

Development Narratives and the Mechanisms of the Ecological Conflict

How the Environmental Discourses in IPCC and WWF Report Summaries Maintain
the Foundation of the Crisis

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Abstract

In an era marked by an increased flow of information and acknowledgment of environmental problems, our understandings of the crisis are increasingly shaped by the discourses employed to communicate these issues. This thesis explores how the assumptions and comprehensions of development, including growth and universality as a rule of history, are present in the conversation surrounding the ecological crisis, and to what extent the mainstream environmental discourse is an extension of the naturalized ideologies that can be argued to have produced human existence on the destruction of the environment for centuries. The data consists of two summaries in total, one from the International Panel on Climate Change and the other one from the World Wildlife Fund. These are analyzed following the theoretical framework of ecolinguistics and the methodological conventions of critical discourse analysis. The results uncover the ways language is employed to erase traces of history, agency and processes, conveying an abstract reality in which the harmful preconceptions are embedded. The role of capital accumulation, unequal power relations and alienated conceptions of nature that structure ways of being and thinking in the world, on multiple levels, are not challenged as the underlying forces behind the environmental crisis. Thus, the environmental discourse retains silences that echo the ideas of development, perpetuating the crisis. By highlighting these dynamics, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the crisis and the importance of discourse in making visible and challenging the conventional thinking patterns to create more viable and holistic solutions in the face of the environmental degradation.

Key words: environmental discourse; development; capitalism; naturalization; ecolinguistics

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1 Introduction

“In seeking solutions to the ecological challenges we face, we may have to explore and reconsider some of the fundamental stories that underlie our culture.” (Stibbe 2015, 5)

I wish to begin this thesis by asserting the relationship between language and the environmental crisis at hand as neither this, nor any other challenge of our time, is isolated from or external to language or the conversation conveying them, an aspect often overlooked but ever more important. Not only does language embody many aspects of reality and reveal the way we comprehend it, resulting in how meanings are employed in a conversation, in this case, in the framework of the ecological degradation, it also produces this reality and how we relate to it, creating a framework where the possible or desirable solutions to the crisis are negotiated (Dryzek 2022; Stibbe 2015).

When it comes to the discussion around the environmental conflict, many different discourses, or shared understandings, can be located. These rest on certain assumptions and contentions, “bound up with political practices and power” (Dryzek 2022, 10). Providing the basis for the discourse itself, this framework serves to translate the shared understandings into a narrative that conditions further interpretations and definitions. Indeed, language can work to support and justify some perceptions of reality and to shake and delegitimize others. One of the most prevailing and permeating, yet repeatedly concealed, narrative dictating our current world order and controlling the ways the environmental crisis unfolds, in language and as real-world cause-effects, is the western development discourse, a perception of history and life itself in the context of capitalist progress. Underway, is a negotiation of the crisis that becomes meaningful and visible against the background of capitalist expansion. With this articulation of reality, these produced understandings, or ‘truths’, also become productive forces (Escobar 1996, 340).

It is rarely publicly expressed, e.g. in the media, by ‘authoritative’ voices, in texts or reports, etc., how the idea of development maintains knowledge, behaviour and thinking that reproduce the dominant societal, cultural, economic, and political structures of today that are deteriorating the environment. This western idea of progress and the “good life” (Stibbe 2014, 125), i.e. what is deemed as desirable or worthy, is said to be achieved through a path that was once built on the ideas of enlightenment, modernization, and reason, among others. A dominant shared understanding of the world that founds itself on the narrative of economic

growth as something to be striven for, presenting capital accumulation as natural. The power of development rests upon the precondition that these ideologies, “or ways of representing the world” (Fairclough 2010, 8) are portrayed as natural which is a result and the cause of the hegemonic framework of this narrative (Stibbe 2015, 130). This dream, born in specific space and time, is being imposed upon other life-worlds as a universal model, presenting the past, and nature, as something to move away from (Sachs 1999). As this desire for, and an alleged path to, modernity is naturalized, the historical conditions and pathways are erased. The western construction of development becomes part of a ‘natural history’ of human development, rendering it harder to question or comprehend it as something contributing to the ecological crisis. In this *naturalized* discourse:

Historically contingent processes can be represented as natural essences or things, actors and agency can be deleted from accounts, history can be invoked in specific ways to underlie the construction of a narrative, and metaphors and figures of speech can be organized and juxtaposed to resonate with particular common-sense understandings. (Wall 1999, 57)

The unequal power relations are re-established by circulating the discourses of growth and modernity, so fundamental to development thinking, as a natural law. Operationalised are ways of being and relating to other forms of life that work as a foundation for the social and the imagination of what is to be achieved in the quest for fulfilment. Grounded in reason, development becomes a project for ostensible global emancipation (Crush [1995] 2005; Escobar 1995; Rist 2002; Sachs 1999; among others).

Discourse can be defined as a way of organizing language to convey specific representations of reality, a contextualized use of language that conditions understanding (Stibbe 2012, 3). According to Escobar, discourse is “the process through which social reality inevitably comes into being” (1996, 326). That is why the development discourse is maintained by different institutions, behavioural models, ways of thinking, etc. These global power structures rely on the story of development and present the hegemonic ideologies as unmarked, rendering the stories invisible in the sense that it becomes more difficult to notice that they are, in fact, stories. Embedded in various forms of communication and interactions, these apprehensions of reality “appear between the lines of the texts which surround us in everyday life: in news reports, advertisements, conversations with friends, the weather forecast, instruction manuals or textbooks” (Stibbe 2015, 5) and become ‘the way things are’. These stories, the prevailing

hegemony of development, implement the current framework within which the environment is discussed. Again, this is about who is interpreting the issues at hand and the terms of that discussion; it is about power, discourse being the medium for exercising it. Indeed, there are many kinds of knowledges, and those that have the right to establish ‘reliable information’, have the power here as well to interpret the ecological crisis, the processes, the causalities, and valuing of certain responses over others. They have the means to deem other knowledges as marginalized or false: “The texts of development have always been avowedly strategic and tactical — promoting, licensing and justifying certain interventions and practices, delegitimizing and excluding others” (Crush [1995] 2005, 5). The hegemonic way of relating to the world – here development thinking – is the context where the knowledge emanating from the Global North becomes applicable and valid. The environmental discourse becomes materialized through these narratives, further reproducing the conditions favourable to the idea and the problem. Thus, it can be argued that development, with its comprehensions of growth, modernity and progress, dictate the limits and possibilities of the environmental discourse and the management of the crisis (e.g., environmental adaptation/climate change mitigation etc.) materializes through the hegemonic discourse that subsumes others.

Today, especially in the Global North, our societies and lives entail that the changes, deterioration, and tumult in the ‘natural’ environment are not perceptible in a way which would render the understanding of the processes and problems as based on experience. Therefore, “the environmental predicament enters the life-worlds of most urban people merely as an intellectual issue “(Escobar 1996, 21), producing the environmental crisis, for the most part, as discursively created (Hajer 1997, 20). Thus, translating the ecological disaster into words is not trivial. If the environmental discourse is understood through a master narrative of development, implemented by the West as a world project, the environmental discourse is nothing more than a continuation of colonized storylines and narratives. Controlled by naturalized ideologies, the development discourse averts its inherent problems: the fragmented and unstable foundation of its own worldviews which do not have any existence outside of that reality which constituted it in the first place (Crush [1995] 2005, Escobar 1995, Sachs 1999). Now, the environmental discourse follows these arguments, reasonings, and policies which claim to be value-free, interest-free, and just something that has naturally been here all along. The environmental problems take shape against that background while, on the other hand, development works through nature, and the growth paradigm gives meaning to it. In this way, the representation of the ecological crisis serves the

current power structures and the interests of the few. As the majority of nature (humans included) is excluded from what is deemed significant, this approach is unable to meet the complexity of the crisis.

In this thesis, I am interested in the discourses surrounding the environmental crisis and the discourse of the environmental crisis itself. I wish to study how, and to what extent, environmental discourse is built on this premise that can be said to be its demise. By studying how the ecological crisis is presented, what is identified as the reasons behind it, what are the solutions offered etc., I seek to bring forth how the material relations between nature and development are coded in the environmental discourse. To illustrate this, I will study two documents on the environmental crisis from two different sources. One is an executive summary of the Living planet Report (2022) from the World Wildlife Fund. The other document is from the International Panel on Climate change and consists of the Headline Statements formed according to the AR6 Synthesis report (2023). I will employ ecolinguistics and critical discourse analysis to uncover the following research questions:

1. How does the mainstream environmental discourse relate to the hegemonic idea of development and growth?
2. What are the discursive and linguistic features found in the mainstream environmental discourse? What are the problems identified and solutions offered?
3. How are the naturalized ideologies of development present in environmental discourse? How are they camouflaged (and why)?

As Sachs (1992, 2) states: “it calls for apostasy from the faith in development in order to liberate the imagination for bold responses to the challenges humanity is facing”. How do the discussions, negations, talks, and reports that are supposed to guide the societies of the world through the biggest challenges of our time, maintain these ideas of growth and development? Maybe the problem is just that – these are testimonies from above and from the few. In this thesis, I regard the most widely applied institutional discourse which the media and other entities are engaged with as the mainstream environmental discourse. What makes it mainstream or dominant as well is the hegemonic nature of it as it is legitimized in the current web of power; having many ‘subscribers’ it does not usually invite a lot of questions. That is why the analysis of the mainstream environmental discourse and the identification of its

underlying assumptions embodying the development narrative are essential to reveal the greater forces behind the crises of our time. With this thesis, I aim to do just that.

I will begin by discussing contentions on development, its meaning, and elaborate on it as a discourse. After, I wish to provide a brief background on the history and on the intricate relations between development, capitalism, and the environment. In the third section, I move on to discuss the theoretical framework of this study, and how I will be utilizing the provided conceptual tools in this thesis. In the material section, I introduce my primary data and argue for their relevance regarding the arguments made here. From there, I will continue to establish the method and develop my application of it. In the analysis and discussion sections, I present the results first in more detail and then discuss the larger frameworks found.

2 Background

Here I will give a brief introduction to the ideas of development. I will go through its naissance as a concept, and as a state of being, which orders our view on the world and lays out the framework in which societies and processes operate. In addition, I discuss its interaction with capitalism and growth, in relation to which development is often understood and through which it is executed. Lastly, I wish to bring forth the liaison between development and capitalism paradigms, and the environment; an exploitative relationship and an alternative story to the multidimensional crisis we are facing today.

2.1 Regarding development

The concept of *development* in its current form was negotiated in the aftermath of the second world war, in a context where the balance of power shifted from Europe to the US, many of the former colonies gained independence, and the USSR presented itself as a counter force. Against the changing political and economic field, with new states emerging and challenging the existing global power composition, the West came to redefine itself, and the course of future was articulated along the ideas of modernity. As development was laid out in 1949, in the words of Harry S. Truman, as a “world project”, most of the world were left outside the realm of “successful societies”, and the Third World, i.e. the ‘underdeveloped’, came to be (Sachs 1999, 3). Imposed from the outside, some people, or to be more specific, most people did not have the choice of becoming ‘underdeveloped’. Other ways of living were (and still are) valued in relation to the Western model, which created new meanings for people; determining who they are, what they are doing, and why. The ‘developed’ was “forced to modify his social relations and his relationship to nature in order to enter the promised new world” (Rist 2002, 2). Thus, people were placed under conditions where they saw themselves as underdeveloped while the West reorganized their own place in the system to their own benefit, ensuring the hegemonic and central position (Escobar 1992, 23). People were left to dream: to dream of something better. What happened was a mental colonization, in a sense, a conquest of the imagination of the world as well as “a reinterpretation of global history” (Sachs 1999, 5). To this day, the history of humankind is seen as linear, as a natural progression towards the benefits of development, implying a universal path and set of values for each nation and people.

Development is “an imperative”, “un raison d’être” (Sachs 1999), that structures discourses and directs strategies and processes in all levels and aspects of society, reproducing uneven power relations. On one hand, it is a means to an end but on the other, it is articulated as an objective, the latter being a more normative definition. It connotes ideas of what is lacking in the current situation and what is worth attaining (Rist 2002). In this context, economic growth is often valued and seen as the gateway to advanced societies and modernity which underlie the idea of development. Indeed, for Karl Marx and many others, capitalism and development were (and are) equivalent. However, over the years development has been theorized in relation to imperialism, socialism, as well as approached from different economist and philosophical perspectives, such as structuralism and the dependency theory (Veltmeyer and Bowles 2022).

Amid the quest for a more accurate definition, it soon becomes visible that “development is a most elusive concept” (Crush [1995] 2005, 2). Not only in the sense that it is hard to grasp the precise meaning, but also in the sense of the idea being illusory, fleeting. It expresses many things: “universality, progress, feasibility” but at the same time it is void of meaning (Sachs 1999, 7). It is a story, and at the same time it is just a story but with very real implications. While it is deceptive as whether there really is such a thing as ‘development’, still it does exist through the “actions that it legitimates, through the institutions it keeps alive and the signs testifying to its presence” (Rist 2002, 10). However, since the inaugural speech of Truman in 1949, the word ‘development’ has connoted at least the idea of escaping a state of ‘backwardness’ towards the ‘civilized’, an ‘ideal’ society and humanity. The power of development lies, as a result, in its hegemonic definition supported and exploited by a system which awards it relevance and enables its use to legitimate and promote the current power structures among other things: “The grand narrative of development bases itself on this ideal of modern, reason, and captures the imagination of people as something to be aimed at, which, again, justifies the exploitation of people and nature” (Peet and Hartwick 2009). Indeed, not only does the development discourse impoverish the natural landscape by maintaining the growth narrative but also by homogenizing imagination, dreams, goals, and the ideas of progress. The reading of history that development offers is not only linear, but also anthropogenic and often Eurocentric, and it does not only exclude natural systems from the story, but also most humans (Moore 2016). This idea of civilizational evolution, reason being the motor of human progress, and development as the goal of humanity (not only any development but a certain western idea of progress), are being imposed upon other parts of

the world, legitimizing some forms of knowledge over other. This assumes some voices and experiences as inherently more valid than others, affecting one's sense of self. In other words, development thinking imagines a world and becomes a real force in the world through the structures which the modern world is built on and are reproduced by the hegemonic discourse. Within this genre where ideas are born and interpreted, reality is given meaning and development itself becomes meaningful.

As a process, development has deepened the distance between society and nature, redefining the meaning of both. Here, *nature* receives the role of an apparent 'other', becoming a place outside the realm of morality or reason. For instance, colonization meant the dehumanization of most of the population, by altering their sense of self and the colonizer's identity in relation to the colonized facilitated the abusive processes along with the exploitation of nature (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton, 2021; Moore 2016). This was made in the name of the 'civilizing project', motivated by capital, permitted by reducing the colonized and nature to a resource. Modernity was equated as the right form of civilization. Later, development became the surface where humanity was given meaning as opposed to the undeveloped, backwardness of non-western societies, located closer to nature in the timeline of history. This line of thought, this imagination of what it is to be human, is still reproduced by development discourse: being 'developed' or 'underdeveloped' often more or less implicitly refers to the degree of industrialization, free-trade, democratization, or other institutions associated with the West. In recent history, the establishment of this idea of civilization on this frontier between society and nature, has translated into neo-imperialism and the idea of development exercised in the name of human rights, democracy, free markets, etc. This has meant explicit and implicit interventions into the lives of other peoples. It is a homogenization process through which the securing of interests in a capitalist economy has benefitted from the usage of the myth of the frontier. In this sense, it is a story of action and reaction, a powerful tool of building a sense of meaning through what is not an all-inclusive view of history but a dominant 'desire to be'.

Development has become the great narrative of our time. However, it is not a story conveyed explicitly. Instead, it "exist[s] behind and between the lines of the texts that surround us" (Stibbe 2015, 3). We see development in expert contributions and state's appearances, or advertisements, for instance, which are often presented through the media. It is an institutionalized discourse found in many contexts and texts. It is a story that disguises itself as natural, as something that exists outside the realm of reality which constituted it in the first

place, portrayed as free from value and the ideas or interests of certain groups of people. Indeed, for the development scheme: “[t]he key instrument in this permanent project is discourse, a sufficient guarantee of social power. For it is words that are given the responsibility not only to classify, but actually to ground the existence of a representation meant to be generally applied” (Durkheim 1982 in Rist 1997, 28). It is, however, just that, a portrait, a western representation of the world, and a one that cannot be deemed as universally beneficial and applicable to all spaces and times. Due to development manifesting itself through different texts, interactions, exchanges, etc., many scholars, including Arturo Escobar, Wolfgang Sachs and Edward Said, bring forth the need to examine development as a discourse since it “promotes and justifies very real interventions and practices with very real (though invariably unintended) consequences” (Crush [1995] 2005, 6). Critical development studies (CDS) are one example of an interdisciplinary field which aims to reveal the dynamics of development thinking, the “development frame” (Stibbe 2015), and challenge the underlying assumptions beneath. As follows, it is worth to focus on “the ways that development is written, narrated and spoken” (Crush [1995] 2005, 3).

The roots of knowledge, the appraisal of reason and logic and the aspiration for ‘modernity’ behind the “development machine”, however, date back later than the 50s when the development discourse itself can be said to have been born. The western production of discourses and strategies devising the exploitative, unequal economic, social, and political relations between the West and the rest need to be seen in the light of historical pathways. We can trace it back to the Enlightenment but the colonial forces, the domination, and the quest for exploitation of people and nature goes beyond that. That is why, next, I will discuss the “development dynamics of the underlying operating system—capitalism” (Veltmeyer and Bowles 2022, 3).

