State Power and Environmental NGOs in South Australia: Moving Towards a Sustainable Society?

Meagan Magnusson

Bachelor of International Studies
Honours in Geographical and Environmental Policy and Management
Graduate Diploma in International Development

Department of Geography, Environment and Population
School of Social Sciences
University of Adelaide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS i

LIST OF TABLES v

LIST OF ACRONYMS vi

ABSTRACT vii

DECLARATION viii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ix

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Justification of the research 2

1.2 Aims and objectives 5

1.3 Research design 6

1.4 Thesis structure 7

1.5 A note on terminology 7

1.6 Defining NGOs 7

1.6.1 NGOs as advocates 11

1.6.2 NGOs as service providers 13

1.6.3 NGOs as partners 15

1.6.4 NGOs as information managers 17

2 LITERATURE REVIEW 19

2.1 ENGOs, Environmental governance and sustainable development 19

2.1.1 Environmental governance 19
2.1.2 Sustainable development 22
2.1.3 Ecologically Sustainable Development 26
2.1.4 Discourses in environmental governance 28
2.1.5 Critiques of ENGO roles in environmental governance 33
2.2 The neoliberal context of environmental governance 36
2.2.1 The neoliberalisation of nature 36
2.2.2 Critique of the neoliberalisation of nature 41
2.2.3 Post-neoliberalism? 42
2.3 The neoliberalisation of ENGOs 44
2.3.1 The professionalisation of NGOs 44
2.3.2 Technocracy and depoliticisation 48
2.3.3 ENGOs: extending neoliberalism's reach? 50
2.3.4 ENGOs as potential major challengers to neoliberalism 51
3 METHODOLOGY 54
3.1 Theoretical framework 54
3.2 Foucault: neoliberalism and governmentality 55
3.2.1 Foucault's neoliberalism 55
3.2.2 Governmentality, civil society and NGOs 58
3.2.3 Sustainable development as a technology of government for the extension of neoliberalism 61
3.3 Gramsci's key concepts 66

3.3.1 Civil society, hegemony and passive revolution 66

3.4 A synthesis of Foucault and Gramsci 71

3.4.1 Criticisms of using Foucault and Gramsci together 71

3.4.2 Finding congruity between poststructuralist governmentality and an essentialist Gramsci 73

3.4.3 Power and resistance with Foucault and Gramsci 75

3.5 Methods 79

3.5.1 Interviews 79

3.5.2 ENGO profiles 80

3.5.2.1 The Conservation Council of SA 80

3.5.2.2 The Wilderness Society 80

3.5.2.3 Trees for Life 81

3.5.3 Thematic analysis 81

3.5.4 Research rigour 82

3.5.5 Limitations of the research 83

3.6 Background 84

3.6.1 Government roles in Australian environmental governance 84

4 RESULTS 90

4.1 Theme 1: Governmentality effects on ENGOs 90

4.1.1 Funding with strings 91

4.1.2 Bureaucracy, and reporting 95

4.1.3 ENGOs operating as a government resource 97

4.1.4 Personal relationships that moderate NGO discourse 98

4.2 Theme 2: Environmental discourses in the ENGO sector..101

4.3 Theme 3: A renewed focus on community and fostering connection to nature...................109

4.4 Theme 4: ENGO futures 113

5 DISCUSSION..117

5.1 How ENGOs are constrained...117

5.2 Seeking strong sustainability within a hegemony of weak sustainability.............................121

5.3 Building an historic bloc for strong sustainability while avoiding a passive revolution.........125

6 CONCLUSIONS..131

6.1 Implications of the research...131

7 REFERENCES..134

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Characteristics of NGOs 9

Table 2 Dryzek's (2013) nine environmental discourses........29

Table 3 McGregor's (2004) typology of environmental discourses in Australia........32

Table 4 Participating ENGO and government organisations........79

Table 5 Participant characteristics 80

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CVA	Conservation Volunteers Australia
ENGO	Environmental Non-governmental Organisation
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
ESD	Ecologically Sustainable Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GVESHO	Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations
IPA	Institute of Public Affairs
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSESD	National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development
PIRSA	Primary Industries and Regions South Australia
SA	South Australia
SAFF	South Australian Farmer's Federation
SD discourse	Sustainable Development discourse
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TWS	The Wilderness Society
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

ABSTRACT

Environmental Non-government Organisations (ENGOs) have come to play an important and increasingly institutionalised role in environmental governance in Australia. Yet, as their relationships with government evolve and they become detached from their original grassroots forms, their new incarnations need to be examined to ensure they contribute to environmental governance in ways that enhance democracy. Improved environmental governance may be dependent on understanding these relationships, how they operate and the ways that they may change the activities and behaviour of ENGOs. This is particularly true if the inclusion of ENGOs in environmental governance is based on the premise that they are independent and able to articulate public sentiment about how the environment should be managed. A theoretical synthesis of Foucault and Gramsci informs the research questions which focus on whether ENGOs are inhibited by being embedded in government and how ENGOs work within these structures whilst maintaining independence. To answer these questions, the research used thematic analysis of interviews with ENGO professionals and government representatives. Results show how the South Australian (SA) government uses a variety of techniques to govern the activities of ENGOs. It also shows that ENGO professionals predominantly seek strong sustainable development that challenges the primacy of economic growth over environmental concerns. However, it is difficult for them to voice political-economic critiques of the weak sustainability that is hegemonic in environmental governance in Australia in their current relationships with government. Finally, the thesis shows the vulnerability of ENGO professionals to perpetuating the weak sustainability discourse because of a willingness to subvert critical discourses to the hegemony. The study suggests pursuit of projects that create horizontal links across civil society and focus on establishing connection to nature in the community to produce a new common sense that challenges the weak sustainability discourse.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree. I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of NGOs into governance structures of international institutions such as the UN shows that they have been recognised as vital to the success of environmental governance (Robinson *et al.* 1993). Yet, as their relationships with government evolve and they become increasingly detached from their original forms, their new incarnations need to be examined. Improved environmental governance is likely to be dependent on understanding these relationships, how they operate and the ways that they may change NGOs. This is particularly true if sections of civil society continue to rely on them to articulate public sentiment. Lang (2013, p. 17), for instance, rejects the trope that NGOs and the state are locked in a lopsided power battle and asks '[w]hat if David and Goliath simply live a marriage of convenience?... [t]he ties that bind NGOs and government… call for closer inspection'. Sending and Neumann (2006, p. 652) also suggest that it is a misconception to think of civil society as separate to the state and argues that;

> the self-association and political will-formation characteristic of civil society and nonstate actors do not stand in opposition to the political power of the state, but is a most central feature of how power operates in late modern society.

This shows that the increasing role of ENGOs in environmental governance does not represent a transfer of power or authority from the state to ENGOs. Instead it is evident that it is in fact;

> an expression of a change in governmentality by which civil society is redefined from a passive object of government to be acted upon and into an entity that is both an object and a subject of government (Sending & Neumann 2006, p. 658).

There has been an increasing recognition that NGOs and governments are in fact co-dependent (Lang 2013). States not only provide ENGOs legal, economic, and political currency, they are also major funders of their activities. Governments, on the other hand, rely on NGOs to provide knowledge, services, perform consultative roles, channel citizen voices and legitimise state actions. These

relationships are complex and actors on both sides are affected by them. As these relationships become more entrenched into our environmental governance systems and they apparently erode the divisions between state, market and civil society (Cotoi 2011), they need to be better understood to ensure that they function in a way that promotes both a sustainable and democratic future.

This thesis addresses this problem by focussing on the relationships between ENGOs in South Australia (SA) and the Government of SA. The thesis identifies how ENGOs are constrained by technologies of government in SA and the ways that this might be diminishing their capacity to be effective agents of civil society. The main argument of the thesis is that notwithstanding the many positive aspects of the close relationships between ENGOs and the Government of SA, they do compromise ENGOs ability to question the central government imperative of economic growth. While participants identified this as a key factor preventing a transition to a sustainable society, in partnerships with the Government of SA it was shown that ENGOs are unable to voice critiques of unchecked economic growth. This lack of critique may contribute to the perpetuation of the neoliberal hegemony that dominates environmental governance in Australia. I suggest that ENGOs counter this by forming coalitions with other civil society actors, both within and outside the environment movement, to shape a new common narrative about nature, with an emphasis on connection to nature, that does challenge the political economic causes of environmental degradation. By focussing on denaturalising the discourse of weak sustainable development and replacing it with a strong sustainability vision amongst the community, ENGOs could mount a counter-hegemonic movement that displaces neoliberal hegemony in environmental governance in Australia.

1.1 Justification of the research

The 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janiero set a precedent of increased NGO participation in environmental governance. Multiscalar

environmental governance is increasingly needed to manage environmental problems which are growing in their complexity, becoming multi-scalar and cross-boundary in nature and linked with other social and economic issues (Andonova & Mitchell 2010). Addressing these problems frequently requires international cooperation, however, often the implementation of environmental solutions must occur at the local scale. Further, there has been increasing recognition of the unequal distribution of the costs and benefits of environmental issues because of the 'decoupling across scales of the causes and consequences of environmental problems' (Lemos & Agrawal 2006, p. 308). This understanding has led to recognition of the need for decentralised environmental governance which views communities and local institutions as important actors in environmental decision-making and policy implementation, such that environmental governance no longer focusses narrowly on the state (Lemos & Agrawal 2006). Because of the complex interactions between various scales required to manage environmental problems Vogler and Jordan (2003, p. 141) suggest that environmental governance now seeks 'not just to establish formal commitments from governments, but also to reach down to the levels at which polluting activities occur and to alter the behaviour of organizations and individuals'. This rescaling of environmental governance has meant that NGOs have become increasingly important actors and have correspondingly come under rising scrutiny (Banks *et al.* 2015; Chartier & Deléage 1998; Feldman 2003; Fisher 1997; Johns 2005a; Kamat 2004; Klees 1998; Lane & Morrison 2006; Lehman 2007; Phillips 2007; Wallace 2009).

Extensive literature already exists analysing the role of ENGOs in global environmental governance (Betsill & Corell 2008; Gemmill & Bamidele-Izu 2002; Kellow 2000; Princen & Finger 1994; Raustiala 2001; Yamin 2001). In the Australian NGO literature, concerns have been raised about the de-radicalisation of NGOs in environmental governance as a result of their institutionalisation and dependence on the state (Edgar 2008; Hamilton & Maddison 2007; Lane & Morrison 2006; McGregor 2003). This indicates an interest in the effects of the changes in the relationship between NGOs and the state but does not address *how* this is occurring or the potential for rectifying the changes.

Additionally, much of this body of literature is characterised by broad generalisations. By focussing on the NGO sector as a single, cohesive body, much of the variation within the sector is overlooked. Green (2012, p. n.d.), of Oxfam, sparked debate with Banks and Hulme (2012), accusing them of making claims that 'NGOs are this and NGOs are that, with evidence-free assertions across geography, scale and role'. Further, he lamented the absence of case studies, lack of use of publications from NGOs themselves and the failure to interview people actually working in the current NGO context and instead relying on their personal and arguably outdated experiences and academic literature. These are legitimate charges which can easily be rectified with studies which do pay close attention to the actual on-ground context by engaging with current NGO professionals and the literature they produce. By focussing on a smaller, South Australian subset of NGOs, this thesis will attempt to provide empirical evidence, from ENGOs about what is actually occurring between them and the state in SA.

Understanding how government processes can influence ENGO behaviour will make it possible to either harness or contest particular technologies of government. National and state based ENGOs, as recognised links to the local scale, where implementation of environmental solutions often occurs are an obvious place to focus in the environmental governance power network.

Literature on how civil society influences environmental policy and governance has used methods such as game theory (Putnam 1988), quantitative analysis of the ratification of international environmental agreements (Böhmelt *et al.* 2015) and models of ENGO behaviour at varying scales (Keck & Sikkink 1998). Other studies have used interviews variously with NGOs (Edgar 2008), government departments (Johns & Roskam 2004) or both (Ramanath 2007; Sending & Neumann 2006; Tucker 2014; Tully 2004)

As Dryzek (1996) has previously argued, while the inclusion of civil society in politics enhances democracy, if a group leaves the oppositional sphere of politics to be included in the state, the dominant classes and public officials have less to fear from them. Although these partnerships may

be conducive for some of civil society's goals, it may also result in 'a less vital civil society, the erosion of some existing democratic accomplishments, and a reduced likelihood of further democratization in the future' (Dryzek 1996, p. 476). Gaining an understanding of the ways that significant actors in environmental governance, such as ENGOs, are governed by hegemonic interests could be key to improving environmental outcomes in the future.

This research aims to provide ENGOs with empirical evidence on how they can be more effective whilst maintaining a critical stance toward dominant ideologies of sustainable development. It may also provide empirical evidence for policymakers to make more informed decisions about the role of ENGOs as representatives of civil society in environmental governance. The research builds on previous research conducted by Doyle (2000) analysing less formalised environmental movement's in Australia, Lane and Morrison (2006) critiquing the role of ENGOs in Australian environmental governance and Edgar (2008), Maddison *et al.* (2004) and Hamilton and Maddison (2007) critiquing the creeping co-optation and silencing of dissent of ENGOs by the Australian Government.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of the research is to identify whether ENGO activities are constrained by technologies of government in SA and to assess whether they can be effective civil society agents within that context. In order to achieve this aim the specific objectives of the research are;

- To investigate the specific practices and techniques governing ENGOs in Australia
- To identify the environmental discourses that characterise the systematic thinking and knowledge that may render environmental governance through ENGOs possible and identify how these have shaped the roles and activities of ENGOs in Australia,

- to determine the potential (or not) of ENGOs to contribute to the development of more effective environmental governance systems within that context

The first objective focusses on how the state governs ENGOs through governmental techniques and if this has reduced their ability to challenge the status quo. The second looks at the discourses about nature used by both ENGOs and the state that could enable the state to govern through ENGOs and the ways that they shape the activities that ENGOs undertake. The third objective is to use this analysis to show whether ENGOs can contribute to developing more effective environmental governance systems in SA.

1.3 Research design

The thesis uses a conceptual framework about governmentality informed by the work of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. Studies in governmentality focus on discourse and language to uncover relationships of knowledge and power. Organisational documents such as ENGO websites, newspaper articles and transcribed interview data, government environmental policies and other relevant documentation was thematically analysed to uncover the relationships between the state and ENGO discourses and the discursive field of the broader culture.

An in-depth, semi-structured interview methodology is also used. Interviews were conducted with ENGO representatives about how their activities, agendas and aims might be shaped by technologies of government. Interviews with key government representatives were also conducted to evaluate the discourses that shape the ways that the state interacts with ENGOs and the requirements the state holds for the interactions between ENGOs and the state. Interviews were semi-structured, and the interviewees were encouraged to speak freely and broaden the interview to encompass their concerns and ideas.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis begins with a review of the literature which canvasses thought on environmental governance, the SD discourse and how ENGOs are embedded in that system. The literature review then examines the neoliberal context of environmental governance, followed by the role of ENGOs in the neoliberal context. The theoretical framework which combines Foucault's governmentality and Gramsci's key concepts of civil society, hegemony and the passive revolution is then outlined and critiqued. The interview and thematic analysis methods are then outlined. Results of the interviews are then presented and discussed in the context of the theoretical framework and finally, conclusions are drawn and presented in the final chapter.

1.5 A note on terminology

Throughout this thesis the reader will come across various acronyms relating to different parts of the NGO sector. I will refer to all NGOs, including those operating in a development, health or other sector as NGOs while when focussing on only those NGOs that focus on environmental issues, the ENGO acronym is used. Throughout, cited authors have also used other terminology such as not-for-profits or not-for-profit-advocacy-organisations and in those cases, I have used the authors terminology to avoid misconstruing the original author's words, it should however be noted that these other acronyms are akin to the NGO acronym.

1.6 Defining NGOs

Defining what exactly is meant by the catch-all label 'NGO' can be problematic. Yamin (2001, p. 149) suggests that the term NGO refers to 'quite literally, every kind of organization that is not a State'. This

definition, however, is far too broad for the purposes of this thesis as it would include the private sector, including industry and corporations. Martens (2002, p. 282) also reaches an inclusive, if vague definition; 'NGOs are formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level'. These, definitions are perhaps unhelpfully broad, in that they say little about the actual organisations. However, as Edwards *et al.* (1999, p. 130) warn, 'NGOs operate in so many contexts and at so many levels that generalisation is hazardous'. This means that providing a concrete definition of NGOs is difficult and perhaps even counterproductive.

There are, however, some recurring themes when attempting to define NGOs. Generally, they are not founded or fully supported by government, they usually have defined goals and objectives, often solidified in some kind of constitution, they are also usually thought to work at the grass-roots level, though this is not always the case (Doyle 2000; Doyle *et al.* 2016; Rudasill 2006). NGOs are civil society actors, usually thought to enhance the democratisation of governance, though this too is highly disputed (Mercer 2002). As Simmons (1998, p. 83) warns, 'hailed as the exemplars of grassroots democracy in action, many NGOs are, in fact, decidedly undemocratic and unaccountable to the people they claim to represent'.

In attempting to define NGOs, it becomes clear that there is no singular definition that can encompass them all. While they are often referred to as though they are a homogenous group, within and between NGOs there is great diversity. Princen and Finger (1994, p. 6) stress that;

> The term 'NGO' has many uses and many connotations. The difficulty of characterizing the entire phenomenon results in large part from the tremendous diversity found in the global NGO community. That diversity derives from differences in size, duration, range and scope of activities, ideology, cultural background, organizational culture, and legal status.

Given that NGOs are so diverse, it is perhaps more useful to define NGOs in terms of what they actually do, where they are based or at what scale they operate at, who their members are, where

their money comes from and whether they ostensibly operate for the benefit of themselves or others.

Table 1 outlines some of the characteristics that NGOs might have.

Table 1 Characteristics of NGOs

Scale of operation	International
	National
	Local / Community-based
Activities	Service provider, i.e. planting trees
	Advocacy; monitoring and watchdog role
	Research, information gathering and analysis; information dissemination; generation of ideas and recommendations
Funding model	Private donor funded
	Public donor funded; government grants or contracts
	Member funded
Beneficiary	Private interests of members
	Public interest
	Interests of the "nonrepresented" (future generations/planet)
Status	Formal
	Informal
Membership base	Community-based
	National
	Regional
	Transnational
Personnel	Undifferentiated/voluntary
	Expert and professional
	Elected representatives

Adapted from (Doyle 2000; Simmons 1998; Vakil 1997; Yaziji & Doh 2009).

The characteristics of particular NGOs can have a significant influence on their roles in environmental governance. For instance, whether the NGO is funded by corporate donors, government or by members can influence the public perception of the NGOs independence and the perception from the private and government sectors about their willingness to work in partnerships. These perceptions can affect an ENGOs ability to influence environmental governance. Highly adversarial advocacy ENGOs such as Greenpeace may sacrifice the ability to work in partnerships with the corporate and government sectors and attract funding from those sources to cultivate an image of independence (Doyle 2000). While this might give the freedom to dictate their own agendas and increase public confidence in their independence, it can also reduce the ability to have input into policymaking. Conversely, ENGOs that eschew public criticism of government can win themselves governmental favour that entails greater influence in policymaking and opportunities for funding (Phillips 2007).

Much has been written about the roles of NGOs in governance. Banks and Hulme (2012), for example take a simple approach and categorise them as either service providers or advocacy NGOs. This is perhaps the broadest and most important division between NGO roles. Bell (2003) also notes the significance of the service provider and advocacy roles of NGOs but additionally emphasises the role that NGOs have in changing the behaviour or views of the public. Yamin (2001) outlines the roles of NGOs as agenda setters, “conscience-keepers”, partners, experts, lobbyists and enforcers. Szarka (2013, p. 12) defines the roles of NGOs as ‘issue framing, knowledge generation and dissemination, attribution of responsibility, lobbying, public mobilisation and agenda setting’. In the Australian context, Lane and Morrison (2006) outline the key roles of ENGOs as policy development, conflict resolution and environmental management. The categories described below; advocates, service providers, partners and information managers are based on and adapted from the categories found in the literature above. Many of the categories are overlapping or can be embedded within each other. For example, Szarka’s (2013) lobbying and public mobilisation categories can arguably be covered within

the category of advocacy. Likewise, environmental management as mentioned by Lane and Morrison (2006) falls under service providers.

The following sections investigate some examples of NGOs working in different contexts with various roles to illustrate the diversity of the sector. The NGOs covered are by no means exhaustive, though most of the more prominent NGOs in Australia are mentioned. The divisions here are also not exclusive and inclusion in one category does not necessarily preclude the NGO from engaging in activities in another category.

1.6.1 NGOS AS ADVOCATES

Advocacy ENGOs are likely the most well-known of the various ENGO types because of their deliberately and carefully cultivated public images and messages. In Australia advocacy ENGOs contribute to the pluralism of liberal democracy. According to Rawls (2001, p. 3) it must be recognised that a democratic society is not ‘a body of persons united in affirming the same comprehensive, or partially comprehensive, doctrine’. Instead, pluralism is fundamental to liberal democracy. This pluralism reflects ‘the fact of profound and irreconcilable differences in citizens' reasonable comprehensive religious and philosophical conceptions of the world’ (Rawls 2001, p. 3). This means that diverse voices must be shared in a democracy to ensure that various sections of the population are represented.

In Australia the preservation of wilderness and anti-nuclear campaigns have prevailed as the dominant issues addressed by advocacy ENGOs (Doyle 2000). Pakulski and Tranter (2004) suggest that preservation of wilderness is a radical ‘green’ concern while issues focussing on extractive industries, pollution, waste disposal and issues associated with industry and agricultural activities are more salient with the general population (Pakulski & Tranter 2004). As such, advocacy by ENGOs offers a liberal democracy important perspectives. As Phillips (2006, p. 62) points out;

> in a pluralistic society, the diversity of input into political and social debates by NPAOs [Non Profit Advocacy Organisations] both contributes to and enhances the representation of ideas and values, thus contributing to a strong and genuine democracy.

However, advocacy ENGOs in Australia have been criticised by both conservatives and progressives for only representing an urbanised, professional, educated and arguably elite environmental movement (Doyle 2000; Johns 2005a; Lane & Morrison 2006; Pakulski & Tranter 2004). This is problematic as it could further enhance the representation of an already privileged class while potentially disenfranchising sections of society that depend on targeted industries and agriculture for employment.

Using this reasoning, attacks have been initiated by mining companies such as BHP, Rio Tinto and Santos, facilitated by government to remove the tax-deductible status of advocacy ENGOs to cripple their funding (Campbell *et al.* 2015). Meanwhile, primary producers accuse advocacy ENGOs of 'greenmailing' the industry through sustainability certification schemes and threats to 'devalue the public perception of the brand name or company reputation of producers' (Boswell 2013, p. 8). These retaliatory attacks on ENGOs from industry have greatly impacted their income sources (Staples 2007).

The most prominent example of advocacy ENGO is Greenpeace. Well-known for their elaborate protest strategies, Greenpeace has a history of being relatively hostile to government and the corporate world (Doyle 2000). However, in the past two decades it has relaxed its critical stance towards some business, though continues to maintain distance, particularly from government. Greenpeace campaigns are wide-ranging from promoting climate change action, wildlife preservation, promoting a transition to renewable energy and tackling pollution (Greenpeace n.d.-a). Some of Greenpeace's peaceful protest and 'bearing witness' strategies have included; using dinghies to shield whales from harpoons, exposing and releasing covert footage of environmental destruction and pollution, obstructing ships attempting to dock, tampering with waste discharge pipes, disrupting

nuclear weapons testing by gaining access to test sites and erecting protest slogans in prominent public places, such as a "Time To Stop Nuclear Testing" banner across Big Ben in London in 1994 (Greenpeace n.d.-b). These tactics have made Greenpeace effective at influencing behaviour at multiple scales of governance, from individuals to national governments and multilateral institutions (Zelko 2017).

1.6.2 NGOS AS SERVICE PROVIDERS

In Australia, examples of ENGOs that focus on service delivery include Trees for Life, Greening Australia and Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA). These NGOs are non-political and have been heavily involved in government-backed programs such as Landcare and, in the case of CVA, the delivery of the Green Army program. They recruit volunteers to undertake conservation activities to plant trees, protect threatened species, restore degraded habitat and generally involve the community in environmental conservation. Service provider ENGOs are more likely to engage in partnerships with government and corporations and to accept funding from these sources. All three examples above accept government and corporate funding. Trees for Life works in partnership with predominantly small local business such as Adelaide Bank and Eco Pest Control, Greening Australia works with Virgin Australia and CVA works in partnership with BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance, Chevron, RioTinto and Exxon Mobil.

While these ENGOs undoubtedly contribute valuable services to conservation initiatives, Banks and Hulme (2012) warn that a shift towards ENGOs as service deliverers could be problematic. This is because of a refocussing of priorities towards achieving measurable outputs rather than changing systemic processes and institutions that perpetuate the injustices they seek to rectify. Service provider ENGOs can have the effect of depoliticising environmental issues by minimising the negative impacts of industry without challenging the underlying causes of environmental damage.

Much of the literature about service provider NGOs is focussed on the development sector. It is useful here to examine development NGOs as well as environmental NGOs as there is generally some overlap between them given that many development and poverty issues stem from mismanagement of the environment or unequal distribution of natural resources (Robbins 2012; Yap 1989). In the development sector NGOs are well established as service providers, particularly in developing countries with weak governments (Henderson 2002).

