anglistica aion

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

Environmental Conflicts and Legal Disputes Across Media Discourse

Edited by Oriana Palusci and Jan Engberg

Table of Contents

Popularizing Environmental Disputes

Reviews

Notes on Contributors

Oriana Palusci — Jan Engberg

Introduction
Environmental Conflicts and Legal Disputes
Across Media Discourse

The study of legal discourse from discourse analytical as well as linguistic and translational perspectives has experienced a boom in recent years, which is reflected in the publication of a considerable number of books, journals, and conferences and other events. A possible reason for the rise in interest is that legal discourse provides a remarkable and central example of how states intend to influence the life and thinking of its citizens. Statutes present normative preferences and value statements by governments and parliaments. Court decisions and the argumentative documents which support such decisions explicitly 'translate' shared norms and values into concrete instances and situations. Discussions and debate over legal norms, values and decisions by the civil society and individual citizens are great avenues for insight into not only linguistic and textual interaction and argumentation mechanisms, but also societal positions and discoursal power struggles.[1]

Due to these characteristics, in the present special issue we have chosen to focus upon what environmental questions look like, when they enter the legal sphere. Our interest, however, is not legal. We are interested in the process of the environment getting into the legal sphere via conflicts over environmental questions in an epoch of public awareness and engagement. Hence, law is the communicative and discoursal venue more than the topic of the works collected here. Instead, conflict and its representation in media discourse are central concepts.[2]

In its broadest meaning, conflict refers to situations where two or more parties seek to undermine each other because they have incompatible views, competing interests, or fundamentally different values.[3] In this sense, conflict is part of everyday life, which may in time become a state of hostility between groups and people and eventually lead to a legal dispute. In this context, the media representation of the conflicts and of the different positions from which the conflicts are built has an

---

[1] See, among the others, Maarten Hajer and Wytske Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives", *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 7.3 (2005), and Roger Sidaway, *Resolving Environmental Disputes: From Conflict to Consensus* (London: Earthscan, 2005).

[2] Elizabeth Thompson and Peter R. R. White, eds., *Communicating Conflict: Multilingual Case Studies of the News Media* (London: Continuum, 2008).

[3] Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

overwhelming influence upon how the conflicts develop and whether they actually end up entering the legal sphere.

Media discourse has gained a central role in the information and participation of citizens in the evaluation of environmental risks, conflict and legal disputes.[4] Institutions and experts working within those institutions increasingly use new media to communicate and disseminate up-to-date environmental legislation and terminology, in order to actually avoid conflicts and disputes entering the legal sphere.[5] In this case, new media discourse offers a space for the dissemination of highly specialised discourse with ordinary lay people, who are far removed from the judicial system. Here, the topic of media discourse, environmental conflict and the legal sphere touches upon the field of popularization of law and legal institutions.[6] On the other side, thanks to new media, citizens have arguably become more inclined to share their opinions and participate in media discussions about public policy-making and new legislation.[7] Single citizens and vocal movements have also exploited the power of media to discuss legislation and offer a cross-cultural interpretation of legal distinctions and definitions within a host country. Thus, as noted above, choosing media discourse as the domain for legal discourse studies represents a door for the understanding of the positions and struggles going on in civil society at different points in space and time.

The special issue consists of eleven articles, divided into four interrelated sections, which study a number of poignant contemporary issues related to environmental legal disputes around the world and their representation in old and new media. The articles offer stimulating interdisciplinary discursive perspectives on specific case studies related to the dissemination and popularization in different countries of media responses to the disputes connected to mega industrial projects and environmental risk (coal mining, pipelines, fog), water pollution and plastic waste, climate change denial, environmental legislation and environmental policy From a methodological point of view, we must acknowledge that the majority of authors have built a significant corpus, specifically compiled, for the analysis of their selected case study. Besides, they draw from a number of integrated methodological tools, which range from Corpus Linguistics to Genre Analysis, from Media Discourse to Critical Discourse Analysis and the Appraisal Framework. The domains of analysis range from media such as the printed press and television broadcast news to the Internet and online e-petitions, key-quotes, summaries, press-releases and blogs. All the papers address questions of media representation and power in regard to environmental legal issues.

---

[4] Jan Engberg et al., *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation in the Law / Popularisierung und Wissensvermittlung im Recht* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2018); Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

[5] Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Hodder Education, 1995), 77.

[6] Engberg et al., *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation*.

[7] Thompson and White, *Communicating Conflict*.

We decided to dedicate Part 1 to 'Earth: Indigenous Environmental Justice', which has, in the last decades, been increasingly addressed by international tribunals and courts. The legal campaigns selected here cover two remote British ex-colonies, Australia and Canada, and the disputes compiled by its respective Indigenous Peoples, who are actively protesting against the further scarring of the land, endangering water and air quality. In "'Stop Adani': Mining Conflicts and Legal Discourse in Australian Media Discourse", Katherine E. Russo focuses on the evaluation of mining and climate change risks by analysing an opportunistic corpus to represent the Stop Adani legal network campaign. She discusses the ways in which the scientific and Indigenous Australian peoples perspective on climate change is re-evaluated in blogs and newspaper discourses. On the other hand, in Canada, as Maria Cristina Nisco underlines, the Grassy Narrows Community in north-western Ontario is one of the most toxic of the country. In her study of a corpus of news reports dealing with severe mercury poisoning due to the pollution of the Wabigoon River by the Reed Paper chemical plant, she argues that the newspapers under analysis tend to downsize the devastating consequences on the First Nations by rendering them almost invisible. A second Canadian environmental dispute is investigated in "Land Rights in Mediatized Indigenous Legal Discourse" by Anna Mongibello. It involves the provincial government of Alberta, the federal government of Canada and the First Nations over the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. The article examines the mediatisation of Indigenous Law by analysing two corpora of news reports taken from two popular online information platforms (CBC.ca and APTN.ca). The corpus-based critical discourse analysis conducted on the data shows that in the news reports covering the pipeline expansion, legal knowledge is recontextualised strategically by means of lexical and semantic choices, in order to frame the legal dispute and circulate ideological positionings.

Part 2, "Water and Plastic Narratives", takes us to the Balkan Peninsula in Southeast Europe where multilateral development banks have invested massively in the field of hydroelectricity. Such funding, as Bronwen Hughes points out in her transitivity analysis of press releases, has called into play two antagonistic factions with diametrically opposed ideas: on the one hand the local governments needful of economic gain and international visibility, on the other the local populations bolstered by international environmental organizations, who are well aware of the damage such investments can bring about. The following two articles engage in popular responses, even if from different perspectives, to plastic pollution. Antonella Napolitano concentrates on the Lightweight Plastic Bags Ban in Australia examining the recontextualisation of the environmental and legal issue of the single-use plastic bags ban in a collection of articles published by two of the major Australian online news outlets in 2017 and 2018 and the comments they generated. Instead, Maria Cristina Aiezza analyses a corpus collecting a selection of online petitions against unnecessary plastic usage published on the British version of one of the most popular e-petitioning platforms (*Change.org*), in order to uncover,

by integrating discourse and genre analysis perspectives, the recurring strategies exploited by petitioners to gain support for their environmental causes.

Part 3 "Legislation and Environmental Policy" opens with Antonio Fruttaldo's article centred on the way the Great Smog of London was represented in the English press. By adopting a methodological approach that employs the appraisal systems of attitude and engagement, the study reveals how the event was discursively constructed as a deviation phenomenon, leading to the drafting and passing of the 1956 *Clean Air Act* by the UK Parliament. The author additionally analyses the Act itself in order to emphasise the linguistic processes that relate legal language to societal priorities and concerns. The following paper, by Margaret Rasulo, examines climate change denial theories and their impact on the public's general understanding of anthropogenic causes of global warming and other environmental risks. Specifically, by drawing on data retrieved from a Canada based online counter-denial blog, the study explores the extent to which power structures such as large corporations, think tanks and political leaders rely on the discursive construction of denial strategies in North America to influence and weaken political resolve towards reinforcing climate change policies. In the meantime, in Canada, there is an ongoing lively parliamentary debate on Environment, as Federico Pio Gentile's article points out. Gentile brings to the fore the Canadian *Environmental Assessment Act*, comparing the linguistic changes in the original 1992 version and the more recent 2012 one. He then discusses the linguistic implicatures of the environmental projects published online undergoing mediating revision before the formal approval.

The last Part "Popularizing Environmental Disputes" includes two articles expanding on the popularization of environmental issues by focussing specifically on the European Union and on the Council of Europe. Without doubt, as Stefania D'Avanzo writes in her article, environment is one of the top priorities of the European Union. She studies popularisation strategies in a corpus of Summaries of EU legislation on environmental issues. After analysing the commitment by the EU towards these issues via an analysis of the contextual features of the word 'environment' in the corpus under scrutiny, D'Avanzo compares the summaries with their source legal texts to single out the strategies employed to 'reformulate' legal concepts for a wider audience. The final paper of this special issue, "Human Rights Discourse and the Environment. Empowering Young Generations through Old and New Media" by Sole Alba Zollo, is based on the assumption that environmental protection is a fundamental human right. By using different media from the European Union's and the Council of Europe's websites, Zollo's analysis detects the main verbal and visual discursive strategies of knowledge communication and dissemination in order to communicate the legal discourse on environmental protection and human rights to non-specialists with the aim of developing an eco-friendly consciousness, especially among the younger generations.

The lively debate on environmental legal disputes across media explored in this special issue will hopefully lead to further investigation on environmental risk and on climate change.

Katherine E. Russo

Stop Adani:
Risk Communication and Legal Mining Conflicts
in Australian Media Discourse

Abstract: The evaluation of environmental risk often leads to conflict and legal disputes. Legal verdicts and actions are in turn mediated by news media, which call lay people to think about them either as active participants or interested observers. During the last decade, new media have intensified their role as a channel for the communication of legal discourse regarding environmental risk and conflict. The spreading of news across 'genre chains', is central to the present study on the evaluation of mining legal disputes and climate change risks in new media. The article provides an analysis of the recontextualisation and appraisal of legal discourse in a media genre chain regarding the Stop Adani legal action campaign network against the instalment of a coal megamine in central Queensland. The analysis was carried out by analysing a corpus (2014-2018), specifically compiled to represent different interrelated discourse genres. The data is analyzed according to an approach which draws upon findings in Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Linguistics, and Corpus Linguistics. Accordingly, it situates quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis within a wider analytical framework which includes extra-linguistic social variables.

Keywords: *environmental legal discourse, risk communication, climate change discourse, news discourse*

1. Introduction

In 2016, Indigenous Australian leaders started their battle against plans by the Indian firm Adani to install a megamine in central Queensland, running four separate legal challenges to the project. Their fight was closely related to the Legal Campaign Network, Stop Adani, and strategically supported a series of environmental communication campaigns on the risks and outcomes of the mining proposal: its impact upon the Great Barrier Reef and the groundwater and fauna at its site, and its carbon emissions which would generate an estimated 4.7 billion tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. Although the Indigenous battle was based on deep knowledge of environmental risks, the news media were quick to frame the Indigenous fight against the instalment of the Adani mine as a claim against the invasion of sacred sites vs. economic growth and development. The stakes were all in Adani's favour, but the

cases were aided by the Stop Adani campaign, which has been the biggest environmental campaign seen in Australia since the 1980s: "It is talismanic. It's the litmus test. Adani has become shorthand for 'are you serious about climate change?'."[1] Up until the present day, Adani's proposed mine remains highly uncertain because the Queensland government will not extinguish native title over the land while the outstanding Traditional Owners' court action is unresolved.

The Adani case may be regarded as one of the most interesting examples of communication on environmental legal disputes of the last decades. Risks are "threats to outcomes that we value", yet while everyone agrees that some outcomes, such as car mortality, should be defined as risks, other outcomes such as climate change are contested and their measurement often leads to legal controversies.[2] Legal verdicts and actions are in turn mediated by blogs and news media, which call lay people to think about them either as active participants or interested observers. During the last decade, new media have intensified their role as a channel for the communication of legal discourse regarding environmental risk and conflict. In order to make risk decisions, citizens seek information, which is circulated through online news media, and later arises in social media such as facebook and twitter, or face-to-face conversations. This process of mediation is defined by Norman Fairclough as a 'chain', which through the networking of different social practices constrains and transforms language realisations. The spreading of news across 'genre chains', is central to the present study on the recontextualisation of mining legal disputes and climate change in new media discourse since it may affect the citizens' evaluation of legal decisions.[3]

The article provides an analysis of the appraisal of climate change risks in legal discourse in a media genre chain regarding the Stop Adani legal action campaign network. The analysis was carried out by analysing a corpus (2014-2018), specifically compiled to represent different interrelated media discourse genres. The data is analyzed according to an approach which draws upon findings in Critical Discourse Analysis, Appraisal Linguistics, and Corpus Linguistics.[4] Accordingly, the article situates

---

[1] Katharine Humphrey, "Federal Labor Feels the Heat over Adani, and Coalition Is Sweating Too", *The Guardian* (26/05/2017).

[2] Baruch Fischhoff and John Kadvany, *Risk* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2011), 22.

[3] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003); Jan Blommaert, *Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2005), 46; Vijay K. Bhatia, et al., eds., *Legal Discourse across Cultures and Systems*, Hong Kong U.P., 2008.

[4] Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006); James R. Martin and Peter R.R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: The Appraisal Framework* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Elizabeth Thomson and Peter R.R. White, eds., *Communicating Conflict: Multilingual Case Studies of the News Media* (London: Continuum, 2008); Marina Bondi and Anna Mauranen, "Editorial: Evaluative Language Use in Academic Discourse", *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(4) (2003), 269–71.

quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis within a wider analytical framework which includes extra-linguistic social variables.[5]

2. Background: The Adani case

Over the past fifteen years environmental issues have been addressed by a growing number of national and international courts and tribunals. The so-called Adani case has many of the main characteristics of most environmental disputes.[6] In 2010, Adani Mining, a wholly owned subsidiary of India's Adani Group, proposed the Carmichael coal mine in the north of the Galilee Basin in Central Queensland, Australia, with a 16.5 Australian dollars billion investment. The proposal entailed the instalment of one of the largest mines in the world. It would be the first of a number of large mines proposed for the Galilee Basin, with exports leaving the country via port facilities at Hay Point and Abbot Point after being transported to the coast via rail, thus requiring a new 189 km rail line to connect with the existing Goonyella railway line.

The contestation of the Carmichael mine case entailed several different disputes. In May 2014 the Queensland Coordinator General recommended the project be approved and there was a call for public comment and objections. Coast and Country, represented by Environmental Defenders Office Queensland, brought the "The Adani Mining Pty Ltd v Land Services of Coast and Country Inc." case to the Queensland Land Court. They contended that:

- Adani grossly overstated to the public the number of jobs, and royalties the mine would have for Queensland;
- The mine, rail and port as well as the burning of coal will cause damage to the Great Barrier Reef from climate change and ocean acidification;
- The mine will destroy the core population of endangered Black Throated Finch and may impact Waxy Cabbage Palms, and the potatoes grown in the area too;
- The mine will threaten the base flow of the Carmichael River and may threaten the ancient springs estimated to be one million years old; and
- The project is extremely risky and unlikely to be financially viable.[7]

---

[5] Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[6] Richard Lazarus, *The Making of Environmental Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[7] Environmental Law Australia, "Carmichael Coal ('Adani') Mine Cases in Queensland Courts", http://envlaw.com.au/carmichael-coal-mine-case/, last accessed 20 October 2018.

In January 2015, the Mackay Conservation Group, based in Mackay, challenged the July 2013 federal approval of the Carmichael project by Greg Hunt, Environment Minister, under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 in "Mackay Conservation Group v Commonwealth of Australia and Adani Mining". The Group was represented by the Environmental Defenders Office of New South Wales. The case involved three main contentions:

1. That the Minister unlawfully excluded consideration of greenhouse gas emissions to emissions directly associated with the operation of the mine. The Minister did not consider the much larger emissions associated with burning the coal from the mine.
2. That the Minister failed to consider Adani's poor record of environmental management in India, including building without approvals and illegally clearing mangroves, instead relying on a statement from the company that it has a good track record.
3. That the Minister did not consider "approved conservation advice" for two endangered species that would be affected by the mine, the yakka skink and the ornamental snake, as required by federal law.[8]

The Federal Court set aside the approval on the latter ground. Both cases entailed a large legal effort and required extensive factual investigations, numerous witnesses, and considerable legal research and knowledge of the area in dispute due to the complex and evolving nature of environmental legal precedent. Moreover, due to scientific and technical complexity and uncertainty, lawyers had to commit long hours to the effort consulting documents and a wide diversity of people at the local, regional, and national level. Scientists and technical experts provided information about the short and long term impacts of the mine, and defenders and prosecutors had to evaluate large volumes of information that required expertise and that was subject to differences of interpretation.

As in most environmental disputes, it was not a two-party dispute. Environmental impacts from industrial operations have ill-defined boundaries because these impacts can spread across time and locations. Many individuals and organizations were involved since the implications of the decisions had effects across administrative and legislative jurisdictions (i.e., the Queensland and Federal Court). The fact that the decision would have far reaching climate change effects also raised the stakes of the decision and ultimately attracted wide public attention and brought new people into the dispute such as environmental and conservation groups.

---

[8] Environmental Law Australia, "Carmichael Coal ('Adani') Mine cases in the Federal Court", http://envlaw.com.au/carmichael-coal-mine-federal-court/, last accessed 20 October 2018.

The Traditional Owners of the land on which the mine was proposed, the Wangan and Jagalingou People, also initiated several disputes about the mine with hearings in the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) and the Federal Court under the Native Title Act 1993. The Wangan and Jagalingou People rejected an Indigenous Land Use Agreement proposed by Adani for the grant of the mining lease and had applied in 2004 for acknowledgment of their native title for the area in central Queensland. Registration of their native title claim gave the Wangan and Jagalingou People a right to negotiate in relation to government decisions that may affect their native title interests, such as the grant of a mining lease.

The Adani group was thus challenged by the Wangan and Jagalingou people and by two small conservation groups. The cases were presented solely by non-profit Law firms, thus representing the quintessential Indigenous and environmental justice disputes pitting small struggling non-profit organizations against a large and powerful corporation. As in many environmental disputes, the Indigenous peoples and the so-called "environmentalists" were endowed with less financial, legal, and technical resources when compared to the Adani Group.

3. Environmental Legal Discourse in New Media

One of the distinctive characteristics of environmental disputes is that they are often grounded in fundamental value differences or opposing ideologies between parties. In the case of the battle against Adani, the legal campaign network Stop Adani united numerous communities committed to environmental conservation and reached an enormous scale, stopping the gigantic enterprise in a country that has been profiting from mining since its foundation. As a matter of fact, the Carmichael legal disputes taken under consideration in this study had a lifespan that extended greatly beyond their specific communicative moment. This was arguably possible due to the unlimited reach and pervasive nature of new media. Stop Adani employed new media for several purposes:

- Communicating news on events related to the legal disputes through online newspapers and blogs;
- Sharing and remediating news through social media;
- Framing and recontextualising public opinion on scientific specialized information through online news media, blogs, etc.;
- Enabling the rise of independent activists;
- Creating campaign pressure points through the use of geotags and hashtags;
- Online fund-raising;

–   Online petitions.

Through their popularisation in news genres, such as reports and editorials, the legal disputes moved considerably beyond legal settings and genres. Yet, new media also had a direct impact on the cases because funding was raised through online promotional genres such as fundraising letters and petitions. The latter have been one of the most versatile and fast developing areas of discourse due to the explosion of information technology and the new media and the overpowering influence of promotional activities in the contemporary overly competitive world.[9] Moreover, the conservation groups which initiated the case and the legal organizations representing them set up their own blogs accounts where readers could follow them on a more intimate level. While blogs are not accepted as a legitimate news reporting platform, the most important stories were often broken on blogs. Hence, the legal disputes were supported through several related genres which shared the overlapping communicative purpose of promoting legal counselling to potential customers and supporters and of creating a dialogue with the community.[10] The Stop Adani campaign may be considered as a media ecology and discourse contact zone with a nexus of genres which needs to be analysed with multidimensional methods. As Vijay Bhatia notes, such cases call for a shift in emphasis from analyzing genres as mere artefacts to integrating text-external factors by using ethnographic and other multidimensional methods.[11]

Drawing upon findings in Critical Genre studies and Critical Discourse Analysis, Bhatia argues that the appropriation of semiotic resources across genres, professional practices and disciplinary cultures, should be considered when mapping the semiotic cycles of events, actors, discourses and their interaction.[12] Moreover, according to Fairclough in representing a social event one is incorporating it within the context of another social event. Specific social fields, networks social practices and genres have associated with them recontextualising principles.[13] One can also identify differences between texts in this regard by analysing the relationship between the discourses and features of a genre, in the sense that genres can be seen as 'framing' devices for organising relationships between discourses. For instance, as Susan Erhlich pointed out, in the case of legal disputes, "speakers may have unequal access to and control over contextualising spaces (as is true in many contextualising spaces), these transformations in meaning can be deeply implicated in larger patterns of social inequality".[14] For these

---

[9] Bhatia, *Critical Genre Analysis: Investigating Interdiscursive Performance in Professional Practice* (London: Routledge, 2017).

[10] Marina Bondi, "Blogs as Interwoven Polylogues", *Language and Dialogue*, 8.1 (2018), 44-66.

[11] Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-based View* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[12] Bhatia, *Critical Genre Analysis*.

[13] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*.

[14] Susan Ehrlich, "Legal Discourse and the Cultural Intelligibility of Gendered Meanings", *Sociolinguistics*, 11 (2007), 457.

reasons, the notions of recontextualisation, interdiscursivity, intertextuality and genre networks are central to the present analysis of the appraisal of climate change risks in legal discourse and in the media genre chain regarding the Stop Adani legal action campaign network. In other words, the article will focus on how environmental risks were evaluated in legal discourses and in new media genres in the process of accomplishing a socially motivated goal.[15]

Corpus Linguistics methodological tools such as quantitative techniques (lists of frequency, concordances and collocational analysis) have been combined in the study with the analysis of context and discourse structural evaluation through qualitative assessments.[16] The analysis considered several aspects. Firstly, in order to obtain a more comprehensive rather than fragmented view of the evaluation of risk, the analysis focused on concordance and collocation. The analysis was conducted with the AntConc concordance tool to consider the terms co-text and later focused on collocation, in order to gain some insights on the semantic preference of the terms under investigation within specific discourse genres. Following Pedersen,[17] factors which were considered in the individuation of collocates are: frequency, statistical significance, extension of the phrase, distribution in the texts, distribution across text types, collocation structure. Finally the search was narrowed from bulk data retrieval to qualitative analysis to combine a corpus-assisted discourse and appraisal approach to the analysis of terms in the corpus.

4. The Stop Adani Corpus

The Stop Adani Corpus (hereafter, SAC) includes the case documents of the environmental law disputes. They include court pleadings, expert reports, and decisions.

Adani Mining Pty Ltd v Land Services of Coast and Country Inc.						
Decisions under EPBC Act	Objections	Opening Submissions	Affidavit	Approval for the mine	Judicial review challenge	Expert evidence
5	3	2	3	4	8	22
Total Texts 47			Tokens 110.512			

Table 1. Legal Discourse Subcorpora

---

[15] Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Hodder Education, 1995).

[16] Baker, *Using Corpora.*

[17] Jan Pedersen, "The Identification and Selection of Collocation in Technical Dictionaries", *Lexicographica,* 11 (1995), 60–73.

Mackay Conservation Group v Commonwealth of Australia and Adani Mining				
Decisions under EPBC Act	First and second Approval for the mine	Statement of reasons	Application for judicial review	Judicial review challenge
3	1	2	5	3
Total Texts14			Tokens 55.567	

Table 2. Legal Discourse Subcorpora

The SAC was further designed by selecting texts from an interrelated nexus of new media genres from the years 2015-2018. It includes an Online News Reports subcorpus (tagged as <ONR>). The latter was designed by selecting newspaper reports from Australian quality newspapers, such as *The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald,* and *The Age* covering the years 2015-2018 with the query terms 'Carmichael' and 'Adani' with the help of the comprehensive news search engine Newsbank. The news reports are balanced per year and newspaper. The corpus also included a blog posts subcorpus (tagged as <B>), which includes different types of law blogs: the law firms blogs, the conservation groups blogs and the STOP ADANI campaign blog. These were also balanced per year and blog.

New Media	ONR	B	Total
Texts	132	145	277
Tokens	355.000	355.000	710.000

Table 3. New Media Discourse Subcorpora

5. Results and Findings

Before proceeding with the analysis, given the different size of the subcorpora, all the data were normalized on a 10,000 basis following a standard procedure in the field for opportunistic corpora. The first line of analysis took into consideration the term 'climate change' (n. 2300), with a distribution which in the case of the legal subcorpora is predictably more frequent in the documents submitted by the legal defenders and experts (Decisions Under EPBC Act n. 3, Objections n. 9, Opening Submissions n. 10, Affidavit n. 0, Approval for the Mine n. 0, Statement of Reasons n. 2, Judicial Review Challenge n. 2, Expert Evidence n. 23, Online News Reports n. 88, Blogs n. 156). The AntConc collocates tool was employed to ascertain the statistically significant use of collocates in the subcorpora in comparison with a reference corpus, the British National Corpus (see Table 4). The combined analysis of collocations (context horizon, 5 L and 5 R) further revealed that in the sections of the corpus climate change risks are evaluated upon a meaning continuum that changes considerably in

lexical terms, but also that there is a great difference in the values which are salient in the different genres that were taken under consideration.

Legal documents		Blogs		News reports	
1.179.170	unfccc	1.279.170	credible	1.179.170	save
1.179.170	happening	1.179.170	Our	1.079.170	personal
1.179.170	amplify	1.179.170	formerly	1.020.674	existential
1.179.170	alleviate	1.179.170	Article	1.020.674	Government
1.179.170	adaptation	1.179.170	amplify	979.170	court
1.152.867	acidification	1.079.170	Saying	979.170	essentially
1.120.674	websites	979.170	Shark	879.170	Wangan
1.120.674	warming	979.170	Pursue	846.977	poor
1.086.570	gases	979.170	Help	846.977	fossil
1.083.932	change	946.977	Fight	820.674	pollution
1.079.170	irrespective	920.674	Society	803.682	highly
1.079.170	harms	920.674	Battle	789.253	spokesman
1.079.170	droughts	879.170	Former	788.481	challenge
1.074.108	contributing	879.170	Ahead	779.170	Queensland
1.020.674	united	851.868	mackay	770.424	investment
1.020.674	mitigation	846.977	Fossil	762.178	federal
1.020.674	nations	837.795	Change	746.977	legal
979.170	longevity	833.227	Ocean	733.227	firm
958.525	greenhouse	833.227	Civil	714.785	many
951.160	burning	809.126	We	709.126	people
946.977	ocean	809.126	member	703.682	you

Table 4. Climate Change Collocates in different genres of the SAC Corpus.

The examination (minimum collocate frequency 20) suggested that in the legal documents 'climate change' has a quite restricted range of statistically significant collocates. Many of the collocates are predictably related to the causes and effects of climate change, i.e. specific terminology such as 'acidification'. As previous studies have shown, terms of high frequency in legal discourse consist in terms which have undergone semantic shift by narrowing or extension from general usage into special usage, such as 'warming', and terms which have shifted from special to general usage such as 'greenhouse gas emissions'. The frequency search combined with the matrices of term formation also revealed that novel complex noun phrases and compounds are employed as micro-definitions, such as

'anthropogenic climate change', 'greenhouse gas abatement', 'mitigation policies' and 'mitigation measures'.

The general preference for nominalization or grammatical metaphor is also observable. Grammatical metaphor was defined by M.A.K. Halliday as a language item transferred from a more expected word class to another, as in the case of the verbs 'mitigate' or 'acid' transformed in 'mitigation' and 'acidification'.[18] The terms 'acidification', 'mitigation' and 'warming' have an extremely high statistical significance in the legal documents. As John Humbley proposes, such terms may be defined after Halliday as "theoretical constructs" which emerge in response to the needs of unfolding discourse as grammatical metaphors and are taken up by the discourse communities, i.e., grammatical categories allow human experience to be transferred through language into knowledge.[19] Yet, from a critical point of view, nominalisation, which typically replaces verb processes with a noun construction, may obscure agency and responsibility for an action.[20] Grammatical metaphors "provide excellent linguistic resources for those who wish to replace actual concrete processes, identities and settings with abstractions".[21]

The analysis of nouns on the left side of the concordance line in the legal documents corpus uncovered that climate change risk is mainly defined as an environmental harm caused by greenhouse emissions and which has an effect on ocean acidification. Obviously the evaluation changes according to the legal procedure. For instance, in the Opening Submission by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ex. 1), the causes and effects of climate change are communicated as an undoubted finding through the use of boosters such as 'significantly', the repetition of the active verb 'cause', the use of negative lexemes such as 'threat' and 'catastrophic'.

Evidence is also foregrounded in legal documents. Expressions of evidentiality and the endorsement or disendorsement of intertextextual references (i.e. 'precise' and 'detailed' referred to sources or evidence of statements and information, such as The Great Barrier Outlook Report, documents, EIS) are used to give information and support legal claims.[22] Moreover, there is a strong appeal to concrete elements (i.e. the Great Barrier Reef, specific flora and fauna) as concrete evidence is fundamental to legal disputes:

---

[18] Michael A. K. Halliday, "Language and Knowledge: The "Unpacking" of Text", in Johnathan J. Webster, ed., *The Language of Science* (London: Continuum, 1989), 24–84.

[19] John Humbley, "Accounting for Term Formation: Terminology", *Science and Research*, 20 (2009), 1-15.

[20] David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2012), 137.

[21] Ibid, 164.

[22] Monika Bednarek, "Evaluation and Text Types", *Functions of Language*, 15.1 (2008); Bednarek and Helen Caple, *News Discourse* (London: Continuum, 2012).

Ex. 1

Greenhouse gas emissions significantly contribute to anthropogenic climate change, which causes seawater to become warmer. Carbon dioxide emissions cause seawater to become more acidic.10 The warming and acidification of seawater are the two most serious threats to the Great Barrier Reef,11 and are the only threats that the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report 201412 (the Outlook Report) rated as "almost certain" to occur and as having "catastrophic" consequences by reference to six specific measures.

The EIS included documents containing a precise inventory of the mining emissions, a detailed analysis of mitigation and abatement measures, and an environmental management plan containing specific commitments directed to mitigation and abatement (*Opening Submission by Australian Conservation Foundation*, filed 5 April 2016).

Instead, the analysis of concordance lines in the blog section reveals the discursive construction of a community, that needs protection, which may be regarded as a peculiarity of the Blog corpus (see ex. 2 and ex 3). The semantic sets including 'our' and 'we' and 'pursue', 'battle', 'fight' and 'combat' are salient in the blog corpus. The strength of these collocations is particularly significant in comparison with the dispute files since they implicitly define climate change as an enemy and employ the *topoi* of 'militarisation' and 'securitisation'[23] to categorize social actors and align readers with the environmental campaign.

Ex 2.

Our water, Our Lifeblood

Water is the life blood of Queensland. Regional and farming communities work hard to put food on our dinner table every week – and they rely on clean water for their survival. Yet if built, Adani's proposed mega-mine would:

Drain an estimated 12.5 billion litres of water per year from nearby catchments.

Threaten ancient spring oases that provide permanent water and habitat during drought.

Leave behind 6 unfilled coal pits that will drain millions of litres of groundwater every year.

When more than two thirds of Queensland is suffering from drought, we need to ask ourselves – what are the real, long term impacts of Adani's mine on our communities? And how can we ensure our precious water resources are protected for generations to come? We've known for years the damage we're causing to our precious environment. Yet here I am, asking you to urgently support us to help people like you use the law to fight for a safer climate. (*Lock the Gate Blog*, https://www.lockthegate.org.au/watermackay, 12 April 2016)

---

[23] Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination*, 52.

Ex. 3

Will you please make a tax-deductible donation to EDO Qld before 30 June? Every dollar you donate to EDO Qld this tax-time will be matched by a generous donor, up to a maximum total of $25,000.

We need your support to continue to take on David-and-Goliath legal battles - like the recent landmark victory won on behalf of Queensland farmers objecting to the Acland coal mine expansion, and the Adani Carmichael Coal court challenges.

With a State election looming; it's even more important that your experienced non-profit EDO Qld lawyers are here to fight to keep and strengthen our environmental laws, upon which our communities depend for a safe climate, clean air, clean water and the protection of nature and the Great Barrier Reef.

Will you please make a donation to EDO Qld today to help even the scales between well-resourced corporate interests and the community's underfunded legal voice?

Are you ready to stand-up with us? (*Edo Queensland Environmental Defenders Blog*, https://www.edoqld.org.au/donate_cc, 16 November 2017)

Ex. 4

What is happening to the Great Barrier Reef is a tragedy for Australia. We must not look away and instead pursue real action on climate change to help give our reef a fighting chance.

(*Australian Conservation Foundation Blog*, https://www.acf.org.au/study_on_coral_death_on_the_ great_barrier_reef_in_2016_is_shocking_but_not_surprising , 19 April 2017)

With a similar rhetorical move, the Wangan and Jagalingou people posted the following online petition on their blog:

Ex. 5

Stop Adani destroying our land and culture

We, the Wangan and Jagalingou people, are the Traditional Owners of the land in Queensland's Galilee Basin. Corporate conglomerate, Adani, wants to use our ancestral lands for their Carmichael coal mine.

SIGN OUR PETITION

We do hereby firmly REJECT a Land Use Agreement with Adani for the Carmichael mine on our traditional lands.

We DO NOT consent to the Carmichael mine on our ancestral lands.

We DO NOT accept Adani's "offers" to sign away our land and our rights and interests in it. We will not take their "shut up" money.

We will PROTECT and DEFEND our Country and our connection to it.

Why is this important?

We are gravely concerned about the push by Adani and the Queensland and Federal Governments to open up the Carmichael Mine on our traditional lands. Our traditional lands are an interconnected and living

whole; a vital cultural landscape. It is central to us as a People, and to the maintenance of our identity, laws and consequent rights. …

We know that many other people who care deeply about conserving natural places, vital water resources, the great fauna and flora of central Queensland, and a health planet share our concerns about this mine.

Please stand with us in our Defence of Country.

When we say No, we mean No. (*Wangan And Jagalingou Family Council Blog*, https://wanganjagalingou.com.au/our-fight/, ongoing petition)

The analysis of blogs suggests a correlation between speculations about climate change and discourses of chaos and catastrophe, which insistently foreground the magnitude and catastrophic impact of the hazards. The supporters of climate change greatly resort to affect, mobilizing fear and a sense of urgency in order to persuade people by highlighting relevance and describing risk outcomes as terrible things that will certainly happen to them if they do not do what the message recommends.

Ex. 6

Ms Millie Telford, National Co-Director of the Seed Indigenous Youth Climate Network, said Adani's mine will destroy country and the climate forever and devastate the ancestral lands, waters and culture of Aboriginal peoples in the region as well as Indigenous communities who are already on the frontline of climate change. (*Bob Brown Foundation Climate Action Blog*, https://www.bobbrown.org.au/bob_brown_launches_stop_adani_mine_campaign_bigger_than_the_franklin, 13 May 2017)

Moreover, in the blogs, promotional values are fundamental since they are generally used to fund the legal campaigns. The evaluation of information is based on general knowledge and information is treated as a 'given' or as undoubted evidence since it is part of the communal epistemic background shared by the community (see ex. 7):

Ex. 7

Given that climate change is the greatest threat to the survival of the Reef, Mackay Conservation Group says that the Minister should have considered greenhouse gas emissions arising from the burning of the coal by Adani in India, not just the emissions from mining the coal. (*Environmental Defenders Office New South Wales Blog*, https://www.edonsw.org.au/mackay_conservation_group_v_commonwealth_of_australia_and_adani_mining, 13 August 2015)

Ex. 8

Our elected representatives have the legal options. Our elected representatives have the clear evidence that climate change is damaging the Great Barrier Reef. They know the majority of Australians oppose this

polluting mine. (*Australian Conservation Foundation Blog,* https://www.acf.org.au/acf_statement_on_legal_advice_about_stopping_adani_coal_mine, 28 February 2018)

Ex. 9

Mr Shorten has seen with his own eyes what these new finding tells us about what climate change is doing to our reef. The Prime Minister should immediately visit these areas too and develop a greater understanding about the damage the 2016 mass coral bleaching events caused. (*Australian Conservation Foundation Blog*, https://www.acf.org.au, 19 April 2018)

Conversely, online news reports introduce complexity and scientific uncertainty becomes a salient theme.[24] For instance, in ex. 10 and ex. 11, the attribution to 'anonymous' scientists and environmental activists may be regarded as an example of non-endorsement on behalf of the reporter. Moreover, the thought verb 'agree' is counteracted by the adversative sentence which incorporates an element of doubt or mitigation with respect to the reported information through the use of premodifiers ('considerable uncertainty', 'actual', 'precise').

Ex. 10

The scientists agreed that there is no doubt about the global warming itself and its links to anthropogenic activities, but there remains considerable uncertainty about the actual warming rate and the precise nature and magnitude of the consequences of climate change.

Ex. 11

Environmental activists have begun a legal bid to prevent the creation in Queensland of Australia's largest mine, citing its contribution to global climate change and potential impact on water and biodiversity. (*The Guardian*, 20 March 2015)

In the following example, the reporter on the Queensland court's initial approval of the mine remains neutral through the repeated use of the structuring verb 'say' and the introduction of the main lines of argument of both parties:

Ex. 12

Conservation group Coast and Country challenged the proposal in the Land Court in Brisbane on the impacts the mine would have to groundwater, climate change and biodiversity, including black-throated finches, an endangered species.

---

[24] Maxwell Boycoff and Jules Boycoff, "Balance as Bias: Global Warming and the U.S Prestige Press", *Global Environmental Change*, 14.2 (2004), 125-126.

Coast and Country lawyer Derec Davies said it was a disappointing result.

"Today's decision will pave the way to the destruction of some of Queensland's most beautiful ecosystems," he said.

The Queensland Resources Council chief executive Michael Roche said the decision showed the group's claims were unfounded.

"This judgement is a comprehensive rejection of the activist argument against this huge job generating project, it's rejected the activist arguments around the financial viability of the project, it's rejected the activists arguments around the issue of climate change," he said. (*ABC News*, 15 December 2015)

In online news reports, the main focus is on the arguments of the two opposing political views – environmental risks and climate change vs. the economic investment and job revenues. Yet, while in ex. 13 and ex. 14 the opposing views seem to be simply set up against each other, the reporter also implicitly gives voice and strength to the ideology of economic growth and capitalist development through the quoting of the 16.5 billion investment and the quantifiers "largest", "huge" and "biggest" against the spiritual claim of the Indigenous peoples:

Ex. 13

Mr Adani asked Mr Turnbull to fix native title laws in order to help clear the way for a $21 billion coal project in central Queensland, assuring the Prime Minister the project would create 10,000 jobs and inject *huge* sums into the economy. (*The Australian*, 11 April 2017)

Ex. 14

"Protecting our common home and all those who live here is an essential part of each of our faiths," they wrote in the letter to Adani chairman Gautam Adani. The leaders oppose all new coal mining in the Galilee Basin, with fears it could impact on water supplies, climate change and the Great Barrier Reef.

Adani has argued the $16.5 billion Carmichael mine would be a boon for jobs in struggling areas of regional Queensland. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 April 2018)

Ex. 15

Adani is facing a fresh legal battle over its planned Carmichael coal mine, a day after announcing workforce arrangement. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 December 2016)

In the following example, the reporter introduces doubt through the headline:

Ex 16

Who wants to capitalise on the Galilee Basin?

A challenge by Indigenous interests to the Carmichael mega mine in Queensland's Galilee Basin is shaping up as the *biggest* test of Australia's Native Title law in almost two decades.

Traditional owners from central Queensland today presented the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament with a Defence of Country Declaration opposing the $16 billion Carmichael project, which will cover more than 200 square kilometres and be one of the world's largest black coal mines.

The Wangan and Jagalingou (W&J) people, who lodged a native title claim over most of the Galilee Basin in 2004, said the Carmichael mine would destroy their ancestral lands and cultural heritage.

"The Mundunjurra, we call the giver of water. The water comes up and travels through that land, it feeds everything, it feeds the whole area of the Carmichael River to the Belyando River, out to the Burdekin and out to the ocean and it feeds all the surrounding areas of all the other tribes," W&J people lawman Adrian Burragubba told ABC RN Breakfast.

"So this is the starting point of life. We consider this as our place of where we come from, our dreaming…. "If this mine proceeds, it will destroy every connection there is with our ancestors and our laws and customs." (*ABC News*, 17 March 2015)

Perhaps the greatest difference in the online news reports subcorpus is related to epistemic modality and predictions. Scientific findings are generally expressed with great caution through modal verbs conveying possibility. Reporters refer to different opinions in the science and political debate on climate change with regard to social actors, generally adopting a neutral stance. A further confirmation is that in cases in which positive judgement realizations related to prediction or forecasting are used, they are hedged or non-endorsed by reporters. In the following examples, the reporter refers to a forecast by an expert, but frames it as a hypothesis through the use of 'would'.

Ex. 17

The extraction of coal from Australia's biggest mine would not directly affect the Great Barrier Reef, but burning it would help push the climate to a dangerous state, a Queensland court has heard.

Conservation group Coast and Country is objecting to Adani's plans to build the $16.5 billion Carmichael Mine in the Galilee Basin. (*Sydney Morning Herald*,7 April 2015)

Ex. 18

The Indian mining giant intends to export at least 50 million tonnes of coal a year from the Abbot Point terminal, north of Bowen. Coast and Country claims the project would contribute to climate change when the coal is burnt overseas, and carbon emissions would damage the Great Barrier Reef through ocean acidification. (*Sydney Morning Herald,* 7 April 2015)

Ex. 19

The Queensland Land Court heard on Tuesday a United Nations agreement across 200 countries dictates global warming should be kept under 2C. That threshold would be reached after the emission of roughly

850 gigatonnes of C02, University of Queensland's Ove Hoegh Guldberg told the court. (*The Guardian*, 7 April 2015)

6. Conclusions

The analysis of the corpus has confirmed that evaluative items and discourse structural evaluation patterns related to the popularization and evaluation of legal procedures regarding climate change risks are principally influenced by the communicative purpose of genres. Moreover, they are influenced by co-text and context, and by specific domains, institutional settings, special professional and communicative roles, as well as the various kinds of specialised and lay knowledge of participants. This is probably due to the fact that the communicative purpose of filling a gap in the knowledge of the audience entails the transformation of legal discourse into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge, as well as a re-contextualization of scientific discourse.[25]

The analysis also suggests that although sciences scholars have reached a high level of consensus on anthropogenic climate change, the scientific perspective on climate science undergoes a re-evaluation in blogs and online newspaper discourse due to the influence of the journalistic norms of personalization, authority and balance. In the case of blogs, in order to maximize persuasion and reach the lay audience, communication operators often background planning and forecasting and privilege the recruitment of people though the appeals to community building and correlated underlying ideologies of protection and securitisation. In online news reports the popularization of science, which often employs caution and probability measures, has been translated into scientific uncertainty as a salient theme in numerous cases. While news reporting follows a well-established tradition, which claims to be 'objective, 'neutral' and 'impartial' and which often obscures the subjective role of the journalistic author in constructing the text, the analysis has found that in the corpus news reporters balance supportive and sceptical views of climate change in order to represent all political views and ideologies. In particular, news reporters overtly included the ideological opposition of Indigenous spiritual claims to the land vs. the Minister's appeal to economic growth and development, thus resorting to ideological squaring, i.e. the use of opposing classes of concepts built up around participants.

---

[25] Helena Calsamiglia and Teun A. van Djik, "Popularization Discourse and Knowledge About the Genome", *Discourse and Society*, 15.4 (2004), 369–389.

Maria Cristina Nisco

Environmental Racism in Canadian News Discourse.
The Case of Grassy Narrows

Abstract: Grassy Narrows (Ontario, Canada) came to public attention in 1970 when it was revealed that an alarming number of the community members were displaying symptoms of the Minamata disease, a form of mercury poisoning. The source of pollution, Reed Paper chemical plant, had dumped between 4 and 9 kg of mercury per day into the Wabigoon river from 1962 to 1970.

In January 2017, the Canadian press covered the news again after Grassy Narrows chief urged PM Trudeau to engage the federal government in the clean-up of the river.

This paper takes into account the recent developments of this dispute – that bears important consequences for the community and the government – analysing the news reports published from early 2017 to early 2018. The paper compares and contrasts national and local newspapers' construal of the event and the political and social actors involved, to examine how the news was framed in relation to issues of (in)visibility as forms of violence. Special emphasis is further given to the concept of environmental racism which plays a pivotal role in how First Nations communities are treated in Canada.

Keywords: *Grassy Narrows, news discourse, environmental racism, First Nations communities*

1. Introducing the Case

Situated on the English-Wabigoon river system about 90 km north-east of Kenora (in north-western Ontario, Canada), Grassy Narrows came to public attention in 1970 when it was revealed that an alarming number of residents were displaying symptoms of the Minamata disease, which is a neurological syndrome caused by severe mercury poisoning.[1] Experts determined that the fish eaten by

---

[1] Symptoms included sensory disturbances, such as narrowing of the visual field, impaired hearing, abnormal eye movements, tremor, ataxia (impaired balance), dysarthria (poor articulation of speech). The history of mercury poisoning among First Nations in Canada is entangled with the 20th-century incident in the fishing village of Minamata, Japan, which also gave the name to the disease (before this disaster, the scientific community was unaware of the effects of mercury on humans). At the time, doctors established a link between methylmercury contaminated fish and human neurologic symptoms. As investigations proceeded in Japan from the late 1950s, a similar story began to unfold a few years later in Northern Canada – where, however, problems persisted for more than 50 years.

the community contained excessively high mercury levels. In fact, the mercury entering aquatic ecosystems was consumed by small animals and when larger fish ate them, mercury underwent biomagnification, reaching toxic levels. It then emerged that the source of the pollution was Reed Paper Ltd chemical plant operating upstream from the reserve as part of the Dryden Chemical Company's pulp and paper mill bleaching paper. From 1962 to 1970, between 4 and 9 kg of untreated mercury per day were dumped into the English and Wabigoon rivers, poisoning waters that had been vital for local people for centuries. Food became contaminated, commercial activities were closed and people were cut off from their main sources of income.[2] Although Reed Paper Ltd ceased using mercury in its operations in 1975 following provincial government orders, the economic and social impact of mercury pollution was devastating to Grassy Narrows. Tourism declined, while the loss of traditional ways of life originated a number of social problems like alcohol addiction, drug abuse, family violence, suicides and depression. Residents had worryingly elevated levels of mercury in their bodies, and despite the fact that compensation was offered – more than a decade later, (falsely) assuming that the effects of contamination would soon go away – community members currently continue to suffer from disproportionate rates of serious health problems. Indeed, recent surveys provide clear evidence that the physical and mental health of people in Grassy Narrows is poorer than that of other First Nation communities in Canada.[3]

As a matter of fact, Grassy Narrows was involved in one of the worst environmental disasters in Canadian history. Any discussion of the issue cannot leave the relationship of Indigenous peoples to their lands and territories out of consideration. It is a very spiritual, emotional, mental and physical tie based on the concept that land is not merely the biological environment, it is the ashes of ancestors and, as such, it must be preserved for future generations.[4] Indigenous communities consider their own history and culture to be closely and integrally connected to a specific ethno-habitat. It is through this land-culture connection and the ties to territories and natural resources that historical continuity with ancestors and origins can be maintained. However, there are several relevant differences between Indigenous views on territory, on the one hand, and institutional, legal and political definitions of territory, on the other. Indeed, while Indigenous conceptions are based on kinship ties, management of resources, oral histories, cultural and linguistic connections to the place, legal frameworks are based on

---

[2] In 1970, the Ontario government banned commercial fishing in the English-Wabigoon rivers – which had been a central source of income and employment for local people – posting 'Fish for Fun' signs throughout the region to discourage consumption. See Adam Mosa and Jacalyn Duffin, "The Interwoven History of Mercury Poisoning in Ontario and Japan", *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 189.12 (2017), E475.

[3] See Daniela Germano, "Health in Grassy Narrows 'Significantly "Worse' than Other First Nations: Report", *CTC News* (24/05/2018).

[4] Lori A. Colomeda and Eberhard Wenzel, "Medicine Keepers: Issues of Indigenous Health", *Critical Public Health*, 10.2 (2000), 243-256.

geographical areas defined by major political entities, such as provinces and cities, bringing along the imposed idea of nation-state. Unfortunately, in contemporary politics, the Indigenous interests and the so-called Canadian interests have often diverged and clashed, making Indigenous sovereignty and land rights weaker and weaker, while their concerns were neglected.

In this respect, the concept of environmental justice, which has attracted increasing attention in the last decades, can be said to play a central role. According to Bullard, environmental justice "embraces the principle that all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations".[5] Linking a number of social movements (anti-racism, Aboriginal rights, the environmental movement), environmental justice is based on the assumption that all individuals have the right to be protected from pollution and to live and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. Most importantly, it brings together key dimensions relating not only to sustainable development but also to social inclusion. Within the American context, for example, a landmark study, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*, showed that some communities – mainly ethnic communities – were at disproportionate risk from commercial toxic waste, something which was confirmed by later research and then led to the newly-coined term 'environmental racism'. [6]

The concept of racism in relation to natural resources has been of pivotal importance in the development of environmental justice studies in the USA, which demonstrated that racism is embedded in multiple social structures, discourses, and dominant value systems operating within society.[7] Social scientists and environmental activists concerned about pollution began to use the term 'environmental racism' in the late 1980s, specifically referring to "the intentional siting of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators and polluting industries in areas inhabited mainly by Blacks, Latinos, Indigenous peoples, Asians, migrant farm workers and low-income peoples".[8] This could be regarded as an

---

[5] Robert Bullard, "Environmental Justice: More than Waste Facility Siting", *Social Science Quarterly*, 77 (1996), 493.

[6] Benjamin Chavis and Charles Lee, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States* (New York: United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, 1987); Bullard, "Ecological Inequalities and the New South: Black Communities Under Siege", *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 17 (1990), 105-115; Paul Mohai and Bunyan Bryant, "Environmental Injustice: Weighing Race and Class as Factors in the Distribution of Environmental Hazards", *University of Colorado Law Review*, 63 (1992), 921-932; Francis Adeola, "Environmental Hazards, Health and Racial Inequity in Hazardous Waste Distribution", *Environment and Behavior*, 26 (1994), 99-126. After opposing a proposed toxic-waste site slated for a poor, largely African-American community in North Carolina, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice launched a study that revealed a disturbing pattern. Hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators and coal-fired plants were often placed in areas largely inhabited by African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and the poor. Such marginalised groups were perceived as weak, vulnerable citizens unable to rally against the poisoning of their neighbourhoods. According to the study, such targeting was often deliberate.

[7] Bullard, *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997).

[8] James Hamilton, "Testing for Environmental Racism: Prejudice, Profits, Political Power?", *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 14.1 (1995), 107.

extension of institutional racism, causing racist discrimination in environmental policymaking.[9] As such, environmental racism evolved from a community-based movement struggling to raise public awareness of unequal environmental policies affecting low-income, ethnic communities, to a scholarly paradigm focusing on racism as a structural process involving communities that lack the resources or social status to partake in decisions that affect their territories.[10]

The scientific literature on environmental justice and racism has consequently recently become well-established, including disciplines ranging from toxicology and epidemiology to sociology and economics. This framework necessarily takes into account the historical legacies of contemporary racism and white privilege, also acknowledging the significance of the concept of social class which is at the origin of an uneven distribution of political and social power.[11]

Although such studies first appeared in the US, there is a growing body of academic and scientific literature highlighting a series of cases of environmental injustice in Canada too.[12] In particular, for instance, they prove that despite the fact that Canada has the world's third largest per-capita freshwater reserve, many Indigenous communities depend on contaminated water and difficult to access reservoirs.[13] So water pollution broadly appears a very controversial issue for First Nations communities.

---

[9] Andil Gosine and Cheryl Teelucksingh, *Environmental Justice and Racism: An Introduction* (Toronto: Emond Montgomery Publications Limited, 2008), 4.

[10] In the 1970s, the environmental justice movement emerged in the USA with a series of local 'acts of resistance', mostly by poor people and ethnic communities. The movement then gathered momentum in the 1980s, and it culminated in the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. The movement's primary aim was to expose the environmental racism embedded within the policies and practices that negatively impacted some communities or groups in particular.

[11] Gary Bryner, "Assessing Claims of Environmental Justice: Conceptual Frameworks", in Kathryn Mutz et al., eds., *Justice and Natural Resources* (Washington: Island Press, 2002), 31-55; Oriana Palusci, ed., *Green Canada* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2016).

[12] See, among others, Michael Jerrett et al., "Environmental Equity in Canada: An Empirical Investigation into the Income Distribution of Pollution in Ontario", *Environmental and Planning*, A 29.10 (1997), 1777-1800; Randolph Haluza-Delay, "Environmental Justice in Canada", *Local Environment*, 12.6 (2007), 557-564; Leith Deacon and Jamie Baxter, "Framing Environmental Inequity in Canada: A Content Analysis of Daily Print News Media", in Julian Agyeman et al., eds., *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 181-202; Deacon and Baxter, "No Opportunity to Say No: A Case Study of Procedural Environmental Justice In Canada", *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 56.5 (2013), 607-623. These studies posit that socially vulnerable groups – be they ethnic minorities or low-income groups – are usually disproportionately exposed to pollution. Most importantly, they stress that environmental justice is tied to broader issues of social and political justice endorsing the marginalization of some specific groups.

[13] See Sharon Nadeem et al., "Finding a Solution to Canada's Indigenous Water Crisis", *BBC News* (26/08/2018), and, for a general reference, the regulations followed by Indigenous Services Canada and First Nations Health Authority. In Canada, it is the federal government's responsibility to ensure that First Nations peoples living on reserve lands have safe and clean drinking water and proper wastewater systems. Under the Canadian Environment Protection Act, Environment Canada – the Department that coordinates environmental policies and programmes – is responsible to ensure the clean-up of hazardous waste, developing standards, guidelines and protocols for wastewater systems, while the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is responsible to provide funding for the construction, operation and maintenance of wastewater treatment facilities (see Gosine and Teelucksingh, *Environmental Justice and Racism*, 39).

Since the federal government was aware of the water quality and the severe health problems suffered by the Grassy Narrows community, it can be argued that the institutional refusal – or delay – to take responsibility for ensuring clean drinking water and a safe environment for food sources (mostly deriving from fish) can be deemed as a case of environmental racism. The federal government's lack of action was a practice that, intentionally or unintentionally, affected community members, treating them as second-class citizens. Indeed, generally speaking, whenever government decisions might affect the rights of First Nations communities, Canadian law requires a process of good faith consultation and accommodation of Indigenous concerns – in some cases it requires that no action be taken except with the consent of the affected peoples.[14] The case of Grassy Narrows would have urged the government to apply the highest standards of protection to their rights. Instead, the community was left unheard for decades, seeking justice while paying the price of systemic racism in state legislation and sovereignty with their health. Reflection on how events happened and were handled might allow an understanding of the extent to which Canada is complicit in forms of environmental racism, producing effects of displacement to which Indigenous people are subjected. This may critically question the image of Canada as a fair and just society – which continues to prevail, even if it is contradicted by policies that appear somehow rooted in neo-colonial, racist attitudes and practices towards Indigenous peoples.

2. Framing Environmental Justice through News Discourse: A Theoretical Perspective

Media research on environmental justice integrates reflection on geographical space and environment into theories on social processes and politics, critically thinking about how differences in ecological, economic, political and social conditions are produced, while evaluating how such differences are portrayed and discursively construed by the media.[15] This seems crucial since most people learn about environmental justice/injustice from the media, that act as a filter, either as a constructor or as a silencer of environmental disputes and issues. In this respect, affected communities may suffer from under-representation – resulting in general indifference or serving to perpetuate environmental inequity. Therefore, news discourse seems worth being investigated to examine and monitor how the media react to some critical events and what overall impact they have at a local scale. Especially when concentrating on areas that tend to be geopolitically remote in relation to centres of power, media research has approached the complex weave of people, nature, geography and politics in terms of

---

[14] See Amnesty International, "Grassy Narrows", *Indigenous People in Canada*, https://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/indigenous-peoples/indigenous-peoples-in-canada/grassy-narrows, last accessed 20 November 2018.

[15] David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 5.

environmental justice rather ambivalently. Indeed, when justice and geography are at stake, media *misframing* can become a major source of injustice, as a form of misrepresentation occurring when some social groups or individuals are denied access to just representation due to their geographical location and political status.[16] Injustices are often (un)recognised as such in relation to the status of people, which is directly connected to the media as much as politics.

The importance of considering the intricate connections between news media and Indigenous people – in cases of environmental justice – is often underscored. According to some scholars, environmental disasters receive increasing attention when they impact white, higher-income communities or neighbourhoods.[17] In other words, news media tend to treat members of Indigenous communities as "un-people", unimportant and, therefore, unworthy of coverage.[18] The way ethnic diversity is covered – or, as some view it, undercovered – also points to an economic undergirding of the media industry, marginalising environmental issues when poor and/or ethnic communities are involved.[19] Framing thus appears crucial. How cases are approached, construed or silenced, the amount of attention given to them, the perspective included in the reporting, are all relevant factors when critically analysing media and news discourse.

Scientific literature on media, Indigenous people and environment – whether in the Canadian context or not – has mostly focused on climate change.[20] In fact, Indigenous people often inhabit areas that are most exposed to shifts in the environmental context as far as acute climate change effects are concerned. The topic of climate change has usually been addressed in terms of climate justice, as an ethical issue, linked as it is to global equality, human rights, political responsibilities and marginalisation. While discursively framing legal disputes in the domain of environmental pollution

---

[16] Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia U.P., 2008), 114.

[17] Teresa Heinz, "From Civil Rights to Environmental Rights: Constructions of Race, Community, and Identity in three American Newspapers' Coverage of the Environmental Justice Movement", *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 29 (2005), 47-65.

[18] Valerie Alia, *Media Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Psychology Press, 2004); Alia, "Un/Covering the North", *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 33-34 (2006), 179-198.

[19] Rodney Benson, "American Journalism and the Politics of Diversity", *Media, Culture and Society*, 27.1 (2005), 5-20.

[20] See, among others, Conny Davidsen, "Amazon Struggles in the Global Media Age: Framing and Discourses in Environmental Conflict", in Simon Cottle and Libby Lester, eds., *Transnational Protests and the Media* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 172-184; Katherine De Onis, "'Looking both ways'. Metaphor and the Rhetorical Alignment of Intersectional Climate Justice and Reproductive Justice Concerns", *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, 6.3 (2012), 308-327; Anna Roosvall and Matthew Tegelberg, "Misframing the Messenger: Scales of Justice, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Media Coverage of Indigenous People and Climate Change", in Elizabeth Eide and Risto Kunelius, eds., *Media Meets Climate* (Nordicom: Sweden, 2012), 297-312; Roosvall and Tegelberg, "Framing Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples", *International Communication Gazette*, 75.1 (2013), 392-409.

and justice, media can and do play a pivotal role in amplifying or downplaying individual and social perceptions of risk about hazardous facilities in First Nations territories.[21]

Since, as is evident, great interest lies in the concepts of *dominance* and *inequality*, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was privileged for this investigation,[22] paying attention to the discursive strategies employed, as they are "systematic ways of using language […] at different levels of linguistic organization and complexity to achieve a certain social, political, psychological or linguistic aim".[23] In the attempt to achieve a series of multifaceted aims, language sustains discourse, and as such, it constitutes a central means by which discourses are conveyed to reproduce the existing order of things. In this context, the basic assumption is that all texts and discourses bear the mark of power, defining and maximising/minimising issues.[24] In any society, "there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated or implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse".[25]

3. Corpus Description and Methodology

This article aims to contribute to the scientific research in the above-mentioned field, examining the discourses embedded in the news coverage of a case of mercury contamination that poisoned the ecosystem upon which the First Nation community of Grassy Narrows depended. On 1st January 2017, the Canadian press started to cover the news again following declarations by the chief of Grassy Narrows, Simon Fobister, who urged Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to publicly engage the federal government in the clean-up of the river, after several letters had gone unanswered.

The paper thus takes into account the most recent developments of the issue – a dispute that bears important consequences, at different levels, for both the community and the Canadian government – analysing the news reports published afterwards, from early 2017 to early 2018. More specifically, the paper compares and contrasts the media construal of the political actors involved and the event as conveyed, on the one hand, by national, broad-scale newspapers – namely, *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* – and, on the other hand, by the local newspapers from one of the largest metropolitan areas and major regions across Canada, Ontario, where Grassy Narrows is situated. Newspapers were

---

[21] Sarah Wakefield and Susan Elliott, "Constructing the News: The Role of Local Newspapers in Environmental Risk Perception", *The Professional Geographer*, 55.2 (2003), 216-226.

[22] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 1995).

