

Rethinking the Limits of the Concept of Agency in the International Relations Discipline: The Case of the Climate Justice Movement

Uluslararası İlişkiler Disiplininde Aktör Kavramının Sınırlarını Yeniden Düşünmek: İklim Adaleti Hareketi Örneği

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Abstract

For a long period of time, in the International Relations discipline, the concept of agency has been discussed within the scope of certain theoretical premises, and the question of what might be considered an agent has been neglected. However, the distinctive issues and dynamics of the 21st century necessitate to reconsider these premises. The article discusses the agency of the Climate Justice Movement on critical realist ground with a poststructuralist intervention. It suggests that the level of analysis and the agent – structure relations should be considered in tandem to grasp the Movement's agency. It claims that for decentralized agents, the lack of a decision-making mechanism might be the very reason for the agency of the political entity. The article is organized into four main parts. Firstly, the particular features of the Climate Justice Movement will be examined. Secondly, a hypothetical mechanism regarding the agency of the Movement will be reproduced. Reproduction is a mode of inference that is widely used by critical realists as a means of scrutinizing unobservable mechanisms. Thirdly, based on the agency debate in International Relations, various approaches will be analyzed to explain the Movement's agency. Lastly, the reproduced hypothetical mechanism will be scrutinized within the context of level of analysis, structure and agency.

Keywords

Climate Justice Movement, Agency, International Relations Theory, Critical Realism, Poststructuralism

Öz

Uluslararası ilişkiler disiplininde uzun yıllar boyunca aktör kavramı belli teorik kabuller çerçevesinde ele alınsa da hangi siyasi unsurların aktör olarak nitelendirilebileceği konusu göz ardı edilmiştir. Fakat 21. yüzyılın kendisine has sorunları ve dinamikleri aktörlüğe dair söz konusu kabulleri yeniden değerlendirmeyi gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, İklim Adaleti Hareketi'nin aktörlüğünü eleştirel gerçekçi bir zeminde postyapısalcı bir müdahale ile ele almaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, merkezi olmayan (decentralized) aktörler için karar alma mekanizmasının noksanlığının söz konusu siyasi unsurların aktörlüğünün temel sebebi olabileceğini iddia eder. Çalışma dört temel bölüme ayrılmıştır. Öncelikle İklim Adaleti Hareketinin özgün nitelikleri incelenecektir. Ardından geridönüm (retroduction) metoduyla Hareket'in aktörlüğüne ilişkin bir varsayımsal mekanizma öne sürülecektir. Sonrasında Uluslararası İlişkiler'de aktörlük tartışması temel alınarak Hareket'in aktörlüğü irdelenecektir. Son olarak, öne sürülen varsayımsal mekanizma analiz düzeyi ve aktör-yapı sorunsalı çerçevesinde değerlendirilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

İklim Adaleti Hareketi, Aktörlük, Uluslararası İlişkiler Teorisi, Eleştirel Gerçekçilik, Postyapısalcılık

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Introduction

The distinctive dynamics of the 21st century have nourished political developments that are inclined to rethink the concepts and subjects which have been overlooked or disregarded by the international relations (IR) academia. Undoubtedly, two of the most significant issues are global climate change, which has gained a critical momentum in threatening our lives, and the directly linked reaction to this phenomenon, the emergence of the Climate Justice Movement (CJM). The CJM, in a very short period, has gathered masses on a global scale and pointed out the political, economic and moral dimensions of global climate change which had barely been described in numbers by future projections. Even though the CJM arouses interest to be analyzed by these contributions, the abstract nature of the Movement and the heterogeneous elements of it, complicate its study.

The question should be asked therefore, how beneficial are the debates, conceptualizations and definitions concerning agency in understanding and explaining the causalities which are generated or will be generated by the CJM? Since the early years of the IR discipline, the concept of agency has been discussed in the light of some certain traditions of the philosophy of science. These rather barren dialogues were enriched by the critical realist and poststructural approaches of the 1980s. The aim of this study is to develop a critical realist approach which will scrutinize the agency of the CJM with regards to its unique character and structural conditions. Along with providing a well-structured plan to look into the agents and structures, critical realism introduces the ontological and epistemological premises that underlie the very foundation to produce scientific knowledge. In this regard, Bhaskar's DREI model, which was developed from his critical realist multi-layered ontology for theoretical analysis, will be used.

According to critical realism, the purpose of science is to unearth the mechanisms generating events and phenomena (Bhaskar, 2013: 56). The mechanisms, in the simplest way, are the modes of operation of the structures. Bhaskar claims that reality includes another established layer outside of human thought and perception. The mechanisms, which are the main sources of causality, are the ontologies of the aforementioned reality. By definition, the information of social reality cannot be reached by intuitions nor empirical methods. At this point, DREI is a tool to understand the mechanisms with regards to the methodological limitations of acquiring the knowledge of the 'domain of real' (Bhaskar, 2008:46; Bhaskar, 2016:59). Each letter that constitutes the name of the model signifies a step of the research process, i.e., D is for describe; R is for retroduction; E is for elimination, and I is for identify. The model envisages developing a hypothetical mechanism with references to knowledge that is grasped in the 'domain of actual', and discussing the speculative mechanism and the causal relations within the domain of real (Hu, 2018:6). In this context, the first step is to 'describe' the events or the phenomenon that contradict with the explanations of existing theories. The second step is to 'retroduce' a hypothetical mechanism which is able to explain the defined events or phenomena. The third step is to 'eliminate' the rival theories and explanations. This step is followed by 'identifying' the way of working of the hypothetical mechanism (Hartwig, 2015:195; Minger & Standing, 2017:12). Within this framework, each part of the study is formed to follow the steps of the DREI model.

