

**DISCOURSE, POLICY AND THE ENVIRONMENT: HEGEMONY,
STATEMENTS AND THE ANALYSIS OF UK AIRPORT EXPANSION**

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ABSTRACT

Building on the work of Laclau and Mouffe and others, this article develops a distinctively poststructuralist approach to the analysis of policy discourse in the field of environmental politics. Despite advances, there remain persistent critiques of the approach. Some claim that its theoretical assumptions are either too ideational or insufficiently attuned to the linguistic aspect of discourse analysis. Others pinpoint methodological difficulties in operationalizing the approach and generating effective research strategies. Addressing such critiques, we seek to articulate elements of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist theory of hegemony with insights gleaned from Foucault's archaeology of discourse, more specifically his idea of the statement. When supplemented with the logic of hegemony, we argue that describing and mapping statements of various types, as they appear and disappear, circulate and change, in relation to particular policy problems in specific historical contexts, provides vital clues for delimiting competing discursive formations. It also enables researchers to detect and explicate the underlying rules that brought them into being. We illustrate such claims through an empirical analysis of three exemplary statements in aviation policy in the United Kingdom, demonstrating how the critical evaluation of these statements offers a lens through which to examine the continuities and discontinuities of on-going hegemonic struggles.

Key words

discourse; airport expansion; statements; Foucault; Laclau and Mouffe

Building on the work of Laclau and Mouffe and others, this article develops a distinctively poststructuralist approach to policy discourse in the field of environmental politics.¹ Despite important theoretical advances, there remain persistent critiques of the approach, both theoretical and methodological. On the one hand, it is alleged that its theoretical assumptions are either too ideational or insufficiently attuned to the linguistic aspect of discourse analysis. On the other hand, it is claimed that there are difficulties in operationalizing the approach and thus generating effective research strategies (e.g. Bevir and Rhodes, 2004; Wagenaar, 2011).

While some of these criticisms are wide of the mark, they do raise a crucial question about the *specificity* of discourse analysis within a poststructuralist approach to environmental policy research. Its distinctive concern with the emergence and transformation of particular discourses is often lost amidst a concern for philosophical issues and wider social processes. Paradoxically, therefore, an approach that extols the importance of the linguistic model in rethinking policymaking practices often occludes the specific materiality of language in its method.

We respond to this paradox by articulating elements of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist theory of hegemony with insights gleaned from Foucault's concept of the statement. Foucault's different approaches to discourse analysis have been widely used in policy research, including the environmental field (e.g. Hajer, 1995; Keller, 2011; 2013; Litfin, 1995). Yet such work has not been explicitly integrated into a post-Marxist perspective and there remain unanswered questions about different aspects of

Foucault's problematic, especially his analysis of statements, which he developed in the 'archaeological' phase of his writings (e.g. Foucault, 1972).

Our article thus begins by elaborating our approach to discourse and hegemony before turning to its implications for the evaluation of environmental policy change. We then critically examine Foucault's idea of the statement, before supplementing the analytical focus on statements with the logic of hegemony. The value of the approach is then illustrated through an interpretation of key policy reversals in United Kingdom (UK) aviation policy, where environmental demands and statements have come to play a crucial role.

It is our contention that airport expansions and the aviation industry have become something of a paradigm case of the 'wickedness of climate change' (Hulme, 2009, p. 335). Not only do they exemplify 'traditional' environmental issues, such as air and noise pollution, but they are strongly connected to the problem of rising carbon emissions. Here, we select and analyse three exemplary statements that structured the case of UK aviation policy: the search for 'a balanced approach', 'a genuinely sustainable framework', and the need to 'deliver the maximum connectivity bang for each of our carbon bucks'. Such statements are then used to elucidate the underlying discursive formations that made them possible, while also assisting us to account for the shifts between key policy discourses.

DISCOURSE AND HEGEMONY

We begin with the claim that discourse is not reducible to the spoken word, the written text, or communicative actions, but is grounded on a materialist conception of social relations, in which the sharp opposition between reality and symbolic representations is weakened (Howarth, 2013; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, pp. 111-112). This assumption gives rise to four ontological postulates. First, we reject a purely linguistic or ‘cognitive’ approach to discourse by defining it as ‘an *articulatory practice*’ that constitutes the pattern and meaning of social relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 96). Discourse is a *practice* because it is produced by subjects who link together contingent elements - words and things, rules and resources - into relational systems. It is *articulatory* because the identities of the elements are modified in the process of constructing these linkages and relational totalities.

Secondly, the *results* of articulatory practices are incomplete *systems* of meaning and activity, which are delimited by the exclusion of certain elements (Laclau, 2005; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). A discourse thus includes words, things, (human and non-human) agents and actions, and their constitution institutes divisions with rival assemblages. Thirdly, a key *condition* of this approach is that all such elements are contingent and unfixed – no object or entity is determined by an essence - so that their identity is only partially fixed by articulatory practices.

A fourth postulate relates to the particular *spaces* within which contingent elements are connected together. Such ‘fields of discursivity’ constitute a terrain in which the construction and deconstruction of discourses takes place, and they may be related to different levels of analysis, deeper institutional systems and sub-systems that exist in a given context. But though such spaces are relatively sedimented in any given

conjuncture, they are not immune to change. On the contrary, they can over time be changed and replaced through political practices, and it is to this dimension that we now turn.

The concept of hegemony is designed to analyze this complex bundle of processes by foregrounding two fundamental dimensions of politics (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). On the one hand, hegemony is a *political type of relation*, which involves the knitting together of disparate demands and identities so as to forge assemblages that can contest a particular practice or policy. In order to construct broader campaigns and coalitions, strategically-placed agents establish *equivalences* between different demands and identities. For example, protest against fracking in one part of a country might be linked by environmental campaigners to opposition in other areas to create a national coalition. Opposition to fracking might then be hooked up to demands to stop road-building, housing development or airport expansion.

The creation of these linkages between different struggles and demands is achieved by the naming of ‘others’ – big business, for example, which is supported by government and the state - who are presented as blocking the attainment of each of the different grievances and demands that are voiced. Particular differences are thus downplayed in favour of a more universal opposition to a common enemy. In the process, the very identities of the local particular struggles that form such chains of equivalence are modified to reflect their more universal character (Griggs and Howarth, 2014).