[23] Michael Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Anti-Semitism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 386.

[24] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

[25] Ibid., 93.

selected among the wide range of dailies published in Canada following three criteria: they had to be a major daily with the highest circulation rates in their regional market, available electronically and published in English. Accordingly, the following newspapers were comprised in the corpus: *Toronto Star*, *Ottawa Sun*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *The Hamilton Spectator*, *Chronicle Journal*, *Cornwall Standard Freeholder*, *Thunder Bay Chronicle*, *Simcoe Reformer*.[26] Despite the fact that, for pragmatic reasons, the latter were labelled as 'locals' (constituting a sub-corpus to be contrastively investigated with the 'nationals' sub-corpus), it is worth noting that every major city and/or region in Canada is home to dozens of papers which tend to have wide readerships.[27]

This study draws on a qualitative and quantitative investigation of the texts comprised in the corpus, which is meant to examine differences and similarities in the reporting while also examining how the news is framed in relation to the main themes tackled by newspapers, in the first place, and issues of visibility/invisibility as forms of violence, in the second place.[28] Special emphasis is then given to potential debates on governmental responsibilities and the concept of environmental racism which, according to many views, plays a pivotal role in how First Nations communities are treated in the country.[29]

Searching for the string 'Grassy Narrows' in the online archive LexisNexis, about 120 news reports could be retrieved and included in the corpus.[30] Table 1 provides an overall numerical overview on the *GrassyNarrows* corpus, detailing the number of news reports and tokens in each sub-corpus, the *GrassyNarrows_Nationals* and the *GrassyNarrows_Locals*.

	Nationals	Locals	Total
No. of news reports	12	104	116
No. of tokens	4,389	64,126	68,515

Table 1. Corpus information

---

[26] See News Media Canada, "Daily Newspaper Circulation Data", https://nmc-mic.ca/about-newspapers/circulation/daily-newspapers, last accessed 20 November 2018. The article does not take into account First Nations newspapers not only because they had lower circulation rates – while analysis of the articles retrieved from national and local newspapers' was meant to highlight the most widespread construal of the event – but also because they would expectedly (and understandably) privilege one particular perspective in their reporting, portraying the case as a major crime.

[27] In the Canadian context, newspapers continue to be an important source of information for Canadians: 50-60% of the population read them daily and over 80% read a newspaper once a week: See News Media Canada, "FAQ About Newspapers", http://www.newspaperscanada.ca/about-newspapers/faq-about-newspapers, last accessed 20 November 2018.

[28] Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Rosamund Moon, "'Curvy, Hunky, Kinky': Using Corpora as Tolls for Critical Analysis", *Discourse and Society*, 21.2 (2010), 99-133; Paul Baker et al., *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013).

[29] Deacon et al., "Environmental Justice: An Exploratory Snapshot Through the Lens of Canada's Mainstream News Media", *Canadian Geographer*, 59.4 (2015), 419-432; Roosvall and Tegelberg, "Framing Climate Change and Indigenous Peoples".

[30] See LexisNexis (2018), https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic, last accessed 20 November 2018. The archive gives access to the full texts of documents, without images and media files.

An initial comparison of the amount of news reports published by the different types of newspapers can then be drawn, shedding light on a greater coverage by Canadian local newspapers resulting both from the number of articles as well as the number of tokens – also signalling that articles are, on average, longer texts and possibly offer more in-depth overviews.

4. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The first step of analysis was carried out with a meticulous, qualitative reading of all the articles comprised in the *GrassyNarrows* corpus – amounting to a total of 116 news reports – paying attention to the most recurrent topics and social actors in the news reports, examining how they are discursively represented. Such investigation seems relevant in that it may uncover how the overall meaning of media texts and the recurrent themes mentioned in connection to Grassy Narrows are shaped.

4.1 The 'GrassyNarrows_Nationals' sub-corpus

Starting with the *GrassyNarrows_Nationals* sub-corpus, it is worth noting that the two national newspapers, *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post*, published a very limited number of news reports: in fact, only 12 articles could be retrieved, amounting to less than 10% of the texts included in the whole corpus. Such figures provide an important initial indication of the newspapers' – overall scarce – coverage of the issue.

Extensive reading allowed the identification of some key topics, that were then double-checked with quantitative (statistical) information provided by the online platform Sketch Engine.[31] Table 2 details the first thirty keywords that were extracted as multi-words, ordered by their keyness score. Such keywords are meant to help analysts understand what are the main topics of the corpus.[32]

---

[31] Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine", in Williams Geoffrey and Sandra Vessier, eds., *Proceedings of the 11th EURALEX International Congress: EURALEX 2004* (Université de Bretagne-Sud: Lorient, 2004), 105-116.

[32] The keywords thus retrieved evidence how the corpus under investigation differs from a reference corpus. Sketch Engine uses, by default, general language corpora as reference corpora to represent non-specialised language.

Rank	Multi-word	Score
1)	mercury poisoning	2,902
2)	paper mill	2,840
3)	english-wabigoon river system	2,031
4)	ongoing source	1,829
5)	remediation action plan	1,688
6)	environmental group	1,542
7)	mill site	1,514
8)	mercury contamination	1,489
9)	conservation-advocacy group	1,344
10)	old paper mill	1,344
11)	disused paper mill	1,344
12)	mercury remediation	1,344
13)	conducting mercury tests	1,344
14)	expanded mercury testing	1,344
15)	paper company	1,343
16)	provincial government	1,343
17)	chemical plant	1,341
18)	action plan	1,339
19)	comprehensive remediation action	1,338
20)	toxic leak	1,335
21)	federalist game	1,317
22)	causing ongoing health problems	1,313
23)	cleanup efforts	1,313
24)	proper support	1,298
25)	working group	1,270
26)	river cleanup	1,269
27)	full assessment	1,261
28)	supporting role	1,260
29)	prime minister	1,247
30)	provincial issue	1,244

Table 2. Keywords retrieved from the *GrassyNarrows_Nationals* sub-corpus

As Table 2 shows, national newspapers tend to concentrate their reporting, in the first place, on mercury poisoning and contamination, providing full details on the leakage that destroyed the eco-system of the English-Wabigoon river system and heavily affected Grassy Narrows community – by quoting a number of studies, surveys and testimonies. In doing so, they mainly put the blame on the paper mill which caused this disaster, as some concordances retrieved from the corpus exemplify.

1) Few have endured hardships like those suffered in Grassy Narrows, where 90 per cent of residents are showing signs of *mercury poisoning*. (*Globe and Mail*, 2/01/2017)

2) Strangely, though, 90 per cent of the people of Grassy Narrows still suffer from *mercury poisoning*, at the highest levels in Ontario. (*Globe and Mail*, 16/01/2017)

3) A retired *paper-mill* worker confirmed … that mercury had been dumped there in the past. (*Globe and Mail*, 17/01/2017)

4) Researchers have reported that more than 90 per cent of the people in Grassy Narrows and the Wabaseemoong First Nation show signs of *mercury poisoning*. (*National Post*, 14/02/2017)

5) A report commissioned by Grassy Narrows … revealed there is ongoing *mercury contamination* in the area from a paper mill in Dryden, Ont. (*National Post*, 3/03/2017)

Both *The Globe and Mail* and *National Post* acknowledge the current situation in which almost the totality of the population shows signs of mercury poisoning, and they further support their reporting by frequently citing a former worker at the paper mill who confirmed the dumping of mercury occurred back in the 1970s.

Moreover, while constantly reminding that the ongoing mercury poisoning was caused by the paper mill in Dryden, national newspapers aptly avoid any reference to the government's responsibilities (mostly for its lack of action and intervention). Interestingly, instead, great emphasis is given to the government's good intentions and laudable initiatives to clean up the river system in the future – regardless of the past five decades. In fact, the keywords retrieved from Sketch Engine signal high score values for lexical items such as 'remediation action plan', 'clean-up efforts', 'comprehensive remediation action', among the others (see instances 6-8 from concordances).

6) the government is conducting *expanded mercury testing* around the site of an old paper mill in the province's northwest in the hopes of *cleaning up* an area that has left a First Nation plagued with mercury poisoning for more than 50 years. (*National Post*, 14/02/2017)

7) the government … is now *testing the entire mill site*. "We are completely committed to working with all partners to identify all potentially contaminated sites." (*Globe and Mail*, 14/02/2017)

8) the federal government is a key partner in creating and implementing a *comprehensive remediation action plan*. (*National Post*, 3/03/2017)

Besides stressing the government's good intentions, promoting its initiatives to support remediation and amend the ecological disaster in Grassy Narrows, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau seems to sharply hint at the provincial government's responsibilities, thus shifting attention from the federal government (as is evident from example 9 below).

9) the Prime Minister described mercury contamination at Grassy Narrows First Nation as 'very much' an Ontario issue. (*National Post*, 03/03/2017)

Among the many promises to be firmly committed to do everything in his power to solve the health crisis and give proper support to Grassy Narrows community, Trudeau highlights that, although it is a provincial issue, the federal government, under his leadership, "is certainly very engaged with the province to ensure [they] are moving forward in the right direction" (*National Post*, 3/03/2017). As a

matter of fact, national newspapers lend themselves to the blame game, devoting space in their reporting to an official source, such as the Prime Minister, who is simply passing the buck. However, it is also worth noting that unlike the *National Post*, *The Globe and Mail* occasionally mentions the fact that responsibility for the mercury problems straddles provincial and federal jurisdictions. It then admits that, although the province of Ontario has borne much of the blame for the contamination, federal responsibility can also be traced as far as the health of First Nations is concerned (since it falls under the monitoring activities of Health Canada).

4.2 The 'GrassyNarrows_Locals' sub-corpus

The *GrassyNarrows_Locals* sub-corpus comprises the great majority of texts – namely 104 – not only because it includes more newspapers (eight) but also due to the fact that such newspapers covered the event with a higher number of news reports compared to the national papers.

Qualitative reading of the articles combined to quantitative investigation carried out through Sketch Engine allowed a comprehensive identification with statistical confirmation of the main topics and themes tackled by the local newspapers. Table 3 lists the first thirty keywords that were extracted as multi-words, ordered by their keyness score.

Rank	Multi-word	Score
1)	mercury contamination	5,791
2)	mercury poisoning	5,787
3)	paper mill	5,779
4)	river system	5,778
5)	treatment centre	5,762
6)	mill site	5,760
7)	ongoing source	5,743
8)	provincial government	5,727
9)	environment minister	5,708
10)	mill property	5,695
11)	mercury contaminated soil	5,686
12)	loss of muscle coordination	5,684
13)	ongoing mercury contamination	5,667
14)	impaired peripheral vision	5,641
15)	cognitive damage	5,609
16)	mercury problem	5,383
17)	stinging pain	5,317
18)	cord blood	5,290
19)	gross neglect	5,261
20)	mercury cleanup	5,250
21)	compensation fund	5,193
22)	liberal government	5,175
23)	symptoms of mercury poisoning	4,994
24)	elevated mercury exposure	4,874
25)	environmental commissioner	4,801
26)	dump site	4,729

27)	potent neurotoxin	4,685
28)	appropriate investigative action	4,617
29)	impaired speech	4,608
30)	social environmental catastrophe	4,581

Table 3. Keywords retrieved from the *GrassyNarrows_Locals* sub-corpus

What surfaces very clearly in the *Locals* sub-corpus is an overt attention to the mercury contamination involving Grassy Narrows and, above all, the consequences and diseases resulting from it. Indeed, great emphasis is given to the several medical conditions and impairments affecting members of the community, as some concordances retrieved from the sub-corpus show in the examples below.

1) The symptoms of *mercury poisoning include impaired peripheral vision, muscle weakness, impaired speech, hearing and cognitive function and numbness or stinging pain* in the extremities and mouth. (*The Hamilton Spectator*, 20/11/17)

2) Reportedly 90 per cent of the community suffers from some form of *mercury poisoning*…. While early research suggested *mercury poisoning* could only occur through direct ingestion, recent studies indicate it can be passed on to children through the placenta. The *mercury poisoning* in Grassy Narrows is now inter-generational. Children are literally being born into suffering and death from *mercury poisoning*. (*Toronto Star*, 23/11/17)

3) The people of Grassy Narrows, including children, continue to bear the *physical and emotional scars of mercury contamination*. (*Thunder Bay Chronicle*, 28/11/17)

4) Physical symptoms of *mercury poisoning* include *loss of muscle coordination and tunnel vision*. Fetuses are particularly vulnerable to *cognitive damage*. (*Toronto Star*, 29/11/17)

5) A 2016 study … found those with cord blood mercury levels greater than 7.5 ppb were four times more likely to have an IQ score below 80, the clinical cut-off for borderline intellectual disabilities. (*Toronto Star*, 13/02/18)

As is evident, in the local newspapers' reporting, great space is devoted to scientific studies and surveys on both mercury contamination and the seriousness of the symptoms and impairments resulting from mercury poisoning.

However, in addition to scientific data, the newspapers also allow community members to tell their stories, voicing their current disabling conditions and diagnoses (see instances 6-10), thus heavily relying on the emotional aspects of the event. This strategy seems to somehow counterbalance the cold 'scientific facts' of other (mostly national) news reports, resulting in a potentially enhanced involvement of readers.

6) Fobister, whose hands and feet ache daily, says something else about the symptoms: "They will never go away…. His cousin Steve has been diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease…. He has become dependent on a feeding tube to survive, his family says. His daughter, Sherry, has symptoms, too – as do her mother, her 18-year-old daughter and 10-year-old son." (*Thunder Bay Chronicle*, 20/11/17)

7) Bill Fobister says his granddaughter, Betty, needs a speech therapist and physical therapist. Both he and Betty get mercury board disability benefits … adding that his sense of taste and smell are gone and his hearing is poor. (*Toronto Star*, 29/11/17)

8) Betty is forced to use a wheelchair and is unable to speak…. But there is no specialised care for her in Grassy Narrows First Nation…. So [she] lives with a foster family in Fort Frances, Ont., a town 280 km from her parents, siblings … and culture. (*Toronto Star*, 29/11/17)

9) Chrissy Swain was one of hundreds of infants who, between 1970 and 1992, had their umbilical cord blood tested for mercury by the federal government…. Swain grew up with problems that could be attributed to mercury poisoning. Her mother took her to a doctor as a toddler because she was clumsy. Into adulthood, her hands began to tingle. Today, she can't open bottles. (*Toronto Star*, 13/02/18)

10) Fisher, who is 31, … says she experiences dizziness and gets the shakes. Her hands often turn numb, as if they have fallen asleep…. "Sometimes I'm scared of driving, I'm scared I can't feel my hands […]," she says, adding she once accidentally dropped a knife and cut her hand…. When she talks about holding her newborn daughter she begins to cry. (*Toronto Star*, 13/02/18)

By providing detailed descriptions of people's highly debilitating diseases and the resulting complications in their everyday lives, local newspapers allow their readerships to almost 'experience', in their turn, the challenges faced by members of the community, forcing them to realise the extent to which their lives were made to change without them being even aware of it. Accordingly, Grassy Narrows residents are interviewed, their words extensively quoted, thus strengthening readers' sense of involvement and sympathetic identification with them. Several community members claim they feel violated and wronged since the government was well informed about the mercury contamination but it restrained from admitting it for decades, which resulted in one of the worst cases of gross neglect in Canadian history.

Indeed, local newspapers do emphasise federal/provincial responsibilities in (mis)handling the case, downplaying the extent of mercury poisoning, releasing false statements and making (unrealised) promises. While independent scientists sounded alarms over the years, governments invariably reiterated that the river was cleaning itself naturally and that there was no source of neurotoxin – official spokespersons claimed there was no evidence to suggest that mercury levels in the river system

were such that further remediation was needed beyond natural recovery (as emerging from the instances below).

11) The Province admitted in the legislature Tuesday that it had received an updated report about mercury contamination at the Dryden pulp mill last fall, but didn't say why it apparently didn't share the report's contents with Grassy Narrows First Nation. (*Thunder Bay Chronicle*, 15/11/2017)

12) Ontario's government has had a report in hand about mercury contamination upstream from the Grassy Narrows First Nation for more than a year, but the Premier says she didn't see it.… The report was received by the government in September 2016, but it apparently never made its way to Premier Kathleen Wynne. (*Simcoe Reformer*, 16/11/2017)

13) Until recently, provincial officials had said *the site was not an ongoing source of mercury* to the river system. Scientist John Rudd has said that, historically, paper mills have been known to be sources of contamination long after they stopped using mercury in the paper-bleaching process. (*Toronto Star*, 5/02/18)

14) In 2015 an environment ministry staffer assured community leadership in an email that "*the Dryden pulp mill is not a source of mercury*". This echoed what another ministry spokesperson told the public around that time: *there is "no evidence to suggest that mercury levels in the river system are such that any remediation … is warranted or advisable"*. In late 2016, Ontario's environment minister announced the province had searched for the *barrels* and concluded they *did not exist*. (*Toronto Star*, 5/02/18)

15) The province did not explain why it took one year to confirm *The Star*'s results. The underground metal 'anomalies' were detected in October by a government worker who scanned the area with a hand-held electromagnetic surveying device. (*Toronto Star*, 5/02/18)

Instance 15) specifically refers to a survey jointly carried out by *The Star* and the environmental advocacy group Earthroots which had the soil tested in 2016 and found that it showed mercury readings up to 80 times natural levels. According to the newspaper, the provincial government knew in the 1990s that mercury was visible in soil under the mill site but never told community residents. For decades, politicians maintained that the river would clean itself naturally, while test results from soil, fish and river sediment revealed there were still dangerously high levels of mercury.

This is a crucial point in the local newspapers' reporting of the case of Grassy Narrows. The *Toronto Star*, for instance, is very straightforward on it, referring to 'plausible deniability' and pleas of ignorance as a tactic to provide impunity to people in power (19/11/2017). The newspaper goes so far

as to frame the issue in terms of 'environmental racism'.[33] In fact, it further argues, if mercury contamination were found in the water supply of an upscale Toronto neighbourhood, it seems unlikely it would be allowed to poison peoples' lives for three generations. Grassy Narrows poisoning is, therefore, explicitly termed as a crime against humanity, appalling, heart-rendering, shameful, rage-inducing (*Toronto Star*, 23/11/2017). In this context, it is portrayed as a moral and legal question, something that started as negligence and then became a form of persecution through continuing harm. In the words of Stephen Bede Scharper, Professor of Environment and Anthropology at the University of Toronto, "the experience of Grassy Narrows must be understood as part of the legacy of decades of mistreatment of Canada's Indigenous people by the government and industry" (*Toronto Star*, 23/11/2017).

Accordingly, local newspapers uncover the fact that the government has been concealing the report and term this omission as a form of treachery; people were not only deceived, but then paid the price of such a misdeed with their own health. They further resort to official sources from the community, such as the Environmental Coordinator for Grassy Narrows, Judy Da Silva, stating "they should have told us, it's not all on [Kathleen Wynne]. We are used to people not treating us like humans, as if we are not worth it" (*Cornwall Standard Freeholder*, 16/11/2017). While noting Ottawa has turned a blind eye to this environmental disaster, the local press urges the government to acknowledge that if the institutional negligence of the past cannot be changed, there should be a moral obligation to find credible solutions.

One of the solutions mentioned by the press – which also emerges as a pivotal topic from the analysis of news reports – is the need to provide Grassy Narrows population with a treatment centre addressing the health issues related to mercury poisoning on the reserve, so that people will not have to travel to other (more or less distant) centres to receive care (see examples 16-19 below).

16) The prospect of a treatment facility for Grassy Narrows residents suffering from the effects of mercury poisoning is to be discussed in Toronto today at a special meeting, as pressure to establish a facility mounts. (*Chronicle Journal*, 29/11/17)

17) "I beg the government to make a commitment that they will do something in our community for the sake of those who are suffering." Fobister and other Grassy Narrows leaders are in Toronto this week to ask provincial and federal officials to help build a care home for survivors. (*Toronto Star*, 29/11/17)

---

[33] To such extent, the newspaper draws a comparison between the case of Grassy Narrows and the Holocaust, in terms of knowing and not knowing, highlighting people's responsibilities for knowing more than they somehow acknowledged about the genocide.

18) "We've been requesting this for years and years", said Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister. "The government of Canada has stepped up to build a mercury home and treatment centre for our people." (*The Hamilton Spectator*, 30/11/17)

19) For four years, Grassy Narrows leaders have been asking for help for survivors of the industrial pollution that has sickened the community for decades.… Now it appears that, subject to a feasibility study, the federal government will build a treatment centre that can provide palliative care, physiotherapy, counselling and traditional healing to those suffering from mercury poisoning.… The treatment facility can't be built soon enough." (*Toronto Star*, 30/11/17)

As is evident, such aspect is addressed with urgency. Chief Simon Fobister has long pressured the federal government to plan and fund a new facility with specialised equipment on the premises of the reserve so that people who continue to bear the physical and emotional scars of mercury contamination, can receive treatment closer to home. This is something to which local newspapers devote great attention, unlike the national press.

Similarly, the local press also tackles the social consequences of the river poisoning.

20) Since the mercury was dumped in the river more than 40 years ago, the neurotoxin has sickened generations…. It has also had tremendous social impacts. The pollution decimated a robust fishing industry and many of the people in Grassy Narrows, who worked as guides, lost their jobs. (*Toronto Star*, 30/11/17)

Indeed, some newspapers note that in Grassy Narrows, time can be measured in two blocks – before and after the mercury was dumped. Before, most people worked in the local fishing and trapping industries, catering to tourists taking daytrips to catch walleye. After, everything changed, the jobs disappeared, and the community became plagued with intractable problems, such as poverty, alcoholism, drug addiction, and suicides.

5. Conclusions

By taking into account the case of Grassy Narrows, this study seeks to contribute to current research on environmental conflicts across media discourse in the Canadian context. If media discourse is said to hold a central role in how legal disputes are re-contextualised and framed to encourage citizens' involvement on public policy issues,[34] the way the environmental disaster of Grassy Narrows was

---

[34] Girolamo Tessuto et al., eds., *Frameworks for Discursive Actions and Practices of the Law* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

discursively construed can certainly offer a lens to investigate which power relations are enacted and reinforced when vulnerable groups are involved. Indeed, examination of such relations permeating news discourse can provide insights into how society is constituted, shedding light on questions of visibility and invisibility as forms of violence that embed acts of institutional racism.

A contrastive qualitative and quantitative analysis between the national and local press in Canada has allowed the identification of some major differences, mostly pertaining to how the event was linguistically depicted, what topics were recurrently tackled in relation to the specific case, which voices were (or were not) reported, narrated and heard.

The sub-corpus of national newspapers – which, in itself, comprised a very limited number of news reports, signalling an equally limited press coverage at national level – principally concentrates on one particular topic: mercury poisoning and contamination, supported by evidence from a series of studies and surveys. While all blame for the disaster is on the paper mill, there is hardly any reference to the government's responsibilities in managing the event. On the contrary, the national press seems to praise the government for its good intentions to clean the river system – despite its lack of action and intervention in the past five decades. Therefore, newspapers tend to downplay threats to the Indigenous community's health, minimising (or muting) issues concerning environmental injustice with the rhetorical support of institutional spokespersons (their primary, authoritative sources) providing reassurances that all measures have been taken to guarantee the residents' safety and health, following national laws and regulations. In line with this trend, readers are aptly given more information and factual details about the positive initiatives launched by the government in terms of remediation and/or compensation.

The local newspapers, on the other hand, provide their readerships with a much more articulated reporting of the event, offering an array of perspectives to report the case of Grassy Narrows. Mercury contamination is certainly the central topic, but unlike the national press, it is always related to the diseases and medical conditions affecting community members and the seriousness of their symptoms and impairments. Such aspects are additionally emphasised by resorting to ordinary people's testimonies and interviews which call on readers' emotional involvement and sympathetic identification with the victims of this environmental injustice. Accordingly, the local press highlights the government's responsibilities (both at federal and provincial level) and their false statements when claiming that the river system was recovering naturally. This institutional denial and the subsequent pleas of ignorance are explicitly described as a strategic move to dismiss – and, eventually, divert – responsibilities in the mishandling of the case, while covering 'uncomfortable knowledge' about

mercury contamination in Grassy Narrows.[35] In doing so, local newspapers manage to bring such uncomfortable knowledge back into policy debates and environmental discourses, thus counteracting its prior exclusion. By amending the misinformation spread by media, they undermine the national newspapers' (more or less intentional) campaign to build public trust in the government's work which seemed to aim at maintaining a status quo – whether depending on political conservatism, preserving national self-image and so forth – despite the threats posed by an ongoing environmental disaster.

Most importantly, the sub-corpus of local newspapers addresses the complicated and politically sensitive issue of environmental racism which appears not just as a concept or an abstract notion, but as a practice that is inherent in institutional policies. Indigenous populations experience the violence of environmental racism, negligence and degradation as something occurring gradually, over time, and out of sight – unlike other forms of violence manifesting themselves with immediacy and sensationalism. Varying degrees of visibility/invisibility are then ingrained in the representational strategies enacted to report the case of a community suffering from mercury poisoning for over five decades. To a certain extent, Grassy Narrows residents found themselves victims of a partial invisibility and collective amnesia. They were forgotten, their stories faded out of (some part of) mainstream media, through a process which allowed the Canadian Society to selectively leave behind the predicament of a particular people and place. This is a clear example of how amnesia may pervade language and discourse, something which can, in turn, become a signifying metaphor of the violence of social neglect and silent abuse.

If, over the last decades, there has been a surge of environmental conflicts and legal disputes in news discourse – mostly due to the key role played by media in framing and, thus, defining controversies, marking what counts as relevant, implying blame and recognition, inferring causes to explain why something occurred – what increasingly emerges is the need to address such disputes critically, as battlegrounds where discursive struggles between oppositional tensions take place. While discourses are produced and reproduced in the public sphere through competing narratives which are closely related to major agenda items, they also provide coherence and meaning to social events. In doing so, discourses can affect people's perceptions and value orientations, setting the parameters for policy debates. Therefore, investigating news discourse on environmental conflicts in Canada offers a critical lens to explore both the complexities and inherent ambiguities of the country.

---

[35] Steve Rayner, "Uncomfortable Knowledge: The Social Construction of Ignorance in Science and Environmental Policy Discourses", *Economy and Society*, 41.1 (2012), 107-125.

Anna Mongibello

Land Rights in Mediatized Indigenous Legal Discourse.
The Kinder Morgan Pipeline Expansion

Abstract: In the years 2016-2018 a number of protests conducted by the Indigenous peoples of Canada against the controversial expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline was framed in the Canadian news discourse as a conflict involving the First Nations, the federal government and the provincial government of Alberta. The dispute over pipeline regulations, environmental risks and Indigenous land rights saw First Nations peoples arguing against the government of Canada and the government of Alberta as the new expansion would further aggravate water and air pollution on Indigenous sacred lands; while the Liberal Party's leader and PM, Justin Trudeau, had promised to make environmental assessment credible again, the government approved plans to build pipelines on lands whose ownership is still hotly contested. Based on the assumption that the media acts as a proxy for personal contact with the legal system and that legal language plays an important role in the construction, interpretation, negotiation and implementation of legal justice, the present paper intends to investigate the mediatization of Indigenous Law, i.e. the construction and dissemination of legal knowledge on Indigenous land rights in online news discourse for global consumption.

Keywords: *legal language, mediatization, Indigenous Law, legal knowledge, dissemination, online news*

1. Introduction

It was November 2016 when Canada's PM and leader of the Liberal Party Justin Trudeau announced the approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, a $6.8 billion project in operation since 1953 to transport crude oil across North America. The project implied turning the 53-year-old pipeline into a massive tanker port that would triple the capacity of crude oil barrels transported per day (from 300,000 to 890,000). The aim was to bring the Alberta oil sands to the Pacific coast, running 1,000 km from Northern Alberta to the port of Vancouver, so as to ensure that oil exports reached Asia, with a consistent reduction of reliance on the United States market. According to Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, one of the protagonists of the debate and supporter of the initiative, the Trans Mountain pipeline was in the best interest of both Alberta and Canada. However, this was a hotly contested plan, because the expansion would have run over Indigenous ancestral lands in Alberta and British Columbia, ending on the Salish Sea, part of the hereditary territory of the Squamish People, where

some of the world's largest wild salmon runs. The announcement resulted in Indigenous nations mounting legal challenges and organizing protests all across Canada.

Similar issues are not new to Indigenous peoples, who have never stopped fighting, in Canada as well as elsewhere, over their sacred lands. Although it may sound redundant to point out that Indigenous fights for land rights are to be traced back into Canada's colonial past (or present?), it is however necessary to remember that much of the current federal territory lays on former Indigenous lands. These were either ceded through very controversial treaty policies back in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, or forcibly dispossessed, without even being conquered by war or signed away through a treaty.[1] Most of these lands reside, for instance, in British Columbia, where Indigenous peoples control only 0.36% of the territory, while the settler share is the remaining 99.64%.

As Miller highlights:

> Treaties between the Crown and Aboriginal Peoples are one of the paradoxes of Canadian history. Although they have been an important feature of the country since the earliest days of contact between the Natives and the newcomers, relatively few Canadians understand what they are or the role they have played in the country's past.[2]

Just to mention two examples, not too long ago, in 2006, the Nuunchah-nulth Nation protested against the expansion of the Sea-to-Sky Highway at Eagleridge Bluffs (British Columbia), that would have eased access to Whistler during the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. The overland route ended up destroying thousands of acres of Indigenous sacred land. More recently, starting from 2012, Idle No More, an Indigenous mass movement, has crossed Canada from side to side, mobilizing non-violent marches to support the fight for established land and water rights, threatened, at the time, by former PM Stephen Harper's repressive, anti-Indigenous, policies. Hence, the conflict between the Canadian government, on the one hand, and the Indigenous nations, on the other, has been going on for years, if not centuries, often leading to critical tensions between the protesters and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and to legal disputes.

Besides being a matter of land dispute, the conflict deriving from the expansion of existing pipelines also poses an environmental problem, since Canadian tar sands (or oil sands) are one of the

---

[1] See Steffi Retzlaff, *Tradition, Solidarity and Empowerment: The Native Discourse in Canada* (Verlag: Ibidem, 2005).

[2] James R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3.

world's largest sources of climate pollution.[3] These are deposits of bitumen, a very dense and viscous form of petroleum mixed with sand and clay that occupy 21% of the province of Alberta. The extraction of oil through mining and drilling is carbon-intensive and results in massive greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, in Alberta, huge amounts of fresh water, needed for the process, are pumped from the Athabasca River, sacred to the Athabasca First Nation. Since the water becomes toxic after the extractions, it cannot be given back to the river; therefore, it is retained into extremely polluted ponds which nonetheless let pollutants leak through the soil into the groundwater system. Therefore, not only the areas surrounding the tar sands working sites are highly contaminated, but also those crossed by the pipelines are exposed to a number of accidents, mostly in the form of oil spills.

As we have seen so far, both the occupation of disputed Indigenous lands and the environmental hazards resulting from the extraction and transportation of crude oil that threaten sacred territories have made the dispute between the Canadian and Albertan government, on the one hand, and the First Peoples on the other, critical. What made it even more contentious, though, is the complex relationship between the Indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands, that is not to be understood in terms of possession but of mutual belonging. In other words, the First Peoples are linked to their lands in a relationship of mutual assistance, care and respect, which is also the source of much Indigenous Knowledge and Law. For this reason, technically and according to Indigenous Law, sacred lands cannot be ceded nor dispossessed, because neither the Indigenous peoples themselves nor the Canadian government are entitled to own them in the first place.

Considering the above mentioned context, this study concentrates on the examination of some recent representations of the 2016-2017 dispute between the federal and provincial governments, and the First Nations over further expansions of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. By using the tools of Corpus Linguistics in a discourse-analytical perspective, our intent is to investigate the mediatization of Indigenous Law, i.e. to see how legal knowledge of Indigenous land rights is constructed in and disseminated through news discourse for global consumption, in light of the contrast between the language of the official legislations endorsed by the Canadian government and that of Indigenous sovereignty.[4] For our case study, we have chosen to consider, comparatively, the news reported on two very popular online news platforms, CBC.ca and APTN.ca, in the years 2016-2018, marking the beginning and the end of the coverage.

---

[3] See Oriana Palusci, "River of Hell: Athabasca Tar Sands Narratives", in Palusci, ed., *Green Canada* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 67-85.

[4] Daniel Joyce, "Human Rights and the Mediatization of International Law", *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 23 (2010), 507-527.

2. Mediatizing Legal Knowledge

It seems useful, at this point, to provide a broad definition of legal language as it is one of the key points in this study. According to Bhatia, legal language is the language in which the law is learnt and, as such it is the legal language of law.[5] As Bhatia et al. remark, legal language "plays an important role in the construction, interpretation, negotiation and implementation of legal justice."[6] Some of its characteristics, although with significant differences across cultures and languages, include frequent use of ordinary words with specialized meanings, use of Latin words and phrases along with other archaic expressions, doublets, unusual prepositional phrases, formality and precision.[7] The list could be even longer, should we dig deeper into the analysis of linguistic structures. However, suffice it to say that being it a highly specialized language, its syntactic and lexical features make the understanding of legal texts difficult for non-experts. Because of its complex nature, legal language has been thoroughly investigated by legal philosophers, while it is only recently that, as Bhatia remarks, it has exercised some attraction on linguists and discourse analysts as well. Forensic Linguistics, for examples, flowered in the 1990s with collections of reports on language and the law.[8] Also, in the last twenty years, some pioneering works have been published by scholars such as Bhatia and Candlin, Maleyand many others.[9] Their works look into the complexities of legal language, its linguistic and discoursal properties, along with issues regarding its production, translation and interpretation.

Despite being a highly specialized discourse, legal language does not pertain exclusively to specific contexts of usage (such as the court). Through the media, especially in the form of print/online newspapers, television, social networks and other forms of media discourse, legal knowledge is circulated. Hence, the distance between ordinary, lay people and legal experts is significantly shortened. In this sense, the media works as a site for the construction of specialized knowledge for ordinary, non-expert, audiences, who, otherwise, would have no contact with the law. In this study, we therefore make use of the concept of "mediatization" as theorized by Joyce, in reference to "the dynamic involved in the shaping of international legal forms, discourses and processes",[10] or, to put it simply, the translation of the law for global audiences.

---

[5] K. L. Bhatia, *Textbook on Legal Language and Legal Writing* (New Delhi: Universal Law Publishing, 2016), 2.

[6] K. L. Bhatia et al., *Legal Discourse Across Cultures and Systems* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong U.P., 2008), 9.

[7] Anna Trosborg, "Rhetorical Strategies in Arbitration Law", in K. L. Bhatia et al., *Legal Discourse Across Cultures*, 12.

[8] John Gibbons, ed., *Language and the Law* (London: Longman, 1994).

[9] Vijay K. Bhatia and Christopher Candlin, "Analysing Arbitration Laws Across Legal Systems", *Hermes*, 32 (2004), 13–43; Yon Maley, "The Language of the Law", in John Gibbons, ed., *Language and the Law* (London: Longman, 1994).

[10] Joyce, "Human Rights", 516.

When the media acts as a proxy for personal contact with the legal system, a number of processes take place at the level of language and discourse.[11] Not only legal language, but highly specialized languages in general, are popularized by means of linguistic strategies meant to recontextualize special knowledges so as to make them 'understandable' to ordinary people. Scholars such as Gotti, Calsamiglia, Williams, Garzone and Tessuto have looked into various popularization strategies, including some rhetorical and textual devices, such as exemplification and reformulation, or use of hedges, verb choices and modality.[12] However, from the perspective of linguistics, not much has been said about the connection between the law and the news, either in the form of newspaper, television or online news. Only few researches into court reporting, for instance, have considered the language of the court and the news[13] or, more generally, the uneasy relationship between the courts and the media,[14] but, as Johnston remarks, these studies are often legal-centric, in that legal academics or judges lead the debate.[15]

The process of dissemination that the media enacts also intertwines with the framing of disagreements and tensions. In our case, as we will see, legal disputes are defined and redefined through different narratives and framings, which result in the altering of "the naming and blaming among constituents".[16] This commonly happens, for instance, in the wider arena of news discourse where environmental conflicts are constructed through an ongoing process of assessing and reassessing issues, meant to negotiate, persuade and redefine meanings, to develop understandings that vary from one producer of information to another.[17]

---

[11] Lieve Gies, *Law and the Media: The Future of an Uneasy Relationship* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007).

[12] Christopher Williams, "The 'Popularization of Law' and 'Law and Plain Language': Are there Two Separate Issues?" in Susan Kermas and Tgomas Christiansen, eds, *The Popularization of Specialized Discourse Across Communities and Cultures* (Bari: Edipuglia, 2013); Maurizio Gotti, "The Analysis of Popularization Discourse: Conceptual Changes and Methodological Evolutions", in Kermas and Christiansen, eds., *The Popularization of Specialized Discourse*; Giuliana Garzone, "Investigating Blawgs through Corpus Linguistics: Issues of Generic Integrity", in Gotti and Simone Giannoni, eds., *Corpus Analysis for Descriptive and Pedagogical Purposes: ESP Perspectives* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014); Helena Calsamiglia, "Popularization Discourse", *Discourse Studies*, 5.2 (2003), 139-146; Girolamo Tessuto, "Legal Problem Question Answer Genre Across Jurisdictions and Cultures, *English for Specific Purposes*, 30 (2011), 298-309. See also Tessuto et al., eds., *Frameworks for Discursive Actions and Practices of the Law* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

[13] Steve Chibnall, *Law-and-Order News* (London: Tavistock, 1977).

[14] Rhonda Breit, "How the Law Defines Journalism", *Australian Journalism Review*, 20.1 (2008), 13-25.

[15] Jane Johnston and Rhonda Breit, "Constructing Legal Narratives: Law, Language and the Media", *ANZCA* (2010), 135-155.

[16] Linda Putnam and Martha Shoemaker, "Changes in Conflict Framing in the News Coverage of an Environmental Conflict", *Journal of Dispute Resolution*, 1.10 (2007), 1-10.

[17] Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

2.1 Indigenous legal discourse

Most of the above mentioned works focus on legal English and make reference to common law. On the contrary, in this research paper, what we intend to examine is whether and how Indigenous legal knowledge trespasses the threshold of the court and enters into the arena of online news discourse. According to John Borrows, Indigenous Law originates in the political, economic, spiritual, and social values expressed through the teachings of the elders. These principles are enunciated in stories, ceremonies and traditions that differ across nations. They pre-date common law and consist in rules for conflict resolution and broad principles of living.[18] Indigenous Law is sacred to Indigenous peoples and has been shared orally. Because of its 'narrative' origins, in the years of colonization it was overlooked by common law and obscured by Canadian Law. However, Indigenous legal traditions have resisted colonialism: in Canada, Indigenous Law is recognized today by Canadian courts as a legitimate source in formulating legal principles dealing with Aboriginal rights, although Indigenous peoples are still fighting for the recognition of their own sovereignty, law and entitlement to their sacred lands.

To date, not much research has been done in the area of Indigenous legal knowledge conveyed in English from a linguistic point of view, although some Indigenous scholars have started to work on Indigenous Law from anthropological, juridical and sociological perspectives.[19] To the best of our knowledge and in spite of the relevance of the topic, no other study has investigated Indigenous legal language using a combination of Corpus Linguistics tools and Critical Discourse Analysis. Regardless of the lack of previous studies, in this context, we refer to Indigenous legal language as specialized legal knowledge conveyed in English, influenced by Indigenous cultures and languages. Because of its cultural specificity and uniqueness, it presents significant differences in lexicon, phraseology and other syntactical features compared to the language of other legal systems. The legal traditions of the Mi'kmaq people, for instance, are rooted in ecological relationships. This is also evident from Mi'kmaq language which is built on the identification with the land. Given the changeability of the ecosystem, their language is centered on verbs and privileges states of being rather than noun-based categories. This feature reflects in Mi'kmaq legal system as well, that is flexible and informed by the experience of the land, the spiritual connections with the ecosystem and its knowledge. Regardless of the various Indigenous legal traditions, the relationship with the land is the foundation of all Indigenous rights.

---

[18] John Borrows, "With or Without You: First Nations Law (in Canada)", *McGill Law Journal*, 41 (1996), 629-665.

[19] See Julie Macfarlane, "Commentary: When Cultures Collide", in Catherine Bell and David Kahane, eds., *Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal C*ontexts (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

While this paper does not specifically address the nature nor the features of Indigenous legal language in general, in light of the above premises, what is of interest to us are the modes of mediatization, i.e. the ways in which Indigenous legal language is translated for global audiences in our case study, i.e. the framing and reframing of the dispute between the government of Canada and the Indigenous peoples as reported in Canadian online news with regard to the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion in the years 2016-2018.[20] In this context, we refer to "dispute" as "a situation in which the two sides held clearly opposite views concerning the question of the performance or non-performance of certain treaty obligations", according to the definition provided by the International Court of Justice.[21] Our research, then, moves within the gap left by previous literature, in order to offer a possible analytical framework for gathering insights into how an environmental dispute is reproduced in online news stories and legal knowledge is popularized.

3. Research Methods and Corpus Design

For the purpose of the present study, we have chosen Canadian online news as our field of enquiry, since today this is the biggest source of information.[22] Another reason motivating our choice is connected to the nature of our case study, that takes into account Indigenous news. This includes news about Indigenous peoples produced both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous broadcasters and newspapers. While non-Indigenous newspapers and television networks abound in Canada, Indigenous-administered TV networks are not as many. The latter may be reduced to one, the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), the only television network made by and for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Although Indigenous media include several hundred local radio stations and a number of newspapers, such as *Windspeaker* and *Birchbark*, their reception is difficult and the printed newspapers are almost impossible to find. On the contrary, APTN, besides being now a popular basic cable TV channel, is also an online news platform, where Indigenous-related news circulate in the form of online news reports of easy access, mostly covering the same topics as the newscasts. In this sense, APTN.ca provides an important alternative news source for those who want to explore another perspective besides the mainstream one. Therefore, for our analysis, we have chosen to focus

---

[20] Many scholars have contributed to theorizing the concepts of frames and framing. See the seminal study by Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern U.P., 1974) and the studies by Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1980) and Todd Gitlin, "The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[21] International Court of Justice, 65, at 74, 17 I.L.R. 331 (1950).

[22] According to a report by Nic Newman et al., "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017" (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2017).

on APTN.ca news. At the same time, we will also consider online news stories taken from one mainstream information platform, CBC.ca, the English-language online service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Canada's leading national TV network.

In the past twenty years, many studies have explored online journalism and the new practices of news production and consumption.[23] What emerged is that online news is a stream of information published on digital platforms that may exist in different electronic forms, including webcasts, news alert services, news tickers, e-journals, weblogs, new trackers and emails, all mainly characterized by compression and a new style of language. This is tailored to the audience and draws from the language of broadcast news, with oral presentation styles, and, in general, a more conversational approach that is reflected into lexical and semantic choices. One of the characteristics of online news is its simultaneous individualization and globalization, in that it has a global reach while 'talking to' individual consumers. It also integrates writing, sound, image and video, differentiated by the hypertext that creates multiple layers of content and numerous levels of details.[24]

Having set the narrower field of investigation, the present study is led by the following research questions:

1. Is Indigenous legal knowledge mediatized in online news discourse?
2. How is Indigenous legal knowledge used in the framing of the conflict between the Indigenous peoples and the Albertan/federal governments over pipeline expansions? What are the discursive strategies employed in the framing of the dispute?

In order to address the above questions, two small corpora of online news stories have been specifically designed, compiled and named for the purpose of the analysis. The Environmental CBC News Corpus (ENV-CBC-NC) comprises 85 online news reports published between January 1, 2016 and September 1, 2018 on cbc.ca, for a total of 58,337 words. The timeframe corresponds to the beginning, the climax and the end of the coverage at the time when the news stories were searched and collected. The reports were retrieved from the online database LexisNexis, using "kinder morgan" and "pipeline" as query words. Similarly, the Environmental APTN News Corpus (ENV-APTN-NC) contains 85 online news reports published during the same timeframe on APTN.ca for a total of 58,737 words. The reports were collected manually from the above website and copied into separate plain text documents. In fact, no online database includes online news items from APTN.ca, since it is not a popular mainstream

---

[23] See Michael Karlsson and Jesper Strömbäck, "Freezing the Flow of Online News: Exploring Approaches to the Study of the Liquidity of Online News", *Journalism Studies*, 11.1 (2010), 2-19.

[24] Diana Lewis, "Online News: A News Genre?", in Jean Aitchison and Diana Lewis, *New Media Language* (London: Routledge, 2003).

website. APTN.ca offers, though, a tool for searching through news reports published from 2012 on. The same query words were used to retrieve the APTN reports. Both corpora are small and specialized in that they comprise fewer than a million words.

Since the purpose of the analysis is to highlight lexical, semantic and discourse choices, while we do recognize that news discourse is multimodal in nature, it was decided to not include visual data such as photos and other graphic features. The two corpora have been investigated using a framework that combines Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics.[25] In doing so, the analysis examined frequencies and statistically significant lexical patterns in the corpora under investigation as well as their expanded concordances, taking into account collocations. Collocability was determined through mutual information (MI), a method that favors content words that, compared to function words, more clearly indicate discourse prosodies.[26] The investigation was also informed by notions of keyness and semantic prosody. Keyness refers to the level of significance of higher or lower frequencies (keywords). Keyness values were generated automatically based on log-likelihood calculations. Keyword analysis was therefore employed to find out which words were significantly most frequent in each corpus and to determine whether Indigenous legal terms were used, while the analysis of collocates provided indications of semantic prosody, i.e. the associations of a given word or phrase with other words or phrases which are positive or negative in their evaluative orientation.[27] Two software programs were used in this study: *Sketch Engine*[28] was employed as a corpus manager and text analysis software and *Termostat*, an online tool allowing the extraction of candidate terms and clusters from a corpus employed for the analysis of legal terminology.

4. Indigenous Law in the APTN News Corpus (ENV-APTN-NC)

Our analysis starts by addressing the first research question. In order to do so, we retrieved a list of keywords from the ENV-APTN-NC. For our keyword analysis we chose the International Corpus of Canadian English (ICE-Can) as a reference corpus, given the context of interest.

---

[25] Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Sage, 2001); Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995); Teun van Dijk, *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1988); Paul Baker et al., *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013).

[26] Baker and Costas Gabrielatos, "Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding: A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996-2005", *Journal of English Linguistics*, 36.1 (2008), 5-38.

[27] Susan Hunston, "Evaluation and the Planes of Discourse: Status and Value in Persuasive Texts", in Susan Hunston and Geoff Thompson, eds., *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2000), 176–207.

[28] Adam Kilgarriff et al., "The Sketch Engine: Ten Years On", *Lexicography,* 1 (2014), 7-36.

Rank	Occurrences	Keyness	Keywords
1	519	3447.392	pipeline
2	310	1986.015	indigenous
3	305	1946.241	morgan
4	290	1933.536	kinder
5	651	1600.049	said
6	230	1461.592	trudeau
7	299	1372.800	project
8	3855	1370.893	land
9	228	1296.542	mountain
10	218	1266.475	trans
11	204	1121.056	nations
12	202	1045.547	nation
13	137	919.699	aptn
14	150	872.986	expansion
15	299	815.060	government
16	125	763.512	burnaby
17	140	709.290	chief
18	1928	636.488	to
19	295	533.512	first
20	136	531.523	rights
21	153	502.773	minister
22	74	496.772	justin
23	109	465.584	oil
24	77	464.445	manuel
25	77	443.503	peters
26	138	416.753	federal
27	91	414.017	camp
28	141	397.618	national
29	86	366.154	prime
30	622	356.068	on
31	104	337.818	court
32	114	324.467	water
33	77	322.734	band
34	48	312.538	pipelines
35	46	308.804	secwepemc
36	72	305.704	billion
37	47	287.759	chiefs
38	46	286.445	treaty
39	188	286.169	canada
40	56	279.900	consultation
41	83	274.443	energy
42	83	273.575	communities
43	59	270.703	indian
44	76	268.377	environmental
45	100	256.992	news
46	51	256.936	territory
47	50	246.317	consent
48	82	236.924	process
49	35	234.960	afn
50	271	232.611	will

Table 1. List of keywords in the ENV-APTN-NC sorted by keyness rates

Expectedly, the most salient words in this corpus are also the query terms used to retrieve the reports ("pipeline" and "kinder morgan"), followed by content words related to the Kinder Morgan plan, such as "project", "oil" and "expansion". We also found that "mountain" and "trans" are keywords, since the name of the expansion project is "Trans Mountain Pipeline", owned until August 31 2018 by the Canadian division of Kinder Morgan Energy Partners. Along with these words, the highest positions of the chart are occupied by the main social actors in this coverage: "indigenous", "trudeau" and "nations". However, there is an overuse of "indigenous" in this corpus, compared to the ICE-Can, suggesting that, as expected and in line with the nature of the network, APTN.ca journalists favour an all-Indigenous perspective in the narration of the events.

Interestingly, another very salient word is "said", with the strongest collocates of the query, based on the number of co-occurrences, being inverted commas. In 401 cases, APTN journalists report quotations from statements by Indigenous representatives such as Bobby Cameron, regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations in Saskatchewan and Dustin Khelsilem, council member at Squamish Nation. Another relevant collocate of "said" is "we", used here as an inclusive pronoun by the spokespeople representing the anti-expansion First Nations:

> Anti-pipeline activists are planning to flood the offices of 100 MPs across Canada on Monday, calling on the federal government to rescind its 'outrageous plan' to buy Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain project. "*We* can't let our tax dollars go to a project that violates Indigenous rights and would threaten our shared climate," reads the "day of action" event description. (APTN.ca, 4/06/2018)

Conversely, the co-occurrences of "said" and "Trudeau" are only 30 out of 209, which means that in 14% of the cases the words of the PM are picked up by APTN journalist, while there are only 6 co-occurrences of "Notley" and "say*", meaning that Alberta Premier's statements are even more underrated. One possible interpretation of the data is that Trudeau's and Notley's words are not perceived as newsworthy as the words by First Nations representatives that, at the same time, are more interesting to APTN.ca readers.

Once established that the perspective privileged in the narration of the events by APTN journalists is one that sympathizes with Indigenous positions, we can turn to the analysis of legal terms. We compared the longer keyword list featuring 200 keywords (that we could not reproduce here for space constraints) against a list of 100 Indigenous legal terms, compiled using *TermoStat*. The corpus was a collection of 10 different pieces of legislation taken from the *First Nations Gazette*.[29] This is an important online information source providing public notice of First Nation laws, by-laws, land codes, and other First Nation legislation, that serves as the authoritative reference for Indigenous Law. The comparative analysis resulted in a list of 40 Indigenous legal terms, occurring both in the ENV-APTN-NC and in the *First Nations Gazette* (Table 2). We found out that about 20% of the longer keyword list is made of legal terms also related to the field of Indigenous Law. At the same time, we conducted a manual search for frequencies on the ENV-APTN-NC to see which terms presented the highest raw frequency counts. In completing our ultimate list (Table 3), we excluded the terms occurring less than 10 times as we did not find them statistically relevant:

---

[29] First Nations Gazette (2018), http://www.fng.ca, last accessed 30 November 2018.

Item
accordance
agreement
amend
appeal
apply
approval
approve
arbitration
authorize
Band
chief
community
comply
concern
conflict
consent
consultation
council
decision
description
determine
dispute
Duty
equipment
govern
jurisdiction
Land
Law
licence
limit
meeting
property
protection
reserve
resolution
resolve
resource
respect
Rule
Title

Table 2. List of common legal terms in the ENV-APTN-NC and in the *First Nations Gazette*

Item	Occurrences
chief	187
land	112
band	89
decision	78
community	67
consultation	64
council	63
Law	59
approval	56
agreement	54
resource	52
consent	50
Title	49
concern	45
meeting	43
approve	41
jurisdiction	25
respect	24
Duty	19
Rule	18
protection	13
property	11

Table 3. List of the most recurrent legal terms in the ENV-APTN-NC based on raw frequency

If we observe Table 3, we will notice that the list contains two groups of sub-technical terms: words that either refer to legal concepts in both a general or specialized way ("law", "council" etc.), depending on the context of usage; and words having a specialized meaning while also being used in everyday language ("chief", "land", "band", "meeting", "property" etc.). This translates into the hypothesis that references to Indigenous Law are made in APTN.ca news reports via sub-technical terms that are also used in common, everyday language and are therefore familiar to all readers. For the purpose of the analysis, we focused on three key legal concepts recurring in the ENV-APTN-NC: "chief", "land" and "consultation".

In this corpus, "chief" is used only as a culturally significant and specialized word. Collocates of "chief" were retrieved sorting one span on the right. The results show that the strongest pattern, based on MI score, in this corpus is {*Chief* + [proper noun]}, as in the following example:

> We have governance laws based on consensus that were given to us from–in our case in Secwepemcul'ecw, from **Chief Coyote**, and the old ones, those teachings of consensus. The proper decision-makers are the people who hold that title collectively amongst our Nation. (APTN.ca, 3/10/2018)

By means of a semantic redetermination, the meaning of this word, now capitalized, is re-defined by the context and therefore gets a technical connotation. In fact, the noun is used as a modifier of a name in reference to a person who detains a political and cultural power within Indigenous communities. Among Indigenous nations, chiefs are political leaders that deal with a number of issues, fundamental to the lives of band members. Other collocates in the position of pre-modifiers are "grand" (8.57 MI) and "national" (6.92 MI), that are the maximum political authorities whose influence is recognized within and across Indigenous nations. APTN.ca journalists report on chiefs' actions, since the term occurs as the subject of lexical verbs such as "prefer", "instruct", "remove", "gather", "lead" and "sign". The data confirm the initial findings, i.e. APTN.ca leans towards a perspective that privileges Indigenous points of view shared by Indigenous authorities.

The second most frequent sub-technical term and keyword in this corpus is "land", a culturally loaded term in Indigenous worldviews and a legal term in Indigenous Law. As previously stated, land does not merely equate "territory". On the contrary, land as a culture-specific term, is part of Indigenous spirituality and ways of life, a site of belonging rather than a space to own, possess or control. Native lands are sacred since they guard and preserve Indigenous cultural memory. As a legal term, "land" is used in this corpus both as a noun and in the position of pre-modifier of "claim" and "right". Collocates of "land" include "unceded" (9.20 MI), "stolen" (7.23 MI) and "reserve" (6.46 MI). The phrase "unceded land" refers to traditional Indigenous territories that have not been ceded through treaties, but, nevertheless, have been occupied by the British Crown. A closer reading of the reports reveals that, in the coverage of the pipeline expansion and consequent protests, APTN.ca journalists rely on the "legitimate vs. illegitimate" frame: in doing so, they make use of the concept of "unceded land" to represent the pipeline expansion as illegitimate because it violates land rights. Therefore, within such a frame, the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion is represented as unlawful. As a matter of fact, the phrase "unceded land" occurs in the surroundings of other legal terms such as "law" and "dispute", as in this extract:

> Manuel and many others maintain Canadian laws used to force unwanted development on ***unceded Indigenous lands***, including the use of force to physically remove Indigenous people from defending their lands and waters, do not respect the Supreme Court of Canada's own rulings or international law. On Sunday night Manuel signed off her Facebook live stream in saying: "The ancestors are with us as we stop this pipeline and defend everything that is sacred to us." After a two week break, the Kinder Morgan pipeline dispute was on the minds of members of parliament today in Ottawa. (APTN.ca, 15/07/2017)

Here the narration of the dispute relies on the mediatization of the concept of "unceded Indigenous lands" to build a crucial conflict between two main social actors: the government of Canada that does

not respect the rulings of the Supreme Court and the International Law, on the one hand, and the Indigenous peoples who are physically removed from their own lands, on the other. In another extract, the phrase "unceded Algonquin territory" is employed to further dramatize the tension and fortify the contrast between the Canadian government, whose parliament lays on sacred Algonquin land, and the Indigenous peoples gathered in Ottawa to protest against the pipeline expansion. Since that land is technically unceded, as the journalist remarks, Indigenous protesters have all rights to be there and fight the pipeline:

> "As Indigenous people we are born embedded into the land. The land is sacred to our people and is the location of our spiritual reality," White-Eye told the 300 or so people gathered at Parliament Hill, *on unceded Algonquin territory*. "The western people believe the land and resources should be available for development and extraction for the benefit of the human. We all struggle with the consequences of their actions," she continued. "We need the government to know and understand that" (APTN.ca, 5/12/2018)

Emphasis is also put, in another report, on the decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada in favor of Indigenous land rights. By reporting the words of a legal expert (Law professor Nicole Schabus), the journalist aims at clarifying why Indigenous peoples are entitled to protest against the pipeline. His/her explanations recontexualize Indigenous legal discourse and provide an interesting example of popularization, in that the reporter aims at making sure that the legal terms employed are understood properly:

> Since then, multiple Supreme Court of Canada decisions have strengthened Indigenous Peoples' land rights, title and jurisdiction in decision-making processes about what happens on their *unceded territories* where no treaties exist that give title to the Crown. At least four Secwepemc First Nations along the pipeline route have signed onto the project, but Schabus says Aboriginal title and jurisdiction belong to the Secwepemc people themselves – not the bands established under Canada's Indian Act – and the people are the "proper rights holders." (APTN.ca, 12/07/2018)

According to Calsamiglia and Van Dijk, scientific knowledge is recontextualized in a context other than that where it was originally produced, in order to be accessible to the lay public.[30] In our case, through the use of periphrasis, the writer introduces the concept of "unceded territories" into the narrative and explains that this is where no treaties exist. In this sense, the journalist works as "an

---

[30] Helena Calsamiglia and Van Dijk, "Popularization Discourse and Knowledge about the Genome", *Discourse and Society*, 15.4 (2004), 369–389.

active participant in the production of novel information and new opinions",[31] in that legal knowledge is included in the narration in order to legitimize Indigenous resistance to the pipeline expansion.

Another worth-noticing case is that of "consultation". The term refers to the "duty to consult and accommodate" doctrine, which is part of a process of dealing and reconciliation, a rule that requires the government to consult with Indigenous communities before making administrative decisions that could have an impact on their rights. While nominalizations are usually very common in legal English in spite of verbs when referring to actions,[32] here the noun seems to represent an instance of reformulation:

> Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr told reporters Thursday the Trudeau government believes it only needs to accommodate and *consult* First Nations before proceeding with major resource development projects and not obtain "free prior and informed consent." It's a position at odds with Supreme Court of Canada rulings which have stated that obtaining consent is part of the *consultation* spectrum the Crown faces when dealing with First Nations on issues that impact rights, title and territory. (APTN.ca, 4/11/2016)

In this case, the journalist introduces the complex issue of First Nations consultation and consent. The query term is preceded by the corresponding verb "consult" occurring with "accommodate". The nominalization ("consultation") stands out as a form of reformulation for clarification purposes, in that it seems to offer another chance to the readers to understand what has been previously stated. Also, by means of opposition, the reporter inserts into the discourse the contrasting positions between what has been stated by Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr, in representation of the Canadian government, and the rulings of the Supreme Court of Canada. Such an opposition relies on a different interpretation of the rulings themselves, that the journalist introduces by unpacking the language of the Court, using paraphrase and the spectrum metaphor. The concept of the spectrum refers to a decision by the Supreme Court of Canada on the *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* court case, when the province of British Columbia issued a number of tree farm licenses without consent of the Haida people, who claimed they had owned the land for more than 100 years.[33] The Supreme Court decided that the province had a duty to consult with the Haida people and suggested a significant accommodation of their interests. In that case, the Court found that the Crown has a duty to consult with Aboriginal peoples and accommodate their interests proportionately to the strength of the claim for a right or title and the seriousness of the potential effect upon the claimed right or title. The Haida

---

[31] Gotti, "Reformulation and Recontexualization in Popularization Discourse", *Ibérica*, 27 (2014), 15-34.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, "Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)" (2004), https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/2189/1/document.do, last accessed 30 November 2018.

Spectrum, therefore, refers to the fact that consultation is conducted on a spectrum from low to high. In the extract above, the metaphor is recontexualized, in that it migrates from the discourse of the Supreme Court into that of APTN.ca news. In so doing, it undergoes a process of oversimplification, since in the report the spectrum is "faced" by the Crown, whereas, as we said, the concept refers to the estimated degree of consultation (from giving notice to participating into the decision-making process).

What is even more significant, though, is that by addressing the Haida Spectrum, the reporter is evoking the leading decision of the Supreme Court of Canada on the duty to consult Aboriginal groups which legitimizes, again, Aboriginal concerns and protests against the Kinder Morgan expansion. The intent is remarked by the opening sentence ("it's a position at odds with Supreme Court of Canada rulings"), which unveils the writer's strategy of legitimation and negative evaluation of Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr's positions.

