Reframing the Reality of Climate Justice

An Invitation to Imagine Otherwise

MSc thesis

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For years, climate change discourse has been characterized by the same people telling the same stories. The world is now in an unprecedented crisis, and we can only overcome this by listening to the voices that put ecological integrity and the survival of our planet first. A heartfelt issue like climate change could easily allow pessimism to take over. I encourage you not to let that happen. Hopefully, this work provides for hope and sparks the imagination of what could be.

Cover design artwork created with DALL•E[1] based on my imagination.

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[1] An AI system that creates realistic images and art based on a written description

Table of contents

Abstract

Climate change and global warming are, quite literally, hot topics. Over the last few years it has become evident that the uneven consequences of climate change are the result of a dire reality in which the vulnerable areas of the Earth pay the price for the self-serving choices and destructive habits of those in power. At the same time, since the beginning of Western colonialism and imperialism, narratives and discourse on the vulnerable areas have contributed to the creation of an 'exotic Other'. However, the academic debate has yet to thoroughly connect discourses of othering and alienation to the degradation of nature and climate injustices for the people inhabiting these areas. Besides, what is currently missing is an analysis of means and practical solutions to realize different narratives and promote climate justice within climate change discourse. To counter these shortcomings, this work places significant importance on the expertise of those engaging within the climate conversation. The results emphasize the experts' imaginations of a discourse that promotes climate justice through actively expressing and allowing feelings, emotions, the local, diversity, social relations, culture, and experience into the debate.

Key Words: Climate Justice, Climate Change, Discourse, Imagination, Power

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1. Introduction

> Taking account of the ecological crisis […] of the almost impossibility of the system to continue its present course, what is required is a new imaginary creation of an importance unparalleled in the past, a creation that would put in the center of human life other significations than the expansion of production and consumption, that would pose different life objectives, that could be recognized by human beings as being worth it (Castoriadis, in Morel, 1994).

Climate change and global warming are, quite literally, hot topics. The concerns about the consequences of climate change have grown over the last decades, and the window of time to keep the world from a tipping point is becoming smaller (WMO, 2022). We are amid a climate crisis threatening our health, safety, and perhaps even our lives (Ibid.). In other words: climate change might present the most significant conflict of our times. Even though the consequences of climate change threaten the livelihood of everyone and everything on our planet, some socially and economically disadvantaged groups face the most substantial risks (Schlosberg & Collins, 2014; Cho, September 22, 2020).

This dire reality derives from a set of historic and systemic injustices based on race, color, and descent, that developed at the beginning of Western imperialism and colonialism (Ferdinand, 2019). The concept of climate justice acknowledges that climate change's effects are distributed unjustly, where some people and communities are affected to a greater extent than others. These communities are not responsible for the climate crisis, yet they carry the burden of its consequences. For example: while the African continent is particularly vulnerable to climate change consequences, its share of global gas house emissions is only 3.8%, compared to 23% in China, 19% in the US, and 13% in Europe (Carbon Disclosure Project, 2020). These percentages have been the same for decades, and in that time, disastrous events like floods and droughts deriving from climate change have started to rupture the most vulnerable areas[2] of the Earth (Ibid.). Still, no responsibility is taken by those accountable for the critical consequences of climate change.

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[2] The term 'vulnerable countries' or 'vulnerable areas of the Earth' in this thesis is used to describe those countries that carry little responsibility for the degradation of nature yet carry the responsibility of dealing with the consequences of climate change. Even though the term can seem patronizing, it still carries the fact that these areas *are* more vulnerable regarding their livelihood due to our changing climate.

Since the beginning of Western imperialism and colonialism, the vulnerable areas of the Earth have, e.g., been described as the 'Other', 'exotic', 'developing', and so on. These narratives have been used to intervene, occupy and control these areas. Keeping the example within the African continent: 'Africa'[3] is often one-sided and imagined as "a disastrous place ravaged by interethnic warfare, natural disasters and disease epidemics" (Wainaina, January 19, 2006). An example of an imaginary that neglects the global influences that evoked this view and legitimized Western dominance through colonizing structures over the African continent (Ibid.). The same can be said about other vulnerable areas of the world. For example, during the season of wildfires, the Amazon is often described in popular media as the 'lungs of Mother Earth'. However, referring to the Amazon as a 'breathing tool' for the Earth fails to recognize what it is: the home of indigenous communities who have managed to maintain the forest's biodiversity for centuries. On top of that, current practices of extraction and deforestation are left out of the picture. These narratives[4] have in common that they produce a reality in which some places are rendered less important than others and legitimize intervention, control, and exploitation.

Therefore, this thesis argues that the Western imagination of the vulnerable areas of the Earth, expressed through narratives and discourse, creates a reality that ignores the livelihoods of the people inhabiting these areas and nature as a whole. While the consequences of climate change are becoming more visible each day, the imaginations that construct this reality are overlooked. Shaped through social interactions, we think about the world in a certain way and use our imagination to better understand it (Warf, 2010). The imagination is also used as a tool for individuals to place themselves within larger social structures and therefore plays a role in producing social and spatial realities (Gieseking, 2007). So, imaginations manifest to reality, even though physical realities can be distinct from the realness of the imagination (Larsen & Jensen, 2020). The reality of climate injustice thus cannot be understood separately from the imaginations, narratives, and discourses that construct it. So, in order for discourse to be a driver of social change, what is needed is a significant change of habits and attitudes.

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[3] Another imaginary includes African countries being depicted as one whole of "Africa", an umbrella term that does not recognize the vast versatility of countries within the continent.

[4] Another example can be found within the popular Dutch children's theatre club *Kinderen voor Kinderen* (Children for Children), whose introduction song used to include "*Een kind onder de evenaar/is meestal maar een bedelaar*", which translates to: "A child under the equator/is often just a beggar".

What needs to be added is an understanding of what discourse on climate change should contain were it to contribute to reaching climate justice. In other words: how does one think/talk/act, etcetera, to (partly) reach climate justice? In order to achieve the creation of an analysis of such kind, this work places significant importance on the insights of those who engage themselves within climate justice discussions on different levels, ranging from activism to local governance. It aims to evaluate such contributions and create a framework of what an ideal discourse on climate justice should look like in order to affect social change.

