
THE GREEN LANGUAGE OF CHANGE

AN ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS BY GREENPEACE IN BRAZIL

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INTRODUCTION

Tropical sounds fill the forest with life, sometimes rain rolls in silently or falls shamelessly hard from heaven after a long hot day that made believe there was nothing more than blue sky and sunshine in the future. Unfortunately, on the borders of the forest, this tranquillity is disturbed by the sound of saws and rain is no longer enough to put out the spreading fires.

The Amazon is the largest rainforest in the world and thus an important factor in the debate on global warming. The forest reaches over nine countries with the vast majority (58%) located in the north-west of Brazil (Greenpeace International). In the past years, deforestation has increased drastically because of human settlement for cattle or the supposedly natural wildfires that have been eating the forest at a rapid pace. The NGO Greenpeace functions from different headquarters all over the world to raise awareness for environmental problems through varied methods of campaigning. They devote a large part of their campaigns to their battle against the deforestation in this area and herewith do not shy away from addressing the current Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro and his anti-environment policies. The first Greenpeace campaigns in 1971, against the nuclear bomb testing in Alaska and the large-scale whale fishing, mainly distributed photographs as “the bearing witness” of these events to show that they do not go unnoticed by the public (Doyle). Today, with greater access to the internet together with the growing discourse of environmentalist politics, Greenpeace makes use of different platforms and strategies to amplify their voice. They now focus more on targeting the big polluters and politically influential people more personally. When it comes to the Amazon, this change in campaigning may mainly be influenced by the threatening environment policies of Bolsonaro, the sitting president of Brazil. The question that arises is: How do the Greenpeace Amazon campaigns (2016-2020) and the changing political climate of environmental policies by Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil influence each another?

The time frame of this question is of great importance since the “government ... took control of the presidency in 2016 through an administrative coup d’etat” (Rojas et. al, 960). This coup introduced to the change in the political climate of Brazil that became even more drastic when Jair Bolsonaro took office as the president in 2019. Consequently, it becomes interesting to align the campaigns of Greenpeace with the stances of Bolsonaro to understand the rhetoric of image and text in the environmental debate on the Amazon rainforest. Previous Presidents such as Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula) and his successor Dilma Rousseff were more engaged with the preservation of the environment and they showed greater responsibility for the Amazon forest. In Lula’s speech for the fifth Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen (2009), he was very vocal not only about accepting help from other countries. Lula also promised that Brazil would be investing sixteen billion dollars a year until 2020 in the reduction of greenhouse effects.

Greenpeace, an important voice in the activism against climate change, has offered its first solution to deforestation in the Amazon in 2006 through the Soy Moratorium. This campaign started in 2006 after Greenpeace released their “‘Eating Up the Amazon’ report, which exposed the links between deforestation in the Amazon, soy and meat” (Brittlebank). More specifically, due to the Moratorium, the deforestation has dropped by 86 per cent in the surveyed areas in the past ten years (Brittlebank). The Moratorium has been “renewed indefinitely since May 2016” and found great support of large consumer companies such as Mac Donalds (Brittlebank). This solution shows the power and importance of campaigning, but how did Greenpeace continue to shape their following campaigns?

My analysis will be narrowed down to three campaigns of the preservation of the Amazon forest by Greenpeace, and mainly focus on how these campaigns and the Bolsonaro administration show a mutual interaction or influence. I aim to find out whether Greenpeace’s

rhetoric shows flexibility in opposing challenges within the political climate, and whether the political agenda of the administration acknowledges the campaigns of Greenpeace in their future decisions. The analysis will be conducted through historical research of the decisions that have been made by the sitting presidents of Brazil, in combination with a visual analysis of a selection of campaigns by Greenpeace that concern the Amazon. Ultimately, these two analyses will be interpreted and chronologically aligned for probable (dis-)similarities and influences.

In the first chapter, I will chronologically dissect the basics of my analysis by introducing the administrations of Michel Temer (2016 – 2018) and Jair Bolsonaro (2019 – 2020) and their most influential actions that stand in direct connection to the question of the Amazon and environment. In the second chapter, I will conduct a visual analysis of three Greenpeace Campaigns which concern the battle against the destruction of the Amazon since Bolsonaro took office. The analysis will include the following campaigns: Oil Spill and Burnt Forest Action in Brasilia (2019), Ice Sculptures of Melting Leaders Trump and Bolsonaro in New York (2020), and Monument to Destruction in the Pantanal in Brazil (2020). The visual analysis will be informed by the theory of “mythologies” (1957) by Roland Barthes to explore the signification of the selected images which accompany the campaigns. In the third, and final, chapter, I aim to further analyse the political significance of the Greenpeace campaigns and their social-political relevance in the selected time frame. The political relevance will be analysed through the reach of the Amazon Greenpeace campaigns in (online) articles and online platforms in combination with a chronological alignment of the campaigns and the decisions made by Bolsonaro. This will form a comprehensive and clear image of how the rhetoric of both Bolsonaro and Greenpeace are influenced by one another. The total analysis will consider the social, political, geographical, and organisational influences and results.