5. A Comparative Analysis of the CBC News Corpus and the ENV-APTN-NC

The aim of this section is to verify whether different strategies of representation of the conflict occur in the ENV-CBC-NC compared to the data retrieved from the analysis of the ENV-APTN-NC, specifically with regard to the use of legal terms pertaining to Indigenous Law. In other words, our intent is to check if CBC.ca makes use of the same terminology we spotted in the news coverage by APTN.ca and how the terms related to Indigenous Law are used in the discursive construction of the events narrated by CBC.ca journalists. In so doing, we applied the same procedure used in the previous section. Thus, we firstly retrieved a list of keywords from our focus corpus using the ICE-Can as a referent:

Rank	Occurrences	Keyness	Keywords
1	542	3607.250	pipeline
2	403	1985.874	project
3	697	1791.684	said
4	250	1667.944	kinder
5	4037	1635.783	the
6	253	1604.214	morgan
7	230	1311.689	mountain
8	221	1288.069	trans
9	174	1029.545	expansion
10	205	1024.102	oil
11	331	955.952	government
12	153	954.232	trudeau
13	151	935.643	indigenous
14	139	934.592	â
15	2012	754.625	to
16	205	738.437	federal
17	166	566.672	minister

18	184	566.398	alberta
19	84	526.636	headline
20	98	473.131	nations
21	67	450.487	notley
22	118	449.806	energy
23	66	433.439	pipelines
24	114	431.463	decision
25	59	386.596	neb
26	335	383.431	will
27	57	383.250	justin
28	84	376.816	projects
29	87	372.559	prime
30	55	369.802	morneau
31	53	356.355	horgan
32	85	347.201	ndp
33	51	333.095	barrels
34	55	304.362	cbc
35	588	304.118	on
36	71	300.936	billion
37	53	298.399	burnaby
38	191	296.740	canada
39	67	295.939	construction
40	45	293.001	singh
41	93	287.762	court
42	89	272.559	body
43	98	264.002	company
44	39	262.224	enbridge
45	74	259.258	environmental
46	1137	257.613	in
47	38	255.500	bitumen
48	39	252.942	trump
49	64	247.332	nation
50	38	246.269	oilsands

Table 4. List of keywords in the ENV-CBC-NC sorted by keyness rates

Similarly to the ENV-APTN-NC, the highest ranks are occupied by the query terms used to retrieve the reports from LexisNexis. However, there is an overuse of words referred to federal social actors, ("government", "minister", "prime"), including names of politicians ("trudeau", "notley", "morneau" and "horgan"), presenting high rates of LL score. The data show that they are much more common in this corpus compared to the reference corpus. Even more significant is the much lower position occupied by "nation" (#20), contrary to what we observed in the keyword list retrieved from the ENV-APTN-NC, where "nation" featured as 10th. Another striking difference is the absence of Indigenous-related terms referring to non-governmental, Aboriginal authorities, such as "band" and "chief" in the first 50 positions, whereas the high LL scores and also raw frequency counts of governmental references may suggest that the most accredited and reported voices in this corpus are those coming from Canadian authorities (Justin Trudeau and Rachel Notley, more than others). Consequently, it seems safe to assume that the perspective embraced in the coverage of the pipeline expansion by

CBC.ca journalists is one that leans towards official representatives of the government rather than other social actors.

In order to check whether our hypothesis is correct, we need to dig deeper in the analysis of collocates. The word sketch tool provided by *Sketch Engine* allows us, for instance, to see that "government" occurs 70 times as an object and more than double the times (181) as the subject of verbs such as "approve" (12), "announce" (9), "say" (9) "do" (5), "promise" (2). Pre-modifiers of the query term show that "government" alternatively refers to the "federal", "Alberta", "B.C." or "Canadian", the former being the most recurrent (82 occurrences and 8.58 of MI score). While the government of Alberta is portrayed as an ally of the federal government, the representation of the provincial government of British Columbia is focused on the conflict between the latter and the federal one, with "opposition" being the strongest collocate (9.02 MI). This means that within the arena of social actors, the federal government is the one being more credited by the journalists in terms of frequency counts. Interestingly, "approve", "announce" and "decide" are also strong collocates of "government", with MI scores higher than 5.50. One possible interpretation of the data is that in CBC.ca news stories the federal government is represented as a 'doer' and its perspective is privileged, being that its occurrences range at 355. In other words, CBC coverage ties up the link between the federal government and the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion while at the same time providing an overall positive representation of this social actor. If we check the string of concordances for the pattern {*government* + [be] + [Adj.] or [V]}, we will easily notice that "be" tends to bring a positive prosody, as it is followed by items reflecting a positive evaluation, such as "willing" and "prepared". The following extract, reporting the words of the Financial Minister Bill Morneau, provides an example of this trend:

> Morneau said the federal government is willing to compensate the pipeline's backers for any financial loss due to British Columbia's attempts to obstruct the company's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. "The indemnification would allow Kinder Morgan to finish what they started, what they received federal and B.C. approval to do" (CBC.ca, 15/05/2018)

Once established that the perspective of CBC.ca news aligns with governmental positions, we can move to the analysis of legal terms and see whether legal terminology pertaining to Indigenous Law occurs and how it is used. Hence, we compared our list of 100 common legal terms in the *First Nations Gazette* against a longer list of 200 keywords to see which legal terms from the *First Nations Gazette* occur in the ENV-CBC-NC as well. As a result, in Table 5 we reported a list of legal terms from our focus corpus, occurring more than 10 times, along with their raw frequency counts.

Item	Occurrences
community	86
consultation	51
law	43
chief	39
resource	39
agreement	36
land	33
rule	25
band	23
council	18
consent	17
protection	12
reserve	12
title	11
property	10

Table 5. List of the most frequent legal terms in the *First Nations Gazette* and the ENV-CBC-NC based on raw frequency

As we can see, this list is much shorter than Table 3. Also, these are only candidate sub-technical terms that need further investigation in order to assert whether they are used as specific terminology pertaining to the field of Indigenous Law or not. While "consultation", "chief", "band" and "title" are used exclusively as Indigenous-related terms, collocate candidates retrieved for "law", "rule", "protection" and "property", based on a closer reading of concordance strings, do not show any evidence of usage as legal terms in Indigenous legal discourse. The investigation of the remaining words showed low percentages of usage as specialized terms. For instance, "land" collocates with "Indigenous", "reserve" and "defenders" 9 times, and in one case only we found the occurrence of "unceded land". The data suggest that, in the reports posted on CBC.ca, the issue of unceded Indigenous land is not a relevant topic in the framing of the dispute over pipeline expansion, whereas, in the news reports by APTN.ca journalists, this is a recurrent theme.

A list of collocate candidates was retrieved for "consultation" in order to compare the use of the legal term within the ENV-CBC-NC compared to its occurrences in the ENV-APTN-NC. More specifically, what we looked at are the pre-modifiers of the query term, since pre-modification can be the expression of evaluation. In our case, we noticed that "meaningful" is a very strong collocate candidate of "consultation" in both the ENV-CBC-NC and the ENV-APTN-NC. However, the semantic prosody differs in that in this corpus occurrences of the phrase "meaningful consultation" appear in the surroundings of verbs expressing a positive prosody and adverbs/modifiers reinforcing an overall positive stance, as in this example:

> Meanwhile, Alberta Premier Rachel Notley said she was happy to see at least one legal hurdle fall. "This
> pipeline is unlike any other in that it has been rigorously reviewed, *meaningful consultation* has taken

place and it is paired with an effective climate protection plan," she said in a statement. (CBC.ca 24/05/2018)

Here the journalist, through direct speech, reports a statement by Alberta Premier Rachel Notley who is a strong supporter of the pipeline expansion. If we consider the whole context of the phrase, the presence of positively connoted modifiers such as "happy" and "effective", and also of the adverb "rigorously" enforces a positive evaluation of the consultation process itself, which is framed as successful.

Let us now turn to the occurrences of "meaningful evaluation" in the ENV-APTN-NC: "meaningful" is still a very strong collocate (9.35 MI) of the query term, however the prosody is very different. In fact, when "meaningful" and "evaluation" occur in the same sentence, the verb is in the negative form, as you can see in this extract:

> An unnamed federal government source told The Canadian Press on Tuesday that more Indigenous groups support the project than oppose it. But some groups that did sign agreements say there was no other choice. ***Consultation process not meaningful***: chief Ditidaht is a nation of 774 members with 17 reserves. Its main community is located on the west coast of Vancouver Island. (APTN.ca 11/06/2018)

The lack of 'meaningful consultation' is reported here as the cause leading a small number of First Nations to support the project rather than oppose it, contrary to the majority of Indigenous Nations. This is one clear case of how legal terminology can be strategically employed in different discursive representations of the same event and still not produce the same effect. While in the ENV-CBC-NC the occurrences of "consultation" preceded by the pre-modifier "meaningful", in light of the semantic prosody, are meant to activate a positive evaluation of governmental positions, in the ENV-APTN-NC uses of the query term are embedded in a general project of de-legitimization of governmental positions and legitimization of Indigenous actions.

It seems quite clear, at this point, that in the coverage of the dispute by CBC.ca there is not much concern about Indigenous land rights. This is evident from the percentage of the overall occurrences of Indigenous related legal terms, and also from their semantic prosody. While, as we have already seen, some emphasis is put on the consultation process, which seems to highlight governmental efforts towards Indigenous communities, however, the other legal term co-occurring with "consultation" in the ENV-APTN-NC, i.e. "consent", is here consistently less frequent (17 vs. 50), since, *de facto*, Indigenous consent was not given by First Nations communities. In other words, apparently, more weight is attached to the whole consultation process whereas the negation of consent emerges as a

minor problem. There is, however, one attempt to shed some light on the technical meaning of the legal term by one CBC journalist, as evident from this extract:

> Earlier this year, the federal government said it fully supported the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Part of that resolution calls for the free, prior and informed *consent* over development on their land. ***So what does that mean?*** It depends who you ask. Earlier this month, Carr seemed to suggest that Kinder Morgan ***didn't require*** First Nations consent for the Trans Mountain plan. But not everyone agrees. (CBC.ca, 26/11/2016)

In this case, the use of a direct question has an engagement function in that it allows the construction of a dialogic interaction between the journalist and his/her readers. Apparently, the journalist plays the role of a mediator who owns some specialized knowledge. In compliance with the informal register of CBC reports, verb contractions are consciously chosen by the writer to establish a common ground of cooperation and create mutual understanding. Therefore, contracted forms and the use of features of spoken language ("it depends who you ask") may suggest that, in delivering legal information, the journalist is trying to facilitate the transmission of his/her own thoughts. However, no definition is provided regarding the notion of "consent". What the reporter seems more concerned about is its non-linearity and lack of clarity, which further complicates the whole issue. In other words, by engaging the reader into a dialogic interaction and by adopting an overall informal but friendly tone, the journalist seems to push towards an understanding of Indigenous consent as a non-crucial point, since nobody really knows what "free, prior and informed consent" truly means.

6. Concluding Remarks

In this paper we have attempted to analyze comparatively two corpora, the ENV-APTN-NC and the ENV-CBC-NC, both collecting online news reports posted in the years 2016-2018 on two different virtual platforms of information, APTN.ca, an all-Indigenous website and TV network, and CBC.ca, a very popular website of online news and national TV channel in Canada. All the reports focused on the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion, a very controversial project approved by the Canadian government and strongly supported by Alberta Premier Rachel Notley in 2016 which, nonetheless led to a serious dispute with the First Nations because of the infringement of Indigenous laws pertaining to land rights. The case was taken to court. The analysis took into consideration uses and occurrences of legal terminology related to Indigenous Law in order to see whether and how this is employed within the wider discursive representation of the dispute and its social actors.

The data showed that in both coverages, Indigenous legal terms are used, although in different percentages, based on raw frequency counts. While in the ENV-APTN-NC, Indigenous sub-technical terms account for 11% of the whole list of keywords, in the ENV-CBC-NC these account only for 7%. The higher percentage in the former corpus confirms the general trend of APTN.ca's coverage, leaning towards a representation of the dispute which sets the conflict between the federal government and Indigenous Nations, giving less space to Alberta's positions, and makes use of Indigenous legal terminology in order not only to explain the reasons of such a conflict but also to legitimize Indigenous actions. The issue of unceded Indigenous lands, for instance, emerges as one of the most recurrent topics, strictly connected with that of consultation and consent. We would like to argue that these are relevant legal issues in Indigenous Law, mediatized by means of a process of recontexualization that is also a form of rediscoursification.[34] In fact, the legal concepts enter a new discursive dimension, that of online news discourse, and are therefore employed in a different setting within which new meanings are construed and directed to specific audiences. In the case of APTN.ca news, the inclusion of legal terminology in the coverage of the pipeline expansion takes the whole framing of the dispute to a jurisdictional level: when recontexualizing legal knowledge, APTN.ca journalists do no simply act as mediators of information, but also as producers of meanings that affect the ways in which the dispute over the pipeline expansion is framed and received. Conversely, Indigenous related legal concepts are employed in CBC.ca's reports either to de-emphasize Indigenous involvement into the pipeline expansion debate or to delegitimize Indigenous court actions. As a matter of fact, the topic of unceded Indigenous territories does not emerge as a crucial point in the dispute. Consistently, uses of sub-technical legal terms, such as "consultation" occur in an overall positive discursive frame, with a semantic prosody that privileges verbs in the affirmative form. This strategy is meant to represent the consultation process as a successful phase in the negotiation of permits. At the same time, no real dissemination of Indigenous Law is provided, which seems to confirm the perspective of CBC.ca that favors governmental positions in the matter.

To conclude, the present research has attempted to show how legal knowledge can be recontexualized in online news discourse, and be employed, by means of lexical and semantic choices, in order to frame legal disputes in comparatively different ways, depending on the information source. Although much more could be said on the topic, we can envision further developments in the investigation of legal knowledge recontexualized in news discourse, as well as in that of Indigenous Law and Media Studies.

---

[34] Patrizia Anesa, "The Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Legal Information in Expert-Lay Online Interaction", *ESP Today*, 4.1 (2016), 69-86.

Bronwen Hughes

Being Sold down the River.
An Investigation of Conflicting Environmental Narratives
in Present-day Southeast Europe

Abstract: Over the next few years, more than 3000 hydroelectric plants will progressively invade the Balkan peninsula, with eight dams on the Albanian stretch of the Vjosa River alone and 23 so-called 'small' hydropower plants on its tributaries.

This wave of dam building across Southeast Europe has already received much of its funding from large multilateral development banks such as the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

These infrastructural projects have called into play two antagonistic groupings: on the one hand, local governments supported by international funding organizations, who claim that the projects will boost the economy and provide the country with international visibility. On the other, international environmental non-governmental organizations, together with the local populations of the designated areas, who are well aware that the dams will submerge not only their homes but also the agricultural land from which they gain their livelihood. Those who oppose the 'dam tsunami' feel that the government, thanks to the funds being provided by multilateral development banks, is working against their best interests, they are literally and metaphorically 'being sold down the river'.

By applying van Leeuwen's sociosemantic inventory and a detailed transitivity analysis to press releases published by the opposing factions, the aim of this paper is to outline the way in which the construal of represented participants' identities can enable us to access their underlying value systems and to assess which cultural, ideological and political factors have influenced agency, causality and responsibility.

Keywords: *transitivity, Systemic Functional Grammar, evaluative language, multimodality*

1. Introduction

To those of us whose interests do not lie in the field of contemporary geopolitics, the Balkan peninsula may well bring to mind only images of the violent warfare that characterized the region throughout the 1990s, or the oft-published statistical data regarding illegal immigration routes into the European Union in the early 2000s.

Better known today as 'Southeast Europe' (SEE), instability and vulnerability are still foundational traits of this topographical area.

In itself the regional denomination SEE is porous, stretching and shrinking to include more or fewer countries, depending on the institutional body with whom the Balkan states interact: the World Bank, for example, only incorporates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia within SEE, whereas the World Health Organisation also includes Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova, but excludes Kosovo.[1]

Apart from the uncertainty regarding geographical confines, the peninsula's latent vulnerability also stems from the fact that Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia are all EU candidate countries, with Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina as potential candidates. The status of 'candidate country' and to a greater extent 'potential candidate country' clearly entails a need to fulfil expectations and measure up to standards set by others; in this case the political, economic, administrative and institutional accession criteria and the legislative *acquis communautaire* established by the European Commission.

The rather subservient condition of the South East European states is further enhanced by their having signed the Energy Community Treaty, whose mission is to create an integrated, pan-European energy market. Besides being 'candidates' they thus also become 'Contracting Parties committed to implementing key EU energy law'.[2] Again, the term 'contracting parties' points to a condition of acquiescence, the need to comply with terms and agreements established elsewhere, by others.

Both the implementation of pre-accession instruments and the Energy Community framework grant the European Union and other international organizations a considerable amount of leverage over the SEE states, whose driving aim is to access EU membership within the briefest possible delay, and hence to comply with all the norms that govern political, social and economic integration. Consequently, a number of powerful multilateral development banks and international agencies such as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, have been actively involved in monitoring economic development in the area for over twenty years.

The energy sector is just one of the areas in which the influence of the World Bank and other agencies with gate-keeping duties over investments and loans is heavily felt, especially due to the focus

---

[1] World Health Organization, "South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN)", http://www.euro.who.int/en/about-us/networks/south-eastern-europe-health-network-seehn, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[2] Energy Community, "Creating an Integrated and Sustainable Pan-European Energy Market" (2018), https://www.energy-community.org/, last accessed 28 November 2018.

on renewable energy sources underlined by the Energy Community Treaty and the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement – signed and ratified by all SEE countries.

And it is precisely in the field of renewable energy sources, specifically hydropower, that a little-known environmental battle is currently raging throughout the Balkan peninsula.

Known as 'the Blue Heart of Europe', the peninsula boasts some of the longest and wildest rivers in Europe where endemic flora and fauna still live in pristine conditions, and riverine agriculture and livestock farming are "economically significant, both in terms of value added and employment",[3] yet in recent years a 'hydropower tsunami' (phrase initially coined by Ulrich Eichelmann, CEO of the Riverwatch NGO) has hit the region with large scale dams and small scale hydropower stations being built along the main rivers and their tributaries.

The two parties to the environmental conflict, on the one hand the funding bodies, the World Bank group and other multilateral development organisations, upheld by local governments and regional press apparatuses, on the other a consortium of environmental NGOs, who have launched the 'Save the Blue Heart of Europe' campaign, together with the local inhabitants whose river-based livelihoods are being compromised, each tell very different stories. And, as is often the case in mediatised public conflict where credibility subsumes truth, the precise impact of the economic intervention by international bodies and the number of hydropower projects being financed is difficult to gauge.

In this paper, by means of a small corpus made up of two press releases issued by the conflicting parties, I investigate the manner in which the two opposing factions articulate their rival 'discourses', granting the term its widest possible acceptation namely: "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events".[4]

2. Corpus and Methodology

The online corpus materials centre on two recent events in the current environmental conflict involving multilateral development organizations and a consortium of international NGOs. The first is the announcement in May 2018 by the World Bank that it will be providing an additional 12 million Euro loan for a 'Dam Safety Project' to Albania, to top up the original credit of 30 million Euros (2008) and the first loan of 15.5 million Euros (2011). The fact that this additional loan is being granted specifically to Albania has considerable relevance for the NGOs because, despite the fact that the

---

[3] OECD, "Competitiveness in South East Europe: A Policy Outlook 2018", *Competitiveness and Private Sector Development* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2018).

[4] Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 1995), 48.

Vjosa, Mat and Drin rivers flowing through the country are considered the most uncontaminated in Europe and SEE, Albania is the country with the highest number of currently planned or potential hydropower plants, approximately 500 of the 3000 to be built or renovated throughout the Balkans in the next three years.[5]

The second 'landmark' event to have occurred in recent months concerns the publication by Bankwatch, an NGO network with 17 member groups spread across central and eastern Europe, of an in-depth report on the financing of hydropower in SEE.[6] The report is particularly incriminatory in that it reveals that the World Bank and other multilateral development agencies are not merely, as they claim, providing loans for the safety and rehabilitation of existing dams, but are effectively investing in the construction of new hydropower plants of which at least 37 projects in protected areas or internationally recognised areas of high biodiversity value.[7]

We are therefore in the presence of two substantially different accounts, both of which claim to be acting in the best interests of the South East European countries and yet present contradictory facts. On the one hand, an international funding institution, whose mission is to "reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries",[8] but whose dynamic thrust towards progress and development may neglect environmental issues; on the other, an international consortium of conservationist NGOs, whose desire to preserve the riverine *status quo* may not contemplate the need for integration within European frameworks.

The aim of this paper is clearly not to dispute the reported facts *per se*, but rather to analyze the corpus and investigate the linguistic and representational devices adopted to identify social actors, outline their agentive scope and align readers with one or other of the accounts. The small contrastive corpus is therefore made up of the World Bank press release announcing its decision to grant Albania a

---

[5] The World Bank, "Additional Financing to Energy Community of South East Europe APL Program APL 5 for Albania Dam Safety (P166469)", Report no. PAD2749 (2018), http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/426051527478225166/pdf/Albania-Dam-Safety-PP-05082018.pdf, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[6] CEE Bankwatch Network, "Who We Are", (2018), https://bankwatch.org/about/who-we-are, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[7] CEE Bankwatch Network, "Financing for Hydropower in Protected Areas of South East Europe", Report (2018), https://balkanrivers.net/sites/default/files/Financing-hydropower-southeast-Europe-web-fin.pdf, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[8] The World Bank, "Who We Are", (2018), https://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are, last accessed 28 November 2018.

second loan[9] and the Bankwatch network press release heralding its whistle-blowing *Financing Hydropower* report.[10]

In keeping with the view that media texts do not simply reflect reality, but rather construct diverse versions of it, mirroring the social positions and interests of their producers in an "enactment, reproduction and legitimization of power and domination",[11] analysis needs to bring to the fore the manner in which "ideological saturation"[12] is naturalized in these texts to the point of becoming invisible.

Within the broad confines of Critical Discourse Analysis, which sees linguistic phenomena as socially determined with naturally ensuing social effects, and "primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in social and political contexts",[13] I focus on the manner in which participants' identities, actions and relations are delineated in the texts keeping in mind that the expressive value of words is a central concern in this study because of the focus on persuasive communication upheld by the two parties and by media discourse as a whole.

I employ van Leeuwen's analytical framework or "sociosemantic inventory" to outline the way in which the construal of represented participants' identities in the media accounts can enable us to access the underlying value systems embodied by the two factions.[14] Though agency can in part be encapsulated by the definitional terms employed to construe identity, I will also carry out a transitivity analysis on the corpus texts in order to identify the agentive positions (who the participants are), processes (what is being done), and circumstances (when, where, and how an action occurred).

Transitivity is a semantic concept belonging to the ideational meta-function of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) and allows us to reveal who plays an important role in a given clause and who undergoes the effects of that action alongside generalisable notions of Agent and Patient. The grammar

---

[9] The World Bank, "World Bank Supports Safety of Hydroelectric Dams in Albania and Enhanced Connectivity in Regional Power Market", Press release (2018), https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/05/25/world-bank-supports-safety-of-hydroelectric-dams-in-albania-and-enhanced-connectivity-in-regional-power-market, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[10] CEE Bankwatch Network, "International banks fuelling a hydropower tsunami that's decimating pristine Balkan rivers – study", Press release (2018), https://bankwatch.org/press_release/international-banks-fuelling-a-hydropower-tsunami-that-s-decimating-pristine-balkan-rivers-study, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[11] Teun A. van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in Deborah Schiffrin et al., eds., *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 354.

[12] Gunter Kress, "Representational Resources and the Production of Subjectivity: Questions for the Theoretical Development of Critical Discourse Analysis in a Multicultural Society", in Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard, eds., *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), 268.

[13] van Dijk, "Text and Context of Parliamentary Debates", in Paul Bayley, ed., *Crosscultural Perspective on Parliamentary Discourse* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004), 352.

[14] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2008), 23.

of the clause "construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types",[15] and such processes can be listed as follows: material processes (doing), mental processes (knowing, liking, sensing), relational processes (being, possessing), existential processes (happening, existing), behavioural processes (behaving) and verbal processes (saying). Transitivity, then, focuses on the clauses in the text: "asking who are the actors, who are the acted upon, and what processes are involved in that action".[16]

Finally, because the online articles possess characteristic expository layouts among their compositional features, a simplified multimodal analysis inspired by Kress and van Leeuwen's tripartite framework is also employed.[17]

3. Analysis

3.1 Definitional issues

Before beginning the analysis proper, it may be useful to rapidly delineate the object of study. Press releases are short texts which organizations and institutions publish on their corporate websites or issue to members of the news media in order to divulge what they consider to be newsworthy information. Press releases have therefore "always occupied a special place in the theory and practice of public relations".[18] As both the content matter and the author of the press release are internal to the organization, such documents inevitably have a vested interest in presenting the institution in a positive light. It is by mixing the informative and the promotional that "they invariably focus exclusively on positive aspects and incorporate persuasive and sometimes even promotional elements".[19] The interdiscursive nature of press releases also "has a bearing on the news media discourse whose features release writers borrow to construct their own identity and role on the web".[20]

In terms of genre, broadly considered to be "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes",[21] press releases fall within the category of

---

[15] Michael A. K. Halliday and Christian M. I. M. Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Third Edition (London: Routledge, 2004), 106.

[16] Donald Matheson, *Media Discourses: Analysing Media Texts* (Maidenhead, Open U.P., 2005), 66.

[17] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 2006).

[18] Paola Catenaccio, "Press Releases as a Hybrid Genre: Addressing the Informative/Promotional Conundrum", *Pragmatics*, 18.1 (March 2008), 9-32.

[19] Vijay Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-Based View* (London: Continuum, 2004), 90.

[20] Girolamo Tessuto, "Newsworthy or Market-oriented? Analysing the Genre of Web-mediated Tourism Press Releases for Rhetorical Move Structure and Communicative Purpose(s)", in Maurizio Gotti et al., eds., *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being: Representing the Voices of Tourism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), 175.

[21] John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1990), 58.

institutional communication, a "hybrid genre" in which the need to inform and promote coexists with the canonical space (and time) constraints inherent to the text type.[22]

When the press release serves to divulge the partial contents of a longer document or study produced by the issuing body, as in the two cases under investigation, then it shares an intertextual part to whole relationship with the original text, and the issues/topics selected to be represented have necessarily been granted precedence over a considerable amount of other information which has been excluded on the basis of a "system of constraints and extra-linguistic, social motives for selecting or rejecting linguistic elements or discursive patterns in the construction of a discourse".[23]

3.2 The World Bank press release

3.2.1 Visual analysis of layout and headline sequence

Due to its globalized power and breadth of influence, the World Bank can be considered "a primary definer"[24] in a "hierarchy of credibility"[25] in which the media "tends faithfully and impartially, to reproduce symbolically the existing structure of power in society's institutional order".[26] By carrying out a multimodal analysis of the press release, it soon becomes apparent that the weight of credibility wielded by the multilateral development bank hinges on both visual impact and informational content.

The online article follows the canonical expository layout of World Bank press releases, and the visual effect produced reflects the rigor and order suited to serious institutional documents with low modality markers in terms of "colour saturation", "differentiation" and "modulation".[27] The page is overall white with black print and only the title at the top of the page is set within a light grey rectangle. This rectangle forms the top of a 'T-shape' which then leads down into the centrally-positioned body of the text. Such positioning serves to enhance the apparent rigour of the text as "in contemporary Western society, squares and rectangles are the elements of the mechanical, technological order, of the world of human construction".[28] It can indeed be posited that the layout of

---

[22] Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 128.

[23] Christopher N. Candlin and Yon Maley, "Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in the Discourse of Alternative Dispute Resolution", in Britt-Louise Gunnarsson et al., eds., *The Construction of Professional Discourse* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), 203.

[24] Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave, 1978), 58.

[25] Howard S. Becker, "Whose Side Are We on", *Social Problems*, 14.3 (January 1967), 239-247.

[26] Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 58.

[27] Kress and van Leeuwen, "Colour as a Semiotic Mode: Notes for a Grammar of Colour", *Visual Communication*, 1.3 (October 2002), 343-368, 347.

[28] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 55.

these press releases partakes in a metonymic relationship with the content, the visual form reflecting and bolstering the rigour of the written content.

The article and headline share the same font, with the title being about 4 sizes bigger but not in bold. The nouns, verbs, and adjectives in the title all begin with capitals letters, only the prepositions and conjunction are in small letters. This enables the 'natural' capitalization of the terms World Bank to be spread from agent to process and onto circumstances in a balanced manner, without attributing more importance to the 'doer' than to the 'done' or the 'done to'. No hierarchical order is visually imposed and this clearly suits the political/communicative intent of an organization whose mission statement outlines "sustainable solutions … and shared prosperity". [29]

The only part of the text which differs in font, and which is also in bold, is the place/time identifier, in this case "Washington, May 25, 2018", placed at the beginning of the top paragraph. This is common practice in press releases, and doubtless serves to underline the fact that these articles can be published by different member countries; it also marks, however, the ubiquitous world presence of the multilateral development organisation.

The idea of balance and order is further enhanced by paragraph length and subdivision. The text is subdivided into five short paragraphs with the first two counting five lines, the following two four, and the last one three. This provides an impression of progressive 'tapering off' and visually reflects the idea, in content terms, that the bulk of the information is in the initial part of the article slowly winding down towards the conclusion. Thus, the visual weight of the paragraphs would appear to reflect the compositional structure of the text and echo the information load and priority, as Partington *et al*. state: "evaluation can also be expressed by the particular positioning or ordering of "blocks" of language in certain places in a text". [30]

3.2.2 Lexical analysis of headline and paragraphs

A rapid perusal of online World Bank press release headlines reveals that they are consistently long and unwieldy. Of the 60 headlines examined for mere comparative purposes, 47 contained more than 10 words and none fewer than 5.

The heading of the press release under examination reads: "World Bank Supports Safety of Hydroelectric Dams in Albania and Enhanced Connectivity in Regional Power Market", it contains 16 words and conveys an impression of considerable lexical density.

---

[29] The World Bank, "Who We Are".

[30] Alan Partington, et al., *Patterns and Meanings in Discourse: Theory and Practice in Corpus-assisted Discourse Studies* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013), 57.

The headline presents the World Bank as actor with the verb 'supports' indicating a material process; both of these elements, however, deserve further comment: the World Bank is clearly an institution governed and regulated by sentient beings who can and should be held responsible for their actions and decisions. By suppressing the human element and placing a monolithic, impersonal body in agentive position, one eliminates any possibility of interacting, questioning or attributing responsibility to those who make up the organisation. The material process 'support' is then a further example of abstraction: at first sight it evokes positive connotations in that those who 'support' contribute to an endeavour by showing solidarity in physical, material or empathetic terms and, customarily, the term found in object position clarifies the kind of support that is required and provided. However, in this context 'to support' merely refers to a financial loan transaction which is beneficial to *both* contracting parties and therefore ultimately devoid of any form of generosity or empathy. As Machin and Mayr state: "When we find such abstractions at the level of social action we have to ask why and what is being concealed".[31]

Pursuing the examination of the headline, what is supported by the World Bank is "the safety of hydroelectric dams and enhanced connectivity in regional power market". Here the two processes of 'making safe' and 'enhancing' have been transformed into nominalizations thus further contributing to the lexical density and 'fuzziness' of the headline. Indeed, by transforming processes into products through nominalizations we create "stable entities that progressively enter common usage",[32] and in fact 'Dam Safety' is the expression systematically coined in all official documents and media output when describing the World Bank's hydropower interventions in SEE, irrespective of what such 'safety' operations truly entail. As for the term 'connectivity', again the connotations point to alliance and solidarity, thus obfuscating the cooperative but also highly competitive processes which underlie energy distribution in a regional market economy.

A further linguistic strategy for representing social action is within a circumstance, such as within a prepositional phrase or a subordinate clause. Circumstances serve to background certain actions and foreground others. In the World Bank press release headline the main clause is accompanied by two locative prepositional clauses: "in Albania" and "in Regional Power Market" which, through the 'remove effect' of the preposition, are backgrounded in order to allow the positive 'supporting' and 'enhancing' actions of the World Bank to shine through.

A word for word analysis of the five paragraphs which make up the press release is beyond the scope of the present paper. So, I will focus my analysis on illustrating how the lexical abstraction which characterizes participants, processes and goals, the use of presuppositional assumptions and the

---

[31] David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis: A Multimodal Introduction* (London: Sage, 2012), 115-116.

[32] Ibid., 143.

massive use of nominalization, all serve to render the World Bank's actions vague, indefinite and non-threatening, an ideal strategy if one wishes to forward conflictual objectives in a covert manner.

The first paragraph of the press release opens with the only apparently 'sentient' actor present throughout the text: "The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors". The ostensible 'human' presence is, however, distanced by a two-step removal procedure: the directors belong to an (inanimate) board which in turn belongs to an (inanimate) entity. One can therefore posit that the use of this phrase rather than just 'World Bank' merely serves to lend hierarchical weight and importance to the ensuing process and can be classified as an occurrence of "functional honorifics … terms that suggest a degree of seniority or a role that requires a degree of respect",[33] again the capitalization serves to visually drive the point home. The process which follows is expressed by the verb 'approve', which stands as a mixture between a material, mental and verbal process. As an indicator of a verbal process, approve can also be categorized as "a metapropositional assertive verb".[34]

Such classificatory indeterminacy is a characteristic of transitivity analysis and as Halliday and Matthiessen point out: "the human condition is such that no singularly, determinate construction of experience would enable us to survive. We have to be able to see things in indeterminate ways: now this, now that, partly one thing, partly the other – the transitivity system is a paradigm example, and that lies at the core of the experiential component of grammar".[35]

The goal of 'approve' is "Euro 12 million of additional financing for Dam Safety Project". The positive financial actions of the World Bank, emphasized by the term 'additional', are clearly stated, yet once more the beneficiary is expressed as a stable entity as opposed to a dynamic process (one simply has to consider the difference in terms of attributable responsibility had the press release stated 'to make dams safe'). It can be said that this introductory sentence of the introductory paragraph serves principally to place the World Bank in a positive light both in terms of hierarchical relevance and generous financial contribution while remaining extremely vague as to the precise terms of the actor, process and beneficiary.

Throughout the rest of this first paragraph the subject position is taken over by 'the project' followed by the material process verbs 'enhance', 'improve', and once more 'enhance'; in turn, these process verbs are all preceded by the commissive modal 'will'. As a generic, impersonalised term 'the project' suppresses the nature/number/characteristics of the stakeholders, thus, as the Bankwatch NGO network claims, hiding the fact that individuals or companies operating outside legal boundaries could

---

[33] Ibid., 82.

[34] Caldas-Coulthard, "On Reporting Reporting: The Representation of Speech in Factual and Factional Narratives", in M. Coulthard, ed., *Advances in Written Text Analysis* (London: Routledge 1994), 304.

[35] Halliday and Matthiessen, *Construing Experience Through Meaning: A Language-based Approach to Cognition* (London: Cassell, 1999), 549.

also be involved. By substituting the sentient agentive element with a generic 'project', the World Bank's endeavour also acquires connotations of stability, certainty and immutability, far-removed from any form of human vagary. The process verbs 'enhance' (employed twice) and 'improve' both have strong positive value yet remain vague and nowhere in the paragraph are we told how such actions will be carried out or indeed what they will entail. Halliday describes such material process verbs as of the "creative type" in that they "bring about actions rather than actually do them".[36] The commissive modal 'will' which precedes the three process verbs, embodies the certainty of a promise and the subsequent combination of promise + positive value verb (enhance, improve) prevents readers from questioning how such actions will come about or indeed, how an insentient project can in fact take any action at all.

Finally, in terms of goals, of what will be improved and enhanced, we find: "the support to safeguarding the hydroelectric dams", "the operational efficiency", and "the stability of the power supply": once more the systematic substitution of products for processes further increases the sense of vagueness as to which operations the World Bank loan is effectively going to finance. By removing the material process verbs (supporting, stabilizing, making efficient) and substituting them with nominalisations, the author of the press release is able to achieve several effects. In fact, as previously mentioned, any sense of responsibility and agency for the actions is removed making it seem as though events simply occur; the sense of lexical density causes us to lose sight of significant details; and, despite the commissive 'will', which should entail the fulfilment of a time-bound promise, we also lose sight of any sense of imminence.

The second paragraph of the World Bank press release builds on a key introductory statement: "The Drin Cascade plant represents an important asset for the country". In terms of the environmental conflict which sets the World Bank and other multilateral agencies in opposition to the NGO consortium, this statement stands as the crux of contention: clearly hydropower plants are assets for those in favour, liabilities for those against. In this case the World Bank succeeds in transmitting and imposing its personal views through a generalized assumption. Such discursive techniques enable text producers, especially those in authoritative positions with high epistemic stance, to establish and circumscribe the realms of known and shared knowledge. Here one cannot but to wonder: an asset for whom? For the local inhabitants whose lands are flooded to allow for dam construction or for the national and supranational organizations investing in SEE hydropower projects?

From the point of view of transitivity, the verb 'represents' brings together the carrier "the Drin Cascade" and its attribute "an important asset" in an intensive attributive relational process, thus defining one in terms of the other within the context of what Fairclough classifies as a "value

---

[36] Halliday, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, First Edition (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), 103-104.

assumption".[37] Assumptions create "a relation between a text and what has been said or written or thought elsewhere, with the 'elsewhere' left vague",[38] and are a particularly insidious tool in a conflictual situation as they possess "the capacity to shape to some significant degree the nature and content of this 'common ground', which makes implicitness and assumptions an important issue with respect to ideology".[39] The prepositional clause "for the country" which closes the assumption clearly serves to place emphasis on the fact that the benefits of the asset all accrue to Albania, disregarding the fact that investment banks always receive returns on their loans.

In the remainder of the second paragraph the "three power plants in the Drin River Cascade" become the agent in the material process "generate" and, in goal position, a number of figures are reeled off regarding stable annual energy supply and revenue. In this case contention lies in the information itself rather than in the discursive structure as in recent years lack of rain has caused severe droughts throughout the Balkans, causing hydropower energy output and financial yields to be far from stable.[40]

Once more, in the third paragraph, we have a carrier and an attribute linked by a relational process verb: "Safe and reliable operation of the HPPs on the Drin Cascade is not only a safety concern but also a potential revenue management source for the Government". Once again, the dynamic process of rendering the hydropower plants safe and reliable has been transformed into a static nominalization which serves to remove any form of human agency or responsibility. Furthermore, shifting from the ideational to the textual metafunction, it should be noted that the nominal phrase "Safe and reliable operation of the HPPs on the Drin Cascade" occupies the initial 'given' position thus narrowing and channelling our vision towards the new information which follows. The theme/rheme relationship is further enhanced by the use of 'not only' which reinforces the theme (safety) and whets our appetite for the new information: the potential gain for the Albanian government.

In the remaining lines of the third paragraph "the project" stands once more as the actor followed by the process verb "aims at", in turn followed by the gerunds "improving", "extending" and "increasing" (again referring to the generic safety of dams). Besides what has already been said in the preceding paragraphs about the linguistically strategic advantages of using an insentient actor, in this case the choice of process verb ("aims at") appears particularly interesting, indeterminacy in process type classification being a much-discussed topic in transitivity analysis, with Halliday and Matthiessen themselves claiming that "systemic terms are not Aristotelian categories. Rather they are fuzzy

---

[37] Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 40.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 55.

[40] Maja Zuvela, "West Balkans' Energy Bills Surge as Drought Curbs Hydropower Output", *Reuters* (30 August 2017), https://www.reuters.com/article/balkans-power/west-balkans-energy-bills-surge-as-drought-curbs-hydropower-output-idUSL8N1LG2BH, last accessed 28 November 2018.

categories; they can be thought of as representing fuzzy sets rather than 'crisp' ones".[41] Rather than a material process verb which would express 'doing or happening', the prepositional verb 'aim at' would appear to express a desiderative mental process on a par with 'wishes' or 'wants', thus further weakening the agentive scope of the insentient actor. The choice of the preposition 'at' as opposed to 'to' also subtly shifts the action from an intention, 'aim to', to a more generic plan or hope 'aim at', thus once more confirming the general indeterminacy of the World Bank project.

One last interesting aspect of this paragraph is the repeated use of terms deriving from the root form 'safe': in the short four lines that make up the paragraph we find 'safe' used once, 'safety' twice and 'safeguard' once, as Peter Teo explains, overlexicalisation occurs when "a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms is woven into the fabric of news discourse, giving rise to a sense of overcompleteness";[42] this then produces an effect of over-persuasion in the reader and is often evidence that something is controversial or of ideological contention.

In the penultimate paragraph of the press release, we are told that "The existing project has achieved significant results, so far". Once more the combination of insentient actor, material process verb and generic goal allows the World Bank to remain vague about its actions and outcomes: the adjective 'significant' lacks quantitative and qualitative precision as does the noun 'results', hence readers are left wondering what in fact has been achieved. The temporal clause 'so far' situated at the end of the sentence is of particular interest as it functions as a presuppositional trigger for the underlying assumption that such results will continue to be achieved and consequently entices readers to place their faith in the future endeavours of the multilateral development institution. The remaining lines of the fourth paragraph contain a number of agentless passive structures: "All dams have been equipped with various instruments", "A risk assessment plan has been adopted", "the dams' spillway capacity has been completed". Here, the omission of the agent not only accrues the sense of indeterminacy, it also fuels one of the controversies in the conflict between the multilateral development agencies and the environmental NGOs, who claim that companies not qualified to carry out specific technical tasks are often involved in local hydropower projects with the result that operational outcomes are shoddy and endemic local corruption is rife.

In the short final paragraph of the World Bank press release, the topic moves away from the project goals and back to the additional financing to be provided by the multilateral institution mentioned in the opening paragraph. We read that "the additional financing will provide financial support for the completion of dam rehabilitation": throughout the press release we have repeatedly witnessed insentient actors (the World Bank, the project, the Drin Cascade) carrying out material or relational

---

[41] Halliday and Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, 174.
[42] Peter Teo, "Racism in the News: A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reporting in Two Australian Newspapers", *Discourse and Society*, 11.1 (January 2000), 7-49.

processes and, apart from a mention of the 'Board of Executive Directors' more in the interest of epistemic stance than actual agency, there has been a progressive move away from any form of human participation, and consequently responsibility or liability. Indeed, in this closing sentence of the press release, it is now the 'additional financing' which, in a wholly tautological manner, will provide financial support for the project.

The repeated use of impersonal, insentient agents, the lack of concrete process verbs to describe material actions, and the transformation of processes into products through extensive nominalisation, all contribute to granting the World Bank press release an air of abstraction and vagueness in which tangible aims and objectives slip out of reach. Neither in the brief press release nor in the original World Bank document upon which it is based, is any mention made of alternative sustainable energy sources less dependent on climatic variations and less contentious in terms of human and environmental impact.

Furthermore, although the additional 12 million Euro loan serves ostensibly to guarantee and enhance the safety conditions of existing dams and smaller hydropower plants, the question as to whether such structures *should* in fact be maintained and enhanced is clearly never raised, nor is the fact that the supranational institution is currently party to an environmental battle raging across the peninsula. Finally, the fact that besides safety, the project will also enhance 'dam performance and availability' appears to leave room for the claim advanced by the Bankwatch NGO consortium that multilateral development institutions may be investing in the construction of new hydropower plants in Albania and across South East Europe rather than merely supporting those which already exist.

3.3 The Bankwatch press release

3.3.1 Definitional issues

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Bankwatch is a grassroots environmental organization, based in Prague, which counts 17 member groups spread out across central and eastern Europe. In their mission statement, they declare that their vision is to foster "an environmentally, socially and economically just world, built on solidarity, participation and respect for ecological limits".[43] To make such a vision viable Bankwatch's main endeavour is "to prevent the environmentally and socially harmful impacts of international development finance and to promote alternative solutions and public participation".[44]

---

[43] CEE Bankwatch Network, "Our Vision" (2018), https://bankwatch.org/about/vision, last accessed 28 November 2018.
[44] Ibid.

In 2015, Bankwatch published a first whistle-blowing study which identified the international financing behind the 'dam tsunami' progressively invading SEE; the short press release under investigation presents a 2018 follow-up study in which the responsibilities of multilateral, commercial and local financing apparatuses are more clearly defined.

3.3.2 Visual analysis of layout and headline sequence

In much the same way as the World Bank, Bankwatch press releases also appear to follow an expository format with the logo located in the top left hand corner of the webpage, the headline of the article situated below in bold black letters but without any form of capitalization apart from the first letter, there is then a brief paragraph which summarizes the key points of the article, followed by a photograph, which occupies approximately a third of the overall length of the press release. Below the photograph, the text is subdivided into brief paragraphs which vary in length and hence do not present the 'tapering off' effect that we previously observed in the World Bank text. The last two or three paragraphs at the bottom of the page are invariably statements issued by partner members of the NGO network, which serve to endorse the content matter of the press release.

The general impression is not one of order and institutional rigour as was the case with the World Bank document, but rather that of a lot of information crammed onto the page. Such visual density is due to the left-alignment of the text dictated by the need to leave room on the right of the page for a large 'sign in' box which enables readers to receive regular updates from the NGO consortium and emphasizes the grassroots nature of the organisation. The lack of alignment between the length of the headline, the width of the photograph, and the non-justified paragraphs that follow further increases the idea of density.

From a visual point of view, the most striking feature of the Bankwatch press releases from 2017 onwards, is the presence of the large uncaptioned photographs under the introductory paragraph.[45] Each photo either echoes the one that fronts the study to which the press release refers (as in this specific case), or visually comments the general content of the article.

Turning now to the press release under investigation in which Bankwatch announces the publication of its second whistle-blowing survey, the selected photograph is the same as the one on the front cover of the study being presented. However, whereas in the study the image is identified by its caption "construction of the Medna Sana hydropower plant, Bosnia-Herzegovina", in the press release it is captionless. This suggests that it has been selected for its universal value and ability to represent

---

[45] CEE Bankwatch Network, "Archives for Press Release" (2018), https://bankwatch.org/press_release, last accessed 28 November 2018.

'the issue at hand' and to visually compliment the lexical information contained in the article. Further research in fact reveals that the Medna plant on the Sana river in Bosnia-Herzegovina is being built within the confines of a listed National Park and will severely compromise local fauna, flora and riverine agricultural activities.[46] The photograph has therefore been selected for its high representational value in the current environmental conflict.

From a denotational point of view, the photograph presents what initially appears to be a glaring white gash cutting through a vibrant green surround. Closer examination reveals that the 'gash' is in fact the bare rock of an elongated building site which rises on both sides of a small narrowly-contained rivulet; the green contour is the luxuriant woodland that covers the hills stretching into the distance.

The photograph stands as a "naturalistic, unmediated, uncoded representation",[47] and thus calls attention to the image content (product) as opposed to the manner in which it was produced (process). There is a slight difference between the modality value of the top and bottom half of the image: the slight haze that covers the distant hills located at the top of the photograph lowers the modality value and locates the hills in the realm of the 'what might/could be' as opposed to the 'what is' represented by the glaring white gash situated in the bottom half of the photo.

The lack of vectors connecting participants in "unfolding actions and events"[48] means that the photograph, on the basis of Kress and van Leeuwen's taxonomy, may be classified as a conceptual image which represents events in terms of their "generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence" and does not engage participants in any form of action.[49] The fact that the photograph was taken in broad daylight, probably noon, and is devoid of shadows gives it high modality value; such "extreme lighting"[50] also classifies it as a "symbolic suggestive process" once again reinforcing the idea of a generalized essence.

In terms of centre and margins, the green-covered hills which occupy the left hand, right hand and top margins force interactive viewers to concentrate on the centre: the hydropower building site. The lack of vectors pointing to dynamic action, the lack of human presence (the site could have been portrayed teeming with workers), the glaring staticity of the two contrasting colours, all remove action or process value and serve to present the image as a timeless product. The high naturalistic modality stands as a stark representation of the truth: "whoever controls modality can control which version of reality will be selected out as the valid version in that semiotic process".[51]

---

[46] Environmental Justice Atlas, "Hydro Power Plant Medna on Sana River, BiH" (2015), https://ejatlas.org/conflict/hydro-power-plant-medna-on-the-sana-river, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[47] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*, 161.

[48] Ibid., 59.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid., 106.

[51] Robert Hodge and Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 147.

The image is viewed from an objective standpoint with a disregard for any imposed point of view, merely inviting viewers to observe what has been done to the environment. Furthermore, as will be illustrated in the next section, it can be said to stand in an "ancrage"[52] relationship with the headline, which "remote-controls" the reader towards a pre-determined interpretation.

3.3.3 Lexical analysis of headline and paragraphs

Turning now to the content of the headline sequence, we read "International banks fuelling a hydropower tsunami that's decimating pristine Balkan rivers". The title is followed by the term 'study' a common practice in Bankwatch press releases to indicate that the press release refers to a more extensive document.

As with the World Bank press release, the actor in the headline is an insentient monolithic entity thus generically lumping together all the multilateral development bodies involved in financing hydropower in SEE. In this case one might posit that the all-encompassing label has been deliberately chosen to point to their impalpable, ubiquitous nature. The material process verb 'fuelling' is significant from the point of view of both tense and meaning. The use of the present continuous, with suppression of the auxiliary in line with headline reduction conventions, conveys dynamic thrust to the material process and patently points to the fact that it is ongoing. In semantic terms, the verb to fuel can mean either "to supply or power with fuel" or "to cause a situation or conflict to become more intense".[53] As regards the attribution of blame, the difference in meaning is significant as in the first case it would mean that Bankwatch holds the International banks entirely responsible for the environmental devastation, in the second, that the root cause of the hydropower tsunami lies elsewhere (unspecified) and is only being compounded by the actions of international banks. The expression 'hydropower tsunami' which stands as goal of the material process is an expression systematically employed by the opponents of dam-building in the Balkans (the first recorded use would appear to be in November 2017).[54] Here interest lies in the oppositional nature of the metaphorical source and target domains when applied to hydropower: in the source domain, hydropower causes rivers to be constrained and channelled and thereby tamed, in the target domain, a tsunami is a wild manifestation of unleashed waves, thus the opponents of hydropower are shrewdly projecting the violence of a tidal

---

[52] Roland Barthes, "Rhétorique de l'image", *Communications*, 4 (1964), 40-51.

[53] "Fuel", *Lexico powered by Oxford*, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fuel, last accessed 28 November 2018.

[54] Euronatur Stiftung, "Hydropower Tsunami on Balkans" (28 November 2017), https://www.euronatur.org/en/what-we-do/campaigns-and-initiatives/save-the-blue-heart-of-europe/save-the-blue-heart-of-europe-news/detail/news/hydropower-tsunami-on-balkans/, last accessed 28 November 2018.

manifestation onto a process which, though contextually devastating for the environment, is in itself relatively non-aggressive.[55]

In the relative clause that follows, the goal of the previous action (hydropower tsunami) becomes the actor of the material process verb which follows (decimate), thus enabling the metaphor to work across both main and relative clause. Finally, the adjective 'pristine' serves to provide positive evaluation of the rivers and serves to render the idea of 'decimation' more harrowing.

The short summary paragraph located directly under the headline states: "Multilateral development banks have supported no fewer than 82 hydropower projects across southeast Europe, including in protected areas, according to a study be CEE Bankwatch Network".

The strategic position of the paragraph, sandwiched between the headline and the photograph requires that it summarize the full content of the press release as many readers will doubtless not go beyond.

Whereas in the headline actor position was occupied by 'International banks', in the summary paragraph blame is attributed more specifically to the category of 'Multilateral development banks' of which the World Bank is a key player.

The material process verb 'support' is here employed without any positive semantic connotations, merely to denote a condemnable financial transaction; the use of the present perfect tense points to a completed action now ascertained and verified.

In goal position, we find "no fewer than 82 hydropower projects": as always when conducting a critical analysis of text, the analyst must question why certain discursive choices are made and others discarded; in this case the comparative 'more than' would appear to elicit a more immediate impact than the lengthier 'no fewer than'. Closer examination, however, reveals that the latter expression possesses strong presuppositional value and triggers readers to intuit that the number of projects financed by the multilateral development bodies is doubtless far higher.

Three circumstances then serve to complete the single sentence which makes up the initial summarizing paragraph: the first "across Southeast Europe" serves to delineate Extent, and allows the NGOs to draw attention to the magnitude of the phenomenon; the second "including in protected areas" through the circumstance of Addition expands upon the previous concept to underline the ubiquitous spread of the multilateral banks' actions; the third, through a circumstance of Angle introduced by 'according to', attributes the study to the Bankwatch Network. The positioning of the viewpoint or angle circumstance in final position, rather than at the beginning of such a lengthy sentence, is significant as it leads readers to consider the information provided as objective fact rather than as attributable to a subjective source.

---

[55] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 12.

In the first paragraph of the press release proper, located under the photograph, the actor is 'the study' followed by the behavioural process verb 'finds'. Without reiterating what has previously been stated when investigating the World Bank press release, it is clear that, here too, an insentient agent allows for the shirking of attributable responsibility. The indeterminacy of the behavioural process verb 'find', a combination of the material and the mental, enables the Bankwatch network to refer to the results of the study without providing any details concerning research tools, figures or methods.

The paragraphs which follow progressively list the names of the multilateral development banks and commercial banks responsible for financing hydropower projects throughout SEE: the amount of money invested by each institution and the number of plants located in protected areas is carefully recorded and the press release appears to follow a sort of naming, blaming and shaming pattern.

Compared to the lexical density of the World Bank press release, ascribable to the extensive use of nominalizations, the Bankwatch document is linear in terms of syntactic structure with a systematically dichotomic actor/process attribution: on the one hand 'the study' which 'finds', on the other 'the banks' that 'invest' and 'support'.

As previously mentioned, a characterizing feature of Bankwatch press releases is the presence in the closing section of quoted statements by key players in the partner organizations and co-authors of the document. In terms of the actors, in this case sayers, this textual device allows them to be both individualised in terms of the name and surname provided, and functionalised through the use of honorifics (Executive Director, Co-author, Policy Officer…). Thus, compared to the unattributable generic nature of the World Bank press release, the environmental advocates take full responsibility for their words and actions. As regards the verbal process, the verbs employed alternate between the "neutrally structuring" verb 'say', and the "transcript verb" 'add', thus illustrating that the environmental advocates share a common viewpoint and bolster each other's statements.[56]

In terms of content, the quotations are highly evaluative with a neat balance between the condemnatory lexis employed for the actions of the multilateral agencies (unacceptable, threatening, reckless) and that employed to describe the endangered environment throughout SEE (sensitive, pristine, unique).

The fact that these personal testimonies are located in the final part of the Bankwatch press release serves to remove any sense of abstraction which may have been caused by the repeated use of generic actors 'the study', 'the document' throughout the text, and to firmly establish that the NGOs belonging to the Bankwatch network personally endorse the accusations that have been levied against the commercial and multilateral development banks throughout the document.

---

[56] Caldas-Coulthard, "On Reporting Reporting", 304.

4. Concluding Remarks

Whereas dramatic environmental events such as earthquakes, droughts and other 'natural' catastrophes are usually granted ample media coverage, longer-term processes of progressive environmental deterioration or invisible hazards, especially when caused by human action, often progress silently and covertly until little can be done to salvage the situation. This is what is currently happening across the Balkan Peninsula, where massive investment loans for the development of hydropower plants are being granted by multilateral development institutions, specifically the World Bank Group and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Local governments, eager to gain European member status and other economic benefits, gratefully accept external financial intervention, turning a blind eye to the havoc being wreaked by the progressive subjugation of the last wild rivers of the continent at the expense of endemic flora and fauna, and the livelihoods of the riverine populations.

The detailed analysis that has been carried out on the press releases issued by the two groupings in this environmental conflict has attempted to bring to the fore the discursive tactics employed to forward their divergent objectives. The World Bank by means of substantial lexical density, intangible process verbs and other evasive devices appears to barely acknowledge the conflict at hand, the NGO network, conversely, arouses a form of emotional and cultural resonance based on the deep-rooted values we attribute to nature through "symbolic and 'profane' scenes of the environment as under threat",[57] and openly names and shames those responsible for the hydropower devastation.

Although local inhabitants, spurred on by the NGOs, have become more involved in the protest movement over the last few years, national governments, enticed by the possibility of European accession and attracted to the constant flow of international loans, are turning a blind eye to the environmental predicament and literally selling their countries down the river.

---

[57] Simon Cottle, *Mediatized Conflict: Understanding Media and Conflicts in the Contemporary World* (Maidenhead: Open U.P., 2006) 131-132.

Antonella Napolitano

Bag for Good?
A CDA of News Media and Popular Discourse
on Lightweight Plastic Bags Ban in Australia

Abstract: In order to reduce unnecessary plastic usage, most Australian states have banned lightweight plastic bags. In the non-regulated jurisdictions, the two supermarkets Coles and Woolworths self-imposed a ban, encountering customers' rebellion against the end of the free bag era. The chains initially seemed to surrender to a slower transition to reusable bags, causing further protests by environmentalists. The present paper investigates the recontextualisation of the environmental and legal issue of the single-use plastic bags ban in news media and user-generated discourse. The study analyses a collection of articles published by two of the major Australian online news outlets, *News.com.au* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, in 2017 and 2018 and the comments they generated. A corpus-assisted CDA aims at identifying the way actors and facts are framed in news discourse and user comments, also examining the linguistic means used by readers to express their position about the newspaper's views and to support environmentalist or consumerist positions.

Keywords: *news discourse, user-generated web discourse, environmental conflict, single-use plastics, Australian bag ban, corpus-assisted CDA*

1. Introduction

1.1 Research background

1.1.1 The plastic bag ban in Australia

Plastic has transformed our lives, offering societal benefits and enabling technological and medical advances. Cheap, adaptable, strong and durable, it has been appreciated for its seemingly infinite applications. Nevertheless, its usage and disposal have generated significant environmental impacts. Over a third of the current plastic production is used to manufacture items of packaging, which are then rapidly discarded. Of the plastic produced over the last 70 years, about 79 per cent has been thrown away, either into landfill sites or into the general environment, just nine per cent is recycled, while the

rest is incinerated.[1] The invention of plastic has been considered as a marker for a new era. The current geological epoch has thus been dubbed 'Anthropocene' for the high impact of human activity on our planet. All parts of the earth bear today the signs of pollution from plastic items, including water containers, bags, polystyrene lumps or cigarette filters.[2]

Plastic persists in nature and causes problems to marine wildlife resulting from ingestion, entanglement, and leaching of chemicals. A serious concern is caused by the abundance of small plastic fragments or microplastics from primary sources or from the mechanical and chemical deterioration of larger items. Fish and birds often ingest plastic debris, so that toxic substances may enter the food chain.[3] In particular, although plastic shopping bags seem to be convenient carriers, they have proven to represent a major source of environmental pollution. Their disposal and recycling is extremely problematic, most of them ending up in landfills. Due to their lightness, bags tend to be carried by sea currents and accumulate in ocean gyres. Marine animals (such as albatrosses, sea turtles, and whales) suffer from the risk of entanglement and suffocation, they can easily mistake bags for food and even feed them to their offspring. The accumulation of plastic bags has also shown to block local drainage systems, mostly in developing countries.[4]

After the issue of plastic pollution was brought to public attention, many countries embraced the battle against plastic. All over the world, measures have been adopted to discourage the use of single-use plastics (e.g., cotton buds, cutlery, plates) and particularly of plastic bags, including taxes, levies, and regulatory bans. Up to 2018, globally, more than 40 countries have banned plastic bags, with the first actions taken in Bangladesh in 2002. In South Africa, the government implemented regulations to prohibit light-weight bags and mandate a minimum thickness, so that more durable plastic bags are produced and reused. Several European states have imposed a tax on plastic shopping bags, with very positive impacts on the reduction of their usage.[5] Recently, the European Union approved a directive aiming at reducing the per capita consumption of lightweight plastics carrier bags and imposing a levy on bags provided in shops.[6]

---

[1] Ian Johnston, "How Plastic Is Damaging Planet Earth", *The Independent* (28 September 2017).

[2] Robin McKie, "Plastic Now Pollutes Every Corner of Earth", *The Guardian* (24 January 2016).

[3] Richard C. Thompson et al., "Plastics, the Environment, and Human Health: Current Consensus and Future Trends", *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B, Biological Sciences*, 364.1526 (July 2009), 2153-2166.

[4] Douglas Lober, "Environmental Impact: Effects, Dangers of Plastic Bags", *ReuseThisBag.com* (26 October 2017), https://www.reusethisbag.com/articles/plastic-shopping-bags-environmental-impact/, last accessed 30 November 2018.

[5] ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation), "No Bag, Thanks!", *ABC* (27 March 2003), http://www.abc.net.au/science/features/bags/default.htm, last accessed 30 November 2018.

[6] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Directive (EU) 2015/720 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 Amending Directive 94/62/EC as Regards Reducing the Consumption of Lightweight Plastic Carrier Bags", *Official Journal of the European Union*, 115 (6 May 2015), 11-15.

In Australia, the possibility to introduce a plastic bag tax in shops had been debated for some decades. At the time of writing, most of its state governments have banned or pledged to ban lightweight plastic bags. South Australia was the first to impose a ban, in May 2009.[7] The directive applies to bags with handles with a thickness of 35 microns or less. The Northern Territory introduced a similar ban in September 2011.[8] Shortly after, in November 2011, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) passed its ban.[9] Tasmania applied a similar regulatory ban in November 2013.[10] Bans on lightweight plastic bags were introduced in Queensland and Western Australia from 1 July 2018.[11] In October 2017, the Victorian Government announced its plan to join the lightweight plastic bag ban at the end of 2019 and undertook public consultation on the design of the measure. New South Wales is instead the only primary jurisdiction in Australia that has not yet found an agreement to phase out single-use lightweight plastic bags.