2.2 Capitalism, development, and the environment

The notion of development, in the context of the current world order, becomes significant in relation to economic growth, above all: “Development is most clearly anchored in the western economy, with its ensemble of systems of production, power and signification” (Escobar 1992, 22–23). As capitalism is the gravitational centre in the heart of our current societies, it is important to expose its roots and reveal its role in camouflaging the mainstream narrative into something natural, negotiating the responses to the ecological crisis:

As disaster rages, the answer of the status quo is to accelerate or expand what it is already doing. More investment is needed, rapid deployment of increasingly brilliant technology, a greater purpose for businesses, persuasive campaigns reaching wider audiences, better consumer choices, changed voting patterns, new politicians, enforceable treaties, more facts, better arguments, less denial. But as the clock ticks down, the storms grow, and birdsong fades, it is time to be honest about how it came to this. (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 25–26)

Accumulation of capital is seen as the means to development and economic indicators are often used as a measurement of its success. Indeed, global poverty is one of the biggest themes on the agenda of development. However, to this day, the development project has not brought relief to world's population, rather it has only deepened the social inequality if anything (Escobar 1995, Rist 2002, Sachs 1999, Veltmeyer and Bowles 2022). Economic growth does not, for that matter, automatically lead to better living conditions and overall well-being, nor are the material benefits of capital accumulation true to most of the world's population, despite what conventional economics often tends to argue. Thus, the idea that development would, in its current composition, lead to better health, the eradication of poverty or the overall improvement in life quality, has failed. Despite the supposedly good intentions behind the ideas and agents of development, this way of thinking has, for its part, built the fabric of the global economy. In the guise of development discourse and through the compelling argumentation of modernity, the current world order is preserved with all its inequalities.

According to Moore (2016), the roots of our ecological crisis lie in the 15th century when the rise of early capitalism begun to accelerate, and the transforming of the environment and the harnessing of nature grew in scale and scope. Humans have always made environmental change, but the early capitalist regime introduced something unrepresented which drastically altered the relationship between human activity and that of the rest of nature: a civilization where “capital and power—and countless other strategic relations—do not act *upon* nature, but develop *through* the web of life” (Moore 2016, 97; italics in the original). Not only did “the fractal evolution of getting more for less from every field, forest, and indigenous society” (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 37) or what Moore (2016, 87) calls “the rise of cheap nature”, include the reduction of the web of life to “a series of external objects – mapped, explored, surveyed, calculated for what Nature could do for the accumulation of capital”, but also the exclusion of some people outside humanity. The conquest of the

Americas, the evolution of the modern global market, and “[t]he ongoing condition of turning human activity into labor-power, and land into property”, i.e., capital accumulation, “was a symbolic-knowledge regime premised on separation—on alienation” (Moore 2016, 86). This human-nature binary was fundamental for justifying the exploitation of nature and the rise of capitalism. The reorganization of nature and people in terms of value saw the transformation of production and reproduction organized around new abstract conceptions of space and time (Moore 2016, 87–88). Performance of labour became valid and purposeful through its value in relation to accumulation of wealth and human work was stripped of other meanings or meaningfulness than that of profit. Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton (2021, 31) approach this with the story of the civilizational collapse of the Rapa Nui: “The bodies of the islanders were valuable, along with the island’s fertile environment, because global systems of market exchange, of valuation and pricing, had deemed them so.” This led to exploitation of the land and people through similar mechanisms we witness today: “global webs of exploitation and appropriation, calculation and credit, property and profit, on an unprecedented scale” (Moore 2016, 109), enabled by abstractions of reality and the externalisation of nature.

Thus, capitalism was born in this historically specific context where the European nations of maritime power ventured out into the great wide world driven with competition for “commerce and conquest, trade and war, wealth, and territory” (Polanyi 2013, 10). New possibilities and ways of wealth accumulation were secured in the form of colonies which were made to work for capital. These edges of the global economy and power structures were, and still are, places where the knowledge of the West is reflected and validated against that ‘other’, be it nature or other people, following the integration of it into the capitalist regime. For instance, the stories of the Old West are stories of the American dream, possibilities of fortune, conquest of nature and expansion of frontiers which were already then, the precondition for capital extraction: “That process of getting Nature to work for very low expenditures of money and energy is the history of capitalism’s great commodity frontiers, and with it, of capitalism’s long waves of accumulation” (Moore 2016, 113). The earth was transformed into a machine through development that followed this logic and was operationalized to work for the scientific revolution and later for the industrial revolution. As a result, scarcity was created where there was once abundance (Polanyi 2013, 45; Sachs 1999, 51).

Today, we live in a neoliberal era of capitalism where financialization prevails and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few accelerates, strengthening

polarization and deepening income inequality, among other things. Indeed, international institutions and the market economy are replacing the state as the main agent in development, reinforcing the driving forces of capital and crediting those already favourably aligned with financial flows (Pieterse 2001). It is important to emphasize here that capitalism is not only an economic model but a way of relating to the world, a system of environment making that permeates the economic, the cultural and the social (Frazer 2022; Sachs 1999). In the name of development, it orders our day to day lives, gives it meaning and mediates our relationship with each other and nature (Stibbe 2015). It is an institutionalized social order where development materializes on someone's account, creating gaps and focusing on profit accumulation instead of well-being. From the times of Columbus, the myth of development, the search for growth, has been carried along in language, through which the colonization of nature and people persist and is being carried out even today (Döring and Zunino 2014). What is often omitted from the mainstream environmental discourses, however, is that these histories of immense human suffering, death, and exclusion, are inseparable from the story of the degradation of the environment. The fact that some people are left out of the system or are exploited is what the current world-system feeds on. The scarcity found in the form of poverty, hunger, diseases, and that is an accelerating characteristic in ecosystems, is the flip side of the open-ended production (Sachs 1999, 52), a structural paradox of capitalism: to be eventually consumed by its own foundations; signs of which have long been visible but have long been ignored (Frazer 2022).

3 Theoretical framework

In this section, I will focus on the theories and fields of research that establish the methodological and conceptual base for this study. To begin, I introduce the intellectual framework of ecolinguistics and more specifically ecocritical discourse analysis that operates within the ecolinguistic approach, both of which form here the foundation for the analysis. I will discuss their interaction and develop them in relation to my thesis. I will also elaborate on the definition of environmental discourse applied in this study.

3.1 Ecolinguistics

The approach of this thesis bases itself on the idea that there are diverse interactions between all living systems, considering human societies as included in and being part of the complex ecologies of nature. One of the most fundamental ideas is that language has real effects on the “sociocultural ecosystem” (Döring and Zunino 2014, 35): all modes of connections and communications transform and construct the world we live in, language being one of them and equally influenced by the surrounding reality. The study of this relationships between language and ecology is at the centre of ecolinguistics. However, it is a vast discipline in the sense that interactions of language and ecology can be studied in multiple ways, and that is why I wish to outline a certain framework of ecolinguistics for my study and argue for its use. I will ground the introduction of ecolinguistics as a field with the definition of ‘ecology’ and then move on to discuss the benefits of its liaison with language.

As a concept, we can trace *ecology* back to the 19th century when it was used to describe the interactions between organisms and their surroundings. It has evolved from this specific characterization, not only in and out of itself as the result of the alterations of what are traditionally called ‘natural sciences’, but also because of its application to other fields, such as human or social sciences. With the emergence of the environmental movement in the 1960s, it became to be understood more commonly as that what is natural and environmentally friendly (Fill 2017, 1–2). It did not take long for the rising global awareness of environmental issues to induce an “ecological turn” (Stibbe 2015, 7) in the academic sphere and lead to the incorporation of the word into linguistics, and vice versa. Establishing the connection between ecology and language as a field of study meant, among other things, the centring of the rest of the natural world alongside humans in the quest for knowledge in general and with respect to the ecological degradation specifically: “The advantage of a

linguistic turn in the environmental sciences consists in a deeper and – hopefully – improved insight into the culturally bound processes of meaning-making and contested semantics of an ongoing environmental crisis” (Döring and Zunino 2014, 34).

When it comes to the area of study called ‘ecolinguistics’, it has been used to name many different approaches and forms of doing research during its (approximately) 30-year-old history. Amid this seemingly incoherent subfield of linguistics, two strands stand out which are not, however, mutually exclusive. One of them, the more recent one, “seeks to uncover ideologies that work against ecologically or environmentally sound principles” (Alexander, 2018, 196). It is informed by the idea that “an ecological perspective on language [...] plays a decisive role in the construction and improvement of environmental management” (Döring and Zunino 2014, 35). The strand of ecolinguistics employed in this thesis adheres to this approach as a framework in order to make visible the dominant narratives maintaining the destructive stories about our society and humanity, lying beneath the crisis, “through exposing the ecologically destructive ways that everyday discourses construct notions of the ‘good life’” (Stibbe 2014, 125).

The other prominent strand of ecolinguistics makes a parallel between ecological diversity and linguistic diversity, which can mean the diversity of ways of expressing ideas within one language or the existence of different languages (Fill 2017, 3). Indeed, there is a “parallelism between the impoverishment of the landscape and the impoverishment of the language” (Trampe [2001] 2006, 239). For instance, as Glausiusz ([1997] 2006) argues in his essay, the changes in rainfall affect the ability of a community to sustain itself, resulting in varying degrees of language contact with another community, which may result in that smaller languages disappear. Similarly, the need to enter the western model of world economy will result in an impoverishment of language, through the obligation of harvesting capital, migration caused by environmental problems, and as the world is worded along the development narrative. What is more, the alienation of humans from nature, not only in the mind or as a conception of space, but also in the ways we produce food, for instance, has come to mean that our dependence on the industrial economy has also deepened and the knowledge of land and nature’s cycles is not held in value as opposed to a scientific, abstract expertise. Our ability to interpret the codes having to do with cultivation and agriculture, for example, erodes and is visible in language. In other words, the physical, social and linguistic environments are in a constant interaction. Now, as the development discourse alienates

humans further from nature in many aspects, this knowledge will erode with the loss of diversity in linguistic communications and reactions to the challenges we are facing.

Behind each of the different approaches, merging under this subfield of ecolinguistics, there is an *ecosophy* bearing, at heart, the idea that in the centre of our actions and organization of reality should be harmony and well-being, and that these should be prioritized, instead of profit or capital, for instance:

An ecosophy is informed by both a scientific understanding of how organisms (including humans) depend on interactions with other organisms and a physical environment to survive and flourish, and also an ethical framework to decide why survival and flourishing matters and whose survival and flourishing matters. (Stibbe 2014, 119)

The specific knowledge or understanding employed to fashion an ecosophy may vary according to the research in question. Against this philosophy, then, the use of language is evaluated in ecolinguistics research, leaning on the idea that language and the environment are co-constructing entities. This is the position of the ecological turn in linguistics which is also argued for by Döring and Zunino (2014), for example, as the environmental crisis needs to be approached from more than only science-based understandings. Richer and deeper intelligence is needed to grasp the simultaneous and reciprocal crises of our time. Thus, ecolinguistics is a tool to map the different manifestations of the crisis and to show how many different linguistic and discursive features there are that one way or another, sustain “the unassailable global economy, and the brave new world of consumer democracy being forged worldwide in its name” (Kingsnorth and Hine, 2009), as well as the story of the western civilization warranted and upheld by development.

From this I derive an approach (the ecosophy) for my study that begins from a holistic viewpoint and the idea that language is an integral part of the interconnectedness of all living organisms, manifesting the variety of experiences of and outlooks on our surroundings, verbalising the meaning-making and structuration of reality while being influenced by the rest of nature. This unlocks a view of discourse as a material force in the face of the ecological crisis and highlights the importance of uncovering the unsustainable narratives of our time, instilled in the search for solutions, guiding awareness and action. Therefore, I argue for the use of ecolinguistics in this study. In what follows, I will give this idea a body that will be the methodological framework of my research.

3.2 Ecocritical discourse analysis

In practice, ecolinguistics can take many practical forms and one of the most prominent is ecological discourse analysis or ecocritical discourse analysis (EDA), retaining the idea of ‘critical’ in both and adhering to critical discourse analysis (CDA). For example, Stibbe (2014) introduces ecology as a new dimension and ecolinguistics as an applicable framework for CDA’s occupation with power relations. These are compatible in the sense that both retain a critical outlook and are about unveiling ecologically destructive thought patterns, framings and discourse structures.

According to Fairclough (2010), CDA can be seen to have “three basic properties”: its focus lies in social and dialectical relations in and between discourses and the analysis itself is transdisciplinary. As there is no clear distinction between the collection of data and analysis in CDA (Wodak and Meyer 2001), and the methods often rely on both, linguistic categories and the content, the methodology has no consistent framework. Wodak and Meyer (2001, 14) note that CDA is rather an approach than a single method. It consists of a certain triangulation, a range of selections at different levels, that vary according to the research(er) in question and compose the method. These include the observed phenomena, theoretical assumptions and the specific procedures to link these with the analysis. Consequently, critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a theory includes a wide range of different approaches to doing analysis. Also, as discourses function in various areas of society and on multiple levels, the analysis of discourse is affected by the specific approach to and definition of discourse itself, as well as that of the research topic. For example, van Dijk (1993) emphasizes the relationship of discourse, cognition and society, and how the context of language use and people’s past experiences affect the perception of discourse. According to him, the discursive reproduction of power works not only by the concrete use of language but also through the consequences of these enactments on the minds of people. The dominant social groups’ goal is to build the ‘preferred social cognitions’ favourable to them by managing the public discourse and CDA research aims to analyse and explain the ways this is achieved. Thus, depending on the focus of the study, it varies what researchers look for in a certain discourse. These can include argumentative structures, figurative language, word order, lexical style, composition of text, genre, categorization, etc. (Wodak and Meyer 2001). What all of these have in common, however, is the interest of CDA in the relationship between discourse and power, and the goal of CDA that serves to unravel the discourses sustaining unequal power relations and deconstruct naturalized ideologies. Stibbe (2014, 125) describes how ecolinguistics can add to

this scheme of CDA by expanding the objects of research, offering a more exhaustive philosophical framework and a deeper understanding of the functions of discourse that is derived from this new approach and data.

Thus, ecocritical discourse analysis is similar to CDA, focusing on the ecological approach: the interactions of discourse, nature and power are placed under the microscope and analysed against the background of a certain ecosophy. Below, I have listed the guidelines Stibbe (2014, 118–119) suggests as a framework for an ecological and critical analysis of (ecological) discourse which are also applied in this thesis.

- (a) The focus is on discourses that have (or potentially have) a significant impact not only on how people treat other people, but also on how they treat the larger ecological systems that life depends on.
- (b) The discourses are analysed by showing how clusters of linguistic features come together to form particular worldviews.
- (c) The criteria that worldviews are judged by are derived from an explicit or implicit ecological philosophy (or ecosophy).
- (d) The study aims to expose and draw attention to discourses which appear to be ecologically destructive (i.e. work against the principles of the ecosophy).
- (e) The study is aimed towards practical application through raising awareness of the role of language in ecological destruction or protection, informing policy, informing educational development or providing ideas that can be drawn on in redesigning existing texts or producing new texts in the future.

The point (a) is discussed in the materials section when I introduce the chosen material for this thesis. The ground has been laid for (b) but the specific method will be elaborated further in the method section and illustrated in the analysis. The (c) has already been discussed to an extent and will become more apparent in the upcoming sections. In this thesis, the ecologically destructive discourse (d) focused on is, as mentioned, the development discourse and the ambition of the analysis conforms to the last point (e).

The critique of CDA, which can be also forwarded to ecolinguistics, often hovers around the vagueness of the concept of discourse, the lack of distinct methods and the risk of misinterpreting data due to a particular political standpoint (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 17;

Stibbe 2015, 189). The latter has been argued to result in a biased and incoherent analysis as the ideological commitment positions the researcher in a way that affects the selection of the materials and the collection of the data. In addition, ecolinguistics is an emerging field, and the theoretical evolution is not as ‘mature’ as with CDA which can also be said to increase these aspects of doing research within the framework. However, this critique can be challenged by asking: “Is it possible to perform any research free of a priori value judgements and is it possible to gain insight from purely empirical data without using any preframed categories of experience?” (Wodak and Meyer 2001, 17). Also, as the intention of CDA and EDA is to swim upstream, confront the conventional ways of knowing and being critical of complying with the orthodox rationalities, the divergent way of doing research support this goal of raising awareness and being critical in general, including towards their own research. Thus, the analysis cannot be done in isolation and one needs to be explicit about the position from which they are approaching the analysis. As follows, the commitment and aim of this thesis has been laid out and needs to be taken into consideration.

3.3 Tracing the histories of the environmental discourse

Environmental issues gained a foothold in the public discussion around the 1960s when awareness of the environment and the toll of the industrial societies on nature was on the rise. It was around that time when the environmental movement gained momentum and the *environment* as a concept, referring to our physical environment, became more common in public use as the nature of the problems needed to be described in a way that was more comprehensive and implied the impact of humans on nature and our common globe, in which we all dwell (Dryzek 2022). As a result, this new concept redefined *nature* which again came to be perceived as a space that had not been altered by man, retaining a sense of purity and the idea of nature as something non-human; a ‘natural environment’ not having to do with human activities. On the other hand, some authors (e.g. Escobar 1996) talk about “the death of nature” with “the rise of environment”, emphasizing the role of discursive processes in articulating meaning and producing reality as the broader ecological turn took place. Here, nature became to be construed in the context of the environment, in relation to human impacts upon it, leaving it questionable whether nature, on the contrary, ceased to be, if anything.

The number of environmental concerns that made it to the agenda those 60 years ago has proliferated and so has the number of perspectives on these issues. As the decades have gone by and the accelerated rate of changes of our time exceeds anything seen before, the

environmental discourse has shifted in meaning and focus and the frameworks within which the issues are discussed have evolved. Even today, the terms of these discourses are constantly changing, in time and space, resulting in the changing nature of the crisis. At the same time, the physical and mental separation of nature and society has deepened. We are becoming more and more alienated from our surroundings and the processes of the world. Indeed, the industrial north has little direct experience of the consequences of climate change, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, pollution etc., which the discourses on the environment echo. As a result, it can be said that from the very beginning the environmental crisis, with the creation of new terminology, lexicon and the ways to discuss it, has been a discursive construction, or that is how it has come to the attention of many (Hajer 1996, 8).

