TITLE: Energy colonialism and the role of the global in local responses to new energy infrastructures in the UK: A critical and exploratory empirical analysis

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Why import oil and cause devastation in the Niger Delta, when we could meet our
energy needs domestically?
(Platform, 2013, p.18)

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, several countries worldwide, and specifically in the global north, have been promoting the deployment of large-scale low carbon energy infrastructures, including renewable energy projects and associated technologies such as high voltage power lines (HVPL) (hereby collectively referred to as energy infrastructures or EI), following increasingly binding legislation to tackle climate change (Renewables Directive, 2009; Carrington, 2014). In most countries in the global north, electricity systems are centralised, based on large-scale infrastructures for power generation, usually located in remote areas, and on a national grid of pylons and power lines that transports electricity to sites of consumption (Watson & Devine-Wright, 2011; Graham and Marvin, 1995). This centralised mode of electricity systems has been heavily criticised for not being sustainable – more decentralised modes of organisation of people-energy relations are arguably much more so from both environmental and social perspectives (Alvial-Palavicino et al., 2011; Devine-Wright & Batel, 2013; Walker & Cass, 2007). However, this is the type of system within which most efforts to counter-act climate change in the global north are currently being undertaken, from a policy-making and governmental point of view (for exceptions see the Danish and German cases – Carrington, 2012; Kinglsey, 2012). Within this type of electricity system then, these two types of EI – power lines and power generation infrastructures - despite being different, are closely interconnected, both in terms of need (see Satoen, et al., 2015) and of people's representations (see Batel, Devine-Wright & Tangeland, 2013), even if HVPL are only needed due to centralisation. In other words, in current centralized electricity systems, and mainly due to the international and European binding directives on renewable energy referred to above, constructing a new wind farm is often done at a large, centralised, scale and often does imply the construction of a new high voltage power line; and, in turn, a new high voltage power line is often not constructed unless

it is to connect to a new large-scale low carbon energy generation technology. In turn, it is these new EI, and specifically HVPL – and not the old ones, which exist within the same centralised electricity system – that local communities and other members of the public and stakeholders, often contest, due to the impact they have near where they are deployed, as will be further discussed below.

Whereas the importance of the deployment of HVPL to connect to low carbon large-scale energy generation infrastructures as a mitigation measure of climate change is – within that centralised model for electricity systems (see Devine-Wright & Batel, 2013) - well recognised both at policy and academic levels, more recently, some scholars have also started to discuss its 'dark side', in terms of environmental justice (Gross, 2007; Walker, 2009; Knudsen et al., 2015). As Walker (2009, p.615) suggests, thinking about socio-environmental relations implies taking into account three interrelated aspects of environmental (in)justice, at several scalar levels – distributive justice, in terms of the unequal distribution of impacts and responsibilities and their spatialities; recognition, in terms of valuing and/or devaluing certain people and place identities in comparison to others; and (the ability for) participation in environmental decision-making – or procedural justice. However, the literature on community acceptance and perceptions of EI and specifically HVPL, has often neglected the empirical analysis of the multi-scalar nature (Bickerstaff & Agyeman, 2009) of these infrastructures and namely that issues of environmental justice in their deployment go beyond the local and the national, but are also interconnected with the global. The main aim of this paper is precisely to contribute to address this neglect and generally to research on energy colonialism, by focusing on how the responses of local communities to be affected by the deployment of HVPL to be connected to low carbon energy generation technologies in the UK, are shaped by the multi-scalar nature of these infrastructures.

One increasingly prevalent critique to the deployment of EI has accused the polluting countries from the global North of environmental injustice in the guise of carbon colonialism (e.g., Bachram, 2004; Paterson & Stripple, 2010; Platform, 2013). One of the main measures taken by several countries to comply with the targets set by the Kyoto Protocol and other binding directives that followed, has been carbon trading and namely the offsetting of carbon emissions by deploying EI in the global south, so that carbon credits can be gained, those directives complied to and current levels of consumption maintained in and by the global north (Barry & Ellis, 2011).

Carbon colonialism becomes even more blatant if we consider that carbon trading is actually institutionalized by the before mentioned treaties, that it just opens space for very modest carbon reductions and also that in the global south public participation in decision-making regarding these issues often tends to be almost non-existent (see Liverman, 2009; also Paterson & Stripple 2010; Finley-Brook and Thomas, 2011).

However, there are other practices, related with carbon colonialism and specifically with the deployment of HVPL in connection with the associated low carbon energy generation technologies – or EIs -, which are also important to discuss and examine. These have been neglected by research and will be discussed generally in this paper as 'energy colonialism'. One of these relates with another critique which is associated with the growing body of research that has been contesting how HVPLs are deployed – but mainly in the global north - and how policy-makers and developers often do not take into account in a meaningful way what publics and local communities that are affected by those infrastructures feel and have to say regarding them (e.g., Batel & Devine-Wright, 2015; Wolsink, 2000; Walker, 1995). That body of research has been concerned particularly with examining the lack of procedural justice in those processes, and might therefore be seen as questioning how this main dimension of environmental justice (Walker, 2009), involving public participation as a basic democratic practice, is practised in contemporary societies (Cotton & Devine-Wright, 2011). It also addresses the ways that the deployment of those infrastructures might impact on those places and the people living there (e.g., Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright, 2009; McLachlan, 2009). However, this body of research might be seen as uncritically fostering the deployment of those infrastructures for the sake of tackling climate change without considering three crucial and interrelated aspects.