1.1.2 Supermarkets' new policies and corporate communications about single-use plastic bags

On the same date the new legislation came into effect in Western Australia and Queensland, in July 2018, the two Australian major grocery retailers, Coles and Woolworths, also decided to phase out lightweight single-use shopping bags, including biodegradable, degradable and compostable bags, in their supermarkets throughout Australia, whether or not a plastic bag ban was in place. In Victoria and New South Wales, therefore, the supermarkets themselves enforced a self-imposed ban, anticipating the governments and in response to public pressure to reduce waste and to prevent harm to wildlife. The new state regulations on plastic bags had met some oppositions by customers when they were first enacted across Australia. The grocery retailers had forewarned customers about the change with notices in their stores. Nevertheless, the enforcement of the new policy provoked a general uproar against the end of the free bag era.[12] Outraged, citizens refused to pay 15 cents for the reusable plastic bags. To respond to its consumers' needs, Coles decided to surrender to a slower transition to reusable bags by continuing to provide free plastic bags in its stores. It initially agreed to give bags away for free only until 1 August 2018. Then, fearful of losing its customers, it backed down again and decided it would

---

[7] Government of South Australia, *Plastic Shopping Bag (Waste Avoidance) Act 2008* (Adelaide: Government of South Australia, 2018).

[8] Northern Territory Government. *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011*, (Darwin: Northern Territory Government, 2011).

[9] ACT (Australian Capital Territory) Government Environment and Sustainable Development, *Review of the Plastic Shopping Bags Ban* (Canberra: Australian Capital Territory, 2014).

[10] Tasmanian Government, *Plastic Shopping Bags Ban Act 2013* (Hobart: Tasmanian Government, 2013).

[11] Government of Queensland, *Waste Reduction and Recycling Act 2011* (Brisbane: Government of Queensland, 2011); Government of Western Australia, *Environment Protection Act* (Perth, Government of Western Australia, 2011).

[12] Kate Lyons, "Jacinda Ardern Says New Zealand Will Ban Plastic Bags", *The Guardian* (10 August 2018).

give bags away indefinitely. Unimpressed by this attitude, environmental movements threatened to boycott Coles. Its back-flip was indeed viewed as worsening the plastic pollution problem since heavier reusable bags degrade more slowly than thin single-use bags. If lightweight plastic bags are supplied free, they are thus likely to proliferate in litter and landfill. Woolworths, on its side, after a short transition period and despite the protests, seemed to be firmer in the application of its plan of action and continued to charge 15 cents for its thicker bags. One of the main competitors of Coles and Woolworths, the German discounter Aldi, has instead never given away plastic bags to shoppers and supported a complete ban on single-use plastic bags.[13]

Australians were not the only citizens to initially oppose plastic bag regulations. For instance, in Italy, since January 2018, the use of plastic bags for fruit, vegetables and baked goods was banned, in favour of eco-friendly biodegradable and compostable alternatives.[14] The new bags could not be given out for free, but charged from 1 to 3 euro cents per bag. Since the law went into effect, it was met with a flood of protests with grocery retailers throughout Italy, as well as on social media. Some called this customer reaction hypocritical, such as the historian Marco Gervasoni, who wrote:

> Everyone is always quick to say that they are environmentally friendly and mock Trump for global warming, but where you ask them for a minuscule and a little-more-than-symbolic concrete contribution, they become indignant.[15]

On their corporate websites, Coles and Woolworths, published a series of press releases about the ban issue, namely three were produced by Woolworths and seven by Coles[16]. While all reports on the topic issued by Woolworths are antecedent to the enactment of the ban, five over seven of Coles' releases were instead written after June 1, 2018. However, in such communications, the company never mentions any critical episodes which have taken place at the supermarkets. The scenario represented in the news releases by the two companies is far from the reality narrated by journalists and customers. No mention is made of the incidents occurred at checkouts, not even when the statements were released in the same dates in which such facts were reported in the news. From the close reading of the documents, it seems that the two companies deliberately chose to manage the conflict by ignoring

---

[13] Dom Knight, "Australia: The Country That Went to War Over Plastic Bags", *The Guardian*, (3 August 2018).

[14] Repubblica Italiana, "Conversione in legge, con modificazioni, del decreto-legge 20 giugno 2017, n. 91, recante disposizioni urgenti per la crescita economica nel mezzogiorno", *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*, Serie Generale, 188, 17G00139 (12 August 2017).

[15] Elisabetta Povoledo, "Biodegradable Bags Cause Outrage in Italy. (It's Not Really About Bags.)", *New York Times* (8 January 2018).

[16] Woolworths Group Limited, "News", (2018), https://www.woolworthsgroup.com.au/page/media/?tab=184415, last accessed 30 November 2018; Coles Supermarkets Australia Pty Ltd, "News", (2018), https://www.coles.com.au/about-coles/news, last accessed 30 November 2018.

potential or actual problems. Both discourses present the phasing out of plastic bags as the right thing to do for a greener Australia, praising the chain's commitment to environmental causes, only acknowledging the time needed, on the part of the customers, for a 'transition' towards the new habits. The discourse strategies adopted in the official communications rely on showing endorsement by government and customers and praising shoppers for their commitment to contributing to an improvement of the environmental outcomes. Consumers are mostly referred to as "our customers", suggesting inclusiveness in an inner group underlining the care on the part of the companies, counterbalanced by the customers' loyalty. The importance of fidelity is confirmed by the stress laid in Coles' press releases to the campaign awarding a *Flybuy* (loyalty scheme) bonus to customers who were reusing own bags, as another way of distracting the attention from violent reactions on the part of many consumers. Intensifiers, comparatives, and adverbs enhance positive actions and aims in the releases by both supermarkets. Thus, apart from anticipations of a "greener future", as would easily be expected, the two chains report on ever "more" customers bringing their own reusable bags, though encountering "huge" problems, but all shifting towards "more" sustainable attitudes. Nouns, adjectives, and verbs used in the press releases all contribute to the description of the phasing out as a responsible action that everybody would wish for and aspire to. On some occasions, Woolworth's tone sounds even epical, specifically in two releases that, taken together, seem to allude to the words Neil Armstrong pronounced when landing on the moon: "this is a big change for our customers and store teams" and "small, but important steps in our commitment to make positive change happen".[17]

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The present study focuses on the controversial issue of the single-use plastic bag ban in the Australian States and on its portrayal in online news discourse. The research investigates the recontextualisation of the environmental and legal case and the representation of the conflicts it originated in the articles published by two of the leading Australian online news providers. Considering the relevance of online news platforms for opinion formation and aggregation, the paper also analyses user-generated comments to online news articles on the issue.

The analysis aims at identifying the way actors and facts are framed in news discourse and readers' comments, also comparing the discourses arising in the two news media outlets. It also examines how the original articles influence the different positions and opinions reflected in users' comments and investigates the linguistic means used by readers to express their stance about the newspaper's views. The study also explores the different discourses emerging in the public debate in the digital arena,

---

[17] Woolworths Group Limited, "News".

which may support environmentalist or consumerist positions and reveal different concepts of Australian citizenship.

2. News Media and User-generated Discourse: Literature Review

News media play a central role in offering access to information and influencing public opinion.[18] News selection and coverage of issues are at the heart of the agenda-setting process, as news media affect the relative importance of a topic, having an impact on both public perceptions and policy development aimed at addressing the featured issues.[19] This tendency is particularly noticeable for environmental problems, which are subject to periodical shifts of public attention.[20] News is not to be naively viewed as a reflection of reality, but as a frame through which the social world is constructed. Facts are reported from a specific angle, and linguistic and representative choices convey ideological positions.[21] News media not only address an ideal reader, but also regularly form an audience which will share the views presented.[22] Newspapers often seem to reduce more complex issues to specific updates or scoops, both in order to attract reader interest and because news articles need to be written in a short space and under tight deadlines.[23] The ownership of news media also influences the political positions expressed in the articles. This situation is plainly evident today, as the number of information suppliers is becoming more and more restricted. Media organisations and management groups tend to acquire various news outlets, thus concentrating the power in the hands of a few sources.[24] For instance, the Australian-born American media mogul Rupert Murdoch, CEO of *Fox News* channel, is accused of biased reporting in favour of the Republican Party in the US. In Australia, Murdoch is the owner of News Corp Australia one of the largest media companies in the nation. The company's sites include *News.com.au*, which publishes news circulating across several national newspapers of the group, including *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Herald Sun*, *The Courier-Mail*, *The Advertiser*, *The Mercury*, and *Northern Territory News*. Another big newsgroup in the country, connected to more left-leaning positions, is Nine Publishing (formerly Fairfax Media Limited), whose newspaper holdings

---

[18] Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (New York: Arnold, 1995).

[19] See Wayne Wanta et al., "Agenda Setting and International News: Media Influence on Public Perceptions of Foreign Nations", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 81.2 (Summer 2004), 364-377.

[20] See Anders Hansen and Robert Cox, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

[21] Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991), 2-10.

[22] Ibid., 232.

[23] Ruth Wodak, *The Discourse of Politics in Action: Politics as Usual* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18.

[24] Maria Grazia Busà, *Introducing the Language of the News: A Student's Guide* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 13-14.

include *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian Financial Review*, *The Canberra Times*, *The Sun-Herald*.

The evolution of the Internet has significantly affected media discourse. In the past, the recipients of mass media messages had little capacity to intervene in the communicative process and contribute to its content and development. Readers could write letters to the editor of a newspaper, yet the discursive identities between the producer and the receiver always remained separated and asymmetrical.[25] The participatory character of the web 2.0, and mostly of social media, has instead allowed readers to communicate with dominant media texts, thus transforming the public from mere consumers into prosumers.[26] The Internet has eroded the classical hierarchy of traditional mass media and direct citizen participation in political debate has promoted the exchange of information and contributed to shape the readership's positions.[27] The technical features of the Internet have favoured the meeting of people in the 'virtual world',[28] viewed as a public sphere where citizens can gather to discuss relevant issues and articulate their interests.[29] The web interactivity has allowed users to become involved in political processes through a series of public participation tools, such as online discussion fora, blogs, Facebook groups, comments on news stories. Such media can be used regardless of the physical location, promote political discussion and encourage argumentation and debate.[30]

The introduction of web 2.0 technologies in online news websites has allowed readers to add their voice to journalistic discourse in the form of comments, creating a new space for public discursive processing of news issues.[31] The one-way flow of information from the newspaper to its audience has today given way to interactive news websites. Consumers have acquired the active and more powerful role of text producers, as they can now publicly express their comments to online news.[32] The commenting tool enables readers to discuss the article contents and express personal views, generally

---

[25] John B. Thompson, *Ideology and Modern Culture: Critical Social Theory in the Era of Mass Communication* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

[26] Michael S. Boyd, "Participation and Recontextualisation in New Media", in Bertie Kaal et al., eds., *From Text to Political Positions: Text Analysis Across Disciplines* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014), 245-268; Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam,1984).

[27] Susan C. Herring, "Discourse in Web 2.0: Familiar, Reconfigured and Emergent", in Deborah Tannen and Anne Marie Trester, eds., *Discourse 2.0: Language and New Media* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown U.P., 2013), 1-25.

[28] Scott Wright and John Street, "Democracy, Deliberation and Design: The Case of Online Discussion Forums", *New Media and Society*, 9.5 (2007), 849-869, 72.

[29] See Jiirgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

[30] Kim Strandberg and Janne Berg, "Online Newspapers' Readers' Comments – Democratic Conversation Platforms or Virtual Soapboxes?", *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 23 (2013), 132-152: 134.

[31] Patrick Weber, "Discussions in the Comments Section: Factors Influencing Participation and Interactivity in Online Newspapers' Readers Comments", *New Media and Society*, 16 (2014), 941-957.

[32] See Herring, "Discourse in Web 2.0".

by posting their remarks in a field placed beneath the text of the article.[33] Online readers' comments are published via an online form with minimal censorship and represent a more immediate, direct and inclusive form of communication if compared to traditional forms of audience interaction, such as letters to the editor, which were vetted in the newsroom and devoted limited space in print newspapers. Online news readers' comments have had a high impact on news practice, by occupying a space once reserved to journalists alone. The possibility to publish comments from anonymous or non-verified profiles allows for the free flow of thoughts and the unconstrained expressions of views on sensitive topics.

Together with other forms of online participation, user-generated comments to news media reports have allowed to gain unprecedented insight into the people's thoughts and reactions.[34] By including perspectives and opinions which may not be considered in newspapers' discourse, such micro-fora enrich public debate on issues of collective interest.[35] In the last few years, several studies have revealed that the most commented news stories are generally about public affairs and politics.[36] Studies have also shown that commenters tend to focus on the subject of the story, on the social actors mentioned or on the broader topic presented the article.[37]

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data collection and corpus

The study analyses a collection of articles published by two of the major Australian online news outlets, namely *News.com.au* and *The Sidney Morning Herald* and the comments they generated. More specifically, the corpus comprises 110 articles, 55 by *News.com.au* (henceforth *News*) and 55 by *The Sidney Morning Herald* (henceforth *SMH*) retrieved through the Google search function, with the search terms "plastic" and "bag" in the time span between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2018. The results of the enquiry were then filtered, selecting only the articles which responded to the topic of the single-use plastic bag ban. The final corpus of *News* articles is made up of 41,272 tokens (running

---

[33] Strandberg and Berg, "Online Newspapers' Readers' Comments", 134.

[34] Jaime Locke, *Amplifying a Public's Voice: Online News Readers' Comments Impact on Journalism and its Role as the New Public Space* (Austin: The University of Texas, 2011).

[35] Edith Manosevitch and Dana Walker, "Reader Comments to Online Opinion Journalism: A Space of Public Deliberation", Paper presented at The 10th International Symposium on Online Journalism, Austin, TX (17-18 April 2009), 6.

[36] Pablo J. Boczkowski PJ and Eugenia Mitchelstein, "How Users Take Advantage of Different Forms of Interactivity on Online News Sites: Clicking, E-Mailing and Commenting", *Human Communication Research*, 38.1 (2012), 1-22.

[37] See Strandberg and Berg, "Online Newspapers' Readers' Comments"; Zara Pinto-Coelho et al., "News Discourse and Readers' Comments: Expanding The Range of Citizenship Positions?", *Journalism*, 15 (May 2017), 1-19.

words) and 4,297 types (distinct words; type/token ratio 10.62), while the news articles by *SMH* comprise 33,426 tokens and 4,267 types (type/token ratio 13.07). Of the articles on *News*, 14 contained comments, amounting to 19,751 tokens and 2,813 types (type/token ratio 14.61), while 27 articles on *SMH* included comments, comprising 231,883 tokens and 10,921 types (type/token ratio 4.92).

3.2 Methods of analysis

Media discourse has been widely investigated from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, mainly focusing on linguistic and representative choices in order to reveal embedded ideologies which may support or challenge the dominant social and political order.[38] The approach combining Corpus Linguistics with Discourse Analysis has also proved productive for the study of media discourse. Through the statistical overview of linguistic data, the use of Corpus Linguistics tools assists the researchers, by enabling them to pinpoint topics and trends that may not be immediately evident and guiding a closer analysis.[39] Studies on media discourse have considered news as a communicative event comprising a social context, participants, and the acts of production and reception.[40] CDA has traditionally viewed text and discourse as created by a dominant text producer for seemingly powerless readers.[41] News producers and receivers were conceived as linked by a one-directional relationship. News corporations, in particular, were viewed as holding an advantageous position, as they could select and give importance to specific issues, thus influencing public discourse and political action.[42]

The present study aims at identifying the way actors and facts are framed in online news discourse. Furthermore, like many media platforms, the selected media outlets include the interactive feature of commenting. User comments are conceived as crucial to understanding both how texts are received and recontextualised by readers and how users react to news topics and texts. The investigation examined therefore also user comments written in response to the articles, primarily considering the high relevance of the issue of the plastic bag ban in the common citizens' life. The corpus-based critical discourse analysis combined quantitative and qualitative examination of news articles and reader

---

[38] See, among the others, Fairclough, *Media Discourse*.

[39] The present study makes use of WordSmith Tool 6.0 software. See Michael Scott, *WordSmith Tool 6.0* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Paul Baker et al., *Discourse Analysis and Media Attitudes: The Representation of Islam in the British Press* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013).

[40] Teun A. van Dijk, *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1988), 1-2.

[41] Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: A Critical Study of Language*, Second Edition (Harlow: Longman, 2010); Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in van Dijk, ed., *Discourse as Social Interaction* (London: Sage, 1997), 258-284.

[42] John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 12.

comments. The investigation of comments focused on the linguistic means used by readers to express their positions on the views and facts in the news and to support environmentalist or consumerist perspectives.[43]

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Australian newspapers' discourse on plastic bag ban

From a CDA perspective, each media text is viewed as both a representation, since it constructs social reality and mediates the world, and as a way of constructing the social identities of the actors involved.[44] In a first approach to the semantics of news texts, the main topics and controversies across the articles were identified. The events narrated in the articles analysed satisfy several of the criteria of 'newsworthiness' or 'news values' which drive journalistic practice.[45] More specifically, the articles seem to give prominence to the values of: novelty, actuality and relevance of news; proximity or impact over the national and the local interest; projection and consequences of the facts in relation to the future evolution of the situation; conflict, by presenting both confrontations and a difference in points of view about the issue and attempting to appease contrasts among parts.[46]

The generation of keyword lists helped identify which words occur statistically more often in each of the sub-corpora[47]. Table 1 shows some of the most significant keywords retrieved through WordSmith Tools 6.0 obtained by contrasting articles by *News* and *SMH*.

[43] See also Michael S. Boyd, "Critical Discourse Analysis and the Editorial 2.0: News Reception and User-generated Comments in Discourses about (Im)migration", *Altre modernità/ Otras modernidades/ Autres modernités/ Other Modernities*, 10 (2018), 1-22.

[44] Fairclough et al., "Critical Discourse Analysis and Citizenship", in Heiko Hausendorf and Alfons Bora, eds., *Analysing Citizenship Talk: Social Positioning in Political and Legal Decision-Making Processes* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 98-123.

[45] Fowler, *Language in the News*, 13.

[46] See also Miguel Túñez and Melitón Guevara, "Framing by Proximity as Criteria for Newsworthiness", *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 64 (2009), 1030-1044.

[47] Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2006).

News.com.au			*The Sydney Morning Herald*		
Keyword	**Freq.**	**%**	**Keyword**	**Freq.**	**%**
bag	389	0.94	government	93	0.28
shoppers	126	0.31	checkouts	28	0.08
check-outs	36	0.09	waste	94	0.28
customers	303	0.73	phase-out	13	0.04
customer	64	0.16	minister	27	0.08
remember	12	0.03	political	8	0.02
reusable	177	0.43	litter	29	0.09
green	38	0.09	forgot	7	0.02

Table 1. Keywords of *News.com.au* vs *The Sydney Morning Herald* news article subcorpora

The concordances for some of the keywords seemed to confirm the author's first impressions as a reader. In particular, keywords revealed in the former news outlet a clear tendency to represent negative issues and consequences for Coles' and Woolworth' customers, while *SMH* looked more prone to calm down conflict and dispute among its readers/commenters.

A special emphasis was placed in both subcorpora and especially in *News* on the object of bags. Newspapers attempted to construct a new way of carrying the shopping and delivering it, also considering the cost and fees connected. The most common immediate right collocates of "bag" in *News* were "ban/s" (157, 0.38%) and "rage" (12, 0.03%) while in *SMH* "ban/s" (57, 0.17%) and "offer" (10, 0.03%) were the most frequent. The economic impact of the ban seems indeed to be dramatically unfavourable to the Australian people. Several terms refer to the people affected, mostly represented in economic terms, as shown in Table 2:

Corpus	*News.com.au*		*The Sydney Morning Herald*	
Word	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
customers	303	0.73	161	0.48
shoppers	126	0.31	42	0.13
people	86	0.21	43	0.13
Australians	19	0.05	19	0.06
consumers	18	0.04	22	0.07

Table 2. Most frequent terms referring to the subjects affected by the bag ban in *News.com.au* vs *The Sydney Morning Herald* news article subcorpora

Altogether, these terms account for 1.34% of the words in *News* articles and 0.87% in *SMH*'s. Choosing the individual as the focus of news updates may be seen as a form of empowerment of the buyer over institutions. People are described as "angry", "frustrated", "irate", "struggling", "disgruntled" and "upset" and are generally at the centre of the events being reported or comments being expressed. The customers' rebellion against the new rules is constantly represented, above all by *News*, as in the extreme example here narrated:

> A frustrated shopper loading a shopping trolley full of groceries into his vehicle outside a Woolworths in western Sydney in a desperate attempt to navigate the new plastic bag ban which is polarising consumers.[48]

The economic consequences experienced by the two supermarkets have a pivotal role in their subsequent behaviour, thus confirming the determinant influence of their customers. Primarily *SMH* reports distinctly emphasize the influence that shoppers have on the retailers, though not denying the customers' inconvenience due to the bag ban. For instance, in the example from the opinion article below, "cave in" is a clear example of the power exercised by the customers, who remained the key factor capable of determining every phase of the ban process. Customers had such a power as to soften Coles' implementation of the ban, while at the beginning the retailer had attempted to pursue a firmer line of action:

> Coles and Woolworths initially ditched providing free single-use shopping bags in tandem. Customers of both revolted but only Coles caved in and allowed customers until the end of this month before it charges for bags.[49]

Some of the journalists overtly sided with the official decisions responsibly taken by governments and supermarkets:

> Customers are being led to believe that their role as consumer makes their behaviour, no matter how abusive, permissible. The rise of the five-star rating across service industries has also given consumers a feeling of power.[50]

It is also worth noting the usage of the verbs "forget" (13, 0.03% in *News* and 13,0.04%, in *SMH*) "remember" (17, 0.04%, in *News*, 5,0.01%, in *SMH*) in the articles, which draws attention to the burden of "remembering" placed on customers. The verb "forget" implies failing to remember, inadvertently neglect to do, bring or mention something, while "remember" refers to doing something that one has undertaken to do or that is necessary or advisable.[51] Constructions with such verbs tend to represent distressed buyers who oppose the new rules, as these force users to cope with the duty of carrying a personal reusable shopping bag or pay, each time, for a new one. Supermarkets seemed to

---

[48] Sam McBeath, "Frustrated Shopper Loads Full Trolley of Shopping into the Boot of His Car After Plastic Bag Ban" *News.com.au* (4 July 2018).

[49] Elizabeth Knight, "Coles Plays Dirty but Smart in Plastic Bag War", *The Sidney Morning Herald* (20 August 2018).

[50] Roqayah Chamseddine, "The Plastic Bag Outrage Is Only the Beginning", *The Sidney Morning Herald* (23 August 2018).

[51] "Forget" and "Remember", *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2018).

show understanding towards buyers' forgetfulness and tried to support them in the first phases of the ban. Again, although showing sympathy towards customers, newspapers opposed the customers' reluctance to accept the legislative provisions, both because the rest of the country had already successfully implemented them and because of the environmental impact of plastic bag usage.

> If people can go to Coles now and not worry about remembering their bag, we could end up in a far worse situation (because) thicker bags take longer to break down. By doing this Coles is creating a far worse environmental problem.[52]

News chooses to emphasise the dangerous effects that Coles' behaviour can have on the environment, whereas, *SMH* appeals to the Australian sense of citizenship, openly criticising those who are not keen on responsible changes:

> For those who somehow forget to bring their own bag, the cost of buying a 15c bag is minuscule. If Australians are too selfish and stuck in their ways to work out a solution to plastic bags, it would have boded ill for other more complicated problems which similarly require the public to make changes in their habits to achieve a public good like a clean environment or public health or safe streets.[53]

It appears worthwhile to focus on the definition of the crucial place where the conflict emerges, informally dubbed as "bagging area*" (14 instances, 0.03%, in *News*, 0 in *SMH*), or more neutrally as "checkout*" (33, 0.08%, in *News*, 60, 0.22% in *SMH*), the latter preferred by *SMH*. Interestingly, the word "bag" has multiple meanings in Australian English, lending therefore itself to multiple interpretations. In the Australian slang, "bag" is indeed also used as a verb with the meaning of "to criticise or denigrate someone or something"[54], as in the example from *News.com*: "Woolworths: Don't be bagging us". The linguistic choice is in line with the campaign slogan "Don't Bag Retail Staff – No One Deserves a Serve", mentioned both by *News* and *SMH*. The programme was launched by the SDA (Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association), a union representing retail workers, to stop verbal and, sometimes, even physical abusive behaviour towards shop assistants who could no longer give free plastic bags to customers. Being "bagging" a more informal term and given its connotation in

---

[52] Benedict Brook, "If Coles Was Going to Blink So Quickly On the Plastic Bag Ban, Why Bother with It in The First Place?", *News.com.au* (1 August 2018).

[53] The Sydney Morning Herald (Editorial), "Seeing Reason On Plastic Bags, One Checkout at a Time", *The Sydney Morning Herald* (4 August 2018).

[54] Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor, eds., "Bag", *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 27; see also "Bag", *Cambridge English Dictionary Online* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2018).

the Australian jargon, it is more present in articles which voice the customers' protests, although still in an attempt to mitigate conflicts.

When customers' feelings are mentioned, very little revolves around a public interest for the environmental outcomes of the measure, but rather the main focus is on rage and incapacity/unwillingness to assume new habits. Analysing the frequencies of terms connected to the environment, very few are related to the positive environmental impacts of the ban. Such terms include "environment*" (140, 0.34% in *News*, 155, 0.46%, in *SMH*), "waste" (49, 0.12% in *News* and 97, 0.29% in *SMH*), "landfill" (37, 0.09% in *News* and 21, 0.06%, in *SMH*), "litter*" (19, 0.05%, in *News* and 35, 0.1%, in *SMH*), "pollut*" (9, 0.02% in *News* and 19, 0.06%, in *SMH*). Praises on the results of the measure are generally presented in News, by reporting statements by either Woolworths or Coles chief executives or by governmental authorities, such as Victoria's Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, Lily D'Ambrosio. In some instances, when terms related to the environment are found in *News*, they seem to be even used to voice criticism towards the ban. This position is presented directly or indirectly, reporting experts' opinions or customers' comments on social media, which tend to be negative, even welcoming a delay of the ban. Litter seems to be represented as a problem that will never be solved as there will always be 'something bigger' behind. Nevertheless, both newspapers do tend to balance negative positions with common-sense comments, to avoid exacerbating conflicts.

> But have we resolved the problem? Not really. We're still polluting the environment with plastic it would have actually have been better for the environment if we'd never gone through this whole sorry process in the first place. In an effort to banish the litter of lightweight, single-use carrier bags, our streets are now going to be littered with heavyweight carrier bags instead. Some progress.[55]

Lexicon referring to the legislation banning single-use plastic bags does not reveal to be central to the debate. Such terms include "minister" (8, 0.02% in *News*, 36, 0.11% in *SMH*), "politic*" (2 in *News*, 13, 0.04% in *SMH*), "law" (4 in *News*, 13, 0.04%, in *SMH*), "legis*" (16, 0.04%, in *News*, 32, 0.1% in *SMH*), "illegal" (1 in *News*, 1 in *SMH*), "legal* (5, 0.01%, in *News*), "enforce*", (5, 0.01%, in *News*, 7, 0.02% in *SMH*), "come/came into force", (9 in *News*, 8, 0.02%, in *SMH*), "enact*" (6 in *News*, 6, 0.02% in *SMH*). Reference to the whole legal process that has led to the ban is largely disregarded, principally in *News*. On the other hand, *SMH* confirms to be more supportive of the ban also by endorsing governmental action. For instance, the articles report some ministers' declarations or refer to statements in favour of the ban, highlighting its positive outcomes. Some articles by *SMH*

---

[55] Benedict Brook, "Plastic Bag Ban: Many Alternatives Have Huge Environmental Footprints", *News.com.au* (21 June 2018).

expressly refer to the legal aspect of the ban process, with explicit reference and popularisation of the texts of the ban. Before the ban came into force in Queensland, *SMH* clarified:

> The ban targets all lightweight, single-use plastic bags, including those of the biodegradable variety, but stops short of prohibiting the heavier bags used at department stores.[56]

On this specific occasion, also *News* published answers to a series of FAQs in the article "What you need to know as plastic bag ban starts to take effect?"[57] *SMH* overtly criticised The New South Wales government for its inactivity on the issue, ironically suggesting politicians the legal language to be used to ban plastic bags explicitly:

> Prohibit, forbid, proscribe, outlaw, make illegal, impose a moratorium or injunction. Perhaps this handy list of synonyms might help the NSW government, which has become the only legislature in Australia not to have introduced, or drafted, laws to ban the single use of plastic bags.[58]

It is crucial to remind the terms of the ban, which, at the time of writing, was not yet into force in two Australian jurisdictions and was self-imposed by the companies Coles and Woolworths. It also has to be considered that these supermarkets operate all over Australia and, thus, also in territories where the ban was already active. The press reported how most CEOs, though admitting the technical and economic challenges of shopping, welcomed the ban as a contribution to environmental pollution:

> Harris Farm Markets CEO Angus Harris said now that most states and major retailers had banned plastic bags, it was time for the federal government to follow up with legislation.[59]

The environmental policy was hardly ever criticised; it was cited, hinted at, explained, often specifying that single-use plastic bags had been phased out after consultation with business groups and community. While companies, as previously shown, were never critical about the law, citizens did not have homogeneous opinions, as will be further revealed by user comments to news articles.

---

[56] Jorge Branco, "Queensland's Plastic Bag Ban Is Official, Along with Recycling Refund", *The Sydney Morning Herald* (6 September 2017).

[57] Sophie Chirgwin, "What You Need to Know as Plastic Bag Ban Starts to Take Effect", *News.com.au* (18 June 2018).

[58] The Sidney Morning Herald (Editorial), "Bin The Bag: Time for Shameful Lack of Action by Berejiklian to End", *The Sidney Morning Herald* (1 July 2018).

[59] Frank Chung, "Ditch 'Problematic' Single-Use Items but Don't 'Demonise' Plastic, Sustainability Experts Say", *News.com.au* (6 June 2018).

4.2 Readers' comments

As previously mentioned (see Paragraph 3), not all of the articles in the corpus enabled or provoked commentaries by the readers' audience. Although the two subcorpora consisting of the original news articles and readers' comments may not be strictly comparable, a corpus analysis was conducted in order to determine lexical similarities and differences between primary and secondary texts.

As it would have been expected, the two subcorpora share a significant number of lexical items. For instance, the most frequent terms in both subcorpora are "bags" (2,157, in the articles, with a normalised frequency of 1.91% and 3,891 in the comments, 1.83%) and "plastic" (1,673, 1.48% against 2,680, 1.26%). Keywords were determined to identify the most relevant linguistic patterns and lexical items in the two subcorpora. Especially in the readers' comment, first and second person pronouns rank high.[60] Table 3 shows the frequencies of the most frequent personal references in the subcorpora of Readers' comments and *News* articles:

Corpus	Readers' comments		News articles	
Word	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
I	2,551	1.20	751	0.66
you	1,999	0.94	612	0.54
my	736	0.35	212	0.19
your	801	0.38	238	0.21

Table 3. Frequencies of personal references in Readers' comments and News articles subcorpora

The use of the first person singular indicates personal participation, alignment or non-alignment with ideas or facts conveyed in the news or in previous comments, or expression of personal opinions (e.g. "I agree", "I think", "I don't think"). It is also used to establish credentials to give proof of environmental-friendly personal habits or to narrate personal experiences with the ban. Predominantly, the usage of the subject "I" together with the commissive "will" seems to be highly relevant, as it expresses the users' actions and reactions either in favour or against the ban, as in:

> shameless money grab ... I will be taking my own bags and holding up the que as I pack them...[61]

Customers may thus react against the supermarkets either for applying the ban and charging for carrier bags or, for opposite reasons, because retailers have initially given up to pressures and delayed

---

[60] See also Boyd, "Critical Discourse Analysis and the Editorial 2.0".

[61] Comment to Daniela Spanjaard and Francine Garlin, "How 'Nudge Theory' Can Help Shops Avoid a Backlash Over Plastic Bag Bans", *News.com.au* (23 July 2017). Being instances of user-generated language, readers' comments may present spelling or grammar mistakes, which have been reported in this paper without modifications.

the implementation. Nevertheless, in both cases, users seem to vent their economic power as buyers, by promising not to shop in those premises.

Second person references are also frequent in comments, used both in the impersonal sense and in interpersonal communication, to address governments, supermarkets, journalists or other commentators. In particular, exploiting the possibility to respond to comments, users sometimes engage in verbal crossfire with their peers.

See for example:

> Good on you Coles, I will be shopping with the supermarket which supplies plastic bags for free, all you anti bag people can get stuffed
> Answer: This is disgusting. How can people be so blatantly lazy and selfish. It is not hard to take a bag to the supermarket and use it. No one is asking you to make the bag yourself. If you are unable to perform such a simple task, you probably need to reconsider you entire life, and atttitude. The lack of concern and or respect for the environment is really quite shocking. Dissapointed does not even come close to describing how I feel about this.[62]

From a reading of the comments, it was possible to identify a general uniformity in the positions held. For the present study, it appeared therefore useful to consider comments to both news outlets as a whole corpus. The tone of the comments is very diversified, ranging from users who fuel the controversy and those who wish to stop the fight, also accusing supermarkets of their backflip. Comments by readers who are in favour of the ban but try to mitigate disputes are usually longer, more articulated in their argumentation, and tend to refer to the respect of legislations or the government's initiative. More specifically, the empirical findings led the author to hypothesize the possibility do distinguish user comments in the four categories of the 'greens', the 'close-fisted', the 'conspirophiles' and the 'disbelievers'.

The 'greens' recognise that the more plastic goes into landfill, the less our planet has to survive and sustain us and our children. They support therefore measures aimed at protecting the environment, such as:

> Plastic = Cancer to the humans and planet Earth. - - - So, problems that need answers. Better to work on this and save the humans, save the planet then what ever it is you are doing. New World – Please. G is for Good. Cheers. [63]

---

[62] Comments to Gavin Fernando, "Coles Has Backflipped on its Bag Ban, Offering Customers Free Reusable Plastic Bags Indefinitely", *News.com.au* (2 August 2018).

[63] Comment to Shireen Khalil and AAP, "Australia-Wide Bag Ban Leads to 1.5 Billion Fewer Plastic Bags in the Environment", *News.com.au* (3 December 2018).

The 'close-fisted' customers declare they have switched from one grocery store to another because they do have environmental preoccupations and would rather save 15 cents than accept Woolworths's position:

> Does this mean I can pack them straight into the trolley as I do at Aldi? I do not want to pay for a convenience that was previously provided because I was (and still am) a money paying customer. This was an Andrews government law, people, but taken up as a money earner by the major supermarkets with alacrity.[64]

The 'conspirophiles' are people who think that the ban represents an occasion for supermarkets to make a profit, rather than a general move to a more sustainable future for our planet – also ignoring that the provision had been supported beforehand by the Australian people in public consultation – as in the following example:

> Woolworths will actually make money out of it. If the genuinely wanted it to work smoothly they'd carry the cost of doing it.[65]

The 'disbelievers' do not trust scientific research, therefore they disdainfully deny the evidence of the damages on the environment:

> The result is not a positive one. The so-called green bags must be used 100 times to be equivalent to 100 light plastic bags. But they take longer to decay, and cannot end their life as bin liners. So most people will buy bin liners. End result, we are worse off than before.[66]

Comments also refer to legal provisions, above all when the reader is in favour of a phasing out of plastic bags and try to mitigate the dispute:

> It is the function of a government to legislate things like a plastic bag bans and because they did nothing, the poor supermarkets are now copping it and being blamed for trying t do something about it.[67]

---

[64] Comment to Frank Chung, "Woolworths, Coles and Harris Farm Markets Ditch Plastic Bags", *News.com.au* (14 July 2017).
[65] Comment to Melissa Cunningham, "'Bringing Reusable Bags Has Been a Challenge': Woolworths Backflip on Plastic Bags", *The Sidney Morning Herald* (29 June 2018).
[66] Comment to Ian Whitworth, "Banning Plastic Bags Is Right So Deal with It" *The Sidney Morning Herald* (3 July 2018).
[67] Ibid.

Long term, the ban will become legislated anyway, the result being Coles will be the only store to face the backlash then, unless Woolies is foolish enough to follow.[68]

5. Conclusions

In response to the recent revelations about the damages caused by plastics on our environment, Australian jurisdictions are gradually embracing the fight against plastic, and chiefly against plastic bags. The present study focused on the discourse about the single-use plastic bag ban emerging in Australian online news and on how such texts influenced and collected public opinion on the issue in the digital arena.

News articles mostly refer to the feelings of frustration and deception experienced by part of the Australia population and to the negative consequences of a possible continuation of plastic bags usage. They also took into account the legal context and contributed to the popularisation of the new measures. Articles by the news outlet News.com.au seemed to be more focused on hard news and more event-oriented, expressing customer dissatisfaction and narrating the immediate and economic impact of the ban on buyers. Articles by *SMH* revealed to be closer to the official governmental perspective, with more frequent references to ministers' statements, legislation, and scientific data. Online articles by *News* employ a more dynamic language which, on some occasions, became so strong as to look to a superficial reading even in contrast with the ban, while articles by *SMH* tended instead to use a less sensationalist and milder tone. Without overtly siding with one of the opposing 'parts', both newspapers kept the attention high on the issue of the plastic bag ban, and also attempted at managing the conflict and transmitting some civic sense to the readers.

User-generated comments reflect a change in discursive and social practices from reception to interaction, allowing online news readers to gather in a shared virtual space to voice their opinions on topics generated by the accompanying news story. In readers' comments, news stories, actors, ideologies are recontextualised and shared in online newspapers and social media, reshaping newsmaking practices and reinforcing beliefs among readers. Although conscious that their reactions and opinions may also not have any deliberative function, citizens still felt the urge to express their own position on the issue. In computer-mediated communication, the user's professional or other status indicators are not visible. Yet, all citizens may claim an implied authority, as, after all, we are all customers and all may be affected by a change in buying and selling practices.

User comments to the articles under analysis seemed to respond to the general themes treated in and to the titles of the related articles. They showed different reactions to the measures and in particular to

---

[68] Comment to Fernando, "Coles Has Backflipped on Its Bag Ban".

the ban that Woolworths and Coles self-imposed in pursuit of a corporate social responsibility strategy. The supermarkets' autonomous action on plastic bags was applauded by environmentalists, but also met with abuse and claims of profiteering. When the retailers initially back-flipped to respond to the needs of their irate customers, the problem seemed to be even amplified. Consumers' reaction may be interpreted as caused by a perceived breach of the supermarkets' 'psychological contract' with customers, a set of unwritten rules or expectations between the parts. Shoppers realised they were the only ones making an effort towards a greener living, as supermarkets were saving money by no longer giving away bags for free, while customers incurred a cost in order to receive a bag. Meanwhile, supermarkets were not attempting to reduce the use of plastic in the store. The Australian people engaged therefore in revenge and retaliation, which took different forms, ranging from online complaints to acts of sabotage like stealing shopping baskets.[69] The online comments largely reflect the situation, emphasising the feelings of betrayal and frustration experienced by many Australian customers.

Figure 1. Landcare Australia, Woolsworth's Reusable Bag, https://landcareaustralia.org.au/woolworthsgrants, Landcare Australia © 2019

---

[69] See also Gary Mortimer and Rebekah Russell-Bennett, "Why Plastic Bag Bans Triggered Such a Huge Reaction", *The Conversation* (15 July 2018).

Maria Cristina Aiezza

"Sign and Make Your Mark on the World a Positive One".
A Discourse and Genre Analysis of UK Online Petitions
to Reduce Single-Use Plastics

Abstract: The increased availability of the Internet and its growing interactivity have led to the emergence of new forms of civic engagement. In particular, e-petitions websites have brought into our time the centuries-old right to petition the rulers. The present study analyzes a corpus collecting a selection of online petitions against unnecessary plastic usage published on the British version of Change.org, one of the most popular e-petitioning platforms. The texts were examined by integrating discourse and genre analysis perspectives to uncover the recurring strategies exploited by petitioners to gain support for their environmental causes. The investigation revealed the way organisers appeal to the readers' civic sense and sensitivity by emphasising the severity of damages of marine litter, reporting environmental information from multiple sources, raising awareness about legal loopholes and asking companies and institutions to lead by example.

Keywords: *petitionary discourse, e-petitions, environmental discourse, single-use plastics, discourse analysis, genre analysis*

1. Introduction

1.1 Plastic Pollution

Plastic is a key material in the global economy. Since World War II, plastics have helped our societies tackle various challenges, providing innovative, inexpensive, durable, light and sanitary alternatives for traditional materials, which generated an unblemished optimism about its infinite possibilities. As a result, the global production of plastics has increased twentyfold since the 1960s, reaching 322 million tonnes in 2015, and is expected to double again over the next 20 years.[1] However, since the 1970s, the

---

[1] European Commission, "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy" (Brussels: European Commission, 16 January 2018), 2.

longevity of plastic waste in the environment has caused major concerns, leading to the emergence of recycling processes.[2] Nevertheless, inadequate waste collection, disposal and recycling measures are still leading to severe consequences. Large quantities of plastic debris leak into the environment, with 5 to 13 million tonnes littering our seas. For its lightness, plastic waste is easily transported by marine currents, ending up on land, degrading or accumulating in ocean gyres, with negative impacts not only on the environment and human health but also on economic activities such as tourism, fishery and shipping.[3]

The plastics found in our seas comprise macroplastics (larger than 5mm in size) and microplastics (fragments below 5mm in diameter). Entanglement of marine species in plastic debris can cause starvation, suffocation, laceration, infection, reduced reproductive success and increased mortality.[4] Microplastics derive from primary sources, e.g. microbeads included in exfoliating products, and secondary sources, from the decomposition of macroplastics. Due to their small size, microplastics are easily mistakenly eaten by the marine fauna, thus entering the food chain.[5] The increasing amount of plastic pollution is fuelled by the growing consumption of single-use plastics, i.e. plastics conceived to be used once and then discarded, which is commonly not recycled. These include bags, disposable cups, lids, straws, cutlery and cotton buds, for which plastic is often chosen for its lightness, low cost and hygiene.[6]

Pollution from plastics has thus recently been perceived as a major environmental concern by scientists, governments, non-governmental organisations, media and civil society. Across the globe, there is a growing awareness of the need for a sustainable plastic economy, covering the entire value chain, from design, production, consumption to reuse and recycling. Initiatives to reduce or eliminate the over-consumption of plastic goods have been gaining momentum. The European Union, which has reached the world's highest rate of plastic recycling, is currently promoting the development of a circular plastics industry worldwide.[7] The EU had already taken steps in this sense by setting legally binding requirements for its member States to adopt measures to drastically reduce the consumption of

---

[2] Science History Institute, "The History and Future of Plastics", https://www.sciencehistory.org/the-history-and-future-of-plastics, last accessed 20 December 2016.

[3] European Commission, "A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy", brochure, 3, https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/plastics-strategy-brochure.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[4] Stelios Katsanevakis, "Marine Debris, a Growing Problem: Sources, Distribution, Composition and Impacts", in Tobias N. Hofer, ed., *Marine Pollution: New Research* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2008), 53-100.

[5] Juliana A. Ivar do Sul and Monica F. Costa, "The Present and Future of Microplastic Pollution in the Marine Environment", *Environmental Pollution*, 185 (February 2014), 352-364.

[6] European Commission, "A European Strategy", 4.

[7] Ibid., 16.

plastic bags and to restrict the use of intentionally added microplastics.[8] In particular, under the directive on lightweight plastic carrier bags, national governments must ensure that the annual consumption level does not exceed 90 bags per person by the end of 2019 and 40 bags by the end of 2025. Furthermore, by 31st December 2018, they must guarantee that lightweight plastic carrier bags are not provided free of charge in shops.[9] In May 2018, the European Commission also proposed new rules to reduce marine plastic litter, then approved in October 2018. The measures include: ban on single-use plastic items with available alternatives (namely, cotton buds, cutlery, plates, stirrers, straws, balloon sticks); general reduction targets on items such as beverage cups and food containers; informative campaigns and extended producer responsibility schemes; labelling requirements about appropriate waste disposal; product design measures (especially for caps to remain attached to beverage containers).[10] In June 2018, the European Commission had contextually launched a public communication campaign across its digital media to raise awareness about sustainable alternatives to single-use plastic products.[11]

As a member State, the United Kingdom, object of the present study, has already taken actions to respond to the EU directives. In particular, all of the constituent countries passed legislation to levy a charge of a minimum of 5 pence on each new plastic carrier bag sold. The measure came into force in Wales (2011),[12] Northern Ireland (2013),[13] Scotland (2014),[14] England (2015)[15], in that order. Yet, England limited the measure to big companies, with 250 or more employees.[16] England (2017)[17],

---

[8] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Directive (EU) 2015/720 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2015 Amending Directive 94/62/EC as Regards Reducing the Consumption of Lightweight Plastic Carrier Bags", *Official Journal of the European Union*, 115 (6 May 2015), 11-15; European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), "Registry of Restriction Intentions: Microplastics" (17 January 2018), https://echa.europa.eu/registry-of-restriction-intentions/-/dislist/details/0b0236e18244cd73, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[9] European Parliament and Council of the European Union, "Directive", 13.

[10] European Commission, "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Reduction of the Impact of Certain Plastic Products on the Environment, 340 final 2018/0172" (Brussels: European Commission, 28 May 2018).

[11] European Commission, "Be Ready to Change" (2018), https://www.bereadytochange.eu/en/, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[12] Welsh Government, "The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Wales) Regulations 2010", Welsh Statutory Instruments, Environmental Protection, Wales, 2880.238 (2010), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2010/2880/made/data.pdf., last accessed 20 March 2018.

[13] Government of Northern Ireland, "The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013", Statutory Rules of Northern Ireland, Environmental Protection, 4 (2013), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2013/4/made/data.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[14] Scottish Government, "The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Scotland) Regulations 2014", Scottish Statutory Instruments, Environmental Protection, 161 (2014), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2014/161/made/data.pdf., last accessed 20 March 2018.

[15] United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "The Single Use Carrier Bags Charges (England) Order 2015", Statutory Instruments, Environmental Protection, England, 776 (2015), https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/776/made/data.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[16] Ibid., 8.

Scotland (2018)[18] and Wales (2018)[19] also approved regulations to ban the manufacturing and supply of rinse-off personal care products containing plastic microbeads.

Nevertheless, as it is currently negotiating its withdrawal from the European Union, the United Kingdom may choose not to meet the EU's standards on single-use plastics after Brexit.[20] In January 2018, Prime Minister Theresa May launched a *25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment*[21] with the intention to deliver a 'Green Brexit'[22], protecting and improving natural resources and environment and mitigating the effects of climate change. In particular, the project aims at eliminating all avoidable plastic waste by the end of 2042, by adopting measures including:

- extending the 5p carrier bag charge to all retailers in England;
- encouraging supermarkets to introduce plastic-free aisles with loose food;
- pressuring manufacturers to take more responsibility for the environmental impacts of their products;
- injecting new funding into plastics innovation;
- banning problematic materials where suitable alternatives exist;
- promoting the installation of water refill points for people to top up their bottles for free.[23]

1.2 The Construction of Environmental Issues

The 'environment' appears to represent one of the main public and political concerns of our time. Nevertheless, the development of the very concept of environment and environmental discourse, with specific vocabulary, themes and frames, seems to be relatively recent, dating back to the 1960s.[24]

---

[17] United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, "The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (England) Regulations 2017", Statutory Instruments Environmental Protection, England, 1312 (2017), 1312http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1312/made/data.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[18] Scottish Government, "The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (Scotland) Regulations 2018", Scottish Statutory Instruments, Environmental Protection, 162 (2018), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2018/162/made/data.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[19] Welsh Government, "The Environmental Protection (Microbeads) (Wales) Regulations 2018", Welsh Statutory Instruments, Environmental Protection, Wales, 760.151 (2018), http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2018/760/made/data.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[20] Daniel Boffey, "Gove Urged to Follow Europe with Ban on Single-Use Plastic", *The Guardian* (27 May 2018).

[21] Government of the United Kingdom, "A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment" (2018), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[22] Ibid., 9.

[23] Ibid., 87-89.

[24] Anders Hansen and Robert Cox, "Introduction: Environment and Communication", in Hansen and Cox, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1-10, 1.

Considered from a constructivist perspective, environmental problems are publicly recognised as 'social issues', which require social, political and legislative attention and action, only when someone makes claims about them in a public arena. Environmental issues fade in and out of focus over time, in cycles that seem to have little to do with their actual amelioration or resolution.[25] Concepts may even become buzzwords through the frequency of their media mentions, as shown by the ever-changing public focus from 'pollution' and 'greenhouse effect', to 'global warming' and 'climate change' and to 'sustainable' and 'green' solutions.

In recent times, the media attention has often been devoted to the problem of 'single-use' plastics, with a mounting number of news and campaigns, often attempting to engage the public in taking redressing actions by shocking them, showing images of the detrimental effects of plastic waste, such as marine animals stuck in plastic items or mistaking plastics for food.[26] The issue of plastic waste obtained official recognition as a 'social problem' when "single-use" was named 'Word of the Year 2018' by Collins Dictionary.[27] Collins' records show a four-fold increase in usage of the term since 2013, explained as fostered by its presence in news stories and in the popular *BBC* documentary *Blue Planet II*, hosted by Sir David Attenborough, which contributed to raising public awareness on the problem (see also Paragraph 4.2).

What the common citizens know about the environment and environmental issues is based on the symbolic reality constructed in social institutions and contexts and represented through media of various kinds. Common people tend to acquire environmental information not from scientific literature, but from media communications, both coming from traditional media, such as television, newspapers and radio, and from new media, such as websites, online fora and social media. Science and politics have clearly influenced media coverage of environmental issues. However, news generated by mass media has, in turn, shaped the agenda for the ongoing scientific and political debate and decisions. TV celebrities engaged in environmental conservationism and conservationists turned celebrities have often helped to provide arguments regarding the need for policy changes about environmental issues.[28] Recent technological advances have produced substantive changes in how people access and interact with information, with a fundamental shift from 'one-to-many' broadcasts to 'many-to-many' interactive communication. Various actors and voices battle today in traditional and new media spaces, together with formal climate science and politics, contributing to forming public understanding and

[25] Hansen, "Communication, Media and the Social Construction of the Environment", in Hansen and Cox, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Environment*, 26-38.

[26] See Laura Parker and Randy Olson, "We Made Plastic. We Depend on It. Now We're Drowning in It", *National Geographic Magazine* (June 2018), https://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2018/06/plastic-planet-waste-pollution-trash-crisis/, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[27] Collins Dictionary, "World of the Year 2018", https://www.collinsdictionary.com/woty, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[28] Graham Huggan, *Nature's Saviours: Celebrity Conservationists in the Television Age* (London: Routledge, 2013).

engagement.[29] Digital medias have also reshaped the boundaries between those who constitute authorised and legitimate speakers and claims-makers, so that undue reliance may be placed on 'fauxperts' instead of 'experts'[30] and 'contrarian' views may receive amplified media coverage.[31]

1.3 E-petitioning

The increased availability of the Internet and its growing interactivity have altered the relations between the political system and citizens by offering new channels to communicate with political representatives and other citizens, leading to the emergence of new forms of civic engagement. The cyberspace can nowadays be used to sensitise and mobilise online communities to organise collective action.[32] Today's 'digital democracies' show some essential differences from traditional democratic systems. The success of the Internet as a medium for citizen participation has been undoubtedly fostered by the perceived crisis of representative democracy, so that trust in established institutions and organisations is gradually declining in favour of alternative forms of political activism and engagement.[33] E-democracy tools reveal indeed a potential to empower the individual users, allowing them to bypass organised interests and alter the conventional processes of agenda-setting. The Internet holds a strong appeal for the high degree of interactivity and multiple communicative options it offers, engaging users in both text production and reception, allowing for different degrees of publicity, and relying on multiple types of media contents. Moreover, the costs of Internet-based communication are significantly lower compared to traditional offline media.[34] A variety of information and communication technologies (ICTs) lend themselves to supporting and facilitating political participation in the different stages of governance and decision-making, including, e.g., virtual discussions and fora, e-surveys, e-polls and e-petitions.[35]

---

[29] Maxwell T. Boykoff, "Communicating in the Anthropocene: The Cultural Politics of Climate Change News Coverage Around the World", in Hansen and Cox, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Environment*, 221-231.

[30] Alissa Quart, "The Trouble with Experts", *Columbia Journalism Review* (July/August 2010).

[31] Maxwell T. Boykoff, "Public Enemy No. 1? Understanding Media Representations of Outlier Views on Climate Change", *American Behavioural Science*, 57.6 (2013), 796-817.

[32] Steffen Albrecht, "E-Consultations: A Review of Current Practice and a Proposal for Opening Up the Process", in Efthimios Tambouris et al., eds., *Electronic Participation: Proceedings of 4th IFIP WG 8.5 International Conference*, ePart 2012, Kristiansand, Norway, September 3-5, 2012 (Heidelberg, Germany: Springer, 2012), 13-24, 13.

[33] Laura Miller, "E-Petitions at Westminster: The Way Forward for Democracy?", *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62.1 (2009), 162-177.

[34] Ralf Lindner and Georg Aichholzer, "Electronic Democracy in Europe: An Introduction", in Ralf Lindner et al., eds., *Electronic Democracy in Europe: Prospects and Challenges of E-Publics, E-Participation and E-Voting* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2016), 1-17, 5-6.

[35] Georg Aichholzer and Stefan Strauß, "Electronic Participation in Europe", in Lindner, et al., eds., *Electronic Democracy in Europe*, 55-132.

Traditionally, petitions were "demands for a favour, or for the redressing of an injustice, directed to some established authority".[36] Popular petitioning has long been used as a form of direct and democratic political participation in which, by collecting a significant number of signatures, advocates acquire the power to express a collective need to a higher authority – generally government agencies and business organisations – and request policy changes.[37] Online petitions bring into our time the centuries-old right to petition Parliament, government or the monarch. E-petitions are petitions which can be signed online, by adding personal details such as name and email.[38] Their usage has become so common that, for instance, the number of petitions created on e-government platforms exceeds today by far the number of those submitted by paper.[39] "E-petitions may be viewed as a natural laboratory for determining subjects of public interest".[40] Online petitions may be used as a vehicle to bring the topics and contents of campaigns into the political system in a formal way.[41] Petitioners are able to express in their own words their policy preferences without the mediation of forces such as pundits, pollsters, political parties, news media and researchers.[42]

The role of e-petitioning as access to a form of digital democracy is, nevertheless, controversial. It is valued for its ability to enhance representative democracy, involving and empowering citizens. Still, e-petitions are often criticised as a form of 'slacktivism' or 'clictivism' with limited, if any, impact on politics.[43] The legitimacy of online petitions may also be compromised as signers may use false names. Moreover, since petitions are easy to initiate, websites may attract frivolous causes.[44]

Numerous official and informal international e-petitioning platforms are found on the web, controlled or sponsored by a wide range of bodies. Platforms can be managed by: national governments and executive branches, such as *We the People* in the US; parliaments, such as the Scottish Parliament; hybrid models combining government and parliament, like the petitions to the UK Government and Parliament; local governments and parliaments, for instance Dover or Brighton; independent platforms

---

[36] Lex Heerma van Voss, "Introduction", in van Voss, ed., *Petitions in Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001), 1-10, 1.

[37] Ann Macintosh, "Using Information and Communication Technologies to Enhance Citizen Engagement in The Policy Process", in Joanne Caddy and Christian Vergez, eds., *Promise and Problems of eDemocracy: Challenges of Online Citizen Engagement* (Paris: OECD, 2003), 19-142, 56.

[38] Aichholzer and Strauß, "Electronic Participation in Europe", 61.

[39] Scott Wright, "E-petitioning", in Stephen Coleman and Deen Freelon, eds., *Handbook of Digital Politics* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgan Publishing, 2015), 136-150, 136.

[40] Loni Hagen et al., "Introducing Textual Analysis Tools for Policy Informatics: A Case Study of E-petitions", *Proceedings of the 16th Annual International Conference on Digital Government Research* (2015), 10-19, 10.

[41] Aichholzer and Strauß, "Electronic Participation in Europe", 93.

[42] See Hagen et al., "Introducing Textual Analysis Tools", 11; Hagen et al., "Understanding Citizens' Direct Policy Suggestions to the Federal Government: A Natural Language Processing and Topic Modeling Approach", 48th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences (2015), 2134-2143, 2135.

[43] Wright, "E-petitioning", 136.

[44] Hagen et al., "Understanding Citizens' Direct Policy Suggestions", 2135.

funded through charity, such as the British *38 Degrees*, the American *Avaaz* and the Australian *GetUp!*; commercial platforms relying on advertising, such as *Change.org*.[45]

Change.org, object of the present study, is one of the most popular petition websites in the world, operated by an American for-profit corporation.[46] The platform makes revenues by allowing paid advertising to promote campaigns, which can be bought by advocacy organisations or common petitioners and signatories. *Change.org* is active on questions such as human rights, environmental protection, animals' rights, health, economics and criminal justice. Anyone can start an online campaign through the website, addressing decision-makers to drive solutions to local, national, and global problems and gain supporters through media coverage and online sharing.

1.3.1 Previous genre studies on petitionary and fundraising discourse

Historical petitionary discourse has been the object of multiple studies, most of which highlighting the submissive stance assumed by the writer and the deferential portrayal of the addressee.[47] Petitions have been viewed as a hybrid genre, exploiting features from more than one domain, and as members of a "genre colony"[48] consisting of different petitionary genres, e.g. legislative, epistolary and judicial.[49] Traditional petitions relied on a highly formulaic language and, also considering their repetitiveness, several studies have identified their rhetorical structure. In particular, based on previous studies on medieval English parliamentary petitioning by Fisher et al. and Dodd, Peikola investigated petitions written in the context of the Salem witch-trials in 1692, in which he distinguished a four-move structure, comprising:[50]

1. Introductory move, enacted through
    i. Address, which respectfully named the addressee;

---

[45] Wright, "E-petitioning", 136-137.

[46] Change.org, "United Kingdom", https://www.change.org/en-GB, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[47] See John H. Fisher et al., *An Anthology of Chancery English* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1984); Susan Zaeske, *Signatures of Citizenship: Petitioning, Antislavery, and Women's Political Identity* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2006); Gwilym Dodd, *Justice and Grace: Private Petitioning and the English Parliament in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2007), Gudrun Held, "'Supplica la Mia Parvidade...': Petitions in Medieval Society – A Matter of Ritualised or First Reflexive Politeness?", *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*, 11 (2010), 194-218; Matti Peikola, "Supplicatory Voices: Genre Properties of the 1692 Petitions in the Salem Witch-Trials", *Studia Neophilologica*, 84.1 (2012), 106-118.

[48] Vijay K. Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-based View* (London: Continuum, 2004).

[49] Dodd, *Justice and Grace*, 107.

[50] Fisher et al., *An Anthology of Chancery English*; Dodd, *Justice and Grace*; Peikola, "Supplicatory Voices".

  ii. Identification of the petitioner/text, which identified the text, e.g. by defining it as a "petition", "request" or "address", and the petitioner, by stating his/her name and location;

2. Statement of grievance or difficulty, the *narratio*, which described the nature of the problem that the petitioners wished the addressee to redress;

3. Request for redress, the *petitio*, in which, as a consequence, petitioners explicitly pleaded/supplicated the addressee to solve the problem;

4. Appeal for remedy, a conclusion in which petitioners invoked the grace and charity of the ruler.

From being a highly formalised text type during the Early Modern English period, petitions later acquired features more typical of administrative prose.[51] Studies on both paper and online petitions have regarded them as instances of persuasive writing and as a special kind of epistolary texts.[52] Several previous studies have focused on the factors – including linguistic and semantic features – which influence the e-petition popularity.[53] For instance, Hagen et al. analysed the US platform *We the People*, which organises the text of the petition in a short title and a detailed description.[54] E-petition texts are viewed as supposedly constructed with the aim of enhancing endorsement by other citizens through a series of discursive strategies, e.g. by suggesting the need for urgent action, by exploiting emotional appeals and by providing detailed supporting data.[55] Petition texts may indeed be particularly informative, by offering documentation, facts, explanations and justifications and including materials such as website links, videos, photographs or articles.[56]

 The genre of contemporary online petitions also bears several similarities with the discourse of fundraising letters, which has the related purpose of informing the recipient about a problematic issue and persuading him/her to financially support the good cause introduced. A number of studies have

---

[51] Thomas Kohnen, "On Defining Text Types within Historical Linguistics: The Case of Petitions/Statutes", *European Journal of English Studies*, 5.2 (2001), 197-203, 199-200.

