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## Planetary Boundaries and Governance Mechanisms in the transition to the Anthropocene



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## Original Paper

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# Strategic Diplomacy, Fractal Governance and the BRICS in the Climate Regime\*

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## Abstract

In the context of the COP 23 outcomes, the puzzling question is: how to save the climate? Starting from the multilateral negotiations that led to the Paris Agreement in 2015 and the French-Californian initiative "Make our Planet Great Again" as a response to President Trump's declarations, this article states that diplomacy and international law have to be more adaptive and inclusive. The emerging order from a fractal governance perspective and the power shift to Asia show the need of opening up for effective dialogue and attracting the BRICS to the UN sphere, not the BASIC.

**Keywords:** BRICS, Fractal Governance, Climate Change

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## Introduction

There is a huge gap between what diplomats negotiate in multilateral regimes and what academics from law and international relations promote. There is the reality of interest-based politics and the official discourse based on ideal Kantian solutions, that is, based on what was Alexandre Kiss' ideal to save the Earth. And, whenever decision-makers listen to scholars, IR literature still lacks data about how it happens, despite of the IPCC and other scientific bodies' role<sup>1</sup>. Concerning the climate change regime, it is also key to assess how multilateral negotiations are reacting to scientific data, since this is not a linear process<sup>2</sup>.

So, how to save the climate? How to relate international law and multilateral negotiations? Bodansky (2010) answered that international environmental law results from multilateral negotiations. This article takes the conceptual elaborations of strategic diplomacy (Goh and Prantl; 2017; Smith 2015a & 2015b) as an analytical starting point for tackling the complexity of the climate regime and propose how Brazil should collaborate to save the climate. In Smith's perspective, strategic diplomacy is related to the "generation and pursuit of a strategic vision" with the aim of offering "principles and guidelines" for a more long-term oriented policy-formation process (2015, p.115-116). This sought-after policy should ideally materialize in effect of the presence of a series of essential elements and lines of action, related to; 1) a stable institutional basis, 2) recourse extraction and coordination, 3) a unified strategic narrative, 4) the capacity of adapting this narrative to external transformations, and 5) the capacity of coordinated policy targeting (Ibid). Diplomatic agency is further complicated by the gradual dilution of hierarchies, objectives, relations and actions, as these are inserted within evermore complex networked processes, in which new constellations of actors and patterns of linkages result in a much muddier picture (Ibid). Fletcher (2016), in the same vein, concluded that digital technology will lead to significant challenges in world politics and may empower myriad actors such as internet titans and citizens. Likewise, the Global Future Council on Energy predicts an "innovation tsunami" related to the global energy system (2018).

Goh and Prantl (2017, p.01) emphasize how the conduct of strategic diplomacy can be viewed as a process through which both state and non-state actors engage in a broad range of activities of framing, communicating, contesting, and negotiating their core interests and objectives. While much literature thus tends to focus on the bi- or multilateral interstate relationships as the basis for diplomatic activity, the strategic diplomacy perspective rather seeks to accentuate its systemic repercussions. "In a nutshell, the analytical focus is on diplomacy pursued to navigate the system rather than dyadic and polyadic state relations" (Ibid). This essential proposition rests on the premise that the character of the global order is marked by a set of key properties, formulated as 1) interconnectedness between the particular components

<sup>1</sup> Haas (2015) proposed the "epistemic communities" concept to show how scientists could have some influence in the decision-making process. But it is worth noting that scientists are not necessarily engaged in policy-making.

<sup>2</sup> See Schleicher, R. (2006) *Ciência, política e institucionalização na cooperação multilateral contra o aquecimento global*. Dissertação de mestrado. Instituto de Relações Internacionais. Universidade de Brasília. Leandra Gonçalves, for instance, has analyzed how politicians use scientific data in the fisheries regime. "Organizações Regionais para o Ordenamento Pesqueiro: o poder está ouvindo a ciência?" Tese de doutorado. Universidade de São Paulo. 2016.