First, that the deployment of HVPL is still often embedded within specific socio-economic systems and ideologies - capitalist and neo-liberal - that perpetuate 'business as usual' (Castree, 2009; Swyngedouw, 2010; Barry & Ellis, 2011; but see Toke & Lauber, 2007) while following the motto of 'sustainable [economic] development' (see also Uzzell & Rahtzel, 2009; Adams, 2014). As Swyngedouw (2010, p. 223) puts it, governments and policies tend to propose that climate change "can be 'cured' by mobilizing the very inner dynamics and logic of the system (privatization of CO_2, commodification and market exchange via carbon and carbon-offset trading)." The deployment of EI is generally performed through a perspective of ecological modernization that aims to maintain the status quo by relying only on

technological solutions – and not on radical social change (see also Harvey, 1996; Bailey, Gouldson & Newell, 2011; Barr & Prillwitz, 2014) - to address environmental problems (Barry, 1999; Liverman, 2009).

Second, while promoting the deployment of HVPL and related low carbon energy generation technologies, research often endorses the underlying neo-liberal assumption that it is each individual's responsibility to accept those technologies (see Batel, Devine-Wright, & Tangeland, 2013; Fast, 2013; also Paterson & Stripple, 2010), albeit within the limits imposed by some democratic ideals (e.g., Anderson, Schirmer, & Abjorensen, 2012; Cotton & Devine-Wright, 2013), that are themselves not truly democratic – in a participative way (Santos, 2005) – as they are ingrained in and legitimized by current hegemonic capitalist and neo-liberal systems and ideologies (Swyngedouw, 2010; see also Barry & Ellis, 2011, Mouffe, 2013).

Third, the literature examining community and public perceptions of HVPL in the global north tends not to acknowledge the fact that while HVPL are not being deployed in the global north due to local community objections, they are being deployed elsewhere in the world (Platform, 2013; also Bickerstaff & Agyeman, 2009), because countries still need to keep 'the lights on' (see National Grid, 2013; also Contemporary Colonialism, 2015). As Platform (2013)[i] puts it "the rhetoric of 'keeping the lights on' re-asserts a politics of demanding oil, gas and other fuels for 'us' - and not for 'them' " which, in turn, makes it necessary to critically think about this and foster "a geography of responsibility that is different from Britain's colonial practice" (p.17).

In fact, and as noted elsewhere (XXX), a great deal of research on people's responses to HVPL tends to 'take sides' with local communities in the global north by defending residents' relationships with the place where they live and where such infrastructures will be built and that the place has to be preserved as such (see Massey, 1995 for a critique). However, and without questioning that it might be important to preserve certain characteristics of places and associated relations with place (in line with Massey, 1995; also Murphy, 2013; Finley-Brook & Thomas, 2011), to the extent that research on place and EI assumes - and reifies – this idea, it is also neglecting the fact that HVPL and associated infrastructures are still being deployed both within the countries of study (e.g., in the global north) and in other countries, and are obviously affecting other places – that often already have other

unwanted land uses (see Walker, 2009; XXX) – and reflecting certain geographies of power or exclusion (Bickerstaff, Walker & Bulkeley, 2013; XXX).

A paradigmatic and recent example is the Desertec project (Ragheb, 2011; Desertec, 2015; also Goodall, 2015). This project is presented as a collaboration between/within EUMENA – Europe, the Middle East and the North of Africa - that "involves making use of the abundant unused solar energy in the deserts and wind on their seashores to promote global energy security and help protect our climate" (Ragheb, p.1) or, in other words, to mainly make use of the solar and wind energy in the North of Africa and export it to the other regions involved. This idea is explicitly contested in Desertec's website – "The DESERTEC idea has never been about delivering electricity from Africa to Europe, but to supply companies in desert regions with energy from the sun instead of oil and gas" – however, and even taking into consideration these regions' levels of energy consumption (Enerdata, 2014), it is clear that albeit the North of Africa being the main producer in Desertec, it will not be its main consumer. Undoubtedly then, as Ragheb (2011, p.8) also points out, with the Desertec project a "hurdle to overcome is the lingering perception of neocolonialism hidden agenda with European investment in North-African energy resources" – and in fact this idea is hard to dismiss, not only for the above but also taking into account how Desertec describes this project's mission: "200 years of global industrialization has resulted in an unparalleled standard of living and an increasing life expectancy for part of the world's population. However, all this has been and still is being achieved at a price: alarming environmental destruction as well as climate change which can no longer be ignored". This quotation clearly shows not only that this project is based on an ecological modernization and market-oriented perspective over climate change, based on a total disentanglement between energy supply and demand (Uzzell & Rahtzel, 2009), but also that while, on one hand, it deems all of us to be responsible for the need of this project, including the countries in the North of Africa, as "actors of 200 years of global industrialization"; on the other hand, it highlights how the outcomes of the project will actually benefit "an unparalleled standard of living and an increasing life expectancy" that is mainly characteristic of precisely just a "part of the world's population" - those living in Europe and other nation-states of the global north. In other words, this extract of Desertec's mission pinpoints how in environmental justice issues two very important axes have to be take into account – space and time and their productions, namely inter-group relations across place – at a

global scale - and history (see Liverman, 2009; for another example see Contemporary Colonialism, 2015).