CHAPTER 1: POLITICAL ANALYSIS

The government in Brazil is structured around a presidential system. The president is head of government and state. The individual states have autonomy to a certain extent, but their policies are centralised through the federal government. To understand the political climate of Brazil concerning environmental decision making, it is important to consider the prominent role of the sitting president.

After the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016, it was Michel Temer who held office until the next elections in 2018. The current president of Brazil, Jair Messias Bolsonaro, retired military officer, has been in office since 2019. Bolsonaro aimed at drastically changing the former “failed” foreign policies and came to the table with decisions and statements that have (had) drastic effects on Brazil’s global status today. He undermined historical bonds with governments all over the world, cut back on multilateral trade agreements, harmed the global climate debate, and bluntly overruled the principles of human rights in various ways. To begin with, let me briefly summarize the most important decisions of the last two administrations of Brazil. Hereby, I hope to create a more in-depth understanding of Bolsonaro’s motives and alleged allies to how he projects himself and his “crusade against ‘global cultural Marxism’” (Saraiva and Silva par. 3). Bolsonaro works according to a vision that is “a mixture between a very historicist version of nationalism, religious zealous and his association ... with transnational extreme-right ideologies” (par. 2). The administration is constantly restructured in a rather uncommon way, which entails that those who disagree with the new decrees will be excluded from new decisions in the future, regardless of their experience or rank (Velasco 6).

Firstly, Michel Temer took over the office of Dilma Rousseff in 2016. He held close ties with other conservative politicians who appropriated measures including agricultural commodities that support deforestation of the Amazon, better known as the “ruralists” (De

Area Leão Pereira 10). Although there was a significant drop in deforestation between the years 2004 and 2012, there was a remarkable growth between 2015 and 2016 (8). The economic crisis is a plausible influence on the increase of deforestation, for example in terms of cutting budgets on Amazon patrol and increasing demand for natural resources for export (9). This puts the Amazon forest in danger as it is used as “a bargaining tool for various political interests” (10). Unfortunately for the forest, the increase in deforestation has led foreign governments to reduce their subsidy for the protection of the Amazon forest. For example, Norway halved their “stock financing in the region in 2017” to 61.3 million dollars, which supported the prevention, monitorization and combat of deforestation (10). Temer’s administration leaves visible traces of violence. As Global Witness wrote in 2017, “more environmental leaders were killed in Brazil than in any other country” (Cox).

Secondly, and most importantly, Bolsonaro took over Temer’s office in 2019 and continued the environmental policies that can be deemed as antienvironmental in many respects. Under the leadership of Bolsonaro, the foreign and domestic policy positioned itself rather antagonistically on climate change and human rights (Casarões and Flemes 8). His administration structurally violates the rights of indigenous people and the “land invasions of indigenous reserves have increased by 150 per cent” since the start of 2019 (1, 9). Also, Bolsonaro did not send help to tackle the Amazon fires until after there was a global threat that would boycott the Brazilian beef industry. This highlights Bolsonaro’s point of focus: the economy over nature (6). Bolsonaro refuses his administration to be “lectured” by the Western countries on how to handle the Amazon. This includes the expansion of agribusiness into the Amazon (8), and “ending programs in support of smallholder farmers” and “agroindustrial monocultures” (Cunha 304, Rojas 976). Furthermore, Bolsonaro withdrew Brazil from the Human Rights Committee, the Migration pact, gave up hosting the UN

Climate Change Conference in 2019 (COP25), and threatened to pull Brazil out of the Paris Climate Agreement.

According to Viola, Bolsonaro and his Ministry of Environment are “carrying out a project of disruption of the Brazilian Environmental Policy, inscribed in the 1988 Brazilian Republic Constitution” (8). More specifically, under his mandate in 2019, several influential measures affect the environmental policies (8). For example, in January the “Secretary of Climate Change and Forestry of the Ministry of Environment” was eliminated; in April the budget of the “Institute of the environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA)” was reduced; in June the commercialization of pesticides that were already prohibited in Europe was approved (8). Bolsonaro continues with saying that “the country has not been as effectively committed as it has proclaimed in the last decade, and most of the time has not contributed according to its capabilities in relation to global environmental governance” (9).