[52] Loni Hagen et al., "E-Petition Popularity: Do Linguistic and Semantic Factors Matter?", *Government Information Quarterly* (2016), 1-13; See Anna Vladimirovna Kurjanovich, "Multiparadigmatic Character of the Petition Genre in the Mirror of Modern Linguistics (An Analysis of Online-Petitions as a Special Kind of Epistolary Texts)", *Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University Bulletin*, 2 (2016) 150-159; Yan Chen et al., "A Multi-appeal Model of Persuasion for Online Petition Success: A Linguistic Cue-Based Approach", *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 20.2 (2019), 105-131.

[53] See Hagen et al., "Understanding Citizens' Direct Policy Suggestions", Hagen et al., "Introducing Textual Analysis Tools"; Hagen et al., "E-Petition Popularity"; Ahmed El Noshokaty et al., "Success Factors of Online Petitions: Evidence from Change.org", in Tung X. Bui and Ralph H. Sprague, eds., *2016 49th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Koloa, HI: IEEE, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, 2016), 1979-1985.

[54] Hagen et al., "E-Petition Popularity".

[55] Ibid.

[56] See Helen Briassoulis, "Online Petitions: New Tools of Secondary Analysis?", *Qualitative Research*, 10.6 (2010), 715-727, 716, and Hagen et al., "E-Petition Popularity".

analysed fundraising discourse form a genre perspective.[57] In particular, Biber et al. investigated a corpus of direct mail letters for non-profit fundraising,[58] identifying the following move scheme:

1. Getting attention, attracting the reader by means of
    i.   General pleasantries and/or
    ii. Quotation, story or shocking/unexpected statement;
2. Introducing the cause and/or establishing credentials of the organisation by
    i.   Indicating a general problem or need;
    ii. Highlighting a specific problem or need;
    iii. Highlighting the successes of past organisation efforts;
    iv. Outlining the mission of the organisation;
3. Soliciting response;
    i.   Soliciting financial support, by
        a. Stating the benefit of support to the need/problem, and/or
        b. Asking directly for pledge/donation, and/or
        c. Reminding of past support to encourage future support, and/or
    ii. Soliciting other response, such as volunteering;
4. Offering incentives, by
    i.   Offering tangible incentive, and/or
    ii. Offering intangible incentive;
5. Referencing insert materials;
6. Expressing gratitude by
    i.   Thanking for past financial or other support, and/or
    ii. Thanking for current and future financial or other support;
7. Concluding with pleasantries, to bring the letter to a pleasant close.

2. Aims and Purposes

The present paper explores the discourse of e-petitioning about single-use plastic reduction in the United Kingdom. The study aims at uncovering the recurring rhetorical and discursive strategies exploited by petitioners to gain support for their causes. In particular, the investigation focuses on the

---

[57] See Bhatia, "Generic Patterns in Fundraising Discourse", *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*, 22 (1998), 95-110.
[58] Douglas Biber et al., *Discourse on the Move: Using Corpus Analysis to Describe Discourse Structure* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 43-73.

way e-petitioners raise public awareness about environmental issues and regulative needs and appeal to the readers' civic sense and sensitivity.

3. Methods and Data

The research is carried out on a corpus collecting a selection of online petitions against unnecessary plastic usage published on the British version of *Change.org*. The texts were retrieved by using the search function of the website, with the search words "plastic" and "UK". Petitions focusing on other related issues, such as improving recycling processes or promoting hemp cultivation to obtain bio-materials, were discarded in order to obtain a thematically coherent corpus.

The final corpus includes 108 petitions created between 4th January 2016 and 20th November 2018. The collected texts include: the name/s of addressee/s; the name/nickname and location of the creator; the number of supporters (to date, 30th November 2018); the date of creation; the text of the petition; if present, the titles of embedded videos and the captions in the pictures included. The final corpus comprises a total of 29,364 tokens and 3,862 types. The length of petitions is extremely variable, ranging from 70 to 1,098 words.

E-petitions were examined from a genre analysis perspective, attempting to define a move scheme for the emerging genre. Being online petitions a recently developed genre, performing a new form of citizen-State interaction, this preliminary investigation attempted at devising the appropriate analytical categories by deriving them from previous scientific literature and adjusting them to the specific elements and purposes of the online texts under study. In particular, traditional petitions and fundraising letters were taken into consideration as genres showing similar features to e-petitions in terms of aims and conventions, although applied in different contexts and cases.[59] More specifically (as shown in Paragraph 1.3.1) extensive genre studies on petitions date back to several centuries ago and focus on events of completely different nature, namely Salem witch-trials. As for fundraising letters, it has to be noticed that the collection of funds is not the primary goal of online petitions. Nevertheless, the analytical tools designed for such diverse genres proved to be particularly convenient for the present study. Their rhetorical moves were thus adapted to the analysis of the digital and hybrid genre of e-petitions by combining them with the interactive, multimodal and intertextual features identified in online genres such as coupon advertising (see Paragraph 4.1).[60]

---

[59] Peikola, "Supplicatory Voices"; Biber et al., *Discourse on the Move*.

[60] See Maria Cristina Aiezza, "Go Before They're Gone: A Comparative Analysis of Online Travel Coupons Advertising", in Maurizio Gotti et al., eds., *Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being: Representing the Voices of Tourism* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), 102-129.

The corpus was also investigated from a discourse analysis perspective, in order to identify emerging discourses in the new forms of petitionary and environmental activism.[61] Moreover, considering the high relevance of video testimonies and scientific documentaries in the development of the British sensitivity to the issue of single-use plastic, a specific section (see Paragraph 4.2) was devoted to the recontextualisation of multimedia references in the petitions.
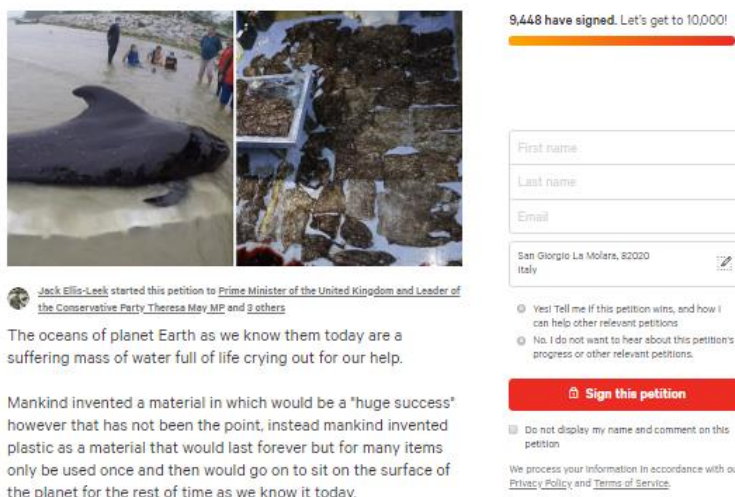
4. Analysis

4.1 Generic and Discursive Trends in Environmental E-petitions

Petitions created on *Change.org* follow a fixed scheme provided by the website, while leaving users a great amount of freedom when detailing textual contents. By way of example, Fig. 1 shows a section of an e-petition from the corpus.

The following paragraphs describe and exemplify the main structural units retrieved in the texts under analysis and the discursive tendencies identified. It is necessary to bear in mind that petitions are generally written by citizens from all cultural backgrounds, especially in response to some piece of news or distressing life event. It is therefore not surprising that some texts include incorrect information – although inserted in good faith – or reveal low language proficiency and/or features of impulsive writing lacking review, typical elements of user-generated contents. Poorly constructed sentences, typos, punctuation and spelling mistakes (e.g. "it's" instead of "its" or "there" for "their") are thus to be found in the present corpus.

---

[61] See Hansen and Cox, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Environment*.

Fig. 1. Example of e-petition on Change.org. Jack Ellis-Leek, "Ban Single Use Plastics and Provide Aid to the Oceans", Change.org, United Kingdom (11 June 2019). © 2019, Change.org, PBC

Attracting attention. In the vast amount of petitions available on the website, appellants need to persuade web users to continue reading and to share their own cause. This function is enacted primarily by choosing an incisive title and representative multimedia. As suggested in *Change.org* guidelines, the title of a petition should be short, direct and focused on the desired solution.[62] Titles in the corpus clearly specify the issues addressed, in this case expressing an opposition to the usage of plastics in several kinds of products: packaging (21 petitions), bags (17), plastics in general (16), single-use plastics in general (11), bottles (13), straws (8), cutlery (5), menstrual tampons (3), balloons (3), tea bags (2), and cigarette filters (1). *Change.org* guidelines also suggest that titles should communicate a sense of urgency, which is achieved through the use of 'shouty' capitalisations (in 17 cases, see e.g. Fig. 1), the insertion of the adverb "NOW" (4 instances) and imperative sentences (69 petitions). Requests are addressed to decision-makers, both aiming at a regulative change, expressed by the verb "ban" (in 26 titles, see e.g. Fig. 1), at a national level, such as "Ban plastic bags in the UK", at a company/retailer level, as in "Ban disposable plastic straws in Morrisons" or at a local and even site-specific level, like "Ban plastic water bottles at Kingston University". The imperative mood in petitions can also call for a behavioural change, such as "ditch" (4) or "stop" (13 petitions), as in "Stop wasting plastic packaging!". In 8 petitions, the aim of the cause is stated through elliptical sentences, such as

---

[62] Change.org, "Start a Petition", https://www.change.org/start-a-petition, last accessed 20 March 2018.

"All UK Supermarkets To Stop Selling Plastic Bags", with the initial omission of expressions such as "In order for" or "I am calling for". Other structures found in titles comprise appeals directed to readers, engaging them to "get" (2), "tell" (2) companies or institutions to avoid some practice which is harmful for the environment, such as "Get Diageo, Carlsberg, Heineken & more to swap their 6-pack plastic rings with eco ones", or to "stop" (2) supermarkets from using unnecessary plastics.

Nearly all of the petitions (102 over 108) attract the reader's attention also through the use of visual media. More specifically, 97 represent the theme of the petitions with a picture, while 6 through a video. Most of the images aim at shocking and moving the viewer by showing the results of plastic pollution on the seas and shores (26 petitions) and on marine animals (17), such as turtles, dolphins, whales, birds entangled in or feeding on plastics (see e.g. Fig. 1). Another section of the pictures simply shows the plastic items the petitioner wishes to eliminate (21 petitions, see e.g. Fig. 2) or their sustainable alternatives (9). Among the embedded videos, two represent the entry films created by two primary schools for the *LitFilmFest*, a festival for young pupils which champions English literacy, creativity, digital skills and attention for global issues. The children involved aimed therefore at spreading environmental-friendly behaviours by setting the example. Another inspiring video embedded in the petitions is a call for environmental stewardship by natural historian Sir David Attenborough, a key figure in the fight to reduce plastic consumption (see also Paragraphs 1.2 and 4.2).

Establishing a discourse community. The platform enables signatories to subscribe to news alerts to be informed about the progress of the petition.

Using pressure tactics. The site shows the current number of signatories and invites the reader to help reach a specific amount of signatures.

Identifying the petitioner. Only subscribed users can start a petition. In the petition format, petitioners are presented though a name and surname/name of organisation/nickname and, if present, a personal picture.

Addressing decision-makers. Petitions are generally directed to the relevant authorities. The website suggests the petitioner should choose addressees who could actually respond to the request, starting from lower levels instead of aiming at higher offices. Nevertheless, among the 61 campaigns appealing to political figures and bodies, many are directed to international and national institutions, including the EU Parliament and the whole UK Government, Prime Minister Theresa May, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Michael Gove and local governments. Other petitions also

address London Mayor Sadiq Khan and specific city councils. In 5 cases, e-petitions aim at changing the plastics policies of local schools or universities and of their facilities, such as "Bill Bryson library café" or the "Bistro at Milngavie". Another section of texts (21 petitions) confronts manufacturing companies, such as Carlsberg or Coca Cola and supermarkets/shops (30 instances), calling into question all retailers in general and/or specific chains such as Tesco or Sainsbury's. Petitioners seem to aim, therefore, both at a larger political and social change and at making an impact at a smaller and local level.

Establishing credentials. All petitioners clearly show their care for our planet by the fact itself of starting a petition to reduce plastic waste. Yet, on some occasions (22 petitions), writers explicitly present themselves as responsible citizens, especially when the story is told from a young activist's perspective, as in "My name is Oscar, I'm 15 years old and I'm passionate about saving our environment from plastic waste.... When I'm not at school, I'm an environmental blogger". These petitioners tend to highlight their efforts for environmental protection or declare they gained awareness of the detrimental effects of some human actions.

Change.org platform itself publishes constant 'Updates' on the number of signatures and on the external coverage the petition has obtained. The platform also allows signatories to endorse the petition by commenting on their 'Reasons for signing'. In one case, the author herself also refers in her text to the support already obtained by the current petition – against plastics in menstrual products – and to its presence in well-known women's magazines such as *Vogue* and *Glamour*.

Indicating a problem. In this fundamental part, present in all of the texts in the corpus, the petitioners describe the nature of the general or specific problem that they wish the addressee to help redress by relying on different appeals.

In most cases (in 62 texts), the problem is detailed by reporting scientific information, which is devoted a varying amount of space. This section may be even physically demarcated in the text in a separate paragraph, such as "PLASTIC POLLUTION FACTS AND STATS". Generally, writers gained awareness of the issue after being exposed to some piece of news – especially if of the shocking type – (see also Paragraph 4.2). As a consequence, when starting their own petitions, they tend to include more detailed information retrieved from different media, such as online news articles, environmental activism websites, Wikipedia entries, official regulations, etc. Users may tend to copy and paste these relevant data or, more often, they may re-narrate and re-contextualise scientific information without even specifying their references. For instance, 9 petitions report the gloomy estimation according to which "by 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the sea", yet, just one of

the petitioners attributes this piece of information to the appropriate source by adding the phrase "according to research by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation". Authors show therefore a tendency to engage in scientific popularisation, by explaining, in their own words, the consequences of plastic waste, as in "PLASTIC BAGS are often ingested by animals because they cannot distinguish whether it is food or not. As a result, it clogs their intestines which results in death by starvation".

The problem of plastic pollution may also be expressed through an emotional appeal (41 texts), attempting at moving readers both through the memories of catastrophic marine damages (see also Paragraph 4.2) and through severe statements, such as "We are drowning in a sea of plastic", "This plastic is becoming a deadly toy to dolphins and seals" or "Balloons don't go to heaven".

The issue may be also presented by simply narrating a personal experience which awakened the writer's environmental conscience (38 petitions), as in "Recently I have visited topshop in London and I noticed that they use paper bags.... if they can use paper bags in London, why can't they use paper bags in all of their shops?" or "I, a full-time self-employed jeweller, place about 20 (if not more) orders with CG every year. If I receive 20 plastic bags per order, that is 400 PER YEAR".

All of the digital campaigns under study clearly aim at obtaining a regulative and/or behavioural change. Nevertheless, some e-petitions (31) emphasise the presence of legal loopholes needing political attention. In particular, some texts state that companies should be subject to stricter laws, otherwise they might tend to prefer cheaper solutions, disregarding their environmental responsibilities, as in "the lack of regulation ... is allowing every company to choose the easier option of using these paper/plastic cups". Some petitions openly stress the fact that the burden of plastic waste reduction should not be left on customers alone, as in "The consumer is not simply going to stop buying plastic packaged goods. Therefore the change needs to come from higher up in the chain". Other petitions point to some single-use plastic items which have not been the object of sufficient public attention or regulations, as in "the UK is holding a consultation on the banning of plastic drinking straws and plastic stemmed cotton buds. But there is one glaring omission from this consultation and that is tampons with plastic applicators". Several petitions also stress the limits of the 5 pence levy on plastic bags, which should be further discouraged until a total ban is reached.

Requesting redress. This section represents a central part of a petition, in which authors appeal rulers for action. This section tends to be inserted as a direct consequence of the circumstances narrated in the previous move, even though a set of authors (23) start their texts by stating the result they wish to obtain through the petition and then motivate their plea.

Decision-makers are generally referred to indirectly, by stating, for instance "the purpose of this petition is to make it a mandatory legal requirement for all manufacturers to include on their plastic

packaging a warning label" or through a direct exhortation as in "Simply.. BAN PLASTIC DRINK BOTTLES FROM THE MEAL DEAL. Come on Boots, let's do this".

Several petitioners (36) point to other companies/institutions which have already taken steps to reduce their plastic footprint. These are shown as examples of positive behaviour or legislation, as in "catch up with retailers across the globe who are ditching single-use plastic". Others (14 petitions) refer to the advances already obtained in other or similar sectors, as a proof of the human possibility to intervene also in the field of plastic policies, as in "We can get gluten-free and dairy-free but we unfortunately can't get plastic-free products".

Some petitions (17) also contain a critique against the governmental bodies or companies addressed, accused especially for their tendency to talk about environmental friendliness in abstract terms instead of taking concrete and prompt action. For instance, (in 6 cases) the petitioners refer to the companies' sustainability reports or statements in order to urge them to practise what they preach, as in "I am calling on Boots to care as much about our planet as they claim to". Theresa May's *25 Year Plan* (see also Paragraph 1.1) is also criticised (in 5 texts) for its lack of urgency, as it establishes long-term reduction goals, while plastic pollution would require immediate action, e.g. "25years is unacceptable and passes the responsibility to a future government instead of the current one". Moreover, uncertainty about plastic policies in a post-Brexit Britain is expressed, as in "There is growing concern about the loss of European environmental standards once the UK leaves the EU".

Offering incentives. Petitioners may persuade their twofold audience, which comprises both decision-makers and citizens, by referring to intangible rewards. Rulers may be invited to implement environmental-friendly practices and norms, to demonstrate their good citizenship and thus be rightfully considered as leaders and inspire the others by example (in 17 cases), as in "Brands like Costa Coffee need to lead the way and show Coca-Cola, and the world, the proof of concept that going plastic-free is achievable for large companies across the globe".

Readers are also offered incentives for signing (in 40 texts), by indicating the benefits which a victorious petition may bring, especially relying on the personal satisfaction that contributing to a good cause may generate, such as "future generations of women will thank you for standing up for our planet" or "Let's save the planet for our children!".

Referencing other materials. Petitions may link to external sources to provide the reader with further information about the problematic issue or the campaign presented. In particular, 18 of the petitions embed hyperlinks redirecting the user to YouTube videos, online newspaper articles or to websites, Facebook pages, Twitter hashtags and accounts of activist groups.

Inviting to support the cause. Common citizens appear to be the primary recipients of the petitions. The website structure itself urges the reader to "Sign the petition" and insert his/her personal data to validate the signature. Nevertheless, in 28 texts, the writer explicitly requires the readers to "sign" or "support" the petition and in 20 cases he/she urges them to "share" the petition online. One of the petitioners also requests readers to financially sponsor the petition, so that it will be shown to other potential supporters on *Change.org* or on its distribution channels:[63] "You can also contribute anything upwards of £3 with a few clicks, this shows our petition to a much wider audience".

Expressing gratitude. In 20 instances, petitioners end their texts by thanking readers for their time and support, e.g. "Thanks for reading, and for caring".

Concluding with pleasantries. In 3 cases, references to epistolary genres are particularly evident, as the authors end their texts with salutations typical of formal letters, such as "Sincerely, Clare", "Best Regards, David" or of informal messages, as "Ros x".

4.2 The 'Blue Planet effect'

Many of the petitions call on the British audience for action by relying on common visual memories, shocking videos showing the consequences of marine pollution. In several cases, the video news referred to had been circulated on websites and social media. In particular, two petitions recall "a cringe-inducing video that's gone viral, where a team of scientists pull an entire plastic straw from the nostril of a sea turtle whilst it winces in pain and bleeds".[64] Two other petitions refer to a video showing a whale sadly found dead in Indonesia with six kilos of plastic in its stomach.[65]

Apart from such testimonies from the web, petitions also refer to three official documentaries: one text alludes to the film *A Plastic Ocean*;[66] three causes mention the episode *A Plastic Tide*[67] from the *Sky* series *Ocean Rescue 2*; but, most significantly, nine petitions quote *BBC Blue Planet II* and six name its host, Sir David Attenborough.

[63] Change.org, "Promoted Petitions FAQs", (11 July 2018), https://help.change.org/s/article/Promoted-Petitions-FAQs?language=en_UK, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[64] See Jane J. Lee, "How Did Sea Turtle Get a Straw Up Its Nose?", *National Geographic* (5 June 2018).

[65] See Laura Parker, "Sperm Whale Found Dead with 13 Pounds of Plastic in Its Stomach", *National Geographic* (21 November 2018).

[66] Craig Leeson, *A Plastic Ocean*, film (U.S.A.: Plastic Oceans International, 2016).

[67] Sky International, "A Plastic Tide", Ocean Rescue 2.7, video (2017), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D35YnZ7_WxM&feature=youtu.be, last accessed 20 March 2018.

On 10th December 2017, the seventh episode of *Blue Planet II*, its season finale *Our Blue Planet*, was aired on *BBC1*.[68] The documentary examined the role of anthropogenic activity on the seas, also showing the results of some redressing actions. The British audience seemed to be particularly affected by the section denouncing the vast amount of plastic waste found in our oceans worldwide, causing the intoxication and death of marine fauna. Some of the most heart-breaking scenes are mentioned in one of the petitions, which, nevertheless, does not quote their source: "Recent shocking footage shows albatrosses unwittingly feeding their chicks pieces of plastic. Whale calves are dying because they are drinking their mothers' milk that has been contaminated by plastic".

In an age which discredits experts, spreads fake news, denies climate change, Attenborough appears nevertheless to be still regarded as a reliable reference. In his long career at the BBC, Attenborough has become "an avatar of scientific authority within natural history broadcasting",[69] respected for his knowledge and institutional role but also able to mobilise sentiments and feelings of the British people. Attenborough's "windswept hair, the whispering voice, and the simultaneously authoritative and self-effacing demeanour"[70] and his quintessential Englishness have contributed to constructing his unique television persona. He has been closely identified with the corporation for which he has worked for more than half a century and has always supported the goal of public service broadcasting to democratise knowledge.[71] As evidenced in the memories recalled in another petition, already before *Blue Planet II* was aired, Attenborough had long been considered a defender of nature, whose conservationist ideals the author wishes to be now put into practice:

> I grew up being educated by the programmes of Sir David Attenborough. I want my children to grow up in a better, cleaner world. I want them to see a less polluted world, the world shown to us in the wildlife documentaries I've watched my entire life.... I want them to see the wishes of Sir Attenborough and like minded people, yourselves included, come true.[72]

The *Blue Planet II* series had an unforeseen impact, raising awareness about plastic pollution, contributing to 'constructing' plastic waste as a 'social problem', engaging people to tackle the issue of single-use plastic and influencing the UK environmental policy.[73] The effect of the series is also

---

[68] David Attenborough, "Our Blue Planet", *Blue Planet II* 1.7, video (U.K.: BBC Earth, 2017), https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b09jbn5f/blue-planet-ii-series-1-7-our-blue-planet, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[69] Michael Jeffries, "BBC Natural History Versus Science Paradigms", *Science as Culture*, 12.4 (2003), 527-545, 527.

[70] Huggan, *Nature's Saviours*, 21.

[71] Ibid., 25.

[72] Moyn AlIslam, "Supermarkets: Stop using Plastic Bags, Reduce Waste, Protect Our Environment & Wildlife", Change.org, United Kingdom (3 October 2016), https://www.change.org/p/supermarkets-stop-using-plastic-bags-reduce-waste-protect-our-environment-wildlife?lang=en-GB, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[73] See BBC, "Attenborough 'Astonished' by Blue Planet Impact", *BBC Newsround* (25 June 2018).

evident in the increasing amount of petitions against the excessive use of plastic initiated in the UK after the episode. Of all the petitions in the corpus, 24 were started before 10th December 2017 and 86 after that date. British petitioners seem to have accepted the call for action launched by Sir Attenborough at the end of the season finale video. His message was also embedded as a 40 seconds video extract in one petition[74] (see also Paragraph 4.1) and quoted in another:

> Never before have we had such an awareness of what we are doing to the planet and never before have we had the power to do something about that. Surely we have a responsibility to care for our blue planet. The future of humanity, and indeed all life on earth, now depends on us.[75]

Another petition, demanding the supermarket Waitrose to stop using non-recyclable cups to offer its customers complimentary coffees, also had a 'real-life' counterpart, documented in the image uploaded in the petition (see Fig. 2) and in online news.[76] Protesters, guided by the petitioner, campaigned outside Chichester's Waitrose dressed as marine animals and brandishing a poster of David Attenborough, with the sea in the background, which read "Come on Waitrose Ditch this cup" and used the hashtag "#doitforDavid". Whereas the retailer may disregard a humble citizen's request, it might instead feel pressured to respond to Sir Attenborough's plea.

Fig. 2. Kay Mawer, "Waitrose - Stop Using Disposable and Non-Recyclable Coffee Cups NOW!", *Change.org*, *United Kingdom* (5 February 2018). © 2019, Change.org, PBC.

---

[74] David Attenborough, "Our Blue Planet", video embedded in Clare Forbes, "Remove Single Use Plastic Bottles from Milngavie Primary School", *Change.org*, United Kingdom (26 January 2018), https://www.change.org/p/clare-forbes-remove-single-use-plastic-bottles-from-milngavie-primary-school?lang=en-GB, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[75] David Attenborough, "Our Blue Planet", cit. in Monir El Moudden, "Act on Cutting Plastic Waste NOW by Introducing a New Act of Parliament Post Brexit", *Change.org*, United Kingdom (12 January 2018), https://www.change.org/p/theresa-may-mp-act-on-cutting-plastic-waste-in-2018-by-introducing-a-new-act-of-parliament-post-brexit?lang=en-GB, last accessed 20 March 2018.

[76] See Johnston Press Staff, "Protesters Take to Fancy Dress in Plea for Supermarket to Ban Use of Non-Recyclable Coffee Cups", *INews* (7 February 2018), https://inews.co.uk/news/environment/protesters-take-fancy-dress-plea-supermarket-ban-use-non-recyclable-coffee-cups, last accessed 20 March 2018.

5. Conclusions

The recent developments of the Internet have enabled the emergence of new forms of digital activism, involving the interaction of citizens with State and businesses through ICTs. Online petitioning platforms, in particular, have allowed users, even with limited digital skills, to publicly express their stance on a variety of issues and conflicts affecting their rights and lives. Public opinion has been deeply affected by the revelation of the enormous damages caused by anthropogenic activity on our planet. Out of the many environmental campaigns examined in the present study, only a small minority have reached the desired aim – at the time of writing this paper, only 4 over 108 petitions ended up in a victory. Nevertheless, their very creation and multiplication has certainly contributed to touching consciences and establishing the overconsumption of plastics as a 'social issue' requiring immediate solutions.

The present study applied a genre-based perspective to the analysis of e-petitions, aiming to provide a novel contribution to the research in political discourse. The analysis revealed that the fixed scheme and guidelines on how to write a petition provided by *Change.org* did not prevent users from personalising their texts. A recurring number of optional rhetorical sequences was identified, notably a mixture of features from different genres, from petitions to fundraising letters, imbued with the interactive capabilities of the web. Nevertheless, as in the traditional petitioning discourse, the *narratio* and *petitio* components still form the core parts of contemporary e-petitions.

A great amount of petitioners attempt at persuading their readers about the negative impacts of plastics on marine life by quoting scientific data retrieved from multiple sources, including newspaper articles and websites, and referring to shocking images shown in viral videos and documentaries. In particular, the study confirmed the key and authoritative role that natural historian David Attenborough and his programmes have had in the construction of British environmental conservationism. Attenborough's plea for the reduction of plastic consumption for the sake of our survival on this planet seems to have fallen on fertile ground. Especially after seeing the devastation that humans have caused in his *Blue Planet II*, many citizens decided not only to change their lives but also to exploit the power of the Internet to prompt others, starting from the smallest shops and ultimately reaching companies and governments, in an effort to change their consumption habits and norms.

The study also evidenced a change in the contemporary practices of consumption of news and specialised knowledge. In an age in which citizens often come across and scan information which was shared by their ties on social media, the boundaries between hearsay and official documents are becoming blurred. All sources seem to become part of a shared knowledge and to be equally contributing to opinion formation. It would therefore appear particularly interesting to further explore

the transformation and recontextualisation processes that media news and specialised texts undergo in user-generated messages.

Antonio Fruttaldo

In the 'Mist' of an Amplification Spiral.
The Case of the 'Great Smog of London'

Abstract: The following paper aims to investigate how the Great Smog of London was slowly constructed in the British press as a deviation phenomenon by analysing a corpus of news stories published in the week from 5 to 12 December 1952. Drawing upon the appraisal systems of attitude and engagement, this investigation examines how the British press shaped a deviancy amplification spiral, which led to the passing of the 1956 Clean Air Act by the UK Parliament. The Act itself will also be analysed to see how the power of the institution is linguistically expressed in legal terms when trying to assert control over environmental matters. In order to do this, a CDA-inspired environmental law analysis will be applied to the study of the Clean Air Act, so as to see how the legal language interacts with societal elites and laypeople, revealing essential tensions in the relationship between nature and society and lay bare the discursive power struggles that underlie environmental politics.

Keywords: *media discourse, legal discourse, critical discourse analysis, interdiscursivity, environmental law, moral panic*

> and as he handed me into a fly, … I asked him whether there was a great fire anywhere? For the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen.
> 'Oh dear no, miss,' he said. 'This is a London particular.'
> I had never heard of such a thing.
> 'A fog, miss,' said the young gentleman.
> 'O indeed!' said I.
> Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*

1. Introduction

As Mertz argues, law can be seen as "the locus of a powerful act of linguistic appropriation, where the translation of everyday categories into legal language effects powerful changes".[1] In this sense, legal language plays a seminal role, on the one hand, in disciplining and controlling human behaviours, and, on the other, in solving conflicts and disputes. Indeed, as Gellers maintains, law can be regarded as "a

---

[1] Elizabeth Mertz, "Legal Language: Pragmatics, Poetics, and Social Power", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23.1 (1994), 441.

means of exerting power and control".[2] Consequently, legal discourse represents the solidification and response to specific social dynamics that are impossible to foresee, and are designed to preserve social order. In this way, law can be regarded as: (1) a source of language in society, and (2) a means for the expression of power.

As a linguistic source, law translates and regulates the everyday social experiences of human kind into a stylised, professionalised and internally coherent form of discourse expressing a system of authority in society.[3] Therefore, "as the rhetoric of a particular group or class, and as a specific exercise of power and of power over meaning … legal language, like any other language usage, is a social practice and … its texts will necessarily bear the imprint of such practice or organisational background".[4] However, it is also necessary to underline the universal and contingent features of the language of law. Indeed, while law and legal discourse are always ensconced within and respond to a certain historical context that, in a given way, dictates the interpretations and subsequent speculations provided at a given moment in time, "it is constantly necessary to remember the compositional, stylistic and semantic mechanisms which allow legal discourse to deny its historical and social genesis".[5] Hence, while responding to and regulating given aspects of society in a specific time and place, law and legal discourse need to abstract from the contemporary junctures of certain events through a stylised form of communication that enforces social order through dominance.[6]

This observation brings us to the second aspect of law, deemed as a locus for the exercise of power. Indeed, according to critical legal theorists, law and its expression through legal discourse is representative of those social institutions through which "the experience and reality of human subordination and domination" are (re)produced.[7] In this sense, law can be seen as an ideological apparatus. Hunt, in discussing critical legal theory, talks about a 'legal ideology', which provides the means through which "the persistence of relations founded on inequality and subordination are explored" in legal discourse.[8] The thesis behind this interpretation of law is that law and legal discourse can be fruitfully analysed and explored as the expression of a precise ideology contributing to the reproduction of subordination. As such, law needs to be legitimated on the grounding assumption that

---

[2] Joshua C. Gellers, "Greening Critical Discourse Analysis: Applications to the Study of Environmental Law", *Critical Discourse Studies*, 12.4 (2015), 482–493.

[3] Peter Goodrich, *Legal Discourse: Studies in Linguistics, Rhetoric and Legal Analysis* (London: Macmillan, 1987).

[4] Ibid., 2.

[5] Ibid., 204.

[6] See Antonio Fruttaldo, "Climate-induced Migration and International Law: Assessing the Discursive Legal Construction of Climate Refugees", in Katherine E. Russo and Ruth Wodak, eds., *The Representation of 'Exceptional Migrants' in Media Discourse: The Case of Climate-induced Migration*, *Anglistica AION*, 21.2 (2017).

[7] Alan Hunt, "The Theory of Critical Legal Studies", *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 6.1 (1986), 43; Alan Hunt, "The Critique of Law: What Is 'Critical' about Critical Legal Theory?", *Journal of Law and Society*, 14.1 (1987), 5–19.

[8] Ibid., 11.

"legal ideology is effective in constructing the perception and consciousness of the dominated in contemporary capitalist societies".[9] Domination is, thus, enforced through subordination, which is legitimated in the places where legal discourse is (re)produced (e.g. courts and law offices), becoming a dominant/dominating form of discourse in the wider society. Therefore, Klare maintains that:

> Legal discourse shapes our beliefs about the experiences and capacities of the human species, our conceptions of justice, freedom and fulfillment, and our visions of the future. It informs our beliefs about how people learn about and treat themselves and others, how we come to hold values, and how we might construct the institutions through which we govern ourselves. In these respects legal discourse resembles all other forms of systematized symbolic interaction. The peculiarity of legal discourse is that it tends to constrain the political imagination and to induce belief that our evolving social arrangements and institutions are just and rational, or at least inevitable, and therefore legitimate. The *modus operandi* of law as legitimating ideology is to make the historically contingent appear necessary.[10]

As a legitimated form of discourse, law comes to govern nearly every aspect of our social and political life. However, as both a reflection and a crystallisation of the dynamic interaction among societal elites, laypeople and specific social issues that need to be regulated, law can reveal key tensions in the relationship between discourse and society.[11] This is particularly true of issues relating to environmental law, where "discursive power struggles underlying environmental politics" can be detected, allowing one to "see environmental politics both as a process that seeks to generate an answer to a real world problem, and as a critical struggle where conflicts between discourses may be exacerbated, sidestepped or resolved".[12]

In this sense, law and legal discourse must not only be seen as a form of and a site for the power struggle that disciplines and restricts social behaviours, but also as "a product of a dominant or hegemonic political culture which directly produces the forms of mentality or social consciousness of the population".[13] Therefore, legal discourse "does not mediate between a dominant ideology and a popular consciousness; it is itself a more or less accurate replication or reflection of that external

---

[9] Ibid.

[10] Karl E. Klare, "The Public/Private Distinction in Labor Law", *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 130 (1982), 1358.

[11] Jan Engberg, "Does Routine Formulation Change Meaning? the Impact of Genre on Word Semantics in the Legal Domain", in Lita Lundquist and Robert J. Jarvella, eds., *Language, Text, and Knowledge: Mental Models of Expert Communication* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2000), 31–48; Engberg, "Legal Linguistics as a Mutual Arena for Cooperation: Recent Developments in the Field of Applied Linguistics and Law", *Applications in Applied Linguistics: AILA Review*, 26.1 (2013), 24–41; Eve Darian-Smith, *Laws and Societies in Global Contexts: Contemporary Approaches* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2013).

[12] Maarten Hajer and Wytske Versteeg, "A Decade of Discourse Analysis of Environmental Politics: Achievements, Challenges, Perspectives", *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 7.3 (2005), 181.

[13] Hunt, "Critical Legal Studies", 13.

process".[14] Since environmental law can be seen as fundamentally prescribing/restricting certain human actions – impacting and actively reshaping human behaviours, for instance, in the use of physical landscapes – it can be conceived as "the most readily available means to drag law as a discipline outside its linguistic ivory tower",[15] thus reconstructing that feeble link to everyday human activities that legal language tries to dissimulate.[16]

Given this picture of the nature of law and legal discourse, the following study aims to investigate the connection between legal discourse and society by analysing how the Great Smog of London was slowly constructed in the British press as a deviation phenomenon, thus urging the British government to take action against the moral panic that ensued as a result of the media's representation of the event.[17]

2. The 'Great Smog' of London and the Clear Air Act

In early December 1952, London was engulfed in a thick fog that lasted for five days. The combination of the humid, cold weather with the black smoke emitted from homes and industries created a deadly smog that killed, according to Wilkins, almost 4,000 people during the meteorological/environmental emergency and the following weeks.[18]

In normal weather conditions, the layer of air nearest the ground is warmer and, therefore, less dense than the layers at greater heights. During periods when fog is apt to occur, the relative arrangement of the warm and cool layers is inverted. If moisture condenses from the atmosphere under these conditions, fog droplets are formed around individual airborne particles. Fog, like clouds, is made up of condensed water droplets which are the result of the air being cooled to the point (called the dewpoint) where it can no longer hold all of the water vapour it contains. As Wilkins highlights, London has often been particularly affected by fog.[19] More importantly, in his paper, Wilkins clearly identifies specific years when a correlation can be drawn between thick fog formation and increased mortality. The problem with fog is that, when it affects extremely polluted areas, much of the air-borne

---

[14] Ibid.

[15] Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, "Actors or Spectators? Vulnerability and Critical Environmental Law", *Oñati Socio-Legal Series*, 3.5 (2013), 867.

[16] See Oriana Palusci, ed., *Green Canada* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016).

[17] The author of this manuscript would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their generous support, insightful criticisms, and constructive remarks. The reviews were extremely helpful in contributing to this final product. While the author could not always follow their advice, this manuscript reads in a more focused way thanks to their efforts. The author takes full responsibility for any time he has neglected to follow their advice.

[18] E.T. Wilkins, "Air Pollution and the London Fog of December, 1952", *Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute*, 74.1 (1954), 1–21.

[19] Ibid.

pollution discharged at ground level is quickly carried upwards and is dissipated in the upper atmosphere, creating, when it descends, a thick curtain of toxic fog (so-called 'pea-soup' fog). These toxic fogs were so characteristic of the London area that, even in 1849, Herman Melville, in his *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent*, described this peculiarity as follows: "Upon sallying out this morning encountered the old-fashioned pea soup London fog – of a gamboge color. It was lifted, however, from the ground & floated in mid-air. When lower, it is worse".[20] The novelist Charles Dickens also popularised the term 'London ivy' in *Bleak House* (1852-1853) to refer to the specific pollution phenomena affecting London associated with the combination of fog with soot, smoke, dust, and chemical particles emitted by furnaces, factories, and incinerators:

> Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snowflakes – gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun…. Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls deified among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds.[21]

Therefore, while these phenomena where widely renowned and defined as an actual "particular" of the city,[22] in the winters of 1948 and 1952, these severe toxic fogs were particularly experienced in London, the most likely cause being the exhaust fumes from an increase in motor vehicles in the years immediately after the end of the war. More notably, in his study on *Fog and Mortality*, Logan underlines the fact that the fog of 1948 caused in excess of 300 deaths attributed to pneumonia and bronchitis in older patients:

> The dense fog that enveloped London and much of the country during the closing days of November, 1948, established a record, not for density but for duration. Commencing in London on the night of Friday,

---

[20] Herman Melville, *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent*, edited by Eleanor Melville Metcalf (London: Cohen and West, 1948 [1849-1850]), 45-46.

[21] Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Reprinted Edition (New York: Penguin Books, 1996 [1852-1853]), 1.

[22] Ibid., 28.

Nov. 26, it persisted until Wednesday, Dec. 1. The disruption of transport that it occasioned received ample comment in the press; but less mention was made of the toll in life that it might be exacting.[23]

However, the unusually dense fog that engulfed practically the whole of the Greater London area from the morning of Friday, 5 December 1952 and continued until the early morning of Tuesday, 9 December 1952 was different and peculiar in its kind: the atmospheric pollution was much more severe, and the concentrations of sulphur dioxide were particularly high. Sulphur dioxide, when it comes into contact with water droplets, becomes sulphurous acid, which is highly irritant to the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts. Logan, in his paper "Mortality in the London Fog Incident, 1952", highlights the exceptionality of the event in this way:

> The dense four-day fog in Greater London in December, 1952, was responsible for some 4,000 deaths during the two following weeks. The increased mortality affected persons of all ages, but particularly those aged 45 and over. Deaths assigned to bronchitis and pneumonia increased eight times and three times respectively in one week. A considerable increase in numbers of deaths occurred even on the first day of the fog. Four previous London fogs resulting in a sudden increase in deaths have been noted; but the 1952 incident caused by far the largest increase.[24]

In line with the preliminary data provided by Logan, Wilkins also estimates, as previously underlined, that there was an excess of 4,000 deaths during the 1952 fog and the following two weeks, with a further 8,000 deaths occurring over the next ten weeks.[25] These observations were confirmed by the data collected by Bell and Davis, showing the increase of mortality in the week of and the weeks after the event (see Figure 1).[26]

---

[23] William P.D. Logan, "Fog and Mortality", *The* Lancet, 253.6541 (1949), 78.

[24] William P. D. Logan, "Mortality in the London Fog Incident, 1952", *The Lancet*, 261.6755 (1953), 338.

[25] Ibid.; Wilkins, "Air Pollution".

[26] Michelle L. Bell and Devra L. Davis, "Reassessment of the Lethal London Fog of 1952: Novel Indicators of Acute and Chronic Consequences of Acute Exposure to Air Pollution", *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 109.3 (2001), 389–394.
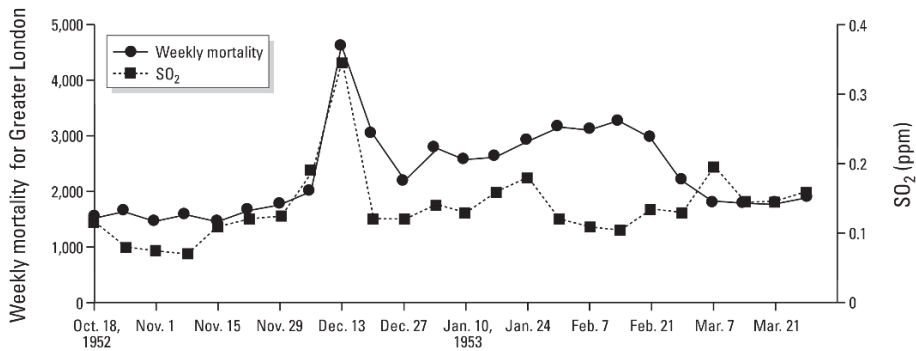
Figure 1. Weekly mortality and SO_2 concentrations for Greater London, 1952-1953 (from Bell and Davis, 2001, 391).

Black, who at the time was responsible for admissions to the Hospital for Sick Children (now Great Ormond Street Hospital), London, emphasises the extreme toxicity of the fog, with people experiencing a sulphurous taste in the mouth and an increase in nasal secretion during the fog of December 1952:

> A unique feature of the 1952 fog was the large number of sudden deaths at home during the actual fog, emphasising its extreme toxicity. During the fog many adults experienced a sulphurous taste in the mouth and an increase in nasal secretion, and it is probable that the epithelium of the terminal ileum of infants with intussusception could have been damaged by swallowed saliva and nasopharyngeal secretions containing irritant substances.[27]

In the aftermath of what is referred to as the 'Great Smog of London', British officials approved several regulations that would reduce the emission of black smoke and require industries to switch to cleaner-burning fuels.[28] While it was not the very first episode in contemporary history when air pollution was responsible for a spike in deaths (see, for instance, the case in the Meuse Valley in Belgium in 1930,[29] and in Donora, Pennsylvania in 1948),[30] the Great Smog represents a turning point in environmental law history. As Stoner and Melathopoulos maintain:

---

[27] J. Black, "Intussusception and the Great Smog of London, December 1952", *Archives of Disease in* Childhood, 88.12 (2003), 1040.

[28] John F. Garner and R. S. Offord, *The Law on the Pollution of the Air and the Practice of its Prevention* (London: Shaw and Sons, 1957).

[29] J. Firket, "Fog along the Meuse Valley", *Transactions of the Faraday Society*, 32 (1936), 1192–1196; Kaj Roholm, "The Fog Disaster in the Meuse Valley, 1930: A Fluorine Intoxication", *The Journal of Industrial Hygiene and Toxicology*, 19.3 (1937), 126–137; Douglas W. Dockery and C. Arden Pope III, "Acute Respiratory Effects of Particulate Air Pollution", *Annual Review of Public Health*, 15.1 (1994), 107–132; Pope III, "Mortality and Air Pollution: Associations Persist with Continued Advances in Research Methodology", *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 107.8 (1999), 613-614; Pope III, "Air Pollution and Health: Good

> Yet, the incident appeared to signal a growing change within society itself.… [A] broad and growing discontent with air pollution – one that could not simply be explained as the straightforward reaction to the physical concentration of particulate matter in the atmosphere began to surface across most industrialized counties after WWII. It was these discontents that became the grounds for the political compact that came to dominate much of the twentieth century, in which the social need for regulating pollution was translated into national environmental legislation enforced and monitored by state agencies. Significantly, the devastation of the Great London Smog positioned the United Kingdom at the forefront of this trend, and in 1956 the House of Commons enacted the Clean Air Act – making the United Kingdom the first country in the world to pass a national statute for regulating air pollution.[31]

Indeed, due to the 'Clean Air Act' of 1956, a milestone in the development of a legal framework to protect the environment, awareness was raised, opening up the floor to a series of regulations that would address problems relating to pollution in urban contexts.

Before the Clean Air Act of 1956, regulations on air pollution were determined by the Public Health Act (1875), the Public Health (Scotland) Act (1897), and the Public Health (Smoke Abatement) Act (1926). These provisions, however, were extremely fragmentary and, more importantly, by the 1950s, technological developments had rendered them obsolete.[32] The Clean Air Act, therefore, established a series of requirements to fight and reduce air pollution by introducing, for instance, smoke control areas where only smokeless fuels could be burned in furnaces, thus decreasing the amount of smoke pollution and sulphur dioxide from household fires. The Act also included a number of measures to relocate power stations outside city centres, and to increase the height of chimneys so as to prevent their smoke, grit, dust or gases from becoming prejudicial to health.

The Clean Air Act, however, was a response to the media's construction of the events that had taken place in December 1952. Indeed, the media coverage of the Great Smog resulted in a deviancy

---

News and Bad", *New England Journal of Medicine,* 351.11 (2004), 1132-1133; Benoit Nemery, et al., "The Meuse Valley Fog of 1930: An Air Pollution Disaster", *The Lancet,* 357.9257 (2001), 704–708.

[30] Helmuth H. Schrenk, et al., *Air Pollution in Donora, Pa.: Epidemiology of the Unusual Smog Episode of October 1948. Preliminary Report* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Security Agency, Public Health Service, Bureau of State Services, Division of Industrial Hygiene, 1949); James G. Townsend, "Investigation of the Smog Incident in Donora, Pa., and Vicinity", *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health*, 40.2 (1950), 183–189; Antonio Ciocco and Donovan J. Thompson, "A Follow-Up of Donora Ten Years After: Methodology and Findings", *American Journal of Public Health and the Nation's Health*, 51.2 (1961), 155–164; Lynne P. Snyder, "'The Death-dealing Smog over Donora, Pennsylvania': Industrial Air Pollution, Public Health Policy, and the Politics of Expertise, 1948-1949", *Environmental History Review*, 18.1 (1994), 117–139.

[31] Alexander M. Stoner and Andony Melathopoulos, *Freedom in the Anthropocene: Twentieth-Century Helplessness in the Face of Climate Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

[32] John B. Sanderson, "The National Smoke Abatement Society and the Clean Air Act (1956)", *Political Studies*, 9.3 (1961), 236–253.

amplification spiral,[33] framing the event in such a way that moral panic was an inevitable consequence.[34] Developed by the sociologist Stanley Cohen in the late 1960s, moral panic theory was introduced in order to "account for episodes where the media and society at large fasten on a particular problem and generate an alarmist debate that, in turn, leads to action against the perceived problem".[35] In the words of Cohen:

> Societies appear to be prone, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions.[36]

On the basis of this definition, Cohen puts forward a cultural model to essentially account for moral panics. The model identifies four basic elements in the creation of a moral panic. First, the moral panic must find an object, namely, what the moral panic is about. Second, once a specific event, aspect or group of individuals of a given society has been identified, a moral panic requires a scapegoat (termed by Cohen a 'folk devil'), "an entity which the public can both project its fears onto and blame for a state of affairs".[37] Third, the moral panic may be generated and (re)produced by what Cohen defines as a moral entrepreneur through the media or by the media alone. Finally, the last stage of the moral panic is represented by obsessive, moralistic and alarmist debates prompted once more by moral entrepreneurs.

The way that the Great Smog of London was portrayed in the press indeed represented an example of moral panic since, as Brimblecombe argues, "the media was … prone to exaggerate some aspects of the fog and stressed the impact of the fog on housebreaking and street crime".[38] Such a construction of the event was also influenced, according to Brimblecombe, by the strong relationship between criminal activities and detective fiction, such as *Tiger in the Smoke* by Margery Allingham (1952) or the film

---

[33] Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics,* Third Edition (London: Routledge, 2002 [1972]). The concept of 'deviancy amplification spiral' was originally introduced by Jock Young, "The Role of the Police as Amplifiers of Deviancy, Negotiators of Reality and Translators of Fantasy: Some Consequences of Our Present System of Drug Control as Seen in Notting Hill", in Cohen, ed., *Images of Deviance* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971). The concept refers to the media hype phenomenon linked to a cycle of increasing numbers of reports on a set of discursively constructed antisocial behaviours or some other sorts of 'undesirable' event leading to a moral panic.

[34] Stuart Hall, et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

[35] Tony McEnery, *Swearing in English: Bad Language, Purity and Power from 1586 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

[36] Cohen, *Folk Devils*, 1.

[37] McEnery, *Swearing in English*, 5.

[38] Peter Brimblecombe, "The Clean Air Act after 50 Years", *Weather* , 1.11 (2006), 311.

Lady in the Fog (1952), directed by Sam Newfield.[39] The moral panic fuelled by the press also reached other types of media. Indeed, the event and its construal had such an enormous impact on people's collective history that it also found its way in the children's book *A Dog so Small* by Philippa Pearce, where the Great Smog of London is elegantly described as follows:

> but later, another fog began. No one could say where it was coming from, but everyone could taste its tang in the air, and feel the oppression of its descent. The sky seemed to thicken, and at the same time to come lower – so low and heavy, it looked as if it would soon need propping up with poles. And then, at last, one day when all indoor lights were on by three o'clock in the afternoon, the sky fell and lay upon London in a greasy, grey-yellow pea-souper of a London fog.… All landmarks and familiarities melted into fog. Pedestrians fumbling their way home overtook even-slower-moving vehicles; as the fog thickened, they would come up abruptly against cars abandoned half on the pavement. By that time, the buses, having reached the safety of their garages, refused to venture out again. The streets filled with fog and emptied of traffic and people.[40]

In line with the previous observations, the present study sets out to investigate the particular type of conflict between the media construal of the events and the public institutions, compelling the government into a policy of intervention for environmental reasons. Therefore, by reconstructing how the British press constructed the moral panic associated with the event under investigation, the present study aims to focus on the so-called 'power to move governments'[41] that the press possesses in provoking the authority of the institutions to intervene once an out of control situation has been engendered. More specifically, the focus of this paper will be on the relationship established between the way the great Smog of London was portrayed as both an unforeseeable and uncontrollable event and the corrective action or legal response to such a lack of authorities or, more generally, a challenge to the authorities themselves, thus prompting the debate around and the final approval of the Clean Air Act by the British Parliament.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

The present study investigates how the Great Smog of London was slowly constructed in the British press as a deviation phenomenon by analysing a corpus of news stories published in the week from 5 to

---

[39] Ibid.; Peter Brimblecombe, "London (1952): An Enduring Legacy", in Brimblecombe, ed., *Air Pollution Episodes* (New Jersey: World Scientific, 2017), 57–72.

[40] Philippa Pearce, *A Dog so Small*, illustrated by Antony Maitland (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1962), 73-74.

[41] Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton U.P., 2015 [1963]).

12 December 1952. Drawing upon the appraisal systems of attitude and engagement,[42] this paper examines how the British press shaped a deviancy amplification spiral, which led to the passing of the 1956 Clean Air Act by the UK government. The regulation itself will also come under scrutiny to see how the power of the institution is discursively conveyed in fostering an approach of increased awareness to environmental matters.

As for the corpus of news stories, they have been qualitatively analysed by focusing on how evaluation and stance are conveyed. In line with McEnery's work on moral panic,[43] attention has been paid to how processes have been constructed, highlighting their consequences. Therefore, newsworthiness has been taken into consideration and how the news values of Impact and Negativity are discursively expressed in the corpus, given the particular interest in the way moral panic has been slowly constructed and enhanced in news stories (see the notion of 'discourse of chaos').[44]

As previously stated, the analysis of the news stories collected in the corpus has been performed by adopting a qualitative approach, in the sense that each news story has been manually annotated in order to highlight the news values enhanced in/by specific lexical items. News values have traditionally been described in terms of the factors that make a news story newsworthy, that is, as "the factors that take an event into the news".[45] In other words, they are "properties of events or stories or … criteria/principles that are applied by news workers in order to select events or stories as news or to choose the structure and order of reporting".[46] Given the focus of this study on how the press might have prompted the corrective action of the law in the case of the Great Smog of London, among the list of news values described by Bednarek and Caple,[47] particular attention has been paid to the evaluative linguistic resources that discursively construct the news values of Negativity and Impact, since they have both allowed a better understanding of the creation of a moral panic.

Negativity can be seen as a key news value since news stories thrive on it. Bednarek and Caple argue that Negativity is enhanced in news stories "through reference to emotions that are culturally

---

[42] James R. Martin, "Beyond Exchange: Appraisal Systems in English", in Susan Hunston and Geoffrey Thompson, eds., *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2000), 142–175; Martin and Peter R. R. White, *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Monika Bednarek, *Evaluation in Media Discourse: Analysis of a Newspaper Corpus* (London: Continuum, 2006); Martin and David Rose, *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause*, Second Edition (London: Continuum, 2007); Yumin Chen, "Exploring the Attitudinal Variations in the Chinese English-Language Press on the 2013 Air Pollution Incident", *Discourse and Communication* 8.4 (2014), 331–349.

[43] McEnery, *Swearing in English*.

[44] See Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse* (Naples: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018).

[45] Bednarek and Helen Caple, *News Discourse* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 39.

[46] Bednarek and Caple, "Why Do News Values Matter? Towards a New Methodological Framework for Analyzing News Discourse in Critical Discourse Analysis and Beyond", *Discourse and Society*, 20.10 (2014), 2.

[47] Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*; Bednarek and Caple, *The Discourse of News Values: How News Organizations Create Newsworthiness* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2017).

---

considered as negative".[48] The description and analysis of a repertoire of negative lexis, that is, "expressions that describe negative events or news actors, but that do not explicitly inform the audience that the writer disapproves of them",[49] can therefore enlighten us on how Negativity is being enhanced in a specific news story.

As for the news value of Impact, it can be regarded as particularly linked to the fact that "[t]he effects or consequences of an event are aspects of a story that are newsworthy, especially if they involve serious repercussions or have a more global impact".[50] In this way, Impact is generally associated with those linguistic resources that discursively assess the significance of a given happening.

Since, as Erikson argues, "a considerable portion of what we call 'news' is devoted to reports about deviant behaviour and its consequences",[51] focusing on the news values of Negativity and Impact will enable us to reconstruct and draw the shape that moral panic has assumed in the case of news stories on the Great Smog of London.

As for the data under investigation, the news stories were collected by accessing the British Newspaper Archive,[52] an online database developed in partnership by the British Library and the online website *findmypast*, containing UK newspapers from 17th century to the present day. At the time of writing, the British Newspaper Archive has digitised more than 40 million newspaper pages taken from the British Library's vast collection. The digitalised image files were then run through optical character recognition (OCR) software, creating searchable electronic texts. Therefore, thanks to this online resource, all the news stories published by UK newspapers between 5 and 12 December 1952 could be collected by using the search word 'fog'. The term was selected because it was deemed to be the least evaluative word in order to retrieve results that were not skewed by any researcher biases, thus allowing not only an impartial collection of the data but also, and more importantly, a retrieval of the different discourses the word was found in.[53]

The choice of the term 'fog' initially allowed us to retrieve 397 news stories in the period under investigation, however it highlighted a problem with the search term used. Indeed, next to articles actually on the Great Smog of London, others were also retrieved that were not, as a matter of fact,

---

[48] Bednarek and Caple, *Discourse of News Values*, 86.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Bednarek and Caple, *News Discourse*, 43.

[51] Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), 12.

[52] The British Newspaper Archive is available online at https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/, last accessed 27/12/2018.

[53] As suggested by Corton, there are multiple terms and expressions that are traditionally used to refer to the London fog. As well as the simple words 'fog' or 'smog', the following ones stand out: 'pea-souper', 'London ivy', and 'London particular'. Among them, however, 'fog' seems to be the most general term that does not entail any type of evaluation on behalf of the speaker. Indeed, searches for the use of the term 'smog', for instance, in the British Newspaper Archive might have found only those news stories that draw an actual link between the poor air quality of the city of London and fog formation. As will be seen, however, this is something that the British press does not tend to do. Therefore, the term 'fog' was selected, given its lack of any kind of stance. See Christine L. Corton, *London Fog: The Biography* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard U.P., 2015).

related to the event (e.g. advertisements for 'fog lamps', weather reports, or 'for sale' ads). Therefore, after checking each of the items collated, a final number of 68 news stories were collected from the following newspapers (see Table 1):

Newspaper	No. of news stories
Birmingham Daily Gazette	7
Clitheroe Advertiser and Times	1
The Coventry Evening Telegraph	5
Daily Herald	11
Daily Mirror	3
Dundee Courier and Advertiser	5
Evening Express	2
Grantham Journal	1
The Hampshire Telegraph	1
Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail	3
The Lancaster Guardian	1
Newcastle Evening Chronicle	1
Newcastle Journal	1
The Northern Whig	7
The Portsmouth Evening News	2
The Shields Daily News	5
West London Observer	2
The Yorkshire Evening Post	5
The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury	5

Table 1. Newspapers and number of news stories on the Great Smog of London published between 5 and 12 December 1952.

Unfortunately, the list of news stories collected by following this procedure is not comprehensive, but merely representative of the number of digitalised news stories published by the newspapers available in the British Newspaper Archive. This means that, while still being representative of how the British press reported the event, other types of discursive representations coming from news stories that were not archived on the database will not be analysed.

The news stories collected from the British Newspaper Archive, however, allow us to provide a further observation. Figure 2, indeed, shows the number of news stories published per day on the Great Smog of London:

UK newspapers (December 5–12, 1952)

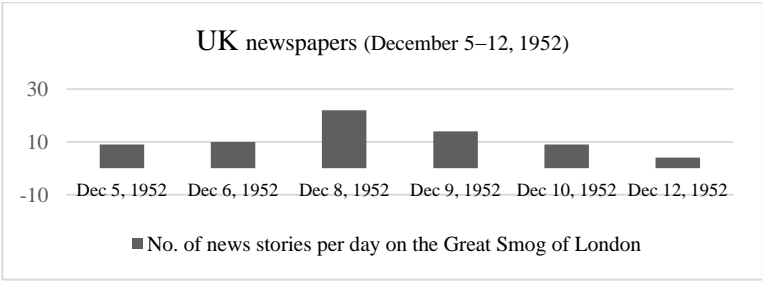■ No. of news stories per day on the Great Smog of London

Figure 2. Distribution per day of news stories on the Great Smog of London published between 5 and 12 December 1952.

This allows us to make a preliminary observation regarding the news cycle of the event. Indeed, it appears that Monday, 8 December 1952 represents the peak of the news stories on the topic, highlighting a growing concern with the situation in London.

As a response to the media construal of the Great Smog of London, the following investigation will also focus on the analysis of the Clean Air Act of 1956. In order to do this, a CDA-inspired environmental law analysis will be applied to the study of this legal document.[54] More specifically, attention will be paid to the way power is conveyed in legal discourse. This is extremely important in the case of the Clean Air Act, since it was a direct response to a situation that was construed, as will be seen, as impossible to control by the authorities. Therefore, the Act was specifically designed not only to address problems related to air pollution but also to re-establish the power of the institutions, which might have been challenged by the media's representation of the event. In doing so, that is, by combining an analysis of how the press shaped the event as a moral panic and how the institutions responded to such a representation of the event, the idea is to capture both text and practice so as to see how legal discourse interacts with the historical and cultural specificity of particular ways of knowing the world.[55]

4. Analysis

In the following sections, an analysis will be provided of the main discourses arising from the investigation into the way newsworthiness has been enhanced in reporting the Great Smog of London. As previously argued, a discursive analysis of newsworthiness will allow us to trace the way the press slowly constructed a moral panic in the specific case of the event under investigation. More precisely, two main discursive constructions on the basis of the linguistic analysis of evaluation and newsworthiness can be highlighted. They will be discussed in Section 4.1 and 4.2 respectively. Section 4.3, on the other hand, will briefly focus on the discursive analysis of the Clean Air Act of 1956 in order to see how specific concerns voiced by the media were (possibly) addressed.