While some academics have called for NGOs to step into service provider roles, particularly when weak governments struggle to meet local needs (Henderson 2002), others have criticised NGOs for undermining already weak governments (Batley & McLoughlin 2010; Gideon 1998; Torpey-Saboe 2015; White 1999). For example, Gideon (1998) suggests that the Brazilian state uses internationally funded NGOs to shirk government responsibilities to provide welfare. Torpey-Saboe (2015), verifies this by showing how the presence of high numbers of NGOs in particular localities in Brazil is correlated with lower welfare spending by government. White (1999) warns of similar outcomes in Bangladesh, suggesting that state failures are, to some extent, in the interest of NGOs. She provides the example of providing public health care, suggesting that if NGOs succeed in providing sufficient health care to the public, the incentive for government to deliver adequate services is lessened.

These lessons from the development sector have implications for ENGOs because of the potential interest that they can develop in environmental degradation and by reducing the need for government to deliver environmental outcomes or reduce degradation. For instance, when a particular industry like agriculture results in the clearing of land, this can be a positive for service provider NGOs because it opens a space for them to apply for funding to deliver tree planting services. Simultaneously, the need for government to prevent land clearing is lessened if they can be sure that NGOs are available to replant trees to reduce the impact of the environmental degradation.

1.6.3 NGOS AS PARTNERS

NGOs work with various industries and government to achieve their goals. In some instances, mining companies and NGOs have moved away from confrontational relationships towards more constructive partnerships with each other (Hamann 2003). This is prudent because each sector has its own failures that prevents positive outcomes. Kolk *et al.* (2008) outline the failures of each;

> (1) 'governance failure' for governments, which limits their ability to address development problems 'top down'
>
> (2) 'market failure' for companies that limits their ability to become ethically virtuous – there is growing awareness that companies cannot implement proactive CSR strategies without the active involvement … of their stakeholders;
>
> (3) 'good intentions' failure for non-profit organisations – there is mounting evidence that co-financing organisations have obtained only limited efficiency in implementing their ideas on development 'bottom up' exactly because of the 'do good' mentality of their constituents.

They suggest that tripartite partnerships between mining corporations, government and NGOs aim to fill the 'institutional void' that has been opened up by retreating neoliberal states (Kolk *et al.* 2008). As Figure 1 illustrates these new relationships are seen as positive for both business and civil society.

Some criticism has been levelled at NGOs for these relationships because of the seeming ability for industry to neutralise the ability of NGOs to hold them to account. For example, industry may recruit prominent members of the NGO community to use their inside information and networks to out-manoeuvre NGO tactics (Kirsch 2014). Further, industry also cultivates close relationships with conservation-oriented NGOs and funds conservation projects to 'offset' the environmental impacts of mining projects and raise companies' public standing (Kirsch 2014).

Figure 1 The evolving CSR agenda from philanthropy and impact mitigation to social partnership

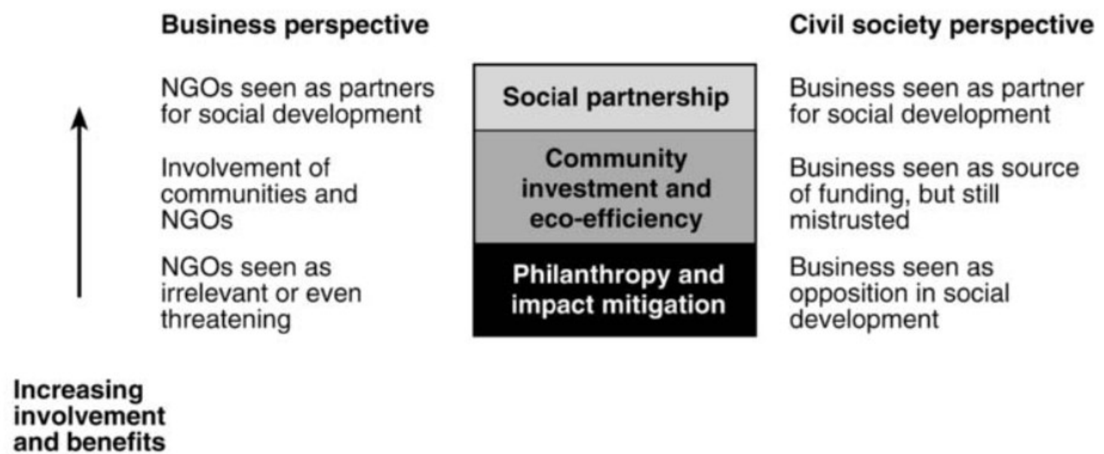


Figure 1: The evolving CSR agenda from philanthropy and impact mitigation to social partnership

(Hamann 2003, p. 239)

These tactics could be seen, for instance in the case of the Ok Tedi mine in Papua New Guinea. Oxfam Australia and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) were invited to participate in regular roundtable meetings (Kirsch 2014). However, these meetings were governed by Chatham House Rules, which meant that they were unable to publicly criticise the mining company or share confidential information with NGO partners. As a result, while they lost autonomy and effectiveness, the mining company gained public standing because of its association with the NGOs. Further, other NGOs and civil society organisations that did not participate in the meetings became reluctant to share information with the aforementioned NGOs because of concerns that their confidential information would be shared with the industry partners. These impacts of engaging directly with mining companies rendered the NGOs involved less effective in achieving their goals (Kirsch 2014).

Despite the dangers associated with aligning with mining companies, maintaining steadfast opposition can also be counter-productive, as NGOs are shut-out of negotiation processes that they may otherwise have been able to influence.

In addition to the partnerships that NGOs make with government to deliver services, they also work with governments for mutually beneficial political outcomes. In Australia governments have favoured and been favoured by different ENGOs. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) in the Howard era is a key example. Their funding from government increased 500% in the period from 1993 to 2003 and they enjoyed positive media coverage from government representatives that can be traced back to their support of the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act), which many other ENGOs opposed (Hamilton & Macintosh 2004; Phillips 2007). In contrast, the Howard government was rarely positive in its public statements regarding other prominent ENGOs that aligned with the ALP such as the ACF or The Wilderness Society. This strategy has drawn criticism from WWFs NGO counterparts because they became 'too close to the Federal Government and, in doing so, have eroded the effectiveness of the movement as a whole' (Hamilton & Macintosh 2004, p. vii).

The ACF also has strong ties with the ALP and has aligned itself with them repeatedly throughout its history. This has not been without its problems. The ACF, as the self-styled representative of the environment movement as a whole in Australia, has often been seen as attempting to "deliver the green vote" to the ALP (Doyle 2000). This has backfired in some cases, such as in the 1998 election when the ALP reneged on its commitments to the ACF and then in 1999 when the ACF's commitment to the losing party resulted in retaliatory funding cuts. Supporting one major party can have the pernicious effect of sustaining repercussions if they do not prevail in an election. Further, it means that whenever the ALP is not in government, the power of the ACF to deliver outcomes is curtailed.

1.6.4 NGOS AS INFORMATION MANAGERS

NGOs also play crucial roles in producing, managing and disseminating information. The complexity of issues such as climate change, which requires engagement from both NGOs and their public audiences with scientific jargon and policy solutions, has necessitated that they work in partnerships as part of epistemic communities to have influence over policy (Gough and Simon 2001). Epistemic

communities, defined as ‘network[s] of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue-area’ have been shown to have significant influence over defining state interests and policies (Haas 1992, p. 3). Scientific knowledge is key to epistemic community legitimacy and is wielded to keep policy actors committed to their objectives (Gough & Shackley 2001). Rudasill (2006, pp. 14-5) lists a wide range of documents and information that NGOs produce and manage;

> Information outflow from the organizations include physical and financial progress reports, narrative reports, annual reports, annual budgets and work- plans, published studies, internal studies, baseline and impact data, participatory rural appraisals, process documentation research, internal evaluation exercises, records, diaries, “significant changes,” tour notes, dialogue with community members and field observations, and meeting minutes.

While some of these documents are made public, most are not. Moreover, many of these documents are poorly archived and recorded, meaning that their existence is temporary and unfortunately most of these information resources are untapped (Rudasill 2006).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review critically analyses the literature covering environmental governance, sustainable development and ENGOs. It then evaluates the literature about the neoliberal context of environmental governance and how that context has influenced and impacted ENGOs.

2.1 ENGOs, Environmental governance and sustainable development

2.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The concept of governance is generally used to refer to a new way of governing that goes beyond states to include a multitude of actors (Rhodes 2007). While *government* focussed on 'top down', hierarchical ways of governing, governance focusses on governing with and through networks (Rhodes 2007). Indeed, a rigid 'statist' system of government in which all levels of government are controlled by a centralised state is arguably outdated and incompatible with the complexities of the modern world (Scholte 2004). Rhodes (1997, p. 53) defines governance as having the following four characteristics;

1. Interdependence between organizations. Governance is broader than government, covering non-state actors…
2. Continuing interactions between network members, caused by the need to exchange resources and negotiate shared purposes.
3. Game-like interactions, rooted in trust and regulated by rules of the game negotiated and agreed by network participants.

4. A significant degree of autonomy from the state. Networks are not accountable to the state; they are self-organizing. Although the state does not occupy a privileged, sovereign position, it can indirectly and imperfectly steer networks.

Environmental governance refers specifically to 'interventions aiming at changes in environment-related incentives, knowledge, institutions, decision making, and behaviors' (Lemos & Agrawal 2006, p. 298). A key feature of environmental governance is the need for integration of global environmental objectives into national strategies (Najam *et al.* 2006).

The shift to governance and diffusion of governmental power to global and local actors led Strange (1996) to suggest that the nation-state was in retreat. This assertion was in response to the apparent decline of the role and sovereignty of the nation-state. She suggested that 'the diffusion of authority away from national governments has left a yawning hole of non-authority, ungovernance it might be called' (Strange 1996, p. 14). However, Sassen (2003, p. 243) argues that the significance of the state is not declining, but that state authority is becoming 'a hybrid that is neither fully private nor fully public, neither fully national nor fully global'. Without a strong state, governance is often impossible. Wolf (2004, p. 277), for example, rejects claims that the shift to multi-actor governance results in the erosion of the state by countering that 'for people to be successful in exploiting the opportunities afforded by international integration, they need states, at both ends of their transactions'.

Rather than a decline in the role of the nation-state, some studies have found that the state's role is instead transformed. Arnauld de Sartre and Taravella (2009) found that in Brazil rather than losing sovereignty to the intrusions of sustainable development, the federal government selectively deploys the discourse to justify interventions in the Amazon rainforest. As such, the Brazilian government uses the cover of conformance to global governance directives to further its own power. Mingus (2006) also found that although the Pacific Salmon Commission, a binational organization established under the Canada-U.S. Pacific Salmon Treaty, had opened up significant governance roles for a variety of sub-

national governments and non-state actors, they were in no way dominant. The national government in Canada, for example, retains veto-power.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), borne out of the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, is the leading authority in global environmental governance and sets the international environmental agenda (McInerney 2017; Najam *et al.* 2006). McInerney (2017) emphasises that the UNEPs role in environmental governance cannot be understood in a hierarchical sense and must be thought of as coordinating a networked system of governance. The role of the UNEP does not involve coercive or directive leadership but instead focusses on fostering collaboration and consensus among dispersed actors.

The cornerstone of global environmental governance is the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (the SDGs), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 (Kanie *et al.* 2017). The aims of the SDGs are multi-pronged and comprehensive, the UN proposes that;

> ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection (The United Nations n.d.).

To achieve the goals by 2030, specific targets have been set for each goal and their achievement will require coordinated effort throughout the UN system but will also need ‘the mobilization of political support and resources well beyond it, including at regional and national levels and among multiple civil society, financial, and business actors’ (Kanie *et al.* 2017, p. 3). As such the SDGs aim to harmonise governance at all levels towards the goal of achieving the ideals of sustainable development.

The inclusion of more diverse actors in environmental management has, in some cases, resulted in innovative governance arrangements that incorporate citizen participation. For example, Enqvist *et al.* (2016) show that in Bangalore, India failing centralised water governance made water scarcity a persistent feature of the city. Groundwater resources had been depleted and a local network of lakes

that were built for local harvesting of rainwater had been abandoned for newer infrastructure projects, creating a dependency on external water sources. This coupled with rapid urbanisation meant that many residents were unable to access to water. The local residents started organising and eventually entered into collaborative management agreements with the municipal authorities to restore the network of lakes and monitor water quality and environmental degradation. The residents were able to not only restore and gain protection for the lakes, improving their access to water, but they have also created opportunities for other similar groups across the city. This example shows how a network approach to environmental governance that provides opportunities for local-scale actors to be involved in implementation can often produce improved outcomes.

The shift from governance from government was necessitated by the increasing complexities of problems in a globalised world. However, it remains unclear whether governance with little enforcement can be effective. The years since the formation of the UNEP have seen an enormous amount of resources and research invested into environmental governance, culminating in numerous multilateral environmental agreements, yet the state of the environment continues to deteriorate (IPBES 2019). This has led some to question whether dispersed models of governance can be effective and McInerney (2017, p. 27) concludes that 'there is a real question as to whether strategies enforced through very weak hierarchy can generate results'.

2.1.2 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Environmental governance and sustainable development go hand-in-hand as the global institutions that drive it subscribe fervently to the discourse (Dryzek 2013). Najam *et al.* (2006, p. 9) contends that 'the end goal of global environmental governance is to improve the state of the environment and to eventually lead to the broader goal of sustainable development'.

In 1987 the UN World Commission on Environment and Development report 'Our Common Future', often referred to as the Brundtland Report, was published. Since then, sustainable development has

been the dominant environmental discourse in international politics and has been adopted into policy by the major international institutions such as the UN and its affiliate organisations (Dryzek 2013). This discourse centres on the concept of sustainable development which is defined in the report as follows;

> Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 8).

The key innovation embedded in the report was that it systematically connected seemingly disparate issues such as 'development, global environmental issues, population, peace and security, and social justice both within and across generations' (Dryzek 2013, p. 150). Perhaps most importantly, sustainable development paints environmental problems as being able to be solved by the mutually reinforcing goals of economic growth, environmental protection, social justice and poverty alleviation (Dryzek 2013). Thus, in this conceptualisation it is possible to achieve a sustainable future without creating any losers, there is ostensibly no need for rigid limits to growth, and few sacrifices to be made.

Sustainable development in any form is not a radical concept. This is because it fundamentally accepts that human welfare takes priority over the environment and that economic growth is essential to pursuing that (Doyle *et al.* 2016). Moreover, the relationship between humans and nature is conceived in terms of natural resources, or natural capital for use by and for humans. From the very first definition of sustainable development given in the Brundtland report, there is explicit emphasis on continued economic growth. Following on from the definition given above, the Brundtland Report continues;

> The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, p. 8).

The focus here is to emphasise that changes need to be made to enable ‘a new era of economic growth’.

There are, however, many interpretations of what sustainable development means. Hay (2002) suggests that there are ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ versions of sustainable development. He posits that strong sustainable development recognises environmental limits while the weak version does not. Daly *et al.* (1995) propose that the crux of the contention between weak and strong sustainable development lies in whether man-made capital and natural capital are substitutes or compliments.

Weak sustainable development essentially means incorporating the environment into the economic system (Hay 2002). Weak sustainability assumes that natural capital and man-made capital are substitutable so long as there is no decline in overall welfare (Beckerman 1994). However, Beckerman (1994) charges that weak sustainability is redundant as a concept because when faced with a choice between natural capital and man-made capital, the deciding factor is overall welfare. This means that weak sustainability would in essence be business as usual as it means falling back on the economic concept of optimality.

Strong sustainability on the other hand views natural capital and man-made capital as complementary rather than interchangeable (Daly *et al.* 1995). To demonstrate how natural and man-made capital are complementary rather than substitutable Daly *et al.* (1995, p. 51) ask ‘what good is a saw-mill without a forest; a fishing boat without populations of fish; a refinery without petroleum deposits; an irrigated farm without an aquifer or river?’. Beckerman (1994, p. 191) however, is also critical of strong sustainability, condemning it as ‘morally repugnant’. This is because it would ostensibly involve withholding resources from developing nations to protect endangered species, leaving them to languish in poverty. Daly *et al.* (1995) however, dismisses this argument as arguing against absurdly strong sustainability and accuses Beckerman of creating a straw man to dismiss strong sustainable development.

As Luke (1995, p. 21) emphasises, the concept of sustainable development is so broad that while some actors and governments will place an emphasis on ecological sustainability 'others can just as rightly see it as economically sustainable, technologically sustainable or politically sustainable'. Wanner (2014) questions whether sustainable development is geared towards environmental sustainability in his analysis of the green economy/growth discourse. He proposes that sustainable development is ultimately about the sustainability of neoliberal capitalism, not the sustainability of society or the environment. As Dryzek (2013, p. 163) points out, the likelihood of sustainable development achieving ecological sustainability is poor 'unless it can be demonstrated that environmental conservation is obviously good for business profitability and economic growth everywhere, not just that these… values can be reconciled'.

Although ENGOs had been active since the 1960s, the rise of the SD discourse is arguably the point at which ENGOs began to be given formalised roles in mainstream environmental governance structures (Yap 1989). At the 1992 UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Agenda 21 was produced as the action plan for the implementation of sustainable development. It outlined the actions needed to be taken globally, nationally and locally by the UN and its associated organisations, government and groups in every area that humans impact on the environment (Robinson *et al.* 1993). Further, it was the first time that national governments acknowledged that the threat of global crisis existed and attempted to formulate common responsibilities for future political conduct (Macnaghten & Urry 1998). Agenda 21 outlines the importance of NGOs as follows;

> Non-governmental organizations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy. Their credibility lies in the responsible and constructive role they play in society. Formal and informal organizations, as well as grass-roots movements, should be recognized as partners in the implementation of Agenda 21. The nature of the independent role played by non-governmental organizations within a society calls for real participation;

> therefore, independence is a major attribute of non-governmental organizations and is the precondition of real participation (Robinson *et al.* 1993, p. 282).

Sustainable development has become the only acceptable narrative for every major actor in environmental governance and with it, the inclusion of NGOs has been solidified (Macnaghten & Urry 1998).

2.1.3 ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Building on the SD discourse, in Australia the concept has been moulded to local context in the variation of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD). However, in practice there is arguably little difference between ESD and sustainable development and the terms are often used interchangeably (Harding 2006). The National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development (NSESD) defines ESD as;

> using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased (Ecologically Sustainable Development Steering Committee 1992).

Like sustainable development, ESD simultaneously encompasses economic, environmental and social factors. The addition of the "E" in ESD signifies a specific commitment to a strong environmental focus. Indeed, ESD has been described as 'a good starting point for considering what sustainable development would look like if any government ever seriously wanted to implement it' (Doyle *et al.* 2016, p. 36). Macintosh (2015) found that ESD has indeed encouraged the Australian Government to take environmental concerns into account particularly in areas such as the over-exploitation of fisheries and water, pollution reduction that poses a direct threat to human health and to protect natural and cultural heritage values, biodiversity and natural systems.

Many analyses of the application of ESD have, however, found it ineffectual. Williams (2013), for example, found that planners in NSW viewed ESD as aspirational but ineffective in the context of a

planning system that prioritises economic growth. Curran (2015) also found that ESD had had limited success in transforming the relationships between government and business toward one that would respect the spirit and goals of ESD. Pittock *et al.* (2015) identify multiple qualities the NSESD lacks that prevent it from being effective. They suggest that to be effective the NSESD would need a coalition of stakeholders advocating for its support, bipartisan support, urgency, significant socio-economic benefits, a limited number of core principles, systemic legislative reform, substantial funding, requirements for reporting to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and repositioning within central governmental agencies (Pittock *et al.* 2015). Macintosh (2015) also found that the commitments government does make to ESD are always contingent upon there being economic benefits to be gained, or at least low to no economic costs, strong favourable public opinion and/or the ability to balance vested interests. He concludes that

> ESD did little to rearrange the networks and power structures that shape policy. Consequently, the institutional outcomes in the counterfactual (i.e. without ESD) are unlikely to have been materially different from those observed (Macintosh 2015, p. 38).

It can be gleaned from these insights that ESD is, in theory, an appropriate policy strategy to achieve strong sustainability. However, in practice, ESD pursues weak sustainability that remains committed to damaging economic growth and has resulted in limited changes to development approvals that might impede economic development (McGregor 2003; Peel 2008). Macintosh (2015) suggests that ESD has had a marginal impact in Australia and argues that without the creation of institutions that ensure policy makers are bound to maintain natural capital, ESD is likely to remain ineffectual. Instead, ESD arguably allows the Australian Government to tout its commitment to environmental sustainability without impeding its pursuit of economic growth that is damaging to the environment.

2.1.4 DISCOURSES IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Although the SD discourse is hegemonic, there are a range of environmental discourses that shape the debates about how to approach the management of the environment. Discourse can be conceptualised in many ways, though Dryzek (2005, p.9) provides a comprehensive definition of discourse which is relevant to environmental politics and governance, he outlines that;

> A discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world. Embedded in language, it enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts. Discourses construct meanings and relationships, helping define common sense and legitimate knowledge. Each discourse rests on assumptions, judgments, and contentions that provide the basic terms for analysis, debates, agreements, and disagreements.

Discourses are relational and dialectical; they are not fully separate from one another and each one internalises others without being reducible to them (Fairclough 2012).

It is not within the scope of this thesis to provide a detailed outline of all environmental discourses that constitute the field of debate about the state of the environment and solutions to environmental problems. It is, however, useful to provide a backdrop to the debates about environmental governance to provide context to the results of the thesis. Dryzek (2013) outlines nine key environmental discourses; limits and survival, Prometheanism, administrative rationalism, democratic pragmatism, economic rationalism, sustainable development, ecological modernization, green consciousness and green politics. These discourses overlap significantly but they give an overview of the various ways of thinking about environmental problems and their solutions. A summary of each of these discourses is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Dryzek's (2013) nine environmental discourses

Discourse	Key narrative	Key terms, concepts	Nature metaphor
Limits and survival	Industrialisation and population growth are exhausting the Earth's finite stocks of resources and pushing human existence toward collapse	Finite stocks of resources, carrying capacity of ecosystems, planetary boundaries/safe operating space, population, elites	Overshoot and collapse
Prometheanism	Human ingenuity and technological advancements, coupled with the distributive power of markets means that unlimited growth is possible and desirable	Nature as brute matter, markets, prices, energy, technology, people	Mechanistic, trends
Administrative rationalism	Using administrative approaches and tools experts can reform industrialised liberal capitalist society to manage environmental problems	Liberal capitalism, administrative state, experts, managers	The administrative mind, navigating and steering
Democratic pragmatism	Through public consultation, alternative dispute resolution, policy dialogues, lay citizen deliberation and public enquiries citizens can reform industrialised liberal capitalist society to manage environmental problems	Liberal capitalism, citizens	Public policy as a resultant of forces, policy like scientific experimentation
Economic rationalism	Markets can solve environmental problems	Homo economicus, markets, prices, property, government	Mechanistic, stigmatising regulation as 'command and control', connection with freedom
Sustainable development	Economic growth is possible without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Economic growth, environmental protection, social justice and poverty alleviation are mutually reinforcing goals.	Nested and networked social and ecological systems, capitalist economy, ambiguity concerning existence of limits	Organic growth, nature as natural capital, connection to progress, reassurance

Discourse	Key narrative	Key terms, concepts	Nature metaphor
Ecological modernization	Capitalist society can be restructured to an environmentally enlightened era. Governments, business, reform-oriented environmentalists and scientists can work in partnerships to find technical and policy solutions to prevent environmental problems from arising.	Complex systems, nature as waste treatment plant, capitalist economy, the state	Tidy household, connection to progress, reassurance
Green consciousness	The basic structure of industrial society is incompatible with environmentally sound society. It can, however, be achieved by changing the way that people experience and regard the world (their consciousness) in a variety of ways. Varieties include deep ecology, ecofeminism, bioregionalism, ecological citizenship, lifestyle greens and ecotheology.	Global limits, nature, unnatural practices, ideas	Wide range of biological and organic metaphors, passion, appeals to emotions and intuitions
Green politics	The basic structure of industrial society is incompatible with environmentally sound society. Social, economic and political structures and practices need to be targeted to bring about the changes necessary to achieve one.	Global limits, nature as complex ecosystems, humans with broad capacities, social, economic and political structures	Organic metaphors, appeals to social learning, link to progress

Adapted from Dryzek (2013).

Dryzek (2013) suggests that the Promethean discourse was dominant throughout the industrial revolution up to the advent of sustainable development. The SD discourse then takes centre stage because of its central role in environmental governance, as will be shown in the next section. More radical, ecocentric discourses tend to be more prevalent in the environmental movement. However, as McGregor's (2004) analysis of environmental philosophies in the Australian environmental movement shows, the SD discourse is also dominant there. McGregor (2004) also provides a typology of the most common environmental discourses used in Australia. The categorisations of discourse that McGregor (2004) used allowed him to distribute the discourses between anthropocentric and ecocentric poles. These are summarised in Table 3. Comparing the two tables, it becomes clear that there is no definitive way to separate and categorise the environmental discourses used in Australia.

It should be noted that although McGregor's (2004) typology provides a useful way of classifying discourses on a scale of anthropocentrism vs ecocentrism, it is uncertain whether this scaling is accurate. McGregor's (2004) typology arguably provides a skewed view of environmental discourses since he neglects to mention any discourses that could be considered more anthropocentric than sustainable development. For instance, Dryzek's (2013) Prometheanism discourse could be considered the most anthropocentric discourse as a result of its positioning of humans above everything else and imagining of nature as simple brute matter. Dryzek's (2013) discourses, however, could not easily be positioned along a similar scale because of the categorisations he has used. For example, it would be a matter of conjecture whether sustainable development or ecological modernisation were more anthropocentric than one another. Likewise, discerning whether green consciousness or green politics were more ecocentric would arguably be somewhat speculative.