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of the system, 2) non-linearity, meaning that even minor events may constitute tipping points which bring about significant repercussions throughout the system and, 3) emergence, which means that the varied interactions between the particular components of the system may lead to qualitatively unique results.

With a specific end point (a precise objective) in mind, Prantl and Goh (2017) present a framework for concrete policy formulation and execution in line with the precepts of strategic diplomacy. This comprises of the definition of entry points, followed by the identification and pursuit of tipping points, with the ultimate goal of reaching the goal set. The notion of entry point helps to define focalized and concerted actions within an initial field, so as to avoid dispersion of recourses on multifold, but less effective efforts. The tipping points can be described as the instance at which an event becomes the catalyst of broader causal dynamics throughout the system, the conjunctional impact of which works to bring about the intended end point.

In our research, the end point of a climate regime is the “safe space for humanity” (Rockström et al., 2009) given that Brazilian economy depends heavily on agribusiness (Lamucci et al, 2018). In other words, Brazilians need to negotiate not only the mitigation of greenhouse gases (GHG) nor exclusively the transition to a low carbon economy. They also need to consider other regimes that threaten humanity as a whole, such as energy, oceans governance, nuclear weapons, global health and wealth.

Strategic diplomacy implies the analyses of the international scenarios, with their main actors, interests and windows of opportunities based on entry points. With a broader approach to climate challenges, negotiating agendas will be intertwined. The nexus among the threats and opportunities in the climate regime are complex and challenging (Orsini et al. 2013, IIASA<sup>3</sup>, Mercure et al., 2017). Furthermore, solutions depend increasingly on technological solutions and on non-state actors, so strategic calculations may also prove wrong as uncertainties proliferate. In this sense, diplomacy and law are challenged to adapt to the new challenges, the rising powers, notably China and India (Diamond, 2018; Jaffe, 2018) and their growing interconnectedness in the climate regime<sup>4</sup>.

Put bluntly, there are two simultaneous processes under way: one is the rise of non-state actors (privatization) (Fletcher, 2016), which is better assessed with the fractal governance concept. The other is the empowerment of China and the BRICS, in which non-state actors have much smaller *marge de manoeuvre*. So, are we in a time of "multipolarity with no multilateralism" as the former Brazilian Foreign Affairs Minister Celso Amorim (2017) used to say?

If multilateralism was a concept forged by Washington during the GATT and NATO negotiations, now it is in deep crisis. International organizations no longer provide adequate answers to global environmental problems (Le Prestre, 2017) such as the planetary boundaries proposed by Steffen et al. (2015). The Western liberal order is being challenged not only by rising powers (Prantl, 2014; Morin and Orsini, 2015) but also by President Donald Trump's foreign policy (Blyth, 2016; Diamond, 2018). Likewise, the UN system failed to implement mandatory

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.iiasa.ac.at/>

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, the 2017 Xiamen and 2018 BRICS Declaration.



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rules in order to solve the climate problems (Viola, Franchini and Lemos, 2013; IPCC, 2017). For example, there is an enormous fragmentation in the legal system in relation to climate policies. As a consequence, establishing the responsibility of the state in relation to environmental and climate damages remains a key challenge for international law (Alfaia Jr., 2014).

In this broader context, "Make our Planet Great Again" was a response the French President Emmanuel Macron<sup>5</sup> and former governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger made to Trump's slogan de "Make America Great Again", to show the North American citizens that being the world superpower, it is their responsibility to ensure a safe Planet for the rest of humanity<sup>6</sup>.

The first part of the article emphasizes the complexity thinking (Kavalsky, 2016) looking for the main tipping point, that is when conditions for a systemic change are produced (Prantl and Goh, 2017). The second part focus on three main processes of multilateral negotiations and entry points, that is, how and where to start building effective solutions for climate threats.

## Part 1 - Complexity in multilateral climate negotiations

Complexity has several sources. One of them is biological, but the main issue here is that the IR research agenda is now is focusing more on a systemic view and the interactions among the parts instead of breaking the system into small parts like the international regimes, rational actors' theories or the *problem-solving theories*<sup>7</sup>. Assuming that the sum of the parts is much bigger than the whole, complexity thinking and strategic diplomacy may be more useful to effectively approach the climate regime.