Climate change affects all of society. To further showcase the seriousness of the issue: rising temperatures and drought will likely cause even more wildfires, the air quality will worsen, which may cause more allergies and lung diseases, and there is even a possibility that certain foods may become scarce (Cho, September 22, 2020). The standard Western discourse on the environment is distorted because nature is viewed as an endless resource, and people on the planet are divided literally and figuratively. The world's path right now leads to losing our health, safety, and lives. All of the above-mentioned societal issues are already visible in the vulnerable areas of the world (Ibid.).

The concept of climate justice exposes the uneven consequences of climate change. How climate change is addressed and discussed influences the outcomes for those particularly vulnerable to climate change consequences. As the literature framework will set out, climate change is a societal issue that raises questions on how to treat the Earth and its inhabitants. It also asks how we are to live with each other and who bears the responsibility for the outcomes of polluting practices. These questions acknowledge that climate change is a social justice issue and therefore help pave the way for understanding and implementing climate justice within the climate change debate. The societal relevance of this research on climate justice can therefore be found in its attempt to understand climate change as a societal issue on a deeper level embedded within our systems. Therefore, it helps imagine the pathways toward climate justice so that the responsibility of dealing with the consequences of climate change can be shared and ultimately, the world can become a place with less injustice and more equality.

While questions of climate justice have throughout the years been voiced by activist groups and within popular debates, the existing body of scientific literature has yet to establish a viable link between narratives and discourse and their consequences for climate justice. Until recently, the scientific debate on climate change was mainly dominated by meteorologists, climate modelers,

and economists (see, e.g., Hulme, 2009). Besides, geographic research on climate justice is often focused on geopolitical structures, omitting one of the bases on which these structures are built (i.e., narratives and imaginations that construct discourses and, therefore, realities) (see, e.g., Dalby, 2013; Ghosh, 2021). However, the core of climate justice theory states that climate change is not only about scientific processes but also about social issues of inequality. Therefore, there lies an opportunity to use discursive theories to understand power dynamics that cause inequality and ultimately alter the overall consciousness of injustices. Also, while Schlossberg and Collins (2014) emphasize the importance of ideas, demands, and principles in climate justice research, an analysis based on different perspectives within the climate justice movement needs to be added to fully grasp the potential of ideas and imagination in the debate.

Therefore, the scientific relevance of this work can be found in its attempt to contribute to the debate by addressing the potential of imagination within discourse to construct new realities. Its outcome can ultimately contribute to rethinking current narratives and discourses and mentally reimagining vulnerable spaces and places to enact different social and spatial realities (Gieseking, 2007).

As the quote at the top of this introduction suggests: it is time for a new imagination. An imagination in which human lives are valued the same and modes of production and consumption are reconsidered. An imagination that does not render the lives of those elsewhere adaptable. Therefore, this work proposes an invitation to imagine otherwise and argues that reimagination of the Earth's vulnerable areas is vital to coming to a new moral order and reaching climate justice.

In order to reach an imagination of such kind, this work asks: *What should discourse on climate change contain if it is to contribute to reaching climate justice?* This question implies that current discourses on climate change ignore the livelihoods of those elsewhere and contribute to climate injustice and that discourses are shapable. To better understand *how* current discourse on climate change contributes to climate change, the following questions served as sub-questions within the research. First: *What problems are experienced in discourses on climate change by those experts who engage themselves within the climate justice debate?* Furthermore: *What are the experts' suggested solutions to the problems experienced?* In order to answer these questions and in light of the literature framework, this

work argues that the debate on climate justice would benefit from expert opinions from multiple angles.

Therefore, the results that form their answer are gained through semi-structured interviews with climate activists, representatives of NGOs, researchers, and people active in local politics and policy. What is currently missing and what these voices add to the debate is a wide-lens view of the problem of climate justice combined within one research framework. Also, while the empirical method allows for an overview of what works and what does not, the theoretical framework provides for positioning these practical implications within the perceived systems and realities of the world, as it discusses how discourse and climate injustice are inherently connected. These experts can add their insights into how they imagine that action and discourse should change to further contribute to reaching climate justice.

This work aims not to generalize or reach saturation but to explore comprehensive theoretical insights on climate justice and related concepts. It also aims to discover what problems in the discourse on climate change are perceived by the experts interviewed and how these problems relate to the concept of climate justice. Ultimately, the research aims to help reimagine the reality of climate justice and provide a framework that views the concept of climate justice from different angles.

After this introduction, the theoretical framework chapter forms the basis for the research. The chapter discusses various theories on climate justice, discourse, and related concepts that explain, promote, and influence discourse and imaginations of inequality and injustice. At last, the chapter elaborates on critical theory literature on enacting social change through reshaping and reimagining discourse. Chapter three contains an overview of the methods used to answer the main research question (i.e., expert interviews). The analysis section in chapter five aims to give an overview of the results found in the interviews conducted. The conclusion and discussion serve to make concluding notions on the research as well its position within the scientific and societal framework of the debate on climate justice. Furthermore, the chapter provides a reflection on the methods used and recommendations for further research.

2. Theoretical framework

The following chapter explores how current dominant discourses construct the reality of climate injustice. To do so, a few concepts first have to be defined and explored theoretically, starting with the concept of climate justice itself. Based on Foucault's theory of discourse, the chapter discusses discourse and related concepts such as space, time, responsibility, and geographical imagination. Throughout the second section, the chapter explores how these concepts contribute to climate justice. At last, theories on enacting societal change through a critical reflection on discourse are discussed. Together, these sections provide the theoretical background of the thesis.

2.1 Climate Change: The Great Multiplier

Besides being an environmental problem, climate change is a social justice and human rights issue (Robinson, June 9, 2022). The concept of justice has been the subject of debate and disagreement in recent decades because of its nature and the way it has been defined and redefined in contemporary society (Sultana, 2021). It, therefore, also means that multiple definitions are attributed to the concept. This thesis uses the following definition: "Climate justice links human rights and development to achieve a human-centered approach, safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its resolution equitably and fairly" (Mary Robinson Foundation, n.d.).

