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**Reference:**

Moernaut Renée, Mast Jelle, Pepermans Yves.- Reversed positionality, reversed reality? The multimodal environmental justice frame in mainstream and alternative media

International communication gazette - ISSN 1748-0493 - (2017), p. 1-30

Full text (Publisher's DOI): <http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1177/1748048517745258>

To cite this reference: <http://hdl.handle.net/10067/1475770151162165141>

**Reversed Positionality, Reversed Reality? The Multimodal  
Environmental Justice Frame in Mainstream and Alternative Media.**

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**Abstract**

Environmental injustice, the unequal distribution of benefits and burdens, is key to understanding climate change. Yet, mainstream media are criticized for only reproducing anthropocentrism when discussing the concern, while this ideology causes socio-environmental problems. Current research is preoccupied with the verbal mode, while visual and verbal modes always work in tandem. This prevents a full understanding of the problems. Also, most studies overlook the alternative media, which may counterbalance the dominant perspective. We have therefore carried out a multimodal framing analysis of a corpus of mainstream and alternative articles published in Belgium. The identified subframes, 'Unequal Vulnerability' and 'Unequal Attribution', show a remarkable reversal of roles and responsibilities. Yet, the counter-hegemonic subframe is still struggling to find a salient multimodal language to depict complex views. Further development is necessary. We hope that this study incites other research on multimodal framing in general and environmental justice in particular.

**Keywords**

Environmental justice; multimodal framing; alternative and mainstream media; climate change; socio-environmental paradigms; positionality

## Introduction

Sea level rise threatening small island states, typhoon Haiyan hitting the Philippines, droughts affecting central Africa; ecological degradation is often intertwined with socio-economic inequity (e.g., Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2002). As the most pressing environmental problem of this age, climate change (IPCC, 2014) has the potential to raise awareness for such environmental injustice. Environmental injustice may be defined as some groups in society suffering earlier and more severely from the consequences of climate change than others because they are more sensitive and/or lack coping abilities. They belong to certain socio-economic, gender, ethnic and/or cultural groups (e.g., lower socio-economic classes, women, non-whites...), mostly – but not exclusively – in the South. Other groups, however, bear a large part of the responsibility for the problems. They mainly consist of the (elite, male, white...) consumer class living in the dominant global regions (the West), as well as the westernized elite groups in the South. (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2002; IPCC, 2014; Shiva, 1988, 1993; Taylor, 2000)[1].

The ways in which people think and talk about environmental justice may, however, differ depending on their socio-economic position, cultural background, experiences, or beliefs, or, in short, their ‘positionality’ (Taylor, 2000). The main groups who put environmental justice on the (inter)national agenda consist of elites such as

(western(ized)) politicians, experts, corporate organizations and NGOs (Brulle, 2010; Greenberg, Knight and Westersund, 2011). They mainly (re)produce the hegemonic (i.e., dominant) 'Euro-American anthropocentric perspective' (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2015). Highlighting economic growth or the superiority of (western) human, this view clearly caters to their interests. This same thinking is, however, also the main cause of many socio-environmental problems. Shiva (1998, p.46) contends, for instance:

Environmentalism then becomes a new patriarchal project of technological fixes and political oppression. It generates a new subjugation of ecological movements and fails to make any progress towards sustainability and equity.

By depoliticizing the issue, a democratic discussion of the hegemonic model and possible alternatives is precluded (Pepermans and Maesele, 2014).

Media have the potency to influence politics and public opinion, strongly defining the boundaries of the debate (e.g., Wilson, 1995). Visuals, in particular, have been shown to be highly pervasive: They are likely to enhance information acquisition and memory or to evoke (strong) emotions (e.g., Geise and Baden, 2015). Yet, mainstream media mainly reproduce the dominant top-down perspective on environmental justice (Doulton and Brown, 2009; Dreher and Voyer, 2015; Farbotko, 2006; Vihersalo, 2008). This can, at least partly, be explained by the privileged access of elite claims-makers (Reese, 2001). Alternative media, however, are more likely to reinforce the bottom-up

voices of counter-movements or grassroots groups, who are often silenced in the mainstream debate (e.g., Groshek and Han, 2011). We may therefore expect alternative media to reflect alternative (biocentric) views and values, like equality or human moderation (e.g., Shiva, 1988), more frequently, although this may not be necessarily so (Brand and Brunnengräber, 2012). This may help to repoliticize the debate (Pepermans and Maesele, 2014) and allow for true discussions among various positionalities (Brulle, 2010; Greenberg, Knight and Westersund, 2011). This is considered to be crucial for more effectively addressing climate change and environmental justice (e.g., Fraser, 2005; Sen, 1999, 2009). Yet, as Roosvall and Tegelberg (2015) point out, only when mainstream media legitimate these alternative views can a broader audience be reached.

The number of studies which address (certain aspects) of environmental justice media representations have been growing over the last decade (e.g., de Onís, 2012; Doulton and Brown, 2009; Dreher and Voyer, 2015; Farbotko, 2006; Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013; Takahashi and Meisner, 2012; Vihersalo, 2008). Yet, they still show limitations. Firstly, most are too partial, providing rather general descriptions of some aspects of the environmental justice discourse. For instance, Dreher and Voyer (2015) problematize the hegemonic framing of Tuvaluans. Although such studies provide interesting contributions, their rather loose sets of findings prevent a fuller understanding of the matter. Framing may allow for more structured and comprehensive

insights (Entman, 1991, 2004; Van Gorp, 2006). The ‘(...) crucial importance of framing to every question of social justice’ (Fraser, 2005: p.77) seems to make the concept particularly fit for addressing environmental justice. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, no qualitative framework showing exactly how the Environmental Justice frame takes shape in the media has yet been developed.

Secondly, the available research largely disregards the role of visuals. This reflects the more general lack of visual and, particularly, multimodal (framing) research in media and communication studies. However, the separation of the visual and verbal is likely to limit our understanding of media events: The two modes – each with their own affordances or limitations – always work in tandem, conveying messages that would be unattainable in a single mode (Coleman, 2010; Geise and Baden, 2015). Our research aims, therefore, to contribute to the development of the multimodal framing method (and concept), strongly drawing on the perspectives of Halliday (2000) and the (Hallidayan) frameworks of authors like Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) or Machin and Mayr (2012), and a number of other fields.

Finally, as Roosvall and Tegelberg (2015) claim, the status and interaction of bottom-up and top-down perspectives across various media outlets has not sufficiently been addressed in empirical media research (an exception is Roosvall and Tegelberg (2013)). By introducing the concept of (hegemonic and counter-hegemonic) subframes, our research will also attend to ideological diversity, in mainstream and alternative

media. This may shed more light on the – assumed – ability of the latter to facilitate democratic debate and the exchange of ideas (Groshek and Han, 2011).

By comparing three mainstream newspapers and the major alternative news website in Flanders (northern Belgium), we will attempt to provide answers to the following research questions:

- (1) How do two oppositional socio-environmental paradigms visually and verbally take shape in the Environmental Justice frame?;

Sub1 How do these ‘subframes’ relate to one another?;

- (2) What is the status of both subframes in mainstream and alternative media?

Sub 2 To what extent do the alternative media (and subframe) allow for repoliticization?

As such, this article may primarily, but not exclusively, appeal to (environmental) communication researchers interested in the multimodal (media) framing of environmental justice.