This study's intended contribution is threefold. Firstly, it aims to contribute to the agent-structure debate in IR with an argument mainly structured on the critical realist theses and supported by a poststructuralist intervention from an agency perspective. As it is claimed, this argument is particularly useful for understanding the possible agency of decentralized political entities. Secondly, by developing the argument with the claim of the agency of the CJM, it aims to provide a meta-theoretical ground for explaining the causal relations concerning social movements and global politics. In this regard, the meta-theoretical claims of the study could open new horizons regarding how social movements' causalities should be inspected; thus, it could lead to new intensive and extensive empirical research (Danermark et al., 2005;165). Last but not least, as the study adopts the DREI model, it utilizes a tool of reasoning that is mainly neglected by IR scholars; thus, it presents an instance of demonstrating the strengths and weaknesses of the model.

What is Climate Justice Movement?

The Roots of the Concept of Climate Justice

The 1972 Stockholm Conference is the first international initiative which discussed the increase of carbon levels in the atmosphere by anthropogenic influences, and thus, the drastic change in the carbon circulation, or briefly, global climate change (Sinn,2012;24). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), signed at the Rio Summit in 1992, is the first declaration to tackle the issue of global climate change on an international scale. Since 1995, at the Conference of the Parties (COP), which was established by the 1992 Convention, various institutions, have been able to contribute to the global efforts on climate change and the on-going discussion. Hence, many civil society organizations (CSO) were followers of the degradation of the environment even before the COP meetings. For example, around 300 CSOs participated in the preliminary meeting in 1990 in Geneva, and 22,000 delegates from more than 9000 CSOs participated in the Rio Summit (Princen & Fingers,1994:4).

With the participation of thousands of institutions from all over the world, these summits have become the platforms, in which the various opinions about the cause of the problems and different solutions have been defended. The voices that were augmented over the years, have criticized the way in which the problem, which had affected all the living beings in the world, was defined and the solutions that were directly linked to it. These critics have shed light on the injustices and cruelty that many societies have suffered and they have emphasized the political and ethical aspects of climate change. In this context, the politicization of global climate change, in other words the discussion of the historical, social, ethical and economic aspects of the process of ecological disruption and its results, is the first core element of the climate justice idea (Building Bridges Collective, 2010:27).

The concept of climate justice was first used in 1999 in the Greenhouse Gangsters vs. Climate Justice report, published by Corpwatch, to redefine climate change based on environmental justice and human rights (Corpwatch, 2020). However, the inception of the process that made the concept well-known, was the establishment of the umbrella

groups of CSOs and social movements that took position against the carbon trade in Kyoto Protocol. The Climate Action Network (CAN), which embodies hundreds of environmental CSOs, had taken an impartial approach to the issue, thus, some CSOs in this group had left and formed the (Climate Justice Now! CJN!) network at the COP13 summit in Bali in 2007. Furthermore, in 2008, The Climate Justice Action (CJA) network, which had a more radical stance regarding the current approach to global climate change compared to the CJN!, was established. In 2009, the COP 15 summit in Copenhagen was the scene of the clash of these three CSO networks.

According to Ruth Reitan and Shannon Gibson (2012), the three aforementioned CSO networks, represent the three perspectives in the environmental movement; the CAN represents liberal reformism, the CJN! represents eco-Marxism and the CJA represents an anarchist perspective. However, considering the various CSOs, which embody many individuals with different thoughts in these networks, their classification based on ideologies falter. Additionally, a more functional classification is possible based on the interactions of the three and the discourse that was constructed during the COP15 meetings. A widely used slogan during the COP15 protests “System Change not Climate Change” is a prominent criterion for the comparison. While the CAN represents the idea of sustaining the system or abstaining from a systemic change while addressing climate change, CJN! and CJA, which use often “climate justice” in their discourse, defend the necessity of structural change, regardless of their reasoning. In light of this point, it could be said that the second core element of the climate justice idea is the belief that the problem cannot be solved by the current system and thus, a structural change is essential for the salvation of humanity.

Climate Justice Movement: United in Diversity

As mentioned in the previous section, the broad definition of the concept of climate justice came to be a necessity rather than a choice. In the past 30 years, climate justice has been used by various movements and groups (ex: Marxist, anarchist, postcolonial as well as LGBTI+, vegan and Pagan societies from a religious perspective). Along with this diversity, considering the movements that belong to the fundamentally opposing CJN! and CAN networks, as well as the different movements with clashing views on climate justice supporting each other, it is obvious that while forming a definition, the dynamism between groups and ideas within the CJM should not be overlooked (Bennett & Segerberg, 2014:99; Weyler, 2019; Rising Up!, 2020).

