

What's the problem represented to be in the Paris Agreement?



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– A policy analysis of the Paris Agreement in the scope of the EU and China

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Abstract

In the Paris Agreement, Parties recognize that climate change poses an urgent and global threat to humanity. The primary goal was thus set to limit global warming below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and furthermore, to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius. However, as it stands, almost none of the countries stand to reach the targets set in their respective NDCs. With the NDCs marking emission goals for 2030, the purpose of this thesis is therefore to explore upon the mechanisms and operationalization of the Paris Agreement. Therefore, there will be examined upon the Paris Agreement in the scope of the EU and China in order to gain a comprehensive understanding as to why the trajectory is suboptimal, and in extension, why the international legislative processes are on the brink of failing. The WPR approach to policy analysis will be utilised in conjunction with qualitative data as well as quantitative data in order to assess the problem representation in the Paris Agreement and the NDCs of the EU and China pertaining thereto.

In the WPR analysis, there were identified several ambiguities in the Paris Agreement, and it is furthermore argued that there exists a false dichotomy in the roles assumed by developed and developing countries, partially due to a pre-existing mechanism of self-identification as one or the other. Therefore, a country with a strong economy such as China, which identifies itself as a developing country, can potentially gain support, financial or otherwise, which in turn may leave developing countries with a weak economy without much needed financial support. Secondly, on the notion of developed countries, it was found that there has been created an illusion that top performing countries, many of which are EU member states, exhibiting high levels of sustainability actually are sustainable, when in fact they often are still taking part in ecologically and environmentally unsustainable practices. Thus, the division of roles are obscured, which poses problematic effects for the enactment of the Paris Agreement and the NDCs pertaining thereto. And therefore, climate change has and will continue to have lived effects for everyone.

Conclusively, it is the recommendation of this thesis, to explore other approaches, such as public participation and climate clubs, which have the potential to fill the gaps and silences of the Paris Agreement, and allow for countries to reach their NDC targets, further mitigation efforts, and hopefully, alleviate the threat of climate change.

Keywords: Climate change, China, EU, Mixed methods, NDC, Paris Agreement, WPR

Glossary & abbreviations

ANT – Actor-Network Theory

CAT – Climate Action Tracker

CO₂ – Carbon dioxide

COP – Conference of the Parties to the Convention

EU – European Union

ETF – Enhanced Transparency Framework

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

LNG – Liquefied natural gas (terminals)

LT-LEDS – Long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies

NDC – Nationally determined contributions

Party – Party to the (Paris) Agreement

SDG - Sustainable Development Goals

UN – United Nations

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WPR – ‘What’s the problem represented to be?’-approach to policy analysis by Carol Bacchi.

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1. Introduction

Climate change policy is an important issue for both the EU and China. Both China and the EU are key actors in the climate change predicament, and have taken steps to address climate change and made ambitious commitments to emissions. Climate change is not only a problem, but a turning point in the history of humanity, as Hulme underlines in the following:

“Climate change is not ‘a problem’ waiting for ‘a solution’. It is an environmental, cultural and political phenomenon which is reshaping the way we think about ourselves, our societies and humanity’s place on Earth.” (Hulme 2009)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its fourth assessment report presented the world with the disquieting statement that “continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems” (IPCC 2015: 8). Despite some coordinated efforts to establish climate change as a global crisis, such as the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the burden and efforts are different to each country. Some countries emit more CO₂ due to different population sizes, primary choice of energy sources and so on. The Paris Agreement thus comes forth as the most ambitious coordinated effort against climate change.

1.1. The Paris Agreement – the answer to climate change?

In order to further coordinate efforts on tackling climate change, at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), 196 parties signed the Paris Agreement, a legally binding international treaty on climate change, in Paris, France, on December 12 in 2015. It made its entry into force on November 4 in 2016 (UNFCCC 2023a). The Paris Agreement provides a framework for financial, technical and capacity building to those countries who need it. The overarching goal of the Paris Agreement is to hold the increase in the global average temperature below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

In recent years, however, it has become apparent that there is a need to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century. This has become imperative due to the fact that the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change indicates that crossing the 1.5 degrees Celsius threshold comes with serious and acute climate change impacts, including

but not limited to more frequent and more severe droughts, heatwaves and rainfall (UNFCCC 2023a).

Since 2020, countries have submitted NDCs as an integral part of the Paris Agreement's five-year cycle. Each successive NDC is thus meant to reflect a higher degree of ambition compared to the previous version. However, recognizing that expedited action is necessary to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the COP27 cover decision requests Parties involved to readdress and strengthen, while taking into account different national circumstances, the 2030 targets in their respective NDCs to align with the Paris Agreement temperature goal by the end of 2023 (UNFCCC 2023a). In the following, the circumstances surrounding China's and the EU's climate policy will be introduced.

1.2. China's Climate Policy

One of the key actors in tackling climate change is China. In the case of CO₂ emissions, China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. In 2020, the largest absolute contributions to global fossil CO₂ emissions came from China at 31 percent (Friedlingstein et al. 2022a). In turn, in lieu of The Paris Agreement, China has set out NDCs and other climate policies, such as its *Action Plan for Carbon Dioxide Peaking Before 2030* and *Working Guidance for Carbon-Dioxide Peaking and Carbon Neutrality*, as well as China's 14th Five Year Plan, which includes energy and carbon intensity reduction targets.

However, while China is projected to reach their targets, they have nevertheless been criticised for their lack of ambition to the climate change cause. Their NDC targets, even after being updated, are labelled as "highly insufficient" by the organisation Climate Action Tracker. This is furthermore reflected in their current policies, which are rated as "insufficient" in terms of meeting the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C global warming limit. Put differently, China's implicit level of ambition is more consistent with a global warming limit of 3°C (Climate Action Tracker 2023a).

1.3. The EU's Climate Policy

The EU on the other hand, is more so on the right track in terms of reaching climate policy goals. However, it is furthermore worth underlining that the EU is at a different phase, or rather further along the timeline, in terms of factors in causes of climate change. Put differently, it can be argued that the EU has a historical climate debt. In addition to this, when looking at the NDC targets, the EU is labelled as "almost sufficient" against modelled

domestic pathways and “insufficient” in terms of NDC targets against fair share (Climate Action Tracker 2023b). Part of why this may be is due to the energy crisis caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, which resulted in the EU making significant progress in adopting policies that would result in emissions reductions going beyond the NDC target, if implemented effectively.

However, the CAT still labels EU’s overall climate action as “insufficient” due to the fact that continued investments in new fossil fuel infrastructure, especially LNG terminals and fossil gas pipelines, undermine the EU’s decarbonisation efforts (Climate Action Tracker 2023b).

The Paris Agreement is ambitious but necessary to coordinate efforts into tackling climate change. However, as briefly outlined here in the introduction, it appears to be an even more difficult and complex task as the global situation develops. As laid out, some of the largest Parties of the Paris Agreement seem to struggle to hit their NDC targets and thus make the Paris Agreement successful, and more importantly, make the fight against climate change a successful one.

1.4. Research Question

The research question puts emphasis on the Paris Agreement’s role in climate change. It takes on an exploratory approach towards the problematics of the Paris Agreement in its current form by examining respective key actors from both the western and eastern hemisphere, namely the EU and China, and their role as a part of the Paris Agreement and their role in climate change policy action. Thus, the research question is as follows:

In the scope of the EU and China, what is the problem represented to be in the Paris Agreement?

In order to approach the research question, and explore upon the issues of the Paris Agreement, there will furthermore be drawn from interrelated policies and NDCs of the EU and China.

2. Literature review

In this chapter, there will be given a review of some of the existing literature relating to the research question of this thesis. Climate change as a research topic has grown exponentially, both within humanities, environmental sciences, physical sciences and social sciences. This review will primarily focus on the research within the social sciences. The reviewed literature is a blend of research that sparked an interest in relation to the research question, as well as literature that serves as background information for the analysis of this paper.

2.1. The potential impact of public participation in climate change

There is a substantial amount of research which suggests and outlines the potential benefits of public participation as opposed to non-participation, and especially in China (Li 2022; Chu et al. 2022; Ge et al. 2021 & Huang et al. 2020). These papers do generally not overtly relate to the Paris Agreement, nor were they published specifically with the Paris Agreement in mind. But public participation is an aspect of the Paris Agreement and these papers provide ample generalisability in their findings on public participation, which will play a role in the analysis of this paper.

In the research paper *Emerging dynamics of public participation in climate governance: A case study of solar energy application in Shenzhen, China*, Huang et al. uncovers the emerging dynamics of climate participation in Chinese communities through their case study on the implementation of solar energy in Shenzhen. Their research challenges the general impression of non-participation in China's climate governance. Furthermore, they argue that public participation is taking a less transparent form, a term which they coined "defensive participation", in which participation occurs when communities mobilise to defend their interests. Similar to other forms of public participation, Huang et al. argues that defensive participation may play an important role in improving policy outcomes and accountability (Huang et al. 2020).

In *Public participation in China: the case for environmental enforcement*, Li supports this argument for defensive participation, although without specifically using that term. Li found that institutionalised public participation, in particular, petition-oriented office visits has an impact on facilitating China's local environmental enforcement due to its potential risks to political stability. This is evident in the relationship between office visits and the increased number of environmental penalties. For example, water pollution incidents were also

observed to be significantly negatively correlated to the number of environmental disputes, which means that public participation in pollution supervision and control can effectively restrain the occurrence of sudden pollution events. Li also found that institutionalised public participation, such as petitioning, functions as leverage against the government aside from as a platform for policy feedback (Li 2021).

Ge et al. takes an econometric approach to explore the effects of public participation on environmental governance in China by applying a spatial Durbin econometric analysis. In their study, they found that there is a negative spatial correlation in environmental governance among regions, which means that the increase in environmental governance in one region reduces the environmental governance in neighbouring regions (Ge et al. 2021). Meanwhile, they also found that public participation has positive local and spillover effects on both the expenditure-based and revenue-based environmental governance. This was found to promote environmental governance expenditures and benefits in local as well as neighbouring areas. Ge. et al concludes that in order to achieve high quality green development, the Chinese government should broaden the channels for public participation in environmental governance, improve their environmental protection assessment system, and deepen pollution control cooperation mechanisms on a cross-regional level (Ge et al. 2021).

Similarly, in the research paper *How can public participation improve environmental governance in China? A policy simulation approach with multi-player evolutionary games*, Chu et al. also found that public participation could improve environmental governance in China. In their simulation game, it was found that with adequate support, public monitoring and activism can help release local governments' supervision burden while still being able to reach the desired outcome. Furthermore, they argue that public participation can benefit "cooperative equilibrium" by reducing governance costs and improving policy flexibility, and particularly when long-term aspirations of reputational effects and environmental tax reform are embraced. Finally they conclude that strong support and ensured independence are crucial aspects in unleashing the full potential of public participation (Chu et al. 2022).