Such relations are embedded in larger socio-historical contexts through which the colonizer-colonized, developed-developing, Western-Eastern, and global north-global south divides developed. In turn, both in policy and academic circles, and at political and institutional levels (e.g., UKIP, 2015), these divides still shape discourses and practices regarding energy issues, hence reiterating and further reifying those divides. While this is likely to shape the discourses of publics and members of local communities who are affected by HVPL and associated infrastructures in the global north and their responses to those EI near the place where they live, this has rarely been examined by research. This is despite the fact that public debates and ideas about climate change and EI, such as the main contents of the IPCC reports and statistics on top countries on carbon emissions, tend to be quickly circulated in public spheres through newspapers, TV, radio, and social networks (e.g., Carrington, 2014; Vidal & Adam, 2007). Moreover, the media are a powerful actor in shaping societal debates about these controversial issues, therefore shaping people's discourses on climate change, carbon emissions and other related subjects (Carvalho, 2007), such as who is responsible for those and should therefore 'pay' for it (Walker, 2009).

Whereas the literature on the social acceptance of EI (Wustenhagen, Wolsink & Burer, 2007; Batel et al., 2013) – in terms of people's representations of and responses to EI - has already highlighted the importance of understanding environmental (in)justice in their deployment and how that contributes to people's responses to those EI, as suggested above, it has mainly focused on the global north and on the local level. It has neglected the fact that in globalised worlds, issues of environmental justice regarding EI, and specifically HVPL, to be deployed in a specific place have repercussions not only at the local level or national level, but also beyond that, at a global level (Bickerstaff & Agyeman, 2009), or, as highlighted before, for other places and times. In an associated way then, the empirical analysis of if and how energy colonialism, shapes people's geographical and social imaginaries (Banchs, 2014) regarding the deployment of EI, and specifically HVPL, at different scales has been neglected. We argue then that it is relevant to adopt a socio-historical and globalization perspective in the analysis of the social acceptance of EI, which also takes account of how other intergroup relations, both within national boundaries and at a transnational level, and associated subjectivities (e.g. being European and/vs.

British and/vs. Scottish), historical narratives and representations, might shape responses to EI (e.g., Batel & Castro, 2015). To empirically illustrate that, we will present some analyses of the discourses of members of local communities in the UK who are affected by local proposals for the construction of HVPL to be connected to new low carbon energy generation infrastructures.

2. Method and analyses

2.1. Method

The data to be presented was collected through eight focus groups that were conducted in the UK. Four focus groups were conducted in settlements affected by proposals for the construction of a new high voltage power line that will connect a new nuclear power station in the Southwest of England (Hinkley Point C case study, for which 2 focus groups were conducted in the same settlement) to the electricity grid; and the other four in settlements affected by proposals for the construction of a new high voltage power line connecting new wind farms in Wales (Midwales case study, for which 2 focus groups were conducted in the same settlement) to the grid. All of the settlements where the focus groups were conducted were rural or semi-rural and those specific settlements were selected because they are proximate to the proposed power lines and also, in a related way, affected by the low carbon energy generation technologies to be constructed.

Each focus group (average duration = 1h30m) was composed of 4-8 participants, who were all local residents (from the respective settlement) and each participant only participated in one of the focus groups. The participants were recruited by a market research company, Ecorys, to guarantee a heterogeneous sample of local adult residents in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. Participants were compensated with a 30 pounds voucher for their participation in the focus groups and the focus groups were audio recorded with the informed consent of the participants, who were also requested to consent with the use of the focus groups' discussion for academic purposes and guaranteed full confidentiality and anonymity. This study was part of a larger research project aimed at better understanding people's responses to HVPL and its impacts for the deployment of low carbon energy infrastructures.

The topics for discussion in the focus groups' guidelines focused around two main themes: questions around participants' relationship with the place where they live; and questions about HVPL in general and the specific project to be constructed. The discussions that ensued from questions and topics related with these main themes developed then around associated issues – such as regarding the associated low carbon energy infrastructures and issues of distributive justice and others – even if these were not explicitly asked about. All focus group interviews were fully transcribed and data analysis performed through the software Atlas.ti v.5.2.

The analytic procedure involved two main stages (following XXX; also Batel & Castro, 2015). At a first stage, a coding scheme was developed, based on the principles of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This first stage allowed us to organise the data so that a second, more fine-grained discursive rhetorical analysis (see Billig 1991; Di Masso, et al., 2011), could then be performed. At this second stage we focused specifically on the examination of if and how particular intergroup relations - national and/or international[ii] - shaped the discourses of members of local communities to be affected by the deployment of HVPL and the associated low carbon energy generation technologies.