Social Movements literature includes many studies that focus on the heterogeneity of global social movements and the dynamism of the elements of the movements (Reitan & Gibson, 2012:400). These studies, which criticize the approaches that disregard the aforementioned aspects and clarifying the elements of the social movements while limiting the scope, highlight the fluid and complex nature of the movements. Yet, it would be contradictory to ignore the plurality and multiple voices, whilst analyzing CJM and from a broader perspective, the social movements that aim to defend structural changes and give voice to the unheard (Zibechi, 2010:83-84). On the other hand, even though diversity is a cornerstone for the movement, the unity of the various elements within it, is just as important. Two closely related elements of unity could be referred to as; discursive

similarities and operational resemblances and cooperation. As mentioned in the previous section, the definition of climate justice with the politicization of climate change and the necessity of structural change, constitutes the base of discursive alignment. The usage of various civil unrest techniques, the realization of social responsibility projects, the organization of events to create public awareness can be taken as some of the examples for an operational resemblance. Additionally, some groups use physical and cyber tools to support each other, which can also be taken as an example of operational cooperation.

The redefinition of the spatial aspect of politics through globalization and the politicization of cyberspace put forward the cyber world as an unruly scene for non-state actors to flourish (Grygiel, 2018:101). The lack of control of authorities on cyberspace and the obsolescence of national borders in this sphere, reconfigure the operational cooperation between the various elements of CJM. Thanks to the possibilities of the cyber world, the cooperation is more than a simple network, it has been enhanced with a discourse where the differences are overlooked and the unity is underlined. The participation of many groups from all over the world, who are connected tightly through the internet, in the Peoples' Climate March in 2014 in New York and the simultaneous solidarity marches in different countries on the same date and the inclusive and unifying nature of the slogans represent some significant examples (Giacomini & Turner, 2015:29). For some, the operational cooperation amplified by the benefits of the cyber world, might outshine the conceptual discussions on climate justice and has the potential to create a discourse of unity. As an Ecuadorian climate activist, Leonardo Cerdo indicates: "*it doesn't matter what we call it; what matters is how we take action*" (Building Bridges Collective, 2010:52).

In summary, the CJM can be defined as a gigantic network of social movements and CSOs, which undertakes the political and ethical aspects of global climate change and advocates fundamental structural changes based on ideological foundations to solve the climate crisis. The heterogeneous structure of this gigantic network hampers the conceptualization of the CJM as an entity with clear goals and methods, capable of decision making, and which has a rational attitude and strategic point of view, i.e., as an instrumental rationalist actor. So, considering its decentralized quality, how would it be possible to probe into the CJM agency in global politics?

What kind of 'Structure' Enables CJM's Agency?

In this part, two fundamental questions on agency of the CJM will be looked into: i) Which level of analysis should be used to examine the Movement's agency? ii) What are the characteristics of the structure relating to agents in the determined analysis level? A hypothetical mechanism on agency, regarding the answers to these questions, will be suggested.

Based on a layered ontology approach, Bhaskar claims that a critical realist explanation of the social world can be made on seven levels: i) the sub-individual psychological level, ii) the individual or biographical level, iii) the level of micro and small group analysis, iv) the meso-level that the relations between the functional roles of a group of a society are examined, v) the macro-level orientated to the understanding of the functioning of whole societies or their regions, vi) the mega-level of the analysis of whole traditions and

civilizations, and vii) the planetary level concerned with the planet as a whole (Bhaskar & Danermark, 2006:289; Bhaskar et al., 2010:9-10). These proposed levels enable analysis of the different levels of agency as well. The classical debates of IR, which centralize states (for instance, the structure of international order, international system etc.) take place in the aforementioned sixth level. On the other hand, the debate on the agency of the CJM and its causality can only be held on the planetary level, because there is a strong interactive connection among the anthropogenic aspect of global climate change, the social world, the planet itself.

A planetary level analysis requires looking into various and complex causality relations. In this context, the 2019 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which provides decision makers detailed reports on many effects of global climate change and precautions regarding them, presents an example for intricate causality relations on climate crisis. For example, in the section on food security, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions during animal-sourced food production and its effects on global warming are highlighted and as an effective solution, a change in consumer habits is recommended (Mbow et., 2019:519). In light of this claim, local, national and international animal-sourced food production firms, individuals who are a fundamental part of the production cycle by their consumption habits, cultural, religious and moral codes which forbid some of the consumer habits and approve the others, and the related societies and CSOs, are some of the elements to be looked into in regards to the climate crisis. Thus, considering that immigrants and natives are the most vulnerable in the face of global climate change (Westra, 2013:28) whereas the multinational firms are the biggest culprits of global warming (Auer,2000:155), it is clear that the non-state actor should be at the center of discussions on global climate change.

Study of the agency of the CJM on a planetary level, draws an abstract picture of the causalities included in the analysis and the elements related to the aforementioned agency. At this point, distinct assumptions on the limits and benefits of this agency can be made from the critical realist perspective to structure. Structure, even though it is a fundamental notion of social sciences, has been interpreted differently by distinct philosophical schools. Porpora has classified them into four: i) patterns of aggregate behavior that are stable over time, ii) law-like regularities that govern the behavior of social facts, iii) systems of human relationships among social positions, and iv) collective rules and resources that structure behavior (Porpora, 1989: 200).