Concepts like environment, sustainable development and climate are too broad to be consensually and properly defined worldwide<sup>8</sup>. The interactions between land, atmospheric and ocean living beings (and human activities) are complex and unveiled (Biermann, 2014; Beau and Larrère, 2018). The planetary boundaries below show how important these interactions are, notably in relation to biochemical flows and genetic diversity.

<sup>5</sup> President Macron also hosted the One Planet Summit on 11 December 2017 in order to boost financing of climate related initiatives.

<sup>6</sup> It corresponds to the legal principle of general interest of humanity (l'intérêt général de l'humanité).

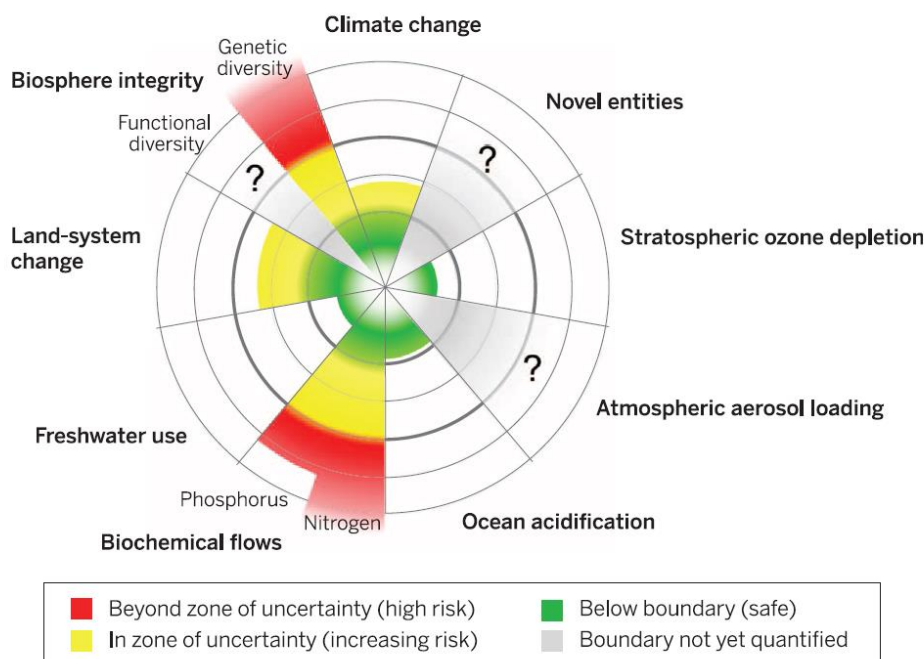
<sup>7</sup> Dostál, J. Theory of Problem Solving. *Procedia*. Volume 174, 12 February 2015, Pages 2798-2805.

<sup>8</sup> Mireille Delmas-Marty offers reflection on that by opposing two kinds of knowledge: *savoir savant* (scientific) and *savoir sachant* (traditional).



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**Figure 1 - Planetary boundaries**



Source: Steffen, W. et al. "Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet". Science, v. 347, n. 6223, 2015.

Undoubtedly, climate is not only an environmental issue, so the COPs need to expand their agenda or to be recognized as the hub for climate diplomatic action. The oceans, the poles, energy, agriculture, transportation, biodiversity and biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions (BBNJ) are not treated together, nor are they approached in a coherent way under the UN auspices. This reveals the challenge of fragmentation in international law and diplomacy. Furthermore, other law branches contribute to the juxtaposition of legal regimes such as trade, intellectual property rights and energy (Barros-Plataiu and Maljean-Dubois, 2017).