On the other hand, the installation of a new practice or regime by a successful hegemonic project must offer points of attachment that can grip subjects in particular

ways. They do so by providing benefits and enjoyments, which affectively bond them to a certain set of actors, while causing them to expel and disparage others. Hegemony can in this sense be used to understand the way in which a governance structure or policy regime is able to secure the consent or compliance of subjects, so that they come to accept a particular practice or policy, even though they may have previously resisted it. Such an achievement is a complicated process, because it concerns the way in which frustrations and demands are managed in the political process. It also requires the production of discursive truths that are endorsed or accepted by subjects, though the exercise of coercion and force may also be present in its operation. When accomplished, such strategies and tactics enable an existing order to be reproduced without direct challenge.

It is here that poststructuralist discourse theorists employ the *logic of difference*, which involves the dismantling of the different elements that form an equivalential chain. It is characterized either by the incorporation or co-optation of demands, where their cutting edge may be blunted, and/or it is accompanied by the opening-up of a regime or practice to new claims, which are then institutionalized. The logic of difference thus conceptualizes the process through which claims are managed by policy-makers and powerholders in ways that do not substantially change a dominant practice or regime in any fundamental way (Howarth, 2013).

Taken as a whole, then, the concept of hegemony is designed to explicate particular processes of (policy) change and stabilisation. In this respect, the notion of demand is crucial, as hegemony involves the combination and decoupling of demands. Following Laclau (2005), the notion of a *demand* is closely tied-up with a subject's 'experience

of contingency', which is generally procured by an unexpected event or traumatic happening, and the subject's response to it. An initial subjective reaction to a dislocatory experience might be a feeling of disorientation or frustration, although the subject might then construe the interruption in terms of a *grievance* or as a *crisis*. Hence the perturbation might be framed as an issue affecting a group or community, whose response can then be expressed as a *request* in the public domain, or formulated as a policy *proposal*. If the relevant public authority can attend to the request in a reasonable way, then the matter will probably go no further. However, if the relevant authority is unable or refuses to deal satisfactorily with a request, at least from the perspective of the aggrieved subject, this can lead to the construction of a *demand* (Laclau, 2005, pp. 73–4). Finally, if this demand overtly challenges the norm of a practice or regime, especially when the latter is manifested as a particular public policy, in the name of an existing principle or alternative ideal, so it qualifies as a quintessentially political form (Glynos and Howarth, 2007, pp. 115–16).

PROBLEMATIZING DISCOURSE THEORY AND POLICY CHANGE

This focus gives rise to a particular set of questions for the policy analyst. How do particular policy discourses or programmes attain dominance or become hegemonic? How are they then sedimented? What are the conditions under which policy regimes and practices are maintained and changed? What are the logics and mechanisms through which subjects are gripped by certain policy discourses and not others? In what ways, and how, are such dominant orders resisted and challenged?

It is here that our poststructuralist policy analysis is augmented by our conceptualization of hegemony. At the outset, this means that we place policy-making practices in a series of wider social and political contexts. Policy analyses and evaluations have thus to be conducted against the background of broader societal logics, tendencies and changes. But precisely because policy-making practices operate in various social milieux, their analysis must be situated at the confluence of processes functioning at multiple spatial scales, be they the micro-processes of an organisation, the dynamics of local and regional governance, or the more macro-processes of national states. Policy is also marked by the clash of competing political forces in society and the changing hegemonic equilibria that emerge and are stabilized in a particular context. These political practices are integrally bound up with related socio-economic processes, such as the contradictory logics and movements of the local, national and global political economy, as well as other social activities and cultural representations (cf. Bridge and McManus, 2000, p.13).

Yet these clarifications still beg further questions about the very specificity of discourse analysis and its methodological prerequisites. To begin with, one clear negative injunction does follow from these assumptions. Questions of method do not involve the imposition of theoretical frameworks on a complex social reality, where reality is subsumed under categories. A better approach entails the critique of existing paradigms in the field, the production of alternative conceptual schemas, and the careful application of abstract theoretical concepts and logics into a particular empirical domain. Here the aim is to produce singular accounts that *articulate* empirical data with categories and notions. Issues of method are thus not reduced to

the search for comprehensive research strategies, or the development of various techniques of gathering and analyzing empirical data.

But there are still legitimate questions about the linguistic or textual specificity of Laclau and Mouffe's discursive approach. Put bluntly, what role (if any) does the linguistic analysis of discourse perform in our approach? And how can this dimension of discourse be properly located and integrated in poststructuralist discourse theory? How can it be effectively operationalized and translated into appropriate research strategies?

In exploring the possibility of a narrower, more linguistically attuned definition of discourse analysis, which can be rendered compatible with our assumptions, we turn to the early work of Foucault. Although his early 'archaeological' writings do not share all our ontological commitments, it is our contention that some of his key concerns, especially his idea of the statement, can be integrated into our approach (and even more so in light of his later genealogical writings, which also problematize the sharp distinction between the discursive and the non-discursive).

FOUCAULT'S STATEMENT

In the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault makes it clear that 'the central theme' of his archaeological approach is an 'enunciative function' called the statement (Foucault, 1972, pp. 106, 114). When understood as a 'function' the statement exists as a 'vertical relation' between other linguistic categories, such as propositions, speech

acts, sentences, and so forth. This complex relation between variables discloses and organises the relations between words and things in a discourse. For example, the statement 'Smoking causes lung cancer' on a cigarette packet or advertising billboard, required by government legislation, establishes a direct connection between a practice and its effects. It is backed up by scientific propositions, models and speech acts, which are designed to alter behaviour that is deemed unhealthy and anti-social.

