Understanding convergence and divergence in the framing of climate change responses: An analysis of two wine companies

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ABSTRACT

Adaptation is a highly malleable concept and people may use various framings of adaptation to support what they are already doing and limit their need to change. By analysing organizations' different, strategic constructions of climate change, this malleability becomes clear. Our paper focuses on two Australian wine companies' approaches to climate change. Using an analysis of interviews with 18 company staff we uncovered two divergent business logics underlying the same climate change responses. Our analysis extends beyond simply identifying dominant frames of climate change to examining what motivates different organizations to create different frames. This has implications for the climate change responses that organizations might implement (or not) and more broadly, for how climate change 'adaptation' (and 'mitigation') is understood and applied.

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1. Introduction

Climate change is a highly politicized topic in contemporary society. Beliefs about climate change, for example, broadly follow political affiliation (Leiserowitz et al., 2011). What is less apparent in the current literature is whether actions taken to address climate change are also politicized. An individual's or organization's engagement on climate change is not a simple technical question, nor a straightforward matter of adopting a defined set of mitigation and/or adaptation actions. It is also not determined automatically by accurate understanding of information about exposure and sensitivity to given climatic and non-climatic climate change risks (Moser and Ekstrom, 2010; Tribbia and Moser, 2008). Rather, the way a person or group implements climate change action, and why, is a complex question that reveals the strategic meanings they dynamically ascribe to various climate change responses. This means that different individuals may frame the same climate change response differently. Frames "identify and label events within individual's lives and the world around them" in an automatic, largely unconscious process (Fünfgeld and McEvoy, 2014, p. 607) This paper explores why it is important to understand the various ways climate change is framed, even if the immediate observable response is the same, because of the later consequences and pathways that the use of particular frames create. We focus on the wine industry to illustrate this, where adaptation decisions tend to be of a longer lasting and thus more consequential nature than in industries based on annual crops.

The conceptual uncertainty of climate change with its 'collateral concepts' (cf. Castree, 2014) of adaptation and mitigation, and the different ways people understand these issues, is the topic of a growing body of literature on framing and climate change (e.g. Aklin and Urpelainen, 2013; Barr et al., 2011; Butler et al., 2014; Hallegatte, 2009; Gasper et al., 2013; Gifford and Comeau, 2011; Morton et al., 2011; Oels, 2013; Spence and Pidgeon, 2010). This work emphasizes that climate change, adaptation and mitigation are not neutral or fixed ideas but are necessarily interpreted and performed in innumerable ways (Cachelin and Ruddell, 2013; Dewulf, 2013; Fünfgeld and McEvoy, 2014). As a result, a major task for social science research is to make explicit the general existence of framing in climate change research, policy and practice, which is well underway, and the specific frames that are emerging, their relationship, underlying agendas, 'logics' and processes.

This paper adds to the literature on strategic climate responses in businesses (Agrawala et al., 2011; Berkhout, 2012; Dalby, 2014; Galbreath, 2011, 2014; Lereboullet et al., 2014; Linnenluecke and Griffiths, 2013) by demonstrating the importance of values, pre-existing identities and agendas in climate responses. The Australian wine industry is one in which many businesses are already actively adapting to climate change, yet there are striking differences between the rationale for, and approach to, such adaptation. Analysis of the strategic frames and organizational images involved helps to explain these differences.

1.1.   *From framing to framers*

A multidisciplinary concept, framing draws attention to the patterned way in which issues are thought about and acted on. Miller (2000, pp. 211–212) defines frames as "systematic lenses" or "interpretive overlays" that "guide communal interpretation and definition of particular issues". Framing involves often automatic decisions about what aspects of an issue are considered important, who is involved, and what options for action are feasible or desirable. While research on framing in the cognitive science tradition presents framing as an individual-level mental process (e.g. Lakoff, 2010), most work on the topic emphasizes its communal and social aspects, which is the approach taken in this paper, for example, how public perceptions of climate change are influenced by narratives in the media or by institutional cultures.

In its emphasis on culturally specific interpretations and patterned ways of thinking, framing literature overlaps with that on discourse. While each has multiple meanings, the terms discourse and frame are generally used interchangeably in this paper, with the difference mainly in the extent of influence, as multiple frames can operate within the same discourse, but not vice versa. Research on discourse draws attention to the role of structures, practices and events as well as explicit verbal or written utterances in constructing particular frames (Fairclough, 2001). People's observations, interpretations, decision making, actions and justifications interact. Together they construct individual and collective understanding of an issue over time, with each actor watching and responding to others as well as to 'external' messages

from the social and physical environment. In this sense, framing is an inherent part of the social learning that is now being discussed in relation to climate change (e.g. Collins and Ison, 2009; Head, 2009). A recent review of the framing of climate change adaptation by Dewulf (2013, p. 322, italics added) suggests that frames are the "strong and generic *storylines that guide both analysis and action* in practical situations". Similar to others such as McEvoy et al. (2013) and Oels (2013), Dewulf (2013, p. 323) argues that the main framings of adaptation evident within developed nations are adaptation as "risk management", "security" or "resilience".

While ideology (politically driven representations of an issue) is more easily recognized in some frames than in others, the aim of discourse analysis is generally not to expose frames in order to do away with them but to reveal the interpretive lenses in (dominant) use and examine their roots and implications. Exposing the use of ideology is crucial in research on representations of climate change to distinguish, for example, industry-funded climate change misinformation campaigns from climate science (Farmer and Cook, 2013; Lakoff, 2010; Nisbet, 2009). But ideology in climate change *responses* is not always easy to discern. There is no clear scientific answer as to what adaptation should specifically entail because adaptation is different in various contexts and purposes. It is also greatly influenced by determinants of adaptive capacity, that is, the key attributes of a system that influence its ability to adapt, for example economic resources, access to technology and information, skill sets, availability of social and physical infrastructure, effectiveness of institutions, and equity (Burton, 1996; Fankhauser and Tol, 1997; IPCC, 2014; Kates, 2000; Kelly and Adger, 1999; O'Riordan and Jordan, 1999; Smit et al., 2001; Yohe and Tol, 2002). While adaptation is often guided by climate science, it is far from a simple application of it (Tribbia and Moser, 2008; Peterson, 2012) and some actions undertaken in the name of adaptation may be at odds with a given climate projection. All climate change responses are strategic, political and internally rational, not because they explicitly adhere to pre-existing agendas, political affiliations or scientific advice, but because they are subjective, goal-oriented and inseparable from other decisions, actions and outcomes (Moser and Ekstrom, 2010; O'Brien and Wolf, 2010). For some researchers, this means that trying to understand what is shaping these responses and to what effect – including how they are collectively framed and why – is more productive than trying to assess what is correct or incorrect about them (Hulme, 2009).

Understanding framing involves more than simply identifying what frames are evident (Miller, 2000). Rather, what is needed is a better understanding of how existing frames relate to each other. Frames also need to be understood in relation to fram*ers* rather than assumed to emerge spontaneously or exist independently of people's (re)production of them, including reactions against others' framing of situations. Even in cases where individuals consciously or unconsciously endorse an existing frame, they inevitably adapt it and contribute to its shifting form (see Fünfgeld and McEvoy, 2014; Cachelin and Ruddell, 2013). Work on individuals' attitudes to climate change suggests that how someone interprets and interacts with existing framings of the issue is likely to reflect, among other things, their cultural identity (e.g. Marshall et al., 2012).