In general, there seems to be ample evidence with the usefulness of public participation, as the reviewed literature suggests. In general, I strongly agree with the usefulness of public participation, and these studies have contributed greatly to its respective section of the research area on climate change. Where there may still be a knowledge gap, especially in the case of China and its massive population, is the question on *how* public that public

participation should be. Should it be completely open to the public or limited to scientific factions of the public. The answer probably lies somewhere in between that, but nevertheless should there be further research. Nevertheless, there needs to be developed a proper framework for public participation. China has already had successful pilot policies on other areas within environmental governance (Liu et al. 2022), and with how far China is away from reaching their NDC targets, the question is how long they can wait with employing other pilot policies, whether it be public participation or other actions and initiatives.

2.2. Existing research on the Paris Agreement

Similar to research on public participation, there has also been conducted numerous studies on the Paris Agreement covering several areas of the treaty, with the vast majority of those studies published in 2016 and 2017. During data collection, there was however not found a study on the Paris Agreement in which the WPR approach was applied. It is thus the hope that this thesis will fill out a gap of knowledge in that regard and with the advantage of hindsight. In the following, there will be outlined some of the research papers on the Paris Agreement that relate to this thesis in one way or another.

In regards to the Paris Agreement, more specifically Article 6, Stua et al. proposes a climate clubs governance framework based on the aforementioned Article. Stua et al. argues that whilst there is an increase of both countries and private firms who pledges carbon neutrality by 2050, which represents a significant improvement in intentions, such pledges lack substance and structure. According to Stua, individual pledges lack coordination and aggregation among peers, and furthermore, strategies and measures taken to achieve ambitious targets are largely absent (Stua et al. 2022). Their theoretical paper therefore describes a governance innovation aimed at overcoming such shortfalls and disagreements through a unifying yet customizable pathway towards carbon neutrality. Firstly, by outlining a political governance framework based on a climate club interpretation of Article 6. Secondly, it proposes carbon emission mitigation effort sharing on a “per capita basis” to ensure efficiency, equity and political feasibility. Finally, the paper describes how the supply of certified emissions required to satisfy effort sharing-based demand can be assetized as carbon credits by operationalizing Article 6 as a joint certification mechanism. By doing so it will be possible to make the emphasis shift from a “problem-driven” cost approach, which is associated with carbon pricing, to a more “opportunity-driven”, collective and ambitious value creation pathway towards carbon neutrality (Stua et al. 2022).

A common argument when it comes to climate clubs is however that it needs “to reach critical mass” in order for it to be effective. This is often referred to as the participation/ambition/compliance trilemma (Tørstad 2020). It basically contends that without participation of the large emitters, climate clubs lack ambition, which will in turn weaken the internal dynamic to achieve compliance. Stua et al. counters this argument with the fact that the San José Principles initiative, which is a climate club with nine Parties (as of the publication of Stua’s research paper) led by Costa Rica and Switzerland, based on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. With this, Stua et al. argues that the initiative, at least during the initial phase, Tørstad’s participation/ambition/compliance trilemma can be addressed through a climate club without a critical mass. Conclusively, this proves Stua’s theorisation on a climate clubs governance framework.

Since then, the initiative has in fact been backed by more Parties, and it has as a matter of fact gained backing by a significant number of EU Member States. Of the larger emitters it gained the backing of Germany, Italy and France. However, if it is enough to reach critical mass is yet to be accounted for as the research paper is relatively recent. What would absolutely ensure critical mass, would be if the largest emitter, China were to join a climate club following a framework as it is theorised by Stua.

According to Pongratz, in its current form, it is doubtful whether China would join such a climate club in the near future, because it is unlikely that they will adjust their 2060 carbon neutrality goal to be in line with the 1.5 degree target. If China were to join a climate club, it would entail exemptions to the climate club proposals:

“This means imposing costs to reduce carbon emissions and providing sufficient incentives for emerging economies such as China, among others, to participate.” (Pongratz 2022)

In general, it can be agreed upon that it is doubtful that China will join a climate club without exemptions, as it is unlikely that they will align their carbon neutrality goals with Parties that are further along. It is however interesting to still categorically classify China as an emerging economy, which entails that it is a developing country. While it is true that China classifies itself as a developing country, in the WPR analysis of this thesis, the issues of this classification will be brought up. In a subtle segue, this concludes the literature review chapter, in which some of the state of the art literature within this research area has been introduced with the purpose of contextualisation. In the following chapter, the methodology of this paper will be introduced.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, there will be an overview of the thesis. Furthermore, the methodological framework will be explained and outlined. Inhere, there will be elaborated upon the philosophy of science that permeates this thesis. Subsequently, the research design will be defined, followed by reasoning behind the choice of data, and finally, a critique in the form of limitations of this project.

3.1. Overview

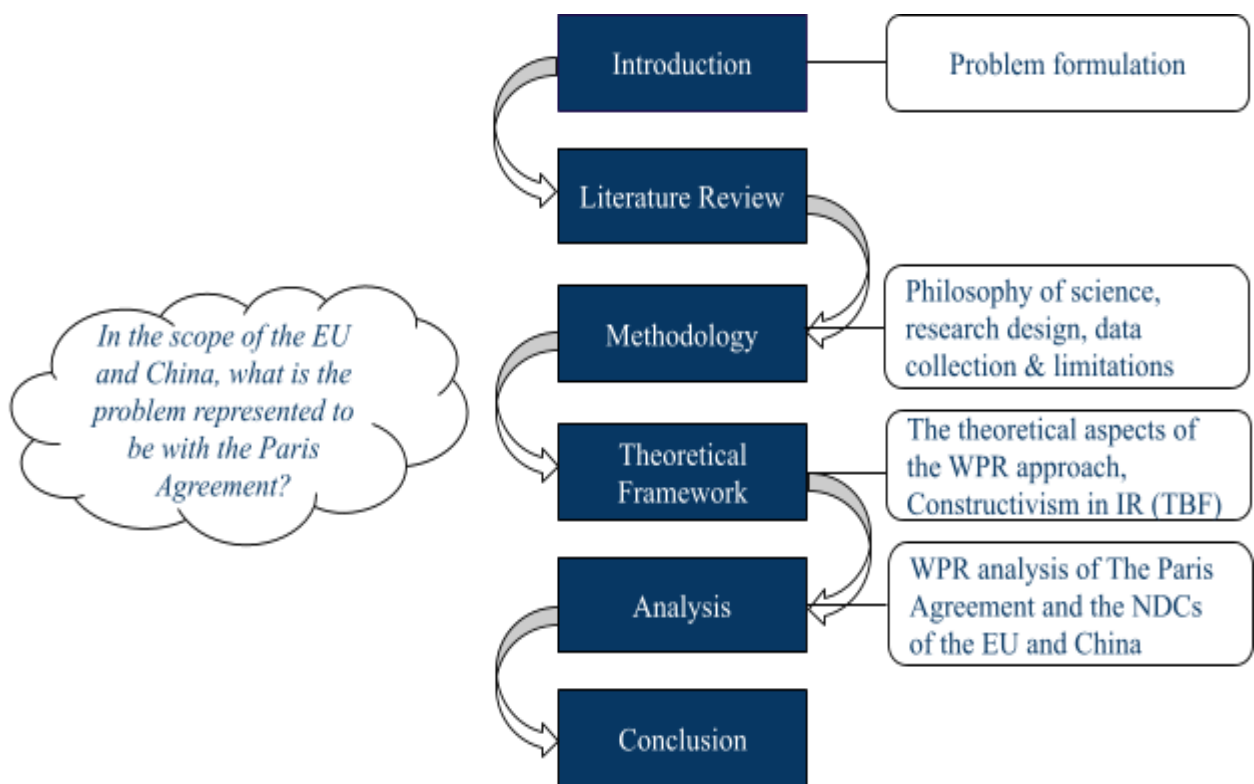


Figure 1: Overview of the thesis structure

3.2. Philosophy of science

In this paper, the ontological position of social constructivism is assumed. This position challenges the suggestion in which categories such as organisations and cultures are pre-given, external realities that social actors have no way of influencing (Bryman 2021: 48-51). Bryman encapsulates constructivism in the following:

“[Constructivism] is an ontological position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being created by social actors. It implies that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but are in a constant state of revision.” (Bryman 2021: 48)

In social constructivism, it is insisted that a critical stance toward the taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves is taken. It invites us to be critical of the idea that observations made upon the world “unproblematically yield its nature to us”, and it encourages us to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon an objective, unbiased observation of the world (Burr 2015: 3).

With Bryman and Burr’s notions on (social) constructivism in mind, knowledge generated by social sciences are also subjected to the paradigm of social constructivism. Explanations, theories and analysis consequently become bound by time and culture and therefore cannot be considered ultimate descriptions (Burr 2015: 5). Social phenomena are produced through social action and interaction where they are in a constant state of revision. Thus, researchers produce one specific version of the social reality, which therefore cannot be considered a definitive version (Bryman 2016: 34-37).

In addendum, Bryman notes that ontological assumptions and commitments will feed into the ways in which research questions are formulated (Bryman 2016: 34). Bryman therefore states the following:

“If a research question is formulated in such a way as to suggest that organisations and cultures are objective social entities that act on individuals, the researcher is likely to emphasise the formal properties of organisations or the beliefs and values of members of the culture.” (Bryman 2016: 34)

This notion was considered in the formulation of the research question, in which the focus is on the problem represented in the Paris Agreement. The notions of social constructivism also pair well with the chosen analytical approach, which is the WPR by Bacchi. Bacchi undertakes the position that problems are not given, but rather are social constructions. In

terms of Bacchi, a focus on problematisations, rather than problems, can demonstrate the role they play in governing processes (Partridge 2010).

In general, there are numerous reflectivities as a researcher under social constructivism. There are various points doing research where bias and values may materialise. It is therefore important to be reflective and conscious of one's own cultural, social and political circumstances. Bias can arise at point during research, may it be choice of research area, in the research question itself, the analysis of data, and even during data selection (Bryman 2016: 34-35). Therefore, it is important to be meticulous in the research design, which will be carried out in-depth in the following subchapter.

3.3. Research design

In this thesis, the WPR approach set forth by Carol Bacchi will be used to conduct a policy analysis. As opposed to conventional policy analysis, the WPR approach was chosen based on its theoretical considerations in which it does not only consider the problem itself. It also opens up for the problem representation in the analysis of the policy, stepping outside of the confines of the written product of policymakers and opens up for the consideration that the policy itself plays a role in the creation and definition of the problem (Bacchi 2009: 1-2). As per the research question, the WPR analysis will be conducted on the *Paris Agreement* in conjunction with the interrelated policies *NDC of the European Union and its Member States* and *China's Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally Determined Contributions*.

While this is a critical policy analysis, a characteristic of the research design is that of an exploratory sequential design, in which the qualitative data was collected first, followed by the quantitative data. It is a type of mixed methods research which combines the strength of qualitative as well as quantitative data, with the goal of substantiating the qualitative results (Damyanov 2023). The key question that these studies typically ask is whether a new policy initiative, namely the Paris Agreement, achieved its anticipated goals (Bryman 2021: 150).