Foucault provides greater definitional clarity to his new concept by contrasting the statement with the proposition (as defined by modern analytical philosophers such as Frege and Russell), an utterance or sentence (as understood by linguists), and 'speech acts' (as developed by philosophers such as John Austin and John Searle). Indeed, he is even happy to abandon the purely linguistic nature of statements altogether (Foucault, 1972, pp. 107-9). Instead, he claims that they are relational units, which 'must be related to a whole adjacent field' of other statements (Foucault, 1972, p. 97). Importantly, although statements are not ordinary speech acts, such as naming a ship or baptizing a child, they can be understood as linguistic practices that are performed in precise historical contexts. However, Foucault is not concerned with the analysis of ordinary performatives, but what might be termed *serious* speech acts (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982, p. 48). Foucault thus focusses on those linguistic performances where subjects are conceded, or assume, the authority to make serious truth claims because of their expertise, institutional location and mode of discourse (Foucault, 1981, pp. 61-6).

A vital aspect of Foucault's archaeological project is to question taken-for-granted systems of statements (or discourses), because they are seemingly unified by reference

to a common object, style, author, way of speaking, and so forth (Foucault, 1972, pp. 21-30). Instead, he uses the statement as a vehicle to group together – and thus also to divide - statements into consistently defined formations. Of capital importance in this regard are the complex systems of *rules* that arise and make possible the production and delimitation of statements in a particular historical context. More particularly, the focus is on those emergent *rules of formation* that facilitate the construction of objects, the positioning of subjects (with the capacities to think, speak and act) in discourse, the formulation of concepts, and the strategies through which discourses are modified (Foucault, 1972, p. 38). For example, in Foucauldian terms, assertions about the impact of aircraft engine emissions on climate change become statements when uttered by suitably qualified scientists and climate experts who present credible theories and evidence to justify their arguments. The plausibility of their statements depends on their adherence to an accepted set of procedures and methodological rules, as well as empirical evidence, which can be publicly tested and scrutinised by other suitably qualified scientists.

However, the precise status of Foucault's conception of rules remains ambiguous and contested. In some places, he adheres to a purely descriptive sense of rules, where the latter are understood as those regularities that are presupposed by the producers of acceptable discourse in a given context, while at other times he appears to concede them a causal function in determining what can (and cannot) be said (Foucault, 1972, pp. 71-76). Other commentators have also raised questions about the normative implications of Foucault's conception of rules, where they can be taken to operate as norms to which subjects should conform if their statements are to be regarded as legitimate and taken seriously (e.g. Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982).

Without entering into the full complexities of such claims, we shall take rules to be those historically specific regularities that structure the practices of debate and contestation in the policy-making process, so that the task of poststructuralist policy analysis is to infer and describe such rules in particular contexts. We can thus gain insight about what can and cannot qualify as a statement or serious speech act in a given situation, while illuminating the control and regulation of statements, as well as the marginalisation and exclusion of others. Equally, with respect to those statements that are enunciated in a particular context, we can investigate how they shape policy outcomes within the policy-making process, while also charting how they are repeated or may change over time in different policy contexts.

Our focus on policy discourse thus includes a range of different types of statements, including the scientific, aspirational, evaluative, political, and prescriptive. Such statements are articulated in the policy arena, where they are regarded as making binding policy commitments, or in which they function as claims that hold politicians, officials and governments to account for their words and deeds. In short, policy statements form a subset of serious speech acts that operate as public declarations, which are open to scrutiny and contestation. Practices of commentary, reporting, critique, evaluation, and so forth, can indeed contribute to the repetition – and subtle alteration – of statements as they are disseminated and reproduced within and outside policy systems. Correlations, similarities, and resonances between and within discourses, can thus be charted by focussing on the repetition/alteration of key statements, that is to say, their iterability, in different institutional contexts.

However, it is important to recognise that, although Foucault was deeply worried about the inexorable growth of statements in the modern period, as the desire for truth and expertise becomes predominant, he also stresses their rareness. This is because statements are surrounded by a *restrictive* ensemble of formation rules, which exclude potential candidates for consideration as statements, as well as ruling out statements that do not fit into a particular discourse (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). Indeed, his archaeological perspective only describes discursive innovations in relation to the underlying rules and practices that made them possible (Foucault, 1972, pp. 166-77). But rather than assuming that the rules which structure policy discourses are coherent and systematic, so that deep contradictions and inconsistencies can be pinpointed and perhaps resolved against this backdrop, the point for Foucault is to expose and characterize such divisions and faultlines (Foucault, 1972, pp. 149-56). Of course, such tasks raise methodological questions about the application of this approach in conducting empirical research. So it is to this question, amongst others, that we shall now turn in order to provide a practical illustration of our proposed perspective.

THE CASE OF AVIATION POLICY IN THE UK

After extensive national consultation at the start of the new millennium, the Labour government's 2003 Air Transport White Paper (ATWP) came down in favour of the largest post-war expansion of British airports (DfT, 2003). Espousing a policy of 'sustainable aviation', it proposed new runways at both Stansted and Heathrow airports in the south east of England. However, its environmental credentials were rapidly discredited by scientific and expert challenges, which highlighted the

contradiction between aviation expansion and the attainment of internationally agreed climate change targets. At the same time, often working hand-in-hand with such expert challenges, local residents' campaigns brought together a broad climate change coalition, which linked demands against expansion at Heathrow and other British airports to the struggles of environmental organisations, local councils, political parties, trade unions, anti-corporate groups and direct activists.

It was widely assumed that this anti-expansion coalition had already reframed the terms of the airports debate in its favour when the Labour government finally gave the go-ahead for the third runway and sixth terminal at Heathrow in January 2009 (Hayden, 2014; Stewart, 2010). This was certainly the case for the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties, because the new coalition government, which was formed in May 2010, reversed plans for expansion and imposed a moratorium on the construction of new runways in the south east of England. But following a two year hiatus it too faced an intense campaign spearheaded by pro-expansion forces (Griggs and Howarth, 2013). This culminated in the setting up of the Airports Commission in September 2012, overturning the Coalition's own short-lived policy reversal in aviation, while putting airport capacity firmly back on the political agenda. When it reported in July 2015, the Commission supported the proposal for a new third northwest runway at Heathrow Airport (Airports Commission, 2015). How are we to explain these policy reversals? And how does the analysis of statements inform our understanding of the hegemonic struggles and discursive policy reconfigurations that have punctuated UK aviation policy over the last fifteen years?

