GLOBAL WARMING

AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE ENCOUNTER OF GLOBAL AND LOCAL CLIMATE CHANGE DISCOURSES IN THE BAMENDA GRASSFIELDS, CAMEROON

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"Global War*n*ing"

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For my father, brother and sister

Sharing in your love is a wonderful experience

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I cherish the hope that this thesis, somehow, can contribute to not lose sight of those people whom this research aims to represent and benefit.

Acronyms

CAMTRACC - Cameroon Tradition Rulers Against Climate Change

CDM - Clean Development Mechanism

CIG - Common Initiative Group

COP - Conference of the Parties

CRU - Climate Research Unit

CRTV - Cameroon Radio and Television

EJM - Environmental Justice Movement

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization

IIPFCC - International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change

(I)NGO - (International) Non Governmental Organization

IPCC - International Panel on Climate Change

PACJA - Pan African Climate Justice Alliance

REDD - Reduction Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

UNEP - United Nations Environment Program

UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WCED - World Commission on Environmental Development

CHAPTER ONE

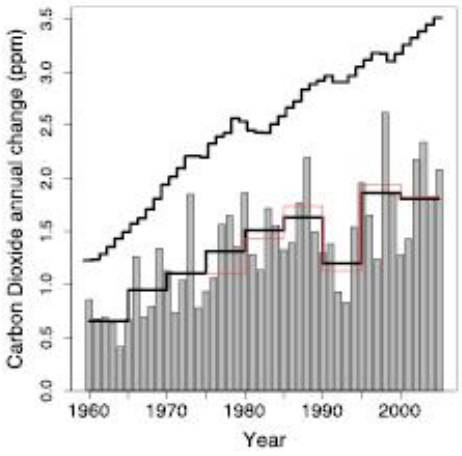
Introduction

Most of you probably played it as a child. I am referring to the so-called "telephone game" that we used to play at school. One person comes up with a story and whispers it into somebody else's ear, and that person recites the same story to the next until the story reaches the last person who is supposed to narrate the story in public. After passing a dozen of people this game often left the whole group giggling since it turned out that the final version had very little to do with the original story. Along the way many elements of the story got lost in translation, and in a similar way it appeared that new elements were added, or original ones were given new life. In each moment the story is retold by one person to the next a translation process takes place that generally entails a reinterpretation and redefinition of the last version of the story. The focus of my research bears many similarities with this game.

This thesis came to fruition in two 'worlds'. In the first one, discourses about humanly induced climate change came to life. This world consists of the Northern, industrialized countries that at the same time can be held responsible for lying at the root of the perceived crisis. Negotiations, summits, conferences, and scientific assessments with alarming predictions about the future of the planet have been manifold; yet no binding set of rules has been put into place to oblige countries to cut their CO_2 emissions. This is in a nutshell how the scientific 'source' of the story is framed:

> *The Earth's global mean climate is determined by incoming energy from the Sun and by the properties of the Earth and its atmosphere, namely the reflection, absorption and emission of energy within the atmosphere and at the surface. Although changes in received solar energy (..) inevitably affect the Earth's energy budget, the properties of the atmosphere and surface are also important and these may be affected by climate feedbacks. The importance of climate feedbacks is evident in the nature of past climate changes as recorded in ice cores up to 650,000 years old. Changes have occurred in several aspects of the atmosphere and surface that alter the global energy budget of the Earth and can therefore cause the climate to change.*

CO_2 Emissions and Increases



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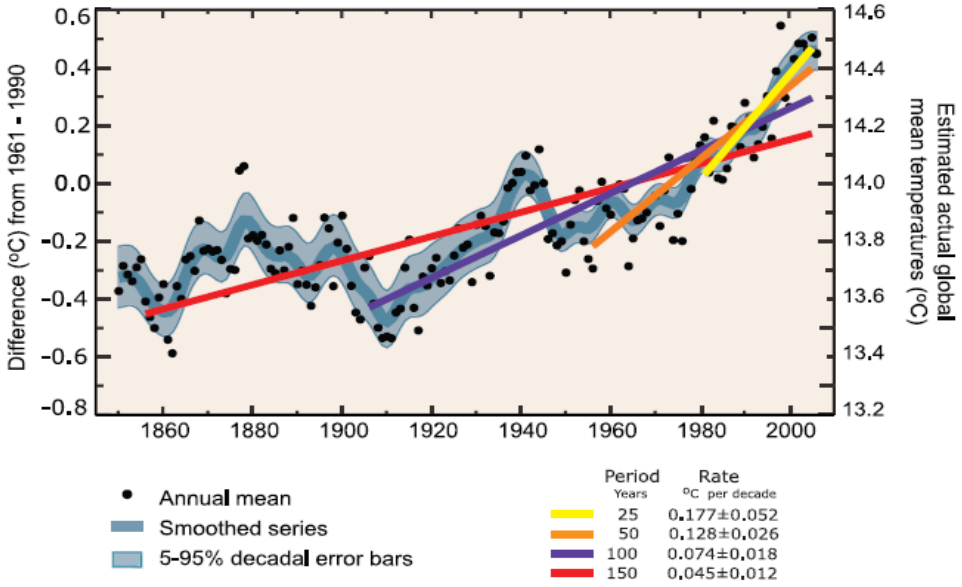


Source: ibid

The other world - The Bamenda Grassfields in the North West region of Cameroon - where I conducted six months of fieldwork, is part of the underdeveloped countries and of what is perceived to be the most vulnerable continent to suffer from the consequences of climate change; while it has played an insignificant role in causing it. This is more or less the story as we know it. And here are some of the expected devastating effects that African countries will face:

[1] IPCC, 2007: Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Solomon, S., D. Qin, M. Manning, Z. Chen, M. Marquis, K.B. Averyt, M. Tignor and H.L. Miller (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, 996 pp.http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg1/en/tssts-2-1-1.html

By 2020, between 75 million and 250 million people [in Africa] are projected to be exposed to increased water stress due to climate change. If coupled with increased demand, this will adversely affect livelihoods and exacerbate water-related problems. (..) Agricultural production, including access to food, in many African countries and regions is projected to be severely compromised by climate variability and change. New studies confirm that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. Some adaptation to current climate variability is taking place; however, this may be insufficient for future changes in climate[2].

- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)**

Since the beginning of the modern environmental movement in the 1970s, which is said to represent the debut of the so-called "new environmentalism", the focus on environmental degradation has become an increasingly global concern. Due to high levels of urbanization, air pollution and depletion of natural resources, industrialized societies – informed by a general critique against the capitalist model of unlimited growth - for the first time saw themselves confronted with the (idea of the) planet's finitude. Parallel with the rapid expansion of the environmental movement and world-wide green consciousness a true "politics of the earth" [Dryzek 1995] has come into existence. In the course of time, on a global scale a multitude of climate change discourses developed shaping both the way we understand and relate to the environment and the world around us. This is a fragment that represents the more 'popular' version of the story:

If you look at the ten hottest years ever measured, they have all occurred in the last fourteen years, and the hottest of all was 2005. Scientific consensus is that we are causing global warming. (..) Within a decade there will be no more snows of Kilimanjaro. This is really not a political issue, so much as a moral issue. Temperatures increases are taking place all over the world, that is causing stronger storms.

Is it possible that we should prepare against other threats besides terrorists? We have to act together to save this global crisis! Our ability to live is what is at stake.

- **From: "An inconvenient Truth", Al Gore**

[2] IPCC, 2007: Summary for Policymakers. In: *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,* M.L. Parry, O.F. Canziani, J.P. Palutikof, P.J. van der Linden and C.E. Hanson, Eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 7-22. http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-spm.pdf

The popular global warming discourse is generally accompanied with this type of visualizations:

Source[3]

Global warming's ' broad appeal and 'apocalyptic aura' also resonate with the fact that, for more than two decades by now, climate change is a highly *securitized* and top-priority matter on international policy and development agenda's. Climate change is recognized as one of the major factors behind the growing inequality between the rich North and the poor South, as the ultimate symbol of injustice. Due to the trans-boundary nature of the climate and the increasing importance of environmental issues in international politics a complex multi-stakeholder field of global environmental governance has been generated, which in turn, profoundly has shaped North-South relations (Duffy 2006). Moreover, climate change embraces all aspects of human existence and human security, a "green paradigm shift" has made its way into development thinking. This change has entailed the expansion and re-shaping of adaptation and mitigation projects at the local level – and thus setting new norms and standards about how to deal with the environment – which have been incorporated into new development models. By the sheer size of the global funds that are made available for adaptation and mitigation in Africa it can be said that this marks the beginning of a new era of global environmental governance.

Within the so-called "development context" of climate change it is assumed that current development policies are not equipped to protect people from environmental disasters, and therefore the focus has shifted to the adaptation and mitigation of billions of people in the developing world. This in turn, will inevitably result in an intense re-shaping of environment-society related relations in Africa (Cannon and Müller-Mahn 2010). In brief, the 'climatic threat' has been by and large invested with an alarming narrative by leading actors in international climate change discourses. The diagnoses on this matter, as much as the understanding of how it can be mitigated and how people should adapt to it, have become the ultimate guidelines for contemporary environmental and development policies:

> *Climate change may be the most significant challenge the world faces today. It will affect everyone, regardless of geographical location or socioeconomic status. It may determine the way we produce food, our access to water, our health, where we live, and the diversity of plant and animal species. No other current concern can claim the scale of climate change – and the scope of the potential catastrophe if the*

[3] http://qwickstep.com/search/polar-ice-melting.html

world fails to act in time. (..) As a phenomenon that affects the whole world, climate change clearly warrants a comprehensive global response[4].

- **United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service**

"Think Globally, Act Locally", the slogan that became popular within the Kyoto Protocol's framework in 1997 has since then been promoted as a global moral responsibility, as the sine qua non for combating the negative consequences of climate change. At this point, in the search for the solution to save the planet, the two 'worlds' suddenly merged into one. Africa is appointed to have a crucial role in this 'fight' by preserving its forests and by investing in (massive) reforestation projects. For African leaders and representatives these emergent climate change policies and discourses have created the chance to plea for "climate justice". An opportunity that they wholeheartedly seized by demanding billions of dollars from the industrialized countries for compensation. Also at the grassroots level voices can be heard that strive for climate justice. The International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) made a clear statement at the Copenhagen Summit: "considering our spiritual and traditional attachment to land we need to be compensated for we never contributed to the *climate mess* in which we are today" (*The Standard Tribune Cameroon,* November 20th, 2009).

Since Cameroon is part of the Congo Basin – the second largest forest in the world - the country forms an important target for the international community in mitigating climate change. Most recently, Paul Biya – the president of the republic - has announced to install a national climate change observatory to monitor climate data, and to help facilitate decision-making in all climate change related sectors. In September 2009 the head of state attended the U.N. preparatory meeting for the Copenhagen Conference that was held in New York. Apart from using climate change (and thus the North) as a scapegoat for the deplorable situation Cameroon finds itself in, he and other representatives of the Congo Basin countries demanded compensation of this 'historical debt'. In the following, a fragment of a Cameroonian version of the story:

We are certain that the issue of climate change today is not caused by African countries, because African countries almost have nothing to do with this as far as the climate is concerned. But you know the consequences are more on the African continent. And you know the forest is very important when it comes to regulating the world climatic conditions. Now the Amazon is falling out, the only major forest reserve that we have here in the world today which can act as a regulator for climate change is The Congo Basin. Now the world has asked African countries to stop depleting their forests, and instead to practice reafforestation. But we also know that most of the countries who have this forest have their river populations living there. They depend on the forest for wood, for food, for everything that you can imagine. Now if we stop them from using the forest as they were using it in the past you will understand that they will go hungry. And this is where president Paul Biya and other leaders of the Congo Basin are insisting that if they must stop using the forest for food then they should be compensated[5].

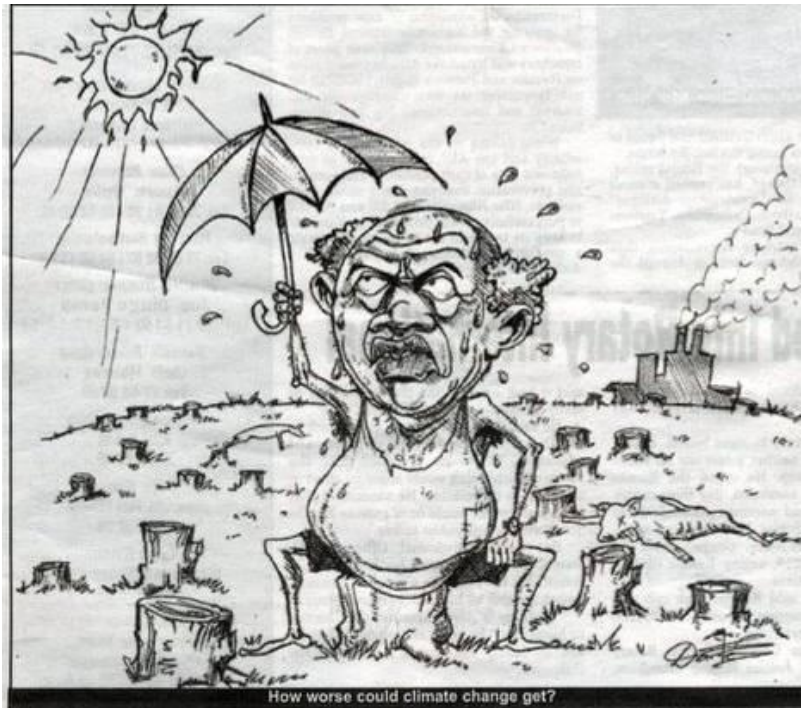
- **A Cameroonian journalist covering the U.N. Summit in New York**

At the governmental level climate change is becoming more and more an important axe of intervention. Several ministries are occupied with fighting deforestation by realizing tree planting projects and raising awareness among the population on adaptation and mitigation of climate change. But also at the broader

[4] In: Adams, Barbara and Luchsinger Gretchen (2009). 'Climate Justice for a Changing Planet: A Primer for Policy Makers and NGOs', New York/ Geneva: United Nations/NGLS. http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/pdf_climatejustice.pdf

[5] Broadcasted on national TV by Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV), September 22, 2009.

institutional level we can find climate change related campaigns and projects. International organizations like WWF, UNDP, FAO and the World Bank, but also NGOs, civil society groups throughout the country are increasingly getting involved in the so-called *green campaigns.*



Source: *The Post Newspaper, October 2009*

President Paul Biya, the only survivor of this "global war"?

The Bamenda Grassfields are situated in the mountainous North West Region of Cameroon, and, as the name indicates, are part of the grass savanna zone of West and Central Africa. The region exhibits characteristics of the tropical grassland regions. The high altitude farming zones with volcanic soils are rich in organic matter and with an annual average rainfall of almost 2500 mm the area is a great potential for intensive agriculture and the growth of a variety of fruits (Molua and Lambi 2000). It can therefore be said that Bamenda is an extraordinary rich and fertile agricultural zone. People often stated to me "you know Bamenda is very very poor, but there is enough food for everybody". Driving through the Grassfields in the midst of the rainy season inevitably leaves one with a great feeling of awe for the mountainous, green and fertile landscapes. My choice to do research in Bamenda was a rather arbitrary one for it was partly guided by practical considerations. Once in the field - especially against the background of the region's favorable climate and fertile ecological zone - I soon realized that the scope of the "green consciousness" was much bigger than I expected. I was in fact stunned by the widespread knowledge and awareness concerning global warming and climate change. In many sectors of society I came across climate change related activities, and I encountered people who were speaking about 'this thing called global warming'.

The government, NGOs, the media, schools, churches and traditional rulers have taken up initiatives to sensitize the population in the fight against climate change. But also for an ordinary farmer who is living on the outskirts of Bamenda, and for most people in town the issue of climate change was in many

instances not a strange phenomenon. To me it appeared to be a contradiction that – in such an environment – global warming is such a prominent theme. However, I believe that there are many good reasons to argue that 'speaking about', 'adapting to', and 'mitigating' global warming and climate change in Bamenda (and in any other place), are not a mere reflection of the bio-physical realities. Namely, the fact that many people relate their visible experiences of changing weather patterns to global warming indicates that there is a discursive frame at hand that enables people to make sense of the perceived changes. Thus, the fact that people speak about global warming all the time means that there is a new message circulating in society that changes the way people perceive the world and their relationship with their environment.

Landscape of the mountainous Grassfields during the rainy season

Due to the newly available money flows coming from international donors and organizations many NGOs in Bamenda have shifted their policies to work on climate change related issues. Whereas once HIV/AIDS took centre stage in the organizations' policies, nowadays climate change is on its way in taking the lead. Part of these projects are sensitization and awareness campaigns in which people are discouraged to burn their land and cut down trees. Moreover, at the grassroots level planting trees has become the ultimate imperative in the call for "thinking globally and acting locally". However, NGOs do not operate in isolation but rather jointly implement their activities with for example the government, churches, schools and the traditional rulers. In November 2009 I attended the launching ceremony of the so-called Cameroon Traditional Rulers Against Climate Change (CAMTRACC) organization. Inspired by the FAO of the United Nations, traditional rulers of the Northwest region united to form a solid front at the grassroots level in order to fight against climate change. During this meeting the traditional rulers – also called *Fons* – were informed about the possible risks of climate change by a representative of the FAO:

Threats:

Climate change is the rapid change of weather patterns or the rapid change of general weather conditions faster than the normal climatic changes that human kind has been used to since the beginning of time. These changes are caused by land use and land use changes leading to the faster and increasing emission of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which resulted in the depletion of the ozone layer that protects the earth against dangerous Ultra Violet Rays from the sun. (..) Africa is one of the regions of the world particularly vulnerable to the potential impacts of climate change. (..) It is affecting water resources, agriculture and food security, economic activities and health, and in particular the poorest countries where poverty limits the capacities of adaptation.

Prospects:

African countries must become fully involved in international negotiations on climate change so that the implementation of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol offers them opportunities and possibilities for choosing environmental options. The interactions of climate change and other environmental problems offer opportunities for creating synergies among the United Nations multilateral environmental agreements. (..) Let's protect the global, it is very fragile.

- **Representative FAO, launching of CAMTRACC**

The following images were used to communicate the threats of climate change:

Source: presentation Launching CAMTRACC, FAO.

While the international organization's aim is to establish a collaboration with the rulers, the traditional rulers themselves seize the opportunity to have their own piece of the hegemonic pie. Since they are the 'natural rulers' and custodians of culture - and are inextricably bound to the environment - climate change turns out to be an outstanding opportunity for the Fons to reinforce their (symbolic) power and to revitalize their 'traditions'. In the same meeting, the Fon of Guzang – as the president and initiator of CAMTRACC – addresses the other traditional rulers:

> *We are here today because the world is at risk of extinction. (..) We are here today because of the fear of the unknown. We are here today because we know the world is not an inheritance from our parents, but a borrowed good from our children that one day we have to refund. (..) The reason for this gathering is to look into one of the toughest challenges facing human kind today. Global warming is on the lips of all politicians, academics, development experts, journalists, environmentalists, diplomats, in fact anybody that matters to a society. We have not yet heard the voice of the traditional rulers.(..) We are here today because of the fear of losing our culture and indigenous knowledge in protecting this precious gift of life and nature left to us by our parents, to pass to our children and our children's children. Traditional rulers are the custodians of our culture, and natural heritage, the guarantors of our traditional knowledge and the fathers of our land. That is why the Cameroon traditional rulers have gathered to join this challenging fight against climate change.*
>
> - **Fon of Guzang, president of CAMTRACC**

After the launching of CAMTRACC the traditional rulers attracted widespread media attention, and several newspaper items and TV and radio programs covered the launching of this organization. In the course of time, more and more traditional rulers joined CAMTRACC and soon a second and third meeting followed. During the third CAMTRACC meeting, that was held in February 2010, more than two hundred people attended the event, two national TV stations were broadcasting it and many national and international NGOs were participating. After several presentations given by government officials,

traditional rulers and NGO representatives, the moderator of the day was asked to summarize the ongoing discussion in pidgin in order for all the rulers to understand:

> *(..) 70% of mankind has already heard about it. But to do something is something else. Plant species are becoming scarce like the raffia-bush in Cameroon, and the prices of white wine are high. We inherited this raffia-bush which is the main source of income for men. The climatic conditions of raffia wine are becoming harsh and climate change affects our culture and traditions. No other drink can replace raffia wine in our localities. It is the alpha and omega of our traditions. No marriage can exist without raffia wine. Funeral rites: the wine shows the love for the deceased. It is used in rituals as the communication between the dead and the living. When we pour wine in our cups and want to complain with our ancestors we use wine. Enthronement, coronation, raffia wine is the language to the ancestors. The climate is the main determinant of life. Global warming is increasing bush fires. Climate change is very dangerous to the planet. White wine is disappearing due to climate change. There will be a fall in income, high scarcity level and prices will be doubled. The long term effects will be affecting our culture: if we have to start communicating with the ancestors with a foreign drink it is the end of our being. Who says our ancestors will no longer listen to us because of climate change?*

- **Moderator of CAMTRACC explaining the effects of climate change to other rulers**

Initiators of CAMTRACC

Within two months more than fifty Fons were sensitized about climate change and gradually took up the task to inform the councils in their palaces and began with disseminating this 'new message' to the villagers. One of the rulers invited me to attend a monthly council meeting in his village. The purpose of the gathering was to settle a conflict and to inform the council and other interested villagers of the new developments in town. The Fon welcomed everybody and spoke the following words:

> *I need to tell you about this thing that we call climate change. The world is very dangerous now. We have to be very careful. You are the first quarter to hear about this, so you are very lucky. I want this village to be very exemplary for the rest. When I formed this quarter it was good and not bad. Before I was*

enthroned this quarter was not here yet. I beg, respect land matters! (..) We burn down our bushes indiscriminately and cut down our trees. If the traditional council sees you burning the soil it will be reported. All this land belongs to me, and no man can burn my soil or he will be in big trouble. I am here to tell you to plant trees, except for eucalyptus. Plant any tree! The quarter heads will mark where the trees have been planted. By all means: no slash and burn. This is no joke. The world is very very dangerous.

- **Fon of Nsonghwa sensitizing (or warning) the villagers**

For most farmers however, the sensitization of the Fon will not be the first time that they come to know about climate change. They have either heard it on the radio, seen it on TV, read it in a newspaper, or spoke about it with a neighbor. While many farmers express their fear for the phenomenon the notion of climate change remains relatively incomprehensible to most of them. Moreover, the communicated "green message" at the grassroots level often entails the construction of guilt and a sense of a moral responsibility that lies in the hands of each individual farmer. The following citation gives an idea of how a farmer in the Grassfields understands the story:

> "I heard it on the radio three or four years ago. What I understood is that the trees that we cut down are providing us with the air that we breath, and that it helps agriculture. And, that there is a layer of air in nature that has already been overused. That is the reason that we have to plant many trees because those trees will replace the air that has been used. (..) If this is going to continue like this we will soon face the end of the world. Therefore we have to plant. If the community will not do it and the government does not do it the world will come to an end, because we have cut down all our trees. Until today we are still afraid." (*focus group discussion, Bawock market, February 2010)*.

- **Jean Claude Toukam, a subsistence farmer in Bamenda**

An ordinary discussion about climate change with farmers at Bawock market

This rather sketchy portrait of a "discursive journey" of globally constructed climate change discourses and the encounter with the 'local' lies at the heart of what this thesis seeks to explore. What I depicted above is the broad and complex field of different "*translation regimes"* through which climate change discourses find their way to the Bamenda Grassfields. A basic assumption of my approach in this research is that *dealing with* climate change is as much a matter of discourses as it has to do with the so-called 'positive' or bio-physical facts. For a long time climate change related research has been dominated by climatology and other natural sciences. While social sciences and the humanities were nearly absent in the debates on climate change (De Bruijn & van Dijk 2008), these disciplines are increasingly getting involved in this area of study. Nevertheless, most studies have by and large taken objectivist stances as their point of departure. An underlying question that generally guides these studies is how climate change as a bio-physical phenomenon is affecting people's livelihoods in those parts of the world of which it is assumed that poverty limits people's adaptive capacities. Very little or no concern at all has been expressed for a critical assessment of the *social construction* of climate change, and thus for the impact of climate change discourses upon the local level. A discourse, a term that was given new meaning by Michel Foucault [1967], is here basically understood as the way we understand and speak about the world. Discourses are part and parcel of the power dynamics that shape the architecture of global environmental governance in the developing world.

All the talks, activities, Earth Summits, proposed solutions, meetings and negotiations shape (our understanding of) the world. The social construction of reality is inextricably bound to the language that we use and the talks that we are engaged in. Put differently, "What we do about climate change depends on the stories that we tell about it, and as the stories change, the world changes too" (Onuf 2007: xi). For this reason, in order to comprehend how the world changes and the power dynamics in which this takes place, it is essential to gain insight into the stories that are being told, by and to whom, where, and who is excluded from storytelling. This research is concerned with those stories. In this study I seek to explore the power processes that are encompassed by the stories that are being constructed at the global level, how this trickles down to the local and what happens at the crossroads of their discursive encounters. And, what happens when global climate change discourses – which can be characterized as fairly alarming or apocalyptic messages - 'travel' from the global, to the national and the local level, but only rarely travel back again? And finally, what does it entail to "Think Globally and Act Locally" for a farmer in the Bamenda Grassfields? This leads me to the following research question:

How are globally constructed discourses on climate change translated, negotiated and appropriated by different "translation regimes" in the Bamenda Grassfields, and how does this discursive journey possibly lead to social transformations at the local level?

The translation process is structured by different translation regimes that are constituted by a specific set of actors, knowledge resources, networks of communication and institutional patterns of interaction. The analysis of each translation regime will focus on the claims-makers, the claims themselves and the process of claims-making. Even though a large part of my study draws from stories of my fieldwork in the Bamenda Grassfields, these are stories that cannot be confined to a village, a region, or a country. This study therefore, transcends the idea of a 'classic' ethnography taking place in a demarcated geographical space; but should rather be seen as an ethnography of a continuously moving story that is shaped by its own borderless journey. The pathways through which climate change discourses are channeled - at the intersection of the global and the local - will be examined by taking a closer look at how particular

dominant actors assume to have a role in this *collective fight* and convey climate change as a 'new message for Africa'.

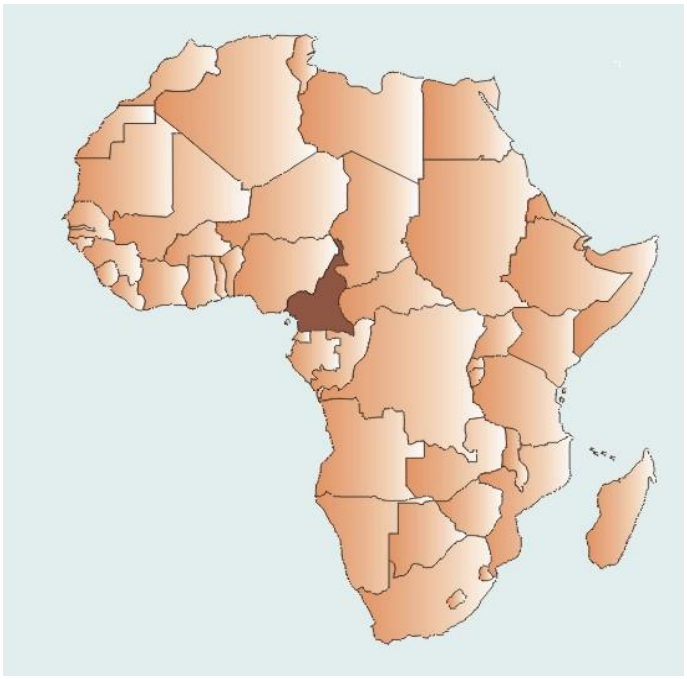
In Bamenda climate change (here understood as a scientific discourse constructed in the West) is the 'new talk of the day'. Important questions to be addressed are: How do different *truth regimes* fuse in their encounter, and how do people discard old elements of their worldviews and give new meaning to their existing ones? And, how does the appropriation and negotiation of discourses in different social spheres take place? By using social constructivism as an alternative lens this research aims to contribute to a broader understand of how "speaking about" climate change potentially shapes local realities.

In chapter two the methodological and theoretical foundation for the overall analysis of this thesis will be explicated. Central in the discussion will be how one can conduct an ethnography of a "travelling discourse", which means something else across a distance and in different contexts. By analyzing different discursive fields (from the Kyoto Protocol to Bamenda's day-to-day realities) I want to make clear how the 'global' and the 'local' are connected but also disconnected. Through the method and theory of critical discourse analysis this chapter aims at unraveling the power processes in which the social construction of climate change takes place. In chapters three, four and five the focus will be on different "translation regimes" and on how global climate change discourses have the capacity to reinforce existing power relationships.

Chapter three addresses the development of environmental discourses in historical perspective. It will become clear how, in the course of time, changing perceptions of the relationship between humans and their environment in the Northern countries profoundly have shaped North-South relations. The focus will be on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as they are here considered to be crucial vehicles in communicating "the green message", and thereby imposing policies on how people *should* adapt to and mitigate climate change. Moreover, by exploring what it means to "Think Globally and Act locally" I wish to demonstrate that global interests – translated into climate change related policies – possibly obfuscate local perceptions and definitions of problems.

Chapter four consists of two parts. Here, I will place the developments of the patterns of power in the Grassfields in historical perspective, and the role of the Fons herein. It will become clear that local cosmologies have the adaptive capacity to encapsulate climate change discourses, and in turn that the latter have the potentiality of revitalizing the first. In the second part I will shed light on the active role of the traditional rulers in their joined fight against climate change, and how climate change enables them to redefine their (symbolic) power.

The final "translation regime" will be discussed in chapter five. By distinguishing farmers by their accessibility to discourses I scrutinize how *knowing about* climate change shapes people's ideas about a changing environment and a changing world.



Source[6]

Source[7]

[6] http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_d8Vqr1v_1os/S6sUnYwoTcI/AAAAAAAAD7g/uVibucRRaEA/s1600/Cameroon.jpg
[7] http://www.thecommonwealth.org/YearbookHomeInternal/138354/

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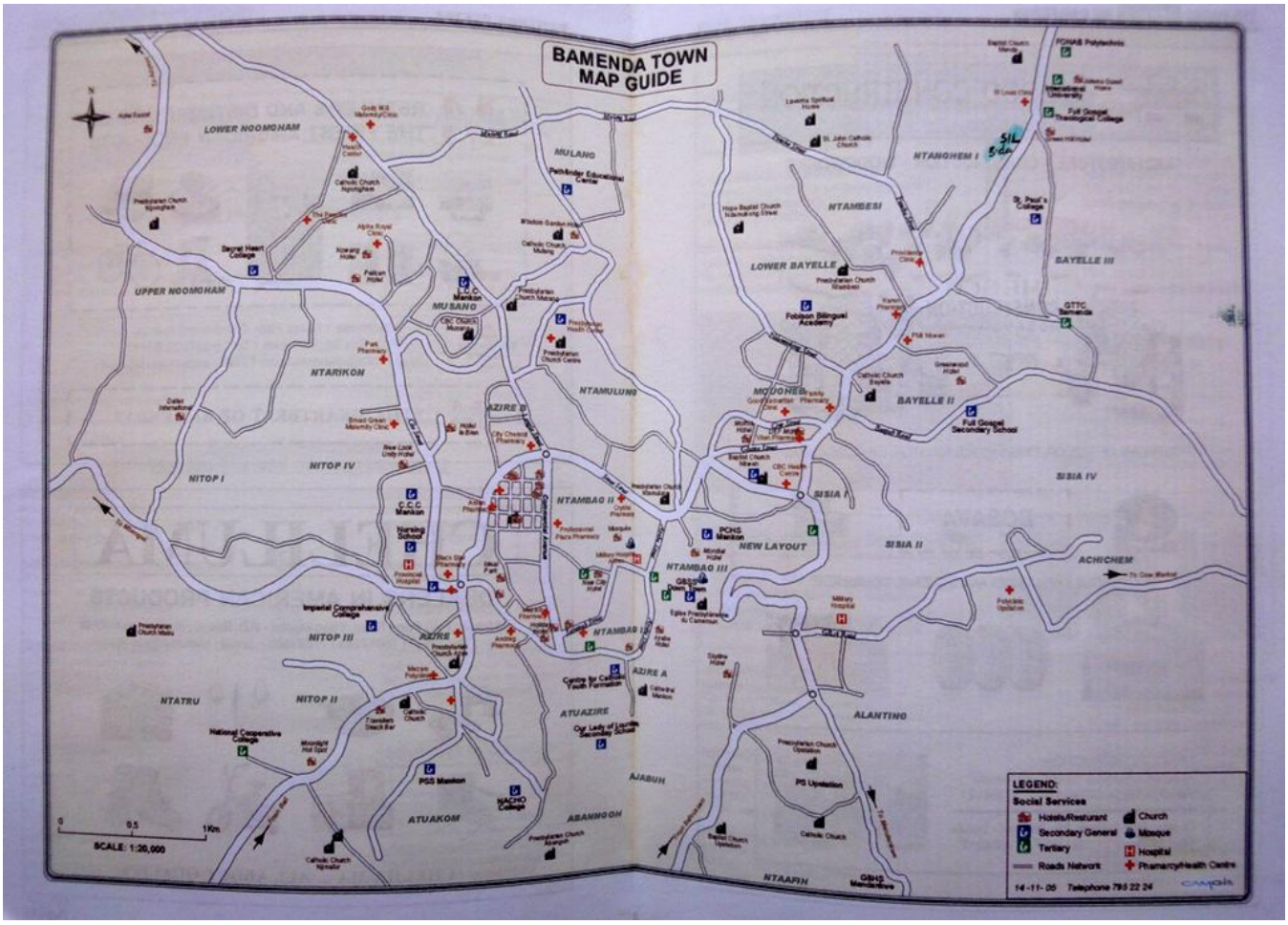


Source[9]

[8] http://maps.google.nl.
[9] http://whereyousendme.wordpress.com/2010/09/.

It was foretold long ago

That after Noah's deluge

The next destruction of the world

Would be by fire

And can't you feel the heat building up already,

The global warming up?

And so to fulfill the prophecy

Copenhagen is going to be

Just some more hot air

Presaging the sparks that would turn

Into the flames in which the world will be consumed

And then out of the ashes of ecocide capitalism

It won't be Christ on his second coming presiding

On Judgement Day

But Karl Marx returning like a revolutionary phoenix

Out of the ashes of the busting bubbles

Of the lopsided economies

Of our over-heated world

- **Mbella Sonne Dipoko**[10] **-**

[10] Chief Mbella Sonne Dipoko was a popular Cameroonian writer and poet who was internationally known for his, often militant, writings. He wrote this poem in December 2009, just before the beginning of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, three days to his death (*The Post Newspaper,* December 7 2009).

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical and methodological considerations

2.1 The scope of study: from Kyoto to the Bamenda Grassfields and back to Copenhagen

The fifteenth United Nations Conference on Climate Change (*COP - 15*) that was held in December 2009 in Copenhagen, was characterized by international actors, and in the media, as the most important meeting since the end of the Second World War. In view of the approaching expiration date of the Kyoto protocol in 2012, this conference was supposed to be an historical moment in which world leaders, and head of states would "seal the deal", and come up with a solid and fair plan to 'save the future of our planet'. Never before in the fifteen year history of the Conference Of the Parties of the UNFCCC[11] the expectations were that high. The world awaited an ambitious new treaty, the Copenhagen protocol, to replace the Kyoto protocol that was ratified in 1997. The key objectives were to establish a binding agreement in which each country - according to the "polluter pays principle" - would take its responsibility by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Likewise, technology transfer and financial assistance to the developing countries was on the agenda for helping the poor in vulnerable regions to mitigate, and to adapt to the negative consequences of climate change. With the slogan: "One Africa, One Voice, One Position" the representatives of African countries in Copenhagen seemed to be united as never before. Yet on a global scale the world found itself in a sharp opposition between the North and South, the rich and poor nations, the developed and developing world, the most and least polluting countries.

The African Union prepared a document that pleaded for C*limate Justice.* In essence, Climate Justice is concerned with principles of distributed fairness; that people everywhere have the right to be free from suffering from the impacts of climate change. It deals with questions such as, how are the burdens and benefits of climate change/global warming distributed across the population? And how can people be protected against and compensated for the inequities of environmental burdens? A fair and just deal should, accordingly, take into consideration historical emissions. Cameroon's president Paul Biya fully embraced this environmental human rights discourse by turning climate change – and, as such, the developed nations - into the ultimate scapegoat for all the existing troubles in his country. In September 2009, during the preparing Conference on Climate Change in New York, he stated that the widespread poverty, the agricultural problems faced by the majority of Cameroonian farmers, and the deplorable situation Cameroon finds itself in, can all be attributed to the effects of climate change[12]. In view of Climate Justice, and the related historical debts, the African delegation demanded two trillion US dollars annually from the industrialized countries. Moreover, the African position has been to curb the rise of global temperatures at 1,5 degrees Celsius by the year 2020, as opposed to the 2 degrees proposed by most industrialized countries. Borrowing language from human rights discourses, impelling slogans were proclaimed during demonstrations by both African representatives and human rights movements: "We stand by Africa"; "There is no planet B"; "If the climate was a commodity, the West would have stored it

[11] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

[12] Speech president Paul Biya during the Summit on Climate Change in New York, 22th of September 2009 (CRTV). This preparing Summit was held to 'mobilize political momentum in Copenhagen'.

at a bank"; "Reparations for historical and economic dept"; "While we are negotiating with the rich to adjust, the climate is forcing the poor to adapt" (CRTV December 14, 2009). Lumumba Di-Aping, ambassador of the UN for the African group and chief negotiator of the G77, stated that: "If we don't act now it will be tantamount for genocide in Africa" (*BBC* December 19, 2009*).* In the course of the conference, African leaders, indigenous and human rights movements, NGOs, civil society organizations and environmentalists saw their hope to reach an equitable and ambitious agreement vanish.

The importance and high-level concern that has been attached to this meeting by multiple stakeholders and international actors worldwide (more than 35,000 participants and 120 Head of State) epitomizes the fact that climate change is a *globally accepted* environmental claim. A claim that is by and large informed with scientific models, which underpin the idea that global warming and climate change are actually happening, something 'real'. In both popular and academic discourses (even though in the latter the picture is often more nuanced) climate change is framed as a global threat that needs immediate worldwide action[13]. Taking into account, on the one hand, the scientific discourses that are sustained by *epistemic communities* at the international level, which emphasize the dangers to the planet if nothing is done to cut down the emissions of greenhouse gases; and, on the other hand, the failure of reaching a binding agreement, there is at least a discrepancy between the construction of the problem, and the political will to solve it. Moreover, the trans-boundary nature of the climate reinforces the notion that it is a *global* issue that involves a *global* responsibility. In Copenhagen the head of states were neither "thinking globally", nor willing to "act locally", which left the world sharply divided. Another discursive element that illustrates the discrepancy between the social construction of the problem and the outcome of the summit is what I call *travelling discourses*. As stressed before, climate change is a Western construct, a scientific discourse that occupies for approximately three decades by now, an increasingly prominent role in global politics. In Copenhagen it became all the more clear that the South has appropriated the discourse – in which Africans are depicted as the first victims – and needed to remind the North of their own 'gospel'.

The stark opposition between North and South can best be exemplified by the countries' positions during the summit and their respective perceptions of the results. For example, for the developing countries the main concerns were about money, and compensation for adaptation and mitigation – under the denominator of historical debts and *Climate Justice*. Nations of the developed world, on the other hand, were more concerned with new technologies and *green* models of growth. The attempts of the developed nations to plea for a fight against climate change on a global scale is by many African representatives considered as a restraint to their economic development. Climate change has turned the long-awaited promise and hope for development and modernization into a call to comply with environmental sustainability, and as such, a call for obeying the global interest. This model of sustainable development entails that the industrial modes of production - which enabled the developed countries to achieve their levels of wealth – no longer can be replicated by the underdeveloped countries. The situation is further complicated by appeals to alternative, *green* technological innovations and solutions that are only affordable by the wealthier nations. A delegate of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance

[13] It is superfluous to say that we cannot speak about *a* popular, *a* global, or even *a* scientific discourse as mutually exclusive and unambiguous claims. Neither can we state that all the actors, representatives, institutions and organizations in the developed countries on the one hand, and the developing nations on the other hand take opposing and opportunistic positions. It is almost impossible – and moreover, beyond the scope of this study - to elaborate on the myriad of differing nuances; but what can be done is discern dominant tendencies that characterize distinctive discursive realms.

(PACJA) in Cameroon commented upon the summit to me: “Compensate, that is the word. Make Them pay, because We need to develop too”.

In a similar vein, many of my respondents regarded the proposed strategies by the United Nations to replant ‘Africa’ as an ethical problem. One of the initiatives to mitigate climate change has been the United Nations’ “Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation” (REDD) mechanism. Since trees serve as a carbon sink the two largest forests in the world ‘The Amazon’ and ‘The Congo Basin’, are perceived to be the ‘lungs of the earth’. Replanting trees and fighting deforestation are therefore seen as an indispensable way to absorb the released carbon dioxide, and as such, to regulate climate change. Despite the fact that the Copenhagen Conference resulted in an unbinding agreement, large amounts of money have been promised to enhance the REDD(-plus) mechanism[14]. The basic principle of the REDD mechanism is that the developed nations can pay off their carbon dioxide emissions by planting trees in Africa, and financing environmental projects. The REDD policy document has identified many positive ‘side-effects’ of tree planting, such as biodiversity conservation and the support of pro-poor development. Nevertheless, critical observers lamented that this form of carbon trading enables the big polluters to sustain their own CO_2 emissions.

The United Nations have identified tree planting in forest rich countries as one of their key strategies to fight climate change. Among many other African countries, Cameroon is targeted by the international community for projects to regenerate the forest, and has, as a result significantly shaped national and local (environmental) politics. The delegate of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection in Bamenda ironically remarked about the government’s massive tree planting activities:

> “If you look at the oppression in the field, now the ministry of forest and wildlife is planting trees , and the ministry of wildlife and nature protection is planting trees. (..) Because ‘somebody’ has finished their trees, now they are telling to Africa, that Africa should keep their trees. (..)The impact is more on those poor economies, because the developed economies can absorb the shock that is coming through climate change. Because if we go to other countries we see that the responds to climate change costs money. In Africa many more people will die than in the developed countries”[15].