In the following, the operationalization of the WPR will be explained. While the WPR can be very open ended, the operationalization will still be outlined for the sake of transparency, replicability (while this is less of a concern in qualitative work as such) and external validity (Bryman 2021: 151-52) The WPR was chosen as the methodological approach to the policy analysis based on its three key propositions:

1. We are governed through problematisations.
2. We need to study problematisations (through analysing the problem representations they contain), rather than ‘problems’.
3. We need to problematise (interrogate) the problematisations on offer through scrutinising the premises and effects of the problem representations they contain. (Bacchi 2009)

As opposed to traditional policy research, which often puts emphasis on fixing problems, the WPR takes it one step further by not presuming that a ‘problem’ as a fixed value. Instead it allows one to not only examine a problem, but also how it is framed to be, and how this problem representation affects the handling of the problem. Additionally, the WPR provides a systematic approach to policy analysis through its six questions which can furthermore allow for guidance or influence in the collection of empirical evidence. As opposed to utilising a grand theory so abstract that it is difficult to make the necessary links with the real world (Bryman 2021: 141), the WPR serves as this link, while other theories, such as constructivism in international relations, will accompany the analysis. The WPR questions are as follows:

- Question 1: What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
- Question 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
- Question 3: How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
- Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?
- Question 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
- Question 6: How and/or where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi 2009: 2)

The first question serves to frame the research question. It is the foundation of the analysis as it aims to delineate the problem representation. The purpose of the question is, plainly put, to frame the problem. Furthermore it serves to contextualise the problem representation by outlining the encompassing NDCs of China and EU.

The second question brings the analysis to the textual level in which the policies will be examined in order to identify the conceptual logic. Put differently, the question deals with epistemological and ontological assumptions. This part of the analysis is not concerned with the assumption, beliefs and motives of the policymakers. The main objective here is to frame

the conceptual logic by identifying the underlying meanings and mechanisms in the Paris Agreement as well as the NDCs.

There are two interconnected objectives in **the third question**. The first objective is to reflect on the developments of climate change, and the decision-making surrounding the mitigation efforts, which are found in the Paris Agreement and the NDCs. The second objective is to address how the problem representation may have developed over time. Inhere, there will be utilised relevant quantitative data to substantiate the analysis.

The fourth question entails an analysis of the gaps and silences in the problem representation in order to reflect on whether the ‘problem’ can be thought about differently. Inhere, the findings from the second question of the WPR will be scrutinised in order to figure out whether and what is unaddressed and unproblematic in the Paris Agreement.

The fifth question will be grounds for an analysis of the effects that are produced by this problem representation found in the Paris Agreement. There will be given an examination of the superimposed effects. Namely the *discursive effects*, *subjectification* (or ‘*subjectivisation*’) *effects* and *lived effects*. In the interest of being concise, this part of the analysis will primarily focus on the impacts in the scope of EU and China.

The sixth and final question concerns itself with the practices and processes that enable the problem representation of the Paris Agreement to dominate. The starting point may be taken from the findings of the preceding questions of the WPR followed by an exploration into what the competing discourses have to offer in terms of combating the problem that is climate change.

Reiteratively, this outlines the methodological approach applied with the six questions of the WPR constituting a qualitative analysis of the Paris Agreement in conjunction with the NDCs of the EU and China. The theoretical considerations behind each of the WPR questions can be found in the next chapter.

3.4. Data collection

The primary sources for the analysis, the *Paris Agreement* (Appendix A), as well as the *NDC of the European Union and its Member States* (Appendix B) and *China’s Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally* (Appendix C) have been selected in order to tackle the research question. As the main objective is to conduct an analysis on the Paris

Agreement, and examine how it has been functioning for China and the EU, the NDCs of the particular parties have been included. The NDCs were collected from the UN’s website which holds the NDC registry, as stated in Article 4, paragraph 2 of the Paris Agreement.

An overview of the data subjected to an analysis can be seen in *Table 1: Overview of data*. The table provides the name of the document, the party that submitted it, the type of policy document, submission date and finally, the assigned appendix letter. In this thesis the documents will either be referred to by the document name, or a shortened version of it, and by appendix letter when it comes to referencing and citation.

Name	Party	Type	Submission Date	Appendix
Paris Agreement	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	International treaty	12/12/2015	Appendix A
Update of the NDC of the European Union and its Member States	European Union	NDC	18/12/2020	Appendix B
China’s Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally Determined Contributions	China	NDC	28/10/2021	Appendix C

Table 1: Overview of data

It is important to give certain clarifications on what is entailed by NDCs. NDCs are submitted every five years to the UNFCCC secretariat. Furthermore, the Paris Agreement provides that successive NDCs will represent a progression compared to the previous NDC and reflect its highest possible ambition. Parties were requested to submit their first NDC around 2015 and every five years thereafter (e.g. 2020, 2025, 2030), regardless of the respective Parties implementation time frames. In addition to this, as per Article 4, paragraph 11 of the Agreement, Parties may at any time adjust their existing NDC with a view to enhancing its

level of ambition. For the analysis, the latest versions of China and the EUs NDCs will be used¹.

The data in this thesis, whether it be documents (including the NDCs), quantitative data or qualitative data, were generally collected and used, based on Scott's framework of data collection. Thus, the data collected for the thesis have had to adhere to the four criteria for assessing quality of documents; *authenticity*, *credibility*, *representativeness* and *meaning* (Scott 1990: 6).

As for authenticity and representativeness, the primary documents, the *Paris Agreement* (Appendix A), as well as the *NDC of the European Union and its Member States* (Appendix B) and *China's Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally* (Appendix C) have been collected from the official UNFCCC's website.

When it comes to credibility and meaning, it is relevant to mention that China's NDC was submitted in mandarin chinese, and thus, a translated version of that document has been used instead. Therefore, it is important to mention that since it is a translated version, and thus not necessarily free from error and distortion, the original version prevails. During the reading and analysis of the document, there were however no noteworthy errors found except for some grammatical errors, and therefore it was still considered clear and comprehensible.

As for the EUs NDC, in terms of representativeness of its Member States, The European Union declares that, in accordance with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 191 and Article 192(1) thereof, it is competent to enter into international agreements, and to implement the obligations resulting therefrom, which contribute to the pursuit of the objectives of the Paris Agreement (Appendix D: 2). Then there is the question of credibility, which raises the issue of whether the documentary source is biased in some way. In a social research context, and in the context of this thesis, bias is not necessarily a negative attribute. Bias is thus not a concern, but instead an opportunity to study what it reveals (Bryman 2021: 529).

¹ As a disclaimer, as of the submission date of this thesis, October 15, 2023, the latest available versions are those listed in Table 1: Overview of Data.

3.5. Limitations

In the following, the limitations of this thesis will be outlined. Both the practical and technical shortcomings of the thesis as well the shortcomings that are outside of a researcher's control. The purpose of this section is to present a foundation for future research.

In order to narrow down the research area, the analysis of the Paris Agreement has been limited to include the NDCs of China and the EU, both Parties which are within my specialisation. In fact, any, or more, Parties to the Agreement, could have been selected to give an even more holistic view of the subject.

Then there is the validity and reliability when it comes to an assessment of qualitative data. As mentioned in subchapter **3.4. Data collection**, instead of China's original NDC document, a translated version has been used. As it is with translated documents, it cannot be entirely guaranteed that it is without textual distortions (Bryman 2016: 388). But to reiterate, during the reading and analysis of the document, there were however no noteworthy errors found except for some grammatical errors, and therefore it was still considered clear and comprehensible.

This concludes the methodology chapter on the philosophy of science, research design, data collection and limitations. In the following chapter, the theoretical framework and considerations will be presented in-depth.

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the underlying theory will be contextualised and elaborated upon. In conjunction with this, relevant concepts and theoretical assumptions will be presented. More specifically, the theoretical aspects of the WPR as an analytical tool will be outlined, while contextualising these with the research question. In addition to this there will be delved deeper into the underlying theory in regards to climate change,

4.1. What's the problem represented to be?

While the WPR by Carol Bacchi is very much a methodological framework, or rather approach, each of the six questions are founded on theoretical considerations. In the following, these theoretical considerations for each of the six questions will be outlined in order to give an explanation as to why they are necessary to answer, and most of all to substantiate the research question. Bacchi undertakes the position that problems are not given, but rather are social constructions. In terms of Bacchi, a focus on problematisations, rather than problems, can demonstrate the role they play in governing processes (Partridge 2010).

The WPR challenges other theoretical approaches to policy making, particularly the dominant problem-solving paradigm. This particular paradigm can be viewed as being reliant on positivist, rationalist assumption, and therefore it can be argued that it purports to treat policy as a neutral, technical process, which can lead to it becoming depoliticising and potentially regressive. Instead, Bacchi seeks to some extent to shift this focus from problem-solving to problem questioning (Partridge 2010). Thus Bacchi brings forth the following interrelated questions:

Question 1: What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?

Question 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

Question 3: How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?

Question 4: What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?

Question 5: What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

Question 6: How and/or where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

(Bacchi 2009: 2)

Bacchi's WPR consists of six questions, with the first question being very general, and each successive question more specific adding onto and substantiating the research question, and the final question being of a more discursive, and somewhat problem-solving nature. In a sense, the WPR works 'backwards' from concrete proposals to reveal what is represented to be the 'problem' within those proposals (Bacchi 2009: 3).

4.1.1. What's the problem represented to be?

The first question, at its core, serves the purpose of clarification. The goal of this question is to identify implied problem representations in specific policies or policy proposals (Bacchi 2009: 4). In order to identify the problem representations, the aim firstly is to identify assumptions and underlying understandings of the problem and in the problem-solving process. While the first question of the WPR is of a very broad and generalising nature at first glance, however, the theoretical essence of the question is derived from the notion that policies are situated in a web of interconnected policies which needs to be included in an analysis (Bacchi 2009: 4). Thus, Bacchi underlines that it is usually necessary to examine related texts, which may include parliamentary debates, ministerial pronouncements, related government reports and media statements, to gain a 'fuller picture' of a particular problem representation (Bacchi 2009: 20). In this case, in order to gain a more solid picture of the problem representation derived from the Paris Agreement, it becomes apparent and relevant to include the encompassing NDCs, as they are an integral part of the Paris Agreement.

4.1.2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?

The goal of the second question of the WPR approach is to identify and analyse the conceptual logics that underpin specific problem representations. The term 'conceptual logic' refers to the meanings that must be in place for a particular problem representation to cohere or make sense (Bacchi 2009: 5). This question does not concern itself with the beliefs held by the policy makers themselves, as that would entail an interest in identifying biases. Instead, the aim is to identify the presuppositions and assumptions implanted within the problem representations (Bacchi 2009: 5). Ways to identify and analyse upon the conceptual logic is to examine *binaries*, *key concepts* and *categories*.

A *binary* assumes "A/not-A relationship". An example of some binaries or dichotomies are nature/culture, public/private, national/international and legal/illegal (Bacchi 2009: 7).

