS to connect anti-systemic and anti-colonial efforts across the world, on the other, GCS is entwined with a global politics of knowledge which often de-legitimizes, excludes, or co-opts knowledges and movements of non-Western origin (cf. Calhoun, 2003; Chandhoke, 2002; Thörn, 2016).

Empirically, I focus on the CM's organizing around COP26 in Glasgow. With this, I also contribute to the literature on the CM within social movement studies with an updated understanding of the CM's configuration as a global movement. The CM's activism around the summit was notable as it raised previously marginalized Southern and anti-colonial perspectives to a prominent position within the broader, global movement. Whilst most of the organizing was done by a coalition of British organizations called the COP26 Coalition, there was a clear focus on advancing an understanding of climate change as entwined with colonial power. COP26 thus enables an examination of two key aspects. First, it allows for an analysis of how perspectives from the South were received and re-articulated within the GCS by the CM. Second, it enables an analysis of how this reception and re-articulation was influenced by the broader dynamics between North and South in the CM and GCS. Here, I show how the COP26 Coalition utilized *post-apocalyptic environmentalism* as a strategic discourse to connect to and represent Southern climate initiatives (Cassegård & Thörn, 2018; 2022).

To achieve my aims, I utilize the following research questions: What discursive strategies are mobilized by the CM to articulate an anti-colonial political alliance across a civil society space dominated by Northern actors? What strategies are mobilized by dominant organizations within the CM to connect to and represent Southern anticolonial initiatives?

Next, I elaborate my theoretical framework, building from a neo-Gramscian understanding of GCS as a space in which global hegemonies are instantiated and contested. Further, I discuss how the neo-Gramscian understanding can be combined with insights from post- and decolonial thought. In Section 3, I discuss discourse analysis of movement texts as my methodological approach. After this, I move to the analysis, demonstrating how the theoretical complexity played out in the CM's articulation of anticolonial climate politics. In Section 4, I discuss the COP26 Coalition's aim to represent the subaltern and how such an aim is always complicated by Eurocentric epistemic hegemony within GCS. In Section 5, I discuss how the COP26 Coalition nonetheless utilized post-apocalyptic environmentalism to connect to a plurality of Southern, anti-colonial climate struggles. Finally, I summarize my contributions.

2. A neo-Gramscian view on Global Civil Society

Discussion on GCS emerged in the new millennium, accompanied by the rise of international NGOs, aid activity, and global social movements. A common view here saw GCS as a potential counterweight to global power, as liberated from state and market constraints and as performing a global dissemination of Western democratic and civil values (e.g. Kaldor, 2003; Lipschutz, 1992). Against this liberal and arguably Eurocentric view, scholars like Cox (1999) and Thörn (2008; 2016; Sunnemark & Thörn, 2023) formulate a neo-Gramscian theorization of GCS, which I adopt in this article.

Neo-Gramscianism suggests a dialectical view of GCS, viewing it as a space of struggle between hegemony and counter-hegemony, over the ideologies and rules that shape and regulate global social spaces and power relations therein. On the one hand, neo-Gramscianism focuses how GCS is used by a global capitalist class to install hegemonic rule: the cultural, medial, educational and public spaces that make up GCS are used by a 'global historic bloc', consisting of 'the most powerful corporate economic forces, their allies in government, and the variety of networks that evolve policy guidelines and propagate the ideology of globalization' (Cox, 1999, p. 12), to instil an ideological 'common sense', govern distant populations, and shape public opinion in ways which sustain class power globally (cf. Calhoun, 2003; Chandhoke, 2002; Thörn, 2016). On the other, neo-Gramscianism accentuates the possibility for global counter-hegemony. Oppositional groups can utilize GCS spaces to contest global hegemony, bring forth projects of social change, build networks and connections, and engage in open struggle against the prevailing system.

Per this dialectical view, neo-Gramscianism alerts us to the complex combinations of forces which take place in GCS. Unlike in the liberal view, GCS actors are not viewed as automatically oppositional: they can shift allegiances or outlooks in manners which make their counter-hegemonic position unclear. Gramsci (1971, pp. 106–114) coined the term *passive revolution* to refer to processes in which a ruling class re-configures its hegemonic bloc, incorporating some of the counter-hegemonic bloc's demands to neutralize opposition and maintain power. As noted by Somers (2017, pp. 1057–1060) and Spash (2021), such processes are present within GCS at large, especially when it comes to climate politics. This points to the complexities which exist *within* any GCS formation, social movement, or (counter-)hegemonic bloc. Within all (counter-)hegemonic projects there are relations of power, as all such projects take shape as combinations of several interests and factions. Negotiations and power struggles between groups will occur, some of them will take the helm, lead the bloc, define and communicate the bloc's goals and ideologies to outside actors. With Hall (1996), this can be viewed as a process of *articulation*, as an enunciative practice linking previously disparate elements through the construction of a unifying identity. Such processes have also been addressed by Gayatri Spivak (who I will return to later), who discusses *subalternity* as a site of exclusion from any (counter-)hegemonic bloc, leading to a position of voicelessness and necessitating 'representation' by leading factions within the (counter-)hegemonic bloc.

