

## CLIMATE FORERUNNER OR UNAMBITIOUS FOLLOWER?

Discursive construction of a Finnish national energy and climate identity and its struggle for legitimacy in parliament

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**Abstract**

A systemic change needs to occur in Finland in order to move to a zero emissions energy system. A central challenge in achieving systemic change and carbon neutrality is making decision makers as well as citizens understand the urgency and importance of change. Research suggests that media coverage on climate change has a smaller impact on public opinion than do signals from the political elite and that we should be looking at the discourses of national identities to reveal which states are more likely to comply with environmental norms.

In this study Critical Discourse Analysis was employed to examine what kinds of discourses the governing parties employed in the parliamentary discussion on the 2016 energy and climate strategy, what kind of a national energy and climate identity emerged from the discourses and how was the emerging energy and climate identity delegitimated by members of the opposition.

Four dominant discourses could be discerned from the speeches of the government party members. These discourses were named 1) Ambitious forerunner, 2) Compliance and co-operation, 3) Land of green gold; and 4) Self-sufficient and secure. In addition there was one super-discourse called "Economy and jobs", which was used by the speakers to justify or legitimise all other four discourses. Instead of one cohesive identity, each government party could be seen as building their own variant of a national energy and climate identity.

The opposition used three specific discursive themes to delegitimate the identity or identities offered by the government parties. These were dubbed 1) Emergency and urgency, 2) Carbon sinks and 3) Future technology. Generally, the opposition did not buy the ambitious forerunner discourse and felt the identity relied too heavily on using Finnish forests as a commodity rather than preserving them as a carbon sink.

Strategic decisions on energy and climate politics were largely legitimated by the traditional state imperative of economic growth and the government discourse mostly lacked reference to a common global responsibility concerning the climate. This would imply that the government lacks the readiness to make decisions that are necessary for the climate but that do not represent the direct economic interests of Finland – thus hindering Finland's evolvment into a true climate leader. On the other hand, complying with EU-level regulation and the Paris Agreement was seen as important, indicating that Finland is ready to follow agreements made in international forums.

If a discursive energy and climate identity could be an indicator of a nation's willingness to evolve and comply with environmental norms, this could potentially also be applied to corporations and their top management to forecast how willingly the corporation is to invest in transforming operations in a climate friendlier direction.

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**Keywords** climate, politics, communication, discourse, national identity, legitimation

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### Tiivistelmä

Suomessa on tarvetta systeemiselle muutokselle, mikäli aiomme siirtyä nollapäästöiseen energiajärjestelmään. Keskeinen haaste systeemisen muutoksen ja hiilineutraaliuden saavuttamiselle on saada päättäjät sekä kansalaiset ymmärtämään muutoksen kiireellisyys ja tärkeys. Tutkimusten mukaan poliittisella eliitillä on suurempi vaikutus yleiseen mielipiteeseen ilmastomuutoksesta kuin medialla ja että meidän pitäisi tarkastella kansallisten identiteettien diskursseja nähdäksemme mitkä valtiot todennäköisimmin noudattavat ympäristönormeja.

Käytin tässä tutkimuksessa kriittistä diskurssianalyysiä (CDA) tutkiakseni millaisia diskursseja hallituspuolueet käyttivät eduskuntakeskustelussa, joka koski vuoden 2016 energia- ja ilmastostrategiaa, millainen kansallinen energia- ja ilmastoidentiteetti rakentuu diskursseista ja miten opposition jäsenet delegitimoivat identiteettiä.

Hallituspuolueiden jäsenten puheista ilmeni neljä pääasiallista diskurssia, jotka nimesin seuraavasti 1) kunnianhimoisen edelläkävijä, 2) yhdenmukaisuus ja yhteistyö 3) vihreän kullan maa, ja 4) omavarainen ja turvattu. Lisäksi esiintyi ”talous ja työpaikat” nimen saanut super-diskurssi, jota puhujat käyttivät muiden neljän diskurssin legitimointiin. Yhden yhteisen identiteetin sijaan, jokainen hallituspuolue näytti rakentavan omaa versiotaan kansallisesta energia- ja ilmastoidentiteetistä.

Oppositio käytti kolmea diskursiivista teemaa delegitimoidakseen hallituspuolueiden tarjoamia identiteettejä. Näiden nimiksi annettiin 1) hätä ja kiire, 2) hiilinielut ja 3) tulevaisuuden teknologia. Yleisesti oppositio ei hyväksynyt kunnianhimoisen edelläkävijän identiteettiä ja pitivät identiteettiä liian riippuvaisena suomalaisten metsien käytöstä raaka-aineena sen sijaan että ne säilytettäisiin hiilinieluna.

Strategisia päätöksiä energia- ja ilmastopolitiikassa legitimoitiin suurelta osin taloudellisella kasvulla ja hallituksen diskurssista puuttui yhteinen globaali vastuu ilmastosta. Tämä antaa ymmärtää, että hallituksella ei ole valmiutta tehdä sellaisia ilmaston kannalta välttämättömiä päätöksiä, jotka eivät ole suoraan Suomen taloudellisen edun mukaisia – näin estäen Suomen kehittymisen todelliseksi ilmastojohtajaksi. Toisaalta EU-säädösten sekä Pariisin sopimuksen noudattaminen oli hallituspuolueille tärkeää, mikä viittaa siihen, että Suomi on valmis noudattamaan kansainvälisiä ympäristösopimuksia.

Mikäli diskursiivinen energia- ja ilmastoidentiteetti voisi olla indikaattori valtion halusta kehittyä ja noudattaa ympäristönormeja, tätä voitaisiin mahdollisesti käyttää myös yrityksiin ja niiden ylimpään johtoon, jotta voitaisiin ennustaa kuinka halukkaita yritykset olisivat investoimaan toimintojen muuttamiseen ilmastoystävällisempään suuntaan.

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**Avainsanat** ilmasto, politiikka, viestintä, diskurssi, kansallinen identiteetti, legitimaatio

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# 1 Introduction – climate change and the need for systemic change

By the present time in history, science has proven without doubt that climate change is a critical issue that will shape the future of humans on planet Earth. The question is no longer if climate change is happening, nor is it when is it happening. Climate change is occurring at a rapid pace and the real question is how fast can we change our behaviour to prevent the most devastating effects of the change from making life for a large proportion of the global population exceedingly difficult due to extreme weather and, for example, the resulting problems in food production.

At the end of 2015 world leaders met in Paris to agree on global efforts to mitigate climate change. The key result was a decision to set the goal of keeping global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The parties also agreed to “pursue efforts” to limit the temperature rise to 1.5 degrees (United Nations, 2016). The global temperature is, however, already risen 0.85 degrees from those pre-industrial levels (Ministry of the Environment et al, 2015), with recent data showing potentially shocking acceleration of warming during the beginning of 2016, possibly bringing us dangerously close to the 1.5 degree mark already (Voiland, 2016). The development warrants drastic and fast measures by governments, companies and private citizens. Communication is a key factor in the success or failure of the necessary measures.

According to a poll conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Environment (2015) only a quarter of the Finnish population is aware that human behaviour is definitely affecting climate change. About a third of Finns estimate that man-made emissions are not the most significant factor in global warming. On the upside, the younger the respondent, the better the knowledge of climate change seems to be. There is also a correlation between knowledge level and willingness to take strong and urgent action to mitigate climate change. In light of this poll it can be stated that the awareness level on the issue of climate

change in Finland is not as good as the education level in the country might suggest. There is a need to educate and encourage people to be more active on the matter, if we are to increase Finnish consumers' willingness to pay for climate change mitigation, meaning, to invest in technology such as electric vehicles, solar energy and energy efficiency improvements in housing.

Although the Finnish energy system is slowly moving towards renewable energy in accordance with international agreements and EU regulation, it is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels (38 % in 2015), nuclear energy (18 % in 2015) and wood based energy (25 % in 2015) and is based on centralized energy production where large utilities have a lot of power. Wood is the largest single source of energy with its 25 % of total energy consumption, and historically wood has always played a significant role in Finnish energy consumption as e.g. oil has never surpassed wood in the energy mix. A systemic change needs to occur in Finland in order to move to a zero emissions energy system. A central challenge in achieving systemic change and carbon neutrality is making decision makers as well as citizens understand the urgency and importance of change. (Berninger et al 2017.)

## 1.1 National identities and environmental norms

Political scientist and researcher of environmental politics Robyn Eckersley (2016) has recently suggested that the fossil fuel dependence of nations may not be a good indicator of their willingness to evolve into ecological states, rather, we should be looking at the discourses of national identities and how states view their international roles to reveal which ones are more likely to comply with environmental norms. Other research also suggests that media coverage on climate change has a smaller impact on public opinion than do signals from the political elite, meaning parliamentarians, ministers and presidents (Brulle et al, 2012).

This means that the opinions of the public are highly likely to be influenced by the messages sent by the political elite of the parties they vote for. If energy and climate

change registers as an issue of very little value on the agenda of a certain elite politician, it is also likely to be reflected in the level of interest or concern for the voter of his or her party. How the issue is painted by the political elite is, therefore, also likely to affect the consumers' willingness to pay for climate change mitigation, i.e. their willingness to invest and pay a premium for technologies and services that are climate friendly.

While a national identity does not formulate an individual's entire identity, it nevertheless provides citizens with a moral agenda and obligations and partly tells us how we should live our lives and can construct a framework for conflicting identities (Poole 2012). Because the political elite holds the power to construct national identity through public statements on important social issues (Leith & Soule 2011), it must be assumed that the political elite also holds the power to influence the public's view of their role and obligation in mitigating a global disaster like climate change. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to critically examine the statements of the political elite on the issue.

Communication around climate change and green energy has been studied quite extensively in recent years and while an impressive number of studies have been conducted in the area of climate change discourse in the media and individuals' attitudes towards climate change, research on discursive strategies used by politicians and decision makers with regard to the climate seem to be few and far between. Indeed, to my knowledge, no studies have been conducted on the connection between national identity and climate change mitigation in Finland as of yet. This study aims to fill that gap and to identify further themes to be studied in the sphere of communications in energy and climate politics.

## 1.2 Strategy in public policy

As a member of the European Union, Finland is committed to the targets set by the EU for reducing greenhouse gas emissions to at least 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 with interim goals set for the years 2020 (20 percent) and 2030 (40 percent) respectively. These goals and targets are to be met by the means of increasing the share of renewable

energy sources out of total energy consumption (20 percent by 2020 and 27 percent by 2030) and improving energy efficiency (also by 20 percent by 2020 and 27 percent by 2030) (Ministry of the Environment et al, 2015).

In order to reach the aforementioned targets, the Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy has commissioned a national Energy and Climate Strategy, which was published for the first time in the year 2001. In practice, every newly elected government has drafted its own energy and climate strategy. After 2001 a renewed strategy has been published in 2005, 2008, 2013 and 2016 (Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2016a).

A growing global trend in the 2000's has been for countries to draft climate strategies rather than climate legislation (Dubash et al, 2013). Indeed, business and strategy thinking has proliferated our society to the extent that public services such as universities, hospitals, schools, and even kindergartens now write strategies (Pälli et al, 2009). In 2015 the Finnish Climate Act came into force and sets, for example the long-term emission reduction goal of 80 percent by 2050 as binding. The Energy and Climate Strategy still, however, governs all energy and climate issues pertaining to the area of emissions trading, including electricity markets. It is, therefore, a significant document in terms of climate change mitigation efforts.

In the strategy-as-practice stream of research in organizational studies, strategy is seen not simply as a process of creating and implementing a strategy, but as a social practice that has many facets and dimensions and which is influenced by connections and relationships (Whittington, 2007). In other words, in organizations strategy is not only created by managers and then "sent" downstream for implementation, but it is created also by the individuals who make sense, interpret and perhaps resist the strategy based on their own views and experiences of the world. In this sense the national Energy and Climate Strategy can be said to be created in the interpretations and discussions of the members of parliament. It is also the sum of months of discussions and negotiations between different government officials, advisors and interest groups.

The current government published its version of the national energy and climate strategy on 24 November 2016 with an official final version published 8 January 2017. The strategy outlines actions that will enable Finland to reach emission reduction targets set in the EU for 2030, and to systematically set the course for achieving an 80–95 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. According to the strategy, Finland will e.g. phase out the use of coal for energy, increase the share of transport biofuels to 30 per cent, aim for a minimum of 250,000 electric and 50,000 gas- powered vehicles on the roads, develop the electricity market at the regional and the European level, grant aid to cost-effective new electricity production from renewable energy on a technology neutral basis, halve the use of imported oil and increase the share of renewable energy in end consumption to 50 per cent, all by 2030. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2017)

The strategy is a joint effort by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The finished strategy was brought to the Finnish parliament for discussion on 30 November 2016. (Ministry of Employment and Economy, 2016b.)

### 1.3 Objectives of this study and research questions

The aim of the present study is firstly to investigate what kinds of discourses are used by members of the governing parties to discuss the 2016 energy and climate strategy. The purpose of the analysis is to examine what kind of national energy and climate identity the government is promoting through their choice of discourses.