Nuclear weapons must also be remembered since they do pose a potential threat to life on Earth. Nuclear armed states have constantly improved the lethal capacity of their arms thus contributing to the arms race that now include Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea. The UN 2017 Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons<sup>9</sup> opened for signature on September 27, 2017, did not have the support of the NATO members<sup>10</sup>, that is, key OECD<sup>11</sup> countries. It did not have the signatures from China, India and Russia also, the key BRICS members. If nuclear disarmament is not linked to the state obligation of not causing damages outside its jurisdiction, nor to the responsibility to protect and not even just our right to a healthy environment, then who is really working to save the climate?

In sum, multilateral negotiations reveal how states act in cacophony, therefore putting the effectiveness of international obligations in question, in terms of commitment and

<sup>9</sup> Adopted by the UN General Assembly in July 2017 with 122 votes for and only the Netherlands voted against. Singapore abstained.

<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=57139#.WesuV1u3yUk>> Accessed on 28 October 2017.

<sup>10</sup> <<https://www.nato.int/>> Accessed on 28 October 2017.

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.oecd.org>> Accessed on 28 October 2017.



compliance. As a consequence, this is not a simple legal fragmentation issue that could be resolved with a more up-to-date umbrella treaty signed in Paris in 2015, because states have not reached basic consensus yet. Not to mention all non-state actors working in parallel tracks. If this is so, the climate regime's tipping point was not the Paris Agreement, but the Copenhagen Accord in the COP 15. The reason for that is that in 2009 the USA and China reached an agreement, which led to the Copenhagen Accord in 2009, with a few supporting countries (Dubash and Rajamani, 2010). Considering that the tipping point depended more on the diplomatic consensus between Washington and Beijing (the invisible giant G2) than on the UN members' votes in 2009, the Paris Agreement is just a new good start, after the climate quagmire since the US left the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

With or without the US, the reelection of President Xi Jinping in October 2017 confirms the trend of a more globally active Beijing diplomacy based on the "Chinese dream" and the "Belt and Road Initiative"<sup>12</sup>. The Chinese leadership in the transition to a low carbon economy is linked to the New Development Bank, which has mainly projects on renewable energy<sup>13</sup>. On top of that, rising powers, especially China, are replacing Western powers in the leadership process (Jaffe, 2018). Two recent examples are the Chinese immediate reaction to President Trump's abandonment of the Paris Agreement and of the UNESCO, both in 2017. This only reinforces the conviction that the power shift from the West to Southern Asia is getting stronger, although China is still a "partial power" as Shambaugh puts it (2013), since it lags far behind the USA in terms of technological capacities (Brooks and Wohlforth, 2016).

Besides this state-level analysis based on the invisible G2, there is a second significant process related to other stakeholders from the private and public sectors, notably companies, NGOs, and subnational actors, like cities and networks, discussed next.

Climate governance has changed so fast and deeply that diplomacy and international law need to adapt faster. The MOPGA initiative is only one example of fractal governance and it is linked to other initiatives such as the R20<sup>14</sup>. The high ambition coalition (HAC) promoted by the Marshall Islands in 2015 that gathered more than a hundred countries to support the signature of the Paris Agreement is another. Cities, subnational states<sup>15</sup> and NGOs are effectively acting as the sovereignty-free actors Rosenau described (1992). All those political arrangements are quite new and amorphous, maybe ephemeral too.

Fractal governance leads to the analysis of small parts that promote the emergence of order from below (Schneider, 2012). That means the obsolescence of the "command and control" legal mechanisms in international law, because sovereign states can no longer afford it, apart from China. The same goes for the "commitment and compliance" logic, since states need companies to help implement sustainable infrastructure projects to change, for instance, the national energy mix (Tasca, 2018). As a consequence, hierarchy and the use of force are less

<sup>12</sup> One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR). <<https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/24/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-could-be-the-next-risk-to-the-global-financial-system.html>> Accessed on 29 October 2017.

<sup>13</sup> <<http://www.ndb.int/>> Accessed on 28 October 2017.

<sup>14</sup> <<https://regions20.org/>> Accessed on 28 October 2017.