Table 3 McGregor's (2004) typology of environmental discourses in Australia

Core principles	Discourse	Key narrative	Key terms, concepts	Nature metaphor
More likely to identify with anthropocentric principles	Sustainable development	Ongoing development can be sustained if based on principles of scientific environmental management	Sustainability, species, carrying capacity, resources, environmentally friendly, environmental management	Nature as resource requiring expert human management
	Left-greens	Capitalism necessitates the destruction of its resource base and must be replaced by ecologically-informed socialist modes of production	Capitalism, socialism, Marxism, modes of production	Nature as resource being exhausted through capitalism
	Survivalism	Development is threatening the earth's capacity to provide for human life and will lead to widespread tragedy unless radical changes are adopted	Limits, life support systems, carrying capacity, catastrophe, crisis	Nature as fragile but vital resource that is rapidly depleting
	Eco-regionalism	Societies need to restructure themselves into smaller nonhierarchical groups living within, and learning from, local ecological systems	Small-scale, bioregionalism, social ecology, decentralisation	Nature as model system for human societies to learn from
	Moral extensionism	Certain non-human species possess intrinsic rights to life based on their inherent morally considerable characteristics	Animal rights, animal liberation, animal cruelty, intrinsic rights, morally considerable, ecocentrism, biocentrism	Nature as a collection of separate morally considerable parts
	Ecofeminism	Humans need to value repressed feminine traits when interacting with nature and develop special relationships to place	Love, caring, compassion, empathy, virtue ethics, compassion, respect, friendship, women, Mother Earth	Nature as friend, mother or companion to humans
More likely to identify with ecocentric principles	Deep ecology	Spiritually, there is no separation between human and nonhuman nature, protecting nature is protecting our transpersonal selves	Transpersonal identities, Gaia, ecocentrism, spirituality, connectivity	Nature is a single organism of which humans are a part

(McGregor 2004, p. 596)

2.1.5 CRITIQUES OF ENGO ROLES IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

The following section provides critiques of ENGOs in their formalised roles in environmental governance globally and in Australia. For critiques of NGOs in their various specific roles such as advocates or service providers, see section 1.6, for critiques of NGOs and their role in neoliberalisation, see section 2.3.

Although the UN emphasises the importance of including NGOs in environmental governance as representatives of 'civil society' and as agents of participation and democratization, many have questioned whether they are truly able to effectively represent the interests of local populations (Banks *et al.* 2015; Mercer 2002; White 1999; Yamin 2001). NGOs are often criticised for failing to live up to the expectations of them in the Brundtland report as they attempt to balance their role of representing their grassroots base with an 'ethic of efficiency and professionalism' which is required to obtain the funding they need (White 1999, p. 320). Yamin (2001, p. 155), proposes that;

> Whether raised through public appeals, charitable foundations or individual benefactors, at some stage or other, someone other than the NGO has helped shape the kinds of issues or activities the NGO should be pursuing.

NGOs often rely heavily on the support of strong states to exercise influence in environmental policy and 'should not be seen as unambiguously representative of a moral nor a scientific cosmopolitanism' (Kellow 2000, p. 17). Banks *et al.* (2015) also suggest that as a result of the increasing technocracy and professionalisation of NGOs their connections to civil society have become weak and reduced their ability to effect social change.

Much of the Australian literature that paints ENGOs in a negative light is produced by writers affiliated with the right-wing think-tank Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) (Beder 2001; Mendes 2003). This literature advocates a managed, sanitised and ultimately reduced role for ENGOs in environmental governance (Johns 2002, 2005a; Johns & Roskam 2004). The IPA stance on the role of NGOs is that they muddy

the waters of democracy rather than contributing in a constructive way. This is based on the premise that fashions towards participatory democracy and increasing community engagement are not helpful for democracy and actually enhance the potential for various special interest groups to capture policy. In fact, Johns (2005b, p. 6) suggests that democracy should be conceived as 'not participative in the broad sense, but as a competition among elites'. This position is based on the premise that citizen interests are already represented by elected representatives. This means that, in the view of the IPA, the participation of NGOs 'merely crowds the field with agents' (Johns 2005b, p. 1). Johns (2005b, p. 9) sums up his concerns about NGO-government relations as follows;

> First, NGOs that receive considerable privileges from government may lose their independence… Second, government can spend public resources on NGOs for its own political purposes, not necessarily in the pursuit of the best policy options. Third, when government embraces participation through NGO engagement, there is the tendency to fold multiple objectives, such as community consultation, influence purchasing, public relations, expert advice, and the achievement of specific contractual obligations for services rendered, all wrapped into one government–NGO relationship.

Johns (2002, p. 6) also suggests that civil society, particularly ENGOs, has been used as a vehicle for damaging the virtues of liberal democracy through;

> …the misuse of evidence in physical science, the use of social science techniques in an attempt to impose minority views on the electorate, governments handing responsibility to NGOs, courts straying into the legislative domain, legislation that invites a wide ambit for civil regulation, and bogus measures of corporate reputation.

These views hold considerable sway within Coalition governments in Australia, leading to frequent defunding of ENGOs and most recently a Senate Inquiry to remove hundreds of ENGOs charitable status (Hamilton & Maddison 2007; Seccombe 2014; Staples 2014).

Johns (2002, p. 5) also alleges that ENGOs create a situation where even '[i]n the most benign of modern production regimes, there is the invention of a permanent litany of environmental disaster'. Logically, it seems that it would be in ENGOs interests to inflate environmental disaster to garner attention, funding and a sense of urgency to their various causes. This is an issue that ENGOs do need to engage with and make concerted efforts to avoid, particularly because it is often a strategy that can cause catastrophe-fatigue and inertia-inducing fear in the public (Yuen 2012). However, though it may seem logical, this does not necessarily mean that it is a practice that they engage in. Angus (2013) rejects the idea that the environmental movement uses catastrophism to advance their cause, arguing that environmental crises, like climate change, really are catastrophic. The framing of ENGOs as inventors of environmental disasters serves to justify the imposing of extensive bureaucratic measures such as reporting requirements and auditing of ENGOs to keep their activities in check and aligned with the overarching goals of government.

It should be noted that the IPA does not suggest that there is no role for NGOs in Australian democracy. It takes no issue with practical ENGOs such as Flora for Fauna, Greening Australia, Landcare Australia Limited and CVA. However, any advocacy NGO claiming to represent a particular section of society and given special status like sitting on a government committee or receiving government funds should have an obligation to disclose details of the relationships.

These critiques are not without their merits and similar concerns about the formal inclusion of ENGO's in environmental governance in Australia can also be found in the academic literature. Lane and Morrison (2006), for example have warned that NGOs are essentially private or government-dependent organisations that cannot be assumed to represent the public interest. Moreover, they suggest that efforts to harness the power of civil society in governance can have the effect of undermining the very qualities being sought. They go on to outline five interrelated risks that arise from incorporating ENGOs more extensively into environmental governance processes;

- Representativeness – NGOs are private organisations that pursue a particular, privately formulated agenda
- Collusion – public deliberations can be overridden and marginalised by negotiations between state agencies and private organisations
- Undemocratic nature – it cannot be assumed that NGOs are democratic organisations and mechanisms for enforcing accountability do not exist
- Independence – many NGOs form in response to particular funding opportunities and are largely compliant with state directives
- Capacity – NGOs may not have the technical and organizational capabilities to execute the at times significant public policy roles they are being allocated (Lane & Morrison 2006).

In response to these issues Lane and Morrison (2006) advise that in Australia new forms of participation are needed such as citizen's juries and citizen referendum to express the public interest in place of ENGOs.

2.2 The neoliberal context of environmental governance

2.2.1 THE NEOLIBERALISATION OF NATURE

Neoliberalism is widely recognised as the dominant ideology of our times which has seen the vast majority of states, either voluntarily or at times under coercion from dominant Western ideologues, adopt neoliberal principles and adjust policies and practices in line with its directives (Harvey 2005). A thorough discussion of neoliberalism is significant for this study because of the role that ENGOs play within that ideological system. Within a neoliberal model, NGOs are encouraged by the state to act as 'flanking mechanisms' whereby, they are charged with the role of filling the vacuum created by the

withdrawal of state-led support in the social and environmental realms (Castree 2010). Further, as Castree (2010, p. 1725, original emphasis) points out, ‘neo-liberalism is in significant measure *defined* by its engagement with the non-human world’. As a result, an extensive body of literature and analysis about the neoliberalisation of nature has been written. ENGOs then, with their emphasis on protection of the environment are pivotal actors in a neoliberal world.

The most commonly used conceptualisation of neoliberalism is a Marxist one, which presents it as;

> A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free market, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (Harvey 2005, p. 2).

The Marxist narrative of neoliberalism paints inequality as an effect of neoliberal policies that are designed to maintain the hegemony of the dominant capitalist class (Ettlinger & Hartmann 2015). It suggests that deregulation has exacerbated inequality both within and between countries while devolution of responsibilities for social and economic wellbeing has been transferred away from the state down to individuals, NGOs and to the private sector (Ettlinger & Hartmann 2015). This version of neoliberalism temporally follows liberalism from the 1970’s. Whilst acknowledging the value of this conceptualisation of neoliberalism, this thesis takes what I contend is a more nuanced stance, drawing, in addition, from a Foucauldian conceptualisation of neoliberalism. Foucault’s neoliberalism is explained in-depth in section 3.2.1, but a brief overview is given here to add context to the neoliberal natures literature.

Through a Foucauldian perspective, neoliberalism takes a different shape. He perceived neoliberalism as being defined by the following core elements of governmental action;

1. Generalization of the enterprise form through the whole of society;

2. Legal and regulatory frameworks that act to promote competition, rather than control its adverse effects;
3. Social policy that aims to stimulate economic activity and the market economy rather than to compensate for its adverse effects;
4. Policy activism that begins from the premise that markets and competition are not 'naturally' grounded in society but instead require a kind of 'positive liberalism' in order to continually promote and stimulate them;
5. Somewhat paradoxically, a judicial activism which aims to set limits to the discretionary application of state power, against the premises of Keynesianism and economic planning which are seen to promote unlimited expansion of the decision-making capacities of the state (Flew 2012, p. 56).

Foucault does not define neoliberalism as temporally following liberalism, nor does he see it as prescribing limited state intervention, instead, to Foucault, neoliberals believe that social policy should work to support economic policy rather than acting as a counterweight to its negative effects (Flew 2012). Therefore, in the case of neoliberalism 'one must govern for the market, rather than because of the market' (Foucault 2008, p. 121).

ENGOs are often conceptualised as filling the empty spaces left by a retreating state, as the Marxist conceptualisation posits. Instead, this Foucauldian theorisation of neoliberalism shows how the state, rather than retreating, reconfigures governance spaces with market ideology. As will be further discussed in the next sections, when ENGOs act within these spaces, they too take on neoliberal characteristics. This is a critical distinction because while a Marxist conceptualisation posits that the neoliberal state is weakened and withered, a Foucauldian approach suggests the continuation of a strong state that, simultaneously declares that it is withdrawing whilst actually redirecting power and resources from social welfare towards extending an ethos of entrepreneurialism and individual responsibility throughout every facet of society.

Neoliberalism is important for studies of environmental politics and of ENGOs because a key feature of the evolution of neoliberalism has been its concurrence with the emergence of modern environmentalism as the two most serious political and ideological foundations of social regulation (McCarthy & Prudham 2004). Additionally, the environmental movement and its concerns arguably represent the most robust source of political opposition to neoliberalism (McCarthy & Prudham 2004).

The extension of neoliberalism has seen a deepening of the intervention of market-based ideology into the management of nature. For many, this has amounted to an intrusion of deeply flawed market ideology into the environment. De Freitas *et al.* (2015, p. 241) define neoliberal natures as referring to;

> the impact of neoliberal socio-economic transformations of nature… and to the constitutive role that changes to forms of management, exploitation, and use of nature has played in facilitating neoliberal political economics.

Neoliberal intrusion has manifested in reduced state initiatives and capacity to curb the socially and environmentally negative impacts of capitalist production. McCarthy and Prudham (2004) outline the characteristics of the neoliberalisation of nature from a Marxist perspective as;

- the increasing privatisation of environmental resources and of environmental management;
- the reduction of the capacity of the state to undertake environmental management activities through fiscal and administrative cuts,
- the hollowing out of the state;
- the rescaling of governance and responsibility both downwards, to local governments without accompanying power or capacity transfers and upwards, to international institutions with no mechanisms for transparency or accountability and;

- changes in regulatory frameworks in favour of corporate interests by removing binding standards and rules and replacing them with voluntary schemes, public-private co-operation, self-regulation and increased citizen coalition participation.

Polanyi (2001) argues that there is an inescapable friction when attempting to incorporate nature into a capitalist system. Capitalism fundamentally depends upon commodities that have social, cultural and/or ecological values which exceed the market value placed upon them, such as land, labour and money. He further asserts that although these are vital elements of the economic system and must be organised in markets, a market cannot ever fully account for their true value because they were not created for sale on a market. Instead, they have inherent values that cannot be incorporated into market prices. Meyer (2005, p. 89) explains that;

> labor as a commodity… cannot be detached from the lives of human subjects; land can be placed for sale on the market, but to believe that this delineation of property can detach it from a broader set of ecological relationships is mistaken.

Moreover Polanyi (2001) suggests that the idea of the self-regulating or autonomous market can never be realised because it requires the subordination of society and nature to the logic of the market. As such, the neoliberalisation of nature is said to be deeply problematic because 'the so-called 'free market' is ultimately destructive of the very things upon which its survival depends' (Castree 2009, p. 7).

McCarthy and Prudham's (2004) call to refocus geographical research on *'neoliberal natures'* has resulted in a proliferation of literature on the topic. Some of the case studies that fall under this umbrella focus on the contradictory nature of attempting to maximise both profits and environmental outcomes. For instance, Bresnihan (2019) outlines how the neoliberalisation of nature plays out in fisheries, showing that fishers are expected to sustainably manage commercially targeted fish stocks while simultaneously adapting to 'green' market opportunities in an attempt to maintain a profitable fishing business. Likewise, Lockie and Higgins (2007) show that neoliberal agri-environmental programs in

Australia that simultaneously encourage farmers to become entrepreneurial, improve productivity and enhance environmental performance are hindered because environmental degradation, capital accumulation and private property rights are competing imperatives. Other studies focus on how conservation efforts extend the logic of the market into nature. For instance, Büscher *et al.* (2012) argue that the neoliberalisation of nature has shifted conservation narratives from focusing on how nature is used in capitalism to how nature can be conserved in and through the expansion of capitalism. Similarly, Brockington and Duffy (2010, p. 470) suggest that neoliberal biodiversity conservation seeks to 'make rainforests worth more alive than dead' by applying financial mechanisms that value ecosystem services.

2.2.2 CRITIQUE OF THE NEOLIBERALISATION OF NATURE

As an emerging body of literature, 'the neoliberalisation of nature' continues to struggle with several deep questions. For instance, Brenner *et al.* (2010) suggest that '"neoliberalism" has become something of a rascal concept—promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise, and frequently contested' (Brenner *et al.* 2010, p. 3). Neoliberalism is often used to describe everything and anything, though it continues to be underspecified (Brenner *et al.* 2010).

Additionally, much of the literature is biased toward painting neoliberalism in an uncompromisingly negative light. It's important to note that neoliberalism is by no means uniformly negative in its impacts. It has afforded immense economic benefits to significant sections of the global population (Wolf 2004). However, it is neither homogenous nor heterogeneous in its outcomes in different localities, and these variations need to be acknowledged and taken into account. Bakker (2010, p. 721) emphasises that 'local experiences of the neoliberalisation of nature reflect the interplay of inherited institutional lineages, policy landscapes, local economic and political dynamics, and the multiscalar dynamics of regulatory restructuring'. As a result, an important distinction must be made between neoliberalisation as an ideology and what Brenner and Theodore (2002) term 'actually existing neoliberalism' which is

inevitably embedded in local historical and institutional context and plays out in a variety of ways. Bakker (2010) emphasises that variegation must be considered when analysing the neoliberalisation of nature to avoid abstract generalisations that render themselves meaningless. However, what is less disputed is that enormous changes in the way nature is governed have taken place over the past few decades. This is encapsulated by Brenner *et al.* (2010, p. 4) when they write;

> Sometimes incrementally, sometimes through more dramatic ruptures, neoliberalization processes have reshaped the contours of inherited institutional landscapes and rewoven the interconnections among them. Crucially, however, across all contexts in which they have been mobilized, neoliberalization processes have facilitated marketization and commodification while simultaneously intensifying the uneven development of regulatory forms across places, territories and scales.

Here it is clear that while the impacts of the proliferation of neoliberalism are varied across time and space, a major transformation in the way that nature is governed has undoubtedly taken place.

2.2.3 POST-NEOLIBERALISM?

Following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, discussion about the failings of neoliberalism reached mainstream discourse, heralding speculation of a 'post-neoliberal' turn (Peck *et al.* 2010; Stiglitz 2008). Latin America has featured strongly in discussions about whether we have entered post-neoliberalism which is 'due not only to its brutal, decades-long experiences with neoliberalisation but also to its enduring record of social mobilization that includes explicitly anti-, counter-, and post-neoliberal movements' (de Freitas *et al.* 2015, p. 40). Where the role of the state under neoliberalism is to ensure competition, and therefore inequality, post-neoliberalism has shades of socialism in that equality is seen as an objective that policies should attempt to obtain and the negative impacts of the market should be ameliorated (Ettlinger & Hartmann 2015). Further, where the modern liberal theory which underpins neoliberalism promoted equality through assimilation, post-neoliberalism 'pays homage to

issues of difference, especially regarding indigenous peoples, and calls for equality through equal recognition of different groups' (Ettlinger & Hartmann 2015, p. 41).

The speculation of a transition to a postneoliberal era ended only a few years later as it became clear that 'the global crisis—far from marking an inauspicious end to the regime of market rule—seems to have brought about something like a redoubling of its intensity and reach' (Peck 2013, p. 132). Ettlinger and Hartmann (2015) conclude, in their analysis of Latin American post-neoliberalism, that neoliberalism continues under the guise of post-neoliberalism. Although the economic rationalism that underpins neoliberal thought has been de-bunked from all corners of the political spectrum, its inexorable march continues and 'while neoliberalism may be essentially dead as an intellectual project, as a mode of crisis-driven governance, its dominance remains' (Springer 2015, p. 12). A common theme in the literature focussing on post-neoliberalism is that recurrent crises do not point to an impending collapse of neoliberalism but are in fact an intrinsic part of its continuation (Ettlinger & Hartmann 2015; Peck 2013; Springer 2015; Wanner 2014). As Springer (2015, p. 7) concludes;

> …because "neoliberalism" indeed does not exist as a coherent and fixed edifice, as an equilibrial complex, or as a finite end-state, it is consequently unlikely to fail in a totalizing moment of collapse.

The conceptualisations of neoliberalism outlined above point to a continually changing process that is difficult to place solid parameters and labels upon, but which share overall common characteristics. Moreover, although neoliberalism is gripped by recurrent crises, it continues to be the dominant ideology guiding environmental governance and as such has had a key role in shaping the roles and forms that ENGOs take within that system.

2.3 The neoliberalisation of ENGOs

Although the environmental movement predates the dominance of neoliberalism, the rise of ENGOs in environmental governance has occurred within a neoliberal context and has not left ENGOs unaffected. As neoliberalism has been extended, reconstituting the role of the state toward expanding market economies, NGOs have stepped in to manage social and environmental matters previously the domain of the state. Neoliberal states actively encourage civil society and ENGOs to act as 'flanking mechanisms' by providing them with funding and empowering them with new duties and functions previously under the jurisdiction of the state (Castree 2011). This may strengthen them in terms of visibility and resources but Castree (2011, p. 41) stresses that 'the key thing is that the[y] must accept the 'neoliberal settlement' rather than seek to challenge it from within'. Further, many ENGOs have internalised neoliberal ideals such that 'neo-liberalism currently pervades the operational and strategic reality of the environment movement in Australia, particularly in elite networks' (Doyle 2000, p. 219). This has led to a proliferation of literature, shown in the following section, which focusses on the ways that some NGOs have both internalised neoliberal ideologies and contributed to wider trends of neoliberalisation.

2.3.1 THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF NGOS

Increasingly, civil society in many advanced capitalist countries such as America, Australia and the UK has become professionalised (Putnam 2002). This is in part due to an increase in professional jobs in the sector, meaning that there are more professional people (Hall 2002). However, there has also been changes in media communications that make centralisation possible, changing sources of financial support for political advocacy and the clustering of would-be educated community leaders into metropolitan centres (Skocpol 2002). These trends have meant that there has been a shift within

NGOs away from community-based, grass-roots organisation, towards organisations with highly professional staff members.

NGOs are pressured, in a multitude of ways to neoliberalise their internal processes through professionalisation to conform to wider management trends, expectations and reporting. NGOs that act as major providers of government contracts and "user-pays" community services must professionalise to meet the expectations of their paying government clients (Cox 2002).

These internal management changes and increasing institutionalisation in the NGO sector has been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, becoming institutionally visible can enhance an NGO's reputation and increase their success in changing policy (Lang 2013; Minkoff & Powell 2006). Yet, to be institutionally visible lobbying NGOs must professionalise to meet the demands of the political processes that they are engaged in (Cox 2002). As professional lobbyists and public relations firms are hired by business and political groups, NGOs must also move away from using "amateurs" to ensure that they are able to promote their views effectively. Becoming ingrained in institutional and governance structures can, however, dilute and delegitimise agendas;

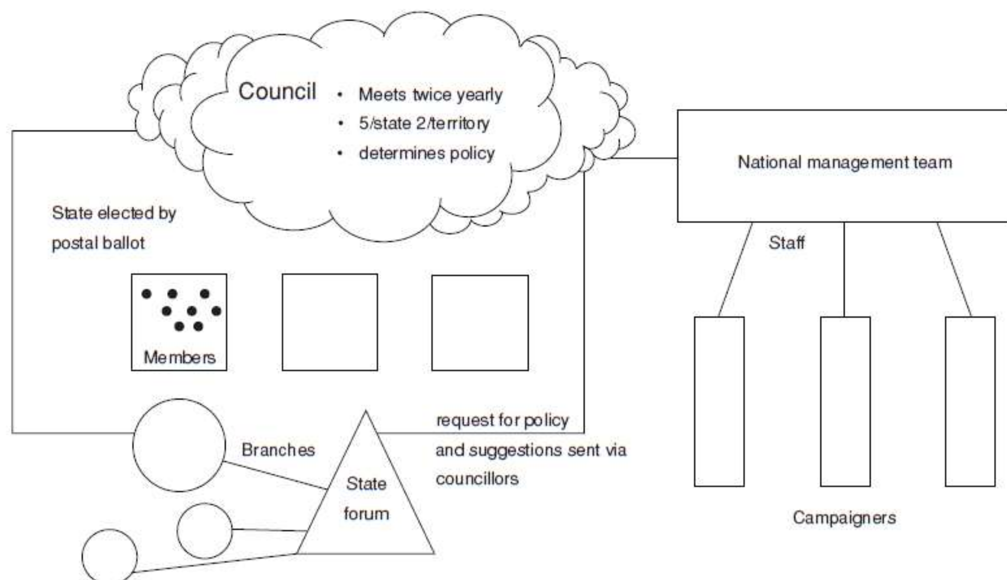
> …sitting at the table increases the pull to adjust agendas from what is considered to be right to what is considered to be feasible; advocacy thus tends to refrain from taking more principled positions and instead concentrates on the appropriate means to move one step further toward any given end (Lang 2013, p. 73).

Eikenberry and Kluver (2004, p. 132) warn that extending this market-based model of public management to the NGO sector is problematic because it is incompatible with democratic accountability and collective action for the public interest. This is because it places an emphasis on entrepreneurialism and the satisfaction of client self-interest. Moreover, institutionalisation can demobilise the overarching social movements that support NGOs. This was the case in resistance to mining in Bolivia where the Morales government created internal divisions within and between

indigenous organisations by offering logistical and financial support to government sympathisers (Andreucci & Radhuber 2017).

In Australia, the ACF provides an example of an institutionalised ENGO. The ACF is the most widely recognised ENGO in Australia when it comes to dealing with the federal government (Doyle 2000). According to its website it is independent, non-partisan and funded by donations (Australian Conservation Foundation 2016). This ostensibly affords them the freedom to pursue goals without government influence. However, the overview of the ACF's organisational structure provided by Doyle *et al.* (2016) shows that the NGO's internal dynamics mimic the structure of the Australian Government. This enables the organisation to work closely with all levels of government, particularly as their headquarters, like the Federal Government are located in Canberra. They describe how the ACF works closely with the Federal Government and has, at times, also been heavily funded by them. While Princen and Finger (1994) would argue that the internal structures of ENGOs should set an example of alternative models to mainstream politics that emphasise democratic accountability, the ACF is dominated by career administrative professionals and top-down governance.

Figure 2 Structure of the Australian Conservation Foundation



(Doyle *et al.* 2016, p. 148)

This mimicry of the government points to a highly professionalised organisation that is not out to create systemic change but takes quite a moderate, incremental approach to environmental change.