If the awareness of the complexity of environmental issues and understanding of their interconnectedness has increased, it entails that so has the number of outlooks on the issues through which the crisis is understood. No more is environmentalism something distinct or characteristic of only some groups of people, but the 'green' movement is adopted to all levels of society and employed to accommodate a diversity of objectives. Thus, environmental discourses of the 21st century go beyond the grassroot movements, and are not only connected to each other but also intertwined with many questions about livelihoods, social relations, the organization of the economy, etc. (Alexander 2018; Dryzek 2022). However, this discussion manifests an impaired understanding of these relations and the complex nuances of the planet's processes (Alexander 2018, Döring and Zunino 2014; Hajer 1997; Stibbe 2015). These discourses do not only need to cover the comprehension of the environmental phenomena but also argue for costs, remedies, and ethical questions concerning attribution of fairness, and responsibility (Hajer 1997). Indeed, Döring and Zunino (2014, 1) argue that more integrative approaches are needed to understand the complexity of ecological problems and to communicate them, a combination of: "various areas of thought and analysis", going beyond "evidence-based environmental management".

It can be concluded that the environmental discourse has its roots in an industrial society racing in the name of development (Dryzek 2022, 14) and leaning on the human-nature dichotomy among others. Being the source and object of human imaginations, this division can be said to be a metaphor, relating to other similar dichotomies such as man/woman, logos/pathos, etc.; a "thread or double braid" that guides us through representations and our understandings of the world, and more specifically in this case, nature and the environmental crisis (Cixous 1986, 72). Indeed, the physical environment and what we make of it, is greatly

influenced by how we define it and ourselves, according to which it can carry multiple meanings (Greider and Garkovich 1994, 1). As a result, there are themes and issues which reign in the environmental discussion, such as climate change or biodiversity, the latter “a master narrative of biological crisis” (Escobar 1998, 4). What we see is that much is dedicated to planning, risk management, evaluation of costs and resource efficiency. The solutions offered by different reports, analyses, articles, etc. emphasize more and more technological and financial solutions. Moreover, there are many things excluded from the discussion on the environmental crisis when it comes to the terms and frames of that discussion which maintain a certain outlook on the causes and effects of environmental degradation. Often, the storyline is linear with the whole of humanity giving birth to an era called “Anthropocene”, where the forces of nature are overwhelmed by humans, retaining the humanity-nature division (Moore 2016, 80).

The language of development is widely adopted in the environmental discussion as can be expected with English as lingua franca, reflecting the past and current political, economic and cultural systems: “the big languages have become much more attractive because what they offer now is access to the whole industrial economy” (Glausiusz [1997] 2006, 166). By having everyone on the hunt for economic growth, it also impoverishes responses to environmental problems through standardizing language and thinking:

Significantly, few of the words used in Anglo dominated development discourse admit of translation into other languages: many come to be used in other languages as loan-words, their meanings ever more closely associated with the external agencies that make their use in proposals, policies, strategies, and reports compulsory. (Cornwall 2007, 473)

The reports, debates, and arguments are all validated within the power structures that condition knowledge production. They dictate and homogenize the way to view nature, society and their own actions (Sachs 1999, 55). Certain features of this language, such as “fragmenting the mass, quantifying intangibles and imaginary nouns, and perceiving time in terms of past, present, and future” (Chawla 1991, 262), not only contribute to the process of “resignifying nature” (Escobar 1996, 336), but also obscure our vision when trying to view the environment in all its elaborate multi-layered processes. As a result, as diverse in themes as this discussion may be, by not acknowledging these historical pathways, processes, and “the structural character of the link between capitalist society and the ecological crisis”

(Frazer 2022, 80), the problems will persist. If we wish to construct a narrative that does not adopt frames that exclude the story of how we got here, it is worth asking why “the inseparable histories of colonialism, economics and environmental breakdown have been told centuries by those suffering on the front line” (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 42). In this context, it is worth asking why some lines of discourse gain adherence and how they become meaningful.

Today, environmental discussion has many forms, dimensions and outlooks and it covers many subjects, issues and themes. The environmental crisis is often mentioned in all kinds of texts, speeches and dialogues whether it is political, economic or social. It is a common topic in the media and at dinner tables. It is a theme that cannot be neglected in election campaigns or in informing about the production of food. Serving many purposes and functions, it has become a platform for social movements, energy companies, governmental organisations, and individual public intellectuals. These are often competing discourses but offer, at the same time, shared apprehensions of the world (Norton and Hulme 2019). Thus, environmental discourse can be almost anything that touches on the subject. It goes beyond environmentalism and can include anyone managing or discussing the crisis (Dryzek 2022, 11). However, in this thesis, by environmental discourse, I refer to the discussion that consults the environmental problems and the crisis itself, its causes and consequences, and which is circulated widely by the western institutions and the media, affecting the way in which we apprehend environmental change

3.4 Sustainable development as an environmental discourse

To counter the environmental crisis, sustainable development is one of the most definitive currents of the ‘green’ discussion. Its usage became part of the agenda after it was introduced to the public with the publication of the 'Brundtland Report' under the title “Our Common Future” in 1987 (Rist 2002; Sachs 1999; Schultz 2006). This United Nation’s report gave a comprehensive list of the threats to the ecological balance of the planet and marked the beginning of a new tradition of national environmental management as well as international environmental summits, commissions and conferences to give birth to new environmental legislation. It was also an answer offered to the challenge of considering the issues of environment and development together despite the inner paradox (Rist 2002, 180): sustainable development retains the idea of development even though it acknowledges the limits to economic growth to some extent. For instance, Escobar (1996, 340) argues that “the

sustainable development discourse must be seen as part of the creation of knowledge linked to capital, to the extent that the concepts produced participate in reinscribing nature into the law of value.” As a result, it can be postulated that the discourse of sustainable development is an attempt to give new potential to the desires of development and reinvent the story to match the ‘green’ consciousness.

The prospect of sustainable development often suggests that the needs of today should be fulfilled without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. However, there are many meanings given to sustainable development and, as a result, “many different projects are furthered under the flag of sustainable development and quarrels have started to emerge about what sustainable development really is” (Hajer 1997, 1). By environmentalists, it is used to prevent further destruction of nature, and by companies it might be used to describe their business policy (Alexander 2009, 61). For example, World Bank has used the narrative of sustainable development to legitimate its intervention in the Global South to import its “green work” which has mostly become materialized for example in the form of structural adjustments, loan conditionalities, and restructuring of the economy in favor of foreign powers (Goldman 2001, 516). Especially for commercial purposes sustainable development retains the idea of “sustained development” (Schultz 2006, 110). The discourse of market economics can also be seen to colonize and “narrowly frame critical and oppositional discourse on the environment and ecology” which results, similarly, in a narrow view of what sustainable development could mean and the alternatives to growth (Alexander 2009, 41).

In conclusion, it can be argued that sustainable development has become another vague and ambivalent buzzword among a green ‘trend’ where the ‘ecological’ is used to market products and services (Alexander 2009, 22). It was there in the beginning of the ‘ecological turn’ and played a role in the growing awareness on the environment. However, despite the presumed well-intentions, it fell short to genuinely challenge the operations of the capitalist economy. Quite the contrary: “In the sustainable development discourse, nature is reinvented as environment so that capital, not nature and culture, may be sustained” (Escobar 1996, 328). To this day it retains its place near the center, if not at the heart, of the environmental discourses, as a devil in disguise.

4 Materials

Here I am going to discuss the data chosen for this thesis. By considering the nature of the environmental discourses in the materials first, I wish to lay the ground for a more detailed inspection of the texts. I will present the materials and the agencies behind their production against this background, in relation to one another and as individual wholes. On this foundation, I will argue for the selection of the materials: how and why I came to include them in this thesis.

For this study, I have chosen two pieces of text: the Executive Summary of the Living Planet Report 2022 from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Headline Statements of the Summary for Policymakers based on the AR6 Synthesis Report 2023 from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a United Nation's body. The choice was based on the size of the organizations and their prominence on the international scene of power relations, the scope of influence and visibility of their contributions in the environmental crisis conversation, and the extent to which they can be assumed to circulate a narrative favourable to the present status quo by encompassing the orthodox regimes and producers of knowledge on the environment and the current crises. Both organisations are western based and have been born in a space and time that carries the heritage of a certain understanding of history, culture and the organization of society. Also, I wanted to include a non-governmental organization (WWF) as opposed to the intergovernmental organization (UN) to analyse texts with assumed difference in styles, motivations and actors in the background.

I decided to analyse these two specific documents out of a vast selection of documents found in both organizations' archives and amid several publications as they are the summaries of the most recent 'flagship' publications. They are notable in the sense that these reports cover a large range of themes, amounts of information and different aspects of the environmental crisis. Their audiences include the public, different authorities and decision-makers, and are often referred to and visible in the media as trustworthy bodies behind negotiating the environmental problems, affecting and regulating the decision-making relevant to the ecological degradation. The legitimacy of the knowledge and information these organizations produce is based, among other things, on a set of scientific principles, their environmental commitment and values, as well as their size and access to resources. Moreover, they adhere

to the institutional use of the English language and the western organization of reality which also validates the way they produce knowledge.

The texts themselves manifest an environmental discourse most prominent to our time. By this I mean that they provide an environmental discourse held in high value and often given much legitimacy as a (re)producer of knowledge. These texts speak the language of the hegemony (scientific, expertise, western), retaining the power of defining the problem-solution scheme and reproducing their own validation as well as that of their producers. They are institutionalized discourses and coded in a way that makes sense in the current social and cultural context, also partly produced by the underlying narrative. They manifest the most current themes of the discussion on the challenges, problems and solutions recognized in relation to the ecological crisis. These mostly revolve around climate change, pollution, biodiversity, sustainable development and feature overarching ideas about the relationships between humanity and nature, assumptions about the world and the organization of our society and power structures. However, it is important to note that there are national, regional, and individual variation on the perception and communication of these matters, and these two reports indeed are western based and only two texts amid a flood of information. What I wish to argue for is that these can be seen to act as prototypes for the kind of environmental discussion that is sensible and rewarding to analyze. Furthermore, the environmental discourses found in the texts lean on the function, nature and interests of the organization, and the language used as well as the subjects covered can be expected to vary but the message to be similar as the idea of these organizations is to address these problems. However, even amid the raising amount of information and awareness on the environment, green thinking and movements, I have hypothesized that the opposite can be expected to be showcased.

As previously noted, instead of the full reports, I will analyse the summaries, or in the case of the AR6 Headline Statements, the summary of a summary, due to the time and scope limitations of this thesis. These reductions of the reports offer an interesting approach to the analysis as not everything can be said in the summarized texts which can be seen as guided readings. This can reveal what is seen as the essence of the reports and the problems themselves as what is brought to our attention happens at the expense of something else. However, they do not discuss the data in the same detail as in the full report, so the science is put into a 'simpler' form, it has already been interpreted and the dots connected. So, on one hand, the reader is provided with less information. On the other hand, this easy access and time-saving form may lead to more people choosing to read them instead of the full reports,

making them more circulated. Also, being publicly accessible, there are no ethical considerations to be considered regarding the analysis.

Thus, these organizations' international status, their access to the environmental discourse itself and role in the regime of environmental management and communication result in that it is worthwhile looking into their way of communicating the ecological crisis as these texts can be expected to offer a take on the environmental discourse that is being followed broadly in communicating the crisis and in concrete measures when it comes to environmental policies, law, regulations, etc. They offer a baseline different from one another but nonetheless a story on the why, what, who and how of the crisis. As follows, I wish to point out the vast, far-reaching, piercing, and defining nature of the discourse of development, implicit in its means, having profound effects on these environmental discourses and the responses to the crisis as well as evaluating it. These two allow a fruitful opportunity for an analysis attempting to display this development.

Next, I will present the organizations in more detail, discuss each text and discourse separately, arguing for the choice of that specific piece of data. I elaborate the context of the reports and how it places itself among the 'environmental discourse' category.

4.1 Living Planet Report 2022 (WWF)

The World Wildlife Fund was established at the headquarters of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1961. That same year, two other national organizations were founded in the UK and USA upon the need to gather the financial means for species' conservation. Initially, WWF's focus lay in this protection of endangered species. However, in the 1970s it began to expand its objectives and today, it operates in more than 100 countries and is among the largest, most well-known and respected nature conservation organizations (Luke 2009). Being a worldwide, multinational and non-governmental organisation concerned with a broad range of environmental issues, it is one of the loudest spokesmen for the environment (Castell 2013; Luke 2009; WWF n.d.).

The Living Planet Report is WWF's flagship report dating back to the 1990s. According to their website (WWF, n.d.), it is "a comprehensive study of trends in global biodiversity and the health of the planet", published every two years. Also, it is a report that has also received attention not only in the press but also on social media (ibid.). For this thesis, I will be focusing on the Executive Summary of the 14th Living Planet Report from 2022 (pages 4–5)

for the reasons stated above. In this report, the focus is on biodiversity loss, climate change, and their interconnectedness, with a broader outlook on the multilayered nature of the crisis and emphasis on technology and science. Within its 60 pages, it is stated what is happening, why, and what should be done. Emphasized are land-use change, rising temperatures and the speed and scale of changes caused by them, as well as a “nature-positive society” that would bring about a more balanced nature-human relationship. The report and its conclusions are based on many different measurements, models and analysis techniques. Out of these, the Living Planet Index is emphasized the most as an indicator of the decline in biodiversity, having monitored changes in wildlife populations from 1970 to 2018 (WWF 2022).

Taken that it is a nongovernmental organization, it can be assumed that WWF provides a perspective considered to be less biased, and a discourse on the environmental crisis that approaches the issues in their own right; a more nature-oriented argumentation employing grassroots action. Indeed, according to WWF International, it is an independent organization, committed to transparency. It is not directly associated with the developmental organizations, so it could be assumed that the base for their legitimacy is not quite the same as with the IPCC. However, its ideological roots lie in the West and the “institutional origins of the WWF-US can be tracked back to the abrupt decolonization of Africa during the 1950s” (Luke 2009, 33), a background relating to the need to ‘develop’ these newly independent countries within the framework of US dominated world economy and politics. Also, it is a public fund operating on donations and was based on the essentiality of securing “the funding necessary to protect places and species that were threatened by human development” (WWF n.d.). Thus, it can also be assumed that there are shared ideologies with the developmental organizations (even though “human development” is seen as a threat), but these might be even more embedded between the lines. As a result, it is important to pay attention to what is implicitly said, making the analysis perhaps challenging but also more intriguing as the hegemonic ideological stances are often veiled by activating certain linguistic constructions, disguising themselves as “‘naturalized’ common sense or background knowledge” (Alexander 2018, 201).

4.2 AR6 Synthesis Report 2023 (IPCC)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was founded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in 1988. According to their website: “The main activity of the IPCC is the preparation of reports

assessing the state of knowledge of climate change” (IPCC n.d.). So, IPCC out of the other UN bodies is responsible for assessing the scientific data on climate change, one of the most covered topics in the environmental crisis discussion. It offers reviewed knowledge and recommendations concerning the climate crisis and its impacts from a position that enjoys legitimacy mostly emanating from this application of the western idea, recognition and employment of science, and its association with the UN.

As the United Nations (UN) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are some of the leading organizations structuring the conversation around the climate crisis and managing the understanding of the problem itself, I wanted to see how their organization, in their most recent report discussing the current and probable future situation and developments, addresses the climate crisis. This report, the AR6 Synthesis Report 2023, is an outline of the Sixth Assessment Cycle and a product of the contributions of three Working Groups, three Special Reports and a refinement to the Methodology Report (IPCC n.d.). For this thesis, I will analyse the Headline Statements of the 2023 Summary for Policymakers (IPCC 2023b) based on the AR6 Synthesis report. These statements are divided into “A: Current Status and Trends”, “B: Future Climate Change, Risks and Long-Term Responses”, and “C: Responses in the Near Term” sections, conforming to the longer report. Each section consists of numbered statements and text that elaborates on the subject. The “A” section includes four statements (A1–A4), the “B” section (B1–B7) and the “C” section consist of seven statements each (C1–C7), all in all there are 18 Headline Statements.

According to Fløttum (2016, 119): “The mandate of the IPCC includes to produce policy-relevant information for multiple decision-making actors in a way that is understandable yet scientifically rigorous. The SPMs are fundamental in this work”. Consequently, the Headline Statements offer a significant object of research as they articulate “the overarching conclusions of the approved Summary for Policymakers which, taken together, provide a concise narrative”, as stated by IPCC (2023a). They offer an interpretation, as the most condensed form of the AR6 Report, of the current crisis, lending themselves to a viable object of analysis in this respect as well. When it comes to analysing a text such as this, one could argue that the more nuanced and abstract the text, the more there may be leverage or vagueness, resulting in a variety of conclusions, making it even more susceptible to subjective interpretation. However, this can prove to be what I am here to showcase: how difficult it might be to access this kind of discourse and the way it relates to the real world.

Next, I develop the method for this thesis. I will explain how I advance with my analysis and derive the results from this data.

5 Method

I approach these materials with the idea that language has real effects on the world, words materialize in a way that constructs reality rather than only describing it: “human access to and interaction with the environment is – amongst other things – deeply mediated and influenced by doing things with words” (Döring and Zunino 2014, 35; see also Austin 1975). Thus, these environmental discourses are not only tools for policy making and implementations but also have effects, in their own right, implicit or explicit, on multiple levels, on the manner and means the environmental ‘protection’, ‘management’, ‘adaptation’, and ‘problem-solving’ are taking place. As a result, it is significant what the discourse is like through which these environmental problems and crises are understood and how the language negotiating the relevance, value, etc. of that conversation is structured. This discursive nature of the crisis and the naissance of the “new environmental conflict” (Hajer 1997, 43) suggest that the analysis of the language of the environmental crisis is of benefit to the difficulties of communicating and understanding the nature of the crisis.

The methodological approach of this thesis draws on the ecolinguistics theory as a framework, as elaborated in section 3.1. The analysis implemented is qualitative to allow a deeper dive into the message of the texts in the scope of this thesis. Tailored for this study, the method consists of the tools of critical discourse analysis with an ecological outlook (see section 3.2), adhering to the ambitions suggested by Stibbe (2015). In CDA, the methods often rely on both linguistic categories and on the content. The idea is that the messages operate on the linguistic devices (Wodak and Meyer 2001), a position which also underpins the methodological approach taken in this thesis.