Expressed in methodological terms, our research addressed these questions in three connected steps. (1) We began by constructing a genealogical narrative of the key events and processes associated with the twists and turns of the changing regimes of UK policy and practice since the early 2000s. As part of this inquiry, we first assembled an archive of 161 texts (excluding media statements) that represented the ‘official public discourses’ of the rival forces in the aviation policy arena. We focused on documents that populated the policy arena at critical junctures in the formulation of aviation policy since 2000. They included the formulation and publication of the ATWP in 2003, as well as the responses it engendered; government approval for the construction of the third runway at Heathrow in 2009; the publication of the Scoping Document on a sustainable framework for aviation in 2011; and the work of the Airports Commission, with its calls for evidence and discussion papers, as well as the publication of its Interim and Final Reports in 2013 and 2015.

Using our theoretical approach, and taking into account the various endeavours of the UK government to exercise strategic leadership in the planning and regulation of airport capacity, we included official documents released by the Department for Transport from the New Labour government’s national consultation on the future of air transport in 2000 until the publication of the Airports Commission’s Final Report in 2015. Such documents addressed aviation expansion, airport capacity, and the economic, environmental and quality of life impacts of air travel. The assembled corpus of texts comprised different genres of document, from scoping papers, consultation documents, calls for evidence, and ministerial speeches through to white papers, policy guidance and departmental responses to parliamentary select committees.

In addition, we assembled a body of policy reports, responses to consultation papers, position statements, briefings and press releases from local resident groups, anti-aviation expansion lobbies and environmental pressure groups, scientific and expert bodies, as well as think-tanks, representatives of the UK aviation industry, trade unions, chambers of commerce, and airport owners and their trade associations. Here we first selected documents from policy actors responding to official consultations before ‘snowballing’ out to others referenced in this initial sample of documents. We also undertook a series of online searches from which we extracted a sample of media statements made by strategically-placed agents and groups during the critical junctures of aviation policy delimited above. Such statements included television and radio interviews conducted with ministers and elite actors, as well as opinion pieces, reports and articles in national newspapers (including the *Guardian*, the *Financial Times*, and the *Telegraph*). Finally, we conducted more than thirty in-depth semi-structured interviews with local activists, aviation industry representatives, policy officers, and environmental lobbyists.

(2) We then undertook repeated readings of the texts, thus engaging in what we might term ‘manual processing’, which began with an analysis of the historico-social context and the specific genre of documents (Keller, 2013, p. 97). In keeping with the ontological assumptions of poststructuralist discourse theory, we focused initially on the way in which different problematisations of the aviation issue structured the terrain of argumentation, along with the construction of demands and how these were articulated together (or not) through the logics of equivalence and difference. Using Foucault’s criteria for identifying a statement, we then isolated and described the core

statements that emerged or disappeared in different contexts, while also charting their repetition and transformation in the critical conjunctures we examined. This enabled us to discern, construct and chart the competing policy discourses that have structured the shifting terrains of argumentation in UK aviation policy.

More specifically, in operationalizing Foucault's criteria for a statement, we privileged four primary conditions. First, Foucault puts in place a number of negative criteria for defining the statement, which rule out various potential candidates (e.g. a proposition, utterance or sentence, or speech act). Secondly, we paid attention to the way in which statements exercise an 'enunciative function', which partly constitute the objects and things they articulate, while structuring the practices of debate and contestation with which they are connected (for example, by positioning subjects who can legitimately speak on an issue). Here statements characteristically validate or are grounded in a particular form of expertise or a knowledge-domain. Thirdly, because statements are relational entities, we considered the extent to which statements were linked to a network of other statements, thus establishing 'a specific link with something else' (Deleuze, 1988, p. 8). Finally, we concerned ourselves with 'serious speech acts', and not all forms of ('everyday' or 'ordinary') discourse. Thus, we did not consider an utterance made by a minister as an aside to a journalist at a press conference to be a statement. On the other hand, declarations to Parliament or the contents of a foreword to an official white paper, when appropriately delimited, were deemed to perform the function of a statement.

(3) The selection and reading of relevant documents was followed by our third methodological step: the careful selection of three statements, which we judged to

exemplify the dominant discourses at play in the naming and constitution of new discursive regimes in aviation policy. This judgment rested on our situated knowledge of UK aviation policy, which in turn reflects our long-standing engagement in the field, as well as the to-ing and fro-ing between our theoretical assumptions and ongoing developments in this domain. Indeed, we continued our dialogue with primary stakeholders throughout the study, using these exchanges to modify and validate our interpretations, while engaging in critical reflections.

THREE EXEMPLARY STATEMENTS

Bearing this in mind, we thus focus on three exemplary statements, which crystallised government thinking on aviation expansion. These are, first, the aspiration for a ‘balanced approach’, which is taken from the Blair government’s *Future of Air Transport* White Paper (DfT, 2003), and which constituted the Labour discourse of sustainable aviation. The second statement - ‘a genuinely sustainable framework’ – is extracted from the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government’s 2011 scoping document, *Developing a Sustainable Framework for UK Aviation* (DfT, 2011a). This statement encapsulated the new government’s commitment to impose a moratorium on new runways in the south east of England, thus foregrounding ‘better use of existing capacity’ and the need for ‘environmental “headroom” for aviation to expand’ (DfT, 2011a, p. 12). The third statement is drawn from a 2013 speech, *Aviation Capacity in the UK: Emerging Thinking*, by Howard Davies, chair of the Airports Commission (Airports Commission, 2013a), which advocated the construction of at least one new runway in the South East. The statement calling on the authorities to ‘deliver the maximum connectivity bang for each of our carbon

bucks' epitomized the need for new airport capacity, while deeming 'doing nothing' as the wrong approach to aviation policy and airport capacity.