It may be evident that global discourses and global environmental politics have transformed and directed national and local environmental politics in forest rich countries like Cameroon. However, what is less emphasized in scientific research is that, apart from being merely a political challenge between states, dominated by the big economic powers, climate change and perceptions on how to combat it touch upon profound ethical considerations. Dale Jamieson frames the problem as follows: “Climate change is a dramatic challenge to the moral consciousness of human kind. It not only challenges people to act in a morally responsible way but it also challenges the very idea of a moral responsibility” (Jamieson 2008: 459).

Representatives of the developing countries framed the unbinding agreement as unacceptable, a disaster. Lumumba said that “The ‘deal’ is suicidal for Africa, and will turn the continent into a furnace. It is the single-most disturbing document in the history of the UNFCCC” (*The Post Newspaper* December 21,

[14] It is estimated that financial flows for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through the REDD-plus mechanism can reach the 30 billion US dollar a year. The (UN) REDD-plus mechanism builds on the expertise and financial support of the UNEP, UNDP and the FAO. In chapter three I will elaborate more on the ethical considerations of massive tree planting campaigns in Cameroon.

[15] Interview with the delegate of the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection.

2009). Representatives of the big economic powers (China, India, Russia and the US) perceived it to be a first step into the right direction. President Barack Obama – 'Africa's hope' - described the talks as 'a meaningful and unprecedented breakthrough'. Many climate change experts stated that the negotiations were dominated by five major powers (predominantly the US and China), and that the meetings' failure was due to the unwillingness of China (currently the biggest emitter in the world) to offer deeper cuts in CO_2 emissions, for it would jeopardize its rising economic position[16]. As such, the Copenhagen summit seemed to be more the product of global capitalism and a forum for the redistribution of wealth, rather than a genuine attempt to 'save the future of our planet'[17].

My concern here is not, however, to explain why this conference did not meet the expectations, nor to speculate about who was acting 'right' or 'wrong'. This brief discussion of global vis-à-vis local environmental politics demonstrates that *dealing with* climate change is as much a matter of discourses and paradigmatic politics as it has to do with so-called 'hard' or 'objective' facts. All the activities, 'communicative events', proposed solutions, 'speech acts', meetings and negotiations shape our understanding of the world. The social construction of reality is inextricably bound to the language that we use and the talks that we are engaged in. Therefore, put in Nicholas Onuf's words "What we do about climate change depends on the stories that we tell about it, and as the stories change, the world changes too" (2007: xi). In order to comprehend how the world changes and the power dynamics in which this takes place, it is essential to gain insight into the stories that are being told, by whom, where, and who is excluded from storytelling. This research is concerned with those stories. In this study I seek to explore the power processes that are encompassed by the stories that are being constructed at the global level, how this triples down to the local and what happens at the crossroads of their discursive encounters. And what happens when global climate change discourses – which can be characterized as fairly apocalyptic messages - 'travel' from the global, to the national and the local level, but only rarely back again? And what does it entail to "Think Globally and Act Locally"? This chapter will address these questions and form the analytical foundation for the chapters that follow hereafter.

2.2 'Travelling discourses': Studying global and local connectivity

During the Copenhagen Conference I was in the midst of my fieldwork in Bamenda. Being in the fortunate position of having access to the internet, radio and television, I had insight in both the media coverage in the 'West' as in Bamenda, and (to some extent) in Cameroon at large. This made me realize that the Summit - apart from being a global political manifestation that showed the clashing interests of the North vis-à-vis the South - was also a platform for something else. Copenhagen showed all the more that climate change is pre-eminently a symbol of the interconnectedness of the world. With this, I refer not so much to the physical interdependency of sharing a globe and the climate. In fact, as will be discussed in paragraph 2.3, I argue that in common understandings of climate change the discursive construction of a shared climate, *and* hence, a shared responsibility serves as a powerful tool to obfuscate local interests. Both the 'tangibility' of sharing the climate, and the abstraction that is derived from it (i.e. a global

[16] This is however, not the full picture. China became the world's biggest polluter partly due to the so-called outsourcing of industries from the West to China; meaning that the West can continue with the same level of production but China will be billed for it.

[17] For the Copenhagen Accord see: http://www.denmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/C41B62AB-4688-4ACE-BB7B-F6D2C8AAEC20/0/copenhagen_accord.pdf.

climate and a global responsibility), make the problem of climate change a multi-stakeholder's playground to negotiate different *regimes of truth*, responsibilities and power. In this light, when speaking about interconnectivity I am concerned with the density of the interlinked activities and discursive practices that have a significant influence on how one understands, sees and knows about the world. The Copenhagen Conference served as an arena for global connectivity where public, scientific, indigenous and human rights discourses were negotiated; a space for the encounter of the *global* and the *local*. This research addresses the relationship between what is being said at the global and the local and what happens at the intersection of their discursive encounters. Even though large parts of my study draw from stories of my fieldwork in the Bamenda Grassfields, these are stories that cannot be confined in a village, a region, or a country. This study therefore transcends the idea of a 'classical' ethnography taking place in a demarcated and predefined geographical space, and should rather be seen as an ethnography of a continuously moving story that is shaped by and along its own borderless journey.

By conducting an ethnography about global and local connectivity challenging questions arise like, how and where does one locate the 'global'? And what do we mean when we speak about the 'local'? With emerging and intensified processes of globalization these terms were brought to the fore as two opposing and binary representations. Scholars in the field of economics, political sciences and communication were the first to address 'globalization' (which emerged in academia as a popular concept in the mid 1980s) and formulated a theory about 'globality' as a homogenizing and unifying process that gradually would lead to a *global village* in which all the cultural differences would disappear. This world was envisaged as a world in which the 'local' would be squeezed and be dissolved into one dominant 'global' and hegemonic culture. Half a decade later, this one-sided approach - that was informed by premature assumptions about the effect of new information and communication technologies, transport systems and intensified trans-border circulation of goods and people - underwent a critical re-examination that addressed more carefully the cultural aspects of globalization (Geschiere and Meyer 1998). Important contributions from the social and cultural sciences indicated that the apparent homogenizing tendencies inherent to globalization implied at the same time a continuous heterogeneity in cultural terms. It increasingly became clear that, paradoxically enough, homogenization exerts emphasis on cultural differences, and that it is often the process of globalization itself that appears to lead to a deepening of cultural contrasts (ibid: 602). This redefinition of globalization broadened the scope of understanding processes of cultural encounters, and enabled scholars to dissolve the alleged dichotomy between the global and the local, for, as Hall (1991) framed it, "The global and the local are two faces of the same movement".

Globalization connotes an even more elastic process as it comes in many forms, and encompasses different issues ranging from technology, culture, politics, the economy, to the environment and the climate. Globalization has been defined by Giddens as "The intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant realities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa" (1990: 64). A rather confusing characteristic of globalization is that it increasingly connects the 'global' and the 'local' by the intensification of open global (information) flows, enduring interconnectivity and interpenetrations of states and societies. This process is mainly being facilitated by technological advancements, and the enhanced trans-border circulation of goods, people, images, products of culture and knowledge. However, the paradox of globalization is that it is a process marked by accelerated *flows*, and at the same time, accelerated *closures* (Geschiere & Meyer 1998; Nyamnjoh 2004; Castells 2000). Globalization in all its forms denotes in- and exclusion, it divides as much as it unites,

and above all, it engenders greater inequalities between the rich and the poor, as global capital flows are, mainly in Africa, open for an elite few and closed for a marginalized majority (Nyamnjoh 2004).

Closely related to the paradoxes inherent to globalization of homogenization and heterogeneity on the one hand, and of 'flow' and 'closure' on the other hand, is what Meyer & Geschiere [1998] call the 'flux' and the 'fix'. They state that "There is much empirical evidence that people's awareness of being involved in open-ended global flows seems to trigger a search for fixed orientation points and action frames, as well as determined efforts to affirm old and construct new boundaries"(1998: 602). The possibilities of global flows go often hand in hand with a closure and fixing of identities that used to be much more fluid and permeable. This implicates that the problem of how to deal with 'flow' and 'closure', or 'flux' and 'fix' highlights the precariousness of locality that it is not a self-evident unit for study, but also a given orientation point for the people being studied (ibid). One of the main merits of this broader understanding of globalization is that it has enabled social scientists to dismiss the idea of *the* local as a given, bounded unit, and that the challenge should rather be to 'grasp the flux'(Hannerz 1992 in Geschiere & Meyer 1998: 603).

Globalization as such, has posed new challenges to anthropology's original obsession and commitment with boundedness and ideas of locality. The somehow troublesome convergence of the so-called *emic* and *etic* perspective, or in Appadurai's words "the mutually constitutive relationship between anthropology and locality" have forced social scientists to critically reflect upon how they construct their object, or how they 'produce locality'(1996: 178). The changed context of ethnography in an increasingly connected world has led Appadurai to criticize ethnography for failing to undergo a corresponding shift in disciplinary practices. He points out that "The task of ethnography becomes the unraveling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world" (1991: 196)? The paradox that he touches upon is that, even though anthropology has long since given up the idea of fixed and territorial communities, remarkably enough, the practice of fieldwork takes 'the local' for granted. In a similar vein, James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta [1997] state that within contemporary anthropology "the field" is central to a 'real' anthropologist's intellectual and professional identity – since it distinguishes itself by and large from other disciplines with the practice of fieldwork, rather than with the topics studied – and yet it is a largely unexamined one. According to them, everything that entails anthropological methods has been subject to reflection and analysis, but the very field itself, the *where,* has remained a "mysterious" and "taken-for-granted" space that has been left to common sense, beyond the threshold of reflexivity (Jameson and Gupta 1997: 2). Therefore they propose:

> " (..) A reformulation for the anthropological tradition that would decenter and defetishize the concept of "the field", while developing methodological and epistemological strategies that foreground questions of location, intervention and the construction of situated knowledges. (..) It seems most useful to us to attempt to redefine the fieldwork "trademark" not with a time honored commitment to the local but with an attentiveness to social, cultural and political *location* and a willingness to work self-consciously at shifting or realigning our own location while building epistemological and political links with other locations" (ibid: 5).

In this study the terms global and local are used as analytical (permeable) constructs rather than merely as geographical denominators, or empirical realities. Inspired by abovementioned critical rethinking of "the field", a premise taken up in my fieldwork is that in the site of study (i.e. Bamenda), in which global discourses become visible in the local, there is no absolute unaffectedness of global discourses. With

unprecedented rise and significance of global flows of images, ideas, consumption goods, and the intensification of connections, globalization in Africa can no longer be considered a new phenomenon. However, there are interlocutors within the global chain that have more access to those 'flows' (and thus to information and discourses) than others. The task is then to observe and critically examine what local forms these discourses take, how they are appropriated, translated, played out, negotiated and how they move into local repertoires of identity, worldviews and power struggles. As stated before, because "the field" tends to suggest misleading conceptions of its demarcated and bounded 'locality', an analytical shift is here proposed, namely that the focus of study is rather on the discursive journey, or on a 'story-in-motion', and what happens at the 'in-between' spaces where discursive *connections* become apparent.

In their book "Power and Wealth in Connectivity: (Dis-)Connections and Social Change in Africa" [forthcoming] De Bruijn & van Dijk *et al*., develop a similar approach that draws attention to connections and to the significance of linking rather than on the 'people' involved in the network. By making use of the metaphor of a bridge, they demonstrate how connections are socially and politically appropriated, how connections can become 'a life on its own', and how connections have transformative powers (De Bruijn & Van Dijk *et al.*). This proposed idea of connectivity as the focal point of analysis similarly calls for a dissolving of the 'global' and 'local' dichotomy that is here considered to be indispensible in understanding social transformations. The authors refer to both the material and immaterial connectivity and how this relates to wealth and power. I believe therefore that a clear parallel can be drawn between the connectivity that I am concerned with in my research, namely the immaterial connectivity to global discourses, ideas, images and knowledge (which is in general materially facilitated and communicated by intensified flows and information and communication technologies), and gives way to emerging interdiscursive spaces. In their proposition to think beyond the juncture of what they term *post-globality*, De Bruijn & Van Dijk *et al.* explicitly shift to a 'connection perspective' in which the significance of linking becomes central. They state that "We need to allow for the possibility that it is the connection that enables a new constellation to emerge, and it is not the 'dots' in the network that are being connected" (p.4).

The idea of an interdiscursive space can on the one hand be understood in the very physical sense, for example when and where NGO workers or traditional rulers go to a village and speak with farmers. On the other hand, when speaking about spaces of connections we can draw a parallel with the virtual world, or the cyberspace, as being a multidimensional global space with unrestrained and interpenetrating sub-spaces (Kearney 1995: 549) facilitated by technological advancements and (new forms of) media. In this latter case we can think of farmers who listen to the radio, watch television, read newspapers, read items on the internet and converse with each other about climate change. An example that illustrates the blurred boundaries of my own 'field', is how I (as a Dutch researcher in Bamenda) was following the climate change negotiations that were held in Copenhagen, speaking to Cameroonian journalists, delegates and grassroots representatives who travelled to Copenhagen to represent their own localities, and who carried back stories that brought to live their own 'local' life. This characterizes and illustrates the permeable boundaries between the global and the local understood as an empirical and analytical construct.

The term global is not a claim to describe what is being said about climate change throughout the world at large, but is rather a notion that refers to trans-nationally constructed, and accepted, discourses on climate change that guide global environmental politics and actions. Obvious examples of representatives and mediators of global discourses (I prefer using its plural form for no discourse stands on its own) are

international regulatory bodies and institutions like NGOs, The World Bank, and the United Nations. On the other hand, local NGOs, but also government related bodies are often highly informed by discourses that shape global environmental politics, and hence, are part and parcel of similar discursive and political realms. On the other hand there are local media, traditional rulers, religious leaders and farmers in Bamenda who can also be seen as interlocutors in the global chain of climate change discourses. Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that each social group has a different connectivity to information flows, technology, media and 'mediators', and for this reason, has different accessibilities to global discourses. These dynamics of (lacking) accessibility to discourses place grassroots farmers inevitably in a less powerful, and mostly even marginal power position. This assumption is underlined by de Bruijn & van Dijk *et al.* who emphasize in their volume that connections are never a neutral phenomenon, but that the appropriation by people and institutions form part of power hierarchies in ways that are historically informed (p.6).

As I demonstrated above, the 'global' can be find in the 'local' as well as the other way around (although to a much lesser extent). For example, I spoke with farmers who are living in the outskirts of the Bamenda Grassfields and who followed the Copenhagen Conference on the radio. At the first day of the summit I had a talk with a farmer who lives in one of the relatively remote villages. In the course of our conversation I asked him if he was aware of the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen, to which he replied: "Of course we are aware of that. We listen to our radios and hear about Copenhagen. We expected that the rich countries would finally come and help us here, because when we first heard about this climate change we thought the world was coming to an end. And now, they say that nothing is going to be done in Copenhagen"[18]. In a reversed direction, indigenous groups and farmers from the developing world joined themselves in the so-called 'climate caravan' to let their voices be heard in Copenhagen[19].

Albeit abovementioned farmer's reproduction and reinterpretation of global discourses – which demonstrates that there is a glance of global discourses present in local realities – for most farmers the access to information flows is fairly limited. Farmers are dependent on radios and other forms of media channels and on the information they are provided with by NGOs, the government and educational systems. This entails that global information flows in general, and global climate change discourses in particular - and the extent to which Grassfielders have access to knowledge - is thus highly dependent on practical and technological possibilities and restrictions. The potential intensity of global and local 'discursive connectivity' in Bamenda largely varies amongst different localities, but also between different social groups. When I speak of grassroots farmers, I generally refer to 'ordinary' subsistence farmers who have limited access to technology and media – and thus to information. Some of them (mostly men) have access to a radio, but others (mostly women) do not. A small amount of farmers has a television, but often remain 'switched-off' due to power cuts. These technological limitations leave most farmers dependent on the information they receive from aforementioned key players like NGO workers, traditional rulers, church leaders, government workers, or other, educated farmers. One can imagine that

[18] Interview 17th of December 2009, Bali.

[19] An example of the 'local' being present in the 'global' is the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) that denounced the following in the press: "As December draws nearer, masks have started falling and it is now becoming clear here in Barcelona [a preparing Summit on climate change, SdW] that environment enemies in the name of developed countries have been using their usual dirty tricks of divide and rule, financial and political power to break the developing countries' firm stand to hold them to pay for the climate damage they created since industrial revolution days" (*The Standard Tribune Cameroon* December 7, 2009).

along this interconnected chain of actors, crucial information easily gets lost in 'translation'. This entails that farmers do not have access to the 'full' discourse, but instead receive fragments of information that are often less nuanced than the 'original' version of the story. The extent to which actors along the global chain were connected or disconnected to climate change discourses was similarly reflected in the ways that I was able to connect to them.

In her book *Friction* [2005], about environmentalism and global connectivity in the Indonesian rainforest, Anna Tsing raises an essential question namely, how does one conduct an ethnography of global connections? She rightfully points out that it is impossible to gain a full appreciation of every social group that is involved in the global chain. Therefore she proposes the following:

> "My answer has been to focus on zones of awkward engagement, where words mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak. These zones of cultural friction are transient; they rise out of encounters and interactions. They reappear in new places with changing events. The only ways I can think of to study them are patchwork and haphazard. The result of such research may not be a classical ethnography, but it can be deeply ethnographic in the sense of drawing from the learning experiences of the ethnographer" (Tsing 2005: xi).

This study is the fruit of my ethnographic experiences guided by what Tsing calls 'awkward engagements'. I experienced those moments of awkwardness most vigorously when global messages reached the very local and when farmers were told, for example by NGO workers or traditional rulers, that 'the world is in danger and that their farming methods are part and parcel of the problem. So if they don't act fast the world will see its destruction soon'. To me, the apocalyptic aura of these messages were certainly stunning, but the fact that farmers were blamed for causing climate change, I found even more troublesome. This patchwork of engagements manifests itself in a variety of different settings, people and across different contexts and spaces. By following the pathways of key players who, for their own reasons, operate as mediators of global climate change discourses, I navigated along the 'in-between' spaces and moments of connection that shape the global chain. The pathways are the channels through which the key players disseminate their messages, symbols, systems of meaning, ideas and knowledge. One of such pathways is the route that (most) international NGOs follow. The story and action begin with a conceptual development at the international level that gets to be reshaped by a multitude of climate change related projects at the national level, and reaches the local level in concrete projects. These steps are facilitated by back-donors (like governments, ministries, internationally created funds etc.) who are again informed by global climate change discourses. Even though it has been impossible to cover all the levels of communication, in order to follow what I call 'travelling discourses', speaking with NGO workers who are specialized in the field of climate change, reading policy documents, attending sensitizations meetings, press meetings, policy meetings, accompanying them into the field while they communicated their *green message* to farmers, and interviewing farmers were part and parcel of my attempt to get a grip on this global chain. Most of those pathways however, appeared not to be so clear cut. The communication channels and connection points of NGOs often intermingled with those of traditional rulers or with government related bodies. For instance, NGOs made use of the traditional rulers to sensitize the population as well as the other way around. Moreover, during most awareness and policy meetings (e.g. 'Greening the Judiciary' or 'Cameroon Traditional Rulers Against Climate Change') different parties and stakeholders coalesce to form a true forum of a global and local connectivity.

From the outset of my research I started to develop an account of how (international) NGOs in Bamenda framed the problem of climate change, and, of how they incorporated (globally proposed) measurements

for mitigation and adaptation into their policies (see chapter three). After some time I found myself in 'sensitization meetings' of female common initiative groups (CIGs) who informed each other about this *global threat*; visiting different palaces; being present in meetings in which traditional rulers united to take part in this 'collective fight'; interviewing government officials; and spending time with grassroots farmers on their lands, in their villages and on markets. Tracking these linkages of communication and sensitization enabled me to gain insight into commonly held views upon the (changing) environment, and into local appropriations of climate change discourses.

Being an anthropologist nowadays – in this increasingly interconnected and interdependent world – studying discursive global connectivity hides an ironic symbolism of 'travelling discourses'. A fundamental premise that underlies the relevance of studying discourses in general is that 'reality' can never be reached outside discourses, and therefore, discourse itself becomes the object of analysis. Following this premise, there is no way to escape discourses. As a Dutch researcher in Bamenda carrying my own discursive 'luggage', speaking with people about climate change, and, as such, being part of the data generation process, writing about it and bringing back those stories to the Netherlands, makes me in fact a subject of travelling discourses myself. This rather complex relationship between myself as a researcher and 'the researched' that I faced, deserves at least some epistemological reflections. Albeit that any researcher unavoidably influences the setting by its mere presence, and that people are always affected by the process of being studied, I found it rather challenging to position myself without distorting the alleged 'neutrality' of the research setting. Talking to professionals in the field like delegates of the ministry of environment and agriculture, educators, journalists and NGO workers did not occur to me as problematic. These interviews were relatively structured, and remarkably enough, I often received very similar answers (see chapter three). The part of my fieldwork that appeared much more challenging to me was talking to grassroots farmers who had never heard of the notion of climate change. For farmers who are directly dependent on nature the climate has always been changing, and as soon as I provided them with the language to speak about climate change, I created a discursive frame in which they could make sense of their experienced realities. In other words, while speaking to them about climate change, I risked 'talking it into existence'. This clearly does not mean that the climate is not changing, nor that it does, but it is very likely that each anomalous rainfall, unexpected heat or crop failure will be understood through this lens, while before it was 'just' a heavy rainfall (see chapter five).

The only way I could think of omitting this, was by using a language that the farmers were already familiar with. My Cameroonian co-researcher played an essential role in developing questions that appeared mostly *emic* to the people concerned. For example, we would never ask if they think that the climate is changing. We shall see in chapter five that climate change for farmers is in fact an empty notion. We would rather ask questions such as if they faced any irregularities in the rainy season and in the dry season, and if so, how this was twenty years ago. Or, we asked about if they experienced any changes in the hot and the cold weather, and how this was in the past, etc. It was not my objective to determine whether the farmers in Bamenda are affected by the impacts of climate change or not. Instead, I wanted to gain insight into how climate change discourses shaped their worldviews and perception upon the environment. Therefore, the group of non-cognizant farmers served as a control group for the farmers who had more access to global climate change discourses, and who were more aware about the supposed risks it entails. We should keep in mind that being a non-cognizant farmer does not imply to have no knowledge about the environment and the climate; it rather refers to knowledge about climate change as a Western construct.

In this section I presented some basic methodological and epistemological reflections. As became clear, the discussed theoretical considerations of a globalizing world - and anthropology's role with its commitment to localities herein - inevitably has implications for its methods and theory. In the following paragraph I will elaborate on social constructivism as the theoretical roots of my research, and how critical discourse analysis as a theory and method guided me in analyzing my data.

2.3 Social constructivism as an alternative 'lens'

> *That something is socially constructed and interpreted does not necessarily mean that it is unreal. Pollution does cause illness, species do become extinct, ecosystems cannot absorb stress indefinitely, tropical forests are disappearing. But people can make very different things of these phenomena and – especially – their interconnections, providing grist for political dispute.*
>
> (Dryzek 2005: 12)

Taking on a social constructivist approach as a means to explore climate change issues involves risks of being accused to neglect the bio-physical aspects and the consequences of the phenomenon. In the course of time, especially within other disciplines like biology and environmental ethics, social constructivist had to face fierce criticism, and have been depicted as 'perverting the force of sociological understanding and ignoring the 'reality' of the environmental crisis (Hannigan 2005: 29). In this section I will make clear that this approach is not to reject the evidentiary basis of climate change, nor to say that it is simply an 'invention' that takes place in our minds to execute power; but instead should be seen as an alternative lens to look at 'climate change realities'. This lens should be considered as an analytical view rather than an instrumental one that mainly aims at problem solving. I want to elucidate that this approach enables us to view climate change in the light of a political concept, which involves power, knowledge and discourses.

With regard to the *green thinking* that last decennia made its way into development thinking - with a particular emphasis on Africa - I argue that if we want to gain a broader understanding of climate change problematic, it is highly relevant to disclose processes and discourses that up until now have been largely neglected and underexposed in academia and policy-making. The very basic question that will be central in the discussion below is how our understandings of climate change have been socially constructed? The section below will on the one hand shed light on the importance of the context in which climate change is constructed, and on the other hand on how we can analyze those processes and discourses. The age-old and complicated relationship between power and knowledge in general, and politics and science in particular (and the media that increasingly complicates this relationship) will be addressed.

At the first day of the Copenhagen Conference something remarkable happened. Professional hackers illegally released more than four thousand emails and other documents from the computer server of the Climate Research Unit (CRU), which is one of the leading institutions concerned with the study of natural and humanly induced climate change. Allegations followed from critics and other observers that the emails – which contained exchanges between climate scientists - revealed the manipulation of data within the *epistemic community* of climate science. The media played its role by covering and presenting the incident in such a way that climate change possibly turned out to be a hoax, and thus an "inconvenient lie" after all. The climate scientists were initially criticized for withholding information,

deleting raw data, and for the subversion of peer review to make the problem of global warming and climate change look more threatening. Subsequent inquiries by different scientific panels and committees indicated that there is no evidence of bias in data selection, and thus no ground to discredit the scientific evidence of anthropogenic climate change[20]. On the other hand, an independent panel review stressed the importance of transparency and openness in climate change science and they acknowledged that the emails suggest a blunt reluctance to share information with others (report p. 5). This controversy that became adopted in the media as the "Climategate affaire" evoked conspiracy sentiments, and as such, widely (at least in many parts of the Western world) touched upon deeply rooted attitudes of belief and *dis*belief. Despite the fact that in climate science and in other fields it is uncommon to publish raw data, the panel review stated that in the case of climate change this is problematic since the issue is of global importance and of public interest (ibid).

The urgent request for transparency in this field resonates with the existing skepticism and distrust vis-à-vis science, and with the idea that we all have the right to know about the truth. A truth that lies in the hands of the *epistemic communities* (like the IPCC and CRU) who are producers and owners of climate change knowledge. An interesting element of climate science as a *regime of truths* is that it has become a public matter, appropriated by an increasing amount of actors that dance across different social and political spheres. The wave of skepticism in the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010 was further nourished when serious errors were uncovered in a text box of the Impacts and Adaptation report of IPCC working group II, and that it was one of the coldest northern winter since many years. This however, should be set against the background of the attendance of more than 35,000 people and 120 Head of State who participated in the Copenhagen Conference (Grubb 2010: 128), and the media attention that it received. We are here confronted with an alleged discrepancy that discloses some basic characteristics and dynamics of how discourses possibly manifest itself.

On the side of the developing (and least polluting) nations no traces can be found of a 'culture' of climate skepticism[21]. To me it was at least remarkable that during the six months of my fieldwork I did not encounter anybody who called the existence or magnitude of the 'climatic threat' into question. However, there has been one exception that in fact proves the 'rule' and is therefore worth mentioning. During a trip to the South I met a man (middle aged, Italian origin) who is living in Cameroon since thirty years, and owns three of the largest timber exploitation companies in Cameroon. More than 80% of the exported timber falls under his control. Considering his profession and companies that highly contribute to deforestation – and against the background of the increasing pressure in this business - I asked him whether he was concerned with the climate, to which he replied:

> "To me that is all one big joke. I see it more as one political game and I don't want to listen to all that. Here, people say that the sea level is rising and that the sea is more and more approaching the coast. But this has nothing to do with rising temperatures or global warming, but with the fact that people remove the sand for new construction purposes. (…) I mean in Italy it is snowing and freezing ten degrees, and

[20] The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee; The Independent Scientific Appraisal Panel and the Independent Climate Change Email Review. For the official report of the UK's Government Response see: http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm79/7934/7934.pdf.

[21] However, Myanna Lahsen demonstrates that Northern nations overwhelmingly dominate the production and framing of climate science that guides international environmental negotiations. Less developed country representatives are not blind to their disadvantage in science-infused political discussions and leads to suspicions related to science among Southern policy-makers and scientists [in Brazil] (Lahsen 2005).

> then they say that there is global warming? To me it is one big lie." (Interview, [original in French] December 28, 2009).

While the 'Climategate' Affair was *breaking news* in Western media and tended to overshadow the negotiations during the Summit; there was no Cameroonian media that covered this matter. Contrary to the (almost) complete absence of climate skepticism in Bamenda and Cameroon, in the US the growing environmental awareness and concern go hand in hand with the emergence of a conservative movement that consist of conservative "think tanks" and sympathetic skeptic scientists who try to undermine the scientific consensus over the reality of global warming (Dunlap & McCright 2000). Riley Dunlap and Aaron McCright explain that the motives of conservative groups are first and foremost opposing the efforts of the environmental movement to establish global warming as a widely accepted problem, and should therefore principally be understood as a countermovement. The counter-claims of this movement contest the evidentiary basis of global warming; state that if it occurs it will have substantial benefits, and warn that proposed actions to combat it will do more harm than good. The authors demonstrate in their article that government action to promote environmental protection threatens essential elements of conservatism, such as the primacy of individual freedom, private property rights, free enterprise etc. This traditional frame about humans and nature that has been called the Dominant Social Paradigm, includes core elements of conservative ideology, but also support for economic growth, faith in material abundance, and faith in future prosperity (Dunlap and Van Liere 1984, in: ibid 504-505). It becomes clear that both claims as counter-claims should be viewed within a particular social-cultural and historical context and that analyzing the content of the claims might give us insight into the frame in which claims-making takes place. The aforementioned discrepancy between emerging – and conflicting - movements shows once more the social construction of *dealing with* climate change, and can be explained as being two faces of the same movement. Likewise, conflicting perspectives reveal the dynamics of how discourses are used in different social settings as resources to meet and pursue, but also to oppose, diverging interests. Nevertheless, in paragraph 2.4 I will demonstrate that discursive dimensions are not necessarily such a clear cut and deliberate process as presented here.

The constant obsession with believing or disbelieving in the existence of climate change and global warming are inextricably bound together with whom is speaking and why. Thus the urge to prove or disproof climate change often bears an ideological fundament and inevitably colors climate change negotiations. An outstanding example is the prevailing skepticism that exist in the US, and the consequent role they play in impeding the climate negotiations. A quantitative poll held in the US has shown that Republicans are much more skeptical about whether global warming is occurring. Moreover, this poll has demonstrated that both political affiliation and ideology inform views on the environment overall, and global warming in particular:

> "Democrats and liberals are more likely than Republicans and conservatives to say the environment's in bad shape, and more apt to believe that global warming is occurring, to call it a threat and to support government action to address it. Liberals are twice as likely as conservatives to identify climate change as the world's biggest environmental problem. (..) They [Evangelical white protestants] are less likely than other to think about their personal impact on the environment or to say the government should address it. Evangelicals also are no more likely than others to think scientists agree on the issue – and they're 12 points less likely than other Americans to trust environmental scientists in the first place."

(*ABC News/Times/Stanford poll* 2006)[22].

Former president George Bush proclaimed in 2001 that the scientific evidence of global warming is too uncertain and that the economic costs are too high to require an immediate response. In a similar vein, James Schlesinger [2005] – policymaker and former US Secretary of Energy – has suggested that in the 'theology of global warming' the burning of fossil fuels is the secular counterpart of man's Original Sin. He therefore states that "The issue of climate change urgently needs to be brought down from the level of theology to what we actually know"(Schlesinger 2005, A10). While climate scientists have been accused of exaggerating data to attract public attention and research funds, news stories appeared about "skeptical" scientists who were directly paid by oil companies and who's aim was to disprove global warming[23].

In the course of time, climate change has come to have a myriad of meanings, underwent paradigmatic shifts and has, accordingly, played different roles in environmental and development policies. Over the last thirty years smaller and bigger steps have been taken to address, conceptualize and understand climate change. Yet the existence and its potential impacts remain largely contested and continue to thrive in political, social, economic and scientific battles. What becomes clear is that the different meanings that are attached to climate change is defined in social settings and should therefore be understood as such - an idea that lies at the heart of social constructivist approaches.

2.3.1 Media(ted) discourses of science and politics

The case of the 'Climategate' story and the different responses that it evoked gives us insight into the complex and often competitive power play between science, (mass) media and politics. It is the interconnection of these different discourses that make climate change such a highly politicized and disputed matter. We can view those different discourses as regimes of knowledge that are competing about what is true and false, and as such, being responsible for creating different "truth effects". According to Foucault, 'truth' should be understood as a system of procedures for the production, regulation and diffusion of statements, and is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power. Since truth is unattainable and there is no position outside discourses it is fruitless to ask whether something is true or false. Instead, he argues that the focus should be on *how* effects of truth are created in discourses. What is then to be analyzed are the discursive processes through which discourses are constructed in ways that give the impression that they represent true or false pictures of reality (Foucault 1972; 1980 in, Philips and Jorgensen 2002: 14). Each discursive realm has its own particularities, time horizons, and dimensions that are subject to rules of selectivity. For example, the media has in general a relatively short time frame because a topic needs to be 'hot' and 'sensational' to be newsworthy; in policy-making spheres the time horizon is much longer and environmental issues are usually not on top of the priority list; and it is in the nature of science (especially with such a complicated issue as climate science) that there is long-term research and ongoing collection of data required. This section will address

[22] http://woods.stanford.edu/docs/surveys/Global-Warming-Woods-ABC-Release-on-2006-Global-Warming-poll.pdf

[23] See: http://www.nytimes.com/1998/04/26/us/industrial-group-plans-to-battle-climate-treaty.html

the discursive interconnection of different *regimes of truth* and how they shape and influence one another.

In the last three decennia the role and power of climate science have changed, first and foremost due to the overwhelming attention that global warming received in the *mass media*. The media has played a crucial role in bringing global warming into the arena of public discourse but also in gaining political momentum. While early news stories relied heavily upon science as a source for knowledge and understanding, over time economic and political specialists edged out scientific experts as the dominant sources for generating news stories (Dunlap & McCRight 2000: 500). This dimension sheds light on how climate change as a scientific discourse has increasingly become a public and popular discourse that inevitably shapes our worldviews and thus involves power. The US infotainment industry - with Hollywood movies such as *The Day After Tomorrow, Sate of Fear* and Al Gore's doomsday scenario movie *An Inconvenient Truth* - increasingly depict diverging climate change interpretations, and illustrate that the media and other mass means of communication have become powerful actors in nurturing our understandings of climate change (Pettenger *et al.* 2005: 4). The same holds true to lesser and greater extent in Bamenda where Grassfielders frequently get to know *mostly* about the destructive forces of climate change through (mass) media. In contrast to commonly held perceptions within environmental sociology about the positive view upon the media's role as an agent of environmental education, and the importance of media visibility in moving environmental problems to policy concerns, I will demonstrate that we should view the role of the (Western) media in a rather different way in the context of the Bamenda Grassfields. The powerful role and influence of the media as a key factor in shaping Grassfielders worldview will be discussed throughout the subsequent chapters. In this section I will assess the more theoretical considerations related to media's power in constructing climate change realities.

In their article about climate change discourses in science, media and politics in Germany (from the period between 1975 and 1995) Peter Weinart *et al.* [2000] demonstrate how useful it is to distinguish dynamics among the separate discourses, in order to understand the co-constitutive relationship between them in constructing climate change understandings. Their findings suggest that there are commonalities as well as disparities to be discerned within each of the three spheres. It appears that the problem is perceived and communicated with great variance in the separate spheres, which leads to specific risks of communication, because – in line with Tsing's idea of 'awkward engagements' – the *disturbances of communication* among these spheres are rather the rule than the exception. They stipulate that the worldwide attention that global warming increasingly receives, and the national and international policies that are developed by governments at first sight seems like an excellent example of a successful communication of a serious environmental risk. Namely, human societies seem capable of anticipating and altering the unintended consequences of their own actions, and of preventing life-threatening outcomes. Nevertheless, scientists, policy makers and journalists have all experienced the problems and complexities resulting from this "success" story. The complex arena of climate change communication has led to mutual accusations of downplaying or exaggerating risks, sensationalism, inciting public hysteria and even conspiracy. In this light, according to the authors, "modern societies must cope not only with environmental risks but also with the risks inherent in communication" (p. 261). An example of a disturbance in communication that negatively impacted upon science' credibility is when in Germany in 1986 a working group of the German Physical Society warned for "an impending climate catastrophe". This new and rather threatening framing of the problem, which overly dramatized scientific findings, never disappeared from discourses in mass media and politics (ibid).

Indeed, most accounts on the social construction of environmental problems (both in science and policy-making) employ their approach in order to determine the necessary factors that are needed to bring environmental problems under the attention, and thus to take appropriate action to prevent damage (see for example: Hannigan 2005; Haas 2004). This way of thinking is what Weingart *et al.* refer to as a naïve rationalist-instrumental model of communication that consists of the following information flows: scientific research helps to discover an environmental problem, inform politicians of these findings and propose potential solutions; in the spheres of politics environmental concerns often suffer from inertia or are distorted by other interests, thus scientists can also try to create public awareness that leads to political pressure. The basic idea of this model is ideally that the content of the information flows unchanged and unaffected among these spheres and automatically leads to political action. If the information does not engender action this model assumes misrepresentation of scientific information by the media or ignorance from policy makers (Weingart *et al.* 2000: 262).

However, as may be evident from the aforementioned events regarding the politics and framing of climate change, along the discursive 'journey' from science, to the media, to the sphere of politics and back, many redefinitions and translations take place. For example, a complicated issue like climate change is subject to many criteria before it is newsworthy. Raw climate data is unattractive for media coverage and journalists need to create their own language to make the issue appealing, 'sensational', and comprehensible for a wide public. Thus, the *mass media* have their own rules for determining if and how a given issue is covered. Political decision making requires a complicated agenda-setting process. And it is the nature of science that many initial findings are preliminary, uncertain and hypothetical. And hence, climate science has to cope with many methodological problems and open questions that must be met with ongoing research and worldwide data collection (Weingart *et al.* 2000: 263). Taking a closer look at the discursive 'journey' from science to media and politics (and back), I believe that a parallel can be drawn with the discursive journey that is the focus of this research. Namely, from the level of science to globally constructed discourses on climate change in policy spheres, to the subsistence farmers in Bamenda, the mediation of climate change discourses inevitably leads to a simplified redefinition, which eventually tends to take apocalyptic shape. In Cameroonian newspapers I regularly encountered the following constellation of words to term climate change: "Climate change is the biggest threat in the world"; "Climate change demons"; "The world is at risk of extinction", or " A monster called climate change"[24].

According to Weingart *et al.* the problem of interferences of discourses – that are characterized by specific selectivities - are more likely to occur in modern societies where there is a close relationship between science, politics and the media than has hitherto been the case (p. 280). In addition to this, I believe that in this 'post-global' world where the concept of modern societies does not longer apply, the intimate and complex relationship between abovementioned spheres can be extended to (almost) any society. In other words, the images, knowledge and ideas that flow from global networks to 'the rest of the world' cannot longer be confined to 'modern' societies alone. Because of the distortions that information and knowledge go through the authors employ a fruitful and broader concept of communication that goes beyond flows of information, and takes into account notions of credibility, legitimacy, entertainment etc. (p. 262). In other words, mediated information and discourses never follow a rational path, because of the disparate communication arenas among three crucial sectors of society. As the authors show, the differences between the three sectors of science, politics and the media are

[24] Collected from *The Post* Newspaper.

systematic and not random. This results in the following: the credibility of science as an institution that produces reliable knowledge is jeopardized, and likewise may threaten the legitimacy of political decisions based on them (ibid: 280-281). A remarkable example in which the realms of science, politics and the media coalesce is the abovementioned movie *An Inconvenient Truth,* by former US Vice President Al Gore. While this representation of scientific knowledge was later criticized for being 'bad' science, this movie can similarly be considered as a successful 'speech act' since Gore received the Nobel Peace Prize for addressing this 'life threatening issue', and gave further impetus to creating public awareness and to call for political commitment.

In brief, on the one hand the mass media have taken centre stage in influencing national and international policy responses, and on the other hand have played a role in eroding science' credibility. Scientists in turn, have played their part in politicizing the issue. The mediated discourses in the web of linkages between science, media and politics is further complicated when we take Anabela Carvalho's thesis into consideration, namely that the discursive (re)construction of climate change in the British "quality press" is highly entangled with ideological standpoints. She argues that ideology works as a powerful selection device in deciding what is scientific news (what are the relevant facts and who are the authorized "agents of definition"). This representation of scientific knowledge has again important implications for evaluating political programs and assessing the responsibility of both governments and the public in addressing climate change. She notes that the consequences the media draw are profoundly ideological. Values such as freedom, responsibilities and equity that may be at stake justify action or non-action (Carvalho 2007: 223). In her illuminating approach Carvalho succeeds to unpack ideological standpoint that are dominant in the British press. In doing so she convincingly demonstrates how media discourse and ideology are mutually constitutive:

> "On the one hand, media texts result from ideological standpoints. On the other hand, media texts produce ideology: news and other media genres always reproduce and/or challenge a certain ideology. The media should not be seen as mere conveyers of the ideologies of other actors. Besides allowing or disallowing other social actors to advance their ideological standings, the media can also have an important agency in bringing in new ideological readings of issues or confronting those of the dominant" (ibid: 225).

Based on my own findings in my research I underscore the view that media and ideology are co-constitutive. However, as I will argue in the subsequent chapters, I opt for a more comprehensive and critical evaluation of the media's powerful and responsible role in the context of the Bamenda Grassfields in communicating the 'green message'. In this thesis I want to make clear that instead of functioning as an agent of environmental education or enhancing agency, the (Western) media is first and foremost imposing a Western and green ideology of how to "Think Globally and Act Locally" (see chapter three and five).

2.3.2 Science and its struggle for 'truth'

Taking the basic assumption of social constructivist approaches into account namely, that climate change must be understood within the context of social settings – which traverses the realms of science and politics - an important question needs to be addressed. How can we view the role of science in the social construction of climate change? This epistemological concern should also be placed in historical

perspective, since the available knowledge of climate change is not the same as ten years ago, which applies to different scientific disciplines. Hannigan points out that an important difference between environmental problems and social problems in general is that the former mostly has its origins in a body of scientific research. For example acid rain, global warming, ozone layer depletion, biodiversity loss, or desertification all were brought to the fore after a set of scientific observations. However, he argues, while this profile of science might suggest that scientific findings reflect physical reality of the natural world in a relatively straight-forward manner; science is not a search for truth in which the goal is to obtain a clear reflection of nature, being as free as possible from any social and subjective influences that might distort the 'facts'. Yet to the contrary, namely the assembly of scientific knowledge is highly dependent on a process of claims-making. Researchers, as such, act as 'gatekeepers' screening potential claims for credibility (Hannigan 2005: 95). The aforementioned complexities of the claims-making processes among the separate realms of science, politics and the media do indeed not only apply to the incongruities of selectivities between those spheres, but are also to be found within each discursive realm. Within science for example, a distinction can be made between cognitive and interpretative claims. Cognitive claims aim to convert experimental observations, hypothesis and theories into publicly accredited factual knowledge. Interpretative claims are in a similar way subject to conditions under which scientists are likely to make such claims (ibid). In this regard, Haas argues that science is indeed highly politicized:

"Scientific consensus is often suspect because the scientists themselves are part of a broader cultural discourse, and thus lack autonomy or independent stature: in part scientific findings may reflect the bias of sponsors, but more deeply they may reflect the broader culture of the society from which they emerge and about which they may not be fully conscious. The universe of what is known or deemed knowable may be biased by the availability of funding resources for research, and thus reflect the conscious or unconscious bias of major public and private funding bodies" (Haas 2004: 572).