Concluding, within four years the Amazon rainforest transformed into a fragile commodity under the leadership of two autocratic candidates. Bolsonaro evidently follows his agenda and herewith jeopardizes the environmental well-being of the country. Brazil is losing its place at the table of the climate debate, the forest is diminishing because of policies and neglect, and the rights of indigenous inhabitants are structurally violated in exchange for profit.

CHAPTER 2: VISUAL ANALYSIS

Campaigning against climate change is difficult since the problem is relatively invisible to most of the world. This makes the problem especially hard to communicate to the people far removed from the most endangered areas. For my analysis, I have selected three campaigns by Greenpeace that show their different intentions of communicating with the leading climate violators of Brazil: sitting president Jair Bolsonaro. Their intentions and attributes can be deciphered utilizing semiological analysis. This chapter will contain an analysis of a selection of three Greenpeace Amazon campaigns between 2016 and 2020. In an attempt to interpret the possible meaning of the campaigns, I will make use of the semiotic analysis as introduced by Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* (1957). To do so, I will introduce the campaigns chronologically by focussing on the first order signification of the images of the concerning campaigns. Firstly, I will outline the theoretical framework to provide a clear basis of the concepts that will be applied throughout the visual analysis and situate the research in the field.

Theoretical Framework

Myth expresses a certain ideology, which consists of a rich layering of meanings. These meanings are conveyed through elements such as words, objects, or anything else. Although such elements only hold a single denotation, many different connotations are possible. The combination of interpreted elements conveys a new culturally loaded meaning, the so-called connotation, ideology, or myth (Walton 57).

According to Barthes, a “myth” is a second-order semiological system. Barthes conceptualises the myth as a “metalanguage,” that talks in a second language about the first (*Image, Music, Text* 37). The first order semiological system is a linguistic system, introduced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure (1857-1913). The first-order system produces the

sign which consists of the signifier and the signified (*Mythologies* 112). In the second-order system, the sign of the first-order system becomes the signifier, which when connected to the second signified results in another sign: the myth (113). To refrain from confusion between the terms in the two systems, Barthes relates to the signifier as “meaning” in the first-order system and as “form” in the second-order system (113). The signified remains the “concept” in both systems. Finally, the sign of the second-order system (the myth) is referred to as the “signification”. In other words, the “meaning” and the “concept” together make the sign of the first-order system (113). The “form” in combination with the “concept” of the second-order system forms a new signification which is the myth itself (113, 120). The interpreted outcome of the first-order system is also called the “language -object”. The myth makes use of the language-object to build its own system. The language object is treated as a solid package that is free for new connotations within the second-order system of myth (114). Thus, the “final term of the linguistic system” later represents the “first term of the mythical system” (115). To further clarify the terminology, I have made a visualisation of the second-order semiological system as explained above. For the convenience of my analysis, I will continue using the terminology as introduced by Barthes.

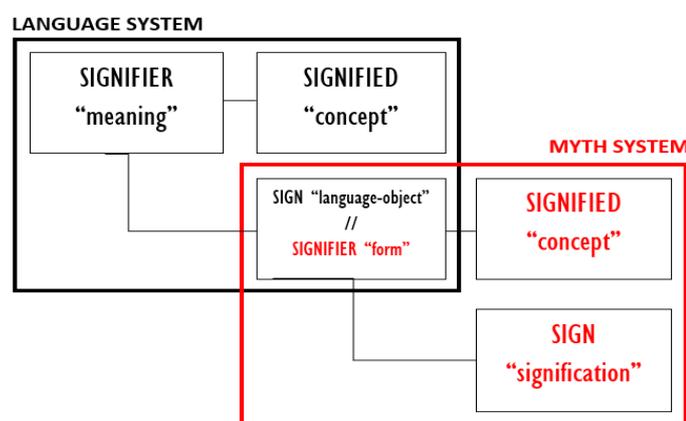


Figure 1. Visualisation of second-order semiological system.