As mentioned before, the structure in IR, which centralizes the state and as taken in Bhaskar's sixth level (or the structure of the international system), corresponds to the second title in Porpora's classification. According to this approach, which can also be taken as "Waltzian", the structure limits the actions of the sole agents of international relations, and it directs states' behavior as far as they are rational agents (See, Waltz, 1979; Ülman et al., 2011). The structure is not a precondition for the existence of actions of states. However, regarding the critical realist approach which can be taken under the third and the fourth sections of Porpora's classification, the structures limit the actions of the agents, as well as enable them to act (Bhaskar, 1979:39). Thus, the structure is not only a restrictor but is a generative ontology. Additionally, as well as the structure is the condition of agency, the agents constantly reproduce and change the structure, therefore their existence

is a condition of the existence of the structure (Bhaskar, 2008:83). This perspective is called 'the duality of structures' and it allocates a wider area of decisiveness compared to Waltz's perspective. Nevertheless, in contrast to methodological structuralism, it does not take structure as the sole notion that shapes social worlds, because according to critical realism, the agents are the creators of the social world and the structures through their actions. In other words, the existence of the structures is a necessity for enabling the agents to create causality, as well as being created by them (Giddens, 1997:5).

In light of this information on the planetary level, to understand the political aspect of global climate change the structure has to be built upon two basic premises: i) Structure needs to enable the study of the agency of the non-state actors because of the aforementioned intricacy of the causality relations. ii) Based on the duality of the structures, structures are the conditions and the restrictions for agency. This indicated structure could be called 'ecological politics'.

At this point, it is fitting to suggest a hypothetical mechanism on agency based on ecological politics. What sort of agencies could be taken as being related to ecological politics? The climate refugees, who have become displaced because of the climate crisis, could be taken as examples. This issue, which came to be known when Kiribatian Ioane Teitota applied to New Zealand for refugee status because of climatic reasons in 2013, is being discussed in the United Nations (UN) by various environmental activist groups. While the legal status of the concept is being discussed (See, Arı & Gökpinar, 2020:43-46) it has been calculated that over 200 million people will be displaced because of climate change by 2050 (Brown, 2008:11). An analysis suggested in this context needs to include the causalities created by states, international organizations, CSOs and climate refugees represented by millions. Additionally it needs, accepting ecological politics, a structural component. Therefore, the heterogeneity of the aforementioned political elements (for example, while the states and organizations have decision making mechanisms, the climate refugees do not have an institutional and hierarchic structure nor a decision-making mechanism) does not prevent them from being agents on an ecological politics basis. In light of this, it could be claimed that hypothetical mechanism, conceptualized on a planetary level, and ecological politics as the structure, enable the agency of decentralized political entities. In the next part, the arguments on agency in IR will be discussed based on this hypothetical mechanism.

The Agency Debate in International Relations

It could be claimed that there are two main meta-theoretical questions in the IR discipline which have contributed to the theoretical aspect of the discipline by their answers and the approaches created: the level of analysis problem and the agent-structure problem. Every study in the discipline, however discrete it might be, includes some certain premises as answers to these questions. Fundamentally, answers to these questions represent a mainframe for the causality of the ontological elements which will be used to explain or understand the chosen situations, processes, relations, norms and events. Until the second half of the 1940s, the perspective to consider the states as the sole agents was generally accepted.

This approach, called a 'traditional' approach by Wolfers in the 1960s, has been criticized by new perspectives which try to interpret world politics (Wolfers, 1965:4).

Its first serious critics suggested that individuals and international organizations could affect the global political dynamics through their own subjectivity. By the proliferation of the methods and areas such as game theory, political psychology and operational code analysis, individuals have started to be accepted as agents in the discipline. At the same time, the increased activity and sphere of influence of international institutions such as the UN and the European Union caused studies that evaluate non-state institutions as subjective agents to flourish. Furthermore, as Doty (1997:372) has brilliantly pointed out, certain political elements have been accepted as agents without any further discussions on agency. The first study that focuses on the subject is Wendt's 1987 article, *The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory*. In this study, Wendt probes into Waltz's and Wallerstein's theories and points out the issues on agent-structure approaches in their work. Wendt suggests that Waltz, contrary to his claim, explains the characteristics of the structure of an international system based on the distribution of power between the states. Thus, instead of creating a structural analysis, it adopts methodological individualism, (See, Ashley, 1984:240; Dessler, 1989:448) and thus it overlooks the internal dynamics of the states' agency (Wendt, 1987:340-344). Wendt's paper on agency ignited a serious debate which was shaped by the contributions of critical realists and post-structuralists. The explanations of these two approaches to the issue are deeply contradictory. In this section, the current debate on agent-structure will be evaluated based on these two approaches and their theoretical solutions regarding the agency of the CJM will be discussed.

The Agency within the Agent-Structure Debate

It would be beneficial to look into the suggestions of two celebrated theorists Bhaskar and Margaret Archer who study the agency on a meta-theoretical level, before probing into the critical realist claims on agency. Bhaskar's understanding of the agent-structure relation can be seen in two fundamental notions framed in the Transformational Model of Social Activity: The duality of structures and the duality of praxis. As mentioned, according to the duality of the structures, as structure is a precondition of agency, the agency is the precondition of structure as well. However, according to the duality of praxis, agents unintentionally reproduce and transform the structures, while intentionally realizing their agency (Bhaskar, 1979:38). In this formulation, it is interesting to see that the "intentional actions" are taken as a part of the agency of the agents. Bhaskar's model studies the agent-structure question based on the relation between the society and the individual, however it disregards the agency of institutional agents.