As stated before, despite the scientific evidence that supports the causal relationship between human activities and climate change, uncertainty about the evidence remains (Pettenger *et al.* 2005: 3). What gives further impetus to the contestation of scientific claims is science' inability to give the absolute proof of anthropogenic causes of climate change. Different climate models that are used to predict global warming show differing results depending on the quality of the models. Former director of the Dutch meteorological institute Gerbrand Komen explains in an interview that the first problems with reliability already occur in the data collection process. To illustrate his point he poses an interesting question: How can you determine the quality of measuring rising temperatures in China during the cultural revolution? He adds that the climate is a very complex phenomenon with many processes that work against each other, and that climate change is not such a black and white process as it might appear. For example, due to desertification an increasing amount of sand is dropped in the oceans that is good for life under water, and enables the water to absorb more CO_2 (*Trouw* October 12, 2010).

A major difference between scientific and popular discourses is that the latter are often less nuanced than the scientific explanation, and tend to ascribe 'sensational' or exaggerated and clear-cut characteristics to global warming. However, after the errors that were found in the IPCC report last year they were accused of using similar exaggerative strategies, and climate science in general widely lost significant credibility. On top of this battle, there is disagreement about whether there is uncertainty of the evidence or not – thus meaning, that there is in fact uncertainty about whether there is uncertainty. In her essay "Undeniable Global Warming", historian Naomi Oreskes [2004] claims that there is scientific

consensus and we should therefore stop repeating nonsense and thinking that there is disagreement about global climate change. Contrary to this, Schlesinger points out that global warming is based on politics, not science. He states that "It is, of course, quite likely that the greenhouse effect has to some extent contributed to global warming – but we simply do not know to what extent " (Schlesinger 2005, A10). To make the confusion complete, Myanna Lahsen - adhering to a social constructivist perspective – calls our attention by saying that "science in many cases *is* the politics of climate change" (Lahsen 2005: 190). In her essay about the problem of knowledge in decision-making she demonstrates how the perceived material reality of climate change is defined in social settings by both scientists and policymakers. She puts forward that scientific facts, and hence, discourses about them, do not transcend particularities of perspective (ibid: 173).

Together with the growing societal concern and attention for environmental issues in the late 1960s and early 1970s sociologists began to examine the popularity of environmentalism and the environmental movement. One of the founders of the field of environmental sociology, Riley Dunlap, identifies two stages since the evolvement of this fields as a distinctive (sub)discipline. From the outset, researchers were mainly preoccupied with studying the social characteristics of environmental activists and social movements, and they applied traditional sociological perspectives on public opinion, the strategies employed by environmental groups and environmental policy making. Over time, sociologists' perspectives gradually shifted to the point where scholars began to analyze the relationship between modern industrial societies and their bio-physical environment. This development occurred at the same time that the term "environmental sociology" began to be used in the early and mid 1970s (Dunlap 2002: 329). The birth of the scientific subdiscipline itself can therefore be seen as being part and parcel of a societal and ideational change, rather than being driven by merely material changes in the environment. Even though environmental sociology has exhibited several major theoretical trends over the past decades, Frederick Buttel [2002] notes that there has been a surprising degree of continuity, regarding the fact that most of the empirical issues of interest to environmental sociology today are the very same as those that called the attention in the past:

> "(..) The nature of environmental social movements; states, politics and environmental policy formation; environmental attitudes, beliefs and values; the relationships between consumption and production institutions; the reciprocal impacts of societies and environments; the role of technology in social and environmental change; and the significance of 'the global' in terms of 'environmental 'scale and social institutions" (Buttel 2002: 28).

An overall theme that can be determined from these topics is the focus on human's relation with the natural world, both in societal (or discursive) as in material terms - and their mutual impacts. However, the ways in which sociology has viewed this relationship have been subject to different paradigms and theoretical shifts. In the early days of this discipline there were key contributors who distinguished between a *real* 'environmental sociology' focusing on the study of environment-society interaction; and a 'sociology of environmental issues' that did not (Dunlap and Catton 1979; Catton and Dunlap, in: Hannigan 2005: 11) a distinction that nowadays no longer exists. The view that the material and the ideational are complexly interwoven and interdependent (Pettenger *et al.* 2005) only gained prominence much later, within the social constructionist paradigm that emerged in the late 1990s. Hannigan emphasizes that the most enduring - and at times rancorous - debate in the field is the realism - constructionism debate (p. 16) that until today yields tension across different disciplines. A few words

about this major controversy that for a long time (until today) has set proponents and opponents against each other, are worth mention.

In the field of environmental sciences social constructivists have often been criticized for denying that the earth is suffering from environmental hazards. These accusations have, according to Hannigan [2005], led to serious misrepresentations about what constructionists stand for. Only a 'false reductionism' can create a constructionist account as claiming that environmental risks do not exists, and that the natural reality does not exist or play a role in identifying these risks (Wynne 2002: 472, in: Hannigan p. 29). This rare stance can be placed on the extreme side of the constructionist spectrum and we might refer to this as 'hyper-constructionism' - meaning that there is no extra-discursive nature of nature, and there is thus nothing beyond human discourse. A more moderate view is the so-called critical "political ecology paradigm" that avoids this extreme and acknowledges that we do not have any shared access to reality other than through discourse (see paragraph 2.4). On the other side of the spectrum the environmental realists can be found whose allegations against constructivist perspectives often stem from an activist driven sentiment, and hence, the fear that such approaches undermine action that is urgently needed to fight environmental hazards. Even though the 'constructionist-realist' debate that for a long time was considered a major controversy in dealing with environmental issues has recently began to settle, Hannigan notes that it is worth to emphasize how constructivism might continue to make a useful contribution in understanding environmental issues. According to him, constructionists are actually saying that there is a need to look more closely at the social, political and cultural processes by which certain conditions are defined. This however, does not mean that we should relax about the possibility of the polar ice caps melting, but that it is just not wise to allow a discussable issue to become an evident crisis, especially where the evidence is open for multiple interpretations (ibid: 30). In line with Hannigan's constructivist approach towards environmental issues, I believe that it is indeed crucial to explore the construction of the questions related to climate change rather than taking a pre-given set of assumptions as a point of departure. While this stance might appear evident, this supposition does not predominantly comes out if we take a closer look at research that has been conducted as far as climate change in Africa is concerned.

Even though the body of literature related to climate change *in Africa* is expanding, research has, over the years, predominantly taken positivist stances and is largely based on scientific and economic models (e.g. Pak Sum Low eds. 2005). For a long time, the debates have largely been dominated by climatology and other natural sciences, which are principally concerned with climate modelling. While many climate models show anomalies in for example annual rainfall patterns in different African regions, scholars acknowledge that many limitations and uncertainties in knowledge continue to exist. For example, Hulme *et al.* point out that particularly the extent to which rainfall variations are related to greenhouse gas-induced global warming remains undetermined. Moreover, there has been relatively little work published on future climate change scenarios for Africa (Hulme *et al.* 2005: 37). In this regard, Johan van Boxel contends that there are regionally large differences between the climate models, especially in the projections for future precipitation amounts. Therefore, he concludes that the outcome of the climate models is not yet accurate enough for a regional interpretation (Van Boxel 2004: 40). While many uncertainties exist within natural sciences regarding climate change modelling in Africa, and in this regard, climate modelling is in its early stages of development, the social sciences have hardly been visible at all in the debates on climate change.

In the last two decennia researchers in different fields like geography, biology, climatology, geophysics, microbiology, meteorology, etc., and later carefully the social sciences and humanities have increasingly been exploring the possible consequences of climate change on the world's supposedly most vulnerable continent. Central questions that up till now have preoccupied researchers in this field have been to ask *how* and *to what extent* climate change is affecting – and will continue to affect - livelihoods in Africa. While covering a wide spectrum of topics, research has by and large aimed at contributing to understand the challenges and opportunities that African countries are facing, amid the growing concerns of climate change and its impacts (see for example Pak Sum Low *et al*. 2005; Dietz, Ruben & Verhagen 2004; Breusers 2001; De Bruijn *et al.* 2005). As such, climate change has in recent years evolved from an environmental issue to a complicated and contested development related matter. Recurrent themes related to climate change – often framed climate variability - in Africa have varied from understanding drought risks[25], to changing rainfall patterns (Hulme *et al.* 2005), to land and livelihood changes (Dietz *et al.* 2004), to the assessment of pathway analysis for understanding local actors' responses[26]. Nevertheless, especially in the field of African Studies, little (or no) concern has been expressed for the power dynamics at the local level that are constituted by the discursive (re)presentations of climate change, and thus rarely have been explored from social constructivist approaches. In this thesis I contend that aforementioned (mainly objectivist) research is mostly valuable if complemented with detailed constructivist and ethnographic analyses. Moreover, I believe that this latter type of research is becoming more and more important because of the high level of concern at the international level with climate change issues and Africa's role herein. In other words, as the 'world' is talking about and acting upon climate change and 'Africa's future' in terms of adaptation and mitigation - in addition to the presumed and expected bio-physical effects that climate change entails - it is crucial to comprehend how these emerging discourses shape society-environment relations and African realities. The primary objectives of a social constructivist approaches related to climate change is not to ask questions such as how climate change is constituted, whether the claim is 'true' or not, or how and even *if* we should respond, but rather to unravel the constructions of those questions and the consecutive responses (Pettenger *et al.* 2007). What does it mean to say that Africans need to adapt to and mitigate climate change? Therefore, a leading analytical question of this study is: by and for whom are the discourses and who is excluded from them? The section below will address this question.

2.4 The power of discourses, or discourses *as* power?

It is difficult these days to speak about discourses without bringing in the notion of power. This is due, in large part, to the influence of Michel Foucault, who transformed generally accepted ideas about power, and played a central role in developing and conceptualizing discourse analysis in both theoretical work and empirical research. Over the last two decades discourse has become a fashionable term, it has been used indiscriminately in scientific texts and debates, often without being defined (Philips and Jorgensen 2004: vii). The more this term has been used and meanings have been attached to it, the more it has been beset with vagueness. Therefore, in this section I briefly want to elaborate on how discourse analysis is a valuable method and theory in my research. From the outset it needs to be stressed that discourse analysis cannot be used as a method of analysis detached from its theoretical and methodological

[25] Verhagen *et al.* 2004; Zaal *et al.* 2004; Dietz and Veldhuizen 2004.
[26] Van Dijk, De Bruijn, & Van Beek 2004; Brons *et al.*; De Bruijn & Van Dijk 2004; Hilhorst & Reij 2004.

foundations, but is rather an integrated whole – a complete package (ibid: 3-4). As mentioned in chapter one, discourses can be understood in very basic terms *as the way we view the world and the way we talk about it*. In each social domain we can think of different patterns and instances of language use, like scientific, political or public discourse. As we shall see in chapter three, in order to speak about environmental issues many different categorizations of discourses have been developed. Delimiting discourses in such a way is, in turn, a social construct in itself, but often necessary to speak about and to make sense of them. Discourses are, as such, not merely a speech or a text but a system of representations that give meaning to things (Frerks 2007: 45).

The proposed general definition about discourses however, does not tell us anything about how discourses operate, manifest itself, how they are produced and received, and hence, about how to analyze them. Among different discourse analytical perspectives there is also not a clear-cut consensus; nevertheless, there are shared premises that are embraced by most approaches, to which I will limit myself in this study[27]. In this section I will briefly discuss the main epistemological and ontological principles that embrace most discourse analytical approaches as presented by Vivien Burr [1995]. As mentioned earlier, a fundamental premise that underscores the relevance of discourse analysis in general is that 'reality' can never be reached outside discourses and therefore, discourse itself becomes the object of analysis. In his work *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [1972] Foucault defines discourse as follows:

> "We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [.. Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [..] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [..] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality" (Foucault 1972: 117).

Here, Foucault introduces a second basic premise that underlines general social constructionist and discourse analytical perspectives, namely that knowledge is not just a reflection of reality. Truth is a discursive construction and different regimes of knowledge determine what is true and false. And, the historical rules of a particular discourse delimit what is possible to say (Philips and Jorgenson 2004). In the course of time, ideas about the environment have changed quite drastically with major implications for politics, environmental policies, and consequently, for social life. Dryzek illustrates this idea in the following statement: "What is the earth? We have long known that it is a planet, but the idea that it might be a finite planet with limiting capacities to support human life has only received widespread attention since the late 1960s". This drastic shift in thinking has led to the most basic consequence that we now have a politics of the Earth, whereas once we did not (Dryzek 2005: vii). In the field of environmental sociology, international relations and communication studies discourse analysis is increasingly being used as an influential method to analyze and contextualize the production, reception and strategic use of environmental 'communicative events'[28]. In this study it is used in a broad sense as an abstract mapping of discourses that circulate within society, which connects and shapes different worlds across a distance.

[27] I refer here to three central approaches which are widely used within social research: Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology. For a basic discussion about the similarities and differences among the approaches see: Philips and Jorgenson 2002, and Burr 1995.

[28] A communicative event is here understood as every instance of language use like a text, speech, interview, article, a talk etc.

Another premise that underpins and is embraced by different discourse analytical approaches is the assumed inherent link between knowledge, social processes and actions. In other words, discourses largely determine (but are also in a dialectical relationship with) our actions. What follows from this statement is that our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, but rather play an active role in creating and changing them. Therefore, in order to understand environmental affairs, we need to examine the discourses that guide the political agenda, for – borrowing Dryzek's words - "the history of environmental affairs is largely a matter of the history of discourses (..)" (Dryzek 2005: v). However, he notes that while discourses have always been important in ordering the system, what is different about the evolving world is the extent to which discourses are amenable to contestation. According to him, many if not most of the main axes of conflict in today's world can be interpreted in term of discourses, but their role is not universally appreciated. And, that those who do appreciate the role of discourses often treat them as singular and accepted, rather than multiple and contested (p. vi). As I pointed out before, we should indeed keep in mind that no discourse is a closed or fixed entity, but that discursive boundaries are permeable and are rather in a constant flux of negotiation. This thought can be found in the poststructuralist idea that discourses construct the social world in meaning, and that – due to the fundamental instability of language - meaning can never be permanently fixed (Philips and Jorgenson 2004: 6). As I tried to make clear in this chapter, this holds all the more true for discourses on climate change. On the one hand this can be explained by the rapidly changing and interconnected world in which climate change has – across a distance - penetrated different spheres of social, political and economic life, and makes the issue unavoidably prone for contestation. On the other hand, the trans-boundary nature of climate change, and consequently, the discursive construction of a *global* responsibility (thinking globally and acting locally) - have profoundly shaped ideas about development, and 'the politics of the earth' – and makes dealing with it a negotiable multi-stakeholder's endeavor. At this point, Foucault has been criticized for trying to identify only one knowledge regime in each historical period, while they operate with a more conflictial picture in which different discourses co-exist and struggle for the right to define the truth (Philips and Jorgenson 2004: 13).

A fourth premise, that touches upon this so-called *discursive struggle,* insists that we take a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and ways of understanding the world, including ourselves (Burr 1995: 3). Knowledge should not be treated as an objective 'truth', but rather as the product of our categorizations and understandings of the world (thus products of discourse). Thus, the way we commonly understand the world and the concepts that we use, are contingent and historically specific (ibid). In his archeological 'phase' Foucault [1972] was interested in studying the rules that determine which knowledge claims were accepted as meaningful and true in a particular period in time. In his writings about these historical configurations of knowledge he argued that the reorganizations of knowledge also constituted new forms of power (Rouse2005: 92). While in his early work Foucault referred rather implicitly to (mechanisms of) power, in his genealogical work that followed later, focused more explicitly on power (see below). His objective was to examine the structure of different regimes of knowledge, or what is possible to say, and what are the so-called *truth effects* created within discourses (Foucault 1980). In broad terms, discourse analysis (embedded in general social constructivist approaches) can be understood as an analytic tool which enables us to analyze these patterns.

The final premise that is worth mention - and brings again to the fore the link between discourses and social processes - is the idea that different understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and therefore, the social construction of knowledge and 'truth' has social consequences (Burr 1995: 3-4). Following these premises, we can state that discourses are always in a dialectical relationship with

aspects of the social; i.e. they are created, (re)shaped, maintained or contested through social processes, and have again social consequences[29]. With these ideas in mind, the 'securitization' of global discourses on climate change – and its strong influence on shaping environmental politics in the developing world – are an important matter to explore. The primary exercise of discourse analysis here, is not so much to sort out who's rhetoric is right or wrong, but to understand how the negotiation processes of different 'truths' are being played out through changing power relations and multiple normative systems.

Against this background, - and all the more because across social settings discourses take on a life of their own it - is not an easy task to analyze, follow and delimit globally constructed discourses on climate change, which are re-told and re-shaped in the process of communication. Therefore, the aim of analyzing these patterns cannot be more ambitious than to develop an account of how climate change discourses are used or manifest itself, by discerning dominant discursive tendencies and to view them in specific cultural, social and historical context. Nevertheless, since discourses cannot be detached from aspects of the social, in the chapters that follow I attempt to reveal – in addition to discursive focus – the (possible) social consequences entailed by the struggle of negotiating climate change as a *regime of truths*. This, with a particular attention and concern for the social consequences of different discursive representations of climate change for farmers who do not have access to high profile forums to negotiate and question these 'realities'. Since discourses are here understood as a form of social action that plays a part in creating the social world, it should be noted that discourses are not simply imposed upon people, but that people also use the available discourses as a platform to negotiate and produce representations of the world. How discourses and knowledge inhibit power will briefly be discussed below, by focusing on Foucault's theory of power/knowledge.

2.4.1 Foucault's notion of power/knowledge

An essential element in Foucault's conception of power, is that it is embedded in social relationships. As such, he dismissed the existing idea that power necessarily resides in institutions, nor that power is solely oppressive, but that it is a fundamental feature of everyday human interaction (Foucault: 1980). In his genealogical phase Foucault developed a theory of power/knowledge, in which power plays a fundamental role as a mechanism that is being spread across different social practices. A first important distinction that Foucault makes is between on the one hand power as domination or as an oppressive force, and on the other hand power as something productive:

> "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it does not only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive framework which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression" (Foucault 1980: 119)

What can be derived from this statement is that power is responsible for both constructing the social world and for the particular ways in which the world is framed and can be talked about, ruling out alternative ways of being and talking. Power then, can work as a productive, and as a constraining force (Philips and Jorgenson 2004: 13-14). Our analysis of how power and discourses work as a constraining

[29] This idea has already been expressed in a fundamental sociological law, introduced by W.I. Thomas in 1928, in which he developed the idea that: "If people define things as real, they are real in their consequences".

force depends on how we conceptualize the subject (individual) and the' freedom of action' within the discourse. Foucault understood the subject as being de-centered, or 'dead', meaning that the subject is created within discourses. Even though this idea is shared, in general, by most discourse analytical perspectives, there is disagreement about the extent to which the subject is 'free' or can act as an agent of change. Whereas Foucault viewed the individual as determined by structure, I adhere to the approach (found in Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology) that discourses can be used as resources with which people create new constellations of words, which enables them to function as agents of discursive and cultural change. However, discourses are here also seen as frameworks that limit the subject's scope for action and possibilities for innovation (ibid: 17). Moreover, I believe that the scope of the subject's 'freedom of action' largely depends on an individual's accessibility to discourses, sources of knowledge, and moreover, the social and political position people fulfill within society.

With regard to perspectives upon the environment, and hence, environmental policies, Hannigan states in his book 'Environmental sociology'(1995), that discourses define what is meaningful, shape processes of socialization and therefore provide institutions with a powerful means of incorporating individuals into relations of domination. While Foucault dismissed the idea that power does not solely belong to particular individuals or the state, he argued that at the level of institutions, power is most effective in discourses because they reduce resistance and internalize consent (Foucault 1967). Foucault regarded this as central to a process of social control. In this study I want to show that Foucault's understanding of discourse serves as a fruitful analytical tool to look at negotiation processes of 'truth' making in the context of my research. Foucault focuses on the question how some discourses have shaped and created meaning systems. The ways in which they gain the status and currency of 'truth', and thereby dominate how we define and organize both ourselves and our social world, whilst other, alternative discourses are marginalized and subjugated (Foucault 1971: 37). Every society has its own 'regimes of truth', its 'politics' of truth, i.e. an arena where different discourses are being bargained. Therefore, in discourses power, knowledge and truth are inextricably bound together. As mentioned before, knowledge is created through social interaction in which we construct 'common truths' and compete about what is true and false. Power then follows from our acceptance of the "reality with which we are presented" (Pinkus 1996).

To make it more concrete, with the global authorization of a discourse on climate change as an existential and global threat as truthful, at the expense of other discourses, the increasing concern with climate change and the encompassing consequences of global environmental governance is inevitably a field of power relationships and domination. The dominant global discourse on climate change is thus a mechanism of power, as it has become a highly prioritized matter on international policy agenda's. In this matter, power can be seen as a substance through which so-called 'expert knowledge' (science) as a regime of truths is embodied by people through institutions and interactions. The following chapters will examine the patterns and identify the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality in different social settings.

CHAPTER THREE

Talking climate change into existence - the role of NGOs in disseminating the *green message*

Part one

3.1. Introduction

I arrived in Bamenda in the midst of August 2009. This period was said to be one of the wettest months since many years. While August is indeed generally the time of maximum rainfall, according to many Grassfielders, and confirmed by geo-environmentalist Fonye Francis, the torrential rains were particularly severe this year[30]. Some people exclaimed that they never experienced such heavy rains before. Others, who were less impressed, stated that many years ago their crops had to face similar excessive rainfall. It was in this same period that a sequence of environmental catastrophes took place. In a recent study on environmental hazards, human ecologist Emmanuel Nyambod states that "The first few days of the month of August 2009 were characterized by sporadic outburst of natural environmental hazards in the city of Bamenda" (Nyambod: 21). Due to the heavy rainfall several streams and rivers had overflowed its banks, and destroyed houses, farmlands, bridges and roads, which in some areas forced people to relocate their houses elsewhere. One particular incident attracted media attention and alarmed many people: a heavy landslide at Bamenda's Up-station[31] carried the governor's residence away, and led to the death of a young boy. In the media the event was by and large attributed to the consequences of climate change or global warming, and soon the idea that these environmental catastrophes are the first signs of global warming became common knowledge among many Grassfielders. Moreover, this event showed that climate change is not only affecting the poor but is touching upon all layers of society.

In a similar way, government officials partly blamed climate change to cause these phenomena – due to the variations in both rainfall and temperature patterns of particular places – and partly attributed it to man's activities like infrastructural works and bad farming methods of the population (Fonye Francis 2009). A critical observer, working for the FAO, had a fairly different view upon the indiscriminate use of climate change by the government for the explanation of existing problems:

> "Climate change is too much politicized. It is used as a scapegoat for poor management, used as a scapegoat for lack of action, used as a scapegoat for everything. (..) The production of maize has been fallen due to climate change; fuck that! You are not giving these people the input, you are not encouraging them, you have not liberalized the fertilizers, you have not given them anything! But you are blaming climate change? It's crazy. That is how politicians have taken it as their baby. It's all bullshit,

[30] 'Environmental and social considerations of the recent natural catastrophes (landslides and floods) in North-West region with special reference to Mezam division', Bamenda 20th of August 2009. Presented by Wadt-zela Fonye Francis, Regional delegate of environment and the protection of nature.

[31] Bamenda's geographical divide in up- station, where most of the government departments reside and where mainly wealthier and well-off people live, and down town where the 'commoners' live, can at the same time be seen as a symbol of the existing hierarchies and the social (and economic) segregation within society.

> let me tell you. (..) Just like the recent landslide. Are you going to blame climate change or are you going to blame bad management? They talk about climate change and that is what really aches me. For years, even a blind person could see that that hill was going to collapse" (Interview with Elvis Paul, September 2009, FAO Bamenda).

Geographical studies of this region (e.g. Nyambod 2010; Chi 1998) that have focused on land surface changes and the social and ecological implications, provide us with a comprehensive insight into recent environmental problems and developments in Bamenda. The socio-environmental account of Acho Chi [1998] has shown that due to the rapid urbanization and sustained population growth since the 1980s, an increasing dislocation in the relationship between human settlements and the environment exists, because the settlements continue to encroach on all land sites. Chi has demonstrated that especially within and around Bamenda city human interferences with the natural regimen of the steep surface slopes creates ecological disequilibrium. Moreover, the expanding urbanization has been accommodated in informal settlements on steep slopes and flood plains, and as such, have increased the risks of environmental catastrophes like landslides (Chi 1998: 161- 163).

The Bamenda Grassfields are situated in the mountainous North West Region of Cameroon, and, as the name indicates, are part of the grass savanna zone of West and Central Africa. The town of Bamenda suddenly emerged around 1899 as the largest urban area in the Western Highlands of Cameroon. The sustained population growth which has taken place since then owes much to its location in the heart of the Grassfields, as well as to its closeness to the city states of Calabar and to a colonial regional city Enugu in Eastern Nigeria. Apart from its geographical location, a growing and changing demand for labor and economic development are factors that have contributed to urbanization and the high growth rate (ibid). Currently, Bamenda has an extraordinarily high population density of about 100 inhabitants per square kilometer, with an annual growth of almost 8%. While Bamenda is indeed facing more and more environmental problems - like soil degradation, erosion, deforestation and the increased risks of environmental catastrophes - entailed by rapid urbanization; the area is nevertheless blessed with an abundance of streams, rivers and crater lakes, and the topography is characterized by extremely varied relief composed of mountains, escarpments, valleys, plains and plateau. The majority of land is situated above 900 meters altitude, plains are generally rich in alluvial deposits which both make the area a great potential for intensive agriculture and the growth of a variety of fruits[32]. In general, the short dry season lasts four months (November – February), and the rainy season lasts about eight months (March – October). More precisely, what we learn from the Grassfielders, is that the rainy season starts every year at the 15th of March, and ends at the 15th of October. It is not surprising that due to the favorable climate, the North West Region is considered to be the breadbasket of Cameroon. Against the backdrop of this allegedly (relatively) stable climate, I was stunned by the widespread awareness of global warming and climate change among different social spheres that I encountered during my stay in Bamenda. To me it appeared to be a contradiction that – in such an environment – global warming (or climate change) is such a prominent theme. Thinking about high risks environments like many parts of the Sahelian Drylands - that have faced recurrent great droughts and irregular rainfall - (and are considered to be among the most vulnerable to climate change (cf. Dietz *et al.* 2004)), one can more easily imagine global warming to be of a major concern.

[32] Studies of the fruits and vegetables sub-sectors in the North West region of Cameroon. Final Report, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation – North West Region, September 2009.

Landslide at Up-station at the governor's residence, August 2009.

This is not to say that in Bamenda climate change cannot be a possible threat to agriculture, or affect people's daily life. In fact, people speak about it all the time. It is fairly common to find people in Bamenda who complain about global warming while referring to changing weather patterns, for example, that there is too much heat during the day or too much cold during the night. Or, that the rains were too heavy this year, and that the dry season is becoming too harsh. Nonetheless, according to meteorologist Mr. Awah, if we take a look at the statistics of average, minimum and maximum temperature, and the rainfall data over the last fifty years (see appendix I), we do not find significant changes in the weather patterns in Bamenda[33]. While he on the other hand stated that Bamenda has experienced very significant rainfall (580 mm of rainfall in the month of July, whereas the average is 444 mm during this month) in the

[33] Interview Mr. Awah, December 2009. The data and statistics that show the measured weather indicators before 1963 are not taken into consideration here, as they are not to be found at the meteorological institute in Bamenda, but in Nigeria. It should be noted however, that this data does not say anything about whether the climate is changing or not, for this requires much more indicators and elaborate and long term measuring.

year 2009, “we should be very careful to say that everything is due to climate change, because in fact we do not know” (interview Mr. Awah, meteorological institute Bamenda, December 2009).

In addition to this, I believe that there are many good reasons to argue that ‘speaking about’, ‘adapting to’, and ‘mitigating’ global warming and climate change in Bamenda (and in any other place), are not being a mere reflection of the bio-physical realities. Namely, the fact that many people relate their visible experiences of changing weather patterns to global warming, indicates that there is a discursive frame at hand that enables people to make sense of the perceived changes. For example, the fact that environmental hazards are on the rise in Bamenda and its surroundings, makes the idea of global warming very acceptable. In order to disclose these discursive dynamics, and how they shape and relate to policies, I chose discourses as my point of departure. In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate that due to the prominent role and activities of (I)NGOs in Bamenda – which are informed and funded by the international community - these organization are among the most crucial *vehicles* in the mediation of globally constructed discourses on climate change.

However, NGOs are not individual and isolated players in this field. If we place their role in a broader perspective, they are rather one among many actors, like epistemic communities, lobby groups and civil society organizations that constitute the so-called transnational norm-building networks (Jakobeit, Kappel and Mückenberger 2010), that shape environmental policies and ideologies in the South. Harrison and Bryner [2004] develop a theory of ‘emergence processes’ as applied to the production of international environmental policy. They argue that international environmental policy should be seen as being not only the creation of states, but rather the product of a complex interaction of many related processes; including the negotiated conclusions of authoritative scientific reports, international discourse between states, the emergent demands of interest groups and the public through domestic political processes, and the beliefs and preferences of governments and leaders (2004: 343). In other words, since NGOs are not operating solitary their activities cannot be detached from other sources of discursive mediation. Noteworthy is the fact that in Bamenda the government and the donor consortium work hand in hand to achieve the overall aim of combating climate change. The complex arena in which environmental issues are addressed and managed results in many instances in so-called hybrid field of discourses. For example, many NGOs have norms and values that are rooted in Christianity, and are therefore closely linked to churches. This means that some churches are apt to convey messages about climate change that are informed by NGO policies, and vice versa, there are NGOs that adopt a so-called eco-theology into their program.

Bamenda's scenery from Up-station

The widespread consciousness of climate change in Bamenda is given further impetus by different media and taken up by civil society initiatives, ranging from TV programs, newspaper items, religious movements, churches, educational programs, environmental clubs at schools, common initiative groups (CIGs), government campaigns etc. For our general understanding of the sources of funding, it should be noted however, that the wide range of different institutions and organizations who have incorporated the climate change problematic into their activities are in many cases encouraged, and by and large financially supported by NGOs. This means that the resources to address this issue as much as the norms and ideas on how to go about it, can be found in external – i.e. Western – donors. Activities that are geared towards combating climate change in Bamenda are frequently termed *green campaigns.* These campaigns convey – as Wendy Bernadette, president of a women empowering CIG explains:

> "Everybody should go green. Eat as much vegetables as possible, and if you cut one tree, plant twenty five, all to fight climate change. By the year 2020 we want zero CO_2. (..) Illness is just here and it is all climate change, which is not far away. We want to save lives! Go green. You are fighting the climate change your own way" (*interview, January 2010, Bamenda*).

Another example of a civil society initiative that indeed fights the issue 'its own way' is the "Mister Bamenda Organization" that was founded in 2004. They concentrate on the most significant concerns facing the Cameroonian society. With a yearly contest of 'Mister Bamenda', this organization seeks to 'enable youths learn to hear their own voices and articulate their own concerns with defiant boldness and piercing clarity'. Mister Bamenda is seen as a role-model and spokesperson about a particular theme, who should devote his time and energy to mandate the public's attention and a requisite call for action[34]. Topics like HIV-Aids, unemployment, discrimination against women and social ills have previously set the

[34] Announcing Mister Bamenda contest 2005: http://www.postwatchmagazine.com/2004/10/announcing_the_.html

agenda. One of the founders and organizers of this yearly event elaborated on the plans for Mister Bamenda 2010 in the following way:

> "We are looking for alternative strategies to communicate climate change through music. In Africa all is done through songs. Music is going into climate. A grassroots approach. (..) We found already sixty musicians who are very excited to sing about climate change. A new field is a new vocabulary for their music. We want to make a festival about climate change in green ways, so producing a green formula. We want a multi-sectoral approach. We cannot talk about climate change and leave other sectors out. Climate change is not in isolation and leaves no one indifferent. Parts of our culture are being affected by climate change. Dressing for example. (..) We want to organize a fashion show to introduce lighter materials for traditional dresses. Since the heat is here, the traditional material has become unbearable. Too hot. The year 2010 Mister Bamenda will be the role-model of how to deal with climate change" (Interview Colbert Gwain, January 19th, Bamenda town).

Here, Colbert is raising a very crucial idea, namely that a new 'field' [or theme] entails a new vocabulary. Within critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology approaches it is stressed that discourses are used as resources with which they create new constellation of words and sentences that have never been used before. Following this view, through producing discourses in this way people function as agents of discursive and cultural change (Philips and Jorgensen 2002: 17). This brings us back to the power *of* discourses or discourses *as* power debate, and the subjects' 'freedom of action', as discussed in the previous chapter. While Foucault viewed individuals as determined by structures – the subject as de-centered – the idea I propose here is more in line with what Roland Barthes [1982] lucidly explained as "people are both masters and slaves of language". However, even if we accept the agency of subjects, discourses can similarly be seen as limiting the scope of action, for example by obscuring alternative perspectives. In the discussion that follows, the subject's role and thus the power of discourses and discourses as power debate will be a focal point in the analysis of my empirical data.

In a similar vein with aforementioned activities, several schools have adopted the *green campaigns* as part of their curriculum, in which tree planting through environmental clubs lies at the heart of the awareness endeavors. Many of these sensitization campaigns are fostered by NGOs like SHUMAS. The project manager of this NGO for Strategic Humanitarian Services emphasizes that if you want to fight this challenge as a community, it is indispensible to start teaching at the elementary level:

> "(..) And then we have the school environmental project, which is all about teaching the young pupils inculcating the environmental notion from the base. So that they grrrow [persuasive emphasis] with it. The problem is today and tomorrow. So it is not just going to the elders and telling them about the environmental problems, but we go to the base and teach them practical skills on how to protect the environment, the elementary forms of the protection of the environment" (Interview September 2009, Bamenda).

On the one hand, all these initiatives reveal the opportunities created by the means of emerging discourses for people to jump on the climate change bandwagon, but on the other hand, they assert the importance of fighting climate change by ingraining the urgency and threat at elementary levels of society. Organizations' slogans like 'Our environment, a war we must win', 'Together we overcome', 'Green our towns, reduce global warming', 'Go organically', 'Together let's fight bush fire pollution', 'Green light to success' and 'Save our planet, change your life', underpin the perceived urgency of the matter. In brief, globally constructed discourses on climate change with their 'apocalyptic aura' have

deeply penetrated development thinking and NGO policies in this region, and moreover, found its way into regional politics and different social spheres in Bamenda.

This chapter seeks to understand how the growing environmental emphasis of NGOs – who convey climate change as 'a new and threatening message (and responsibility) for Africa' – is translated, communicated and appropriated by NGO workers in Bamenda. For the analysis of discourses on climate change I distillated the following recurring discursive elements from my data, which deserve a thorough reflection: the *globality* of the issue (both in terms of a global threat as well as a global responsibility); the perceived *urgency* and *magnitude* of the issue (how serious and grave is it, and what will be the consequences); and, how the causes and the proposed necessary responses are framed. The overall aim of the analysis is to gain a broader understanding of the discursive dynamics of climate change, as reinterpreted by different 'translation regimes', and how this translation process influences and shapes patterns of power. How do people give meaning to this new story that circulates within society and make sense of it? This framework will guide the analyses throughout the following chapters.

This chapter consists of two parts. In order to comprehend how climate change penetrated and gradually encompassed a wide variety of topics within development thinking, the first part discusses the history of environmental discourses. This section concludes with a general and tentative discourse analysis of contemporary conceptualizations of global warming and climate change as construed within global environmental politics. The second part provides a more analytical account of the abstract mapping of how NGOs in Bamenda translate and negotiate discourses on climate change.

3.2 The modern environmental era: the social construction of climate change in historical perspective

In order to comprehend the current "development context" of climate change and how, in the course of time, global discourses have shaped environmental politics, and have led to new developments in North-South relations a brief historical contextualization is needed. This section provides a concise historical account of the developments of the social construction of environmental issues and problems in general, and global warming and climate change in particular. Following Hannigan, the underlying idea is that the social construction of environmental issues does not reflect a self-evident, asocial and fixed set of criteria. Rather, Hannigan argues, they depend on the success (or failure) of 'claims-making' by several social actors like activists, politicians, journalists and scientists (2006: 64). For example, already in 1827, physicist Jean Baptiste Fourier demonstrated how carbon dioxide, methane and other greenhouse gases captured radiation to warm the earth (Tennesen 2008). In 1896, the possibility of global climate change known today as an anthropogenic event[35], was already recognized by the Swedish Nobel Price-winning physicist Svante Arrhenius. He was the first to speculate about burning fossil fuels that might increase atmospheric carbon dioxide affecting climatic conditions. Arrhenius predicted that a doubling of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would lead to a rise of 4 to 6 degrees Celsius in the mean global surface temperatures; an estimation that is close to figures calculated by current climate models (Jamieson 2008: 458). Nearly a century passed before this problem had sufficient ground or data to become legitimized and acknowledged by a wider public, embedded in the 'rhetoric of claims-making' (Hannigan 2006), and hence, reached a prominent place in global politics. This illustrates that an important scientific finding does not necessarily provide a guarantee for a widely shared and accepted response. Several factors,

[35] Meaning that it is caused by humans, and thus does not have a natural cause.

dynamics and people are needed before an environmental problem is successfully constructed, accepted, and becomes part of our daily talk.

Hannigan distinguishes six factors that are necessary for the successful construction of an environmental problem: the validation of the claim by a scientific authority; 'popularizers' who can bridge the gap between environmentalism and science; media attention; visual and symbolic dramatization of the problem; economic incentives to take action; and, institutional sponsors who can safeguard both the continuation and legitimacy of the issue (Hannigan 2006: 63-78). With abovementioned factors in mind, the question *how* (and possibly *why*) 'environmentalism' as a nascent ideology developed from, primarily, a modest concern and protest into something mainstream - which profoundly shaped global thinking and politics - will be central in the discussion that follows.

According to Hannigan, environmental problems share many characteristics of social problems in general. However, a crucial difference is that environmental problems are not so much rooted in personal troubles, but are often directly linked to scientific findings and they have a more imposing physical basis (p. 63). For instance, one hot summer, a landslide or torrential rains gives the scientific claim of a changing climate inevitably a visible experiential focus. For a long time sociologists adhered to a functional structural approach in which social problems were regarded as the product of tangible objective conditions. Since sociology abandoned this approach - due to Spector and Kitsuse who in 1973 suggested that 'social problems are a sequence of events that develop on the basis of collective definitions' - the process of claims-making is treated as more important than the question whether the nature of a claim is true or not (Spector and Kitsuse in Hannigan 2006: 64). The same can be said about environmental problems like global warming. Regardless whether the claim of global warming is true or not, speaking about the possibility of its existence – which can either lead to skepticism, 'belief', or something in between - directs our actions (or non-actions) and become a distinctive reality. In other words, discourses are 'real', and invoke 'real' action. In this regard, for a better understanding of the circumstances under which (the construction of) environmental problems are prone to arise, social constructivism – apart from being a method and theory – is in this section used as an analytic tool. Before turning to the history of environmental discourses, a brief introduction of different 'discursive typologies', that have been used in environmental studies, will be presented.

In academia, several typologies of environmental discourses have been provided to study environmental problems. Brulle (1996), for example, discerned environmental discourses that varied from preservation and conservation, to eco-centrism, eco-feminism, political ecology and deep ecology (Brulle 1996: 63). Eco-feminism derives from the standpoint that ecosystems abuse mirrors male domination in society. Another attempt has been provided by Herndl and Brown (1996) who called their typology: 'rhetorical model for environmental discourse'. This model takes the shape of a triangle with at each end a distinctive, but not mutually exclusive, discourse. At the top we find the *regulatory discourse,* which represents the powerful institutions that develop environmental policy. In this discourse nature is seen as a resource for a greater social welfare. The political power lies in its institutional context, but the rhetorical power emerges from the notion of ethos; the culturally constructed authority of the speaker or writer (ethno-centric: ethos). At the bottom left of the triangle is the *poetic discourse*. The rhetorical power of this discourse lies in the emphasis that is put on the beauty, the value and emotional power of nature. Here, nature is regarded as a spiritual or transcendental unity, and considers human beings to be part of nature (eco-centric: pathos). The bottom right of the triangle represents the *scientific discourse* in which nature is regarded as an object of knowledge, constructed through careful scientific methodology.

In this discourse humans are epistemologically placed outside or above nature. The immense cultural power is derived from our rationalist faith in science, and the appeal to objective fact and reason (anthropocentric: logos) (Herndl and Brown 1996: 11-12). A final illustrative typology of environmental discourses that provides us with a fruitful lens to comprehend the development of the construction of environmental problems, is presented by Hannigan (2006). Building upon prior work, Hannigan offers a comprehensive, chronological typology of three distinctive environmental discourses that rose to prominence at different historical stages, and will be used as a framework in the following discussion. The first one is the *Arcadian discourse,* that is similar to the 'poetic discourse' as used by Herndl and Brown. The second major discourse that has significantly shaped thinking about the environment is the *Ecosystem discourse.* The third influential discourse is what Hannigan frames as the *Justice discourse* (Hannigan 2006: 38-39).