### **Socio-environmental paradigms**

The views and actions of western(ized) humans vis-à-vis nature and other groups in society, who are considered to be less developed and closer to nature, are guided by the

same paradigm: Euro-American anthropocentrism. This highlights values as (economic) development, utilitarianism, or competition and hierarchy (Dryzek, 1997; Shiva, 1988, 1993). The paradigm is, however, increasingly criticized for justifying the exploitation of others and nature, rationalizing this by depicting western humans as offering the ‘gift of civilization’. Colonialism, globalization and many western development missions are largely guided by the belief that development (towards the western model) must be equally distributed among all people and regions: This will increase human well-being, alleviate poverty and reverse environmental degradation. The transfer of money, knowledge or technology is not entirely neutral, though. Rather, it is considered to reproduce hierarchical relations, forcing non-western(ized) groups to become part of a global liberal market based on inequality while destroying (access to) nature and livelihoods (economic/material maldistribution), local knowledge (cultural misrecognition) or democracy (political misrepresentation) (Fraser, 2005; Shiva, 1988, 1993; Smith, 2007). Shiva (1993) therefore argues that the western monoculture must be replaced by cultural (and natural) pluralism. This may allow the affected groups to contribute to the democratic debate and decide how development will look like for them, based on their contexts (Sen, 1999, 2009) *and* on ‘(...) thought and action which make survival possible, and which therefore make justice and peace possible’ (Shiva, 1988, p.xvii). That is, facilitated by processes of (status) recognition and representation (next to redistribution) (Fraser, 2000, 2005), the debate may be injected with more

biocentric values, such as equality, mutual interconnectedness, cooperation, and diversity (Dryzek, 1997; Shiva, 1988, 1993). This might help to address the socio-environmental problems more effectively. (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2002; Fraser, 2005; Sen, 1999, 2009; Shiva, 1988, 1993; Taylor, 2000).

Clearly, then, various local traditions and experiences feed into this (alternative) ‘environmental justice paradigm’ (Taylor, 2000). This gives rise to more diversity than the above may suggest. Smith (2007) discusses, for instance, the African-American environmental thought which has strongly contributed to the paradigm (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans, 2002). This non-anthropocentric tradition highlights (inter-human) equality, the sacredness of Mother Earth and the need for sustainable human action. Yet, having emerged from a Christian tradition, it also depicts humans as stewards, responsible for giving meaning to and modifying nature to make it an appropriate home for their communities (see ‘Green Rationalism’ (Dryzek, 1997)). We do acknowledge the diversity within the non-anthropocentric view. The limited scope of this article prevents us, however, to discuss this to a greater extent.

## **Mainstream and alternative framing**

### *Mainstream and alternative media*

One’s positionality may define the ways in which one thinks and talks about

environmental issues (Taylor, 2000). Accordingly, positionality is also a key point of difference between various media outlets, for instance mainstream and alternative media. We posit that mainstream media tend to have a top-down positionality, while alternative media are rather bottom-up, in terms of their context, content, and production process (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Harcup, 2014):

Alternative media tend to be less, if not at all, institutionalized or driven by commercial interests than mainstream media. This context allows them to be radical and engaged in terms of their content and production process. While they challenge and deconstruct journalistic, social, political, economic and/or cultural practices, and construct alternatives, they tend to enact this change in a non-hierarchical and (partly) de-professionalized organization. Their aim is, as such, to constitute an alternative public sphere, which may empower citizens and encourage them to speak up and act for change.

Table 1 provides an elaboration on this definition, clarifying the crudely defined oppositional positionalities:

	<b>Mainstream media</b>	<b>Alternative media</b>
	<b>Top-down</b> positionality	<b>Bottom-up</b> positionality
<b>Context</b>	Commercial, institutionalized: ( <b>elite</b> ) <b>corporate / political</b> pressures and values	Anti-commercial, de-institutionalized: cooperation with ( <b>grassroots</b> ) <b>movements</b> , dependent on foundation grants and sponsoring
<b>Content</b>	Routines and news values (serving <b>top-down</b> (commercial) pressures). Among others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchy of access: prevalence of <b>elite sources</b></li> <li>• Focus on events, conflict, proximity, unambiguity, consonance, personalization...</li> </ul>	Partly – but not fully – abandoning mainstream routines and values. Among others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Reversed’ hierarchy of access: prevalence of (alternative) <b>NGOs, grassroots movements, citizens</b>, or those speaking on their behalf</li> <li>• Focus on broader contexts and backgrounds, positive stories in favour of minorities...</li> </ul>
<b>Production process</b>	<b>Hierarchy</b> : small (elite) group of <b>professional journalists</b> clearly separated from the audience (as <b>passive consumers / commodity</b> ), quite rigid newsroom organization	<b>Egalitarianism</b> : blurring of boundaries between journalists and audience ( <b>citizen-journalists, active producers</b> ), journalists taking up several roles

**Table 1: The oppositional positionality of mainstream and alternative media in terms of context, content and production process.**

### *Framing*

Framing is a concept and methodology which addresses the interaction of contexts (positionalities) and (media) texts. Drawing on Entman (1991, 2004), Gamson and Modigliani (1989), Stibbe (2015) and Van Gorp (2006), we define a frame as an immanent structuring idea which gives coherence and meaning to a text. Framing, then, is applying a particular frame to structure an area of life: It involves selecting, omitting, expanding and giving salience to certain aspects of a perceived reality in a text, providing context and suggesting a particular problem definition, causal responsibility,

moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation to the audience.

Frames are, in essence, multimodal. As already discussed, the visual and verbal modes always work in tandem. Visuals are, however, particularly salient, given their pervasive characteristics (Coleman, 2010; Geise and Baden, 2015; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). For instance, Messaris and Abraham (2001) highlight three special attributes of the visual mode: analogical quality, indexicality and lack of explicit propositional syntax (i.e., a polysemic character). These help to convey ideological messages without the audience necessarily realizing it. Put differently, we are more inclined to accept the small slice of reality in a picture as being representative (i.e., a metonym) of the total reality.

That is important as frames are used to naturalize ideologies. However, one ideology never equals one frame, or vice versa (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Van Gorp, 2006). Drawing on Benford and Snow (2000), Taylor (2000) and Brulle (2010), we distinguish three interacting, mutually dependent framing levels: 1) Masterframes are broad, structured collectives of language, images and ideas, providing a set of arguments about how the world is and should be (see ideology), e.g., Anthropocentric and Biocentric masterframes. 2) Frames help to structure particular problems or concerns (e.g., economics, justice). They constitute a rather stable, ‘universal’ group, which may reappear across various issues (e.g., climate change, asylum debate). Yet, the ‘culturally available frames’ (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) in any given space-time may differ. 3)

Subframes are shaped by the available masterframes. While various interest groups may use the same frames, the realization of their subframes depends on the masterframe they abide by.

The dominance of certain (sub)frames in a particular outlet type often correlates with the positionality of those controlling the framing process (e.g., frame sponsors, journalists) and other contextual factors (Reese, 2001). It is, for instance, likely for alternative media to promote counter-hegemonic ideologies, but that does not preclude the possibility that they may also reproduce hegemonic views, or that mainstream outlets employ alternative subframes (Brand and Brunnengräber, 2012; Doulton and Brown, 2009).

## **Research design**

Our corpus comprises articles from four Flemish media outlets: three mainstream newspapers ('De Standaard' (DS) (broadsheet, historical catholic and entrepreneurial background), 'De Morgen' (DM) (broadsheet, historical social-democratic background) and 'Het Laatste Nieuws' (HLN) (popular, historical liberal roots)) and the major alternative website 'DeWereldMorgen' (DWM) (openly leftwing). Employing the search tools of the Belgian press archive, Gopress, and/or the archives of the individual

outlets, we conducted key word searches ((Dutch) key words: ‘klimaatverandering/wijziging’ (‘climate change’), ‘opwarming van de aarde/planeet’/‘klimaatopwarming’, ‘opwarming van het klimaat’ (‘global warming’), ‘broeikaseffect’ (‘greenhouse effects’)). Additionally, we carried out a manual search in the paper archives of the national and university libraries. The searches yielded a total of 792 articles for the period February 28, 2012 to February 28, 2014.[2] All articles were downloaded, collected and saved.

All articles in the corpus were subjected to an inductive-deductive qualitative multimodal framing analysis (Van Gorp, 2006): After conducting an in-depth qualitative analysis on about 28% of the articles, we employed the resulting frame matrices for deductively analysing the remainder of the articles. Drawing on Entman (1991), we usually determined one dominant (i.e., the most salient) multimodal frame for each article. After all, ordinary readers are unlikely to discern and be affected by all the frames in a text.