<sup>15</sup> California, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, etc...



important too. It corresponds better to the bottom up mechanisms the climate regime is increasingly adopting, notably with the INDCs<sup>16</sup>.

In sum, there are two co-evolutionary "tectonic changes" in friction that demand adaptation skills from diplomats, decision-makers, law-makers and scholars: the rising powers reinforcing top-down processes (China and India) and the networks proliferating in bottom-up ones (in Western countries mostly). How to put them all together at the same negotiating table? Who wants to open up the dialogue? Will this ever happen? Those are difficult questions for the future, considering that by 2050 emerging economies' GDP will be three times higher and there will be 30% more people living there (Global Future Council on Energy, 2018).

## Part 2 - Opportunities for diplomatic action

As mentioned above, entry points are multiple. Related to life as a whole, environmental and climate negotiations have to deal with oceans, energy, health, biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and others. Forests have their own agenda, but they were included in the Paris Agreement with the REDD+ mechanisms. Trade and energy are different regimes treated by the WTO and the IAEA separately<sup>17</sup>. Transportations are a big challenge since they are an important source of GHG emissions and they need the best available technology to improve in market scales, within the ICAO<sup>18</sup> and IMO agendas for example. As a result, defining entry points in multilateral negotiations is not a simple task. Before doing so, there are three drivers of international affairs to be considered: privatization, interconnectedness and complexification (Kavalski, 2016).

Privatization of decision-making processes is embedded in a larger context resulting from broader access to information and communication technologies, empowering asymmetric actors in multilateral arenas (Green, 2014; Fletcher, 2016). The internet is surely the main one, but there are also social technologies to be considered, like the non-state actors networks<sup>19</sup> and social mobilization. Because market actors have accumulated so many resources in relation to states, privatization is a key challenge for diplomats and academics (Khanna, 2016; Fletcher, 2016). Nonetheless, civil society, though more informed and connected, is not necessarily better mobilized for climate action now than it was in 1992.

The interconnectedness among actors and issues brings up the need for a systemic approach related to climate change. As Baie et al. (2016) put it: "The Anthropocene encapsulates a world of intertwined drivers, complex dynamic structures, emergent phenomena, and unintended consequences". Therefore, the fractal governance approach implies that concepts such as hierarchy, power, linearity, authority and legitimacy are less relevant as analytical tools to understand the global climate governance in the Anthropocene epoch. For instance, some

<sup>16</sup> Intended Nationally Determined Contributions designed under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). <[http://unfccc.int/focus/indc\\_portal/items/8766.php](http://unfccc.int/focus/indc_portal/items/8766.php)> Accessed on 28 October 2017.

<sup>17</sup> World Trade Organization and International Atomic Energy Agency.

<sup>18</sup> International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization.

<sup>19</sup> Such as: R20, Under2 coalition, NAZCA (Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action).



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European markets traditionally import oil from Russia. The current UN economic sanctions against Moscow prevents Russian oil exploiters from using the best available technology. As a consequence, they cause avoidable environmental damages. Will Europeans continue to finance this unsustainable activity or will they invest more in energy alternatives?

The complexification of international affairs results from the two other drivers above. Their impacts on diplomacy and international law show that the negotiations processes are closer to the XIX than to the XXI century. That is, since the end of the XIX century, world conferences led by Western powers, notably Europeans, pretend to promote planetary democracy, but only some States have voice. The so-called "universal values" in fact are a legal and political construction aiming at consolidating a "shared view" to harmonize diversity - of cultures and views of the world. As a result, obligations are progressively less precise and hard (Abbot and Snidal, 2000). Delegation mechanisms are nonexistent in the climate regime, so international organizations are in general are rather toothless. Finally, only soft law mechanisms seem to be accepted widely, such the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Goals.