To deconstruct the two documents, I wish to utilize the four categories identified by Dryzek (2022) who introduces them for the critical analysis of environmental discourses. These categories are the following:

1. Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed
2. Assumptions about natural relationships
3. Agents and their motives
4. Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices

These are useful for the purpose of this study as they help to focus on the instances in the environmental discourse that possibly help maintain, hide or mask ideologies that characterize development thinking, past and current power relations, and are hindering responses to the environmental crisis. Furthermore, they help to dismantle the discourses and give a body to aspects that might be hard to acknowledge as being harmful, i.e. it is of interest how these categories and the linguistics means that form them work for naturalization and how naturalization, in turn, constructs these texts as they are. In addition, the categories are relevant to Stibbe's ecolinguistics framework, making them applicable to this study as well. Below, I present the categories in more detail and the application of them for this thesis:

1. The first element has to do with entities that are present in the text and acknowledged as significant realities in the environmental crisis. These might be treated as objective or naturally existing entities or, in turn, gain their meaning through social and/or cultural agreement, existing in the framework of human discourse. Both serve to reveal the way our surroundings and life-world processes are perceived and frames the readers understanding of the issue. Some possible questions I am interested in are, for instance the following: Is nature seen in terms of resources or in its own right? How the environmental crisis is defined, or what are the recognized existing objects contributing to it or somehow being part of it? Are humans seen as a homogenous group?
2. When it comes to the second element, I wish to focus on the organization of reality in the sense of what is seen as the cause-effects behind the crisis and explore what the established relationships are between different entities. This might include implicit beliefs, assumptions, and arguments of how the world works, how the environmental crisis came to be and what needs to be prioritized in environmental action. For instance, what is the view on history and the understanding of historical processes and continuums? How is this presented as natural? How is the human-nature relationship understood?
3. The third pertains to the producers of knowledge, authoritative entities, administrative actors, but also to non-human actors. Who are involved? What are their intentions, motives, and how are they portrayed in relation to the crisis? How are responsibility and accountability attributed? Who or what plays the lead and features activity and capability? There can also be a lack of agents and silence in

many aspects. Thus, I will also focus on what is left unsaid and elaborate on how this is done to “recognise patterns of absence(s) in the form of traces, masks and voids” (Venkataraman 2018, 241).

4. The fourth discourse component consists of different rhetorical devices. First and foremost, the attention will be on metaphors as they often inherently carry ideological attachments (Alexander 2018), may serve to trigger a frame, structure reasoning patterns and/or assume relationships. In other words, they are used to communicate imaginations of the world. Döring and Zunino (2014, 38) use the idea of “metaphoric transfer” as they evoke connotations, mental associations and cognitive patterns by placing something in the centre while narrowing the view to produce knowledge (see: Alexander 2018; Crush [1995] 2005; Goatly 1996; Stibbe 2014; Stibbe 2015; among others). They are shorthand expressions for complex ideas, juxtaposing different entities, abstract or concrete, creating a network of meaning (Döring and Zunino 2014). By *key metaphors*, I refer to some of the most prevailing metaphors used to structure and explain the environmental crisis and the world around us. Here, I will focus on *nominalizations* that can also be seen as metaphors (Alexander 2009, 52) or *grammatical metaphors* (Goatly 1996; Halliday [1990] 2006) which render processes into fixed things, resulting in that these nouns can represent, like metaphors, complex interactions and mechanisms in a simplified way. This is a prominent feature in scientific language, causing side-effects of objectification, metaphoric transfer and abstraction (Trampe [2001] 2006, 238). Other rhetorical devices might include repetitions, figurative language, parallelisms, etc.

As I approach the texts from a critical perspective, I will keep in mind their intention of speaking on behalf of the environment but by focusing on the ways this is undermined, the root causes of the environmental crisis buried between the lines with the help of the linguistic and discursive devices and the contents of each of these categories that, at the same time, permit uncovering the unsustainable patterns of language which reflect the ideologies that are in favour of the current power structures: “key stories about economic growth, about technological progress, about nature as an object to be used or conquered, about profit and success, that have profound implications for how we treat the systems that life depends on” (Stibbe 2015, 2).

To arrive to the categories and identify the environmentally harmful patterns of language, I will analyze each chapter/section by close reading. It is helpful to focus on “clusters of linguistic features that come together to convey particular worldviews” (Stibbe 2014, 117), constructing the discussion on the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ on the environment and the crisis we are facing. In this study and for its purpose, I wish to focus on different linguistic traits, phenomena and argumentation or reasoning patterns that might somehow erase the traces of actors, agency, and life itself, rendering it hard to access the discourse or to challenge it, naturalizing the ideological essence of the overarching environmental storylines. Indeed, *erasure* is an important device contributing to environmental degradation: not only the erasure of the natural world from “microeconomics textbooks to, perhaps surprisingly, ecological assessment reports” (Stibbe 2015, 188) but also the erasure of humans, agents and social issues from these texts. As follows, with the aid of the above categories and the framework of ecocritical discourse analysis, I deconstruct the metanarratives and challenge the conventional thought patterns that employ language in favour of the current hegemony and maintain destructive processes regarding the whole of existence.

I will provide a selection of passages from both texts that are illustrative when it comes to the four categories. To rule out as much arbitrariness as possible, I choose the examples according to specific criteria, while acknowledging that other passages might be relevant as well. However, taken into consideration the scope of this thesis, I cannot include every feasible example. The extracts are chosen based on their representativeness of the discourse: they reflect recurring linguistic features that appear throughout the text, capture critical moments where meaning is conveyed, and shape the narrative by drawing conclusions and constructing lines of argument. All in all, they are relevant to the research questions of this thesis as they illustrate how language is used to address the environmental crisis. The number of examples might vary according to the length and structure of the text as the IPCC’s Headline Statements have a higher word count.

Before moving onto the analysis itself, I wish to mention here that as with any research, I cannot stand outside the language use or the structures present in these texts, that is, I cannot analyse them from the “outside”. Also, I am not claiming to do research without any presumptions or attitudes, as the research is not done in a vacuum and therefore neutrality is a questionable goal. However, if there is no context for the researcher to do the analysis, one could question the meaningfulness of that research (Wodak and Meyer 2001; see section 3.2).

Instead, I have strived to be straightforward and transparent about the position of this thesis and my own.

6 Analysis

In this section, I will identify the four elements suggested by Dryzek (2022) and discuss their role in transmitting and creating meaning in this context. I will look at the ways the four elements manifest themselves, what are the forms they take in their quest to communicate and narrate the environmental crisis, the roots of the crisis and the steps needed to tackle it.

With each document, I will first give a selection of key examples. Structuring the analysis this way is sensible taking into consideration the scope of this thesis, allowing a more integrated analysis of all the categories that produce the discourse by communicating the meaning in relation to one another. The examples are numbered and coded (see below), referring to the categories suggested by Dryzek (2022):

Category 1: **Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed**

Category 2: *Assumptions about natural relationships*

Category 3: Agents and their motives

Category 4: Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices*

Many of the examples can feature a variety of the categories in question. However, while having shared elements with other examples, each of the examples contribute a unique perspective to the analysis and add new dimensions to the construction of the discourse. In the running text, I will refer to the numbered key examples where each instance of the category in question is present. In addition, I will provide a summary of the most fundamental results at the end of this section. These are the findings that realize the main elements and the overarching arguments in the discourse. While the results cannot cover everything, they do reflect the essence of the discussion.

6.1 The WWF Executive Summary 2022

From the Executive Summary of the Living Planet Report 2022, I have derived ten key examples conforming to the criteria stated in the method section. To enhance clarity and coherence, and to avoid disruptions in the running text, these have been compiled into a list format below. I have analysed each example and identified the categories 1–4, respectively, and marked them with the corresponding instance of code.

Key examples:

- (1) “Today we **face the double, interlinked emergencies of human-induced climate change* and the loss of biodiversity***, *threatening** the well-being of **current and future generations**”.
- (2) “As our future is critically dependent on **biodiversity and a stable climate**, it is essential that we understand how **nature’s decline and climate change are connected.**”
- (3) “Land-use change* is still the biggest current threat* to **nature**, destroying or fragmenting **the natural habitats** of many **plant and animal species***.”
- (4) “However, if we are unable to limit **warming to 1.5°C**, climate change is likely to become the dominant cause of **biodiversity loss*** in the coming decades.”
- (5) “Biodiversity indicators* help us understand how our **natural world** is changing over time.”
- (6) New mapping analysis techniques* allow us to build up a more comprehensive picture of both the speed and the scale of **changes in biodiversity and climate.**”
- (7) “We also explore an analysis using data from the IUCN Red List which allows us to overlay **six key threats – agriculture, hunting*, logging*, pollution*, invasive species* and climate change*.**”
- (8) “To help us imagine a future where people and nature can thrive scenarios and models* – such as the Bending the Curve work featured in the 2020 Living Planet Report – can create **‘menus*** that indicate how we can most effectively address **biodiversity loss*** under a range of **climate and development scenarios***.”
- (9) “We need **systemwide changes*** in how we produce and consume, **the technology we use, and our economic and financial systems.**”
- (10) “To catalyse this, in 2022, the United Nations General Assembly recognised that everyone, everywhere, has the right to live in a clean, healthy and **sustainable environment***, meaning that for those in power respecting this is no longer an option but an obligation (C2).”

The following subsections provide a closer examination of these examples and how they manifest the categories. This will be realized by exploring the contents, forms and functions of each of the categories separately, starting from the first category and proceeding in a numerical order, encompassing the key instances.

6.1.1 **Category (1): Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed**

In the WWF's Executive Summary, a strong sense of 'unity' is created using the pronouns "we", "us" and "our". This 'group' is an entity with a visible and prominent role in the environmental discussion which can be seen from its usage in almost all the examples (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). On one hand, it is inclusive in its meaning as the "we" is considered as a group, including the reader, evoking a feeling of solidarity in the face of a threat. On the other, it is also exclusive, assuming reference to humans only. However, it stands out from the "*human-induced climate change*" (1), in quantity within the lexicon and in connotation. "Human", at the same time, is more an all-inclusive term in the sense that it retains an idea of humanity as one homogenous group, having also a more biological reference to humans as a species. In addition, it creates a sense of distance as opposed to "us". "People" (8) is also used as a more passive entity, being the object of "impacts" alongside the "natural world". Thus, "we" is a more active entity and often followed by verbs such as "understand" (2, 5), "address" (8), "explore" (7) and "limit" (4) rendering it a more capable category, saving "our future" (2) by understanding and experiencing the situation. The "human" and "people" are recognized and constructed as opposed to the "natural" (5) and "nature" (8), arguing the case on the dichotomy of culture/society. However, they all evoke questions of who is included? Who is the "we"? Does it imply "we" as humans or as people? Who is seen as part of the "human", inducing climate change?

Biodiversity, its decline (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8) and climate change (1, 2, 4, 7) are recognized here as the interlinked emergencies and brought to the forefront of the discussion. Also, "six key threats – agriculture, hunting, logging, pollution, invasive species and climate change" (7) are recognized entities as part of the environmental crisis. "Plant and animal species" (3) contain an abundance of entities within them and display an absence and presence of multiple entities at the same time. All of these are taken as entities in and out of themselves, but both retain the idea and need to map, monitor, model, etc. (5, 6, 7, 8) to recognize them. They are thus constructed by an entity given recognition at the expense of other forms of knowing: the authority of science in the form of recognized entities such as "data" (7), "scenarios" (8) and

“mapping techniques (6), assumed to provide expertise and legitimacy. This institution is present in “us” as the indicators promoted by WWF provide information (5, 6, 7, 8) and in the form of the United Nations (10) who has assumed prestige and control over the “ones in power” (10), one that is also a vague entity. The reign of technological, economic and financial regimes/entities (9) is recognized but not defined further

6.1.2 **Category (2): Assumed natural relationships**

Assumption is made about a mutual dependency between humans and nature when it is said that “our future is critically dependent on biodiversity and a stable climate” (2). However, what is considered natural is the divide nature/humans because what is verbalized is a cause-effect relationship in this dependency (2). The “human” is verbalized to be something the “natural” is not, so their mutual exclusiveness is a natural relationship as it is assumed and guides the problem-solution thread and understanding of cause-effect dynamics. The dichotomy of human-nature relationship assumes superiority and humanity’s control over the “natural world”. It is a story of how the world works and is the foundation for explaining the crisis, but not as a problem that should be prioritized in environmental action.

As climate change is related to warming of the atmosphere which again influences biodiversity, then limiting that is a natural relationship resulting in halting the loss of biodiversity (4). Human agency over nature is an assumed natural relationship here as well. Technological advancements are regarded as beneficial in curbing climate change, resulting in an assumption about the naturally favourable consequences of technological progress (5, 6, 7, 8). The environmental crisis responses are assumed to be found in the western production of knowledge and science which allows to “effectively” manage nature (8). This also adheres to the rift between nature and humans, as nature is usually represented as the object of human action, whether good or bad, and the health of the environment portrayed as dependent on the human guardian, who, often regarded as the initiator of change and transformation, acts upon nature, not as part of it.

Human-centred approach to the crisis does not only undermine the agency of nature but also of capital. A need for changes in production and consumption, financial and economic systems (9) suggests that also the planned trajectory towards “a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (10) includes and necessitates the factor of capital, leaving its role as the enabler of the crisis unquestioned and its presumed beneficial consequences are accepted as the natural relationship guiding the workings in our world. This suggests the taken for granted of

some of the underlying power relations, seen as natural consequences of history, resulting in the judgement of who has the ability to change things, who has the authority to say what is wrong (10). The understanding of “how nature’s decline and climate change are connected” (2) happens through this modern patchwork of history.

6.1.3 **Category (3): Agents and their motives**

When it comes to the agents in this text, it is argued that “land-use change is still the biggest current threat to nature” (3) and the IUCN Red List lists “agriculture, hunting, logging, pollution, invasive species and climate change” (6) as key hazards. When these or “climate change” are deemed as “likely to become the dominant cause of biodiversity loss in the coming decades” (3), agency is given to complex processes which are simplified in the form of a noun, attributing responsibility and accountability to abstracted concepts. Not only does this obscure the forces behind these processes but it also conceals motives. Why is land-use change happening? Why is agriculture a threat to biodiversity?

Human agency is implied in “human-induced climate change” (1) which is faced by the entity “us”. As said “we” is experiencing the threats and tied to its role in bringing about change and our ability to “limit warming to 1,5 degrees”, directing a sense of responsibility to this group as well (2, 4, 6, 7, 8). However, “human-induced” also contributes to the vagueness of the message and reproduces the idea of humans as a naturally undivided group whose actions, as a whole, have affected the environment, leaving unquestioned social, political and economic factors that are not naturally motivated, rendering agency of a group called “humans”, in this context, constructed. Thus, “we” are part of the change, contributing to the solutions, the group acting on the threat, a human group not that directly associated with the destructive forces. Whereas the “human”, even though implied in the group “we”, is the only instance where human action is verbalized as being behind the problem, but it is tied to “climate change” which again is explicitly said to be the problem, again contributing to a kind of erasure.

As previously noted, “we” is an active agent whenever we need to rescue, limit, halt or stop something. Nature, again, is an object, void of agency, in the form of monitored species and threats (2, 3, 6, 8), and the problems are agents consisting of ‘natural forces’ to an extent. The summary suggests that “we” need to act and save the planet, as “our future is dependent on biodiversity and a stable climate” (2). The agency, ability and legitimacy are given to science when it comes to accomplishment of this task: “Biodiversity indicators help us understand

how our natural world is changing over time” (5). This refers to knowledge generated by a select group of people.

The summary speaks in the name of stopping biodiversity loss, but the motive comes from securing the human future “where people and nature can thrive” (8), suggesting that the motive retains the idea of the human-nature dichotomy. Authority is given to the UN (10), firstly as it is presumed that the rights of people and values of things become materialized through statements of the UN or organisations/institutions alike. Secondly, its recognition of rights and values is assumed to create change as “those in power” need to respect it. Institutional processes and “those in power” are thus given agency but when it comes to the “systemwide changes in how we produce and consume” (9), it is unclear whether the acknowledgment of the agency behind the crisis, the role of enablers, is attributed to “us”, “humans”, “the people”, or someone else? Also, it is not stated how the production and consumption come about and what it is that needs to change. Or what is the motivation? It is unclear, again. As it happens, it is stated why the issues need to be addressed (to survive) but it is left unsaid what are the motives behind the destructive processes, making it hard to question the fundamental beliefs, thus leaving them intact in the discussion guiding the mainstream understanding of what is happening and why.

6.1.4 **Category (4):** Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices

Different nominalizations are a type of metaphor utilized in the text. These represent processes as autonomous things with no past: “Land-use change is still the biggest current threat to nature, destroying or fragmenting the natural habitats of many plant and animal species” (3). With “no past”, I suggest that the processes that are turned into fixed things seem to just exist without beginning or movement. Also, the vocabulary includes a variety of scientific and technical terms which are abstractions of the world and benefit the management of reality: “invasive species” (7) being one example where a metaphoric transfer of a threat is at play. “New mapping techniques” (6), “indicators” (5) and “scenarios and models” (8) add to the abstract scientific background, and to the technical industrial way of relating to the world.

Another key metaphor is the dichotomy of nature/human. Which becomes visible throughout the examples, whether explicitly “people and nature” (8) or implicitly in the use of the pronoun “we”, “us”, “our” (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9) or “human-induced” (1), implying the existence of an entity “they” that includes the part of the “real-world” that is being acted on. It

is a shorthand expression for representing a multitude of peoples, multitude of interactions, ecosystems and relationships. These two words are defined against one another, producing the idea of what is “human” or what are “people” as opposed to nature (8) and its “decline” (2). Indeed, “our natural world” (5) suggests there is an unnatural world, a world that is developed, capable and human, and the natural world comes to existence as opposed to this, under human possession. It is often understood through the language of science, nominalizations aiding in this process of rendering nature to separate observable parts (4, 5, 6, 7, 8). It is truly “ours” in the sense that it is the product of social construction, our unnatural illusion. Other divisions and metaphors can be found within this division: man/woman, emotion/reason, savagery/civilization, underdeveloped/developed, among others.