So, relating justice to environmental issues, the concept of climate justice exposes multiplicity and intersectionality in the debate on climate change. It states that climate change can have a disproportionate effect on underprivileged populations and has, over the decades, exacerbated gender injustices. Furthermore, it states that nature is often treated unjustly (Robinson, June 9, 2022). Climate justice explains the uneven consequences of climate change and insists that besides reducing greenhouse emissions, halting drought, and melting ice caps, discourses on climate change should concentrate on the societal impacts it has on people and communities (Ibid.). For discourse on climate change to be considered fair, its focus should be on finding solutions that include the livelihoods of those most vulnerable to climate change (Ibid.).

More than just a concept, climate justice can thus be seen as a movement that encourages decision-making processes centered around human beings and nature rather than capital (Ibid.). Over the last few years, while dealing with the consequences of the pandemic, climate justice has increasingly gained attention within public discourse (Sultana, 2021). The most important implication of the concept of climate justice is its ability to help reframe mainstream debates adding critical attention to climate change's social impacts, outcomes, and justice concerns (Ibid.). The approach of climate justice focuses on questions like who loses out? In what ways, where, and why? In this thesis, the concept is used as a tool to help better understand and explain the relationships that co-create as well as maintain injustices (Ibid.).

An example of the continued prevalence of climate justice can be found in the rhetoric of the Western media during the 2019 forest fires in the Amazon. Reporting focused on the Amazon as "the lungs of the Earth"; as a CO2-compensation area that only deserves protection for the safety of the privileged rather than the safety and livelihood of local populations. This way of romanticizing and fetishizing the Amazon ultimately leaves out the struggle of those protecting it. Even though indigenous communities protect over 80% of the world's biodiversity, they only comprise 5% of its population (WWF, 2020). Still, this part of the world is mainly framed regarding how it can serve the privileged metropoles and fails to acknowledge that both faiths are intertwined (Aedy, 2022).

Not only do the consequences of climate change hit differently on those particularly vulnerable, but the share of causes is also distributed unequally (Hughs, Dawn, and Padilla, 2019). The people in the vulnerable areas of the Earth disproportionally pay the price for "the destructive habits and self-serving choices of those in power" (Ibid., p. 3). What is important here is that the vulnerable areas of the Earth deal with pollution and degradation caused by those in power. On top of that, they have less ability to address the consequences caused by climate change (which then again is the result of polluting practices in nature and its
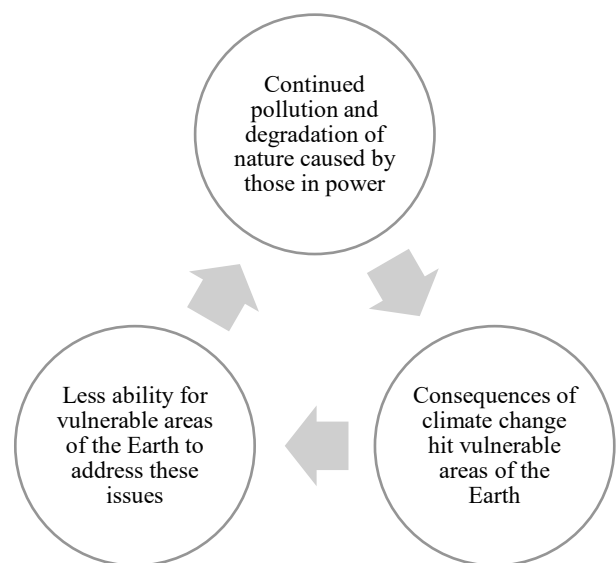

Figure 1. Cycle of environmental degradation (Dawson, 2013)

consequences) (Dawson, 2013). Together, they comprise a loop in which one is reinforced by the other (see figure 1). This loop can be interpreted within the concept of climate justice. Unless specific attention is given to the injustices that derive from current climate change discourses, the sequence of events does not change. Therefore, recognizing the phases of environmental degradation helps better understand the continuous cycle of climate injustice within current practices.

The intersectionality of climate justice is described as the following by Heglar (2020, para. 7): "Climate change takes any problem you already had, any threat you were already under, and multiplies it. … Climate change is not the Great Equalizer. It is the Great Multiplier". All different forms of discrimination are inseparable and reinforce each other (Crenshaw, 1991). Indeed, the consequences of climate change hit differently over space and time, and they hit differently on some communities over others, as some communities are disproportionately impacted because of their race, skin color, or the place they live (Ibid.). Therefore, intersectionality is also "a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects" (Crenshaw, 2017, para. 4) and "a framework that is used to better understand how multiple disadvantages, such as location, race or religion, may lead to oppression" (Hendriksen, 2021).

Ecology without class struggle is just gardening[5]
Narratives on the vulnerable areas of the Earth often focus on differences, where the norm can be found in the standard Western way of living. Narratives one these areas alienate people based on their culture, color, and race. The correlation between these narratives on Black and Indigenous communities and current environmental degradation finds its origins within Western imperialism and colonialism (Ferdinand, 2019). To explain this notion, Ferdinand (2019) uses the concept of a 'decolonial ecology' (*une écologie décoloniale*). The 'colonial way of living' developed since the Americas' discovery, when the Earth was divided into a few privileged metropolises and subordinate areas. In Ferdinand's theory, the latter periphery is mainly used for extracting, cultivating, and shipping raw materials, energy, and food to the metropolises (Ibid.). Still visible in the present, the colonial way of living exposes a reality in which specific areas are considered essential solely because they serve the needs of those in power.

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[5] Quote by Chico Mendes (n.d.), a Brazilian climate activist who devoted his life to protecting and preserving the Brazilian Amazon.

An example of how the intersectionality of climate justice has found its way into the branches of the tree of disadvantages is the concept of environmental racism that focuses on racial discrimination in environmental decision-making processes. According to Chavis (1998, as cited in Newell, 2005, p. 75), environmental racism refers to:

> [...] racial discrimination in environmental policymaking and the unequal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations. It is the deliberate targeting of people-of-color communities for toxic waste facilities and the official sanctioning of a life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in people-of-color communities.