In order to describe and analyze historical specific environmental discourses, a few analytical considerations need to be taken into account. Firstly, as stated before, discourses are no closed entities, nor are they mutually exclusive. Secondly, discourses cannot be separated from the practices of interaction. Collective action is based upon commonly constructed views upon reality – discourses. Brulle states that the establishment of a discourse and the creation of a network of communicative interaction are co-generative of one another (Brulle 1996: 60). In this light, influential environmental organizations are both the effect and cause of historically developed discourses. Following Brulle, discourse analysis does not depart from the point of view that there is a predefined structure regarding the internal logic of a discourse, or, the relation between different discourses. Instead, Brulle argues, in a social order, there are multiple discourses that are historical creations of social actors. The starting point of analysis is then, not so much to analyze the plurality of different viewpoints by consolidating them into some constructed logic, but rather to describe the multiple realities that have been proposed, contested, negotiated and defined by actors themselves (ibid).

3.2.1 Poetic and Arcadian discourses

At the end of the nineteenth century, when Europe and America increasingly urbanized, views upon nature underwent radical transformations. Ideas about 'wild nature' as a threat to civilization gave way to a 'back to nature movement' that celebrated romanticized notions of the wilderness. The first influential conservation organizations that contributed to an increasing environmental awareness, were "The Sierra Club" (1892) and "The Wilderness Society" (1935), which both originated in the United States. These clubs were concerned with the aesthetic value of the environment, and focused on the conservation of the 'untamed' and 'wild' nature for the sake of 'enjoying and exploring the wild places of the earth'.[36] This paradigm shift is vividly illustrated in the following text fragment: "The wilderness, like the forests, was once a great hindrance to our civilization; now, it must be maintained at great expense because society cannot do without it[37]" (Shelford 1926, in: Schmitt 1990: 174, in: Hannigan 2006: 41). These changing ideas about nature were also projected upon Africa. The most famous example is Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), in which Africa's 'dark' wilderness symbolizes the uncivilized and barbarian people that inhibit the continent. Later, as ideas about nature changed with the 'back to nature movement',

[36] See: www.sierraclub.org and www.wilderness.org.

[37] Ecological Society of America's Committee on the Preservation of Natural Conditions, in: *Naturalist Guide to the America's* (Shelford 1926, in: Schmitt 1990: 174).

depictions of Africa transformed into romantic and breathtakingly beautiful portraits of the "pure" and "untouched" African landscape. These shifting worldviews of the natural world demonstrate the social construction of this 'back to nature cult'.

A number of prominent political and institutional sponsors, and media attention gave further impetus to the rise of these so-called 'Arcadian' or 'Poetic' discourses. These discourses, which emphasized the aesthetic and spiritual value of nature, preceded the peak of the modern environmental movement of the early 1970s. According to Van Koppen, the Arcadian tradition is best understood in the context of its *complementarity.* That is, it stands in counterpoint to the urban industrial society and to the social and all of the environmental ills attached to it (Van Koppen 1998: 74-5, in: Hannigan 2006: 39). The emerging environmental awareness in the 1950s and 1960s has - amongst other reasons - been explained by the occurrence of dangerous smog in major cities, predictions of mass starvation, and warnings of an environmental catastrophe related to unprecedented and ongoing population growth (Farley 2008: 45). Manuel Castells [2000] stipulates that at the turn of the third millennium a new world (an information age) is taking shape, which he terms "The Network Society". According to him, the genesis of this new world originated in the historical coincidence, around the late 1960s and mid-1970s, of three independent processes: the information technology revolution; the economic crisis of both capitalism and statism[38], and their subsequent restructuring; and the blooming of cultural social movements such as human rights, feminism and environmentalism (p. 367). Castells does not solely refer to the rise of environmentalism but places this within a broader framework of emerging social movements as a decisive feature of a new world. In line with aforementioned scholars who explain the expanding environmental awareness as a counter-reaction to excessive growth, Castells similarly emphasizes that social movements were not reactions to the economic crisis but that they surged in the late 1960s, in the heyday of sustained growth and full employment, as a critique of the 'consumption society' (Ibid: 370). In a similar vein, Umberto Eco has noted that it is very likely that the current ecology forms the most important moment in contesting modernity's quest for cumulative progress, and symbolizes a deep moral crisis (Eco 1998: 31-32).

3.2.2 Ecosystems discourses

Amongst the profound political changes that occurred in the final decades of the twentieth century was the emergence of environmental ideologies that touched upon fundamental and existential aspects of human life, namely the relationship between human beings and the natural world (Lee 1997: ix). 'Earth Day 1970' is often seen as the beginning of the 'modern environmental era'; a symbolic claim that gained wide public attention since it was instantly embraced by the U.S. American mass media. With the concern to prevent an environmental disaster from happening 'Earth Day' started as a 'teach-in' to rise environmental awareness, change human behavior and to accumulate political weight for an environmental agenda[39]. Beyond everybody's expectations, the first 'Earth Day' brought twenty million Americans together to protest against environmental deterioration. This led again to widespread

[38] Statism is by Manuel Castells understood as 'a social system organized around the appropriation of the economic surplus produced in society by the holders of power in the state apparatus (2000: 8).

[39] Initiator of 'Earth Day' was environmental activist and US senator Gaylord Nelson. The idea of an environmental teach-in day was born after he witnessed the devastating effects of the oil-spill that happened in 1969 off the coast of Santa Barbara.

recognition in public and political arenas, and to the emergence of both radical and mainstream environmental movements.

This second major discourse that changed the ways people related to the environment, focused on notions of 'ecology' and the 'ecosystem'. Basic ideas that underline these discourses are the fact that human interference in the biosphere leads to a misbalance in nature. Examples of emerging movements that fostered these discourses are 'Greenpeace' and 'Friends of the Earth'; both envisioning a 'green' and peaceful world. Greenpeace started as a rather radical, three member organization that decided to act against nuclear weapons testing. Interestingly enough, during their first sailing mission, that was intended to protest against a U.S. nuclear test in Alaska, the original group of activists got inspired by reading a book of Indian legends. According to one legend, an Indian woman predicted how white man would destroy the earth and ravage it from its resources. Just before it was too late for the imminent apocalypse to arrive, the Indian regained his spirit and would teach the white man to worship the earth, and group together with the Indians to become "Warriors of the Rainbow". They adopted this prophecy as meaningful for their own operations and objectives, and as such, incorporated a millenarian element in the organization's goal (Lee: 1997: 8). In the course of time, Greenpeace adopted more moderate tactics, and mainstream views on how to prevent environmental degradation, and is today one of the largest environmental organizations in the world. Greenpeace is the ultimate example of the manifestation of historically developed discourses that has resulted in collective action; and in turn, their actions fertilized Ecosystems discourses.

On the radical side of the spectrum notions like eco-centrism, anti-humanism (that disvalue humans given their negative impact upon the biosphere), and deep ecology (that adheres to a holistic and interdependent belief of human and non-human life), became doctrines of the belief systems of the radical movements. A compelling example of a radical environmental movement is the foundation of "Earth First!" in 1980, an American environmental advocacy group, that prophetically anticipated for an ecological apocalypse, and the end of the industrial civilizations (Keller 2008: 221; Lee 1995). Anti-humanism themes emerged in Earth First! In the mid-1980s, when Christopher Manes (associate journal editor) argued that technology enhances overpopulation and that the practice of medicine should be abandoned. In addition to this, he controversially stated that Aids is a welcome soothing for nature, since overpopulation poses serious risks to the biosphere (Keller 2008: 221).

The Ecosystems discourse can, according to Herndl and Brown, also be classified as a scientific discourse. Different scientific disciplines became increasingly involved in the relationship between humans and the eco-system. A major influential scientific 'communicative event' that contributed significantly to expanding the range of debates about environmental issues was A *Report of the Club of Rome*: 'Limits To Growth' – a project on The Predicament of Mankind, published in 1972 (by Meadows et al.). This is one of the first scientific documents in which the possible problematic and hazardous future scenarios of the planet were raised. The Club of Rome was set up by a group of wealthy individuals and European scientists who united themselves to discuss their concerns about the existing trend of unlimited resource consumption and exponential population growth. One of their main objectives was (and still is) to demonstrate that in an increasing interdependent world several trends and factors - that are part of our current world system and values – threaten all human societies on our planet. [40] The results of the report were fairly stunning. The intrinsic significance of the Report of The Club of Rome was grounded in the

[40] http://www.clubofrome.org/eng/about/4/

strong critique of prevailing world conceptions about the ideology of infinite growth, waste disposal, mass production and consumption, and the encompassing depletion of non-renewable natural resources . In brief, the members of the Club of Rome wanted to proof the limits of the existing world system. The conducted research modeled the relationship between exponential growth, the question if the environment can allow for such an expansion to occur, and how this dimension relates to the fundamental needs and quality of the lives of all world citizens (Meadows 1972: 193). One of the main conclusions was that human kind cannot continue to perceive material growth as its primary goal without facing major problems in the nearby future. At this stage of the research it became clear that many fundamental changes in our behavior, and in the philosophy of human life were needed (ibid:10). This research was the first scientific attempt to simulate the consequences of human systems upon the environment in a computer model, and the results formed a fertile ground to criticize the existing capitalist system and ideology.[41]

Even though the presented findings have been subject to major anti-Malthusian criticisms, and were met with great skepticism, the report had an influential impact on how people thought about, and perceived environmental issues at that time. The fierce criticisms stemmed mainly from conventional economists who argued that the claims-makers of the limits to growth were 'doomsdayers' who ignored the human capacity to innovate and adapt to scarcity. Since there exists in general a negative correlation between wealth and birth rate, they stated that economic growth was not the cause of the problem, but rather the solution. In their view, in presence of widespread poverty, growth is a moral imperative (Farley 2008: 45-46). Nevertheless, the presented ideas about the limits to growth gave a serious impetus to invest in environmental protections by the wealthier nations. Acknowledging and anticipating on an impending environmental crisis, the first important steps were taken by governments of the developed nations to address these issues. For instance, in the United States, the National Policy Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, all passed between 1970 and 1973 (ibid). Although the concerns expressed by environmental movements and the Club of Rome were addressing the problematic relationship between human systems and their environment, their attention was not yet focused on global warming and climate change. A possible explanation for this is that the environmental problems like air pollution, water pollution, and toxic waste disposal were more tied to people's daily life experiences than climate change or global warming, which remained rather vague scientific claims.

3.2.3 Environmental Justice discourses

Emerging mainstream environmental movements fostered thoughts on social justice, and created new discourses about what meaningful human existence is about. As already mentioned in the introduction, environmental justice is concerned with the basic human right that all world citizens have the right to live and work in a healthy environment. This 'discursive field' has generated (and has been generated by) interdisciplinary contributions from scholars in the field of philosophy, social sciences, legal studies, and also the "hard" sciences, mainly biology (Figueroa 2008: 341). Furthermore citizens and activists have made major contributions in promoting environmental justice awareness. This fusion of social justice and environmental concerns increasingly gathered influence throughout the world, and it has been said that this so-called Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) is the largest and fastest-growing social movement

in the world (Gibbs 2003, in: ibid 342). The environmental paradigm shift underwent major transformations, especially at the grassroots level, both in the developed and in the developing nations. Environmental justice has been embraced by grassroots movements, civil rights movements and indigenous people on a large scale. An example of an influential movement - founded by the Nobel-Peace Prize winning Wangaari Mathaai in 1977 in Kenya - that gained widespread support at the grassroots level in Africa, is the *Green Belt Movement* (GBM). Mathaai, known as an environmental and political activist, a professor in biology and former politician, mobilized more than 60.000 women in Kenya to 'plant trees as a symbol for peace'. Since its establishment more than thirty million trees have been planted throughout Africa, and as such played an important role in fighting deforestation. The GBM has become one of the biggest social movements in Africa. By awarding Mathaai with the Nobel Peace Prize to, as the first African woman's laureate, the international community fully embraced her movement and stated that 'her activities oblige us to preserve nature by fighting against climate change, the destruction of the environment and the exploitation of nature' (Klaus Töpfer, UNEP, in: Ehlert 2005: 10).

In the U.S. the EJM began to pose questions about distributive environmental justice, as it became clear that a disproportionate amount of environmental burdens was falling on African-Americans, Latino-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, the working-class, and the poor. Albeit the fact that environmental justice is concerned with such issues as environmental racism, on a global scale it extended to issues of colonialism, global environmental commons and corporate globalization (Figueroa 2008: 342-8). By all means, climate change is pre-eminently a symbol of disproportionally distributed environmental burdens in particular, and global inequality in general. It has been within this discursive frame – enhanced by a growing scientific -, and international organizations interference – that global warming and climate change entered international political debates, and reached multilateral salience. These dilemmas of distributed unfairness faced by the South, were for the first time formally internationally addressed in 1972, during the "Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment", (UNEP 1972) issued in Stockholm. More than a decade later, in 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) of the UN released the famous 'Our Common Future' report (which later became known as the so-called Brundtland report). The result of its publication was that the idea of basic human development fused with the right to live in a healthy environment, and entered official international policy spheres. From this point in time the intrinsic link between development, human rights and environmental justice gradually became part of mainstream development thinking. Within this paradigm, sustainable development – i.e. that development should meet the needs of present populations without compromising the needs of future generations - reached an almost sacred status. By picturing 'our threatened future' and further emphasizing the urgency of the global environmental crisis, the Brundtland report explicitly ascertained the existing tension between long term and short term reasoning that is inherent to modern development-models in which uncurbed consumption, wealth, accumulation and progress are aspired. A basic conclusion of the report was that the non-sustainable consumption patterns of the developed nations have largely contributed to poverty and environmental degradation in the developing countries, particularly in Africa. In depicting the global environmental crisis Africa was already predicted to be highly vulnerable:

> "The seriousness of the African crisis cannot be overemphasized and in its entirety, it should really engage the whole world. (..) It requires of course very little imagination to appreciate the fact that it is not only Africa that is in danger. In the long term the entire world economy could be threatened not only because of the indivisibility of human welfare but because of Africa's crucial position in the global

economy as a source of a large number of vital raw materials" (*Maxime Ferrari, director UNEP 1986, in: 'Our Common Future'*[42]*)*.

This quotation demonstrates how African countries were – and still are – considered to be extremely susceptible for environmental problems. Hence, due to Africa's depicted vulnerability in relation to the global environmental crisis, sustainable development has become ingrained with the mission to assist the poor in carrying out environmentally friendly practices. Furthermore, a crucial element is raised, namely that Africa is (and will become increasingly) indispensible in solving the global crisis that is characterized by the depletion of natural resources. Africa thus needed not only to be 'saved' by the industrialized countries from its own bad environmental practices, but was at the same time envisaged as instrumental to play an essential part in surmounting the global crisis. Interestingly enough, as we shall see below, this way of reasoning bears outstanding similarities with current conceptualizations of the climate crisis and Africa's perceived role herein.

In brief, the growing awareness and concern for the environmental crisis was no longer bound to the industrialized world with its unprecedented urbanization, but gradually became a globalized issue and embedded within broader human rights and development discourses. As a result of the fusion between development and environmental justice, developing and applying national and international environmental laws became important pillars of intervention in the developing world.

By the mid- 1980s most scientists were convinced of the fact that global warming was not merely fluctuating by nature, but was in fact caused by humans. It was around this time that public awareness raised rapidly. The role of science and the *epistemic communities* increasingly gained more prominence in addressing the issue of global climate change. Scientists, operating through the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), and the UNEP were largely responsible for the "framing" of climate change for political debate, and for the fact that a multilateral international response was necessary to address the threat (Cass 1996: 27). Many international organizations were founded, and a multitude of international conferences - centered on both development and the environment - followed that brought climate change to the fore. In 1988 the WMO and the UNEP assembled the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to review the scientific and technical peer-reviewed literature on global climate change (GCC). This scientific body became widely-known as the highest authority concerning human-induced climate change knowledge, and in 2007 the organization, together with Al Gore, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change"[43].

In 1990 the IPCC published its first Assessment Report that unveiled the importance of addressing climate change, and concluded that it deserved a political platform to tackle its consequences. This Assessment played a decisive role in the creation of the key-international treaty to reduce global warming – the UNFCCC (ibid). In 1992 – during the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro – the so-called "Earth Summit", was organized and resulted in the international treaty. Virtually all countries in the world signed it, and pledged to 'prevent anthropogenic interference with the climate system' (Jamieson 2008: 459). An important theme that was addressed during the Summit was to look for alternative sources of energy that could replace the use of fossil fuels. However, the FCCC treaty itself set no limits on GHG emissions and never had any enforcement mechanisms for individual countries. In turn,

[42] http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-03.htm#II.1
[43] http://www.ipcc.ch/organization/organization_history.shtml

this legally non-binding treaty paved the way for the Kyoto Protocol that came into existence in 1997, in which industrialized countries for the first time agreed upon reducing greenhouse gas emissions. While contrary to the former this is a binding treaty it took until 2005 before the majority of the countries signed it and that it effectively could be brought into force. However, the US remains an exception since it is still not a signatory, while being responsible for 36.1% of 1990 emission levels of Annex I countries[44].

The Protocol expires in 2012 and until today there is no consensus about how a post-Kyoto document will or should look like. Remarkably enough, among the richest and industrialized countries there appears to be no intrinsic will to cut down their emissions. Yet the amount of money that is made available to compensate African countries for mitigation and adaptation to climate change has been established in the form of global climate funds. Moreover, the so-called "flexibility mechanisms" like Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI) and massive tree planting undertakings in the form of REDD, are the ultimate proof that the international community has given the developing world in general and Africa in particular the task to play an important role in fighting and overcoming the global climate crisis. Embedded in that idea is the discursive construction that it is 'to save the continent from its own detriment'. In other words, instead of tackling the problem at its roots, i.e. reducing global greenhouse gas emissions, the focus has shifted towards finding, once more, the solution "in" Africa.

In this section I briefly discussed the history of environmental discourses, and how they are entangled with, and impinge upon, related international policy developments. In this context Dryzek's (2005) notes that, even if we believe in progress, it would be a mistake to think of the history of environmental affairs of a clear trajectory towards an environmental enlightenment - that humanity is becoming more sensitive and aware, escaping from past misconceptions and ignorance. But what we see instead is that these matters are subject to ongoing dispute between people who think in sharply different ways (Dryzek 2005: 6). An overall observation that can be made is that due to the trans-boundary character of climate change, an extensive trans-national norm building network with a myriad of stakeholders has come to dominate global politics. Civil society movements, epistemic communities, lobby groups are influencing the global economy and global politics more than ever before (Jacobeit, Kappel and Mückenberger 2010), and as such continue to shape North South relations. Lee (1995) states that "during the final decades of the twentieth century profound political changes have occurred. The most critical of these changes has been the rise to power and prominence of environmental ideologies" (Lee 1995: ix).

It is indeed highly remarkable to notice that the 'new environmentalism' developed from a modest attempt to protest against pollution into something that today is part of mainstream, and globally wide public and political ideologies and policies. A final crucial question rises in this context, namely, how can we understand the rise of this particular movement and ideology? How can we explain the fact that especially environmentalism spread so rapidly and gained worldwide support? Can we discern a recurrent form or content of environmental discourses that traverses all different discursive and social realms? In other words, is there a *life-blood* or intrinsic vital force that perseveres in each interpretation of environmental threats, in different time frames but also in differing cultural contexts?

In academia several factors and causes have been pointed out. A convincing explanation is given by Lee (1995) and Arendt (1958), who state that our relationship with the planet touches upon the essence of

[44] Under the UNFCCC there have been forty countries - the so-called Annex I countries - determined as industrialized countries, or countries in transition. Annex II countries are a sub-group of developed countries but pay for the costs of developing countries.

human condition (Arendt 1958 in: Lee), and is directly linked to our political identity. Lee states that it is therefore not surprising that 'environmentalism' permeated traditional left-right dichotomies (Lee 1995: ix). Moreover, According to Lee, there is a common ground that is shared by all forms of environmentalism. She writes in her book E*arth First!* that:

> "In all its forms, environmentalism is – at least marginally – apocalyptic. It is the wellbeing of this planet that most fundamentally supports human life; threats to the health of the earth are therefore threats to human life itself. It is the power of that connection that drives environmentalism. Confronting pollution and extinction is in a very real way confronting the source and limits of power" (ix).

Not coincidentally, environmentalism came to surge right after the earth was photographed for the first time from space, and indeed what a fragile and beautiful place it looked (see picture on the next page).

For the first time in history it became possible to conceive the globe as a finite entity, and to delimit the geographical boundaries of human's place in this world. This brings us to the crucial relationship between the environment on the one hand, and the limits of human existence on the other. It is therefore not surprising that the relation of people with their source of existence plays a vital role in oral traditions, myths, legends but also in written scriptures (see van Beek 1999a; 1999b). Van Beek (1999a) argues that the meta message that is hidden in the wide fascination with the climate should be understood as a cultural phenomenon, as a way of speaking that belongs to a society. This entails that who is concerned with the climate, has concerns about the future of a society. As such, he contends that climate discourses can be analyzed as a particular end of time idea. We shall see in the subsequent chapters that the apocalyptic aura of climate change – indivisible from notions of fear and moral responsibility – lends itself fairly easily to be appropriated by differing ontological and discursive realms, while still impinging a particular form upon them. In line with Lee and van Beek I wish to demonstrate that indeed the *life-blood* of climate change discourses (and thus environmentalism in general) lies in the finitude of the earth, and touches upon the limits of human existence. From this historical description and analysis I will now turn to a more discourse analytical approach of contemporary climate change debates.

This "Earthrise" picture was taken by Apollo 8's crew on Dec. 24, 1968, and is considered the first color photograph of Earth taken by humans in (deep) space. Source[45]

3.3 "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally": Deconstructing Kyoto

Over the last years, climate change has increasingly played a prominent role within broader world-wide 'human security' challenges and natural disaster management. Since it is more and more pointed out as an all-embracing explanation for the already deeply rooted problems in Africa, a global 'environmental consciousness' made its way into development thinking. Predictions on the effects on African societies are not very hopeful. The main concerns are that climate change will lead to widespread poverty, increase food scarcity, engender diseases, migration, refugees, overpopulation in better-endowed areas, and conflicts over natural resources (Second Report on Climate Change and Development, IIED 2005). In brief, the 'climatic threat' has been by and large invested with an 'apocalyptic aura' by leading actors in international climate change discourses. The diagnoses on this matter, as much as the understanding of how it can be mitigated, and how people can or *should* adapt to the changing climate have become the ultimate guidelines for contemporary environmental and development policies. Within this paradigm, it is widely accepted that the industrialized countries in the North have caused 'irreversible' climatic change and that the developing countries in the South are the first victims to pay the prize. The IPCC describes Africa as "the world's poorest region, as the continent most vulnerable to the impacts of projected

[45] http://photoblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2010/12/24/5708231-holiday-calendar-from-the-moon-to-the-earth.

change because widespread poverty limits adaptation capabilities. Small scale farming provides most of the food produced in Africa; all this means that Africa is exceptionally vulnerable to the uncertainties and weather extremes of global warming" (cf. IPCC, in: second working report of IIED, 2005: 23).

As mentioned before, science overwhelmingly shares the opinion that over the last century, climate change is an anthropogenic event, and as such not merely fluctuating by nature. A general proposal in development thinking and global environmental politics is that the industrialized North should compensate for its own overuse by decreasing their greenhouse gas emissions. Nicholas Onuf resumes common understandings of climate change as follows: "We have done it to ourselves and we have only begun to pay. For many commentators this is the Faustian bargain, modernity's deal with the devil, the inevitable consequence of our material excesses, (…), our willful innocence, our invincible arrogance" (Onuf 2007: xii). Or, as Sarah O'Gorman frames it, "(…) mother nature is turning out to be a virulent anti-capitalist. (…) And the first metamorphosis must be of the capitalist orthodoxy into something far more humane and appropriate to the world" (O'Gorman 2000: 9).

According to 'the polluter pays principle' the answer for the problems Africa is facing, caused by climate change, should 'once again' come from the North. On the other hand, the environmental paradigm shift in development thinking conveys to "Think Globally and Act Locally" – which implies that African farmers should take their responsibility and be part of the global solution. Educating farmers should lead to more sustainable agricultural production, and additionally, sensitize farmers in order to fit the dominant discourse. The South therefore is in the first place seen as merely victims of northern excessive consumption patterns. Secondly, farmers in developing countries are similarly considered to be part of the problem, and consequently, should play a part in the global solution[46].

What derives from this very short introduction of trans-nationally constructed environmental discourses is the suggestion that climate change is a *global* problem – a universal threat – which requires a global solution, or a 'global social contract'[47]. To some, the conceptualization of this concern as something global might seem unproblematic, and foremost, the only rationale to save the planet. Nevertheless, whatever this global contract constitutes and proposes, it is a solution that is by and large shaped and dominated by northern states and elites as a 'one size fits all solution' for the developing world; while local perceptions in the South and their counter hegemonic discourses are obscured and subjugated. Therefore, in line with Heather Smith, who argues that 'to remain deaf to counter hegemonic discourse is to deny the realities of climate change' (Smith 2007: 198), this research wants to show that the notion of global is problematic and that local discourses provide a necessary alternative (see also: Pettenger *et al.* 2007).

This global notion encompasses other implications, which will briefly be discussed in this paragraph. The understanding of climate change as a *global* issue implies a conception of a shared vulnerability, which suggests to be of equal important to all parties as; i.e. a solution is needed in which all parties should play

[46] See for example: The second report from the Working Group on Climate Change and Development (2005). And: www.fairclimate.nl/

http://www.foreignaffairs.com/features/readinglists/what-to-read-on-climate-change

http://www.realclimate.org/
http://www.climatescience.gov/

[47] Term borrowed from Nicholas Onuf (2007: xiii).

a part and take their responsibility. Smith underpins that this problematic global notion is a reflection of interests of particular states, and states that "it will be seen that there is power in the language of global to obfuscate power relations and prevailing social orders, to construct "others" and to deny responsibility" (Smith 2007: 201). To plea for a global solution might be used as a justification for Western interference and intervention in the affairs of vulnerable regions in the South. Furthermore, hazards also provide a useful rationale for blaming poverty and inequitable distribution of material goods of the people living in these regions who are directly living with and depending on nature. Smith talks about a denial of historical responsibility for emissions, an externalization and detachment of nature. By focusing on global concentrations, states are able to hide behind percentages that do not cover their per capita emissions (ibid: 203). In brief, the global notion of environmental problems hides a multitude of political, economic, social and ethical difficulties. In various ways the global notion of the climatic threat is rather a political term than merely a geographical one; following Shiva, one which provides the North with a new political space in which to control the South, thus creating the moral base for *green imperialism* (Elliott 1998 citing Shiva, 1998: 201).

While the climate change paradigm bears parallels to earlier narratives on the precariousness of society-environment relations in Africa (e.g. desiccation narrative of the 1920s, the tragedy of the commons of the 1960s, and the expansion of the Sahel narrative of the 1970s and 1980s) it can be said that the very size of global funds – flowing to INGOs and NGOs – that are made available for adaptation and mitigation in Africa, marks the beginning of a new era of global environmental governance. Moreover, due to the fact that the climate change problematic embraces all aspects of human life and human security, a green paradigm shift has made its way into development thinking. This shift has entailed the expansion and re-shaping of adaptation and mitigation projects at the local level – and thus setting new norms and standards about how to deal with the environment and with development. The world-wide recognition of climate change as a major challenge facing households and communities in the developing world has led to a 'mainstreaming' of adaptation into development policies, which in turn inevitably will result in an intense re-shaping of environment-society related relations in Africa (Cannon and Müller-Mahn 2010: 3).

The reshaping of environment-society relations in Africa in itself might seem unproblematic, however if we take a closer look at both the concepts of development in general and adaptation in particular, several problems arise. Firstly, development is generally understood as the improvement and transformation of the present day situation – based on socially constructed indicators like human rights, ideas of justice and equality etc. Adaptation on the other hand does not necessarily make life better, it rather aims at rendering it possible as it is more focused on preventing environmental damages from happening. The paradigm shift from 'development' to 'adaptation' in this regard is what Cannon and Müller-Mahn term as "the development context" of climate change. They state that current development policies and projects are presumably not equipped to protect people from environmental hazards, and as a response to the climate change problematic the focus of development policies and NGOs has been on adaptation and mitigation of billions of people in the developing world. Therefore, nowadays it is impossible to detach adaptation from development while at the same time the connections are not quite clear. Taking on a social constructivist perspective the authors argue that adaptation is not just a response to meteorological parameters of a changing climate but is primarily driven by discourses about these phenomena in a society. In a similar vein, modifications of development or climate policy do not simply happen as a reaction of policymakers to newly emerging problems, but they are rather brought about because certain types of knowledge and perceptions are negotiated and become powerful in public discourses. As such, climate change problematic and the focus on adaptation goes along with a significant

shift in discourses used to deal with what is normally called development. While acknowledging that climate change adaptation and development are closely related, they similarly point out that it would be highly insufficient to subsume the one under the other (ibid).

3.3.2. The Copenhagen School: towards a comprehensive notion of Human Security and the risks of *Securitization*

To securitize an issue means to frame it as a special kind of politics, or above politics. It can be seen as an extreme version of politicization (Buzan, Weaver and de Wilde, in: Emmers 2007: 111). The act of securitization involves the conceptualization of an issue as an existential threat that needs emergency actions. This determination occurs by securitizing actors (bureaucracies, pressure groups etc.) and referent objects (things that are threatened; i.e. states, economies, ideologies, species etc.). The actors need to convince relevant audiences that extra-ordinary measures are needed (ibid; Frerks 2007: 4). The Copenhagen School envisions a broad view of security that includes not only military domains but also environmental, societal, economic and political spheres. The war-on-terror, climate change, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS and the economical crisis are some obvious examples of securitized issues. Interestingly enough, by the same token, issues can go through a reversed process and become de-securitized (Emmers 2007: 111).

Related to the act of securitization of the matter is the idea – which increasingly gains more prominence within contemporary environmental discourse - that climate change causes conflicts and wars. This mono-causal, Neo-Malthusian approach has rightfully been criticized by Frerks (2005: 41) who states that "we 'need' a political discourse and 'violence entrepreneurs' to mobilize people". And by Richards who states that we do not encounter a Malthus with Guns, but there is always a discourse needed to put people into action (Richards 1996). This does not mean that environmental degradation cannot lead to tensions or competition over natural resources, however, it more often works in an indirect manner and doesn't lead on its own to wars in the classical sense (ibid).

In light of the concerns expressed by the Copenhagen School, Frerks argues that the 'over- securitization' of issues among which 'the war-on- terror' and climate change, involves serious risks. He states that by legitimizing extra-ordinary measures to promote human security, a clouded vision towards alternative, more peaceful approaches can be a consequence (Frerks 2007: 4). In contrast to most realist approaches to security studies, which focus is on the material nature of threats, The Copenhagen School focuses more on the role of discourses in which two important questions have been addressed. The first one is why have some moves of securitization have succeeded in convincing an audience while others have not; the second one is why some issues are articulated and treated as existential threats while others are not (Hansen 2000, in: ibid)?

The aim of the securitization model is to opt for a more comprehensive conceptualization of security that is not just bounded to military matters that require emergency actions (Emmers 2007). However, several limitations of the securitization model have been pointed out. An important criticism is that research related to security issues have primarily been concerned with theoretical approaches, while little empirical research has been involved. For this reason, it is still open to debate whether the securitization model can contribute to the study of international security (Frerks 2007, and Emmers 2007).

3.4 NGOs as increasing authorities in building *green* norms and settings global standards

What can be derived from the discussion above is that global environmental politics form an extremely complex web of stakeholders, ethical concerns, global-local responsibilities, interests, and paradigmatic politics – all informed by and embedded within particular discourses, and a specific time frame. As has been shown by Lee (among others), environmentalism in all its forms bears apocalyptic elements, for, she argues, threats to the health of the earth are threats to human life itself. It is therefore not surprising that within environmental politics, climate change has reached the status of a *securitized* issue. The perceived urgency of the matter is conceptualized and materialized by the means of protocols and funding of back-donors like governments, ministries and international organizations. Money flows from back-donors respectively to INGOs, NGOs, which are again turned into projects at the local level. In brief, the problem is conceptualized at the global level, ideologically interpreted and translated at the national level, and finally played out and mediated in different 'translation regimes' at the local level. In other words, where money flows, discourses travel with it[48]. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter two, these processes do not follow such a uni-directional and one dimensional path; but are rather subject to continuous flows of communication, negotiation and translation, adopted by a multitude of programs and actors that constitute the complex field of environmental global governance. While ideas about climate change adaptation and mitigation are conceptualized at the global level, disseminated in the South through different actors, within this multi-level and multi-layered arena we can determine translators who have a more powerful mediating position than others. As I will disclose below, in the context of the Bamenda Grassfields the mediating power and defining role of NGOs is rather particular – as they occupy a crucial strategic node between the global and the local level in the translation process - and will therefore be explored in the following.

The World Bank's definition of NGOs as: "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interest of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development"; is rather unsatisfactory, for it reduces these organizations to what they do and not what they stand for. In order to understand the power and influence of – especially - environmental NGOs (e.g. nature and wildlife conservation, forest community development etc.) in sub-Saharan Africa we have to take into account that they are based on politically, economically, and ideologically-informed decisions, and have been influenced by a wide variety of environmental ideologies (see Duffy 1997: 442), as discussed in the previous section. What we can learn from the extensive body of sociological and political science literature covering international environmental policy, is that NGOs and INGOs have profoundly shaped the "politics of the earth", and moreover, the development of North-South relations (see: Dryzek 2005; Duffy 1997; 2006; Boli and Thomas 1999). In this section I want to demonstrate – based on both literature review and my empirical data - how (I)NGOs are among the most powerful vehicles in shaping and mediating globally constructed discourses on climate change in the Bamenda Grassfields. Moreover, I wish to disclose how Kyoto's 'ideology' of "Thinking Globally and Acting Locally" results in many cases in imposing mitigation strategies, rather than providing tools and develop adaptive capacities among Grassroots farmers in Bamenda. What follows below is firstly, a broader theoretical discussion of how environmental politics and NGOs relate to the development of North-South relations. Secondly, I will shed light on the discursive processes of how NGOs in Bamenda adopt and adapt donor language to, on the one hand attract external funding, and on the other hand how this leads to the translation of narratives at the local level that primarily blame farmers for causing climate change.

[48] This holds (mainly) true for the institutional level.

3.4.1. Environmental NGOs in broader perspective

Only by the virtue of their numbers - from six thousand before the 1990s, until forty thousand worldwide in 2008 - we can conclude that NGOs have become significant players on the international stage[49]. Much of their growth has been a product of heightened globalization, driven by the emergence of the internet in the 1990s, which invoked a dramatic expansion of NGOs (Gunter 2008: 95). Moreover, social movements and intergovernmental agreements and protocols have played a role in fostering the growth of these organizations. The structure in which NGOs operate is clearly different from governments and their role has been viewed in that they pluralize world politics by offering multiple channels of access across traditional nation-state borders. "They act as both allies and adversaries to states, forming networks that advocate policy changes and define ethical standards" (ibid). While it is generally accepted that NGOs fulfill an increasingly important role in global politics, there is no agreement about how to define them. As Gunter notes, they can be in one fundamental sense defined by what they are not: "they are not governmental but nongovernmental". This is however a rather complicated terminology since they are predominantly dependent on government funding. In addition to this, it is within the discursive frames and paradigms created at the level of states, and international governments (informed by all sorts of actors like epistemic communities and environmental movements) that NGOs have to operate. The fact that these organizations are not bounded to states and to the bureaucratic thresholds that many environmental laws need to pass, make NGOs more dynamic and flexible, which in turn makes them operate within a relatively short time dimension.

In other words, NGOs are likely to respond faster to changes in discursive formations than governments and states. The thematic occupation of the majority of NGOs have encompassed all forms of social, political, economic and existential life. But the role of environmental or *green* NGOs in global politics have had the greatest impact (ibid). This is not so surprising if we take into account that the environmental movement today has grown into the largest social movements in the world. Their influence has varied from taking part in global dialogues (e.g. world summits), to establishing ethical standards, to shaping and framing policy formations. The social constructed image of NGOs with their social values and obtained results have been appreciated in varying degrees. Michael Gunter defines the power of environmental NGOs as follows:

> "Environmental NGOs are an alternative power source to nation-states that enhance environmental justice around the world by creating new transnational political coalitions through the creation and maintenance of the civil society"(Gunter 2008: 96).

Other scholars have taken more critical stances. For example, in much of the mainstream literature the focus has been on processes of dominance in which aid giving and receiving is seen as a reflection of power-oriented interstate competition, dominance and the creation of new interdependencies. This general emphasis on power processes at the global level as adhered to in political sciences and international relations – in which power in the narrow understanding of the term is viewed as political domination, and as the residing of power in institutions and dominant actors - is however, not the primary focus of this study. In climate change research very little concern has been expressed for the ideological effects of travelling discourses at the local level. Therefore I am here more concerned with the role of NGOs acting as vehicles of discursive mediation, translating and negotiate prevailing norms and standards that are conceptualized at the global level and translated locally. From this point of view, the

assumption derives that power is constituted within the so-called ideological effects or truth effects as created within (hegemonic) discourses. The primary task becomes then to unveil the dominant and taken-for-granted representations of 'reality'.

The complex field of global environmental governance and North-South relations is thoroughly examined by Rosaleen Duffy (1997;2006). Based on several case studies in Madagascar and Southern-Africa she argues that the new development in North-South relations denotes a move towards the politics of post-conditionality. This is a situation in which states are defined as 'stakeholders' and drawn into partnerships with global public- private partnerships. Due to the trans-boundary nature of the climate and the increasing importance of environmental issues in global politics, Duffy (2006) argues – and demonstrated in her study in Madagascar - that new and complex networks of interest groups keen to develop particular forms of natural resource management have been generated. This can be seen in light of what Harrison [2004] has termed *the governance state*, a new phenomena of global networks of governance (including NGOs, donors, private companies and international financial institutions) which have become indivisible from nation-states (Harrison 2004: 23-26, in: Duffy 2006: 732), and in turn have transformed environmental politics into something that is neither local nor global. Duffy additionally argues that in many ways, environmental issues and policy making in the developing world have become intimately intertwined with global actors, and produces a new kind of global politics (Duffy 2006). As a result of this, national governments' policies and NGOs' activities are inextricably bound together, since they (among other actors and institutions) constitute the global network of governance. By demonstrating how transnational networks deeply affect conservation policy in the developing world, Duffy similarly underscores the importance of discourses and ideologies that inform environmental policymaking.

The ever-expanding actors and interests groups concerned with global governance and environmental issues implies a fundamental shift away from state-centric views of global politics. Sociologist David Frank [2002] has identified three main stages of global institutionalization through which nature protection has passed: changes in world-culture; changes in world organization; and changes in the nation-state politics (Frank 2002: 49). In a similar vein, John Boli and Thomas George demonstrate in their book *Constructing world culture: international nongovernmental organizations* (1999) that in the existing analyses and studies of global governance the role and influence of INGOs is highly underexposed. In their volume they state that the paucity of scholarly attention to INGOs and they ways they have been treated as marginal or even epiphenomenal has left them puzzled. This led them to advance the existing world-polity perspective on global change by examining the history, structure and operations of INGOs. They argue that the world polity – like any polity – is constituted by a distinct culture, what they define "as a set of fundamental principles and models, mainly ontological and cognitive in character, defining the nature and purpose of social actors and action". According to them, world culture becomes embedded in social organizations, mainly operating at the global level , of which most are INGOs. By studying INGOs' structures, purposes and operations, they claim that we can identify fundamental principles of (a changing) world culture. In their study they examine how INGOs promote world cultural principles, and as such, demonstrate how these organizations play a central role in developing and shaping the frames that orient other actors, including states (Boli and Thomas 1999: 14).

While this assessment of INGOs' role in shaping 'world culture' and world organization is beyond the scope of this study, it gives us a tentative idea of the important position that these organization occupy in influencing global governance, and hence, constructing norms and setting standards beyond the authority of national governments - particularly in developing countries. In the case of environmental politics in

general and climate change in particular the development of setting global standards to preserve the ecosystem and protect the ozone layer have become all the more apparent in the day-to-day realities of people in the South. As Duffy demonstrates, environmental NGOs have had an increasing impact upon global regimes through pressure group politics. Their capacity to disseminate environmental information through the media and other campaigning activities have often been used to embarrass governments, and to raise awareness about globally conceptualized key problems. Following Duffy, global institutions and national governments have in many ways transformed their governing activities in response to the encounter with the environmental movement (ibid).

The predictions of the devastating consequences of climate change for the developing world in general and Africa in particular, and hence the increasing preoccupation at the policy level with enhancing the adaptation and mitigation techniques for local populations, has been materialized in the creation of new global funds. Financial support for African countries is seen as a crucial and indispensible tool for African populations to adapt to the consequences of climate change and to achieve the agreements as proposed by the UNFCCC in Copenhagen. Several proposals to generate new funds (both bilateral and multilateral) have been put forward by the UNDP, World Bank, African Development Bank, European Commission and many others. The estimated costs of climate change adaptation for the developing countries vary between the World Bank's 10 to 40 billion dollar per year in 2020, to the UNDP's (2007) estimate of 86 billion dollar per year in 2015. The expected costs for climate change mitigation have been estimated at 100 to 200 billion dollar[50].

What can be derived from the brief discussion of the governance state is that the complex arena of environmental politics in developing countries can be seen as a new form of hybrid politics that is neither global nor local, and allows external players to have a extraordinary degree of influence in the national and local context in developing countries. While the useful framework of the governance state on the one hand enables us to comprehend these dynamics at the policy level, it similarly shows that it is fruitful and necessary to extend this debate to the empirical sphere of local practices and policies. As we shall see below, globally constructed discourses on climate change are powerfully represented and reinterpreted in (local) NGO policies and expressed by NGO workers in Bamenda.

3.5 Climate change mitigation and adaptation in Bamenda

3.5.1 Bamenda's *Governance State*

Due to its variety in biodiversity, and more important, because the country shares the Congo Basin – the second largest rainforest in the world - Cameroon forms an important target for climate change mitigation on the international agenda. The Congo basin represents a carbon reserve of global significance for regulating greenhouse gas emissions, and the regeneration and preservation of the forest is considered to be a crucial factor in the global fight against environmental degradation and controlling climate change. In addition to the mitigating role of the forest, enhancing adaptation capacities of people who depend on the forest is an important policy focus. This is because the predicted future changes of

[50] See report 'Financing Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation in Africa: Key Issues and Options for Policy-makers and Negotiators', May 2009: http://www.uneca.org/adfvii/documents/FINALPolicyBrief_FinancingCC130509.pdf

the climate expect forests to face significant pressure from climate change over the next century. A such, Cameroon forms - as many other forest rich countries in Africa - a 'donor darling' for the international community within the mitigation and adaptation to climate change paradigms. In as similar vein, at the national level these issues are by and large embedded in development programs. This might be a possible explanation for the large amount of projects and NGOs that are active in this field in Bamenda and Cameroon at large.