The “contemporary myth” can be interpreted through semiology (165). Semiology exists of “two semantic systems: a connoted system whose signified is ideological,” and “a

denoted system” that is the “apparent literalness of image, object, sentence” (166). The problem that occurs when expressing connotations, is that of language. For instance, “ideology” is defined as “a systematic body of concepts” (Merriam-Webster). How the viewer connects certain concepts is defined individually. The connoted image is dependent on the viewers’ knowledge. The lexicon of the viewer eventually influences the meaning that will be derived. Saying the meaning is not only constructed by the creator, but also by the consumer of the image. All the signifiers combined within a particular medium are the “connotators” (Barthes 49). The total set of connotators form the rhetoric of the image, “appearing as the signifying aspect of ideology” (49). Barthes applies the semiological system mainly to advertisement images, as these mostly hold a clear ideological goal. Though, I will analyse how this system functions with non-advertisement images. In this case, with live-action photographs that are taken of protests organised by Greenpeace. The medium of photography is essential in the modern campaigning methods of Greenpeace. Barthes defines the myth as a “type of speech” which conveys a message through a “system of communication” (107). This “mythical speech” can be expressed by more than written discourse, namely also through for example photography, reporting, publicity, etcetera (108). In the context of this analysis, it is important to point out the difference between consciously composed images (such as an advertisement) and the photographic documentation of live-action. I will distinguish between the two in the analysis when applicable.

Greenpeace uses the medium of photography to document their campaigns in various manners. The pictures of these events are later added to their online database *Greenpeace Media* and posted on online platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Barthes rightfully states that pictures are also considered a sort of writing, and thus, “call for a lexis” (108). In the chapter “Picturing the Clima(c)tic: Greenpeace and the Representational Politics of Climate Change Communication” (2014), Doyle researches the power of images within the campaigns

of Greenpeace UK. Specifically, between the timeframe of 1997-2007. Here, Doyle particularly investigated the problematics of “visual immediacy” within the battle against environmental problems that are often (still) invisible for the public. More precisely she problematizes the medium of photography that “privileges the here and now,” and how these images show the already irreversible consequences of climate change (225). However, by the time these images can be taken or distributed, some battles have already been lost. Here, only the shocking aspect of the image remains, but the (future) activist is left beaten. Doyle points out the strategy of Greenpeace through analysing Greenpeace’s “visual communication of environmental issues” (225). The tactic of Greenpeace to use photography as an active part of their campaigns stresses the “limitations of the visual within [the] environmental discourse” (Doyle 242).

Oil Spill and Burnt Forest Action (2019)

The “Oil Spill and Burnt Forest Action” (2019) took place in front of the Palácio do Planalto in Brasilia (Greenpeace). Here, the activists brought the image of the polluted oceans and burning forest literally to the capital of Brazil. Focussing specifically on the Amazon, they brought the problem of the forest fires to the doorstep of the most influential decision-makers of Brazil.

The image, as can be seen in figure 2, is a live-action picture, with composed elements. Because it is a live-action picture, it is important to keep in mind that not all elements are consciously placed. Within the picture, there is a pile of wood placed on the ground in front of a big white building, accompanied by people who hold yellow signs. The left sign reads “Patria Queimada, Brasil” (Burnt Country, Brazil), and the right sign “Stop Amazon Destruction”. The people wear black t-shirts that read the same message in yellow letters, in combination with red overalls and blue masks. The people in the picture are

protestors that are part of Greenpeace. The Palácio do Planalto building fills half of the picture but looks closed and inaccessible. Their identical outfits could be interpreted as an attempt of the protestors to form unity against the imposing white governmental powerhouse behind them. Probably unconsciously captured in the image are the militants and guards that supervise the protestors who stand next to their bright yellow signs. The red overalls, being the colour of passion and blood, indicate their fierce fullness of protecting the suffering indigenous communities in the Amazon. One protestor stands in front of the pile of burned wood, which puts a particular focus on the banner he holds. The two banners in the picture are bright yellow. This bold, commanding colour holds a strong association with energy. The pile of wood in the centre produces a slight breeze of white smoke. This implies the burning of the pile of wood. In the context of the Amazon campaign, the connotations of smoke can be interpreted more profoundly. Smoke can be an indicator of danger or a warning, but also new decisions and new beginnings. For example, think of the white smoke from the Vatican in the Roman Catholic Church or the spiritual use of smoke to “smoke out” the bad spirits.

The linguistic message is used as an anchorage to direct the viewer on how to interpret the possible meanings. More specifically, the text in this image has an explaining role to the elements that are depicted. The immediate denotation of “Patria Queimada, Brasil” is the burning Amazon forest of Brazil. The word “Patria” refers to the country. The English translation of “Patria” is “homeland,” which has an ethnic nationalist connotation. The word “Queimada” (burnt) holds a specific connotative power. “Queimada” is directly connected to the word “fire” which connotes heat, destruction, danger, uncontrollable power, fear. The message on the right reads “Stop Amazon Destruction”. This message implies that there is ongoing destruction in the Amazon. The combination of these words connotes the aim of the campaign, which is to arrest further development in the destruction of the Amazon.