There are also rhetorical devices such as the repetition of the pronoun “we” which includes the reader, creates a sense of common hopes, needs and responsibilities. A sense of urgency is brought about by lexical choices such as “emergencies” (1) or “threat” (1, 3, 7) with a metaphoric function as they provoke other mental images through which the situation becomes to be understood. These refer to a state of turmoil which is countered with “a clean, healthy and sustainable environment” (10), and a future where “people and nature can thrive” (8). What does this mean in the context of “systemwide changes”? (9)

6.2 The IPCC Headline Statements

Here, I have listed fifteen key examples from the IPCC Headline Statements 2023. As with the WWF examples above, I have analysed and marked these extracts following the same principles. The language of the IPCC is more scientific and technical than that of WWF’s as one can expect, so it is to be noted that the elements of the fourth category, like nominalizations, are more prominent. To avoid over-marking the examples, I have marked each instance of key metaphoric or rhetoric device only once, even though it might occur again in the examples. For instance, ‘pollution’ and ‘emission’ can both be considered as nominalizations, but both will be marked as each instance is considered in the context of its specific meaning, even though it might fall under the same grammatical/rhetoric category as another instance.

Key examples:

- (11) “**Human activities***, principally through **emissions*** of greenhouse gases, *have unequivocally caused global warming**.”

- (12) **“Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase, with unequal historical and ongoing contributions* arising from **unsustainable energy use***, **land use*** and **land-use change***, **lifestyles** and **patterns of consumption and production*** across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals”**
- (13) **“Human-caused climate change* is already affecting many **weather and climate extremes** in every region across the globe. This has led to **widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages*** to **nature and people*** (high confidence).”**
- (14) **“Vulnerable communities* who have historically contributed the least to current **climate change** are disproportionately affected (high confidence).”**
- (15) **“Current **global financial flows for adaptation*** are insufficient for, and constrain implementation of, **adaptation options**, especially in **developing countries***.”**
- (16) **“Continued **greenhouse gas emissions** will lead to increasing **global warming**, with the best **estimate** of reaching 1.5°C in the near term in **considered scenarios and modelled pathways***.”**
- (17) **“Climatic and non-climatic risks* will increasingly interact, creating **compound and cascading risks** that are more complex and *difficult to manage*”**
- (18) **“Some **future changes** are unavoidable and/or irreversible but *can be limited by deep, rapid and sustained global greenhouse gas emissions reduction**.” (B3)**
- (19) **“With increasing **global warming**, **losses and damages** will increase and additional **human and natural systems** will reach **adaptation limits***.” (B4)**
- (20) **“If **warming** exceeds a specified level such as 1.5°C, it could gradually be reduced again by achieving and sustaining **net negative global CO2 emissions***”.**
- (21) **“There is a **rapidly closing window of opportunity*** to secure a **liveable and sustainable future** for all (*very high confidence*).”**
- (22) **“Climate resilient development* integrates **adaptation** and **mitigation** to advance **sustainable development*** for all, and is enabled by **increased international cooperation** including **improved access to adequate financial resources***,**

particularly for vulnerable regions, sectors and groups, and inclusive governance and coordinated policies*.”*

(23) “**Delayed mitigation and adaptation action** *would lock-in* high-emissions infrastructure, *raise risks of stranded assets** and *cost-escalation**, *reduce* feasibility*, and *increase losses and damages* (high confidence)”.

(24) “Prioritising **equity, climate justice, social justice, inclusion and just transition processes*** *can enable* **adaptation** and **ambitious mitigation actions** and **climate resilient development.**”

(25) “There is sufficient **global capital** to close the **global investment gaps*** but there are **barriers** to redirect **capital** to **climate action.**”

In what follows, I will examine these key examples more closely by discussing each of the categories separately. This allows for a more detailed discussion of the implications and relevance of the instances found.

6.2.1 **Category (1):** Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed

The IPCC Headline Statements are a summarized version of the understanding of the climate crisis. It recognizes entities that help to construct the issue’s focus: the current trends, possible future developments, and the responses needed. Each of these dimensions include a number of entities. The reproduction of the human/nature dichotomy, by recognizing and constructing entities such as “nature and people” (13) and “human and natural systems” (19), manifests two of the most prominent entities in this text: “the human” and the “natural”. This division of space, verbalized by the juxtaposition of the two categories, could be said to be the central organizing idea of the “concise narrative”. Indeed, this distinction enables the understanding of the problem as it is. It enables the text to construct the entity of “climate change” (13, 14) or “global warming” (11, 16, 19, 20) (and many others such as “human activities” (11)), the cause-effect relationships adhering to this distinction and the negotiation of the responses to the crisis. It is somehow through this that the problem comes “to be” in the mind, in the text, and in the real world. Paradoxically, it is not acknowledged how this construction, in fact, could be the problem behind the voiced issues.

Behind climate change are recognized forces such as the “unequal historical and ongoing contributions” (12) and “greenhouse gas emissions” (11, 12, 16, 18, 20) that have been the

result of entities such as “unsustainable energy use” (12), “land-use change” (12) and “patterns of consumption and production” (12). These issues have resulted in “risks” (17, 23), “damages” (13, 19, 23) and “losses” (13, 19, 23). There are also “estimates” (16) and “limits” (9) for “warming” and “adaptation” (15, 19, 22, 23, 24), as well as “scenarios and pathways” for “mitigation” (22, 23, 24) which require “capital” (25) and redirection of “financial flows” (15) or “financial resources” (22). The economy, and global capital, as entities are given more recognition as the forces needed to tackle climate change than as the central organizing patterns responsible for the “consumption and production patterns” (12). There are “barriers” (25) to redirect the financial flows and capital, but it is not elaborated on. All these entities that construct the narrative of the climate crisis, are also constructed in this specific context to convey complex processes and evoke imaginations of what it means that the climate is changing, and how it all has to do with the recognized/constructed “limit of 1,5 degrees” (16, 20). “Climate resilient development” (22, 24) suggests an adaptation that allows development to continue, representing the climate more as an obstacle needed to transcend.

The identification of entities such as “vulnerable communities” (14), “vulnerable regions, sectors and groups” (22) and “developing countries” (15) suggests that there is another type of entity that is not vulnerable and is developed, leading to the construction of both entities. The division is thus extended within the entity of “people” suggesting the interdependency of the “vulnerable” on the ‘stronger’ communities and countries, guiding the problem-solution thread. “Social justice and equity” (24) as concepts are mentioned and called to be prioritized but these entities and dimensions have a side character role in the narrative which might be expected.

6.2.2 **Category (2): Assumed natural relationships**

That human action has overwhelmed the forces of nature is implied, more or less directly, and is also one of the assumed natural relationships established in the text that tells the tale of how we got here (11, 12, 13). What is assumed “natural” is that nature and humans act upon one another as separate entities: the relationship between humans and the planet is seen as natural, as given, but human actions are seen separate from other functions of the eco-system. In addition, human management is recognized as the solution which entails an assumption about a natural hierarchical relationship (18, 20). Thus, the cause-effect dynamics between human activities and climate change imply a seemingly natural relationship in which humans actively exert influence over nature. Conversely, while nature poses certain threats, it does not play an

active role in 'salvation'; rather, it exists passively as something essential for sustaining life. It could be argued that the 'environment' is posing a threat to 'nature'.

To global warming, there is a constructed limit which, if exceeded, will result in even more losses and damages, but the warming can also allegedly be reversed (16, 20). The human management of nature is assumed as the natural solution which needs to be implemented through scientific knowledge, technology and financing which will all permit adaptation to climate change and mitigation of emissions (15, 16, 20, 22, 24, 25). The human-centred focus (anthropological view) reproduces the assumption of a natural evolution of history where humans transcend the boundaries of nature, in better or for worse. Part of this is the idea of development through which the transcendence has taken place, but not equally for all, and some regions are still articulated to be in the process of separating themselves intellectually and physically from nature (12, 14, 15, 22). Thus, what is part of the natural, are the developing countries, rendering them more vulnerable, as they lack the means to counter climate change. Here, the natural becomes the less capable and more influenced, an object in a man's world.

Development, whether it is "sustainable development" or "climate resilient development", is negotiated as part of the adaptation and mitigation measures (22, 24). It becomes part of the argumentation of what is needed, a natural cause-effect relationship. In this case as well, capital, technology, science, management, etc. are seen in a natural cause-effect relationship with progress, implied when stated that access to adequate financial resources must be ensured especially for vulnerable regions (22) as these are insufficient in developing countries (15). Lack of capital makes a country vulnerable, giving an evaluative statement of the capability of capital and its role in the path to 'progress'. Thus, financial systems are seen as a necessity for managing climate change, which is to assume a natural (beneficial) relationship between the two. The need for this is also argued in terms of the "risks of stranded assets and cost-escalation" that "reduce feasibility and increase losses and damages" (23).

6.2.3 **Category (3): Agents and their motives**

A loss of agency is a prominent feature in the statements. This is realized through certain grammatical conventions often used in scientific texts. For instance, the position of the subject is mostly occupied by nominalizations, or processes transformed into things: "emissions" (11, 12, 16, 18, 20), "losses and damages" (13, 19, 23), "warming" (20), "development" (22). These agents are inanimate, "emissions have continued to increase" (12)

or “human activities have unequivocally caused” (11), or they are deemed as such, as there is a lack of identification of animate forces behind the processes and things. As the environmental crisis, climate change, and the causes of the crisis are attributed to “human activities” (11) as a whole and to “emissions” (11, 12) in particular, it obscures the actions, structures, relations, interactions, causes, benefits, and disadvantages behind the things emanating “unequal historical and ongoing contributions” (12) that are deemed to be the cause of the current crisis. Passive voice also adds to the abstract nature of the text which is characteristic of a scientific discourse. Consequently, this lack of agency erases here not only humans as part of nature but the role of human organisations, institutions and systems in the crisis. Interactions behind the processes, things and entities are not expressed and deprived of life. As a result, responsibility and accountability are obscured amid the abstract ideas and goals.

Motivation of adaptation, mitigation, etc. stems from risks, losses and costs of climate change (13, 17, 19, 23). As the vocabulary circulates a terminology of economics, among other orthodox linguistic conventions, it is not clear whether the losses are measured implicitly in accordance with human “well-being” or explicitly with what the terminology can indeed be associated, with the economy. However, the report articulates a clearer motive to battle climate change (13, 16, 17, 19, 23) when compared to the motive behind the nominalised processes, i.e. definite ‘things’, that are causing the change/problems (11, 12, 16, 19, 20), as motivation behind the actions of land use change, etc. is not stated. Here, the agency is allocated to the nominalisations as the ‘instigators’ of these issues. However, when it comes to restraining the bad, the agency, while still unclear, can be interpreted as human.

Power, along with authority to make a change, is given to politics, science, investments, etc. However, it is not stated which entities need to act: who or what needs to reduce emissions and limit warming? Vulnerable communities are mostly communicated as the victims or objects of this action, like nature, and not the ones pursuing to tackle the rising temperatures, rendering their knowledge and position to act less robust in the framework of capital, the global power relations and the narrative of development that has deemed it this way.

6.2.4 **Category (4):** Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices

One of the text’s most important characteristics is that the language, the vocabulary, grammar and structure are abstract. There is no “we”, no voice whatsoever, as passive voice is used

widely. This alienates the writer from the text but also the reader from what is said. It is a device to “neutralize” the tone, making it supposedly more objective, and thus, natural.

Language of a scientific report can be expected to be complex. However, in that complexity there is a sense of alienation from the real world as well. It is full of complex concepts but at the same time these are simplifications of the world, technical constructions of sort, enabling the management of nature (as argued in previous sections). The text is dense with nouns and nominalisations such as “ambitious mitigation actions” (24), “global greenhouse gas emissions” (12) or “unequal historical and ongoing contributions arising from unsustainable energy use” (12), which turn multilevel and intricate processes into rigid, already “figured out” entities: abstractions of the world around us. In addition to these, an important metaphor is the human-nature -dichotomy. All of these categorize the world and are shorthand expressions for ideas of how the world works.

The text also contains figurative expressions such as “rapidly closing window” (21), evoking mental images and ideas of urgency. There is also repetition, especially of the co-location of the words “deep, rapid and sustained” (18). “Unequivocally caused” (11) is a statement counteracting any arguments against it.

6.3 Summary of the key findings

To conclude the analysis, I have provided a table that organizes the key findings in a way that provides a clear reference point for the following sections and a broader discussion. Each entry emphasizes the dominant instances, and overarching themes present in the examples, which will be further explored in relation to the ideas and discourse of development and their implications for the negotiation and understanding of the environmental crisis.

Table 1. Summary of the main results.

	Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed.	Assumptions about natural relationships	Agents and their motives	Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices

Living Planet Report 2022 (WWF)	“We” as humans/people; Nature, Biodiversity (loss), Climate (change); Science; Technology	Development, e.g. technological advancement as a given solution; Cause-effect relationship between humans and nature but as separate entities; Humans as ‘guardians’ of nature	<i>Agents behind the problems:</i> Processes such as land-change and “human-induced” climate change; <i>Agents finding solutions:</i> “We” and abstract things, e.g. mapping techniques and scenarios <i>Motivation:</i> Our future is dependent on it; Biodiversity loss	Nominalizations; Objectifications/reifications; Metaphor of human/nature dichotomy; Pronoun “we”; Sense of urgency
AR6 Synthesis Report (IPCC)	Human activities (emissions, land-use, etc); Global warming; Human and Natural systems; Development; Mitigation and Adaptation	Developmental view on history; Nature external of human systems, (interacting but detached); The role of capital, financing and technology as the way out	<i>Agents:</i> Abstract things and processes; Lack of agency <i>Motivation:</i> to limit warming; to reduce losses and damages; to secure the future	Nominalizations; Objectifications; Abstract/analytical language: Human/nature and other dichotomies (metaphors)

To explain how these underlying “cultural-codes” are put to work (Stibbe 2014, 118), I will move on to discuss how they serve naturalisation: the means dominant ideologies are made to appear as “obvious truths about the world” (Stibbe 2015, 24). I wish to display how “[t]he language habits of the community influence our perception and experience” as they “predispose us toward certain choices of interpretation and action” (Chawla 2006, 254–255). If the environmental discourses narrated in these materials become understood in the framework of development, the quest for identifying the causes behind the crisis, communicating it to the wider public and approaching solutions, are confined in its own inner contradictions.

7 Discussion

In my analysis, I observed a significant absence of recognition regarding how "the history of environmental breakdown is the story of the making of the modern world" (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 41). This is among the most profound and problematic characteristics of the mainstream environmental discourses. The environmental crisis along with its solutions are being negotiated and understood through the same fragmented and obscured discourse that rests on the narrative of development.

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the many ways naturalization is realized in the texts amid the recognition of entities taking part in the crisis, the cause-effect relationships and the problems identified, and solutions offered. From there, I will continue charting the interactions between the environmental and development discourses as well as examining their reflections of one another.

7.1 Deconstructing the "natural"

An *ideology* benefits from *not* being viewed as an ideology, as something that adheres to the political, social and economic, being an evaluation, a perception of the world and how reality is or should be organized. As Fairclough (1989, 107) notes: "ideology is truly effective only when it is disguised". This happens by privileging and naturalizing some perceptions and practices at the expense of others as "when ideology becomes common sense, it apparently ceases to be an ideology" (ibid.). This "ideological effect" (ibid.) is necessary to justify a hegemonic system of power relations where one interpretation is deemed to be more salient and valid which again grounds the existence for the hegemony. Indeed, "explanations are better than others if they are more consistent with whatever evidence exists" (Fairclough 2010, 9) and therefore the established interpretation resonates in the system, making it seem like it's a natural development of things. Thus, by concealing power relations, naturalized ideologies validate the power regime to which the ideologies adhere.

The analysis of the documents from IPCC and WWF demonstrates naturalization through the contents and means of each of the four categories, manifested by different linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, reasoning patterns and silences; certain things are assumed, also often as universal. Attention is drawn towards specific understandings of history, the human-nature relationship and cause-effect patterns behind the crisis, while concealing power in 'the environmental' by assuming these judgements to be objective. The

scientific outlook of the texts is beneficial to this process as this register is often nominalized, constructing “a world of fixed, determinate, discrete and abstract objects” (Halliday [1990] 2006, 96). Indeed, some of the key metaphors in the texts are nominalizations which “can be a powerful device for erasure” (Stibbe 2015, 147). According to Fairclough (2010, 360) nominalization is “a shift from the representations of actions and processes situated in the ‘here and now’ [...] to an abstract representation of them”. By nominalization, processes become things (Alexander 2018, 201) and the attribution of causality and responsibility become concealed along with agency. This can also be seen as reification (ibid.) or objectification (Halliday and Martin 1993, 57) which results in that nature, as an entity, is understood through technological data reductions, a narrowed knowledge base. It allows nature to be something that can be “observed and measured, reasoned about, and brought to order” (Halliday [1990] 2006, 189), admitting “intervention from the outside” (Wolfgang 1999, 51). These ‘conventions’ erase traces of the world: not only the agents (human and non-human) but also nature itself from the texts, working against the ecosophy of this thesis.