After analysing the whole corpus, we separated the articles applying a dominant Environmental Justice frame (n=135) from the rest of our corpus. Drawing on the matrices, the third author coded 28% of the articles in a deductive way. Methods, frames and results were discussed during intervision moments. The test result (Krippendorff’s  $\alpha = 0.97$ ) indicated a high level of agreement (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007).

### *Analytic method*

We can reconstruct immanent frames analysing explicit/implicit framing and reasoning devices (Van Gorp, 2006, pp.51—53). Although attempts have been made to provide comprehensive overviews of framing devices (e.g., Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011; Van Gorp, 2006), we maintain that these do not yet fully allow for a systematic and convincing investigation of robust frames, let alone their underlying ideologies. Visual framing also remains methodologically and conceptually underdeveloped. Hence, apart from drawing on verbal and/or visual framing research (Fahmy, 2010; Grittmann, 2014, 2013; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Rodriguez and Dimitrova, 2011; Van Gorp, 2006), our toolkit borrows heavily from (multimodal) semiotics and critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki, 2006; Machin and Mayr, 2012; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Richardson, 2007; van Dijk, 1998; van Leeuwen, 2008), (eco)linguistics (Halliday, 2000; Stibbe, 2015), rhetorical analysis (e.g., Durand, 1987), narrative analysis (e.g., Wozniak, Lück & Wessler, 2015), photography and film studies (e.g., Monaco, 2000) and (visual) journalism studies (Huxford, 2001).

- *Level 1: Participants and context*
  - Names and prepositions (the selection of qualities and values of participants)
  - / visual choices

- Individualization/humanization (e.g., ‘the 25 year old Amber’) versus collectivization/generalization (e.g., ‘the people’)
- Identification (what one is or has, e.g., ‘a victim’) versus functionalization (what one does, e.g., ‘a vendor’)
- Narrative roles
  - Alignment (personal pronouns / horizontal and vertical point of view, distance (intimate, personal, social, public))
  - Context (time, space, causality...)
- *Level 2: (Inter)actions*
  - Verbal grammatical choices / vectors (e.g., gazes, arm lines...) or other visual choices:
    - Transitivity (Halliday, 2000) (a property of verbs that highlights the doings and relations between participants): material (e.g., ‘we help them’), behavioural (e.g., ‘they weep’), verbal (e.g., ‘she asks’), relational (e.g., ‘he is ill’), existential (e.g., ‘there is no food’) and mental (e.g., ‘we think’) processes
    - Active (e.g., ‘we save them’ / visual demand (gaze/visual address by the depicted subject)) and passive (e.g., ‘they are saved’ / visual offer (no gaze)) voice, nominalizations (e.g., growing cities)

- Tense (indication of time), modality (indication of certainty, necessity, likelihood...)
- *Level 3: Rhetorical figures*
  - Among others: metaphor (e.g., ‘the Earth is a machine’), simile (e.g., ‘they are like monsters’), metonym (e.g., ‘pointing finger’ stands for blame), contrast, inversion, euphemism, semantic reversal (misleading term which suggests inaccurate facts or circumstances)
- *Level 4: Narration*
  - The narrative point of view expressed by the (dominant) quoted sources; verbal/visual (de)legitimation of sources and/or their quotes
- *Level 5: Intertextuality*
  - Other (media)texts
  - Key events, part of the collective memory (e.g., 9/11) (Van Gorp, 2006)

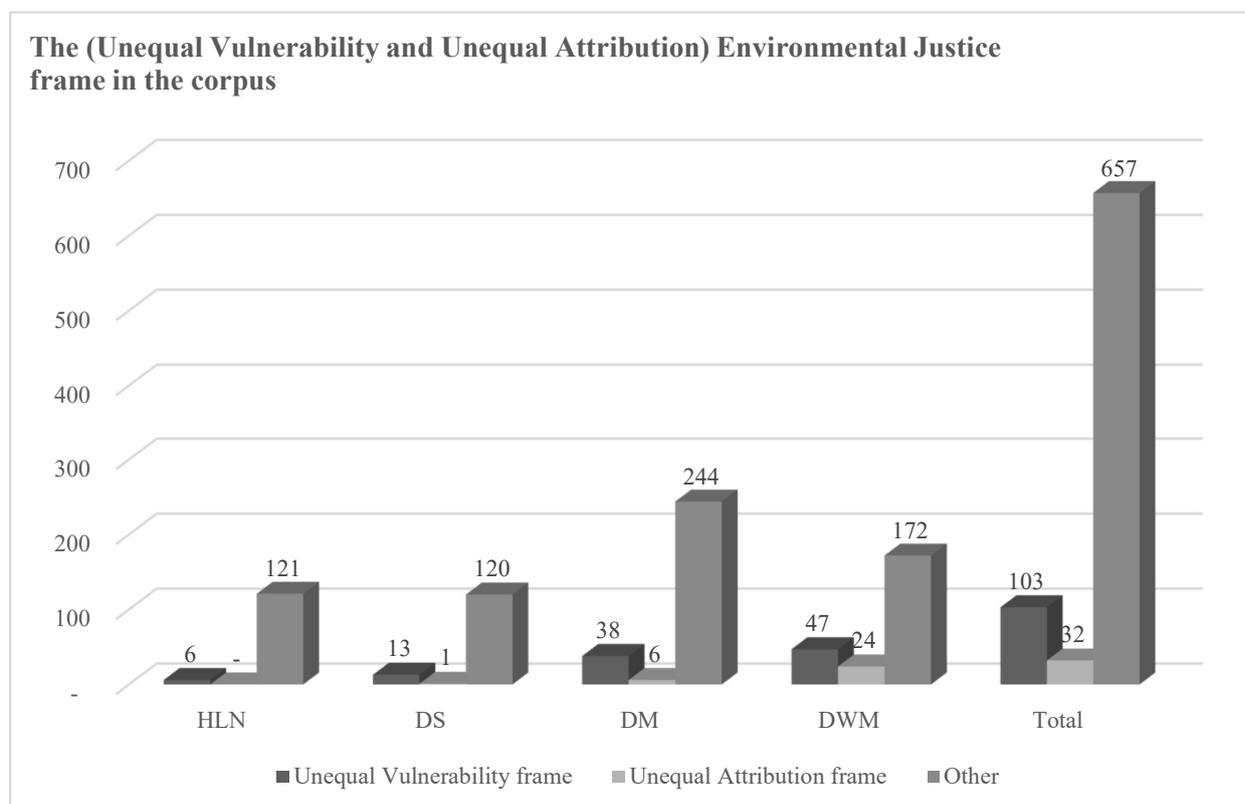
Since ‘[t]he essence of framing is sizing – magnifying or shrinking elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient’ (Entman, 1991: p.9), the following salience enhancing devices are also taken into account: attention (repetition, size, colour, tonal contrast, sharpness...), prominence (placement in the outlet, on a page or within the format of an article (headlines, subheads, leads, photo captions, lay-out, conclusions)...), and valence (affective, or graphic, quality of a visual) (Entman, 1991, 2004; Fahmy, 2010; Huxford, 2001; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006; Van Gorp, 2006).

## Results

The underlying narrative of the Environmental Justice frame can be summarized as follows: some (socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, gender...) groups in society are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change consequences (problem). A major responsibility for these problems lies with the most powerful and rich groups in society (cause). Mitigation and/or adaptation will need to provide a solution. This is the storyline both subframes share. Yet, each adds a distinctive (ideologically coloured) narrative layer.

The (hegemonic/anthropocentric) 'Unequal Vulnerability' subframe emphasizes the *internal vulnerability* of the victims (problem) to human-induced climate change (cause), hence calling for the *external intervention* of the 'western(ized) hero' (solution) (Doulton and Brown, 2009). The (counter-hegemonic/biocentric) 'Unequal Attribution' Environmental Justice frame, however, foregrounds the unjust attribution and/or deconstruction of common goods by elite groups as an *external pressure* (cause) that strongly harms the *internal resilience* of others in society (problem); yet, the latter is key to addressing climate change (solution).[3]

### Quantitative overview



**Figure 1.** These quantitative data mainly have indicative purposes. They provide an overview of all articles employing a multimodal, or at least visual or verbal, EJ subframe (if an article comprises divergent frames in the verbal and visual mode, only the frame category of the visual mode is shown here) (Chi-square (6) = 128.369,  $p < 0.001$ ).