Coinciding with this professionalisation has been a distancing of NGOs from their membership bases. As Phillips (2006) outlines, what she classifies as non-profit advocacy organisations (NPAOs) operating in democratic systems find their legitimacy in representing alternative and minority views. She emphasises that;

> The capacity to mobilize public support for, and media interest in, a specific cause is the central aspect of NPAOs' place in a democratic process. The capacity of NPAOs to push public problems onto public policy agendas demonstrates their important contribution to democracy (Phillips 2006, p. 71).

This legitimacy is called into question when links with the grassroots are diminished. In the US, for instance, Skocpol (2002) has noted a decline in translocal but locally rooted membership associations in favour of professional advocacy groups with limited membership bases that are located in large urban centres. Similarly, a pattern can be noted in Australia of people opting to participate in one-off, large-scale events such as Clean-up Australia Day rather than maintaining active membership within organisations (Cox 2002). This is problematic as Banks *et al.* (2015) suggest that membership-based organisations have much stronger orientations towards social, political and economic change and achieving member goals. A detachment from membership bases also leaves NGOs vulnerable to capture by political interests on both sides of the political spectrum and the systems they aim to reform (Lehman 2007, p. 648).

The professionalisation of NGOs has afforded them the tools to advocate and operate in the multi-scalar system of environmental governance. However, it has also led to a detachment from civil society, purportedly the very reason that they are included.

2.3.2 TECHNOCRACY AND DEPOLITICISATION

The issues that NGOs seek to redress have undergone a process of depoliticisation as technocratic approaches have become favoured over finding political solutions (Swyngedouw 2011). Framing issues such as poverty or environmental degradation as a technical problem to be 'solved' depoliticises them by redirecting discussions about power towards discussion about project details (Banks & Hulme 2012; Swyngedouw 2011). It is common for NGOs to use a project-based service delivery approach and there has been a trend towards focussing NGO goals on measurable outputs rather than on broader goals of empowerment (Banks & Hulme 2012). This means that NGOs are able to meet targets by providing short-term solutions without addressing the systemic social and economic structures of neoliberalism which cause the problems they are trying to solve (Banks & Hulme 2012).

These changes also disincentivise NGOs from creating relationships with social movements whilst drawing them towards creating narrow and specific relationships to deliver programs and events (Banks & Hulme 2012). A technocratic approach also depoliticises issues by reducing public engagement (Lang 2013). Lust (2014) goes even further and suggests that the *primary role* of ENGOs is to depoliticise the environment, despite their radical appearances. She notes that they are most concerned with strengthening ties between communities and local governments for the purpose of empowering *governments* to intervene in conflicts between companies and communities by negotiating on their behalf and monitoring social and environmental impacts of industrial activities. Additionally, and in line with Banks and Hulme (2012), she suggests that the emphasis on a micro-project approach rather than mobilising forces of resistance discourages communities from challenging the structure and agencies of economic and political power.

This can be seen in what took place in Bolivia in the 1980's between women's NGOs and grassroots organisations. Monasterios (2007) outlines how women's NGOs crowded out grassroots organisations from political processes. She points out how these NGOs utilised their connections to take on a quasi-

public-sector role which helped to legitimise neoliberalisation of the social movement. Further, the grassroots organisations increasingly became 'beneficiaries' of NGO projects, displacing them from their previous leadership roles within the social movement and replacing them with NGOs as representatives. Finally, instead of basing their goals and activities on dialogue with Bolivian women, the women's NGOs drew on the principles of UN conventions and so Monasterios (2007, p. 34) concludes that;

> Gender technocracy thus differs from the rest of women's organizations because its main goal has not been to confront specific relations of gender subordination in Bolivia, but rather to mitigate the poor life conditions of marginal women through short-term programs that follow UN dictates.

The widespread shift towards technocracy means that NGOs have shifted their focus from one which covets relationships and alliances with social movements and communities, to one that covets government and organisations that will work with government. Bebbington (2005, p. 944) makes this clear, drawing from experience in the development NGO sector;

> When development was understood as transformation, NGOs worked more frequently with peasant political organizations, and interventions were at times coordinated with and channeled through these organizations… [NGOs] have moved toward working with other types of partner— municipal governments and more functionally oriented peasant groups (such as watershed management and commodity specific producer groups).

These trends make NGOs poorly positioned to effect real social change (Banks & Hulme 2012; Banks *et al.* 2015). While these examples draw on the development sector experience, the lessons are equally applicable to ENGOs as their mediating roles between communities and social movements and government are analogous.

2.3.3 ENGOS: EXTENDING NEOLIBERALISM'S REACH?

In addition to internal neoliberalisation in the NGO sector, a significant body of literature suggests that NGOs inadvertently contribute to the extension of neoliberalism (Brockington & Duffy 2010; Chartier & Deléage 1998; Kamat 2004; Klees 1998; Lust 2014; Torpey-Saboe 2015; Wallace 2009; White 1999). Wallace (2009) suggests that NGOs may be acting as 'trojan horses' for global neoliberalism as they are increasingly forced to rely on official donor funding which often comes with extensive conditionalities in the social and political spheres. This means that they can end up pushing donor agendas whilst subverting many of their own initial objectives to secure funding.

Kamat (2004) also suggests that the neoliberalisation of the NGO sector amounts to a privatisation of the public interest rather than fulfilling their ostensible role as agents of democratisation and representation of civil society. White's (1999) analysis of NGOs in Bangladesh finds that expanding the role of NGOs may lead to the bypassing of the state, encouraging further erosion of the provision of state services. Feldman (2003) also notes that NGOs in Bangladesh have shifted from emphasising social welfare and redistribution to perpetuating a neoliberal ethic of individualism, entrepreneurship, and self-reliance. Similarly, Torpey-Saboe (2015) find that the presence of high concentrations of NGOs in Brazil is associated with lower government spending, indicating that NGOs may 'crowd out' the government in social spending. This enables neoliberalisation processes by allowing the state to roll back its social spending further still. Chartier and Deléage (1998) go yet further and suggest that those ENGOs that do not focus on the overthrow of capitalism are culpable in preventing social and economic change. They directly lay responsibility on them, claiming that they 'serve as the co-pilot of capitalism's ecological modernisation' (Chartier & Deléage 1998, p. 26). While Brockington and Duffy (2010, p. 470) charge that conservation ENGO's fuel the processes of capital accumulation that lead to environmental degradation 'by providing an avenue by which corporations and politicians can become "green", as well as through new enclosures and conservation-based enterprises'. This

sentiment that NGO's extend neoliberalism is perhaps most poignantly expressed by Lust's (2014, p. 219) diagnosis of NGOs in Peru;

> notwithstanding the presence of good willing people within NGOs, in reality these organizations are created to make the practices of exploitation and oppression less cruel and more politically acceptable for the population. In their efforts to help community members adjust to the forces of capitalist development rather than resisting them in the form of social movements, the NGOs play an important role in turning the rural poor and the communities away from a class analysis of these forces and demobilizing them.

It must be noted that NGOs are limited by the political economic context in which they work and as Humphreys (2008, p. 160) points out 'NGO textual proposals tend to be blocked where they run directly counter to neoliberal discourse'. This leaves NGOs in the extremely difficult situation of deciding whether to do nothing and allow a situation to become so terrible that it is unbearable for local populations so that they revolt, or to do what little they can within the political context they are mired in.

2.3.4 ENGOS AS POTENTIAL MAJOR CHALLENGERS TO NEOLIBERALISM

Some scholars have identified the environmental movement as one of the most robust sources of political opposition to neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; McCarthy & Prudham 2004). McCarthy and Prudham (2004, p. 278) suggest that 'contemporary environmental concerns and their politics have been, in many respects, the most passionately articulated and effective political sources of response and resistance to neoliberal projects'. They contend that this is because they contest neoliberal attempts to sever social controls and regulations that transform a diverse range of concerns such as health, endangered species and spaces and threatened amenity values.

There are many case studies of local environmental movements resisting neoliberal hegemony. In Europe, the anti-genetically modified organisms (GMO) movement was led by ENGOs such as Friends

of the Earth and Greenpeace. This movement was deeply concerned, not only with food safety but also in fighting against the 'dangers of economic liberalization, commodification, and the loss of autonomy' associated with neoliberalisation (Ansell *et al.* 2006, p. 21). Privatisation and use of water, particularly in mining has also spurred challenges to neoliberal hegemony throughout the globe, with examples in Bolivia (Andreucci & Radhuber 2017), Armenia (Ishkanian 2016) and Mexico (Tetreault 2015; Toledo *et al.* 2015).

However, ENGOs exist on a spectrum of environmental politics which ranges from neoliberal environmentalist pragmatism through to radical deep ecologists. Importantly, formal and institutionalised ENGOs tend to be far less radical than less formalised elements of environmental movements and radical activists often resist becoming registered ENGOs because of their more revolutionary ideals (Doyle *et al.* 2016). The radical elements of the environmental movement resist becoming formal NGOs because of fears of being co-opted by mainstream politics and because they believe that more fluid and less structured political forms will enable them to achieve their goals (Doyle *et al.* 2016).

In the examples above the more formal, institutionalised NGOs tend not to present the most ardent challenges to neoliberalisation. For example, Ishkanian (2016) suggests that the NGOs in her case study of an Armenian movement against mining were non-confrontational, preferring to conduct research, issue reports and engage in dialogue with policymakers. It was the informal movement that presented the main challenge to mining in the country. When the NGOs were unable to prevent the Teghut mine they instead turned to mitigating the impacts rather than opposing the opening of the mine.

Similarly, in Argentina Reboratti (2012) notes that it is the non-institutionalised elements of the environmental movement, not the NGO sector that tends to hold hard-line positions on environmental issues. This led, in the 1990s to a local rejection of assistance from Greenpeace in the resistance against the Uruguay River pulp mills because of the NGOs moderate stance; while it opposed industrial

pollution, it was not opposed to the establishment of factories on the river (Reboratti 2008). The local movement therefore viewed the NGO with the same distrust it had of government.

NGOs tend to be far more pragmatic, than informal movements, adjusting their goals to focus on what is viewed as being achievable rather than what they view as ideal. This begs the central question posed in this thesis of whether ENGOs are able to act as major challengers of neoliberalism, given that they are so deeply embedded within that system. Rather, the previous sub-sections have illustrated how ENGO activities frequently have unintended consequences that further the spread of neoliberalism. This means that they must evaluate their approaches and situate them within the broader political context in which they operate to ensure that they account for the ways that they may further the hegemony of the neoliberal capitalist regime that causes many of the problems they seek to address.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical framework

The study uses a conceptual framework informed by the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984) and Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Although Foucault and Gramsci draw on two very different theoretical presuppositions, with Foucault beginning from a post-structural position and Gramsci from a Marxist one, their writings are both fundamentally 'concerned with describing the exercise of power in ways other than through the use of force or violence' (Schulzke 2015, p. 63). Many studies have successfully reconciled the two (Bulkeley & Schroeder 2012; Ekers & Loftus 2008; Pyykkönen 2015; Sum 2015; Thörn 2015). Particularly, Schulzke (2015, p. 57) argues that;

> When the two theorists are analysed together, in reference to specific problems, they can be seen as filling in the gaps of the other's work… Gramsci and Foucault are especially well suited for theorizing resistance that is capable of overcoming the myriad forms of power that shape modern life.

While the literature review above has already suggested that ENGOs are influenced by the state and corporate interests, limited studies have been conducted into the subtleties of how this influence may be occurring and how ENGOs can be reconstituted to resist and challenge neoliberal hegemony. Foucault's concept of governmentality provides the theoretical tools to expose the specific ways that ENGOs and their activities and aims are shaped by powerful interests and; if and how this may dislocate them from their ostensibly civil society roots. Meanwhile, Gramsci's explanations of the relations between the state and civil society provide a framework for analysing the interactions between ENGOs and the state in Australia. His concepts of hegemony, passive revolution and historic blocs provide a theoretical basis for investigating the ways in which ENGOs may be challenging or

perpetuating the continuing dominance of the neoliberal consensus. A synthesis of Gramsci and Foucault;

> …requires that we not only critically examine how, by and for whom governing is accomplished, but also that we analyse how institutions and identities (of state, non-state, public and private…) are established through these processes (Bulkeley & Schroeder 2012, p. 748).

A synthesis of these two theorists' work is appropriate for the study because, in environmental governance power relations and decision making are dispersed amongst networks, often obscuring the direct power relations at work. In the section that follows, I will first provide a deeper explanation of Foucault's conceptualisation of neoliberalism, then outline the key aspects of governmentality theory that are relevant to this study, I will then consider Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, civil society, historic blocs and passive revolution. Finally, I will synthesise the two to illustrate how the two theorists can be productively used together to analyse ENGO-state relations.

3.2 Foucault: neoliberalism and governmentality

3.2.1 FOUCAULT'S NEOLIBERALISM

Foucault's formulation of neoliberalism is perhaps best understood by contrasting it with classical liberalism. For Foucault, the key difference between liberalism and neoliberalism is a shift in emphasis in the relationships between humans in a market (Foucault 2008). Liberalism, Foucault says, centres on the belief that an ethic of exchange is naturally occurring among humans. Under liberalism the market is thought to be self-sustaining, requiring minimal governmental intervention. Indeed, government intervention is viewed as antithetical to the operation of the market. In contrast, neoliberalism emphasises an ethic of competition. Competition is not naturally occurring and 'as an essential economic logic will only appear and produce its effects under certain conditions which have

to be carefully and artificially constructed' (Foucault 2008, p. 120). Markets tend toward monopolies which are anti-competitive, therefore, to ensure that markets remain competitive they must be protected against this tendency via state intervention.

This shift changes the approach to governing in a fundamental way. Under liberalism the state is needed to ensure that everyone respects laws of private property and little else. The market, because of its self-sustaining nature, does not require intervention by the state. Moreover, Foucault (2008, p. 319) posits that 'Liberalism… is imbued with the principle: "One always governs too much"—or at least, one should always suspect that one governs too much'. So, a central focus of liberalism is the limitation of government. In contrast, because competition requires carefully constructed conditions, the shift in emphasis to competition in neoliberalism justifies 'a constant intervention on the part of the state, not on the market, but on the conditions of the market' (Read 2009, p. 28). Moreover, Foucault (2008) asserts that neoliberalism endeavours to extend market rationality into domains that are not economic such as the family, birth rates, delinquency or penal policy. And so, by extending the rationality of the market into other social spheres coupled with the need for intervention to ensure the conditions are amendable to competitive relations, neoliberalism provides the government with a way to extend its power into new domains.

This all occurs under a paradoxical rationality which enables the government to maintain that the subjects of neoliberalism remain 'free' from its influence. As Read (2009, p. 29) points out 'neoliberalism would seem paradoxically to govern without governing; that is, in order to function its subjects must have a great deal of freedom to act'. However, Foucault's conceptualisation of neoliberalism is not just about governing states or economies but is also fundamentally about the formation of individual subjects (Read 2009).

Neoliberalism can be thought of as being a 'regime of truth', which Foucault (1980, p. 131) explained as;

> the types of discourse which it [society] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.

This means that a regime of truth determines what is held as true in a society. This truth is created and recreated by what can or cannot be said because of what are considered acceptable forms of knowledge.

Through this designation of what it is possible to think of as true Foucault suggests that subjectification occurs. Subjectification is the process or processes of self-formation in which a person is themselves active (Rabinow 1984). A regime of truth shapes self-formation because it presents;

> the available norms through which self-recognition can take place, so that what I can "be" quite literally, is constrained in advance by a regime of truth that decides what will and will not be a recognizable form of being (Butler 2005, p. 22).

Foucault proposes that the subject that arises in the neoliberal regime of truth is *homo oeconomicus,* whom he suggests is 'the interface of government and the individual' (Foucault 2008, p. 256). *Homo oeconomicus* superseded *homo juridicus*, the subject of rights. Where previous forms of government formed legal subjects of the state who were governed by rights and laws, neoliberalism creates subjects who are self-governing and individually responsible (Read 2009). Foucault (2008, p. 226) describes *homo oeconomicus* as 'an entrepreneur of himself… being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings'. Moreover, *homo oeconomicus* is 'someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment' (Foucault 2008, p. 270). This means that the neoliberal regime of truth elicits the self-formation of subjects who are imminently governable and imbued with an ethic of competition, rationality, self-interest and self-responsibility.

Foucault's dissection of neoliberalism suggests that it extends governmental power and market rationality into social spheres and produces a self-interested and competitive subject. This has affected the way that subjects in neoliberal societies relate to one another. The implications of the acceptance of the neoliberal regime of truth is that collective transformation of the conditions of existence become restricted, not because they are prohibited by structures of disciplinary power but because they are not seen as possible in a society of individuals ostensibly only concerned with their own self-interest (Read 2009).

The significance of the proliferation of neoliberalism for this thesis was extensively examined throughout the literature review. However, using a specifically Foucauldian approach illustrates how the extension of neoliberal mentalities creates a regime of truth that curtails the ability for ENGOs to collectively challenge environmental damage.

3.2.2 GOVERNMENTALITY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND NGOS

Governmentality was first introduced in a series of lectures delivered by Foucault between 1977-78. He used the concept to investigate dispersed power relations. It is commonly summed up as 'the conduct of conduct'. Government, in a governmentality conceptualisation, refers to;

> …all endeavours to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others, whether these be the crew of a ship, the members of a household, the employees of a boss, the children of a family or the inhabitants of a territory (Rose 1999, p. 3).

Governing, within this definition, is not an activity limited to the state but is a set of processes and technologies which seek to shape the conduct of others to achieve particular ends (Rose 1999). Government encompasses not only political government but extends through society right down to self-regulation (Lemke 2001). Governmentality studies concern themselves with the processes and techniques, or to use Foucault's terms 'technologies of government', which are employed to shape conduct. These technologies of government can extend from 'the great technologies such as the

Panopticon[1]… to the mundane, little governmental techniques and tools, such as interviews, case records, diaries, brochures, and manuals' (Rose *et al.* 2006, p. 89). Miller and Rose (1990) suggest that technologies of government are the conduit through which political rationalities in the domain of thought are translated into the domain of reality.

A governmentality approach does not ask questions about what happens or why. Instead, governmentality looks to ways of acting and knowing as its central focus and seeks to establish 'what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives, through what strategies and techniques' (Rose 1999, p. 20). Governmentality studies focus on;

> …the emergence of particular 'regimes of truth' concerning the conduct of conduct, ways of speaking truth, persons authorized to speak truths, ways of enacting truths and the costs of so doing. Of the invention and assemblage of particular apparatuses and devices for exercising power and intervening upon particular problems (Rose 1999, p. 19).

Foucault rejects structural theories which suggest that power is located within the state. Instead, he is interested in how power concentrates in the form of the state yet cannot be reducible to it (Lemke 2002). He says that power is;

> at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood

[1] The Panopticon is a circular building designed by Jeremy Bentham in 1791 with rooms arranged around the circumference of the building and a tower in the centre where an occupant could see into every room without being seen by the inhabitants of the rooms. The construction was designed in such a way that inhabitants would not only 'be subject to external power, they would turn that power on to themselves, being self-disciplining' as they could be being watched at any time (Gregory *et al.* 2011, p. 517).

> in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality (Foucault 1991, p. 103).

This is important for the analysis in this thesis because it recognises that while power might be consolidated in the state, it is also exercised outside of the state through technologies of government.

Governmentality approaches are increasingly being advocated to analyse the effects of discourses of environmental governance in civil society (Burchell 1993; Pyykkönen 2015; Sending & Neumann 2006). A governmentality approach is appropriate for this thesis because it 'draws attention to the complex processes of negotiation and persuasion involved in the assemblage of loose and mobile networks that can bring persons, organizations and objectives into alignment' (Miller & Rose 1990, p. 1). A governmentality approach provides the analytical tools to investigate ways that powerful actors influence environmental outcomes indirectly. Sending and Neumann (2006, p. 652) advocate using a governmentality approach to study NGOs because;

> An attempt to grasp the role of nonstate actors, and civil society organizations in particular, requires an approach that can theorize about the specific relations between state and nonstate actors and about the logic of the processes of governance.

Pyykkönen (2015) also suggests that Foucauldian approaches to studies focussing on civil society are useful to illuminate the operations of modern government. He delineates four areas that a governmentality approach to civil society can help to increase understanding in governance including;

- the relationships between civil society and state power
- the multidimensionality of power in the actions of citizens themselves
- the intertwinement of freedom, resistance and power in neoliberal governmentality, focussing on the interaction of government with counter-actions
- the citizen-subject in processes of governmentality in the modern world and through successive regimes of power (Pyykkönen 2015, p. 5).

In environmental governance this knowledge is pivotal because power relations and decision making are dispersed, often removing direct involvement of the state.

Governmentality is also useful for the study of civil society because it seeks to apply a critical attitude toward what is generally accepted as timeless, natural and unquestionable (Rose 1999). In democracies civil society is commonly defined along the lines of Cohen and Arato (1994, p. ix) as;

> a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations, social movements, and forms of public communication.

However, according to Cotoi (2011) a governmentality approach tries to dissolve the compartmentalised state/market/civil society model.

In line with Walters (2012) assertion that many scholars of governmentality have been 'too faithful to Foucault', this study is in agreement with that proposition and instead of simply focussing on what discourses and truths have emerged in the NGO sector, it augments the governmentality approach with Gramsci's theorisation on resistance.

3.2.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AS A TECHNOLOGY OF GOVERNMENT FOR THE EXTENSION OF NEOLIBERALISM

Relationships of knowledge and power are embedded in discourse and language (Rose 1999). Dominant social classes can use discourse as a way to effect cultural change to establish and re-establish a hegemonic order (Fairclough 2013). This is referred to by Fairclough (2013, p. 137) as the technologisation of discourse, which he defines as;

> a process of intervention in the sphere of discourse practices with the objective of constructing a new hegemony in the order of discourse of the institution or organisation concerned, as part of a more general struggle to impose restructured hegemonies in institutional practices and culture.

The SD discourse can be framed as a technology of government in two ways. Firstly, it presents nature as a realm that can be measured, understood and managed. Management of the environment, in this discourse, is conceptualised as being possible through the application of the scientific principles of ecology (Rutherford 1999). The discourse paints nature as being able to be 'disassembled, recombined and subjected to the disciplinary designs of its organizationally embodied expert management' (Luke 1995, p. 25). In this way, the environment is compartmentalised by scientific expertise which itself becomes a technology of government. In this conceptualisation of nature, it is possible to intervene in allegedly 'unsustainable' environments and practices in order to rearrange their configuration and lend them to particular ends. Luke (1995, p. 25) concludes that 'enveloped in such governmentalized interpretive frames, any environment could be redirected to fulfil the ends of other economic scripts, managerial directives and administrative writs denominated in sustainability values'. As such, the SD discourse allows and encourages an extension of governance technologies into any environmental issues under the guise of the need of environmental management. Scientific expertise facilitates this extension and enables the redeployment of nature towards government goals.

One such example of the technologisation of the SD discourse can be seen in global biodiversity governance through the Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Turnhout *et al.* (2014) detail how the IPBES introduced technologies to biodiversity governance such as monitoring, reporting and auditing to generate transparent, reliable and standardised information to objectively assess the effectiveness and efficiency of conservation. These changes allowed for governing at a distance as ecologists and natural scientists are charged with the responsibility to define, measure, monitor, interpret and evaluate environmental quality with the intention of setting environmental goals for private actors to achieve. However, Turnhout *et al.* (2014) suggests that IPBES is primarily interested in generating knowledge about ecosystem services and that this means that it 'is not interested in biodiversity knowledge *per se*: its primary interest is in generating economically and politically relevant knowledge'. They propose that ecosystem services

can be thought of as the parts of biodiversity that are relevant from an economic and political perspective. This means that the knowledge generated by IPBES renders these parts of biodiversity subject to analysis and control. Turnhout *et al.* (2014) conclude that;

> Only those items of biodiversity that are represented in scientific knowledge are counted and can be made to count in political and management strategies while other items that go uncounted do not count and disappear from view. It is in this way that IPBES may result not only in an impoverishment of the biodiversity agenda … but, ultimately, in an impoverished understanding of biodiversity itself.

This example shows how policy initiatives that appear to be apolitical, with the intention of knowledge generation for environmental management can in fact be mobilised for the extension of neoliberal technologies of government.

Secondly, the notions of community participation which are key to both the SD discourse, through Agenda 21 and Australia's ESD through the NSESD, are used as technologies of government that shape the behaviour of ENGOs and the communities they work in (Bryant 2002; Summerville *et al.* 2008). Rose (1996, p. 332) outlines how the concept of community has become a technology of government as communities have become;

> zones to be investigated, mapped, classified, documented, interpreted, their vectors explained to enlightened professionals-to-be in countless college courses and to be taken into account in numberless encounters between professionals and their clients, whose individual conduct is now to be made intelligible in terms of the beliefs and values of 'their community'.

As communities are measured in these ways, this knowledge can be operationalised to allow government control.

Rose (1999, p. 176) argues that communities can be mobilised and deployed in novel programmes and techniques to encourage self-management, identity construction and collective allegiances. He refers to this as government through community. To govern through community does not mean directly

regulating conduct but to 'set conditions, structure a field of possible of actions, and use incentives to foster new habits of entrepreneurship and responsibility, competition and choice' (Li 2006, p. iii). Phillips and Ilcan's (2004) example of the approach to food security is illustrative of how this is accomplished. They outline how the FAO targets rural communities to transform themselves through capacity building in ways that enable greater participation in the market economy. This is done through educational training to improve literacy and understanding of sustainable development, encouragement of the capitalisation of entrepreneurial opportunities, empowerment of local communities and their organisations and targeted funding resources for sympathetic governmental agencies. It also aims to transform smallholder farmers into demand-driven commercial agricultural enterprises and informed decision-makers. Key to government through community is that it is unthinkable that the poor might be vulnerable people or victims of the forces of inequality or injustice, instead they are conceived in terms of their ability to build capacity to solve problems for themselves within a capitalist system (Li 2006; Phillips & Ilcan 2004). In this way individuals are encouraged to reconstitute themselves as neoliberal subjects imbued with an ethic of competition, rationality, self-interest and self-responsibility.