---

[54] Gellers, "Greening Critical Discourse Analysis".

[55] Liz Sharp and Tim Richardson, "Reflections on Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in Planning and Environmental Policy Research", *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 3.3 (2001), 196.

4.1 The Great Smog of London and its discursive representation in the British press: discourse of routine disruption

In the very first news stories published on the event and collected in the corpus, activity (e.g. 'delay', 'cover', etc.) and behavioural processes (e.g. 'thicken', 'experience') seem to construct the fog as interrupting the normal routines of London services and affairs (transports, sports, etc.):

1) SEVERE FROST, **WIDESPREAD** FOG **DELAY** BUSES, TRAINS
   [*The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 5/12/1952]

2) Trains Late as Fog **Thickens**
   FOG covering **wide areas** of Britain suddenly **thickened** early to-day, and many trains were running late.
   [*The Portsmouth Evening News*, 5/12/1952]

In particular, the newsworthiness is enhanced in these very first news stories on the Great Smog of London by highlighting the news value of Impact (e.g. 'widespread', 'wide areas'), thus underlining how the fog had affected a widespread area of the United Kingdom and, more importantly, means of transport. Therefore, no mention is initially made to the specific case of the city of London, even though the city is mentioned as being particularly affected by this weather event in the body copy of the newspapers:

3) **London**, with a "**pea-souper**," and many parts of the country are to-day **experiencing thick** fog.
   [*The Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 5/12/1952]

4) Fog **Delayed** Carrier
   DELAYED by fog yesterday, the aircraft maintenance carrier Perseus was expected to arrive at Portsmouth to-day.
   [*The Hampshire Telegraph*, 5/12/1952]

5) FOG AND FROST **DELAY** SERVICES
   [*Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 5/12/1952]

Another important aspect that needs to be highlighted in these very first news stories on the event (see example 5) is the typical linguistic pattern the weather condition that London is experiencing is found in, that is, it is always presented with the phrase 'fog and frost'. This phrase pattern, typically found in

the first news stories, seems to enhance the discursive 'exceptionality' of the event, which is being linguistically linked to weather conditions. This is an interesting aspect of the media construction of the event, since no mention is made of the smog and pollution afflicting the city of London.

Once the fog has been given the discursive power to alter and affect all types of human activities in an increasingly escalating manner, the agency given to the fog is further intensified through material and behavioural processes expressed with verbs such as 'grip', 'thick', and 'circle around'. The fog is additionally constructed by using evaluative expressions representing the fog as being 'severe' and 'widespread', thus further enhancing the news value of Impact and its negative consequences on human activities.

6) Fog **gripped** many parts of Britain to-day – and London had a real "**pea-souper**."
[*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 5/12/1952]

7) Fog '**black-out**' on sport
[*The Portsmouth Evening News*, 6/12/1952]

8) SPORT, TRANSPORT HOLD-UP Fog '**Black-out**' and Frost
[*Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 6/12/1952]

9) **Visibility nil** in the **great** London fog
Day and night of traffic **chaos**
After another day of fog **black-out**, described by an A.A. official as being as **bad** as any ever known, all bus and trolley-bus services in the London Transport area, with the exception of three routes, were **withdrawn** at 10 o'clock last night.
[*The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 8/12/1952]

The situation is represented as being so out of control that, by the second day of the Great Smog of London, the news stories reporting the event construct the UK and, more specifically, the city of London as being in a complete state of paralysis (i.e. 'black-out'). This discursive construction, found in the majority of news stories in our corpus, seems to embody the peak of the climatic discursive sequence of a situation that has gone from merely affecting some of the activities carried out by Londoners (e.g. going to the cinema, using public transport, cancelled flights, etc.) to impacting their lives completely, thus creating a situation where no human activities are possible.

10) London again at **standstill**

London's **great** fog curtain, which temporarily lifted yesterday in many districts, **dropped** again last night and once again brought the capital to a **standstill**.
[*Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 9/12/1952]

11) **Black-out** holds up food today
[*Daily Herald*, 8/12/1952]

In the standstill created by the fog, however, something more menacing is slowly being created in connection with the fog, and this is strictly linked to the sense of paralysis discursively created by the press. Indeed, in the chaos brought by the fog, a black-out of the power of the institutions, conveyed through the exercise of control over citizens thanks to law enforcement personnel, is also being experienced, which brings us to the following and more vicious discursive construction of the events that took place in December 1952, the final link in the chain that gave life to a moral panic. This was also made possible because of the lack of or, at least, the relatively little prominence given to elite individuals (i.e. politicians, law enforcement workers, etc.). Indeed, the news value of Eliteness – i.e. "[t]he event is discursively constructed as of high status or fame (including but not limited to the people, countries, or institutions involved)" –[56] while not being the focus of this investigation, is scarcely enhanced in the corpus of news stories linked to the Great Smog of London. If, therefore, elite individuals are not prominently featured in the corpus, it might suggest a discursive construction where the event seems to be out of control and of the reach of the institutional power, thus leading to the following media representation.

4.2 The Great Smog of London and its discursive representation in the British press: discourse of moral deviation

Once agency has been discursively constructed and the fog is, therefore, linguistically construed as an actor capable of disrupting human activities, it slowly becomes instrumental to carrying out other activities; more specifically, the fog slowly becomes an instrument through which criminal activities are carried out, as can be seen in the following examples:

1) Thugs throw bricks at London policeman
[…] The area was searched, but the men **escaped in the fog**.
[*The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 6/12/1952]

---

[56] Bednarek and Caple, *Discourse of News Values*, 55.

2) Fog **brings a crime-wave**

Reports of burglaries, attacks and robberies **under cover of the fog** continued to be received at Scotland Yard yesterday.

[*The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury*, 8/12/1952]

3) SMASH, GRAB RAIDERS ACTIVE **IN DENSE FOG**

Smash and grab raiders **took advantage of the fog** last night.

[*The Portsmouth Evening News*, 8/12/1952]

4) London's worst **black-out**

BANDITS STRIKE IN FOG

Reports of burglaries, attacks and robberies **under cover of the great fog** which is blanketing the South-East of England were received at Scotland Yard yesterday.

[*Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, 8/12/1952]

5) Girl (15) **stabbed in the fog**

A 15-year-old girl was **stabbed** in the back with a stiletto while walking in **thick** fog in Cheshunt (Hertfordshire), last night.

[*Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 9/12/1952]

As previously discussed in Section 2, the model proposed by Cohen in the creation of moral panic identifies four basic elements.[57] First, moral panic must find an object, namely, what the moral panic is about. In the specific case of the event under investigation, initially 'fog and frost' and then only 'fog' can be identified as the objects around which the moral panic is slowly constructed. Second, once a specific event has been identified, the moral panic requires a scapegoat. In the case of the Great Smog of London, the scapegoat may be represented by the criminal activities carried out in the dense fog. The moral entrepreneur, through the media or by the media alone, reproduces the state of fear that people have been put into, publishing a series of news stories reporting the types of criminal activities carried out in the fog. The last stage of the moral panic is represented by the obsessive, moralistic and alarmist debates prompted once more by moral entrepreneurs, that is, the press. In this way, the moral panic around the Great Smog of London has been created, thus diverting readers' attention away from the actual problem affecting them, namely, the poor quality of the air in the London area. Indeed, in the corpus under investigation, no mention is made of the critical levels of smog in the city that were the

---

[57] Cohen, *Folk Devils*.

probable cause of the many deaths during and after the event. There is only one news story that tangentially draws a connection between the fog's formation and the poor quality of the London air:

6) 'Fog coughs' keep London doctors busy
    Doctors' surgeries in the London area filled yesterday with patients suffering from "fog cough". A general practitioner in North London told the "Daily Mirror": "It is having serious effects on elderly people with a tendency to chest troubles. Normally healthy people should not be worried. If you breathe through the nose, as you should, the nose acts as a filter to remove **the particles of soot and dirt from the air**."
    [*Daily Mirror*, 8/12/1952]

By conveying a possible cause for the health troubles caused by the fog through an accessed voice, the *Daily Mirror* is thus incidentally drawing a connection between smog and the health troubles affecting, however, only a specific part of the population of London. Time would nevertheless demonstrate that the situation was far worse.

4.3 Re-establishing order in the name of the institutions: the Clean Air Act

In the aftermath of what has been traditionally labelled as the Great Smog of London, many pressure groups took the issue of the problem linked to the air pollution afflicting the London area to Parliament. As Sanderson underlines, "[s]moke abatement is within that class of subjects sometimes designated as 'non-controversial', not because no controversies are involved, but because political parties have no definite policies about it".[58] Therefore, it was up to pressure groups to raise concerns linked to the quality of the air as part of the political agenda of a government. In particular, in the years following the Great Smog of London, no other pressure group was more active in this than the National Smoke Abatement Society (NSAS), which was specifically concerned with the issues highlighted by the Great Smog of London. Indeed, it was partly because of the effect on public opinion of the great smog of 1952 and partly because of the NSAS' activities that the Clean Air Act of 1956 was passed.[59]

Being the first of its kind, the Clean Air Act of 1956 not only represents a reflection of the concerns linked to the poor air quality of that time (and what its potential causes might be) but also an introductory example of environmental legal discourse. Indeed, the Act established national policies requiring all citizens and organisations to give full consideration to the environmental effects in planning their activities and building their edifices. In order to ensure that citizens and organisations

---

[58] Sanderson, "National Smoke Abatement Society", 236.
[59] Ibid., for a detailed account of pressure groups' activities surrounding the Clean Air Act of 1956.

implemented the policies introduced, the Clean Air Acts prescribed specific action-forcing mechanisms which needed to be observed. Therefore, from a linguistic point of view, while displaying some of the typical characteristics of the legal genre (i.e. an impersonal style with formulaic expressions and a typical legal vocabulary, syntactic complexity, impersonality, negatives (in particular double negatives), frequent and fixed binomial expressions, etc.), the Act is also positively brimming with expressions that served as a way to respond to the moral panic created by the press.[60] Indeed, if legal language carries with it the force of the law and each statement must thus be seen as an actual act,[61] the abundant use of deontic modality in the Act (see Table 2), while also being a typical characteristic of the genre, also serves a specific function in the social context that has been described: the power of the institutions needed to be re-established as it had been challenged by the media construal of the event.

Central modal verbs	*Occurrences*
SHALL	231
MAY	88
WOULD	5
WILL	5
COULD	3
CAN	3
OUGHT	2
MIGHT	2
SHOULD	1

Table 2. Number of occurrences of central modals in the Clean Air Act 1956

It is interesting to note that the central modal verb 'must' is completely missing from the Clean Air Act, while 'shall' and 'may' are unsurprisingly the most frequently used modals. This may be indicative of a specifically discursive expression of power: a form of power that not only imposes itself onto its citizens but that also wants to define a new legal glossary in order to fight smog and improve the quality of the urban environment.

> Subject to the provisions of this section, no furnace shall be installed in a building or in any boiler or industrial plant attached to a building or for the time being fixed to or installed on any land unless it is so far as practicable capable of being operated continuously without emitting smoke when burning fuel of a

---

[60] See Veda R. Charrow, et al., "Characteristics and Functions in Legal Language", in Richard Kittredge and John Lehrberg, eds., *Sublanguage: Studies of Language in Restricted Semantic Domains* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 175–190; Brenda Danet, "Language in the Legal Process", *Law and Society Review*, 14 (1980), 445–564; Danet, "Language in Legal and Bureaucratic Settings", in Allen D. Grimshaw, ed., "Language as a Social Problem", *Society*, 20.4 (1983); Danet, "Legal Discourse", in Teun A. Van Dijk, ed., *Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Vol. 1: Disciplines of Discourse* (London: Academic Press, 1985), 273–291; Anna Trosborg, "An Analysis of Legal Speech Acts in English Contract Law: 'It Is Hereby Performed'", *HERMES – Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 6 (1991), 65–90; Trosborg, "Statutes and Contracts: An Analysis of Legal Speech Acts in the English Language of the Law", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23.1 (1995), 31–53; Christopher Williams, "Legal English and Plain Language: An Update", *ESP Across Cultures*, 8 (2011), 139–151.

[61] Charrow, Crandall, and Charrow, "Characteristics and Functions", 181.

type for which the furnace was designed, and any person who installs a furnace in contravention of this subsection or on whose instructions a furnace is so installed shall be guilty of an offence (*Clean Air Act* 1956, Section 3).

The absence of the modal verb 'must', therefore, may be due to the fact that this modal verb signals an obligation to do something if the rules that lay that specific type of commitment are deontically accessible. Conversely, as the Clean Air Act is setting the scene for the abatement of environmental issues that, up until then, were not represented in legal terms, the modal verb 'shall' is preferable given its vagueness in simultaneously expressing an obligation and implying futurity, that is, the implementation of the rules established by the Act in order to fight air pollution.

Another important element that needs to be highlighted in the Act is represented by the specific type of institutional power it calls upon. As seen in Section 4.1, elite individuals are not prominently represented in the media's portrayal of the events that took place in December 1952, virtually implying a discursive construction where the event seems to be out of control and of the reach of the institutional power, and thus leading the way towards a media representation of chaos and criminality afflicting, specifically, the city of London. The Clean Air Act, therefore, seems to respond directly to this lack of control by repeatedly calling upon the power of local authorities, which are prominently featured in the Act (there are 74 occurrences of 'local authority' and 10 occurrences of 'local authorities').

[A]nd no oven in any building or on any land shall be used to subject solid fuel to any process involving the application of heat, unless the furnace or oven is provided with plant for arresting grit and dust which has been approved by the local authority or which has been installed in accordance with plans and specifications submitted to and approved by the local authority, and that plant is properly maintained and used, and if a furnace or oven is used in contravention of this subsection the occupier of the building or land shall be guilty of an offence (*Clean Air Act* 1956, Section 6).

Provided that the local authority may, by a subsequent notice in writing served on the occupier of the building or land, revoke any direction given under this subsection, without prejudice, however, to their power to give another direction thereunder (*Clean Air Act* 1956, Section 7).

Such a form of local control over environmental issues seems to be a response to the specific emergency situation following the events that took place in December 1952; a territorial control that would, in a certain way, re-establish order and enforce the power of the institution once more. The Clean Air Act, therefore, places a series of environmental imperatives upon those agencies (i.e. local authorities) which had earlier lacked the authority to consider the environmental effects of given actions and must now impose higher environmental standards. In this way, the Act's strict procedural

duties, which local authorities had to enforce, required that they commit themselves to the possible environmental consequences of their actions, thus laying the ground for a basic change in the pattern of institutional decision-making in the environmental arena.

5. Concluding Remarks

In *David Copperfield* (1849–1850), Charles Dickens describes London in the following way: "I saw all London lying in the distance like a great vapour, with here and there some lights twinkling through it".[62] London's thick, yellow, viscous and persistent fogs came to be an inescapable and constantly recurring feature in his work, a way through which the capital's everyday life in the winter months was captured. The fog might be regarded as a narrative expedient used by the author to portray the city. This atmospheric phenomenon became part of the imaginary of the city itself and, with reference to Dickens's work, many critics saw in it his increasingly pessimistic view of London.[63] As Alter states:

> The city in the industrial age spells the irrevocable end of the pastoral prospect – at least in Dickens's understanding …. The barrier of pollution that insulates the metropolis from nature is dense with the ominous idea that the modern city – in its terrific concentration of population, its runaway production of noxious waste products, its frenetic dedication to the accumulation of wealth – could prove to be, in the worst of possible projections, an irreversible catastrophe for human existence on this globe.[64]

Given this picture of the city of London as being characterised by this kind of phenomenon, this paper has analysed the way in which the Great Smog of London was actually constructed in the British press as a deviancy amplification spiral. The moral panic linked to the event has been discursively reconstructed in order to analyse how a deviancy effect was shaped, which led to the passing of the 1956 Clean Air Act by the UK Parliament. The focus on the news values of Impact and Negativity has allowed us to highlight key elements in the construction of the moral panic, which prompted the response of the institutional authorities in the form of the Clean Air Act. The regulation itself has also been analysed to see how the power of the institution linguistically re-asserted control over a situation that the media had constructed as out of control. In this way, this paper has perhaps shed further light on the tensions between society, discourse and law by identifying issues of power and dominance in the realm of environmental law and illuminating as yet uninvestigated strands of their relationship.

---

[62] Dickens, *David Copperfield* (New York: Vintage Classics, 2012 [1849-1850]), 288.

[63] Corton, *London Fog*, 72.

[64] Robert Alter, *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2005), 79.

This paper does not, however, pretend to be a comprehensive analysis of the events that took place in December 1952 and the institutional response towards them. Indeed, it is but a preliminary step towards a discursive mapping of them. Future studies may be devoted to a further analysis of the discursive enhancement of the various news values in the corpus of news stories that has been collected for this investigation.

Margherita Rasulo

Debunking Climate Change Denial.
The Case of DeSmogBlog Project and Its Crusade
Against Climate Misinformation Campaigns

Abstract: The discussion on the ideological and legal underpinning of climate change denial theories, recently inflaming political and institutional controversy around the world, merits closer linguistic scrutiny in order to take proper measure of its discursive impact on constructing denialist stakeholder stance. This study intends to investigate how the lobbying efforts of individuals and organizational think tanks, located in greater numbers in corporate America, have deliberately disseminated doubt concerning climate change. To this purpose, the investigation draws on data provided by DeSmogBlog, a counter-denialist project whose website contains profiles of those accused of routinely exposing denialist theories and policy issues through the world's most popular media outlets. In particular, the corpus of study comprises a collection of texts consisting of key quotes extracted from interviews, speeches, remarks and articles which are analyzed by implementing qualitative tools afforded by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) supported by Appraisal Theory and Stance frameworks. Preliminary results suggest that discursive patterns of denial, which lead to the formulation of a denial typology, are embedded in strategies employed by those involved in the concerted effort to discredit scientific consensus over climate change.

Keywords: *climate change denial, global warming, denial strategies, denial typology, stance*

1. Introduction

Climate change has a far bigger impact on humanity than fully acknowledged by institutions, media outlets and public opinion. As an existential issue for every individual, the effects of climate change have already been observed on every continent regardless of geographical position or economic ranking in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) poverty levels.[1] The complexity of approaching this issue at a global level, its relatedness to the extensively criticized proof of anthropogenic causes, and general disinformation are just some of the reasons why countries who have enhanced their

---

[1] Marshall Burke et al., "Global Non-linear Effect of Temperature on Economic Production", *Nature*: *International Journal of Science*, 527 (2015), 235-239; Kris M. Wilson, "Communicating Climate Change through Media: Predictions, Politics, and Perceptions of Risk", in Stuart Allan et al., eds., *Environmental Risks and the Media* (London: Routledge, 2000), 201-217.

ambition towards climate change policies still have a long road ahead of them.[2] The very nature of climate science constitutes an additional reason: the inevitable and endemic uncertainties involved in scientific research have induced the dismissal of environmental changes along with the public's confidence in the work of scientists.[3]

Learning about climate change means questioning, for example, what is being done to limit greenhouse gas emissions, the loss of Arctic sea ice and the increase of sea levels. But climate change only became a political issue in the early 1990s when some nations of the world came together to require scientific research and climate change observations. As a result, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) took upon itself to provide policymakers around the world with the latest and best science information.[4] However, almost simultaneously to this increased attention on climate change, a counter-position began to gain ground by generating fears of international action to reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuels. These fears were then crystallized by the 1997 Kyoto Protocol which entered into force on 16 February 2005.[5] The global Paris agreement in 2015 was another major step forward as more than 190 nations unanimously agreed to do what it takes to keep total global warming below 2°C (3.6°F). Unfortunately, one of the world's biggest emitter, the United States, abandoned the Paris deal in 2017, although it cannot officially announce its plan to withdraw from the agreement until 4 November 2019, consequently delaying action to avoid serious climate impacts in the coming decades.[6]

According to the latest data from the 2018 IPCC Climate Change report on global warming of 1.5C, there is abundant proof that climate change is not an invention, just as there is concrete testimony that human beings, as observed since the mid-twentieth century, are largely responsible for it.[7] Yet, it has also been observed that international agreement on the concrete effects of climate change is difficult to secure, notwithstanding the fact that our climate has been changing far faster than the early predictions

---

[2] Rebecca M. Henderson et al., "Climate Change in 2018: Implications for Business", *Harvard Business School Background Note* 317-032 (October 2016, revised January 2018), 317-356.

[3] Riley E. Dunlap, "Climate Change Skepticism and Denial: An Introduction", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57.6 (2013), 691-698.

[4] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) http://www.ipcc.ch/news_and_events/docs/factsheets/FS_what_ipcc.pdf, accessed 20 March 2018.

[5] Aaron M. McCright and Riley E. Dunlap, "Challenging Global Warming as a Social Problem: An Analysis of the Conservative Movement's Counter-claims", *Social Problems*, 47 (2000), 499-522. Kyoto Protocol (1997) implemented the objective to reduce the onset of global warming by reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. To date, there are 192 signatory parties.

[6] Trevor Nace, "America Is Officially the Only Nation on Earth to Reject the Paris Agreement", *Forbes.com* (7 November 2017), https://www.forbes.com/sites/trevornace/2017/11/07/america-is-officially-the-only-nation-on-earth-to-reject-the-paris-agreement, accessed 20 March 2018.

[7] IPCC, "Climate Change 2018", https://www.ipcc.ch/, accessed 20 March 2018.

made by climate scientists.[8] Bodansky et al. explain that there are three major reasons for such world-wide reluctance. Firstly, climate change is closely intertwined with other issues of domestic policies often difficult to solve individually. Secondly, climate change requires long-term commitment and immediate action likewise difficult to sustain and undertake. Thirdly, climate change is not always classified as an environmental problem, but more of an economic problem with a cost-benefit perspective, with the former placing emphasis on reducing emissions and preventing anthropogenic changes, and the latter on reducing emissions but only as long as the benefits exceed the costs.[9]

While emphasizing the complexity of climate denial movement, especially in corporate America, the discussion undertaken throughout the study carries an underlying narrative which repeatedly questions the legality of this movement in terms of the real threats it poses on humanity. By identifying a set of denial strategies and denial types embedded in discourse, the investigation argues that corporate efforts, namely protecting activities from regulations and profit margins, have been instrumental in forestalling legal action against blocking environmental legislation from being passed.

2. Context of the Study

If we look at the literature from the past 10 years, climate change controversy has grown rapidly, disseminated especially through major media outlets which create dangerous echo chambers that influence public opinion and bring to the forefront influential political think tanks.[10] Against this background of political, legal, economic and cultural controversy, the study intends to reveal what lies behind the half-truths which public opinion has been exposed to so far. What the study does not question, however, is whether climate change and anthropogenic causes are real or related; there is, by now, abundant proof that it is happening. Rather, the investigation focuses on the discursive strategies employed to dismiss climate change theories and how denialists have managed to instill doubt in the public at large regarding a phenomenon that authoritative climate scientists have been recording for decades. To this purpose, a counter-denialist online blog, the Canadian-based DeSmogBlog, running in the US but with a sister website in the UK, was selected as the context of study. The blog's project

---

[8] Daniel M. Bodansky et al., "Introduction to International Climate Change Law", *International Climate Change Law* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2017).

[9] World Bank, *The Economics of Adaptation to Climate Change: A Synthesis Report"* (Washington: The World Bank Group, 2010), https://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTCC/Resources/EACC_FinalSynthesisReport0803_2010.pdf, accessed 20 March 2018.

[10] Karen Bjornberg et al., "Climate and Environmental Science Denial: A Review of the Scientific Literature Published 1990-2015", *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 167 (2017), 229-241; Riley E. Dunlap and Aaron M. McCright, "Challenging Climate Change: The Denial Countermovement", in Dunlap and Robert J. Brulle, eds., *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Oxford U.P., 2015), 300-332.

aims to discuss "accurate, fact-based information regarding global warming misinformation campaigns",[11] while debunking what lies behind the lobbying efforts of scientists, experts, corporate industries and conservative think tanks. DeSmogBlog regularly records on profile pages how these entities deliberately dismiss, with the aid of media interference, evidence concerning climate change and anthropogenic agency.[12] The profile comprises written and audio-visual materials about the individual or organization accused by DeSmogBlog of spreading denial theories, thus providing a general idea of how these social actors position themselves towards climate denial which is this study's point of departure for its own inquiry into stancetaking, specifically conducted through a linguistic analysis of acts of speech in the key quotes expressing denial claims. The main argument underlying this analysis is based on the consideration that DeSmogBlog's data not only provide access to the identification of denial strategies, but also lead to the identification of a denial typology. Hence, to achieve this twofold aim, qualitative analysis tools were implemented drawn from CDA, Appraisal Theory framework, and a comprehensive cognitive-functional stance framework (Table 3) developed from previous work by Simaki et al.[13] This framework was applied by the author to analyze a collection of opinionated texts that made up their Brexit Blog Corpus. In conducting the analysis of the key quotes, this study considers the framework's original ten notional stance categories namely, agreement/disagreement, contrariety, hypotheticality, necessity, prediction, source of knowledge, certainty, uncertainty, tact/rudeness, volition.

2.1 Research threads and caveats

Based on the structure of the investigation described above, the study is organized around three main research threads that inquire about:

– climate change denial strategies and discursive resources;
– environmental science denial stance in relation to scientific research evidence;
– climate change denial typology.

One of the caveats involved when investigating data from controversial online sources is the element of researcher subjectivity that goes into the selection of material operated by a focus group, likely to insist on certain aspects that will work for their cause.[14] It is the study's view, however, that DeSmogBlog's denialist profiles afford the opportunity to decipher the logic of denial and how it attempts to erode existing scientific evidence on climate change.

Related to the above is the next caveat which involves the vector of communication, or the blog. Blogs are particularly convincing in the coverage of controversial issues such as climate change debates, mostly owing to their inherent features of generating discussion and effectively disseminating topics among broader international audiences.[15] By acknowledging the fact that previous research has abundantly provided evidence of the effectiveness of blogs, this investigation specifically focuses on the DeSmogBlog project rather than the nature of blog's medium affordances albeit the latter might very well be the object of future research.

One final caveat, which is more of a terminological clarification, is agreeing on climate-related definitions. The first two terms, climate change and global warming, are frequently used interchangeably. This study uses the explanation provided by NASA scientists which explains that both terms are two sides of the same coin. Specifically:

> Global warming refers to the long-term warming of the planet since the early 20th century, and most notably since the late 1970s, due to the increase in fossil fuel emissions since the Industrial Revolution….[16]

> Climate change refers to a broad range of global phenomena created predominantly by burning fossil fuels, which add heat-trapping gases to Earth's atmosphere. These phenomena include the increased temperature trends described by global warming, but also encompass changes such as sea level rise; ice mass loss in Greenland, Antarctica, the Arctic and mountain glaciers worldwide; shifts in flower/plant blooming; and extreme weather events.[17]

Climate denial and climate skepticism are the next two terms requiring a minimum of contextual clarification. It is worth noting that the former refers to a set of attitudes and behaviors whereby conspiracies are commonly invoked, legitimate debate is avoided, and personal attacks are

---

[14] Carl Ratner, "Subjectivity and Objectivity in Qualitative Methodology", *FQS: Forum Qualitative Social Research / Sozialforschung*, 3.3, Art. 16 (2002), http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/829/1800, accessed 20 March 2018.

[15] Amelia Sharman, "Mapping the Climate Sceptical Blogosphere", *Global Environment Change*, 26 (2014), 159-170.

[16] NASA, "Global Warming", *NASA Earth Observatory* (2018), https://climate.nasa.gov/resources/global-warming, accessed 20 March 2018.

[17] Ibid.

committed.[18] The latter, if conducted with an open mind, can contribute to a healthier debate as it refers to attitudes that allow for and invite greater public involvement in discussing controversial issues. Hence, the terms deriving from the noun 'denial' are more consistently used in this study as they better correspond to DeSmogBlog's mission against all forms of dismissal.

2.2 Corpus

The study's corpus, at the time of writing, comprises data extracted from 578 profiles, specifically divided into 392 individuals (14 female, 378 male) and 186 organizations mainly operating in the US, reported by DeSmogBlog as being responsible for consistently spreading denialist narratives. These profiles contain information as to who these social actors are, what they do, who they work for, and the deeds undertaken towards the rejection of climate change. Their diverse fields of work, study or pursuits are listed in Table 1. DeSmogBlog's project mainly consists in analyzing the radio and TV interviews, speeches, remarks, articles or essays released by the profiled individuals, and arrange them under 9 headings on their Research Data Page: credentials, background, stance on climate change, key quotes, key deeds, affiliations, publications, resources, other resources. The present corpus takes into consideration the Key Quotes category as it presents a collection of linguistic data such as speech acts, modality, discourse markers and other parts of speech where aspects of stancetaking can be located. Specifically, the corpus analyzes a total of 32 key quotes of 5 profiled social actors for a total of 123 lexical chunks.

Individuals	Experts (meteorologists, climate engineers, geologists)
	Field-related experts in climate science (physicists, medical doctors, science writers)
	Self-proclaimed experts (academics, business analysts, TV and radio hosts, journalists)
	Politicians
Organizations	Governmental or institutional think tanks (religious, ethnic, economic)
	Corporations and industries

Table 1. Denialist individuals and organizations reported by DeSmogBlog.com

The diversity of positions and roles listed in Table 1 provides evidence that Climatology is probably a popularized area of study, and many people even outside a specific community of climate scientists, feel entitled to ascribe to various theories and become self-proclaimed experts.[19] In fact, DeSmogBlog's profiles, to date, contain only a small number of climate scientists, mainly from affiliated communities of meteorologists, geologists or climate engineers, who are involved in

---

[18] Stephan Lewandowsky et al., "Science and the Public: Debate, Denial, and Scepticism", *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 4.2 (2016), 536-553.

[19] Dunlap, *Climate Change Skepticism*.

spreading denial narratives,[20] and even fewer ones are from field-related backgrounds. The majority are, in truth, self-proclaimed experts with very different backgrounds (Table 1).

Regarding the profiles of organizations, the majority represent conservative think tanks, corporations and industries inimical to climate science, either for personal or company reasons, mainly involved in the lucrative activities of oil and coal extraction. But there are also tobacco and car industries espousing the denial campaign by claiming their own right to contribute to the economic progress of the country.

2.3 About DeSmogBlog

DeSmogBlog, notwithstanding its commendable effort to expose climate change denialists, does not apparently have a totally clean record in terms of its mission statement. In fact, the blog has been accused of being a highly politicized alarmist website whose project is to hunt down climate change skeptics. These sources[21] base their charges on the fact that the site was co-founded by lawyer and Internet entrepreneur John David Lefebvre, convicted of money laundering in 2006, and controlled by James Hoggan, owner of Hoggan and Associates, a for-profit public relations firm based in Canada.

This study argues, however, that DeSmogBlog's endeavor has brought to light faces and names involved in fueling climate change denial. Indeed, because DeSmogBlog is a highly organized PR campaign, whose associates are climate writers, scientists, climate journalists, authors, lawyers and other professionals, it affords a broader viewpoint on the unethical actions of denial stakeholders. Thus, by exploring counter-denial sources other than the ones provided by recognized climate science, the project's aim is to contend that the denialist movement, one that strives to counter the threat of anthropogenic interference, is actually "clouding the science on climate change".

3. Methodology

Qualitative research analysis methodology was considered best able to follow the pattern of discursive strategies that convey the logic of denial embedded in social, cultural and political instantiations.[22] Hence, as mentioned earlier, the study draws heavily on CDA-based approaches implemented through

---

[20] Myanna Lahsen, "Anatomy of Dissent: A Cultural Analysis of Climate Scepticism", *American Behavioral Sciences*, 57.6 (2013), 732-758.

[21] For sources criticizing DeSmogBlog, see LeftExposed, "DeSmogBlogSources" (2017), http://leftexposed.org/2016/08/desmogblog, accessed 20 March 2018.

[22] Wodak, *Pragmatics*.

appraisal resources and the closely related concept of stance to detect denial strategies and a stance typology.[23]

Drawing on Martin and White's extensive work, the meaning-making resources afforded by their appraisal framework provide accounts of the interpersonal meanings of a text explaining social roles, identities, and relationships, and their correlation with speech functions, involvement levels and positionings. As widely known, the general goal of Martin and White's framework, as illustrated in figure 1, is to model the dialogic effects of meanings in three semantic regions which are instantiated by resources at all levels of the language system.[24] These areas are: attitude (resources for construing emotional responses and value judgements, both ethical and aesthetic); engagement (resources to adjust the speaker's commitment to his or her evaluations); graduation (resources to quantify, intensify and compare these evaluations).
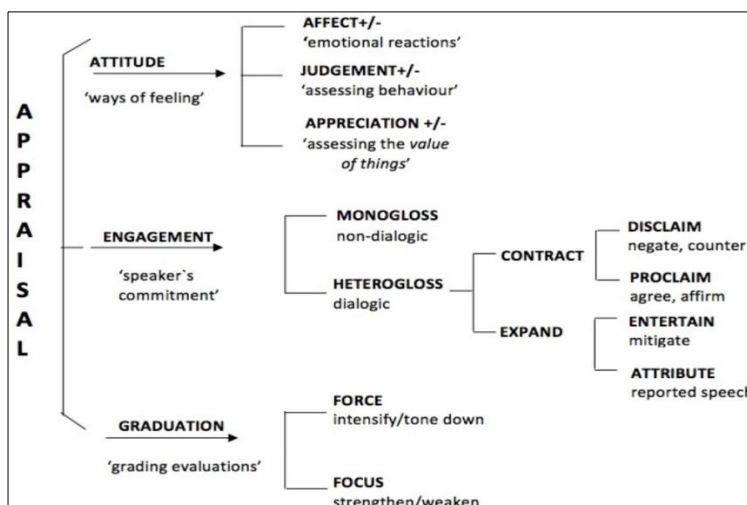
Figure 1. Martin and White Appraisal Framework

---

[23] Ibid.; Martin and White, *The Language of Evaluation;* Simaki et al., "Annotating Speaker Stance"; Douglas Biber, "Stance in Spoken and Written University Registers", *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 5 (2006), 97-116; Ken Hyland, "Stance and Engagement: A Model of Interaction in Academic Discourse", D*iscourse Studies* 7.2 (2005), 173-192.

[24] In figure 1, the appraisal system is adapted from Martin and White, *The Language of Evaluation*, 38.

Table 2 below illustrates the appraisal resources used in the data analysis and the relative acronyms referenced in the grids.

Resource	Subcategory	Acronym
Attitude	Affect	Aff
	Judgement	Judg
	Appreciation	App
Engagement	Heterogloss	Eng (H): (C) (D)
	Monogloss	Eng (M)
Graduation both Force and Focus are indicated as Graduation; a distinction is made only when required.	Force	Grad
	Focus	

Table 2. Appraisal System adapted from Martin and White

The analysis of speaker stance covers a wide range of related concepts such as modality,[25] subjectivity,[26] and sentiment.[27] In this study, the investigation of linguistic data concerning stance will be conducted by including the ten comprehensive categories in the Simaki et al. framework,[28] a tool which fine-tunes the analysis through additional specifications that refer to acts performed by social actors which focus on expressed beliefs towards objects, events, propositions and viewpoints on what is talked about.[29]

By interconnecting both the appraisal and stance frameworks, it is this study's view that the identification and isolation, at a more granular level,[30] of stakeholder positioning embedded in the linguistic expressions will be greatly enhanced. Table 3 below lists these stance categories and their acronyms as well as a selection of linguistic instantiations pertaining to each category.[31]

---

[25] Frank Palmer, "Modality in English: Theoretical, Descriptive and Typological Issues", in Roberta Facchinetti et al., eds., *Modality in Contemporary English* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2003), 1-18.

[26] Dylan Glynn and Mette Sjölin, "Subjectivity and Epistemicity", in Dylan Glynnand and Mette Sjölin, eds., S*ubjectivity and Epistemicity: Stance Strategies in Discourse and Narration* (Lund: Lund U.P., 2015).

[27] Marjan Van de Kauter et al., "The Good, the Bad and the Implicit: A Comprehensive Approach to Annotating Explicit and Implicit Sentiment", *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 49.3 (2015), 685-720.

[28] Simaki et al., "Annotating Speaker Stance".

[29] John W. Du Bois, "The Stance Triangle", in Robert Englebretson, ed., *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007), 163.

[30] Saif M. Mohammad et al., "Stance and Sentiment in Tweets", *ACM Transactions on Internet Technology (TOIT)*, 17.3 (2017).

[31] The stance categories are adapted from Simaki et al., "Annotating Speaker Stance".

Stance categories	Description	Linguistic instantiations
Agreement/Disagreement (Ag/Disag)	expressing a similar or different opinion	agree/don't agree, do/don't do, in contrast to, my opinion is, etc.
Contrariety (Contra)	expressing a compromising or a contrastive/comparative opinion	but, if not, than, while, not only, this is not, not to…but to, even if, rather than, as bad as, either or, although, less about, etc.
Hypotheticality (Hypo)	expressing a possible consequence of a condition	if, then, would, should they, what would happen if, had…wouldn't, unless, if…will
Necessity (Nec)	expressing a request, recommendation, instruction or an obligation	let, must, need, should, to, it's worth remembering, keep this in mind, let's not try, will require, etc.
Prediction (Pred)	expressing a guess/conjecture about a future event or an obligation	be, will, tomorrow, will be, might see, will concern, will happen, etc.
Source of Knowledge (SoK)	expressing the origin of what is said	said, say that, I've seen/known, calculate that, it seems that, get the impression, you may note, think, etc.
Uncertainty (Uncert)	expressing doubt as to the likelihood or truth of what is said	could, maybe, may, might, probably, think, not necessarily, seem to be, perhaps, may/could, hardly, likely, etc.
Certainty (Cert)	expressing confidence as to what is said	certainly, sure, of course, no doubt that, etc.
Tact/Rudeness (Tt/Rud)	expressing pleasantries and unpleasantries	contrastive notions on the dimensions of politeness; direct vs. indirect, etc.
Volition (Vol)	expressing wishes or refusals, inclinations or disinclinations.	want, prefer, wish, desire, etc.

Table 3. Stance categories adapted from Simaki et al.

3.1 Procedure

The methodological interaction of both frameworks is performed by implementing a three-step analysis procedure regarding the key quotes. It is important to note that the analysis of the example provided in each lexical chunk will be coded by either the appraisal (Table 2) or stance category (Table 3) or both, depending on which one or ones best represent that particular item.

During the first step, aspects of evaluative language are identified by highlighting inscribed or invoked lexical chunks. Each are coded according to the appraisal and stance resources (right column), bearing in mind, as mentioned above, that as the two frameworks are closely interrelated and concur in detecting stance, categories are likely to co-occur in a single act (e.g. *prediction and source of knowledge, uncertainty, certainty and source of knowledge*).

The second step identifies strategy patterns by clustering similar annotated lexical chunks under a broadly-defined denial strategy category.[32] This is discussed in the commentary.

The final and third step involves taking an even broader view of these strategies to detect a climate change framing device, or denial typology presented in the Discussion section.[33]

4. Analysis

The following selection of the profiles from the DeSmogBlog corpus are listed as: climate expert, self-proclaimed expert, field-related expert and politician, for the individuals; think tank and industry, for the organizations.[34] The 32 key quotes are arranged in the analysis grids below listed in progressive numbers. Each key quote has been broken down into numbered segments (left column) to facilitate the analysis and coding of the appraisal and stance resources (listed as acronyms in the right column); readability is also facilitated by boldfacing the lexical example. The qualitative analysis is then followed by a general commentary connecting the appraisal and stance resources to the embedded denial strategy(ies).

4.1 Expert: Friedrich-Karl Ewert

Geologist and emeritus professor of geophysics at the University of Paderborn		Appraisal and stance resources
	Key Quotes	
1	1.1 **Contrary to** computer-based scenarios, and **contrary to**	Contra
	1.2 what is **generally believed**, anthropogenic CO2	Grad
	1.3 **is meaningless**	Judg
	1.4 **because** its influence	SoK
	1.5 **is not recognizable.**	Contra; App
	1.6 **Of course,** this result **complies with**	Cert; Judg
	1.7 the **basic** laws of physics and	App
	1.8 **is not really surprising**.	Contra; Grad; App

---

[32] Dennis W.C. Liu, "Science Denial and the Science Classroom. CBE", *Life Science Education*, 11.2 (2012), 129-134; Matt Ferkany, "Is It Arrogant to Deny Climate Change or Is It Arrogant to Say It Is Arrogant? Understanding Arrogance and Cultivating Humility in Climate Change Discourse and Education", *Environmental Values*, 24.6 (2015), 705-724; Wendee Holtcamp, "Flavors of Uncertainty: the Difference between Denial and Debate", *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 120.8 (2012), A314-A319.

[33] Stanley Cohen S., *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001); Stefan Rahmstorf, "The Climate Sceptics" (Potsdam: Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2004), http://www.pik-potsdam.de/~stefan/Publications/Other/rahmstorf_climate_sceptics_2004.pdf., accessed 20 March 2018; Bjornberg et al., "Climate and Environmental Science Denial".

[34] All profiles have been last accessed and checked on the DeSmogBlog.com website on 30 December 2018. Therefore, no further references are made in the analysis grids.

2	2.1 **The facts are: Ever since** the Little Ice Age, we have been warming up again.	SoK
	2.2 We **don't have global climate change**; **what we have are normal** temperature fluctuations.	Grad Contra; SoK
	2.3 **We have had parallel** cooling and warming episodes.	Graduation
	2.4 **No CO2 influence can be** detected.	SoK
	2.5 **Since 2000, we have been cooling off again**.	Cert
	2.6 And, data **have been manipulated** in order to **fake a warming trend**: **Climategate.**	Grad; SoK
	2.7 The IPCC's scenarios **are failures**. And in conclusion, ladies and gentlemen,	SoK; Judg
	2.8 This analysis **can be** verified—**any** one of you **can do it!**	App Eng (C) Eng (E)
3	3.1 **Between the years 2010 and 2012** the data measured **since 1881**	Grad
	3.2 **were obviously altered** so that	Eng (C)
	3.3 they **showed a significant** warming, especially after 1950….	SoK; Grad
	3.4 **A comparison of the data from 2010 with the data of 2012 shows** that NASA-GISS had altered its own datasets so that especially after WWII, **a clear** warming appears – **although** it **never existed**.	SoK App Eng (C)
4	4.1 **Increasing solar activity is probably** the reason for	Grad; Uncert; Grad
	4.2 **a slow global warming** since the mid-19th century.	

Table 4. Key quotes from Friedrich-Karl Ewert

Ewert relies on the functions of contrariety to establish, first and foremost, the inexistence of climate change and its relation to anthropogenic causes (1.1, 2.2, 2.4,). In quote 1, his reasons mainly deal with evidence considered meaningless (1.3) and not recognizable (1.5). He then leverages his knowledge as a geophysics expert to back his evaluations as basic laws of physics (1.7). Quote 2 starts off with the word 'facts' (2.1) that he tries to establish throughout his narrative. He first dismisses the analysis conducted by climate scientists (2.8), claiming a manipulation of data (2.6), and then steers the focus on past occurrences (3.1-3.4) by counting on the graduation resource of time. In quotes 3 and 4, he admits there might be a slow (4.2) warming of the planet, but it can be attributed to natural and unavoidable causes.

His denial strategies are based on the tactic of questionability of evidence and his self-proclaimed role as climate expert. His stancetaking reinforces the claim that climate change is not occurring and uses past experience to prove it.

4.2 Self-proclaimed expert: Ralph B. Alexander

Associate Professor of Physics at Wayne State University and former President and co-founder of Ion Surface Technology		
	Key Quotes	**Appraisal and stance resources**
1	1.1 We **have** accounts of **major** droughts and flooding for **two hundred** years.	SoK
	1.2 And the 2005 drought **was not the worst**.	Grad; Contra
2	2.1 Climate-change **sceptics might be** regarded as **modern-day witches**	Eng (E); Grad; Judg
	2.2 **because they think that** global warming comes from natural forces.	SoK
	2.3 **However, it's superstitious alarmists**, …	Contra; Judg

	2.4 **who are really** the witches.	Eng (C); Cert
3	3.1 **I am offended** that science **is being perverted** in the name of global warming, 3.2 today's environmental *cause celebre.*	Aff; Eng; App Judg
4	4.1 The Earth has supported abundant life **many times** in the geological past when 4.2 there were **much higher** levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. 4.3 **It is quite likely** that future generations **will benefit** from the enrichment of 4.4 Earth's atmosphere with **more** carbon dioxide.	Grad Grad Sok; Pred Grad
5	5.1 Greenhouse gas emissions…**are part of** human industrial and agricultural activity. 5.2 **While** substantial concern has been expressed that emissions **may cause** 5.3 **significant** climate change… records indicate that 20th and 21st century changes 5.4 **are neither exceptional nor persistent**… 5.5 **there is an extensive** scientific literature that examines **beneficial effects** of 5.6 **increased levels** of carbon dioxide for both plants and animals.	Eng (C) Contra Uncert Grad Contra; Judg SoK; App Grad

Table 5. Key quotes from Ralph B. Alexander

Alexander also counts on the time factor (1.1, 2.1, 4.1, 5.3) to establish that climate change is part of our history, with higher or lower manifestations, and can be attributed to natural causes. He also ridicules the alarmists (2.3) who try to discredit climate skeptics through acts of name calling (2.1), but then resorts to doing the same (2.4). His other tactic is based on discrediting the theory of global warming by calling it a scientific perversion (3.1) and a trend (3.2). In quote 5 he somewhat acknowledges that climate change may have some effects (5.3), but that these are beneficial to the environment as stated in the literature (5.5).

Alexander generally adopts the strategy of blaming the alarmists for concocting conspiracy theories against denialists. He relies on the 'it's in the literature' as his source of knowledge (4.3, 5.5) but remains vague as to scientific data. He promotes the benefits of climate change by taking a stance against expert opinion and facts.

4.3 Field-related expert: Joanne Nova

	Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology from the University of Western Australia	
	Key Quotes	**Appraisal and stance resources**
1	1.1 **Good people** of Earth are spending thousands of billions of dollars to prevent a future with predicted by models that **we know don't work** 1.2 The debate **is over,** climate spending is an **unscientific, pagan, theological quest** to 1.3 change the weather. Just another iteration of what **Druids and Witchdoctors** 1.4 have been promising **for eons.**	App; Contra; SoK Eng (C); Judg Judg Grad

2	2.1 The **real story** is that **everyone wants**	Sok; Vol; Grad
	2.2 a **nicer** climate,	Contra
	2.3 **But most people know**	Judg
	2.4 **it's a waste** of money.	Judg
	2.5 **That's why this is** a	Sok
	2.6 **dead** topic in the election.	Judg
3	3.1 **Finally, I know there is a decent survey** on the topic,	SoK; Grad; Judg
	3.2 and **it shows** that **less than half** of what we **would call** 'climate scientists' who	SoK; Grad
	3.3 research the topic and for the **most part**, publish in the **peer reviewed** literature,	Grad; App
	3.4 **would agree** with the IPCC's main conclusions. Only **43% of** climate scientists agree	Eng (E); Grad
	3.5 with the IPCC **'97%'** certainty.	Grad
	3.6	
4	4.1 **There is a good reason** climate scientists **are failing** to convince other	Sok; Eng (C);
	4.2 scientists — their evidence is **weak** — and **any good scientist can see that**,	Judg; Eng (E);
5	5.1 If, **hypothetically**, there are scientific gaps in the theory of man-made global	Hypo
	5.2 warming, for **the most part** we are leaving it up t**o volunteers** to find them.	Grad; Judg
	5.3 It's **as if** the government has funded a team of QCs for the prosecution	Eng
	5.4 **but spent nothing** on legal aid for the defense.	Contra
6	6.1 The **swelling** ranks of inquiring **sceptical** scientists is now the **largest whistle-blowing** cohort	Grad; Judg
	6.2 in science ever seen. It includes some of the **brightest**: **two** with **Nobel prizes** in	App; Grad
	6.3 physics, **four NASA** astronauts, **9000 PhDs** in science, and another **20,000 science**	Grad
	6.4 **graduates** to cap it off. A **recent US Senate minority** report contained **1000 names**	SoK; Grad; Judg Grad
	6.5 **of eminent scientists** who are **sceptical**, and the term professor pops up more than	Judg
	6.6 **500 times** in that list.	Grad

Table 6. Key quotes from Joanne Nova

Nova believes that negative climate change effects can be traced back to pagan times (1.3) and, therefore, any alarm created by these false claims results in the spending of good people's (1.1) money (1.2). Quotes 1 and 2 are, indeed, all about careless spending that has been going on for ages (1.4) which ultimately leads to a dead end (2.6). In quote 3 she offers her field-related expertise by arguing that many recognized climate scientist (3.2), who even manage to get their work published (3.3), disagree with the results of the IPCC concerning the severity of climate change (3.5). Her strategy is to pit good science (hers) against the bad one (the others) (4.1, 4.2) which ultimately relies on volunteers (5.2) to do the work. She builds on hypotheticality to instill doubt and engage the interlocutor in her line of reasoning, and in Quote 6 force (6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6) and focus (6.3, 6.4, 6.5) are used to prove her point. Her source of knowledge is mainly based on hearsay and minority reports (1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 6.4).

The main denial strategy is reliability of research evidence. She claims that skeptical science, due its inquisitive nature, is more reliable than counter-denial science but supports this view by simply mentioning numbers. Her stancetaking is construed by a strong mistrust towards climate scientists and their needless alarmist attitude.

4.4 Politician: Donald Trump

	Key Quotes	Appraisal and stance resources
	45th President of the USA	
1	1.1 **I think something's happening**. Something's changing and **it'll change back again**. 1.2 **I don't think** it's **a hoax,** I think there's **probably** a difference. 1.3 But **I don't know** that it's **manmade.** 1.4 **I want to say** this. **I don't wanna** give **trillions and trillions** of dollars. 1.5 **I don't wanna** lose **millions and millions** of jobs**.** **I don't wanna** be put at a **disadvantage.**	SoK; Pred SoK; Uncert SoK; Judg Vol; Grad Vol; Grad Judg
2	2.1 **I want to** use hair spray… 2.2 **They say**, 'Don't use hair spray, it's bad for the 2.3 'ozone.' So, I'm sitting in this concealed apartment, … **I don't think** anything gets out.	Vol SoK SoK
3	3.1 **While the world is** in turmoil and falling apart in 3.2 **so many different** ways—especially 3.3 with ISIS—our president is **worried** about global warming, he [Obama] 3.4 said. What a **ridiculous** situation.	Contra Grad App Judg
4	4.1 **I'm not a believer** in man-made global warming. **It could be** warming, 3.1 **and it's going** start to cool at some point. 3.2 And **you know**, in the early, in the 1920s, people talked about global cooling… 3.3 **They thought** the Earth was cooling. 3.4 Now, it's global warming…**But** … **I don't think** in any major fashion exists.	Contra; Uncert Pred SoK SoK Contra; SoK
5	5.1 The United States **will certainly cease** all 5.2 implementation of the **non-binding** Paris Accord ….	Pred; Cert Judg
6	6.1 Staying in the agreement **could also pose serious obstacles** for the United States as we begin the process of unlocking the restrictions on 6.2 America's **abundant energy reserves**.	Uncert; Judg Grad
7	7.1 **Even if the Paris Agreement were** implemented in full, … it is estimated it would only 7.2 produce a **two-tenths of one-degree Celsius reduction** in global temperature by the year 2100.	Hypo Grad
8	8.1 It's freezing and snowing in New York -- **we need** global warming!	Nec
9	9.1 […] Right now we're at **the cleanest** we've ever been and that's very **important** to me. 9.2 But, o**f course, if we're clean**, **but** every other place on Earth is **dirty**, that's **not so good**. So, **I want** 9.3 clean air, **I want** clean water, very important.	Judg; Grad Judg Eng; Grad; App Judg; Vol

Table 7. Key quotes from Donald Trump

Trump's general attitude towards climate change is based on a strong denial of anthropogenic causes (1.3, 4.1), and an attribution of blame on other countries (9.2). Throughout his quotes, volition and judgment are the two main functions that support this logic (1.4, 3.4, 6.1, 9.2). He argues that climate change is a minor problem (3.1, 3.2) in the face of other issues that need more attention. In fact, he uses sarcasm (3.3, 8.1), past time (4.3) and the argument that America can make it on its own (6.2) to highlight his point. The 'you know' in 4.3 is quite interesting as this expression is often used for

discourse organization or a verbal routine but, in this context, it connects the present to the past. He also often uses his own source of knowledge to call in other actors (2.2, 4.3, 4.4). However, it is worth noting that his source of knowledge is often insufficient (1.2, 2.3, 4.5) as it is scaled down to a level of uncertainty. He states that he is the first to want (9.2) clean air, thus affirming that he is not against measures, but that the rest of the world (9.2) should contribute. This all leads to the withdrawal from the Paris Accord (quote 5).

Trump's offensive denial strategies are based on counter arguments deriving from misinterpretation of research (4.1-4.4) and conspiracy theories. By questioning measures that fight climate change (7.1, 7.2), he justifies the fact that this evidence is not enough to stop American progress and, therefore, endorses fossil fuel extraction. Trump's stancetaking strategy, despite his weak form of openness to discussion, is one of full denial. However, as can be inferred, his position is not the result of pure conviction that climate change is not happening, but it is most likely shaped by his newly-acquired power as businessman turned President, a power which he exploits in order to safeguard all corporate interests.

4.5 Think Tank: The Heartland Institute

	The Heartland Institute is a Chicago-based free market think tank	
	Key Quotes	**Appraisal and stance resources**
1	1.1 **Maybe two-thirds** of the warming in the 1990s was due to natural 1.2 causes; forecasts of future warming are **unreliable;** and the benefits of 1.3 a **moderate** warming 1.4 **are likely to** outweigh the costs.	Uncert; Grad Judg Grad Pred
2	2.1 **You may also know us** from our work exposing 2.2 the **shoddy science and missing economics** behind the global warming 2.3 **delusion.** 2.4 **Some** say the earth is warming. **Some** also said the earth was flat.	SoK; Eng (E) Judg; Judg SoK; Grad
3	3.1 **Some** environmentalists **call for** a **'save-the-day'** strategy to 'stop global 3.2 warming,' Such a position **seems logica**l until we stop to think: 3.3 Immediate action **wouldn't make us any safer**, but it would surely make 3.4 us **poorer.**	SoK; Grad; Judg Eng Uncert; Grad Grad
4	4.1 **Unfortunately**, global warming is an issue that is well suited to 4.2 **political demagoguery**, which can be defined as **pandering** to 4.3 **misinformed voters** and promising **unrealistic solutions**.	Judg Judg Judg

Table 8. Key quotes form the Heartland Institute

In many of the quotes (2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 4.2), Hartland Institute seems to question the work accomplished by climate science and by other fields of study that are impacted by climate change (2.2). In fact, as a highly conservative think tank, the Institute totally dismisses the negative effects of

climate change in the economic sector. Indeed, its members use sarcasm and parallelisms (2.4) to state that any action taken towards ameliorating change will make the world poorer (3.3), and attribute claims of public beguilement (4.3) to the meddling work of politicians (4.2). Their source of knowledge also seems to rely on unspecified literature (2.1, 2.4, 3.1).

Clearly, the Heartland Institute, as a conservative, libertarian, and right wing think tank, conducts work that aims to question scientific results regarding climate change and has also lobbied against many other health related reforms such as passive smoking. The main defensive denial strategy is the dismissal of negative results obtained from scientific research. On the offensive side, Heartland claims that reformists have construed conspiracy theories against them and against economic progress. Generally speaking, the Institute's stancetaking perspective insists on the scarce reliability of climate scientists and their scientific evidence.

4.6 Industry: CO2 Coalition

The CO2 Coalition was established in 2015 as an organization for the purpose of the general public about the important contribution made by carbon dioxide and fossil fuels to our lives and the economy.		
	Key Quotes	**Appraisal and stance resources**
1	1.1 The **positive impacts** of atmospheric CO2 enrichment remain largely 1.2 **under-appreciated or ignored** in the debate over what to do or not do 1.3 about **rising** CO2 concentrations in the future …. 1.4 atmospheric CO2 **is not a pollutant**; it is, in fact, the **very elixir** of life.	Judg Grad; App Grad; Pred Contra; Grad
2	2.1 **[O]bservations … show** that **increased CO2 levels** over the next 2.2 century **will cause modest and beneficial** warming … and that this 2.3 **will be** an even **larger benefit** to agriculture than it is now.	SoK; Grad Pred; Judg Pred; Grad
3	3.1 The costs of emissions regulations, which **will be paid** by **everyone, will** 3.2 **be punishingly high** and **will provide no benefits** to **most people** 3.3 **anywhere** in the world … Yes, **there will be mild climate** change, 3.4 and it **will benefit** the world.	Pred; Eng (E) Pred; App; Grad Grad; Pred; App Pred; App
4	4.1 Damaging hurricanes, tornadoes, and whatever … **are not clearly linked** to the buildup of greenhouse gases …. 4.2 **Increased** CO2 worldwide with few exceptions means plants grow **better, period.** … 4.3 CO2 is something that plants love … **It's hardly** a pollutant at all. 4.4 **It's obviously** a naturally occurring gas ….	Contra Grad Eng (C); Judg Cert

Table 9. Key quotes from the CO2 Coalition

CO2 industry exploits the argument that the positive outweighs the negative. By claiming that CO2 is not harmful (1.4), the industry instills doubt towards climate change theories and global warming but provides no evidence. The strategy is to create a threatening future scenario in which climate change

regulations (3.1) will be paid in full by the public. The benefits (1.4, 2.3, 3.2, 3.4, 4.2), therefore, even in the face of mild change, will be higher (3.3).

Due to the difficulty in finding research to support CO2's denialist beliefs (2.1), the industry heavily questions the existing contrarian scientific evidence, and insists on the benefits of rising CO2 levels. The company's personal interest shapes their stance taking, supported by their mission of protecting economic progress and standards of living.

5. Discussion

Reflecting on how an extended presentation of all the key quotes of the DeSmogBlog resource data set would enrich the understanding of the climate change denial debate, it is unlikely to be carried out in a single paper. Nevertheless, owing to the multiple readings of the data, the samples analyzed in this study were selected according to the level of representativity of each of the denialist categories listed in Table 1. This means that generalizations could cautiously be formulated for the purpose of contributing to the heated debate in relation to climate change as well as providing proposals for future research to explore.

With reference to this study's profiled climate denialists, it can be argued that experts or self-proclaimed experts seem to contend that climate change is not a serious problem, or that the effects are often exaggerated. These views especially question the integrity of climate science, even the kind that gets peer reviewed in journal entries, sustaining that it is driven by personal motives. By defending their right to dispute climate change theories, their effort has created a powerful denial machine which runs on generating skepticism.

The organizations represented by the Hartland Institute "that has been at the forefront of denying the scientific evidence for man-made climate change",[35] due to their illustrative role as conservative and corporate front groups, speak in the name of a wider interest which, in most cases, has to do with defending the extraction of fossil fuels. They mostly frame the issue of climate change as a natural phenomenon which does not pose any immediate threats, and conversely argue that regulations in favor of climate change intervention could put a stop to personal initiative and economic progress.

What follows is a list of the denial strategies that emerged from the above analysis through which it is possible to identify acts of stance taking:

− Accusations of conspiracy theories. Denialists affirm that conspiracy theories are generated against their right to disagree or ask legitimate questions as a consequence of the failure of

---

[35] DeSmogBlog, "The Heartland Institute" (2018), https://www.desmogblog.com/heartland-institute, accessed 20 March 2018.

recognized climate science to produce convincing evidence (see Alexander, Heartland Institute);

– Abuse or misinterpretation of climate change research. In the effort to defend climate change denial, when the accusation of conspiracy theories is ineffective, official research studies are brought in but with a distorted version of the results (see Trump);

– Questionability of climate experts and scientific evidence. The inevitable and inherent uncertainties of climate science research is at the basis of this strategy which is used to encourage denial attitudes among public opinion and diminish trust in mainstream climate science and its scholars (see Nova);[36]

– Unavoidability of climate emergencies. This attitude is common to all profiles as the main argumentation is based on the repeated natural occurrences of catastrophes recorded in history.

Disseminating doubt is at the very heart of science denial, and by positioning this attitude at a higher or lower level of the denial spectrum is parallel to taking a stance. By identifying patterns of discursive behaviors regarding denial, the present investigation argues that these attitudes can be measured at different intensities and shaped into denial types. The ones described below, informed by Bjornberg et al.'s previous research in this field,[37] are the result of this study's analysis:

– Literal denial. Contests any activity of change in terms of global warming and anthropogenic causes;

– Imputability denial. Affirms that climate change can be attributed to other specific causes such as solar activity;

– Unavoidability denial. Acknowledges catastrophic events regarding climate change but expected and unavoidable natural causes are to be blamed;

– Reputability denial. Attacks climate science and the credibility of climate scientists especially on their consensus on the anthropogenic nature of climate change;

– Distortion denial. Fabricates fake information from scientific data resulting in the distortion of truth.

---

[36] See Dunlap, *Climate Change Skepticism.*

[37] Bjornberg et al., "Climate and Environmental Science Denial".