As the graph illustrates, the Environmental Justice frame occurs in all outlets. It is, nevertheless, particularly prevalent in the mainstream (leftist) outlet DM, and, especially, in the alternative DWM. Although the Unequal Vulnerability subframe is, as expected, more characteristic for the mainstream coverage, it is also the main subframe in the alternative outlet. This illustrates its pervasiveness. The Unequal Attribution

subframe is indeed highly salient in the alternative website, although it is not exclusive to the latter. Perhaps, this indicates (the start of) its broader expansion. Summarizing, rather than a complete opposition, the mainstream-alternative field constitutes a continuum with the popular outlet (HLN) and centrist broadsheet (DS) at one extreme and the alternative (DWM) at the other. DM takes a middle position, although more strongly tilting towards DWM.

### *Qualitative discussion*

The mainstream outlets, which produce most Unequal Vulnerability subframes, mainly work with a rather small pool of (western) professional journalists. The alternative outlet, which has most counter-hegemonic frames, publishes more articles written by citizen journalists or locals, who often show familiarity with local situations and/or have extensive grassroots networks. Accordingly, the mainstream frame mainly focuses on top-down sources, such as western officials, scientists, or NGOs (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2015; Takahashi and Meisner, 2012). The bottom-up sources are scarce and, if present, usually function as ‘victim-witnesses’ rather than equal participants in the debate (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013). Besides, they do generally not provide us with a different perspective. As Farbotko (2005) argues, affected people often mimic the

discourse of other groups in order to be heard, or they are only allowed to do so by the media (Takahashi and Meisner, 2012). Therefore, Roosvall and Tegelberg (2015) contend that mainstream media reproduce injustice, preventing alternative voices from truly challenging the forces that oppress them (Fraser, 2005). *Unequal Attribution*, however, does amplify the voices of a diversity of counter-hegemonic sources including ordinary citizens, grassroots movements, local officials and experts. These sources tend to position themselves more often as resilient ‘victim-heroes’ (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013), telling different stories from those of the ‘victim-witnesses’ above. The top-down perspective is present as well, especially in mainstream media accounts. Western NGOs and other intermediaries also act as legitimated sources. Their stories are, however, far more inspired by the bottom-up perspective than the ones they (are allowed to) tell in the mainstream frame (Brulle, 2010; Greenberg, Knight and Westersund, 2011; Groshek and Han, 2011).

We will now focus on each of the reasoning devices separately and highlight how each takes shape in the frame and in the two subframes.

### *Causal Responsibility*

Both subframes depict responsibility as the interplay of natural forces and human action

and yet each elaborates on this idea differently.

*1) Frame: nature as raging actor.* On a first level, the underlying narrative (verbally) highlights climate change, including its consequences and causes (GHG), as a quite independent, but also extraordinary powerful agent (in material processes). For example: ‘That is much more powerful than Hurricane Katrina (...) and powerful enough to crush glass and eradicate trees’ (DWM, 11/11/2013) (comparison, intertextual reference, exemplars).

*Unequal Vulnerability subframe: sublimation.* Only the Unequal Vulnerability subframe, however, continually conveys this idea of a natural (i.e., largely human-external) agent in the visual mode, rendering it particularly salient. Depictions highlighting devastating consequences, as metonyms for natural causes (e.g., ruined cities standing for a powerful typhoon), are remarkably prevalent. Being mutually interchangeable and reminiscent of previous key events, they may evoke ‘sublimation’ (Chouliaraki, 2006): The focus on spectacular nature may encourage spectators to gaze at this fascinating ‘tableaux vivant’ from a distance. As such, decontextualizing (the causes of) the suffering, they are likely to set aside feelings of responsibility or engagement. In short, humans are largely backgrounded as the responsible agents (Grittmann, 2014).

2) *Frame: the human as underlying cause*. This sublimation may convey the sense of uncertainty concerning the exact responsibility of western(ized) human in the mainstream debate, or even conceal this responsibility (Doulton and Brown, 2009). Nevertheless, throughout their various realizations both subframes do not (completely) deny human responsibility. Frequently identified villains encompass the ‘developed’ or ‘industrialized countries’, ‘the West’, ‘we’ (collectivizations), or individualized politicians or countries. -Individualizations, in particular, may draw attention away from the bigger picture (Iyengar, 1990). Collectivizations often include the dominant in-group of the audience, which might encourage identification. On the visual level, this is usually sustained through gazes, facial expressions, and/or pointing (as metonym for guilt) (vectors) of the depicted victims vis-à-vis the spectator. Smoke stacks, which are metonyms for human emissions (Grittmann, 2014), are firmly situated in the space-time of the audience through verbal references. ‘Flanders’ (DWM, 01/08/2014), for instance, makes this responsibility manifest. Accordingly, the verbal focus lies on material/behavioural processes referring to (economic) growth, for example ‘to emit’ (Vihersalo, 2008).

2.1) *Unequal Attribution subframe: multi-layered debt*. However, only Unequal Attribution profoundly contextualizes this story of elite responsibility. In these

instances, climate change functions mostly as a vehicle to raise awareness for and to denounce the under-lying Euro-American anthropocentrism, which lies at the roots of various, interconnected injustices. In particular, perverse or counterproductive consequences of ‘development’ – loss or damage of habitats, local knowledge, democracy... – are targeted as the main causes of inequality and vulnerability (see above). Compared to realizations in the alternative outlet, mainstream realizations of this subframe tend to be less complex, focusing on one or a few under-lying injustices (Doulton and Brown, 2009).

The same groups of elite agents are now involved in quite different (mainly) material processes, such as ‘to rob’ or ‘to drive away’. For instance, ‘The US introduced language and culture to educate local, inexpensive labourers (...)to exploit the natural resources of the archipelago’ (DWM, 11/11/2013). Furthermore, there are several comparisons of the conscious human being as equally devastating or even worse than accidental natural forces. For example, ‘(...) a second wave will hit the Philippines soon: the wave of international emergency aid’ (DM, 13/11/2013, p.31) (metaphor). This may help to reveal the mainstream ideals of certain types of ‘charity’ or ‘aid’ as hegemonic semantic reversals: The flood of unorganized ‘western help’ renders the affected groups more helpless, for instance, by disrupting local networks. As this example also illustrates, it is often the broader processes (see also nominalizations or

personifications like ‘debts which should have been forgiven years ago’ (DWM, 30/12/2013)) which are targeted rather than (individual) human actors.

Due to their abstract character, these ideas are not often visually sustained, although some exceptions can be found. In an article on land grabbing, for example, two large photographs are juxtaposed. The one on the left depicts a local female farmer in a landscape where the original nature is partially supplanted by palm plantations. In the one on the right, a large truck shown from below symbolizes (metonym) the top-down forces (i.e., unsustainable cash cropping) which threaten the sustainable grassroots traditions (DM, 07/02/2013, p.12) (see, e.g., Shiva, 1988, 1993).

### *Problem definition*

*Frame: the victim group is sensitive and lacks coping abilities.*

*Unequal Vulnerability subframe: internal defect.* Failing to provide contextualization (Iyengar, 1990), Unequal Vulnerability usually represents the others as internally weak, or at most as victims of circumstances (Dreher and Voyer, 2015). In the process, physical vulnerability is uncritically linked to social, cultural, or political vulnerability (Farbotko, 2005). Identifying names or predications, like ‘vulnerable’, ‘victims’, or ‘the poor’, are common, as are visuals of wounded, starving, or dead people (e.g., DM,

14/11/2013, p.9). As western metaphors for vulnerability, depictions of elderly people, women, and children stand for the weakness and passivity of the victims as a whole (metonym) (Höijer, 2004) (e.g., HLN, 28/09/2013, p.8).