Newell (2005) mentions numerous studies showing that race and class are the most critical factors for hazardous waste landfills that cause severe medical conditions in nearby communities. Therefore, environmental inequality is closely related to other forms of inequality, like exploitation and discrimination based on race (Ibid.).

No climate justice without gender justice

Besides injustices based on race or color, another aspect that multiplies climate injustice is gender. The issue of gender injustice within the climate justice debate is often overlooked because the central discourse on climate change views it as a problem that is to be solved through stereotypically 'masculine' technologies, such as complex computer systems or other large-scale economic instruments (Terry, 2009). Another reason that explains why it seems so hard to grasp the connection between gender and climate change is that climate change does not happen within a vacuum but rather "in the context of other risks, including economic liberalization, globalization, conflict, unpredictable government policies, and risks to health, in particular, HIV and AIDS" (Ibid., p. 6). Therefore, women experiencing many different problems might not experience climate change as the foremost issue, let alone connect gender with it.

However, 80% of the world's small-scale farmers are female (The Feminist Wire, September 29, 2014). Women in rural areas often play a crucial role in environmental conservation and natural resource management and are thus highly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change (Denton, 2010). Their knowledge of ecosystems, such as forests, gained through their close interaction with nature, is rarely recognized in policymaking. Despite their expertise

within their environment, women rarely own land or resources (Ibid.). Even though the argument that women have gained their expertise knowledge through traditionally defined roles of caregivers has given women a seat at the table, this argument is still part of creating a colonial stereotype that homogenizes all women and constructs a colonial stereotypical 'Average Third World Woman' that is robbed from all of her historical and political agency (Gay-Antaki, 2020). Therefore, the concept of climate justice cannot be seen separately from relations of power in which gender is embedded because gender *does* matter.

Nature as the stage vs. being part of the play

While the concept of justice is often seen as a societal issue between human beings, it stretches further into different levels of interaction. One such level is the interaction with the environment and the discourses that shape how the environment is defined, understood and used, or abused (Ali, 2001). Whereas nature has long been understood as merely a playground on which the events of the world unfolded, in the last couple of decades, it has become clear that human life and nature are inherently interconnected and thus interdependent (Geessink, 2022, January 5). Our contemporary world is characterized by the profound effect of human activity on the climate and the world's ecosystems (Ali, 2001.). The realization that humankind is ultimately responsible for and dependent on nature has sparked an interest in including non-human forms of life in the equation. An example of recent developments on including ecological issues into the debate is the push to add ecocide to the four mass atrocity crimes as defined by the International Criminal Court (i.e., genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing) (Geessink, 2022, January 5).

Climate justice questions current discourses on climate change and focuses on including people and communities in the periphery of the debate. Their voices and ideas on nature, amongst others, referred to as indigenous or traditional knowledge, have, throughout the years, entered the debate on climate change and altered ways of interacting with nature (see, e.g., Wall Kimmerer, 2013). Accordingly, including other voices within the debate means including other ways of knowing and accepting these ways as equal to what Western knowledge has taught. This analysis adds a new aspect to the concept of climate justice, namely one that proposes that to move forward nature has to become part of the play.

2.2 The Tales We Tell

So, climate justice is a dire concept that teaches how climate change has different consequences for humans and places based on discrimination, racial injustices, and gender inequality. The concept reveals what is left out of the mainstream narrative on climate change, namely the aspect of humanity and equality. The origin of this narrative is rooted in discourses that fail to explain climate change as a societal problem. The following section, therefore, serves to explore the concept of discourse and provides an overview of how discourse on climate change relates to other concepts, such as power, social imagination, notions of space, time, and responsibility, and the dichotomy between the local and the global. More importantly, the section explores how these concepts relate to climate (in)justice to establish the framework on which this research is based.

The Foucauldian concept of discourse

Discourse refers to "a set of ideas and practices with particular conditions of existence, which are more or less institutionalized, but which may only be partially understood by those they encompass" (Gill, 1995). More than just ways of thinking or producing meaning, discourse shapes identities, thoughts, and what is considered normal or abnormal (Young, 1981). It also constitutes knowledge through social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations. According to Foucault, knowledge can only exist within a system of power relations that allow the knowledge to be considered 'true' (Ibid.). These power relations define what is included or excluded from knowledge or truth. The same goes the other way around: those with power only gain it because of the underlying cultural views that allow them to obtain power (Ibid.).

Because power is not solely achieved through force, Foucault distinguishes between two kinds of power: repressive power and normalizing power (Ibid.). Whereas repressive power is used or threatened when boundaries are broken, and therefore, as the word itself says, represses, normalizing power works in a more subtle yet controlling way. Normalizing power determines what we view as 'normal' and constructs how we view the world and ourselves (Ibid.). The perceptions of ourselves, 'the Other', and other spaces are therefore assumed to be a constituent part of discourse, therefore of truth and knowledge (Young, 1981, p.48). For example, narratives that construct 'the abnormal or exotic Other' foster discourses that do not consider these people and places and thus stand in the way of climate justice. Power relations not only determine who and what is left out but also what knowledge is deemed 'true' and worth taking into account. E.g., even though indigenous and traditional knowledge have started to enter the climate change debate, they are often at the end of the ranking of value (Klein, June 2, 2016).

The perceptions created through discourse are considered truth, therefore, it is almost impossible to think outside of them because that would be considered mad (Hook, 2007). For that reason, discourse is inherently linked to the exercise of normalizing power because it both constrains and limits writing, speaking, decision-making, and thinking (Ibid.). However, at the same time, normalizing power ensures that these ideas and decisions are considered one's own (Ibid.). Recognizing normalizing power thus helps better explain what is considered truth and knowledge within societies and how these views are reflected within policy and thinking on inclusion/exclusion. While repressive power is present within particular institutions, such as the army, the police, or companies with a hierarchy, Foucault states that normalizing power is everywhere, even in institutions like schools, universities, or hospitals.