Secondly, this study is looking at how the 2016 energy and climate strategy is legitimated and delegitimated by members of parliament in the parliamentary discussion. It can be assumed that the political affiliation of the members will have a strong effect on whether the strategy and thus the intended identity is legitimated or delegitimated by the speakers, as the current government consists of conservative parties with liberals in opposition.

Examining the legitimation and delegitimation strategies of the parliamentarians of different political parties may give some indication as to what kind of an attitude towards energy and climate change the voters of the respective parties might take.

The research questions for the study are:

1. What kinds of discourses do the governing parties employ in the parliamentary discussion on the 2016 energy and climate strategy?
2. What kind of a national energy and climate identity does emerge from the discourses?
3. How is the emerging energy and climate identity delegitimated by members of the opposition?

In the next chapter of this study I shall go through relevant literature and define key concepts such as *discourse*, *identity* and *legitimation*. I will also elaborate on the theoretical frameworks employed in this study. These include Ruth Wodak's macro-strategies of discursive construction of national identity.

## 2 Literature review

The purpose of this study is firstly to analyse the discourse choices made by the current Finnish governing parties in discussing the national energy and climate strategy and to examine what kind of national energy and climate identity those discourses imply. Secondly, this study looks at how members of the opposition delegitimise the intended identity. Critical analysis of the discourse choices of the political elite is important in a democratic society and especially when it comes to a topic as urgent and threatening as climate change.

In this chapter I define key concepts and theoretical frameworks employed in this study, but first I present relevant literature that examines the relationship between energy and climate politics and discourse as well as national identity. The interdependence between climate politics, discourses and national identity has not been studied extensively, therefore a research gap exists in this area. This study aims to fill that gap.

### 2.1 Climate politics, communication and global responsibility

Environmentalists have generally had a contradictory relationship with the nation-state, as it has been seen as both the propagator of environmental damage as well as protecting the environment. Nevertheless, the nation-state plays an important role as a forum of social and political power and it has the potential to be a positive force in forwarding an environmental agenda in society. (Eckersley 2005, 159–160).

The topicality and urgency of climate change has propagated some, albeit not very many, studies into climate change communication by the political elites of nations. For example, political discussion in Australia – who only signed the Kyoto treaty in 2007 and is one of the largest per capita emitters in the world – has been polarized and there has been

significant resistance to climate change mitigation measures. In Australia, political party affiliation has a powerful influence on views on the climate and political ideology is the most important predictor of politicians' climate change beliefs (Fielding et al, 2012).

In their study Kurz et al (2010) identified that politicized debates around climate change generated social, political, and moral identities, which were used to warrant or undermine positions on the issue. The research credits the Australian Labour Party's victory in the 2007 elections partly to their ability to answer growing concerns over climate change and to construct an ecological modernization discourse calling for 'drastic and immediate action' on climate change as a way of maintaining rather than changing consumer 'lifestyles'. The authors also argue that consumerism is at stake in the politics of climate change, which is why the idea of dramatic reductions in carbon emissions is a rhetorically troubled issue for many countries.

Weingart et al (2000) analysed communication on the issue of global warming among actors in the fields of science, politics, and the media in Germany between 1975 and 1995. According to the study politicians are forced to select simplistic options that allow them to make decisions when faced with uncertainties that potentially threaten their legitimate claim to power.

Research also shows that public opinion on climate change is heavily influenced by cues from the political elite, meaning that the stand politicians take on the issue is likely to affect the attitudes of the public. The effect seems to be even stronger than that of media coverage of climate change related news (Brulle et al, 2012).

In the United States opinions are highly polarized between the conservative and liberal voters. The same effect can be seen within the countries of the European Union, although the divide is far less pronounced than in the US (McCright, 2015).

Viewed traditionally, the two main imperatives of a state are national security and economic growth. The highly demanding environmental responsibilities that climate

change imposes go against these traditional purposes of the state and propose a challenge of legitimation for governments. This is largely due to the fact that large scale environmental problems such as climate change are global, not national, by nature, and cannot be solved through national policy alone, but require vast global co-operation and agreement among nations. Research on green states and social movements argues that environmental concerns will not be given emphasis on the agenda of policymakers unless they can be connected to the traditional state imperatives and that nations may succeed to be climate leaders if they frame and legitimate environmental policies in terms of increased welfare or improved security. (Eckersley, 2016.)

However, Eckersley (2016) claims that as the success of climate change mitigation efforts are dependent on international co-operation, for a state to evolve to a true climate leader, it needs to assume some kind of identity of global or shared responsibility. True evolution into an ecological state may not be possible, if such a purpose is missing from a state that aspires to be a climate leader. Eckersley studied how the governments of Germany and Norway have discursively legitimated their respective climate policies in the public arena. Her material included speeches, press releases, media interviews, You Tube videos, and conference presentations by the top political elites of both countries. Germany and Norway were selected because of their assumed role as climate leaders with relatively ambitious emission reduction targets.

Throughout the 1990's Norwegian climate policy developed from concentrating on unilateral Norwegian targets and measures, to understanding climate change as an international problem and political discourse evolved from one of 'national action' to 'thinking globally' (Hovden & Lindseth, 2004).

The results of Eckersley's study reveal that both countries have very much relied on discourses of green growth and ecological modernisation and, although to a lesser degree, national security to legitimate their climate and energy policies domestically, thus confirming the need to rely on traditional state imperatives in the search for legitimation. However, both German and Norwegian discourses also evoked a "*cosmopolitan narrative*

*of connections and 'enlarged responsibility' towards others in a global community*". This seems to suggest that it would be possible for Norway and Germany to become true climate leaders. Eckersley thus suggests that rather than depending on calculations of the fossil-fuel dependence of nations, studying the discourses of national identities and states' beliefs of their international roles may reveal which states are more likely to feel obligated to comply with environmental norms and evolve into more mature ecological states.

Eckersley's proposition opens up interesting avenues for new research in climate communication, as a perceived national identity may in fact have a significant impact on the attitudes of citizens towards climate change mitigation. The political elites or decision makers of nations need to recognize that they have a responsibility in guiding citizens into more responsible choices, as they have the power to construct national identity through discourse. If there is an absence of a sense of global responsibility in the national climate identity, how would this affect the behaviour of citizens who connect with the national identity?

It could also be argued that it is the voters who hold power over the political elite through public opinion and that in democratic states politicians are merely executing the voters' will. Indeed, Wodak (2002) suggests that there exists a complex interaction between the political elite and the public. Nevertheless, politicians influence what and how issues are discussed in the public forum. Through their choice of discourses, they guide the public's perceptions of complicated issues. Discourse choices define what is possible and which avenues are not even worth exploring. This is why critical analysis of political discourses is important in a democratic society. Discourses and Critical Discourse Analysis are further elaborated on next in this study.

In the following subchapters, I shall define the key concepts of *discourse* and *identity* and discuss how *national identity* is seen to be constructed in relevant literature. I also present a theoretical framework of discursive macro-strategies developed by Ruth Wodak and her team (2009) in their study of the discursive construction of national identity, that I intend to utilize in the second stage of analysis of the present study. Finally I shortly

explain *legitimacy theory* and the concepts of *legitimation* and *delegitimation* and their relationship to Aristotle's rhetorical strategies, which shall be employed in the final stage of the analysis of the parliamentary discussion.

## 2.2 Defining discourse

In the first stage of analysis I shall identify the most salient discourses employed by the members of parliament of the governing parties as they discuss the new national energy and climate strategy. It is therefore necessary to define what is meant by *discourse* in the present study.

Modern study of discourses dates back to developments in humanities and social sciences in the 1960's and 1970's. Scholars of anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology and communication have all had an interest in researching discourses. Despite the long history in studying discourses, there is still a vast amount of properties and problems in the field yet to be addressed (van Dijk 2011.)

There is no one definitive definition of discourse, rather scholars have produced a range of intersecting and conflicting theorizations of the concept (Fairclough 2004). Bacchi even suggests that policy-as-discourse researchers are often on a mission to unveil and challenge prevalent structures of power and thus define discourse as best to suit their needs, although this does not necessarily happen consciously (2000, 55).

Many definitions of discourse are based on the work of French scholar Michel Foucault (e.g. Ball 2012, Fairclough 2004). Foucault theorized the relationship between power and knowledge extensively. Power and power abuse can be defined as the preferential access to and control over public discourse and can manifest as domination based on gender, class, ethnicity or sexuality or other type of social inequality (van Dijk 2011, 3–4). Ball (2012) states that 'we do not speak the discourse, the discourse speaks us', meaning that discourse dictates what and how we can express about specific issues.

Fairclough (2004) sees discourses as ‘ways of representing aspects of the world’. For him, an integral part of the study of discourses is analysing the interrelationships between discourses. He writes:

*“Different discourses are different perspectives on the world, and they are associated with the different relations people have to the world, which in turn depends on their positions in the world, their social and personal identities, and the social relationships in which they stand to other people.”*

Discourses are at the same time constructing society and being constructed by society. In this way discourses help in sustaining and reproducing the political status quo, but at the same time can also be the instrument in changing it. Discourse can also seem to pass off ideological or biased thinking as common sense. (Fairclough et al 2011, 358.)

Fairclough (2013) further defines three ways of using the concept of discourse: (1) meaning making (semiosis) as a part of social processes, (2) as the language linked to a certain social field or practice, and (3) a way of interpreting aspects of the world that are associated with a specific social perspective. In this study discourses take on the first (1) definition as the data is analysed from a semiotic perspective, asking what kinds of meanings a text can be seen to take on, i.e. what can be read between the lines.

Critical Discourse Analysis, as developed by Fairclough, brings the critical thought practiced in social analysis into language studies by focusing on discourses and examining the relationships between discourses and other social elements such as power and social identities (Fairclough, 2013). Wodak et al (2009) situate their research and definition of discourse within Fairclough’s stream of Critical Discourse Analysis. In their work discourse is treated as a social practice and authentic political texts are being analysed. Discourses can be seen to have an interdependent relationship with institutions and social structures: discourses are influenced by the surrounding social contexts but at the same time discourses influence the surrounding political reality. For Wodak, the role

of Critical Discourse Analysis is to unveil political power structures that favour some at the expense of others.

Critical Discourse Analysis thus seems a particularly apt tool to examine a national energy and climate strategy. Climate change is the defining challenge of our generation, perhaps the most crucial in all of human history and it can be argued that our success or failure is largely decided behind closed doors in negotiations between members of the political elite. Discourses can potentially reveal underlying attitudes and historical baggage that can obstruct nations from developing carbon-free infrastructure with sufficient haste.

Discourse is, for the purposes of the present study, therefore defined as specific perspectives or points of approach on energy and climate policy. Such discourses could, for example, include the relationship between national and EU policy or promotion of bio fuels and forestry.

### 2.3 The relationship between discourse and identity

Identity has been studied and discussed extensively by a large number of disciplines, including psychology, sociology and politics. Identity as a term refers to a relationship between two entities and denotes a sameness or equality. Effectively there does not exist a homogenous 'pure' identity in the individual or collective level, as each person is surrounded by a myriad of possible, e.g. religious, political, regional and cultural identities to associate themselves with. (Wodak et al 2009.)

In the field of psychology and specifically identification theory, identification refers to the process by which individuals associate themselves with the attitudes, mores and behaviour of a certain group, thus creating an identity for themselves. When a group of individuals share an identity, it is possible for them to enrich and protect that shared identity together as a mass. (Bloom 1990, 50–51.)

From a linguistic and sociological perspective identities are inherently dynamic, meaning that they are not static but change during the course of time. Thus, individual and collective identities are fluid and actively constructed through discourse. As life's circumstances change, individuals may make new identifications. (e.g. Wodak et al 2009, Thomas 2005, Bloom 1990, Howarth & Stavrakakis 2009, Preston 1997, Benwell & Stokoe 2006, De Fina 2011.)

Identities can be communicated directly in discussions or indirectly through symbols such as sounds, words, expressions or styles. Categorisation as a discursive process is central to identity construction: identity categories reflect and constitute wider social processes and representations, beliefs and ideologies as well as social relationships. An example of this would be ethnic categorisation by race or origins. (De Fina 2011).

Castells (2010, 7–8), outlines three forms of identity building:

- 1) *legitimizing identity* – offered by the dominating institutions of society to rationalise their domination
- 2) *resistance identity* – created by actors who are devalued or oppressed by the dominating society
- 3) *project identity* – when social actors are building a new identity to redefine their position in society and to transform society as a whole.

According to Castells resistance identity can, over time, become a project identity and project identity can, in turn, become a legitimizing identity. Clean energy and climate concerns could be considered to form either resistance identities or project identities for individuals depending on how the dominating institutions in their respective countries are currently standing on the issue. In Finland, climate and clean energy could currently be seen as forming a kind of project identity, as the issue is still in its infancy but the need for transforming it into a legitimizing identity is recognized.

