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Situating the IPCC as a Practice of Writing

It was after my seventeenth interview that analytically something shifted. It was an uncomfortable interview, where the participant felt defensive, and it reflected the atmosphere for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) at the time. When I asked about the target audience and the direction of the next assessment, the respondent impatiently reminded me that ‘What you should do is really read the rules and procedures we have to follow’ (interview 5.10.2002). I had read those rules and procedures; I had been referred to them in another awkward interview with a government delegate. I just could not seem to grasp the content of this document the way my respondents did. The discomfort of this interview turned out to be a critical moment on my journey into the IPCC, and my understanding of what this organisation is and does in relation to climate change began to form.

A few days after this interview, I travelled to Busan in South Korea to observe the 32nd plenary of the IPCC, which enabled me to watch how the rules and procedures were written. The year 2010 was a difficult one for the IPCC. It was subject to fierce criticism when errors were found in WGII’s assessment of the likely melting and disappearance of the Himalayan Glaciers, the so-called ‘Himalayagate’ affair (Carrington 2010). This came on the back of a wave of scepticism that followed the hacking and publication of email exchanges between prominent climate scientists and IPCC authors from the University of East Anglia in the run up to COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009, coined ‘Climategate’ (Pearce 2010). To address these criticisms and re-establish the organisations symbolic power, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, and IPCC chair, Rajendra Pachauri, requested the IAC ‘to conduct an independent review of IPCC processes and procedures used to produce assessments (IAC 2010a, 7). It was at the 32nd plenary that the IAC review and recommendations were discussed by the panel, and the processes and procedures for producing assessment reports were reformulated.

It was on observing the rewriting of the rules and procedures that I came to understand why interview participants kept referring me to this document.¹ The rules and procedures are a reference to practice – describing and prescribing how IPCC assessment reports are to be constructed, by whom and performing which tasks. Organisational documents such as these embody IPCC and plenary specific activities that put them together.² As scholars have indicated in relation to other organisations, to be understood as documents embodying practice, they need to be observed in the making, which makes apparent that the institutional processes through which they are constructed are as important as their contents.³ Within the context of the plenary sessions, these documents become rich texts, packed full of signposts and references to the social forces and dynamics that govern the interactions between actors during the meetings.

It was through observation that IPCC documentation came to life. Suddenly, I felt that I could read the IPCC paper trail and ‘get’ these documents as my participants did. It was at this point that I saw the significance of the assessment report’s construction pathway, and it became clear that how an IPCC assessment report is assembled – its journey through the IPCC, who this provides access to and authorises to perform set activities – is central to the meaning imbued in the document through the process. From this, I came to share scholar’s perspective on the importance of the view from the inside for understanding the making of organisational documentation (Riles 2000; Neumann 2002; Hull 2003, 2012; Yamin and Depledge 2004).

I made another important observation at this meeting, something I knew on paper, but which I observed in practice. Not all actors are equal in the construction of IPCC documents; there is a pecking order (Pouliot 2016) in and to their writing. Put simply, there are those actors that speak and shape the construction of the document versus those that speak but the text remains unchanged. The politics and power on display at this meeting were palpable and entangled. There was the phenomenon of the disinterested country delegate, the effect of which was empty spaces behind country plaques and people wandering in and out of the hall during proceedings. In contrast, the deeply immersed and invested delegations dominated the proceedings, evidenced by the number and timing of interventions recorded in Chapter 4 (Table 4.2). On the surface these appear as two distinct

¹ In relation to the UNFCCC, Yamin and Depledge (2004: 2) state that ‘documents alone give little insight into the functioning of the regime because it is difficult to glean the institutional practices, procedures and informal understandings that help define how the international climate process actually works.’ Other scholars studying UN documentation have made a similar observation, see for example, Rise (2001).

² As noted by Yamin and Depledge (2004: 470), ‘In some cases, the IPCC has developed informal customary practices that, while well established, are not recorded in the text.’ This explains why, for many interviewees, the questions I asked seemed self-evident, but to someone not familiar with IPCC customs, the documents and procedures prescribed were often impenetrable.

³ Hull observes the same in his study of document-making in bureaucratic institutions in Pakistan, ‘Things look different from the inside’ (Hull 2003: 289).

and disconnected phenomena. However, a connection becomes apparent through asking, what constitutes the power of some actors to speak, be heard and shape the text, while the words of others are lost in proceedings?