Foucault's notion of power has a few important implications. First, power is not wielded by a few individuals over many others but is something everyone is subjected to. Second, scientific knowledge cannot be separated from power, for the institutions that generate this knowledge are subjected to normalizing power. Third, scientific knowledge is a standard of normalization and plays a significant role in the social structures surrounding us. Last, discourse, therefore, "constructs the social body through the internalization of aspects that are attributed to groups or places and, for that reason, privileges some while marginalizing others" (Hook, 2007).

Discourse as a driver of social change
Because of its ability to uncover power relationships, discourse analysis can be seen as the basis of social and institutional activities that strive to change socio-political practices (Ibid.). This does not mean that analyzing discourse can bring about social change. However, it can make valuable contributions by providing data and engaging with those best equipped to sow the seeds for innovation and change (Fairclough, 1995).

Staying on the beaten track has had no valuable insights as to how to solve the issue of climate injustice, as the problem is not to be fixed with an annual meeting (e.g., the Conference of the Parties, COP). It instead requires a deep analysis of current practices and discourses. It, therefore, asks for critical theory, as Cox (1987) argues: "[Critical theory] stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about. Critical theory […] does not take institutions and social and power relations for granted but calls them into question" (p.

208). From a critical perspective, questions can, for example, be: for whom are the discourses constructed? Whom do they serve, and who is left out?

Albert Einstein once said, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it" (in Pettenger, 2007). The debates around climate change and climate justice center around questions that involve the dialogue between power and knowledge. We know something has to be done, yet this knowledge needs to be more powerful to establish change. If we are to address the consequences of climate change effectively, new deep levels of consciousness should arise (Ibid.). Discourses on climate change and climate justice are often based on a traditional Western construction of knowledge, which have yet to lead to a more inclusive notion of climate justice.

Focusing on discursive institutionalism, Schmidt (2011) explains how mainstream approaches have yet to effectively be able to contribute to the solution to climate change. Discursive institutionalism refers to "a wide range of 'interpretive' approaches in the social sciences that take ideas and discourse seriously and, in so doing, help explain the dynamics of change (and continuity)" (Ibid., p. 107). Only by emphasizing that discourse is not just a substantive idea but rather an interactive process can it fully realize its potential role as a driver of change (Ibid.). What follows is that speaking about change, rather than just thinking about it, is crucial in explaining actions that may lead to transformation (Ibid.). Besides thinking and speaking, Schmidt (2011) adds a third component: doing. In order to pave the way for collective change, the triangle of thinking, speaking, and doing, connected under the umbrella term of discursive institutionalism, focuses on multiple arenas of interactive discursive processes. These are "narratives, frames, frames of reference, discursive fields of ideas, argumentative practices, storytelling, collective memories, and more" (Ibid., p. 121). These forms of interaction arise from a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach where local agents and social movement activists take the stage and voice their ideas (Ibid.).

For these ideas to have an impact, they need power. Within the climate change debate, discursive claims and a diverse range of problem definitions and knowledge frames fueled by ideational elements are central to the question of who gets to take the stage in debating which solutions should be endorsed (Pettenger, 2007). To explain the explicit manner in which ideas can influence outcomes, Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) introduced the concept of ideational power. Ideational power is "[...] the capacity of actors (whether individual or collective) to

influence other actors' normative and cognitive beliefs through the use of ideational elements" (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016, p. 321). Carstensen and Schmidt (2016) define three approaches to ideational power within this concept. First, power through ideas, which aims to gain power through reasoning or arguments. Second is power over ideas, which works as a coercive power when actors aim to control which ideas enter the public debate and which do not. At last, power in ideas, where embedded ideas serve to organize further thinking.

Analysis of both power relations and approaches to ideational power may help identify and criticize the actors that impact deciding which issues are considered problems and which solutions are deemed viable (Ibid.). As Hayward and Lukes (2008) argue: "Analyzing power relations is an inherently evaluative and critical enterprise, one to which questions of freedom, domination, and hierarchy are – and should be – central" (p. 5). Therefore, an explicit vocabulary for discussing ideational power might aid in enhancing the ability to track agents (both individual and collective) that can affect the context in which interests and ideas are debated (Carstensen & Schmidt, 2016). In other words, to develop ways of using ideas in practice, it is essential to analyze what battles between actors (both from the elite and the masses) are being fought and how the three approaches to ideational power are involved within these arenas of discussion.

Channeling this framework on discourse as a driver of social change back to the concept of climate injustice leads to a few concluding notions. First, analyzing discourse aids in recognizing which actors are best suited to be drivers of change. Second, to better understand the why and how of climate injustices, one must recognize the frame in which one interprets the concept. Third, there is a need to actively empower new ways of knowing within the climate justice debate. Last, the three approaches to ideational power might aid in recognizing both the arenas in which ideas on climate justice are considered and giving power to those most capable of change-making.

Orientalism and the Other
Further explaining Foucault's notion of power and knowledge can be through analyzing discourses that construct the Other, e.g., Said's imaginative geographies. Modern-day geopolitical mapping is a highly spatial phenomenon in which power is used to control and maintain the social order (Al-Mahfedi, 2011). The interplay between space and power can be implicated by emphasizing that geographical landscapes are a social construct, that humans

possess agency in transforming that space (i.e., power), and by acknowledging the role of subordinates in resisting that power and changing the outcomes (Ibid.). What emerges then is a narrative of power within an ongoing spatial history in which "dominant groups and subalterns confront one another to impose and defend competing visions of life on the land" (Ibid., p. 21). Said contends that this need to control other people and places is inherently culturally shaped by attitudes and ideologies based on the notion of difference (Ibid.).

Imaginary geography refers to the perception of space through various means, such as imagery, text, and discourses (Said, 1987). Orientalism explores and explains the typical Western ('Occident's') view on what he calls 'the Orient' by studying Western dominance (or power) over the 'East'. Said's discourse of orientalism is nowadays referred to as the generalizing and patronizing Western attitude towards countries in (West) Asia and North Africa. In other words, orientalism is used to describe the Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient and, therefore, also frames what one's 'own' (Ibid., p. 3) is.