## 2.4 National identity and the role of the state

National identity is a form of collective identity, which forms a we-ness that goes beyond the individual and leads to collective action. Collective identity means that the members of a group recognize that they share the same social identity. (David & Bar-Tal 2009.)

William Bloom (1990, 52) defines national identity as describing “that condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with national symbols – have internalised the symbols of the nation – so that they may act as one psychological group when there is a threat to, or the possibility of enhancement of, these symbols of national identity.”

Bloom (1990, 53), however, also states that a national identity does not come about simply because a group of people are told they are a nation, rather they must all go through the process of identifying with that nation.

Identification, or *nation-building* happens when the state is perceived as being engaged in a common combat against an external threat or if the state acts in a way that benefits the individual. This identification is evoked by symbols of the state that can be individuals, ideas, institutions or rituals that are either formal or informal e.g. monarchs, social benefit systems or songs. (Bloom 1990, 61.)

Nations are always constituted in relation to ‘others’ or ‘outsiders’, although the ‘others’ may also exist inside the same country, meaning, for example, ethnic minorities or other social groups, whose membership to the nation is challenged (Nyyssönen and Vares 2012, 18).

Traditionally in Western civilizations nations entail two distinct components, namely cultural nationhood and political nationhood. Cultural nationhood denotes a passive community based on, for example, ethnicity. Political nationhood, on the other hand, is actively constructed through common institutions, legislation and a defined territory.

Thus, a nation can be defined as a group of people living within a specific area of land and who live by a certain set of laws. (Smith 1991, 8–9.)

Historically language has been considered an important marker in defining national identity. Governments have, for example, imposed a national language on minorities in an attempt to construct a cohesive national identity. It has been considered important that the cultural identity of the nation should be in harmony with the political identity of the state. (Williams 1999.)

National identity also provides individuals with a moral agenda and specific obligations as citizens. Individuals are likewise morally implicated in the past transgressions of a nation, as well as part of its successes. National identity also at least partly answers the moral reflection on how we should live our lives, however, national identity is not a comprehensive doctrine, but rather provides space for other, sometimes conflicting, identities. (Poole 2012.)

The political elite of a given society are individuals, who have the power to make statements about important social and political issues and who seek to construct national identity through discourse (Leith & Soule 2011, 121–122). However, while the discourse of the political elite does influence how citizens think and speak of issues, the effect is not merely top-down, rather there exists a complex interplay within the public sphere (Wodak 2002).

In recent years, the significance of states has been called into question in defining national identity, as nations and, indeed identities, defy geographic borders and states appear to be more like empty frames that are filled by different identities (Nyyssönen and Vares 2012, 19–20). In this view the cultural component of nationhood takes on a stronger meaning and the political component takes a back seat.

This view, however, begs the question, what distinguishes national identity from any other type of collective identity. Smith (1991) lists five fundamental features of national identity:

1. an historic territory, or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members

In addition to external and salient functions such as political legitimacy and economic control of resources, national identities also fulfil internal and more intimate functions for individuals within a community. National identity provides a powerful sense of location for the individual through a shared culture that enables individuals to define who they are in the world. The concept of national identity has, however, encountered strong criticism also from a moral standpoint, since national identity easily leads to a kind of nationalism that evokes conflict in areas with mixed ethnic and religious populations. (Smith 1991, 15–18.)

In the globalised world that we currently live in, homogenous nations are rare and most parts of the world are filled with people of mixed ethnicities and different religious beliefs. The type of morally suspect nationalism that Smith refers to is again globally more prominent at this time in history than before as economic and political uncertainty has become the new norm on the global stage. Nationalism also comes strongly into play as national interests are being weighed against the common good in climate negotiations.

For the sake of the current study, national identity can therefore be, in its simplest form, defined as the collective identity that applies to people who share the common legal rights and duties endowed to them by Finnish law. Those rights including the right to vote for the political representatives, i.e. the political elite, who are responsible for creating the Finnish climate and energy strategy and consequently construct national identity.

This, of course, is a very simplistic view and does not take into account the cultural component of national identity. Although historically, for example, language has served as a strong cohesive (but also divisive) agent in Finnish society, it should be noted that today there are a significant number of minorities whose mother tongue is not Finnish living in Finland.

Nevertheless, it can be assumed that people who consider themselves to be Finns share a collective identity that also, to some extent, drives their behaviour on global issues that no state can escape, such as climate change. However, as stated in the previous subchapter, identities are dynamic and malleable and are constructed through discourse. Considering the aforementioned assumptions to be true then it should also be assumed that the Finnish political elite holds the power to construct and mould national identity discursively through public statements.

Yet, as already stated, just because the political elite ascribes a certain national identity it does not mean that citizens automatically accept or adopt that identity. Rather, it may be resisted by some individuals based on other conflicting identities. Indeed, the aim of this study is to reveal a national identity proffered by the political elite in government, but not if that identity is, in fact, accepted by the citizens of Finland or not. The legitimization and delegitimation strategies employed by the members of parliament may provide hints as to how also the public would react to the suggested national identity.

## 2.5 Discursive construction of national identity

In the second stage of the analysis conducted in this study the aim is to further examine the salient discourses identified in the first stage to see what kind of a national energy and climate identity emerges from those discourses. The construction of national identity through political discourses has been extensively studied over several decades by Austrian linguist Ruth Wodak, and her discursive macro-strategies are used as the basis for the analysis in the present study.

Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart (2009) studied the discursive construction of national identity in Austria, using, on the one hand, political speeches to analyse how politicians construct national identity and on the other hand, focus groups and qualitative interviews to find out how the public reacts to the offered identity. For the sake of the present study, I have focused on the first part of the study, namely analysing the political speeches.

Wodak and her team originally analysed 23 commemorative speeches and policy addresses by members of the Austrian political elite that were given in 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Austrian Second Republic, which began with the end of the Second World War. The same year Austria also became a member of the EU. The subsequent later data set consisted of a further 26 speeches delivered in the years 1988, 1995 and 2005 and the analysis traced the development of Austrian national identity with the upsurge of right-wing populist nationalism at the beginning of the millennium.

Although the research conducted by the authors is a great deal more extensive and exhaustive than the scope of the present study, it nevertheless, provides a fitting framework for a critical discursive analysis of the Finnish Energy and Climate Strategy. Wodak et al (2009, 31-35) define four macro-strategies that are employed in the discursive construction of national identity, namely

- 1) Constructive strategies
- 2) Strategies of perpetuation
- 3) Strategies of transformation
- 4) Destructive strategies

*Constructive strategies* use unification, identification and solidarity as well as differentiation from others to build a certain national identity. The speaker (or writer) uses certain means to define what makes an identity unique and different from other identities, but also how people within a certain identity are similar and belong together in a group.

*Strategies of perpetuation*, on the other hand, try to maintain and uphold a national identity that is perceived to be under threat. A speaker can defend his/her position by denying the need for political change or demand for continuity. *Strategies of transformation* aim to transform a national identity into another, already conceptualised identity. The speaker may, for example, argue for a need to change and claim superiority compared to others through the change. Finally, *destructive strategies* endeavour to dismantle parts of an existing national identity but do not offer another model in place of the old. The aim here could be, for example, to refute a commonly accepted ‘truth’ or myth. An additional fifth macro-strategy is presented as a subgroup of the strategies of perpetuation. *Strategies of justification* are used to explain problematical actions or events in the past to protect an identity that is somehow tainted by those events.

The authors further define a variety of sub-strategies and argumentative means that can be used within the macro-strategies. Most of the sub-strategies can be *constructive*, *destructive*, *transformatory* or *perpetuating* according to their social macro-functions. For example, the strategy of *dissimilation*, meaning differentiating from others, can be used to construct, transform or destruct identity. The original study focuses on Austrian national identity in the throes of ascension into the EU, therefore in large part the sub-categorisation is concentrated on some level of identity “crisis” in the midst of a major political change.

Wodak et al (2009, 35-47) introduce a number of linguistic means that are involved in the discursive construction of national identity and which are used in the analysis of texts. They focused on devices that serve to construct unification, unity, sameness, difference, uniqueness, origin, continuity gradual or abrupt change, autonomy, heteronomy, among other things. An important part of the analysis was to look at the linguistic representation of the social actors that are seen as members of a national collectivity.

Due to the scope of the present analysis, I have chosen two linguistic devices to focus on, namely the *trope of metonymy* and the personal pronoun ‘we’. A Metonymy replaces the name of what is referred to with another that is related to it either concretely, or abstractly.

Wodak et al (2009, 43) present ten groups of metonymies of which I am focusing on the *place for person* metonymy, meaning where the *Finnish people* are being referred to simply by the word *Finland*. The personal pronoun ‘we’ on the other hand has inherent properties that can be used to include or exclude and, thus, can serve as a powerful device in creating sameness (Wodak et al 2009, 45). It is, however, important to consider who is the group that a particular ‘we’ is referring to.

While climate change is definitely also a crisis of a large magnitude, the change happens at such a slow pace at the moment, that it doesn’t yet present a threat to individual or collective identity in the same way as ascension into the EU presented for Austrians at the time. In this regard the topic of Wodak’s analysis is somewhat different from the present study, which means that many of the sub-strategies may not be relevant to the present analysis. The material under analysis, however, is similar as both Wodak’s material and the material in the present study consist of political speeches and therefore makes Wodak’s framework applicable.

The applicability of the framework is yet challenged by the fact that the present study investigates not a general national identity as a whole but the potential existence of a kind of national sub-identity around a very specific topic. Nevertheless, the aforementioned macro strategies will hopefully present a fitting tool to analyse what could be considered a “niche” within the general national identity, namely a national energy and climate identity.

In the present study, I shall employ Wodak’s strategies to further analyse the discourses that can be identified in the parliamentary discussion on the Finnish energy and climate strategy. The aim is to ascertain which strategies are used by the members of the governing parties in the discussion to construct (or deconstruct) a national climate identity and to therefore reveal the underlying value choices made by the political elite currently in power in Finland.

## 2.6 Discursive legitimation and delegitimation

In the final stage of analysis, I will be examining the delegitimation strategies employed by opposition members of parliament in their discussion of the national energy and climate strategy. In the following I shall define legitimation, which is used to analyse how the governing parties' energy and climate discourses are legitimated and delegitimated.

According to Suchman (1995) "legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions." Legitimation, therefore, could be defined as an attempt by the sender to make an idea or an issue desirable or appropriate in the mind of the receiver.

Legitimation always occurs within an institutional system and, therefore, always happens in context to something (van Leeuwen 2007). Legitimation is also essential for an idea or practice to become institutionalised, an established part of society or culture (Vaara et al 2006).

In politics and parliamentary politics in particular, legitimacy is a fundamental aspect of discourse and, indeed, of the work of decision-makers. Discourse is used to legitimate decisions but also to delegitimize them by the opposition. Drawing from legitimation in organizations, dramatic changes denote legitimacy crises that call into question decisions to be made, as well as the whole management. Impression management is also a significant part of legitimation: targeted and manipulative rhetoric is used to promote the interests and protect the power position of certain actors. (Erkama & Vaara, 2010.)

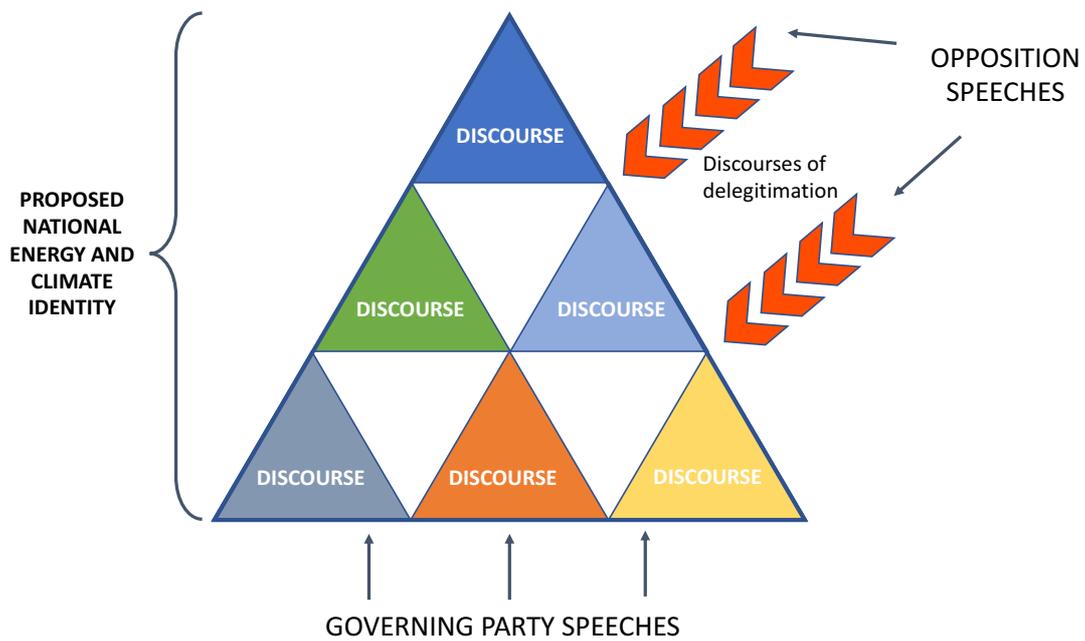
Legitimacy, therefore, is a very salient issue when analysing parliamentary discussion on the national energy and climate strategy. It is fair to make the assumption that the members of the conservative parties currently in government, as the authors and proponents of the strategy, will attempt to legitimize it, while any attempts to delegitimize the strategy will come from the parties in opposition.