2.2. Analyses[iii]

Participants' discourses in focus groups can be basically identified as being organised around two inter-related issues – discussing present relations with energy issues based on present practices; and discussing present energy issues based on how those present practices are shaped by/embedded in past practices and inter-group histories. In turn, energy issues were discussed mainly around three main inter-group relations: London vs. the rest of the UK; England vs. the other countries/regions in the UK, such as Wales; and the UK/Britain vs. other countries in the world.

2.2.1. Within the UK

When discussing the new HVPL and associated low carbon energy generation infrastructure, participants often highlighted how unjust it was that these EI are being built near the place where they live. This was explained with reference to the fact that whereas they are enduring the deployment of large-scale, countryside-spoiling and place-changing EI (see also XXX), with few if any local or regional benefits, the

places that need them the most, namely, big cities, or "*major…areas*" (see Extracts n.1a), only get their benefits. This is exemplified in the extracts below:

Extracts n.1:

a. P5 - *I do think that <u>power generation should be closer to the major … areas</u>[iv] that it requires in other words you know if you're putting in a power station it needs to be in an area where the power is to be used.* [CS2/FG1[v]]

b. P2 - *And <u>why can't it go the nearest way to London – England</u>, why does it have to come right round the north and down?* [CS2/FG2]

c. P7 – (…) *so <u>the power is coming from Hinkley to London basically and we're going to suffer with the pylons all down our lovely countryside</u> that's the trouble you see* [CS1/FG1, 24:80]

As we progress through the extracts, we see, on one hand, that debating HVPL comes closely related with debating the energy generation infrastructures that they will connect with, as, within centralised electricity systems, without the latter the former wouldn't be needed, as discussed in the Introduction[vi]. On the other hand, they suggest that what apparently is 'just' perceived distributive injustice based on a 'rational', market-oriented justification which considers that those who consume and have been consuming the most electricity should be the ones to take the burden of the deployment of EI near them (Extract n.1a, n.1c and n.1d) is actually embedded in specific inter-group relations and socio-cultural and political histories that reflect "longstanding tensions (…) between those living in the countryside and the city" (Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright, 2009, p.364; also XXX), between those living in other parts of the UK and those living in London, where (the centre of) the power is (Extract n.1b) – or what otherwise might be considered as the colonisation of the countryside (Phillips, 1993).

As Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright (2009) also suggest, this reflects that inhabitants in rural areas in the UK and outside London feel excluded from decisions around energy issues with important implications at national, regional and local levels (see also Ellis, et al., 2013; Platform, 2013), therefore highlighting how the different dimensions of environmental justice are all interconnected (Walker, 2009). This

becomes very evident in the extract n.1c, which puts it quite clearly that the divide between rural and urban areas shapes participants' discourses over the fairness of this decision and highlights that this seems to be related with associated re-presentations, such as 'natural' and 'industrial' landscapes (see XXX).

However, this perception of injustice happens at different scales. As also highlighted by Devine-Wright & Devine-Wright (2009) and by Ellis and colleagues (2013), another important and still currently relevant source of inter-group tensions within the UK context is that between England and the other countries that compose the UK: Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Despite recent devolution efforts from central government, both material and symbolic power inequalities still exist between the different governments, for instance, in planning over energy issues (Ellis et al., 2013). This, in turn, still clearly reflects the history(ies) of 'internal colonisation' of these countries by England and related inter-group relations and tensions in the past and towards the present (Nairn, 2003). This became very evident when participants from communities in Wales in the context of the MidWales connection project, discussed the project – involving, as pinpointed before, the deployment of wind farms situated in Mid Wales and a HVPL to connect those to the existing electricity grid in England – by framing it through English-Wales relations and historical narratives of those relations, as illustrated in the extracts below:

Extracts n.2:

a. P3- _England needs it and Welsh_ has all the necessary landscape I think _- where they think they can_…. hills I suppose, without too much objection [CS2/FG3]

b. P2 - _And I think there's a long tradition of England milking Wales for what it wants without much regard for the Welsh people_ [CS2/FG3]

These two extracts put the relations between England and Wales as central to understanding why the windfarms and associated power lines are being built in Wales despite them being most needed in England, and, in an associated way, to justify opposition to those infrastructures. In this vein, and as discussed elsewhere regarding representations of the British countryside and associated subjectivities (XXX), it is interesting to see how different resources, including different level place and group relations, are used to negotiate specific responses to these energy infrastructures and

to legitimise those. More specifically, these claims go beyond so called Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY – see Batel & Devine-Wright, 2015) motives, and instead highlight the importance of the lack of environmental justice, in all its dimensions, in shaping negative responses to these energy infrastructures and, namely, of the lack of recognition, based on a past history of unequal power relations and distribution of resources between England and Wales and on a collective remembering of that – or, again, what we might call a history of colonialism that is reproduced here regarding energy issues. In this sense, it is relevant to notice the metaphor used to talk about this relation of exploitation of England regarding Wales – milking, which basically presents Wales as an 'inferior', domesticated, animal, which is just being used as a resource producer, with no say on that, by a 'superior', rational, animal. Again, this 'infra-humanization' (Tileagă, 2007) is very characteristic of colonialist discourses (e.g., Fanon, 1961). This becomes even more evident in the extracts below, that anchors this new controversy and conflict between Wales and England in a past episode included in the historical narrative of their relations that materializes that "England milking Wales" highlighted in extract n.2a:

Extracts n.3:
a. P1 – *At the end of the day we're not going to be the main beneficiaries of all this electricity then*
P? – *No, <u>they will pass it on us</u>*
P1 – *Yes, <u>so it will come on our electricity bill like on the water going down to Liverpool</u> then, isn't it?* [CS2/FG2]

b. P3 – *Again because <u>this happened a hundred and fifty years ago</u> when they started flooding a few villages to provide water for cities elsewhere* [like Liverpool] *and Wales never got any benefit from that, it was just, you know, <u>another way of **raiding** this country</u>, it's ridiculous, it's just **another way of providing energy for the rest of the <u>country, from a <u>country</u></u>** that has a very small – comparatively – population* [CS2/FG1]

One interesting aspect to note about these extracts is that they come from different focus groups, in different locations of the mid-Wales area, but different participants in both of them refer to this narrative of "water going down to Liverpool [England]" (Extract n.3a). The second important aspect is that this further suggests that it is a collective memory, being re-told in this historical narrative (Jovchelovitch, 2012), which seems to be used as a symbol or a token of how England-Wales relations are mainly based on the exploitation of the latter by the former and, specifically, regarding natural resources and Wales "providing energy for the rest of the country" (Extract n.3b). This historical narrative refers to different points in time when Wales actually was made to provide water to Liverpool - and other cities in England - following the Liverpool Water Act of 1847 which allowed Liverpool to look for water outside the city limits. So, in 1879 a dam started to be built in Vyrnwy (near where the Mid Wales electricity connection project is to be developed) so that water would be provided from Wales to Liverpool (BBC, 2013). Then again in the 1960's a whole village was destroyed and flooded in mid-Wales, again to create a reservoir to provide drinking water to the people of Liverpool, this time in Tryweryn (Ward, 2005). In 2005, 40 years after the construction, Liverpool city council issued a formal and public apology for that (BBC, 2013). Extract n.3b quite strongly suggests then that this memory acts as a symbol of the relations between Wales and England while emphasizing that that was just "*another way of raiding this country"*, suggesting that the same raiding – which is a quite strong military metaphor, and strongly associated with past and present British and other Western countries' colonisation practices in other countries outside Europe (see Gill, 2006) – happened and still does, for other issues, namely energy and other natural resources. The use of *country* to refer both to Wales – to emphasize its distinction from England – and to the UK/Britain (*it's just another way of providing energy <u>for the rest of the country, from a country</u> that has a very small – comparatively – population*) is also quite indicative of the tensions that still exist within the UK between its different countries/regions and their 'status' in relation to one another.

So far we have seen that when the deployment of EI is discussed at a national level, different inter-group relations and histories are drawn upon to talk about it in terms of environmental (un)justice and energy colonialism, but still within a 'national' scale (e.g. South West vs. London; Wales vs. England). At other times during the focus group's discussions, participants often organised their discourses by

drawing upon narratives of relations with other countries (outside the UK) and past
and current 'environmental practices'.

2.2.2.   Beyond the UK

Devising acceptable locations for the deployment of HVPL and the associated low
carbon energy generation infrastructures within the UK was often debated throughout
the focus groups' discussions and, namely, the fact that everybody in the UK "sort of
agrees that they don't want it in their back garden, don't they?" (CS2, FG4). In turn,
this was often associated with thinking about alternative solutions that would not
imply building them near these local communities, or, in other words, in people's
back garden in the UK. This is illustrated in the Extracts n.4 below:

Extracts n.4:

a. P5 **-** *in <u>Africa</u> and all **<u>those countries</u>** <u>that have got 99.9% sun</u>, why can they not
     build <u>those all deserts filled with solar panels</u>, and <u>provide the rest of the
     world with power</u>*

   P7 - *How do you store it that's the trouble you can't store electricity kept in big
     packets?*

   P1 - *Mm you can't store it*

   P7 - *That is one of the problems with it - I think if ..... (sighs) I don't know*

   P2 - *And **<u>those countries</u>** can <u>grow unsettled</u> very quickly*

   P4 - *And then you get your power cut off a bit*

   P2 - *<u>That was like Africa, **they're so poor**</u> you know they've no money for it
     <u>perhaps they can build themselves up by creating solar panels</u> I don't know*
     [CS1/FG1]

The first quotation presented in Extracts n.4a illustrates three aspects very well.
First, it shows how the discussion in this period of the focus group is totally shaped by
distinguishing and distancing the UK specifically and countries from the northern
hemisphere more generally, from *those* countries, from the global south or developing
countries, and namely, countries from Africa, which are presented as a somewhat
homogenous package with certain essential characteristics (Gill, 2006; also
Verkuyten, 2003). *Those countries* specifically mean (indiscriminate countries in)
Africa and are stereotypically presented as endemically poor (see Gill, 2006) and