6. Conclusion

In this study I have focused on climate change denial strategies and the dialogic achievement of stance on the part of individuals and organizations. The climate denial phenomenon, as discussed in the above sections, can be classified according to types and further clustered under two sets of factors. The first category is expressed by psychological factors which, in this study, are linked to the imputability and unavoidability denial types.[38] They induce the rejection of evidence produced by climate science as a form of defense mechanism, often in response to what is perceived as either a problem caused by other forces or an unsolvable predicament. Then there are sociological factors,[39] referring to literal, reputability and distortion denial types whereby climate science and climate change research are perceived to be uncomfortable as they demean the defense of anthropocentrism,[40] private property rights[41] and the more economic-related belief in free market and liberalism.[42]

An underlying thread runs through this brief portrayal of denial, as mentioned at the very beginning of the investigation, and it is one that requires attention from all those who support climate science and are adamant about posing questions regarding when corporate maneuvers, in their attempt to weaken environmental regulations, will be legally forced to act more responsibly. Indeed, despite the imperfection of climate science, its goals are preferable to the schemes underlying denialist claims; an observation that also brings to the foreground the responsibility of the academic research community in terms of addressing this phenomenon from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives. In other words, climate change research needs to contribute to the work accomplished by DeSmogBlog to debunk the perpetrators of denial, perhaps with a wider and more radical approach that illustrates the life-threatening environmental risks that human beings are exposed to everyday.

---

[38] Holtcamp, "Flavors of Uncertainty".

[39] Steve Rayner, "Uncomfortable Knowledge: The Social Construction of Ignorance in Science and Environmental Policy Discourses", *Economic and Society*, 41.1 (2012), 107-125.

[40] Peter J. Jacques, "A General Theory of Climate Denial", *Global Environmental Politics*, 12.2 (2013), 9-17.

[41] Alex Y. Lo, "The Right to Doubt: Climate-change Scepticism and Asserted Rights to Private Property", *Environmental Politics,* 23.4 (2014), 549-569.

[42] Jeremiah Bohr, "The 'Climatism' Cartel: Why Climate Change Deniers Oppose Market-based Mitigation Policy", *Environmental Politics*, 25.5 (2016), 812-830.

Federico Pio Gentile

The Canadian *Environmental Assessment Act*.
Legal Implicatures and Media Interference

Abstract: The paper proposes a linguistic study of the Canadian *Environmental Assessment Act* of 2012 (CEAA), the latest redraft of the original document (dated 1992), regulating the issue of human (over-)interaction with the natural milieu of the Country. The analysis concerns the main and most relevant linguistic aspects of the CEAA also in consideration of the ample series of modifications, and repealments occurred in comparison with its 1992 draft, focusing on the contemporary social, historical and cultural asset. Moreover, the linguistic investigation outlines the peculiarities of the document on the terminological and syntactic levels mirroring the link between the language conveyed and the legal content applicability in association with the retrieval of significant formulaic divergences, symptomatic of linguistic evolutive phenomena. Eventually, the web-facilitated intermediality of the Act is observed in relation to the evaluative process interferences on behalf of its users and affecting final political decisions about the environmental projects.

Keywords: *Canadian studies, environmental law, legal discourse, terminology*

> Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or cultural boundaries
> James Earl Carter Jr., *An Outdoor Journal*

1. Environmental Laws and the Canadian Context

According to the shared classification provided by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Environmental Laws consist in "an amalgam of state and federal statutes, regulations and common-law principles covering air pollution, water pollution, hazardous waste, the wilderness and endangered wildlife".[1] Indeed, as for any illegal deed befalling the respect for social cohabitation criteria and the otherness, all individuals must undergo a series of rules and norms to be collected within a range of codes which legal value has to be guaranteed by State apparatuses acting

---

[1] Stéphane Boyera et al., *Farmer Profiling: Making Data Work for Smallholder Farmers* (Wageningen: CTA Working Paper, 2017), 8.

and legislating over human's presence, participation and (over-)interaction – thus with the impact they exert – on the endurance of arrays of natural environments, ecosystems and resources which are at the same time surrounding communities of people and useful to those dwellers for their survival and socio-economic development.

Nonetheless, despite the great care the issue is experiencing nowadays, environmental sensitization has a fairly recent history, whose main concern intensified throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until the 1950s breaking point, when after WWII the exponential increase of urbanisation rates in North America and Europe led to "severe air pollution events ... in London in 1952 and New York City in 1953, reportedly resulting in the deaths of at least four thousand and two hundred persons, respectively".[2] Yet, as remarked by Richard Lazarus, Director of the Supreme Court Institute of the Georgetown University:

> By the mid-twentieth century, environmental pollution remained a less prominent political issue, likely because of national attention to matters of war and peace, but it had nonetheless become a matter of importance to many Americans. There was considerable news media coverage of the air pollution disaster in Donora, Pennsylvania, in 1948, in which twenty persons immediately died, fifty more died within a month, and thousands became ill as the result of pollution during a dense fog caused by a lengthy thermal inversion that persisted for several days.[3]

A similar consideration would highlight how between the 1940s and the 1950s times were certainly mature for the utter acknowledgement of the environmental problem, but the post-war situation required the drafting of major agreements re-establishing peace, and thus postponed the urgency for such 'secondary' matters, which, however, started being seriously taken under duly consideration immediately after the Donora, London, and New York tragic events (definitely acquiring more importance during the 1960s). One relevant example of what has been described so far is the first actual British *Clean Air Act* of 1956, effective until 1964 – since previous efforts had failed – as the direct provision enacted to regulate over pollution issues after the London's Great Smog (1952) and establishing a list of limits to the consumption of fuel and burning-coal adopted to supply mostly heating and electric services.[4] Subsequent to critical episodes in history the environmental sensitization has grown and intensified over the years allowing the raise of governmental policies which are today attentive to the present situation.

To generalise, modern Environmental Laws act under a Common Law perspective intervening over

---

[2] Richard Lazarus, *Making of Environmental Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 53.

[3] Ibid., 52.

[4] The example refers to previous provisions such as the *Smoke Nuisance Abatement Act* (1853, 1856) and the London *Public Health Act* (1891). See Peter Brimblecombe, "The Clean Air Act after 50 Years", *Weather*, 61.11 (January 2007), 311-314.

litigations on Nuisance, Trespass, or Negligence (in case of disputes about individuals damaging each other), Strict Liability (including resolution of torts according to the *stare decisis* principle), and Prior Appropriations or Riparian Rights (which involve refund provision cases in advantage of those, whom were armed by others' illegal actions or behaviours).[5] Nevertheless, considering the common basis of the discipline, diverse geographical areas disclose different needs to be profiled and managed, as the attention to be paid to those aspects is also required to adhere with the proper set of laws in force within such heterogeneous territories.[6]

The Canadian situation, for instance, flanks the Common Law legal system basically adopted in the totality of the Anglophone Countries in the world with 'Federal' Environmental Regulations and 'Provincial' Statutes, mostly because of the vastness of the area involved, where – however – the federal authorities prevail over the territorial ones.[7] Moreover, notwithstanding the general fields mentioned in the former CTA definition, Canadian norms on the matter also cover specific applicability related to Geopolitical Affairs (such as international borders and relations; trade and commerce; navigation and shipping; activities affecting seacoasts conditions and fishery), Criminal Law, and any other activity useful for preserving the safety and the wellness of the Country. As a consequence, since the 1980s, Canada has been passing through an extensive range of legal documents starting from the enaction of the *Department of the Environment Act* in 1985 sanctioning the establishment of both a Department and a Minister of the Environment with the aim of taking care and legislate over issues affecting the Canadian ecosystems, their resilience and the sustainability of resources, also in compliance with international trade agreements and political relationships.

The long list of Acts then continued through lawmaking processes concerning agriculture and wildlife (see the *Fisheries Act*; the *Species at Risk Act*; the *Pest Control Products Act*), products transportation quality and requirements (see the *Hazardous Product Act*; the *Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act*; the *Shipping Act*), along with overall provisions affecting the whole environmental legal context (see the *Environmental Protection Act*; the *Environmental Assessment Act*), with the eventual result of not only divulging and spreading environmental(-ist) knowledge and awareness throughout the entire population, but also launching brand new cultural, linguistic, literary and mediatic discourses on subjects including Ecocriticism and Ecolinguistic Studies granting the Country the label of 'Green' Canada:

---

[5] "Environmental Law", *The Free Dictionary*, https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/environmental+law, accessed 12 June 2018).

[6] See also Philippe Sands and Jaqueline Peel, *Principles of International Environmental Law*, Third Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2012).

[7] Dianne Saxe and Jackie Campbell, "Canadian Environmental Law Introduction", *Siskinds Law Firm*, https://www.siskinds.com/envirolaw/canadian-environmental-law-learn/intro-environmental-law/, accessed 12 June 2018.

> In "Wood", first published in 1980 and revised in 2009, the male protagonist ... walks self-confidently across the woods with his axe and chain-saw without perceiving any danger as he believes that nature is predictable and can be easily subdued. His failure proves him wrong ... "Wood" is an apt example of the recent turn in the Canadian literary imagination as it reveals the ever-growing environmental awareness and ecological involvement, but also the changing Canadian perception of the representation of the complex and intriguing relation between the human and the natural world.[8]

At that extent, summoning 'that' Alice Munro's short story entitled *Wood* has a peculiar significance in the Environmental Discourse as the mentioned female author writes her plots set in utterly ordinary (in this case, natural as well) contexts, although recurrently requiring well-focused mental rielaboration of the narrations, in order to let the readers access new perspectival dimensions reflecting their essence in relation to what they are surrounded by. In tight connection with this evaluative process, it would be metaphorically possible to understand the schemata according to which, in 1992, Canada introduced a fundamental *Environmental Assessment Act* aiming at the correct comprehension of the role of Canadians within the natural milieu they inhabit inasmuch as the consequences of the human influence upon it.[9]

The following analysis, indeed, presents a case study which observes the main features retrievable within the aforesaid *Act* – in its latest redraft of 2012 (*CEAA*, hereafter) – in terms of contentful information and prescriptions, and the most relevant Legal Discourse conveyed throughout its commas, eventually operating a linguistic comparison with the 1992 original version for the description of some significant discoursal evolutive aspects in time, according to the social and political changes witnessed by the Country itself.

2. The Canadian *Environmental Assessment Act* Case Study

The Government of Canada passed the parliamentary act in 1992 to enact the first *CEAA* pertaining to the preservation of the Canadian soil, with the purpose of "predict[ing] environmental effects of proposed initiatives before they are carried out" in order to mitigate any possible evident adversity could be unleashed by projects entailing the alteration of the current environmental status.[10] In accordance with a similar perspective, any activity of this kind, once established the need for assessment, would be submitted to an evaluative protocol first on behalf of an Agency that ponders

---

[8] See Oriana Palusci, ed., *Green Canada* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016), 11.

[9] See also Robert Baldwin et al., *Understanding Regulations: Theory, Strategy and Practice*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2012), 315-337.

[10] Government of Canada, "Basics of Environmental Assessment", available online at https://www.canada.ca/en/environmental-assessment-agency/services/environmental-assessments/basics-environmental-assessment.html, accessed 13 June 2018.

over the impact it would have on factors such as biodiversity, climate, etc., then accordingly contrasted by counter-arguments held by the proponent(s), which would lead to a further step foreseeing possible revisions of previous considerations by the Agency itself or by a panel of individuals appointed by the Government to ratify a final environmental assessment decision.

Nonetheless, besides the bureaucratic *iter* associated with the exploitation of the Act, the present paragraph will mostly focus on its textual configuration and linguistic formulation.[11] Indeed, in analysing the *CEAA* one would immediately notice the bilingual drafting – evident on both a textual (two separated texts flaking each other) and a linguistic perspective (two different linguistic versions flanking each other) – due to the presence of multiple Canadian official legal communicative codes, English and French, displayed in a comparative structure where the two languages are aligned in order to let users shift between the couple for interpretation observations, understandability reasons, etc., related to legal, monolingual or bilingual needs and approaches.

Moreover, as for the majority of this sort of documents, which are all basically ascribable to a unique textual and linguistic 'class' where inner organisational and formulaic differences are abolished,[12] the Act immediately appears as highly fragmented and, although every sentence (or better, comma) is spatially and formally detached from the previous and the following ones, they are all clearly related to each other in defining an organic text setting the jurisprudence. As a consequence, quoting Bice Mortara-Garavelli's speculation concerning the law, on a primary outer stage it would be convenient to deal with textual 'classifications' rather than daring to sketch 'typological' generalisations.[13] Substantially, there are indeed linguistic traits identifying iterative aspects of the codes conveyed (such as lexicogrammar units, textual semantics and pragmatics), and which are peculiar of such domain, but classifications in the place of typologies would be of great help in determining the purposes and the communicative functions of similar given documents as well, mostly according to their authoritarian reliability both prescribing and informing the public of receivers.[14] Yet, insisting on the textual level, the typical commatic structure adopted for specifically outlining the prescriptability of the *CEAA*, which defines point by point every single applicable case or provision, shows seventeen different sections and a total number of one hundred and twenty-nine articles plus

---

[11] Treating the Canadian *Environmental Assessment Act* (2012) as a corpus, it will be linguistically observed via both qualitative and quantitative analysis focusing on its English version (disregarding the French one) and described according to a Corpus-Driven approach. See Elena Tognini-Bonelli, *Corpus Linguistics at Work* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001).

[12] Michele A. Cortelazzo, "Lingua e diritto in Italia. Il punto di vista dei linguisti", in Leandro Schena, ed., *La lingua del diritto. Difficoltà traduttive, applicazioni didattiche. Atti del convegno internazionale, Milano 5-6 ottobre 1995* (Rome: Centro d'Informazione e Stampa Universitaria [CISU], 1997), 35-49.

[13] Bice Mortara-Garavelli, *Le parole della giustizia. Divagazioni grammaticali e retoriche sui testi giuridici italiani* (Torino: Einaudi, 2001), 42.

[14] Peter Newmark, *A Textbook of Translation* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), 39.

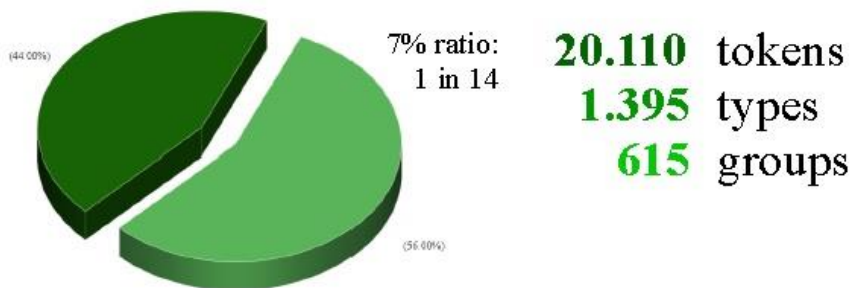three additional schedules designating Federal Authorities, Components of the Environment, and Bodies.

Figure 1. *CEAA* word tokens, types and groups ratio

On the other hand, on the linguistic level the English version of the *CEAA* – parsed using a free online Corpus Analysis software –[15] counts more than twenty thousand words (tokens) and circa one thousand four hundred word types, with seven percent ratio that involves a relationship of one new word/term conveyed every fourteen full or partial repetitions (see figure 1), and including a linguistic pattern which would recall the presence of about six hundred word-families/groups thus reporting forty-four to fifty-six percent ratio of variation. Indeed, about one-in-two word-types are actually ascribable to the same content or contextual meaning as they only differ on the grammatical level when occurring as verbs rather than nouns, adjectives or adverbs. As a matter of fact, it is worth noting that said multifaceted class of texts is reckoned as "a formal, non-emotive, technical style for academic papers characterized in English by passive, present and perfect tenses, literal language, Latinised vocabulary, jargon, multi-noun compounds with 'empty' verbs, no metaphors".[16] Similar data necessarily induce to subsequent considerations on the lexical density of the Act, where the amount of words and terms adopted to render the jurisprudence does not automatically include a high level of variation, hence summoning frequent redundancy (through derivational morphology as well as through full repetitions), and accordingly involving a very limited terminological thesaurus which – at some extent – could contribute to the ease of reading, understanding and interpreting the law by a different public of users ranging from experts to laymen at the same time.

Furthermore, the main observations were conducted on the keywords contained in the title and then to be retrieved within the rest of the document, finding once more that they are disseminated throughout the Act via full or partial repetition. Therefore, the occurrence plots of 'environment(-al)'

---

[15] Laurence Anthony, *AntConc 3.5.7*, computer software (Tokyo, Japan: Waseda University, 2018), http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software.
[16] Ibid. 40.

and 'act(-ing; -ion-s)' traces some more values to be considered (see figure 2). The mentioned terms formally and equally occur only in their adjectival (two hundred and fifty-three hits) and nominal (two hundred and fifty-two hits) forms respectively, while other variants are rarely found: nonetheless, the noun 'environment' reaches 23 occurrences, albeit 'act' suffixations and derivational morphemes do not exceed the totality of 14 recurrences. What has just been described in consideration of the first two terms is also valid for 'assessment', on the whole always associated with those, but also including derivational forms as numerous as its co-occurring terms affixations (see figure 2), such as plurals or the most significant verbal class – 'assessing' – denoting actions to be taken for accomplishing the evaluative procedures.
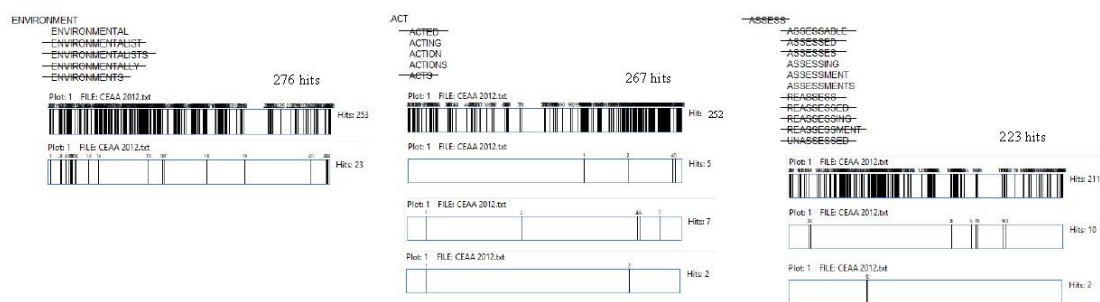

Figure 2. *CEAA* title terms recurrence plots

Despite the scarce amount of repetitions of similar derivational morphemes as much as the comparable number of hits between 'environment', 'action(s)', and 'assess-' (this latter being considered now in its verbal form), the value of any Act is to prescribe and set actual procedures to regulate and give directives on specific matters. As a consequence, considering the tendency to erasing the agent's presence in phrastic contexts via the usage of depersonification strategies or the abundance of passive voices mostly after gender-sensitive modifications applied to Canadian legal documents since 1995,[17] the utter recurrence of verbs in their active voice also denotes the introduction of primary subjects (such as Governmental Head Departments or Functionaries embodying the Organs) exploiting the task they are in charge to enact or supervise (see ex. 1, all the examples are from the CEAA of 2012 and numbered progressively).

---

[17] British Columbia Law Institute, *Gender-Free Legal Writing: Managing the Personal Pronouns* (Vancouver: British Columbia Law Institute, 1998).

Ex. 1

32(1) Subject to section 33 and 34, if the **Minister** <u>is of the opinion that</u> <u>a process for assessing</u> the <u>environmental effect</u> of <u>designed projects</u> that <u>is followed by</u> the government <u>of a province</u> – or any agency or body that is established under an Act of the legislature <u>of a province</u> – that has powers, duties or functions in relation to an assessment of the <u>environmental effects</u> of a <u>designed project</u> would be appropriate substitute, the **Minister** <u>must</u>, on request of the province, <u>approve</u> the substitution of that process for an <u>environmental assessment</u>.

The intricacy of the Legal Discourse conveyed thus is not only given by the high fragmentation induced by the already described commatic structure, but also through sentence construction techniques preferring typical post modification expedients involving the proliferation of hypotaxis for intra-textual references to other sections listed within the document, along with the need for redundant terminology recurrence often reiterating action performers – when elicited – or syntactic objects to be considered (see ex. 1). Yet, being 'assessment' (as an act and/or a process to be carried out) the core of such observations, it would also be worth noting the collocation list in consideration of its direct and indirect objects, finding solid matches with (environmental) effects related to a 'designated project' (see figure 3).
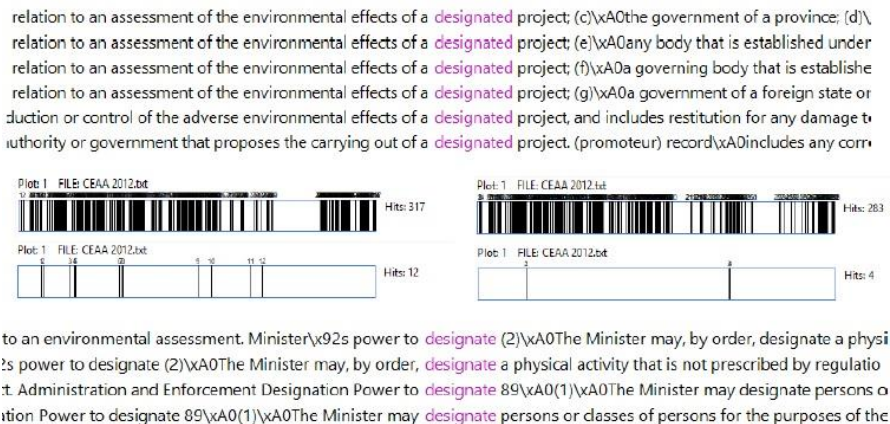

Figure 3. *CEAA* 'designated project' occurrence plot and collocations

As one would understand, the actual assessment should involve a precise *object* to be examined and judged as adequate for its completion. The addressee of said investigation then should expressly be a 'project', in this draft labelled as 'designated project' (see ex. 2 and 3), since it also has to adhere with specific criteria and be approved by named organs or agencies which today are represented by the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, if not "designated" by the

Minister (see ex. 3) of the Environment.

> Ex. 2
>
> 57 The Agency must establish a participant funding program to facilitate the participation of the public in the <u>environmental assessment of</u> **designated projects** that have been referred to a review panel under section 38.

> Ex. 3
>
> ***Designated project*** means one or more physical activities that
>
>   **(a)** are carried out in Canada or on federal lands;
>
>   **(b)** <u>are designated</u> by regulations made under paragraph 84(a) or <u>designated in</u> an order made by the Minister under subsection 14(2); and
>
>   **(c)** are linked to the same federal authority as specified in those regulations or that order.
>
> It includes any physical activity that is incidental to those physical activities. (*projet désigné)*

Both the examples reported here propose again cases of redundancy and intra-textuality already described and always deployed to emphasise the need for constant internal connections and implicatures: within the English version of the document one could steadily find even references to the CEAA French version as well (see ex. 3). Nonetheless, as for the 'assess-' case, the term 'designated' is here employed in both its adjectival and verbal forms to contemporaneously refer to the appointed project and the authorising Entity, once more relinquishing the Legal Discourse praxis foreseeing the indirect description of the actions of diaphanous Organs of Control by specifically mentioning them along with their functions (see ex. 3).

If many elements described so far are constant features of the Legal Discourse structure and transmission, that some scholars could have predicted to find, there are although other aspects that one would indeed expect to retrieve in an Act, and yet this case study is surprisingly missing (see ex. 4).

> Ex. 4
>
> (9) If the review panel's environmental assessment of the designated project to which the application relates is terminated by the Minister of the Environment under subsection 49(1) or (2) of the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012*, or is considered to have been terminated under subsection (8),
>
>   **(a)** despite section 50 of that Act, the Board **<u>shall</u>** complete the environmental assessment of the designated project and prepare a report with respect to the environmental assessment; and....

As a matter of fact, a main recurring syntactic particle of the English Legal language is the modal 'shall', often (over-)used in the discipline in order to grant the text its most authoritative aim in

prescribing and setting mandatory parameters and obligations to be performed, accomplished or simply acknowledged by Legal Discourse users, being them experts, professionals, or common citizens. Contrariwise, the sole occurrence of such verb in the *Environmental Assessment Act* (2012) consists in the disposition of having the National Energy Board to conclude its evaluative examination within a given duration and in compliance with specified clauses (see ex. 4). Under the same perspective, it seems likewise peculiar to trace, instead, ten occurrences of the modal 'will' (see ex. 5), which is *per se* considered as referring to personal volition and that, hence, one would not expect to find that much in a similar text and with a wider usage than the aforementioned 'shall', which is oppositely associated with a compulsory meaning. Yet, it is also true that "the use of 'shall' in legal acts [is] related to the ambiguity of its meaning which is considered to be against the rules of drafting techniques. As a result ... the use of *shall* in Legal English is none other than an archaism which causes interpretation problems for legal specialists, translators, and lay readers".[18]

> Ex. 5
>
> Authority to issue warrant
>
> (2) On *ex parte* application, a justice may issue a warrant authorizing a designated person who is named in it to enter a dwelling-house, subject to any conditions specified in the warrant, if the justice is satisfied by information on oath that ...
>
>> **(c)** entry was refused by the occupant or there are reasonable grounds to believe that entry **will be refused** or that consent to entry cannot be obtained from the occupant.

> Ex. 6
>
> (2) The Minister's determination regarding whether the referral of the environmental assessment of the designated project to a review panel is in the public interest **must** include a consideration of the following factors....

As a consequence, labelling the use of 'shall' in Legal English as ungrammatical then implies the big issue of 'how to substitute it?' The problem has been largely debated over the years, proposing an apt adaptation of such Specialised Discourse intricacy to be given up to the advantageous replacement of it via the introduction of a Plain Legal English:

> Beginning in the US in the late 1970s, the movement soon spread to Canada and the UK, but it was in Australia and New Zealand that the proposals of restyling legislative texts were first accepted by the Offices of Parliamentary Counsel as early as the late 1980s. Canada and post-apartheid South Africa also

---

[18] Olga A. Krapivkina, "Semantics of the Verb *Shall* in Legal Discourse", *Jezikoslovlje,* 18.2 (2017), 305.

implemented changes in the way some (though not all) of the English versions of their laws were drafted. But in the US, despite early successes, progress were generally slow, and in the UK there were few signs of a willingness to change.[19]

As anticipated, the Legal Language reformation in Canada – despite the good purposes already displayed in between the 1970s and the 1980s – found effective application since the 1995 redesigns of legal documents in compliance with gender-sensitive requirements and simplification norms befalling the linguistic code in object.

At that extent, besides the unexpected use of 'will', it is possible to affirm that over the years – and after the application of clarifying discourse strategies – the expressiveness and the communicativeness of the legal linguistics praxis has eventually changed, being (specialised) languages "symbol system[s] based on pure arbitrary conventions ... infinitely extendable and modifiable according to the changing needs and conditions of speakers".[20] Thus the avoidance of any ungrammatical usages of modals imposed a careful employment of attenuative, concessive forms (e.g. 'may', one hundred and nine hits) and limitations in the specific use of 'shall', utterly substituted by its less formal but as mush peremptory equivalent 'must', with one hundred and seventy occurrences (see ex. 6).

Also, in accordance with neutralisation requirements, Legal Language has undergone some gender adaptations which requested to delete any male connoted references throughout the legal documents in order to shape a newly inclusive language which would have fitted both men and women's needs (in terms of duties and rights as well), inasmuch as "it is clear that language not only reflects social structures but, more importantly, sometimes serves to perpetuate existing differences in power; thus, a serious concern with linguistic usage is fully warranted".[21] Therefore, the elimination of performing agents' presence in sentences has been introduced and flanked – wherever the camouflage was not possible – by the insertion of plural, collective nouns and pronouns in place of the original male ones (see ex. 7), or by the explication of the two recognised genders in their singular number (see ex. 8).

Ex. 7

Person accompanying designate person

(2) <u>A person may</u>, at the designated person's request, <u>accompany the designated person to assist</u> **them** to gain entry to the place referred to in subsection 90(1) and is not liable for doing so.

---

[19] Christopher Williams, "Legal English and Plain Language: An Update", *ESP Across Cultures*, 8 (2011), 140.

[20] Pushpinder Syal, *An Introduction to Linguistics. Language, Grammar and Semiotics* (Delhi: PHI Learning, 2007), 3.

[21] Francine Wattman-Frank, "Language Planning, Language Reform and Language Change: A Review of Guidelines of Nonsexist Usage", in Francine Wattman-Frank and Paula Treichler, eds., *Language, Gender and Professional Writing* (New York: The Modern Language Association, 1989), 105.

Ex. 8

(2) The Minister may also approve the substitution of a process that has already been completed for an environmental assessment if **he or she** is satisfied that the conditions under subsection (1) have been met.

Eventually, the main concern of this paragraph is to delve into the main elements of discontinuity emerging from the comparison of the *Environmental Assessment Act* drafted in 2012 and its original version to be dated 1992. Such contrastive study does not merely focus on the unfitting alignment of the features described so far for the *CEAA* of 2012, since they generally are all dependent on the mentioned language modification criteria listed in 1995 and it would thus conduce the paper to an endless play of theatre mirrors reflecting on evident disparities which are not symptomatic of natural linguistic evolutive changes, but to *ad hoc* regulations to be rigorously applied, respected by law, and perfectly schematised in the existing manuals on the matter. Although, the differences that are placed here under the spotlight involve some structural, textual changes along with other terminological (and not only grammatical) finishing touches (see figure 4).

CEAA (1992) S.C. 1992, c. 37	CEAA (2012) S.C. 2012, c. 19, s. 52
Statement of purpose	OMISSION of preamble and purpose
Applicability: projects	Applicability: **designated** projects
Validity: **throughout** environ. assessment	Validity: **during** environ. Assessment (to be completed in a *timely* manner)
Larger Inclusion list regulation, which riquired screening reports for *any* activity	Regulation on physical activities includes agencies allowed to issue licences within the duration of the assessment
Expert-to-Expert communication	De-technified language to be accessed by laymen as well
Assessment report required w/i 12 months	Assessment report required w/i 12 months

Figure 4. Canadian *Environmental Assessment Acts* comparison (1992; 2012)

At first sight, one immediate difference between the two drafts is the alteration of the initial statement of purpose and the following preamble. Indeed, while the Act of 1992 arranged a preliminary sentence in which briefly summarise the aims (see ex. 9) then supported by a further list of considerations, the newest modification of the sanctioning paper appears quite as brief as the original one (see ex. 10), but the extensive and highly informative *whereas clauses* missing mostly generates ambiguity.

Ex. 9

An Act to establish a federal environmental assessment process.

WHEREAS....

NOW, THEREFORE, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows....

Ex. 10

An Act respecting the environmental assessment of certain activities and the prevention of significant adverse environmental effects [Assented to 29th June 2012]....

Where the document dated 1992 specifies the assessment is strictly related to the achievement of sustainable development, the enhancement and promotion of the Canadian economic and environmental quality – portraying the frame into which construe the environmental scenario of the Act –, the latest redraft chooses not to mention that, running up against a mischievous formulation undoubtedly adopting an uncertain adjectival usage ('certain activities') and sending an unclear message. Indeed, while the purpose of the 1992 Act was to 'establish' a federal assessment, the goal of the 2012 version is now to 'respect' the assessment and the prevention of adverse effects evaluations. As a consequence, the texts already diverge in their first statement, having on the one hand an older but proactive document with an authoritarian prestige actually 'doing' something on a matter; on the other hand, a new and improved text which, however, preliminarily declares 'to be attentive' in consideration of some environmental assessment that, instead, should itself utter to be defining.

Moreover, the already described polyrematic 'designated projects' of the *CEAA* of 2012 contrasts with the broader and non-adjectivated noun 'project' of the 1992 version. Such question is tightly connected with interpretation problems, since originally the *CEAA* was thought to be applied to 'any' project involving physical activities and to refuse potential limitations justified by the intervention of extra-governmental organs or agencies, that today play a very important role in taking decisions on appraisals and evaluations. Subsequently, the current Act is less restrictive than in the past, with possible and contingent consequences on the environment and on the impact that authorised activities could have on it.

Similarly, the described applicability penalisation seems to be directly proportional to validity diminishment implications. Despite the fact that the first Act was designed to set a spatial and temporal coverage that would guarantee the integrity of any environment to be preserved 'throughout' the assessment (see ex. 11), the adverb has now long disappeared, supplanted by 'during' (see ex. 12).

Ex. 11

Duties

12.2 The federal environmental assessment coordinator shall ...

   (c) coordinate the involvement throughout the environmental assessment process;

Ex. 12

Authority's reporting duty

72(1) The authority referred to in paragraph (b) of the definition **authority** in section 66 must, each year, report on its activities during the previous year under sections 67 and 69.

On a linguistic level, such modification would lead to interpretations that could actually justify misbehaviours of the Companies exploiting their projects as much as of the Organs of Control, being them urged to assess or operate sporadically while activities are taking place, rather than adopting a constant evaluation of their deeds from the very moment in which the project starts to the utmost and formal end of it. Indeed, while the adverb 'throughout' implied (and it still linguistically does) something to be performed incessantly from a beginning to its complete termination, 'during' involves a less binding linguistic (and thus legal) meaning, where the performance has to be carried out in adherence with a first start and within a deadline, but with possibilities of accomplishing the task intermittently working on it.

Eventually, assessment periods have now almost the same duration they were warranted in 1992 (twelve months). Nonetheless, in the past only governmental authorities could express their opinions on projects affected by assessment operations; oppositely, today projects assessments are open to any comment people directly involved by the activities included would formulate, possibly influencing commissions to take their own decisions on whether authorising the proposals or not. The topic would therefore easily find its very speculative milieu within the Media Discourse context too, as inclusive of "any interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer".[22] Indeed, one peculiar aspect of the CEAA is the fact that every project deemed to undergo the assessment has to be uploaded online for the public perusal through a guided procedure detailed on the Government of Canada website,[23] where citizens could find a registry multimodally reporting information about public participations, external links with regulations and submission procedures, or the possibility to browsing the project list specifically checking activities by reference numbers, scrolling the archive, or even focusing on precise

---

[22] Anna O'Keeffe, "Media and Discourse Analysis", in James P. Gee and Michael Handford, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2011), 441.

[23] Government of Canada, "Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry", https://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/evaluations/?culture=en-CA, accessed 29 July 2018.

geographical areas of Canada via a real time interactive map pinned wherever ongoing initiatives are being carried out. A similar examination would proffer any individuals willing to benefit from the opportunity of expressing their idea the chance to post a public comment, informing readers (both lay audiences and Board members) about possible pros and cons affecting the procedures related to any project waiting for a formal approval. This way, people's reactions constitute an actual environmental sensitization pragmatic corpus of testimonies (lending itself to potential cultural and linguistic surveys) firing up disputes over the eventual (dis-)advantages that the exploitation could lead to. As a matter of fact, the section reports extensive lists of links forwarding users to PDF versions of single comments ranging from three lines long contributions up to one hundred pages reports, all annotated with posting dates and writers' names.[24] Such process, however, easily associating professionals' evaluative procedures or personal opinions with profanes' emotional formulations often driven by ideological and populist motivations –once more– proves the impracticability of the path unifying expert-to-expert and expert-to-laypeople levels of interaction.

This (interferential) appraisal of legal issues would frequently bring to life equivocal and pointless disputes over sensible questions. A similar process of assessment democratisation via narrowing the gap between lay people and State apparatuses, allowing citizens to embrace an active role in evaluating public works and tasks which involve the surrounding milieu they are immersed also required great efforts in terms of linguistic simplification. That would be one of the many reasons behind the Plain Legal Language modifications finally de-technifying and adapting the expressive codes adopted within the described textual classes.

There have been described the main and most relevant disparities occurring on a textual, linguistic and content levels between the first Act of 1992 and its 2012 modification currently in force. Some elements, such as the erasure of Purpose and Preamble statements are peculiar of redrafting procedures, tending to amend, abrogate or repeal unnecessary parts of old legal materials (such as superfluous or redundant sections; forfeiture of specific articles due to law renovations; etc.), in order to streamline documents and create fitting and up-to-date versions in accordance with social and legal system changes in time. Some other assets of Legal Discourse have been conversely inserted to specifically outcome adequate alterations of archaic and much patriarchal linguistic heritages involving the consolidation of masculine reference usages for both singular and plural forms implicitly inclusive of the feminine gender, this latter being lately declared to be clearly mentioned wherever neutral pronominal and adjectival particles are not possible. Such modifications are, indeed, flanked by other interventions necessary for changing more obsolete usages, such as the utter substitution of the original

---

[24] Government of Canada, "Public Participation Opportunities during an Environmental Assessment", https://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/evaluations/Participation?Type=1&culture=en-CA, accessed 29 July 2018.

modal 'shall' (which however, in the *CEAA* of 1992 counted none other than one hundred and seventy-three occurrences) with its tweaked equivalent 'must', less formal but certainly as imperative as the former verb. Nonetheless, similar overturns regarding the replacement of some outdated terminology to be given up to some other could eventually unbalance the linguistic significance and the legal applicability of Acts like the one described in this paper, for merely pursuing the aim of a complete understandability by the entire public of users mustering at the same time the highest and lowest levels of competence and expertise on the matter. As a consequence, the abuse of Plain Language adaptations and de-technification procedures would happen at expense of Specialised Discourses expressibility and communicativeness, which intricacy is not a perverse linguistic trick, but the result of extremely careful and studied conveyance of specific monoreferential meanings expressly coined to avoid possible cases of ambiguity and interpretation uncertainties in crucial situations (such as the legal one) which are instead likely to occur then.

3. Conclusions

In consideration of the issues signalled in this paper it would be possible to narrow down a few interesting facts which have emerged so far. Starting from a contextualised perspective, it would be easy to guess the reason why Environmentalism is one burning problem in Canada (the Country hosting nine percent of the world's forests and counting three hundred and forty-seven million hectares),[25] rooted way back in the past, to arrive to the best known events ranging from the early 1990s 'War in the Woods' driven by Clayoquot Sound and British Columbia demonstrations against the formerly consolidated clearcutting and logging practices – a protest then recognised as the "largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history" – or the anti-nuclear movements risen up in the first decade of the nineteenth century.[26] Thus the sensitization levels which peaked in 2013, when statistics revealed almost eighty-five percent of Canadians households have parks or green areas close home, along with modernised spending reviews and statutes on environmental protection.[27]

A consequential point would involve the idiosyncrasies putting such attentive inner approaches to contrast with International Policies that, if on the one hand allow Canada to take responsible advantage of its resources to be traded all over the world, on the other hand they also enslave and force it to

---

[25] Government of Canada, "How Much Forest Does Canada Have?", https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/forests/report/area/17601, accessed 16 July 2018.

[26] Peter Grant, "Clayoquot Sound", *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (2010), https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/clayoquot-sound, accessed 16 July 2018.

[27] Statistics Canada, "Environment Fact Sheets", https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/16-508-X, accessed 16 July 2018.

undergo conditions limiting its powers in terms of environmental protection from beyond border polluting actors (e.g. the Canadian vs. U.S. *querelle* of the 'Windsor Hum').

However, the legal implicatures connected to the Environmental applicability are also strictly related to the language and the linguistics adopted to communicate and enact the formulae of the law, which every citizen has to comply with independently from their competence and educational background. Subsequently, it is of course true that the goal of drafting legal documents to be accurately reachable by experts as well as by lay people is noble, and that 'correct' Plain Legal English modifications are without doubt advisable; however, it is also true that the indiscriminate over-use of theoretical simplifications – such as the one that could be launched by the CEAA peculiarity of being accessible via the internet and commentable by anybody – is actually unpracticable and could lead to a final frustration of the Legal (as of any other) Discourse through the making of a hybrid and imperfect code. Hence, in the opinion of this paper, any simplification activities should not directly affect the nature and the denotative linguistics of Specialised Discourses, since the simultaneous reaching of every level of competence through a unique all-inclusive text would just resolve into the flattening of users' proficiency. On the contrary, it could be much of aid to maintain the expert/professional-oriented legal (as well as scientific, medical, etc.) document linguistic essence and level of technification, and then operate divulgation procedures mostly finalised at creating parallel laypeople-targeted textual versions of the originals to be explicatory and exemplified. Instead of annihilating the highest degrees of knowledge and linguistic awareness, the use of Plain Legal English strategies could be used to lecture and increase the linguistic competences of citizens according to bottom-up perspectives, rather than up-to bottom drops.

Furthermore, running on the silver thread of the countless cultural, linguistic and social problems deriving from the situation described so far, one huge issue related to the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* that can be deduced from its web-based resonance is that it has, ever since 2012, originated public dissatisfaction for its ambiguous, contorted and seemingly partial applicability (and actual application), also causing mistrust and concern in terms of the Provincial, national and international scales. Hence, in accordance with diagnoses inferred by many experts in the field of Law, it should be noted that "in order to modernise the environmental assessment process, tinkering with the existing legislation is not enough",[28] and Canadian citizens are currently demanding a renewed evaluative system redefining a legislative framework which could feasibly approach the future matters with more adequate overtures.

---

[28] Supriya Tandan, "How to Fix Canada's Broken Environmental Assessment Framework", *National: The Power of Perspective*, 2017, http://www.nationalmagazine.ca/Articles/February-2017/How-to-fix-Canada-s-broken-environmental-assessmen.aspx, accessed 29 July 2018.

Stefania D'Avanzo

Popularizing while Implementing EU Legislation on Environmental Issues

Abstract: The aim of this study is to investigate popularization strategies in a corpus of Summaries of EU legislation on environmental issues. In particular, the analysis will be divided into two steps. The first step will include the investigation of commitment by the EU towards these issues by means of an analysis of the contextual features of the word 'environment' in the corpus under scrutiny. The second step, instead, will be aimed at comparing the summaries with their source legal texts in order to focus on the strategies employed to 'reformulate' legal concepts for popularising purposes.

Keywords: *popularization, environmental legislation, reformulation, EU Commitment*

1 Introduction

Environment is one of the top priorities of the European Union. As can be read on the European portal, "the EU and national governments have set clear objectives to guide European environment policy until 2020 and a vision beyond that, of where to be by 2050, with the support of dedicated research programmes, legislation and funding".[1] From a legal perspective, the EU is committed to ensuring the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement and implementing the EU's Emissions Trading System (EU ETS). In this regard, EU countries have agreed to meet various targets in the years to come. EU environment policy is based on Articles 11 and 191-193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Under Article 191, combating climate change is an explicit objective of EU environmental policy. Sustainable development is an overarching objective for the EU, which is committed to a 'high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment' (Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union).

Starting from this assumption, the study is aimed at investigating a corpus of Summaries of EU legislation concerning environmental issues. The final goal will be to focus on the strategies employed by the EU to disseminate legal concepts concerning environment but also to analyse the EU

---

[1] European Union, "Environment", https://europa.eu/european-union/topics/environment_en, accessed 20 March 2018.

'viewpoint' concerning this issue. Thus, methodology will imply some different perspectives (see Sections 2, 3)

2. Corpus and Aims

The corpus under scrutiny includes Summaries of EU legislation on environmental issues from 2000 to 2017. The Summaries are part of EU legislation published on the EU portal. They are aimed at disseminating legal knowledge on different issues, such as Agriculture, Economic and monetary affairs, Enterprise, external trade, etc.

Summaries can be subsumed as a popularization genre.[2] The latter is usually addressed to non-specialists as its function is mainly informative in disseminating specialized knowledge. In particular, innovative knowledge, target audience and purposes are listed among the main features that characterize popularization.[3] Thus, Summaries are aimed to disseminate knowledge and redefine the message of the source text addressed to a wider audience. More specifically, they are expected to be primarily informative through the use of a language close to everyday life in dealing with specialized topics.[4] A distinction concerning the popularized text could be made between 'appropriate semplification' and 'distortion'.[5] In particular, simplifying information means selecting materials from a source text into a popularizing one. A distorted popularization, instead, relies on oversimplification and adulteration of the original knowledge. For all these reasons, popularization can be compared to the translation process, as it implies derivation from a source text, thus requiring a transformation process from a source text into a target text. In particular, the processes of redrafting and remodelling are implicit in popularization.[6] Notwithstanding, redrafting can be found to be accountable for generating an imperfect equivalence of the source text resulting from moving 'from one system of discourse to another'[7]. Thus, the study is aimed at focussing both on possible distortion and exhaustiveness of legal information concerning some environmental issues when it is disseminated through the EU portal. Exhaustiveness will be intended here as appropriateness and completeness of

---

[2] Vanda Polese and Stefania D'Avanzo, "Popularization and Dissemination of Legal Knowledge in EU Summaries of Directives on Immigration", in Giuditta Caliendo and Giancarmine Bongo, eds., *The Language of Popularization: Theoretical and Descriptive Models*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 191-220.

[3] Maurizio Gotti, *Specialized Discourse: Linguistic Features and Changing Conventions* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003).

[4] Ibid.

[5] Stephen Hilgartner, "The Dominant View of Popularization: Conceptual Problems, Political Uses", *Social Studies of Science,* 20 (1990), 519–539.

[6] Gotti, *Specialized Discourse*.

[7] Richard D. Whitley, "Knowledge Producers and Knowledge Acquirers: Popularisation as a Relation between Scientific Fields and Their Publics", in Terry Shinn and Richard Whitley, eds., *Expository Science: Forms and Functions of Popularisation, Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook*, Volume 9 (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1985), 3-28.

legal information when it is 'recontextualized' from the original legal texts into their Summaries. In short, the latter will be analysed in contrast with their original legal texts in order to focus on the strategies employed to disseminate legal knowledge. Furthermore, the EU 'viewpoint' concerning environmental issues will be analysed thanks to the investigation of the immediate co-text of some key words. In particular, corpus based approach will allow to focus on some contextual features of words and phrases concerning environment with the final goal of analysing discursive practices employed by the EU when dealing with this issue (see Section 3).

Thus, the study will try to answer two main research question: 1) What are the discoursal strategies employed by the EU when dealing with environmental issues? 2) Is the audience exhaustively informed about EU Environmental legislation?

3. Methodological Framework

The study is based on a twofold methodology corresponding to the two main aims illustrated above (See Section 2). In particular, corpus based approach will help to analyse patterns of language co-occurring in the popularized legal discourse concerning environmental issues.[8] More specifically, clusters and concordance lines will be used to focus on the immediate co-text of some key-words in the corpus under scrutiny. Then, the co-text of the key words investigated will be analysed in terms of 'semantic preference', intended as the relation between a word form and a set of semantically related words.[9]

The second step of the analysis will be based, instead, on some theoretical approaches and studies concerning popularization discourse.[10] In popularization discourse, purpose and target audience have revealed to be fundamental in demarcating a specialized text from a popularized one.[11] In particular, purpose has appeared to be prominent in the Summaries investigated. More specifically, the function of the summaries is mainly informative as some legal information is spread through the EU portal in order to inform the wider audience about legal provisions enacted by the European Union. Thus, no legal obligation is imposed on citizens through the Summaries as they are only informed about provisions legally adopted by the E U concerning some different issues. As asserted in Section 2, a controversial

---

[8] Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: London Continuum, 2006).

[9] Michael Stubbs, *Words and Phrases: Corpus Studies of Lexical Semantics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2001).

[10] Gouimar Ciapuscio, "Formulation and Reformulation Procedures in Verbal Interactions between Experts and (Semi-) Laypersons", *Discourse Studies*, 5.2 (2003), 207-233; Helena Calsamiglia and Teun van Dijk, "Popularization Discourse and Knowledge", *Discourse and Society* 15.4 (2004), 369-389; Jan Engberg, et al., eds., *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation in the Law* (Zürich: Lit Verlag, 2018); Srikant Sarangi, "Rethinking Recontextualization in Professional Discourse Studies: An Epilogue", *Text*, 2 (1998), 301-318.

[11] Polese and D'Avanzo, "Popularization and Dissemination".

point is often implicit in popularization discourse, as it is often challenging to distinguish distorted information from the simplified one. In particular, even in the case of appropriate simplification, the popularized knowledge is somehow deprived of the purity of the original causing the boundary between appropriate simplification and distortion to be ambiguous and flexible as it appears to depend on context as well as on the communicative purpose.[12]

Thus, in the study, possible simplification of legal concepts expected in the Summaries will be discussed in terms of presence or absence of distortion of information.

4. Contextual Features of 'Environment'

The first step of the analysis coincides with the investigation of the immediate co-text of the word 'environment' in the summaries mentioned above. The corpus of Summaries includes 15409 word tokens. In Table 1, a selection of clusters of the word 'environment' has been provided:

Rank	Frequency	Range	Cluster
1	6	3	environment action
2	5	5	environment and
3	4	2	environment policy
4	4	3	environment. The
5	3	2	environment (oj
6	3	2	environment of
7	2	2	environment what
8	2	1	environment \x
9	2	2	environment adequate
Total No. of Cluster Types: 51			
#Total No. of Cluster Tokens: 78			

Table 1. Clusters co-occurring with 'environment' sorted by frequency

.

As can be observed from the data above, EU 'action' is one of the fundamental aspects related to the environmental issue in the Summaries. The phrase 'environment action' as the first-word cluster reveals the EU's commitment to safeguarding environment. Thus, in order to verify this assumptions, some selected significant concordance lines of the word 'environment' have been provided:

---

[12] Ibid.

○	1	2007 Environment Policy Review The 2007 Environment Policy Review 2007 environment policy revie
○	2	al marine knowledge system. **Establishing** a common environment for marine data Obtaining data crossing M
○	3	depends on **the creation** of a common environment. This environment should incorporate the followin
○	4	data of activities that could affect the environment; authorisations which could have a significant im
○	5	data of activities that could affect the environment \x97 authorisations given which could affect the
○	6	\x97 authorisations given which could affect the environment \x97 environmental impact studies and risk asses 2
○	7	articipation in **decision-making** which affects the environment; extending the conditions of access to justice
○	8	articipation in **decision-making** which affects the environment; extending the conditions of access to justice
○	9	nt, soil, pesticides, natural resources and urban environment) and the accompanying legislative proposals have
○	10	of public health, consumer safety and the environment (C (2015) 5383 final, 7.8.2015) last update 23.01
○	11	greater consistency in **implementing and applying** environment legislation in the Member States. This recommend
○	12	of public health, consumer safety and the environment WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE DECISION?
○	13	ring and declaring greenhouse gas emissions. The environment in other policies Integration of the environme
○	14	the **creation of** a common environment. This environment should incorporate the following elements: from
○	15	exploit business opportunities in the field of environment and energy. Acting on a global scale
○	16	, including LIFE+, the Thematic programme for the environment and the sustainable management of natural reso

Table 2. Concordances lines of the word 'environment'

If we refer to Habermas' distinction between 'communicative' and 'strategic action',[13] it is possible to assert that the interaction is here oriented to arriving at understanding and conveying the EU's attitude towards the Environmental policy and legislation rather than to getting results in terms of audience involvement.

As can be observed from the selected concordance lines above, action verbs related to legal discourse are frequently found co-occurring with the word 'environment' (establishing, implementing, decision making, applying, etc.). 'Action verbs' have been explored in popularization studies where they have been included in the category of 'Directives'. The latter being considered as a category implying three main acts used to involve the audience: textual acts, physical acts, cognitive acts.[14] Textual acts are used to guide the readers through discussion, whereas, physical acts instruct readers how to carry out research processes. Finally, cognitive acts get the readers to understand a point in a certain way and are "… potentially the most threatening type of directives".[15] Action verbs have also been analysed in studies concerning popularization of legal discourse where their use was explored in order to focus on the interactional metadiscourse found in some examples from Popularization of family Law.[16] Notwithstanding, action verbs related to legal concepts seem to be used differently in this study as no element related to the interactional dimension is found due to the informative function of the Summaries rather than the interactional metadiscourse traditionally implicit in popularization studies. In order to verify this assumption, the co-text of these verbs is further explored in the examples 1, 2, and 3:

---

[13] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and Rationalization of Society*, Volume 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

[14] Ken Hyland, "Directives: Power and Engagement in Academic Writing", *Applied Linguistics*, 23.2 (2002), 215-239.

[15] Hyland, "Stance and Engagement: A Model of Interaction in Academic Discourse", *Discourse Studies*, 7.2 (2005), 173-192.

[16] Engberg, et al., *Popularization.*

Ex. 1

the European Parliament and the Council stressed the need to fix criteria and/or minimum guidelines for inspections performed in Member States and possible ways to enable Member States to supervise their implementation. This would foster greater consistency **in implementing and applying** environment legislation in the Member States (*Summary of Recommendation*, 2001/331/EC).

As can be observed in (1) above, the two verbs 'implementing' and 'applying' are referred to environmental legislation which could be 'implemented' and 'applied' if some criteria and guidelines concerning inspections and supervision are adopted. The employment of these two verbs in (1) could be interpreted in terms of semantic preference,[17] which "… describes a phenomenon whereby a particular item x collocates frequently, not with another item y, but with a series of items which belong to a semantic set".[18] Both of the verbs are referred to the semantic field of commitment, which includes some legal actions by the EU in favour of environment.

In (2) below, instead, agents responsible for implementing legislation are clearly expressed:

Ex. 2

The 7th EAP entered into force in January 2014.

It is now up to the EU institutions and the Member States to **ensure** that it is **implemented**, and that the priority objectives set out are met by 2020 (*Summary of Environment Action Programme*, 2014-2020)

In (2), 'implemented' is referred to Environment Action Programme (EAP), which is aimed at guiding European Environment policy until 2020. In the programme, three main objectives are identified, that is, to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital; to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green, and competitive low-carbon economy; to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and wellbeing. In the example above, responsibility for the implementation of the programme is explicitly applied to EU institutions and Member States. In particular, agency is here reinforced as it is 'anticipated' in an 'it- cleft' structure (e.g. *It is now up to the EU institutions and the Member States*). Thus, its explicitation represents here explicit commitment by the EU to implement EAP.

---

[17] Stubbs, *Words and Phrases*; Alan Partington, "'Utterly Content in Each Other's Company': Semantic Prosody and Semantic Preference", *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 9.1 (2004), 131-156.

[18] Ibid, 150.

In the following example, instead, action verbs are referred to actions involving both the EU and the Arctic population:

Ex. 3

To help the Arctic population to **develop** an ambitious climate adaptation policy, the EU **is ready to work** together with Arctic countries, their local populations and indigenous communities to (*Summary of Joint Communication,* 2016) .

As can be noticed in (3), the EU is committing to help the Arctic population, as it is 'ready' to cooperate with them. In particular, the EU seems to promise immediacy in its intervention among the local populations and communities.

In short, in all the examples above, the verbs adopted all deal with commitment as they related to legal and political actions adopted by the EU order to improve and guarantee environmental rights to EU citizen.

Thus, coming back to distinction concerning some different types of 'acts' in popularization discourse, these verbs seem to be responsible for 'cognitive acts', as they get the readers to understand environmental issues as some of the EU top priorities.

5. Summaries vs. Legal Provisions

In order to try to answer the second research question – is the audience exhaustively informed about EU Environmental legislation? – the Summaries have been 'compared' to their source legal texts with the aim to better focus on possible reformulation procedures adopted by the EU to disseminate legal knowledge to a wider audience. In the following example, an extract of Regulation (EC) No 1367/2006 (4a) has been investigated in relation to its summary (4b):

Ex. 4a

The objective of this Regulation is to contribute to the implementation of the obligations arising under the UNECE Convention on Access to Information   by laying down rules to apply the provisions of the Convention to Community institutions and bodies, in particular by:

 guaranteeing the right of public access to environmental information received or produced by Community institutions or bodies and held by them, and by setting out the basic terms and conditions of, and practical arrangements for, the exercise of that right (*Regulation, EC,* No 1367/2006)

Ex. 4b

EU institutions and bodies must:

guarantee the public access to environmental information they receive or produce (*Summary of Regulation*, *EC,* No 1367/2006).

As can be observed in the Summary above, no reference to the type of obligations has been made. As a matter of fact, in the source text obligations have been specified (e.g. obligations arising under the UNECE Convention on Access to Information). Conversely, in the Summary, they are not mentioned at all. Furthermore, in the Regulation, the institutions where the information is held are further specified (e.g. *environmental information received or produced by **Community institutions** or **bodies and held by them***) whereas they are not found in the corresponding summary. In short, in the latter, the obligation is clearly expressed through a very simple syntactic structure following the pattern: Agents responsible for the obligations+verbal phrase (including *must*)+direct object (the right to be implemented).

In the instances 5a) and 5b) below, an extract of the Summary of Directive 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information has been examined and compared to the original provision:

Ex. 5a

Access to environmental information upon request

1. Member States shall ensure that public authorities are required, in accordance with the provisions of this Directive, to make available environmental information held by or for them to any applicant at his request and without his having to state an interest (*Directive* 2003/4/EC on public access to environmental information, art.3)

Ex. 5b

Public authorities must make available any environmental information they possess to an applicant without the person having to state a reason. (*Summary of Directive* 2003/4/EC)

If the extracts 5a) and 5b) are compared, it is possible to notice that some legal procedures and the institutions involved in them mentioned in the source text (e.g. *Member States shall ensure that public authorities are required, in accordance with the provisions of this Directive, to make available environmental information*) are not included in the summary. On the contrary, a structure similar to the one found in the previous Summary (Agents responsible for the obligations+verbal phrase (including must) + direct object (the right to be implemented) is found. In this case, the right is represented by with the availability of the information provided by public authorities.

In the following examples, avoidance and simplification in the Summaries concern the dissemination of environmental information:

> Ex. 6a
>
> ensuring that environmental information is progressively made available and disseminated to the public in order to achieve its widest possible systematic availability and dissemination. To that end, the use, in particular, of computer telecommunication and/or electronic technology, where available, shall be promoted (*Regulation, EC,* No 1367/2006)

> Ex. 6b
>
> ensure that environmental information is progressively made available and disseminated to the public (*Summary of Regulation, EC,* No 1367/2006)

In the instance (6b), the EU's final aim of providing the 'widest possible availability and dissemination' of environmental information has been omitted.

In the next instance, instead, omission concerns legal procedures and legislation:

> Ex. 7a
>
> 2. For the purposes of this recommendation, "environmental inspection" is an activity which entails, as appropriate:
>
> (a) checking and promoting the compliance of controlled installations with relevant environmental requirements set out in Community legislation as transposed into national legislation or applied in the national legal order (referred to hereinafter as "EC legal requirements");
>
> (b) monitoring the impact of controlled installations on the environment to determine whether further inspection or enforcement action (including issuing, modification or revocation of any authorisation, permit or licence) is required to secure compliance with EC legal requirements; (*Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council*, 4/04/2001)

> Ex. 7b
>
> Inspection entails the following:
>
> checking that installations comply with EU environmental requirements;
>
> monitoring the impact of installations on the environment.
>
> (*Summary of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council*, 4/04/2001)

As asserted above, in 7b) omission is related to legal procedures (*requirements set out in Community legislation as transposed into national legislation or but also applied in the national legal order*) but also to specification of further enforcement actions probably needed in the impact of installations on the environment.

In short, in all the examples above, the phenomena of "exemplification" and "reformulations" can be observed as some concepts have been omitted or paraphrased using some recurrent patterns.[19] In particular, omission mainly concerns legal procedures or provisions which are not mentioned in the Summaries. Thus, only partial information concerning legal environmental issues is conveyed to the wider audience. This outcome is consistent with previous studies where Summaries of legislation concerning migrants' rights were investigated.[20] As a matter of fact, in these studies, 'omission' seemed to be the most relevant practice.

In short, in the study, both reformulation and omission practices have been employed in order to make legal information easier to be understood by a wider audience.

Coming back to the initial differentiation between simplification and distortion, it is possible to infer that avoidance of some information related to legal procedures or motivations of the EU legal actions could surely be considered as distorted messages communicated to a non-expert audience. As a matter of fact, the latter is not exhaustively informed about legal procedure. Furthermore, reformulation concerning more explicitness of agents responsible for legal actions in the Summaries may convey more certainty concerning actual implementation of environmental rights as responsibility is clearly expressed and attributed to authorities and Institutions.

6. Concluding Remarks

In order to draw some conclusions, the initial two research questions will be addressed. As far as the first research question is concerned – what are the discourse strategies employed by the EU when dealing with environmental issues? – it is possible to assert that commitment by the European Union in favour of environmental rights seems to be conveyed through the Summaries. In particular, the audience is surely informed about the positive attitude of the EU towards the future improvement of environmental legislation and policy. As far as the second research question is concerned – is the audience exhaustively informed about EU environmental legislation? – it can be stated that two main popularization procedures have been employed, including omission and reformulation in terms of

---

[19] Calsamiglia and van Dijk, "Popularization Discourse".

[20] D'Avanzo, "European Summaries of Directives on Asylum: Changes in Institutional Discourse", in Srikant Sarangi et al., *Genre(s) on the Move: Hybridization and Discourse Change in Specialized Communication* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2011), 87-97; Polese and D'Avanzo, "Popularization and Dissemination".

paraphrasing. The wider audience is only partially informed about legal actions on environmental issues.