Said contends that "without examining orientalism as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" (Ibid., p. 3). Building on Said's imaginary geographies, Gregory (1994) posited that, instead of 'just being out there', space is 'doing'. This notion will be discussed further, but for now, it helps better understand how imaginative geographies produce the effect they name in the first place (Ibid.). Different from colonial structures that aim to inflict cultural change and transformation from within, Orientalist discourse can instead be seen as a practice that inflicts change from without through fictionalizing the image of the Orient and engraving this image within the collective memory of both Westerners and Easterners (Mora, 2009). Accordingly, the fictive production of the Orient through othering ensures a legitimate ground for exploitation and domination, which still prevails in today's society (Ibid.).

The Other at the border[6]

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[6] Section based on an unpublished essay I wrote in 2020 for the course *Geopolitics of Borders* at Radboud University: *Just geopolitical borders in the light of human dignity.*

Van Houtum and Naerssen (2001) explain the notion of difference through their concept of bordering, othering and ordering. According to them, the exclusionary geography of nation-states that try to secure and govern their economic welfare and identity has led to bordering processes. These borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time but rather symbolize "a social practice of differentiation" characterized by exclusion and purification (Ibid., p. 126-127). This process is what Van Houtum and Naerssen refer to as 'othering'. They state that:

> […] it is through and at borders that the specific character of the rigidity and openness of the governance of places becomes most clearly manifested. And it is at borders where normative values of differential social systems meet. Borders function as spatial mediators of often latent power and governance discourses and practices of places in society. Borders intrinsically and ineluctably represent the governing and preserving of values (p. 129).

Ultimately, the notion of othering is based on a differentiation between what is 'ours' and what is 'theirs', in which the latter remain marginalized as 'semi-aliens' (e.g., ordering) (Ibid., p. 126).

Laine (2017) argues that nation-states are very much defined by their geographical borders, not only as a physical manifestation of power but also as a symbolic and mental representation of statehood, who belongs, and who does not. Society then either produces social binding or exclusion, which can be related to the imagination of the Orient, in which there is also a clear judgment of value in the narrative of comparing the East and the West. The outcome in the practice of these theoretical approaches can be found in polluting practices across the world for mainly Western purposes (e.g., palm oil extraction in Africa, Asia, and South America). These are not considered problematic because the land is not ours. The process of othering realizes a situation in which no accountability has to be taken because certain places are not deemed important enough.

Social imaginaries

To 'remake' the imagined geographies that are now 'broken', there is a need to reimagine (Al-Mafhedi, 2011). The cultural process of re-creating representations starts with inventing new meanings about places and reimagining the systems on which the attribution of agency is stooled (Ibid.). As this thesis uses the imagination as a means to reach a new discourse on climate change, it is crucial to understand what imaginations and, related to that, imaginaries

mean. Gieseking (2007) explains that the geographical imagination is the "spatialized cultural and historical knowledge that characterizes social groups". The concept assumes relationships and can therefore be connected to the social. The social imaginary can be defined as "the understanding of the world that an individual acquires through external social forces" (Debarbieux, 2019, p1). Within this definition, the pith of the matter is located in the social forces that form the individual's understanding of the world. This is not solely based on a mental image of something or someone, but created by the course of life, the lessons one learns, and the people one is surrounded by. It does not always mean that only the unknown can be imagined; the imagination does not fill an absence. It aims to explain how individuals connect their experiences deeply rooted within their systems to all aspects of life.

Taylor (2002) states that the term social imaginary does not simply relate to the theories through which a minority of intellectuals reflect on specific societal issues but to the broader and more profound ways in which ordinary people imagine and experience their social surroundings: an understanding that is deep and vast. It entails how we experience our world, relationships with other humans, history, norms and values, et cetera. This common understanding makes certain practices and a shared sense of legitimacy of those practices possible (Ibid.). The social imaginary is both factual and normative; our sense of how things usually go is interwoven with an idea of how they ought to go. It forms the background of our practices and actions; in return, the practices carry the imaginary (Ibid.).

To help clarify the complex relationship between everyday practices and the social imaginary, Taylor provides the example of organizing a demonstration (Ibid.). This practice is in our repertory; we know how to assemble and pick up banners and that a demonstration should remain within certain bounds (e.g., do not use violence). This background understanding makes the activity possible, but behind this immediate background lies a broader picture of how we stand in relation to others and to power, our predicament in time and space, and in what narrative we are participating. What we are doing in a demonstration only makes sense in a context in which we view ourselves as compatriots and see the capacity to demonstrate peacefully as an achievement of democracy, hard-won by our ancestors, which we should sustain together. This comprehensive and deep background picture forms the social imaginary by providing the essential context to our practices (Ibid.).

Because of its normative working, the social imaginary is also an instituting condition of the social, an activity by which each society institutes itself, in particular through the imagination of the individuals of that society (Debarbieux, 2019). For space to be instituting Debarbieux (Ibid.) defined that it should constitute "a fundamental component of the symbolic universe of a collective and that of its principal institutions" (p. 10). The symbolic universe is how a collective conceives itself and its interactions with others. Instituting thus references the exteriority of the group, like 'the others' or 'nature' (Ibid.).

The previous implies two things. First, there are two sides to the same reality; besides the imagination of individuals, there is also a collective imagination that is created in societies and institutes its citizens, which can be compared to Foucault's notions of normalizing power (Young, 1981). Second, they stand in relation to each other and can thus influence each other (Debarbieux, 2019). Various categories of objectification in which the adjective corresponds to the institutionalized social collective can be defined. E.g., the 'imaginary of space', the 'imaginary of nature', and the 'imaginary of time' (Ibid., p. 4). Understanding the concept in this way is no longer some vague abstraction or a counterpoint to reality but linked to concrete notions of space, nature, and time. Together they comprise the mental playground and the institutionalizing activity that form the stage on which the concept of climate justice is defined and understood in discourse. Also, to better understand how narratives on climate change should be altered to move towards climate justice, these notions help clarify the areas where the discussion should occur. It follows the train of thought that to, e.g., change the imagination of nature, it is essential to know how that imagination came about in the first place, it answers the question of what thoughts and institutionalizing activities created the imagination of nature.