Statement One: 'a balanced approach'

When the Labour party came to office in 1997, its first transport policy white paper committed the new government to producing a 30-year strategic plan in aviation policy. In preparing for this strategic plan, there followed a nationwide aviation policy consultation, which resulted in the publication of the 2003 ATWP. This White Paper promised to address the increasing demands for both air travel and environmental protection, thus putting in place a sustainable aviation policy for the UK. At the heart of this policy commitment was the development of a 'balanced approach' to air travel, which stood in opposition to capacity-driven policies of 'predict and provide'. Accordingly, appeals to the figure of 'balance' were repeatedly expressed in the ATWP, where it was stated that

Air travel has increased five-fold over the past 30 years, and demand is projected to be between two and three times current levels by 2030. Some of our major airports are already close to capacity, so failure to allow for increased capacity could have serious economic consequences, both at national and at regional level. That must be balanced by the need to have regard to the environmental consequences of air travel. The Government believes that simply building more and more capacity to meet demand is not a sustainable way forward. Instead, *a balanced approach is required* (DfT, 2003, p.9 Our emphasis).

In its function as a statement, this affirmation of a 'balanced approach' was constituted by – and partly constituted - a new set of formation rules in aviation policy. In other words, its conditions of possibility rested on the reconstruction of the multiple objects, categories, subjects and relations 'within' aviation policy, especially with respect to 'air travel', 'airports', 'economic consequences' and 'environmental consequences'. Importantly, in a complex interplay of equivalence and difference, the 'balanced approach' statement sought to redefine the previously opposed demands for aviation growth, on the one hand, and environmental protection, on the other, as compatible outcomes, which were capable of being mediated or 'balanced'. Indeed, this primary rule was one of the discursive foundations of the Labour's discourse of sustainable aviation. In forging such rules, the 'balanced approach' statement challenged the limits of the previous 'predict and provide' regime, which was characterised as having failed to tackle the environmental consequences of air travel. But, equally, the statement carried the potential of depoliticizing appeals associated with the discourse of demand management, which proposed measures to curtail the need for more air travel, by transforming concerns over the environmental consequences of aviation impacts into tractable managerialist claims. Such concerns could be incorporated into the decision-making process under the guise of an appeal to the possibilities of 'balance'.

In fact, the statement calling for a 'balanced approach' was connected to a network of statements - and resonated with New Labour's 'third way' politics more generally - which shaped its significance and overall function, and which it in turn reinforced. The concept of 'balance' thus embedded specific 'facts' about aviation policy, which resonated as serious claims to 'truth' in the political and policy-making community, as

well as some quarters of the broader society. First, it invoked the inevitability of continuously rising demand for air travel, which was assumed to be beyond the control of government and unrelated to supply-led increases in demand coming from new capacity. Indeed, the statement of a 'balanced approach' invoked the portrayal of aviation growth as an inescapable, but nonetheless desirable, element of future societies, which would necessarily bring about economic prosperity and social progress (cf. Foucault, 1972, pp. 123-4, 135).

Secondly, the 'balanced approach' statement was intrinsically connected to a fantasmatic narrative that privileged the risk of under-capacity at British airports, where the latter was pictured as a threat to economic prosperity. It thus foregrounded the economic 'success story' of aviation, while at the same time emphasizing 'our' shared reliance on aviation in order to sustain contemporary levels of economic and social well being. Indeed, it was intimately intertwined with the underside of the 'success story' narrative, which highlighted the horrific consequences for 'our' wider social practices of business travel, package tours and visits to friends and families, if the capacity constraints facing UK airports were not adequately met (DfT, 2003, p. 8, 22, 51-2). In short, this complex web or network of statements displaced and reframed the problem of airport expansion: it was no longer to be portrayed as a set of negative consequences for the quality of life of local communities, but a problem that, if not properly addressed, challenged the economic and social well being of the whole population. It universalized the set of interests that would be negatively affected by the failure to expand.

Finally, framed in these terms, the statement of ‘balance’ was connected to statements about the need for more fairness with respect to the environmental policy outcomes of aviation expansion. Here, the task of ‘balancing’ the localized environmental impacts of aviation expansion, such as noise and air pollution, was redefined as an issue of ‘fairness’ for particular communities, who disproportionately suffer the costs of future expansion. In other words, in an endeavour to address strong local pressures for the mitigation of negative externalities, appeals to the idea of fairness were deemed worthy of serious consideration. Crucially, however, in this discursive operation, there was a subtle reframing and displacing of the issues, as the justness of local demands to lower noise and air pollution were to be addressed in ways that would *not* threaten or outweigh the broader national benefits of airport expansion when considered in the round (DfT, 2003, pp. 19, 33). For their part, rising carbon emissions were firmly situated within the domain of international action and global emissions trading schemes, so that climate change was rendered less visible (DfT, 2003, pp. 40-41). At the same time, aviation was constructed as an exceptional case among UK industries, with the government recognising that its climate change strategy did not ‘mean that every sector is expected to follow the same path’, while implicitly acknowledging that an expanding aviation industry could ‘purchase [...] reductions [of carbon emissions] that can be produced more cheaply by other sectors’ (DfT, 2003, p. 40).

By virtue of this complex network of statements, and their underlying rules of formation, the ‘balanced approach’ established new subject positions and modes of enunciation. On the one hand, it constructed government as the authoritative arbiter or mediator of conflicting positions, because it was the only actor able to ensure the definition of an appropriate ‘balance’ between priorities. Once again, this rested on the

credibility of the argument that competing demands in aviation were in some way compatible. On the other hand, it negated the voicing of support for previous expansionist policies in aviation based on the model of 'predict and provide'. It privileged rhetorical appeals about the need for sustainable air travel, which resonated with the broad commitments of the Labour government to encourage sustainable development and to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent by 2050 (DfT and DEFRA, 2003).

In so doing, it helped to shape the terrain of argumentation in aviation policy. For the supporters of aviation growth, the constraints of a 'balanced approach' meant that demands for expansion had, at least, to acknowledge or address the environmental challenges of aviation and its rising carbon emissions. (Significantly, the pro-expansion Sustainable Aviation lobby was founded in the wake of the publication of the ATWP in 2003). For the advocates of 'demand management', the opposition to expansion was partially negated by the juxtaposition of a 'balanced approach' alongside the politics of 'predict and provide'. In this way, government also sought to dissolve the boundaries between the competing discourse coalitions that emerged during the period of consultation. But the new discursive formation also opened up potential spaces of contestation. Indeed, once the White Paper was published with its proposals for new runways and terminals across the UK, the meaning of a 'balanced approach' and its environmental commitments could be mobilised as a fault-line in aviation politics.