A difference between Gramsci's civil society and GCS, however, concerns the role of the state. Instead of the national state as a singular site of power, actors within GCS relate to a plenitude of fragmentary institutional powers, such as the UN, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, which often have tight-knit relations to the aforementioned 'most powerful corporate economic forces'. While these institutions hold some form of regulatory power over distinct policy areas, and wield discursive and economic power globally, none of them occupy a singular, state-like center of authority. Within this space, however, the power that the United Nation's Framework Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) holds over global climate governance is undeniable. While it lacks some of the sanctioning powers of a state and has had trouble constructing binding agreements, it wields immense power in defining what constitutes legitimate knowledge on the climate issue, in articulating leading policies, in distributing resources and responsibilities, and is – financially as well as politically – backed up by powerful multinationals and corporate actors, not least by sectors within the fossil industry.

2.1. The climate movement as a Global Civil Society actor

As the CM constitutes an interaction process articulating political conflict and envisioning social change, it operates as a social movement. As it utilizes medial, cultural, and public spheres to coordinate action and push change, it operates within civil society. As it is comprised of a global plethora of groups, who coordinate action, communicate in global networks, and articulate a social conflict of global weight, it can be considered a globalized social movement within GCS. Therefore, the aforementioned dynamics apply to the CM.

First, the climate movement is not a singular actor. It is diverse and internally conflictual. As such, it is dependent on processes of communication, negotiation, and combination to articulate itself as a unified actor. Such processes are conditioned by the standings of different organizations within GCS, derived from varying access to economic, social, and political capital. This gives different sections differing possibilities to have their specific ideological positions represented within the overarching articulation processes which define the movement as a unified actor. As with any globalized social movement, there are thus relations of hegemony and subalternity within the CM: some actors enforce a directing role, some serve subservient but influential roles, and yet others are excluded from representation altogether. Typically, leading positions within the CM have been occupied by environmentalist INGOs, such as Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund, or Friends of the Earth International (cf. Hadden, 2015; Thörn et al., 2017), while radical, Indigenous, or Southern organizations, as well as 'the environmentalism of the poor', i.e. the local struggles of 'historically marginalized' and subaltern populations 'who have a material interest in the environment as a source and a requirement for livelihood' (Anguelovski & Martinez-Alier, 2014, p. 167), have typically struggled to have their voices heard, gain influence, and affect the movement's positions (Bond, 2010; Dawson, 2010).

Second, the COPs serve a privileged function for that articulation work which temporarily defines the CM as unified actor. Of course, The COPs are not the only spaces where the climate movement acts; the movement is diverse and acts on a plethora of scales and localities which also affect the movement's articulation process. The COPs, however, remain privileged points for the practical conduction of articulation. The COPs are global public sphere moments in which the UNFCCC's decisions, and the hegemony they represent, become instantiated (Thörn et al., 2017). From this, the COPs, through their concentration of political actors, media spotlight and political tension, facilitate 'contentious spaces' (Chatterton et al., 2013) or 'globalities' (de Moor, 2021) utilized by the movement as hubs for activism and as opportunities for convergence, debate, and development. Whilst such moments enable encounters between the CM's Northern and Southern components, they also reflect the movement's power structures. As Northern organizations are generally more well-funded and connected, they often face less obstacles to participating in COPs and similar meeting spaces. This increases their ability to take a leading role in articulating the movement.

Third, different parts of the CM have had shifting allegiances to sections of global hegemony. Historically, the CM has interacted with two partially confluent, partially divergent, climate-political blocs which form part of global climate hegemony, aligned with different sections of global capital but converging over an ambition to sustain the global regime of accumulation: on the one hand, the *fossil fuel bloc of interests*, which seeks to combat decarbonization altogether, on the other, the forces of *eco-modernization and sustainable development* which seek to establish a project of decarbonization compatible with capital accumulation (Hajer, 1997; Paterson & P-Laberge, 2018). Prior to 2009, the most well-funded and arguably leading faction of the CM – the reformist CAN – acted as a subservient actor in the eco-modernist/sustainable development bloc, trusted COP negotiations, and compromised on the issue of emissions trading, all whilst still opposing the fossil fuel bloc (cf. Bond, 2010; Hadden, 2015; Thörn et al., 2017). After the failure of this strategy at COP15, however, the CM has moved towards a more consistently counter-hegemonic position – often contesting the fossil fuel *as well as* many factions of the sustainable development bloc (Cassegård & Thörn, 2017; de Moor & Wahlström, 2019). This corresponds with the increasingly prominent position of the climate justice movement in the larger CM, which resulted in a more widespread adoption of anti-capitalist rhetoric and critique of sustainable development discourse. The turn towards the South indicates an even stronger turn towards a counter-hegemonic position, largely due to the increased influence of Southern perspectives and organizations within the movement at large.

2.2. Global civil society and coloniality

While some scholars engaging with GCS are attuned to the (post-)colonial dimensions of global inequality, concepts from post- or decolonialism have rarely been incorporated into the theorization of GCS. As a result, there is a tendency to undertheorize how (counter-)hegemony within GCS intersects with coloniality. While neo-Gramscianism maps relations of hegemony and subalternity onto a global field of relations, it does not take a step towards explicitly theorizing hegemony in relation to what Grosfoguel (2002, p. 205), referencing Quijano, calls *the coloniality of power*: ‘the entangled and mutually constitutive relations between the international division of labor, the global racial/ethnic hierarchy, and the hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies’. This final step can be achieved by mapping post- and decolonial theory’s critique of coloniality onto neo-Gramscianism’s delineation of GCS. This develops neo-Gramscianism and arrives at a fuller understanding of how global hegemony in GCS operates through colonial modes of rule, how counter-hegemonic projects can operate by contesting coloniality, and how colonial divisions and inequalities condition GCS activity. Below, I do this by relating GCS to Grosfoguel’s (2002) discussion of the coloniality of power, Castro-Gómez’s (2021) critique of zero-point hubris, Rivera Cusicanqui’s (2012) notion of a political economy of knowledge, and Spivak’s (1988) theorization of subaltern speech.