Critical to illuminating the social order within the IPCC is understanding where the organisation is located in political space – its place in climate politics. When analysed, the IPCC is often situated to the side of climate politics, as a provider of knowledge for action rather than as a site of political action in and of itself. In this chapter and inspired by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, I redescribe climate politics as a struggle to fix the meaning of climate change and thereby how it is acted on and the order that those actions make or retain (Bourdieu 1991). This situates the IPCC centrally in climate politics as a powerful site of order-making in the struggle to name the problem. Symbolic power has emerged as an important dimension of Bourdieu-inspired study of power and authority in IR (Epstein 2008; Stuvøy 2010; Abrahamsen and Williams 2011; Adler-Nissen 2013; Eagleton-Pierce 2013; Adler-Nissen 2014; Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014; Hughes 2015, 2023; Sending 2015; Hughes and Vadrot 2019). However, its imprint on organisational products is less frequently subject to systematic analysis and the aim of the next two chapters is to develop an analytical framework that can enable this. Using Bourdieu's notion of field to situate the IPCC in political space is essential for identifying the external pressures and forces this social location generates and examining how these dynamics have historically shaped, and continue to shape, the IPCC and its assessment practice. From this location in climate politics, I move inward to the IPCC's organisational form, and by the end of the chapter, I begin to put together the analytical framework that will enable me to identify the actors, activities and forms of authority that constitute the IPCC's practice of writing climate change.

3.1 The Politics of Naming Climate Change

Thinking of climate politics as a struggle to name climate change helps to make sense of this complex realm and sensitises study to the forces it generates. Climate change is recognised as a super wicked problem that confounds conventional ways of knowing and responding to collective issues (Levin et al. 2009, 2012). At a societal level, the battle to contain and control this problem has played out through contestation over the human role in and physical extent of climate change. Within the climate negotiations, from the outset the struggle has been to determine who acts to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) (Paterson and Grubb 1992), when and by how much alongside how and by whom this mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage are to be funded (Rajamani 2015a, 2015b, 2016). The notion of naming, however, points to the forces and dynamics that lie beneath and run through these visible

struggles; it points to the implications that the meaning of climate change has for international order and ultimately for life itself. Naming climate change offers the potential for world-making on an unprecedented scale. The way this issue is constructed shapes the societal response at all levels, which has the potential to reconfigure all practices of life as these are impacted by and adapted to the shifts and extremes of a changing climate and aligned with carbon-neutral social organisation.

While the daily lives of all are likely to be impacted by physical changes and the political response – regardless of responsibility for the problem – not all have the power to name the problem. The stakes in this struggle are indeterminately high. For those privileged within the current fossil-fuel dependent global order, there is social dominance to preserve and maintain. For others, there is the necessity to attain some level of this ‘development’ and the opportunity to advance a global political order based upon and organised around value for human and environmental relations. These stakes have engendered a 30-year fight over climate change that continues to intensify, and the IPCC is a central battle ground. To explore the effects of this struggle on the organisation, its assessment practice and the knowledge produced, the first step is to situate the IPCC within this global struggle to fix the meaning of climate change and the field of activity this has generated.

The condition of a field is interest, as interest and investment is what produces struggle and generates the forces that structure a field (Bourdieu 1986a; Wacquant 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).⁴ The emergence of interest in climate change has a long history, although until the 1980s, this was largely an object of scientific enquiry, to be discovered and represented through scientific practice. As described in Chapter 2, during the 1980s a group of actors, workshop and assessment activities brought climate change to the attention of a wider audience. The political interest these actors and activities generated were critical to the formation of the IPCC and for transforming climate change into an object of wider social concern (Hughes 2015).

When the IPCC was established in 1988, its mandate was to assess the most up-to-date knowledge of the science, impacts and response strategies to climate change (UNGA RES/45/53, 1988). This established the IPCC as a central site for naming climate change and, as such, placed the organisation and its assessment practice in the middle of emerging political interest in the issue and the forces and struggles this generated. However, once political interest was mobilised, and

⁴ For other studies that have adapted Bourdieu’s concept of field for the study of organisations and ‘international’ objects, see Bigo 2006, 2011; Fligsten and McAdam 2011, 2014; Pouliot and Mérand 2012; Sending 2015. The focus here is on exploring the emergence of interest in climate change and to identify some of the key forces and dynamics that come to structure relations and the newly forming institutions established to address climate change (Hughes 2015), in other words, the genesis of the field (see Sending 2015).

as the stakes in the issue became ever more apparent, the global response to climate change took on a momentum that was not within the organisation's design or power to control. While actors within the parent bodies of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Meteorological Society (WMO) envisioned that they would carry forward the process from the IPCC and initiate negotiations for a framework convention on climate change – as UNEP had for ozone depletion – political contestation made this impossible.