Statement Two: 'a genuinely sustainable framework'

The establishment of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition in 2010 reversed the Labour government's commitment to construct a third runway and sixth terminal at London Heathrow. The incoming government put in place a moratorium on the construction of new runways in the South-East of England and set up the South East Airports Task Force in June 2010 to develop policies to 'make our airports better not bigger' (DfT, 2011a, p. 7). The Department for Transport then opened a further consultation exercise in March 2011, when it released the government's scoping paper setting out the terms for its more radical sustainable approach to aviation. In the Foreword to this scoping document, which was entitled *Developing a Sustainable Framework for UK Aviation*, Phillip Hammond, the new Transport Secretary stated that

There is an urgent need for a *genuinely sustainable framework* to guide the aviation industry in planning its investment and technological development in the short, medium and long term. The previous government's 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Air Transport*, is *fundamentally out of date, because it fails to give sufficient weight to the challenge of climate change*. In maintaining its support for new runways – in particular at Heathrow – in the face of the local environmental impacts and mounting evidence of aviation's growing contribution towards climate change, the *previous government got the balance wrong*. It failed to adapt its policies to the fact that climate change has become one of the gravest threats we face. (DfT, 2011a, p.4, our emphasis)

The need for a 'genuinely sustainable framework' was the remarkable product of a novel system of rules, which were put into place by the incoming government, that reordered the relationships between air travel, on the one hand, and the environment

and, even more significantly, climate change on the other. The new statement now presented aviation as a major challenge to efforts to tackle climate change, while naming the battle against climate change as the primary challenge facing any government and nation. It thus established a rupture with past practices that were predicated on the logic of ‘predict and provide’ and its attendant policies. Importantly, it challenged demands for increased airport capacity, while bringing the issue of rising carbon emissions in aviation firmly back under the control of agencies in the national policy arena. Indeed, in the words of the then Secretary of State, the Labour government had ‘got the balance [between environmental protection and expansion] wrong’ (DfT, 2011a, p. 4). In affirming the need for a ‘genuinely sustainable framework’ the new discourse shed doubt on the compatibility, and the desirability, of growth in aviation capacity and environmental protection. It thus redefined the conception of ‘balance’ more in terms of a ‘trade-off’ in which policy-makers now faced the choice between either expanding air travel or reducing carbon emissions. In short, it did not bring into doubt the rising demand for air travel, and its economic contribution of aviation, as these outcomes were pushed down the policy agenda, below the significance of the challenge of climate change.

The novel rules informing aviation policy brought into being new subject positions and strategies. Notably, the office of the Secretary of State was transformed.

Traditionally, the holder of this office was publicly a staunch advocate of the aviation industry and its value to the UK economy. However, the statement of a ‘genuinely sustainable framework’ reflected the emergence of a different subject position, in which the Secretary of State morphed into that of a public critic or commentator on the industry. In part, such transformations also made possible the appointment of

Justine Greening as Secretary of State for Transport in the October 2011 ministerial reshuffle. Greening, whose parliamentary constituency is directly under Heathrow's flight path, had been a vocal and persistent opponent of the third runway at the hub airport, expressing concerns about the negative environmental impacts of the aviation industry. Undoubtedly, such beliefs would have previously barred her from the leadership of the Department for Transport. But now occupying this newly-emergent subject position of Secretary of State for Transport, Greening communicated a concise explanation of government policy to the assembled delegates of the Airports Operators Association in 2011: 'the political reality is that the runway decision [at Heathrow] has been made. It's done.' She challenged the aviation industry to 'turn the page and write a new chapter in the story of aviation' (DfT, 2011b). In other words, in the rhetoric of the coalition government, the industry itself had become an obstacle to the government's newly stated objectives in aviation policy. At least publicly, the aviation industry had been pushed to the sidelines and redefined as the 'outsider'.

As Greening's intervention suggests, the statement of a 'genuinely sustainable framework' was once again positioned within a whole network of statements, which it drew upon and supported. First, it co-existed with David Cameron's aspiration that his coalition government should be the 'greenest government ever' (*Guardian*, 14 May 2010). Here the Conservative Party's opposition to Heathrow expansion functioned as an emblematic issue of its environmental commitments. Indeed, such statements legitimized the Cameron government's opposition to airport expansion, explaining that 'we [the Cameron government] are not anti-aviation. We are anti-carbon' (DfT, 2011a, p. 4). Secondly, the emphasis on environmental sustainability was a key component in the reframing of the aviation policy debate. Rather than an

unsustainable expansion, the new idea was to create ‘better not bigger’ airports. In this discourse, aviation was construed in terms of making better use of existing capacity and the provision of the necessary ‘environmental headroom’ by the aviation industry. Thirdly, this appeal to sustainability in aviation could not be dissociated from statements concerning peak oil and the questioning of the possibilities of technological fixes, which challenged the discourse of continued economic growth (DfT, 2011a, p.4, 8). Finally, it was connected to statements that supported high-speed rail and the way the latter could possibly substitute for short-haul flights (DfT, 2011a, p. 26). Such statements brought into play a complex web of claims concerning numbers of transfer passengers, the desirability of long-haul flights and hub connections.

Overall, therefore, the developing system of statements brought into being new concepts, subject positions, and strategies, all of which were made possible and held together by a different set of rules. It effectively consigned Labour’s 2003 ATWP to the political equivalent of the wastepaper bin. In terms of the post-war regime of aviation expansion, a ‘genuinely sustainable framework’ was therefore a novel statement, which dislocated and destabilised the once sedimented logics of state-sponsored growth. This is not to say that concerns over the rising contribution of air travel to carbon emissions had not been previously articulated. Yet the particular place from which the enunciation was made was highly significant. Here was a Secretary of State for Transport in a Conservative-led government, which was supposedly a representative of the party of business and liberalisation, declaring that expansion was no longer on the cards for the aviation industry.