Archer's morphogenetic approach, similar to Bhaskar, claims that the interaction of the structure and the agent continuously causes the reformation of society (Archer, 1995). Even though Archer agrees on the conditionality of agents and structures, she analyses the conditions and effects of the causalities of the two ontologies in separate time periods, thus, suggests a new method that enables the study of the ontologies separately. The most important part of Archer's method relating to the agency debate, is the perception of agency as primary and corporate. According to this approach, individuals are unintentional agents because of the effects of the preexisting social structures on their lives. Being a part of society makes the individual the primary agent. Additionally, individuals may become institutional agents by working with other individuals for common goals and executing

collective actions with intentional participation. This approach enables the theoretical study of agency of the individuals who are involved in social movements, however, it is insufficient in explaining the agency of the social movement itself. In both critical realist approaches, agency is conceptualized intrinsically with human faculties such as intentional behavior and voluntary participation. Critical realist theorists, who study the subject from an IR perspective take on a similar approach to the agents of global politics.

Along the lines of the framework given above, various interpretations of the agent-structure debate have been made in light of the critical realist perspective. Dessler, who criticizes Waltz's structural conceptualization from a Bhaskarian perspective, claims that the main difference between the Waltzian and Bhaskarian perspectives on structure, is structure's function to enable agents' 'intentional' actions (Dessler, 1989). According to Dessler, the sole method of analyzing the causalities that are made by the intentions of the agents, is Bhaskar's limiting yet conditioning understanding of structure. This claim, includes certain ambiguities in how the causalities made by the ontologies could be understood, as much as creating a basis to describe structures and agents as irreducible ontologies. Archers adds the time factor to her model in order to fix this issue. Carlsnaes, derivative of Archer's morphogenetic approach, suggests a model which enables the study of the formative effects of structure and agents on foreign policy making (Carlsnaes, 1992:264). Dessler and Carlsnaes' approach to the agent-structure debate, highlights several important points regarding the nature of agency. However, since the main agent that they point out in their analyses is the nation-state, they offer little with regards to one of the main topics of this study; the discussion on the limitations of agency. Carlsnaes focuses on the reflection of the agent-structure debate on foreign policy analyses. As for Dessler, he suggests that to explain the causes of actions, it is necessary to look into agency analysis as well as structural analysis. Hence, he has looked into the agency of the states, disregarding the possibility of agency of various political entities (Dessler, 1989:453).

Similar to Dessler and Carlsnaes, Wendt uses a critical realist approach to the agent-structure debate and determines certain points on the nature of agency. According to him, all agents basically have three intrinsic capacities, or rather powers: i) to have a theoretical understanding (however inaccurate) of its activities, in the sense that it could supply reasons for its behavior; ii) to reflexively monitor and potentially adapt its behavior; and iii) to make decisions. In this context, Wendt claims that states can be taken as agents by definition (Wendt, 1987:359). The most striking point of his study is his opinion on a states' agency being similar to the individuals, based on capacities and intentions. This understanding highlights two points about the peculiarity of a state agency and its connection to the human agency.

The first point is about the way the agency of the state is studied. Could the causality created by states be understood by analyzing the individuals in the decision-making mechanism? Or, could the politics, practiced by a state as an institution, be understood by analyzing the interests and values that belong to the state itself? Wendt discusses the uniqueness of state agency centered on two notions: collective agency and corporate agency. The collective agency simply represents the sum of the individuals who can use state tools and are able to make decisions in the name of state. There is no description

for the subjectivity of the state. However, corporate agency, used by Wendt to explain the agency of a state, defines institutions as more than the sum of their parts. In order to use this definition, the individuals who form the state should accept the 'self of the state' and act loyally, accordingly (Wendt, 1999:220).

The second matter is Wendt's characterization of the states similarity to humans, based on specific competences such as; intention, consciousness, identity (Wendt, 1999:194). This claim, indicating more than an analogy between humans and states, is nourished, by his work on the possibilities of conceptualizing states as organisms, in light of the basic qualities of them (Wendt, 2004). Wendt's approach has been criticized because of its conceptualization, which had been used by authoritarian and irredentist ideologies, like *Lebensraum* for self-legitimization and its undermining influence on the normative obligations of individuals (Lomas, 2005).

Even though Wendt has constructed his approach to the agency debate on human and state, he does not deny the possible agency of non-state entities and their rising significance in world politics (Wendt, 1992:424) Additionally, 'plural subjects', which he uses while discussing the qualities of corporate agency, pave the way for studying the agency of non-state entities in a broader scope. According to Wendt, plural subjects, contrary to corporate agency, do not have a central authority. Thus, even though they are formed by individuals who share similar goals, the lack of a binding decision-making mechanism enables plural subjects to include various intentions and objectives. For this reason, plural subjects are less capable of forming agencies compared to corporate agencies (Wendt, 2004: 297-298).