Both texts employ nominalizations as entities and agents resulting in that agency is concealed in these abstracted processes that are deemed subjects causing the climate to change or are needed to battle against it, depriving the processes from temporal or spatial context (Goatly 1996, 553). For instance, “emissions”, “land-use change” and “production and consumption patterns” are some of the identified (at the same time unidentified) activities, functioning as agents and contributing to entities such as “global warming” and “the loss of species”. On one hand, there is an abundance of agency in the expression of “human activity” as it puts every human in one basket and points a finger at them. On the other hand, there is a deprivation of agency as it does not address the people who have control over most of production, resources, and capital, nor does it identify capitalist processes and corporate power, for instance, as the dominant fabric where the cause-effect patterns materialize, causing the emissions and the climate to change. In addition, by constructing first nominalized entities and then ascribing responsibility to them, for example by stating “human-caused climate change is affecting” or “human-induced climate change is threatening”, raises the question why the causes *behind* them are not named or communicated as a ‘threat’? If “agriculture” is presented as a ‘threat’, it undermines the diverse ways of cultivating land at once, under the umbrella term of “human activity”. Instead, ‘industrial agricultural production’ could be used to emphasize the role of fast and intensive food production. Furthermore, it is not clear what the “production and consumption patterns” are and why they exist as they do. As a result, what is left unvoiced as

well, is how some agents have more power than others and how this relates to the crisis. This misrepresentation constructs an image of unspecified activity being carried out by a homogenous group of people which frames the issue in a way that enables “the modern late capitalist system” to be “just ‘there’” (Alexander 2018, 201). This kind of acceptance prevents that the structure could be shown to have been created by anyone.

In the process of concealment of agency, along with the expression of causality and the attribution of responsibility, nominalization is effective (Fairclough 1992). However, this can also be done by another form of abstraction. “Impersonalisation” dehumanizes social actors by representing them more as elements of institutional processes than as people (Stibbe 2015). For instance, “financial flows” is an entity on its own, and the social actors, even if they were present somehow and articulated to have “control” over these, they would not be more than instruments in the system. Especially in the IPCC text, passive voice is employed throughout the text obscuring power and motivation. Thus, there is a sort of impersonalisation of the challenge itself. What is more, by using the word “humans” there is a certain universality implied, evoking a connotation of the “human species”, giving a “natural” sense to the activities, homogeneity assumed. This can be compared with the WWF’s usage of “we”, the most prominent entity to which agency is attributed in the text, however only when it came to problem-solving. “We” as a group is more exclusive, referring to us as “people”, as a society. It can be understood as including the writers, experts, analysts, etc. behind the report as it is argued that new technologies enable “us” to build scenarios and pictures of the environmental problems. However, as “we need systemwide changes”, the pronoun can also be associated with a more comprehensive group, including the reader, creating a feeling of solidarity, and functioning as a rhetorical device. Nonetheless, as with “human” it is unclear, who is included in this specific group of people, demonstrating a level of impersonalisation.

When it comes to solving the crisis, “limiting warming”, “halting biodiversity loss” and “achieving sustainable development” are prioritized and argued for in terms of “losses and damages” but also in the name of the future of the planet. Entities such as “global capital” and “financial flows” and “technology” are recognized as the solution, a natural cause-effect relationship assumed, not questioned. Especially financial systems are either constraining or enabling environmental solutions, particularly adaptation and mitigation actions. They are treated as independent forces as it is not stated what are the barriers or blockages. Agency is erased and their human-control made less apparent, adding to the idea of the naturalness of these forces of capital. This reinforces the development paradigm by accepting the

naturalness, validity and applicability of technological, financial and scientific solutions. Developed countries are implicitly endowed with qualification to lead in the process of solving the crisis as the “vulnerable”, “developing” countries are more the objects of assistance. This reveals yet another assumption of the natural cause-effect relationship of development, as well as capability and authority, yet implicitly, as it is not expressed in a straightforward manner, as if it was truly a natural relationship, as if development was something natural, equated to evolution (Halliday [1990] 2006).

One can conclude that these features render the texts so abstract that it can be difficult to access the environmental discourse. It could be argued that even the whole of the environmental crisis is abstract. Many people do not have comprehensive and concrete experiences or ideas what it means, and the communication works according to the systematic of the hegemony, the logic of development; that the way ahead means to continue working for the capital and transcending the obstacles nature sets on our path. While being aware that these ways of employing language are also an aid in expressing the complexity of the world, one cannot fully understand the crisis if it is awarded only fractions of the multitude of ways of knowing and being, represented as a determinate object, as something happening out there somewhere because of human actions. This transformation of the processes concerned as something that are “applicable regardless of time, place or people involved” (Fairclough 2010, 360), as well as the erasure of the rest of nature from our minds, language and surroundings, are linguistic phenomena that contribute to naturalization: if the world is more abstract, it is easier to manage and make certain things vanish from direct perception (Stibbe 2015). This again facilitates alienation which nominalization reproduces by rendering the natural world as something to calculate and map, enabling domination over it.

The alienation of humans from nature is not just a physical phenomenon but also a discursive one which is reproduced by the environmental discourses of WWF and IPCC. The perception of humans as an external entity not embedded in the ecosystems is embodied in the juxtaposition of “us, humans, people” against “nature”, or as Halliday ([1990] 2006, 195) suggests: “conscious versus nonconscious”. This organizes the understanding of the environmental crisis around an anthropological view of the world and history: humans acting on nature and nature playing a rather passive role but still argued to function as an entity that the future of the civilization depends on. Contrary to this, the entity of nature is at times communicated as a threat to be overcome. Again adding, however, to the idea of these entities acting upon one another, as separate entities. The idea that humans “manage”, “protect” or

“destroy” implies the superiority of human agency and capability. Similarly, IPCC’s “climate resilient development” suggests flexible development that will endure despite the natural environment. This human/nature dichotomy is pervasive and guides the discussion by reproducing the exertion of power over nature in the name of development. It is an assumption of a natural relationship and distorts the comprehension of the interactions between these entities.

Thus, it is in these assumptions of natural relationships between entities, in the ideas of how the crisis came to be and what are the solutions presented and argued for, as well as in the negotiation of agency and motivation where the ideologies become buried, and the crisis fathomed. In both texts, these specific representations of the issue are constructed around the human-nature dichotomy and embodied in abstractions and erasure of the natural world, human agency, specific processes along with accountability and motivation along with power. The role of these comprehensions of the world are left unquestioned.

Ostensibly deprived of the discussion of how the environmental crisis relates to the political and power, by a void in grammar, in discourse, and in the narrative, these ideologies are represented to have unquestionable validity in that they are made invisible. (Alexander 2018, 266)

As follows, the naturalized ideology comes to exist in the silences, in the blind spots where power is obscured, i.e. in the ways it is made to seem that it would be about anything else than power.

But who then has the right to the ‘right’ or ‘correct’ form of knowledge? Who has the means/power to access the discourse and steer the discussion on the environment? Both development discourse and environmental discourse are restricted in that sense: “like most of the stories, there are people and sources that are held within an acceptability that doesn’t alter this “truth” and the legitimacy of power relations and knowledge production” (van Dijk 1993, 8). Indeed, to validate its existence, it is useful for the western hegemony to embed its own understandings of the world in and between different discourses, to create its own narrative which consumes other discourses. In this case the discussion of the environmental crisis organizes itself around the narrative discussed in this section (e.g the interpretation of humans in relation to nature, the role of science, current hegemonic understanding of history and progress) which again justifies the existence of the dominant regime (hegemonic organizations, power relations) including development and how it has come about. From this,

we can conclude that development as an understanding of the natural being of things, as a sort of evolutive process, has not only justified the current world order but also the exploitation of nature (humans included). It can be expected that the environmental discourse is preconditioned to follow this form of reasoning.

7.2 Development in the environmental

In the IPCC's Headline Statements and WWF's Executive summary, the environmental and development discourses often overlap each other and are intertwined in many aspects. This is often explicit since development is argued for in the context of the environmental crisis and solving environmental challenges is seen as part of the development project. For example, in the IPCC and WWF documents, development is being argued as part of the solution in the form of "sustainable development" or "climate resilient development". However, development's role in the "harmful consumption and production patterns", which are addressed, is not challenged but rather this specific perception of progress is represented as natural. Consequently, the discourses also implicitly operate on the logic of development by:

Constructing the world as an unruly terrain requiring management and intervention; [...] their use (and abuse) of history, their modes of establishing expertise and authority and silencing alternative voices; on the forms of knowledge that development produces and assumes; and on the power relations it underwrites and reproduces. (Crush [1995] 2005, 3)

In addition to the usage of the word development itself and its derivatives, the analysis of the IPCC and WWF texts derives evidence of how the environmental discourse is a continuation of development ideology. For example, when adaptation and mitigation measures are deemed uniformly feasible and applicable, certain technological advancements and scientific knowledge are fostered as universal; universally required and desired. This attributes legitimacy to the western institutions as the provider. At the same time, the environmental texts both represent development thinking as they follow economically value laden narratives and financial reasoning hovering about them, directing the structuration of argumentation and defining the discussion on the environment. This is visible in the discourse when analysis for change is made in terms of loss and profit/gain, for instance. The economic system is at times acknowledged as a problem (that discussion is rather vague) but also offered as one of the main solutions (financing). By retaining and recirculating the ideas about progress and capital: "the system gives the capitalists motive, means and opportunity to savage the planet" (Frazer

2022, 84). This same oxymoron is present in the discussion that follows the logic of capitalism, giving meaning to all life in terms of value, materializing, as we can see now, through loss of life.

Both, development and environmental discourses, are understandings of the world sprung from a certain place and time. They offer us a ready-made way to relate to the world, to ourselves and to others: a means to understand the state of things. In development thinking history is seen as linear, moving towards a culmination of humanity and civilization, leaving behind, and excluding from this progress, the past, the ‘undeveloped’ forms of societies, and nature. To be human is to be developed, something outside of nature; echoes of which can be heard in the environmental texts analyzed. This way, the ‘developing’ countries are also closer to something that is linguistically framed as a source to be exploited, the other. As a result, the environmental discourse adheres to an underlying metanarrative claiming to be universal, to a story of humanity as a tale of human conquest over nature, exercised through reason and knowledge, a privileged viewpoint that becomes valid against that background, but the problems are not found here:

The historical conditions that would explain the ‘lead’ of some countries over others cannot enter into argument, since the ‘laws of development’ are supposedly the same for all, [...]not only does this bracket out the effects of conquest, colonization, the slave trade [...] it also presents the things as if the existence of industrial countries did not radically alter the context in which candidates for industrialization have to operate. (Rist 2002, 74-75).

As follows, the current negotiation of the environmental crisis is devoid of how civilization and the idea of development is based on the above. As Moore (2016, 82) argues, this is an easy story to convey as “it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity’s strategic relations of power and production.” From this follows that the underlying narrative that encloses both development and environmental discourses have similar assumptions of the world and history, and ideas of what will or should become. These conventional views are represented as value-free and add up to what can be called the dominant patterns of thought, the natural representation of which supports the hegemonic meaning-making. The ideas of nature-human relationship and progress in the form of development thinking feed off from each other and portray a technological, scientific take on nature. This affects the way nature is acted upon in the context of the environmental crisis.

If the conventional voices have the validity to decide what is deemed as attainable, desirable, objective, or the 'truth' about the world, it also means they have the authority to lead the vanguard, once more, in the 'battle against nature'. Thus, the surface where the solutions become meaningful is the context of the 'business-as-usual' activities which are regarded as harmful but not specified.

This is present in the IPCC and WWF discourses on the environment as they do not discuss the effects of these processes. The history of these conditions is erased, and the texts lack the explicit identification of the profound problems contributing to the crisis. Attention is diverted away from capital (as a problem), the historical contingencies and the power structures that allow the imagination of 'good life' be based on growth that organizes reality. It could be argued that it makes sense to design a discourse that fits the system but if 'funding' is argued for to tackle the challenges in a system that gravitates towards the most profitable, those solutions will never make sense because there is always something superseding the interests that materialize in that exact system. The fragmented knowledge resulting from these beliefs and thought patterns is manifested in an abstract, noncommittal language that tries to evade responsibility or avoid certain questions/facts. This non-holistic view of the world allows humans to be placed in the centre. In this context, the question of *who* benefits from defining the cause-effects of the crisis, is important. Not questioning this allows, again, *some* humans to be in the dominant position (Chawla 1991). That is why the base of the conversation and thinking needs to change, leading to a change in action, and vice versa.

To conclude, I wish to add that my aim is not to say that environmental problems should not be addressed but the means must transcend the conventional thinking of development (in its current form) as the natural path, i.e. the discourse's own presuppositions about the world that have caused damage in the first place. In addition, it is not to say that humans could not define their identity as something different than other species, for instance, but what is needed is equality in difference since that identity cannot rest on exploitation. Also, technology can expand our observations of the world, but the current valuing and application of that knowledge does not match the level and complexity needed to understand the crisis, leaving many experiences at the margins. The myth of development and the question of power need to be addressed as part of the story of environmental degradation in order to deconstruct the exploitative structures and to give recognition to other voices and perspectives. From there we can build a path forward.

8 Conclusion

In an information society, different mediums of communication have increasingly become the space where the environmental crisis is negotiated in and reacted upon. It is a space where the narratives of our time gain adherence, rendering “the discursive construction of reality [...] an important realm of power” (Hajer 1997, 21). However, the mainstream narrative of the environmental crisis, circulated by the media and widely applied in international organizations such as the WWF or the IPCC, does not adequately address the structural problems behind the degradation of nature, including humans. Instead, it can be seen not only to recirculate the ideas of development but also reproducing this interpretation of reality.

The current hegemonic development model, forged in the name of capital, bears understandings of historical processes and shapes reality by pursuing modernity and universality as a rule of history. The power of it lies in what it is used to achieve and the logic this interpretation follows. The idea of the hegemonic order as ‘natural’ delegitimizes other modes of living. What lies beyond the capitalist frontier is not seen as valuable on its own, but in relation to how it can benefit the capitalist development. By naturalizing the advantaged view of the history of civilization, the development narrative preserves certain identities while erasing others; by justifying interventions and exploitations in the name of progress, we justify our own existence. As a result, development can also be referred to as a myth (Karagiannis 2004; Rist 2002; Sachs 1992 and 1999; among others) and “one of the main goals of myth [is] to direct future actions by justifying the present through naturalization of the past” (Spurgeon 2005, 145). By the naturalization of this perception, power dynamics have become embedded in societal norms and behaviours. Indeed, power is most effective when it persuades individuals to believe that their desires align with the objectives of those in control. The foreshadowed liberation becomes relative, and the concept of freedom preconditioned.

Environmental discourse has not only become a continuation or a reflection of development thinking but it is now part of the great narrative of development, framed so that it fits the story, to make it useful for justifying development, obstructing the discussion on the search for solutions, and reflecting the contradiction within the capitalist society seeking infinite growth. It is one of the governing genres within which the environmental discourse materializes, and which at the same time ultimately fails to represent the environmental crisis by promoting a discussion on the environment deprived of the inconvenient truths of

“imperial expansion, extractive capitalism and modern colonialism” (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 31–32). Consequently, addressing the environmental crisis from a “capitalogenic” perspective (Moore 2016), for instance, instead of the anthropogenic (human-centered) view, is not only justifiable, but a requirement to make visible how the complex interactions and processes of all the levels and dimensions of our society have organized, one way or another, around capital which reproduces a cycle feeding off of itself until there is no more.

What I found in my analysis, confirms this proposition. In both texts, that of IPCC and WWF, the environmental crisis discourse works for and under the narrative of development. It becomes materialized within the same power structures, the same hegemonic understandings of the world. This is carried out by reproducing certain lines of argument and camouflaging others. Ideologies are made invisible, rendered common sense and thus development and all that comes with it, is represented as natural. This is done with the aid linguistic tools that form the four categories derived from the texts. The discourses of technology and science reinvent nature as a tool for development and operate on knowledges deemed more legitimate or valuable than others. These further assert nature as something outside human society, existing to be measured and observed, and to validate a history of progress. What is more, both texts leave a void in agency. This again leads to a void in the discourse as motives, interests and processes behind the abstract nominalizations leave something out of the equation, in addition to not explicitly addressing the underlying problematic of the environmental/development discussion, facilitating naturalization. It can be concluded that amid an information society and so many voices, the silence is loud.

The ecological crisis is presented in such a way that is meaningful to the structures, and in a way which serves the interests of the few. The sustainable development argument transforms the ‘business-as-usual’ discourse, the same reasoning patterns used to privilege the objective of growth, presumably to the benefit of the environment. The development thinking is reproduced and rendered plausible once again. The crisis is thus encrypted in how we manage it, how we speak about it. It can be found in the silences and in the cloaked ideologies that shape the negotiation of how the crisis of environment came to be and how it should be solved which is often explained using the language of the western capitalist hegemony. We reproduce it but are unable or unwilling to discuss the problem, at least in a satisfactory manner. It is like a code, we understand the problem through certain conventions, manières, and discourses, but we are unable to attach ourselves from it, as the code is where the problem

lies, where the problem comes into existence and in which it is reproduced. This expansion of development thinking reproduces the socio-economic structures of our time and builds itself on the ‘naturalness’ of the ideologies that operate as the metanarrative which cuts through and transcends the environmental discourse, guiding future ideas and policies: “Institutions will continue to re/produce the world as seen by those who rule it” (Escobar 1996, 340). To deconstruct the code, we need to ask who at the present time is given the right to interpret history, value and devalue identities and forms of living, and why?

One of the aims of this thesis was to reveal how development thinking is not about a natural state of things. It is political, about power, about profit, which makes environmental discourse also about power. The naturalization of things and “erasing histories of environmental exploitation interwoven with human suffering” (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021, 32) is something that aims to conceal these driving forces behind environmental degradation. I have strived to illustrate how this contradiction of growth-oriented development and the ideologies underlying it, are present, yet obscured or affirmed by silence, in the discussion surrounding the environmental issues. Limiting our vision and reproducing the conventional story of how we got here, the knowledge of the West, resting on reason and the promise of modernity, is violent in its means of decreasing nature and people into quantifiable resources, defining the meaning of life itself, and implementing solutions, which for many are externally imposed and asserted from above. We need to identify and shine light to the exploitative processes that maintain this mentality and are “too often expunged from mainstream narratives of climate and other environmental breakdown, limiting our understanding of the deeper drivers of ecological destruction” (Lawrence & Laybourn-Langton 2021, 41).