Similarly, Burchell (1993) points out that governments willingly "offer" both individuals and communities opportunities to be actively involved in tasks which were previously the responsibility of governmental agencies. However, he goes on to assert that this involvement comes with the cost of assuming active responsibility for not only carrying out the activities but for their outcomes as well. Moreover, he suggests that in taking on these responsibilities the participants are also required to conduct themselves in accordance with government approved models of action. This, he labels a new form of 'responsibilisation' where the governed are encouraged to freely and rationally conduct themselves in line with state directives.

Community participation is also key to the legitimisation of the NSESD (Ecologically Sustainable Development Steering Committee 1992). Community participation is a difficult concept to critique; it is

often accepted as an innately beneficial practice. However, the emphasis on community participation in ESD discourse in many ways enables government through community by creating specific pathways that are acceptable for engaging in participation processes. The NSESD emphasises that;

> Australia's potential for successfully embracing ESD depends in large part on our ability to recognise and utilise the full range of [private enterprise and community] experience. This can be facilitated by creating a partnership between government, the corporate world and community groups that have a particular interest in, or capacity to contribute to ESD (Ecologically Sustainable Development Steering Committee 1992).

This quote is important because it demonstrates the significance of community in achieving ESD goals. It also emphasises that community participation is based on the precondition that these groups 'have a particular interest in, or capacity to contribute to ESD'. This places limitations on who is deemed acceptable participants to actors who are considered to have a particular interest in assisting to achieve the governmental goals set out by ESD. Further, it limits participants to those who are considered to have the capacity to contribute, providing the parameters for excluding actors who may have limited education, social capital or other capacity. Here it is clear that democratic participation of communities in ESD in Australia is conditional upon 'the ultimate responsibility to participate in a manner that contributes to achieving predefined sustainability objectives' (Summerville *et al.* 2008, p. 701). In this way the NSESD can use the rhetoric of community participation to legitimise pre-determined goals, rather than attain genuine democratic outcomes.

The implications of this for ENGOs are that only those organisations that subscribe to the government's predetermined goals and values are deemed as acceptable participants in defining and implementing ESD imperatives. When viewed in this light SD discourse can be seen to 'permit the formation and management of certain kinds of problems and prevent the conceivability of others' (Summerville *et al.* 2008, p. 709). McGregor (2004) demonstrates how this is problematic in Australia because nature is primarily conceptualised through a sustainable development paradigm and the commonality of the

language of sustainable development maintains its dominance. Consequently, he suggests that alternative discourses are inhibited and disempowered and this risks 'de-radicalising the [environmental] movement and limits the diversity of political strategies and options that it could potentially adopt' (McGregor 2004, p. 593). The discourse of ESD in Australia 'shapes the sorts of conduct required for entry into the 'democratic' participatory process' (Summerville *et al.* 2008, p. 709). Therefore, those ENGOs which may have ideologies, values and goals that do not align with the governments may not be recognised as legitimate community participants.

ENGOs operating within the existing structures of environmental governance clearly must conform to government directives in significant ways. Because of this, it is tempting to view ENGOs as being bound into an overriding and inescapable governmentality. Foucault's theories of power can seem 'deeply threatening to individual agency' (Schulzke 2015, p. 57) and make it appear as though there is no scope for resistance. For this reason, in subsequent sections, I turn to Gramsci to theorise how ENGOs may be able to resist being absorbed into the neoliberal hegemony. Gramsci's key concepts provide the thesis with the tools to theorise the potential for resistance.

3.3 Gramsci's key concepts

3.3.1 CIVIL SOCIETY, HEGEMONY AND PASSIVE REVOLUTION

Gramsci's concepts of civil society and the interlinking concepts of hegemony, historic blocs and passive revolution will be used for the study to illuminate the ways that ENGOs are linked to, influenced by and arguably an integral part of the neoliberal state. Moreover, these concepts will show how resistance may be possible.

Gramsci uses a particular notion of the state which is far more encompassing than its standard, liberal usage. He rejects liberal conceptualisations of the state as a neutral and classless entity whose

existence is solely within the legal and bureaucratic spheres and whose function is ostensibly to safeguard an autonomous civil society (Buttigeig 1995). Instead he recognises relationships of power and influence that traverse across the bounds of the state and civil society which mutually reinforce each other for the advantage of dominant groups and institutions. Here it is clear that Gramsci, like Foucault, does not see a division between state and civil society, but regards civil society as an integral part of the state. In fact, he sees it as 'its most resilient constitutive element' (Buttigeig 1995, p. 4). He sometimes refers to political society and civil society together as the 'integral state'. These two aspects of the state employ two different 'levels' of power;

> 1. The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
>
> 2. The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed (Gramsci 1971, p. 145).

In the first level, Gramsci charges that civil society, far from being a domain of freedom, is actually a space in which hegemony reigns to manufacture consent (Gregory *et al.* 2011).

Hegemony to Gramsci is the 'capacity to exercise control by means other than coercive force; namely, through constructing a willing mass acquiescence towards, and participation in, social projects that are beneficial only to an elite' (Gregory *et al.* 2011, p. 327). This is achieved through the extensive dissemination and instillation of the values and cultural practices of the elite throughout civil society until they become normalised and unquestioned. In this way, the beliefs and values of the elite are adopted by civil society and the prevailing social order and hierarchy is reinforced through the everyday

actions of the people who benefit the least from it (Gregory *et al.* 2011). This conceptualisation of hegemony and the culpability of civil society in its perpetuation contrast markedly with western liberal conceptualisation of civil society as separate from and inimical to the state.

Gramsci's concept of hegemony is central to this analysis because of its ability to illuminate how a seemingly oppositional civil society can be an integral part of the state. Even when sections of civil society challenge a hegemonic state, it can contribute to strengthening it. For instance, Gramsci (1971, p. 373) demonstrates how an antagonistic civil society is accounted for within a hegemonic state;

> Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed… But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential.

This shows how hegemony can accommodate oppositional forces, so long as their challenges are neutralised through passive revolution so that they do not threaten the prevailing economic order.

Passive revolutions are a strategy to maintain the *status quo.* They can be defined as;

> a 'revolution without a revolution' or 'revolution restoration', in other words a process whereby a social group comes to power without rupturing the social fabric… but rather by adapting to it and gradually modifying it (Gramsci in Forgacs 2000, p. 247).

Gramsci uses the term passive revolution in two ways; the first as a revolution without mass participation and largely due to outside forces and elite social and political reform (Gramsci 1971; Morton 2010). Secondly, it is used to describe a transformation which occurs when the dominant classes react to mobilisations of the popular masses by accommodating part of their demands (Morton 2010). The 'passive' aspect of a passive revolution 'consists in preventing the development of a revolutionary adversary by 'decapitating' its revolutionary potential' (Sassoon 1980, p. 207).

For example, Wanner's (2014) analysis of the green economy/growth discourse shows how a passive revolution has occurred to subsume and mollify radical criticisms within the green growth discourse of neoliberal capitalism such as limits to growth arguments. Wanner (2014)'s example shows how international organisations such as the World Bank and the UNEP have co-opted the discourse of green economy/growth which was meant to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism. Instead, he finds that this discourse has been neutralised and reconstituted to actually perpetuate and extend the neoliberal discourse. In this instance, hegemony is achieved through both domination and through intellectual and moral leadership. To achieve this, a social group dominates or absorbs antagonistic groups, even those that appear to be irreconcilably hostile.

When actors such as NGOs, wider social movements and unions challenge hegemonic structures through disrupting or subverting cultural symbols and practices, the hegemonic forces have to constantly renegotiate to accommodate them 'through depoliticization, repoliticization and remoralization of particular (dis-)order' (Sum 2015, p. 44). This creates a constantly shifting hegemonic landscape where specific gains by counter-hegemonic challenges are absorbed into the hegemony to depoliticise them and prevent challenges to the wider hegemonic structures.

This is not to say that hegemony cannot be overcome, and this is the key extension that Gramsci's theories can offer a governmentality analysis. Gramsci believed that reformist strategies that involved collaborating with the political apparatus of government only served to strengthen them (Buttigeig 1995). As such, he was sharply opposed to this approach. However, for Gramsci, revolution was not synonymous with rebellion and he did not advocate full frontal assaults upon the state. As Sum (2015, p. 44) points out,

> hegemony is not a cohesive and singular relationship of leaders and led; it is riddled with tensions, contradictions and the suturing of difference… This opens up the possibility of counter-hegemonic struggles and the building of solidarity networks… and alternative knowledge.

To instigate a counter-hegemonic movement that challenges the existing hegemony a new 'historic bloc' must be established. This occurs within the existing hegemony. An historic bloc refers to;

> the solid structure that is created when a hegemonic order is in place, its formation being dependent on the hegemony, which in turn ``binds'' or ``glues'' together all the other parts of society into a relationship which recognises homogeneous norms of political economic practices and culture (Worth 2002, pp. 298-9).

To establish a new historic bloc requires painstaking effort to materially transform not just the technical and social relations of production but also to achieve the production of a new common sense, the emergence of a new hegemonic vision, a new regime of truth and a new hegemonic form of subjectivisation (Sum 2015). When an historical bloc is established, and the counter-hegemonic forces have matured to a point of passive revolution;

> The final process of transformation occurs when certain compromises are made with the resistant groups so that a consolidation process can take place, in which the former resistant groups become saturated into the new hegemonic order, and accept its conditions (Worth 2002, p. 299).

And thus, the existing hegemony is overtaken by the new hegemony to establish dominance over the previously ruling classes. This is the ultimate goal of counter-hegemonic forces, to establish an historic bloc that is capable of forming a new hegemonic order. Gramsci saw a successful revolution as being a product of a meticulous process of changing the collective hegemonic way of thinking and cultural values through education, intellectual development, and critical and theoretical elaboration (Buttigeig 1995). This was a process which Gramsci believed must occur through civil society.

3.4 A synthesis of Foucault and Gramsci

3.4.1 CRITICISMS OF USING FOUCAULT AND GRAMSCI TOGETHER

Synthesising Foucault and Gramsci has been staunchly criticised by ardent supporters of both post-structuralism and Marxism. Geras (1990), for example, emphatically critiques combining post-structuralism with Marxist thought, suggesting that using concepts such as capitalism or hegemony with poststructuralist theories of power creates theoretical inconsistencies because Marxist concepts can only exist within a structured society. For example, he argues that the concept of hegemony implies that all discourses are constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity. This means that to use the concept within a poststructuralist framework, which conceptualises power as diffuse and multi-directional, conflicts with the very core of hegemony. However, Olssen (2016, p. 115) points out that Gera's arguments, 'only constitute a handicap to a convergence [of poststructuralism and Marxism] if one expects the outcome to be some form of classical Marxism'.

Day (2005, p. 203), on the other hand, uses Foucault to critique Gramsci's concept of hegemony, suggesting that 'the logic of hegemony has been exhausted', making the concept redundant. He posits that seeking counter-hegemony is to accept 'the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and en masse, across an entire national or supranational space' (Day 2005, p. 8). This he calls the 'hegemony of hegemony'. Instead, he suggests that radical activism should and is operating non-hegemonically by focussing activism on influencing individuals rather than state power. Yet, Kreps (2015) argues that Day falls into the Foucauldian trap of reducing everything to the level of the individual. Additionally, Day's proposition misconstrues Gramsci's concept of hegemony by overlooking the painstaking process of counter-hegemony that requires influencing individuals for the purpose of challenging hegemony. Hence, his solution, is none other than counter-hegemony itself.

Barnett (2005, p. 8) ardently argues that the two theorists are simply incompatible;

> They imply different models of the nature of explanatory concepts; different models of causality and determination; different models of social relations and agency; and different normative understandings of political power. We should not finesse these differences away by presuming that the two approaches converge around a common real-world referent, so-called ''neoliberalism''.

Barnett, reaches the conclusion that the two are therefore irreconcilable and theoretically incoherent. However, as Ekers and Loftus (2008, p. 699) point out, 'nowhere in the debate do we find a detailed discussion of the actual tensions and resonances within the work of these two important theorists'.

Bidet (2016) takes the apparent incompatibility of Foucault and Marx and turns it on its head. Of particular issue, he argues, is the supposed incompatibility of Foucault's conceptualisation of power and Marx's theory of class (Bidet 2016). However, his analysis shows how Foucault acknowledged that over-arching structures existed in the background, while never incorporating them into his research. Marx's concept of class is also shown to be at once a division within the social body and a unit that gathers together singular persons. Similarly, Kreps (2015) questions whether the two thinkers might have simply focussed on differing aspects of a wider picture that does not necessarily exclude each other's theories. Kreps (2015) surmises that while Foucault focussed on micro-politics, these can be thought of as adding up to and constituting the overarching power of the state which complement and parallel Gramsci's concentration on hegemony into the intricacies of social relations.

For these reasons, the criticisms of using Foucault and Gramsci appear to be primarily ideologically based, with most critiques attempting to maintain absolute theoretical adherence to a chosen side. However, by taking a less dogmatic perspective and acknowledging the sometimes incomplete and disjointed nature of both theorist's *oeuvres*, they can be used together to augment each other's work. This is particularly true in the field of human geography where different scales of analysis, from the individual to the societal are highly salient.

3.4.2 FINDING CONGRUITY BETWEEN POSTSTRUCTURALIST GOVERNMENTALITY AND AN ESSENTIALIST GRAMSCI

Despite the abovementioned tensions between poststructuralism and Marxism, the differences do not necessarily preclude dialogue (Ekers & Loftus 2008). The following discussion outlines how and why the two theorists together are more useful for analysing NGO power than if they were used separately.

Foucault draws on a post-modern/post-structuralist philosophical tradition. At its most basic simplification, post-modernism can be thought of as 'incredulity toward metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984, p. xxiv). By this, Lyotard means that postmodernism rejects;

> 'overarching principles' that *legitimated* a certain kind of *modern* discourse – a discourse which claimed to be capable of disclosing the *truth*, hence guaranteeing the value and utility of *knowledge*-based action to society at large (Clarke 2006, pp. 109-10).

Postmodernism, in contraposition to modernism, embraces plurality, questions attempts at representation and the construction of a 'big picture' or all-encompassing truths and criticises attempts to create these metanarratives for necessarily denying anything that doesn't fit within them.

Post-structuralism, often conflated with postmodernism, also attacks the idea of an absolute or single truth. However, whereas postmodernism is primarily associated with a cultural movement, poststructuralism is a philosophical standpoint. Post-structuralism counterpoises structuralism, which attempts to 'expose the enduring and underlying structures inscribed in the cultural practices of human subjects' (Gregory *et al.* 2011, p. 725). Post-structural methods are critical methods which 'enable a perspective from which we can make critical assessments of… existing social institutions, cultural beliefs and political arrangements' (Wylie 2006, p. 298). Here, the applicability of a post-structural approach to the topic under study can be clearly identified. Where the existing role of civil society, and ENGOs as a constitutive element of it, is accepted as inimical to the state, a post-structural approach

would critically assess the social institutions, cultural beliefs and political arrangements that reinforce this accepted norm.

Gramsci's work is also inadequate for answering the research questions in this thesis. Gramsci's key concepts are grounded in Marxist theory, which is structural, essentialist and materialist. Marxism can be categorised into structural philosophy because it examines 'the giveness of particular individuals in a society on the basis of the social structures in which they are inserted' (Bidet 2016). His work runs a tendency, common in Marxist thought, towards essentialism, which is;

> the intellectual presumption that complex realities of any sort are ultimately reducible to simpler, or essential, realities… With respect to causation, essentialism involves reducing an openended multiplicity of determinants to one or a few fundamental causes (Graham 1990, p. 54).

This essentialism can ignore the nuances and complexities of the actions of individuals within social groups. Further, it tends to assume that the economy is the essence of social life (Graham 1990, p. 54). Gramsci's meta-narratives explaining society are altogether too simplistic to explain the complexities of power-relations in the modern globalised world.

Foucauldian analysis looks exclusively at micro-level relationships between individuals, making it impossible to simplify Foucauldian analysis into a description shorter than its full detail. Though ENGOs do operate at the micro-level, their activities are multi-scalar, meaning that Foucauldian theory limits the scope of analysis. Gramsci, on the other hand recognises the micro-level whilst also discerning macro-scale, "lawlike behaviours" in structures and institutions (Sum 2015, p. 8). Foucault's theories of power shackle individuals within multiple sources of power acting upon them, such that it is difficult to conceive of how they might be able to carry out acts of resistance (Sum 2015). Further, Rose (1999) suggests that governmentality studies generally do not focus on the actual organisations and operations of a certain system of rule. This limits the ability to use Foucault and governmentality to theorise how individuals might work together through organisations like ENGOs to resist

neoliberalisation. Gramsci, on the other hand, focusses on the strategies used by social groups to move against hegemonic structures.

Foucault's post-structuralist critique of grand narratives and his focus on specific technologies of government provides a more detailed way to focus on the realities of how the state manages to bring individuals within ENGOs into alignment with their goals. As Sum (2015, p. 38) surmises;

> [Foucault] has more to offer in regard to the specific technologies of structuration and power. Conversely, Gramsci offers a richer vocabulary for thinking about the shifting agential forces and the scope for alliances in a changing but unstable equilibrium of compromise compared to Foucault's emphasis on the dispersion of microrevolts and the particular forms of resistance.

By using the two theorists together, Gramsci's theory of resistance responds to the forms of power Foucault describes (Schulzke 2015). Thus, it will be possible to identify general tendencies and patterns of group resistance and acquiescence within and between ENGOs and the state whilst also determining the specific ways that these trends are achieved.

3.4.3 POWER AND RESISTANCE WITH FOUCAULT AND GRAMSCI

As previously noted, civil society is most commonly thought of as being distinct from the state, market and family, an arena where collective action in associations takes place (Heinrich 2005, p. 213). This runs contrary to Gramscian and Foucauldian theories and is a conceptualisation that is rejected for the purposes of this thesis. Gramsci (1971, p. 527) observes that although the state is integral to hegemony, private initiatives and activities also contribute to the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of ruling classes. This has clear resonances with Foucault's governmentality as a form of dispersed rule. While Gramsci begins from the state and traces power relations from it outwards and downwards through society, Foucault starts from the dispersed practices and knowledges present in everyday forms of power (Ekers & Loftus 2008). These, Ekers and Loftus (2008, p. 703) suggest

culminate in ‘an ascending analysis [that] … constitute the state’. In this way, it is clear that from both a Gramscian and Foucaldian perspective civil society is integral to the perpetuation of power and can be analysed from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective.

Foucault’s (1977, 1978) conceptualisation of power is complex and dispersed. He argues that power exists and comes from everywhere. In Foucault’s estimation, the state and institutions are decentred from power. Power relations are not located within and between social classes or between citizens and the state but instead they exist within relationships between individuals (Smart 1983). He argues that power ‘is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with’ (Foucault 1978, p. 93). However, of top down analyses of power, Foucault (2003, p. 31) reasons that ‘such deductions are always possible; they are both true and false’.

Foucault (1978) characterises power as something that cannot be acquired or possessed but that is exercised from innumerable points in society. Power is bound up in all relationships and is the immediate effect of any imbalances that exist in such relationships as economic processes, knowledge relationships and sexual relationships. He emphasises that power relationships are strictly relational, meaning that their existence is dependent on the presence of multiple points of resistance (Foucault 1978, pp. 94-6). Crucially, Foucault (1978) describes overarching power structures thus;

> the rationality of power is characterized by tactics that are often quite explicit at the restricted level where they are inscribed (the local cynicism of power), tactics which, becoming connected to one another, attracting and propagating one another, but finding their base of support and their condition elsewhere, end by forming comprehensive systems: the logic is perfectly clear, the aims decipherable, and yet it is often the case that no one is there to have invented them, and few who can be said to have formulated them: an implicit characteristic of the great anonymous, almost unspoken strategies which coordinate the loquacious tactics whose "inventors" or decisionmakers are often without hypocrisy.

In this quote, it can be seen that Foucault believes that power structures do not exist within the institutions of the state but in the overarching social systems that run through them. Importantly, this calls into question any conception of a global binary opposition between a ruling and subordinate class or group (Smart 1983). This means that it is difficult in this formulation of power to identify its source to articulate any kind of resistance. In this vein, it becomes deeply uncertain as to whom or what resistance should be directed at. This arguably leaves the possibility of resistance in tatters. Yet, Foucault (1978, p. 96) does provide for the prospect of an occasional collective resistance;

> Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships.

In this quote, Foucault has gone on to describe how, not only is power dispersed but, so too is resistance. He does, however, leave open the possibility of a revolution through the "strategic codification" of points of resistance. Yet, he does not go on to explain how this might be possible.

This post-structural approach is arguably limited in its ability to theorise resistance (Cole 2003; Harvey 1996). While post-structural thought manages to illuminate injustices, it provides little opportunity for change beyond the local scale. This, Harvey (1996, p. 347) argues is because of its inherent preoccupation with '…affirming the importance of infinite heterogeneity and open-endedness in a world of unstructured processes and infinitely complex flows'. This, he goes on to contend makes it impossible to theorise resistance with a post structural frame because 'no particular moral or ethical principles can carry any particular weight over any other' (Harvey 1996, p. 347). For this reason, poststructuralism and theories derived from it have been criticised for leaving no recourse for wide-spread social improvement. Harvey (1996, p. 348) goes on to argue that 'the best that can be hoped

for… is that innumerable localized struggles might have some sort of collective effect'. This is where Gramsci's key concepts can augment a Foucauldian approach.

Gramsci, like Harvey, is a Marxist. The Marxist meta-narrative conceptualises power in simple, uni-directional terms whereby those in control of the means of production use it to reproduce and transmit the ideology of the dominant economic class (Marx 1978). Gramsci deviates from this with his theorisation of the relationships between hegemony, historic blocs and counter-hegemonic movements which highlight the dialectical nature of the struggle for power (Thomas 2006).

In this thesis, Gramsci's concepts are used to provide the possibility for social improvement that Foucault's poststructuralist approach lacks. This does not constitute a return to Marxist meta-narratives and materialism but recognises the common struggles that ENGOS face. This is in line with Harvey's contestation that;

> we are in daily practice surrounded by things, institutions, discourses, and even states of mind of such relative permanence and power that it would be foolish not to acknowledge those evident qualities… The "solid rock" of historical geographical materialism is… [such] that dialectical argumentation cannot be understood as outside of the concrete material conditions of the world in which we find ourselves (Harvey 1996, p. 8).

This means that, although no overarching 'truth' or meta-narrative exists, there are some constant material conditions such as 'organizations, institutions, doctrines, programs, formalized structures' that do actually exist (Harvey 1996, p. 8). Where post-structural thinking emphasises heterogeneity and localised specificity, this thesis recognises that ENGOs can coordinate against key institutions and formalised structures to resist neoliberalisation.

3.5 Methods

3.5.1 INTERVIEWS

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to elicit self-assessments from ENGO's in Australia about how their activities, agendas and aims are shaped by technologies of government. Interviews with government representatives were also conducted to evaluate the discourses that shape the ways that the state interacts with ENGOs and the requirements the state holds for interactions between ENGOs and the state. The interview questions were framed around the theoretical framework informed by the work of Foucault and Gramsci. Interviews have been used by numerous researchers to uncover how ENGOs influence environmental policy, when they are most effective and whether they contribute to more democratic governance (for examples see; Aguilar 2002; Arts 2004; Betsill & Corell 2008; Dombrowski 2010; Edgar 2008; Ramanath 2008; Schroeder 2008). Table 4 and Table 5 below provide a summary of the characteristics of the organisations and individual participants involved in the study.

Table 4 Participating ENGO and government organisations

Organisation	Government funding?	ENGO type
TWS	None	Advocacy
CCSA	Yes	Advocacy/Service
Trees for Life	Yes	Service
CVA	Yes	Service
Greening Australia	Yes	Service
ACF	None	Advocacy
WWF	Yes	Advocacy/Service
SA NRM boards	NA	NA

Table 5 Participant characteristics

Participant ID	ENGO/GOV	ENGO type
ENGO1(S)	ENGO	Service
ENGO2(S)	ENGO/GOV	Service
ENGO3(A)	ENGO	Advocacy
ENGO4(A/S)	ENGO	Advocacy/Service
ENGO5(A/S)	ENGO	Advocacy/Service
ENGO6(S)	ENGO/GOV	Service
ENGO7(A)	ENGO	Advocacy
ENGO8(A/S)	ENGO	Advocacy/Service
ENGO9(A)	ENGO/GOV	Advocacy
ENGO10(S)	ENGO/GOV	Service
ENGO11(A)	ENGO/GOV	Advocacy
GOV1	GOV	NRM
GOV2	GOV	NRM

3.5.2 ENGO PROFILES

This section provides some short profiles of the key ENGOs involved in the study.

3.5.2.1 The Conservation Council of SA

CCSA is SA's peak environment organisation, acting as the conduit between various ENGOs and community groups in the state and the Government of SA. In 2019 they represent 60 member groups with a common interest in the environment. While they are an independent, non-profit, non-government and non-party political organisation, they do receive around 15% of their income from state community grants (Conservation Council of South Australia 2018). The CCSA plays an advocacy role, delivers on-ground projects and it acts as a community hub through the Joinery. It has also held consultative status in the NRM Act since its establishment in 2004.