One of the essential entry points for firmly engaging with mitigation of climate change is the BRICS. The BRICS group has been accounting for an increasingly large share of global CO2 emissions, and due to being at a point well below their structural saturation in terms of energy consumption, climate conscious action by the BRICS becomes a quintessentially important element in combating climate change (Wu et al., 2015; Rinaldi and Martuscelli, 2016). The group is constituted by highly heterogeneous countries, which does not appear to be the case in terms of their official standpoints, as well as their effective actions taken<sup>20</sup>, in relation to climate change. Thus, while Russia continues to express very limited concern with the issue of climate change, and also has refrained from taking any significant steps in order to reorient its emission-heavy economy, China, on the other hand, has clearly stated its ambition to be a central part of the global energy transition, and has become the leading investor in renewable energy in a very short time span (Jaffe, 2018). India, Brazil and South Africa have often displayed adherence to combating climate change at the international level, though their record in terms of following up on these non-binding commitments at the domestic level is rather more mixed.

Yet, in spite of these differences, a certain commonality can nonetheless be detected in terms of their skepticism of adhering to climate change protocols operating with caps defined by total national emissions. Considering the different developmental contexts characterizing the BRICS, and well as their comparative historical emission records, - with the possible exception of Russia in relation to this parameter - these countries have often pointed to the somewhat irrefutable circumstance, that capping emissions close to their current level, followed by reduction obligations, would wield a much more favorable edge towards developed countries. Strategic diplomatic action should take this into account when devising a course of action towards ensuring the BRICS' adherence to a credible climate regime. Smith's (2015, p.115-116) conceptualization of the different stages in strategic diplomacy, formulated as institutional basis,

<sup>20</sup> O'Neill, J. "New Rules for the New Global Economy". Interview by the Project Syndicate, on July 27, 2018. available at: <https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/new-rules-for-the-new-global-economy-by-jim-o-neill-2018-07?barrier=accesspaylog>. Accessed on August 5, 2018.



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recourse coordination, strategic narrative, adaption of this narrative, as well as policy coordination constitute a useful analytical point of departure.

The fact that climate issues have been on the agenda since the earliest BRIC(S) meetings (BRICS, 2009) as well as the fact that mutual confidence and routinely interactions have become laid down with time, means that a certain institutional basis, with capacity for further amplification with climate action in mind, does appear to exist. The issues of the (re)framing of a strategic narrative of climate action, combined with the coordination of recourses, becomes essential. This means that first of all, the precondition for emphatic engagement within climate mitigation regimes by the BRICS must necessarily rest upon a strategic narrative which takes the notion of common, but differentiated responsibilities (CISDL, 2002) into account. In more concrete terms, this would imply a relative reorientation of focus on emission reduction commitments from the total national level, and towards per capita emissions. The proliferation of such redefined narrative becomes essential in order to stimulate the redirection of organizational and financial recourses of the BRICS towards climate change mitigation. Since China is the world largest exporter and second largest importer, the transportation sector is key for Beijing and its trade partners inside and outside the BRICS.

An important tipping point should be highlighted as the instance at which investments in increasingly accessible and competitive renewable technologies becomes viewed by BRICS states as strategic asset acquisition, rather than as a cost. Concomitantly, cooperation, technology-sharing, and coordination between these nations also mean that positive-sum synergies might be reached, which stand in contrast to the often-zero-sum logic characteristic of the geopolitics of fossil fuels. The emphasis upon sustainability as a criterion for credit concessions of the New Development Bank (NDB, 2017) might give a hint of this institution's potential to serve as a vehicle for the proliferation of sustainable technologies and infrastructure projects, in the case that political will exists. Firm common commitments to regimes are fed out of the belief that in the long run, they will benefit the individual interests of their participants (Keohane 1984; Stein 1993) which in the case of the BRICS would depend upon tangible positive spillovers of energy-related cooperation.

Adaptation of the strategic narrative to the changing global conjunctures and geopolitical challenges, as well as policy coordination stands as the reproduction and perpetuation of the strategic policy engagement. This does not mean that instances of cooperation might not come under stress by either structural or conjunctural developments, but as long as the overall positive sum synergies are attained through these states' adhesion to global regimes based upon (sustainable) energy related concerns, their fundamental interests in preserving these regimes should maintain constant. The main challenge of strategic diplomacy thus appears to be related to ensuring that the transitional "push" towards sustainable energy brings about a switch towards an alternate path-dependency which rests upon the common interest in the development and incremental refinement of effective legal instruments, that serve to keep states in line with their collective commitments.