A UN General Assembly resolution supported a UNEP decision to begin preparations for climate negotiations in December 1989. However, when an open-ended ad-hoc working group of government representatives was convened by UNEP and WMO in September 1990, disagreement quickly arose. Participants at the meeting could not agree on who should organise and conduct negotiations: 'a negotiating committee under the auspices of WMO and UNEP, in essence carrying forward the IPCC process, or a special conference under the authority of the UN General Assembly' (Bodansky 1993: 473–74). While countries in the global north generally supported the former option, many countries in the global south, 'who felt excluded from the IPCC, preferred the second option' (Bodansky 1993: 474).⁵ As a result, an International Negotiating Committee (INC) under the auspices of the General Assembly was established for negotiating the framework for collective action on climate change (UNGA RES 45/212 1990). Although this newly formed body was to 'take into account' the work of the IPCC, and UNEP and WMO were invited to make 'appropriate contributions' to the process, a separate ad hoc secretariat was established (UNGA RES 45/212 1990).

The formation of the INC transferred the IPCC's mandate for formulating policy response options to this newly formed body (UNGA RES 45/212 1990). The 1992 adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) established this treaty-making process as the principal site for negotiating global interest in climate change. However, like the IPCC, the UNFCCC does not determine the limits of the climate field nor is it able to retain control over the outcomes of its negotiating processes. The social, scientific, political and economic ways of practicing climate change generated through the UNFCCC – temperature targets, methodologies for measuring and reporting, financial transactions through mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage funds and the new institutional arrangements that oversee and implement these – do not stay in the hands of those that authorise their creation. In fact, as methods for embedding climate change in the everyday organisation and conduct of life, these objects come to exert their own force both on the UNFCCC process and on the wider climate field.⁶

⁵ See also Miller 2001a: 255, 2004:59–61.

⁶ See for instance, Paterson (2009) on the 'quasi-autonomous dynamic' of the 'carbon market' and Bernstein et al. (2010) on how these markets have taken on a life of their own beyond the reach of states to control them.

With the creation of the negotiation site under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the organisation of climate change knowledge for these negotiations became more deeply separated than it might have been had both organisations been under UNEP.⁷ This meant that the managers of the IPCC had to undertake work to define and maintain the organisation's role as the central knowledge provider (Hughes 2015: 95). During the negotiation of the Framework Convention, the IPCC chair and other actors within the organisation sought to establish the IPCC's institutional significance to this new body. However, this objective was hampered by a number of developing countries, most notably Brazil and India, which had limited authorship in the first assessment report (FAR) (IPCC 1990a: xxviii), did not accept the assessment's construction of climate change (IPCC 1990b: 151), and did not want the IPCC formally recognised within the Convention text (Miller 2001b: 255; Biermann 2002: 205–6; Yamin and Depledge 2004: 465).

Consequently, the IPCC's attempt to be signified as the official provider of scientific and technical advice was unsuccessful and a provision was made for the establishment of a Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA). This new body was to manage the Convention's knowledge requirements with only oblique reference to relations with 'existing competent international bodies' made in the text (UNFCCC 1992, Article 9).⁸ The SBSTA was not formally constituted, however, until the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 1) in 1995. In the meantime, the IPCC was requested to respond to the Conventions needs for 'objective scientific and technical advice' (UNFCCC 1992, Article 21). This gave the IPCC leadership time to strengthen the organisation's position as leading knowledge provider in the climate field and to establish its relationship to the UNFCCC.⁹

The IPCC's success in establishing its relationship to the UNFCCC is apparent. The SBSTA and COP regularly request the IPCC to provide assessments and input specific information into the negotiating process (IPCC 2007a), and both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement refer to the IPCC and its work (UNFCCC 1997, 2015). The IPCC's relationship to the UNFCCC has been further consolidated by the Paris Agreement. In the Paris Agreement, the IPCC continues to provide the methodology for Parties to provide regular reporting on anthropogenic emissions of GHG

⁷ This was the case, for example, with negotiations on ozone, the Basel Convention and Convention for Biological Diversity.

⁸ For a detailed analysis of SBSTA and its relation vis-à-vis the UNFCCC and the IPCC, see Miller 2001a, 2001b.