3.5.2.2 The Wilderness Society

TWS was formed in 1976 by Bob Brown in a campaign to save the Franklin River in the south west Tasmanian wilderness area (Doyle 2000). It was first registered as Tasmanian Wilderness Society Inc

in 1981 but then changed its name to The Wilderness Society Inc in 1984 as its reach extended nationally. TWS' constitutional purpose is 'protecting, promoting and restoring wilderness and natural processes across Australia for the survival and ongoing evolution of life on Earth' (The Wilderness Society 2015, p. 10). In 2015-16 TWS funding was sourced from donations (90%), Subscriptions (6%), Bequests (3%) and Merchandise and sales (1%) (The Wilderness Society 2016). TWS is known for its steadfast rejection of corporate and government funding and in 2016 had a membership base of 32000 Australians (The Wilderness Society 2016). TWS is an advocacy focussed ENGO that does not deliver on-ground projects.

3.5.2.3 Trees for Life

Trees for Life was founded in 1981 and its main purpose is to revegetate and protect bushland, farmland and urban landscapes. It is a South Australian, state-based organisation with a membership base of 7000. The organisation largely focusses on running two programs, the Bush for Life program which trains people to care for remnant fragments of bushland, and the Tree Scheme which helps people grow and plant native seedlings for revegetation. Trees for Life is a purely service-delivery ENGO that does not engage in advocacy activities, though some of its employees do provide advice and comment on policy issues.

3.5.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then thematic analysis was used to code and categorise the key results from the interviews and ENGO documents collected. Thematic analysis is a flexible method that focusses on identifying themes and patterns across a data set (Aronson 1995). It identifies both implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Guest *et al.* 2012). This method of analysis was chosen as it is not only the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research, but it is also particularly useful for capturing the complexities of meaning in textual data (Guest *et al.* 2012). The

primary goal of thematic analysis is to 'describe and understand how people feel, think and behave within a particular context relative to a specific research question' (Guest *et al.* 2012, p. 13).

As suggested by Guest *et al.* (2012), the data analysis process involved three stages: (i) reading the transcripts, (ii) identifying possible themes and (iii) comparing and contrasting themes while identifying structure among them. An inductive approach was taken, meaning that rather than using predetermined categories or themes, the coding and theme development were indicated by the data.

Each participant's response is coded with a pseudonym such as ENGO1(S). The bracketed letter indicates whether the ENGO that the participant is involved in is primarily service oriented (S), advocacy focussed (A) or whether it undertakes both (A/S).

3.5.4 RESEARCH RIGOUR

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research was used to ensure the results of the study were academically rigorous. These criteria are:

- Credibility – the 'truth value' of the findings
- Transferability – the generalisability of the findings
- Dependability – the reliability of the findings
- Confirmability – the objectivity of the findings

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the research was established through data triangulation, where multiple sources of data were used to confirm patterns and themes. Triangulation validates data via cross verification from two or more sources (Webb 1966). The different data sources used were interview transcripts and documents produced by ENGOs and policy documents. As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1982), the transferability of the research was ensured by the use of a purposive snowballing sampling method. This sampling method aims to 'include as much information as possible, in all of its various

ramifications and constructions' (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 201). To achieve this, the interviews were conducted with 'dis-similar comparison groups', as advocated by Denzin (1970). This means that people from ENGOs with varying characteristics, such as government funded, advocacy and/or service based were included in the sample, see Table 4 and Table 5. To do this, initial participants were identified from publicly available information, such as ENGO websites and then these participants were asked to help identify others who were also knowledgeable on the topic.

3.5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The non-probabilistic nature of the snowballing method can result in the overrepresentation of the most vocal or most affiliated stakeholders, or representation of only one section of the community with specific or strong viewpoints (Flowerdew & Martin 2005). The limitations of this method of recruitment was mitigated by beginning the snowballing process from multiple starting points. The sample size was also relatively small, with only 13 participants. Interviews were, however, conducted until data saturation, when little or no change to the coding categories was made following evaluation of new interview data (Guest *et al.* 2006). Moreover, all of the participants had many years of experience and a deep knowledge of the sector meaning that they were able to speak from their own understanding of the sector.

There were also only two participants from state government though there was significant overlap of ENGO and government professionals. As such, many of the participants could speak about both the government and ENGO perspectives and about the sector as a whole. It was also not possible to speak to representatives of all ENGOs in SA, however, the participants were not speaking on behalf of the organisations they worked with, they were speaking about their own personal opinions across their experience that often ranged across many organisations. As such, the results should not be read as representative of particular organisations that were consulted but as perspectives from ENGO professionals who work within the sector.

As a result of these limitations the study provides a snapshot into the experiences and thinking of some ENGO professionals in SA rather than says something about ENGOs as a whole. However, a key criticism of ENGO literature is that it often attempts to make generalisations about an incredibly diverse sector. This study provides a small but significant addition.

3.6 Background

3.6.1 GOVERNMENT ROLES IN AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Environmental governance in Australia is a complex process. It is structured with three levels of government, overlaid with regional NRM boards all with differing responsibilities and powers. Adding to this mix, the many private companies and industries, ENGOs and community groups which also contribute to environmental governance in varying ways, the complexity of the system is substantial. In the following section, a brief outline of the key structures of government in Australia are outlined.

The Australian Government is responsible for the EPBC Act. The legislation enables it to intervene in environmental and heritage issues considered to be of national significance. Although, when the EPBC Act was passed in 1999 it was heralded as a new era for responsible environmental governance in Australia, it has been scathingly criticised;

> In almost all areas, the regime has failed to produce any noticeable improvements in environmental outcomes. The activities that pose the greatest threat to the Act's 'matters of national environmental significance' are rarely being referred to the Minister and, when they are, the Minister is not taking adequate steps to ensure appropriate conservation results (Macintosh & Wilkinson 2005, p. vii).

The EPBC Act provides for bilateral agreements between the federal and state governments to reduce duplication of process and to increase the cost-effectiveness of compliance. It also conforms to the Agenda 21 rhetoric that often the best route to sustainable development is through local governance

(Walshe 2011). However, the bilateral agreement system in many cases takes responsibility for environmental issues out of the hands of environmental departments and places it in the hands of state-based development departments across Australia. For example, in the case of the Traveston Crossing Dam the responsibility for the Environmental Impact Assessment fell to the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), in the Northern Territory the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development is responsible for mine regulation and in SA the Beverley Uranium Mine monitoring was conducted by Primary Industries and Regions SA (PIRSA) (ETICARC 2003). A Senate enquiry found there was a 'clear conflict of interest between these two roles' (ETICARC 2003, p. 16). This conflict of interest is seen to result in highly lenient applications of the EPBC Act requirements and a soft stance on monitoring.

State environmental departments in Australia are responsible for a range of environmental governance roles which vary from state to state. Environment responsibilities are variously bundled into departments that also focus on science (QLD), primary industries (TAS), energy (NSW), water (SA and WA) and natural resources (NT). Key roles that state environment departments take on include managing national parks, conservation, and managing and regulating the state's environment and natural resources. For example, the SA Department of Environment and Water (DEW) lists its roles as being;

- A facilitator of community involvement in and taking responsibility for the environment.
- A steward of the state's natural resources to enable sustainable development.
- The custodian of public parks, gardens, heritage places and crown lands for public benefit and enjoyment, and for their intrinsic value.
- An authority on the state's environment and natural resources to help governments, businesses and individuals make good long-term decisions (Department of Environment and Water n.d.)

Local governments also play key roles in environmental governance in Australia, though they have far fewer resources than the other levels of government. While they are the smallest sphere of government, they perhaps have some of the largest effects on the environment as a result of the thousands of small decisions and actions made each day that cumulatively have large impacts on the environment (Wild River 2006). Some of their responsibilities include waste and recycling, development and planning approvals and a variety of other environmental management roles. There are around 700 local governments in Australia, and they are highly diverse. As Wild River (2006, p. 3) explains;

> The most populous has over 5000 times more people than the most sparse. The richest spends over 50 000 times more each year than the poorest and the most extensive covers 250 000 times the geographic area of the most compact. The most populous, rich and compact local governments are located within capital cities and regional centres.

This is the sphere of government that is closest to affected communities and environments. Local government officials often find themselves caught in the middle of state government expectations and their local communities. For example, local governments are constituted under state and territory governments, meaning that they retain the power to sack councils and disband local governments. This means that state and territory governments often consider local governments to be subordinate to the state and they expect them to implement state and territory legislation accordingly (Wild River 2006). However, local councillors are democratically elected by the residents of their local councils and are therefore responsible to the local community. As a result, they do not tend to simply implement state and territory legislation but they 'use state and territory laws as toolkits to fix local problems, rather than using them as the instruction manuals that the state or territory government intends them to be' (Wild River 2006, p. 4). As such, local government tends to have contradictory responsibilities and roles in environmental governance.

The federal, state and local levels of government are also overlaid by regional environmental management structures. These evolved out of the National Landcare Program and the Natural Heritage Trust. In the late 1980's Landcare groups were promoted by the Australian Government as a local response to widespread land and water degradation. The Landcare groups are voluntary, self-organising groups of farmers and community members who can apply for funding to assist them in dealing with local environmental problems (Lane *et al.* 2009). Government funding for Landcare is targeted at education and demonstration activities, rather than direct funding of large scale on-ground work. The intention being to instigate wide-spread improvement in environmental stewardship practices, particularly on farming land (Lockwood 2000).

Landcare has however, been criticised for extending neoliberal practices and creating tensions within communities. This can be seen as an example of governing through community (Herbert-Cheshire 2000). For instance;

> On the one hand, farmers are expected to become entrepreneurial and 'active' agents who improve their productivity and competitiveness without government interference. On the other, they are expected to put community interests before their own by providing off-site and/or long-term social and environmental benefit (Lockie & Higgins 2007, p. 2).

These tensions, Lockie and Higgins (2007) argue, have limited the impact of many agri-environmental programmes and undermined the confidence in participatory strategies. Moreover, Landcare programs arguably disempower community activists and extend bureaucracy into the community sector by displacing grassroots community initiatives (Doyle *et al.* 2016).

In SA there are eight Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Boards including the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges, Alinytjara Wilurara, Eyre Peninsula, Kangaroo Island, Northern and Yorke, SA Arid Lands, SA Murray-Darling Basin and South East. These NRM regions are governed by the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (the NRM Act) which is described as 'an Act to promote sustainable and integrated management of the State's natural resources; to make provision for the

protection of the State's natural resources'. The NRM Act replaced the *Animal and Plant Control (Agricultural Protection and Other Purposes) Act 1986*, the *Soil Conservation and Land Care Act 1989* and the *Water Resources Act 1997.* NRM boards were originally established in response to a demand from communities for more bottom-up systems of governance and a shift away from the traditional top-down governing style of environmental management (Robins & Dovers 2007). They are ostensibly;

> underpinned by theory about public participation, adult education and agricultural extension, but also influenced by neoliberalism's calls for 'smaller government', [and so] governments embraced engagement as a cost-effective approach to effecting change (Curtis *et al.* 2014, p. 175).

This means that they achieve two goals simultaneously, they allow greater input to NRM by the community, but they also have the effect of allowing government to outsource responsibility to community.

The original 2004 form of the legislation stipulated that the NRM Council, which advised the Minister on matters of NRM and produced the State NRM plan, should be comprised of 9 members. These were specified as one with experience in NRM and community affairs, one from the LGA, one from the CCSA, one from the South Australian Farmers Federation Incorporated (SAFF) (now known as Primary Producers SA) and one Aboriginal representative. Thus, the NRM Act enshrined the CCSA as the peak body representing the ENGO sector in NRM in SA. Though the NRM Council no longer exists, the most recent (2014) version of the NRM Act continues to name the CCSA as the peak body to be consulted on behalf of the ENGO sector. In 2019 the Landscape SA Bill was introduced to parliament to replace the NRM Act. This Bill does not specify an explicit role for CCSA or any other ENGO. Instead, membership of the landscape boards that are proposed to replace the NRM boards will be determined by the Minister and regional elections.

Despite the principled beginnings of NRM boards, the reality of their implementation has been questioned and their adherence to their original key values is arguably doubtful (Head 2009; Robins &

Dovers 2007). Particularly, NRM boards are thought to have become homogenised, professionalised and heavily influenced by government (Robins & Dovers 2007). NRM boards are also dependent on government support, appointments to boards are often made by the responsible minister, and these members tend to be oriented towards the representation of primary producers (Curtis *et al.* 2014; Robins & Dovers 2007). Perhaps most significantly, Curtis *et al.* (2014, p. 184) are scathing in their evaluation of NRM Boards, concluding that 'the original intent of empowering communities changed markedly to one of these bodies being on-ground implementation agents of strategies decided elsewhere'. This is a significant divergence from their original intention, and they could now be seen as a vehicle for government to bypass uncooperative NGOs to achieve community engagement goals, while diffusing the power they may have had through formalisation. Although NGOs are included in NRM boards through the peak body of the CCSA, their voices are diluted by other interest groups such as agriculture.

4 RESULTS

This section presents and discusses the results of the interviews and documentary analysis. The results presented in Theme 1 suggest that ENGOs in SA *are* operating within a complex web of governmental techniques that influence their actions within the neoliberal hegemony. Several technologies of government were identified. These included government funding with strings attached, heavy bureaucratic requirements that stifle the progress of projects, ENGOs being used as government resources and personal relationships between ENGO professionals and public servants that moderate ENGO discourse. Results in Theme 2 indicate that ENGO professionals in SA favour a strong sustainability discourse that challenges the primacy of economic growth over environmental concerns. Theme 3 suggests that ENGOs in SA have refocussed efforts towards fostering connection to nature in the community in the hope that this may result in changes towards pro-environmental behaviour. Finally, Theme 4 shows that ENGOs are seeking partnerships with other civil society actors, business and philanthropists to strengthen their ability to achieve environmental outcomes.

4.1 Theme 1: Governmentality effects on ENGOs

Participants working within ENGOs were deeply thoughtful about the potential impacts of governmentality and the overriding hegemony of neoliberalism that permeates the context of their work. Many participants spoke of their own conflict about their close relationships with government while also attempting to hold them to account. All ENGO participants felt that there was a real threat to the effectiveness of ENGOs that were heavily dependent on funding from government.

Three core benefits of close government relationships were identified by participants which explain their willingness to enter into these arrangements. Firstly, the obvious financial benefits were noted by all participants. Usually project based, this funding enables ENGOs to undertake many projects and

achieve local environmental outcomes. The second benefit identified was the personal relationships that could be formed with government employees which can open opportunities for funding for other projects that may not be the government's core interest. Thirdly, a level of credibility could be gained from being in partnership with government because it shows an implicit endorsement of the capability of the ENGO. This is useful both for pursuing other funding opportunities and enhances the credibility of an ENGO in some sectors of community.

4.1.1 FUNDING WITH STRINGS

There was consensus among the ENGO participants that accepting funding from government could be used to influence their conduct. Firstly, this occurs because of the incentive to channel resources into projects that align with government goals. Since 2005 the Australian Government has explicitly refused to grant funding to organisations that engage in political activity, indicated a preference for organisations that do practical work like tree planting and water quality works and capped grants at $10,000 (Peatling 2005). This has left many ENGOs in critical funding deficits, with an incentive to remain apolitical and providing a fee-for-service model. ENGO10(S) outlined the situation;

> ENGO10(S): Government, they have been starving the ENGOs, and they are beating them over the head. Seriously, I mean, at the moment there is no funding stream that ENGOs can apply for. No state-wide ENGO can apply for federal funding currently for the environment. It is shit. At the same time, they're messing with the charity status, so you know they're basically in, not quite the Abbott obliteration mode, but you know, if you're not a Landcaring-type group go away and die kind of mode.

For ENGOs that deliver on-ground projects and have an advocacy role, like CCSA, this presents a deep conflict. ENGO4(A/S) said 'We would dearly love to not have any funding from Government, which would free us up to a degree'. ENGO5(A/S) was in agreement and spoke at length about the difficulties of being reliant on government funding;

> ENGO5(A/S): That comes back to that thing about how the public good is funded, because traditionally it's been funded by Governments, which then means that there is that dependence... You can try and get donations from the community, but that's really hard work and it might be easier in some cities than others, like in the East Coast, there's a lot more money... [But] there's economic down turns and then all of a sudden people aren't donating anymore, so it's not necessarily a good steady and secure income stream.

Moreover, ENGO5(A/S) spoke about how the loss of the Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations (GVESHO) in 2014, which for CCSA was valued at around $90,000 and wasn't tied to the delivery of specific projects, has left the ENGO unable to cover its overheads. ENGO5(A/S)'s assessment of the funding situation was that 'It's just not working. This underfunding is becoming pretty critical' (ENGO5(A/S)). ENGO4(A/S) also described how the dependence on government funding puts their very existence at risk; 'our existence is, unless we get secure, enduring funding, our own sustainable future is in question and that's a real concern in terms of the whole model of operating'. Being in a position of critical underfunding could make ENGOs even more vulnerable to this technology of government because they may accept funding with heavier conditions. A funding model that is dependent of government clearly puts ENGOs in a compromised position.

Entering into funding agreements can also sometimes mean that restrictions are placed on what ENGOs are able to publicly say;

> ENGO10(S): If you're funded by them, that gets trickier, and it gets trickier for a range of reasons… We have to often get their permission to do any media, or communications, they dictate some of the things that we can and cannot communicate. That can be pretty tricky, and if things are going wrong, or you're aware of things that you're not happy with, you are constrained within those contracts… We have our own support base, and we want to communicate with them. I don't feel I need the minister's permission to do that, but if I get

> funding, I do… there is unease about it you know, it creates a master servant relationship, which is not appropriate.

This illustrates the complicated nature of fee-for-service ENGOs as it means that at times, achieving a small on-ground environmental outcome can come at a cost to their overall messaging to their membership base. Moreover, it shows that those ENGOs that are primarily service focussed are also constrained by this technology of government.

Restrictions over what ENGOs are able to say are not always explicit or contractual. As ENGO9(A) explains, self-censoring is also common when funding is involved;

> ENGO9(A): the Conservation Council, because we were desperate for funding… we were getting quite a lot of money from the Department of Environment and Heritage, and I think that meant that people in the department thought they had a bit of favour and control over the Con Council. I think the Conservation Council also felt they couldn't be too critical and so they stopped being as critical.

This shows how funding as a technology of government induces self-regulation of ENGOs and brings their messaging into line with the hegemonic interests of the government.

CCSA was frequently cited as the ENGO in SA that had the riskiest relationships with government. This was due to its heavy reliance on government funding and it's deep embedding into government process, such as the CCSA's consultative status in the NRM Act. As the peak body of ENGOs in the state, this could present a significant obstacle to varied ENGO voices being heard. However, the ENGO participants did not suggest that they were not being adequately represented by the CCSA, merely that there was potential for this to happen.

The ENGO that was repeatedly mentioned that did not have these problems was TWS. With its focus on advocacy rather than service provision and steadfast choice not to accept government funding, it was the only ENGO in SA that was identified as being able to continue to campaign in a way that was

not compromised by its funding arrangements. However, TWS has a very narrow focus which may not contribute to wider societal change, as ENGO7(A) explained;

> ENGO7(A): We've got a clear purpose. Our constitutional purpose is to promote and preserve wilderness. And some people would focus very tightly on that… On the other end of the spectrum you have people that would say that the only way that we can achieve that is by changing society. And the only way to change society is to change the political process... But on that spectrum… I know it can't be achieved without social change but the reason I'm employed by the Wilderness Society is not to deliver that social change, it is to deliver on our purpose.

In contrast to the narrow TWS purpose, the CCSA outlines their vision of sustainability as;

> …a world in which humans live healthy, fulfilling lives in balance with nature. Economic activity has been fundamentally remodelled to reuse non-renewable resources as many times as possible or replace them with renewable ones. Human societies no longer require resources beyond our planet's carrying capacity. The result is that ecosystems are able to increase their size and diversity, providing a stable base for all life on earth for generations to come (CCSA 2013, p. 7).

This reflects an overall aim of transforming society towards strong sustainability. Although the CCSA arguably plays the greatest role in advocacy that focusses on structural change in SA, it was also identified as the organisation that could be most compromised by its close relationships with government.

All ENGO participants were, however, steadfast that their respective organisations do not and would not accept funding with strings attached that did not align with or compromised their core values. However, as will be shown in Theme 2, conflicts with core values are likely to be infrequent given that the environmental discourses of ENGO professionals in SA commonly align with the SD discourse that the government also subscribes to.

4.1.2 BUREAUCRACY, AND REPORTING

Despite the incentives for working with government, there was a strong theme in interviews that the realities of working within the bureaucratic processes of government makes these partnerships arduous. Moreover, it provides government with a litany of ways of influencing ENGO behaviour. ENGO8(A/S) spoke of the heavy reporting requirements that came with money in the environment sector. She described how different government departments had vastly different reporting requirements for identical amounts of money. She relayed a situation where she had worked on a project that received $100,000 from the Department of Health which only required a final report. In contrast, a $100,000 grant from the Department of Environment required monthly, quarterly and final reports. This suggests that government may attach heavier reporting requirements to money allocated for environmental purposes as a way to monitor and control ENGO behaviour.

Participants also voiced the frustration of project stagnation. ENGO participants emphasised that their resources were tightly stretched and that it was problematic that their investment of resources into projects could sometimes be wasted when government momentum dissipated;

> ENGO10(S): You know, a lot of the things that are in the government's hands just haven't moved and they're like: "Is that project still around? That was a really good idea, I haven't heard anything". It's terrible… You lose trust in their ability to be an effective partner… So, you know they're hard partners to work with. Great people, bureaucratic processes, and politics make them hard bed fellows. Sometimes it's worth it, sometimes it's not.

ENGO10(S) also described the ways that administrative and reporting requirements for funding can hinder the progress of projects;

> ENGO10(S): Boy it has been frustrating working with government. Oh my God, it's head-buttingly frustrating and that's starting to affect things actually… it's just been paralysed like… they'll say:

> "Well you need to go and talk to the other sectors, talk to the miners"
>
> Great, bring 'em on!
>
> "You can't do that till executive have ticked off the community engagement plan"
>
> Okay then write the plan and get the tick off.
>
> "What exactly are you going to achieve by talking to the miners?"
>
> Well the miners will know more about the program, and I guess they'll identify what we have in common, whether they're interested in pursuing it or not.
>
> "I want exact KPIs"
>
> Well you're not going to get KPIs, it's a conversation. We are not doing it to leverage this or leverage [that], we want to see if there is opportunities, we're exploring partnerships. Do you have a button in there that says exploring partnerships?
>
> "No, no we don't have one of those."
>
> Far out! And then we get banged over the head for not having done the consultation! This is like, you've got to be kidding. Like I'm having to meet with farmers in secret to talk with them about these things. Honestly, it's really bad.

This shows how the Government of SA outsources environment-related work such as community consultation to ENGOs whilst simultaneously maintaining tight control over the way that it is conducted that may not align with the way that ENGOs prefer to operate. This example shows how government can use administrative requirements such as predetermined KPIs to shape the way that ENGOs conduct consultation. This could have the effect of limiting the consultation process to meeting the KPIs that were set before the consultation even began. Moreover, it prevents ENGOs from doing consultation in more iterative ways that allows community to have more control over the outcomes of consultation and therefore the outcomes of environmental projects.

4.1.3 ENGOS OPERATING AS A GOVERNMENT RESOURCE

The use of ENGOs as a government resource was another technique that was identified that puts constraints on ENGOs. ENGO10(S) noted that their existence is only necessary because government is not delivering on environmental outcomes for the public 'We're here largely as a failure of government, you wouldn't need ENGOs if government actually did all the things ENGOs did'. ENGO6(S) outlined one of the ways that the government makes up for this shortfall;

> ENGO6(S): The government often comes to NGOs for advice and support and often it's either not in position or willing to pay for that support and advice. So, it's kind of this interesting relationship where the NGOs are trying to influence government and the government is wanting feedback and consultation from the NGOs as part of their policy and legislative agenda but that can easily be abused. So, NGOs can be providing lots of support into government without any recompense or acknowledgement for that advice. And that's particularly the case for advocacy organisations like Nature Conservation society. They provide endless hours of their time on submissions into legislative policy reform into government and sometimes it's a token consultation process from government. So, they are spending all this time in vain and sometimes its advice that is taken freely and the advocacy organisation doesn't get any kind of support for doing that. So, there can be quite a lot of, well there is the potential there for government to abuse that position a little bit.

This presents a problem for ENGOs. On the one hand, being invited to provide input may give them the opportunity to have influence over policy outcomes. On the other hand, it requires the use of the ENGOs scarce resources. Moreover, even when ENGOs are compensated for the use of their resources, the long-term effects of undertaking projects funded by government are that government is able to increasingly withdraw from the responsibility of providing environmental services. GOV1 made the point;

> GOV1: Our role is increasingly that of a broker or facilitator where we might get the money and the project managers if you like, but we will be looking to an ENGO to actually deliver the work on ground.

Here, Foucauldian neoliberalism is evidenced where the government 'withdraws' from its responsibilities whilst simultaneously deploying new methods of governing through transforming its role into that of a facilitator. ENGOs then become Castree's (2010, p. 1728) 'state-sanctioned actors [that] take on functions that states themselves could otherwise perform in theory or practice'. Taking into account the previously discussed techniques of funding with strings and bureaucracy and reporting requirements, it is clear that the government is not opening up a space for community control of resources. Instead it maintains control over projects through project management.