This focus on passivity may distance the audience from the ‘O/others’ (Chouliaraki, 2006). The same goes for the generalizing terms such as abstract wordings, uncountable or mass nouns (e.g., ‘the population’), or numbers and percentages. Furthermore, the victims are often referred to as (generic, exclusive) ‘they’. Visually, stereotypical elements deprive people of their individuality. Cultural and physiognomic attributes, like traditional garments (e.g., DM, 25/01/2014, p.54), for instance, signal a stereotypical group of others (‘cultural identity recognition’ (Fraser, 2000; Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013)). Also, we often encounter large groups of anonymous or faceless people, connected through similarity, consonance or overlap. These are presented in profile, from a public or social distance and a high angle, hence lacking much detail; that is, of course, if they are represented. Indeed, depictions often make people entirely invisible, ‘Othering’ them completely (Chouliaraki, 2006). In these cases, we usually see a ‘primitive’ or devastated landscape from above (e.g., air views of flooded areas, maps), or from an eye level. The Other is reduced to a dot, while the spectacular replaces contextualization (e.g., DS, 27/11/2013, p.21).

Furthermore, relational and non-transitive behavioural processes dominate in the visual and verbal mode. The former, in particular, reinforce the idea of these groups as

merely ‘being’ or ‘(not) having’, by allocating the attributes or names to them identified above. Both depict the victims as not or barely interacting with their environment, let alone improving their situation, for example, ‘they have no means’ or ‘they wait’. Even if they interact with their environment in material processes, they merely hold ‘conditional agency’ (Chouliaraki, 2006): Their action is involuntary and/or will not fundamentally change their situation, for instance, ‘they bury the dead’.. Finally, dehumanizing processes (nominalizations, personifications), for instance, ‘Extremely poor settlements are expanding in these [vulnerable] regions’ (DWM, 26/07/2012), add to the idea of vulnerability as an objective ‘fact’, usually omitting all human actors.

Frequently, the victims also play a ‘*patient*’ role (*goal, beneficiary, or recipient*). For instance, ‘Some of them had to wait for days (...) *to be saved* from drowning’ (DWM, 12/02/2013). Visually, the lack of gaze, and thus contact, between the spectator and the depicted victims also foregrounds the latter as passive others (offer). A minority do make visual contact by looking the spectator in the eye. However, they merely seem to formulate a demand for help, as suggested by their passive state or facial expressions. For example, two starving women, holding their emaciated babies, stare helpless at the spectator (HLN, 09/08/2012, p.12). The lack of (visual/verbal) tense reinforces the idea of timelessness of this passivity.

*Unequal Attribution subframe: external victimization.* Rejecting this hierarchical view, the Unequal Attribution subframe provides a more balanced picture of vulnerability. The idea of innocent victims, which is a precondition for the audience to engage (Höjjer, 2004), is not completely discarded. Yet, the suffering is contextualized as the consequence of particular beliefs and actions (Iyengar, 1990). As such, the audience encounters participants who are neither agents nor victims, neither fully equal to them nor completely different.

Identifications are not uncommon. The child is, for instance, still used as a visual metaphor (e.g., DM, 13/11/2013, p.31). However, through the balancing with neutral or empowering (visual) descriptions, like the metaphor ‘father and mother’, the focus lies on the resilience of the locals, who are caring for their most vulnerable citizens. Other functionalizations are ‘farmers’ or ‘employers’. These may start to facilitate the ‘status recognition’ of individuals as full partners in social interactions, thereby delegitimizing depictions of others as deficient (Fraser, 2000; Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013).

Individualizing terms like names (i.e., nominations) or descriptions (e.g., age, living conditions) often foreground locals, for example, ‘Shajahan Mallik, a 53 year old former fisherman’ (DWM, 21/12/2012). Likewise, most pictures zoom in on one or a few individuals, who tend to be shown frontally, at eye level and from a personal or intimate distance. Salient cultural or physiognomic attributes are exchanged for a focus on

personal traits and other details. Such individualizing choices may humanize the victims, encouraging engagement.

These representational choices are balanced with distancing features. ‘They’ is still the dominant pronoun, some verbal generalizations can be found and some participants are depicted at a public distance viewed from the back. Besides, only a minority of the visually represented victims are also verbally identified. This may help to depict the individuals as representatives of broader groups, giving more weight to the discussion (Chouliaraki, 2006). However, it might also confront the audience with the dominant western (top-down) perspective (and action) which a majority of them does not question, demonstrating how it still victimizes the others.

Balance is also key to the dominant processes: The participants are often engaged in behavioural or material processes comparable to those found in the Unequal Vulnerability subframe, highlighting their victim role on the most apparent level. Another part, however, addresses the more profound processes which underlie this victimization, for example, ‘The smaller ones cannot compete with the large farms (...)’ (DWM, 20/12/2013). Likewise, the prevalence of relational processes and passivizations is reminiscent of the hegemonic paradigm. By adding causes (circumstances) or foregrounding rather than deleting the responsible agents, however, the Unequal Attribution subframe provides contextualization. For instance, ‘Women and girls are affected more severely as they are the last ones allowed to eat (...) because

of their social status' (DWM, 24/08/2013). Visually, a lack of gaze might, again, distance the victims (as passive others). However, the fact that the victims are taking action rather than passively waiting for help, suggests their underlying resilience which is often overlooked or denied from the traditional perspective. The lack of temporal contextualization, then, adds a sense of timelessness to the idea of (denied) resilience.

#### *Treatment recommendation*

##### *Frame: mitigation and adaptation.*

*Unequal Vulnerability subframe: external aid.* The main agents responsible for solving the problems are identified as the villains who are said to be causing them (see above), or at least those who are 'developed', 'rich', and 'powerful' enough to provide solutions (Grittmann, 2014). More specific (individualized) actors are, for instance, 'the minister of Development and Cooperation' (identification) or 'donors' (functionalization). The dominant in-group of the audience is regularly included or implied, which may encourage identification. Accordingly, the visual mode often invites the spectator to – literally – look down on the victims from a high angle. Alternatively, top-down agents are depicted within the time-space of the others, like an airplane (metonym) which is literally hovering over the victims (DS, 12/11/2013, p.6). Clearly, neither the superiority

of the dominant classes nor of the system they defend is questioned (Doulton and Brown, 2009).

The material and behavioural processes, like ‘to help’ or ‘to support’, endorse the idea of special agency of these actors. While this ‘helping’ is often merely suggested in the visuals (e.g., by the high angle), some of the actions are literally going on in the pictures such as soldiers carrying victims to a plane (DM, 13/11/2013, p.4). Apart from reducing emissions by means of a ‘green economy’ or ‘emission trading’ (mitigation), the elites show charity by transferring ‘money’, ‘emergency aid’, or ‘technology’ to the ‘backward regions’ (e.g., DS, 18/10/2013, p.21). Numbers are, for instance, often very salient. This ‘redistribution’ (Fraser, 2005) will stimulate the development of the victims (adaptation). As discussed, however, this exact ‘help’ is deconstructed by the Unequal Attribution subframe as a semantic reversal.

In some cases the (individualized) victims are legitimated as actors. Nevertheless, their (mainly) verbal action mostly reinforces the idea of vulnerability and ‘conditional agency’ (Chouliaraki, 2006). The affected groups cannot fundamentally improve their own situation, but look to elite intermediators for help. For instance, ‘ “I call upon the world leaders to finally recognize the reality. (...)”, he [Philippine negotiator Yeb Saño] said, with tears in his eyes.’ (DS, 08/12/2012, p.36). So, if (elite) ‘victim-witnesses’ (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013) may speak for themselves (‘I’/‘We’), they are only allowed to second the hegemonic perspective (Dreher and Voyer, 2015; Farbotko,

2005). Summarizing, being fully or largely prevented from making first-order claims concerning fundamental aspects of justice, these groups are ‘misframed’ (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013, 2015). They are acting mostly as ‘objects of charity or benevolence’ (Fraser, 2005: p.77).

*Unequal Attribution subframe: (external restoration of) internal resilience.* As Fraser (2005) argues the neo-liberal system – as major vehicle of injustice – can only be thoroughly transformed if struggles for economic (‘redistribution’), cultural (‘status recognition’), and political (‘representation’) justice are combined. Participatory parity is the goal and the means (Sen, 1999, 2009).