In his discussion of coloniality, Grosfoguel (2002, 2011) notes how it is not an exclusively economic phenomenon. While the ‘the endless accumulation of capital at a world scale and the existence of a particular class structure in global capitalism’ (2011: 7) is central to coloniality, it is co-constitutive of it along with other structures, such as racial classification schemes, the universalization of Western patriarchy, and the universalization of Western epistemologies. Castro-Gómez (2021) discusses this epistemological part of coloniality, accentuating how global institutions impose a norm of Western science, language, and culture as the exclusive source(s) of universal, objective knowledge. This takes place by articulating Western knowledges as *zero-point epistemologies*, as detached from the situatedness of their articulating subject(s), with the knowledge produced conceived of as disembodied and universal truth. Knowledges of Other origin or of Other concepts are, contrarily, often judged from a Western gaze, de-legitimized because of their supposed particularity, and dismissed as archaic or barbaric. According to Mignolo (2009), this epistemic coloniality can be critiqued by focusing on the situated and political nature of knowledge production: this contextualization can expose the 'epistemic privilege of the first world', '[de-link] from the illusion of the zero point epistemology' (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160) and envision a *decolonial option* (2009; Bhambra, 2014, pp. 134–137) – a global project of social change which builds from a Southern refusal of Western, modern epistemologies and instead affirms local histories, knowledges, and narratives of decolonization. In addition to this, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) calls for a *political economy of knowledge:* that we pay attention not only to a knowledge body's origin, but also what comes *after* the enunciation of knowledge, i.e. the political and economic regularities with which knowledge becomes appropriated, disseminated, received, and valuated across the world. This alerts us to the concrete GCS articulations through which connections between local climate struggles might be instituted in global counter-hegemonic political projects, i.e. the discursive formations and organizational networks used to constitute such projects and how such formations and networks are bound up in the inequality of the global political economy of knowledge.

In relation to GCS, the different decolonial trajectories of Quijano, Grosfoguel, Castro-Gomez, Mignolo, and Rivera Cusicanqui provide us with four points. (1) The realization that hegemonies perpetuated throughout GCS do not only serve the purposes of global capital, but also reproduce colonial power relations pertaining to race, gender, sexuality, and epistemology. (2) An understanding that hegemony's construction of 'common sense' throughout GCS is synonymous with an institutionalization of certain knowledges as zero-point epistemologies. (3) An understanding of hierarchies within GCS and (counter-)hegemonic blocs such as the CM as not only derived from unequal access to economic resources and political influence but also from epistemic injustices within the same space, with leading actors often demonstrating an alignment with hegemonic Eurocentric epistemologies. (4) An understanding that genuine counter-hegemony cannot limit itself to an exclusively anti-capitalist struggle but must also articulate this struggle with struggle against heteropatriarchy, racism, Western epistemological dominance, climate change consequences, etc., and that it must therefore somehow confront or override Western epistemology's privilege within GCS.

Elaborating this using Spivak (1988), the practical instantiation of genuine counter-hegemony in GCS can be viewed as a problem of *subaltern speech*. This discussion, as has been noted above, has much in common with Gramsci's conception of (counter-)hegemony, as well as with Rivera Cusicanqui's 'critique of representation' in the political economy of knowledge (cf. Asher, 2017). In Spivak's view, *subalternity* signifies a group's distance from established channels of political discourse, causing an inability to form an autonomous hegemonic bloc of its own. Instead, the subaltern group is only ever represented – or articulated – through discourses formed by intellectuals or organizations with some established presence in civil society – with some form of footing in the political economy of knowledge, to speak with Rivera Cusicanqui. This begs the question, thoroughly discussed by Spivak, what the nature of the subaltern voice *actually is*: can the subaltern ever establish a voice of its own outside of established hegemonic channels of representation? If not, how should the intellectual go about representing the subaltern? Can the subaltern speak?

Answering this question affirmatively without further theoretical discussion on interests and epistemic colonization is, according to Spivak, insidious. When an intellectual simply 'allows the subaltern to speak', seemingly without interference, his/her role as a representing interlocutor with a certain position in the international division of labor is erased. Against such false transparency, Spivak (1988, p. 275) suggests 'the necessity of […] counterhegemonic ideological production' – that we critically analyse 'the way in which we, particularly as intellectuals, are formed by interests', how this has 'political implications' for 'our claims to transparency' (Bhambra, 2014, p. 127), and from this engender a critique which '[renders] visible the mechanisms' of epistemic violence that denies the subaltern the ability to speech in the first place (Spivak, 1988, p. 285). Above all, this alerts us to the fact that a global connection across decolonials cannot flow immediately from local experiences 'on the border'. Spivak's (1988) discussion instead alerts us to how connections or articulations that may establish the CM as a global decolonial movement must always be conceived as acts of articulation done by movement intellectuals with some access to civil society (cf. Eyerman & Jamison, 1991, pp. 94–102; Gramsci, 1971, pp. 3–14). The question then becomes to analyse the political and intellectual specificities which guide such projects of representation. Who are the intellectuals, classes, or organizations that provide subalterns with representation? What are their positions, interests, and abilities within the civil society in which the act of representation is being made? Here, Spivak – like Rivera Cusicanqui – asks us to interrogate the actual political and representative mechanisms through which resistances are coordinated into larger projects.