So, what next? We need structural changes to alter the mental and material spaces of policymaking and interpretation to find alternative ways for imagining reality and to create new spaces for a multitude of voices and ideas, in order to make the problems and solutions become visible in a meaningful way. Stibbe (2015) suggests writing language back to the land. This might include new vocabulary since to create the issue we need the discourse (Durkheim 1982 in Rist 1997, 28). There are already theories of ‘degrowth’ or words such as ‘overdevelopment’ which try to convey and shape “new narratives of life and culture” (Escobar 1996, 341), and to display “alternative rationalities” (Escobar 1996, 340). The *Post-Development Dictionary* (Kothari et al. 2019) is an exemplary attempt to fashion a “multiverse”. It includes over hundred essays on alternatives to the global development. These new discourses can offer more holistic approaches to the crisis, acknowledging not

only the interconnectedness of the different challenges of our time but also the multidimensional nature and diversity of experiencing, feeling and doing, for a more meaningful ways of relating to the world, ourselves and each other. This is something where linguistics in general and ecolinguistics specifically have an important role to play and further studies are needed to truly transcend the conventional ways of thinking that rely much on the historical understanding of the West and development. This way we could “remake our place in nature in a way that promises emancipation for all life” (Moore 2016, 114), a more inclusive history could be written, and other forms of civilization given recognition. As a result, the environmental discourse could communicate responses that center around life, the worth of which not conditioned by capital, creating another kind of welfare, and that for the many instead of the few. To create new imaginations of ‘good life’, is to decode the naturalized ideologies and the opposition of humans and nature, and spark truly sustainable responses for the future. The endeavor of this thesis has been to take a step in that direction.

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Appendices

Here you can find the Finnish abridgement of this thesis. In the summary, I will give an overview of the thesis' topic and aim, materials and methods, as well as the main findings and conclusions.

Appendix 1 Suomenkielinen lyhennelmä

1. Johdanto

Ympäröivä todellisuus saa merkityksensä kielessä; kielen rakenteet ja käyttötavat eivät ainoastaan heijasta käsitystä siitä, miten asiat ovat, vaan sen kautta myös navigoimme omaa suhdettamme esimerkiksi ympäristöön ja toisiimme sekä sanoitamme oman olemassaolomme, luoden näin osaltamme todellisuutta. Kielen avulla voidaan näin tukea ja oikeuttaa tiettyjä tulkintoja todellisuudesta ja samalla kyseenalaistaa niitä, jotka eivät tue vallitsevaa käsitystä, jossa tietyt valtarakenteet materialisoituvat. Tapa, jolla kieli järjestyy kuvaamaan tiettyä maailman tulkintaa, tunnetaan diskurssina. Diskurssin avulla jaettu tulkinta voidaan valjastaa palvelemaan vallitsevia valtarakenteita. Näin siitä muotoutuu myös vallan väline. (Dryzek 2022; Stibbe 2015)

Nykyään kokemuksemme ympäristön muutoksista ja luonnon tilan heikkenemisestä on etääntynyt arkitodellisuudestamme. Länsimaiset yhteiskunnat perustuvat pitkälti luonnosta eriytymiseen, mikä on johtanut siihen, että ympäristöongelmien ymmärtäminen nojaa yhä enemmän välilliseen tietoon: mediaan, viestintäkanaviin ja intellektuaaliseen analyysiin (Escobar 1996). Tämä tekee kokemuksistamme riippuvaisia tiedosta, joka on usein suodatettu kulttuuristen ja poliittisten linssien läpi. Näin ollen se, miten ympäristökriisistä puhutaan ja millaisiin diskursseihin se kietoutuu, on ratkaisevaa, sillä kielellä ei vain kuvata ympäristökriisiä, vaan rakennetaan sitä osana sosiaalista ja poliittista todellisuutta (Hajer 1997). Ympäristökeskustelun viitekehystä ja ehtoja onkin tarkasteltava kriittisesti: on tutkittava, miten ympäristökriisi rakentuu ja muovautuu tiettyjen käsitysten pohjalta, ja millä tavalla diskurssit saattavat jopa ylläpitää ongelmia, joita ne pyrkivät ratkaisemaan.

Nykyisessä ympäristökeskustelussa 'kehitys' – olipa kyseessä sitten 'kestävä kehitys' tai ympäristöongelmien suhde muihin kehityskysymyksiin – on usein keskeinen osa argumentointia ja mukana määrittelemässä ympäristöongelmien syy-seuraussuhteita sekä ratkaisumalleja. Harvoin kuitenkaan kehitysjattelua, tätä läntistä käsitystä edistyksestä ja

”hyvästä elämästä” (Stibbe 2014, 125), nostetaan esiin ongelmana; harvoin käsitellään sitä, miten tämä tulkinta todellisuudesta ylläpitää yhteiskunnallisia, poliittisia, kulttuurisia, sosiaalisia ja taloudellisia rakenteita, jotka sekä aiheuttavat että oikeuttavat luonnon – ihmiset mukaan lukien – hyväksikäytön ja rappeutumisen (Crush [1995] 2005; Escobar 1995; Rist 2002; Sachs 1999). Modernin yhteiskunnan rakentaminen on samalla myös ympäristökriisin historiaa, mutta tätä aihetta ei juuri käsitellä julkisessa keskustelussa, ainakaan merkityksellisellä tai tarpeellisella tavalla (Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021). Ne ideat ja käsitykset, jotka arvottavat ihmisenä olemisen, yhteiskunnan järjestämisen ja historian suunnan, tulisi kyseenalaistaa itsestäänselvyyksinä ja purkaa osana näihin rakenteisiin pohjautuvia todellisuuskäsityksiä. Kieli toimii tässä avaimena.

Tutkielmassani tarkastelen, miten kehitysajattelu ja siihen liittyvät hegemoniset käsitykset ovat läsnä ympäristödiskurssissa ja miten tämä keskustelu voidaan nähdä toimivan jatkeena ideologioille, jotka ovat pitkään hallinneet ihmisen ja luonnon välistä suhdetta. Nämä kehitysideologiat, jotka korostavat taloudellista kasvua ja jatkuvaa edistystä näyttäytyvät itsestään selvinä, aivan kuin ne olisivat olemassa ajasta ja paikasta riippumattomina, vailla ideologisia sidonnaisuuksia, rajoittaen ympäristöongelmien syiden ja seurausten monipuolista ymmärtämistä (Stibbe 2015; Wall 1999). Siksi on olennaista tarkastella valtavirran ympäristödiskurssia ja tunnistaa sen kehitysnarratiivia ilmentävät piilooletukset tuomalla esiin kielelliset keinot, joilla hämärretään ympäristökriisin syvempiä voimia luonnollistamalla kehitysajattelua ja siihen liittyvät käsityksiä (eng. *naturalization*). Näin voimme tehdä näkyviksi aikamme kriisien taustalla vaikuttavat perimmäiset prosessit ja avata tilaa vaihtoehtoisille tulkinnoille historiasta ja nykyhetkestä sekä mahdollistaa uudenlaisten ratkaisumallien muotoutumisen. Tämän tutkielman avulla pyrin juuri tähän.

Tutkin missä määrin nykyinen ympäristödiskurssi heijastaa ja ylläpitää länsimaista kehitysajattelua, ja miten tämä suhde muovaa keskustelua ympäristöongelmien syistä ja ratkaisuista. Mitä ongelmia tunnistetaan, millaisia ratkaisuja tarjotaan, ja mitä jätetään huomiotta? Miten luonnollistetut kehitysideologiat ovat läsnä ympäristödiskurssissa, ja miten ne naamioidaan diskursiivisesti siten, että niiden ideologiset ja historialliset juuret jäävät piiloon? Näiden kysymysten kautta pyrin tarjoamaan vaihtoehtoisen näkökulman ympäristökriisiin ja sen juurisyihin, sekä syventämään ymmärrystä kulttuuristen narratiivien, ympäristöongelmien ja sosiaalisten rakenteiden vuorovaikutuksesta. Tavoitteena on edistää ajattelutapoja ja ratkaisuja, jotka haastavat vallitsevat kehitysajattelun ideologiat ja mahdollistavat ihmisen näkemisen erottomattomana osana ekosysteemiä.

2. Kehitys, kapitalismi ja ympäristö

Nykyinen kehitysajattelu ja -diskurssi juontaa juurensa 1950-luvulle toisen maailmansodan jälkeiseen maailmaan ja kontekstiin, jossa Yhdysvaltojen valta-asema lujittui, vallan tasapaino muuttui, sekä Euroopan kansallisvaltioiden rakenne ja rooli kansainvälisissä suhteissa rakentui uudelleen (Rist 2002; Sachs 1999). Tätä uudenlaista poliittista ja taloudellista kenttää haastoivat itsenäistyvät siirtomaat sekä Neuvostoliitto, joita vasten länsi uudelleen määrittämyös itseään. Vuonna 1949 Yhdysvaltojen presidentti Harry S. Truman julisti yhteiskuntien kehityksen eli taloudellisen, poliittisen ja sosiaalisen edistyksen maailmanlaajuiseksi ”projektiksi”, jossa länsi, eritoten Yhdysvallat, toimisivat esimerkkeinä ”kehittyneestä” yhteiskuntamallista ja johon muiden maiden tulisi pyrkiä. Näin saneltiin, millainen on ”onnistunut yhteiskunta”. Määritelmä, jonka ulkopuolelle monet kolmannen maailman valtiot jäivät ja joiden ”alikehittyneisyys” määriteltiin ulkopuolelta. Toisin sanoen erilaiset tavat elää ja suhtautua maailmaan peilautuivat lännen ”hyvän elämän” käsitystä vasten. Tämä merkitsi myös historian uudelleentulkintaa, joka oli eurosentrisen ja ihmiskeskeisen näkökulman värittämää, ja loi oletuksen universaalista tavasta järjestää sosiaalinen todellisuus sekä luonnollisesta tulkinnasta, mitä tarkoittaa sivilisaatio. (Rist 2002; Sachs 1999; Stibbe 2015)

Vaikka kehityksellä on monia tulkintoja ja määritelmiä, tämän ”mentaalisen kolonisaation” (Sachs 1999) ytimessä voidaan sanoa olevan länsimainen tarina siitä, mitä tarkoittaa olla ihminen, mitä on hyvä elämä ja miten siihen on päästy. Toisin sanoen historian uudelleen määrittäminen, mikä on osaltaan vaikuttanut siihen, miten näemme itsemme, toisemme ja maailman, ja kuinka maailmanjärjestelmä materialisoituu. Se nähdään universaalina päämääränä, jonka varjolla länsimaat ovat oikeuttaneet interventiot muihin maihin (Crush [1995] 2005). Kuten sanottu, kehitys on vallan mekanismi, tullen oikeutetuksi nykyisen hegemonian kontekstissa ja ylläpidetyksi nykyisten valtarakenteiden toimesta, uusintaen rakenteita, jotka ovat koko ‘modernin’ historian ajan hyväksikäyttäneet sekä luontoa että ihmisiä modernisaation nimissä. Se, miten joidenkin maiden ‘kehittymättömyys’ tulkitaan ikään kuin luonnollisen historian jatkumoksi, oikeuttaa tiedon ja päätöksenteon keskittämisen ‘kehittyneille maille’, jotka perustavat kykynsä ja oikeutuksensa esimerkiksi ympäristökeskustelussa juuri tähän tarinaan.

Kehitys nykyisen kapitalistisen valta-aseman kontekstissa ymmärretään ennen kaikkea talouskasvuna. Se ei kuitenkaan ole on ankkuroitu läntiseen yhteiskuntaan ainoastaan tätä kautta, vaan myös valistuksen, teollisen vallankumouksen sekä esimerkiksi imperialismin

perinnön kautta (Sachs 1999; Rist 2002). Nykyisen kapitalismin juuret voidaan Mooren (2016) mukaan nähdä ulottuvan löytöretkien aikaan ja kolonisaation alkuun 1400-luvulle, jolloin ensimmäinen suurimittainen ympäristön ja luonnon hyväksikäyttö sai alkunsa eurooppalaisten kolonisaatioprosessien aikana. Ihmiset ovat aina vaikuttaneet ympäristöönsä, mutta varhaiskapitalistinen järjestelmä toi mukanaan jotain ennenkokematonta: perustavanlaatuisen muutoksen ihmisen ja luonnon suhteessa. Luonto sekä läntisen sivilisaation ulkopuolelle jäivät ihmisryhmät jäsentyivät resursseiksi, joiden arvo määrittyi niiden potentiaalin kautta tuottaa pääomaa. Tämä käsitys, jossa luonto nähtiin ulkopuolisena, hyödynnettävänä resurssina, ja ihmisen toiminta arvottui suhteessa, oikeutti näiden entiteettien hyväksikäytön, mahdollistaen kapitalistisen järjestelmän synnyn (Moore 2016). Luonnosta muotoutui kohde, jota voitaisiin kartoittaa, mitata ja arvioida varakkuuden kartuttamisen sekä omistamisen näkökulmista. Varhaiskapitalismi ei ainoastaan määrittänyt uudelleen ympäristöä ja ihmistä, vaan se loi myös uudenlaisen maailmanjärjestyksen, jossa yhteiskuntia arvioitiin niiden taloudellisen tuottavuuden perusteella. Luonnon ja ihmisten riisto muotoutui keinoksi, jolla länsimaiset imperiumit laajensivat markkinoitaan, tuotantoaan ja vaikutusvaltaansa niin politiikan, kulttuurin kuin sosiaalisten rakenteiden saralla.

Nykyajan uusliberalistisessa kapitalismissa valtioiden vaikutusvalta on vähentynyt, ja globaalit markkinavoimat, rahoitusinstitutioidet ja yksittäiset yritykset määrittävät ympäristökeskustelua ja yhteiskunnallisia suuntaviivoja (Pieterse 2001). Kapitalismi ei jäsennä ainoastaan taloutta, vaan toimii tarttumispintana myös kulttuurin ja arjen prosesseissa, mikä on johtanut kaiken elämän, mielen sekä kehon, resurssien hyödyntämiseen yhä tiukemmin voitontavoittelun ja talouskasvun ehdoilla (Moore 2016; Lawrence and Laybourn-Langton 2021). Tämä logiikka on kiinteästi sidoksissa ympäristökriisin syntyyn ja kehitysjätkelyyn, minkä vuoksi sen haastaminen on olennaista kestävän tulevaisuuden rakentamisessa.

3. Tieteellinen viitekehys

Tämän tutkielman lähestymistapa niin todellisuuteen kuin tutkimukseen perustuu siihen, että ihmiset eivät ole vain osa luonnon monimuotoista ekosysteemiä, vaan että jokainen elävä olento on toisiinsa yhteydessä. Toisin sanoen ihminen ja luonto eivät vain ole vuorovaikutuksessa vaan kietoutuneina toisiinsa. Kieli on olennainen osa tätä ekologiaa ja ilmentää kokemustamme ja sanoittaa näkemystä ympäristöstämme, samalla luoden merkityksiä ja alati muovautuen osana ympäristöä (Döring and Zunino 2014). Diskurssi on

näin ollen materiaallinen voima ympäristöhaasteiden edessä ja merkityksellinen sen ratkaisemisessa. Ekolinguistiikka, tämän tutkielman tieteellinen kehys, perustuu yllä olevaan ajatukseen siitä, miten kieltä analysoiden voimme paljastaa kestävämmät narratiivit, jotka pitävät yllä haitallisia ideologioita, sekä oikeuttavat ja mahdollistavat ympäristön riiston, mutta joita kuitenkin harvoin tuodaan esiin osana ympäristökeskustelua.

Ympäristö käsitteenä alkoi muodostua 1960-luvulla, kun ympäristöongelmat nousivat entistä enemmän esiin sekä ympäristöliike vahvistui. Samoihin aikoihin ekolinguistiikka sai tutkimusalana alkunsa, kun niin akateemisessa maailmassa, kuin myös laajemmin yhteiskunnan eri elämän alueilla, tapahtui ekologinen käänne (Fill 2017; Stibbe 2015). Tämä kielitieteen haara on vuosien varrella nähnyt monta menetelmää tutkimuksen tekemiseen. Siihen on lukeutunut esimerkiksi ekologisen monipuolisuuden ja kielellisen diversiteetin välisen suhteen tutkimusta sekä kielen ja ympäröivän fyysisen ympäristön vuorovaikutuksen tarkastelua. Yksi viimeaikaisista suuntauksista, johon myös tämän tutkielman lähestymistapa lukeutuu, pyrkii paljastamaan ideologioita, jotka ovat ristiriidassa ekologisesti tai ympäristöllisesti kestävien periaatteiden kanssa (Alexander 2018). Mitä kaikki ekolinguistiikan suuntaukset kuitenkin tarjoavat, on ekologiseen filosofiaan perustuvan heijastuspinnan kielen tutkimukseen. Tämän tutkimuksen lähestymistapa (ecosophy) perustuu holistiseen näkökulmaan ja ekologiseen harmoniaan. Tähän lukeutuu ajatus siitä, että kieli on osa elollisten olentojen välistä yhteyttä. Näin diskurssi näyttäytyy materiaalisena voimana ekologisen kriisin keskellä, joten kestävyydelle haitallisten narratiivien purkaminen on keskeistä. Tähän tarkoitukseen ekolinguistiikka on toimiva ja hedelmällinen metodologisenä viitekehyksenä.

Ekolinguistiikan teoreettisen näkökulman lisäksi hyödynnän tutkielmassani kriittisen diskurssianalyysin työkaluja. Tämä soveltavan kielitieteen haara tutkii diskurssin ja vallan välistä suhdetta. Sen päämääränä on valottaa ja purkaa niitä diskursseja, joiden avulla ylläpidetään epätasa-arvoisia valtasuhteita ja luonnollistettuja ideologioita (Fairclough 2010; van Dijk 1993). Stibbe (2014) ehdottaa kriittisen diskurssianalyysin tekemistä ekolinguistisen viitekehyksen sisällä, keskittyen ekologiseen näkökulmaan. Hyödynnän tässä tutkimuksessa kyseistä tietoperustaa analysoimalla diskurssin, luonnon ja vallan vuorovaikutuksia yllä mainitsemaani (ecosophy) taustaa vasten.