The combination of the meanings and their concepts together form the sign of the first-order system. The sign depicts an over-all image of destruction and imposed power in connection to the environment. In the second-order system, the sign serves as the language-object. Here, the form signifies a political subject that incorporates the location, linguistic message, and protest. The combination of the form and the concept form the signification. The image holds the signification of environmental justice. The total image, as seen in figure 2, is a depiction of the myth of environmental justice. This myth speaks to people who are an active part of the environmental discourse, following the ideology of fighting for environmental justice. Greenpeace plays upon this ideology of their myth consumers to stimulate them in political involvement in the shape of commenting or protesting the climate violations.



Fig. 2. Bragao, Cristian. “Oil Spill and Burnt Forest Action in Brazil”. Media Greenpeace, no. GP0STU41S, 23 Oct. 2019, <https://media.greenpeace.org/archive/Oil-Spill-and-Burnt-Forest-Action-in-Brazil-27MZIFJ8YLPLY.html>. Accessed 4 January 2021.

Faces of Extinction (2020)

In September 2020, Greenpeace installed two life-sized ice sculptures of the American president Donald Trump and the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, facing the UN building in

New York. This “Faces of Extinction” (2020) campaign was the result of the absence of the two presidents at the virtual United Nations summit of biodiversity (Greenpeace Brasil).

The photograph depicts the skyline of a city with on the foreground two ice sculptures with a woman in the middle behind a small ice-block that reads “Greenpeace” while she secures two yellow signs (figure 3). The left sign reads “Faces of Extinction: Fuelling a Planet in Crisis” and the translated version in Portuguese “Líderes da Extinção: Destruindo um Planeta Em Crise” on the right. The who secures the signs is dressed in black and uses a mask to cover her nose and mouth. Besides the current global situation that requires people to wear masks in public, the mask can also give more anonymity to the person. This anonymity stands in contrast to the sculptures of Trump and Bolsonaro. The composition puts a clear emphasis on the sculptures in front and uses the backdrop of the city as a location indicator. The statues are carved of ice. Ice represents the coldest season, frigidity, unexplored territory (north- and south pole). Another interpretation could be their “ice-cold” and inhumane stances towards the importance of the UN summit. Ice becomes liquid when in contact with heat. In other words, it causes to pass away or fade. Hereof it has a second signification, namely the overarching and globally accepted concept of the earth heating up due to negligence of global warming (melting ice caps). Within the discourse of climate change, the melting face of Bolsonaro possibly signifies the ticking time of the planet under the regime of Bolsonaro.

The linguistic message is “Faces of Extinction: Fuelling a Planet in Crisis”. The text serves as an anchorage to direct the possible interpretations of the two ice-sculptures. The apparent literal translation of this sentence is to identify what is the purpose of the silent protest that is depicted. “Faces of Extinction” connotes the idea that they stand in direct relation to each other. Their faces represent extinction, which implies that their faces represent destruction, end of life, annihilation. The text “Fuelling a Planet in Crisis” in combination

with the ice-sculptures, connotes the idea that Bolsonaro and Trump are sustaining, giving power to the current planetary crisis.

The choice of Greenpeace to install ice sculptures instead of statues out of lasting material shows their attempt to identify the “faces of extinction” without the possibility of heroification. The form is the political comment on Bolsonaro not attending the UN summit. Consequently, global warming and Bolsonaro are framed in one picture. The form and the concept make the myth of environmental justice as Greenpeace tries to visualise the absence of Bolsonaro that would normally go unnoticed.



Fig. 3. Williams, Tracy. “Ice Sculptures of Melting Leaders Trump and Bolsonaro in New York”. Media Greenpeace, no. GP1SUE88, 30 Sept. 2020.

<https://media.greenpeace.org/archive/Ice-Sculptures-of-Melting-Leaders-Trump-and-Bolsonaro-in-New-York-27MDHUGR80E.html>. Accessed 4 January 2021.

Monument to Destruction (2020)

Greenpeace activists visited the dried out and burned Pantanal wetlands in Brazil to report the destruction of the fires in combination with the instalment of a four-meter-high monument of Bolsonaro titled “the Monument to Destruction” (2020) (Greenpeace Media).