## 2.7 Summary of the literature review

I have now defined the key concepts of *discourse*, *identity*, *national identity* and *legitimation* in the above subchapters. In this study discourses are seen as ways of speaking about energy and climate change or specific viewpoints into the topic. Identity is seen as something flexible and plastic that can change with circumstances and that is moulded through discourses. An individual's identity is formed through any number of collective identities, including a national identity that is built by the culture and conventions of the nation but also by the discourses of political elites, meaning parliamentarians, ministers and presidents.

The assumption is, therefore, that discourses employed by the Finnish political elites on energy and climate change will affect the formation of the collective identity of the Finnish people on the same subject. The national identity is, in this case, a construction by the government of Finland in the form of a national energy and climate strategy. The role of the governing parties is then to fight for the legitimation of the strategy (or identity) in parliament, meaning to give their reasonings that it is desirable, proper, or appropriate. The role of the opposition parties, on the other hand, is to delegitimize the identity, to prove that it is not desirable, proper, or appropriate, if they hold that it does not warrant to be legitimized.

The below figure (Figure 1) illustrates this process. The triangles representing distinct discourses employed by the government parties in the parliamentary discussions construct a proposed national energy and climate identity represented by the forming large triangle. The identity is proposed as opposed to given, as it is susceptible to the interpretation or even rejection of the receiver. The proposed identity is then delegitimized through the discourses employed by the opposition, in essence, attempting to dismantle the proposed discursive construct.



*Figure 1. Illustration of the discursive construction of a national energy and climate identity through parliamentary discussion and the delegitimation thereof by the opposition.*

In the next chapter I will introduce the methodology of the present study, i.e. Critical Discourse Analysis. I will also go over the empirical materials used in the analysis. I will also shortly discuss the limitations and challenges inherent in the methodology and methods chosen for this study.

### 3 Methodology, methods and empirical materials

As stated in the introductory chapter of this study, strategy can be seen to be created through the discourses used to negotiate about it. A perspective on discourse allows the examination of how discourse is used to achieve specific ends, such as building of corporate image, shifting blame or distancing the organization from a problem (Grant et al, 2004). In general, discourse analysis shows how discourses in particular texts construct social reality (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Critical discourse analysis (CDA), on the other hand, is not only commentary of discourse, but systematic analysis of the relationship between discourse and other social systems. CDA is also normative instead of being merely descriptive in the sense that the research is meant to evaluate the social effects of the discourse (Fairclough, 2010).

Because of the normative nature of CDA and its suitability to examine power relationships, it is an apt tool to examine discourses in the political sphere. Fairclough (2010) presents a three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis. Each discursive event is 1) a written or spoken text, 2) an instance of discourse practice of producing or interpreting the text and 3) a piece of social practice. The framework combines the concepts of hegemony and intertextuality, or interdiscursivity, and it tries to establish the connections between the three dimensions with discourse practice operating as a mediator between the text and the social practice. In this study CDA is employed to examine what kinds of discourses are used by the members of parliament in the discussion on the national energy and climate strategy and, on the one hand, if and how those discourses form a national energy and climate identity that represents the views of the current conservative government in Finland. On the other hand, CDA is used to analyse how members of parliament legitimise and delegitimise the presented identity.

Discourses form a specific pattern of meaning that comprises, for example, ideas, values, beliefs, social identities, roles and responsibilities and proposes appropriate behaviour. The central insight in analysing discourses is that they construct social roles, responsibilities and identities instead of merely mirroring them (Eckersley, 2016). Since the objective of the present research is to search for some kind of national identity with regard to energy and climate politics, it is important to not only look for the seemingly hegemonic discourse constructed by the government, but also to study how that hegemony is challenged by the opposition. If the hegemony of the identity does not hold, its validity can be brought into question.

Therefore, as already stated, the empirical analysis conducted in this study is threefold: 1) identifying dominant discourses employed by the government parties in the parliamentary discussion on the Finnish energy and climate strategy 2) analysing what kind of a national energy and climate identity can be seen to form from those discourses; and 3) examining how opposition members of parliament delegitimise the strategy according to their party affiliations. The final stage of the analysis is important to find out if the hegemonic position of the national climate identity drafted by the government is challenged or not.

The nature of the research is qualitative, as it consists of discourse analysis. Epistemologically speaking the study is constructivist, since the analysis is centred on giving meaning and interpreting texts instead of merely describing events.

The empirical materials of the present study consists of a publicly available transcript of the parliamentary discussion regarding the 2016 energy and climate strategy held on 30 November 2016 (PTK 123/2016/9). The discussion consists of 109 individual comments and responses including those of two ministers, the then Minister of Economic Affairs Olli Rehn and Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner. The

aforementioned transcript is 63 pages in length and has been made publicly available on the website of the Finnish parliament.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion is opened by a longer statement by Minister of Economic Affairs Olli Rehn, in which he presents the national energy and climate strategy to the parliament. He is then followed by the representatives of each political party. After these so-called group statements, other members of parliament have their turn at the podium. Each statement or response can be at maximum five minutes in length. Deputy speaker of Parliament Mauri Pekkarinen has the job of monitoring that the statements do not run overtime.

The function of the parliamentary discussion is to give members of parliament the opportunity to express their points of view on a matter before it moves on to be processed in a parliamentary committee. In this case the responsible parliamentary committee was the financial committee, with the treasury, transport and communications, agriculture and forestry, futures and environmental committees each having given their respective statement on the strategy by 15 March 2017. The committees may take points brought up in discussion into consideration in their statements.

Several readings of the transcript were carried out to complete all of the three stages of analysis described above. Once the most salient discourses were identified (stage 1), Ruth Wodak's macro strategies in discursive construction of national identity were employed to conclude what kind of a national energy and climate identity can be detected (stage 2). Finally, discourses of delegitimation were identified from the speeches of the members of the opposition to identify how the constructed identity is attempted to be dismantled (stage 3).

As the study is qualitative by nature and the method of study relies on critical analysis of text, the results are heavily influenced by the history and personal views of the author of the study. In fact, there should be no misconception that this study is in any way objective,

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<sup>1</sup> The Finnish language transcript of the parliamentary debate is available at: [https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/PoytakirjaAsiakohta/Sivut/PTK\\_123+2016+9.aspx](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/PoytakirjaAsiakohta/Sivut/PTK_123+2016+9.aspx)

as it is merely the author's interpretation of meanings as that is the nature of Critical Discourse Analysis.

## 4 Findings – climate change as an opportunity

In this part of the report, I present the findings of the analysis. I've used the transcript of the parliamentary discussion to code statements in order to find predominant discourses that the members of the government parties use in discussing the National Energy and Climate Strategy. Further analysis of discursive strategies reveals what kind of a proposed national energy and climate identity is carved out by the government. I have also coded the opposition member's statements to find what kinds of discourses they use to delegitimise the proposed identity.

The parliamentary discussion followed a general protocol of Finnish parliamentary discussions, in that first the discussion was opened by the speaker of parliament (or in this case the deputy speaker Mauri Pekkarinen), who then dealt turns to the ministers and members of parliament. First turn was given to Minister of Industry Olli Rehn, whose ministry was responsible for preparing the National Energy and Climate Strategy. The Minister's speech was followed by official opening speeches of the ruling parties (Centre Party, National Coalition and Finns Party) then the opening speeches of the opposition parties (Social Democratic Party, Green League, Left Alliance, Swedish People's Party and Christian Democrats) after which further turns for rebuttals were dealt by the speaker to willing members of parliament. The speaker's role was also to ensure that no member spoke for longer than the number of minutes allotted to them.

### 4.1 Four dominant discourses

Looking at the speeches by the representatives of the three ruling parties, I identified four major dominant discourses, which I have named:

- 1) Ambitious forerunner
- 2) Compliance and co-operation
- 3) Land of green gold; and
- 4) Self-sufficient and secure

In addition I identified one additional overarching discourse or super-discourse, which I have dubbed “Economy and jobs”. The reason I call this a super-discourse, is that it is mainly used by the speakers to justify or legitimise all other four discourses. Although “Economy and jobs” can be seen as a discourse among the other four discourses, it’s main function in this discussion is to rationalise the other discourses as being in the best interest of the Finnish people. I will explicate more on this in Section 4.1.5.

The four discourses are sometimes mixed with each other with features from two or several discourses used within even one sentence. Sometimes one discourse may take precedence over another or one can be used to justify another. Distinctions between the four discourses were still fairly clear in the speeches and they were easily detectable in the text as they were so prominent.

In the following sub-sections, I shall be examining each discourse in detail, including examples of statements using each discourse. I have translated all quotes into English from the official transcript of the parliamentary discussion held on 30 November 2016 and they are indented and printed in italics with the name and party of the speaker in parentheses after the quote.

#### 4.1.1 Ambitious forerunner

*Esteemed Chairman! Dear colleagues, when I stated, that the energy strategy outlined here is internationally ambitious, I meant, among other things, this abandonment of the use of coal in energy production. I am convinced that in the coming decades this shall be seen as almost equally important in the energy sector as giving the vote to women in Finland in 1906 was for democracy. That decision*

*paved the way for the rest of the world, of which we are rightfully proud. We are the forerunners of sustainable energy and we should not keep our candle under the bushel but boldly promote this around the world and thus create a basis for the export of Finnish energy and environmental technology. A 100-year old Finland is not built on nihilism, but on an open-minded attitude and healthy self-confidence [...] (Olli Rehn, Centre Party, Minister of Industry)*

In this discourse, Finnish energy and climate strategy is described as ambitious and exemplary, as Finland aims to be the first country in the world to prohibit the use of coal in energy production. Finland is painted as a trendsetter and role model for other countries and climate change is depicted as a historical opportunity for Finland to assume a leadership role on the global stage. Finnish knowhow and technological capabilities are emphasized as keys in this process.

The monumental nature of the change is emphasized by several speakers and words such as “ambitious” and “historical” are repeated in many speeches. A few representatives even describe the strategy as revolutionary:

*The government’s climate and energy strategy means a peaceful revolution on behalf of a good cause. We here are building an ecologically sustainable bio and electricity Finland in a way that has, indeed, never before been seen in this country. (Seppo Kääriäinen, Centre Party)*

War metaphors were also used by several representatives in the ‘Ambitious forerunner’ discourse, as they referred to the war against climate change, fighting climate change and leading the troupes. The expression “being in the front line” was used by several representatives in their arguments, as they referred to the position of Finland as taking a leader role in carbon neutral solutions and in banning the use of coal in energy.

*Finland wants to be in the front line to stop the globe from warming by more than two degrees. [...] If we are in the front line of this energy reform, the world truly is open to new Finnish energy concepts. (Harri Jaskari, National Coalition Party)*

*On top of everything, this strategy allows us to be in the front line in tackling climate change in a significant way, promoting technology and so forth. (Jari Leppä, Centre Party)*

In other speeches, representatives propose that Finland adopt the forerunner and leadership role also in other related cleantech (clean technology) industries such as biofuels, building and construction, flexible electricity demand solutions, energy efficiency and in electrification of transport. This is seen as a unique opportunity for a small country to assume a role larger than its size in both terms of recognition and economic gain.

*We, as Finns, have all the prerequisites of becoming a cleantech superpower. We have many kinds of capabilities, resources and so forth. (Kimmo Kivelä, Finns Party)*

*Finland could be an example for the whole of Europe in building with wood. [...] we can have amazing possibilities in the future of being a global leader in new biofuels. (Martti Mölsä, Finns Party)*

*We now have a similar opportunity to be in the front line in these smart electrical grids as we did in telecommunications in the early 90's and late 80's. (Harri Jaskari, National Coalition Party)*

What is being implied through many speeches is that Finland is going to go far beyond what is demanded of it by the EU and in international agreements. As a global leader and trendsetter Finland is acting as a shining example for other countries and thus leading the way to a cleaner and brighter future. According to the “Ambitious forerunner” discourse,

taking this role is also reasonable and rational from an economic point of view, since it means huge business opportunities for Finnish companies. The super-discourse of Economy and jobs (see section 4.1.5) is thus used to justify the Ambitious forerunner discourse.

There is also a strong conflict between the “Ambitious forerunner” discourse and the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse, which I shall be explaining in detail in the next section (4.1.2). On the one hand, Finland is seen to be a shining beacon in the front line of the fight against climate change but on the other, there are strong fears about the regulation and demands set on Finland concerning cutting emissions and how that will affect the economy.