4.1.4 PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS THAT MODERATE NGO DISCOURSE

Looking below the organisational level, there is an extensive overlap of government and ENGO actors. Particularly within the ENGO sector, some participants had worked in both government and ENGOs, sometimes resorting to entering the ENGO sector when they felt too constrained by the heavy bureaucratic burdens of being a public servant. These participants maintained personal relationships with people working within the government sector and generally felt that this was an advantage in the ENGO sector. Participants, both government and ENGO based, viewed having close personal relationships as being very positive and enabled ENGO participants to have greater influence and gain insider knowledge. For example;

> ENGO5(A/S): I think, where there can be benefits in a good relationship, if the person in government actually cares about that area genuinely and actually does want to see good outcomes but knows that their hands are quite tied in knots, they can actually really see the value of groups like ours because we can actually go out and get everyone fired up and do and say the things that they can't do and say.

Certainly, the public servants involved in the study held their ENGO partners in high regard and viewed them as valuable to achieving environmental outcomes. For example, GOV1 outlined his thoughts on relationships with ENGOs;

> GOV1: I don't believe that there is intimidation or any constraints that are applied to ENGOs because of a relationship with government… we have an absolute reliance on the relationships with ENGOs because we haven't got hope, with our work force being a fairly small one, we don't have a hope of delivering everything that we would like to do in this region by ourselves. We really need to work hand in hand with ENGOs for the benefit of South Australia.

Similarly, GOV2 emphasised how his department was fully supportive of the involvement of ENGOs in decision making;

> GOV2: we could make autonomous decisions but truly the culture is not to just make autonomous decisions. Because … on most things, you know from an officer to NGO, you know, we often get quite close in agreement. Because we are genuinely, you respect those groups, so you don't just want to make decisions autonomously.

Although, in most cases personal relationships between ENGOs and government appear to work in a positive way, these personal relationships could be a double-edged sword. Some participants also felt that the closeness of ENGOs to government meant that they were not a force to be feared anymore. Government actors were thought to know that there was a level of mutual respect that would not be crossed, reducing the threat from ENGOs. As ENGO9(A) lamented 'we have lost authority. We don't frighten them anymore'. ENGO5(A/S) also talked about how close personal relationships could at times make it difficult to hold government to account;

> ENGO5(A/S): the thing about personal relationships, is that humans are social creatures, we've evolved that way, we have an innate drive to maintain positive relationships and if you're very cosy with people in government, it is going to make it harder to go out hard on something they're doing.

ENGO3(A) took a similar view;

> ENGO3(A): I think that they've [ENGOs] lost a lot of credibility. And in South Australia, I see a lot of it has been very, very dysfunctional. There's still a very strong alignment with Labor and that is poor form. As an NGO, you should be, where possible, politically neutral. You've got to be able to bring out the big stick and beat whoever is in power over the head. If that stick is only relevant to one side, then you find one hand tied behind your back. And I think that's really what's going on at the moment in the ENGO movement in South Australia.

In addition to a reduced ability for ENGOs to critique a government they are deeply entwined with, public servants are deeply restrained and incapacitated by the bureaucratic processes of government. Despite a desire to achieve the best outcomes, the public servants working in the environmental sector within the Government of SA are often unable to overcome the restrictions of their bureaucracy. GOV2 outlined his position on the problem;

> GOV2: Politics does come into play… but you work for politicians and yeah, occasionally, the priority that different ministers put on certain things probably does go against you, and maybe the way that resources in terms of finances are allocated. You think it is the wrong thing. But … you have to do the best in the constraints of the system.

People within government would often like to make changes that ENGO representatives suggest but are unable to put those changes into effect. ENGO9(A) described how they left a government position to work in the ENGO sector because working in government left no room for flexibility or creativity and was perpetually mired in political underfunding. ENGO6(S) also outlined how a change of government could impact years of collaborative work between ENGOs and public servants;

> ENGO6(S): In my experience government has a very short corporate memory and therefore change is just so frequent that influence is difficult to maintain over a long period. So, as much as we will provide advice and advocate for certain things, a change in administration or a

change in government can just turn that on its head at a whim. So, our ability to influence longer term it's probably there but its tedious.

This means that changes in government can render ENGO efforts at exerting influence over government wasted.

These results show that there are significant costs to the close personal relationships that ENGOs cultivate with public servants. Firstly, there is the potential for ENGOs to lose credibility, not only with the public but also within their own ranks for having these close relationships. Secondly, it is apparent that although ENGO professionals actively seek these relationships, they are often ineffective, whether it be through the bureaucratic and political restraints on the public servants themselves, or the constant changing of the guard that is the nature of government.

4.2 Theme 2: Environmental discourses in the ENGO sector

The interview results presented a complex interweaving of narratives about nature. While the SD discourse shaped the language and concepts participants used, there were distinct ways that some ENGO professionals countered its dominance.

There were two somewhat overlapping groups of participants in this study. The first group consisted of people who had a very pragmatic approach to the environment. They fit almost entirely within the weak SD discourse favoured by government and had little difficulty reconciling their philosophies with broader trends in the environmental sector. For these participants working in close partnerships with government is unlikely to present any philosophical challenges or difficulties. These participants spoke about the responsibility humans have to manage nature, the value that needs to be placed on it and the dependence humans have on the environment for our own survival. For example;

ENGO1(S): So what is nature to me, it's ridiculously complex, and has proved to be quite reliant upon the human community to take notice and be involved and understand its

> importance … it does require a certain amount of management, and that may be no interference at all. But that still could be part of a management plan.

Here ENGO1(S) places humans as central to the management of nature, this indicates an anthropocentric leaning that aligns with the SD discourse. ENGO2(S) also showed an anthropocentric focus;

> ENGO2(S): The natural world is the drive for everything and in this sort of society we live the economy is a subsector of that. So, I see that as, like we treat it the other way around, we treat it as a resource. I'm pretty pragmatic in the work we do. We are working with people that are wanting to do things for the environment for the benefit of their production and that's perfectly valid.

ENGO2(S) is pragmatic about nature as natural capital for the benefit of production which is consistent with Dryzek's (2013, p. 159) key metaphors used in the SD discourse that 'nature's capital stock deserves respect and should be sustained because it is imperfectly substitutable by man-made capital'. However, ENGO2(S) also laments the emphasis put on the economy over the environment within this system which contrasts with the weak SD discourse's tendency to subordinate nature (Dryzek 2013). ENGO4(A/S) shows a similar conflict with the SD discourse;

> ENGO4(A/S): I guess it [nature] underpins everything we do. To have a healthy, functioning society, we need to first and foremost respect and ensure, that we focus on the environment first, ahead of our economic and social structures, so that it's not an afterthought. I guess, intergenerational equity, that the principles of ecologically sustainable development, although that doesn't exist, but in terms of, where we're actually enhancing the environment for the future generations, we're actually not depleting it.

Like ENGO2(S), ENGO4(A/S)'s response conforms to SD in some ways, using concepts like intergenerational equity but simultaneously places an emphasis on the importance and centrality of nature to the continuation of that system. This was a common tendency throughout the interviews,

where the participants spoke using language that largely conformed to the SD discourse but gave primacy to nature above social and economic aspects. This was often cited as being because the social and economic aspects of SD could not be realised if the environment was not cared for first. This indicates a propensity toward strong sustainability rather than the hegemonic weak sustainability.

ENGO6(S) demonstrates a tendency to value nature in an economic sense;

> ENGO6(S): I think that nature has to be valued for its intrinsic properties I think its inexplicably linked to our lives and our wellbeing so for that reason there should be a value placed on nature. Unfortunately, there isn't in many cases particularly in a world driven by economics.

Here ENGO6(S) indicates that the primacy of economic growth is problematic, though they also suggest that it could be the solution for the undervaluing of nature. This shows a similar preference for strong sustainability but also a pragmatism about what might be achievable. ENGO9(A) also demonstrates a pragmatism around the economic value of nature, however they also suggest that this can be done in a way that does not have devastating impacts on the environment or on the aboriginal communities that own the land;

> ENGO9(A): My philosophy is around the fact we're part of the whole the big ecosystem and we have a higher demand and higher impact. And I do work for mining companies in aboriginal communities and Native Title looking at clearances for mining, so I know that's inevitable, mining resource extraction. I know it's inevitable but there's a good way to do it and a bad way to do it.

This aligns neatly with the SD discourse which suggests that '[e]conomic growth should… be promoted, but guided in ways that are both environmentally benign and socially just' (Dryzek 2013, p. 156). These quotes demonstrate that many ENGO participants think about the environment predominantly within the confines of the SD discourse. However, they also all indicated that there was not enough emphasis put on the environmental aspects of SD. Further, many ENGO participants

indicated that their preference would be to elevate the environment to primacy over the social and economic aspects of SD.

When asked to envision a sustainable society many perspectives that were expressed were moderate and were easily accommodated within the SD discourse. ENGO1(S)s vision of a sustainable society emphasises individual responsibility, self-improvement and education;

> ENGO1(S): I think a society that is engaging, and so therefore enabling people to understand their role in society. And their responsibility. And that can be done in quite a simple way in schools, all the way through to quite technical and academically I suppose. And therefore, all levels of the community see it as just part of their life that they engage in society with that environmental understanding.

This quote aligns with the SD discourse as it emphasises the ways that individuals can grow into more sensitive, caring and intelligent actors that improve the political-economic system (Dryzek 2013). ENGO2(S) emphasises the need to internalise the externalities of economic development;

> ENGO2(S): at the moment we operate on a very economic driven monetary system so somehow the externalities… I guess you call that, the latest term is circular economy, or some way that what we do and the impact on its environment and people is actually built into the way we value as a society.

This is an attempt to find ways to make the hegemonic system workable. Similarly, ENGO4(A/S) emphasises a need to adjust the system to internalise the negative effects of economic development;

> ENGO4(A/S): To me, a sustainable society is one where we close the loops, we stop living in this linear way that we've developed the habit of, really pretty recently, in terms of our human civilisation, of just sucking resources out of the environment and then producing a whole lot of pollution and waste at the other end of it.

ENGO6(S) specifies that their own belief is that population growth is problematic. This falls more neatly into a limits to growth paradigm;

> ENGO6(S): there's obviously a demand problem just because there are lots of people in this world, if there were fewer people there wouldn't be such a big problem, but again putting a pragmatic lens across that, it is unlikely to change so therefore we need to be looking at solutions of how to do that and we need to bring innovation into our management practice into those landscapes and make the most of the ecosystems services that natural asset in the landscape provide into those systems.

However, ENGO6(S) also shows that they do not think that an attempt to curtail this is likely, perhaps not desirable either. Instead ENGO6(S) suggests that the best way to deal with the problem is through managerial, technocratic solutions. This could be seen as extending the reach of neoliberalism. ENGO9(A) also mentions the 'population explosion';

> ENGO9(A): The fundamental thing is, you need to be able to get people to understand… that degradation of the environment is going to affect them. They're going to be affected individually now. Their kids are going to be affected and their grandchildren are going to be affected worse, much worse. And so that's the imperative. To… change the way we live to try and mitigate our individual impact on the environment, on the globe, the earth.

These perspectives focus on changes in individual behaviour and wider management practices that would enable sustainable development to be achieved.

Although this first group spoke in ways that largely, though not entirely fit within the SD discourse, some participants spoke about nature in more ecocentric ways, evoking Gaia and speaking about nature in a spiritual and emotional sense;

> ENGO10(S): Karijini I think is the most amazing place I've ever been to, which is in the Pilbara. I'll get emotional talking about it. It's still wild, you know it's a landscape that has been so remote, and is so diverse, and so fierce… it just sings with life, and its own sense of self, and it's bloody wonderful. Just wonderful… I always find my best self in nature, even you know the hard places, cause it's, I don't want to glorify it; sometimes it's a pain in the ass you know.

> It can be hard work, but it's still wonderful, and it still brings out the best in me. So, it's a broad, deep love of nature.

This quote shows a deep love and connection to nature that ENGO10(S) is eager to preserve. ENGO3(A) also spoke in ecocentric ways, though they emphasised the equality of all species;

> ENGO3(A): My philosophy is that humans have no more right to the environment than a dung beetle, we are equal. I am not a religious man, but I do genuinely believe in Gaia, and you muck about with it and you ruin it. So, my philosophy is pretty basic, it's that we are all equal under the sun.

When asked to envision a sustainable society these participants believed that more radical social changes needed to occur. These participants spoke of limits to growth, re-localisation and re-thinking all aspects of decision-making processes to consider human-nature relationships. ENGO3(A) is emphatic that the hegemonic approach cannot be successful;

> ENGO3(A): At the moment. I think [a sustainable society] is impossible. It's completely impossible… Yeah, I think as long as we are heading towards a population of 12 billion people, forget it. That can't be sustainable. Certainly, they can't be sustainable economies. It's just gonna be mayhem. I don't think the environment can cope with 12 billion humans… And capitalism is unforgiving. You cannot make capitalism sustainable. So, for as long as we are using a capitalist model for the management of the world's resources, they can't make it sustainable. Capitalism won't allow it.

This quote illustrates a strong belief in a limits to growth paradigm that does not fit within the SD discourse. However, ENGO3(A) also outlines that taking a radical approach is often inhibiting;

> ENGO3(A): I get myself a slap around the face and realise that I was a bit of radical and that's just gonna be completely discounted. So, I needed to bury some of that and I try and contain my passion and use my passion much more strategically and exploit the system that we live

> in to make some advantage. Because just being passionate, and angry, and beating a drum keeps you in one bucket and you never get out of it.

Instead of taking a radical approach, ENGO3(A) emphasises that it is necessary to work within the hegemony to achieve desired changes. ENGO10(S) turns to indigenous Australian culture for guidance on how to create a more sustainable society;

> ENGO10(S): I think the traditional owners, and indigenous people have that [a sustainable society] … So, you know, it's our interdependence, but it's also deeper than that. It's how we are our full selves with a relationship with nature, and we are not our full selves [now]. We are very unhealthy, physically and mentally, and socially… But ultimately, that is what we need to have, and there is a humility in that relationship, and gratefulness. Gratefulness is so important, and that doesn't mean you don't use it, doesn't mean you don't live. But it's a way, it just makes you think twice about things… I think that that's what their relationship with country helps them to have in the face of ridiculous trauma, and challenges. That's what they had that allowed them to come up with problem solving and decision making and governance, and law and education that had a different framework to ours. Where we just think we own everything, and it's just there to be split... The whole premise of law is you know… we will tell you which two parties out of the two parties have more right to it. But that is not a relationship with country. So that somehow needs to penetrate and then I think if that happened, we would make decisions vastly differently in our personal life, and in our governance and in our workplace, and in our community.

In this quote ENGO10(S) is advocating a re-think of the entire hegemonic approach to environmental governance. However, like ENGO3(A), they also emphasised that they saw a necessity to work within the hegemony to effect change. They emphasised the importance of finding commonality with resource users to achieve on-ground results.

These results show that those ENGO participants who had more radical views about the environment found ways to operate within the SD discourse, finding common ground with natural resource users to enable them to work in partnerships to achieve environmental outcomes.

It was apparent that for many participants the need to work productively with natural resources users to achieve environmental outcomes meant that in some circumstances they were willing to prioritise anthropocentric values. This could be seen as an overall trend of de-radicalisation of the environmental movement as identified by Edgar (2008), Hamilton & Maddison (2007) and Lane & Morrison (2006). However, it is my contention that the participants in this study maintained a flexibility in their approaches that allowed them to work within the hegemonic discourse while continuing to hold onto their ecocentric values.

This duality was illustrated by two participants in particular who have spent time working in partnerships with farmers and fishers within the SD paradigm but who are also actively engaging in projects that seek to encourage the broader community to reconnect with nature in more ecocentric ways.

ENGO8(A/S) is a Forest Bathing Guide. This practice proposes that 'simply being out in nature provides a healing, grounded and connective experience. The practice of Forest Bathing fosters a deeper more intentional connection with nature and ourselves' (CCSA 2018, p. n.d.). While the focus of the practice is personal wellness, the participant also felt that these experiences would be crucial to fostering positive environmental values amongst community members which would translate into political outcomes;

> ENGO8(A/S): [In our program] we might stop and ask people to close their eyes for a minute or two and just listen to the birds. Very simple but very effective and it doesn't matter that they don't know what they are. What matters is that they got that experience in the moment of listening to something beautiful. And made a connection that it was more meaningful than knowing what the birds were. In the western world we put meaning on knowing what

something is called but the new work we're interested in is connecting people through non cognitive engagement. Where it doesn't matter what things are called it matters what experience you have with that thing or with that place. And it is now becoming very much recognized that experiences are where it's at with the natural world. And experiences build values that's my motto now in life. Experiences build values, they absolutely do.

ENGO10(S) is also involved in a project that seeks to encourage the community to connect with nature;

ENGO10(S): So, we've got this great project, which is about encouraging people to celebrate nature every day, and to share that with others. We're asking people from all sorts of walks of life to run these kinds of events, or communication exercises or whatever, and you know to talk to their sector about ways that it's meaningful to them. So, you know, we set up the texting tree in the Garden of Unearthly Delights. Thirty-five thousand different people texted this tree while that was going, and some of them are like love notes, like: "Oh, I've wanted so long to talk to a tree, it's so lovely, you're so beautiful". Some of it is really moving…

This illustrates the complex ways that ENGO professionals transition between different environmental discourses depending on the type of environmental stakeholders they are engaging with. ENGO professionals who have more radical environmental narratives often work on projects within the SD discourse to achieve environmental outcomes with natural resource users but can also pursue projects that fall outside that paradigm to instil a stronger connection to nature in the community.

4.3 Theme 3: A renewed focus on community and fostering connection to nature

There was a perception amongst some ENGO professionals that they have become less effective at influencing policy over time. Interviews were permeated with nostalgia for the big environmental win in Australia of the Franklin-Gordon river campaign. There seemed to be little expectation that this kind

of impact could be possible in today's context. There were a few reasons for this shift. Firstly, their resources are deeply stretched, and they cannot afford to waste money on attempting to influence policy when the outcomes are so uncertain. As ENGO4(A/S) said 'it's much more of a sure-fire thing, if you expend effort building community, it's just that we cannot afford to lose'.

In response to these restraints, some ENGOs have refocussed their strategies toward creating a cultural change amongst the SA community to foster a deeper connection to nature. The following quotes from interviews show the focus being placed on changing community attitudes. ENGO1(S) emphasises the need for ENGOs to change the community's attitude to the environment;

> ENGO1(S): if we, as a collective, create the change ourselves. Whether whoever is in power at the time likes it or not. That just builds up that momentum, and you don't necessarily need lots of money to make those changes and to create a society that is sustainable.

ENGO1(S)'s history is with relatively conservative service-oriented ENGOs, making this assertion an interesting one. In this quote ENGO1(S) shows that they view part of the role of service-oriented NGOs as creating social change toward sustainable societies through changing the attitudes of the community toward the environment. This is achieved through the involvement of community members of all types, particularly people involved in the public service and business in practical conservation activities through volunteer programs.

ENGO8(A/S) also emphasises a need to build environmental values in the community to catalyse behaviour change around environmental use and to influence voting behaviours;

> ENGO8(A/S): building values around wanting to protect nature and valuing nature can lead to changes in behaviour, more environmentally friendly behaviour. It's a long game though. It's tough in the short term. You can do particular things to trigger behaviours but in the longer term really you want people to change their behaviours every day, change their voting behaviour, change all sorts of things about the way they think… maybe their consumer

> behaviour. Ultimately for me the game is about behaviour change through values and building positive values around nature.

ENGO11(A) an advocacy professional emphasises that the community needs to lead campaigns that target policy changes;

> ENGO11(A): we have to make the most of the systems we have, change them as we grow, but not be disempowered by the nature of a competitive political system, make the most of it, embrace it, and use it, engage the community, activate them, bring them in, make sure that they're leading the charge so that the decision-makers have no choice but to make the change that is needed.

These quotes illustrate the centrality of changing values in the community to the success of ENGO goals.

The Nature of SA project was mentioned by several participants as an example of this new, coordinated strategy being pursued by ENGOs. The Nature of SA initiative is a sector-wide partnership involving people from government, including Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA), and regional and central offices of the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and several ENGOs including people from Conservation SA, Nature Conservation Society and Trees for Life. The partnership is broadly focussed on developing a strategic approach and supporting positive change in SA's approach to nature conservation. This initiative was started as a partnership between Craig Wilkins, CE of CCSA and Sandy Pitcher then CE of DEWNR as a means to improve the relationships between the ENGO sector and government and to replace the *No Species Loss: A Nature Conservation Strategy for South Australia 2007–2017.*

Documentary analysis of the Nature of SA's discussion paper shows an emphasis on strengthening the collective narrative around nature. It highlights a need to;

> publicly and continually strengthen our collective narrative around nature in all its forms. That means helping citizens find more ways to celebrate nature in positive, public ways, and tying

> these closely to how we think about what's special about South Australia (Government of SA & CCSA 2017, p. 9).

Importantly, this does not just mean responding to community values, but an emphasis is put on;

> reminding the community about how meaningful and therapeutic nature, in all its forms, can be. We need to reinforce the notion that nature isn't something that's 'over there' that we visit occasionally or just 'provides us services' (Government of SA & CCSA 2017, p. 9).

This speaks directly to instilling a culture of valuing nature, outside of its economic values in the community. Or in other words, the project seeks to shape the way that the community views, values and experiences the environment. The discussion paper outlines what is needed to achieve this;

> We need festivals, public art, seminars, books, ambassadors, etc. We need groups of citizens celebrating our parklands and natural spaces. We need installations in our airports and city squares trumpeting the quiet, accessible gem of Morialta and the grand splendour of Arkaroola. We need to continue to build cross-sector partnerships to strengthen this narrative (Government of SA & CCSA 2017, p. 9).

These tactics are all focussed on creating cultural experiences that encourage connection to nature.

One of the key outcomes of the Nature of SA project is *Amongst It,* which describes itself as 'an experiment in connecting individuals to everyday nature and celebrating how important nature is to the identity of South Australia' (Amongst It). Amongst It offers grants to projects that 'help people feel closer or more connected to nature' and 'shift peoples feelings of connection to nature or inspire them to take action to care for nature' (Amongst It 2018). Some examples of projects that have been funded include; a local indigenous Ngarrindjeri story telling event, workshops for primary school students that involved mindful movement and exploring the tastes and smells of the Adelaide Botanical Gardens Kitchen Garden, a cubby building competition for families, Forest Bathing experiences and public signage that invites people to notice, touch, smell and enjoy nature.

The ENGOs involved in the Nature of SA initiative clearly view it as one that seeks to create a community that values the environment more highly and will therefore push politicians to implement policy to protect it. ENGO5(A/S) outlined the longer-term hopes of the project;

> ENGO5(A/S): As people start coming to more of those events and they start making the personal changes, and they start chatting to their networks about it, and they start building networks, of like-minded people, who care about the same things, it creates the opportunity, for a bit of different mind set to start permeating and for people to start realising, that the way we're used to living, doesn't have to be the way we always live. There are other ways. That makes that Utopian vision seem a little bit more attainable.

The Nature of SA discussion paper also puts forward that;

> By working in many and varied ways to tie the love of nature more strongly to our collective identity, we can end up in a place where people and politicians say 'of course we respect and protect nature, that's just what South Australians do' (Government of SA & CCSA 2017, p. 9).

Importantly, this is also the view taken by the public servants working on the project. They too want to encourage cultural change in the community to connect to nature and then push politicians to protect the environment in SA. This is significant because it means that ENGOs and DEW are jointly pushing to create an historic bloc that values the environment in ways that are not directly linked to its value as natural capital. Moreover, in attempting to 'tie the love of nature more strongly to our collective identity', the Nature of SA project is arguably seeking to reconstitute subjects in SA with a stronger connection to nature.

4.4 Theme 4: ENGO futures

The final theme that emerged in the interviews centred on what ENGOs still have to offer in environmental governance and how to make them more effective agents of civil society. The results

focussed on making connections with more diverse partners in the community and moving away from a reliance on government funding and partnerships.

In the quote below ENGO10(S) outlines the ways that ENGOs can continue to capitalise on their strengths to bring diverse partners together to overcome the stagnation that many participants lamented about working with government;

> ENGO10(S): I think they're [ENGOs] great innovators, they can move nimbly, they're much cheaper than a lot of other models, and they can take some risks. They can fail spectacularly as long as they work hard enough on their support base to understand the story. They can work with just about anyone. They can facilitate partnerships with just about anyone. They can ask all parties to come to the table, which is not something a government can do. So, you know I think their ability to try different things you know, going to new territory, and to bring all sorts of parties to the table is really valuable… I think they're pretty good deliver's, because they're pretty cheap. They're very practical, they can be nimble, they can adapt to things quite quickly… they can get things done, and they can get things done quite quickly. They do bring in private and philanthropic investment in a way that a lot of other groups can't do…They can use different ways of reaching people's values, and emotions in a way that a lot of other machines of communication can't do.

Some participants felt that corporate funding and partnerships were not so restrictive as working with government. ENGO1(S) spoke of how CVA accepts corporate funding for big projects when the goals of the corporation align with those of the ENGO. She gave an example of $5 million of funding from BHP Billiton that CVA received to restore wetlands. While she thought that this could be interpreted as the ENGO being influenced by the goals of BHP, her interpretation was that this funding enabled CVA to achieve their conservation and community engagement goals;

> ENGO1(S): So of course, we were able to build up all sorts of things with that funding. Build up that awareness amongst people. Not only about CVA, but CVA's involvement in conservation. Build up tools. Build up knowledge within our staff about those particular

> locations. Build up relationships with wetland managers… Huge strengthening of our organisation whenever we work with corporates who have funding …There's never been, as far as I know, a negative in that respect.