According to Wight, who examines the core principle of Wendt's approach, the relationship between human and agency, the main problem of the anthropomorphic state concept is, contrary to Wendt's claims, that taking states as humans is not theoretically functional (Wight, 2006:180-181). Wight claims that the quality of agency uniquely belongs to humans. The state, is a specific structure for humans to perform corporate agency. Thus, the agency of the state could only be understood through the agency of certain individuals in state positions (Wight, 2004:276). From this point forth, Wight developed an understanding of agency based on layered critical realism. The first layer is the recognition of the self based on responsibilities and intentions. The second layer refers to the way in which agency of the first layer becomes 'something' based on a socio-cultural system so that the social systems enable the first layer. The last layer indicates the role of the first layer of agency in the area described in the second layer. Wight aims to differentiate the idea of the Cartesian subject from the agency by his layered agency approach (Wight, 1999:129). However, similarly to other critical realist approaches, he relates the agency, with his first layer, to an internal competence of the recognition of the self.

In different methods and levels, critical realist approaches define agency with certain competences of humanity. For this reason, certain approaches in IR liken the agency of state to humans (Dessler and Carlsnaes), some take the state just as humans (Wendt) and the others explain the agency of the state based on the agency of the individuals that take part in state (Wight). Nonetheless, none of these approaches are useful in explaining the CJM, which is a decentralized political entity, and thus cannot be likened to an

individual, cannot be accepted as an individual and since it does not have a decision-making mechanism cannot be understood by examining certain individuals within it.

The Agency from the Perspective of the Poststructuralist Approach

Different names in critical realist circles scrutinized the agent and structure in a manner that exceeds methodological individualism and methodological structuralism based on relationality of two ontologies. However, the adoption of this approach has brought along certain challenges and obscurity. According to Weber, the study of the agent structure resulted in the certain definition of one of them as static and given, i.e., an analysis on structure takes the agents as static or vice versa (Weber, 1998:87). Additionally, as previously mentioned, critical realist readings are restrictive, as they perceive agency through the likeness to human faculties. Exactly at this point, the undecidability and the indeterminacy concepts of poststructural approach forms the foundations of a perspective that enables the rethinking of the limits of agency.

The poststructural approach rejects the unchanging and given agency conceptualizations. The existence of unchangeable, static and sometimes assumed “natural” categories are accepted as the presumptions of material reality. Contrary to general misconception, the poststructural approach does not reject the presence of these categories and disregard the physical aspects of the social world and human existence. However, according to post-structuralists, the physical aspect of the social world is not the premise of our attempts to interpret existence. The material elements of existence and the causations created by them can only be understood as far as they carry a discursive meaning. This discursivity is extremely open to change and as much close to being completed. This never-ending construction process is the main reason behind the indecisive quality of the concepts.

The main element that creates the construction process is the practices that are intrinsic to discourses. The practices are socially meaningful patterns of action that generate and reify discourses on the material world (Adler & Pouliot, 2011:4). However, the elements that realize practices are the parts of the never-ending construction process as well. Thus, these elements, or rather agents, are ambiguous since they are constructed by the practices and subjects of a never-ending change (Doty, 1997:376-377). The characteristics of the agents are changed by the practices they perform. Another important point of the conditions that make possible the generative power of the practices. Butler (1988:521) has likened the realization of the practices to performances through theatrical lenses. According to Butler, the construction of gender is a continuous process that is caused by performative acts. However, it is also clear that the singular performative acts are not enough to change the nature of the agent, or according to the example, the gender of the individual. The practices that enable the change are related to reiterative performative acts, i.e., performativity (Butler, 1993:12). From this point of view, it could be claimed that the practices are influential on altering the characteristics of the concepts, norms and agents as much as they are repeated.

In light of the post-structural approach, two contributions to the agency debate should be mentioned: i) the reconceptualization of the agency which is perceived as given from a traditional perspective and other approaches ii) the debate of the agency of the political entities which were overlooked. Weber’s study (1998) on the notion of state sovereignty

with Butler's performativity approach, and David Campbell's performative constructivist perspective to state identity, while reinterpreting the relation between the violence and politics can be put under the first category (Campbell, 1998).

The problematizing of the many categories which were presumed to be natural or unchangeable and the study of the agency in a broader perspective are the defining attributes of the examples in the second group. According to the poststructuralist approach, since the agency could not be reduced to possession of certain intrinsic competences, the agency of the political entities could be mentioned even when the presented political activity limits the intellectual capabilities. Abrahamson and Danyi's agency debate on the political action, presented as the hunger strike of the illegal immigrants [sic] in Brussels, tested the limitations of the agency as the aforementioned concept (Abrahamson & Danyi, 2018). These immigrants aimed to make an impactful protest, with their decision to make a hunger strike at the expense of dampening their physical and cognitive abilities. The interesting point here, while their bodies weakened and their physical and mental capabilities decreased in the duration of the strike, the impact and the power of their political action increased. Thus, under certain conditions, the lack of certain faculties, which are seen as preconditions of agency by many, could become the source of the agency of the political entities. Another example in this category is the debate on the 'Polish plumbers' phenomenon, which occupied French public opinion for a long time during the 2005 European Constitutional Referendum process. Inspired by Polish plumbers, Noyes (2018) argues that non-human entities and even the abstract notions could be conceptualized as agents. The media myth of Polish plumbers, which claims that French citizens' jobs would be taken, has been very effective on the outcome of the referendum. Noyes, describes this phenomenon as 'phantom agents' based on its strong effect on various agents.