Niin kriittisen diskurssianalyysin kuin ekolinguistiikan kritiikki liittyy usein diskurssin käsitteen epämääräisyyteen, menetelmien puutteeseen ja riskiin tulkita dataa poliittisen

näkökulman kautta, mikä voi johtaa vinoutuneeseen analyysiin. Ekolinguistiikan teoreettinen pohja ei ole vielä yhtä kehittynyt kuin kriittisen diskurssianalyysin, mikä voi myös osaltaan lisätä tutkimuksen haasteita (Stibbe 2015). On kuitenkin kyseenalaistettava, onko mikään tutkimus mahdollista ilman ennako-oletuksia ja voiko täysin neutraalia tietoa ylipäättään tuottaa (Wodak and Meyer 2001). Analyysiä ei siis voi tehdä erillään kontekstista, joten tutkijan on oltava avoin omista lähtökohdistaan. Tämän tutkielman tavoite ja näkökulma on määritelty ja ne on huomioitava analyysin tulokinnassa.

4. Materiaalit

Nykyiseen ympäristökeskusteluun mahtuu monia muotoja, ulottuvuuksia sekä näkökulmia, jotka ovat muovautuneet yhä uudelleen vuosikymmenien varrella. Lähivuosina keskustelun aiheet ovat keskittyneet muun muassa uhanalaisten lajien suojelun, ilmaston lämpenemisen sekä saasteiden ympärille. Ympäristönsuojelu ja vihreä liike, sen sijaan että olisivat enää vain tietyn ryhmän edustamaa toimintaa, ovat levinneet kaikkiin yhteiskunnan tasoihin ja ekologista näkökulmaa sovelletaan monien eri funktioiden ja motivaatioiden värittämänä (Alexander 2018). Tässä tutkielmassa, käsitteellä ympäristödiskurssi, viitataan keskusteluun, joka keskittyy ympäristöongelmien kartoittamiseen, selittämiseen ja ratkaisemiseen, sekä ympäristökriisiin itsessään, sen syihin ja seurauksiin. Kyseinen diskurssi usein läpäisee poliittisen, taloudellisen sekä sosiaalisen ulottuvuuden, sekä on laajassa levityksessä länsimaisten instituutioiden ja median toimesta. Näin ollen sen vaikutus ymmärrykseemme luonnon tilan heikkenemisestä ja ympäristökonfliktista, on merkittävä.

Tutkimuksessa analysoin kahta dokumenttia, jotka ovat esimerkkejä pinnalla olevasta ympäristökeskustelusta. Ensimmäinen niistä on luonnonsuojelujärjestö World Wildlife Fundin *Living Planet Report* (2022), josta tarkastelen ”Executive Summary” – tiivistelmää. Kyseisessä raportissa keskitytään ilmastonmuutokseen, luonnon monimuotoisuuteen sekä näiden kahden vuorovaikutukseen. Se kattaa myös argumentoinnin siitä, mistä ympäristöongelmat juontavat juurensa ja mitä asialle pitäisi tehdä. Toinen tarkasteltava dokumentti on YK:n alaisen Ilmastopaneelin (IPCC) *AR6 Synthesis Report 2023* -raportin ”Headline Statements”. Nämä lausumat käsittävät ilmastonmuutoksen tämänhetkisen tilan, tulevaisuuteen liittyviä arvioita ja riskejä, sekä tarvittavia toimia. Molemmat raportit, joihin tarkasteltavat tiivistelmät ja päälausumat perustuvat, ovat niin sanottuja ’lippulaivajulkaisuja’, jotka kattavat monia ympäristökriisin teemoja sekä vaikuttavat julkiseen keskusteluun ja päätöksentekoon. Niiden tuottaman tiedon legitimiteetti perustuu tieteellisiin periaatteisiin,

ympäristöarvoihin sekä instituutioiden suureen kokoon ja resursseihin. Teksteissä käytetään englanninkielistä, länsimaisen todellisuuden jäsentämistä tukevan diskurssin kieltä, mikä vahvistaa osaltaan tämän tiedon asemaa.

WWF edustaa kansalaisjärjestöä ja IPCC hallitustenvälistä organisaatiota, mikä mahdollistaa erilaisten tekstien vertailun siinä määrin onko kehitysajattelu samalla tavalla tai samassa mittakaavassa läsnä. Tiivistelmät valitsin tutkielman rajallisuuden takia, mutta ne tuovat myös mielenkiintoisen näkökulman, sillä niihin on sisällytetty raporttien ‘pääasiat’, mikä kertoo mikä nähdään merkittävänä ja viestimisen arvoisena. Tämä usein siis tapahtuu jonkun muun asian kustannuksella. Voidaan myös olettaa, että tiivistelmät ovat esteettömämpiä ja jotka ihmiset valitsevat ensisijaisesti luettavaksi pitempien raporttien sijasta. Raportit ilmentävät myös aikamme keskeistä ympäristödiskurssia, jossa korostuu tieteellisen asiantuntijuuden ja länsimaisen ajattelun rooli ympäristöhaasteiden määrittelyssä ja ratkaisujen esittämisessä. Niissä voidaan myös nähdä heijastuvan oletuksia ihmisen ja luonnon suhteesta sekä yhteiskunnan ja valtarakenteiden järjestäytymisestä.

5. Metodi

Tutkimuksen metodologinen kehys on kvalitatiivinen ja perustuu ekolinguistiikan sekä ekologisen diskurssianalyysin periaatteisiin (Stibbe 2015). Lähestyn materiaaleja ajatuksella, että kielellä on todellisia vaikutuksia maailmaan: sanat konkretisoituvat tavalla, joka rakentaa todellisuutta sen sijaan, että ne vain kuvailisivat sitä. Tähän liittyen pyrin erottelemaan näille teksteille ominaiset mekanismit hyödyntäen Dryzeekin (2022) tunnistamia neljää kategoriaa ympäristödiskurssien analysoimiseksi:

- Perusentiteetit (eng. *Basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed*):
- Luonnollisina pidetyt suhteet (eng. *Assumed natural relationships*)
- Toimijat ja heidän motiivinsa (eng. *Agents and their motives*)
- Keskeiset metaforat ja muut retoriset keinot (eng. *Key metaphors and other rhetorical devices*)

Erotellakseni kyseiset kategoriat tekstistä, keskityn analyysissä kielellisiin ryhmittymiin ja argumentointirakenteisiin, jotka luovat keskustelua siitä, mitä asioita käsitellään, miksi ne esitetään tärkeinä ja miten tätä perustellaan; ja jotka voivat valottaa argumentoinnin osia, jotka uudelleen tuottavat ympäristön kannalta haitallisia ajatusrakenteita. Kiinnitän huomiota

esimerkiksi siihen, missä määrin tietyt toimijat tai tapahtumat esitetään aktiivisina tai passiivisina tai jätetäänkö jotkut toimijat tai syy-seuraussuhteet tarkoituksellisesti varjoon. Keskityn erityisesti mitä sanotaan rivien välissä: luonnollistamisen strategioihin, eli tapoihin, joilla ympäristökriisistä käytetty kieli toimii häivyttää vastuullisia toimijoita ja elollisuuden näkökulman, mikä taas vaikeuttaa todellisuuden hahmottamista ja edistää ympäristön heikentymistä – ei vain luonnon poistamisena taloustieteen oppikirjoista ja ympäristöraporteista, vaan myös ihmisten ja sosiaalisten kysymysten syrjäyttämisenä näissä teksteissä. Tämä voi tarkoittaa, että ympäristön heikentyminen ja hyväksikäyttö näyttäytyvät luonnollisena osana kehitystä ja kasvua, eikä näitä vaikutuksia kyseenalaisteta riittävästi.

Tämän ekokriittisen diskurssianalyysin avulla pyrin purkamaan kehityksen narratiiveja ja haastamaan perinteiset ajatusmallit, jotka tukevat nykyistä hegemoniaa sekä ylläpitävät ympäristön ja elollisuuden kannalta tuhoisia prosesseja.

6. Keskeisimmät tulokset ja johtopäätökset

Ideologiat hyötyvät siitä, ettei niitä nähdä ideologioina, vaan pikemminkin neutraaleina ja itsestään selvinä käsityksinä siitä, millainen maailma on tai kuinka yhteiskunnat tulisi järjestetää poliittisesti, sosiaalisesti tai taloudellisesti. Kuten Fairclough (2010) toteaa, ideologia on tehokas vasta silloin, kun se vaikuttaa niin sanotusti 'maalaisjärjeltä' ja lakkaa olemasta ideologia, muuttuen hyväksytyksi totuudeksi. Tämä on olennaista hegemonisten valtasuhteiden oikeuttamiseksi – tietty tulkinta nähdään yleisesti pätevimpänä, ja sen katsotaan luonnollisesti oikeuttavan vallitsevan vallan ja järjestyksen.

IPCC ja WWF asiakirjojen tarkastelu osoittaa, kuinka tämä luonnollistaminen ilmenee kielen eri tasoilla ja voidaan tuoda näkyviin analysoitujen kategorioiden avulla. Eri kielelliset piirteet, kuten sanasto, kieliopilliset rakenteet, argumentointimallit ja hiljaisuudet, rakentavat käsitystä siitä, että tietyt asiat olisivat universaaleja totuuksia. Näin ollen dokumentit suuntaavat huomion tiettyihin historian, ihmisen ja luonnon välisen suhteen sekä kriisin taustalla olevien syy-seuraussuhteiden käsityksiin. Samalla ne häivyttävät vallan osana ympäristön ongelmia ja esittävät nämä tulkinnat ympäristökriisistä objektiivisina.

Nominalisointi, jossa toiminnasta, prosessista tai ilmiöstä tulee muuttumaton 'asia', toimii teksteissä tehokkaana kätkemisen välineenä. Prosessit sellaisten asioiden taustalla, kuten "päästöt", "maankäytön muutos" ja "kulutusmallit", muuttuvat abstrakteiksi ilman tarkempaa toimijaa, mikä johtaa käsitykseen siitä, että ihmisen toiminta kollektiivisesti olisi vastuussa

ympäristökriisistä ja toisaalta estävät kysymyksen siitä, miksi ja miten nykyiset kulutus- ja tuotantomallit ovat syntyneet. Tämä jättää epäselväksi, ketkä ovat vastuussa ja kuka hyötyy nykyisestä järjestelmästä, vaimentaen ympäristön heikkenemisen taustalla toimivien suurten toimijoiden, kuten yritysten ja kapitalististen prosessien, merkitystä. Näin syntyy kuva, jossa ongelma tuntuu olevan olemassa itsenäisesti, ilman sen taustalla vaikuttavia valtarakenteita. Tämä lähestymistapa mahdollistaa kapitalismin kuvaamisen luonnollisena, itsestään olemassa olevana järjestelmänä, jonka perustaa ei kyseenalaisteta (Alexander 2018).

Kielen käytössä abstraktioita luo myös impersonalisointi, jossa yksilöiden rooli kutistuu pelkäksi osaksi suurempia instituutioita tai prosesseja. IPCC:n tekstissä passiivin käyttö sumentaa valtasuhteiden ja erilaisten intressien roolin tässä kontekstissa. WWF puolestaan käyttää "me" -pronominia viitaten siihen, että yhteiskunta tai ihmiskunta voi ratkaista ympäristöongelmat. Tämä "me" luo yhteisöllisyyden tuntua ja solidaarisuutta, mutta jättää epäselväksi, ketä "me" todellisuudessa koskee ja kuka on vastuussa tai kyvykäs vastaamaan kriisin haasteisiin.

Ratkaisukeskeisyys painottuu ilmaston lämpenemisen rajoittamiseen, biodiversiteetin köyhtymisen pysäyttämiseen ja kestäväen kehityksen edistämiseen, mikä esitetään globaalina tavoitteena. Dokumentit asettavat "globaalin pääoman," "rahoitusvirrat" ja "teknologian" ratkaisuiksi ympäristökriisiin, mikä luo vaikutelman, että nykyinen taloudellinen järjestelmä on keskeinen osa ratkaisua. Tämä tukee kehitysajattelua, jossa teknologiset ja taloudelliset ratkaisut esitetään luonnollisina ja objektiivisina.

Kielenkäytössä ilmenevä ideologinen luonnollistaminen tapahtuu myös hiljaisuuksissa ja valtasuhteiden katvealueilla. Kehitys- ja ympäristödiskurssit ovat rajattuja; vain tietyt tarinat ja lähteet ovat hyväksytyjä, eivätkä ne uhkaa olemassa olevia valtasuhteita. Näin länsimainen hegemonia hyödyntää diskurssia upottamalla omat maailmankuvansa ja luoden kertomuksen, joka hallitsee ympäristökriisin käsittelyä. Tässä diskurssissa "kehitys" nähdään luonnollisena prosessina, joka oikeuttaa nykyisen maailmanjärjestyksen ja luonnon hyväksikäytön.

Yhteenvetona voidaan sanoa, että IPCC ja WWF ympäristödiskurssit eivät vain heijasta kehityskäsitystä, vaan ovat jatke ideologioille, jotka sisältävät tiettyyn aikaan ja paikkaan juurtuneita käsityksiä historiasta ja todellisuudesta, tarjoten valmiin tavan suhtautua maailmaan, itseemme ja toisiimme. Kehitysideologiassa historia nähdään lineaarisena, edeten kohti ihmisyyden ja sivilisaation huipentumaa, jolloin menneisyys, "kehittymättömät" yhteiskunnat ja luonto jäävät tämän kehityksen ulkopuolelle. "Kehittynyt ihminen" nähdään

erillisenä luonnosta, kun taas "kehittyvät" maat sijoitetaan lähemmäs jotain, joka kielessä hahmottuu resurssiksi, "toiseuden" ruumillistumaksi", jota voi hyödyntää ja hallita. IPCC:n ja WWF:n ympäristödiskurssit nojaavat tähän metanarratiiviin, jossa ihmiskunnan historia ja määränpää kuvataan voittajien tulkinnan mukaisena; jossa luonnon valloitus järjen ja tieteen keinoin nähdään luonnollisena polkuna modernin sivilisaation synnyssä. Tässä etuoikeutetussa ympäristökeskustelussa ei tarkastella sivilisaation ja kehityksen vaikutuksia ympäristökriisin syihin, ja ne jättävät huomiotta ne historialliset ja yhteiskunnalliset rakenteet, jotka mahdollistavat "hyvän elämän" perustamisen kasvulle. Näin syntyy diskurssi, joka sopii järjestelmän jatkumolle, mutta todelliset ratkaisut pysyvät saavuttamattomina. Kysymys siitä, kuka hyötyy näistä kriisin syy-seuraussuhteiden määrittelystä, on keskeinen, ja kenen tai minkä valta-asemaa näiden kyseenalaistamattomuus ylläpitää.

7. Yhteenveto

Kehityskäsitys on juurtunut syvälle sosiaalisiin, taloudellisiin ja poliittisiin rakenteisiin, ja sitä voidaan pitää ympäristökriisin taustalla vaikuttavana voimana. Se rajoittaa myös ympäristöongelmien ymmärtämistä ja niihin reagoimista, koska se heijastaa vain yhdenlaista – länsimaista ja modernistista – näkökulmaa. Tämä käsitys toimii pohjana nykyisille yhteiskunnallisille rakenteille ja ohjaa tapaa, jolla ymmärrämme ja käsittelemme ympäristöongelmia. Siksi on ratkaisevaa tuoda esille, miten ajatus "kehittyneestä" ja näin ollen onnistuneesta yhteiskunnasta ihanteena ei ole luonnonlaki, vaan sosiaalinen rakennelma, joka heijastaa ja oikeuttaa epätasa-arvoisia valtasuhteita. Sitä, miten tätä näkemystä uudelleen tuotetaan kielessä, varsinkin itse ympäristökeskustelussa, olen tässä tutkielmassa pyrkinyt havainnollistamaan.

IPCC ja WWF teksteissä ympäristökriisin diskurssi nivoutuu osaksi kehityksen narratiivia ja siten myös nykyisiä valtarakenteita. Tietyt argumentit toistuvat johdonmukaisesti, kun taas toiset jäävät katveeseen. Ideologiat ei tuoda esiin tai ne esitetään itsestään selvinä, mikä tekee kehityksestä näkymättömän, luonnollisen ajattelumallin. Tiede ja teknologia määrittelevät luonnon kehityksen välineenä, korostaen sen arvoa mitattavana ja havainnoitavana kohteena, joka tukee historian edistystä. Näissä teksteissä toimijuus kuitenkin usein häivytetään: abstraktit nominalisaatiot, kuten "kulutusmallit" ja "päästöt", eivät osoita tarkempia toimijoita tai taustalla olevia motiiveja, jolloin syvemmät voimat ja oletukset kriisin taustalla jäävät piiloon. Esimerkiksi juuri ihmisen ja luonnon välinen kahtiajako – kehitysideoogian hiljainen

itsestäänselvyys – jää kyseenalaistamatta, vaikka se vaikuttaa tapaan, jolla ympäristöongelmat tulkitaan ja ratkaisuja kehitetään.

Ratkaisuksi tarvitaan rakenteellisia muutoksia, jotka luovat tilaa moninaisille näkemyksille ja uusille tavoille ymmärtää todellisuutta. Tämä voisi tarkoittaa uuden sanaston ja narratiivien kehittämistä, jotka tunnustavat elämän ja kulttuurin vaihtoehtoiset järkipärisyydet ja kokemusten monimuotoisuuden (Escobar 1996). Ekolinguistiikalla on tässä merkittävä rooli, ja lisää tutkimusta tarvitaan perinteisten länsimaisten ajattelutapojen ylittämiseksi (Stibbe 2015). Näin ympäristödiskurssi voisi kommunikoida näkökulmaan, joka keskittyy elämään ja hyvinvointiin, eikä ole sidottu pääomaan. Tämä mahdollistaisi uudenlaisen käsityksen "hyvästä elämästä" ja tarjoaisi aidosti kestäviä ratkaisuja tulevaisuuden haasteisiin.