From this discussion follows six points about global decolonial resistance and its relation to GCS. (1) GCS is a space for social and political *struggle* and *conflict* over a global hegemony. (2) The current global hegemony instantiated through GCS does not merely enact a stabilization of *capitalist* relations but also reproduces and relies on *colonial* modes of rule. (3) Anticolonial counter-hegemonic initiatives are thus dependent on not only mobilizing resistance against capitalism but also on articulating this struggle with resistance against Western dominance broadly. (4) However, Western dominance within GCS shapes the possibilities for non-Western initiatives to articulate themselves on a global scale, insofar as Western norms generally dictate what discourses are considered legitimate. (5) The formation of an anticolonial counter-hegemony thus requires complex and tension-ridden representation work in which movement intellectuals utilize and subvert available GCS structures to disseminate discourses which can articulate different, locally anchored, anticolonial struggles under the guise of a common counter-hegemonic bloc. (6) The critical matter when studying and theorizing global anticolonial politics then becomes to analyse how, where, and by whom such acts of articulation are made and how they position local struggles within a common, global initiative. In the analysis section, I will demonstrate how these points play out in the concrete attempt by the COP26 Coalition to articulate a global climate politics based on Southern perspectives.

2.3. Post-apocalyptic environmentalism

Before moving to the analysis, I need to discuss *post-apocalyptic environmentalism*. This concept denotes an environmentalism which '[experiences] or [imagines]' environmental disaster, such as climate change, 'as 'already here' […], based on a catastrophic loss experienced as already having occurred, as ongoing or as impossible to prevent' (Cassegård & Thörn, 2018, p. 563). This establishes a present-focused temporality in opposition to previously dominant discourses within the climate and environmentalist movement(s) – what Cassegård and Thörn (2022) dub 'green progress' and 'apocalypticism' – which view environmental disaster as a potential threat looming in a distant future, which could be averted through legislation, technological development, or lifestyle changes.

In the Northern CM, post-apocalypticism has only recently become an influential discourse, being adopted by organizations such as XR and FFF. It has, however, multiple antecedents in Indigenous and Southern activism, as well as the environmentalism of the poor, from the early 1900s and onwards. As said by Cassegård and Thörn (2018, p. 568) 'climate movement actors based in the Global South are […] one of the key contexts for the emergence of the postapocalyptic discourse'. In this, they echo the arguments of Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020), Sealey-Huggins (2017), and Sultana (2023), pointing to the fact that 'sacrifice zones', engendered from the unequal politico-economic geography of capitalism and colonialism, are where most environmental disasters and climate change effects occur, and that resistance in these locations thus often build from local experiences of acute and ongoing environmental disaster which become linked to wider demands for social justice and anti-colonial politics. Here, Cassegård and Thörn (2018, 2022) draw on Japanese peasants' anti-pollution activism, Sámi resistance against hydropower, as well as the International Tribunals for the Rights of Nature, to demonstrate their point.

Considering this, I suggest that we view post-apocalyptic environmentalism as a discourse emerging out of the environmental consequences of coloniality as experienced in the South. Considering its original Southern loci of enunciation, its focus on local, situated, and embodied experiences of disaster, and its antagonistic relation to dominant narratives of green growth and apocalypticism, I claim that post-apocalyptic environmentalism emerges out of *decolonial acts of epistemic disobedience* (Mignolo, 2009) contesting the ecocidal effects of the neo-colonial world-system, the instrumentalized and disembodied view of nature it is predicated upon, as well as the universalized Western notion of environmental disaster as future risk. It is thus a theory *from the South*, consisting of a plethora of what Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020) call 'placed-based perspectives', which have subsequently travelled and gained influence in Northern and global CM spaces.

With this disobedience, post-apocalyptic environmentalism connects to an anti-colonial tradition of refuting Western visions of progress and growth, counterposing such visions to the static temporal experience of coloniality, described as characterized by an 'omnipresent death' (Fanon, 1965, p. 128) permanentized in a 'motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing into the logic of equilibrium' (1963:, p. 314; cf. Opperman, 2019; Sankar, 2019; Sunnemark, 2022). Post-apocalyptic environmentalism applies this description of the temporality of the colonized to the experience of environmental catastrophe. Through this, post-apocalyptic environmentalism refutes green growth's and apocalypticism's future-orientations in a way which mirrors anti-colonialism's critique of Western historical temporality. It criticizes the temporal outlooks of these discourses as masking the true nature of climate change insofar as they universalize the Western view of climate change as a potential future condition. Post-apocalypticism thus *delinks* from dominant apocalyptic and growth temporalities and instead builds a political critique which engages with local, situated experiences of climate change as a *present* disaster (cf. Mignolo, 2009). As I will demonstrate, it has subsequently become a discourse for Northern components of the movement to articulate itself with Southern environmentalisms.

3. Discourse analysis of movement texts

The analysis is based on *discourse analysis of movement texts* (Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Thörn, 1997; 2015; cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). This builds from my theoretical framing of civil society and social movement activity, which centres the category of *discourse*. Insofar as civil society is a public space of disseminating political projects, identities, and knowledges to stabilize hegemonic power, continuously contested by social movements' alternative collective identities, knowledges, and visions of social change, it is concerned with the production and dissemination of, as well as struggle over, meaning, capturable mainly in texts.