Policies are also often rich in *key concepts*. Policies are often formed around key concepts. “Health” as well as “welfare” can be considered key concepts. These concepts are often abstract and ambiguous, and therefore discursively contested. Health policy, for example, is relatively open-ended, as it can depend on whether ‘health’ is about general wellbeing, mental health, or simply the absence of disease. However, many other concepts such as equality, liberty and democracy appear to be much more indubitable, until they are probed more deeply. As concepts possess a contested nature, the task lies in identifying the key concepts in problem representations and examining which meanings are given to those concepts (Bacchi 8: 2009).

Categories have a fundamental function in how governing takes place. Age, disease, gender and zones are often categorised for example. The assignment here, as with binaries and key concepts, is not to simply identify them and accept them as given, but instead to examine how they function to give intrinsic meanings to problem representations (Bacchi 2009: 9).

4.1.3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?

The third question of the WPR approach aims to highlight the conditions that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and to assume dominance (Bacchi 2009: 11). Inhere, there are two interconnected objectives; to reflect on the specific developments and decisions (the non-discursive practices) and to recognise that competing problem representations may exist both over time and across space (Bacchi 2009: 10). Bacchi notes to following regarding time, or rather ‘history’:

“... When we seek to trace the ‘history’ of a current problem representation, we need to follow the twists and turns rather than assume, as often happens in conventional historical accounts, that current practices and institutions, and the way ‘problems’ are understood, are the inevitable product of ‘natural’ evolution.” (Bacchi 2009: 10).

In this case, while the climate change course seems to be overtly linear, it is important to identify specific points in time when key decisions were made, taking a specific issue in a particular direction, in which it becomes apparent that the problem representation can be susceptible to change when scrutinised. In addition to this, it is also important to take differential power relations into account, in which one faction with more influence than

another can attempt to ensure that a particular problem representation adheres (Bacchi 2009: 10-11).

4.1.4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?

The fourth question of the WPR approach serves to bring up reflection and consideration issues. Furthermore, it serves the purpose of bringing up perspectives that are silenced, and therefore lying outside of the dominant discourse, in the problem representations identified in the previous WPR questions (Bacchi 2009: 13). This question tends to the bigger picture instead of the problem representation as it appears in the specific policies. The analysis from the second question of the WPR can become useful here, since categorisations, binaries and dichotomies often simplify complex matters. This way, it becomes possible to consider limits in the underlying problem representation. In summary, this part of the analysis aims to draw attention to tensions and contradictions in problem representations, highlighting limitations and/or inadequacies in the way that the ‘problem’ is being represented in the policy (Bacchi 2009: 12-14).

4.1.5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

The fifth question of the WPR approach is about identifying the effects of specific problem representations so that they can be critically assessed (Bacchi 2009: 15). The purpose here is to identify and analyse upon three interconnected effects. The three types of effects are the *discursive effects*, *subjectification effects* and *lived effects*.

In regards to *discursive effects*, there are clear connections with the second, third and fourth question of the WPR, which identify assumptions and presuppositions within problem representations, the discourses which give expression to these, and the silences that these discourses contain.

Subjectification effects have to do with how a subject is constituted in a policy’s discourse. In policies, we become specific subjects through the ways in which a policy sets up social relationships and position within them. Inhere, according to Bacchi, representations of ‘problems’ usually have built-in implications regarding responsibility for the problem. Therefore it becomes apparent to look at these implied attributions of responsibility in order to examine whether the responsibility is proportionately equal, and what effects follow from the particular attributions of responsibility (Bacchi 2009: 16-17).

Lived effects are the impact of the policy. Fundamentally, it relates to how people's lives are directly impacted by the problem and how people can be indirectly affected by the problem representation.

In essence, the objective of the fourth question is to identify how the policy makers frame the problem and what can be disputed inhere (discursive effects), who is placed within the problem representation (subjectification), and finally, what are the direct and indirect consequences of this (the lived effects).

4.1.6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The sixth and final question of the WPR approach is of a more discursive nature. It serves to consider the means through which some problem representations become dominant, as well as consider the possibility of challenging problem representations that are judged to be harmful (Bacchi 2009: 19) or suboptimal or otherwise not considered thoroughly.

The first part of this question relates to preceding questions, in particular questions of the WPR, and in particular the third question. It concerns itself with the practices and processes that enable a problem representation to dominate. For the second part of the question it is imperative to recognise that discourses are not singular, but complex and inconsistent (Bacchi 2009: 19). Inhere, there needs to be explored upon possible resistance to the dominating discourse.

4.2. Constructivism in International Relations

As mentioned in **3.2. Philosophy of science**, this thesis subscribes to the principles of social constructivism. In the following, social constructivism will be elaborated upon in the context of international relations. In *Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics*, Wendt presents a research objective within social constructivism in international relations:

“Its objective should be to assess the causal relationship between practice and interaction (as independent variable) and the cognitive structures at the level of individual states and of systems of states which constitute identities and interests (as dependent variable) – that is, the relationship between what actors do and what they are.” (Wendt 1992: 424)

Wendt presents the claim that “identities are the basis of interests”, and therefore an actor’s strategies will be established in accordance with the circumstances in which they find themselves (Wendt 1992: 398).

In the context of climate change, actors have thus gained an interest in fighting it. Climate change is not an issue that can be solved through self-help at a national level, and thus a “collective meaning”, such as the Paris Agreement set forth by the UNFCCC, came to fruition. In the scope of social constructivism in international relations theory, Wendt explains in the following that:

“Actors acquire identities — relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self — by participating in such “collective meanings”. (Wendt 1992: 397).

These stable and role-specific understandings and expectations that actors acquire about themselves are specifically of interest in the scope of the research question. The role which an actor puts themselves in, may it be China or the EU, may prove to be a factor in “how the problem has come about” as expressed in the third question of the WPR.

This concludes this chapter on theoretical considerations. Thus far the research question, literature review, methodology and theoretical framework has been introduced, presented and discussed. The following chapter will present the policy analysis of the *Paris Agreement* (Appendix A), as well as the *NDC of the European Union and its Member States* (Appendix B) and *China’s Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally* (Appendix C) in accordance with the WPR framework.

5. Analysis

In this following chapter of the thesis, the six questions of the WPR (Bacchi 2009) will be used to analyse the Paris Agreement, in the scope of EU and China's NDCs and political circumstances respectively. The WPR analysis will heavily focus on the Paris Agreement itself, but will draw from the NDCs of EU and China when necessary, as these are interconnected policies of the Paris Agreement. The answers of the six questions of the WPR are based on the theoretical framework and principles as presented in the theory chapter, and in accordance with the research design as it is presented in the methodology chapter. The six questions of the WPR will be processed in the order of question one through six.

5.1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in the Paris Agreement?

First and foremost, in the Paris Agreement, climate change is recognized as an “*urgent threat*”, which requires an “*effective and progressive response*”. The primary problem which the Paris Agreement addresses is the threat of severe climate change caused by the increase in global greenhouse gas emissions.

It is an international treaty on climate change, in which a primary goal is to limit global warming below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and furthermore, to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius as stated in Article 2 (Appendix A: 3). Thus, a keyword in regards to the climate change problem as presented in the Paris Agreement is the word *mitigation*, as the Agreement further states that governments also agreed on the need for global emissions to peak as soon as possible, whilst recognizing that this will take longer for developing countries. Furthermore, governments agreed to undertake rapid reductions thereafter in accordance with the best available science on the subject, as to achieve a balance between emissions and removals in the second half of the century.

Summarised, the Paris Agreement with the involved Parties agreed that climate change is an ongoing and immediate global threat that requires international cooperation in order to address the problem. So the Agreement seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage a transition to a low-carbon sustainable economy by setting targets for countries to reduce their emissions. However, it also recognizes that the extent of contributions and emissions peaking depends on how developed a country is. Therefore, Parties to the Agreement consented to submit successive comprehensive national climate action plans to

the UNFCCC, also known as NDCs with the ambition to reach the goal of the Paris Agreement as stated in Article 4, paragraph 2 (Appendix A: 4), or in the case of a developing nation, to trace the way to further action.

In short, the problem is climate change, the solution is global cooperation, but the hindrance is the extent of efforts based on how developed a country is. In the scope of this analytical question and further analysis, there will be taken a look into the NDC of the European Union and its member states as well as China's NDC, as these are considered to be interconnected parts of the Paris Agreement.

5.1.1. The NDCs of the EU and China – similar goals, but different circumstances

The NDCs of the EU and China share a similar outlook on climate change, as in accordance with the Paris Agreement. However, it differentiates in terms of where the challenges lie on the road to accomplishing the goals of the Paris Agreement and the respective NDCs.

According to the EU's NDC, as submitted to the UNFCCC, the EU and its Member States, acting jointly, are committed to a binding target of a net domestic reduction of at least 55 percent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 (Appendix B, 2 & 8). And furthermore, the EU and its Member States shall comply with the objective of climate neutrality by 2050 (Appendix B, 1). In regards to energy demands, the EU acknowledges that not all Member States share the same starting point in terms of the transition towards climate-neutrality. The EU acknowledges that it is more challenging for Member States with a higher share of fossil fuels in the energy mix, higher greenhouse gas emissions, energy and intensity and lower GDP per capita (European Commission & Directorate-General for Climate Action 2020, 6). However, in the NDC, the EU presents the Just Transition Mechanism, including a Just Transition Fund (Appendix B 2), in which these social and economic consequences of the objective of reaching their 2030 and 2050 targets will be addressed.

According to the translation of China's NDC, China has similar goals in similar timeframes. Inhere, China declares that they will scale up NDCs by adopting more vigorous policies and measures, and aims to have CO₂ emissions peak by 2030, and furthermore, achieve carbon neutrality before 2060 (Appendix C, 1). In China's NDC, the 'problem' is multifaceted. As

China states about itself in the NDC, it is a developing country with a population of 1.4 billion, China is faced with tasks within economic development, improvement of people's livelihood, environmental governance, and addressing climate change. Furthermore, in regards to energy demands, the Chinese NDC elaborates:

“With the continuation of industrialization and urbanisation, energy demand will keep rising while it is unlikely to fundamentally change the coal-dominated energy mix in the short term. The updated NDC goals represent new major contributions to global climate governance and raise higher requirements for China's work on addressing climate change” (Appendix C, 2-3)

Additionally, China recognizes new problems and challenges facing global climate governance have increased in recent years. In turn, according to the NDC, unilateralism, protectionism, and anti-globalization have risen (in the wake of COVID-19 and the since then escalated crisis in Ukraine), which exerts adverse effects on global cooperation in climate change. In summary, implementation of the Chinese NDC is even more difficult as they are a developing country with a more complex external environment (Appendix C, 3).

Both NDCs conforms with the Paris Agreement, and both the EU and China have similar targets and timeframes in terms of ‘solving’ the climate change problem, however differentiates in starting points. While some Member States may have a significant dependency on fossil fuels to China's, the EU has created a safety net in the transition to climate neutrality in the form of a Just Transition Mechanism to alleviate the challenges of such a transition. On the other hand, China recognizes their different position in which their external environment is more complex.