The non-hegemonic group is recognized in a ‘victim-hero’ role (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013), as ‘communities who are organized and able to react’ (functionalization) or ‘locally embedded organizations’ (identification). We often encounter humanized individuals, feeling, reflecting, and acting on their own fate. Mainstream or, particularly, alternative arenas (e.g., the Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples (DWM, 21/11/2013)), including the media themselves, (are) frequently (said to) allow these groups to speak up, legitimizing them as ‘sovereign agents’ (Chouliaraki, 2006: pp.158—159). Material (and behavioural) active processes complement the verbal processes, for example, ‘[a]nd now, when these climate changes are the produce of human behaviour, we can tackle these consequences drawing upon

our traditional knowledge and the circumstances imposed upon us by modernity’ (DWM, 18/04/2012). Note the use of the (exclusive) personal pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’ (Dreher and Voyer, 2015).

Many traditional societies have been living in close interaction with nature for a long time and hence possess valuable ‘knowledge’ and ‘traditions’, such as ‘climate clever agriculture’ (DWM, 27/08/2012). This traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) may be highly valuable for living through precarious situations, including recent climate change consequences, and might also be instructive for the western(ized) humans who are less experienced in this regard (Shiva, 1988, 1993). The close interconnectedness of humans and nature is visually highlighted through the depiction of circumstances. Spatial contexts are regularly characterized by harmonious nature, showing the constructive traces of human interaction. For instance, a female vendor is completely surrounded by fruits and vegetables, blending with them through proximity or the consonance of bright colours (DWM, 18/04/2012). The lack of temporal contextualization conveys the sense of long-term traditions necessary for the survival of multi-natural worlds (Shiva, 1988, 1993). Furthermore, there are more general references to locals’ resilience or superior familiarity with their own local culture and society (see Sen, 1999, 2009). In mainstream realizations these are more salient than the TEK. Summarizing, cultural (and natural) pluralism may reduce the vulnerability of all while allowing for more sustainable ways of living.

The idea that the victim-agents have something to offer, rather than demand, is also visually highlighted. Many depicted actors do not look the spectator in the eye, foregrounding them as sovereign agents (Chouliaraki, 2006) who do not require the help of others. They independently act in material processes, for instance managing their environment in sustainable ways (e.g., DWM, 31/01/2013), which we are invited to observe, but not to intervene with. Therefore, instead of us offering them our knowledge and means, they provide us with alternative knowledge (inversion of roles). This may foster a sense of inequality, regarding differential experiences and responsibilities. That is, however, slightly mitigated by depictions which suggest contact among equals. Some visuals represent the locals as looking the spectator in the eye: Their non-verbal communication (e.g., a confident smile) concretizes these as demands for respecting their rights and traditions (e.g., DWM, 21/12/2012). In a similar vein, the verbal mode depicts the elites in a minor agent role: They are responsible for restoring the (economic/cultural/political) rights of the South and allowing the locals to participate as full agents. Accordingly, many material processes in which the dominant groups are involved refer to deeper levels of responsibility and go beyond the reduction of GHG emissions. For example, ‘The restoration and protection of the collective progenitorial knowledge of indigenous people needs to be guaranteed’ (DWM, 18/04/2012). As such, being reduced to – largely voiceless – villain-onlookers or facilitators, the elites are subject to misrecognition and misrepresentation (Fraser, 2005).

This is most salient throughout the alternative outlet. The mainstream outlet, where it is mostly western NGOs and other intermediaries who speak, tends to nuance this depiction in the verbal mode: The elites play a more substantial and positive role as villain-heroes or partners. It is, for instance, argued that local knowledge should be united with top-down solutions (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013) (e.g., ‘employ the local knowledge and involve local citizens’ (DM, 13/11/2013, p.31)). That is no surprise. It is unlikely for NGO representatives to completely do away with the responsibility of their own organization, and therefore, their *raison d’être* (Greenberg, Knight and Westersund, 2011). Simultaneously, however, the political representation and status recognition of the bottom-up groups is backgrounded (Fraser, 2005).

<b>Environmental Justice Frame</b>					
Whereas some – socio-economic, ethnic, cultural gender... – groups (mainly, but not exclusively (in) the South) are less responsible for climate change, they (will) pay the bill: They are more sensitive to changes and/or lack coping abilities.	The most powerful and dominant groups (mainly, but not exclusively (in) the West / westernized) carry a large responsibility, for the loss of lives, livelihoods, cultures... beyond their time-spaces.	A combination of mitigation (GHG reduction) and (local) adaptation can solve the problems.	-The current acting of the ('western(ized)') elites is immoral and indefensible (i.e., overly selfish) towards other groups in society, who live beyond the (cultural) time-space of the former -Recognition (vis-à-vis contempt) of other lives, livelihoods, cultures	<p><b><u>Participant and process depiction:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The elites (mainly, but not exclusively (in) the West / westernized), climate change: responsible agents (cause)</li> <li>-Cause (goal): elite ('western(ized)') development, wrong (i.e., 'misguided') priorities and beliefs (e.g., egocentric economic prosperity, contempt for 'others'), climate disasters – maldistribution, misrecognition</li> <li>-Particular human(s) (groups) (with certain socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, gender... backgrounds): responsible agents (solution)</li> <li>-Object of help: mitigation + adaptation (with a certain role for green economy / sustainable development) – redistribution, recognition</li> <li>-Particular bottom-up groups (mainly, but not exclusively (in) the South): patients</li> <li>-Unwanted object (goal): maldistribution (vulnerability, e.g., socio-economic loss), misrecognition (e.g. of certain ways of living, organizing one's life and economy...)</li> <li>-Context: continuous time, (mainly) human environments</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Rhetorical devices:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Metaphors, hyperbole, numerals... emphasizing the extraordinary natural forces hitting certain groups</li> <li>-Contrast / juxtaposition: 'us' versus 'them'</li> <li>-Pigeonholing; deletion / concealing of (full) natural web</li> <li>-Key events / intertextual references: Typhoon Haiyan (2013), Tsunami (2004)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“We pollute and they pay the price.” (DWM, 20/09/2013)</li> <li>-“As a result of the Kyoto protocol they [the industrialized countries] were obliged to reduce their GHG emissions during the past 15 years. They had taken on that responsibility because they bear a historical heritage for (...) gases which cause a gradual temperature rise on Earth.” (DS, 19/11/2013, p. 14)</li> <li>-“(...) the industrialized countries have the responsibility to support adaptation in the developing countries.” (MO, 12/11/2012)</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Environmental Justice Frame matrix.**