⁹ The decisions taken at the first Conference of the Parties in 1995 strengthened the IPCC's formal tie to the UNFCCC, 'citing it as a source of "the latest international scientific, technical, socio-economic and other information", as well as input on methodological issues' (Yamin and Depledge 2004: 465). The relationship between the IPCC and the SBSTA was also formalised, with the SBSTA charged with summarising and converting the IPCC's assessments into a format 'appropriate to the needs of the Conference of the Parties' and seeking input and advice from the IPCC on methodologies, for example, for compiling national GHG inventories etc. (IPCC 2007b: 3).

by sources and removals by sinks (UNFCCC 2015, Article 13), as it did in the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC 1997, Article 5). A role that is extended to providing the methodologies and common metrics for reporting in Nationally Determined Contributions (UNFCCC 2015, decision 1/CP.21). Furthermore, the IPCC assessments are identified as a source of input to the global stocktake, and the organisation was invited to provide a special report in 2018 on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (UNFCCC 2015, decision 1/CP.21). As explored in Chapter 7, this privileged relationship means that many of the key objects negotiated within the UNFCCC, including the 1.5°C temperature target, originate from or are legitimated through the IPCC's assessment practice (Fogel 2005; Lahn and Sundqvist 2017; Livingston and Rummukainen 2020; Beek et al. 2022; Cointe and Guillemot 2023). This relationship to and role in global climate agreement-making generates forces that require constant attention and management by lead IPCC actors.

The IPCC's position in the climate field rests upon its symbolic power to arbitrate over the legitimate means for knowing and acting upon climate change, a source of power that is coupled to its relationship with the UNFCCC. The IPCC competes for this position with other climate change knowledge and assessment products compiled by national governments, NGOs and other international organisations, and maintaining its relationship to the negotiating process is crucial for preserving the relevance and pre-eminence of its assessment products. This pre-eminence means that the IPCC and its assessment practice have the capacity to authorise climate knowledges and expertise and thereby legitimate actors' stake in international climate politics. Governments are well aware of the force that the IPCC's knowledge production has in and over the negotiating process and for this reason take a keen interest in the IPCC's procedures for producing assessments and approving the report outline (Chapter 5) and key messages in the SPM (Chapter 7). This political interest exerts a force over the IPCC's practice of writing and the content of the final messages, which is documented over the coming chapters. However, it is not only governments that seek to gain access and input into the IPCC's climate change assessment.

Global interest in climate change diverts attention and resources from other international political concerns, including global health issues (Fidler 2010), migration (Hall 2015), biodiversity (Jinnah 2011a), desertification (Conliffe 2011) and other environmental problems (Axelrod 2011). If these issue areas are to retain the interest of the international community, they must either recapture attention from climate change or align themselves with and to the interests of the climate field.¹⁰ In the case of global health, the IPCC assessment process

¹⁰ The strategic alignment of issue areas with the climate regime has been conceptualised as climate bandwagoning; see the special issue of *Global Environmental Politics* (Jinnah 2011b).

has provided an important means for identifying the impact of climate change to human health (Hashimoto et al. 1990; McMichael et al. 1996, 2001; Confalonieri et al. 2007) and for highlighting the synergies between tackling climate change alongside other development issues (Field et al. 2012). The primary concern and objective of actors within the global health field may be to recapture political commitment and resources to long-standing global health issues. However, by becoming interested and invested in climate change and supporting research on the health impacts of climate change, the field of health can align their interests with the interests of the climate field and promote their expertise and the utility of their work through the position they take (Bowen et al. 2012). This also brings important benefits to the IPCC and supporters of the UNFCCC process, as health issues mobilise public and government support for addressing climate change, which in turn deepens support for further research and assessment activities (Haines et al. 2007, 2009; Haines 2008). This demonstrates how interest and investment in climate change shapes both the climate field and other fields in diverse ways: diverting energy and attention from other global concerns. At the same time, the IPCC's assessment practice provides an opportunity for actors to develop new forms of capital and revenue in their own fields, as well as empowering their form of expertise within the climate field.