#### 4.1.2 Compliance and co-operation

*The energy and climate strategy implements the government’s programme and it rests on the European Union’s common goals and on Finland’s international commitments. Looking from an international point of view, the strategy is ambitious and in line with the winter package of the energy and climate package of the commission, which was approved today. (Olli Rehn, Centre Party, Minister of Industry)*

In the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse, the Finnish energy and climate strategy is rationalised as an answer to demands set on Finland foremost by the EU but also by the international community in the form of the Paris treaty as well as Nordic colleagues in the common Nordic electricity market. Indeed, when co-operation is being referenced it is often in conjunction with Sweden or other Nordic countries, who are seen as allies due to geographic and cultural proximity and as facing similar challenges climate-wise.

*We have also been in close co-operation with, for example, Sweden, with many other member states, and from now on the emphasis will move most certainly towards influencing both the commission and on the other hand, the parliament.*

*[...] The Nordic electricity market is a benchmark for the rest of Europe, but we know that it has its failings and that is why we want to develop it very far along, and this is what we put an emphasis on last week when we met with the Nordic energy ministers. (Olli Rehn, Centre Party, Minister of Industry)*

*Transmission cabling between Finland and Sweden is good Nordic co-operation and it is encouraging to hear that there is also a possibility to get investment support from the EU for this project and a green light for it. (Mirja Vehkaperä, Centre party)*

Where Sweden and other Nordic countries are seen as allies, the EU is, however, seen in many speeches as an adversary or an annoying big brother trying to impose regulations on Finland that endanger its economy or the way of life of the people. The necessity to comply with EU regulation is not challenged by the speakers, but the urgent need to influence EU legislation in a way favourable to Finland is expressed by many.

*So also in that sense the scientific [carbon] sink versus what the commission is presenting in the first place is completely wrong, which is why it is very good that today we got good news related to it, that the first round has now been won in the direction of the EU, but there is still work to be done [...]. (Jari Leppä, Centre Party)*

*[...] but the demands on us are the biggest in the world compared to for example Poland, the goals are set very high. But if we do it in practice, we have to make a wire model about these things here, so let's take representative Soini there and representative Terho. They start to lose weight. The goal is the same. Who do you think will find it easier, the one that does not have it or the one that does. Now we are tightening ourselves here from the screw as tight as possible, and the industry will suffer from this, the end price is not known. (Teuvo Hakkarainen, Finns Party)*

*But the sad undertone of these agreements and goals on the Union level is that for the sake of the climate we will suffer from living up here in the north and our energy intensive industry. This old industry, as the Greens call it, must not be run down. Finnish work must be defended.* (Jani Mäkelä, Finns Party)

Where in the “Ambitious forerunner” discourse the role of Finland is seen as being in the vanguard and setting apart from the crowd in an exemplary manner, in the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse the emphasis is on working with others and adhering to the demands set upon Finland by the EU and the international community. Terms such as “taking responsibility”, “duty” and “implementing agreements” are used several times.

Therein lies the dichotomy between the “Ambitious forerunner” discourse and the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse. On the one hand, the government parties are painting a picture of Finland as a revolutionary radical that blazes its own trail in the fight against climate change, while on the other hand it is emphasized how the energy and climate strategy is perfectly in line with demands from the EU and the international community. Furthermore, Finland must still work hard to influence EU policy to make sure that it stays favourable to the Finnish economy and way of life. This raises the question of whether a nation can assume the role of global leader and forerunner and base its strategy on following regulation and guidelines at the same time.

#### 4.1.3 Land of green gold

*Esteemed Chairman! I have been raised in the middle of forests and swamplands, which is why I can appreciate energy uses to be had from them [...] Finland is known of its forests and their abundance has given rise to speak of the Land of green gold. The growth of Finnish forests has more than doubled in the last 50 years. Our forests grow more timber now than ever before during the Finnish independence. [...] As a domestic, local, renewable and environmentally friendly source of energy and building material wood will be an ever more competitive raw material, which we have plenty at our disposal.* (Lea Mäkipää, Finns Party)

In the “Land of green gold” discourse, the unique role of Finnish forests is put in centre stage in the discussion about energy and climate change. Forests are seen by many representatives as a cornucopia that will provide our country with endless technological opportunities in, for example biofuels, pharmaceuticals, textiles and packaging, while at the same time operating as a carbon sink easing our obligations on the EU level to reduce emissions. The “Land of green gold” discourse is related to the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse in the sense that many representatives were worried that other countries, and especially the EU, do not understand the unique role of forests for the Finns and how sensible forest maintenance can enhance the effectiveness of forests as carbon sinks.

*I think it is an important climate act, that forests are also in the future Finland's carbon sink, the whole world's carbon sink, and they must also get the status they deserve in these international agreements. (Mirja Vehkaperä, Centre party)*

*It is hard to understand how Brussels does not understand Finnish forestry and forest maintenance. For years, the forests in this country have been kept in first-class condition, and Finland is the most forest-covered country in the EU. The Union should give out a special mention and thank you for the fact that there is a country like this in Europe that has for ages taken care of its forests and has not cleared them out of the way of cities and farm lands. Instead we are offered the idea that our well maintained and continually net growing forests are a burden when making comparisons. (Jani Mäkelä, Finns Party)*

Environmental values and the sensible use of Finnish forest resources was also a frequent theme for representatives. Many representatives expressed their conviction that Finnish forests are already very well looked after and that there is no additional need to protect them as carbon sinks. Several representatives also used numerical evidence to show that Finland is growing more timber than we are using, thus justifying increasing logging of forests as sustainable. In the “Land of green gold” discourse, excellence in combining

environmental and economical values with the use of forest resources was seen as unique to Finns and Finland.

*Finland deserves a genuine, healthy and sustainable relationship with nature, and the current government has just that. That we all must state. It is also manifested in this climate strategy. (Ari Torniainen, Centre party)*

*Esteemed Chairman! There has been much undue worry here about what additional use of forests might cause. The additional growth and wellbeing maintenance of Finnish forests has been studied for decades. [...] We have very good forest legislation that stimulates and upholds diversity and which will, also in the future, make sure that the use of Finnish forests is sensible, that their wellbeing will be looked after and that diversity will be on the level demanded by legislation. There is no need to worry. (Timo Kalli, Centre Party)*

Combining climate change mitigation and environmental values with economic gains to be had from forests was a recurring theme in speeches. In this sense, the “Land of green gold” discourse is, of course, justified by the “Economy and jobs” super-discourse (see section 4.1.5), as forests were seen as providing Finland with economic advantages. Finnish forestry, the Finnish economy and the global climate were seen to be in a kind of win-win-win situation, where there are no losers and no compromises.

*[...] there is huge demand for forests [as timber] in certain areas, but, for example, in Northern and Eastern Finland, where the forest industry has partly left the areas, the situation is that up to half of the forest growth and potential that could be utilised after protection is not utilised, and this is not sensible. We must create jobs and this government programme also creates jobs in Finland. (Markus Lohi, Centre party)*

*Through this simple example everyone in this room understands and realises what kind of a national fortune is at stake, when we talk about the marshlands of our*

*country, of which only a fraction is viable for peat production. (Reijo Hongisto, Finns Party)*

In essence, climate change and the energy transition are seen as an opportunity for tapping into underused resources in Finnish forests. The speakers paint a picture of a future bio economy where Finnish timber is utilised in a myriad of industries and unique Finnish knowhow in forest maintenance enables the sustainable use of forests while still contributing positively to the fight against climate change.

The “Land of green gold” discourse is closely related also to the “Ambitious forerunner” discourse, as both see climate change as an opportunity for Finland to pioneer new technological breakthroughs. The only threat to this vision is seen to be the lack of understanding in other countries (the EU) about the uniqueness of Finnish forests and the capabilities and knowhow of Finns in Forest maintenance.

#### 4.1.4 Self-sufficient and secure

*Esteemed Chairman! The recent uncertainty in international politics has reminded all of us about the importance of energy self-sufficiency also from the point of view of our security of supply. Therefore, a significant increase in energy self-sufficiency should be set as a central goal and long-term priority in our energy policy. This has now been done by the government and we are pleased with that. (Martti Mölsä, Finns Party)*

In the “Self-sufficient and secure” discourse the energy and climate strategy is discussed from the point of view of energy security as well as national security. Dependency on foreign imported energy sources is seen as a bad thing not only because Finnish residents and companies are paying for foreign energy but also because in a potential crisis Finland cannot depend on the availability of foreign energy. According to speakers, the quantity and availability of domestic energy should be increased to improve security of supply.

Increasing self-sufficiency and security of supply by promoting domestic energy sources is seen also to have positive economic repercussions, since more money will be directed towards Finnish industry. Here again, the “Economy and jobs” super-discourse (see section 4.1.5) was used to justify the “Self-sufficient and secure” discourse, as protecting domestic energy production was seen as generating income and employment in Finland.

*The implications of this decision can be very significant. Nowadays more than 60 per cent of the energy use of imported oil is used in transportation. Finland imports a net of 6.8 billion euros of energy every year. In the future, more of these euros will be paid to the domestic biofuel industry, which is excellent. (Harri Jaskari, National Coalition Party)*

*The government’s course is progressive, if we consider that every decreased percentage point of imported oil means an improvement of at least five per cent in the Finnish trade account. These are astounding numbers and as the government is strongly on the course of employment, here we have the same course. (Hanna Kosonen, National Coalition Party)*

This seems to be an especially important discourse for the Finns Party as many speakers used this discourse in their speeches. Members of the Finns Party, but also some members of the Centre Party used the “Self-sufficient and secure” discourse to justify the promotion of the highly controversial energy use of peat, which has been proven in several studies to be as or more detrimental to the climate than coal. The logic is that as Finland needs to cut the use of fossil fuels, from a self-sufficiency point of view it makes sense to cut foreign energy sources such as coal first and replace them with domestic ones such as peat. According to this course of thought, replacing one fossil fuel with another will not increase Finnish carbon emissions, but it will increase self-sufficiency and security of supply and create Finnish jobs.

*I know personally dozens of peat producers, peat entrepreneurs, and they are having a hard time getting environmental permits for new peat production areas*

*that they want. [...] At least I find that peat production would bring, which coal does not, needed jobs to the countryside, and I ask: what actions can the government take to speed up the permit process?* (Reijo Hongisto, Finns Party)

*As we anyway cannot immediately get rid of all fossil fuels, it is important that the marching order that the government has, is the right one, that we first try to get rid of those fossil fuels that are brought here from outside our country's borders and after this of those that are domestic.* (Markus Lohi, Centre Party)

Even though the energy use of peat is as detrimental to the climate as coal use, the abandonment of peat on any time-frame is not mentioned in the Energy and Climate Strategy, nor is it discussed by the ruling party representatives. From a climate point of view, it would be as important to phase out the use of peat as it is to phase out coal. It could be argued that energy self-sufficiency and Finnish jobs seem to trump the climate for the governing parties.

#### 4.1.5 Super-discourse of Economy and jobs

*Minister[s] Rehn and Berner, you have done fantastic work to create this strategy, which will take the Finnish bioeconomy strategy forward with the goal of 100 000 jobs and increasing value added to 100 billion euros. This is a patriotic endeavour and everyone should give their support to this whole and to think about Finnish work and livelihoods.* (Antti Rantakangas, Centre Party)

The “Economy and jobs” super-discourse is all about the economic benefits and opportunities (or threats) presented by the energy and climate strategy and the “bioeconomy” in general. Creating jobs, especially in remote locations in the countryside where jobs are currently disappearing, is seen by many speakers as the most important benefit of implementing the proposed strategy. For many representatives, the economic effects of the strategy override its environmental benefits or its effectiveness in fighting climate change, when weighing its merits.

From the discussion, it is clear that for most of the representatives of the governing parties, the main attraction of the energy and climate strategy is, in fact, the economic benefits it offers, and not its ability (or inability) to fight climate change. In a way, economic effects are the core motivator behind the perceived value of the strategy and the environmental benefits are seen as merely an added bonus.

*When we make changes, we must make sure that we don't damage the competitiveness of our country's industry by making too radical changes. By taking care of our competitiveness, we at the same time make sure that our industry can develop more energy efficient and climate friendly products and processes. (Esko Kiviranta, Centre Party)*

In fact, the “Economy and jobs” super-discourse can be seen as being tied to all four other discourses, as in most cases, when speakers employed one of the other discourses, “Economy and jobs” was used to justify the proposed course as making sense for the prosperity of the Finnish people. Even when speakers employed the “Compliance and co-operation” discourse to express concern over demands made by Brussels, the criticism was justified by alarm over how the demanded emission reductions will affect Finnish jobs.