Problem definition	Causal responsibility	Solution	Moral basis	Framing devices	Examples
Some ('bottom-up') socio-economic groups possess certain internal characteristics which render them more vulnerable to and less able to cope with climate change consequences	Man-made climate change (consequences / causes) are a ((n) external) threat. Due to their development the elites in society bear a major responsibility for emitting GHG. Besides, many of them refuse to profoundly change habits.	Their causal responsibility, and/or at least their power, knowledge and means entitle the ('top-down') elites as main actors. They need to mitigate their GHG emissions and aid the most vulnerable to adapt, mainly by means of a green economy and (the transfer of) technological development and other accomplishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Wrongs need to be rectified for the sake of the helpless 'other'.</li> <li>-The developed groups have the obligation to share their accomplishments with undeveloped others, help them to develop and protect themselves.</li> <li>-The right to live and to develop as 'Universal Justice'.</li> <li>-Charity.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Participant and process depiction:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Climate change, (individualized) elites ('the West'), 'exclusive we': responsible actors (cause + solution) / agents (mostly economic material processes), carriers or behaviors</li> <li>-Cause (goal): GHG emissions, industrialization, refusal to change habits</li> <li>-Object of help (goal): emission reduction, efficiency, renewable energy, green economy/development, techno-fix + (developmental) aid, charity, transfer (of money, means, knowledge) – redistribution</li> <li>-The 'others', 'the South' (generalized): 'vulnerable' - patients / carriers or identified, behaviors, patients (goal, beneficiary or recipient), conditional agents, sayers</li> <li>-Unwanted object (goal): maldistribution (mainly socio-economic loss)</li> <li>-Deletion of circumstances (cause), agent deletion in passive processes, factors causing vulnerability as independent agents (processes): decontextualization of broader responsibilities (mainly the hegemonic system)</li> <li>-Overlexicalization: GHG/nature (as an agent), '(un)developed' and comparable terms/ideas (predicates)</li> <li>-Context: continuous time (timelessness of passivity, vulnerability as internal/eternal state) / mainly human environments (nature: background, source, deleted...)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Rhetorical devices:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Symbol/metonym: the helpless child</li> <li>-Metaphor: nature as a machine, sublime nature, war</li> <li>-Contrast, juxtaposition: 'us' (the elites – 'West') versus 'them' (the others – 'South'), hero versus villain, man versus nature</li> <li>-Numbers: lives lost (and lives saved), economic loss</li> <li>-Concatenation of verbal/visual images of passivity, helplessness, destruction (visual sublimation of natural destruction)</li> <li>-Presupposition: anthropocentric worldview as given</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Narrative point of view:</u></b> Prevalence of ('Western') elite voices (e.g., politicians), NGOs, or elite representative of subaltern groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-“The US did not ratify the Kyoto protocol out of fear that it would harm its economic interests.” (DS, 11/12/2013, p.6)</li> <li>-“(…) the combination of geography, poverty, unsafe constructions, and the extreme population growth.” (DM, 11/13/2013, p.4)</li> <li>-Two starving women, holding their emaciated babies, look at the spectator, their gaze expressing a demand for help. (HLN, 08/09/2012, p.12)</li> <li>-“The number of people who have fled for the consequences of climate change has risen to 31 million.” (DS, 05/24/2013, p.21)</li> <li>-Slogans on banners during a demonstration of locals: “Save us. We are drowning”. (DWM, 11/12/2013)</li> <li>-“(…) sharing green technology with the developing countries.” (DM, 06/23/2012, p.1)</li> </ul>

**Table 4: Unequal Vulnerability Subframe matrix.**

Problem definition	Causal responsibility	Solution	Moral basis	Framing devices	Examples
<p>Some ('bottom-up') groups – mainly those who do not meet the western elite ideal (i.e., 'who are underdeveloped') – more than others are largely deprived of their livelihoods, cultural traditions, voice..., and thus resilience, due to external pressures. As such, they are disproportionately vulnerable. Climate change is the latest pressure exacerbating this victimized state</p>	<p>The ('top-down') 'western(ized)' elites – who sustain the hegemonic worldview – appropriate 'common goods' to themselves, in a process which they call 'development' (directed towards a 'western' elite ideal). This (neo)-colonialism / capitalist imperialism results in a number of interconnected injustices: environmental, economic, social, cultural, political...</p>	<p>The victimized ('southern') groups need to be respected, and allowed to act, as ('sovereign') equals (i.e. participatory parity as means and goal). Drawing on their (local) experiences or cultures, they may provide (biocentric) alternatives, with an eye on local / diverse needs and long-term adaptation / mitigation. As such, they can improve their own situation, but also inspire other groups to work (together) on a (funda)mental transformation</p>	<p>-Multiple, locally defined justices, which are different but equally valuable as the western ideal</p>	<p><b><u>Participant and process depiction:</u></b>          -Political / corporate elites ('western(ized)'), NGOs, the hegemonic system, climate change: responsible agents (cause)          -Cause: the hegemonic system, evident in 'green economy', 'emission (trading)', 'development', 'aid', 'land grabbing'...          -Particular bottom-up groups ('the South'), 'exclusive collective we' / 'I' (generalized / individualized, identified / functionalized): patients (problem) + agents (solution)          -Particular (i.e., 'western(ized)') elites / 'inclusive we': secondary responsible agents (solution)          -Unwanted object: multi-layered vulnerability, e.g., climate-induced economic loss + land grabbing, disregarding / destructing of alternative knowledge or cultures (e.g., climate clever agriculture), no democratic voice (e.g., in international debates)          -Object of help: sustainable development / green economy, scientific knowledge, means (mainly top-down) + biocentric alternatives (e.g., traditional knowledge)          -Reversal of hegemonic 'us-them' roles: others close to 'us' (humanization)          -Context: continuous time (timelessness of bottom-up resilience, harmony ...) / (clearly situated) human environments, but some recognition of the holistic nature of the world</p> <p><b><u>Rhetorical devices:</u></b>          -Symbol / metonym: the 'parent' looking after his/her children, the (southern) hero / 'militant'          -Metaphor: the elites as predator          -Concatenation of verbal / visual images of resilience, harmony, activity          -Key events / intertextual references: 'Principles of Environmental Justice' (1991)</p> <p><b><u>Narration:</u></b>          -Sources: prevalence of locals (e.g., farmers), grassroots movements or officials, as well as ('western') NGOs speaking on their behalf</p>	<p>-“(...) a second wave will hit the Philippines soon: the wave of international emergency aid.” (DM, 11/13/2013, p. 31)          -A father and mother running from the devastation caused by typhoon Haiyan, carry / protect their child. (DM, 11/13/2013, p.31)          -“The indigenous leaders show an enormous generosity, teaching us a different story.” (DWM, 09/15/2013)          -“(...) the Cuban delegation did not agree with the tight focus on 'green economy' (...).” (DWM, 06/15/2012)          -“(...) we combine scientific weather forecasts with traditional knowledge.” (MO, 06/29/2012)          -A Bangladesh farmer looks us proudly in the eyes, showing the produce of his combined farming project. (DWM, 12/21/2012)</p>

**Table 5: Unequal Attribution Subframe matrix.**

## Discussion and conclusions

The main goal of this article was to provide a comprehensive multimodal discussion of the differential realizations of the Environmental Justice frame. We can now summarize the frame and its subframes, proposing the following frame matrices.

The Unequal Vulnerability subframe matrix highlights the most salient devices, for instance, the contrast between active ‘us’ and passive and collectivized ‘them’, used to present the others as victims in need of help (see table 5). As such, this subframe signals injustice, potentially bringing about the ‘politics of pity’ (Chouliaraki, 2006; Höijer, 2004). Yet, the only justice claims made are those for (limited) redistribution and identity recognition, which fall well within the boundaries of the socio-economic system: The fundamental problems produced by the hegemonic system remain unquestioned (Fraser, 2005; Shiva, 1988, 1993). Clearly, the subframe only ‘looks in one direction’ (de Onís, 2012), i.e., the climate problem.

The Unequal Attribution subframe, on the other hand, employs devices like the reversal of alignments (see table 5), which may help to give rise to three-dimensional justice claims: (multi-level) redistribution, status recognition and political representation (Fraser, 2000, 2005; Shiva, 1988, 1993). Playing around with, and questioning, the positionality of the audience, this subframe is more likely to evoke ‘reflexive identification’, encouraging the audience to engage with their ‘fellow human beings’,

while contemplating and acting more systematically upon the *why* of the suffering ('reflexive identification') (Chouliaraki, 2006). Thus, only the introduction of alternative views urges us to 'look in both/several directions' (de Onís, 2012).

As expected, Unequal Vulnerability prevails in the mainstream newspapers, while Unequal Attribution is characteristic for the alternative outlet. However, we found that the Unequal Vulnerability subframe not only dominates the mainstream media, but also the alternative outlet (see Brand and Brunnengräber, 2012). This highlights the pervasiveness of the hegemonic thinking. Counter-voices are prevented from truly entering the debate and find their messages mis/reframed by the media (consciously or unconsciously, e.g., due to practical restraints or pervasive pictorial/ideological traditions (see Chouliaraki, 2006)) or at least are/feel obliged to adapt their views to the boundaries set by the hegemonic groups (Farbotko, 2005; Groshek and Han, 2011). Moreover, our analysis demonstrates that the counter-hegemonic subframe is also qualitatively weaker. Unequal Vulnerability is verbally *and* visually well-developed, with strong, culturally resonant symbols and strategies in both modes which seem to mutually reinforce each other. Unequal Attribution, however, is struggling to find a salient and recognizable multimodal – and particularly, visual – language to depict complex and less familiar views (Grittmann, 2014). Its lack of consonance, visibility or unambiguity (Reese, 2001) does not help its case and it only seems to lead to a Catch-22 situation.