Poststructuralist answers, based on practices with notions such as undecidability, indeterminacy, performativity, aim to offer a fruitful debate field where the agency of all objects, animate or not, related to humans or not, could be explained. However, this broad conceptualization of agency and study of the agents based on the practices it performed, overlooks the structural incentives and limitations that enable agency, while defining the agent indistinguishably from the other political entities (Ringmar, 2019). This approach, where the characteristics of the agent and limitations of agency become obsolete, would be inadequate to explain a political entity which will be examined on only one analysis level (planetary) and related to one structure (ecological politics) such as CJM and thus enable an explanation of its hypothetical mechanism.

The Debate on the Agency of CJM

In the previous section, the reasons behind the inadequacy of the various interpretations on the characteristics of the structure of critical realist and poststructuralist approaches of IR perspective, to explain the suggested hypothetical mechanism, have been mentioned. On the one hand, the critical realist interpretations of the connection between the agency and the intentional actions of humans remain inadequate to study the agency of decentralized political entities. On the other hand, poststructural solutions examine the agency independently from the structure and reduce the quality of the agents to the

production of the practices. In this section, the function of the reproduced hypothetical mechanism will be elaborated with critical realist and poststructural approaches. According to the critical realist approach, it is crucial to compare the contradictory theories on the subject based on their explanatory power, to unveil a mechanism (Reed, 2005:1630). However, this situation inevitably brings out the question: How suitable is it to use these two approaches together?

The lack of consensus on the ontology between critical realist and poststructuralist approaches has been exposed by many scholars (Yalvaç, 2012; Porpora, 2015; Klevis, 2020). The traces of the aforementioned distance, could be seen in the debate of Wight and Doty, on the agent-structure context (Doty, 1997; Wight, 1999; Doty, 1999, Wight, 2000). Thus, to give an explanation which embodies elements from the two approaches is only possible by being very cautious in a relatively limited area. This study on the agency of the CJM with a Bhaskarian method aims to analyze the phenomena with critical realist meta-theoretical assumptions and to utilize the poststructural approach to overcome the issues concerning agency of decentralized political entities. The analysis, based on these conditions, is constructed on the critical realist premises of the duality of the structures and human's agency on change and transformation of society. It would not be wrong to describe 'human actions as a flow' which continuously reshapes the social world (Bhaskar, 1979). Furthermore, it is clear that the scrutiny on bigger scales of the level of analysis to examine social structure, force us to ponder new forms of agencies. The explanations of names such as Wendt, Wight, Dessler, Carlsnaes could be seen as the reflections of this necessity on governmental and international relations planes. Yet these efforts could not meet with agency of the decentralized political entities such as the CJM. The poststructural approach would enable us to overcome the aforementioned theoretical restrictions.

At this stage, it is necessary to resolve the two possible metatheoretical conflicts of the simultaneous usage of the critical realist and poststructural approaches. Firstly, whereas the poststructural approach removes the limitation of agency by the definition based on practices, the critical realist approach defines the agency as directly related to humans' activities in the social world. The second problem is the establishment of the connection between the attributes of the CJM, which are defined by the poststructuralist concepts, and the critical realist structure. Based on critical realist arguments, it could be claimed that the practices are only formed by human actions. Thus, from this perspective, the agency of the notions like the Polish Plumbers, defined as ghost agents by Noyes, cannot be accepted (Noyes, 2018) because the practices are made by actions and actionability is a human faculty (Wendt, 2002:289). For this reason, even though the productive area of post structural conceptualization of practices is used, adoption of the critical realist understanding of the formation of the practices by humans and the corporate agents formed by humans would resolve the first conflict.

So, how could the CJM, regarding the described characteristics, be analysed as an agent connected to ecological politics? To resolve this meta-theoretical conflict through a critical realist perspective, the duality of praxis and the duality of the structures could be used. According to the duality of the praxis principle, the intentional actions of the agents would unintentionally change and transform the structures. At this point, it would

be beneficial to mention the conceptual differences between the actions and practices. According to Adler and Pouliot, the actions are intentional behaviors realized in a certain period of time, whereas the practices are patterns of action which find meaning in a certain context and are able to build new meanings and contexts (Adler & Pouliot, 2011:5-7). Even though the CJM does not perform actions shaped by certain purposes, it performs practices that create causalities that affect other agents related to ecological politics. Each protest, beyond the boundaries of states, based on the sensitivities regarding the disruption of ecological balance, is a singular example of these practices. This is because the protests connect individuals and peoples of different geographies for a systematic change. (See, Bir, 2020).

Because of its decentralized constitution without an institutional decision-making mechanism, the CJM, described as an abstract collective, does not perform actions with certain purposes. So, based on its abstract collectivity, how can the CJM perform the aforementioned practices? The declaration of action of an institution (for example, a state signing an agreement) in fact, refers to the actions made by the individuals for the interests and goals of the institutions. Thus, the CJM performing these practices, just like every other institution, is only possible with the actions of individuals. The deterministic relation between the intentionality and the actions for the institutions with a hierarchical organizational structure (states, companies etc.), is more apparent compared to the decentralized institutions. In the particular example of the CJM, the individuals who perform these practices may not even notice what they do as parts of the movement (Martiskainen, 2020). However, without a doubt, each of the individuals who contribute to the realization of these practices with their actions, regardless of their levels, is aware of the political aspect of global climate change and believes in the necessity of a structural change. In addition, discursive similarities and operational resemblances and cooperation within the CJM, results in the formation of collective intentionality on various scales.