Consequently, Thörn (1997; 2015) as well as Eyerman and Jamison (1991) view *movement texts* as key for understanding social movements as collective actors. Movement texts refers to documents of those discourses which have attained hegemony *within* a movement and are subsequently promulgated as representations of the movement's identity and goals and can include press releases, manifestoes, websites, and ideological discussions. By reading these texts as *articulations*, i.e. as assemblages of differentiated elements under a common identity and in relation to a particular context of struggle (Hall, 1996; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, pp. 105–114; Thörn, 2015, pp. 89–91), they can be approached as *acts* intervening in structural and political processes. This enables a contextualizing discussion which can relate discursive regularities uncovered in the texts to broader theoretical and historical issues. In this context, we can from the texts gather the CM's configuration of climate politics, how it relates to political contexts, adversaries, and previous trajectories of struggle, and how it positions the various groupings that make up the global CM. It does not enable any direct insight into the CM's 'behind the scenes'-work; however, because movement texts are products of such behind the scenes-processes, it often becomes possible to discern strains or inconsistencies within the movement as a collective process by analysing contradictions or ambivalences in the texts.

As said, I study the texts of the COP26 Coalition. This coalition primarily consisted of organizations based in the United Kingdom, spread across a broad spectrum of ideological positions, although organizations from all over the world collaborated with the network. The network included everything from moderate INGOs such as 350.org, Christian Aid, and Greenpeace, to more radical organizations such as Landworkers' Alliance, Earth Strike, and Extinction Rebellion (COP26 Coalition, 2020a). As noted in the introduction, the reasons for choosing to focus on activism surrounding COP26 relates to the way it demonstrates how Southern perspectives influence high-profile activism on a global scale principally dominated by Northern actors. While COP26's Scottish location might have caused Northern organizations to take a disproportionately large role compared to other COPs, this is a difference in degree rather than in kind. While Arab and African NGOs/SMOs played a leading role in activism around COP27 in Egypt, for instance, the COP27 Coalition was also made up of a large amount of Northern or international NGOs. At COP26, there was no similar representation of African or Arab organizations in the COP26 Coalition. In this sense, the Northern location of COP26 made Northern dominance more pronounced, but not in a way which deviates from a general pattern which characterizes most of the CM's global convergence spaces. This difference in degree makes COP26 an ample case for discussing the empirical and theoretical dynamics of interest here.

The texts of the coalition were gathered by accessing all text and video material published on the coalition's public website and social media spaces up until March 2022. This included the movement's newsletter, *The Rising Clyde*, published in 31 issues from early 2020 to 2022. In total, this amounted to approximately 500 pages of text and 100 hours of video. This corpus was grouped into two subsets to facilitate analysis. First, there were what I call *primary texts*, i.e. texts or videos signed by the coalition as a whole and which can be regarded as relating to the CM's overarching discursivities. These texts address broad external publics and/or general populations of movement participants and often serve the purpose of declaring the coalition's overarching political and ideological stances. It includes central texts from the coalition's website, its press releases and newsletters, and video documentation of the coalition's most promoted events – the Opening Event, the Global Day of Action, the Movement Assemblies and the live-broadcasted cross-coalition talks

Our Time is Now. Second, there were *marginal texts*, i.e. shorter texts or videos serving primarily practical functions and which give limited insight into the movement's discursivity. I weight my analysis by only submitting primary texts to detailed analysis, whilst using marginal texts for triangulation and contextualization purposes.

After organizing the texts chronologically and submitting them to synoptic readings, I selected the primary texts due for detailed analysis. These were subject to repeated close readings and coding in which I paid specific attention to the movement's articulation of anticolonial climate politics, as well as its *placing* of such a politics in relation to a global scale of social movement activity. After repeated rounds of coding, a preliminary image of the coalition's discursive apparatus could be discerned. This image was then specified through another round of coding, focusing on finding statements which could falsify or complexify the preliminary results. The final results were subsequently contextualized in relation to the context of climate struggle, using previous research and theoretical readings on GCS, decolonialism and postcolonialism. This resulted in the theoretical framework recounted above. The results of the analysis and how they relate to the theoretical framework are presented below. Here, I illustrate my points using quotes from primary texts. By including a quote, I take it to represent a wider discursive pattern that is present throughout the material.

4. Analysis

4.1. The COP26 Coalition's representation of the subaltern

The COP26 Coalition was founded in 2019 to organize resistance against the then-upcoming Glasgow summit. Eventually, the coalition conducted two main events during the COP: *the Global Day of Action*, a global conglomerate of protests spearheaded by a march in Glasgow attended by approximately 110,000 people, and *the People's Summit*, an online and in person seminar program during the COP's second week, primarily featuring activists and scholars from the South. The coalition also provided foreign activists and scholars with legal aid in navigating the United Kingdom's visa rules and pandemic restrictions.

The main objective behind these efforts was to centre and amplify climate activism from the South. Activists and scholars from the South were main speakers at all of the coalition's main rallies; discussions on the conditions for climate activism in the South, as well as reports on the effects of climate change in the South, made up the bulk of the People's Summit program, primarily featuring scholars and activists from South; the coalition's legal and visa counselling program was largely aimed at potential participants from the South; the calls to postpone the COP were based on demands from Southern activists, scholars, and negotiators.