unstable (*can grow unsettled very quickly*), but rich in natural resources (they have *99.9% sun*) and having specific types of landscapes (*all deserts*) (see also Fanon, 1961). In turn, presenting northern Africa countries in this way reflects specific aspects of the relations between these groups and fulfils different functions. It reflects that there is an already existent and larger (colonial) narrative and associated practices that posit these African countries as an homogenous and distant Other and accentuates this 'we-them' distinction, which, in turn, allows this narrative to be used by publics to accentuate their disengagement with the perspective and position of this Other (see Riggins, 1997; Castro & Batel, 2008). This, as hinted to in the Introduction of this paper, is probably also shaped by projects like Desertec and other global issues and associated re-presentations that were and still are often disseminated by the media (e.g., Oliver, 2011; Mathiansen, 2013) and that are institutionalized in the practices of policy-makers and energy companies on these issues. In turn, this narrative seems to be closely associated with Britain's' and Western countries' colonisation practices and relations with these countries (e.g., Gill, 2006), which legitimises that they *provide the rest of the world with power*, as they have provided territories and other resources, both material and symbolic, in the past. Discourses seem to be built then in historical narratives or charters (Liu & Laszlo, 2007) that provide symbolic resources for people to orient themselves towards their own projects and interests in the present and the future or, in other words, and in this case, the colonial world provides "its function as a surface of fantasy, ambivalence, hatred and desire" (Hook, 2005, p.479) to negotiate responses about energy issues.

Second, and in an associated way, the landscape, which, as we have seen before is a frequently used and powerful resource for negotiating and specifically opposing the deployment of HVPL and other large-scale energy infrastructures in the British countryside (see also XXX; Cowell, 2010; Wallwork & Dixon, 2004), becomes here a powerful resource to support all those "*deserts filled with solar panels*". Deserts, as a landscape, are here not considered important, as they are represented from a 'British perspective', which values the green rolling hills of the British countryside (Rose, 1995) – or, as put in extracts n.1c, *our lovely countryside* - as just the empty, dry and arid Saharan desert, which is the traditional Western representation of the Orient, of those living in and around the desert and associated landscapes (Said, 1985; Gill, 2006). The desert and *those other countries* characterised by this landscape seem then to function in these discourses as a heterotopia, a place "outside of all places, even

though it may be possible to indicate [their] location in reality… a place of nowhere… without geographical markers" (Foucault, 1986, p.25). As Gill (2006) suggests, it is easy to construct the Other's territory as a "shapeless, a-historical void, the blank on the map" (p. 164), with just raw materials that can be exploited and used (Fanon, 1961). This also resonates with Barry's discussion (1999) of how Western thought tends to represent indigenous people – or the locals in distant, foreign and 'exotic' lands – as part of the environment, which is, among other examples, "at the root of the *terra nullis* claim (…) Since the Australian aboriginal peoples were part of the Australian environment, like other species, the land of Australia was uninhabited, 'terra nullis', a land empty of people and thus could be legitimately claimed as property" (p.58; see also Fanon, 1961). This is similar to what is being presented in the extracts above as a legitimate solution for defining acceptable locations for new EI that can provide the UK with electricity, even if obviously dismissive of the relation that the locals in and around those places – such as Tuaregs - have with the desert and the meanings they attribute to it (Keeling, 2009) and of the fact that the desert is not a unified landscape that is governed on its own, but that it actually spreads out across different countries, with different characteristics and interests, which obviously raises different geopolitical issues and associated subjectivities, as is the case within the UK. In fact, it is relevant to recall in this context how some participants have actually contested another version of the '*terra nullis*' - or colonial - narrative in other parts of the focus groups' discussions, but applied to countryside-London and/or Wales-English relations, precisely in order to justify the legitimacy of their opposition to the construction of HVPL and associated energy infrastructures in the countryside and/or Wales to 'feed' (associated with the *milking* metaphor) London and England. This then illustrates the dynamics of both collective remembering and forgetting (Brockmeier, 2002) and how they are associated with political projects and interests and related institutional practices. In other words, this type of 'energy colonial' discourse seems to be built upon a colonial past which is still part of the collective memories and practices of the institutional and political landscape in the UK and therefore pervades citizens' ways of positioning themselves about these (still colonised) Other. In turn, this clearly highlights how colonialism is a means "not only of appropriating land and territory, but of appropriating culture and history themselves, as a way of appropriating the means and resources of identity" (Hook, 2005, p.482). As discussed by Walker (2009), what is at play here are both

geographies of responsibility and geographies of recognition, as a dislocation between those benefitting from the electricity and those suffering from the implementation of energy infrastructures[vii] which is closely knitted to the fact that there is a misrecognition and stigmatisation of those living in developing countries, here specifically, in the North of Africa. This becomes even more evident in the extracts below:

Extracts n.5:

P5 - (…) *I went to the Middle East where I know oil is very very cheap and my sister throws a bag of rubbish away every day for the amount I have in a fortnight because of all the recycling I do there's no recycling over there no glass no plastic no metal nothing it all gets put in one great big bag and a little man comes round and collects it and you think at home … I'm going "Put that in the recycling put that in the recycling!"*

P6 - *I mean we're such a tiny island it's mean that one not green India China … we're paying a huge amount in taxes for green energy and all the rest of the world Russia China India...* [nothing] [CS1/FG3]