The overall problem represented in the Paris Agreement is thus naturally the urgent need to address the threat of climate change caused by the increase in global greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from fossil fuels for energy and of course other human activities. The Agreement seeks to reduce emissions “as soon as possible” (Appendix A) through collective and cooperative action by the Parties, but recognizes that the global goal will take longer for developing country Parties, which is why it also addresses the need to mobilise necessary resources and technology to achieve its short-term goals from the NDCs, as well as the long-term goals of the LT-LEDS. To encapsulate the problem, tackling climate change requires coordinated and coherent efforts, which is difficult when the developed-developing categorisation figures so prominently in the current oversimplified framework. In the

following part of the analysis the conceptual logic will be analysed by taking a look at the underlying presuppositions and assumptions in the representation of the problem.

5.2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?

In this part of the analysis, the focus is on the identification of the conceptual logic of the Paris Agreement. It is about finding the principles and mechanisms that make the system of the policy. Put differently, the aim here is to figure out the functions of the policy. Inhere, there will be identified and analysed upon the *binaries*, *key concepts* and *categories* of the Paris Agreement.

5.2.1. The binaries ‘developing’ and ‘developed countries’: An intangible dichotomy

One of the biggest and most recurring dichotomies in the Paris Agreement is found in the binary that is *developing* and *developed country Parties*. The power balance in terms of developing and developed countries does not determine the overall goal of the Paris Agreement. However, the presumed capabilities and responsibilities contain significant variations whether or not the standpoint is from a developing or developed country.



Figure 2

In Article 4, paragraph 4 of the Paris Agreement, it states that developed countries “should continue taking the lead by undertaking economy-wide absolute emission reduction targets” (Appendix A: 4). On the other hand, the same paragraph states that developing countries should continue their mitigation efforts, and are at the same time encouraged to move over time towards “economy-wide emission reduction or limitation targets in the light of different national circumstances” (Appendix A: 4).

In Article 4, paragraph 5, it is stated that developing country Parties for the implementation of the Article, will be provided support in regards to Articles 9, 10 and 11 on financial, technological and capacity-building matters (Appendix A: 4). Reason for this being that this

support will allow for higher ambition in terms of climate action for these developing countries.

While it is a very clear-cut binary, there are degrees to it. In Article 4, paragraphs 5 and 6 as well as in Article 9, paragraphs 4 and 9 there are mentions of “least developed country Parties” (Appendix A: 4-13). When it comes to the economic aspect entailed to developing and developed countries, there also appears to be an indication of priority. Article 4, Paragraph 15 of the Paris Agreement states that economies most affected by the impacts of response measures need to be taken into consideration, and in particular developing countries (Appendix A: 5).

“Developed country Parties shall, and other Parties that provide support should, provide information on financial, technology transfer and capacity-building support provided to developing country Parties under Articles 9, 10 and 11” (Appendix A: 17)

Article 13, paragraph 9 solidifies the point that developed countries share the biggest burden of responsibility. Developed countries are to assist developing countries according to Article 9 on financial resources and information, Article 10 on technological assistance and facilitation, and to Article 11 on capacity–building.

As it underscored that this dichotomy of developing and developed country Parties is almost omnipresent in the Paris Agreement, there are still some aspects of the agreement that are *acquis communautaire*. The legislation regarding NDCs as well as the communicative aspects of the Agreement as seen in Article 3, 4, 11 and 13. To summarise, there is a very clear distribution of responsibility between developing and developed country Parties that spans over the financial, technical and capacity-building aspects of the Paris Agreement, while only the requirement of NDCs and communicative requirements are to be met by all Parties to the Agreement.

5.2.2. Key concepts

In the following, there will be accounted for the key concepts that appear in the Paris Agreement. There are three key concepts relevant to the research question. These are *sustainable development*, *capacity-building* and *climate change*. Inhere, there will be analysed upon which meanings are given to those concepts in the Paris Agreement.



Figure 3

Sustainable development is a term that appears frequently in the Paris Agreement. It appears a total of 12 times throughout the Agreement, 11 of those times within the Articles themselves, most prominent in Article 6, in which it makes 6 appearances. In the EU’s NDC *sustainable development* only makes 2 appearances, while the concept makes a total of 14 appearances in China’s NDC. A specific definition of the concept has been omitted from both the Paris Agreement itself as well as both the NDCs of the EU and China. However, as the Paris Agreement is set forth through the UN it is feasible to examine their definition of the concept. The UN describes *sustainable development* in the following:

“Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN 2023a).

The key concept can be argued to be overtly ambiguous and non-descript. However, at this point, the objective is without decoration to simply identify the key concepts. *Sustainable development* as a key concept will be problematized in the fourth question of the WPR analysis.

Capacity-building is another unspecified term that is mentioned throughout the Paris Agreement. It appears a total of 12 times through Articles 11 and 13. Similar to *sustainable development*, it does not figure with a concrete description. The UN defines *capacity-building* in the following:

“Capacity-building is defined as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world. An essential ingredient in capacity-building is transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within; transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.” (UN 2023c).

Specifically in the Paris Agreement, the focus lies on capacity-building of the developing country Parties, and in particular the countries with the least capacity, which in turn is most likely to be the least developed countries. In addition to the least developed countries, those that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, such as small island

developing States (Appendix A: 15-16). The Paris Agreement states that capacity-building essentially should be country-driven in response to and based on national needs, including national, subnational and local levels. Article 11, paragraph 3 states that:

“All Parties should cooperate to enhance the capacity of developing country Parties to implement this Agreement. Developed country Parties should enhance support for capacity-building actions in developing country Parties.” (Appendix A: 15)

This entails an assumption regarding developed countries. It is assumed herein that developed countries already are well-developed in terms of sustainability and on mitigations efforts in climate change. *Sustainable development* in junction with *capacity-building* will be further analysed upon in the fourth and fifth question of the WPR.

Climate change may almost seem self-evident at first glance, but inhere, it will nevertheless be treated as a key concept in regards to the analysis, as climate change is what the Paris Agreement concerns itself with. In the Paris Agreement it is described as a common concern of humankind. Climate change is referred to as the long-term shift in average weather conditions of the region, such as the typical temperatures, rainfall and windiness. *Climate change* means that this range of conditions expected in regions will change over the coming decades (Appendix A). By extension, this entails changes in extreme conditions, leading to adverse effects such as a higher frequency and increase in severity in events such as floods, droughts and wildfires.

Furthermore, related to the understanding of climate change, there is mention of the concept of “climate justice”, when taking action to address climate change.” Per the definition set forth by the UN, *climate justice* means putting equity and human rights at the core of decision-making and action on climate change (UN 2023b). This concept refers to the unequal historical responsibility that countries and communities bear in relation to the climate crisis. In turn, countries, industries, businesses, and people that have become wealthy from emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases thus have a responsibility to help those affected by climate change, in particular the most vulnerable countries and communities, which may be the least developed countries and small island developing States (Appendix A), who often have made the smallest contribution to greenhouse gas emissions (UN 2023b).

5.2.3. Categories

As mentioned throughout this part of the analysis, there are developed and developing countries. The conceptual logic of the Paris Agreement entails a sort of categorisation of countries, and therefore, a type of prioritisation in terms of assistance. Put differently, who can get the most assistance and who can give that assistance.

Type	Role	Example(s)
Developed countries/Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encouraged to give communicative, financial and technological assistance. ● Bolstering own mitigation efforts 	The EU (Denmark, Germany, France and so on)
Developing countries/Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recipient of communicative, financial and technological assistance ● Improve mitigation efforts 	China
Least developed countries/Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Priority recipient of communicate, financial and technological assistance due to climate crisis risks (floods, drought and so on) ● Begin/heavily improve mitigation efforts 	Afghanistan, The Democratic Republic of Congo

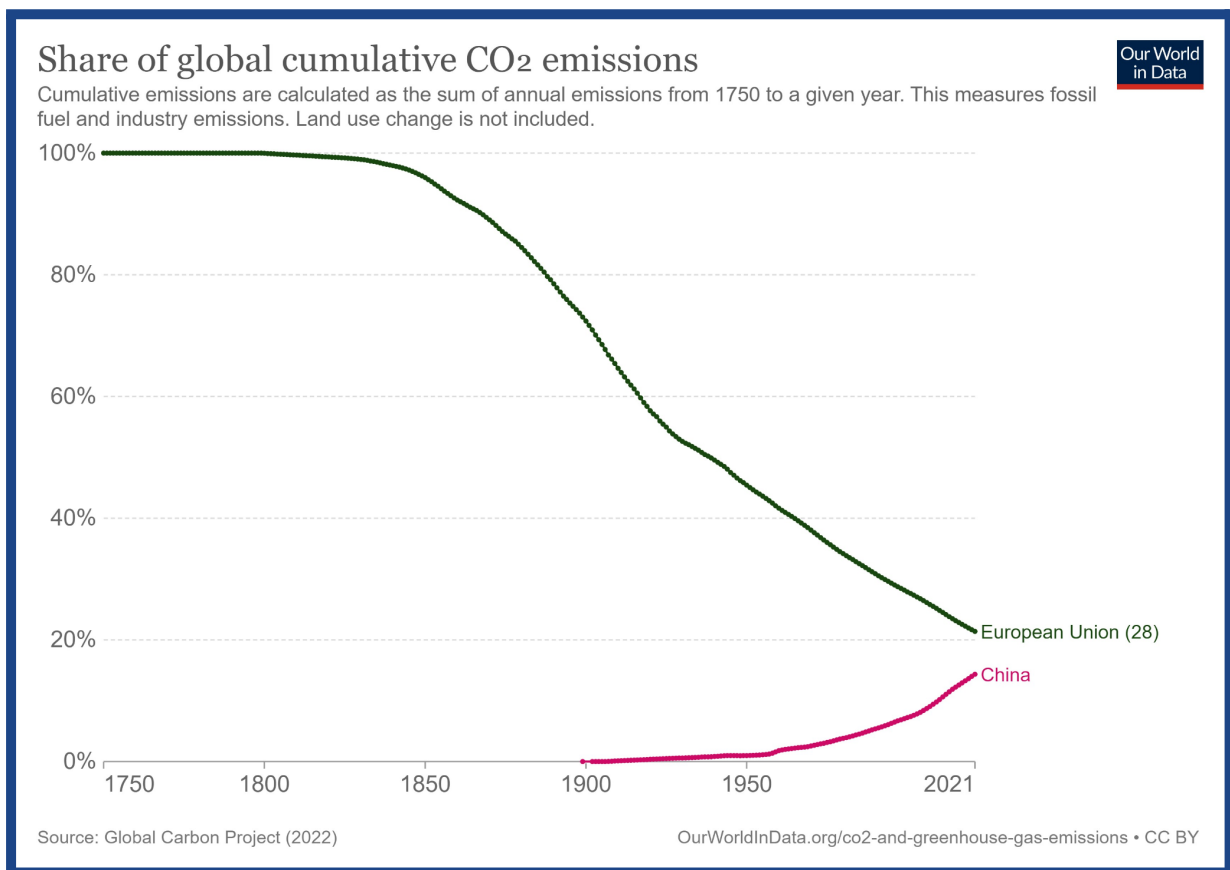
Table 2: Categorisations

The Paris Agreement states that *All Parties* are required to communicate on the actions of enhancing the capacity of developing country Parties to implement the Agreement through regional, bilateral and multilateral approaches. However, as apparent in *Table 2: Categorisations*, the conceptual logic of the legislature seems to suggest that there is an implicit prioritisation strategy, in which developed countries are to help the developed and least developed countries.