As an illustration of the discourse underlying this objective, this excerpt from a press release which describes the coalition's Global Day of Action and People's Summit can be considered:

> Today, the people who have been locked out of this climate summit have had their voices heard – and those voices will be ringing in the ears of world leaders as we enter the second week of negotiations […] The People's Summit has been created to centre and amplify the voices of the most marginalized, of those hit hardest by climate change and of the people resisting and organizing for change. The summit brings together movements from across the world to discuss, learn, and strategies for system change together from the ground up. (COP26 Coalition, 2021h)

In this quote, a positionality of marginalization or exclusion seems to warrant access to authentic – yet local, partial and embodied – knowledges and experiences which elucidate the truth about climate change as a presently occurring crisis, prefiguring 'strategies for system change from the ground up'. In this sense, the coalition seems to bring forth a view that a position of marginalization entails a point of *epistemic privilege* from which an objective and in-depth view of those social systems which produce experiences of marginalization can be elucidated and changed.

From this and other quotes, it is clear that a chief goal of the coalition is to respond to calls from 'the voices of the most marginalized' by directing the coalition's organizational and discursive apparatus towards '[centring] and [amplifying]' such voices. In fact, the coalition's own organizational and discursive work is articulated as directly carrying forth the thrust of those subaltern voices which are often excluded from COP-negotiations. By stating that 'we already know that many groups and communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis will not be able to make it to Glasgow this November' and that 'this means that it's more important than ever to get organized so that our demands for climate justice are loud enough that they can't ignored' (2021e), the coalition's discourse of climate justice is articulated as a direct voicing of subaltern, Southern demands.

Throughout all primary movement texts, the coalition's mission is articulated as built around this objective to center and amplify subaltern voices. These 'voices' and 'positions' are largely described by reference to climate change as an area of struggle fractured along the lines of historical colonial difference. In its call for The People's Summit, the coalition describes itself as concerned with centring specifically 'frontline communities in the Global South, Indigenous communities, Black and people of colour' (COP26 Coalition, 2021a). Consequently, the coalition's discourse is centered around an objective to bring forth a plurality of perspectives and voices which have historically been positioned antagonistically against modernity/coloniality and its 'zero-point epistemology'. Using a decolonial framework, these voices can be viewed as positioned on 'the border' of modernity/coloniality, thus laying the groundwork for a potential decolonial option.

What is partially new with this is how the COP26 Coalition refrains from positioning itself as the main articulator of political demands. The coalition never really articulates a far-reaching or large-scale climate justice program from its own organizational standpoint; rather, the coalition responds to Southern activists' struggles and critiques of the UNFCCC and the mainstream CM by positioning itself as a facilitator or interlocutor which can utilize its abundance of organizational resources to assemble, connect, and represent demands and political struggles from the South. In this sense, the COP26 Coalition places itself as that representing agent which can establish translocal connections across a plenitude of local resistances demanding to be heard – i.e. the organizational and representational work required for establishing decolonial politics on a global scale.

Consequently, we can also gather that the questions posed by Rivera Cusicanqui and Spivak resonate throughout the COP26 Coalition's discourse. While subaltern groups are largely placed as a form of avant-garde of the movement, as a set of groups whose demands and perspectives should be centred, a consequence of the institutional set-up of the CM and GCS is that such an act of voice-giving *can only be done by the hegemonic Northern/Western organizations and intellectuals which lead the CM*. The speech of the subaltern is of necessity promulgated through the institutional and discursive framework(s) of the established CM, conditioned and characterized by the geopolitics and political economy of knowledge that characterizes GCS at large. The demands and perspectives of Southern or Indigenous activists are rendered legible within the GCS space insofar as they are subordinated under the overarching framework of climate justice, as articulated by the leading organizations.

This should be viewed as reflective of the complexity of representation highlighted by Spivak: while embodied and situated experiences of disaster drive resistances against modernity/coloniality on a *local* scale, on the basis of local epistemologies, the scaling of such struggles into a global movement formation requires – physical, financial, discursive – access to established GCS arenas, which is differentiated and hierarchized along colonial divides (cf. Calhoun, 2003; Chandhoke, 2002; Sunnemark & Thörn, 2023; Thörn, 2016). Arguably, this constitutes a challenge for the articulation of a global decolonial politics: it requires the promotion of frontline, Southern, and Indigenous voices *as well as* a globally dispersed organizational and discursive apparatus. It requires a tense and power-fraught representational interplay between local, partial, and embodied knowledges and globalized movement intellectuals. In the next section, I will discuss how post-apocalyptic environmentalism functioned as the main discursive apparatus through which such representational interplay was instantiated.

4.2. Post-apocalypticism as a decolonial approach to climate politics

During the panel discussion 'Our Time is Now #3', which was part of the general *People's Summit* program, scholar Vijay Prashad made a passionate statement regarding the contemporary CM and its relation to global inequalities. After lambasting world leaders for continuing 'colonial mentalities and structures' in their climate policies, he stated that:

> The climate justice movement is a movement that says, 'we're worried about our future'. *What future?* What future, for the children of the African continent, of Latin America, and Asia? They don't have a future! They don't have a present! They're not worried about their future – they're worried about their present! Your slogan is that you're 'worried about your future' – what future? That's a middle class, Western, bourgeois slogan. You've got to be worried about *now*. 2,7 billion people can't eat now, and you're telling people, 'reduce your consumption'? How does this sound to a child who hasn't eaten in days? You got to clue in to this […] Otherwise, this movement will have no legs in the Third World. (COP26 Coalition, 2021g)