More specifically, exhaustiveness of legal information is not guaranteed at all as omissions concerning motivations related to some legal actions are found along with omissions referred to some legislative provisions and implementation procedures. Moreover, reformulations in terms of adoption of different syntactic structures seem to be responsible for distortion of information as institutions and authorities are clearly mentioned in the Summaries as directly liable for implementation of environmental rights. On the contrary, in the source text, Member States, rather than institutions and local authorities are responsible for respect of the same rights.

Sole Alba Zollo

Human Rights Discourse and the Environment.
Empowering Young Generations through Old and New Media

Abstract: Over the past decade, it has become more and more important for international organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe (COE) to bridge the knowledge gap between experts and laypeople in order to open a debate about environmental protection as a fundamental human right. By using different media, in particular the Internet, the two organisations have been generating a variety of informative materials in a form that can be easily understood by non-expert citizens, particularly the young generations, to mitigate conflicts and legal disputes and foster a multidirectional dialogue on sensitive issues such as the promotion of a sustainable environment framework.

Following the tradition of Social Semiotics and research on Positive Discourse Analysis, this study has analysed a range of different resources related to the environment available on the EU's and COE's websites, aimed at explaining citizens the two institutions' policies in an understandable and attractive way. The analysis has tried to detect the main verbal and visual discursive strategies of knowledge communication and dissemination in order to communicate the institutional/legal discourse on environmental protection and human rights to non-specialists and develop eco-friendly consciousness, especially among the young.

Keywords: *human rights, environment, legal/institutional discourse, genre hybridisation, positive multimodal discourse analysis*

1. Introduction: The Interrelationship between Human Rights and the Environment

In the last years, the issue of environmental rights has risen rapidly up the political agenda of most countries. Human rights and environmental protection are no longer considered separate matters, but they are interdependent and choices made by governments on environmental challenges affect directly human rights.

The link between human rights and the environment has long been recognised. In 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment pointed out the direct relationship between the environment and the right to life. The Preamble of the Declaration stated that:

> Man is both creature and moulder of his environment, which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth.… Both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man-made, are essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights – even the right to life itself. [1]

In addition, Principle 1 of the Declaration established a further foundation for linking human rights and environmental protection, declaring that: "Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being".[2] In 1982 the World Charter for Nature acknowledged that "Mankind is a part of nature and life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients".[3] Ten years later, in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (also known as the Earth Summit) stated that "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature".[4] The Declaration also provided for the right of access to environmental information and of public participation in environmental decision-making. In addition, the UN Human Rights Commission adopted several resolutions linking human rights and the environment, such as Res. 2005/60 entitled "Human Rights and the Environment as Part of Sustainable Development". The resolution called on states "to take all necessary measures to protect the legitimate exercise of everyone's human rights when promoting environmental protection and sustainable development".[5] It emphasised the needs of the vulnerable members of society and also encouraged efforts towards the implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The Aarhus Convention (1998) established a number of rights of the public (individuals and their associations) with regard to the environment. The Convention provided for the right of everyone to have access to environmental information held by governments/states, to participate in decision-making and have access to justice. This means that governments are obliged to disseminate information on environmental issues and citizens can comment on projects or plans related to the environment and review legal procedures and challenge public decisions.

---

[1] United Nations, "Report on the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" (Stockholm, 1972), 3, http://www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf, accessed 25 March 2018.

[2] Ibid., 4.

[3] UN General Assembly, "World Charter for Nature" (New York, 1982), 17, available at https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/39295 , accessed 25 March 2018.

[4] United Nations, "Rio Declaration on Environment and Development" (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), 1, available at http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/RIO_E.PDF, accessed 25 March 2018.

[5] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "*Human Rights Resolution 2005/60: Human Rights and the Environment as Part of Sustainable Development"* (UN Commission on Human Rights, 2005), 2, https://www.refworld.org/docid/45377c759.html, accessed 25 March 2018.

Over the past few years, the number of international and domestic laws, and academic studies on the interconnection between human rights and the environment has grown rapidly, stressing the importance of procedural rights such as easier access to information and public participation in decision making.[6] As a result, it has become increasingly important for large institutions such as the Council of Europe (COE) and the European Union (EU) to bridge the knowledge gap between experts and laypeople in order to open a debate on environmental protection as a fundamental human right. By using different media, in particular the Internet, the two organisations have been designing different informative materials in a form that can be easily understood by non-expert citizens, in particular younger generations, in order to foster a multidirectional dialogue on sensitive issues such as the promotion of a sustainable environment framework.

2. Data and Research Questions

The analysis has been conducted on a corpus collected from *Compass* and *Teachers' Corner*, the COE's and EU's websites respectively, which contain a wide range of informative resources aimed at describing the two institutions' policies in an understandable and attractive way to young generations both in formal and non-formal education contexts.

Compass – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People was first published in 2002 within the framework of the Human Rights Education Youth Programme of the Directorate of Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe. The programme was created because human rights education is considered of incalculable value in shaping a dimension of democratic citizenship for all young people and in promoting a culture of universal human rights. This study has focused on the Main Page "human rights and the environment" and the pages called "Related Activities" (3 things, beware we are watching, fingers and thumbs, front page, Makah whaling, our futures, tale of two cities, web of life).[7]

The *Teachers' Corner* is a webpage that contains many resources (online games, brochures, booklets, comics, and picture books) aimed at explaining the European Union and its policies to students of different age groups. For this study two booklets addressed to adolescents and young adults

---

[6] Marc Pallemaerts and Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, *Human Rights and the Environment* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2002); Donald K. Anton and Dinah L. Shelton, eds., *Environmental Protection and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2011).

[7] Council of Europe, "Human Rights and the Environment" (2018), https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/environment, accessed 25 March 2018.

were investigated, specifically "Our Planet, our Future"[8] and "The EU and energy union and climate action".[9]

The main objective of this research is to detect the main discursive strategies of knowledge dissemination across different genres in order to communicate institutional/legal discourse on environmental protection and human rights to non-specialists and develop eco-friendly consciousness, especially among the young.[10] In particular, the analysis will focus on how specialised discourses – institutional, political and legal – are "translated" for the computer screen and how different modes (words, pictures, colours, typography etc.) are produced and re-produced, particularly for younger generations. In addition, by bringing to light the intertextual and interdiscursive elements which come out of the linguistic and semiotic investigation, this research explores how the EU and COE environmental policies and procedures are recontextualised in the different educational resources. The investigation of the interaction and combination of different modes allows us to verify whether the transfer from legal/institutional language to popularising texts involves any contamination in discursive practices, thus leading to the birth of new text-types, which can help mitigate environmental conflicts and legal debates.

3. From Critical Linguistics to Multimodal Positive Discourse Analysis

In the late 1970s a new approach to the study of language was born in the UK. Roger Fowler and his colleagues at the University of East Anglia coined the term Critical Linguistics.[11] The main concern of this approach was to "demonstrate that grammatical and semantic forms can be used as ideological instruments to make meaning in texts and to categorize and classify things, people and events".[12] Focusing on grammatical features and vocabulary choices one of its central purposes was to reveal biases and points of view that were hidden in texts such as newspaper articles and schoolbooks. For example, one area of investigation was agency, that is how grammatical features determine participants' responsibility, and who has control over communicative events. One of the limitations of

---

[8] European Commission, "Our Planet, Our Future" (2018), https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/youth_en, accessed 25 March 2018.

[9] European Commission, "The EU and Energy Union and Climate Action", http://publications.europa.eu/webpub/com/factsheets/energy/en, accessed 25 March 2018.

[10] Guiomar E. Ciapuscio, "Formulation and Reformulation Procedures in Verbal Interactions between Experts and (Semi) Laypersons", *Discourse Studies*, 5.2 (2003), 207-233; Helena Calsamiglia and Teun A. van Dijk, "Popularization Discourse and Knowledge about the Genome", *Discourse and Society,* 15.4 (2004), 369-389; Vijay K. Bhatia, et al., eds., *Variations in Specialized Genres: Standardization and Popularization* (Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto Verlag, 2015).

[11] Roger Fowler, et al., eds., *Language and Control* (London: Routledge, 1979); Gunther Kress and Robert Hodge, *Language as Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1979).

[12] Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayr, *Language and Power*: *A Resource Book for Students* (London: Routledge, 2010), 50.

Critical Linguistics mentioned by Fairclough is that the relationship between language, power and ideology has been too narrowly elaborated, since the whole narrative structure of a text is not taken into account in order to identify ideological implications.[13] Moreover, texts are mainly seen as products without looking at their productive and interpretative processes. Consequently, a theory of language as a social practice was elaborated which has become known as Critical Discourse Analysis. It mainly focuses on "the social and ideological functions of language in producing, reproducing or changing social structures, relations and identities moving away from the investigation of decontextualised texts to identify the sociocultural aspects that lie behind the production of texts.[14] Including many aspects of Critical Linguistics, CDA's main purpose is to critically investigate the so-called 'unequal encounters' such as political speeches and interviews, news texts, advertising, doctor-patient interactions, job interviews etc. in order to unveil ideologies and how power structures are built through discourse. Texts do not occur in isolation. Other texts (intertextuality) and other discourses (interdiscursivity) are weaved within them. CDA aims at deconstructing power inequalities in those texts that could lead to discrimination in some areas such as class, gender, race and recently, with the rise of ecolinguistics, the environment. Since discourse is a tool of power and control, CDA investigates how discriminatory values are mediated through language. "Critical Discourse Analysis is essentially political in intent with its practitioners acting upon the world in order to transform it and thereby create a world where people are not discriminated against because of sex, colour, creed, age or social class'".[15]

In 2004 Martin suggests a complementary perspective on language and semiosis which he refers to as Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA). Through an analysis of genre renovation, evaluative language and narrative in the context of post-colonial relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, Martin argues that deconstructive and constructive activities are both necessary in order to reconsider power and how communities renovate discourses that enact a better world rather than focusing on social processes which disempower and oppress. In other words, PDA "analyses the discourse we like rather than the discourse we wish to criticize".[16] Instead of highlighting injustices, this approach aims at identifying and promoting alternatives. It is rooted in CDA that critically looks at how the language system can be used by dominating groups to maintain their power in society but it goes beyond it to detect discourses that can be effective in encouraging the change we desire to see.

---

[13] Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992).

[14] Simpson and Mayr, *Language and Power*, 50.

[15] Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard, eds., *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 1996), vi.

[16] Felicitas Macgilchrist, "Positive Discourse Analysis: Contesting Dominant Discourses by Reframing the Issues", *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 1.1 (2007), 74-94, 74.

According to Bartlett, CDA has been criticised because of its tendency to solve problems by removing the negative rather than promoting positive alternative voices.[17] "Much work has focused on the negative, such as highlighting the propagation of sexist and racist stereotypes in the press or cataloguing the detrimental effects of marketisation on education, while much less attention has been paid to addressing such problems and seeking practical solutions".[18]

PDA aims to look for positive uses of language in order to provide alternatives to what scholars perceive as negative or damaging dominant discourses. Ecolinguistics usually focuses on negative critique, illustrating the mainstream negative discourses on unsustainable societies and ecologically destructive attitudes. For Stibbe it is useless to present the problems without suggesting new discourses that "promote *being more* rather than *having more*, well-being rather than growth and respecting rather than conquering nature".[19] Positive Discourse Analysis within ecolinguistics can help "identify the linguistic patterns from positive discourses that inspire respect and care for the natural world and make them available to those who want to adjust their language to better address ecological issues".[20] Analysing positive discourses can help identify linguistic patterns that can encourage human beings to care about and protect the environment.

> Positive Discourse Analysis is a search for new ways of using language that tell very different stories from those of the current industrial civilization – stories that can encourage us to protect the ecosystems that life depends on and build more socially just societies. New stories are needed to provide alternatives to current stories of consumerism, technological progress, economic growth, the mastery of nature and other dominant ways of conceiving the world that contribute to ecological destruction.[21]

Several scholars have recognised the potential of PDA in different fields, from politics to education.[22] More recently, Hughes proposes Progressive Discourse Analysis as an alternative to Positive

---

[17] Tom Bartlett, "Towards Intervention in Positive Discourse Analysis", in Caroline Coffin, et al., eds., *Applied Linguistics Methods: A Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 133-147; Tom Bartlett, *Hybrid Voices and Collaborative Change: Contextualising Positive Discourse Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

[18] Bartlett, "Towards Intervention", 137.

[19] Arran Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics: Language, Ecology and the Stories We Live By* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Stibbe, "Positive Discourse Analysis Rethinking Human Ecological Relationships", in F. Fill Alwin and Penz Hermine, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Ecolinguistics* (London: Routledge, 2017), 309-335, 309.

[20] Stibbe, "Positive Discourse Analysis", 324.

[21] Ibid., 310.

[22] Macgilchrist and Ellen Van Praet, "Writing the History of the Victors? Discourse, Social Change and (Radical) Democracy", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 12.4 (2013), 626-651; Ting Su, "Positive Discourse Analysis of Xi Jinping's Speech at the National University of Singapore under Appraisal Theory", *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 7.4 (2016), 796–801; Rebecca Rogers and Melissa Mosley Wetzel, "Studying Agency in Literacy Teacher Education: A Layered Approach to Positive Discourse Analysis", *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 10.1 (2013), 62–92.

Discourse Analysis, since positive discourse is concerned with progress toward a better world.[23] She points out that PDA is not an alternative to CDA but a complement to critically analysing discourse and both approaches are aimed at progressive social change. An alternative term may help analysts "grapple more critically with the question of what constitutes 'positive' social change".[24]

My own research concerns exactly what suggested above. I will examine the way the EU and COE talk about environmental issues to the young providing positive clusters of linguistic features as alternatives such as the use of metaphors, pronouns, positive evaluation, narrative etc. I will specifically look at how the institutions mitigate catastrophic consequences through counter-discursive strategies going against the mainstream environment discourse that tends to emphasise the negative consequences of human beings' attitude towards nature and try to raise awareness through "moral panic".

The COE and EU discourses do not include just verbal texts but visuals too and sometimes they function in a reciprocally reinforcing way that makes them complicated to disentangle. The analysis is based on the combination of a Multimodal Discourse Analysis approach and research on Positive Discourse Analysis.[25]

If discourse is the set of social practices which *make meaning*, then many of the texts produced in this process are multi-modal. Some of the major scholars in critical linguistics have more recently extended discourse analysis to include non-linguistic semiotic systems, developing a Social Semiotics.[26] Social Semiotics tries to find ways of investigating visual images and their relationship with language. In fact, Kress and van Leeuwen underline that the study of visual images may contribute to rethinking the theories of language.[27] Social Semiotics focuses on discourse and its context, that is on "the way people use semiotic 'resources' both to produce communicative artifacts and events and to interpret them – which is also a form of semiotic – in the context of specific social situations and practices".[28] Texts are embedded in the contexts in which they function. Context is not something extrinsic to text. Texts themselves may recontextualise meanings and practices in one modality to some other modality. Social semiotics also focuses on productive and interpretative

---

[23] Jessica M. F. Hughes, "Progressing Positive Discourse Analysis and/in Critical Discourse Studies: Reconstructing Resistance through Progressive Discourse Analysis", *Review of Communication*, 18.3 (2018), 193-211.

[24] Ibid., 198.

[25] Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (London: Routledge, 1996); Kress and van Leeuwen, *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication* (London: Arnold, 2001); Carey Jewitt, *Technology, Literacy and Learning: A Multimodal Approach* (London: Routledge, 2008); Jim Martin, "Grace: The Logogenesis of Freedom", *Discourse Studies*, 1.1 (1999), 29-56; Martin, "Positive Discourse Analysis: Solidarity and Change", *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 49 (2004), 179-202; Stibbe, "Positive Discourse Analysis".

[26] Hodge and Kress, *Social Semiotics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).

[27] Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images*.

[28] Van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* (London: Routledge, 2005), xi.

practices associated with types of text and the notion of genre has become central as well as the concept of intertextuality.

Multimodal discourse analysis is the study of different semiotic modes in a text or communicative event. It is "the combination of different semiotics modes – for example, language and music – in a communicative artifact or event".[29] A mode is not a rigid concept. New modes are continually being created and existing ones are transformed by their users in response to specific communication needs. Since modes are *inseparably integrated* multimodal discourse analysis aims at investigating in which way meaning is made in all the modes independently and how they work together to create a unified text or communicative event.[30] It is usually believed that words are more important than visuals, but according to multimodal discourse analysts there is not hierarchy but difference.

4. Analysis: Reframing Environmental Conflicts through Education

Compass was first published in 2002 because human rights education is considered fundamental to construct democratic citizens. Thanks to it, human rights education has been brought into the curricula of numerous schools.

Many issues and challenges to human rights have characterised these last years, such as an increase of terrorism, different revolutions such as the Arab Spring, the spread of online hate speech, natural disasters such as the tsunami and the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, and more. For this reason, an updated version was published in 2012 and, another reprint in 2015. Furthermore, it was made available online in order to update information and activities constantly. A website was then devoted to this publication.[31] This hands-on manual introduces human rights education for young people and it is suitable for formal and non-formal educational settings. All the activities can be adapted to any context and offer suggestions to put into action what has been learned. The activities are organised in 20 themes, from poverty, to discrimination, to gender, to peace that can be discussed from a human rights perspective. Among them, one section is devoted to the environment.

The main website page is divided in different sections and one of them is titled "The equity issue" where we find a mixture of negative and positive discourses. Negative discourses are given by the use of negative noun phrases, high modality, repetitions, nominalization, and destruction metaphors. For example, in excerpt 1, the noun phrase "threat" is repeated several times contributing to creating an atmosphere of fear, which is reinforced by premodifiers such as the superlative "the greatest", the

---

[29] Ibid., 281.

[30] Jay L. Lemke, "Travels in Hypermodality", *Visual Communication*, 1.3 (2002), 299-325.

[31] Council of Europe, "Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People", https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/home, accessed 25 March 2018.

adjective "immediate" or modal forms such as the adverb "certainly". The text is full of negative evaluation expressed also by adjectives such as "unfortunate" and adverbs such as "urgently". Moreover, in the first two lines the author's stance is emphasised by the presence of the adverb "undoubtedly" conveying the message that urgent actions are required without any doubt. This text is an example of the conventional discourse that unsustainable industrial societies promote ecologically destructive behaviour reinforced through a list of human beings' irresponsible actions, as a consequence of a consumerist society which treats the nature mechanistically as a resource to be exploited.

> Excerpt 1
>
> Climate change may be the greatest threat to long-term human well-being, and undoubtedly needs to be addressed urgently. However, the focus on climate change can have unfortunate consequences: either other environmental problems such as pollution, over-fishing or urban development are not given sufficient attention, or the impacts of these pressures are attributed to climate change when in fact there are other causes that should be addressed. Threats to coral reefs are a good example. Warmer sea temperatures, rising sea levels and the acidification of the oceans due to climate change are certainly a potential threat to coral reefs and thus to the rights of those people who gain their livelihoods or enjoy leisure activities on them. However, the immediate threats of pollution, sedimentation due to excess run-off as a result of changes in agricultural practices, over fishing of reef fish for food, the collection of fish, snails and coral itself for hobby aquarists, and mining the coral for making cement and road-fill, are a few of the immediate dangers that may destroy the reefs long before the effects of climate change take effect in 70 years.

Next to the abovementioned section, on the left-side of the page, we find two quotations (excerpt 2). One quote is by Ban Ki-moon, South Korean diplomat who was the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations from January 2007 to December 2016, and the other citation is by Andrew Simms, who is author, analyst and co-director of the New Weather Institute and a research associate with the Centre for Global Political Economy at the University of Sussex. The topos of authority is here used not only as a persuasive strategy to endorse the information given by the text but also to underpin the dominant negative discourses of an unsustainable society.

> Excerpt 2
>
> "Climate change is a real threat to international peace and security". Ban Ki-moon
>
> "Beginning from the stroke of New Year, as they sit down to their evening meal on 2 January, a US family will already have used, per person, the equivalent in fossil fuels that a family in Tanzania will depend on for the whole year". Andrew Simms

From a multimodal perspective this negative approach is also mirrored in the visual elements introduced on the webpage. The white and black image (see figure 1) depicts a man driving a car which is releasing a high level of air pollutant emissions.[32] Pollution is here personified. It is shaped as a monster which, like a contemporary Brutus, tries to kill its own father. The image contributes to reinforcing the message of human beings' ecologically destructive behaviour. Paradoxically, even if this text seems to employ common discursive features linked to the dominant negative discourses, we can also notice a slight attempt to fight against this traditional approach. A more detailed analysis reveals some hidden positive features, revealing the ideologies embedded in the whole manual that will become clearer in other sections, in particular in those which describe the Council of Europe's policies on environmental issues. For example, in excerpt 1 the fixed phrase "climate change" occurs five times rather than the more threatening "global warming".[33]
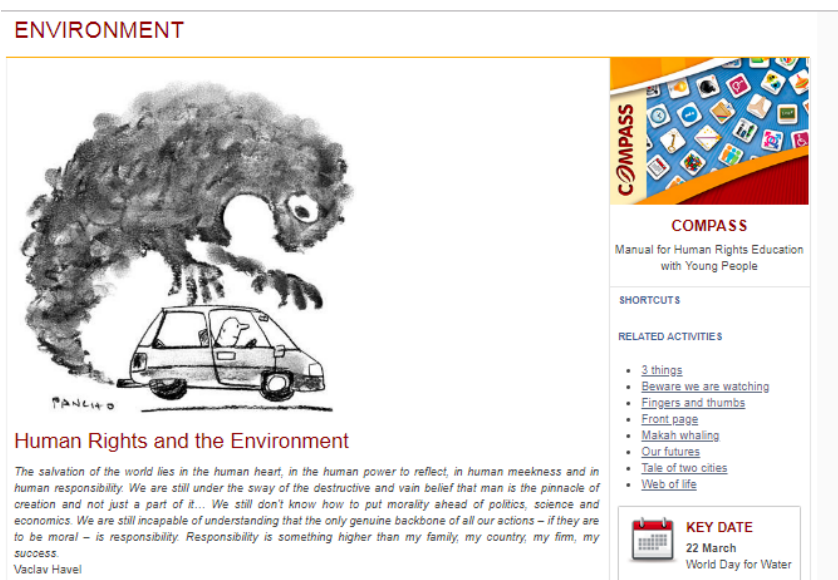

Figure 1. Webpage, "Human Rights and the Environment" (Council of Europe)

Positive discourses are mainly revealed in the section titled "The role of the Council of Europe". Excerpt 3 shows that positive features are expressed by positive noun phrases (development, actions, sustainability, diversity), active verbs, the deontic value of must, and the repetition of the COE as doer. The discourse of preservation and protection is emphasised. Sustainability becomes the keyword and a

---

[32] Council of Europe, "Human Rights and the Environment" (webpage), available at www.coe.int/en/web/compass/environment, accessed 25 March 2018.
[33] Stibbe, *Ecolinguistics*.

kind of motto for the promotion of the institution itself. This text becomes also a promotional text-type in fact it includes many advertising linguistic strategies such as repetitions (sustainable development), positive evaluative expressions (sustainable development, adequate legal environment, outstanding scientific, cultural or aesthetic qualities) and action verbs (to develop, to preserve, to protect) in order to convey a positive and active image of the organisation. It seems that the manual becomes also an instrument of self-legitimation.

> Excerpt 3
>
> The Council of Europe puts sustainable development at the top of its agenda. Its policy is that economic progress must not compromise the key assets of humanity: the quality of the environment and landscapes, human rights and social equity, cultural diversity and democracy. The Council of Europe views climate change as the most serious environmental problem that the world faces today, recognises the implications for human rights and is active on two fronts: preserving natural resources and biodiversity, but also protecting the diversity and vitality of the world's many cultures. The cultural pillar of sustainable development therefore requires parallel efforts to develop a culture of sustainability and to protect cultural diversity.
>
> By its actions, the Council of Europe has helped to shape an adequate legal environment in Europe in favour of biodiversity, spatial planning and landscape management, and sustainable territorial development based on the integrated use of cultural and natural resources. The Council of Europe environment programme launched in 1961 has produced the European Landscape Convention, Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, and the Framework Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society. The Council of Europe also runs The European Diploma of Protected Areas. Created in 1965, it is awarded to protected areas because of their outstanding scientific, cultural or aesthetic qualities; they must also be the subject of a suitable conservation scheme which may be combined with a sustainable development programme….

Participation by young people is a strategy to support positive discourses. As you can see in excerpt 4, a quotation from the Worth Youth Report 2003 is introduced to underline the key role of young people as activists. This is linguistically highlighted by the use of grammatical evaluation such as the use of comparatives such as "stronger", "greater" and lexical evaluation such as "awareness" and "lead".

> Excerpt 4
>
> "Because youth have a stronger awareness of the issues and a greater stake in long-term sustainability, the environment is one area in which they ought to take the lead." (World Youth Report 2003).

The popularisation of legal/institutional discourse becomes a tool to enhance young people's participation and activism. Popularisation involves not only a 'reformulation', but especially a 'recontextualisation' of specific discourses – in this case legal and institutional discourses – which are originally generated in specialised contexts to which lay people have limited access.

> Popularization is a vast class of various types of communicative events or genres that involve the transformation of specialized knowledge into 'everyday' or 'lay' knowledge, as well as a recontextualization of scientific discourse, for instance, in the realm of the public discourses of the mass media or other institutions.[34]

On *Compass* main page devoted to the environment we find that the main points of conventions or regulations are briefly explained in separate boxes. On the page we often find interrogative sentences which follow the introduction of a legal action in order to shorten the gap between the institution and the readership. The use of rhetorical questions such as "Is it possible for everyone in the world to live a life with dignity and in adequate conditions of life without devastating consequences for the environment? If yes, how?" helps create a more colloquial atmosphere in order to involve young readers. Examples of knowledge dissemination are also present in some related class activities. For example, *Fingers and Thumbs* is a simulation of a competition to find the "greenest" youth group. One of its objectives is to develop understanding about the value of co-operation and the need for the monitoring and verification of agreements. Students are asked to focus on the UN Climate Change Conference 2009, discussing the weaknesses of voluntary agreements and the pros and cons of government directives and laws.

Concerning the data collected from the *Teacher's Corner* website, popularising strategies are mostly given by the interaction of different modes. In the booklet *Our Planet, our Future*, consisting of thirty-two pages, the interplay of verbal and visual elements (colour, layout, typography, images) creates a positive way of writing about the world inspiring the young to protect nature. As showed in figure 2, the mixture of legal, informative and promotional discourses (use of testimonial, evaluative adjectives, question and answer structure) becomes an instrument of meaning-making and knowledge dissemination among the young.[35] For instance, one section of the booklet focuses on the international treaty called the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) signed in 1992, underling the fact that, in order to reduce risks and impacts of climate change, both citizens and policy makers have an important role to play and together have to take action to limit global warming and protect our planet.

---

[34] Calsamiglia and van Dijk, "Popularization Discourse", 370.
[35] European Commission, "Our Planet, Our Future: Fighting Climate Change Together" (Luxembourg: European Union, 2018).

The booklet also becomes an educational tool to transform young people into "climate change experts". In order to persuade the young to become activists, we find a message by the actor Leonardo Di Caprio, UN Messenger of Peace, extracted from his talk addressing world leaders at the Paris Agreement signing ceremony in New York in 2016. The message says:

> Our planet cannot be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong. An upheaval and massive change is required, now. One that leads to a new collective consciousness. A new collective evolution of the human race, inspired and enabled by a sense of urgency from all of you. We all know that reversing the course of climate change will not be easy, but the tools are in our hands – if we apply them before it is too late.

The text includes positive linguistic patterns such as "collective consciousness", "collective evolution" or "inspired and enabled". Transitivity, in particular agency, is exploited. Change and collective evolution become the doers. Interestingly the common metaphorical fixed-phrase "fighting climate change" which can denote conflicts and tensions has been substituted with the more peaceful expression "reversing the course of climate change". Subsequently, being environmental activists does not mean to become fighters which implicitly recalls a battle with winners and losers, but it means to find the right compromise between civilization and nature, progress and natural protection.
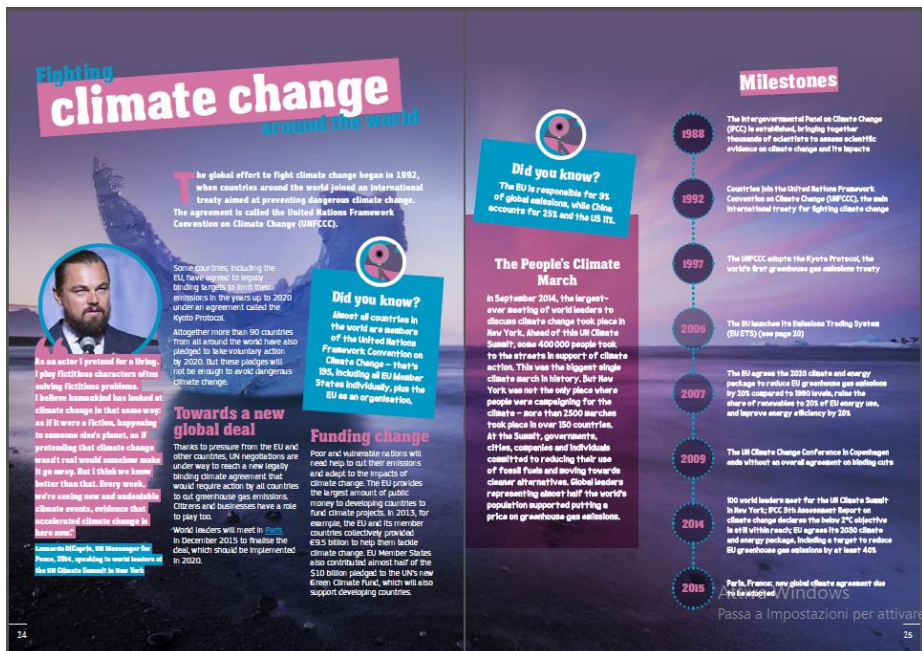

Figure 2. European Commission, "Our Planet, Our Future" (brochure)

The brochure *The EU and energy union and climate action* is composed of four pages and focuses on the role of the EU and its active role. It is very common in the corpus under investigation. Apart from empowering young generations on environmental issues, this text-type becomes a kind of manifesto through which the institution promotes itself and its policies (figure 3).[36] Taking action on climate change is the main message conveyed to the young through this genre, but at the same time it illustrates how the EU takes action on climate change.
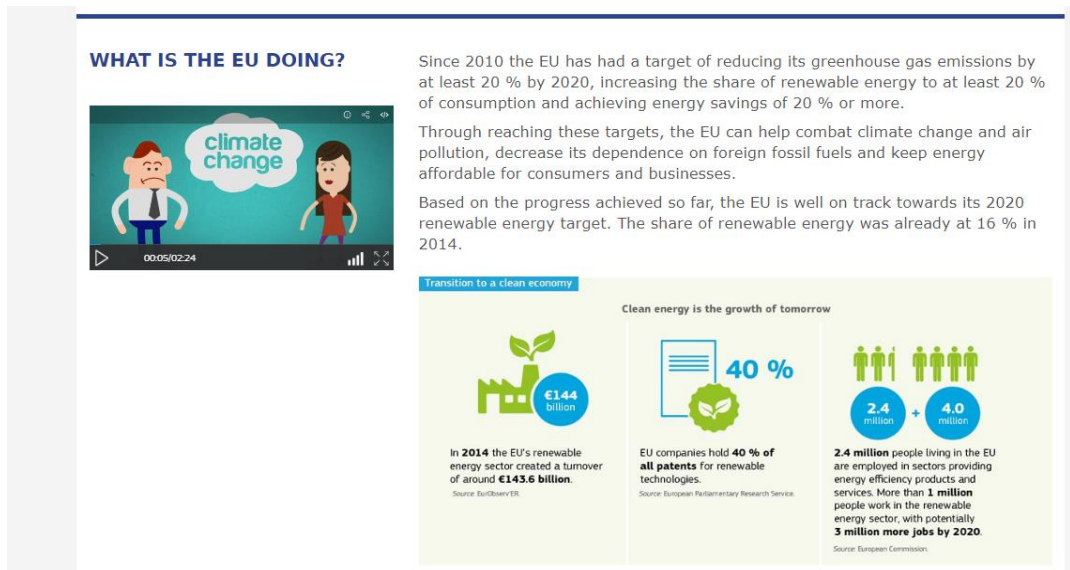

Figure 3. The EU and energy union and climate action (website)

This brochure is another example of hybrid text resulting from the mixture of old and new media. New media usually refer to content available on-demand through the Internet, accessible on any digital device, usually containing interactive user feedback and creative participation. In fact, the brochure is also available in electronic/interactive format. Firstly, it is highly multimodal as meaning is given by the interplay of verbal texts and visuals, colour, font, etc. Secondly, videos are embedded in the written texts which through cartoons explain and clarify the content of the written part. The primary benefit of new media is interactivity and active rather than passive participation on the part of the consumer. In this case, readers can immediately express their opinions on environmental issues filling in a questionnaire at the end of the page or share ideas and comments through social networks such as

---

36   European Commission, "The EU and Energy Union and Climate Action" (2017), www.op.europa.eu/webpub/com/factsheets/energy/en, accessed 25 March 2018.

Facebook and Twitter. Since many traditional media (newspapers, magazines, broadcast and cable, radio, movies) now have digital forms, the distinction between traditional media and new media is not straightforward and frequently genres tend to innovate through hybridisation. Genres can change, hybridise with and colonise one another. Colonisation is a process that involves invasion of the territorial integrity of one genre by another, often leading to the birth of a new hybrid – both mixed and embedded – genre.[37]

> any text is necessarily shaped by socially available repertoires of genres (for example, the genre of scientific articles, or the genre of advertisements), but may creatively mix genres. There are pressures for texts to follow conventional genres, but also pressures to innovate by mixing genres.[38]

The data under investigation combine different modes and media and the transfer from legal/institutional language to disseminating text-types involves contamination in discursive practices. Accordingly, non-expert citizens have access to new and innovative genres, which can help them understand specialised discourses and contribute to mitigating environmental conflicts and legal disputes.

5. Concluding Remarks

Over the last years, human rights and environment preservation have become more and more interconnected matters and policy makers have recognised that every decision on environmental issues can affect human rights. International institutions such as the European Union and the Council of Europe have started to highlight the necessity of making citizens participate actively in the decision making process. Consequently, the two institutions have designed informative materials to shorten the knowledge distance between experts and non-experts, in particular among younger generations, and promote a sustainable environment agenda. Through different media the EU and COE have created different resources available online which aim at supporting the current debate on environmental protection as a fundamental human right.

A corpus of different text-types (brochures, leaflets, web pages) was collected from *Compass* and *Teachers' Corner*, respectively the COE's and EU's websites devoted to education and young people, and investigated from a Positive Multimodal Discourse Analysis perspective.

---

[37] Bhatia, *Worlds of Written Discourse: A Genre-Based View* (London: Continuum International, 2004).

[38] Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, "Critical Discourse Analysis", in van Dijk, ed., *Discourse as Social Interaction: Discourse Studies, A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Volume 2 (London: Sage, 1997), 258-294, 262.

The analysis has demonstrated that there is a shift from traditional negative discourses on environmental issues to more positive discourses, providing positive linguistic features as alternatives such as metaphors, pronouns, grammatical and lexical evaluation, etc. Both organisations soften disastrous consequences through counter-discursive strategies going against the typical environmental discourses that usually underline only the destructive consequences of people's selfish behaviour towards nature trying to raise awareness on this delicate issue through "moral panic". Nonetheless, the materials do not omit the threatening consequences of climate change in order to avoid that this softening might have the opposite effect. Both in the written and visual content negative and positive representations often alternate to mitigate the message but also to warn readers to be aware of possible catastrophic situations. The analysis might offer a model of discourse analysis aimed at progressive social change. Negative and positive representations can be useful to critically deconstruct and reconstruct discursive strategies in order to gain a better understanding of problems and possible solutions. In addition, the popularisation of institutional/legal texts is expressed through the interaction of various modes and the hybridisation of media, genres and discourses are responsible for easy-to-read language. Besides, by adopting a self-referential dimension, it seems that the COE and the EU use popularisation as a communicative instrument to promote the institutions themselves and their policies.

Since the interplay between verbal and visual strategies contribute to creating new positive discourses in ecolinguistics, Positive Multimodal Discourse Analysis within ecolinguistics might help find new ways of using verbal and visual language that narrate different stories from the dominant discourses of industrial civilization to move in a progressive direction. These positive stories could encourage citizens, in particular the young, to protect the ecosystems and build a more environmentally friendly society by empowering them as agents of progressive social change.

Katherine E. Russo, *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse* (Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 2018), 167 pp., ISBN: 978-88-9391-311-9

Reviewed by Giuliana Regnoli

Katherine E. Russo's *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: The Case of Climate Change and Migration* offers a great contribution to the fields of social sciences and corpus linguistics with regards to two contemporary urgent issues: climate change and climate-induced migration. In addressing risk communication as inherently related to discourses of meaning, perception and evaluation, the volume points to their fundamental role in relation to climate change in the communication of Anglophone social and political institutions and organisations. The volume intends to shed new light on the apparent paradox between the apocalypticism of many climate discourses and the technocratic jargon used to describe the latter as a 'problem' to be solved. Considering that news media shape public perceptions and that they play a pivotal role in policymaking and institutional discourse, Russo delves into the evaluation of risk communication as a social process dealing with complexity and uncertainty, ultimately engaging in the evaluation and the representation of social actors across institutional and newspaper discourse.

In doing so, the volume devises a theoretical framework based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Appraisal Linguistics in order to elaborate a semantic prosody cutting across the two different genres involved. Specifically, it designs and analyses a corpus of texts covering the years 1996-2017 and combining the following sub-corpora: the News Reports sub-corpus – 285 texts selected from the Anglophone newspapers *The Australian*, *The Global Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Washington Post* – and the Institution sub-corpus – 370 documents selected from communication documents between organs of the same institutions, staff working documents, reports, press releases and news alerts – gathered from the following institutions: the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UN), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the European Commission (EU).

Through the analysis of the spread of risk information across such 'genre chains' or 'networks of texts', the CCCMC (Climate Change and Climate-Induced Migration Corpus) aims to reveal how social institutions and conventions influence risk communication and to "provid[e] a window into how societies express and define themselves as they grapple with uncertainty about facts, opinions, beliefs and common values" (21).

The present study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methodological tools such as lists of frequency, concordances and collocation analysis have been combined with the qualitative analysis of context and discourse structural evaluation. The quantitative strand was carried out through the aid of *AntConc*, a corpus analysis toolkit for concordance and text analysis to better explore frequencies, statistical significance, the context of specific lexical items, phrases, lexical bundles and multiword units. Following an explanatory sequential design, the data were followed up with a qualitative phase drawing on CDA and Appraisal Linguistics.

The volume begins with an overview of the debate on the evaluation of information and the viral power of media dissemination across institutional and newspaper genre chains. Specifically, it delves into the concepts of 'evaluation' and 'appraisal' in relation to their multifunctional, ideological and political positioning to construe news values and to engage an audience. Evaluation, interpreted as "the writer's expression of opinion or subjectivity" (44), contributes toward the recontextualisation and the transformation of scientific, political and institutional social practices in newspaper discourse as in the case of 'contested science' such as climate change and migration. Appraisal, defined as "a discourse semantic system for interpersonal meaning" (47), is a crucial theoretical tool since it attends to the speaker/writer's certainty in evaluation and investigates how the textual voice positions itself in relation to others. Hence, attending to such frameworks reveals many of the tensions that characterise the communication of evidence on climate change and its related risks.

Chapter Two examines attitude and evaluation regarding climate change in the communication of social and political institutions and organisations, arguing that "semantic preference and lexicogrammar related to the case of climate-change is particularly relevant for the analysis of the many and often contradictory rhetorical and ideological strategies of organizational and institutional actors" (25). The analysis, in fact, showed not only a strong tendency toward the positive evaluation of action against climate change, but also a high degree of instability and uncertainty in the language, terms and significations related to climate change and climate-induced migration.

The volume proceeds with the analysis of risk communication in newspaper discourse, first providing a detailed overview of the genre of newspaper language, and then delving into epistemic modality linguistic realisations regarding climate change and migration. Specifically, Chapter Three addresses the degree of un/certainty, im/probability and im/possibility in the CCCMC, revealing that communication and news operators often privilege spectacular, catastrophic and unexpected events in order to maximise persuasion and to reach the lay audience. Therefore, they tend to frame climate change backgrounding sensational elements, forecasting and risk assessments.

The last chapter provides an accurate analysis of the ways in which climate change and climate-induced migration are appraised and (re)contextualised in social and political institutions and organisations. In doing so, it explores the linguistic resources for the representation of social actors, and, specifically, those strategies such as 'nominalisation' and 'nominating strategies' that lead to

successfully depicting the figure of the climate refugee as an apocalyptic collectivised other – embodied in the image of hundreds of millions of destitutes uprooted from climate change.

The semantic instability encountered in the lexis and terms related to climate change and climate-induced migration in the CCCMC reinforces the significance of the present study, which aims to delve into the linguistic structures of such rapidly evolving discourses in order to reveal how specialised information is conveyed to lay people. The data, in fact, confirm that the scientific perspective on climate science has been widely mispresented in newspaper discourse due to the influence of journalistic norms, authority and balance and that risk communication "is also marred by journalistic norms in the selection and composition of news" (141). The study ultimately sheds light on the representation of climate change as characterised by "affective labour" (142), responsible for triggering feelings of fear, anxiety and alarm toward transnational mobility.

As can be seen, Russo's volume deals with a number of complex themes that go even beyond climate change since it invites readers to be critical about the apocalyptic and spectacularised tones of risk science as depicted by institutions and news operators, in order to delineate how societies express and define themselves through discourse.

Peter Carravetta, *After Identity: Migration, Critique, Italian American Culture*
(New York: Bordighera Press, 2017), 278 pp., ISBN: 978-15-9954-072-6

Reviewed by Carla Francellini

Peter Carravetta's inspiring volume, *After Identity. Migration, Critique, Italian American Culture* (Bordighera Press, 2017), consists of a collection of seven essays, published in different venues in the last two decades, whose focus on the fascinating topic of identity in Italian American culture and literature is new and more relevant than ever. The notion of identity has long been at the core of the theoretical discussion in Italian American studies, a field that has grown into a full-fledged academic discipline in the past quarter of a century, thanks to the expertise of dedicated scholars from different disciplines such as demography, folklore, semiotics, cultural history, gender and race studies, literary criticism, political analysis, cinema, poetics, music and sports. Carravetta – a poet himself and a lucid scholar, most famous for his studies on post-modernism – places significant emphasis on the need for methodologies and ideas from diverse fields to converge in the research centered on the process of building an identity.

In his enlightening preface, he states, in fact, that among the aims of his collection "there is the attempt at a critical reconfiguration of the rhetoric of identity" together with the endeavour "to construct a conceptual map" which could "characterize Italian American culture in terms of newer, multilayered and broader categories" ("Preface", x). As Carravetta states in different *loci* of his book, it is definitely high time we went beyond the limits imposed by a school of thought which aimed only at obtaining a public – and possibly academic – acknowledgement of the value of the field of Italian American studies. It's also necessary to go beyond the fight against prejudices and stereotypes, still deeply rooted in the approach of many critics and scholars, in order to gain a new and more fruitful future perspective.

Carravetta's methodological choices become very clear to the reader when he declares to "opt for a critique of the margins and of interrelations across identity markers", interpreting the Italian American experience "as eminently suited to serve as a herm at the interstice where conflicting rhetorics of class, power, aggression and cultural distortion can be analyzed in their constitutive even if at times not so reassuring elements" (xii-xiii). As for the first option, the Italian American critic insists on the opportunity of situating the critical act in a *locus* where it can see both sides of any given question without advancing any claim towards totality or comprehensiveness. Boundaries, limits, disciplines are obviously involved in a larger discourse on a critique focusing on the margins, to the point that

Carravetta devises a topology (sketched in the *Conclusion*) to explore and chart sites of negotiation and power as manifested in the experience of transit and crossing, in the entering and exiting from situations which are eminently political.

It's truly worth noting how "being at the margin," in a "borderline" situation turns out to be a most "fruitful locus from which to scan and analyze our shiftless contemporary society" (207). In the wake of Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Franco Rella, Giorgio Agamben, and Julia Kristeva – in Carravetta's words, the "high circles" of critical and philosophical reflection – the Italian American critic insists on the privileged positions connected with the ontological status of being/living "in-between," or of "belonging-to-no-one" (207). Having to express such a status through literature generates, therefore, perplexity and doubt, even before we deal with the issue of ethnically or nationally marked literature.

In his sparkling methodological introduction, Carravetta places at the very center of his critical and theoretical discourse the need to go back to the dramatic experience of migration, which is the ineludible event from which everything unfolds not only in Italian American literature but also in the so-called *mainstream* American literature. A great lesson to learn from Carravetta's book is that Italian American studies should go back to the crucial issue of migration, "revisiting and recontextualizing [it] for the 21st century" since migration is obviously the "enabling trope of all Americans, hyphenated or not," haunted – in different ways and modes – by the "perturbation that pricks at the reassurances of rootedness and unitary identity" (xiii). Thus, ultimately, migration is "at the very core of all three master discourses, that of America, that of Italy/Europe, and most pointedly that of […] Italian America" (xiii).

Key terms/concepts, guiding the reader through the fascinating maze of Carravetta's many discourses, are powerful and strongly evocative words, expressions, and formulas such as *belonging*, *membership*, *polycentric consciousness*, *mediascapes*, *forms of translation*, *hybridity*, *strategic marginality*, *inventions of the past* and *the defusing of nationalistic mythologies*. Chasing identity – which is also one of the meanings implicit in the title of the book – becomes, therefore, a truly challenging adventure in the wake of Melville's mythic chase, as Carravetta's *white whale* of identity turns out to be "a construct of multiple elements, all critically slippery, all historically contingent and multipronged, and perhaps constituting, deploying a post-modern moniker, a plurality of discourses in constant conflict and exchange. Identity has no contours; it is fluid, amoebic, viscous" (xii).

Politics, moreover, seems to play a significant role in defining identity. Moving from the assumption that any idea of identity in what the Italian American scholar defines "a heterological social reality betrays from the start a political stance, and the assumptions it rests upon", Carravetta's research, in fact, concludes that "ethnic identity is found to be constituted by a cluster of different and not always coherent (sub)identities, some of which have little to do with nations and languages and much with politics and power" (xii).

If the title of the book, *After Identity*, means to foreground an attempt to draw up some maps of identity, chasing it in those literary texts presented in the second part of the book, it also hints at a clear attempt to go beyond identity as a "monolithic presence" in recent scholarship, leaving behind its holistic, centering, neatly defined semiotic, since, as Carravetta states, "each horn of the dilemma is itself a palimpsest rolled into a maneuverable token for immanent validation but with little transcendent or trans-cultural usefulness" (xii).

The subtitle, *Migration, Critique, Italian American Culture*, indicates the three areas of investigation of the book, even though it soon becomes very clear to the reader that the question of interpretation looms large as well. Critique is, in fact, in Carravetta's words "also metacritique, an unceasing conscious retooling and refashioning of the means and methods of inquiry, crucial insofar as topics such as migration, identity and cultural politics constantly challenge any assertion or conclusion" (xi). The Italian American critic's approach draws on different theories of varied provenance, from hermeneutics proper to literary analysis, sociology, anthropology in the attempt to go beyond a notion of identity and insisting on "an embedded and tearing duality that is time and place bound and, as such, subject to specific dynamics that emerge, assert themselves, and then must change in some guise as newer or alternative and broader palimpsests are set in motion" (xii).

The volume consists of two sections, in the first of which, "Theoretical and Historical Contexts," Carravetta analyzes the historical, cultural and theoretical contexts within which identity is forged moving from the relevant historical and social question of migration and its undeniably leading role in shaping cultural identities or specific communities in the United States. Through the three essays included in this section – "Con/Texts Before the Journeys: Migration, Narration, and Historical Identities," "Dabblers, Small Fry, Canon Fodder: Problems and Perspectives in Italian American Literary History," and "The Silence of the Subalterns: Contact, Conflict, Consolidation during the First Wave (1880s-1913)" – Carravetta confronts the reader with an analysis of the dramatic experience of migration as a whole, moving from the detailed historical and theoretical description of the experience itself, within which the topic of identity emerges and requires being dealt with. In the very first chapters of the book, the reader is confronted with one of Carravetta's most interesting assumptions – running, in fact, through the different essays – when he highlights that "not enough reflection has been focused on the question of how someone – especially if an artist, or a writer, or a public persona — can identify as being *both*, an American *and* an Italian" (xii). A perfect example of this is provided in chapter six in the analysis of Maria Gillan's poetics, which Carravetta defines as "a paradoxical poetic" that keeps conjugating – "wedding" in the critic's words – "the old and the new", putting side by side "the traditional and the radical" as well as "the simple and the complex," in the poet's perception that there exists a "possibility of making contraries co-exist" (179).

In the second part of his volume – "Geography of Identity through Literature" – Carravetta includes a truly piquant chapter entitled "Places, Processes, Perspectives in Italian American Poetry and Poetics," which is almost an introduction to the following essays where he analyzes some aspects of

the poetics of Pasquale Verdicchio, Jay Parini, Claudia Menza, Kathryn Nocerino, Anthony Valerio, Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Robert Viscusi. Moving from Gay Talese's provocative article, "Where Are the Italian-American Novelists," published in 1993 on the *New York Times*, Carravetta provokes the reader with another enticing question: "Where are the Italian American Poets?" Carravetta, therefore, reminds us, with his elegant and clear style, of the fundamental role of the poets in giving shape to the language of a society, making sure that its words, and their power to generate interest and innovation, "do not degenerate into automatic ready-made phrases, endlessly repeatable until they lose their range, richness, their predisposition to be more than univocal messages or, worse, signals" (145). A risk which is becoming more and more evident in our globalized world, where poets are given the role of attacking "long-encrusted locutions" or "everyday words or word-clusters," a task which makes them automatically avant-gardists. The point is, in fact, the "Word" – "the Noun, the *lexis*, Greek *onoma*" – that needs to be shocked out of its torpor and recharged with "political, symbolic, visual, enigmatic allusions" (145). These essays are a fascinating example of Carravetta's lucid methodological approach to a literary critique aiming at chasing the ghost of identity through the verses and the paragraphs of such engaging texts as Maria Gillan's poem, "The Crow" and Robert Viscusi's "Oration upon the Most Recent Death of Christopher Columbus" (1992). Carravetta engages the poetics of Maria Gillan – in a groundbreaking essay entitled "Naming Identity in the Poetry of Maria Mazziotti Gillan" – and of Robert Viscusi – "The Historical Poetics of Robert Viscusi" – while in his "Valerio and the Refashioning of an American Idol" he deals with Valerio's work on RudolphValentino.

An illuminating reading of the role of the poet – and of poetry – in a society is offered by the essay on Maria Gillan, where Carravetta, among other aspects, aims to explore the so-called politics of naming in the belief that "[t]o name something actually existing corresponds not to merely mentioning a word-that-refers-to something the first time", but also to bring something into existence from "*the void or nullity of non-Being*" (146). Naming something is, therefore, bringing it to light, creating it, inventing it, and this has a lot to do with identity. While researching on the reasons why a writer needs to express his/her identity through poetry, Carravetta shows how in Gillan's poems the naming becomes a crucial issue, moving from the assumption that in her lyrical texts "the loci of memory make up a sort of series or suites on specific interlocutors, such as the daughter, the mother, the husband" (179). This sequence, in fact, ends up establishing "a cluster of themes, and circumscrib[ing] a poetic journal, a phenomenology of feelings, of the feelings of a woman who ushers a new typology, a more complex picture of the Italian American woman, and the Italian American woman poet at that" (180). Carravetta's great attention to women's poetry in his volume focuses on the most compelling themes of their righteous claim for a voice, which started in the 1980s with the groundbreaking anthology by Helen Barolini, *The Dream Book* (1985), and continued through the decades with other works such as Mary Jo Bona's *The Voices We Carry* (1994). Carravetta draws the reader into Gillan's poetics by quoting some verses from the poem "The Crow" (67-69), a manifesto of women's claim for a voice in the past decades: "We are driven women,/and we'll never escape/ the voices we carry within us."

Everything in this collection by Carravetta proves to be allusive, metaphorical, and multi-layered. An impressive geographical metaphor looms on the whole book from its cover image, "L'Allegoria della Geografia" painted by Italian exile, Constantino Brumidi, in the Capitol in 1858. The image seems to suggest that even pictorial representations of social history can be studied as theoretical palimpsests. In the painting, in fact, a woman representing geography is situated between a map featuring the New World on her right and a globe to her left, and is looking at the map to verify what is attested by the globe. This gesture recalls the early sixteenth-century iconography, when Italian explorations of the New World, led by Amerigo Vespucci, Giovanni Verrazzano, and their likes, were drawing new coastlines, soon making old globes unusable for navigation purposes. Besides evoking the "by then over three-century-old myth of the origin of his adopted country," the picture contains a clear reference to the time and place in which Brumidi was painting: on the left of the image, an angel holds a steam locomotive, soon to become the glory of transportation and commerce in the United States, linking coast to coast (ix).

Supported by a vast and updated bibliography, Carravetta's volume establishes once more in its conclusion – "For a Topological Critique of Italian American Culture" – the importance of going back to a critique of the *topos* as "the common-place embedded in a culture, the site of occurrence of a recurring exchange" in order to establish a more contemporary version of a critique of "what people say" over and over within certain "communities of speakers" (223). Some common themes (*topoi*), "though over time degenerated and congealed into cliché," represent the terrain "from which to invent or sketch … a field of inquiry, before analysis can commence" (224). A topological critic, in fact, being a critic "of the margin" and "from the margin," would pay great attention to the inherent non homogeneity of any category of identity and especially to those exclusions and elisions aiming at presenting as homogenous a collective culture, hybrid, composite and syncretic by its own nature.

As Carravetta concludes, "there are other unexplored pathways … to rethink identity" and a fundamental one is "the common-place reality that comes into view each time, as locals (in *our* time and place), we meet a 'migrant' (an 'other,' a foreigner, a stranger) or, as migrants (travelers), we meet 'locals' (in their space or world)…. At such interstices – crossroads … or chance encounters – we can display the full richness of our many identities in light of an exchange that is both individually empowering and illuminating and socio-politically democratic, positive, and peaceful" (241).

Maria Cristina Aiezza is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Sannio, Benevento. She holds a PhD in English for Special Purposes from the University of Naples 'Federico II', with a corpus-assisted study on the discourse of CSR reports. Her research interests and publications focus on Corporate Discourse, Institutional and Political Discourse, Legal Discourse, Environmental Discourse, Popularisation, Discourse of News Media, User-Generated Discourse, Web Genres and Social Media.

Stefania D'Avanzo is a Research Fellow at the University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'. She holds a PhD in English for Special Purposes from the University of Naples 'Federico II'. Her current research is mainly concerned with Popularization, Environmental, Legal and Institutional Discourse. Her publications include articles on the dissemination of Legal knowledge, Linguistic and Legal Vagueness, Modality in legal texts, as well as the book *Europe: Home of Migrants Built on Sand. EU Political and Legal Discourse on Immigration and Asylum* (2012).

Antonio Fruttaldo holds a PhD in English for Special Purposes from the University of Naples 'Federico II'. He is currently a Research Fellow at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. His research interests lie in the intersections between different methodological approaches, such as Corpus Linguistics, (Critical) Discourse Analysis, and Genre Analysis. He has recently authored *Media Discourse and Digital Currents: A Corpus-Based Genre Analysis of News Tickers* (2017).

Federico Pio Gentile, is a PhD Student at the Department of Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies at the University of Napoli 'L'Orientale'. His main research interests involve Canadian Studies, Multimodality, Specialised Discourse and Communication, Translation Studies and Media Studies. He has recently authored *La linguistica del delitto. Maureen Jennings e il caso di 'Poor Tom is Cold', tra formulaicità e traduzione* (2015) and translated China Miéville's *Embassytown* into Italian (2016).

Bronwen Hughes is a Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Naples 'Parthenope'. She holds a PhD in Linguistics and Modern and Comparative Literature and her research interests lie in the fields of translation as a tool for Second Language Acquisition, Cross-Cultural Media Studies and Gender Studies. In terms of methodological frameworks, she commonly uses the tools offered by CDA, Conversation Analysis, Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Corpus

Linguistics. She has published a monographic work on televised format transferral and numerous research articles which appear in collected volumes. Her current research centers upon a comparative study of first-hand migrant narratives collected both in the UK and in Italy.

Anna Mongibello, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. Her research interests include the intersections of Language, Ideology and Identity in the Canadian context, and Online Teaching/Learning Strategies to build intercultural communicative competence. She has been a member of the board of the Italian Association for Canadian Studies (AISC) since 2017. She has authored *Indigenous Peoples in Canadian TV News: A Corpus-based Analysis of Mainstream and Indigenous News Discourses* (2018) and *Geografie alternative: scrittrici indigene contemporanee del Canada anglofono* (2013).

Antonella Napolitano is Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Sannio, Benevento. Her research activity is centred on the field of ESP theory and applications, Professional and Institutional Discourse, the Language of Advertising, Legal English, Identity-Building and Gender Studies. Some of her recent works focus on online customer reviews, corporate scandals and the discourse of and about President Trump. She is currently conducting a research on Institutional and Corporate Communication and New Media. She is the scientific coordinator of the Language Centre at the University of Sannio.

Maria Cristina Nisco, PhD in English for Special Purposes, is a Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation at the University of Naples 'Parthenope'. Her current research areas include Identity and Diversity in News and Legal Discourse through the lens offered by CDA and corpus linguistics. She has published numerous articles on the linguistic and discursive construal of ethnic and gender diversity, migration, and disability and has authored *Agency in the British Press: A Corpus-based Discourse Analysis of the 2011 UK Riots* (2016), and edited, with G. Balirano, *Languaging Diversity* (2015), and *Language, Theory, and Society* (2015). She is the co-editor in chief of the international peer-reviewed *I-LanD Journal*.

Margherita Rasulo is a Senior Lecturer in English Language and Translation Studies at the University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'. She has conducted research in the fields of Digital Discourse and Computer Mediated Communication, Public Speaking, Sociolinguistics, Multimodality, Knowledge Dissemination and Content-Based Language Instruction, and is currently working on a number of research studies on Islamic terrorism. She has recently authored *Language First. Analyzing Online Discourse* (2018).

Giuliana Regnoli is a third-year Ph.D student in English linguistics at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' and the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Her research interests include sociophonetics, language attitudes, perceptual dialectology, second language awareness and World Englishes (in particular Indian English). She is the author of "Translanguaging as an Expression of Transnational Identity: Ethnicity Renegotiation in the Indian Diaspora" in *Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts* and of "Local and Global Ideologies in Transient Contact Zones: Evidence from an Indian Student Community" in *Quaderni Labirinti*.

Katherine E. Russo, PhD University of New South Wales (Sydney), is an Associate Professor of English at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. Her research interests include Language Variation and Change, Audiovisual and Translation Studies, Critical Discourse Analysis, Media Discourse, Post-colonial, Whiteness and Gender Studies. She is the authored: *Practices of Proximity: The Appropriation of English in Australian Indigenous Literature* (2010, which won the ESSE Book Award for Junior Scholars in 2012), *Global English, Transnational Flows: Australia and New Zealand in Translation* (2012) and *The Evaluation of Risk in Institutional and Newspaper Discourse: the Case of Climate Change and Migration* (2018).

Sole Alba Zollo holds a PhD in English for Special Purposes from the University of Naples 'Federico II', where she is a Lecturer in English Linguistics and Communication. Her research interests include: Human Rights Discourse, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis in institutional contexts, Rhetoric and Visual Argumentation, the Language of Tourism, Education and Social Media, New Literacies. Her publications include *See Britain by Train: A Diachronic Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Tourist Railway Posters* (2018) and *Promotion, Popularisation and Pedagogy: An Analysis of the Verbal and Visual Strategies in the COE's Human Rights Campaigns* (2013).

Notes on Editors

Oriana Palusci is Full Professor of English at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale'. She has published extensively on contemporary Women writers, Gender Studies, Utopia and Science Fiction, Travel Writing, Postcolonial Studies, Translation Studies, Canadian Linguistics and Cultures, the Languages of Tourism, Critical Toponymy, and Environmental issues. She has recently edited: *Wastelands: Eco-narratives in Contemporary Cultures in English* (special issue of *Anglistica AION*, 2015, with H. Ventura), *Green Canada* (2016), *Alice Munro and the Anatomy of the Short Story*

(2017), *Miss Man? Languaging Gendered Bodies* (2018, with G. Balirano). She is the President of the Italian Association for Canadian Studies.

Jan Engberg is Professor of Knowledge Communication at the School of Communication and Culture, University of Aarhus, Denmark. His main research interests, to which he has published extensively, are Cognitive aspects of domain specific discourse and relations between Specialized knowledge, Text Formulation and Translation, especially in the field of Law. He has co-edited a number of books and special journal issues on the topics, the most recent book being *Popularization and Knowledge Mediation in the Law* (2018, co-edited with Karin Luttermann, Silvia Cacchiani and Chiara Preite). Finally, he is co-editor of the international journal *Fachsprache*.