The IPCC's capacity to legitimate knowledge makes it the prime target for those contesting the science of climate change and the political significance of the issue. The notion of naming identifies this as a struggle over social order, with actors contesting the reality of climate change and the knowledge that underpins it to preserve their own social position (Lahsen 2008). In an attempt to undermine the authority of the IPCC's scientific findings and contest the reality and urgency of climate change, actors have sought to undermine the credentials of IPCC authors and the scientific conventions of its assessment practice (Edwards and Schneider 2001; Dunlap and McCright 2015; BBC Four 2021). By publicly exposing inconsistencies in the process and content of a new report, these attacks have successfully challenged key findings that underpin the collective response, forcing the IPCC to defend its work and moderate its operating procedures to regain authority for the next assessment. The measures the organisation takes to re-establish its authority are critical. If governments and other users of the reports come to question the IPCC as a legitimate source of knowledge, or if they suspect that the IPCC is no longer widely recognised as a legitimate source of knowledge, they may want to reduce their proximity to the organisation to avoid becoming embroiled in the controversy and preserve their own symbolic power.

The IPCC came under sustained attack prior to and after COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009 as a result of the 'climategate' affair and mistakes discovered in the fourth

assessment report (AR4).¹¹ The IPCC chair was targeted in these attacks and strongly criticised for his response to errors over the melting of the Himalayan glaciers.¹² As the face of the organisation, calling into question the ability of the IPCC chair poses a threat to the organisation's symbolic power. Traditionally, the IPCC chair addresses the UNFCCC COP during its high-level segment. However, the IPCC was not invited to present to the main plenary at COP 17 in Durban in 2011 (Gutierrez, van Alstine and Yamineva 2011: 8). This provoked consternation amongst IPCC panel members during the 34th plenary session, and after informal communication between the IPCC Chair and the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, the agenda was amended (Gutierrez, van Alstine and Yamineva 2011). Although these events may be unrelated, the criticism directed at the IPCC chair and its reports impacts the organisation's scientific authority and its position in the climate field, which has the potential to impact upon those that are closely coupled to the organisation and its assessments. It is therefore unsurprising that, at a time when the UNFCCC was dealing with questions around its own centrality to climate action (Keohane and Victor 2011), the secretariat sought to insulate itself by distancing itself from the IPCC and its chair (Hughes 2015: 97).

This section has set out to describe the IPCC's role in establishing global interest in climate change, to locate the IPCC within the climate field and to sketch the dynamics that this social location engenders. Recounting this history reveals that neither the IPCC nor the UNFCCC have been able to contain interest or contestation over climate change, which is revealing of the physical phenomenon and collective effort to reach agreement on it. By implicating the current economic order, climate change threatens current ways of organising life and those privileged within and by this order. At the same time, by bringing modes of existence into focus, climate change offers an unprecedented opportunity for re-evaluating the basis and values of collective organisation. The improvement this could bring to the material conditions of some at social and economic cost to others makes the stakes in this struggle indeterminately high. The physical reality of climate change is increasingly encroaching on the organisation and conduct of everyday life. As the consequences of a changing climate become everyday experiences, the limits of the climate field will continue to expand with the potential for every being to become interested and invested in its name. The IPCC is centrally situated in this expanding social field, and this growing interest exerts pressure on what the IPCC is, the activities that identify it as such and the meaning these activities produce. These external forces, however, are not the

¹¹ On 'Climategate' see Pearce 2010. On mistakes surrounding the melting of Himalayan glaciers, see Carrington 2010.

¹² For information on this attack on the IPCC chair, see Section 5.3.

sole pressure on the IPCC and its assessment practice; the IPCC's mandated purpose and the necessity of realising global reports generate their own pressures. To identify these internal forces, I turn from the IPCC's location in the climate field to the IPCC as its own field of practice.

3.2 The IPCC as a Field of Practice

The climate field is a field in emergence. As a field orientated around activity in the name of climate change, it is shaped by actors from well-established fields of professional activity. Originally limited to scientific practice, today global interest in climate change is generated by and constitutes political, scientific, economic, legal and bureaucratic activities. Actors draw their authority to know and respond to climate change, and symbolic power to influence and be influential in the climate field, from these diverse disciplinary and professional realms. Each has distinct interests in the problem, ways of practicing the profession, recognising authority and undertaking activity in and for the name of climate change. Collectively, over time, however, these distinct ways of doing and knowing professional existence are developing internationally recognised ways of practicing the climate change problematic, which in turn shapes the fields contributing to this collective attempt at agreement-making.

Like the climate field in which it is situated, the IPCC is made up of actors from distinct fields of practice, from the scientists that produce knowledge of climate change to the member governments that accept and approve IPCC products. Each of these fields is driven by its own interests and has its own conventions and methods for producing and recognising legitimate ways of knowing, as well as means for assigning and acknowledging authority. Over the past 30 years, actors' shared investment in realising an intergovernmental assessment of climate change has produced a unique organisation and practice for producing assessment reports. Participants' investment in the organisation and its assessment activities has exerted a force that shapes actor interests over time and through practice. It is this reshaping of participants through their involvement in the IPCC that enables the organisation itself to be identified as a field of practice.