The imaginary of nature

The concept of the social imaginary thus stretches further into different interaction levels, e.g., that of nature. Whereas discourse on nature, on the one hand, involves the relationship between humans and nature, it also serves to understand that nature functions as both the ground on which we live and an actor on its own.

> The Earthrise photo, with the absence of human artifacts perceptible on the Earth's surface – neither borders nor megalopolises, et cetera – brought the image to the service of a celebration of the Earth as a unique and common entity to all humans (Debarbieux, 2019, p. 169).

The quote by Debarbieux about the photo of the Earth taken from space in 1968 describes the Earth as foremost a place for all humans. The astronaut that took the photo during Christmas time even said that "[…] rather than a massive giant, [the Earth] should be thought of as the fragile Christmas tree ball that we should handle with care" (William Anders, quoted by Debarbieux, 2019, p. 169). The photo's publication went hand in hand with the rise of environmental organizations and ecological rhetoric. Whereas the term 'ecosystem' was invented in the 1930s, it only gained importance and prominence in scholarly literature during the 70s, when the photos of the Earth became public (Debarbieux, p.170).

Figure 2. Earthrise, taken on December 24, 1968, by Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders.

The idea of nature as an ontological precondition of humanity was slowly abandoned with the eruption of catastrophic events like floods, droughts, and wildfires. Instead, it became widely recognized that the environment and nature are inherently connected to today's social and cultural world (Pohl & Helbrecht, 2022). The concept of an 'ecology of shared identities' illustrates this by inviting individuals to approach identity not just as being a member of a particular human social group, but as being "an integral part of a much larger whole, as components of a fundamentally interlinked and interdependent web of nature" (McGinnis et al., 1999).

The changing discourse on nature brought about other questions. Despite the realization that humankind carries responsibility for handling the fragile Christmas bauble on which we live with care, nature is still mainly seen as a means rather than a purpose in itself. In the traditional anthropocentric worldview, humans are central actors on a cultural stage, placed against the passive and inert background of nature (Geessink, 2022, January 5). Culture and interaction are strictly separated from the domain of nature. Nature is understood as merely the stage on which the events of the world unfold rather than as an agent of these events. However, that exact nature now often surprises and disrupts us as we experience drought, heatwaves, floods, and other disasters. In light of the disruptive character of current events, the question is whether we should still imagine nature as a passive object without any form of agency (Ibid.). As the South-African

singer Jeremy Loops phrases it: "Nature takes back what is owned, and all that remains is overgrown" (2018).

Stretching further into other levels of interaction, the concept of climate justice can also be considered concerning the imagination of nature described above. The framework provides an overview of how discourse on nature has changed within the last decennia and aims to open up the possibility of incorporating the imaginary of nature even further within the climate justice narrative by viewing nature and humankind not as separate entities but as part of the same whole. The question that remains for the analysis section is: what is then needed to turn this theory into practice?

The imaginary of space and time
The spatial and temporal dimensions of social imaginaries implicate that individual experience and social realities are intrinsically linked to the space in which they unfold and the time in which they occur. Therefore, concerning the global inequality that the world is facing now, we should rethink assumptions on space. To do so, Massey (2006) suggests three propositions regarding the conceptualization of space. First, space is "a product of practices, relations, connections, and disconnections" (Ibid., p. 90). It is something we make rather than something that is merely there or forms the ground on which we live. Similar to the notion of space as an instituting condition of the social and to Gregory's notion of space as a 'doing': space is makeable. Second, space is the dimension of multiplicity. This can be explained in relation to time. If time is the dimension of succession, in which things happen in sequence, space can be seen as the dimension in which things exist simultaneously and, consequently, as the dimension that presents us the existence of the other (Ibid.). It presents us the question of the social, in other words: how are we to live with each other? The following section on the intersection of space and responsibility elaborates more on this notion. The third proposition derives from the latter two and states that space is always in process and thus never a complete holism (Ibid.).

Space can thus be seen as an ongoing production. The previously mentioned propositions open up the possibility of connecting the concept of space to the concepts of responsibility and politics (Ibid.). If space is the dimension of multiplicity, it naturally follows that the concept is not about physical locality but rather the relations that are formed between human beings. The so-called 'social space' is a product of the connections we have with each other. However, this conceptualization of space also poses a challenge. Massey explains this by stating that space is

often dealt with as if it is time. Instead of accepting that the underlying conceptualization of space is the dimension of multiplicity, it is discussed as being part of the dimension of succession (i.e., time) (Ibid.).

This 'evasive imagination' cannot confront the challenge of space and thus turns 'space into time' and 'geography into history' (Ibid., p. 90). The problematic aspect of doing so is that it creates a discourse in which an uneven geography is explained as a problem created within a historical line of succession. For example, poverty and inequality that exist within today's globalized world are not the results of actual inequality or a lack of taking responsibility but rather exist because certain groups, lands, or countries have just not yet reached the level of development of others. In other words: it assumes that there is a line of 'success' on which every country in the world is located, rather than accepting the existence of multiple lines that can exist next to each other and are not valued differently.

What also happens as a result of this evasive imagination, through the comparison of places within the wrong dimension, is that some places are valued as less 'successful'. A narrative that is filled with power because of the positive characteristics (i.e., developed, prosperous) that are set against the negative (i.e., underdeveloped, unsuccessful). Moreover, it flows through to other aspects attributed to these same 'unsuccessful' places, such as 'levels of civilization'. So, suppose a place is considered a beautiful, developed nation, bringing in capital and experiencing richness and welfare. In that case, it is ascribed power over others that do not experience that same welfare. However, these relationships of power are distributed too unequally. Relating these theoretical considerations to the problem of climate injustice, brings us back to the same notion: climate change has different outcomes for different places, and those in power that are responsible for the climate crisis do not take responsibility for dealing with its consequences, while at the same time, the vulnerable areas of the Earth are not powerful enough to adequately address the issues they face. The levels of agency attributed to different levels of 'success' are inherently problematic because they fail to acknowledge how different views on the environment and climate justice matter. When there is no room left in the debate to voice different ways of living, of dealing with the Earth on which we live, solely because these ideas arise from places with less power, the world's destructive path will not change.