A second entry point which we chose to accentuate can be formulated as the reorientation of national and international energy-related regulation towards a systemic bias in



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favor of renewable solutions. This derives from the observation that market forces are capable of accelerating the transition towards a more renewable energy system, but for this to materialize, economic incentives and correctional measures need to be provided by the political authorities. Consistent behavior-molding regulation thus aims to accelerate the movement towards a tipping point, at which renewables become the most economically viable alternative, is reached. Regulation which discriminates between "dirty" fossil based energy, and "clean" renewable energy - and thereby takes the atmospheric environmental externalities into account (Sandmo, 2011) - becomes necessary in order to advance the timeframe for reaching such a tipping point. The most important aspect of this regulatory turn towards sustainable energy is that it is conducted in a consistent manner, and implies a long-term focus upon certain pre-established goals. This may create a level playing field, at which the private sector is clearly informed about the politically defined confines of the business space in which it will have to operate, in order to plan for longer periods ahead. In line with Doris et al. (2009), it can be presumed that a close public-private coordination, with a focused public policy framework as the regulatory background, has a strong potential to spur transitions towards a renewable energy system.

Yet, a certain degree of international lower-benchmark, implying that essential principles with a positive edge towards renewable energy are more broadly adopted, also becomes important. This is not only because of the importance that all of the largest global economies contribute to the energy transition, but also in order to avoid that the immediate competitive advantages associated with lax regulation of fossil fuel consumption are not overtly exploited by some large industrial countries; dynamics often described as a "race to the bottom". But as the price-tipping point between renewable and fossil fuels are reached in some countries, and within certain technological fields, this may well also materialize as a strategic competition in relation to providing the most favorable conditions for organic growth of renewable sectors, or rephrased; as a "race to the sky". As the competitive dynamics of future geopolitics of energy are bound to be redrawn by the advent of non-finite generation systems, a new series of challenges are posed in terms of the productive insertion within global commodity chains and technology platforms associated with these. As the case of the German, - and later Chinese - public policy engagement within solar energy has proven, the productive and technological developments, and the timeframe for their commercial maturation, is by no means disconnected from the mode of regulation to which they are subjected. Presuming that competitiveness and self-interest will continue to define the interactions between modern states, being the last to join this process of gearing national energy regimes toward productive recalibration might well wield serious strategic repercussions for the laggards.

Given the need to work harder and collectively to build "the future we want"<sup>21</sup>, as shown in Figure 1 below, the entry points should focus on complexity, responsibility and equity issues (Beau and Larrère 2018). So far, climate talks have focused more on mitigation of GHG emissions,