In this sense, it could be argued that “Economy and jobs” is not actually a discourse in itself but a kind of tool that is used to legitimate any of the other four discourses: being an ambitious forerunner in renewable energy and cleantech is legitimated by the huge business opportunities it presents on the global markets for Finnish companies and products; criticizing compliance is legitimised by protecting Finnish jobs; cutting more forests is legitimised by more efficient utilisation of abundant domestic resources; and decreasing import of foreign oil and coal is legitimated by bigger investments in domestic alternatives.

For the next phase of the analysis, I have coded statements made by members of the ruling parties that construct a national energy and climate strategy in accordance with the macro strategies introduced by Wodak et al (2009). I then look at what macro strategies are used within the afore discussed discourses and finally come to formulate three respective identities that are implied in the three governing party members' statements.

## 4.2 National energy and climate identity

As Wodak et al (2009) define, there are four major overarching macro-strategies at work when constructing national identity through discourse. These are: 1) *constructive strategies*, 2) *strategies of perpetuation*, 3) *strategies of transformation* and 4) *destructive strategies*. The theoretical bases of these macro-strategies were discussed in detail in Section 2.5.

In the case of the parliamentary discussions of the Finnish Energy and Climate Strategy, the first three macro-strategies, namely *constructive strategies*, *strategies of perpetuation* and *strategies of transformation* seem to be the most relevant and generally used strategies in the speeches of the representatives. In general, representatives seem to be either trying to construct or define a national energy and climate identity or painting a transformative future identity of Finland as an energy vanguard. Other representatives, on the other hand, seem to be attempting to preserve a part of some historical Finnish national identity to be carried over to a technologically evolving modern world in the middle of an energy revolution. In the following sections I shall discuss the manifestations of these macro-strategies in more detail.

### 4.2.1 'We' and 'Finland'

As discussed in Section 2.5, the use of the personal pronoun 'we' or 'us' is a powerful indicator that the speaker wishes to create a sense of sameness among those that are being referred to. Thus, for the sake of the analysis, I isolated statements using the personal pronoun 'we' from the speeches of the governing parties' representatives' speeches. I,

however, disregarded those statements where it was obvious that the statement had only an informative function, i.e. there was no valuation attached to it. Also, it was not always clear whether the ‘we’ of the representative in question was referring to the Finnish people as a nation or to the government as a decision-making organ or to politicians in general. Therefore, I only included ‘we’ statements that clearly referred to the Finnish people as some kind of a collective and that had some reference to a common value attached to it.

I isolated a total number of 58 ‘we’ statements. I coded the statements based on the above macro-strategies. Representatives used three out of the four, namely constructive strategies, transformative strategies and strategies of perpetuation when referring to the Finnish people as ‘we’ or ‘us’.

Representatives also often used the term *Finland*, where they referred to the *Finnish people*. This is a metonymy that can be used to denote sameness, in the same manner as the ‘we’ pronoun. I also included one statement which used the term *state* in place of the Finnish people. Fewer statements (29) could be found than with the ‘we’ statements. Almost all representatives used only constructive and/or transformative strategies in their statements and constructive strategies were more popular. Only one representative from the Finns Party used a perpetuating strategy in one statement.

#### 4.2.1.1 ‘We show the way to the rest of the world’

Transformative strategies were the most popular in the speeches. Statements using transformative strategies referred to an ideal future identity of Finland as a leader and example to other nations in clean technology and environmental politics. The “Ambitious forerunner” discourse was very prominent in transformative statements with many representatives repeating key terms such as *being a forerunner*, *setting an example* and *creating a bioeconomy*.

*We are an international forerunner, we show the way to the rest of the world* (Olli Rehn, Centre Party, Minister of Industry)

*Finland has the opportunity to specialize as a top expert in flexible demand solutions* (Harri Jaskari, Coalition Party)

Constructive strategies were the second most used, close to the number of statements using transformative strategies. Constructive statements featured the discourse of 'Compliance and Co-operation' quite prominently. Most representatives used sub-strategies of *assimilation*, meaning highlighting intra-national sameness and referred to Finland's strengths as a nation and being proud of our history and contribution but also bearing an international responsibility and doing our part.

*We are shouldering our responsibility internationally* (Hanna Kosonen, Centre party)

*And Finland is, by the way, really good at this. Finland is, incidentally, already really good [at efficient production]* (Jari Leppä, Centre Party)

However, representatives of the Finns Party largely used sub-strategies of *dissimilation*, i.e. emphasizing how Finland and Finns differ from other countries and nations. Finland was described as a country with a uniquely cold climate, lots of forests and very little weight in global problems.

*[...]we are a small pile of sand in the Saharan desert* (Lea Mäkipää, Finns Party)

*Finland is a special country, because we have a cold winter and long distances.*  
(Ari Torniainen, Finns Party)

#### 4.2.1.2 'Our green gold is still valuable to us'

Interestingly, strategies of perpetuation were also popular with the Finns Party, but also with some Centre Party representatives. The discourse of 'Self-sufficient and Secure'

featured prominently in perpetuating statements. Statements referred to the importance of energy security and preserving Finnish forestry and the use of domestic energy sources, i.e. wood and peat. Many speakers used the sub-strategy of dissimulation, underlining unique Finnish expertise in Forest management.

*It is very important that we continue sustainable forestry, sustainable forest management (Olli Rehn, Centre Party, Minister of Industry)*

*It is very important for us to maintain the affordance of our domestic energy sources (Sampo Terho, Finns Party)*

*[...]our green gold is still valuable to us (Lea Mäkipää, Finns Party)*

Strategies of perpetuation were used also strongly within the “Land of green gold” discourse, however, so were transformative strategies, which can be seen somewhat as the opposite of perpetuating strategies. For most Centre Party and Coalition Party representatives, Finnish forests were seen as a treasure trove of opportunities in new futuristic products that will produce a whole bioeconomy where Finland can be a shining beacon for other countries. Some Finns Party but also Centre Party representatives, however, saw a need to protect a “Finnishness” of living off the forests from e.g. EU bureaucrats who do not understand our way of life.

#### 4.2.2 An identity forms

From the analysis of the macro-strategies employed in the parliamentary discussions it can be stated that if indeed a national energy and climate identity does emerge, it is far from straightforward and clear, due to the differences in the three governing parties’ philosophies and agendas. Instead of one coherent identity, each ruling party seems to have its own identity proposition, that is slightly different from the other parties’ identities.

As the party with most power with holding the post of Prime Minister, the Centre Party can be argued as having the most influence in shaping the national energy and climate identity in Parliament. The Centre Party's proposed identity is very dynamic and future-driven, but protective of tradition at the same time. It could be said, that the Centre Party's identity is everything to everyone. The following is the author's own interpretation of what the Centre Party's proposed identity:

*Finland is a global leader in high-tech carbon neutral solutions, which arise from the ancient Finnish forests and the wisdom we have gathered in nurturing them throughout the centuries. We are also heroically shouldering our responsibility for the planet and showing the way for others, while at the same time creating incredible prosperity and well-being for our nation.*

The Coalition Party's proposed identity is, however, a lot harder to define, as there was only one speaker from the party represented in the collected statements. In fact, only two Coalition representatives participated in the discussion in the first place. Does this mean that the party does not deem the subject important enough or do the representatives of the party lack the expertise to discuss it?

Based on the one representative's (who did, however take several turns at speaking and replying to comments) statements it can be stated that the Coalition Party's identity resembles that of the Centre Party, but does not make a connection to the forestry industry. The following is the author's own interpretation of the Coalition Party's proposed identity:

*Finland is a world-leader and a desired business partner in clean tech smart solutions. We are a small but agile pioneer in a new lucrative frontier. We are saving the planet while making money.*

Trying to define the Finns Party's proposed identity is perhaps the most challenging because of the pluralistic nature of their representatives' respective statements. On the

one hand the Finns Party also sees the connection between fighting climate change, new innovations and national prosperity. But on the other, they are worried about protecting Finnish livelihoods, domestic energy sources, energy security and, indeed, a whole Finnish way of life. They are especially sceptical of the EU and worried that other nations do not understand our living conditions in the North. The following is the author's own interpretation of the Finns Party's proposed identity:

*Finland is a global expert in bioenergy that we extract from our own forests with our own hands, as we have done for centuries. We rely on no one's help and are self-sufficient but are prepared to guide others in the fight against climate change through our accumulated wisdom about forest maintenance.*

While the three identities are different, they nonetheless, have similarities such as an emphasis on Finnish expertise and knowhow and sharing that expertise with other nations of the world for profit. The Centre Party and Coalition Party are more enthusiastically looking to the future of energy solutions, while the Finns Party members are, perhaps, more interested in protecting the status quo, but are still open to new innovations, provided that they benefit the Finnish people. It, perhaps, bears mentioning that the few sceptical comments towards the Energy and Climate Strategy that came from governing parties' representatives were all made by Finns Party representatives.

In the following section (4.3) I present the voice of the opposition: how the parties on the other side of the fence received the Energy and Climate Strategy and what kinds of discourses they used to either give the proposed energy and climate identity legitimacy or to delegitimise it.

#### 4.3 Discourses of delegitimation

It can be said that there were noticeable differences in the reception of the Energy and Climate Strategy between opposition parties and even to an extent between members within the parties. While some older male members of the Social Democratic Party and

members of the Swedish People's Party of Finland gave the government considerable praise on the Strategy, other opposition representatives from the Green League, Left Alliance and Christian Democrats and, indeed, younger members from the Social Democrats took a more critical view. Generally, the opposition parties agreed that the Strategy contained some commendable measures, but that it was not radical or fast-paced enough to stop climate change and to reach the goals set in the Paris Accord.

I identified three major discursive themes that recurred in most speeches by opposition members that I have named *Emergency and urgency*, *Carbon sinks* and *Future technology*. Each theme contained discourses that many members used to delegitimize the government's arguments and, thus, the proposed energy and climate identity. In the following, I will explicate on these discursive themes of delegitimation further.

#### 4.3.1 Emergency and urgency

*Climate change is proceeding at an overwhelming pace. This year will almost certainly see record high temperatures, as did last year and the year before. In the Paris Climate Accord, we are committed to controlling climate change to around 1.5 degrees. All countries must set even stricter goals. Unfortunately, the government does not utter a word about this. Nevertheless, climate change won't wait, it will not pause for negotiations, it only adheres to the laws of nature.* (Satu Hassi, Green League)

*Emergency and urgency* was a discursive theme used by nearly all opposition members in their speeches and it was extensively used to delegitimize the governing parties' "Ambitious forerunner" discourse. This theme mainly consisted of two discourses, firstly, on the rapid acceleration and urgent nature of climate change as a global phenomenon and, secondly and interestingly, on a lack of ambition in the Strategy as seen by the opposition.

*Esteemed Chairman! Reading the government's Energy and Climate Strategy I'm reminded of the familiar fable of the emperor's new clothes: has no one had the courage to say, that although this [strategy] contains good ideas, it is not enough to combat climate change? This strategy should show us the means to solve the climate crisis but it is too unambitious for that. In the strategy the time span for climate action is between the years 2030 to 2050, when in reality we must reduce our emissions much faster. (Silvia Modig, Left Alliance)*

It is clear from the speeches that the opposition feels that the government may not fully understand the dire nature of climate change and, accordingly, is not adjusting the needed measures to respond to the situation rapidly enough. Here seems to be one of the biggest divides between the sides in the proposed energy and climate identity: the government parties are ready to declare Finland a brave pioneer and an example for the rest of the world in the fight against climate change, but the opposition's delegitimation of this notion is quite brutal.

The opposition does acknowledge the government's Energy and Climate Strategy as a step in the right direction, virtually all speakers admit that the Strategy does contain commendable measures. Especially the intent to ban the use of coal in energy production by 2030 gathers praise. However, even here some speakers wonder at the schedule: why not sooner? The Greens even question the government's much promoted idea of Finland gaining economic advantage from its forerunner position:

*And I am myself a bit disappointed that, even though the current government's programme did contain good goals – this halving of the imports and banning of coal are included in this strategy – there are quite few new measures as to how Finland really could be a forerunner in growing areas in the global market. [...] This international development is moving forward very rapidly and mere talk will not make anyone a forerunner. (Ville Niinistö, Green League)*

### 4.3.2 Carbon sinks

*Another central problem for the reaching of the climate goals is, that the Energy and Climate Strategy relies heavily on increased logging and use of forest resources. Forests are a major natural resource for Finland and the sensible use of wood is an important resource also from the point of view of domestic livelihoods. The transition to renewable energy production cannot, however, be done at the expense of our forests, or carbon sink, but the aim should be the sustainable use of wood by raising the level of value added. (Sanna Marin, Social Democratic Party)*

Another major discursive theme that was easily discernible from the discussion was that of forests as carbon sinks and as something worth protecting in Finland. Carbon sinks mean areas of greenery, such as forests, that absorb large quantities of carbon dioxide over time. Nearly all opposition speakers expressed their concern that the Strategy is promoting the use of biofuels too heavily to sustain Finnish forests as a carbon sink and that the environmental values and diversity of forests are under threat as a result. The government's cutting of the funding for environmental protection also gained criticism. Even the representatives of the Swedish People's Party of Finland, who generally took a relatively positive stance on the Strategy, expressed their concerns.