The images are used as a primary source of the campaign. Contrary to the city-situated “Oil spill and Burnt Forest” (2019) and “Faces of Extinction” (2020) actions, the “Monument of Destruction” campaign is situated in the remote area of the Pantanal wetlands. In this case, the pictures *are* the campaign, instead of the documentation of the event. The picture as seen in figure 4, depicts a Roman-inspired statue with the face of Bolsonaro on a pedestal. The statue of Bolsonaro has a (fake) leopard skin draped over his right shoulder, a laurel wreath on his head and a lyre in his left hand. Positioned in the centre of the image, the statue is the main point of focus. The white statue stands in stark contrast with the dark background of the charred forest. The statue has three carefully selected attributes. Each attribute holds an intense and specific meaning within the Ancient Greek art of sculpture. Firstly, the laurel wreath on his head is a symbol of hostile victory, which was used to crown the commanders during their triumph. Secondly, he wears a leopard skin draped over his body, which also signifies the victory of battle in the hunter- collectors era. Thirdly, the lyre in his left hand is an ancient instrument that was, amongst other things, played during funerals. These attributes combined share the message of victory for him as an individual who is positioned in his conquered territory. The size of the sculpture was an indication of wealth and importance in Ancient Greece, as the sculptors mainly worked on assigned and funded projects. Thus, the four-meter high sculpture signifies Bolsonaro’s power and wealth that is contrasting the charred tree trunks that are the result of a large-scale forest fire.

The Greenpeace activists painted “Pátria Queimada Brasil” (burnt country Brazil) in yellow letters on the charred ground (figure 5). The linguistic message calls for the same reading as was depicted in the “Oil Spill and Burnt Forest” action (figure 2). As stated before, “queimada” is related to fire, which connotes heat, destruction, danger, uncontrollable power, fear.

As seen in the two previous campaigns, the myth of environmental justice is conveyed through the combined meanings in the form. In the context of global warming and political involvement, the form, a misplaced heroification of Bolsonaro, signifies Bolsonaro's responsibility of the burned Pantanal wetlands. The myth of environmental justice is again established by Greenpeace through the cleverly combined contrasting image. The signification of destruction under the rule of Bolsonaro is an accurate but sneering depiction of reality.



Fig. 4. Baravelli, Diego. “Monument to Destruction in the Pantanal in Brazil”. Media Greenpeace, no. GP1SUFYS, 8 Oct. 2020, <https://media.greenpeace.org/archive/Monument-to-Destruction-in-the-Pantanal-in-Brazil-27MDHU7NJXO.html>. Accessed 4 January 2021.



Fig. 5. Braga, Christian. "Monument to Destruction in the Pantanal in Brazil". Media Greenpeace, no. GP1SUFYP, 8 Oct. 2020, <https://media.greenpeace.org/archive/Monument-to-Destruction-in-the-Pantanal-in-Brazil-27MDHU7NEO8.html>. Accessed 4 January 2021.

Concluding, the strategies that Greenpeace uses in their campaigns variate in form and location. The campaigns are located regional, national, and international: Brasilia, the capital of Brazil; New York, the UN Headquarters; the Pantanal wetlands in the Amazon. The message of the Greenpeace campaigns mainly publicizes the suffering of nature and animals under the regime of Bolsonaro. The returning element of heat and/or fire in the form of signifiers bundles the campaigns together under the overarching theme of the burning Amazon forest. Greenpeace alternates between more- and less-visible in terms of location and signifiers that ask for interpretation. The three campaigns convey the same message of global warming and its problematic powerhouses (Bolsonaro and his government). Greenpeace incorporates the iconographic signifier of the monument in a unique manner. Traditionally monuments ask for interpretation, either in a social or geographical context. Greenpeace employs the statues and sculptures to put a face on the ongoing destruction of the Amazon rainforest. In the following chapter, I will interpret the political significance of the campaigns within the political and social (online) context.

CHAPTER 3: INTERPRETATION

The three analysed campaigns by Greenpeace show their political character through subject matter and the discourse they belong to. To further deepen out the political significance of these campaigns, I will place the campaigns within their social-political context. I base my political interpretations of the Greenpeace campaigns on Barthes' concept of "mythologies" and their significance as a form of "mythical speech". Furthermore, I will substantiate my arguments by a selection of (online) articles that, in my perspective, accurately demonstrate the possible interplay between the concurrent political situation in Brazil and the selected campaigns by Greenpeace.

In the context of this research, the "myth" should be interpreted as the outcome of the signification and meaning of the practical uses of Greenpeace in their campaigns. More specifically, since Greenpeace is part of the environmental narrative, all campaigns share the same myth, but vary in signs and signifiers to communicate this discourse. As previously discussed in the second chapter, Barthes states that myth is a combination of two connected semiological systems (113). Analysing the Greenpeace campaigns according to these systems shows how their eventual myth is established. Applying this theory to the Greenpeace campaigns shows how each campaign is filled with different signifiers that, in combination with the same concept of global warming each form a unique sign, which becomes the "form" of the myth-building system. Concretely, this means that for instance in the "Faces of Extinction" campaign, the ice sculpture (meaning) in connection with the concept of global warming represents the political subject of the deteriorating earth. This political subject that is communicated through the form in combination with the concept of political incentive and involvement ultimately signifies the myth of environmental justice. What is interesting to point out, in my interpretation, no matter what sign that Greenpeace produces in combination

with political involvement it will ultimately always point towards the quest of environmental justice.