This concludes the second part of the analysis, in which the binaries, key concepts and categorisation of the Paris Agreement have been framed. In the fourth question, there will be analysed upon the limitations of this conceptual logic, which potentially causes hindrance to the mitigation process.

5.3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?

In this part of the analysis, there will be examined upon the consequences of rapid economic growth through industrialisation, the shared burden, and the predicament entailed by the comparatively delayed advancements throughout the last century. In order to gain an understanding about how this representation of the problem has come about, the developments in the EU and China, and their share in emissions, will be outlined.



Graph 1: Share of global cumulative CO2 emissions

5.3.1. Historical climate emissions in the case of the EU and China

Up until 1950, more than half of the historical CO₂ emissions came from Europe. The vast majority of European emissions back then were emitted by the UK. In addition, more than half of the world’s cumulative emissions came from the UK alone (Friedlingstein et al.

2022b). While the UK is not a member of the EU anymore, and the EU did not exist until 1993, it is included here for the sake of the argument of historical climate debt. The countries, and former countries, of the EU are a large contributor to historical CO₂ emissions. As of the end of 2021, the EU is responsible for 22 percent in terms of global cumulative emissions (Friedlingstein et al. 2022b) as seen in Graph 1. In comparison, as of the end of 2021, China is responsible for approximately 15 percent of global cumulative emissions (Friedlingstein et al. 2022b).

While this data presentation may seem peculiar, it is important to underline that “global cumulative emissions” entail a historical debt. And the historical aspect is important, as it is not definitively bound to history yet. This is because a large fraction of CO₂ will still remain in the atmosphere for hundreds of years once it has been emitted (IPCC 2013). Many of the present-day large annual emitters are not large contributors in the historical context. Conversely, many of those who used to be large annual emitters are not anymore. This is the case for China and the EU. The EU used to be one of the largest emitters, but is however now generally becoming smaller and smaller. On the other hand there is China, who emitted 11.47 metric tons of CO₂ in 2021, making it by far the world’s largest current polluter that year (Friedlingstein et al. 2022b) and continuing the rise in annual emissions up until 2030, given that their action plan is successful.

In a sense, China and the EU remain on different timelines. Europe saw the First Industrial Revolution by the 1830s and 1840s in the UK, which swiftly spread throughout the rest of Europe. On the other hand, China came late to the industrial race, with their own industrial revolution first beginning in the 1950s. While their industrialisation came more than a hundred years later, it has however happened at a much faster pace. In addendum, climate change first emerged as a political issue in the 1970s. Efforts to mitigate climate change first became prominent on the international political agenda in the 1990s with the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.

As Bacchi states, we need to follow the twists and turns rather than assume, as often happens in conventional historical accounts. When it comes to climate change, emissions and responsibility, a contemporary view does not depict all of the complexity. In this regard, it is interesting that climate justice, as previously mentioned, does not play a larger role in the Paris Agreement. To reiterate, climate justice refers to the unequal historical responsibility that countries and communities bear in relation to the climate crisis. In turn, countries,

industries, businesses, and people that have become wealthy from emitting large amounts of greenhouse gases thus have a responsibility to help those affected by climate change.

In the following there will be analysed upon the contemporary events in climate change in the scope of the EU and China. Furthermore there will be reflected upon recent developments in climate change.

5.3.2. Contemporary climate emissions in the context of the EU and China

The EU and China are still among the biggest today. Firstly, the recent data on emissions in the context of the EU and China will be outlined and analysed upon in the context of the third question of the WPR. On the global level, the IPCC reveals in their latest available report that global fossil CO₂ emissions further increased in 2022, and is now slightly above pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. Furthermore, preliminary estimates based on the available data have suggested that fossil CO₂ emissions continued to increase by 1.0 percent in 2022 relative to 2021 (Friedlingstein et al. 2022b). In 2022, emissions from coal were expected to be up by 1.0 percent from their 2021 levels. Emissions from oil were expected to be up by 2.2 percent from their 2021 levels. Finally, gas was expected to be below their 2021 levels by 0.2 percent. In the case of the EU and China on the regional level, emissions in 2022 were expected to have decreased by 0.8 percent in the EU, and decreased by 0.9 percent in China (Friedlingstein et al. 2022b).

According to the NDC targets of the EU and China, the goal and hope in both cases were to follow the projections of the IPCC. The EU very much follows the IPCC projections, and at the time continues to do so. In the first quarter of 2023, the EU saw notable progress in the fight against climate change, in which the European Commission's statistical office, Eurostat, reported the following:

“In the first quarter of 2023, EU economy greenhouse gas emissions totalled 941 million tonnes of CO₂-equivalents (CO₂-eq), a 2.9 percent decrease compared with the same quarter of 2022 (969 million tonnes of CO₂-eq). This decrease took place simultaneously with a 1.2 percent increase in the EU's gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of 2023, compared with the same quarter of 2022.” (Eurostat 2023)

As seen, the EU are on the right course, and the first quarter of 2023 draws well for the EU, as this indicates that their adopted policies are being implemented effectively, which may result in emissions reductions going beyond its NDC target. In turn, this would mean that the

EU should come forward with a strengthened target (CAT 2023b). Furthermore, the EU's progress shows hope in terms of slowing down economic growth, in which the IPCC otherwise reported that limiting warming to 2 degrees celsius would reduce the growth rate of per capita global consumption by around 0.06 percent annually (IPCC 2023).

In the case of China, however, the progression towards their NDC targets have taken a step in the wrong direction. In their first quarter of 2023, CO₂ emissions increased by 4 percent (Myllyvirta & Qin 2023). While the EU may be able to stay the course, China's focus on economic growth indicates that they are on track to reach an all-time high in 2023 in terms of CO₂ emissions, topping their previous peak in 2021 (Myllyvirta & Qin 2023). The significant increase in CO₂ emission has been shown to be driven by the economic rebound after the end of China's extensive "zero-Covid"-policy, stimulus measures and weak hydro generation due to an ongoing drought (Myllyvirta & Qin 2023; IPCC 2021; IPCC 2022), a drought which is concurrently caused by climate change.

China's emissions are conclusively high, however, it is interesting to consider how much of China's regional emissions is actually Chinese. Countries calculate and report their emissions based on IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. This is known as a bottom-up approach, where national emissions are estimated by combining data on types of activity with the emissions typically produced by those types of activities (IPCC 2019). In example, knowing how much CO₂ steel manufacturing produces, and knowing how much steel is produced in a country, the total quantity of emissions in a country's steel sector can be estimated.

With this in mind, it is worth questioning to what extent globalisation and China's although decreasing role as "the world's factory" or world's manufacturing base affects the data on China's emissions. Nevertheless, China's manufacturing supply chain strategy ensures that it remains located in China. Its low-cost labour and favourable policies remains to be an attraction for the entire world's manufacturing base (Morrison 2019; Hejazi & Blum 2023). While China seeks to steer away from being the world's manufacturing base, costs associated with leaving China are simply too high from an international perspective (Hejazi & Blum 2023). In the scope of emissions, a non-centralised manufacturing base does not change anything in regards to the climate debt, it does however affect China's emissions statistics. And furthermore, and more importantly, it affects their regional emissions, and in turn, regional pollution.

In general, climate change is very much a man-made problem with the burning of fossil fuels, cutting down forests, and the farming of livestock, which is increasingly influencing the climate and the global temperature level. Over time, this has added enormous amounts of greenhouse gases to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere, which has increased the greenhouse effect and global warming. In this part of the analysis, it has been found that emissions entail a historical climate debt, in which the EU was found to be one of the largest contributors with 22 percent in terms of global cumulative emissions. Contemporarily, the EU are however progressing well towards their NDC targets. China is “only” responsible for 15 percent of global cumulative emissions, however, they still seem to be far away from their NDC targets, and thus from peaking on emissions.

This concludes the subchapter on how the representation of the “problem” has come about, which, along with the second question of the WPR, foreshadows the next questions in the analysis. In the following chapter, the silences of the problem representation will be processed.

5.4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? What are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be thought about differently?

From this question, and to the questions which are to follow, there will be a shift in focus more towards what is outside of the problem represented in the Paris Agreement. In this part of the analysis, there will be taken a deeper look at the silences of the problem representation. The underlying presuppositions and assumptions processed in the second question of the WPR entails silences that are not entirely unproblematic. In the following there will be analysed and discussed upon the unproblematized dichotomy of developed and developing countries, the ambiguity of sustainable development, and finally, on the ambition and enforcement of the Paris Agreement and the NDCs.

5.4.1. The unproblematized dichotomy of developed and developing countries

Inhere, the problems with the “developed/developing country” dichotomy will be discussed, as it appears to be central in conceptual logic behind the Paris Agreement. As stated in the answer to the first question of the WPR, in their NDC paper, China assumes the role of a developing country as it very clearly states in the introduction chapter of the NDC:

“China is a developing country with a population of up to 1.4 billion. It is facing multiple challenges including economic development, people’s livelihood improvement, and environmental protection, coupled with the prominent contradiction of unbalanced and inadequate development. China is also among countries most severely affected by climate change.” (Appendix C: 1)

However, while China assumes the role of a developing country, they can be scrutinised in terms of whether they actually are a developing country, or in fact a developed country. Nevertheless, China seems to continue on the insistence that they are a developing country. This is not unproblematic as China is surrounded by a number of developing countries. This can mean that international negotiations for support can potentially mean that special needs for other developing countries can potentially not be met when a dominant actor such as China also has access to such support (Sharma 2023). As Wendt states, “identities are the basis of interest (Wendt 1992: 128), and as long as it is in China’s interest to classify as a developing country in their ambition for further economic growth, it will continue to have a negative impact on the effectiveness of climate action. Conclusively, a pitfall of the Paris Agreement is that Parties with strong economies, such as China, can at the very least choose to interpret the commitments set forth in the Paris Agreement on their assumption of being a developing country, and thus, take a lesser share of the burden of climate action.

Furthermore, in terms of economical and technological assistance to developing countries, what stops the EU from giving technological and economical support to another developing EU country rather than a developing country party to the Paris Agreement that would yield a far greater result in the grand scheme of climate change is to be questioned. The developed/developing country dichotomy is even further challenged by the fact that there are factions within the Paris Agreement given the fact that institutions consisting of several countries, such as the EU, joined alongside individual countries.

To add on another layer to the dichotomy of developed and developing countries, the lack of clarity on financial aspects poses a problem as well. In Article 9, paragraph 1, of the Paris Agreement, it calls for developed countries to financially assist developing countries in mitigation and adaptation (Appendix A: 13). The Paris Agreement does however not give out any specifications in terms of how much money is needed, how much money should be distributed, and neither how it should be distributed.