Source: *photographed at MINFOF*

In climate change research it has been shown that the institution of the state, civil society organizations and the market play a crucial role in determining responses to changing environmental and policy conditions and risks. Moreover, it has been found that a significant factor that influences the local climate policies is the way in which decision makers perceive climate change (Brown, Nkem *et al.* 2010). Against this backdrop, this section sheds light on the responses and perceptions of important stakeholders (NGO workers and government officials) regarding the opportunities and challenges of climate change. Part of my analysis – bases on several in-depth interviews with NGO representatives, policy and sensitization meetings, and policy documents - form fifteen (regional, national and international) NGOs that over the last years all have embedded climate change related programs into their policies. Moreover, I conducted interviews with delegates (both in Yaoundé as in Bamenda) of the Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINSRESI), Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP), Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF). The delegates and representatives of the NGOs were elected for the interviews because of the decision-making role they fulfil within the organizations and their involvement in the climate change debate.

It does not require a thorough investigation to realize that Bamenda hosts a fairly good amount of NGOs. Especially in the city centre one can easily find several international, national and local NGOs along the streets. According to the North West Association of Development Organizations (NWADO), which functions as an overarching civil society organization, in Bamenda alone there are at least seventy registered NGOs, and an even larger amount of Common Initiative Groups (CIGs). The emergence of the civil society in Cameroon dates back to the 1980s and 1990s with the deepening economic crises of that

time, rising unemployment, poor provision of social services and the more than 80% devaluation of the FCFA - the national currency. Global pressure towards a more democratic and open society resulted in the enactment of laws that made it possible for civil society groupings to facilitate their recognition. One of these laws is the 1999 law which spells out the provisions to acquire status as an NGO in Cameroon[51]. Taking a closer look at the case of Bamenda, there are at least two constituents that make climate change politics a complex network. In the first place, the role of the government and the role of environmental organizations in combating climate change has become very diffuse, and can be seen in line with Harrison's *governance state*. The government relies on organizations like SHUMAS[52] to execute programs of tree planting since they have the expertise, the means and technical supplies. Another organization called ANAFOR[53] is a government institution that was specifically created in 2002 to fight climate change. However, they are dependent of external funding to carry out their activities, which makes them partly a parastatal body. One part of the explanation of the diffuse character of climate change politics in this region lies indeed in the global character of the issue, and thus the external pressure and funding that has put new organizations and projects into place. Secondly, a fundamental element that explains the prominent role of the donor consortium in contrast with the role of the government, could be viewed in historical perspective, i.e. the so-called Anglophone problem and the marginalization of Bamenda from national politics[54]. NGOs are namely far and foremost a fruitful way to create jobs and to find alternative means and channels to create opportunities that are not provided for by the government. A fundamental difference that became apparent in the interviews with NGO workers in contrast to government officials, was that the latter emphasized the lack of means to carry out their activities, as a delegate scrutinized:

> "(..)at the government level they give you little means to function. They give you very limited means to function. Even the most beautiful woman can only give what she has. So you try to work within your means. I cannot kill myself. But I would want to do a lot. I have to criticize because they give limited means to technical services. Very limited, so you cannot do a lot" (*interview September 2009, coordinator mountain forest project of the MINFOF*).

Interestingly enough, the delegate of livestock and animal husbandries in Bafut saw the responsibility to combat climate change in his sector to be depending on the support of NGOs:

> "My sector is badly hit by climate change heat. Streams are drying off when the first rains have not yet even come. Pastures are scarce, humans and animals have no more water to drink. It's terrible and something serious needs to be done. At mile 4 a full river has gone (..). The ministry tells us to plant trees. Everybody is involved in tree planting but who are those that are planting? We bring the component on how to protect the ozone layer, we sensitize them to mitigate climate change. But, we are still in Africa and we have no NGOs that can assist us" (*interview February 8, 2010. Ambe Samuel Ngwankaa*).

Another factor that underlines the influential role of NGOs in the Bamenda Grassfields in shaping both society-environment relations and creating climate change awareness can be found at the grass roots level. Namely, the majority of the farmers who had heard about climate change, stated that they became aware of this by the sensitization of a particular NGO. This brief discussion about the diffuse character of

[51] 'Strengthening the Civil Society', NWADO September 2009, Vol. 1 issue 2.
[52] Strategic Humanitarian Services.
[53] Agence National D'appui au Développement Forestier.
[54] For an elaborate discussion about the role of civil society in Cameroon and the Anglophone problem see: Konings, P. (2009) *Neoliberal Bandwagonism: Civil society and the politics of belonging in Anglophone Cameroon*. Langaa & African Studies Centre.

the environmental politics in Bamenda enables us to comprehend the prevalence of a complex multi-level governance framework - something that is neither global nor local – while allowing global discourses to have a significant amount of influence on the local context. Even though it is difficult to detach one discursive or institutional realm from the other, this chapter takes as a point of departure the institutional level and aims at demonstrating how globally constructed discourses inform interactions between different levels and policies in this field. Brown *et al.* (2010) have visualized the institutional links between different decision-making bodies in Cameroon that are dealing with climate change, in the following figure:

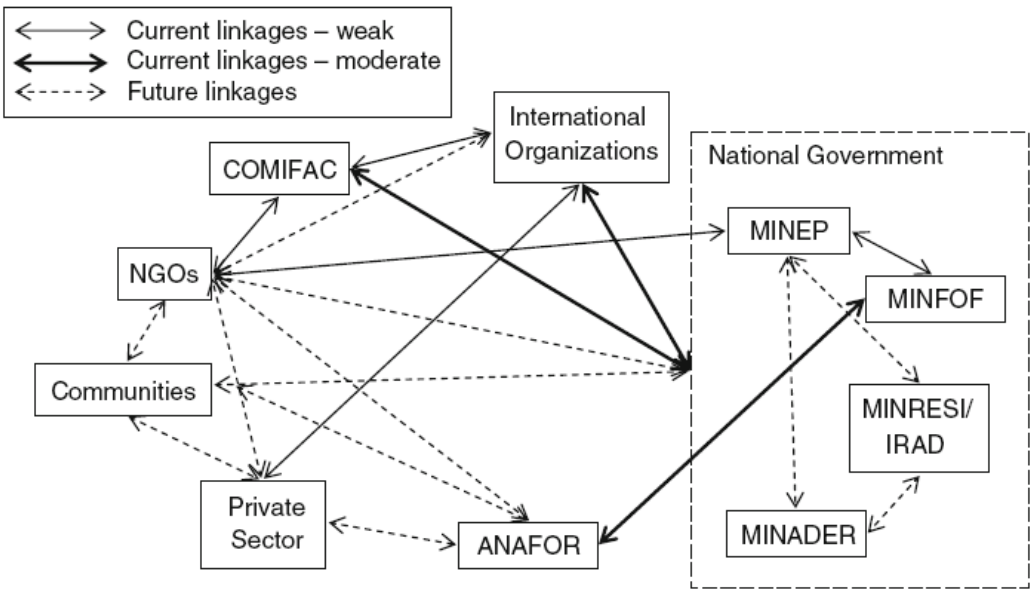
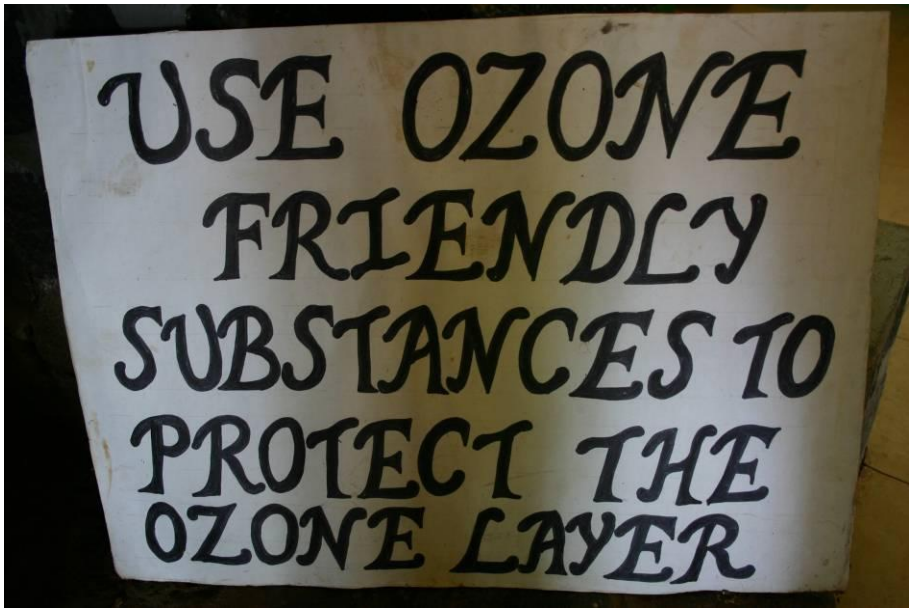


Fig. 2 Current and future inter-institutional linkages on climate change in Cameroon

Brown *et al.* 2010: 274.

While the authors have focused here solely on the inter-institutional linkages, we can imagine that at the discursive level a rather different and more complex picture emerges. As it is impossible to disconnect and isolate these translation regimes from one another, it is very likely that the engagement between NGOs, international organizations, the government and communities is more connected and blurred than this figure shows. However, it gives an idea of what constitutes the complexity of the governance state in Cameroon, and the role of international organizations herein.



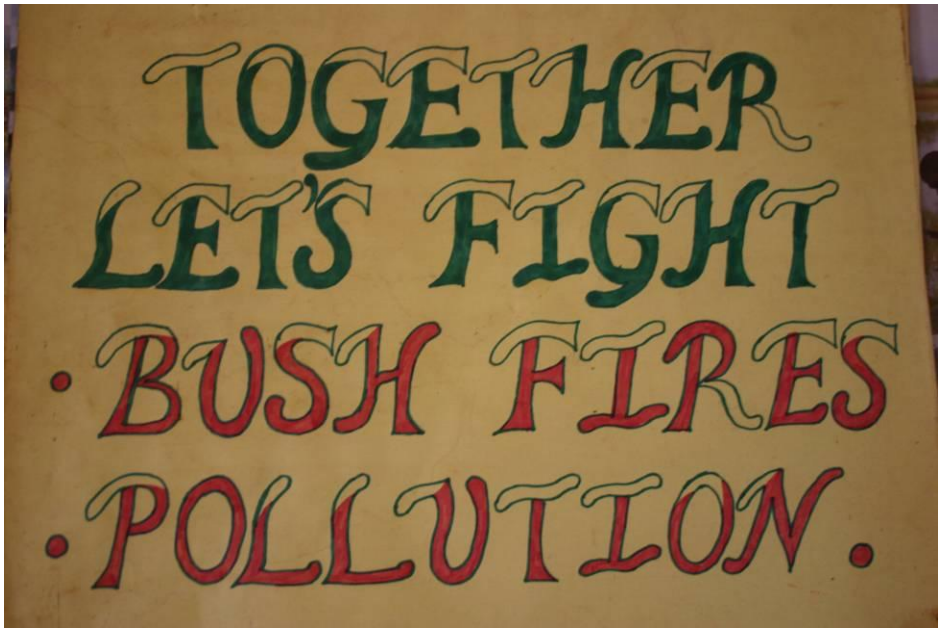
Source: *photographed at MINFOF*

3.5.2. Towards a *green* paradigm shift

The issues of concern of the majority of the wide variety of organizations vary from the rather broad topics like sustainable development, to ensuring gender equality, nature conservation, HIV/Aids, to enhancing agricultural practices and environmental protection. An important observation has been made concerning the prominent role of globally constructed discourses, namely that many NGOs have undergone a *green* paradigm shift, since their initial policies were centered on different issues. An organization like COMINSUD[55], that originally focused on HIV-Aids prevention and gender issues, created an environmental department in 1992 - the year of the Rio Conventions. Within the Earth Summit's framework their motto became 'Think Globally, Act Locally', and climate change, environmental education and natural resource management are currently at the heart of the organizations' guidelines. Another example that illustrates this paradigm shift is SHUMAS, an NGO that was founded in 1993 and started as an informal initiative to help educating deprived children and orphans. In 1996 their focus shifted towards promoting sustainable agricultural activities, and nowadays a major axe of intervention is environmental protection and climate change. For an organization like CIPCRE[56] - a Christian based NGO that was from the outset founded to integrate ecological issues and development rooted in evangelical values – the incorporation of climate change as a major axe of intervention was a rather obvious move within what they call a 'global ecology paradigm'. CIPCRE considers that "Tackling its task in the perspective of a global ecology, the environmental, political, economical and socio-cultural dimensions of human life should be fed by the spiritual sap of faith in God and openness to the spirit of the Gospel"[57]. In this so-called eco-theological vision the idea of preserving the environment and ecosystem (that are divinely created) should automatically promote human development, and the other way around.

[55] Community Initiative for Sustainable Development.
[56] Cercle International Pour la Promotion de la Création.
[57] http://www.cipcre.org/en/pages/aboutus.html#top.

Following this perspective – that seamlessly lends itself to embrace climate change discourses – fighting climate change is indeed subsumed under general ideas about development.



Source: *photographed at MINFOF*

All NGOs that I envisaged (including SNV, FAO and farmers' associations) have in the course of time established climate change related programs. These policy changes can simply be explained by the increasing concern on climate change by international leading actors, and consequently by the impact of earth summits on international donor flows. Since NGOs are highly dependent on these external funding, adapting and reshaping their policies within the international development framework is the most likely way to safeguard their existence. Most representatives of NGOs that encouraged this green paradigm shift stated that this was due to the urgency and importance of the matter, while others said that since there is a lot of international money available this was an issue to embark on, because in the end it will serve the poor who will be mostly affected. However, some informants expressed their concerns about the constraints that they foresaw concerning the high level of corruption in Cameroon. Their main worry was whether the newly available international funds that partly will be dispersed at the government level will at the end of the day meet the needs of the poor.

Also at the national level we can find an increasing concern with climate change, particularly since Cameroon ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2002. Together with other Congo Basin countries, Cameroon has joined post-Kyoto negotiations in REDD and CDM related activities. In the course of time, a national office was created in the MINEP as the national focal point to the UNFCCC. And most recently, president Paul Biya announced to put in place a national climate change observatory that will provide ongoing monitoring of climate data. The idea is that this observatory will fulfill two roles. First, it will serve as a tool to support and facilitate decision-makers in all sectors on climate change, and second, it will serve as a permanent monitor of the carbon stock in Cameroon (Brown, Nkem, Sonwa and Bele 2010: 271). In brief, the green paradigm shift is not only visible at the regional and NGO level but all the more at the governmental level. Particularly international organizations are heavily involved in working with the government as far as climate change is concerned. The UNDP, FAO and the World Bank have actively been building government capacity on the issue, especially at the MINEF and the MINFOF (ibid). As

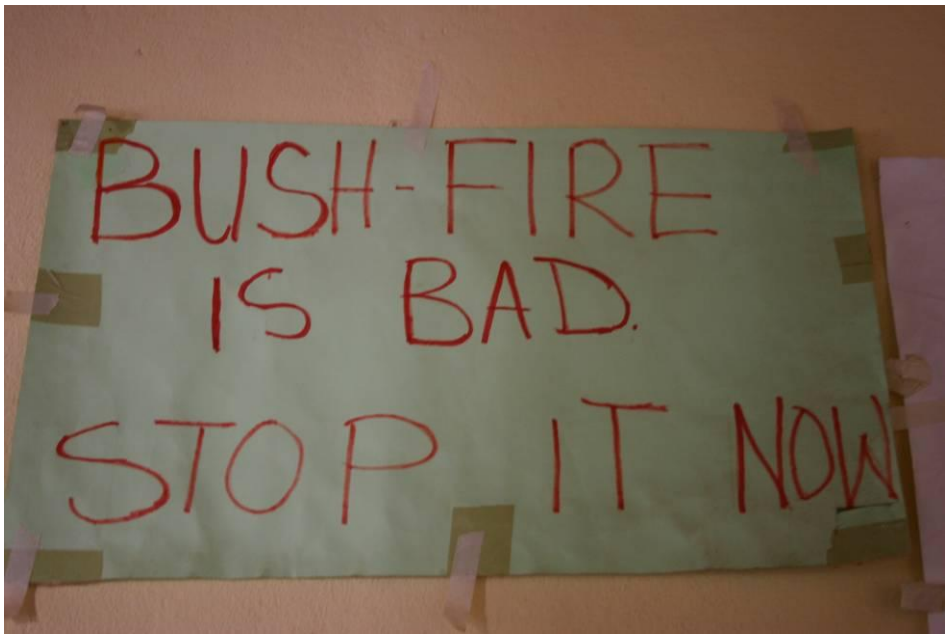
mentioned in chapter two, this international involvement and pressure has in 2004 resulted in the division of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry into two separate ministries, which are both occupied with the same goal: i.e. the planting of trees. The activities of ANAFOR, an organization that is responsible for reforestation in Cameroon, feel that the tree planting projects are a key part of responding to climate change. A major observation that was made during my fieldwork is that not only at the national level but also at the local level in Bamenda, tree planting was perceived to be the most crucial and indispensible strategy to combat the negative consequences of climate change - the imperative for adapting to and mitigating climate change. Moreover, preventing people from cutting trees and the complete eradication of slash and burn are considered to be part and parcel of the 'collective fight against climate change'.

This so-called *ankara* method consists of collecting grass and covering it with soil before burning it. *Ankara* is a relatively fast and easy practice to clear one's farm and to make it fertile for the growth of particular crops like cassava and cocoyam. Although this burning practice gives a higher yield next year, a major problem is that it destroys important nutrients in the soil. Harvests for the subsequent years are never substantial as a result of a decreased soil fertility. With time the farm will be abandoned to give space for vegetation to cover the land again. The smoke that is released into the air while burning the soil, is considered - by the government and the international community - to be a substantial factor in the contribution to climate change. The government's attempt to eradicate slash and burn is not new, as it was part and parcel of older paradigms like biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Nevertheless, within the adaptation and mitigation paradigm related to climate change this effort is given further impetus.

Whereas most farmers in the North West region experience the negative long-term consequences of burning the soil themselves, the *ankara* practice continues. This demonstrates that the short-term revenues (and the short- term horizon wherein most subsistence farmers operate) outweigh the long-term effects. In the conducted interviews it became clear that there is a general consensus amongst farmers that the *ankara* method is born out of the inaccessibility to alternative means of agricultural production. Most complaints were related to the cost of expenses for manure and fertilizers. Other problems concern lack of labor (or money to pay for labor), no farming tools, and furthermore the absence of appropriate knowledge of alternative farming methods. Wendy, president of a rural women's association against climate change (ACTWID), explains: "*ankara* is not sustainable, but if you don't have anybody to work on the land you have to burn it; it is a shortcut born out of poverty".

In their article 'Institutional adaptive capacity and climate change response in the Congo Basin Forests of Cameroon' Brown *et al.* [2010] have shown that forest dependent communities are not only vulnerable to the direct effects of climate change, but that people are also vulnerable to changing environmental policy that might affect their access to forest resources. Results of their study indicate that decision-makers awareness on climate change is high, but that a concrete institutional response is at a very early stage. Furthermore, the authors point out that the civil society – among which (international) NGOs – play a decisive role in enhancing the capacity of the government to respond to new policies on climate change (Brown, Nkem *et al.* 2010: 263). While the government's capacity to deal with climate change policies might be at an early stage, there are many indicators that both the government as well as the broader institutional arena (i.e. NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector) are at the dawn of undergoing a significant 'green paradigm shift', informed by globally constructed discourses on climate change. This is in line with the aforementioned idea that adaptation to climate change goes along with a

significant shift in discourses used to deal with what is normally called development (Cannon and Müller-Mahn 2010). As will become clear in the following section, climate change adaptation and mitigation in the perceptions of policy-makers and NGO workers do indeed embrace all aspects of human development, and have reached in many instances a high level of priority.



Source: *photographed at MINFOF*

3.5.3 The ethics of tree planting

> "Development models have preached that the less trees you have the more developed you are. When you look at the pro's and con's we might say let the South plant more trees and try to balance up the CO_2 emissions, that's one way. The other way: what becomes of those in the South who will plant those trees? Are they not going to develop, build their own roads and the skyscrapers? No, it is a global issue and if we just follow the flow, before long the South will be like the North if we make the very mistakes the West has made. It is a war between us and the environment. The environment is saying now: you people have abused me, you have to pay me back" (*interview with FAO representative).*

> "Because the North wanted development so they chopped down all their trees. While They are the principle contributors [to climate change] the South has the potential to preserve the trees. But we should look for alternative ways of production" (*interview divisional delegate of Public Works, September 2009, Wum).*

While the mere idea of tree planting and abandoning slash and burn might appear to be rather innocent and necessary; a myriad of ethical, but also socio-economic considerations that have been raised by the Grassfielders need to be taken into account. In the organizations' policies climate change mitigation and adaptation take centre stage – all funded by external donors – and similarly resonate with representatives' personal experiences and perspectives on a supposedly changing environment. In other words, discourses on climate change are linked up with a visible experiential focus. As one NGO worker explained:

> "It is realized that the climate is changing and as a result there are many effects of it. Today we hear of hurricanes, desertification, landslides etc. all as a result of climate change. It's a call for concern that people must talk about. Everybody can testify that the climate is changing in Bamenda. I will point out to you that the water that flew from the station hill when I was a kid is not more there. The landslides in town today were unheard of. Why should they be happening now? It means something has changed. A lot of water is coming out, where is it coming from? All these led us to an answer which implies that there is climate change" (*focus group discussion natural resource management department SIRDEP*).

Based on the conducted interviews with representatives of NGOs and delegates of different ministries, one predominantly discursive pattern could be determined, namely that global warming and the climatic threat are very 'real'. The urgency of the matter as much as the need to come into action on a very short notice was underscored by all respondents. Moreover, there was a general consensus that African communities in general and the poor would be mostly effected:

> "The most vulnerable are the poor families. One of the effects is failing crop production, and the crop to a poor family is what they live on, since they farm just for subsistence. If that fails they won't be able to feed themselves. [Other consequences are] The emergence of diseases, famine, and even conflicts over the little natural resources (..) there will be a scramble over them, tribal conflicts" (*interview coordinator climate change project COMINSUD*).

Other delegates and NGO representatives pointed out that particularly women and children will be mostly affected:

> "These that will be mostly affected will be women and children. (..) The food is cultivated and sold by women and with the income they can buy other substitutes. So you can run down their incomes completely, not only at the level of health but income and nutrition" (*interview project manager COMINSUD*).

While it was by and large agreed upon that Africans in general and the poor in particular are and will be the most vulnerable to climate change, there was a higher level of disagreement among the informants about what (and who) have caused it, and hence, who is going to pay the price for averting its effects. In other words, the general paradox that "Africans contribute least and will be mostly affected" does not appear to fully resonate with NGO workers. On the contrary, many respondents emphasized during interviews the significant contribution of the local population in contributing to climate change, a message that was also communicated to the local population (see chapter five).

> "Local people have the tendency of burning their bushes, set wild fires which destroy their vegetation and the rate of regeneration may not be proportionate to the destruction. People cut down watershed to get better lands for farming. The water is coming out but the water level is dropping. So these are significant contributions [to climate change]. These elements of the local people contribute with big dynamics. I would want to think of it in terms of representation of a pie chart and what percentage is the result of the local actions. (..) The contribution of local people in Africa to climate change is very significant"(*interview COMINSUD*).

In a similar way, some informants applied the causes of climate change only locally to the case of Bamenda and Cameroon, and as such, saw a direct link between the changing weather patterns in the Grassfields and environmentally unfriendly practices. While acknowledging that climate change is a global issue, they did not see the pollution like greenhouse gas emission in the North to be the primary cause of a changing climate in the South, but rather attributed the causes primarily to the Grassfielders:

> "Cameroon is an underdeveloped country, so we will not look at industrialization as the main cause. We look at agricultural activities because we are agriculturally based. The increase in population more of agric land is being converted into inhabited land. Wood is being chopped off as fire wood. The wood is burned and it brings a lot of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. That is the main cause of climate change in the underdeveloped world" (*focus group discussion resource management department SIRDEP*).
>
> "For climatic change you see, I want to apply it very locally. The climate has changed. It is no longer alike before. (..) There is a serious problem that the environment is facing through the massive burning of bushes. When you come around Bamenda, around the month of December/ January (..), just look at the atmosphere. It is so cloudy. Because of the burning of bushes. Bush fires in preparation for farming. Which is a matter that we are really trying to tell people not to, not to practice. We try to let them change from those practices. Imagine burning one hectare of land like that! The amount of carbon that is emitted into the atmosphere" (*interview SHUMAS*).
>
> "We have issues of pollution that is not the major issue. But we look at issues that are touching the world globally like climate change. And when you look at issues like that and we look at the enormous deforestation here, like areas that were purely forested areas are all being cleared now, and people are moving in and building houses. (..) You see you have this contributing to the global climate change the whole world is facing. The major cause for this, if we look at it as a micro climate we look at the population. We look at the different activities people are engaging in. (..) That is why we tell people please don't slash and burn the soil because it is causing more radiation" (*interview NWADO)*.

The fact that farmers often were blamed for being the cause of climate change themselves was further underlined during my attendance of sensitization meetings in which I gained some insight into communication strategies of NGOs. For example, one day in December I was invited by CIPCRE to come along with them on one of their fieldtrips to Bafoussam. In between their activities I seized the opportunity to speak with several farmers, which resulted in the following remarkable situation:

> (R = respondent who is a peasant engaged in medicinal plants; I: interviewer; NGO = representative of CIPCRE)
>
> I: What are the main causes of this climate change you just mentioned?
>
> R: As the radio has said, those big industries that produce cars, planes and all that. The smoke that rises to block the ozone layer and prevents the sun from reaching the earth. That is what I know.
>
> NGO: She is trying to ask you what your own contribution is to the climatic changes, since the population here is contributing a lot too.
>
> R: Yes, the population. I know we also contribute to the changes in the ozone layer. If the trees were there the gas would not have come out. (..) The forest that was first of all here does not more exist. It's the people around that have cut it, and when they have been asked to plant they are refusing.
>
> (*Interview at a tree nursery, December 2009, Bafoussam).*

The NGO representative's intervention during the interview demonstrates his perception upon farmers' contribution and responsibility. I remember another sensitization meeting that was held in January 2010, in Nkambe. The meeting was jointly organized by multiple (I)NGOs and a group of traditional rulers of the North West region. During one of the presentations that was given that day a policy maker gave a

scientific explanation of climate change, in which he emphasized how the industrialized countries are polluting the world. And, that in order to fight this pollution - that is mostly affecting Africa - everybody must come into action and stop burning the bushes, and abandon cutting down trees. After this speech a critical farmer took the chance to ask him the following question: "So you are telling us that it is the 'white men's country' who are causing it, but why don't they stop this CO_2 if that is the enemy for the climate?" (A traditional ruler interrupts and exclaims: "It is just like the old fridges that are dumped by white men here with us, because they have understood the danger of it"). Consequently, the policy maker elaborated upon the local responsibilities and contributions to environmental degradation, but that the most important thing is that the world, and mainly Africa, are in danger. "If we refuse to fight we will soon face our own destruction". From a policy standpoint it appears that there are at least two crucial 'discursive tools' needed and used to make people act. The first one, is to render people guilty and appeal to one's sense of a moral responsibility, and the second one relates to notions of fear. Another example that illustrates this point was the following conversation that took place in a taxi while being on my way to a climate change meeting. By coincidence we encountered an agric technician who is engaged in assisting farmers and sensitizing them about the issue. Mr. George, one of my respondents, is a farmer who is involved in organic agriculture and active in climate change projects, was also present, together with another older woman who became the subject of the discussion.

> (G=Mr. George, A= agric technician)
>
> A: For us it is a song. We sing about climate change to our farmers.
>
> G: But do they believe in climate change?
>
> A: Yes, they do. They see it happening. They see it on TV but also here in our own localities. If mami asks me what is causing all of this I tell them: you are the cause! Because you burn the soil. You are the cause because you cut down the trees. And mami tells me that if she doesn't burn the soil her potatoes and coco yams will not do fine and that she has no means for fertilizer. And I tell mami that is she burns her soil she has a low yield and she will say that it is witchcraft. Isn't that true mami? And then I will tell her that it is climate change and that it is her own cause (*discussion in a taxi, Nkambe, February 2010)*.

Without discarding the local contributions to environmental degradation by practices like slash and burn and deforestation, on a global scale we know that African countries are emitting less than 4% of CO_2. With this knowledge in mind, the idea of "Thinking Globally and Acting Locally" seems to entail a rather ironical situation. Respondents pointed out that while global warming is a global issue and thus indeed a globally shared concern, they emphasized that in the South people are as much part of the problem as in the North, and should therefore take a similar responsibility. The discursive construction of "thinking globally" as reproduced by the respondents, implies thus indeed that – due to the perceived urgency of climate change - the global interest is of more importance than the local. Within environmental sociology the tendency to downplay local perceptions and definition of problems, and the blaming of poor people in underdeveloped countries for causing environmental degradation is termed "global managerialist paradigm" (see Hannigan 2002: 74). It may be superfluous to say that this idea of 'blaming the victims' is rather oppressive, as it reduces the poor to be solely polluters of their environment. This perspective does not do justice to the broader picture in which people are often struggling for survival and do not have any alternative means to provide themselves in their subsistence than, for example, by cutting trees for fire wood; or by burning their land - due to a lack of fertilizers - in order to harvest a yield on a short term. Moreover, they are submitted to fit the dominant discourse in order to serve the global interest.

Interestingly enough, the importance of trees was by many NGO workers considered primarily to fulfill the role of a carbon sink, rather than to serve the interests of the farmers. As exemplified in the following quote:

> "They are cutting trees which are supposed to be sinks for CO_2, but increasing CO_2 in the atmosphere through their burning. We know the issue of climate change is global but it needs local initiative, local actions for us to succeed. Though somebody may wonder why it concerns Africa when it contributes very little to climate change. But they are the biggest potentials in stopping the situation. They still have the largest remaining forest. And we cannot say we are not a great cause to the problem so we can go on living our own way. It is a trans-frontier problem (*interview SIRDEP, October 2009)*."

A widely shared stance among NGO workers, which touches upon another discursive dynamic, is that if Africans are the most vulnerable to the causes of climate change, and it requires indeed such urgent action to adverse its effects, African farmers are also fighting against climate change for their own interests. This can be illustrated by quotes like: "we are in the same boat so we have to put all hands on deck", and "there is no time for blame game, we need to act fast". Both citations can, however, once again respectively be assigned to the socially constructed ideas of the 'globality' and the 'urgency' of the problem. In a similar way, another delegate stressed the importance for Africans to stand on their own feet:

> "European nations, you know the industrial development in European nations has comes with its own strings. It has caused quite a lot. But the European nations are up on their feet now, trying to moderate it by pumping money to African nations that still have something like forests and so on (*interview delegate of MINEP, Bamenda)*."

Paradoxically enough, all NGO workers agreed upon the fact that on a global scale climate change is caused by the industrialized countries who are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gas emissions. This was mainly expressed in terms of the need for money to compensate the developing countries for preserving the environment, the idea that is generally termed *climate justice*. Like the delegate of MINFOF in Bamenda stated: "We'll plant those trees don't worry. We will do that. But let Them pay for it". The ethics of tree planting was often raised by NGO and government workers, but notions of a shared responsibility remained:

> "So we know that it is them [the industrialized world] who cause it. But it is an issue that everybody needs to hold onto his own side of the blanket. So you cannot say that I am doing little I am going to stay out of it and just watch it. Because at the end of the day, Africa is going to suffer the most. At the end of the day. It is going to suffer in terms of: people don't know how to plant, rains come at any time, temperatures are changing, and crops don't grow well under certain changes in temperatures and things like that."

Even though perceived as a global concern that should be fought collectively, the need for compensation and extra support from the industrialized world was affirmed by all respondents.

> "We know that the causes are more from the developed world, and that is the reason that we advocate, I think most African head of states are advocating that the developed world should sponsor or maybe provide some assistance with the developing world to fight the climate change. Because we don't have enough resources. We don't have enough resources and if we have to leave and conserve the forest, we should have some sort of compensation because our livelihood depends on the forest that we have now. So if we have to leave the forest intact we have to have something that can sustain the population, and

> have something to eat. It is impossible for us to tell the population to not go into the forests without replacing their needs (*Interview NOWEFOR, September 2009)*."

Only a handful of policy makers took on a much more critical stance towards giving the responsibility to African farmers. The following citation touches upon one of the many perversities that are entailed by climate change (discourses).

> "There is no fairness. There is absolutely no fairness. The Kyoto protocol has been on great talks. Was it meant considering the African farmer? Did they take that into context? It is still within the European context. (..) You see Africa is coming very strong into this big talk. We have to adapt everything to fit the small scale farmers, if not the small scale farmer is dying of hunger and poverty. He will continue chopping down that forest for agricultural purposes to look for fertile land. The land is fast degrading no matter how much talk you talk. If you come and impose a forest reserve there, you are wasting your time. He has to go in there to get food. If there's hunger it is going to kill him. Take him to the prison where he doesn't have to work but where he gets food. So we have to place those things into the local context. (..) apply it to African realities (*interview associate scientist World Agro-forestry Centre/ ICRAF, November 2009, Bamenda)*."

In this section I highlighted some of the main recurrent themes that play an important role in the perception of decision-makers, NGO workers, and government officials as far as the climate change problematic – and North/ South relations is concerned. What has become clear is how globally constructed climate change discourses impinge a particular adaptation and mitigation development model upon the institutional level, and in so doing shaping national and local development policies. Moreover, within the institutional translation regime policy makers view the role of African farmers as indispensable in fighting climate change, for it is both a *global* responsibility and a *serious* threat. The two recurrent 'discursive devices' (i.e. the globality and gravity of the issue) play an important role in communicating the *green message* to the population.

Members of a CIG going "green" and fighting against climate change.

Member of a female CIG on her common land growing organic cassava.

CHAPTER FOUR

Translating back and forth the climate - traditional rulers in the fight against climate change

4.1 Introduction

In the end of November last year, when the rains usually have already ceded, a raging storm destroyed plants and crops in the kingdom of Kom. A week earlier a landslide in Belo- Sub-division killed eleven people, and a twelve year old boy was swept away by a river that overflowed its banks. This sequence of environmental catastrophes gripped the people and left them in panic and confusion. According to the highest traditional body in the palaces, the so-called *Kwi'foin,* the incidents were the handwork of people from the metaphysical world. The day after the storm, the Kwi'foin spokesman followed by other Kwi'foin members, meandered across the market square when he all of a sudden started to preach his message:

> "Oooooh Kom! Oooooh Kom! The Kwi'foin asked me to salute you three good times and tell you not to panic. We will soon grip the demons, the people of muso [transworld] that are responsible for these disasters that breed melancholy, suffering and death*"* (*The Post newspaper,* November 30th 2009).

To confirm their spiritual and moral authority, the Kwi'foin exclaimed that they uncovered the people who caused the floods and tornadoes, and that they have been warned to stop causing the disasters before the next market day arrives. Individuals were held responsible for the extreme climatic occurrences, and the people of Kom had put trust in the hands of the Kwi'foin to bring back the socio-cosmic harmony. A woman at the market place approved the Kwi'foin's declaration with the words: "Kwi'foin must come to our rescue because I can't understand why rain falls when we expect sun". At the same time on the radio, government delegates informed the population that the floods were 'simply' the cause of climate change, and the message was that people should stop burning their bushes and abandon practicing *ankara.* Whereas the traditional authorities pointed their finger to particular individuals, or 'climate change demons' as *The Post Newspaper* framed it, government delegates appealed to a collective responsibility, and turned the message into a call for a radical behavioural transformation. Although the initial focus of my study was not so much on the role of traditional rulers, it soon became clear that to do justice to the "ethnographic realities", they could not be left out of the analysis. Several remarkable observations and incidents drove my curiosity and convinced me to broaden my focus.

In the beginning of February this year, heavy lightening struck a primary school in Bamali and eight children lost their lives. The next day, the Fon of that village proclaimed that this rare event could only be attributed to witchcraft (*The Standard Tribune,* February 13th 2010). Another incidence that illustrates the essential role and moral grip that remains with the traditional rulers in society, is the case of a heavy earth tremor that destroyed almost a whole neighborhood in Bamenda's old town in 2006. It was explained by the traditional rulers with the fact that the ancestors were not well addressed before the construction of that neighborhood. What the Fons consequently did, was to worship at the shrines and

offer sacrifices to the gods. Particularly for those traditional rulers who are not (yet) aware of climate change as a Western discourse, irregular weather events and natural disasters tend to be explained as a form of witchcraft, or with the belief that society neglected the ancestors. Both type of explanations signify the existence of a moral relationship between people and the environment, with the Fons as important ritual authorities and mediators of this connection. There are many indicators and examples that show how – in present-day Bamenda - the Fons' solid spiritual control over their people finds its expression in exceptional weather events and natural disasters. This will be described in further detail in paragraph 4.3.

What can be derived from abovementioned examples, is that the weather and the climate are associated with the metaphysical world. Hence, those who are given the right to translate, or even control the climate, have a spiritual and powerful role within society. For example, if we take the belief in the gift or power of *rainmaking* into consideration - that today is still a common practice in many African societies – shows that rain is closely connected to power. Van Beek even states in this context that rain is the obsession of Africa. He emphasizes that rain is a matter to be dealt with only by the powerful ones in society, which is underlined and becomes visible in the actual moment of rainfall. He furthermore states that in all cultures specific weather events are considered to be the proof of the special relationship with the transcendental. The weather is often seen as the result of a connection between heaven and earth (Van Beek 1999: 4). Discourses about the weather and the climate are thus inevitably discourses about power. In this chapter it will become clear that the translation and mediation of 'physical' weather events and natural disasters in Bamenda, demonstrate how power is structured within society, and is strongly reflected in the spiritual and moral role of the Fons.

In November 2009, on a very short notice due to the 'urgency of the matter', a group of influential traditional rulers of the Northwest region jointly formed an organization, which they called Cameroon Traditional Rulers Against Climate Change (CAMTRACC). During the meeting in which the body was launched, the Fon of Guzang - as the president of CAMTRACC - held an introductory speech, which will be discussed in detail in paragraph 4.5. It became clear to me that this speech was a fairly influential 'communicating event' as it was taken over by several other traditional rulers, and could be marked as the beginning of a sequence of locally appropriated, global climate change discourses. This initiative epitomizes the argument that the power of the Fons is not only limited to the mediation of tangible weather events, but that it also attempts to be in power of the (novel) discourse. This type of power comes close to what Bourdieu (1989) has called *symbolic power*, that is, the power to produce and impose a legitimate vision of the world. Power, in its broad understanding, lies with the authorities – i.e. the Fons - who have a certain amount of control over the translation and (re)creation of discourses. The aim of this chapter is two-fold. The first part offers a concise historical overview of the Grassfields, in which will be discussed how the spiritual and moral power of the Fons have developed over the years, from days of the early settlements until the post-colonial state today. It will become clear that a central element in the religious and political belief system of the Grassfielders, is explaining misfortune (e.g. natural disasters) and malice, which forms the fundament of the Fons' social control. The second part will examine how the exploitation of global discourses on climate change enables the Fons to both re-appropriate local discourses, and to redefine their symbolic power. Furthermore, this section will serve as a contextualization for chapter five, which is an attempt to demonstrate how climate change discourses are being embedded in local cosmologies, and moreover, provide an alternative framework for understanding misfortune. Abovementioned speech, and other 'communicative events' produced by the Fons that followed, will be used as a focal point in the (discourse) analysis that follows.

4.2 A brief historical overview of the settlements of chiefdoms in the Grassfields

For a better understanding of the socio- cultural and political development of the chiefdoms, and to get an idea of how local cosmologies form the fundament for present day translations of climate change discourses, a brief historical overview is needed. Although I was based in Bamenda during my fieldwork, the geographical scope of my study could rather be seen as an ethnography of discourses, in which Bamenda is located at the centre of 'discursive mediation', with the surrounding Grassfields villages and chiefdoms as satellites. The area under consideration stretches from Wum and Bafut to the North, Baba I and Ndop to the east, the city of Bafoussam to the South and Bali in the West (see figure), which fall under the geographical nominator of the Western Grassfields, or also called Western highlands. A first essential characteristic of the history of chiefdoms of the Western Grassfields is that they have many economic, social, political and religious features in common. The chiefdoms maintained close contact amongst each other, which was driven by intensive trading, intermarriages and diplomatic relationships (Warnier 1982: 38). This long-term relations of social- and political organizations and common beliefs legitimizes therefore the following discussion of the development of different chiefdoms as a whole.[58] We should keep in mind that each chiefdom was up to a certain extent a sovereign unit, but that they did not exist in a vacuum. It was quite the contrary. What follows in this section is a regional approach in which the common stock of beliefs, political and social institutions will be highlighted, with a particular focus on the environment. After visiting different palaces in this area and attending a number of ceremonies, I found the name Grassfields rather confusing, since it appeared to me that strong symbolic references to the forest could be observed in all the palace-related practices. Several historical dynamics can be pointed out for this apparent discrepancy. Part of the answer can be found in the ways how people related to- and shaped their environment. In the following section a brief historical overview will be given of human- nature related developments.

While the Grassfields nowadays are part of the grass savanna area of West and Central Africa, archeological evidence shows that this has not always been the case. Before the Neolithic time, which basically forms the transition period from hunting and gathering to agriculture and animal rearing, this area was fully covered with forests very high into the mountains (Chilver 1967: 2). Warnier stresses in his book *A history of the western Grassfields* that the ancestors of the present-day Grassfielders were forest people, and that contemporary societies still share many features that indicate a close relationship with the forest people to the south. The fact that rituals and symbols always incorporate elements of the environment and the forest, is for him a reason to argue that it were not the Grassfields people who migrated away from the forest, but rather the forest that moved away from them (Warnier 1982: 24). If one pays a visit to the palaces in the Grassfields today, it immediately becomes apparent that the forest, and forest elements are omnipresent in the local cosmologies, and in how the political institutions are structured. An obvious example is the cultural and spiritual importance of the secret and sacred forests that surround the palaces. The palace-based secret societies worship at the shrines of the preceding Fons that can be found there, and the sacred forests are inhibited by the ancestral gods. The role of the *juju's* during death celebrations of the Fons, and in annual dances, incorporate elements that symbolically refer to the forest (see pictures).