According to Barthes, there are two consequences for the ambiguity of mythical speech, “which henceforth appears both like a notification and like a statement of fact” (123). The myth that Greenpeace produces in the three analysed campaigns, is that of the lacking Brazilian government in the protection of the Amazon (notification) which resulted in the deteriorating forest (statement of fact). For this reason, it is not only important to decipher the myth of environmental justice in Brazil but also to consider its (contemporary) political significance. In defiance of Barthes’ statement that myth is the opposite of politicized speech (146), I argue that myth is a rather vital element of political discourse. For example, look at the idealisation of political leaders, or the use of myth to define the origin of a community. In other words, myth is used in a social-political context to create certain codes of a collective identity. Politically, myth is employed differently on the left than myth on the right. Myth on the left exists on the margins between revolution and the “innocent metalanguage” of a counter-narrative (Barthes 147). Whereas myth on the right “conceal[s] its principal evil” through its political speech while it “understands reality more cheaply” (151). In its essence, a counter-narrative provides a positive alternative to extremist publicity. Greenpeace can be considered a counter-narrative in the way they provide an opposing narrative to the radical government of Bolsonaro. Based on political stances and involvement, Greenpeace utilizes myth in concordance with the left. Greenpeace campaigns hover between inciting a green revolution and the neutral representation of facts. On the other hand, Bolsonaro can be categorized as part of the right, as he sometimes voluntarily shies away from fact-checking while he uses his rhetorical talents to conceal his destructive agenda.

In the case of Greenpeace Amazon campaigns (2019-2020), the language-object always proves to be a political subject. These political subjects are influenced by various

factors, such as organisational, geographical and political. Organisationally, they all belong to the same group of the NGO Greenpeace. Geographically, they always visibly include the importance of the place in their campaigns. The location of the three campaigns I analysed varies widely. Namely, the work-place of the lawless (Palácio do Planalto), the place of absence (New York), and the place of delict (Pantanal wetlands). Lastly, the medium of photography held an important role in the making and distribution of the campaigns. The internet is an important global manner of communication. Through the use of the internet, Greenpeace reaches a much higher number of “consumers” than only by campaigns and protests on the streets. In continuation of Doyle’s analysis, the Greenpeace Amazon campaigns between 2016 and 2020 have become more creative in terms of the medium of communication and concept. More specifically, two out of three of the analysed campaigns do not directly include the suffering of nature in the primary source. In the “Monument of Destruction” campaign, the burned Pantanal wetlands are part of the produced image to stress the guilt of Bolsonaro. It is a rather cynical campaign by Greenpeace, but it does emphasize that the ignorance of his decisions is a direct cause of the already burned down wetlands.

The linguistic message in the “Oil Spill and Burnt Forest Action” and the “Statue of Destruction” campaign asks for further political analysis. Namely, the banners that read “Patria Queimada, Brasil” (Burnt Country, Brazil) in figure 2 and 5 are a direct reference to the slogan introduced by the Bolsonaro government that states “Patria Amada, Brasil” (Beloved Homeland, Brazil) (Diario do Nordeste). Here, “Amada” is a play on the word “Queimada”. The word has the same sounds but changes the entire connotation of the sentence. Greenpeace cleverly uses the government slogan against itself. In my interpretation, this shows the political ingenuity of Greenpeace. Additionally, the play on the slogan unifies the Brazilian environmentalists, as they will recognize the slogan, and empowered by the outspoken repulsion of the Bolsonaro government.

As a final part of this chapter, I will align the interaction between the political decisions regarding the Brazilian climate debate and the campaigns concerning the Amazon rainforest in Brazil. Since before Bolsonaro took office, various journalists expressed their concerns regarding the Bolsonaro administration and its neglecting stance towards the environment. For example, the early fears that Bolsonaro will jeopardize international commitment (Anderson 524) or that fires “may” spike under Bolsonaro (Walker) have eventually been proven to be accurate. When Temer took office in 2016, there was a significant increase in deforestation, most likely fuelled by the economic crisis, which caused multiple cutbacks of foreign aids. In 2017, the Temer administration was held responsible for Brazil’s highest rates of killed environmental leaders. In 2018, Bolsonaro threatened to take Brazil out of the Paris Agreement during his campaigns but later settled for passive participation. When Bolsonaro took office in January 2019, he pulled Brazil out of the UN migration accord and land invasions directly increased drastically. The “Oil Spill and Burnt Forest” (2019) action by Greenpeace in Brasilia did not influence Bolsonaro in his decision to subtract Brazil from the Human Rights Committee in October and to give up hosting the UN Climate Change Conference in November. The “Faces of Extinction” campaign in New York in September 2020 mainly visualised the absence of Bolsonaro (and Trump) at the virtual United Nations summit of biodiversity. On the same day, Greenpeace posted a picture of the statues on Twitter. The picture in the tweet gives an extra text as a relay, saying: “nobody can get away with ignoring the climate crisis,” “don’t let these leaders melt away our future” (@Greenpeace). Finally, the first success by Greenpeace of the Soy Moratorium in 2016, recently inspired another sixty NGOs to combine their forces by asking for a moratorium on deforestation in 2020 (Amazonwatch).