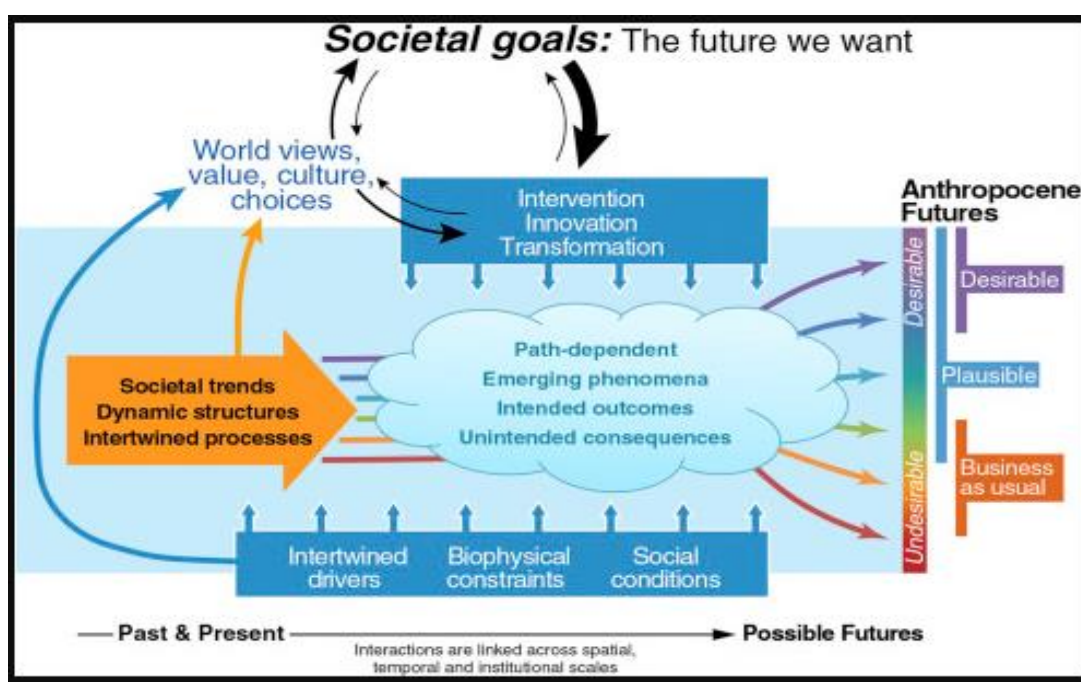
<sup>21</sup> Outcome Document. A/RES/66/288 - The Future We Want. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/futurewewant.html>. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June 2012.



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deforestation and national economic costs, named "green economy" in 2012 Rio+20 Conference. However, energy production and consumption should be the main priority, in order to promote the shift from self-interested states energy security to planetary security. Also, responsibility is the key background for effective multilateralism, including historical, present and future public-private responsibilities. Likewise, nuclear technology should be used only for peaceful means, because it makes no sense to work to save the Planet and prevent humanity from having a safer future. We propose, with a growing number of observers, that negotiations shift from the state level to the per capita data level, assuring more equity to each human being. In other words, that every human being has the same rights independently of his/her nationality. Finally, the ecosystems' approach definitely enables us to include the oceans in the climate talks, since oceans are suffering great climate change impacts that in turn reduce their capacity of providing ecosystem services, notably CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration (Büscher, Form, Riebesell, 2017), thus threatening global health and wealth, as shown below.

**Figure 2 - Societal Goals: the future we want**



Source: Baie et al. (2016). Available at:  
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378015300546#fig0005>. Access on 25 October 2017.

## Conclusions

From a systemic analysis of climate change talks since 1992, we propose that two major shifts have to be considered by decision makers and scholars. One is the power shift to Asia, giving China under Xi Jinping the leadership role in the transition to a low carbon economy, and placing the BRICS at the center of the climate agenda, thus reinforcing a state-led top-down



process. This is better understood using IR analytical tools related to complexity thinking, such as the strategic diplomacy concept. India is also rising in Asia and may deepen the ongoing power shift. The other is quite the opposite, translating a new cleavage inside the declining West, that is, the proliferation of private-public networks composed of entrepreneurs, subnational actors and NGOs.

In this context, diplomats and other public authorities are demanded to look for more results-oriented processes since the main results from the UN talks are disappointing, after 23 annual COPs. They were rather to postpone expensive and effective measures, make empty promises of transfers of technology and additional resources and the creation of funds that will most probably never meet their goals. Instead, companies and private actors are looking for solutions to stay in the world market and on the diplomatic stage. International law also needs to adapt to these two tectonic changes and not to blithely assume that non-binding norms or the 2015 Paris agreement will suffice.

In this sense, multilateralism will be more effective if technology, energy, oceans, nuclear weapons and transportation are seriously taken into account in the next COPs and afterwards. The main question remains: who wants to make our Planet great again? Nuclear powers? Rising powers? BRICS members? The High Ambition Coalition and likeminded alliances? Billionaire entrepreneurs?

Finally, complexity, responsibility, and equity are not yet shared principles and values, but they need to be, for the sake of our safe space for humanity.



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