Mapping the IPCC as a practice of writing enables a detailed study of by whom (the actors), how (through what activities) and on the basis of what authority the reality of climate change is written, and the order of relations this practice is built upon and has the potential to remake. As I aim to establish over the coming chapters by borrowing Bourdieu's notion of capital (Bourdieu 1986b), the IPCC embodies the international order of which it is the product, an order that has the potential to be reproduced in and through the IPCC's practice for producing knowledge of climate change. That is, if the IPCC's practice

of writing remains static and uncontested. It is the IPCC's symbolic power to write reality, however, which makes its practice of writing climate change – by whom, on the basis of what authority and according to what scholarly, administrative and diplomatic conventions – a central object of struggle within (and outside) of the organisation.

Producing internationally recognised assessments of climate change that can be accepted and approved by member governments is a delicate balance and the product of struggle between scientific conventions, political interests, administrative realities and the social and economic structures these embody. Objectively, in and through the structures of the world, the struggle for symbolic power in and over the IPCC's practice of writing is fought over recognised pillars of the organisation: rules and procedures for producing IPCC assessment reports; geographical and disciplinary representation in the authorship and leadership of the assessments; access to and distribution of labour in writing the reports. Subjectively, these battles are governed by the perceptions, opinions and attitudes of IPCC participants, as internalised in habitus. Less often cited, these cultural dispositions are a conservative force, as they have a capacity – despite organisational attempts to ensure balance – to recognise, acknowledge and reproduce the order of which they are the product (Hughes and Paterson 2017).

The production of IPCC assessment reports began as a relatively informal process, one that relied on the conventions and experiences of the actors leading the process. However, as the political stakes in the climate change problematic increased and as the IPCC leadership sought to be at the centre of the international political response, pressure on the rules and procedures for constructing IPCC assessment reports also increased. Political involvement combined with relentless criticism about the inclusiveness and scientific authority of IPCC assessment products persistently brings the IPCC's rules and procedures into focus, which has resulted in the codification of the IPCC's practice of writing. This practice is the product of the interplay between external pressures and the internal struggle between scientific, political and administrative authority in and over how an IPCC assessment is to be written, by whom, on the basis of what qualifications and according to what geographical balance.

Geographical representation of the IPCC's panel, bureau and authorship has been a force within the IPCC's practice of writing from the outset (Agrawala 1998a, 1998b), the significance of which is demonstrated by the contestation of developing countries of the IPCC's position and symbolic power in the climate field (Hughes 2015). Objectively, the IPCC's struggle to legitimate and universalise its assessment products has played out through the creation of funds for developing country participation (Chapter 6), bureau expansion and author numbers (Chapter 6). Subjectively, this is a harder battle, as in practice scientific and other

cultural criteria identify and distinguish leadership through the assessment process and these forms of authority are tied to the material necessities required for building a distinguished scientific career (Chapter 6).

Access to the IPCC's practice of writing is power. This is as true for those within the IPCC as it is for those attempting to gain access to the climate field and legitimate their stake in the struggle over climate change. The objective of the IPCC's practice of writing is an intergovernmental assessment of climate change – knowledge that ultimately has the symbolic power to challenge and legitimise particular ways of perceiving and acting on the world in the name of climate change. Access to the assessment's assembly pathway and the activities through which the reports are compiled – outlining, commenting, assessing, reviewing, editing, selecting the report's core messages and accepting and approving the final product – offers the opportunity to shape how climate change is known. Those invested in the IPCC's practice of writing struggle for and over the forms of capital that enable increased access to and influence over the writing of climate change. Interests in and objectives for access depend on actors' role and position within the organisation and are largely the product of the scientific, governmental and bureaucratic fields that qualify actors to participate in the assessment process. This individual investment in climate change and the IPCC cannot be reduced solely to a search for recognition (Sending 2015), as this sits alongside a deep-seated care for human and planetary relations that the IPCC transforms into meaningful and purposeful action.