Since Bolsonaro took office in 2019, Greenpeace produced more Amazon protection campaigns than in the years before. This is highly influenced by the anti-environmentalist

regulations of the Bolsonaro government. The online posts by Greenpeace on social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter) do not show a big reach in terms of followers, reposts, retweets. This implies that their reach and engagement within the online global political debate on environmentalism is limited. Greenpeace is mentioned in multiple articles in connection to the Amazon and environmentalism, yet their specific Amazon campaigns remain relatively unnoticed on the web. Bolsonaro is seemingly unbothered by the accusations of Greenpeace in their public campaigns. The only public response that Bolsonaro gave that concerns Greenpeace is when he blamed NGOs in general for the increasing Amazon fires, which can be considered an argument from ignorance since it is not based on facts or evidence (Foggin, Boadle).

In summary, I have argued that Greenpeace's myth of environmental justice conceptually shows political significance. The myth of environmental justice (as produced by Greenpeace) shows some ambiguous traits in respect of their strongly opinionated but factually correct rhetoric. As I have shown, it is visible how Greenpeace operates both preventive and responsive in their campaign strategies. Although the campaigns connote a strong political significance in terms of subject-matter, Bolsonaro remains (almost) unresponsive.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to analyse how the Greenpeace Amazon campaigns (2016-2020) and the changing political climate of environmental policies by Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil influence one another. Through a visual analysis of the campaigns, I have formed a better understanding of the rhetoric of Greenpeace which provided a more evident connection with the political decisions by the Bolsonaro government. In line of the analysis by Doyle on Greenpeace campaigns (1997-2007) and her problematization of the visual immediacy of photography. Within the time-frame of 2016 to 2020, it has become evident that Greenpeace found new platforms, concepts and locations to amplify their voice differently.

Moreover, Greenpeace has established a certain myth of environmental justice through their use of various meanings and forms in combination with the concepts of global warming and political involvement. The unique rhetoric of Greenpeace regarding the protection of the Amazon rainforests stands in stark contrast to the environmentally oblivious rhetoric used by Bolsonaro. The visual analysis of the signifiers within the myth of Greenpeace led to the discovery of many more myths outside of environmental justice. Although Greenpeace may not be acknowledged in its relevance by Bolsonaro, they do continue to tear down existing (problematic) myths within the discourse of environmental politics and motivate political involvement. Interestingly, Greenpeace actively focusses on overthrowing myths surrounding the international influence on deforestation by using phrases such as “Patria Queimada, Brasil” or “Faces of Extinction”. In my perception, the inclusion of such rhetoric eliminates the possibility of any naïve interpretation of the presented issue. Herein lies its true political significance. This concords with the notion that the language-object of the Greenpeace campaigns signify a political subject, which is then employed by the myth system as the form to communicate the issue. The myth theory of Barthes did not include the political importance

of myths, while in my conclusion, it is an intrinsic part of it since the subjects naturally concern a political commentary in the concept.

By chronologically aligning the campaigns, (news) articles, online platforms, and the concurrent political decisions made, it has become clear that it is a rather one-sided conversation between Greenpeace and Brazil. Although there are some incidental unsubstantiated responses by Bolsonaro, it is mainly Greenpeace who stays on top of the political facts. However, the long-term effects of the campaigns were not ascertained. A possible limitation of this analysis is the recency of events, and with this, the credibility of lacking influences of the campaigns in the long run. To determine the ultimate reciprocal influence, I would suggest further monitoring of the Greenpeace Amazon campaigns and the political decisions on the global climate debate. In continuation of Doyle, I gave the subject of the analysis Greenpeace campaigns relevance again in the current environmental debate. This analysis, however, hopefully contributed to the knowledge on the analyses of Greenpeace campaigns and the role of NGOs in environmentalism.

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