Similarly, ENGO10(S) also spoke of the positive relationships that ENGOs could build on with business and philanthropists to overcome many of the technologies of government that were leading to the stagnation of projects;

> ENGO10(S): I like the idea of ENGOs and business, and philanthropics getting together, and creating solutions completely aside from government. Because government is sitting in this bloody role of where they kind of… I don't know why we gave them the moderator stick; I mean they're shocking at it… Business are very clear about what they need, and we're very clear about what we need, and philanthropics want good outcomes for society, and we are really keen on community… I want us to get really creative together and… really tackle hard problems together, and government can catch up if they like and they can ask to play. That is where I would like us to go, because I think at the moment with their moderation kind of role, where they are not letting anyone sort of talk to each other, or they're deciding on behalf of those stakeholders what… will be in the best interests of who they consider to be the most important stakeholder, which is often the ones bringing the money to the table, we're getting the worst outcomes. We are getting at best average outcomes. So, they're not really even doing that arbitration role, do you know what I mean?

In addition to reducing reliance on government funding, an emphasis was put on making broader connections in the community, bringing the environment into people's lives in areas that the environment movement is yet to explore. For example, ENGO10(S) mentioned exploring partnerships with groups such as surf lifesaving clubs. ENGO8(A/S) suggested that as ENGOs struggle with gaining funding, the ones that would continue to do well were those that started to take this route. Moreover, ENGO8(A/S) suggested that this was an ideal way to move environmental issues to become central to people's lives;

> ENGO8(A/S): I think what has happened is that either environmental NGO's have pigeonholed themselves or society has pigeonholed them into being all those lefty greeny wackies or they're just tree huggers or whatever. I think the ones that will do well to me are the ones that will start to partner outside the normal partners.

ENGO8(A/S) was particularly excited about pursuing partnerships between health providers and the environment movement to simultaneously increase well-being and connection to nature.

These results indicated a growing fatigue with the restrains commonly placed upon them as a result of their partnerships with government. Although there was no suggestion of leaving these partnerships behind completely, there was a palpable desire to reduce any dependency on them.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 How ENGOs are constrained

The results presented in Theme 1 show *how*, in the view of SA ENGO professionals, they are constrained by technologies of government through their relationship with the state. They identified four key ways that they are constrained which were categorised into sub-themes. Firstly, Theme 1.1 showed that the environmental priorities that ENGOs direct their efforts and resources toward are affected by funding arrangements with the state. Secondly, Theme 1.2 showed that the ways that they conduct their work are influenced by the bureaucracy and reporting requirements for these funding arrangements. Thirdly, Theme 1.3 showed how the resources available to pursue their goals are reduced by the ways that the government uses ENGOs as resources to be deployed for their purposes and finally, Theme 1.4 showed that personal relationships with public servants has a moderating influence on the discourses they use.

Although previous literature has already shown that becoming part of the state constrains ENGOs, the results above and the following discussion will show *how,* in the view of ENGO professionals, that is occurring (Dryzek 1996; Lane & Morrison 2006; Lang 2013). This is significant because it provides ENGOs with information for creating strategies to maintain their independence.

The results above confirm that some of the wider trends outlined in the literature review can be seen in the SA context and can be linked to the close relationships ENGOs have with the state. For example, the restraints of funding agreements with government is probably the most pressing concern about ENGO independence that appears in the literature from NGOs themselves, their critics and their supporters (Edgar 2008; Johns & Roskam 2004; Maddison *et al.* 2004; Phillips 2007; Yamin 2001). As such, it is no surprise that it was identified as the most significant factor that constrains ENGOs in this

study. However, the results here also show that some ENGO professionals in SA are now questioning whether their dependence on government funding is putting them at too great of a risk. The withdrawal of funding for ENGOs at the federal level since 2005 has put ENGOs in increasingly critical funding deficits. The participants in this study were now considering whether this reliance is untenable into the future. This was a sentiment expressed by both advocacy and service focussed ENGOs.

Professionalisation and bureaucratisation has also been noted in the wider literature as a concerning trend within NGOs (Edgar 2008). This study showed that ENGOs may have an even greater reporting burden than NGOs focussed on imperatives that align more directly with government goals such as health. Moreover, it showed how conforming to government process creates obstacles to progress in projects and forces ENGOs to operate within the confines KPI reporting. This can be seen as a technology of government because it operates as a way to bring the organisations, their objectives and their activities into alignment with the government (Miller & Rose 1990).

The wider literature has outlined how service based ENGOs in particular have become much like an arm of government to deliver projects (Banks & Hulme 2012). The results in this study showed that this is also a problem for advocacy ENGOs as they devote many hours to submissions on legislative policy reform, providing expert advice that government often does not have to pay for. Although ENGOs may benefit through having influence over the policy outcomes, it was noted that this is not always the case.

Environmental governance in SA is arranged that creates incentives for ENGOs to compete with each other for government funding, submit to carrying out activities in accordance with government directives and oversight, and act as a governmental resource to fill gaps left by state withdrawal. ENGOs are a central feature of how the environment is governed in SA, they are built into the strategies of how government operates. This is made clear by the results above which confirm that the Government of SA operates as a broker and actively deploys ENGOs to achieve government outcomes. Yet, as Foucault describes;

> …with government it is a question not of imposing law on men, but of disposing things; that is to say, of employing tactics rather than laws, and even of using laws themselves as tactics to arrange things in such a way that, through a certain number of means, such and such ends may be achieved (Foucault 1991).

As outlined in section 3.2 above, this is all possible while ENGOs are able to act freely and in accordance with their core values because neoliberal subjects systematically respond to modifications artificially introduced into the environment (Foucault 2008). Arrangement of governance in this way, however, does not confer power to ENGOs in a substantial way. On the contrary, government retains the ability to influence the actions of ENGOs directly through contractual obligations and reporting requirements and indirectly through the personal relationships between public servants and ENGOs. By arranging environmental governance this way, that provides incentives for funding and opportunities for input to policy, ENGOs can be left to act freely because it is rational for them to choose to enter into agreements that allow them to be controlled and monitored.

Finally, the close personal relationships that ENGO professionals cultivate with public servants was also noted as a key factor that restrains ENGO activities, though it also functions as a way to achieve their goals. Edgar (2008) argues that NGOs in Australia need to pursue even closer relationships with government in the form of 'compacts' which focus on inclusion and representation in policy making instead of on 'opposition'. Similarly, Phillips (2007) has shown that particular ENGOs that conform to government expectations are able to garner favour and inclusion into policy processes, to the exclusion of others. She outlines a 'typology' of NGOs that are considered acceptable for being favoured by government in Australia;

1. although some advocacy is acceptable, it must exist with the bounds of a 'healthy' range of acceptance of government policy and focus more on debates within the issue at hand, rather than be elevated to broad political policy debates

2. the NGO must conform to either a conservative or neo-liberal agenda or, if seeking an independent position, must converge with a likeminded philosophy such as Christianity for welfare and human services or, in the case of the environment, sustainability within the limits of economic growth
3. the NGO must be prepared to carry the core policy values held by the government and work in 'partnership' with them
4. there is a strong emphasis on 'partnerships' with the corporate sector and a willingness to adopt a corporatised approach to services and public participation (Phillips 2007)

Returning to Dryzek's (1996) argument that leaving the oppositional sphere of politics makes ENGOs less of a force to be feared, it is clear that these relations come at a significant cost. Indeed, Edgar (2008, p. 33) recognises that the compacts she advocates would not 'facilitate the more radical activities, such as the protests or boycotts that some organisations or individuals may engage in'. The results of this study indicate that some ENGO professionals do feel that to some degree ENGOs have left the oppositional sphere of politics in SA. There certainly appears to be little for government to fear from them. Part of this is due to the dominance of service delivery ENGOs in the state, which makes them much more focussed on collaboration rather than deliberation. However, this study showed that even service delivery ENGOs are concerned about the level of government influence over their activities and communications. Moreover, for ENGOs that serve both advocacy and service provider roles, such as the CCSA it may be even more problematic. Given that the CCSA has such a prominent role in coordinating ENGO voices in SA, this does present a risk for the sector and this was reflected in the concerns raised by ENGO participants in the interviews.

Although the constraints outlined here can often be benign, they each contribute to an overall weakening of the ability of ENGOs to hold government to account and reduce systematic environmental degradation. Moreover, bringing ENGOs into alignment with government directives

compromises the very rationale for their inclusion in environmental governance, attributes such as their independence, ability to facilitate public participation and democratising influence (Dryzek 1996; Robinson et al. 1993).

5.2 Seeking strong sustainability within a hegemony of weak sustainability

The results in Theme 2 showed that many of the ENGO participants felt that their relationships with government were productive and positive so long as they did not have to compromise on their core values. These results also showed that the environmental discourses used by people in ENGOs in SA largely align with a strong SD discourse. That the environmental discourses used amongst the environmental movement often fit largely, though not entirely within the SD discourse is in line with what other studies in Australia have found (McGregor 2004). In McGregor (2004)'s study on the environmental discourses in the Australian environment movement he concludes that;

> Naturalising sustainable development discourses within a potentially radical and politically challenging social movement makes the movement much more amenable to relatively conservative environmental goals.

However, while many aspects of their philosophies do align with the hegemonic discourse, the prioritisation of the environment and move away from a focus on economic growth was pivotal to many of their imaginings of a sustainable society.

It is doubtful whether ENGOs can make progress toward a goal of strong sustainability within their current relationships with government. Dryzek (1996) suggests that groups included in government will only be able to achieve goals that already align with state imperatives. He argues that

> groups whose inclusion coincides with no imperative will not easily acquire the tangible goods they value. They may be allowed to participate in the policymaking process, but outcomes will be systematically skewed against them (Dryzek 1996, p. 480).

As such, those aspects of ENGO discourse which do align with the weak versions of sustainability favoured by government may be accommodated. However, aspects that pose a more radical challenge to economic growth are perhaps unlikely to gain traction.

Dryzek (1996) also posits that groups should be prepared to reassess their inclusion in government if state imperatives change over time. This assessment of their inclusion in government takes the form of two criterion;

> The first criterion asks a group to consider whether its presence in the state will indeed be accompanied by real influence. The second asks the group to contemplate the potential impairment of its influence resulting from the loss of a standing warning to dominant actors attendant upon the group's wholesale commitment to conventional politics (Dryzek 1996, p. 485).

It was shown in section 2.1.3 above, that despite governments stated commitment to the principles of ESD, many studies have found that they are only upheld when they do not compromise economic imperatives (Curran 2015; Macintosh 2015; McGregor 2003; Peel 2008; Williams 2013). For that reason, it can be argued that the strong sustainability sought by the ENGO professionals in this study does not align with state imperatives. Moreover, the results outlined in Theme 1.4 showed that some people in the ENGO sector feel that they no longer pose a threat to government. As such, the results of this study suggest that the relationships between ENGOs and the state do not meet either criterion. It would be prudent, then, for ENGOs to take stock on whether they are able to achieve their overarching goals whilst being embedded in government.

The results also showed the subtleties of ENGO discourse around the environment and where it converges and diverges from the hegemonic discourse. As shown in section 3.2.3, hegemonic

discourses can be used as a technology of government to structure the practices and culture of institutions or organisations to shape their activities, goals and outcomes. Importantly, this technologisation of discourse does not mean that institutions unthinkingly adopt the hegemonic discourse but, through dialectical processes, those who are subject to it may receive and appropriate the discourse through both accommodation and resistance to produce a hybrid combination of their own and the imposed discursive practices (Fairclough 2013).

Despite the overall use and acceptance of most aspects of the SD discourse, ENGO participants made clear that there were some key ways that their philosophies did not align with the hegemonic weak sustainability discourse. Some key points that were recurring in the interviews were;

- A desire for less emphasis on economic growth
- A move away from GDP as primary unit of measure
- A greater focus on community
- Recognition of the centrality of nature to economic and social well-being

While a greater focus on community is likely to be accommodated in their relationships with government, those aspects that directly challenge economic growth may be less acceptable.

Hegemony and the hegemonic struggle largely take place and are constituted in the discursive practices of institutions and organisations (Fairclough 2013). Moreover, wresting control over discursive practices in institutions is one part of achieving cultural hegemony. When discursive practices become naturalised within institutions and become common-sense, so too do ideological presuppositions. This means that;

> naturalised discourse conventions are a most effective mechanism for sustaining and reproducing cultural and ideological dimensions of hegemony. Correspondingly, a significant target of hegemonic struggle is the denaturalisation of existing conventions and replacement of them with others (Fairclough 2013, p. 129).

This means that, beyond ENGOs environmental goals they also need to denaturalise existing discursive conventions and replace them with others that enable them to achieve their objectives.

It was clear in interviews that many ENGO participants justified their close relationships with government with an assertion that they would not compromise on their core values. However, Gramsci's concept of hegemony fully allows and depends on the freedom and even antagonism of civil society. As such, ENGOs are able to engage with government and take on responsibility for some of its functions without any requirements for them to compromise on their values. Certainly, any antagonism may cause annoyance to public servants but despite this, their engagement is useful. This is because the utility of ENGOs to government resides in their ability 'to mobilize political constituencies, to confer legitimacy to policy-processes, to implement policies, and to monitor and evaluate them' (Sending & Neumann 2006, p. 652). An ENGOs freedom to make autonomous decisions and uphold core values is arguably essential to ensure that they are able to carry out these functions. As such, the legitimacy of the ENGO in the public's eye is central to their utility to the government.

This is not to suggest that the Government of SA or the public servants that inhabit it are working in a sinister way in their relationships with ENGOs. On the contrary, the results from this study suggest that the public servants in SA view ENGOs as invaluable and respected partners in environmental governance. Yet, as Foucault's explanation of the origin of power relations shows, the intentions of the local subject do not contain the whole picture. He suggests that institutions of the state are not the primary source of power structures, instead they reside in the overarching social systems that run through them (Foucault 1978). As such, despite the intentions of the public servants of SA and their desire to involve ENGOs in environmental governance in a constructive way, they still contribute to drawing them into an overarching power system which disempowers them through the hegemony of neoliberalism. This is why Foucauldian power and technologies of government are so difficult to resist. ENGOs cannot and should not simply direct their resistance at individual public servants to resist the

neoliberal hegemony. They must denaturalise neoliberal rhetoric and build an alternative historic bloc that challenges the overarching social system with a counter-hegemonic movement.

5.3 Building an historic bloc for strong sustainability while avoiding a passive revolution

Theme 3 showed that ENGOs in SA are refocussing their efforts towards fostering a greater connection to nature amongst community members to encourage greater support of social change. This could be the beginning of a new historic bloc for strong sustainability.

Many studies have found that connection to nature can lead to developing positive conservation behaviours (Cheng & Monroe 2012; Gkargkavouzi *et al.* 2019; Howe 2017; Hughes *et al.* 2018; Kaiser *et al.* 2014; Lumber *et al.* 2017). Although no single definition of ‘connection to nature’ exists, it can broadly be thought of as ‘the idea of an emotional and empathic relationship with the rest of the natural world and a perception of interdependence’ (Howe 2017, p. 20). Lumber *et al.* (2017, p. 3) also suggest that a connection with nature centres on ‘a sense of belonging to the wider natural world as part of a larger community of nature’. Hughes *et al.* (2018) posit that repeated engagement with nature and particularly experiences during childhood are key to fostering a connection to nature. Kaiser *et al.* (2014) also proposes that experiences during childhood are particularly important and argue that changes in attitudes toward nature among adults is more difficult to achieve.

In the past ENGOs have focussed largely on knowledge and identification of species to engage people with nature, these strategies, however, have not been shown to increase connection to nature (Lumber *et al.* 2017). Given that, as Matutinović (2012) have found, positive environmental values and behaviours remain weak across the EU, US and globally and they suggest that there is a

correspondingly weak potential for transition to sustainability, this is an important focus for ENGO work. Lumber *et al.* (2017) suggest the following pathways to increase connection to nature;

- Contact: The act of engaging with nature through the senses
- Beauty: The perception of aesthetic qualities including shape, colour and form that please the senses
- Meaning: Using nature or natural symbolism to communicate a concept that is not directly expressed
- Emotion: An affective state or sensation that occurs as a result of engaging with nature
- Compassion: Extending the self to include nature, leading to a concern for other natural entities that motivates understanding and helping/co-operation

They suggest that these pathways can be operationalised through such activities as having conversations about thoughts and feelings about nature, writing down meaning inferred from nature or watching videos about empathetic conservation activities such as building homes for birds. The approaches that emerged in Theme 3 indicated that some ENGO professionals are beginning to embark on projects that implement such pathways. Particularly, the forest bathing and Nature of SA projects focus on these strategies.

The Nature of SA, it's associated projects (Amongst It) and other programmes like it (Nature Play SA and Healthy Parks, Healthy People) present ENGOs with opportunities to continue to promote connection to nature amongst the community. This coupled with the linking of connection to nature with health and wellbeing and the active attempts to shift environmentalism away from being a discrete field presents ENGOs with opportunities to broaden and further the impacts of their work. An indication of how this might be possible can be shown using Gramsci's outline of how organic intellectuals can establish an historic bloc for a counter-hegemonic movement.

Gramsci believed that establishing an historic bloc would be a painstaking process that necessitated the linking of many sections of society working in tandem to create a counter-hegemonic movement that would challenge an existing hegemony (Buttigeig 1995). Gramsci also uses the concept of organic intellectuals to 'designate anyone whose function in society is primarily that of organizing, administering, directing, educating or leading others' (Forags 2000, p. 300). Organic intellectuals were theorised by Gramsci as key creators of historic blocs. They are distinguished by their role in directing the ideas and aspirations of the social class to which they belong (Gramsci 1971). As such, organic intellectuals, as a social category are crucial to the reproduction and challenge of hegemony (Sum 2015).

I contend that some ENGO participants and public servants are acting as organic intellectuals through the Nature of SA. This is because the Nature of SA project, with a component focussed on creating a collective narrative around nature provides a medium for directing the ideas and aspirations of the broader community. These organic intellectuals can either strengthen or challenge the existing hegemony in this role. Gramsci theorises both;

> intellectuals who function directly or indirectly on behalf of a dominant social group to organize coercion and consent and with the problem of how to form intellectuals of the subaltern social groups who will be capable of opposing and transforming the existing social order (Forags 2000).

Carroll and Ratner (2010) suggest that to create a historic bloc that can be sustained against hegemony a movement needs to pursue three distinct tasks; community-building, meeting the needs of constituents, and mobilising and engaging in collective action. However, they warn that 'all three tasks can be pursued by a given group in ways that either tie constituents to, or wean them from, hegemonic constructions of their interests and identities' (Carroll & Ratner 2010, p. 13). As such, the ENGOs involved in the Nature of SA project will need to think carefully about whether they are

intellectuals functioning on behalf of the hegemonic version of sustainability to organise coercion and consent or whether they are functioning on behalf of the strong sustainability they desire.

As shown in the results, many of the ENGO participants in the study identified the prioritisation of economic growth over environmental concerns as the key factor inhibiting sustainability. The CCSA's policy blueprint sets out ambitious goals that challenge the current political economic regime. For example, it states that '[t]he state government needs to build a vision for the state that does not depend on economic growth as its key driver, and instead focuses on the sustainability vision' (CCSA 2013, p. 11). This call for the need for political economic transformation, with an emphasis on limits to growth is at odds with the apolitical nature of the messaging in the Nature of SA documentation. While the results showed that the messaging in the Nature of SA has elements of strong sustainability and promotes connection to nature, it does not directly challenge the hegemonic weak SD discourse.

According to Foucault, when analysing discourses in text, it is what wasn't said or what couldn't be said, rather than what was said that is of most importance (Foucault 1972). The fact that this most central problem, the pursual of economic growth at the cost of the environment, is not mentioned in a key document that ENGOs have jointly produced in partnership with government and seeks to shape the collective narrative of South Australians points to the submission of ENGO environmental narratives to the hegemonic discourse.

The next step to creating a historic bloc is to create a shared understanding of the sources and nature of injustice. Carroll and Ratner (2010, p. 10) have found in studies of social movement relations that;

> A political economy framing of injustice seems to provide a language in which activists from different movements can communicate and perhaps find common ground, elevating single-issue and local contexts into more comprehensive critiques of power and more expansive forms of action.

While the Nature of SA does encourage people to connect with, love and value nature outside of its economic values, this does not explicitly conflict with an emphasis on continued economic growth. As such, if the ENGOs taking part do not challenge the neoliberal aspects of the messaging in the documents, they could become active agents in strengthening it.

The results showed that some ENGO professionals are identifying ways to link with non-environmental organisations like surf-life saving clubs and health organisations. Banks *et al.* (2015) have made similar conclusions about NGOs in the development sector, arguing for NGOs to build bridges between grassroots organisations to bring about social transformation. As Carroll and Ratner (2010) show in their study, although environmentalists can share a political-economic framing of the sources of injustice with other social movements, the kind of society they are striving for can be at odds with the wider community. This may be a result of the weak environmental values that are characteristic in western countries (Matutinović 2012). This bolsters the need for a focus on connection to nature to foster the environmental values and behaviours in the community needed to generate pro-environmental behaviours.

When attempting to form a new historic bloc, Gramsci emphasised creating civil society spaces beyond the reach of the state to avoid a passive revolution (Buttigeig 1995). The results from Theme 4 show that some ENGO participants are already seeking ways to establish links between the environment movement and other sectors of society where government is unable to play a moderating or arbitration role. However, the cultural context in SA means that having limited ties with government can mean losing legitimacy. As Edgar (2008) points out,

> many members of the public may prefer to support an organisation that presents itself as working closely and respectfully with government in order to effect change. Some may also feel that an organisation approved by government is more legitimate and stable than the 'ratbag' groups that make a lot of noise but do not appear to achieve a great deal.

As a result, having limited relationships with government could be self-destructive for ENGOs in SA.

While the Nature of SA project provides an exciting and new direction for ENGO efforts it is restrained by the dependence on the state government as a major partner. This has been illustrated by how interest and momentum behind the project has petered out since the 2018 SA state election that saw a change of government from the Australian Labor Party (SA) to the Liberal Party of Australia (SA). Since then, the visibility of the project has reduced and funding allocations to Amongst It have declined. However, as some participants noted in Theme 3, creating experiences that foster connection to nature amongst the community is inexpensive and less risky than attempting to influence policy. For these reasons, the Nature of SA project could be used as a blueprint for new directions for the ENGO sector to establish a new common narrative about nature in partnerships with other civil society actors and the private sector.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Implications of the research

To conclude, many of the results of this study echo the concerns of ENGO legitimacy and autonomy that have been more widely expressed in the literature. The thesis identifies the ways that ENGO activities are constrained by technologies of government in Australia and shows how this can diminish their capacity to be effective civil society agents. Returning to Green's (2012) concerns about broad generalisations in the literature about ENGOs, this study has confirmed that many of the overarching critiques are relevant in SA. Moreover, ENGO professionals themselves are questioning their relationships with government and identifying a need to rethink their dependence and strategies. Of particular interest is that even service delivery ENGOs, which are often thought of as being relatively benign, were shown to be concerned about the level of constraint and risk that their funding relationships with government entailed. Although far from radical, they were also shown to be dissatisfied with the continuing emphasis on economic growth that characterises the weak sustainability that remains hegemonic.

The study also showed that ENGOs in SA predominately follow a strong sustainability philosophy, however, this may not be achievable while they are embedded in government. As shown in section 5.2, it is possible that changes in government imperative towards sustainability may have already been exhausted. This means that further social changes that conflict with continued economic growth may not be realised in current relationships with government.

The implications of this for ENGOs are that they may need to refocus their strategies to achieve additional environmental gains and establish a counter-hegemonic movement that could achieve the strong sustainability they desire. Mounting a counter-hegemonic movement will require mobilisation of

organic intellectuals within the environmental movement to build connection to nature amongst the community, building links across many sections of society and then creating a shared understanding of the sources of injustice to create a historic bloc that can challenge the existing hegemony. Some ENGOs show signs of this with a pivot towards small-scale projects that foster connection to nature in the community. ENGOs can continue to encourage these projects to break down barriers between the environment movement and the rest of society.

Finally, the Nature of SA project makes clear that in partnerships with government ENGOs are unable to voice critiques of unchecked economic growth. However, the results of this study showed that this was the key area that the discourses used by ENGO professionals deviate from that used by the state. It was also viewed as the key aspect of our current social structure that needed to change to achieve the strong sustainability many people in ENGOs desire. The inability, or unwillingness to voice these critiques in a project that partners with government could be because it does not align with government imperatives. Given that the Nature of SA project seeks to shape the community's shared narrative about nature ENGO professionals will need to undertake some critical reflection to decide whether the possibility of being active agents of the perpetuation of the hegemonic weak sustainability discourse is a role they are comfortable taking on.

One way that ENGOs could counter this is by using the blueprint of the Nature of SA project to begin to form coalitions with other civil society actors to shape a new common narrative about nature that does challenge the political economic causes of environmental degradation. With a focus on connection to nature to produce a new common sense and creating horizontal links across civil society to build a new hegemonic vision, such a project could challenge the hegemony of weak sustainability that dominates environmental governance in Australia. Moreover, by focussing on denaturalising the discourse of weak sustainable development that frames nature as natural capital in environmental governance and replacing it with the strong sustainability vision that elevates the environment to

primacy above economic growth, ENGOs may just be able to bring about the changes needed to achieve a sustainable society in Australia.

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