The organisational form and assessment practice of the IPCC are products of these struggles. Today the IPCC can be identified as five distinct units according to actors' role, interests and authority in and over the assessment practice. These five distinct units have emerged over the course of the IPCC's lifetime and in response to the forces exerted on the organisation and its practice of producing assessments of climate change. The following chapter identifies these units as the panel, the bureau, the WG, the technical support units (TSUs), the secretariat and the authors. Chapter 4 sketches the relations between these units, the activities they perform and the access and forms of capital they have in and over the IPCC's practice of writing. Once the organisation of the IPCC has been mapped, it is possible to follow the production of an IPCC assessment report along its assembly pathway, which is divided into the decision to repeat the assessment (Chapter 5), the scientific assessment (Chapter 6) and the acceptance and approval of the final product (Chapter 7). This is a living organisation and a dynamic process that is constantly updating and adjusting to the demands and forces of its situation, not least the force that a changing climate exerts, and the practice of writing aims to capture the nature of this process rather than produce a fixed representation of its outcomes.

3.3 The Method for Unravelling a Practice

The IPCC's assessment practice is made up of a multitude of tasks – scheduling, arranging, meeting, reading, reviewing, writing, compiling, editing, commenting, submitting, intervening, proposing – activities that are divided between set actors that have responsibility for and the recognised authority to conduct these tasks and differentiated capacity to influence through the process. To systematise the study of how these activities enable access to and authority over the IPCC's assessment practice and the distribution of symbolic power to write climate change through the process, I disaggregate the organisation according to actors, activities and forms of authority. Adopting actors, activities and forms of authority as an analytical framework makes it possible to unravel the IPCC's practice of writing into its constituent tasks and to describe the emergence of this practice over time and six rounds of assessments. This brings to light the properties or forms of capital that have been valued in the organisation and the social order of relations this has institutionalised within the IPCC.

This approach offers new insight to studies of the IPCC and has the potential to open up other international organisations to systematic study because no particular group of actors or forms of authority are privileged prior to study. Thus, while existing studies of the IPCC informed by the concepts of epistemic community, notions of co-production or boundary organisation (as reviewed in Chapter 5) focus analysis on actors and relations designated as scientific or political, this categorisation is not reified from the outset because all actors that are part of the organisation are included in the analysis. This brings in to view the secretariat and technical support units, which have previously been overlooked and under analysed. In Chapter 5, I describe the particular forms of authority housed within these units and identify who within the organisation has privileged access to the capital these actors hold. In this section, I explore how this analytical approach emerged through the fieldwork and identify the forms of data collected and used to build an account of the IPCC as a practice of writing climate change.

Looking back, there were three distinct stages to my research that contributed to reconstructing the IPCC as a practice of writing (see Table 3.1). In reality, this has been a process of back and forth, for example, returning to IPCC documentation after an interview or revising interview questions based on observation. First, I focused on the assessment reports, recording the nationality, expertise and career trajectory of the authors, and how this changed over subsequent assessments. I read the executive summaries of the chapters, the technical summaries and SPMs of each round of assessment reports to try and get a sense of how climate change was being constructed, through what forms of knowledge, and how this shifted over

Table 3.1 *Methodology for studying the IPCC as a practice of writing*

Analytical framework	<p>The practice of writing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actors: the actors that make up the IPCC – grouped into units according to the activities they undertake and the forms of authority this gives in/over the assessment 2. Activities: the set tasks that a unit has/is responsible for in the production of the report 3. Authority: the valued properties and their distribution within and across units of the organisation that enables actors to shape the conduct and content of the report
Method	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentary analysis: Identification and location of actors; description of IPCC assessment activities; organisational concerns; change over time 2. Interviews: bibliographical/historical account of interest in climate change; roles in the IPCC; description of activities; perceptions, attitudes, dispositions and values (who or what is valued) 3. Observation: place and type of work; role in the organisation; social order – who has an effect; struggles and contestation
Aim	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reconstruct the IPCC's assessment practice 2. Identify the actors with symbolic power, the properties and attributes of this power to imprint and its distribution at different stages of the assessment formation 3. Identify the attitudes and dispositions shaping the social order within the IPCC and its potential imprint on IPCC products 4. Explore the relationship between valued social properties within IPCC (scientific authority) and global political order (economic resources)

time through each round of assessment. This initial research was important for identifying key actors within the organisation to interview.