*This strategy bets a lot on bioeconomy, and it is understandable – Finland is a forerunner in the production of biofuels and it is developing into a great export, but there is a limit to its production. Many people are concerned about the sufficiency of wood as raw material, about whether we are cutting into our carbon sink and as a result into the diversity of nature. Concern has been showed by the wood industry as well as organisations: loggings cannot be increased indefinitely. (Anders Adlercreutz, Swedish People's Party of Finland)*

A significant discourse under the carbon sinks theme was that of peat use in energy production. This has historically always been a hot potato in the debate about domestic

energy in Finland. In the 1990's the government campaigned for peat to be categorized as a renewable energy, but later science established that, in fact, it is not renewable and the emissions caused by burning peat are equal to, if not worse than, those of coal. Peat is still treated to generous tax exemptions, despite the significant greenhouse gas emissions, as the energy tax levied on peat is a fraction of the tax on natural gas (Berninger et al 2017, 69). Nevertheless, the current government is pushing peat as a provisional replacement to imported coal, as it is a domestic energy form and can, thus, improve energy security.

The opposition did not agree that this is a viable strategy and were disappointed that peat extraction continues to be supported financially by the government and that the strategy paper makes no mention of the phasing out of peat use. Several opposition speakers stated that the government has a “blind spot” when it comes to the climate impact of burning peat.

*The government has a big blind spot where peat is concerned. The climate emissions of peat are roughly the same as those of coal. Surely the government is not filling in for relinquishing coal by increasing peat use? Replacing one emitter with another is not going to get us closer to the goal. Peat will still be a part of Finnish energy production in the coming years, but it is not part of the energy mix of the future. Peat use must be reduced gradually and its tax subsidies must be decreased slowly. (Silvia Modig, Left Alliance)*

#### 4.3.3 Future technology

*The house of the future is a part of a smart electrical grid. Part of the equipment, such as ground-source heat pumps and boilers, take part in the demand response of electricity, meaning that they consume electricity when it is cheap. In this way we can strike four flies with one blow: cut emissions, peak consumption of electricity, needed maximum capacity of power stations and the consumers'*

*electricity bill. [...] Unfortunately the report dismisses smart grids with just a mention. (Satu Hassi, Green League)*

The third overarching discursive theme in the opposition's speeches was that of existing technology as well as future technology as a solution to climate change. A specific discourse under the theme was that of technological innovations, where advances such as smart grids, electric cars and energy efficiency solutions combined with renewable energy such as solar and wind were seen as the way of the future. Opposition members were strongly of the opinion that these solutions were going to proliferate global markets in the future and that the government was too preoccupied with biofuels, which they saw as a provisional solution, but not as a sensible investment in the long run. In this sense the Future technology theme is related to the Carbon sinks theme, in that the government's reliance on the use of Finnish forests in energy production was seen as a problem from this perspective as well by the opposition.

A further distinct discourse under the future technology theme was that of empowerment of the consumers, as the technological innovations of the future were also seen to give consumers more power on the electricity market. Consumers would be able to act as electricity producers, store energy and level peak demand times through their choices. Consumers would be given the possibility to take a more active role and to take part in the fight against climate change through their own actions and choices. It was seen that these solutions and changes in the electricity market were not taken into account by the government in the Energy and Climate Strategy.

*Esteemed chairman! Smart grids even out consumption peaks and transfer power in energy consumption from electricity companies to consumers. Smart grids are, in fact, often called the internet of energy. It is, therefore, no wonder, that back in the Katainen government programme it was promised in three separate occasions to promote the development of smart grids. After that not much has happened and again in this strategy smart grids are bypassed with a mention. (Jyrki Kasvi, Green League)*

#### 4.3.4 Delegitimizing the proposed identity

Where governing party members painted a picture of Finland and Finns as forerunners in the fight against climate change, the opposition saw the Energy and Climate Strategy as lacking ambition for us to even reach the targets set in the Paris Accord, thus questioning the proposed identity. The opposition also called into question the identity in the sense that they saw the reliance in bioeconomy as obsolete in that the sustainable solutions to climate change and the energy transition were seen by the opposition to be in other technological solutions and that bioenergy should only be seen as a provisional solution.

Where the ruling party members saw Finnish forests as part of the Finnish Energy and Climate identity through forestry and decades of accumulated knowhow in forest management and wood products, the opposition (for the most part) emphasised the value of Finnish forests as a source of biodiversity and as carbon sinks. They questioned the sensibility of increasing production of bioenergy and gave Finnish forests more value as carbon sinks than as a source of renewable energy.

As a very rough generalisation, in the fight against climate change as well as for the wellbeing of the Finnish people, forests can be seen as having absolute value by the opposition and an instrumental value by the government parties: the opposition sees forests as producing most benefit for society as carbon sinks and through their unspoilt biodiversity, while the ruling party members see forests as a means to an end, which is greater prosperity for the Finnish people and a carbon neutral economy at the same time.

Thus, while it can be stated that forests are a big part of the Finnish national energy and climate identity for both the governing party members as well as the opposition members, the opposition nevertheless attempted to delegitimise the entirety of the identity proposed by the government. They neither saw the same forward thinking and example setting elements in the Energy and Climate Strategy nor did they agree that forest resource use for energy should be a part of the identity.

In the following chapter of this report I will move on to discuss the meaning of the above findings and discuss the implications of the results of this study. I will also reflect on its limitations and finally, give suggestions for further research in political climate change communication and its potential effect on the voting public.

## 5 Discussion and conclusions – if the going gets tough?

The aim of this thesis was to firstly investigate what kinds of discourses were used by members of the governing parties to discuss the 2016 energy and climate strategy in parliament on 30 November 2016. The purpose of the analysis was to examine what kind of national energy and climate identity the government is promoting through their choice of discourses, if indeed it is possible to determine such a proposed identity.

Secondly, this study was looking at how the governing parties' arguments and proposed national energy and climate identity was delegitimated by members of parliament in the opposition parties.

The research questions that this thesis set out to answer were:

1. What kinds of discourses do the governing parties employ in the parliamentary discussion on the 2016 energy and climate strategy?
2. What kind of a national energy and climate identity does emerge from the discourses?
3. How is the emerging energy and climate identity delegitimated by members of the opposition?

The motivation for this study was the magnitude of climate change as the global problem of our generation and the importance of national energy strategies and legislation in tackling that issue. The subject of this study was spurred by Eckersley's (2016) suggestion that rather than looking at the fossil fuel dependence of nations as an indication of their willingness to comply with environmental norms, we should be looking at their discourses of national identities to see how states view their international roles in fighting climate change.

The method used in this study was critical discourse analysis of a parliamentary discussion on the 2016 national energy and climate strategy and a 63 page transcript of that discussion publicly available on the parliament's web site was used to carry out the analysis.

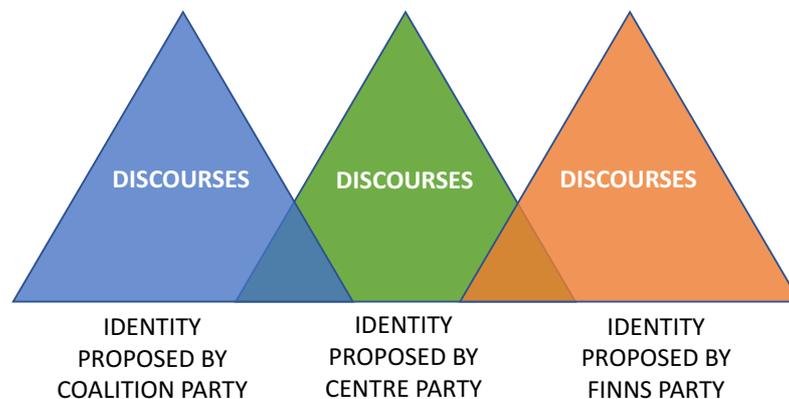
## 5.1 Results of the study

From the speeches and statements of the members of the governing parties four dominating discourses were clearly discernible. These were: *ambitious forerunner*, *compliance and co-operation*, *land of green gold* and *self-sufficient and secure*. Each of these discourses served the purpose of legitimating the national energy and climate strategy and all of the four discourses were further legitimised by an overarching super-discourse that was *economy and jobs*. In essence, all the other discourses could be reduced to benefitting the national interest financially either through business opportunities and/or domestic job creation.

In the findings to this study I also presented three respective hypothetical national energy and climate identities that could be interpreted as being proposed by each of the governing parties, namely the Centre Party, the Coalition Party and the Finns Party, as each party had some variance to the discourses used in the discussion. Roughly generalising, it could be stated that the Centre Party's (also the largest party in power) identity centred on Finns as setting an example for the rest of the world through pioneering knowledge in bioenergy and bioeconomy products, while the Coalition Party's identity painted Finns as being business savvy, being the potential frontrunner in clean energy business of the future. The Finns Party, on the other hand, wanted to see Finns as being self-sufficient and independent energy producers and, like the Centre Party, saw Finnish natural resources as an integral part of the identity.

In this sense the results of the present study present a slight variation to the original premise of the study (Figure 1, page 25) where it was presumed that one consistent

government-proposed national energy and climate identity would be discernible from the empirical material. Instead, each government party seems to be forming its own discursive identity. There are many similarities and overlapping themes in the three identities but each party has its own distinct emphases in the discourses employed. It could also be stated that the Centre Party identity had most in common with both the Coalition Party identity as well as the Finns Party identity, while the Coalition Party identity was further apart from the Finns Party identity. This is illustrated through the below figure (Figure 2).



*Figure 2. Three distinct but overlapping discursive national energy and climate identities as proposed by the three government parties respectively.*

There also seemed to be interesting contradictions or conflicts between certain discourses as well. For example, on the one hand, the discourse of *ambitious forerunner*, where Finns were described as being in the forefront of clean energy development and deployment was somewhat at odds with the discourse of *compliance and co-operation*, which emphasized complying with agreements and EU regulation as well as developing clean energy systems with other nations. Also, the *land of green gold* discourse contained, in essence, two sub-discourses: one which emphasized Finnish forests as a treasure trove of future bioproducts that we haven't perhaps even invented yet, and one that looked to the past and saw forestry as a traditional Finnish way of life that has provided prosperity to the people for centuries and that has to be protected against foreigners who do not

understand it. This was partly explained by party affiliations, since different parties employed different discourses based on their own interests.

### 5.1.1 Delegitimation by the opposition

It was assumed that the political affiliation of the members would have a strong effect on whether the strategy and thus the proposed identity was legitimated or delegitimated by the speakers, and this certainly was the case, as speeches were quite polarized between government and opposition members, although there were some exceptions to this rule. When looking at the statements and analysing the discourses used by the members of the opposition parties, it is clear, however, that the vast majority of their speeches and statements were aimed at delegitimising the governing parties discourses, the proposed identities and, indeed, many parts of national energy and climate strategy. The discursive theme of *emergency and urgency* was used by the opposition to highlight what they saw as a dangerous lack of ambition in the strategy in reaching international targets concerning climate change (in stark contrast to the Centre Party's strong proposition of Finns as being frontrunners in climate matters).

The discursive theme of *carbon sinks*, on the other hand, was used by the opposition to delegitimize the proposition of wood based biofuels as part of the Finnish energy and climate identity. Many members of the opposition would rather propose an identity where forests work as valuable carbon sinks and biodiversity is something to be proud of. One important discourse in the carbon sinks theme was the increased use of peat in energy production to replace foreign coal, which the government party members saw as increasing self-sufficiency but the opposition saw as irresponsible and counterproductive in the fight to reduce carbon emissions.

The opposition's discursive theme of *future technology* was used by many members of parliament to further delegitimise the proposed energy and climate frontrunner identity, since what they saw was a lack of foresight in the national energy and climate strategy into new smart technologies that were anticipated as becoming more and more important

as the energy transition widens. Increasing wood use as biofuel and the forest-use-based energy and climate identity was also delegitimized using this theme as the opposition saw the government as relying too heavily on an interim solution while the long-term solutions were seen to be in e.g. wind and solar power, energy storage, smart grids and consumer empowerment in the energy market.

### 5.1.2 Climate change as an opportunity

To sum up the findings of the study, it can be stated that while certain discourses were clearly discernible in the government party member's speeches, there was not one clear proposed identity that could be seen as rising up from the discourses, but rather party affiliations clearly affected which discourses were employed and how. This resulted in what seemed to be multiple proposed identities instead of one coherent identity. The common denominator behind all proposed identities was economy and jobs as what seemed to be the 'primus motor' of the choices made in the national energy and climate strategy. It could be stated that climate change was seen as an opportunity instead of a threat by the government. This was especially interesting, as climate change is often seen as a global problem where all countries need to agree to make sacrifices in order to solve a complex politically charged situation.