In these extracts, discourses are constructed in order to place the responsibility for current global environmental 'bads' onto so-called developing countries, such as in the Middle East (Extract n.5a), Russia, China and India (Extract n.5b). Again, not only do these discourses contextualize the issue of where to deploy EI and associated environmental practices at a global level so that responsibility for accepting those within the UK context can be attenuated, but more importantly, they do so in an indirect, non blatant, way, which can be much more powerful in resisting change and in reproducing power relations (see Castro & Batel, 2008). In fact, and contrarily to Extracts n.4, in these last extracts, discourses are organized in a way that puts responsibility for global environmental 'bads' on other (developing) countries but not in the UK – or countries similar to the UK – but without even explicitly and directly talking about the issue of the deployment of HVPL and the associated infrastructures. In fact, it is quite interesting that Extract n.5a picks up a non-EI related example – recycling - as a strategy to further reinforce that not being concerned with the environment and behaving 'badly' regarding it are consistent characteristics of the Other.

In turn, and as discussed in the Introduction of this paper, this narrative of presenting current developing countries that are 'looking towards modernization and westernization', as the ones to blame for fostering climate change, is pervasive at political and institutional levels (e.g., UKIP, 2015) and rarely discussed and contested, for instance in the fact that there is a carbon legacy (Walker, 2009) or history which has started and is still continuing in those countries that were first responsible for industrialization, such as the UK.

These spatialised narratives of difference and inequality (Walker, 2009) highlight how individuals both take part in collective remembering and in thus reproducing certain 'traditions' and cultural symbols – such as that of Britain and Europe's colonialism of the wild, global south developing countries and relations of domination over those spaces (see Hinchcliffe, 2007) – AND in collective forgetting of their own practices and impacts so that it can be ascertained that the Other is to blame and should therefore legitimately take responsibility for it, or what Miraftab (2009) calls the collective social amnesia much fostered and created by neoliberal capitalist systems.

3.   Discussion

In this paper we aimed to address a neglect in empirical research on the social acceptance of EI and specifically HVPL, that examines how energy colonialism and associated inter-group relations and geographical historical narratives at local, national but also global scales, are used by members of local communities in the global north to shape their responses to these infrastructures. We discuss several critiques of the deployment of EI and particularly HVPL, mainly started by the global north and following international and European binding directives (e.g., Renewables Directive, 2009), and, specifically the fact that not only is this often developed at the expense of a new form of colonialism, energy colonialism, but also that academic research examining local communities responses to that type of infrastructures in countries of the global north tends to be acritical in regard to that. This despite – and contributing to - the fact that divides such as global south-global north, developing-developed countries, developed precisely following long and impactful colonisation histories of the latter actors of these dichotomies by the former ones. In turn, these

colonisation practices still seem not to be contested and instead to be largely reiterated within the capitalist neo-liberal systems that characterise the global north and that shape policy and academic arenas there. Departing from this, with this paper we aimed to perform an empirical exploration of ways that publics, and specifically those living near to places where EI are to be constructed in the UK would or not, and in which ways, reiterate, contest or negotiate those institutional discourses and historical narratives of colonisation to position themselves in regard to the deployment of HVPL and associated low carbon energy generation infrastructures nearby. For this, we departed from an environmental justice framework based on a multi-scalar approach.

Our analyses suggested that members of local communities to be impacted by new energy infrastructures do shape their responses based on framing their deployment and associated decision-making processes through diverse subjectivities, intertwined at different levels and scales, and use them and associated narratives and discourses – including those based in past histories – differently, in different contexts, to pursue distinct political and identity projects related with those subjectivities. As Walker (2009) highlights, the analyses illustrate how "different forms and scales of space are in this sense a strategic resource and (…) different groups will work with different understanding of the spatiality of the issues at hand" (p.630). In turn, this clearly demonstrates how past practices and memories, namely colonisation ones, at different scales – within the UK, beyond the UK, always with England at its centre – and which are obviously still inscribed today in the memory of institutions and even in the communicative memory of people (Brockmeier, 2002), shape current ways of doing and thinking about contemporary issues and, in turn, perpetuate those old practices even if in different guises.

In fact, analyses suggest that the public relies on and reiterates historical narratives and practices of Britain's colonisation practices regarding countries in the global South to justify and legitimate particular responses to the deployment of EI in the UK and specifically near the place where they live in the countryside, namely, opposition. However, this in turn highlights two very important issues to take into account both by academics and policy-makers. First, the fact that people focus mainly on putting the burden of HVPL and associated infrastructures in other countries and places, therefore perpetuating former geographies of power and exclusion, instead of contesting policy-makers and governments' current practices in the global north

regarding energy supply and demand (e.g., discussing alternative practices such as community scale EI – see Platform, 2013) and how those are embedded in and perpetuate current neo-liberal and capitalist systems. This, as just discussed, is informed and constrained by the larger socio political context which contributes to the ways that people reproduce those systems and their ways of thinking and doing, in such a way that it illustrates how in a completely similar way to the systems where they live in, discourses uttered by the participants in the focus groups also mainly focused on, using John Barry's (1999) formulation, the displacement of the problem of deploying HVPL and associated infrastructures, instead of proposing 'real' solutions for it.