A clip from the talk, featuring Prashad's speech, was published on the COP26 Coalition's social media channels. The clip quickly became a minor viral phenomenon. During the same talk, Fridays for Future-activist Mitzi Jonelle Tan made a similar statement:

> It's not ten years from now, as Kevin already mentioned. It's happening today, and we're still fighting. So, if we go past 1.5, then we keep fighting for 1.51, 1.52. We just have to minimize suffering as much as possible. And that's also why we have to talk about adaptation simultaneously as emissions reductions. Because it is already happening today. We have to get rid of the idea that we have a little bit of time left. And Fridays for Future … The name is actually really flawed. It shouldn't be for the future; it should be for the *present*. (2021g)

In both quotes, and with the coalition's choice to single out and promote Prashad's speech, a break from the climate movement's discourse in the 2000s and 2010s is communicated. The CM's previous emphasis on future threats, as well as its insistence that there is still 'a little bit of time left' to prevent such threats, is here criticized on the coalition's leading channels as a 'middle class, Western, bourgeoisie' position that does not recognize climate catastrophes already occurring on 'the African continent, Latin America and Asia'. There are many other examples of similar articulations. In the COP26 Coalition's final press statement after the summit, for instance, it is said that '[it's] immoral for the rich to sit there talking about their future children and grandchildren, when the children of the South are suffering now' (2021h). The coalition's list of demands similarly states that the 'Indigenous peoples, frontline communities, and the Global South cannot *continue* to pay the price for the climate crisis while the Global North profits – in fact the loss and damage must be compensated' (2021c: emphasis added).

What is articulated here is a clear example of post-apocalyptic environmentalism. Against the view of climate catastrophe as an abstract threat which might affect humanity – viewed as an undifferentiated, universal entity – in the future, the quotes above suggest that the effects of climate change are already present and felt unevenly across the globe, along the lines of neo-colonial global inequalities. In this sense, the quotes do not only propose that the view of climate change as a future threat is a falsehood. They also question the positionality of such a discourse. The description of climate change as an abstract, future threat is viewed as a false universalization of the Global North's relative non-experience of climate change, building from a modern/colonial 'view from nowhere' and thus excluding the experiences and solutions of subaltern groups already suffering.

Throughout the movement texts, this refutation builds towards a present-focused climate politics which builds from and articulates those subalterns, aiming to minimize present 'suffering', reduce inequalities, facilitate adequate adaptation measures, and demand repayment of the North's historical ecological debt to the South. Thus, the coalition does not seem to view risk prevention as the primary task of climate politics. Rather, it focuses on radical changes in present social structures and on recognition and redemption of historical inequalities. Insofar as the coalition's discourse refers to a future horizon, it is less about preventing climate change as a future catastrophe and more about building a better future global society which responds to climate change in a justice-oriented manner, building from the 'voices' and 'solutions' of those already suffering.

Of course, the struggle to limit emissions and future warming occupies an important role in movement discourse. But it is articulated in a manner which places primary emphasis on present suffering. By stating in its list of demands that 'global temperature rise must be limited to 1.5 degrees – anything above this means that climate change is no longer just disastrous, but catastrophic' (2021b), the coalition's view of climate change as a present disaster remains at the base, but with a qualification which states that effective mitigation could potentially prevent this crisis from running amok even further – but not avoid it entirely. In this sense, the mitigation of climate change is conceptualized as the halting of an ongoing disastrous process – not as a postponing of crisis through further modernization.

This rendition of post-apocalyptic environmentalism should be understood as an overarching discursive framework, articulated by the global CM with the purpose of enabling and legitimizing representation of Southern epistemic disobediences. Articulated by a Northern coalition in dialogue with activists, organizations, and intellectuals from the South, it takes influence from Southern climate struggle to explicitly refute Eurocentric, future- and progress-oriented understandings of climate change, thereby committing to a '[delinking] from the illusion of the zero-point epistemology'. Here, the *present* experience of colonial subjugation and climate crisis is posed as a common denominator, a common antagonistic point, which links together a plethora of climate struggles. By conjoining local climate struggles under a generalized post-apocalyptic discourse in this manner, the partial and local epistemologies that characterize many environmental justice struggles and 'environmentalisms of the poor' become aggregated from their local or national scaling into a globalized political discourse. The appearance of post-apocalypticism here thus demonstrates an increased prevalence of Southern perspectives and struggles in the CM and the establishment of a transnational discursive connector which unifies and encapsulates a diverse discursive space into a potential counter-hegemonic bloc. Post-apocalypticism functions to make a variety of anticolonial discourses coherent and politically legible within the CM's global counter-hegemonic bloc, hence bringing theories and struggles from the South into the center of the movement.

It should also be noted that this discourse brings forth subaltern voices in a *specific* manner. While binding subaltern voices together as a common counter-hegemonic project, the post-apocalyptic discourse simultaneously refrains from subordinating the represented resistances under a strictly defined political ideology or program, articulated from the political and organizational stance of the actors leading the hegemonic bloc. Instead, the main purpose of the discourse is to generate a discursive space through which a plurality of epistemologies and solutions can come forth.

4.3. Further anchoring the post-apocalyptic discourse: 'multiple crises' and 'reparations'

In addition to the explicit articulation of post-apocalypticism, post-apocalypticism is communicated through two discursive patterns which reappear throughout the coalition's texts: (1) the equivalation of climate change with other 'crises' and (2) the illumination of historical injustices from the focus on present crises.