Statement Three: ‘deliver the maximum connectivity bang for each of our carbon bucks’

The Cameron government’s policy U-turn brought a quick and persistent backlash from the supporters of airport expansion, who launched a high-profile media campaign from the spring of 2012. Under pressure from the aviation industry, and from within his own Cabinet and political party, Cameron replaced Greening as Secretary of State and put in place the Airports Commission. Led by Sir Howard Davies, it was tasked with examining the ‘scale and timing of any requirement for additional capacity to maintain the UK’s position as Europe’s most important aviation hub’ (Airports Commission, 2013b, p. 16). Not unexpectedly, reporting in July 2015, the Airports Commission came out in favour of a third runway at Heathrow, thus potentially laying the ground for the reversal of the 2010 policy commitment of the Cameron government (Airports Commission, 2015).

It was not unexpected because support for an additional runway in the South-East of England was advanced in the Interim Report of the Commission at the end of 2013.

Outlining the then thinking of the Commission, Howard Davies argued that

The challenge ... is to deliver the best solution for the UK overall, which has to be one that both achieves our carbon targets and delivers the connections that our economy and society demand. These are not irreconcilable goals. But they mean that, alongside looking at carbon emissions, we need also to consider what our future aviation needs are likely to be and where passengers are going to want to fly to and from over the coming decades, in order to identify what configuration of airport capacity is most likely to facilitate those

journeys. In short, *how do we deliver the maximum connectivity bang for each of our carbon bucks?* Our work so far suggests that doing nothing to address the capacity constraints in our current airport system would not be the right approach. Its likely effect would be to restrict passengers' choices and it could have unintended consequences for the efficiency and resilience of UK airports, as well as possibly leading to some flights and emissions being displaced to other countries (Airports Commission, 2013a).

This 'maximum connectivity bang' statement signals a further discursive reframing of the 'problem' of aviation policy. This statement resurrects the logic and rules of 'predict and provide' regimes of aviation expansion, thus returning to the appeals of planning for 'future aviation needs' and ensuring the appropriate 'configuration of airport capacity'. In this way, it restructures once again aviation policy as an issue of capacity building, while constructing connectivity as a newly privileged category to judge the economic and social value of air travel. But while the new discourse intimates the possibility of a reworked positive-sum game between aviation expansion and environmental protection, it does so within the limits of meeting the UK's 'carbon targets' as the final arbiter of the possibilities of airport expansion. In short, it re-establishes the desirability of expansion, but subjugates it to the broader constraints and commitments of agreed carbon reductions.

Here aviation's inclusion in the European Union emissions trading scheme and the UK's position in a global competitive market serves to legitimize airport expansion. On the one hand, the metaphor of the 'carbon buck' invokes the emissions trading schemes and caps on aviation emissions, ruling in this case that aviation capacity can

expand as the cap on emissions ultimately prevents any increases in carbon emissions from aviation. On the other hand, global competitiveness is invoked to dismiss any unilateral cuts to aviation capacity by the UK, such that any limits on UK aviation capacity would risk carbon emissions 'being displaced to other countries' (Airports Commission, 2013a). As a result, carbon targets and carbon emissions are installed and simultaneously by-passed as an obstacle to aviation expansion, which means that the terrain of argumentation is ultimately structured by calculations over aviation needs and its global connectivity. Significantly, this relegation of the difficulties of tackling aviation's rising carbon emissions elevates aircraft noise and air quality around airports as the remaining environmental obstacles to airport expansion.

In a wider sense, the 'maximising connectivity' statement functions as a nodal point in a discourse of global competitiveness, which is linked to a web of stylized 'facts' and other statements about the changing global economy, growing international competition, the demand for the UK to maintain its links with emerging markets in Asia, the continued vibrancy of London as a global financial centre, and the historical portrayal of the UK as a world 'trading nation' (Airports Commission, 2013a, 2015). Notably, through its evocation of future aviation needs, and the demands of connectivity, it highlights the need for an international hub airport that can ensure the health of the UK service sector. Taken together, such statements form a constellation of truth claims, which serve as the necessary condition for the expansion of Heathrow, Britain's leading hub, although not ruling out altogether a new runway at Gatwick. At the same time, the need to maximize connectivity brings into play a series of fantasmatic appeals about the indispensable benefits of aviation, on the one hand, and the threat to such benefits if the long-term 'efficiency and resilience of UK airports' is

not ensured on the other. The failure to expand airport capacity is thus denounced as a threat to Britain's competitive advantage in aviation, and to everyday consumers and passengers, thereby re-articulating the embedded fantasmatic narrative of UK air superiority and the social benefits of flying (Airports Commission, 2013a).

Finally, the oft-repeated claim about the need to 'maximise connectivity' validates a further set of expert and technical statements concerning carbon targets and the contribution of rising aviation emissions to climate change. In many ways, in the new discursive formation, its authoritative power and legitimacy is grounded in the taken-for-granted authority of such expert and technical statements, especially those of the Committee on Climate Change, which was established by New Labour in 2008. Of particular importance in this regard is the acceptance of the Committee's statement in 2009 that aviation demand could grow by 60 per cent, while keeping carbon emissions from air travel in 2050 at 2005 levels (CCC, 2009). With this in mind, the statement of the Airports Commission, and thus the rules that enabled its production, further privilege the subject position of the expert or technocrat. Its co-existence within this network of related statements on carbon targets structures the terrain of argumentation as a field of expertise in which interventions are validated by verified empirical evidence and competing scenarios of future development. More generally, such manoeuvres are part and parcel of the wider depoliticizing practices of a commission of inquiry, which seeks to provide an impartial and reasonable resolution of a wicked policy problem. In equal measure, they rest upon the rhetoric and performance of Sir Howard Davies himself, an eminent financial economist, administrator and university professor. In sum, then, the new statement about 'maximizing connectivity', when placed alongside the strategic reliance on carbon targets to justify expansion,

assessments about future aviation needs, and scientific predictions of passenger demands, forms a novel discursive formation that channels deliberation, engagement and debate onto an argumentative terrain that privileges empirical data, scientific evidence, and rival expertise.