[58] For a detailed overview of the history of the development of chiefdom settlements see for example: *Traditional Bamenda (*Chilver and Kaberry 1967), and *Échanges, développement et hiérarchies dans le Bamenda pré-colonial* (Warnier 1985).

(Above) Juju's dancing during the death celebration of the late Fon of Bambalang. The feathers represent positive qualities associated with birds.

The Fon of Bafut blesses village members with camwood (forest tree). Even though this has completely disappeared from the highlands, it is imported from the south because of its symbolic value.

Juju's *performing during the annual dance in Baba I.*

There are other related, but less obvious, characteristics that show the attachment and connection to the forest areas. The first one is the role that forest crops and plants like camwood, banana leafs, and palm oil play in rituals. The second one is the importance of men's societies in the political, social and religious life of people, which exhibit striking similarities with all forest people south of the highlands (Warnier 1982: 25). From the outset it needs to be said that the western highlands, due to its relatively fertile soils and cool climate, have early and continuously been populated. The population density at that time was unusually high by African standards. Other possible factors are that because of the altitude and healthy environment, endemic diseases could be kept outside. Furthermore, the fact that until the seventeenth century the Grassfields were far away from coastal slave trade networks, and, until the nineteenth century from empires such as Sokoto and Borno that depopulated societies through intense slave-raiding (ibid). This century old enduring population density shows that this area also climatologically has always been prosperous, and relatively stable for agricultural practices.

Around 3000 B.C. began the first major changes that affected the landscape and the people. Two important developments can be pointed out for the enduring and massive deforestation of the highlands during that time. The first change was the introduction of food production by agriculture and animal husbandry. For these activities people needed to clear the forest by using slash and burn methods, which slowly turned the area into savanna. A second major development that accelerated the de-forestation process was the introduction of iron technology about 2000 years ago. For the smelting and smithing industries that most probably endured for more than 1500 years, high amounts of charcoal were needed (ibid: 30). The development of agriculture and the introduction of iron technology entailed at least two

big social changes. The first one was the formation of sedentary life and settlement of permanent villages. The second one was the increasing population density. For the social stratification of the Grassfielders, the shift from hunting and gathering – which basically was a way of living without hardly any social ranking – to agriculture and sedentary life, provided more necessary grounds for chiefs to emerge. Of significant importance for the growing hierarchies were the development of unequal statuses between title holders and low ranking people, and with this, growing male dominance (Warnier 1982: 39).

In Bamenda, if we walk around different markets it is easy to see that each locality developed its own specialization of commodities. At the Bafut market, large quantities of good quality palm wine and pigs can be found, in Ndop excellent rice can be bought, Njinikom and Oku are famous for its honey. These dispersed commodities resonate the history of large scale inter-chiefdom trade and economic specialization, which accompanied the introduction of agriculture. For each chiefdom it was important to be well-known for a specific commodity to be able to accumulate wealth. The trading of food crops over short and long distances was also good to compensate permanent imbalances in food resources, crop-failure, and to survive the 'hunger time', which was at the beginning of the rainy season. People always tried to grow more crops than needed, in case natural disasters would happen (Warnier 1982: 43).

It is worth mentioning that both the current differentiation and specialization of commodities in different localities, and the incorporation of forest symbols in cultural practices, are the result of long term historical patterns. The aim of this very brief historical contextualization is however, not so much concerned with economic developments, but should lead instead, to a broader understanding of how, and if, the power of present-day traditional rulers can be found in long-term dynamics. It is difficult to speak about the Grassfields chiefs in the longue durée history, because some chiefdoms underwent major transformations during the colonial rule. But important elements of the historical dynamics that formed the fundament of the Fons' power, were the long-distance trade and the accumulation of wealth, which were under strict control of the Fons (Geschiere 1996: 316). Apart from the material function of the Fons' power, which was expressed in economic capital and the maintenance of external relations, his power was by and large rooted in socio-cultural and spiritual significance, and will be discussed in the following section.

4.3 The ritual, moral and legal patterns of power in the chiefdoms

Each chiefdom consisted of a group of exogamous lineages. This means that there were continuous inter-lineage and inter-chiefdom population exchanges, and explains why lineages often overlapped chiefdom boundaries. It happened regularly that entire lineages left one chiefdom to join another, which gave the grassfielders a 'floating character'. A basic problem that was shared by each chiefdom was how to integrate different lineages within one political unit (Warnier 1982: 56). Other responsibilities of the palace at this level were organizing labor, dealing with crimes and governing the country. Albeit that among the notables the Fons were far above the others in the hierarchy, the socio-political power was not only limited to the Fons. These roles were also fulfilled by the territorial quarter heads, the council and regulatory societies. An example of a regulatory society is the *Kwi'foin* (or *Kwi'fo*), as mentioned in the first paragraph. These societies, that nowadays are being referred to as 'secret societies', were the most important bodies and exerted significant power in the chiefdoms (ibid). A peculiar feature of both the Fons and the regulatory societies is that – besides the political role they fulfilled - they also possessed

ritual and moral power. The association of sacred kinship together with the closed societies and governmental functions, was unique in the sense that it could only be found elsewhere in central Cameroon and Benin (Chilver 1967: 47).

The nature and role of regulatory societies were based on beliefs shared by all Fondoms. The belief in animal affinities, or that spiritual beings and dead kings were residing in waterfalls and deep pools, and the belief in 'sending' lightening were widely spread across the Grassfields (ibid). According to Warnier we can analyze Grassfields' beliefs by arguing that the encroachment of nature on the human or cultural world is seen as dangerous and polluting. Morally bad behavior, like fighting or assaulting people was perceived to be 'polluting' and hence, the cause of misfortune. Accidental death by drowning or lightening, fire destroying property, or destructive *natural* events in general, were equally seen as pollution. This is not to say that nature itself was dangerous, but only the impingement of nature on humans that was seen as such (Warnier 1982: 57). In addition to this, I would argue that destructive natural events in itself were not so much seen as pollution, but rather as a 'transcendental sign' - an expression of morally bad, or polluting behavior. Namely, taking the belief into account that the deities and ancestors are residing in the forests and streams, the importance of the gods of the land, and the sacredness of particular animals like the leopard (it was believed that the chiefs could transform themselves into leopards), there are good reasons to argue that divinities are embodied in nature, and that nature is thus strongly associated with the *divine*. In other words, I would argue that it is rather the encroachment of humans on nature (and violence between humans) that was considered polluting and dangerous, and that destructive natural events were seen as an expression thereof. How this moral relationship between humans and nature is expressed in society will be described in further detail in the following chapter.

The 'traditional' political and religious belief system, which were fully intertwined, were strongly centered around the moral question of how to eradicate misfortune or malevolence (Chilver and Kaberry 1967: 53). Bringing back the socio-cosmic harmony could only be achieved by removing the polluting or dangerous forces. To be able to remove pollution from society required a ritual power that was constituted by a special corps in the chiefdom. Misfortune was like a substance that entered the ground at the place where a bad event took place and that needed to be removed (Warnier 1982: 57). For the chiefs - who were in the position to identify and monitor the misfortune and malice – the occurrence of extreme natural events can therefore be seen as moments *par excellence* in which they could execute their power. This particular ritual power was, and is to a certain extent the case today, limited to agents of supernatural forces, who execute their ceremonial duties to remove the polluted forces from society. Fisiy discerns three different patterns of authority in the 'traditional' kingdoms of the Grassfields that are executed by three different classes of notables. The first class comprises the spokesman of tradition, those who command moral authority to maintain the unity and morality in a community. The second class is made up of people who possess ritual authority, like traditional healers, rainmakers and priests of traditional cults. The proclamations of these agents of supernatural forces are believed to be derived from supernaturally-supported traditions (Fisiy 1988: 265). An example is the communication between the ancestors and the gods of the land to assure the sanctity of the community, as illustrated with the case of an earth tremor in the introduction of this chapter. The third class consists of the ones who execute legal authority and were employed to the use of force.

Among the various authoritative bodies of the palace the Fon had a separate and supreme status. The rulers could execute the various moral, ritual and legal powers, but always relied on mythical and ritual

support of the gods to maintain their political supremacy. These core beliefs that underpinned the concept of justice in the Grassfields were aimed at enhancing human solidarity and peaceful co-existence between community members (ibid: 264). The importance of eradicating pollution and explaining misfortune was therefore an efficient means of social control. Nevertheless, the different classes cannot strictly be divided along the lines of these categories, because in reality they were much more blurred. In fact, in the eighteenth century - even though the Fons ranked highest - their judicial powers were very limited. The removal of pollution, settling of disputes, or the repression in the village were often vested in the regulatory societies. The Fon was never directly involved in matters concerning pollution, because he belonged to the opposite pole of the human society, namely that of regeneration and blessing. The Fon embodied society because he formed the alliance between lineages and clans, the social rules and norms, and he was in contact with the ancestors (Warnier 1982: 62). Whereas natural disasters were associated with pollution, the Fon warranted the prosperity of the community. This indicates that the power of the Fon was by and large invested in his spiritual significance and divine status. However, it should be emphasized that patterns of authority were a complex web of power relationships that blurred the distinctions of moral, ritual and legal authority (Fisiy 1988). Firiy writes about the sanctity and spirituality of the institution of the Fon:

> "The founding of most of the chiefdoms [in the Bamenda grassfields] is based on a myth of origin that tended to confer temporal power on those repositories of traditional authority. For the Fon, the source of legitimacy is shrouded in myth and ritual orderings, which give a spiritual content to the exercise of his authority. This is because the lineage through which the myth was initially transmitted had contact with the deities and ancestors" (Fisiy 1992: 212).

This discussion of the role of the chiefs, and the 'rootedness' of their power in historical perspective is presented here to gain a better insight into how we should look at certain continuities and discontinuities in the patterns of power that are characteristic for the Grassfields. It is however, very difficult to speak of pre-colonial versus post-colonial chiefdoms in a dichotomist way, because the chiefdoms have always been developing and adapting to changes in a dynamic way. By several scholars it has been stressed that the stock of institutions and beliefs, are probably very old (from several centuries to a couple of millennia) considering the fact that they are widely shared amongst Grassfields chiefdoms. Nevertheless, the most drastic and far-reaching transformation that had an impact upon the power and institution of the Fon, happened in the nineteenth and twentieth century during colonial rule. In the following section, some of these deep transformations will be highlighted in order to come to a better understanding of how, and to what extent the present-day power of the Fons is anchored in society.

4.4 The Fons in the colonial state

As is well-known in the field of African Studies, all colonial powers made use of chiefs or 'traditional' rulers to govern their subjects. In Africa, the interaction of local patterns of organization and new relations of authority, imposed by the colonial and post-colonial state, defined if and to what extent 'traditional' chiefs could maintain their authority at the local level (Van Binsbergen en Geschiere 1985, in: Geschiere 1996: 308). This means that the colonial encounter had different impacts upon the (political) structure of societies across different regions because both parties played a role in the development and establishment of new patterns of power. According to Deschamps, the colonial division between the former British ideology of indirect rule, and French' idea of 'assimilation' is of limited value in the

understanding of the differences between regions, and should therefore be analyzed in a longer historical perspective (Deschamps 1963, in: Geschiere 1996: 307). The influence of the European invasion in African countries, entailed major changes concerning the role of chiefs and the extent to which they can be considered 'real traditional' chiefs. With the rising awareness in academia that in Africa a large part of "traditional practices" was in fact an 'invention of tradition', the notion of *tradition* underwent major paradigm shifts. The concept of tradition for a long time implied a pre-colonial and static character, while more recent studies clearly adhere to a more flexible and evolutionary approach. On the other side of the spectrum, the idea can be found that everything that is traditional was in fact an invention that became a creation of the colonial encounter (see Ranger 1993).

Cameroon inhibits interesting variations between different regions. In the Northwest province, which was consequently former German and British territory, chieftaincy has a long history. In the West and Northwest province, chiefs were successful in consolidating their power and position during colonial times. In the coastal areas several chiefs took advantage of the European trade, and competed among themselves for expansion. Early colonial administrators saw African societies as tribal units that were held together by 'primitive' and immutable traditions. In the Grassfields, as happened in other African countries, the Germans and the British tried to regroup different chiefdoms into larger administrative units. One of the strategies to rule over their subjects was to create new hierarchies amongst the Fons, and to enforce paramountcy upon the powerful ones. In practice, some Fons embraced the new opportunities to expand their power. Many Fons responded by claiming long-standing supremacy over their neighbors, which evoked counter-claims by other Fondoms. These new rivalries contributed for a large part in obscuring the nature of pre-colonial inter-chiefdom relations (Warnier 1982: 71). These hierarchies of different ranks among the Fons is still present in Bamenda. There exist five so-called first class rulers, or paramount chiefs (Mankon, Bafut, Bali, Nso and Kom), and a dozen of secondary and tertiary ranking chiefs. During ceremonial events where all the Fons group together the hierarchies are strongly felt and become visible in social interaction and ritual moments.

In Cameroon, it were both the German and British colonial administrators who made use of the traditional rulers for administrative territorial purposes (Talla 1997: 69). The colonial administrators partitioned the Grassfields into different 'tribes' that were all supposed to have perpetuated distinct language, specific customs and traditions of origins in a time-less and immutable environment. Economic and socio-political interdependencies between different groups were disregarded by the Europeans to a great extent. Even though from the 1930s onwards, scholars and colonial administrators adapted a more subtle approach to such phenomena, nowadays there are clear reminiscences of notions of a 'tribal myth' (ibid). Another important change that came along with the colonial influence, and which had an impact upon the constitution of the power of the Fons in the Grassfields, was that they were forced into a judicial role. The British created native courts in which the Fons had to act a judges, a role that previously was fulfilled by lineage heads or councilors. Warnier and Nkwi stress that before the colonial conquest the Fons had little, if any judicial role. The Fons were only consulted in case of serious conflicts, or crimes that threatened the whole community that could not be solved by the lower-ranking 'conflict-settlement' assemblies (Warnier and Nwki 1982: 68). The judicial role that was attributed to the Fons gave their power definitely a different character, but there were other events in the nineteenth and twentieth century that enhanced institutional changes in the Fondoms. The most significant changes were influenced by the penetration of northern people into the Grassfields, and the increasing involvement in coastal trade networks.

4.5 Climate change and its discursive 'compatibility' with Grassfields' cosmologies

Considering the drastic institutional changes that happened in the twentieth century, an important question rises in this context, namely, whether chiefs still have a role to play in recent political changes on the African continent. Geschiere *et al.* argue that there is no unambiguous answer to this question, since the evolution of chieftaincies and their relation and reactions to the colonial and post-colonial state have followed varying trajectories (Geschiere 1996: 307). With varying trajectories Geschiere refers to abovementioned 'traditionality' of chieftaincies, which in many cases in Africa was in fact a colonial construct. There are clear examples that make the sharp opposition of on the one hand, 'real' traditional chieftaincies as firmly rooted in society, and on the other hand, chieftaincies as colonial constructs and thus more transitory, ungrounded. He suggests that a good indication of how firm rulers' authority is anchored in society is the degree to which rulers have some sort of control over the occult forces, or in other words, over witchcraft and sorcery (ibid: 308). Especially in the case of Cameroon, this is not an arbitrary indicator. Considering peoples' general interpretations of misfortune, and the way radio- and TV shows and newspapers in Bamenda play a part in disseminating messages about witchcraft and malice, there are good reasons to believe that there is a strong obsession with controlling witchcraft. It is omnipresent in people's understanding of events with an indeterminate meaning, as was most often the case with the occurrence of natural disasters. Each unique and unusual occasion - either fortunate or unfortunate – seems most likely to be ascribed to witchcraft. In those instances the Fons are expected to remove the polluting forces in order to regenerate society, and to act as 'moral mediators'.

Even though this suggests that the ritual authority of the Fons comprises considerable power in society, this does not necessarily mean that traditional authorities have 'traditional' roots, because the 'traditionality' of authorities in Africa is highly variable. Put differently, it is not so much the traditionality of the chiefs' power that is at stake here since there are many historical pitfalls that have distorted this image, but rather the way their power developed and adapted to socio-political changes. Most chieftaincies in the Northwestern Grassfields were successful in incorporating the new politico-economic changes that encompassed colonial rule. There exists in general a consensus amongst scholars that the institution of Fon still beholds a considerable spiritual and political power in the present day societies of the Grassfields, though certain elements are weakening its grip on the people (see for example Talla 1997; Geschiere 1996). Although the power of the Fons is engrained in religious belief and traditions, the chiefs' authority has always been subject to various checks and balances. The chief is both responsible for and accountable to his people (Fisiy 1992). During my fieldwork it appeared to me that the Fondoms today still fulfill an important moral function as a means of social control, an observation which is being underlined by Talla (1997) and Geschiere (1996). But there were also clear examples and indicators that the political authority of some of the Fons is being questioned by the population, especially when it comes down to the position they occupy in national politics[59]. The chiefly power has recently been challenged by at least two important developments. First, the emergence of a wealthy and knowledgeable elite who wanted to have a greater say in local community affairs. To cope with these competing sources of power the Fons have incorporated this elite into local authority structures, which has resulted in a marginalization of members of 'traditional' authorities. A second influential

[59] For a detailed description of Bamenda's position in national politics and the Anglophone problem, see Neoliberal bandwagonism: *Civil society and the politics of belonging in Anglophone Cameroon'* (Piet Konings 2009).

development was that in 1977 the Fons were promulgated to be auxiliaries of the administration. This reduced them into lower ranks of the local bureaucracy (Fisiy 1992). The political authority of the Fon has thus been subject to major changes, and has eroded to a large extent in the wake of the post-colonial state. However, as stated before, whereas at the administrative level the chiefs were left with very few influence, much of their moral and spiritual power has remained.

In the previous paragraphs it was argued that witchcraft can possibly serve as a fruitful indicator to understand how the chiefs' power is rooted in society, and how they succeed in maintaining their power. In this context Geschiere (1990, 1996 and 1998), and the Comaroff's (1993) emphasize that the occupation with witchcraft in many parts of present-day Africa (and also in parts of East Asia) is not to be seen as some sort of traditional residue, but rather as something that is particularly present in modern spheres of society (Geschiere 1998: 811). Throughout the whole continent there seems to be a growing panic concerning the thrive of obsession with witchcraft. Rowlands and Warnier even state that sorcery lies at the heart of the State building process in Cameroon (Rowlands and Warnier 1988: 119). In an increasing globalized world in which the 'global' and the 'local' are becoming more and more entangled, new challenges of 'indeterminate meaning' (Weller 1994) at the local level seem to go hand in hand with new forms of witchcraft (and thus new forms of power). While scholars approached witchcraft for a long time as something to be 'traditional', since the 1990s an increasing interest in the modern dynamics of witchcraft in relation to politics, new forms of wealth, and the enchantments of modernity can be observed[60]. Geschiere links modernity and novel forms of witchcraft in the case of South and West Cameroon in the following way:

> "The power of such discourses on occult forces is that they relate people's fascination with the open-endedness of global flows to the search for fixed orientation points and identities. Both witchcraft and spirit cults exhibit a surprising capacity for combining the local and the global. Both also have specific implications for the ways in which people try to deal with modernity's challenge (Geschiere 1998: 811).

We should be careful here to see new forms of witchcraft as merely a continuation of 'traditional' discourses that make sense of changes that are encompassed with modernity's challenges. This would imply static and systematic local conceptualizations about witchcraft and malice, which are in reality much more fluid, dynamic and open for re-interpretation (ibid). What is interesting here is to question what these challenges and new forms of fear entail at the local level, and how these lead to a search for new forms of protection. It has become clear that the Fon and the secret societies are in charge of accusing the witches and removing the polluted forces from society. A new, more modern and often aggressive type of witchcraft can be observed that has led, in some parts of Cameroon, to condemn 'witches' to heavy sentences in jail (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990). This study however, is not about witchcraft per se, but it deals with broader issues surrounding the notions of threat, misfortune and disaster. The aim of elaborating briefly on witchcraft, modernity and globalization is to demonstrate how the proliferation of local discourses has been reinforced by the encounter of global and local discourses. A leading question here is how to relate global change to daily realities of people in the Bamenda Grassfields? In the next chapter, I wish to demonstrate that at a deeper level, parallel dynamics with the 'witchcraft craze' – here understood as a re-interpretation of local discourses on the occult - can be observed with the 'arrival' and construction of a new threat, namely climate change and global warming.

[60] See for example: Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, 1998; Fisiy 1990, and Geschiere 1990, 1996, 1998; Niehaus 2005.

In other words, global climate change discourses possibly create new spaces for re-interpretation (or reinvention) of local discourses.

In the former section I tried to show how the ritual, moral and political power of the Fons have been subject to long term and short term historical changes. For most Grassfields chiefdoms we can state that they were successful in consolidating their power during the European invasion, and colonial conquest. Even though the chiefdoms have been subject to drastic institutional changes, the Fons have retained much of their ritual and moral authority. This is not to say that their power was engrained in a fixed and time-less set of beliefs, but rather the contrary. General principles of morality were constituted in an ideological framework that was amendable for changing times. A basic feature that was shared by all Fondoms is the core belief that pollution is dangerous and should be removed from society by holders of spiritual power. Whereas the 'traditionality' of chiefs is somewhat misleading in terms of how their power is rooted in society, an alternative indicator has been proposed by Geschiere and Fisiy, namely the degree to which they have control over witchcraft. In the first part of this chapter a brief outline has been provided to shed light on how certain continuities and discontinuities can be observed over the years and shaped present-day patterns of power in the Bamenda Grassfields. It has been shown that witchcraft, as an allegedly traditional discourse, has modernizing capacities for it allows for many different interpretations, a phenomenon that Weller has called: 'The power of indeterminate meaning'. In chapter five, we will see that a similar dynamic can be discerned concerning climate change discourses. Part two of this chapter will build upon the historical contextualization to demonstrate how the Fons currently exploit global climate change discourses – as being part and parcel of modernity's challenge - to redefine their symbolic power, and hence, the social space.

Part two

4.6 Climate change as a possible new framework to redefine local discourses and symbolic power

My first encounter with a Fon was fairly fascinating. Sitting in the bank office with an authoritative, French speaking account manager, the transaction promptly was interrupted when a crew of five people entered the room. Before I realized what was happening, two other customers and the bank representative lifted themselves up and clapped in their hands twice. A young man, carrying a thick carpet under his arm, placed it on the chair next to me. An older and seemingly powerful man, dressed in a traditional gown, occupied the seat. The older man gave me an imposing but friendly look, which I responded with a smile. The bank representative requested me to wait, because as he stated, 'this is something of more importance'. The younger man, who turned out to be his son, clarified that the older man sitting next to me, was the Fon of Mendankwe. As it is uncommon and mostly inappropriate for a man of his status to speak directly to a commoner like me, he commanded his son to invite me to his palace. I answered his hospitality by visiting him and his family on a frequent basis, which enabled me to get more familiar with the lives of a royal family. Moreover, I gained insight into his understanding of climate change, and his proposed solutions to combat it.

This encounter took place before the 'climate change craze' that followed when the Fons jointly engaged themselves in the fight against climate change in the organization, which they called CAMTRACC. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, this organization was founded on the 13th of November 2009, and has its seat in Bamenda. From November onwards I started to follow the pathways of those traditional rulers who were mostly engaged in the organization of CAMTRACC[61]. In the media this event received much attention. In the Newspapers, on the radio, and on national TV 'global warming and cultural heritage' soon became a *hot* topic for discussion. Although CAMTRACC was set up as a unity with general solutions, and common rules to surmount 'one of the toughest challenges facing humankind today', during individual interviews with the Fons it appeared to me that each Fon had his own idea about the implementation. This means that in different palaces, other (traditional) injunctions and sanctions were set up in view this 'global fight'. This chapter is concerned with the main and common objectives of CAMTRACC. Inspired by Philips and Jorgensen (2004) I will use three focal points as a tool in the following analysis, namely a) what is being said about climate change, or the *claims themselves*; b) what is the (collective) identity and interests of the Fons and/or NGOs, or *claims-makers*; and c) the arena's of public discourse, or the *claims-making process.* Important questions to be addressed here are: How is climate change communicated? What is the rhetoric of claim-making? How is climate change presented so to persuade the audience? Who has been addressed? And how does the nature of the claim (e.g. the gravity of the threat of climate change) and the identity of the claims-makers (e.g. the supernatural authority of the Fon) affect the audience's response? The following analysis is grounded upon Foucault's idea (1972) that 'truth' is embedded in, and produced by systems of power.

[61] Among the Fons who played a crucial role in the organization of CAMTRACC were the Fon of Guzang, Baba I, Mankon, Nsohngwa and Bali.

4.7 Cameroon Traditional Rulers Against Climate Change

The main objective of CAMTRACC, according to the Fon of Guzang (His Royal Highness Fon Gwan Mbanyamsig III), is "to call on all traditional rulers, who are beholders of indigenous knowledge and are proven to be custodians of ecological heritage, to stop the constant destruction of the climate". The Fon emphasized that the whole idea behind it is to strengthen and consolidate indigenous knowledge in the fight against climate change (*The Pilot Newspaper,* 15-12-2009). As a non-profit organization the Fons of the Northwest region - who were pioneers to engage themselves actively in climate change - wish to make it a nationwide and even continent wide union. The first contacts with the paramount ruler of Tamale (Northern Ghana) at this point of the launching had already been made. The Fon of Guzang stated: "The voices of the Fons, the natural rulers, have not yet been heard. All the traditional rulers throughout the African continent have to put their hands on deck to rescue the situation"[62]. From the outset there were about five traditional rulers involved in the organization – amongst whom the paramount rulers of Mankon and Bali - under the presidency of the Fon of Guzang[63]. At the second meeting that was held in the palace of Bali in January 2010, there were more than twenty rulers of the Northwest region engaged, and in February during the meeting in Nkambe more than fifty Fons were present. An increasing amount of NGOs, government institutions and researchers like myself showed interest, and the event reached national television and was broadcasted on CRTV and STV.

The joint fight against climate change of the traditional rulers in the formation of CAMTRACC has resulted in a whole range of new discursive practices, and inevitably, in new forms of authoritative struggle. In the aftermath of the launching of this organization, rumors were spread in the media that CAMTRACC was in fact set up to replace the North West Fons Union (NOWEFU). This union presumably had lost much of its credibility and political power since the introduction of multiparty politics by Paul Biya's regime in the 1990s, which resulted in growing internal tensions between the rulers.[64] In fact, the initial idea to engage the traditional rulers in this global issue came from a representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations who has been trained in indigenous knowledge. In view of the upcoming Copenhagen summit on climate change in December 2009, and with his strong conviction of the importance of indigenous knowledge in tackling this global environmental problem, the idea of CAMTRACC was born. After the launching the organization was left in the hands of the Fon of Guzang. It is at least remarkable that the Fon of Guzang – who was one of the opponents to the first vice-president of NOWEFU at that time - declared himself president of CAMTRACC. This could be a possible reason for the rumors that CAMTRACC was set up to replace NOWEFU, and thus a means for other Fons to strengthen their power.

As representatives of the 'local' within the 'global' – here again used as analytical constructs rather than empirical realities – the traditional rulers have a special role to play as translators and intermediaries of two worlds. As described in paragraph 4.4, the Fons have a history of serving as intermediaries for the Europeans to administer newly conquered territories in the colonial state, and of being auxiliaries of the administration in the post-colonial state until today. Although the Fons do not have much political power

[62] Interview with the Fon of Guzang.
[63] Other rulers who were involved from the beginning were the Fon of Baba I, Aghem, Nkor and Nsohngwa.
[64] In 2008 the elections of NOWEFU caused irreparable damage to the organizations' image, when the results of the Fons who were to be chosen to occupy particular positions, were already announced before the elections were held. It was said that the majority of the Fons have been manipulated to support the chosen few (*The Post* Newspaper 23 November 2008. See: http://allafrica.com/stories/200811241411.html).

(in its narrow understanding of the term) it is their moral and spiritual power that enables them to sustain grip over their people, and to deal with external influences. Since the Fon is considered to be of a divine status, he is respected and listened to by his people. The last decennia the traditional rulers have formed for this reason an important target group for international donors to communicate seemingly urgent messages at the local level. For example, in the 1990s (I)NGOs targeted the rulers to sensitize the broader population on the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In a similar vein, the Fons currently play an essential role in making people aware of climate change in order to participate in this "global fight", or to "think globally and act locally". This is not to say that the Fons are merely recipients of global discourses who disseminate the message and inform the population, but they are also interlocutors. They have own messages to relay back to the government, and the international organizations. The Fons are aware of their historical role as 'instruments' of the administration, and the Fon of Guzang takes a clear stance towards this. Speaking to the press he lamented that:

> "The Fons who used to be at the forefront of whatever happened in the past, were later on relegated to the back seats. This time around the traditional rulers have decided not to stay back anymore, especially with this issue of climate change." It is therefore that he promised to preach the gospel of climate change to their colleagues and subjects (*Life Time Newspaper,* December 14th, 2009).

This statement demonstrates that the rulers have something to say, and they insist that their voice is being heard. What I will attempt to show in the following section is that global discourses lead to a reinterpretation and novel appreciation of local discourses, that it is not just a top-down movement, but that in fact the climate is also being translated 'back'. The question here is not so much to what extent their voices are being heard in international circles, but rather how the rulers' translation of the climate leads to new challenges at the local level. In order to gain a more profound insight into how discourses on climate change are manifested in the Grassfields' society through the rulers, the CAMTRACC meeting, and the inaugural speech that was presented by the Fon of Guzang will now be examined.

The meeting began with fragments of the documentary called *Home*, by Yann Arthus- Bertrand. The beginning of the documentary shows breathtaking images of our planet, Mother Earth and her untouched landscapes with pristine nature, which is presented as our home. In the field of environmental sociology this portrait could be classified as a *poetic* discourse (Herndl and Brown 1996), that is, a narrative about nature, which emphasizes the beauty and spirituality of mother earth. From showing the untamed nature, the documentary drastically shifts to showing the development of mankind from the invention of agriculture, to showing pictures of oil, cars, urbanization and mass consumption. The industrialized era that in the West entailed the externalization of man from nature is depicted as the era (and area) that engendered global warming. Next, we see pictures of Dubai, typified as the 'culmination of modernity':

> "[Dubai] It is the totem to total modernity that never fails to amaze the world. Dubai is the beacon for all the world's money. Nothing seems further removed from nature than Dubai, although nothing depends on nature more than Dubai. Dubai is the sort of culmination of the Western model. We haven't understood that we are depleting what nature provides" (Fragment from the documentary 'Home').

While the images of Dubai pass by, I notice the expression of the traditional ruler sitting next to me who seems to be highly impressed. He asks me if the place where I come from is like Dubai: "There are no trees over there? I would not like to live in a place without trees, I wouldn't. Is that development? Aren't that model houses?" The documentary set the tone for the discourse that then follows. The first speaker that afternoon was the Fon of Guzang. His inaugural speech will now be discussed.

Bamenda, 13th November 2009

HRH Fon Gwan Mbayamsig II

Your royal highnesses, honorable members of parliament, queens for peace, ladies and gentlemen. I will start with this saying:' only a madman will sleep with his roof on fire'. We are here today because the world is at risk of extinction. We are here today because our forefathers are not at rest in the world beyond. We are here today because the future of our children and our children's children is bleak. We are here today because of the fear of the unknown. We are here today because we know the world is not an inheritance from our parents, but a borrowed good from our children that one day we have to refund. My dear people, my children, your royal highnesses present; thank you for being present and for answering our call on a very short notice. That shows the importance you attach to the topical issue of today: global warming, climate change.

The reason for this gathering is to look into one of the toughest challenges facing human kind today. In yesteryears, mankind has surmounted many challenges; from small pox, chicken pox, mad cow disease, the Ebola virus and what have you. Today, we are conquering terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, H1N1 and HIV-Aids. We conquered the cold war, and this week we are celebrating the fall of the Berlin wall that marked the end of the cold war 20 years ago. But none of those challenges have put the world at risk like the phenomenon of climate change today. Climate change - which is caused by land use and land use changes - is our greatest preoccupation today. Nobody worth the 'salt' on this world can be indifferent to this global quagmire. Global warming is on the lips of all politicians, academics, development experts, journalists, environmentalists, diplomats, in fact anybody that matters to a society. We have not yet heard the voice of the traditional rulers.

A first observation that can be made is the accentuated urgency and gravity of the matter. Climate change is on the list of all the so-called 'securitized' issues, like the war on terrorism and HIV/Aids. The emphasis on both the urgency and the gravity, with terms as 'the world is at risk of extinction', or 'fear of the unknown' have an apocalyptic suggestion. This is however, not much different from Western discourses about global warming. We can think of many speech acts – for instance, Al Gore's movie *An Inconvenient Truth,* or Leonardo DiCaprio's *11th Hour* - in which similar fear- evoking techniques to convince the audience have been used. More remarkable is the hybridism of the discourse. The Fon began with a more 'traditional' discourse, speaking about the inheritance of the earth from our forefathers, while he is at the same time 'agreeing' upon the Western (scientific) construction of the problem. Whereas the international community is asking the rulers and the population to take their responsibility, in their turn, the Fons embrace the opportunity to strengthen their power by referring to the importance of their traditions. It becomes clear the Fon is attempting to convince the audience that the traditional rulers should be put on the agenda too. The CAMTRACC initiative is a clear example of how the rulers assume to have a part to play in the call for a global social transformation. The increasing prominence of global climate change discourses in Bamenda, triggered them to assert their voices, or in more powerful terms, to get a piece of the 'hegemonic pie'. The inherited symbolic power they have within society – which is anchored in the socio- cosmic view that the Fons are the centre of social life – enables them to create a legitimate vision of the world in the Grassfields. In other words, the Fons are to a large extent in power of the *truth*. We should keep in mind that truth is here understood as a discursive

construction, which is constituted by different regimes of knowledge that determine what is true and false (Foucault 1972). In the following fragment we can see that the foundation for the construction of truth and reality are derived from the past, and that references to traditional values are made:

> *When I look at all this, people, and there is a chance of a better tomorrow, it brings to me a lot of mixed feelings. In the days of our forefathers, we applied our indigenous and traditional knowledge and know-how to surmount many natural disasters. With the advice, culture and leadership of the traditional rulers we adapted our life style to suit the demands of nature. We implored with the rainmakers to bring forth rain in times of severe dryness, we called on the traditional healers to act in terms of health crisis and pleaded with mother nature when our general weather conditions frowned on us. You will agree with me that traditional rulers played a very vital role in the conservation of our natural ecosystems. You will agree with me equally that our culture and tradition is directly linked to nature and the soul of our culture is our natural environment.*
>
> *Reason why most of our traditional sacrifices are done not in the house but in nature. Our culture and indigenous knowledge - inherited from our ancestors – who taught us that our natural environment with all the trees and bushes and animals is not a resource that we should use at our will to satisfy our needs at all costs, but the environment is part of us. We, our relationship is symbiotic and complementary, one cannot survive without the other. Because of this complementary relation we are not to use our natural environment abusively. We should apply our sustainability instinct whenever we have to cut down a tree, or use an animal as a resource for whatever purpose. Example: our culture taught us that we are not to cut down any young tree – no matter the size, we are not to kill female animals with the capacity to reproduce for any reason. We should not harvest the young little plants' leaves for it is that one to regenerate. And we can go on, and on and on and on, to portray the indigenous knowledge that protects the environment.*
>
> *My dear children, your royal highnesses, my dear people, we are here today to look back, undertake checks and balances at the way the world has been using this nature that our very existence depends on, to ask ourselves whether we have followed the rules of our forefathers. It is said by the wise and I quote: "when a man loses his culture he is a lost man". We are here today because of the fear of losing our culture and indigenous knowledge in protecting this precious gift of life and nature left to us by our parents, to pass to our children and our children's children. Traditional rulers are the custodians of our culture, and natural heritage, the guarantors of our traditional knowledge and the fathers of our land. That is why the Cameroon traditional rulers have gathered to join this challenging fight against climate change.*

In between the lines a strong societal critique towards the industrialized countries, who caused climate change to happen, can be read. The meta message here speaks about the fact that modernity has come with its own strings. By emphasizing the eroding culture, the importance of reinstalling traditional values, and connecting this to the fight against climate change, the text is a way of saying to the West: We were right and You were wrong, look what you have done to the world! I remember a comment made by the Fon of Guzang during the meeting that illustrates his critique towards modernity: "Modernity has misused the planet, therefore we should go back to our traditions". Moreover, the Fon lashed out at the western world for being responsible for high carbon emissions while innocent Africans suffer. He said that "the effects of climate change are devastating to Africa, though the continent is paying a price for a crime it did not commit". He therefore demanded climate justice, or adequate payments to compensate the

African countries (*Eden Newspaper* 25th November 2009). This critique provides the rulers with a good ground to plea for going 'back' to traditions and using indigenous knowledge and ancestral wisdom. Thus, apart from the fact that the rulers have a message for their own localities, they similarly address the international community and the western world. On the one hand, the rulers appropriate the message, and on the other hand they have to find their own ways to make sense of something that is perceived to be "one of the biggest challenges ever occurred to man, a life threatening monster" (*Life Time Newspaper* 14th December 2009).

Since the Fons lost much of their power during the colonial period, in their eyes modernity is tantamount to the degeneration of their traditional values and culture. The threat of climate change – as a tangible expression of this – is all the more confirming the rulers' critique towards the West. During the second meeting of CAMTRACC the Fon of Guzang exclaimed that with modern society the Fons have been having it difficult, as some of their traditional roles have been taken up by local administrators, such as the police and the gendarmes. He disclosed that the Fons have been dragged to court by their subjects for placing injunctions on their land. With the problem of climate change, the Fon of Guzang said it is time that the local administrators collaborate with the traditional rulers (*The Chronicle* 18th January 2010). It should be mentioned that the new political struggle to be in power of the discourse on climate change, does not necessarily discard the actual belief behind their action. In other words, the rulers' opportunistic motive to embrace climate change discourses and strengthen their traditional belief system and their role herein, could very well be entrenched in a sincere conviction of their role as being noble defenders of nature. It is however very difficult to answer this question. Yet to understand the dynamics of power, the rulers' participation should be viewed in historical perspective.

An essential element that is pointed out in this text, is the complementary relation between man and nature that is characteristic for the Grassfielders' culture, in which man has a subordinate position towards nature. In previous times, it were the traditional rulers with their cultural leadership who guided society to adapt to nature's demands. It were (and to some extent still are) the rulers who mediated the transcendental, explained deviant natural events, and who are assumed to be capable of stabilizing the environmental tumult. Natural disasters in the Grassfields have always been interpreted as a sign of malevolence and misfortune. In the same way, global warming and climate change are here perceived to be a clear sign of misfortune: the world has failed to listen to their forefathers, and hence, to the traditional rulers. Interestingly enough, in the view of the rulers, if one loses his culture he is a lost man, a nobody. Global warming is in this sense being equalized to globalization, and to losing one's culture and values. That is why the Grassfielders have to go back to their traditions, obey to the rules as prescribed by the ancestors and mediated by the rulers. A clear message here is that the role of traditional rulers is presented to be indispensible in this new challenge of climate change. The suggestion is made again that if the world wants to surmount this unprecedented threat, the rulers must be listened to:

> *The traditional rulers were supposed to be the first to be consulted when the world realized that things were going wrong, and that mother earth was against her own children. But behold in a world where moral values are fast disappearing, where the culture of people is considered archaic, where the wisdom of our ancestors is considered useless, when a foreign culture takes precedence of our own, we will not expect any better. No doubt mother earth has turned against her own off springs. Or how else can we explain that we have thunder storms and heavy rainfall in November, when we supposed to prepare the soil for tilling. How can we explain that on one day we have two seasons? Thunderstorms in the morning and sharp dryness in the evening? How can we explain that temperature vary like never before,*

how can we explain that landslides and floods are killing and damaging property and even our governor can no longer live in a house constructed to last forever[65]?

How can we explain the drop in honey, and vegetables, and lack of natural potable water in our streams? Mother earth is unbalanced and angry, and we all need to act and fast. Traditional rulers have been acting in their various localities as individuals, but today we have decided to come together to look for a shared vision and a common goal to surmount this challenge. CAMTRACC is born out of a necessity to act, it is time we, the national leaders of our land, we, the custodians of culture, and carriers of indigenous knowledge act and fast. We must act because the world is in danger. The streams are drying up, the children lack food, the waters lack animals, the rain patterns are changing, plants and animals are confused and gestation periods are not longer obeying. CAMTRACC is not a political party, it is not a religion and it does not discriminate. This is a group set up to support the global fight against climate change and global warming. It is set up to take the fight back to the people, from the smallest hamlets to the biggest cities. CAMTRACC has as a main objective promoting the local initiatives through the use of indigenous knowledge, to combat climate change and related challenges. We intend to join our efforts without the restraint of the civil society, international development organs and individuals to conquer the challenges of climate change.

We intend to do this by reviewing the world of indigenous knowledge inherited from our forefathers, looking at how we can apply it today and we'll use it. Educate and sensitize our people on good practices and habits that will mitigate the effects of climate change. Introduce activities that will bring back our natural environment, promoting the use of eco friendly methods in cultivation, and install checks and balances measures the alert of any drastic changes. We will use measures like protecting and extending our sacred groves and sacred forests. Abolition of hunting certain species and in certain sites. Intensifying community participation climate change related activities as a matter of law. Installation of local climate change control committees and observation post around the palaces. Designing particular notables in charge of climate change. Recognizing active participation in the fight against climate change through traditional titles and favors. The immediate next step from here will be to educate and sensitize the other traditional rulers nationwide and launch the program at the national scale. From there we will work with Alhadji Dr Oumarou Salifou the paramount ruler of Tamale, Northern Ghana – who is spokesman of the sacred groves to combat climate change. You all know the status that Ghana occupies now in Africa.

My dear people, your royal highnesses, the fight against climate change is a collective responsibility. No one man or group of people can succeed. I call for all of us here present to take it as a personal duty to win this battle. Of course, as rulers we have to serve and see our people through sensitization. In line with professor Francis Tjema of blessed memory, initiator of Saboga [botanical garden] I say: "climate change, a war we must win".

Ladies and gentleman, thank you for your kind attention.