First: climate change is referred throughout most of the movement texts as one of several 'crises' which exacerbate inequality across the globe, in addition to racism, patriarchy, and the covid-19 pandemic. Like covid, racism, and patriarchy, the climate issue is thus articulated as a catastrophe of the present, causing suffering and exacerbating existing inequalities. Together, the 'multiple crises' constitute an ongoing critical condition – 'a period of breaking points' (2021d) – which continues a history of inequality. The key characteristic here is the immediacy and present-ness of the 'multiple crises': it connects to the view of modernity/coloniality as devoid of progress, instead viewing it as stuck in a dialectical standstill of 'crisis'.

Second: the post-apocalyptic focus on present-ness also brings an emphasis on historical power structures. Against the imperative of progress associated with modernity/coloniality, the coalition highlights how the present crisis is constituted through a foundation in, and continuation of, historical patterns of colonial oppression. In this image of historical temporality, the present and the historical become linked due to the 'stagnation [of] dialectics' that characterizes coloniality. The temporality of crisis thus holds within it a capacity from which the past can be articulated: it enables a memory and analysis of past wrongdoings and struggles insofar as these are linked to the present crises.

In the discourse of the COP26 Coalition, such a view of history is primarily established through an insistent focus on the North's ecological debt to the South, which, according to the coalition, necessitates unconditional cancellation of the South's debts and the transfer of reparations*:*

> Reparations would undo the philosophy of extraction which has allowed great wrongs, from the imperial slave trade to today's fossil fuel extraction. If we win reparations, we change the world. Reparations is not just money: its policy and agreement that this will never happen again. It is an apology and an acknowledgement that what you have done is wrong … It's time for us to start changing our words from handouts to justice. Reparations belong to the people. This is not just about money – this is about accountability. (COP26 Coalition, 2021f)

In this quote, debt cancellation and transferring of grants from North to South is articulated as not only about climate finance but equally about recognition of and accountability for 'the philosophy of extraction' which was exacted through the European colonial project, laid the groundwork for climate change, and therefore constituted the present state of crisis. In this sense, demands for reparations and repayment of ecological debt, induced by the present crisis, are turned into demands for redemption for historical wrongdoings. The temporality of present crisis thus brings with it an activation of memories of historical wrongdoings and struggle.

5. Concluding discussion

In this article, I have elaborated a theory on GCS in relation to decolonial and postcolonial theory and demonstrated how the consequences of this theory can be seen in the COP26 Coalition's articulation of a global, anticolonial environmentalism. I have highlighted how the coalition attempted to construct movement discourse directly from Southern activists' struggles, positions, and knowledges and largely refrained from placing primary emphasis on the coalition's main organizations' concerns. This set-up reflects the unequal nature of GCS: it demonstrates how global anticolonial politics is dependent on becoming articulated by actors with some form of connection or access to established GCS arenas. Subaltern representation was of necessity enabled by and disseminated through the institutional and discursive frameworks of established, primarily Northern, CM organizations.

Further, I have shown how the coalition established this representational apparatus by articulating a plurality of local, anticolonial climate struggles under a common discursive framework of *post-apocalyptic environmentalism*. Post-apocalyptic environmentalism functions here as a broad decolonial refutation of ecomodernist and apocalyptic environmentalisms, viewing these as carrying forth a modern/colonial universalization of Western epistemologies. Against the view of climate change as a potential future threat facing an undifferentiated *humanitas*, post-apocalyptic environmentalism asserts the stratified and situated nature of climate change as a presently occurring phenomenon; that the disastrous effects of climate change are already here and experienced primarily by formerly colonized subjects in the South. Here, the notion of post-apocalypticism is articulated as a common antagonistic point, binding together a plurality of local climate struggles through their common experience of climate change as a presently occurring disaster resulting from the exploits of global capital and colonial powers. It establishes a representational space from which subaltern subjects' resistances can be read as agentic on a global scale, within a conjoint space of action.

This demonstrates how GCS must not only be conceived as a space of struggle over the legitimacy of global *capitalist* hegemony, but equally as a space of struggle over global hegemony's *colonial* mode of ruling. This allows us to not only identify global anti-capitalist struggles as potential counter-hegemonic alternatives but to also consider decolonial disobediences as potential challenges to global hegemony. From this discussion, the question of imagining a global decolonial option becomes synonymous with imagining the articulation of a plurality of local, anticolonial resistances into a common hegemonic bloc, linked by some form of common framework which enables the decolonial option to act as a unified actor on a global scale of activity. Such an articulation of decoloniality as a global political force must be viewed as *always-already* performed within and in relation to GCS, as this is the space in which global political projects become enacted. The political difficulty associated with this project has been discussed by previous scholars of GCS, as well as by Spivak. Here, we note how GCS privileges those zero-point epistemologies which underlie contemporary global hegemony and those well-funded Northern actors which articulate and implement them. This makes it difficult for non- or anti-Western border epistemologies to become heard and reach global power. The project of articulating a discursive framework that could create a conjoint decolonial option thus becomes a task for those organizations and intellectuals which have some form of (economic, medial, lingual, epistemological) access to GCS arenas – established or influential NGOs, social movement organizations, intellectuals, artists, or writers. Whilst bearing in mind that such a representation of the subaltern is *necessary*, we should also interrogate how it positions subaltern subjects in relation to both hegemonic powers and the overarching discursive and institutional set-up of the larger counter-hegemonic bloc.

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