Returning to the duality of the structures principle, in short, the structures, while limiting the agents based on their positions in their networks, are also preconditions of their activities (Porpora, 1989:200). The CJM demonstrates its agency in an ecological political sphere, by highlighting the relation between the biophysical changes and politics on a global and local level, with the practices it performs. For example, a week before the 27 September 2019 UN Climate Summit, the Climate Strike, with the participation of millions of people from more than 150 countries, protested the UN and the states who ignored global warming and through various method of civil disobedience they drew attention to the low-income groups who are the most affected by the disruption of the ecological balance and to the cruelty that is endured by local communities (Tollefson, 2019).

The nature of the global climate crisis which inevitably involves countless stakeholders and the spaces in the structure which could not be filled by the various other agents -like being the voice of the unheard others- (Mohai, 2009:405) give the CJM an area of agency. The embellishment of the practices, which enlarge the limits of the politics on a local and a global scale with a discourse that criticizes the existing order, even aims to change it and has the potential to undermine the traditional and state-centric system (Princen & Fingers, 1994:217). Nonetheless, considering that the states sometimes do not include

the elements of the CJM to the resolution processes about the disruption of the ecological balance, and their undeniable power and resources, it is clear how much the agency of the CJM and its mobility are limited (See, Brototi & Martinez-Alier, 2019). Thus, whereas ecological politics enables the agency of climate justice in the aforementioned multi-stakeholder system, it also has a complexion that limits it.

Additionally, the ambiguous (the undecidability of the notion of climate justice and the uncertainty of the Movement as mentioned above) and the decentralized composition of the Movement constitutes the foundation of its agencies in ecological politics. The establishment of an institutional organization scheme and the representation by a more limited ideological spectrum than now (for example only Marxist) would undermine the Movement's ability to perform the aforementioned practices. Just like the conclusion Abrahamson and Danyi reached while analyzing the agency of the immigrants who staged a hunger strike, the lack of cognitive abilities and inner competences which are accepted as the conditions of agency by some through a poststructural interference, could be understood as the main source of the agency of the suggested political entity (Abrahamson & Danyi, 2018). Going back to the suggested hypothetical mechanism, the agents related to the ecological political structure, conceptualized on the planetary level, could have a decentralized constitution which could as well be the main source of their agencies. The heavy impact of the disruption of the ecological balance on the lives of every living being in the world, causes the unification of various reactions from different locations, which 'cannot become' one voice. The study of the agency, in the manner that is developed in this paper, enables the unpacking of the causalities created by the various political entities which are overlooked by IR and the reevaluation of the ways that we can interact with people in distant locations on common grounds.

Conclusion

While the disruption of the ecological balance creates a unison, since it is a phenomenon that concerns all humanity, it also separates us, as it does not equally affect everybody. The CJM became the voice of large unheard masses by bringing this phenomenon, which disproportionately affected the lives of humans in a short time, and its results to the global political scene.

In this study, the agency of the CJM is discussed on a critical realist basis with a poststructural interference, and a formula to understand the agency of the decentralized political entities, based on the CJM, is suggested. The debates on the agency in the IR discipline mostly overlooked the agency of the political entities which do not have a decision-making mechanism, instrumental rationalist capabilities, and strategic oversight, thus, which could not be likened to humans in certain regards. In this study Bhaskar's DREI method is applied and the parts of the article structured respectively; d) 'described' the peculiarity of the Movement, r) established the level of analysis and the structure in which the agency of the Movement could be studied and 'retroduced' a hypothetical mechanism relating to this structure, e) 'eliminated' the existing theses of agency that could possibly be useful based of the discussion concerning the peculiarities of the movement and the hypothetical mechanism, and lastly i) 'identified' the connections between the structure and the characteristics of the Movement which enables its agency and explains how the

hypothetical mechanism works. Instead of accepting the agency based on the intentional actions and humane competences, conceptualizing the agency based on the structure in which it formed and the practices it creates offers a theoretical scape in which the causalities created by the decentralized political entities could be debated. In conclusion, it is ascertained that the decentralized agents related to ecological politics could exist and the ambiguity of these agents could be the main source of their agency, thus their ability to generate causalities.

Considering the CJM as an agent that is related to ecological politics (structure) that could be scrutinized on a planetary level (level of analysis) is just an instance to address how to understand and explain the agency of decentralized political entities. Claiming that the concept of agency could not be discussed without examining a related structure and a level of analysis, embodies a foundational principle to deal with the agent-structure problem. Based on this principle, the study pointed out that decentralized political entities could and should be the scientific objective of IR and environmental studies. Moreover it should be noted that in the last decade, plenty of articles focusing on developing the literature methodology and methods of critical realism have appeared (Fletcher, 2017; Hoody, 2019; Hasting, 2021; Dyer & Williams, 2021). In this regard, this brand-new way of taking social movements as actors contributes to this literature by challenging the rooted understandings concerning social ontologies.

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