To summarise, the political mechanism of self-identification when it comes to whether a country is developing or developed poses a problem in the battle against climate change. A

country with a strong economy such as China, which identifies itself as a developing country, can potentially gain support, which in turn may leave developing countries with a weak economy without much needed financial support. Furthermore, the Paris Agreement is without a dedicated and much needed financial support system, as most contributions happen through existing channels, and in order to distribute financial support to the Parties that are in most need of assistance in their mitigation and adaptation efforts.

5.4.2. The ambiguity of sustainable development – has environmental development taken a backseat?

Another core issue in the Paris Agreement is the key concept of *sustainable development*, which was described in the second question of the WPR analysis. The definition from the UN were, once more for the sake of transparency, as follows:

“Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN 2023a)

The term is rather ambiguous and non-descript in terms of practicality, which poses a problem with the NDC framework. The four main types of *sustainability* are *human, social, economic* and *environmental*. There can be argued for the importance of specifying which type of sustainability that is to be dealt with, as they are inherently different, although overlapping each other to some extent (Goodland 2002).

Then there is the SDG Index, developed in order to assess where each country stands in regards to reaching the sustainable development goals (Sachs et al. 2023). For the sake of the argument, the 2023 SDG Index from the Sustainable Development Report 2023, will be presented in the following:

Rank	Country	Score
1.	Finland	86.8
2.	Sweden	86.0
3.	Denmark	85.7
4.	Germany	83.4
5.	Austria	82.3
6.	France	82.0
7.	Norway	82.0

8.	Czechia	81.9
9.	Poland	81.8
10.	Estonia	81.7

Table 3: The 2023 SDG Index (Sachs et al. 2023: 25-26).

As seen here in *Table 3: The 2023 SDG Index*, all countries listed here are members of the EU, apart from Norway. None of these countries receive a perfect score. In the Sustainable Development Report 2023, it was found that even the highest performing countries, which mostly consists of EU member states, were and are still facing considerable challenges related to climate, biodiversity, and sustainable diets and food systems (Sachs et al. 2023: 27).

In terms of sustainable development, when looking at the SDG Index, the notion of sustainable development becomes incoherent. As an example, the EU Member State Sweden scores 86.0 on the SDG Index, however, ecologists have pointed out that Sweden’s material footprint is severe. In terms of quantities, Sweden is one of the biggest consumers of natural resources (Hickel 2020), and continues to face “major challenges” on responsible consumption and production, climate action and life on land (Sachs et al. 2023: 37) according to the Sustainable Development Report 2023. Another example is Finland, which ranks at the very top of the SDG Index. Similarly, Finland also has major challenges when it comes to responsible consumption and development and climate action. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Report 2023 indicates that climate action is on the decline in Finland (Sachs et al. 2023: 37).

It creates an illusion that top performing countries exhibiting high levels of sustainability actually are sustainable, when in fact they often are still taking part in ecologically and environmentally unsustainable practices. Environmental development seems to be taking a backseat in the operationalization of sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Report 2023 somewhat suggests that the term sustainable development seems to have left the environmental aspect behind. The conceptual logic behind sustainable development is simply too holistic. The problem can and should be thought about differently, under the Paris Agreement and the Enhanced Transparency Network, Parties should to a higher extent be measured on, and set goals in regards to environmental development.

5.4.3. Ambition and enforcement

In terms of ambition, it could be questioned whether limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees celsius is enough. Even under the Paris Agreement negotiations it was questioned on whether 1.5 degrees celsius was enough (Maizland 2023). However, the likelihood of that happening is becoming increasingly bleak. In the Global Carbon Budget 2022, Friedlingstein et al. disclosed the following:

“[...]From January 2023, the remaining carbon (50 percent likelihood) for limiting global warming to 1.5, 1.7, and degrees celsius is estimated to amount to 105, 200, and 335 GtC (380, 730, 1230 GtCO₂). [...]” (Friedlingstein et al. 2022).

And based on the 2030 targets only Climate Action Tracker sets the probability at a 95 percent of exceeding 1.5 celsius degrees in global warming (Climate Action Tracker 2022). Furthermore, it was found that if all countries were to follow the EU’s and China’s respective approaches from their NDCs, warming would reach up to 3 celsius degrees (Climate Action Tracker 2023a; Climate Action Tracker 2023b).

Aside from the NDC cycle, in which Parties are to submit successive and more ambitious cycles every five years, there is no other real mechanism for increasing the ambitiousness of the Parties. In relation to this, the Paris Agreement does not have a mechanism for addressing non-compliance. Put differently, there is no hard enforcement, in the form of penalties, which means that there is no accountability in the event of a Party failing to meet their targets.

To summarise this part of the analysis, the political mechanism of self-identification when it comes to whether a country is developing or developed poses a problem in the battle against climate change. Furthermore, whether a country is sustainably developed or developing is not a clear signifier of environmental development. Finally, the outlook for reaching the 1.5 celsius degree limit seems doubtful due to, among other things, lack of ambition. In order to reach the goals of the Agreement, a proper financial framework needs to come into being and environmental development needs to be reinforced in future NDCs, and finally accountability needs to be considered for future NDCs.

5.5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?

This fifth question of the WPR entails a focus on the effects produced by the representation of the climate change problem, as opposed to conventional policy analysis, in which the focus is often centred around outcome and evaluation. Inhere, the effects of the problem represented in the Paris Agreement will therefore be outlined and assessed. Put differently, the purpose here is to identify the effects which are manufactured by the handling of climate change and climate change itself as these are interconnected. There will be analysed upon three types of effects; the discursive effects, subjectification effects, and finally, the lived effects. To reiterate what was remarked in the theoretical chapter, the objective of the fourth question is to identify and analyse upon how the policymakers frame the problem and what can be disputed inhere, who is placed within the problem representation, and finally, what are the direct and indirect consequences of this.

5.5.1. Discursive effects

As mentioned previously, and numerous times, one of the greater issues in the problem representation is the concept of sustainable development and in which ways it is being operationalized as a unit of measurement and indicator of progress. To reiterate, the UN’s definition of sustainable development is as follows:

“Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (UN 2023a)

In the second question of the WPR, it was found that the term *sustainable development* appears frequently in the Paris Agreement. It appears a total of 12 times throughout the Agreement, 11 of those times within the Articles themselves, most prominent in Article 6, in which it makes 6 appearances. In the EU’s NDC *sustainable development* only makes 2 appearances, while the concept makes a total of 14 appearances in China’s NDC. As analysed upon in the fourth question of the WPR, *sustainable development* was found to be a sub-optimal unit of measurement. However, the most sustainably developed countries, which mostly consists of EU member states, were and are still facing considerable challenges related to climate, biodiversity, and sustainable diets and food systems (Sachs et al. 2023: 27).

To recapitulate, there has to some extent been created an illusion that top performing countries exhibiting high levels of sustainability actually are sustainable, when in fact they often are still taking part in ecologically and environmentally unsustainable practices. In

practice, environmental development seems to lack behind when it is being treated under the sustainable development umbrella. In a sense, it still leaves space for trade-offs within the four types of sustainability. For example, economic development often has occurred at the expense of the environment (Goodland 2002). Balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability is not a new dilemma for policymakers, but the continuance of doing so has nevertheless had the discursive effect of allowing Parties to the Agreement to fail the environment and still get good grades.

On the notion of sustainable development, it is relevant to examine and analyse upon the interconnected term that is *capacity building*. Again, the UN's definition is as follows:

“Capacity-building is defined as the process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, abilities, processes and resources that organisations and communities need to survive, adapt, and thrive in a fast-changing world. An essential ingredient in capacity-building is transformation that is generated and sustained over time from within; transformation of this kind goes beyond performing tasks to changing mindsets and attitudes.” (UN 2023c).

In turn, it can be questioned to what extent developed countries can afford to enhance the capacity of developing countries, when they themselves do not manifest the capacity to change their mindset and prioritise environmental sustainability. Furthermore, in the Paris Agreement itself, there is no clear definition of capacity-building, which is evident in the NDCs of China and EU. EUs NDC has no mention of it all (Appendix B). China's NDC does not seem to use it as per the UN definition, but instead use it almost solely as a technical term as seen in the following:

“[...] They should carry out adaptation actions with matching financial, technology, and capacity-building support, and fulfil information transparency obligations on the basis of flexibility.”
(Appendix C: 43)

“[...] China will press on the capacity-building of carbon emission statistical accounting, and accelerate the construction of a unified and standardised statistical accounting system for carbon emission.”
(Appendix C: 42)

The ambiguity of *capacity-building* can thus have the discursive effect of making it difficult to implement for the Parties to the Paris Agreement, because there is no mutual understanding of what capacity-building entails. In turn to operationalize, and furthermore, to monitor activities of capacity-building.

5.5.2. Subjectification effects

Inhere, the subjects of the Paris Agreement will be examined, and analysed upon how these subjects are constituted in the discourse. The fundamental subjects of the Paris Agreement are naturally the countries that have ratified and acceded to it, which includes countries and the EU. Each country has its own set of commitments and obligations which have been established in the NDCs. The EU Member States have however unified their commitments and obligations in one NDC.

Another subject in the Paris Agreement are the non-party stakeholders which are largely referred to as *observers* in the treaty. Non-party stakeholders or *observers* can include actors such as national governmental entities such as states, provinces and cities. Furthermore, it can include businesses, civil organisations and indigenous people. Observers are Parties to the UNFCCC without being Parties to the Agreement. Article 16 dictates that these are welcome to participate in the proceedings of any Conference to the Agreement, but are not to participate in decision-making processes (Appendix A: 19-20). In terms of responsibility, the role of observers is thus outside of the Agreement itself, but not outside the climate change mitigation efforts. Furthermore, under Article 16, it is stated that observers can however be represented at the Conference (Appendix A: 21). Thus, the observer is more so implied to be a subject in terms of public participation.

In terms of the primary subjects in the Paris Agreement, there are built-in implications in terms of responsibility. As it was found in the second question of the analysis, the primary subjects have been categorised (see *Table 3: Categorisations*). The primary subjects are categorised in the three types: *developed countries*, *developing countries* and *least developed countries*. In short, developed countries, such as EU member states, are encouraged to give communicative, financial and technological assistance to the developing countries, namely China, and the least developed countries. Furthermore, developing countries and the least developed countries entails an impression of vulnerability, which is why they may be categorised as such under the Paris Agreement

While the responsibilities of the roles are clearly stated in the Paris Agreement, the distribution of roles were based on predefined definitions that were not specifically intended for this specific international treaty. The findings from the analysis in the fourth question of the WPR also found that the political mechanism of self-identification poses a problem. For example, China assumes the role of a developing country, despite having a strong economy,

which even surpasses economies of developed countries, and that means that China potentially can receive support under the Paris Agreement framework. Moreover, there is a potential risk in international negotiations in which a developed country with a strong economy, such as China, can potentially strong-arm their way into financial support, which may take away at resources that could have been needed by other developing countries.