HRH Fon Gwan Mbayamsig II, *President of Cameroon Traditional Rulers Against Climate change*

From this fragment it can be derived that in the Fon's understanding climate change is clearly a morally loaded sign. It is seen as a message of misfortune that is about the degeneration of traditional values, and with this, also about the eroding power of the rulers in society. The last part of this speech shows a

[65] In the month of August 2009 the governor's residence collapsed due to a heavy landslide. Immediately in the media it was stated to be the cause of climate change. Other explanations, based on scientific research, declared that it was caused partly by climate change and partly by infrastructural works that destabilized the highly saturated soil (report regional delegation of environment and nature protection 20 August 2009). At the same time, among the population it was said to be the cause of witchcraft.

different discursive dynamic that has not been discussed before, namely the practical consequences of discourses, or discourses as a social practice. As stated in chapter three, dealing with climate change is as much a matter of perception and discourses as it has to do with the so called 'objective' facts. This means that the construction of the problem of climate change, is as much a reality as the biophysical aspects of global warming and climate change. What is important in the analysis of this text is therefore, to gain more insight into how a globally constructed problem has 'real' consequences at the local level in the Bamenda Grassfields. This is not to say that discourses are not real, rather the contrary, but that the power of discourses lies also in the action, or social practice that follows. The main aim of critical discourse analysis is to explore the relationship between language use and social practice, that are assumed to be inherently linked. The proposed solutions by the Fons are a clear example of how the so called *truth effects* of global climate change discourses lead to rather far-reaching methods at the local level to fight the degradation of the planet.

In brief, the suggested ideas are to abandon the practice of ankara, shift to eco-friendly agricultural practices and prohibit the cutting down of trees. In order to achieve these goals the population needs to be sensitized. Apart from this awareness campaign, the traditional injunctions will be invigorated. This means that the palaces, and palace related power will become more prominent in society. More concretely, around the palaces newly created 'climate change control committees' are going to be installed, whom are given the power to fine the perpetrators of the novel laws that are set up to mitigate climate change. A remarkable example is the approach of the Fon of Mendankwe who holds a rather radical view upon the issue.

> "If the people cut down one tree they need permission and they must replant ten trees. Everybody should plant trees on their farm. If they don't do it I take their land and give it to somebody else who will plant. I work for the government and sensitize the population. Climate change is happening due to us human beings, because there are no trees left. The sacred forest has a traditional value and environmental protection. We save certain species and we worship there. Our ancestors are there that is why it is sacred" (*interview Fon of Mendankwe, November 2009).*

Whereas for the international community the solutions proposed by the Fons - suggested by international organizations and NGOs - might sound like a fruitful and necessary way to combat the effects of global warming, one could wonder what this entails for an ordinary farmer who has no alternative methods at hand to cultivate his land. In the chapter five, another dimension of the translation process will be examined, namely, how climate change is communicated at the grassroots level.

Traditional rulers performing a ritual dance to honor the traditional ruler of Baba I during the annual palace celebration, November 2009.

The paramount chief HRH Fon of Mankon and HRH Fon of Guzang during the annual palace celebration, Baba I, November 2009.

Bafut palace.

Bafut palace.

CHAPTER FIVE

Believing in climate change – a grassroots perspective

5.1 Introduction: How access to discourses changes the weather

At the very moment I started writing this chapter, I received a phone call from Bamenda. It was Nadine. During the 6 months of my fieldwork we became close friends, and I found myself hanging around her marketplace on a daily basis. At her marketplace - which is located at the junction near my former house - she sells credit, oranges, some cigarettes and ground nuts. Every time I passed by her place she commanded me to take a rest under her umbrella: "Come and sit down with me, you need to rest". This custom enabled me to meet friends, learn 'small small' pidgin, observe what was happening on the street and talk to people who wanted to make a phone call, hide from the sun for some time, or just passed by for a chat. These encounters gradually gave me insight into one's concerns, sense of humor, enjoyments, but foremost, into people's daily talks. Here, just like in The Netherlands, the weather and the climate are regularly a popular entry point for a discussion. Complaints about excessive heat during the day or extreme cold during the night were prominent in the conversations.

Nadine speaks to me on the phone with a very enthusiastic tone of voice, "I just wanted to greet you. How is the Netherlands? How are your friends and family?" After some time on the phone I ask her how Bamenda is, and suddenly her voice turns into a more concerned tone. She starts telling me:

> "Bamenda is fine, except for the fact that the whole town is covered in white powder. It is this climate change we people have over here. We don't know what this is because we have never experienced this before. Have you ever seen something like this? It must be this climate change, this thing you and everybody is talking about. They tell us over the news that we should rub our noses with Vaseline, and that no rain can touch our body because it is dangerous. We can no longer use the corn that we planted. I am staying home, even today I cannot go to my marketplace because the white powder is falling everywhere. My children cannot go to school. They tell us that we have to protect our skin and should stay indoors as much as possible. But we don't know what is really happening, nobody knows (*phone conversation April 2010)*."

Talking to Nadine brings back memories of being at the marketplace. An ordinary space for people to express and negotiate ideas and exchange thoughts; a place where worldviews meet and visions are shaped. "Bamenda nowadays is too hot", is a recurrently expressed phrase. To most passers-by at this street corner global warming seems to be more familiar than the notion of climate change. I remember one of the conversations I had with two boys, not older than sixteen, who were selling apples. After they greeted me, I asked them how they were doing and they started to speak about the climate: "It is just that this dry season is becoming too harsh. This place is too hot, it was not like this before." Considering their age, this idea of a longstanding *before* demonstrates how the past is a construct of the present, thus how "history is present politics". In this context, Van Beek argues that stories about the climate are some sort of cultural archive that forms part of the collective memory, like a collective reminiscence from the past (Van Beek 1999a). To the question whether they had an idea about a possible cause for this

supposedly increasing heat, one of them replied: "It is this global crisis, they call it global warming. This thing that warms up the whole earth. It is not only in Cameroon, it is everywhere. We don't know what will happen to us." Despite the boy's seemingly satisfying explanation for the rising temperatures, what this global crisis actually is about remained unclear to both.

On the phone Nadine continues to speak about the heat, that there is too much sun and there are no rains yet: "After you left, the rains started to fall already early this year, but after the 15th of March [when the rainy season is suppose to start] we didn't see any rain again, there is only too much sun. And now we have this white powder which makes us to be afraid ". *The Vanguard Cameroon,* an independent news source, reports about this white dust as 'a strange phenomenon of a hazy atmosphere that invades the whole town. (..) Bamenda is waking up to the realities of a strange phenomenon that is yet to be explained by environmentalists and scientists'.[66] In the beginning of March this year, this rare event was witnessed in the extreme North of Cameroon, to the extent that flights were cancelled because the visibility was highly impaired. Hypothesis from environmental scientists range from 'the collapse of a meteorite from the moon', to 'industrial smog', to 'desert storm deposits'. People in Bamenda complain about the irritating effect this 'white snow' has on their eyes and respiratory tract. According to scientists this substance is therefore most likely to be acidic (*The Vanguard*). Unlike some scientists' assumptions about outer atmospheric causes, Nadine and other people who gather at her marketplace, explain this mysterious and unidentified happening by the notion of climate change, which for most people remains a relatively incomprehensible and abstract claim.

In his article 'The end of the climate' (1999), Van Beek aims to unravel a hidden meta-message in the present-day concerns and fascinations with the climate. According to him, talking about the climate is a cultural phenomenon, a discourse that inherently belongs to a society and could therefore be analyzed as a social discourse. The climate forms part and parcel of our group identity, 'we are the climate', not because the climate has shaped us, but because we see the climate as part of our collective identity. We compare our climate discourses with the way people speak about the weather and the climate in other cultures. Two crucial elements are being raised. First, in the comparison to climate change discourses across different cultures, there is a strong identification between society and the climate: talking about the climate is a critique upon one's own society. Secondly, van Beek states that the one who is concerned with the climate has doubts about one's society's future, which enables us to analyze current climate change discourses in light of a special, end of time idea (Van Beek 1999a). Climate change, while from the outset being a secular discourse that derives its authority from scientific claims, in dealing with environmental degradation and the earth's finitude we shall see below that such a discourse lends itself fairly easily to be incorporated into religious language and narratives about endings, also with an apocalyptic character. Important question rise like, What happens when a society is confronted with rather complicated and vigorous notions about a changing climate that are initially constructed outside and imposed upon that society? Does this encounter with new climate change discourses lead to a new form of societal critique? How do people make sense of new discourses through their existing ones? More specifically, how does a secularized and essentially anthropogenic explanation of a changing climate (constructed in the West), fuse with predominantly sacred orientations towards climate trajectories that are locally constructed?

[66] http://news.vanguardcameroon.com/2010/03/serious-health-problems-caused-by.html.

This chapter will explore how climate change discourses manifested itself and are translated by subsistence farmers at the so- called grassroots level in Bamenda. The analysis follows local climate change discourses along a geographically defined dimension, with on the one hand farmers who are relatively far away from high profile climate change forums, and on the other hand farmers who are part and parcel of the global climate change debate. Besides the geographical categorization of grassroots farmers that is adhered to in this chapter, there are obviously other related elements that play a role in the way people relate to and perceive the climate. Educational background, social or political position within society, and profession all play a decisive role in understanding and knowing about climate change. Among these elements educational background is a very crucial one, as schools are amongst the primary sources that disseminate more profound knowledge about geography and the climate. Since levels of education are generally higher in urban areas, the categorization along the physical geographical lines of remoteness from access to discourses, naturally follows the lines of access to levels of education and knowledge.

However, the role of the media should not be discarded. A farmer with a radio has fairly more knowledge about climate change than a farmer who has no radio or access to other media channels, and hence, shares a different view about the weather and the climate. For example, farmers who have (access to) a radio or other types of media are more likely to know about the existence of the ozone layer, and CO_2 emissions than farmers without access to similar media channels. The following fragment of a conversation that I had with my neighbor – a town dweller and fairly passionate (part time) farmer - illustrates her relative accessibility to climate change discourses and knowledge:

(R=respondent; I=interviewer)

> R: There was no Christmas-rain this year and we had to wait until January or February until the first rains fell. That is why it is only now that I am planting. You can feel that there is a lot of moist in the air and that before the end of this month we will have rains. You know, you always have to follow the climate.
>
> I: Are the seasons changing?
>
> R: Yes, it is this global warming, the place is getting too hot and everybody is getting sick. My eyes are worse this year and the dust is increasing. The dry season is too harsh.
>
> I: What is causing this global warming?
>
> R: To my knowledge it is this thing… how do you call it again? That thing that protects us?
>
> I: The ozone layer?
>
> R: Yes, the ozone layer. And because we in Cameroon have cut down all our trees this ozone layer cannot protect us, because trees catch the sunlight. But since I am not a geographer I don't know. But if I go to the cybercafé I can get more information.
>
> I: Does this global warming affect your crops?
>
> R: Yes because it is too dry and too hot. I don't farm because of the food, I just love it. It is always a miracle to put something in the ground and then you see that it grows. I follow my crops, it is just wonderful. But we don't know what this global warming will do to them (*Interview February 2010, Bamenda).*

However, farmers who live in the relatively more remote areas like in the outskirts of the Bamenda Grassfields are mainly dependent on the information that is provided on the radio, as far as the media channels are concerned. For a large group of farmers the radio therefore forms an important source of knowledge. The focus of this chapter will be on the local actors and their understanding and interpretation of climate change rather than on the mere vehicles of transmission, like the media. However, apart from the media, NGOs, churches and other authoritative bodies - who play an indispensable role in the translation and recreation of the discourse - farmers are as much part of this translation process. The aim of exploring the grassroots approach is therefore, to highlight elements of climate change discourses that are distillated, negotiated, and finally lead farmers into "believing" in and contributing to the collective fight against climate change. Since 'the grassroots' is a rather vague and ambiguous concept, it needs to be refined. Three main groups will be discerned, namely: farmers who *know* (or are cognizant) about climate change , farmers who *do not know,* and farmers who *have heard about it* but are not cognizant of it[67]. A disadvantage of categorizing people, is the encompassing risk of treating them, within a defined group, as a homogenous entity. Nevertheless, this does not dismiss the fact that there are shared characteristics and dynamics that can be discerned within each group. Particularly in the group of farmers who have (some) knowledge about (discourses on) climate change, there is a broad range of what knowing means. Therefore, in order to do justice to the heterogeneity of a defined group different farmers will be portrayed.

The main objective here is to examine the dialectical relationship between climate change as an experienced bio-physical reality, and the reception and construction of climate change discourses. Farmers' perceptions on and experiences of (changing) weather patterns will be described, and, furthermore, I will look into how having access to discourses shapes and (re)creates people's perception of the climate. In chapter four I have tried to demonstrate that explaining misfortune lies at the heart of the Grassfielders' belief system and cosmology. It became clear that new challenges are often explained and dealt with by forms of witchcraft; a dynamic that Weller [1994] has called 'the power of indeterminate meaning'. In this chapter I propose that global climate discourses provide a new framework to comprehend and explain misfortune, like diseases, poverty, social change, death and, more obvious, natural disasters. Finally, and foremost, this chapter will point out how the encounter with a new *truth regime* affects farmers' existential security. Existential security refers to non-materialistic components that principally concern individual perceptions on and psychological factors about how people relate to each other and the world. A useful approach within human security studies is formulated by the department of cultural anthropology of the *VU University* of Amsterdam and is here used as an analytic tool for studying the impact of climate change discourses upon counter-hegemonic discourses. "Existential security is the human attempt to make sense of this world and of human beings place in it, in relation to family, community, society and the wider cosmos, through processes of signification in connection to belief, trust, belonging, and mental and spiritual fulfilment" (*VU University* Amsterdam. Year report 2005, Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology: 2). The basic assumption here is, that the notion of *global* in climate change discourses - constructed by leading international actors - imposed upon other actors, leads to a universalization of threats and responsibilities. As such, climate change discourses are inevitably discourses about power and are an important matter to explore.

[67] By *knowing* I do not refer to local understandings or experiences of changes in the climate derived from mere empirical observations, but to a certain level of having the knowledge of climate change as – a scientific regime of truths – constructed in the West.

5.2 “We are the climate” - Climate trajectories as a societal critique

During my first weeks in town - in which I gained some preliminary insights into the extent to which people know and talk about climate change - I decided to pay a visit to a rural village called Babanki, situated in the mountainous outskirts of Bamenda. The choice for going to a rural area was born out of the assumption that a distinct geographical location, in terms of accessibility to global discourses, would give a different picture of farmers’ ‘climate change realities’. From the outset it needs to be said that even though farmers might not be familiar with climate change as a Western discourse, this does not mean that they do not speak about it, nor to say that climate change is not actually happening. Farmers have their own indicators to ‘follow the climate’ and to know when something unusual is happening. The focus here is, however, more concerned with the power that constitutes the messages coming from the West.

It was in the midst of November, the time in which the rainy season was supposed to come to an end to pave the way for the dry season. While usually the rainy season ends around the midst of October, the rains were still present and there were no signs of an approaching dry season yet. After an exhausting four hour walk through a thick forest that was located on a steep mountain, I met three subsistence farmers. They were busy clearing the grass that surrounds the community forest to protect it from wild bushfires, the so called fire-tracing method. In the course of our conversation it became clear that climate change is not a reality for them. They had never heard of global warming, nor of climate change. Eric, the youngest of the three, grows beans, cassava, Irish potatoes, corn and huckleberry. Since ten years he is also keeping a garden where he cultivates onions, carrots and leaks. He explains about the farming conditions: “You know, here the environment is very very good to us. I can say that all kinds of things that we grow here do very well. We have fresh air and all kinds of vegetation. It is not too hot and not so much cold. It is just a balance”. When I asked him if they are experiencing any kind of environmental problems he replied: “We don’t face any climate problems. it is just that we have two seasons here, a dry season and a rainy season.”

Here, Eric calls our attention to a crucial point, namely that climate change as such is an empty notion. The climate changes every year, every season. Moreover, the climate has always been changing and it is generally accepted that the climate is inherently variable on all time scales, (especially in the so called high risk environments), a trend that scholars refer to as climate variability. This immanent void in the term climate change inevitably creates a space for multiple understandings and to attach a myriad of meanings. All of a sudden Eric recalls the fact that there used to be much more trees in the past and that the air used to be much cooler. “At first when there was a lot of forest, the climate was so cool. That is what I have observed. And then things like groundnuts cannot grow, and things like plantain cannot grow. But now like this the climate is hot and we work groundnut here and harvest.” To Eric, the rising temperatures are not evoking any threat, but are rather perceived as the natural course of things. He and other farmers in Babanki are even very content with the current balanced state of the climate, because it enables them to grow a larger variety of crops. The main difference for them with the past is that there is less forest and more heat, because they have observed that there are more people living in this area nowadays than before. Rising temperatures is a more tangible and long term characteristic of a changing climate than climate change as such. This could be a possible explanation for the fact that global warming is easier to understand, and moreover, more likely to be understood as a form of change that is visibly different from the past .

In an environment where heavy rains form part of the variable character of the climate and where droughts have regularly been occurring, the threat of the climate (or the normality of threat) is more the rule than the exception. Climate change has always been part of peoples' daily lives in vulnerable regions. Ordinary farmers share different views on the environment, essentially based on past experiences (De Bruijn et al. 2005). While degradation might indeed be on the rise, for people who always have been directly dependent on nature, environmental problems are not a new phenomenon. Depletion of natural resources has been an integral factor in many ecosystems of the past, as well as in many of the world's climate zones (Van Beek 1999b). A widely heard expression amongst farmers who do not know about climate change is, 'as the world is changing, the climate is changing'. Of course the climate is changing, it has always been changing. Whereas climate change discourses evoke a threat of abnormality in the West - and can be seen as a secularized end of time idea - in environments where climate variability is more significant in long term seasonal changes and extreme weather events, the notion of a changing climate ironically enough leads to a construction of 'normality'. Put differently, with the construction and presentation of climate change as an anomaly or threat, the norm of a constant climate is born. To find an answer to the question why the climate does not appear to be viewed as a threat for abovementioned farmers, we might take a closer look at how nature, and thus the climate, are embedded in local worldviews and cosmo-politics. With cosmo-politics I refer to the inclusive weave of the world in which political systems and cultural patterns define people's place in the wider cosmos and how they relate to the cosmic elements, like the climate and the natural environment.

Farmers in Babanki

Bamenda's landscape in the rainy season, on the road leading to Sabga.

A focus group discussion with members of a CIG, involved in climate change mitigation activities, on their communal cassava farmland.

Many groups with a non-Western interpretation of climate issues have a distinct conception of community. Elements like the soil, plants and climate actively form part of a world which is essentially a social one, held together by reciprocity, communication channels and rights and obligations (Allen 1988; Kuletz 1998 and Descola 1996, in Smith 2009). The same holds true for Bamenda where the environment is perceived to be the soul of the Grassfielders' culture. Notwithstanding the fact that something as *a* local cosmology or belief system does not exist – i.e. each kingdom in the Grassfields has its own distinctive culture – the traditional rulers have always been in close contact with each other and have a shared history, and in many respects also a shared culture. In the former chapter I demonstrated the important role of the palaces within society and how the traditional rulers in this region are emphasizing the importance of nature as part and parcel of their culture. As described in the previous chapter, the symbiotic relation between man and nature finds its expression (amongst others) in the spiritual role of the Fons and the sacred and secret forests that surround the palaces. Moreover, as the environment is always used as a symbol, or sacred icon in rituals the cultural connection to nature becomes visible in the material culture. The relationship with the natural world is thus embedded within political structures and at the same time cannot be detached from its religious context.

The execution of the (spiritual and symbolic) power is functional to preserve the harmony between society and the cosmic elements. This power is not only maintained by the Fons themselves, but is reinforced by the populations who put the faith in their hands to clarify and solve the problems. The symbiotic relation between man and nature explains and demonstrates why there is no inherently embedded fear of the climate - as a catastrophic end of time idea - in local cosmologies. This statement lasts to the extent that man obeys to the rules and laws of mother nature formulated by the ancestors and transmitted by traditional rulers. Because of the interdependent character of the relation between man and nature, adapting their life styles to the demands of nature has always been an imperative. In the past, the Fons applied indigenous and traditional knowledge and know-how to surmount many natural disasters. "We implored with the rainmakers to bring forth rain in times of severe dryness, we called on the traditional healers to act in terms of health crisis and pleaded with mother nature when our general weather conditions frowned on us"(Inauguration speech of CAMTRACC, Fon of Guzang 2009).

Most of the traditional rulers explain climate change by the fact that they failed to live like their forefathers, and that they failed to follow the rules prescribed by the ancestors. Following this, every (extreme) weather event refers directly to the people. The climate tells something about society itself, and therefore justifications should not be found in an outer societal source. Part of the explanation lies in exactly this, if 'we are the climate', to fear the climate is to fear ourselves. An externalization of us from the cosmos and the environment, as if we are being threatened by something that we ourselves are part of. The existence of the possibility of the regeneration of the socio- cosmic harmony in Bamenda, can be characterized as a positive discourse about the climate. Here lies a crucial difference with the externalization of man from nature, and the fear to lose control over nature, which are fundamental pessimistic elements of current Western climate change discourses.

In the field of environmental sociology scholars characterize Western ways of knowing and relating to the environment as the detachment from and subordination of nature. This separation from the environment is guided by economic progress that presumes domination over natural resources (see Smith 2007; Fogel 2004, Hannigan 1995). Smith argues that a fundamental element of counter hegemonic discourses (i.e. non-Western or indigenous peoples' discourses) is that it functions with a sense of attachment where nature is concerned. It is not a discourse of dominance *over* nature, but rather a spiritual and cultural

connection *to* nature (Smith 2007: 208). Many groups with a non-Western interpretation of climate issues have a distinct conception of community. Elements like the soil, plants and climate actively form part of a world which is essentially a social one, held together by reciprocity, communication channels and rights and obligations (Allen 1988; Kuletz 1998 and Descola 1996, in Smith 2009). As demonstrated above, in local cosmologies in the Bamenda Grassfields, the palaces, and practices prescribed by traditions and the traditional rulers actively participate in complying an essentially mutually dependent world. This doesn't mean that farmers' daily practices are fully in line with these local visions embedded in political structures; with slash and burn agriculture, and wild bush fires as the primary examples of environmentally unfriendly practices. These are however no 'traditional' practices as such, but, as argued by most farmers, born out of poverty and thus due to a lack of alternatives. This is not to legitimize local practices, nor to state that the local population in Bamenda are convinced 'noble defenders of nature', but rather an explanation for it[68]. So far, a short recapitalization of the Grassfields socio-political and cosmo-political context. My concern here is however, not so much to explore the institutional level but rather how this 'translation regime' provides grassroots farmers with a particular framework to understand and make sense of certain changes in society. We shall turn now to how environmental degradation and climate change are viewed and understood by farmers.

If speaking about the environment is a commentary about the self, how do people - for whom environmental degradation is not something new - speak about those changes in a rapidly changing world? What I observed during many of the conversations that I had with farmers is that whenever I asked about environmental changes we often ended up talking about general changes in their lives and in the world. As if the environment is seen as some sort of mirror of societal changes. Moreover, it appeared to me that – especially among older people – every form of change, and thus rupture from the past, was valued necessarily in negative terms. A commonly held view amongst farmers was that the world is changing too fast, that there are too many people, and that traditions are no longer respected. Elisabeth, a 74 year old subsistence farmer framed it as follows, "The world is changing. I don't know the cause but the world is changing in a terrible way. Even the child that you put to the world will abuse you. Nobody looks you into the eyes."

A recurrent dynamic that can be discerned from common interpretations of 'non-cognizant' farmers is the way in which the present seems to be a deterioration of the past. The world is changing too fast, traditions are no longer respected, the ancestors are not longer obeyed, and, the environment is degrading. As such, environmental degradation – and climate change - is seen in light of a degrading world that resonates with the socio-cultural and existential realm. Now, if tales about the past are for a significant part meta-commentaries on the present (see Henige 1974 and Jansen 1995, in: Van Beek 1999b: 5), what does the deterioration of the present in comparison with the past entail for a "projected future"? Van Beek writes in his article "Echoes of the Future, Degradation and Eschatology" that if the future is a reflection of today, one could expect political, social and ecological problems to generate tales about endings, also of an apocalyptic nature. By exploring the mythology of both oral traditions and written scriptures in different world cultures it becomes clear that there exist major differences about "endings" or "projected futures" across a distance and between different cultures. It turns out that only a small minority of cultures – that seem to be concentrated in three major regions of the world: i.e. Scandinavia, Judeo-Christian Middle East and Meso America - is fascinated by projections of the future,

[68] For a more detailed discussion about North-South relations and studies of people interacting with their environment I refer to Hannigan's *Environmental Sociology* 1995.

guided by apocalyptic fervor (Van Beek 1999b: 5). What is then the more common idea of a projected future, and how can we understand the case of Bamenda?

For most farmers, increasing temperatures, overpopulation, cutting down of trees are all perceived as a sign of a rapidly changing and degrading world. The list of changes that was raised by the Grassfielders is endless: unpredictable seasons and distorted rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, increasing floods and landslides, stronger winds, decline in the taste and the quality of food, higher poverty levels, drying up of streams and waterfalls, high prevalence of diseases like malaria, HIV, typhoid, loss of trees, soil erosion, loss of plant species and animals etc. Interestingly enough, the majority of 'cognizant' farmers by and large blame climate change to be the major cause for all this. Among 'non-cognizant' farmers there is a widely shared belief that it is either because of overpopulation; because people have cut down their trees (which is against tradition and thus has made the ancestors or the small gods of the forest angry); that witchcraft has been involved, or that it is God's plan. Other common explanations that were pointed out were related to the belief that people have violated traditions, like going to the farm on 'native' holidays (called 'country Sunday') and as such have desecrated the land. Other causes that were raised were poor agricultural practices, rampant bush fires, overexploitation of the forest, and the use of chemicals. In a few cases people explained that they heard on the radio that it is the white men who have caused it, and hence they shared the opinion that it is them who have to come up with a solution. One older woman blamed climate change to be caused by the power executed by man over nature. According to her:

> "Man has been trying to be more powerful than God, so that is why He is reacting like this. It is a warning. Too much interference is not good. You have to listen to nature and God's laws".

In a similar way, the local discourse was reflected in the statement of another female farmer who said that climate change started to happen when man decided to land on the moon:

> "(..) You know it has come as a result of man's interference with the moon. The astronauts have been going to the moon so that is the cause of climate change. People should have stayed off the moon because it has an important value for the shrines. In our culture we only visit the shrines when the moon is out there. You cannot just say let's interfere with the moon."

During many of my interviews with respondents I soon realized that, while fear was a recurrent theme, the extent to which people spoke about the future – and climate change's possible consequences - differed largely between different individuals. My attempts to speak about people's idea of the future, and to explore people's imagination of it often resulted in incomprehension. In some cases (especially among 'non-cognizant') informants just reacted surprised and asked me how I can possibly think that they have the answer if it is only God who knows. Others, who had heard about climate change, emphasized that they were in fact afraid of this global warming since they understood from the radio that Africans are going to be the first ones to suffer from its effects. Finally, a considerable part of the 'cognizant' farmers in fact did mention in their answer the possibility that the world was going to end. In general, what people told me is that when they heard about global warming for the first time it evidently evoked fear in them, as the following comment illustrates:

> "When we heard about this thing global warming we thought 'this could be the end of the world'. We were very scared. If this is going to continue like this, this is going to be the end of the world. It is all because of evolution and modernity. Here in the village the air is still clean and healthy. But in the city

you breath all the gas of the cars. It is all due to modernity. Before there was no problem (*focus group discussion 'mixed farming group', February 2010, Bawock market)*."

It turned out to be that also in the perceived intensity of future changes, and in end of the world ideas there seems to be a geographically defined dimension. The more people know about global warming, the more likely it is that they have an apocalyptic horizon (see paragraph 5.5). Despite these differences, one vision appeared commonly shared: i.e. that the world is changing in a negative way, and as much as the present is different from the past the future will be different from the present. Related to this, Van Beek explains that the majority of the world's cultures do not envisage violent, cataclysmic endings of the world; but in most visions the notion of the future is one of a gradual fading away. Like a gradual decrease and slow degradation of life that will not end with a bang but with a whimper (Van Beek 1999b: 9). This perspective reflects indeed to a large extent how, particularly the older generation of Grassfielders, speaks about the past, the world and the projected future. The glorification of the past also finds expression in that the diminishing power of the Fon. Grassfielders view that the (symbolic) power of the Fon is eroding. The Fons used to be much more powerful before, more respected and better capable of expelling misfortune from society. Also the rainmakers are not longer functional in society since they are not more appointed to possess this form of power. This vision that the world of today is less than the world of yesterday, stems for a considerable part from the dynamics of orality from the ways oral knowledge is transferred. Expected is a process of decay, a diminished existence, loss of power, and loss of knowledge (ibid: 11-13).

Apart from being a mirror of societal changes and explaining the general degradation of the world and thus its future, discourses about the climate are, at least for a considerable part, also a platform to call the existing world order into question. Talking about the climate often turned into critical discussions about the role of the industrialized countries, either in positive or negative terms. In a few occassions I encountered farmers with a critical stance towards the West, who state that since they have caused all this change, they are the ones who should come up with the solution. However, remarkably enough, conversations also often ended up in criticizing the self and blaming Africans for its own underdevelopment. During my 6 months of fieldwork I have been listening to several different (local) radio stations for many hours. I found it once again remarkable to notice that global warming is such a 'hot' topic. The general tendency of speaking about environmental degradation and global warming always seemed directed to blaming farmers for the existing situation. For example, a local radio station *Foundation Radio* has a program called "S.O.S. Environment" fully devoted to sensitize the population on environmental issues. This program, which is an initiative of the NGO "Paradise on Earth" is meant to reach the grassroots farmers in rural communities and has the aim to enlighten the population on urgent environmental issues, like waste disposal, the negative consequences of slash and burn, and climate change. The following fragment of this program in which a panel starts speaking about climate change illustrates how the effects are communicated at the grassroots level. The explanation that was given by a bee farmer/environmentalist resulted in a highly remarkable discussion:

(S= station manager; R=respondent; J=journalist)

S: "Could you explain us why the bee population all over the world is drastically decreasing? For America, Europe and other places? There must be something going on that has made the population very small."

R: "The reason why the bee population has actually reduced nowadays is because of what is called climate change. The climate is changing for all angles. For politics, climate changes. For farming, climate

changes. Everything changes. Even man, the population actually goes down. Everything goes down because of man's actions. Because when I say that God created man and other animals like bees, and He said may they live together. But man turned out to be a wicked creature who does not take care of the other creatures. Even water, we put chemicals inside and fishes die. Thus the climate is suffering everywhere. (..) All the smoke that we produce with our bush fires, the carbon dioxide disturbs the ozone layer. All the heat and smoke in the air suffocates and affect a lot things and bees too. (..) So we need to grow more plants."

J: "I want to ask you something. You go out a lot to Holland, Germany, you study a lot about the environment. And now we hear about this thing global warming, global warming. Even our own president was at the UN, United Nations. They gave him the opportunity to talk about this problem. But we, black people, do not contribute to this problem, but we will be the first one to suffer from the impacts of climate change. You as environmentalists who has reached a high level of education and has given this climate change day at the international level, what have you done with the knowledge that you have accumulated from all this travels and speak in big countries like Germany and Holland to fight this problem, while it affects African countries the most?"

R: "(..) You will be surprised but the white men is developing because he is kind. You will be surprised to hear that in white men's country there are bees but they do not sting people. Even when you step on a snake it will not bite you. The burning plants that we have here the burn your skin, but in Europe they don't harm you. I just want to say that everything in Africa is wounded. Everything has been wounded, bees are wounded. Even this house is wounded. If you touch it is just going to hurt you. I don't know how people do things here, I cannot give an explanation why everything is wounded here. Even if you see the way they build houses in Europe, the prisons looks like our Ayaba Hotel. I cannot understand why the big people go over there, and see these things like good roads, they come back and do not build good roads for us when they come back here. I have concluded that we have been cursed, maybe our forefathers have been cursed. I have seen the white men's country and it just like heaven. I am doubting the fact if heaven can be somewhere else again, because that place is just heaven. Those who have travelled abroad will confirm what I am saying. Because if you cannot see you cannot believe. When they say do not destroy the forest the black men is head strong, is very stubborn. In Germany and Holland I saw lot's of forest. I used to think that white man's country is all tarred but I saw in fact lot's of forest. Forests are big as Bamenda. They go to another area and make a forest where nobody touches it. While it is well planned there people live in harmony with the environment. But here, there is no plan and effort to create this balance in the ecosystem. They grow a lot of forest, and plant a lot of trees. I can conclude that if white men makes something they make it very well. Even water they will respect it. They respect everything, grass is respected, bees are respected. For us, we need time to develop that, to be more committed. Even the houses that were built in up-station by white man you can still find them today. I don't know what our forefathers were doing when Europe was developing.

S:You are a man who has committed himself to new ideas and you want people to change their ideas or you want people to change their consciousness? Since you say that you are a practical man, now the time has come to put your ideas forward. Can you give us practical ideas for the short term and long term future?

R: Everything is a process, and we need a start. Our problem in Africa is that we only complain a lot and we don't want to work. White men works during the day and throughout the night. Even the churches that we have in Africa only pray and do not work. If you only sit at home and pray and you come back and sit at home it does not make you a religious person, it does not bring you anywhere. You have to pray but you also have to work (..) We need to organize ourselves and sacrifice. If the white men wants to help you and you are not in a group they do not want to help you. Some people say that they want

help but they cannot tell you what their needs are. If we want the white men to help us we need to group ourselves."

(*Fragment from the radio show 'S.O.S. Environment', Foundation Radio, September 2009, translated from pidgin*)

In his speech about global warming the bee farmer creates a sharp dichotomy between the industrialized and well developed 'heaven' of the West and the 'curse' of Africa's backwardness. Apart from his personal drive to distinguish himself from the 'common man' - as he has travelled to the West - in order to elevate his status, we can also read a meta-commentary upon his own society. Ironically enough, he equals modernity – and thus the idea that nature can be shaped and modified according to man's desire – with protecting and respecting the environment. While Africans, on the contrary, are depicted as lazy and disrespecting nature, animals and their environment. Yet climate change tells us exactly the contrary. The way in which he is 'enlightening' farmers about global warming makes us think that Africans themselves should be blamed for their detrimental and vulnerable position. This fragment shows how an ordinary discussion about global warming seamless encompasses broad notions related to development vis-à-vis underdevelopment, modernity's utopia, human rights, inequality, notions of inferiority and racism, guilt, responsibilities and power. In this case climate change is reinforcing the idea of 'Africa's backwardness', as the white men's countries are able to protect themselves while Africa finds itself again dependent on their aid. In brief, climate change discourses form a platform to talk about society, to negotiate a (collective) identity, and to establish new models for development.

What I aimed to demonstrate in this section is that speaking about the climate in Bamenda is speaking about the self, like a meta-commentary upon society and the world at large that serves to explain societal changes related to ideas of a projected future. Therefore, in order to understand how people relate to the climate and to what extent climate change is a 'reality', visions on climate trajectories should be placed in the local context. Nonetheless, it would be utmost too simplistic to imbricate Grassfielders' worldviews solely in local cosmologies and 'traditional' political and cultural systems. In Cameroon 53% of the population is Christian, about 25% is Muslim and 23% adheres to so-called indigenous religions. Similarly, to define oneself as a Christian doesn't necessarily exclude the existence of a parallel local cosmology that is oriented towards the ancestors or locally defined deities. Moreover, local narratives, traditions and cosmologies are far from being static and unchangeable; but rather select and adopt new elements that fairly easily merge with existing patterns. This is reflected in the hybrid character of discourses, which are more the rule than the exception. In practice, there is a high level of inter-discursive explanations of climate trajectories, which – with the encounter of Western climate change discourses – becomes even more multifaceted. The unquestioned trust in God, discontented ancestors, witchcraft, local gods and the damaged ozone layer regularly crossed the table during one interview. Considering the complexity and broad scope of my field of study, I decided to limit myself to sedentary subsistence farmers and not so much to grazers. This choice implicitly resulted in a research population that predominantly defines itself as Christian, since most grazers belong to the Muslim Fulbe[69]. In the following paragraph I will explore

[69] Notwithstanding the fact that this sharp agriculturalist- grazers dichotomy along ethnic and religious lines nowadays no longer exists, I deliberately chose to focus on agriculturalists. This choice was partly made because (Fulbe) grazers have a distinct local cosmology, political structure and ways to deal with climatic issues. This however, doesn't mean that the Muslim population have been fully left out of my research. I had several focus group discussions and interviews with Muslim Fulbe who used to be grazers and shifted partly to sedentary forms of agriculture.

how discourses about a changing climate are incorporated into local narratives and cosmologies to explain misfortune and inexplicable events.

5.3 The power of indeterminate meaning

The second group of farmers that are distinguished are the farmers who have heard about climate change or global warming, but in fact don't know it as a scientific problem; what has possibly caused it, and what the possible consequences will be. A first remarkable difference between abovementioned farmers and the farmers who have heard about climate change or global warming, is that climate change is much more a 'reality'. As it is very difficult to draw a clear cut boundary between farmers who *know* and farmers who have heard about climate change, I decided to use the following indicators. The farmers who have heard about climate change or global warming are familiar with the notions, but have a low key understanding of both the scientific as well as the public discourse. Knowledge about climate change can on the one hand mean, being able to reproduce the public discourse and speak about greenhouse gas emissions and the ozone layer, but at the same time being unable to comprehend the bio-physical characteristics of the problem. And finally, there is a select group of farmers who possess a more profound understanding of the scientific discourse.

The mysterious white dust that recently appeared in Bamenda, evoked different sentiments and attitudes across different groups of people. Some people were terrified, others were supposedly indifferent towards it, and again others were explaining it by global warming or climate change. Messages that are disseminated on the radio, in other media, by NGO workers and government officials are generally less detailed and leave farmers often confused. Especially the role of the media in providing farmers with knowledge concerning climate change, leaves them in fear and confusion. Slogans and metaphors that characterize the public discourse on global warming are reproduced on the radio and echoed by farmers. Part of the used language that triples down to the grassroots level and is filtered out – as a pronounced form of intertextuality - are terms like 'global crisis', 'a global war', 'a collective fight' and 'think globally and act locally', which become part of the shared access to climate change realities. I remember a farmer who shared his understanding of global warming with me: "They tell us over the radio that there is a global war coming up, and that we in Africa are the first victims. We have seen the first signs already. We are terrified because we don't know what will happen to all of us and when this war arrives, or how to protect ourselves." While sharing his fear about this global war with me, he looked into the sky to see if he could see it coming. This gesture occurred more often when people were speaking about climate change to me. As if they were looking or waiting for some sort of immediate arrival of a phenomenon possible to see with the naked eye. This farmer's words sharply reflect in a nutshell how the popular discourse on climate change is framed, namely a global war in which Africans are depicted as the first victims. Besides the fact that this farmer is waiting for the arrival of an 'enemy', the used metaphors and the constructed language that shape the discourse awake confusion and persistently call upon a sense of shared responsibility.

I often tried to imagine how it must be for a subsistence farmer in Bamenda, or anywhere else in Africa and the developing world to hear about a new phenomenon like global warming. I personally remember when I heard about it for the first time. It must have been when I was five or six years old when me and my brother arrived at school on an ordinary day in Santiago in Chile, where we grew up. Our teachers

called us together and announced that from now on we could no longer stay out in the sun, because there was a hole in the ozone layer right above the city, which was very dangerous for our skin. It certainly evoked a terrifying sensation, all the more because we had never heard of something similar before. In the same way, I imagined that for farmers to be confronted with this message is like being exposed to a new, or at least different, ontological framework. Having access to a radio or television can indeed make the difference between knowing about the existence of a (damaged) ozone layer, the importance of protecting it, and one's own related contribution and responsibility. The following citation of a farmer who recalled the first moment in which he was informed about global warming illustrate the dynamics of his moments of 'conversion':

> "When I heard about global warming for the first time I was frightened. If the planet will change the way they tell us on the radio it will not be fine. It is going to be very difficult to adapt. I heard that the climate was something coming from the South to the hinterlands. We are experiencing it. Those who tap the palm wine are affected because they don't produce again. If the palm wine is going to be finished our society will not do well because we live with it. I think it is still going to come because this is not yet really the big. It is not really the change yet but it is coming very soon. Places will be dry and affect us, the trees and the animals. That is why we are planting fruit trees. It is just that we lack the seeds (*focus group discussion Bali, February 2010).*

The first encounter with the notion of climate change in Bamenda is by all means attached to fear and responsibilities. Notwithstanding the general understanding of a threatened earth, what global warming constitutes remains in many cases vague and unclear. Part of the confusion that climate change discourses entail is that they are open to an extremely wide variety of interpretative claims. As I briefly touched upon in chapter four, this is a dynamic that Weller [1994] has called 'The power of indeterminate meaning'. Weller describes how in the 1980s The Eighteen Kings temple in northern Taiwan in less than a decade grew from a simple roadside shrine to one of Taiwan's major temples, that is linked to impressive economic progression of the country. The temple plays a wild variation on the standard themes of popular religion: gods, ancestors and ghosts, while at the same time feeding individualistic, profit oriented morals. According to him, this cult can be seen as a free space full of ambivalence, or 'indeterminate meaning' that is the real secret of its power and broad appeal. It allows the cult to integrate effortlessly rapid processes of social and economic change that are partly entailed by modernity's enticements (Weller 1994: 154). Nevertheless, in Weller's interpretation the free space of indeterminate meaning similarly has an emphasis on ambivalence. This 'messy exuberance' makes the struggle for 'interpretative control' by those who try to get a grip on it so difficult (Weller 1994, in: Geschiere 1998: 214). While acknowledging that the economic situation in present day Africa is quite different from in Taiwan, Geschiere draws an interesting parallel with the modernity of witchcraft in Africa. He writes:

> "The parallels with the modernity of witchcraft in Africa are indeed striking. Here, too there is a staggering production of meaning, highly unsystematic and contradictory but, precisely because of this, extremely powerful: witchcraft discourses – like the Taiwanese spirit cults – allow for so many interpretations that they can explain any course of events and are, therefore, impossible to falsify (Geschiere 1998: 214).

Building upon respectively Weller and Geschiere's arguments, I contend that climate change discourses in a similar way allow for a myriad of interpretations, and a 'messy exuberant' production of meaning and contestation. If we replace the term witchcraft by climate change In abovementioned citation the

arguments still stands. This is not to say that they are identical phenomena, but the parallel resides rather in the general power dynamics of their indeterminacy. Both discourses have the adaptive capacity to interpret and to give meaning to modernity's challenges, and the ability to fuse the local and global. As discussed in the previous chapter, explaining misfortune by witchcraft has formed an important part of the Grassfielders socio-political structure, and has served - for ritual and symbolic power holders - as an important source to derive its power from. In addition to this, we can view a clear reinforcement of existing power relations: a continuation of the (palace related) power holders who have taken up the initiative to fight this form of 'misfortune' called climate change.