Our selection and analysis of three exemplary statements, each of which was the product of different modes of enunciation, as they functioned within three different discursive formations, offers a lens through which to examine the continuities and discontinuities of the ongoing hegemonic struggles in UK aviation policy. The focus on statements helped us to clarify the underlying discourses that made them possible, while also enabling us to account for the shifts and differences between discourses. When harnessed to our narrative of policy change, with its emphasis on demands and hegemony, the description and analysis of such statements assists us in capturing the shifting political dynamics of the emergent policy regime, and highlights the exclusionary and inclusionary impacts of different practices.

More specifically, our account militates against over-hasty characterizations of policy change. For one thing, it enabled us to better compare and contrast the discourse of New Labour and the approach of the Airports Commission to aviation policy. We also demonstrated that the Davies Commission's emphasis on 'global connectivity' and the 'management' of the environment both repeated and altered the New Labour government's discourse of 'balance' and 'sustainable aviation'. In addition, our approach unearthed a frequently unremarked continuity in the trajectory of UK's aviation policy discourse. Although certain limits to expansion are implied in the different policy discourses, none of the statements explicitly challenge the inevitable

growth of demand for air travel, as well as the accompanying expansion of aviation infrastructure in the UK and across the globe. For us, this underlying continuity formed one of the conditions of possibility for the establishment of the Davies commission, despite the coalition government's initial commitment to curb expansion, as well as the subsequent decision by the May government to give the go-ahead to Heathrow expansion in October 2016 (DfT, 2016; Griggs and Howarth, 2017). Finally, our analysis delineates and renders explicit the complex and evolving tensions between the desire for continued economic growth and global connectivity, on the one hand, and the need for environmental protection on the other.

CONCLUSION: STATEMENTS AND HEGEMONY

This article has elaborated a poststructuralist approach to the study of environmental policy discourse, and applied it the pressing issue of UK aviation expansion. We argue that Foucault's celebrated theory of statements, when properly integrated into our poststructuralist perspective, and when carefully related to the object of policy discourse, provides an invaluable methodological tool for investigating key environmental policy problems. In our new perspective, one of the key methodological tasks is to describe and map *statements* of various types, including scientific, prescriptive, normative, aspirational, and political statements, as they appear and disappear, circulate and change, in relation to particular environmental policy issues in specific historical contexts. Identifying and charting the emergence and repetition of statements provides vital clues for delimiting different and competing discursive formations in the policy process, while enabling researchers to explicate

their underlying rules of formation. The analytical task in this regard is to show the regularities governing the appearance of statements in a given space, and in relation to other dispersed statements, thus enabling the investigator ultimately to pinpoint the rules that structure the production of discourse. Statements also provide the key to determining the objects, concepts, subjects, and strategies that are constituted in and by a particular environmental discourse.

Finally, in principle at least, the archaeological analysis of statements is useful in connecting discourses to a series of non-discursive events, practices and institutions. Foucault insists that discourses are related to non-discursive processes, so that the statement *qua* function links things and words in a particular relation. Such formations and processes do not simply run parallel to one another, nor are they related in simple causal terms, but are diagonally linked within wider formations or assemblages (Deleuze, 1988, pp. 9-10).

But though Foucault stresses this latter aspect in theory, it is not altogether clear how this task was to be accomplished. Nor are we supplied with the conceptual and methodological wherewithal for its realisation. His description of the formation of rules that enable the production of discourses neglects the role of political practices in the forging of such rules, and deliberately excludes non-discursive objects and practices from his focus on an autonomously constructed domain of discourse. It is here that we endeavour to actively supplement Foucault's account with the account of hegemony that we introduce in the article. Our thicker conception of discourse, coupled with this understanding of hegemony, thus widens the empirical focus to include the emergence and construction of demands in various sites of the social and

political system. It also draws attention to the way in which demands are linked together to form broader coalitions, while exploring the way such connections can be broken down, either by being addressed or co-opted by the political system, or by being incorporated into other discourses.

Most importantly, the logic of hegemony provides a means to identify the *limits* of discursive formations, which include the existence of linguistic and non-linguistic elements, by pinpointing the drawing of political boundaries between rival discourses. Here the logic of equivalence, which in turn presupposes the construction of antagonisms between rival subjects and coalitions, is vital for instituting and showing the divisions between discursive formations. In our view, discursive formations are not just systems of statements governed by rules. Instead, statements are but one type of (linguistic) element that co-exists with other sorts of linguistic and non-linguistic elements. For us, all such elements are articulated together by wider discursive and hegemonic practices.

Our integration of Foucault's conception of the statement within poststructuralist discourse theory is thus useful in analyzing the shifts and stabilities marking UK aviation policy, and environmental policy discourses more generally. In policy domains such as fracking, biodiversity, soil erosion or air quality, it offers, we suggest, alternative insights into the multiple constructions of policy 'problems' over time, the competing coalitions of knowledge and expertise at play, as well as the modes of governance that emerge. It also enables us to show the difficulties of transforming the embedded practices that are part of our everyday lives. Nonetheless, as we also make clear in our account, the focus on statements does not provide a full explanation of the

outcome of hegemonic struggles. Nor does it completely explain why certain statements became dominant in the policy process, or failed to do so. Indeed, answers to such questions require that our analysis be situated within the wider theoretical framework we have developed through our reconstruction and extension of poststructuralist discourse theory. The focus on statements should thus be supplemented by the analysis of rhetoric and arguments, propositions and ordinary speech acts, as well as the complex and interacting logics of equivalence and difference that operate in the wider society. In this way, the limits of Foucault's narrow linguistic analysis of the emergence, disappearance and transformation of statements can be discerned. In equal measure though, the gaps that were pinpointed in our initial presentation of poststructuralist discursive theory can also be rendered visible and addressed. In short, in our view, future empirical research should continue to find ways of integrating the analysis of statements within a poststructuralist approach to policy analysis by generating more empirical and longitudinal applications in different environmental policy sectors, and by conducting comparative studies across sectors and within international environmental policy regimes.

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NOTES

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