However, it is also important to take into account that there is some possibility for contesting and trying to resist and negotiate that. In line with XXX, it is important to recognise that for some groups, the deployment of HVPL and associated infrastructures in the countryside is associated with and also acts like a symbol of change, not only of place and landscape in a 'physical' and aesthetic sense, but also of its social composition, of who can make and contribute to it. In other words, it is relevant to also have in mind that how a person positions herself in regard to HVPL and other large-scale energy infrastructures and other environmental problems and solutions, is often closely intertwined with how she positions herself regarding other socio-political issues such as immigration, which can have an impact in space and place, in imagined communities (Anderson, 1982) at different scales, from the local to the global, which in turn will create different configurations of people's sense of place, from conservative, reactionary and exclusionary, to inclusive and progressive (Massey, 1995).

This is quite clear for instance in rhetoric of the far right-wing conservative party in the UK, UKIP (and of others, like the Conservative party), which, in its 2015 manifesto, puts side by side three types of arguments. First, "protecting our countryside" from being "swamped by over development"*,* as "our unspoilt countryside is the envy of the world" (p.35). Second, the need to "keep the lights on" similarly to "our major global competitors - the USA, China and India – [which] are switching to low-cost fossil fuels [while] we are forced to close perfectly good coal-fired power stations to meet unattainable targets for renewable capacity" (p.39), therefore rejecting windfarms and photovoltaic solar panels as they have "blighted landscapes" (p.39), and supporting other, more unknown, risky and still pollutant

'alternatives', such as fracking. Third, heavily constraining immigration as "these policies are essential if we are to give our country the breathing space it desperately needs, and immigration is not about race; it is about space" (p.11). This is very important to highlight as it illustrates, on one hand, how people largely reproduce what is said in the political and institutional arena and disseminated through the media – as Platform (2013) highlights, "a significant barrier hindering UK renewables is the role of national right-wing politics in shaping and exacerbating local opposition to wind farms, taking advantage of local suspicion of imposed industrial projects" (p.9). But also on the other hand that people can also use different types of arguments to defend their own interests and political projects: the analyses demonstrate how presenting a certain landscape in a certain way – such as the British countryside as the envy of the world - not only allows an easy legitimation of the undervaluation of another landscape which is the opposite – such as the desert – but also highlights how that legitimation is even easier because that undervaluation is built upon a relation and a history of domination and power of Britain over other countries, mainly, those colonised ones where immigrants come from. Also, focusing arguments on landscapes and 'aesthetic' issues is strategic to be able to precisely argue that in immigration it is not race that is a problem, it is space and place.

This paper has several limitations. As hinted at in its title, the empirical part is based on extracts from focus groups' discussions, and is therefore an exploratory study rather than a definitive set of analyses that followed from an intentional research design that aimed to focus on energy colonialism and environmental justice issues *per se*. In an associated way, it would also have been relevant to better explore if and how energy colonialism and associated discourses take shape differently or not for different types of energy infrastructures – power lines, nuclear power stations, wind farms – and at distinct organization models – centralized vs. decentralized.

In sum, this paper highlights that one of the important discussions to further develop in this domain is precisely how to foster the deployment of energy infrastructure in a way which is simultaneously environmentally sustainable at global and local scales and socially sustainable, this is, without reproducing or creating new social inequalities, but which can also be implemented as fast as possible be it building upon or transforming completely the current centralized, large scale energy system. As Platform puts it (2013) the more sustainable way of transitioning to a low carbon energy production and distribution system is arguably a localized,

decentralized one, but before we achieve that we might arguably also need "to develop the vocabulary and concepts of energy commons that are necessary to address bigger scales" (p.9) and to do so in a 'green' way that involves fighting against and eliminating social inequalities and oppression. The present paper has therefore begun to reveal how (right-wing) institutional, political and media discourses are shaping people's own ideas and practices regarding the deployment of energy infrastructure near the place where they live in the global north in a way which can be considered environmentally unjust to people in other places in the world.

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[i] Platform is an organization which fights against the undemocratic and destructive oil-based activities of governments and corporations, mainly regarding the environment, but also other associated forms of oppression and destruction such as sexism, racism, … It develops different types of activities for that, including art, education, activism and research. See http://platformlondon.org/.

ii The discussion of EI at diferente spatial scales was not prompted by the guidelines used to conduct the focus groups, but instead allowed to emerge in the focus groups' discussions.

iii The extracts are illustrative of the main discourses found in the focus groups' discussions, but are not exhaustive, i.e., not all of the quotations of the discourses found are presented in this paper.

iv The use of underline and bold in the extracts emphasises particular aspects of them that will be taken up in the analyses.

v 'CS' corresponds to the number of the case study in which 1=Hinckley Point C and 2=Mid Wales; 'FG' corresponds to the number/location of the focus groups.

vi In fact, it is important to note that the decentralisation of the electricity system was very rarely discussed in the focus groups, and namely, as an alternative to the deployment of HVPL and associated large-scale EI near the place where the participants live, with community ownership of these EI being the most proximate alternative solution discussed.

vii This is not to imply that the installation of solar panels in the Sahara desert might not be seen by people living there and around as an environmental good (see Walker, 2009, for a discussion on the importance of the pluralism of environmental justice concepts).