	<b>The subaltern groups</b> = Us (dominant in-group counter-hegemonic frame) = Them (dominant out-group Western audience)	<b>The elites</b> = Us (dominant in-group Western audience) = Them (dominant out-group counter-hegemonic frame)
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Victim-heroes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not intrinsically passive (victims), but <b>victimized</b> by the elites</li> <li>• <b>Resilient</b> bottom-up groups, drawing on (biocentric) local experience, traditions, knowledge.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>‘Local justices’</b>: stemming from/catering to needs of local nature-cultures</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Partners</b>, or even <b>leaders</b>, in addressing climate change</li> </ul> = <b>Cultural status recognition, political representation, (economic / material) redistribution</b>	<b>(Villain-)heroes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Leaders</b> of the climate change battle, due to responsibility and / or accomplishments</li> <li>• <b>Solutions drawing on achievements elites</b> (techno-economic solutions, development, transfer of technology, money, means, aid...)</li> </ul> = <b>(Economic/material) redistribution</b>
<b>Negative</b>	<b>Victim-witnesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Backward’, ‘undeveloped’...</li> <li>• Eternal and internal <b>vulnerability</b></li> <li>• Passively waiting for external help</li> <li>• <b>Cultural identity recognition of local traditions</b> (like hunting, (livestock) farming, dances or stories)</li> </ul>	<b>Villain(-facilitator)s</b> Holding on to <b>Euro-American anthropocentrism</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Source of <b>multilayered debt</b>: environmental debt, social debt, economic debt, cultural debt, political debt...</li> <li>• Reproducing stories (frames) which naturalize this thinking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>‘Universal Justice’</b>: The right to develop (towards a Western ideal)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Secondary agent role: cultural status recognition, political representation, (economic) redistribution</b></li> </ul>

**Table 5: Unmarked: the emphasis inspired by the ‘top-down’ positionality of the Unequal Vulnerability subframe. Marked: the emphasis fostered by the ‘bottom-up’ positionality of the Unequal Attribution subframe. Based on the ideological square of van Dijk (1998, p. 33).**

Besides, combining our findings with Van Dijk's (1998: p.33) ideological square (Table 5) lays bare the fundamental problem that both subframes share: their essentializing of antagonisms. Hero-victim or hero-villain dualisms tend to oversimplify complex realities, cultivating romanticized stereotypes like the 'white hero' or 'noble savage' (Dreher and Voyer, 2015). As such, they are likely to prevent cooperation or debate: They may disengage the 'villains' or 'victims' as they are delegitimized and reduced to listeners, who are told they cannot understand the situation unless it is explained to them by the 'heroes'. Put differently, the recognition and representation of one group goes hand in hand with the misrecognition and misrepresentation of the other (Groshek and Han, 2011). Yet, dialogue between various equal players and viewpoints (i.e., responsiveness/inclusiveness (Groshek and Han, 2011)) is *the* necessary precondition for truly addressing the multi-levelled problems (Brulle, 2010; Fraser, 2000, 2005; Sen, 1999, 2009; Shiva, 1993). Currently, however, the two subframes mainly seem to inspire parallel monologues (i.e., they are largely exclusive and nonresponsive).

Nevertheless, it remains important that the audience is provided with non-hegemonic *and* counter-hegemonic perspectives (i.e., subframes), across outlets and within the scope of single outlets. This might already help to inform and engage citizens, although requiring more active efforts to explore and balance viewpoints (Groshek and Han, 2011).

In this regard, it is interesting that our research is one of the first to demonstrate the – limited – presence of Unequal Attribution beyond the ‘marginal’ context of the alternative outlet. This is crucial, as it is the only way to reach a broader audience (Groshek and Han, 2011; Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2015). The subframe has been adapted in this context (see the ‘crisis discourse’ (Doulton and Brown (2009)), where intermediary (i.e., less extreme) actors are the main sources. Being largely stripped from its ‘collective action’ layer (Taylor, 2000), it partly deconstructs the ‘victim-hero’ role of the ‘South’ (Roosvall and Tegelberg, 2013), while reinstating western(ized) human as ‘villain-hero’. Yet, the agency and status as legitimate sources of the bottom-up groups tends to be overly de-emphasized. Accordingly, these realizations also fail to depict collaborations or dialogue among true equals. They might, however, already constitute a less complex and more engaging realization of Unequal Attribution to the western target audience and possibly offer a glance of a less extreme alternative subframe.

In conclusion, even when reproducing the hegemonic subframe with the intention to denounce injustice, the media end up largely reinforcing and enacting injustice. The available alternatives are promising, yet insufficient. Clearly, only if resulting from the dialogue among various groups in society, an alternative Environmental Justice subframe might move away from the extreme and become a real tool for collaborative change. We hope that our paper helps to render the current problems (and subframes)

more tangible, raising awareness and inciting more discussion among academics, media producers, politicians, NGOs and citizens from various backgrounds.

In particular, we hope to reach those concerned with representations of environmental justice in media and communication. Indeed, it is important for researchers working in various cultural contexts, fields of communication or disciplines to be able to critically assess and compare (multimodal) accounts of environmental justice across time and space. As such, they may provide valuable contributions to the debate, raising awareness for current practices and suggesting, or pointing out, alternative, more balanced approaches. As such, they may contribute to a fuller understanding of environmental justice, and potentially, more appropriate responses. Our comprehensive framework is one of the first which may stimulate and facilitate such important scholarly work. Besides, it allows for translation to the professional field.

We illustrate the latter, proposing some preliminary suggestions for communication and media professionals. We do this, however, with the understanding that fundamental change can only stem from multi-level evolutions within and outside of media organizations (e.g., Reese, 2001). Based on our findings as well as insights drawn from slow journalism (Gess, 2012) and (the preliminary analysis of) our semi-structured interviews with journalists and editors from mainstream and alternative media, we suggest these initial steps towards fairer and more responsible journalism: Journalists

and editors should provide more context. This could be done by consulting other (bottom-up) sources and by not exclusively looking at the problems through a (professional) western camera lens. The Inter Press Service News Agency (IPS), which often works with local reporters and photographers, can be helpful, as well as NGOs with strong local ties. Besides, it is necessary to question the current preoccupation with ‘what will sell’, and accordingly, news values like consonance, novelty, unambiguity or visibility (Reese, 2001). Further, professionals ought to become more aware of stereotypes, like the suffering child. If those cannot be avoided – due to a lack of alternatives, for instance – they can at least be put into perspective. Finally, it is important to ask questions like “who is ‘us’ in this narrative, and who is ‘them’?”, or “who are the heroes, villains and victims?”. Most likely, the story can be rewritten to make those (pro)nouns more inclusive and interactive.

### **Acknowledgements**

The authors thank Luc Pauwels, professor of Visual Culture at the University of Antwerp, Arran Stibbe, reader in Ecological Linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire and Harry Owen, Ph.D student in Ecological Linguistics at the University of Gloucestershire, for comments that greatly improved earlier versions of this manuscript.

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## Endnotes

[1] To keep our discussion sufficiently comprehensive, we will use the homogenizing labels ‘the West’ and ‘the South’ to refer to these two groups. As discussed, however, the former also includes the ‘westernized’ elites in the South, while the latter also comprises the affected (‘lacking’) groups in the West.

[2] Given our aim to provide a synchronic discussion of the most recent situation, the end date of the research period was determined based on the starting date of our research project. A two year period allows for the analysis of a sufficiently large and diverse number of articles/frames.

[3] The frame matrices represent the most abstract versions of the (sub)frames.

Although actual realizations of each (sub)frame may differ somewhat across the various outlets/articles, we consider them as the same (sub)frames as long as they stay largely within the bounds of the matrices (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989).