I was interested in speaking to long-standing IPCC participants and those that had contributed to multiple assessments in order to document how the assessment process had developed over time. By the time of writing, I had conducted over forty interviews with IPCC authors, bureau members, government delegates and TSU staff (see appendix 1), as well as informal conversations and email exchanges over a ten-year period. Roughly half of these were face-to-face interviews that took place in the UK and North America and averaged just over an hour in length. One quarter of respondents were interviewed in their place

of work, which included a visit to the WGII TSU at the Carnegie Institute at Stanford University in 2010 and a visit to the WGIII TSU at Imperial College London in 2019. I transcribed all interviews in full and used this process to reflect on my interview style and the material I was gathering. After the first two or three interviews, I began to recognise respondents accounts from the published literature, and I became aware that respondents were contributing to and influenced by IPCC scholarship. To get beyond shared opinions on the IPCC, I changed my interview questions, asking interview respondents to recount the origins of their professional interest in climate change, their initial encounters with the IPCC and then to detail the tasks they undertook as a participant.

The change in interview questions made it possible to build a picture of the daily working environment of IPCC participants, which was critical for identifying and locating actors within a field of expertise and comparing and contrasting this to their activities in the assessment process. During the interview stage, the opportunity arose to attend and observe the proceedings of the 32nd IPCC plenary session, hosted in Busan, South Korea, in October 2010, which became the third stage of data collection.¹³ IPCC plenary meetings are the annual meetings of the panel that are organised by the secretariat and attended by IPCC member governments, the bureau, TSU staff and organisations with observer status. This four-day long intergovernmental meeting was the most significant stage of the research process for two reasons. First, I observed the distinct way each unit has for conducting its business and how these are adjusted when the organisation works together in performing a joint task, as it does during plenary proceedings. Second, it gave me an insight into the construction of IPCC documentation and the practical purpose this construction process and its end products serve.

The final account of the IPCC as an organisation and an assessment practice is provided by reference to IPCC documentation, the InterAcademy Council investigation into the organisation (IAC 2010a, 2010b), Earth Negotiation Bulletins of IPCC plenary sessions, secondary literature and where gaps remained, further correspondence and follow-up interviews. In most instances, I do not directly quote interview respondents in the text. I used interviews to understand how the IPCC worked and to gain detailed accounts of assessment activities, rather than as a means to gather information on any particular person or event. The aim is to reconstruct a collective process – a shared social practice – which could not be built from the perceptions or point of view of a single actor. For this reason, all interview data was cross-referenced with other sources, including IPCC documentation, previous historical accounts of the IPCC and the IAC (2010b)

¹³ I obtained observer status through the Tyndall Centre, and I am indebted to Mike Hulme and Asher Minns for enabling this.

questionnaire. Table 3.1 indicates how each method of data collection focused on particular knowledges and understandings of the IPCC that enable it to be constructed as a practice of writing.

3.4 Summing Up

In this chapter, I have described climate politics as a struggle to name the problem driven by attempts to determine the basis by which climate change will be named and the global order of relations this will preserve or has the potential to remake. The IPCC, as the recognised knowledge provider for collective action, is situated centrally within this struggle – authorised to write and set the rules and procedures by which the global meaning of climate change is to be written in and through its assessment practice. The IPCC's practice for writing climate change is shaped by the political forces and struggles that the emergence of political interest in climate change engendered and the organisational attempts to contain and respond to these over thirty years and through six rounds of assessments. The pathway for producing assessments that has emerged – the IPCC's practice of and for writing climate change – can be broken down and studied into its constituent parts through the actors, activities and forms of authority that constitute it. In Chapter 4 I use actors, activities and forms of authority as the analytical framework to disaggregate and to describe the social order that structures the organisation, its conduct and its products.

Examining the IPCC through this analytical framework identifies the IPCC as five distinct organisational units: the secretariat, the panel, the bureau, TSUs and authors. The units are distinguishable by the actors and by the distinct sets of tasks that actors within each unit are authorised to undertake in the writing of climate change. If you remember, in concluding Chapter 2, I suggested that there were two things that I needed from the analytical approach of the book. The first was to situate the IPCC within climate politics so that it was possible to discern the impact of this position on the organisation and its assessment practice, which the chapter did through re-describing climate politics as an act of naming. The second, was to enable an exploration of the authority to name – the properties and distribution of this symbolic power to designate the reality of the problem, and its relationship to broader patterns of global economic and political order. In the coming chapters, I describe the three key stages in the production of an IPCC report: the outline (Chapter 5), the assessment (Chapter 6) and the approval of its key messages (Chapter 7). The analytical framework will aid in providing an account of the order of relations that govern the IPCC's practice of writing through each of these stages and enable exploration of whether this order is written into or challenged in the naming of climate change through the process.