With a similar structure I observed that many of the 'enigmatic' or seemingly inexplicable events that denote misfortune can seamlessly be explained by the indeterminacy of the issue of climate change. For example:

> "Because of the effects of climate change people will see it as witchcraft. This was the case in Bamali where lightening stroke school children. If you don't talk to them they will never believe. When it affects people and they die, they take it for witchcraft. We now know that it is climate change that is behind the incident in Bamali when the lightening stroke and all those children died. The same is the case with malaria, typhoid, many people suffer from it. Climate change affects people a lot" (*focus group discussion with CIG ACTWID, January 2010, Bamenda).*

> "If you visit a group [of farmers], immediately they start telling you about their problems. These are problems of climate change but they don't know what it is. They don't know how to call it. There are many changes that never used to take place before, so the question is now: what is happening? All this is resulting from climate change. We tell them that it is not something brought from elsewhere, it is right here in the house" (*ibid).*

A striking example is the story of Philip, 75 years old and an honorable member of the palace of Mendankwe - the Fondom that geographically lies at the heart of Bamenda. It was a Sunday morning and I had arranged an interview with the Fon to speak about his participation in the campaign in the fight against climate change. The Fon of Mendankwe, Philip and me are sitting in front of the palace. Both of them blamed climate change for all the possible existing troubles. Philip is a subsistence farmer who owns a compound next to the palace, where he grows cola nut trees, bananas, coffee and avocado's. Since the year 2000 Philip is sick, goes regularly to the hospital because of high blood pressure and other health related problems. He explains how climate change is affecting his life:

> "I cannot eat because of climate change. I lost 8 children in 2 years because of climate change. I am 75 years and I don't have the strength to change the climate change. I have no power left. I have two wives and had 12 children and now there are only four left. [The Fon cannot walk by himself because he suffers from a muscular disability. While his son helps him to enter his car, Philip states:] Do you see the condition of the Fon? This is also caused by climate change (*interview at the palace of Mendankwe, December 2009) ".*

The Fon adds to the conversation: "Our skin gets darker and darker. People who have a light skin become even dark like me. If you stay here in Bamenda for a while you will see that you also become dark." For people who have heard about climate change but do not really know what it entails, misfortune seems likely to be understood to be caused by climate change. Even though God is vividly 'present' amongst this group of farmers, poverty, diseases, bad luck, death, irregular weather events, and in some cases even AIDS are considered to be caused by climate change or global warming. During a global warming

sensitization meeting the traditional ruler of Bali (a highly educated man) stated in a speech that all the bad roads in Bamenda are caused by climate change. If climate change was not happening the roads would have been much more accessible and in a better shape. (It might be worth mentioning that he is a member of the ruling CPDM party, who can be held responsible for the bad condition of the roads in Bamenda. Climate change is then again the ultimate scapegoat for blaming the existing troubles in the Anglophone North-West region).

Another distinction of this group is that the global phenomenon is described as something tangible that will cause serious devastation in all layers of their existence. A women's group in Bafut explained the consequences of the issue:

> A: "We also have it here. This year there was no dry season rain. There is so much illness, heat, people don't look healthy. We have hunger, too much hunger. In the rainy season we eat less. We have heard about climate change, it is all over.
>
> B: "In some countries people die, and now we see it also happening here. People are dying and have hunger. The message is that when we cut one stick [tree] we should plant five. First, we only heard it but now we also see it. Aids, orphans, malaria, cough, to us we feel that it is climate change that is causing all these problems."
>
> C: "We were scared to miss our families and that all of us will die. We bury two corpses every week".
>
> A: "I thought that everybody will die. You don't get the power again to work. It causes laziness. The sun brings us cancer and headaches."
>
> C: "We are not God who can tell how climate change will be. He might stop it if He sees that we are suffering, He might stop it one day."
>
> A: "But if you pray do you think God is going to carry us to our farms? No! We must start fighting it ourselves. Those who are lazy, are those who suffer a lot."
>
> (*Focus group discussion with a women's CIG, Bafut, February 2010).*

In comparison to non-cognizant farmers, climate change is clearly an increasing reality and gets a visible experiential focus. One day in January I was walking at a marketplace in Bali, a rural town 19 kilometers from Bamenda. At a certain point I engaged myself with a group of farmers as I was invited to drink palm wine with them. I sat down for a while and we started talking about ordinary things like soccer and the weather. The conversation turned into an informal group discussion in which the climate quickly became a topic for discussion. An older man asked me: "This climate change, is it better over there in Europe?" Five women who were selling huckleberry and coco yams at their marketplace were part of the talk. It was clear from the outset that some of them heard about climate change from the government delegation, but that it remained a rather vague notion and was clearly linked up with their experienced realities.

> "We heard about it but we didn't understand. From our crops we know it, the way it is changing. But some of them don't know. We have heard about it because in July [2009] we had too much rain up to November, and too much heat. The government demonstrated that we should plant many trees. 2010 is much colder than before."

Interestingly enough, this woman's statement is contradicting the rising temperatures emphasized by most farmers. In the discussion the participating women revealed a whole range of irregular weather events that occurred in the past. A long time ago, they had also experienced prolonged drought and excessive rains, but those occurrences were not placed in a climate change framework. Some years they had just enough food, and other years they had to deal with poor yields. What happened last year however, clearly was interpreted as a sign of climate change. When I asked them whether they were afraid and had any idea about the future, I received the following answer:

> "We don't know. We believe in God so it is God's plans. We are not afraid because we depend on God. We are in His hands. We don't know why He does it. God is somebody to command, He does what He desires."

For these women climate change remains a vague and incomprehensible notion, but at the same time they 'see' it happening. Whereas they stated that they can see the climate changing in their crops, they similarly spoke about unforeseeable weather events that occurred in the past. While those occurrences are explained as an act of God, the phenomenon of climate change opens the doors to a new way of speaking about society, oneself and their relation with the transcendental.

5.4 "We are not God oh!" – How a secular discourse fuses with the sacred

The story of Muchoh Laurence certainly represents one of the most vivid manifestations of the hybridity of climate change discourses, and how they have the capacity to be seamlessly adopted within a wide variety of ontological narratives. Laurence, a middle-aged woman, is a vegetarian by faith for eight years and is a convinced believer of the 'world-renowned spiritual teacher' Supreme Master Ching Hai[70]. This spiritual path holds that the world will see its destruction, caused by global warming, in the year 2012 (based on the Maya calendar); unless every individual on earth is willing to save the planet by becoming a vegan (among other things). While Muchoh is not representative for Cameroon (there are only ten members of this cult in Bamenda, and in Douala approximately 150 members who gather on a monthly basis); it is a proof of climate change's powerful discursive capacity. I came to know about Supreme Master when a friend of mine in Bamenda told me to watch her live program on Supreme Master Television. I was certainly stunned by the amalgamation of discourses, and combination of different religious traditions. Supreme Master is a Vietnamese prophet representing a belief system that combines Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and merges them into an all-inclusive, 'newer' religious framework that bases itself on a (primary) scientific discourse: climate change. Soon after seeing this program I met Muchoh. I learned that it is an internationally known religion, that basically connects all its members through internet and TV. In Muchoh's house we find a prominent picture of The Master. She begins to tell me about her vegetarian faith:

> "I am a vegetarian by faith. We belief that the vegetarian diet has 80% cure of climate change, and that is what the world does not understand. We don't keep animals because it contributes to climate change, as methane is produced by animals used for agriculture. It is a school of thought, a faith that teaches about the truth, spirituality. It is beyond Christianity, a path, a religious truth. (..) We do yoga meditation. You have to do certain things that are in line with the bible. Refrain from lies telling and stealing. (..)

[70] For a full description of Supreme Master Ching Hai and Her 'spiritual way to the truth' see the website: http://www.godsdirectcontact.org/ and http://suprememastertv.com/.

> When Buddha was alive he had Christian followers. When Mohammed was alive the whole world only knew about Jesus. Christians are fighting Muslims but they are one and the same. Mohammed is a Master like Buddha and Jesus. Jesus is a Master like Mohammed. Krishna, there are so many Masters. They die and go. A God cannot be only with one Master. When the Master is alive the true religion can be preached. Supreme Master is the present Master. We keep on living on Christ, Christ, but when your soul is ready, you will believe Her. As I am sitting here like this I am Her disciple. Jesus saw the light and heard the voice, it is the same with us. She is Jesus in another body. The Master says that when everybody in the whole world becomes a vegetarian climate change will be eradicated. (..) So we have just two years and some months to save the planet, or else everybody on earth will disappear. The world is sitting on a ticking timing bomb, which can explode within two years and something. If you look at the world today people are talking about climate change too much. Two years ago when I was sharing those pamphlets people were never interested. But now we realize that it is important because we only have two years to save the planet. And the ice all melts, the gas will be released and it will poison the whole world. And we need to pray. (*interview Muchoh Laurence, Bamenda November 2009)*."

The most interesting part of her explanation is that this spiritual path calls upon an individual responsibility. The world is at risk due to human sin and - and while calling upon a feeling of guilt – the promise is that the world can be saved only if everybody takes his or her own responsibility by showing morally good behavior, like 'going green'. In fact, this message bears striking similarities with the *green message* as preached by the NGOs. The direct link between the climate and society's stewardship has been framed by sociologists under the nominator of *eco-theology.* A similar viewpoint was shared and preached by different churches. A reverend of the Presbyterian church in Bamenda explained the concerns of his church with climate change:

> "We are preaching about climate change in church because it is affecting our farmers, and the church is concerned with alleviating poverty. We use the bible. When God created the world He saw that it was good, and He wanted it to stay like this. Humans who are violating the environment are violating God. When we cut down trees it is not good. We dry our water sources, we do bush fires. Not to burn bushes should be taught. Grow flowers and plant trees. We know that we have a good background on climate change all over the country. We can reach the whole country. The world was created good but the world has turned bad due to human sin. Exploitation is greediness because it means that you are depriving somebody else. The world is for all of us and not for one set of people. The children who went to Israel: God told them to collect only enough food for each day. In prayer we ask for daily bread to not let other people go hungry. (..) Climate change is a warning of God that proves human sin. The only way to correct it is to repent it, to correct was has gone wrong. Responsibility is not to waste our resources through greed, that is a moral responsibility. The obedience to God's will" (*interview with the development secretary of the Presbyterian Church Bamenda, December 2010)*.

The feature that has the capacity to fuse discourses about climate change and religious traditions like Christianity (and Supreme Master Ching Hai, but also witchcraft) is the idea of human's sinful nature. The message of a changing climate thus calls upon the deeply embedded sense of a(n)(individual) moral responsibility. Climate change (or the weather) are seen as the ultimate tangible manifestation of the relation between society's constructed idea of morality and the transcendental; the moment in which God speaks to His people, either as a punishment or blessing.

Van Beek typifies climate change discourses and its function within society in three ways, namely the climate as catastrophe, as power, or as judgment (Van Beek 1999). This section is limited to describe how climate change is understood as a moral judgment, while in fact these three functions are strongly inter-related and have the capacity to reinforce each another. The other part of the explanation for the

unquestionable nature of the climate, can be found in the *sacred* realm that constitutes the connection between man and nature. He argues that in all cultures specific weather events are indeed considered to be the proof of the special relationship with the transcendental. The weather is often seen as the result of a connection between heaven and earth (ibid). An outstanding difference between the three groups of farmers that I distinguished above, is that amongst the farmers who I categorize as the group who do not know about climate change or global warming, God is much more present in their explanations of the (changing) climate than amongst cognizant farmers.

For the farmers in Babanki there is no reason to fear the climate, because the projected future is put in God's hands. Joseph, the eldest of the three farmers explains that they don't really have problems with planting or harvesting. Apart from rising temperatures and the trees that have been cut down, he doesn't see any environmentally related problems." It is just that the grazers should be better educated. Their cows are destroying our crops." He has other problems to worry about than the climate. When I asked him whether he has any explanation for the increasing heat he started to laugh. "I cannot really know because I am not God." This is an answer that I fairly often received. To fear the climate is to question an act of God. Why fear something that is in the hands of God? It is rather understood in terms of a sign, either a warning or a blessing. When the Pope arrived in Cameroon in March 2009 there wasn't any rain observed for a long time. After he landed and stepped out of the plain it instantly started to rain. People referred to it as 'a shower of blessing' .

I recall a focus group discussion that I had with a women's group in Wum, a mountainous town located in the Western Grassfields at some 45 km from Bamenda. Since there is no tarred road that connects Wum it is relatively isolated, especially in the rainy season. The president of the group of women invited me to visit their communal farm. Since 2006 this group of nineteen women who call themselves 'Mami Pikin No Di Sleep' (mothers with small children don't sleep) decided to farm together in order to make farming activities easier. The main objective of their group is 'not to die of hunger and to help their children go to school'. During our focus group discussion four of the members were present. They spoke about the difficulties they are facing as farmers. Their problems are not related to the environment or the climate. They revealed a long list of problems that mainly concerns a lack of technological support from the government, no means for transportation, cattle that destroy their crops and the lack of money to buy fertilizers. None of them is familiar with the notion of climate change. However, when we started speaking about the last rainy season they complained about excessive rains that destroyed some of their crops. The government delegation of environment and protection of nature had told them that this is due to the fact that they have cut down most of the trees. Elisabeth, the leader of the group could not really give an explanation for this, "The delegation has told us about the importance of trees. If these trees were not cut down we would not have faced these problems. (..) To my thinking it is God. I think God changes things in the way we cannot explain. All over this is how it is. It is only God." Another group member adds:

> "We cannot know because we are not God. It is what God has planned. We are only listening to God. We are not God oh! God may change things and this year the rain may come at the right time. But sometimes it may not be so. All these changes are changed by God, we are not God, it is God that changes it for us".

If the climate is in the hands of God, why is He sending so much rain? Should this be read as some form of punishment? For these women in Wum, the answer to this question lies indeed in the moral judgment

of God. Van Beek emphasizes this as a third function; the climate as an expression of a moral relationship between a society and the supernatural. God uses elements to bless and to punish, to help or to fight. The climate and the weather therefore speak about oneself and deal intrinsically with guilt (Van Beek 1999: 6). Van Beek mentions as most obvious example Israel's God in The Old Testament, where God uses the weather to communicate with His people. Fertility follows faithfulness, and bad weather is a society's own fault (ibid). When I asked the women why God made it rain so heavily last year, the conversation radically changed from a talk about nature, to a moral judgment about themselves, a societal critique and about a world that is changing too rapidly.

> (R= respondent; I= interviewer)
>
> R: (..) sometimes He may be angry at us because we have done a lot of bad things.
>
> I: What kind of bad things?
>
> R: Some things that God doesn't like us to do. Like this bad things that we do to others, like killing. There are many bad things that our children do like.
>
> I: Like what?
>
> R: Abortion, if you are carrying a child in your womb, it is given by God, it is bad to abort it. Some of the bad things are, some of us who are farmers will take assistance but people will divert it to another area. They will not give us. It is the same. If none of this, we would not have been suffering. People have wicked minds[71].

Special weather events are thus perceived to be either a blessing or a punishment - a sign of appreciation or of rejecting social behavior. Too heavy rains are here understood as a punishment, the result of morally bad behavior of themselves or their children. The fact that the government delegation and NGOs render people guilty by continuously stressing that the farmers in Bamenda are causing climate change themselves by cutting trees and burning the bushes, is calling upon the deeply imbedded perception of the climate as a sign of the moral relationship between God and society. Furthermore, a possible explanation for the widespread awareness that cutting down trees is 'bad' is that it is inscribed in local cosmologies. Put in the words of the Fon of Guzang: "Our culture taught us that we are not to cut down any young tree, no matter the size".

In the course of the focus group discussion I asked the group members if they ever experienced a rainy season that was as heavy as last year's. There seemed to be a consensus amongst the women that this was the heaviest rainy season they had ever witnessed; until one of the members all of a sudden recalled, "I noticed some years a long time ago that the others have forgotten. There was no dry season in Wum, not at all. Only that I do not know the year. There was no dry season apart from two weeks. There was no dry season." To the question whether their forefathers were facing the same climatic problems, I receive a very surprising answer that fully underpins my assumptions: "They faced it, it was not like this. You know things have changed. You know there were no schools, our parents did not have the time. It is not like now where people like you come and teach things like this. That is why we are able to know". It became clear that climate change is not a 'reality' for them, but as stated before, more an ongoing trend that their parents and grandparents were also facing. What this group member in fact stressed, is that the

impact of discourses and shifting accessibility to discourses (in time), has an effect on changing present patterns of perceiving the world.

This statement touches upon the core of what this chapter seeks to explore. By showing different groups of farmers and the extent to which they have access to information and discourses, I want to demonstrate that the accessibility of climate change discourses has a geographical defined dimension (and thus also a temporal one, i.e. with an ongoing globalized world the role of media, lobbyists, global actors, scientists play an increasingly defining role in remote areas). Namely, the further from the geographical 'source' of climate change discourses farmers are, the less climate change – and the related sentiments that it evokes - seems to be a concern in farmers' lives in the region of the Bamenda Grassfields. And the other way around, with an increased level of having access to these discourses the more the weather and the climate are perceived to be changing, and thus climate change is more likely to *be* a reality.

5.5 "Climate change kills, action now!" – Eschatological anxieties over the arrival of the apocalypse

As described in the theoretical framework, an essential element in Foucault's conception of discourse, is that it is embedded in social relationships. He argued that power is not per se about physical force, nor that it solely resides with powerful actors like institutions, but a fundamental feature of everyday human interaction (Foucault: 1967). Hannigan states in his book 'Environmental sociology'(1995), that discourses define what is meaningful, shape processes of socialization and therefore provide institutions with a powerful means of incorporating individuals into relations of domination. At the level of institutions, power is most effective in discourses because they reduce resistance and internalize consent (Foucault 1967). Foucault regarded this as central to a process of social control (Foucault 1967; Gelcich *et al.* in Hannigan 1995: 53). In the context of my research I mainly refer to institutions like churches, NGOs, government related bodies, and the media as transmitters of discourses on climate change. In brief, discourses and power are inextricably bound to *believing* in something, and with *making* people believe in something. Discourses itself are not power, they need to be translated. The following paragraphs will examine the translation of climate change discourses into belief that finally leads to action.

Inspired by critical theory, – which essentially does not take the prevailing order of the world as it is, but rather asks how that order came about - Smith emphasizes the importance of asking questions like, *for whom* is the discourse and who constructed it? Which interests are at play? Who is excluded and 'silenced by the discourse' (Smith 2005: 199)? These questions will guide the analysis of the discursive practices that follows in this section. Smith furthermore argues, that climate change and the construction of it as a global phenomenon, hides a multitude of economic and political complications. To call upon a shared responsibility to humanity as a whole, implies that the global interest prevails at the expense of local interests and discourses (ibid: 200). Considering the 'securitization' of climate change as a global threat for humanity, a large part of its objective has to do with creating a common ground for action, and non-action. In order to be in control of the socialization process, discourses are a powerful means to make people act. What became clear in my research is that three fundamental sentiments play a vital role in this process, namely the construction of guilt, responsibility and fear. In the preceding sections, the relationship between the climate and guilt has been discussed. In the following paragraph, the emotion of

fear will be examined, and how fear and responsibility drives people into participating in the collective fight against climate change.

The last group of farmers that will be described are the ones who *know* about climate change. A first outstanding characteristic of cognizant farmers is that knowing about climate change is inextricably bound up with *believing* in it. During my fieldwork I did not meet one single farmer who stated something in the line of 'I don't believe in it', or, 'I don't buy it' - typical statements for the so- called climate skeptics. Apart from a couple of students in town who argued that global warming was again one of these imperialistic tricks of the West to impose its power upon African countries, at the grassroots level – as much as at institutional spheres - I did not encounter any climate skeptic. To call the truthfulness of the discourse into question did not seem to be an option. Whereas in industrialized countries the fact or fiction debate - represented by different stakeholders and interest groups - colors the ongoing claims-making process, in Bamenda 'knowing' about climate change clearly equals believing in it. Among this group of farmers an apocalyptic fear was often expressed. Like in the following quotation of a farmer who knows about climate change since five years by now:

> "At the radio they talk about atmospheric pollution. That the American, Chinese with the industries destroy the ozone layer, and that people should plant a lot of trees. So that the gas that the industries emit should be absorbed by the trees at our level. The only thing the farmer can do is to plant trees. If the big polluters don't take great measures the world will be finished, people will be finished. (..) How can I not be afraid of this danger? But the problem is that so many people who do not know what is happening, they don't know that there is danger coming" (*interview November 2009, Bafoussam)*.

As climate change discourses can be characterized as a secular end of time idea (see van Beek 1999a; 1999b) the eschatological dynamics must also have fertile ground to develop outside the religious realm. In a dialogue with cardinal Martini[72] Humberto Eco writes that the end of time idea is currently more characteristic for the non-Christian than for the Christian world. And, that the Christian world appropriated it as a topic for meditation, while the non-Christian world pretends to neglect it, yet is in fact possessed by it. In a book that has bundled conversations about the end of time with Eco *et al.*, he additionally argues that although the profane world is insensitive for the biblical apocalyptic descriptions as described in the Book of Revelation of John; they also do have apocalyptic fears. People with a secular vision are sensitive for acid rain, for the hole in the ozone layer, for melting of the polar ice caps, for biodiversity loss, for climate change etc. Moreover, he adds that within a religious worldview the end of the world is an episode, a *rite de passage* towards a heavenly Jerusalem; within a non-Christian worldview it is the end of everything (Eco *et al.* 1998: 22-23). Climate change underpins the idea that eschatological narratives are not necessarily bound to the religious realm – even though they might be informed by it. If environmentalism, in all its forms, is indeed – at least marginally – apocalyptic (Lee 1995), in this eschatological feature might very well lie its broad appeal, power and vital force that transcends the sacred/secular dichotomy.

[72] In cosa crede chi non crede? Rome (Editoriale Atlantide) 1987, in: 'Gesprekken over het einde der tijden' (1998) Humberto Eco, *eds.* Amsterdam, Uitgeverij Boom.

Benedicta

During a meeting that was held concerning gender and climate change, I met Benedicta. As the president of a group called 'Love for children' she spoke to me about her activities and concerns. In 2001, the group started as a common initiative group (CIG) to empower themselves and to be able to take better care of their children. Since 1,5 years fighting climate change is at the heart of the group's objective. During several focus group discussions with the members of this group, I gained some insights into the incentives of their role as convinced ambassadors to fight climate change.

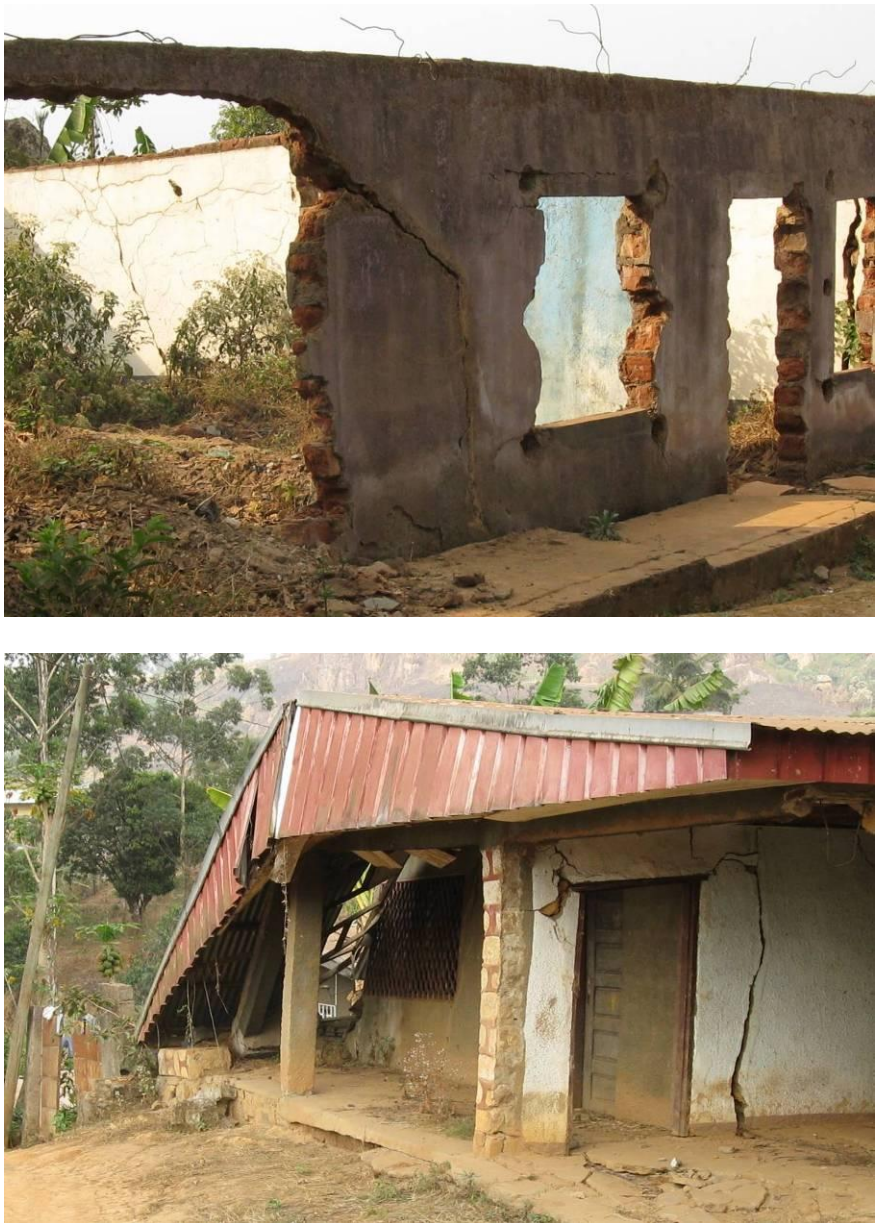
> "As time went on we kept on hearing about the ozone layer. So we started questioning what is climate change all about? We learnt about the adverse effects for the world, we learnt that the atmospheric conditions were changing throughout the world, and this made us to be afraid. Now we have this problem of climate change with devastating effects. We started asking what is going to be the future for our children? The UN is calling on all to take part in the fight. Our members that are farmers are encouraged to go green, and the smoke they produce from ankara and bush fires is one of the causes of climate change. If we don't act now, the effects will be disastrous for everybody. We know that it is us the Africans, the women and under privileged children that are going to suffer the most. We really need a safe climate. (..) The North is polluting and the South is suffering. If We die today, They will die tomorrow. It shouldn't be war, let Them understand that We need to safe our planet because We also need to live. We call the world to order. Let us join together, form an alliance and talk to the world about climate change. Let's talk to the indigenous groups in Africa. All of us should act. Climate change kills, action now!"[73]

The major driving sentiment behind their activities, are strong feelings of fear, and a sense of a shared responsibility. One of the women explained how she was told at the radio that people are going to die, and that she too was afraid of dying. This image was reinforced when she saw a program on TV, called 'aquatic life', which showed images of how a crocodile died because of the heat. "If a crocodile can die because of the heat, what about us? I was really terrified. People here now also go for days without water." Benedicta added:

> "The area around the cathedral has been destroyed by earth tremors, and some people live in houses that are cracked. When we see these things we are afraid. The landslide around the governor's residence, and there is also this flooding everywhere. In Bangladesh, In America, here in town a woman was swept away by water. Some children died in streams as well. We are bent on doing something because of the love for our children. What is the future of the children? It is bleak. Action needs to be done now" (*Focus Group discussion, Bamenda 10-02-2010).*

The following week, Benedicta insists to take me to the cathedral to show me the cracked houses. "See, this is what climate change is doing to our people!" Talking about and understanding climate change seem groundless without any tangible evidence. Notions and ideas about climate change are linked up with an experienced reality and make the climatic threat and global warming very 'real'.

[73] Interview 08-02-2010.



Cracked houses around the cathedral in Bamenda town as the ultimate proof of climate change

Interestingly enough, for most farmers climate change initially becomes a reality through western media channels. When they see horrifying images on TV about melting of the polar ice caps, or flooding in Bangladesh, the belief grows that their 'turn' is still about to come. Once the climate change framework is at hand, the visible experiential focus is a fact. Each heavy rainfall, landslide and unforeseen weather pattern are interpreted through the climate change lens. A similar trend can be observed in the West, for instance when it turned out that errors were made by the IPCC, this was taken up by climate skeptics to disprove the existence of climate change. Or, in a reverse direction we see that exceptional weather events have been pointed out to be clear and tangible signs of increasing changes in the climate.

For government officials this serves as a scapegoat to explain the existing poverty, inequality and the deplorable situation that a large part of the population finds itself in. For farmers however, the situation is fairly different, because they do not have full access to knowledge and are not in power of the discourse. They are being told that they have themselves to blame for the rising temperatures, and that

the only way to prevent a big catastrophe from happening, is to come into action, and fast. A third group member shares her impression of climate change with us:

> "We have seen over the TV that something is wrong somewhere. We see a lot of flooding, rising sea waters even right into homes. Destruction of property, lives, land erosion and earth quakes like the one in Haiti. We see them over the TV and we can now confirm that it is a reality."

The group members of 'love for children' are ready to fight, and to take responsibility for their part in this global problem. By *going green,* planting trees, practicing organic farming and not burning the soil any longer, they hope to reduce their CO_2 emissions. Their communal farm on which they organically plant different sorts of vegetables by using organic manure is for a large part also occupied with a sugar cane field. Benedicta explains: "We saw on television that in Brazil there are large sugar cane plantations which are very good to capture CO_2 emissions. Now we know that sugar cane can reduce our carbon dioxide so we decided to plant it."

According to them, their own government is not putting sufficient effort into mitigating climate change. Benedicta is tired of the government who folds their arms and keeps on pressing others to act:

> "All of us should act. Our government shouldn't sit and say the grassroots should act, because our actions will mean nothing if they themselves are not acting. (..) They will tell the rural women to stop burning *ankara*, what do you provide to that woman and she knows if she doesn't burn *ankara* her yields will be very poor? What do you give them in return? How do you help them out of poverty?"

Apart from the existential doubts that are principally led by fear and responsibility, there is clearly also a social component. Climate change discourses are intrinsically a deep protest against existing structures and forms of living, and therefore can be considered as a call for a global societal transformation. For Benedicta and the other group members, their fight is also directed to the government, and to the countries in the North, who are the biggest polluters. Part of their objective is to form 'a world-wide indigenous group collective', to call the world and the industrialized countries to order. They want *climate justice*.

> "Our government is not taking it seriously. We should not wait on our government to do something. We have to come into action now. Even the own government is complaining and they ask NGOs to assist them. We need to work in groups from the grassroots. If we wait for the government it is a waste of time, and the climate will not wait a second. We sat in our group and said to each other: with or without the government, we will do it! It is a new phenomenon so we empower ourselves and read. We tell our group members what climate change is all about. (..) Not only the rural women should do something, but the government should double their efforts. They go to international conferences. We followed Copenhagen on TV. No agreement in COP15, which is very embarrassing. We need climate justice! The rich nations are polluting the most and are least vulnerable. We don't want war but we need mutual understanding. We need to save our planet".

This citation shows that there is also an element of empowerment related to the use of climate change discourses. For these women, grouping together in the fight against climate change is an act of negotiating their identity, to empower themselves and to make sense of this new phenomenon that is threatening the future of their children.

Another incentive for this group of women to come into action, is the belief that if they come into action fast, there will be a short-term solution for the difficulties they are currently facing. This fight is then not

only a protective mechanism against a catastrophe, but, will lead to a full improvement of their lives. A group member point out that: "If we reduce all these causes such as deforestation and over exploitation of natural resources etc. if we do that, poverty will be reduced, so everything comes down to climate change." The perceived urge of the collective fight against climate change, can at the same time be seen as the way to redeem a promise. This promise encompasses ideas of a brighter future for their children, a world in which they can live in a safe and sustainable environment, where poverty no longer exists.

Wendy

Wendy is the president and coordinator of ACTWID (Association for Creative Teaching for Women in Development). This organization was initially founded in 1989 as a means to empower women and to strive for gender equality. Currently they are predominantly focused on health and environmental issues and they consider themselves as a pioneering civil society initiative in fighting climate change. The organization became popular among rural women and nowadays there are almost fifty women's groups from the North West region registered under her CIG. As time passed by the government started to recognize their strength and invited them to participate on environment day. The organization's outlook has from the beginning strongly been anchored in gender issues, which in the course of time extended to gender and climate change. As a grassroots representative for rural women Wendy was invited by the U.N. to join the negotiations in Copenhagen. While acknowledging the urgency of mitigating climate change she also pointed out that it is not that easy for farmers as the majority lives under the poverty line:

> "In the villages we discourage the burning of *ankara.* They have understood but they tell us that it is easier to burn even the farm if you don't have somebody to clear it. We know it is because of poverty. Cooking sends out smoke which damages the environment. They are ignorant but if they don't burn what then should they do? It needs an alternative. If we stop burning the wood, where is the stove that you want us to use? That's the problem. We are teaching everybody to go green. To start practically in their homes, controlling their garbage, selecting the plastic. This is all about climate change and you will live a better and longer life if you go green. Every household should stop cutting trees and plant more (..). We know the dangers of climate change are already being caused. The GHG emission are increasing and we want to see how we can reduce our GHG emissions. We want to fight by doing these little things. Most people don't know that they are causing it themselves" (*interview January 2010, Bamenda).*

A few days later Wendy invited me to join her weekly group gathering. During this conversation some women shared their incentives to come into action for the climate:

> A: "Climate change makes us to be afraid. There may be high starvation and deaths so we need to fight by working harder on our farms. We have been encouraging CIGs to *go green* and fight. If we act now we are going to save many lives. Some people just die from small illnesses whereas if we teach them how to go green they will live longer."
>
> B: "What do we do instead of talking? We should act! To reduce our carbon we should stop burning *Ankara* as it destroys the soil and much gas is emitted. Our dream is to live in a zero carbon world. Climate change kills and if we don't act now to save lives then we should expect the adverse effects".
>
> A: "Since our government is not taking action we as the civil society should act. We are not tired of lobbying, we have to continue."

Not only at the NGO level a green paradigm shift can be observed but also at the grassroots level. Whereas before these women were engaged in fighting for female rights, nowadays their main occupation is fighting the climate and thereby mobilizing as much women groups as possible. Wendy has raised a crucial problem: “If they don’t burn, what then should they do? If we stop burning the wood, where is the stove that you want us to use?”

Concluding reflections

During one of my weekly promenades through the Bamenda Grassfields, I encountered Elisabeth[74] – a 74 year old subsistence farmer. Like many other farmers and grazers in Bamenda she is practicing slash and burn. Elisabeth lives alone on a steep hill. Her neighbor helps her to fetch water. Since Elisabeth became a widow she has to take care of the farm by herself. She speaks about the great changes that she experienced since she was young. "The world is changing. I don't know the cause but the world is changing in a terrible way. Even the child that you put to the world will abuse you. Nobody looks you into the eyes. In my time people were not dying as much as now, everybody is sick. (..) Places are too hot nowadays and this year there hasn't even been a Christmas' rain yet." Nevertheless, she always knows when to start clearing her farm. "When the termites don't come out of their houses anymore, we know that it is time to clear our rainy season farm. (..) It is just because I am alone that I have to burn it."

In the course of the conversation with Elisabeth and a couple of other female farmers, one of the women asked her why she is burning her soil and what she would do if the government tells her to stop burning it:

> "If the government tells me to stop burning the soil, let them come here and put food in my mouth. It will surprise me because then I will see the government for the first time. Do they still exist? If I stop working the farm, stop burning the soil and there is no manure, will they provide me with food? Should I die of hunger? Like now, if I die nobody will know that something has happened, that a life is lost, that I

[74] Her name has been changed.

> died of hunger. Let them come first and see that I am alive before they tell me to stop burning my soil" *(Interview Bafut, February 2010. Translated from Pidgin).*

The case of Elisabeth illustrates what it means to be a subsistence farmer in Bamenda, and moreover, how old practices are confronted with new (global) politics that are informed by emerging discourses on climate change. It furthermore leads to the realization that these discourses are (at the dawn of) establishing a new connection between the 'global' and the 'local', which constitutes power and thereby having a 'real' impact on the day-to-day realities of the Grassfielders.

In this thesis I demonstrated how the life-blood of climate change discourses – operating as a vital force - lies in its potential to both appropriate and to be incorporated by differing discursive and ontological realms; whilst still impinging a particular form upon them. By portraying different "translation regimes" I highlighted how climate change discourses operate in different contexts, and how "truth" is embedded in, and produced by, systems of power. The rather indeterminate character of this new message that circulates within society, has as much the capacity to make sense of socio-cultural change as it is capable of revitalizing existing structures and worldviews. It turned out that dependent on one's position in society, climate change can serve as a resource in which a particular form of power can be exploited. These transformative dynamics fully underpin the claim that is made in critical discourse analysis, namely that discursive practices contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between social groups. In the context of my research these so-called *ideological* effects of climate change discourses have become visible in the confrontation of global interests vis-à-vis local realities.

In the exploration of the translation of globally constructed discourses in Bamenda, it became clear that – while taking on widely varying forms in different settings – climate change discourses similarly maintain a certain consistency across different context. A recurrent element of the narrative is the eschatological dimension that is entailed by the construction of fear, guilt and responsibility. In all the different discursive spaces through which climate change is travelling, there appears to be, at least marginally, an apocalyptic element of facing the end of the world, and thus of human existence. This fearful element together with the internationally proposed solution to "Think globally and act locally" is in my understanding where climate change derives its power from. By blaming each individual farmer for being part of the problem, clear affinities with religious narratives – both in a Christian and a 'local' ontology - can be observed that touch upon highly moral and existential issues. As such, climate change is by and large a moral discourse, which operates as a platform to negotiate power, identity, the world and human's place herein.

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Appendix: variations in rainfall and temperatures over the years

Average Rainfall variations over the past 42 years:

MONTHS	1963-1965		1966-1970		1971-1975		1976-1980		1981-1985		1986-1990		1991-1995		1996-2000		2001-2005	
	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days	Height	Days
January		1	21.2	2	4.4	1	11.3	2	24.7	2	13.0	1	17.1	1	16.4	2	4.0	1
February	65.2	7	28.9	4	51.6	3	68.6	7	13.6	2	20.2	2	22.4	2	18.4	3	14.1	3
March	152.7	14	192.2	16	147.7	14	102.7	12	174.4	13	84.6	10	110.7	12	127.4	10	90.9	11
April	234.1	19	214.5	21	150.7	19	209.2	21	171.5	20	166.4	16	202.5	20	141.8	19	195.5	20
May	183.4	12	191.8	21	145.1	20	178.5	22	134.6	19	159.5	21	209.6	22	177.2	19	194.4	22
June	335.5	26	315.7	25	242.4	24	279.3	26	249.7	25	262.9	23	259.2	23	271.2	23	351.9	24
July	463.7	29	457.7	29	361.6	26	481.7	28	410.8	28	391.3	27	466.4	28	397.3	28	407.2	28
August	358.1	25	445.6	27	342.1	25	406.7	30	517.9	30	453.9	28	408.3	28	409.4	26	425.0	26
September	406.1	27	534.8	26	420.6	29	432.2	28	425.0	28	417.0	27	358.7	26	391.7	28	411.9	25
October	280.2	25	218,6	26	210.9	23	281.3	24	298.6	23	224.3	22	236.1	26	324.5	25	209.5	24
November	72.0	5	166.6	8	43.4	6	4.5	2	31.5	7	18.9	5	32.7	6	66.2	20	51.0	13
December	34.9	3	1.4	1	9.3	1	0.1	1	13.4	1	17.9	2	1.2	1	5.4	2	18.4	1

Average Temperature variations over the past 42 years:

MONTHS	1961 - 1965		1966 - 1970		1971 - 1975		1976 - 1980		1981 - 1985		1986 - 1990		1991 - 1995		1996 - 2000		2001 - 2005	
	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max	T min	T max
January	14.7	24.9	14.6	25.2	14.8	25.3	15.2	24.5	14.7	25.5	14.0	26.4	14.2	26.1	12.1	27.5	12.6	26.7
February	15.9	25.5	15.8	26.5	16.3	25.9	16.3	25.6	16.0	26.5	15.6	27.0	15.4	25.9	13.4	28.0	13.6	27.8
March	16.1	24.9	16.4	25.2	16.6	24.9	16.6	25.2	16.8	25.3	16.7	26.5	16.8	25.6	14.6	28.3	14.8	26.9
April	16.2	24.3	16.3	24.4	16.2	24.5	16.6	24.7	16.7	24.6	16.7	26.1	16.6	25.4	15.2	26.3	14.3	25.9
May	15.9	24.5	16.0	24.2	16.2	24.3	16.2	24.2	16.3	23.6	16.2	25.0	16.1	25.0	14.0	26.6	14.3	25.7
June	17.4	22.8	18.2	22.8	15.5	23.2	15.1	22.5	15.4	23.1	15.2	23.4	15.4	24.1	14.0	25.6	13.8	23.9
July	14.7	21.2	14.8	21.0	14.9	21.2	15.8	20.1	14.7	21.3	14.7	21.7	14.9	21.8	13.5	23.8	13.3	22.7
August	14.4	20.9	14.8	20,8	14.9	21.2	15.1	21.0	14.9	21.7	15.0	21.6	15.1	22.0	12.4	22.8	13.3	22.4
September	14.7	21.6	14.7	21.5	15.0	21.7	15.1	21.9	14.9	21.9	15.2	22.5	15.3	22.9	12.7	23.7	13.8	23.1
October	15.0	22.5	15.2	23.1	15.6	23.3	15.5	23.3	15.3	23.3	15.1	23.6	15.5	23.9	13.1	24.6	14.2	24.7
November	14.6	23.5	14.9	23.6	14.8	23.8	15.3	23.8	15.0	23.5	14.8	24.3	15.1	24.8	12.9	25.4	13.8	25.7
December	17.9	24.4	14.5	24.5	14.5	24.4	14.5	24.7	14.3	24.4	14.0	24.8	14.2	26.7	12.2	26.4	12.8	26.5

Source: *Regional Service of Meteorology for the North West Region*