Finally, there is the assumption that developed countries are actually developed in the aspects that arguably matters the most in the Paris Agreement. In the fourth question of the WPR analysis, it was found that while developing countries are top performing in terms of sustainable development under the Paris Agreement, there is a trend to be lacking in regards to environmental sustainability.

To summarise, the subjects are very clearly declared in the Paris Agreement, and the roles are also divided in a transparent manner. However, the division of roles are still, in a way, determined outside of the Paris Agreement, which poses problematic effects for the enactment of the Paris Agreement and the NDCs pertaining thereto. And therefore, climate change has and will continue to have lived effects for everyone.

5.5.3. Lived effects

In this part of the analysis, the subject of investigation will be how people's lives are directly impacted by the problem and how people can be indirectly affected by the problem representation. It can without a doubt be acknowledged that climate change affects everyone and everything, however, inhere, the focus will be on impact on people's livelihood and remain within the scope of the EU and China.

China is already suffering from several and severe consequences of climate change. Briefly, in terms of environmental changes, there has already been an increase in climate related natural hazards such as heatwaves, drought, floods and tropical cyclones (The World Bank Group & Asian Development Bank 2021: 13-17). Furthermore, climate change has and will continue to have impacts on natural resources, economic sectors, communities and on human health. In regards to natural resources, China's water sector stands to face major challenges with the loss of natural ecosystems. Furthermore, the report from The World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank found that climate changes will increase the variability and unpredictability of China's water supply, which in turn impacts the reliability of water resources for human consumption and agricultural production.

Climate-related disasters have impacted the Chinese population in many areas. In terms of livelihood, climate change stands to impact the poorest groups of society. The report argues that heavy manual labour jobs are at risk of productivity losses due to heat stress. Furthermore, low-income businesses may be unable to afford cooling systems, and in the agricultural communities, farmers are less likely able to afford local water storage, irrigation infrastructure and adaptation technologies (The World Bank Group & Asian Development Bank 2021: 22-23).

European countries have and are also suffering under events related to climate change, although not to the same extent as China, as Asia stands to lose the most in climate change. Europe suffered from naturally occurring hazards such as storms, heatwaves and flooding which have caused between 85,000 and 145,000 fatalities. Furthermore, between 1980 and 2020, it has suffered massive economic losses which amounts to EUR 450-520 billion (European Environment Agency 2022). There are several social threats in relation to climate change. Climate change has an impact on health, population, employment and education (European Commission 2023). In terms of people's livelihood, climate change affects the energy sector and the agricultural sector. In the energy sector, immediate examples would be less sun or wind where there is usually more. Then there is heat and droughts affecting the crops intended for production of energy from biomass (European Commission 2023). In agriculture there are both positive and negative impacts. Positive effects being longer crop seasons and more frost-free periods depending on location. Negative impacts are expected to be an increase in pest and disease, nutrient leaching and reduced soil organic matter, which affects crop yield (European Commission 2023).

It is important to underline that the Paris Agreement is not the causality in terms of lived effects, instead, the takeaway from this part of the analysis should be that the Paris Agreement and its Parties should become even more vigilant in its mitigation efforts. In the following, the analysis will make a shift into a more discussive comportment.

5.6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

In this final component of the analysis, there will be two facets subject to reflection. Firstly, there will be examined upon the practices and processes that allow for the problem

representation to dominate. Secondly, there will be a deliberation on how the problem representation could be questioned, disrupted and/or replaced. Drawing from the literature review and the preceding analytical points from the WPR, there will thus be discussed upon different approaches to combat climate change.

5.6.1. Production, dissemination & defence

In terms of production, the representation of climate change as a global problem can perhaps be traced all the way back to the establishment of the IPCC in 1988. The IPCC released its First Assessment Report in 1990, in which it presented a comprehensive overview of climate change, emphasising the risks of emissions and the impacts of global warming (IPCC: 1990). The IPCC was conducive in the dissemination of the problem, raising climate change awareness to the general public, media and policymakers. Fast forward, the UNFCCC provided a framework for international cooperation on climate change. The Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015, in which the IPCC is an integral part of (Appendix A: 17).

It is however in the re-dissemination of the problem in which there are issues as found in the preceding WPR questions of the analysis such as: (a) the ambiguity of key concepts, such as *capacity-building*, which there is not one unified understanding of, *sustainable development*, which creates the illusion that developed countries are environmentally sustainable (b) the false dichotomy of developed and developing countries leaving loopholes in the already lacking frameworks, parenthetically, (c) a financial framework which developing countries with strong economies can potentially abuse.

In relation to where the problem representation is being defended, it is relatively straightforward. The discourse is being defended through the double-faceted dissemination. The problem representation of the Paris Agreement is being reproduced in the NDC framework, in which the Parties re-disseminate the problem representation. Notwithstanding, the representation of climate change as a global problem has however been contested by interest groups and conservative think tanks, arguing that the uncertainty and exaggeration of the climate change problem. However, these are often groups with stakes in fossil fuel attempting to challenge the scientific consensus, which seems unfeasible given the fact that there is an astounding majority of scientific research supporting the conclusion that climate change is real and with real risks. While there are some issues with the problem representation as found in this analysis, it is nevertheless still arguably the most important

international agreement on climate change efforts. In the following, there will be discussed some of the different approaches to combat climate change.

5.6.2. Different approaches

As evident in the preceding WPR questions of the analysis, the Paris Agreement can be questioned on a few different issues. The Paris Agreement is the policy archetype of problem-solving. The problem with being holistic is nevertheless that you are virtually bound to leave something unproblematized and unspecified. Inhere, a few different approaches will be deliberated, which could replace the less effective components of the framework.

Firstly, but in no particular order, there is the idea of public participation. While it is not an entirely new approach, public participation is an approach that arguably should be considered more thoroughly. While it is mentioned in the Paris Agreement, public participation figures more so to be on a voluntary basis or an option, as seen in Article 12:

“Parties shall cooperate in taking measures, as appropriate, to enhance climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information, recognizing the importance of these steps with respect to enhancing actions under this Agreement.” (Appendix A: 16)

In the case of the EU, public participation is somewhat well-incorporated with citizen engagement such as assemblies and energy communities. Furthermore, there is the Aarhus Convention which enabled a reactive relationship between the governments and the civil societies with the purpose of enhancing environmental governance. The Aarhus Convention has however been criticised for not guaranteeing that principle of public participation is being followed (Lassen et al. 2011), in order to increase public participation in climate change solutions, they underline the need for more explicit and specific communication, in which it was suggested to deal with possible tensions of public participation; rationales, relevant participants, invited vs. self-organising forms, when to involve, and context sensitivity (Lassen et al. 2011: 425). Nevertheless, in more recent times, it is evident that self-organising forms of public participation is on the rise in Europe with an increasing amount of protests with the purpose of pushing for accelerated progress in the fight against global warming. In the case of China, it is more difficult to assess to what extent public participation can be further incorporated. The predominant form of public participation is defensive participation in which participation occurs when communities mobilise to defend their interests (Huang et

al. 2020). There is however a substantial amount of research that suggests that public participation, including activism and public monitoring, could help release local governments' supervision burden (Chu et al. 2022). Thus, the Paris Agreement and its Parties could very well benefit from furthering public participation, as well as creating actionable guidelines, in order to reach the goals of the NDCs as well as the LT-LEDS.

As touched upon in the literature review, another approach to the climate change problem is climate clubs. Climate clubs have the potential to fill the gaps of the Paris Agreement, and to some extent the problem with the developed and developing countries categorization defined in the previous components of this analysis. Climate clubs have been criticised under the participation/ambition/compliance trilemma (Tørstad 2020), It basically contends that without participation of the large emitters, climate clubs lack ambition, which will in turn weaken the internal dynamic to achieve compliance. However, it further argued that this is not paramount in the initial phase of climate clubs (Stua et al. 2022). While it is doubtful that China will join a climate club without exemptions, as it is unlikely that they will align their carbon neutrality goals with Parties that are further along, there are arguably still benefits of joining a climate club. For instance, climate clubs could solve the problem with a lack of a dedicated financial support system, by instead pooling resources within a club framework. In the case of China especially, the climate club approach could alleviate their burden as the world's manufacturing base by aligning regulations and standards within a club. This has the potential to reduce the risks associated with high pollution industries relocating to countries that are particularly sensitive to climate change. In the case of the EU, climate clubs tend to be on the rise, as evident by the G7 climate club initiated in December 2022. The G7 climate club aims to be fully launched by the time of the COP28, and perhaps it will create a ripple effect of climate club formations. Nevertheless, climate clubs stand to have potential benefits which stand to complement the Paris Agreement.

6. Conclusion

The problem represented in the Paris Agreement is agreed upon by the Parties to be that climate change is an ongoing and urgent global threat which requires international cooperation to tackle. The primary goal is to limit global warming below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and furthermore, to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius as stated in Article 2. Furthermore, it recognises that Parties are situated in different human, social, economic and environmental circumstances. In the analysis on the conceptual logic, the solution to this was found to be addressed through roles in which developed countries are encouraged to support the developed and least developed countries. Furthermore, the analysis found that there is an implied but differentiated responsibility among the Parties. In the case of the EU it was found that while the EU is becoming more sustainable, there is still a historical debt in terms of global cumulative emissions. China on the other hand, does not yet have as much responsibility in terms of global cumulative emissions, but is still one of the largest emitters today. Contemporarily, the EU are however progressing well towards their NDC targets, while China is further from peaking on emissions as evident in their NDC.

The analysis subsequently found silences and unproblematized elements in the Paris Agreement. Firstly, the false dichotomy of developed and developing countries as there exists a political mechanism of self-identification when it comes to whether a country is developing or developed poses a problem in the battle against climate change. Herein, it was found that a country with a strong economy such as China, which identifies itself as a developing country, can potentially gain support, which in turn may leave developing countries with a weak economy without much needed financial support. Secondly, on the notion of developed countries, it was found that there has been created an illusion that top performing countries, many of which are EU member states, exhibiting high levels of sustainability actually are sustainable, when in fact they often are still taking part in ecologically and environmentally unsustainable practices. The division of roles are obscured, which poses problematic effects for the enactment of the Paris Agreement and the NDCs pertaining thereto. And therefore, climate change has and will continue to have lived effects for everyone. There are however approaches, such as public participation and climate clubs, which have the potential to fill the gaps and silences of the Paris Agreement, and allow for countries to reach their NDC targets, further mitigation efforts, and hopefully, alleviate the threat of climate change.

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7.1. Appendix list

Appendix A: *Paris Agreement*. United Nations. Paris, December 12, 2015.

Appendix B: *Update of the NDC of the European Union and its Member States*. Submission by Germany and The European Commission on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. Berlin, December 17, 2020.

Appendix C: *China's Achievements, New Goals and New Measures for Nationally Determined Contributions*. China, Beijing, 2020.

Appendix D: *Declaration by the Union made in accordance with Article 20(3) of the Paris Agreement*. October 5, 2016.