This was not taken up by the opposition party members in their speeches and rebuttals, even though they did delegitimise the national energy and climate strategy as well as the government's proposed identity from a number of key perspectives (lack of ambition, heavy reliance on biofuels and not valuing forests as carbon sinks). This begs the question of whether economy and jobs are seen as such a fundamental issue with constituents that not even the opposition dare or think to challenge its hierarchical standing in decision making when mitigating climate change is in question. In the next section, I discuss this issue further as economic growth is one of the traditional state imperatives, which were discussed in the literature review to this study.

## 5.2 Results in relation to literature

The findings of the present study support existing literature on the subject of climate change communication by the political elites of nations. It seems that as Kurtz et al. (2010) suggest, the idea of dramatic reductions in carbon emissions is a rhetorically troubled issue also for Finnish politicians, when the status quo of the present paradigm of constant growth is on the line. This is represented by the presence of economic justification for all discourses legitimating the national energy and climate strategy, which is not questioned by the opposition either.

Eckersley (2016) states that the two traditional imperatives of a state are national security and economic growth and that the complex environmental responsibilities that climate change imposes go against these traditional purposes of the state and propose a challenge of legitimation for governments. This is why conventionally climate issues need to be connected to the traditional state imperatives. This claim is clearly supported by the findings of the present study, as economic growth and job creation as well as independence from foreign imported energy sources were strongly used by the government party members to legitimate the national energy and climate strategy.

Eckersley further suggests that it may not be possible for states to truly evolve into mature ecological states and to comply with international environmental norms unless they connect the national identity to a global responsibility over the environment. While the Finnish government party members relied on the same type of discourse of green growth as the Norwegian and German governments in Eckersley's study, they did not employ any discourse resembling a "cosmopolitan narrative of connections and 'enlarged responsibility' towards others in a global community" that is evident in Eckersley's findings. Some discourse on compliance and co-operation, but this was more on complying with EU demands and co-operating on Nordic Energy market development.

In her study Eckersley does not, however, note the possibility that perhaps Norway and Germany both have some kind of national guilt that may influence their sense of global

responsibility. In Germany's case it's a question of guilt over historical events, namely the holocaust during the Second World War and for Norway, there may be a collective guilt over the fact that the country has made a vast fortune for its citizens by extracting and selling oil – the very reason climate change is such a huge global problem. For Finland, there is no such clear source of national guilt that would encourage taking global responsibility over climate change.

### 5.2.1 Readiness to evolve?

Reflecting on the results of the study, it could be claimed that Finland may not have the same readiness to evolve into a fully mature ecological state as for example Norway and Germany seems to have, as the Finnish government parties' discourse lacked any real reference to an enlarged global responsibility over the climate, rather, strategic choices were only legitimated by the traditional state imperatives, namely economic growth and security. On the other hand, complying with EU-level regulation and the Paris Agreement was seen as important by the politicians, therefore indicating that Finland is, however, ready to comply with norms and agreements made in international forums.

Further, although a shared or global responsibility was not mentioned by the government party members, rather the Finnish government parties' discourse was about Finland setting an example and showing the way for the rest of the world and legitimising this course by the economic opportunities present in being first in new clean tech businesses, this discourse was challenged and called into question by the opposition, as they saw that the national energy and climate strategy presented little ambition or forward thinking. This means that not all of the Finnish political elite seem to agree with the economic justifications behind the energy and climate strategy; some members of parliament, especially in the opposition, also referred to a global responsibility concerning climate change.

Although political discussions such as this are by nature polarised, this debate raises further questions in relation to Eckersley's suggestion that studying the discourses of

national identities may reveal which states are more likely to evolve into more mature ecological states: assuming that the opposition's stance is from a climate science point of view correct and that the proposed policies are not efficient enough to reach targets set in the Paris Accord, if the government is discursively building an identity that is not backed up by political and regulatory decisions, as these would contradict the traditional imperative of economic prosperity, does this mean that the identity is "false" and would not, in fact, predict if a country is likely to do what is necessary to comply with the Paris Accord? Or, if the national energy and climate identity is based on exaggerated or even false statements, are citizens likely to make wrong choices from the point of view of climate change mitigation, or will a positive identity encourage people to make positive personal choices, even if that identity is not reflecting actual national public policies?

### 5.2.2 Identity is not static

While the political elite may communicate an identity to the citizens, it is, of course, not self-evident that the citizens will adopt or accept the identity. Rather, national identities form frames inside which people form more detailed identities that can also contradict the national identity (Poole 2012, Nyssönen and Vares 2012, Wodak 2002). This means that any energy and climate identity proposed by the government parties will not be assumed by the members of the Finnish public as such, but will be interpreted and challenged. This becomes evident through the opposition's delegitimation of the energy and climate identity.

The analysis carried out by Wodak et al (2009) showed that there is not one static national identity, rather discursive national identity was highly dependent on context such as setting, speaker's political affiliation and origin. The present study supports this finding fully, as indeed, it was not possible to determine one energy and climate identity presented by the government party members, but rather each party seemed to have their own proposed identity with both small as well as large differences between them, and indeed even individual parliament members inside parties seemed to have differences in the use of discourses to legitimate or delegitimize the national energy and climate strategy.

Because of this the national climate and energy identity would be assumed to change over time as government parties and parliament members change.

### 5.3 Implications

The findings of this study seem to indicate that while political elites such as government party members may attempt to construct national (energy and climate) identity discursively, it is clear that there is not only one identity being constructed, but several through individual discursive acts, that are shaped by party affiliation and even personal interests. Therefore, it cannot be said that the government is proposing one coherent identity. This is, perhaps, one hallmark of a multi-party political system where governments are formed by parties that may have significant differences in beliefs and opinions between them.

The recent rise and success of populist movements have polarised sentiments even inside political parties in a way that is making it increasingly difficult for people at each end of the spectrum to necessarily identify with the values of a given party. Although I would not agree that national identities are obsolete, it is increasingly difficult to define a national identity, rather there are as many interpretations of a national identity, as there are people that identify themselves as holding such a nationality.

Nevertheless, as research indicates that public opinion on climate change is influenced by cues from the political elite, even more so than by the media, it is important to examine discourses used by politicians in discussions about climate change and energy policy. In this case the discourses that the ruling party members used constructed an identity of Finns as being in the avantgarde of the energy transition and clean technologies with wood-based biofuel products. But, assuming that voters would accept this identity as the national energy and climate identity, how would that affect their behaviour? Would this encourage them to make more bold decisions concerning purchase behaviour or diet, or would it create a sense of complacency – if we are already the most advanced in the world, why do more?

### 5.3.1 Making difficult decisions

On the one hand, based on the present study, the government's attitude towards climate change mitigation is positive, which becomes across e.g. through the speakers' use of transformative strategies in constructing an energy and climate identity, emphasizing the possibilities of a future with Finland as a world leader in climate neutral innovations and technologies. This is also a positive cue towards the public that climate change is a serious issue that needs to be solved through policies and innovation. On the other hand, if political decisions concerning energy and climate matters are always legitimised by economic growth, what happens when decisions have to be made that are not good for the Finnish economy, but necessary to reach targets set out in the Paris Agreement?

In other words, at some point being the frontrunner in climate change mitigation might not mean business opportunities anymore, but using tax payer money to pay for solutions and policies that are necessary to reach globally set climate targets. From this point of view it might be relevant to question the government's ability to make difficult and even painful decisions that are necessary for the climate but in conflict with Finnish economic interests, as the economy is used to justify all choices in discussion about the national energy and climate strategy.

With regards to Eckersley's (2016) suggestion that national identities discursively constructed by political elites could be studied to predict which states will be able to evolve into mature ecological states and comply with international environmental norms, it could be argued that based on the results of this study, Finland cannot assume a real leadership role in climate matters and cannot expect to evolve into a mature ecological state, because the discourse lacked a reference to a global responsibility beyond the national borders. However, not all political elites agreed with this identity as shown by the discourses used by the opposition to delegitimize it. Therefore, I would say that this analysis alone could not be enough to predict Finland's ability to become a climate leader. Indeed, as national identities are not static but always changing, a judgement made based

on the current political elite's discourses may not hold true in time as times and political elites change.

### 5.3.2 Possible implications on corporate world

If indeed a discursive energy and climate identity could be an indicator of a nation's willingness to evolve and comply with environmental norms, could this apply also to corporations? This study was carried out by analysing political elites' speeches to determine what kind of an identity is constructed through the discourses used in the speeches. This same method could be employed to study the statements of corporate elites such as CEO's of public companies.

This could potentially reveal what kind of climate identities corporations are constructing for themselves and how willing the corporate world is to invest in transforming their operations in order to become carbon neutral or even climate friendlier. In this case, as well as with the political elites, however there is, of course, the question of whether the identity and actual operational decisions match, as this might call for decisions that are economically challenging in the short term.

## 5.4 Limitations of the study

One of the major limitations of this study is that because the chosen method was Critical Discourse Analysis, it means that the results of the study cannot be considered objective, but are the result of the author's own interpretations. On the other hand, all research entails choices, thereby compromising objectivity despite the methodology. Nevertheless, interpreting text always contains the inherent risk of the interpreter's personal views colouring the meanings the text receives in the process. This should be taken into consideration, when evaluating the results of the study and generalisations should be made with care.

Another limitation is that while national identity has been studied extensively, there exists no prior research into national energy and climate identity as a subset of national identity, and it cannot be stated certainly that there even exists such a concept. From the results of this study it could be inferred that it is, indeed, possible to discursively construct a national energy and climate identity, and that that is what political elites do when they speak about national climate policies, but as there exists no additional literature to confirm this, it should be viewed critically.

#### 5.4.1 Political theatre

Concerning the nature of the empirical material, the function of the televised parliamentary discussion is not so much trying to convince the other side, but to represent the speaker's party's views on the matter and to, perhaps, receive some attention in the media. Often the parliamentary discussions do not result in changing a policy proposition, as decisions have already been made elsewhere. But it is, nevertheless, a forum for the opposition to challenge the government, which is its role in a democratic system.

This means that there is an element of "political theatre" in the debate, which limits the reliability of analysing the speeches as an indicator of the actual intentions of the government. On the other hand, it could be argued that it is precisely where national identity is constructed, as media attention is sought with colourful statements.

#### 5.4.2 Changes in government

After the parliamentary discussion was carried out on 30 November 2016, several changes have occurred in parliament and within the parties. For one, the minister in charge of presenting the energy and climate strategy, Olli Rehn, left his post as Minister of Economic Affairs quite soon after the discussion to join the Bank of Finland as Deputy Chairman of the Board. The position was since taken up by Mika Lintilä.

Additionally, the Finns Party went through a major upheaval that resulted in the party leaving the government. The party voted for a new chairman and chose Jussi Halla-Aho, known for his anti-immigration opinions and conviction of breach of the sanctity of religion for his blog posting on Muslims. The election resulted in the more moderate members of the party to resign membership and to found a new party called the Blue Reform. All the Finns party members who held cabinet positions switched parties, thus leaving the Finns Party in the opposition. Therefore, part of the members of parliament who made statements for the Finns Party, are no longer members of the party, and some members of parliament who made statements as members of a government party, are now opposition members. Due to these changes, if the discussion was held today, the result could be quite different.

Additionally, we are nearing the end of term of the current government and parliament with elections due to be held in April 2019. It is predicted that the composition of government will change as the liberal parties are expected to win more seats. Therefore, any discursive identity that may be constructed by the current government in the discussion in question, may no longer be valid when a new government takes office. Of course, this suggests the question of how the proposed identity changes with a new government and possibly a new national energy and climate strategy, as Wodak et al (2009, 186-187) also conclude that discursive national identities are not static, but change according to time, place, setting, audience, etc.

## 5.5 Suggestions for further research

As suggested above, further research could concentrate on observing changes in discursive construction of a national energy and climate identity over time as governments change, technologies evolve and we get more information on climate change and the urgency of actions needed to mitigate its effects. An evolving identity could offer more insight into the willingness of nations to comply with actions needed to reach climate targets, as Eckersley (2016) suggests.

This study has concentrated on how the political elites of Finland construct a national energy and climate identity through discursive practices, but does not investigate exhaustively whether such a concept as a national energy and climate identity is relevant or apt to describe how the political elite communicate on value choices concerning the climate. Based on this study there seems to be a possibility to construct such an identity, but it warrants more research.

Another potentially fruitful avenue of further research would be to investigate how Finnish citizens view the proposed energy and climate identity and what kinds of interpretations they make of it, as national identities are never directly assumed by individuals. It would be interesting to find out to what degree political elites' statements really mould citizens' opinions on climate issues in Finland.

Further, assuming that Finnish citizens are affected by a national energy and climate identity proposed by the political elites, further research could shed light to what extent does that identity control or affect their behaviour and choices from a climate point of view. In other words, will individuals actually make more climate-friendly purchase or lifestyle choices, if the national energy and climate identity encourages them to make those choices? This would be important to know, as individual citizens are expected to make climate friendlier choices and investments pertaining to e.g. diet, mobility and living in order for us to reach the targets set in the Paris Accord.

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