Globalization, inequality, and the local

The problematic aspect of turning 'space into time' hinders opening up questions about the possibility that inequality in our globalized world is produced *now* (Massey, 2006). Moreover, inequality might, in fact, even be inherent to the current form of globalization in the world. In order to further explore this notion, it is essential to demarcate what globalization means in this thesis. This section conceptualizes the term in relation to locality, explains how it can cause inequality, and highlights the current debate on globalization.

As described by Philips et al. (2020), globalization is "the increased interaction and interdependence between different geographical areas around the globe" (p. 510). The notion of separate societies is challenged by globalization, where entire economies are based on the expansion of trade and foreign investment, the growth of multinational and transnational businesses, and the globalization of market goods. With the expansion of international traffic also comes the intensification of international competition, the distribution of power, and inequality (Cox, 1997). As explained by Swyngedouw, globalization has changed the balance of power between capital and labor. He states that:

> Changes in scales of production/reproduction can go either upwards or downwards but will always express new power relations and shift the balance more to one side than another. Over the past decades, it has been mainly capital that 'jumped' upwards [to the global scale], while in many cases (and with varying degrees of resistance), the regulation of labor moved downwards [to the local scale] (1997, p. 170, in Gibson-Graham, 2002).

The quote above illustrates the local and global dichotomy, including the value judgment that comes with it. Upscaling (which is what globalization is) is the privilege of capital, while downscaling (the local) is the forced option for labor. When power is not distributed equally, labor comes with all its problems. When big corporations' 'shop' for the best opportunities, it often means moving to countries with low taxation, low regulation, and low pay. Practices like these undermine the provision of welfare and possibly even the democracy of these countries because they reduce the capacity to set democratically expressed priorities regarding welfare and social distribution for the sake of profit for those in power (Walby, 2009). In other words: upscaling and the unfair distribution of power take away the agency to self-control and self-governance. It creates a binding that can hardly be broken because of the interdependence fabricated. I.e., powerful states need the option of cheap labor and resources, and states with less power have no other option than to offer cheap labor. Therefore, discourse on climate

justice is inherently linked to globalization, inequality, and profit, as the vulnerable areas of the Earth are often disadvantaged because of their inability to break the loop of both environmental and democratic degradation. In the results section, what is left to answer is how to break this loop to reach climate justice and how this translates into a new discourse on climate change.

Milanovic (2016) adds that inequality has long been seen as a national phenomenon rather than a global one, even though it is evident that the gains of globalization are not distributed equally. Danaher (April 29, 2001) adds that:

> […] top-down globalization is characterized by a constant drive to maximize profits for globe-spanning corporations. It forces countries to open up their national economies to large corporations, reduce social services, privatize state functions, deregulate the economy, be 'efficient' and competitive, and submit everything and everyone to the rule of market forces. Because markets move resources only in the direction of those with money, social inequality has reached grotesque levels (para. 5).

Money flows where money is already located, and the distribution of money determines equality. However, as Massey (2004) discussed, there is a way of fighting this by accepting that the local also has agency and is not just a 'victim' of globalization. Local places are also "the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated, and produced" (p.11). The realization that local places in themselves are agents in globalization and that some agents (i.e., places) have more agency than others leaves the following questions: Who bears responsibility for the outcome of power relations? Who bears responsibility for dealing with the consequences of climate change? And, more importantly, why? These questions inherently contribute to understanding discourse within the climate justice debate because they aim to reveal who benefits and who is left out in the context of the globalized world.

Responsibility

Space, or the dimension of multiplicity, presents us with the existence of others. It is in space where we meet other people, build relations, and connect (Massey, 2006). Thinking about space relationally thus opens up questions like, how will we fill those relationships? Moreover, 'what is the geography of our social and political responsibility?' (Massey, 2004). Addressing these

questions through a discussion on notions of space and place, the local and the global, and terms like 'groundedness' and 'embodiment', Massey (2004) states that:

> If place is really to be thought relationally, […] then 'global space' is no more than the sum of relations, connections, embodiments, and practices. These things are utterly every day and grounded at the same time as they may, when linked together, go around the world (p. 8)
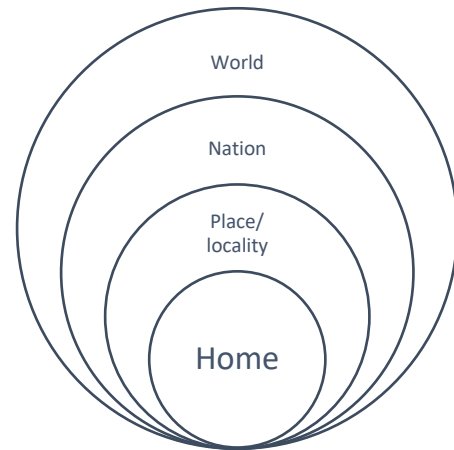
The question then is: how can we make these connections and relations that are grounded yet globally existing meaningful? In other words, how are we to live with each other? Gatens and Lloyd (1999) understand responsibility as being responsible for the past in which identities are formed not only because of what we as individuals have done, but also because of what we are. Massey (2004) adds that:

> [...] were the 'distance' to be spatial, and in the here and now rather than imagined as only temporal, the element of responsibility – the requirement to do something about it – would assert itself with far greater force. The identities in question, including those of place, are forged through embodied relations extended geographically and historically (p. 10).

Whereas Gatens and Lloyd (1999) place the question of responsibility in a temporal dimension, Massey (2004) parallels it in the spatial and the present. She states that this may contribute to adding pressure to do something because it opens a way for "re-subjectivation", which makes it possible to "reimagine the structures of power embedded in the binaries of the global and local, and space and place" (Gibson-Graham in Massey, 2004, p. 10).

Western focus on local place has fuelled the thought that 'global space' is merely abstract, something that is just 'there' rather than meaningful and deserving of the same attention as our own 'place'. Relatively little importance is given to what is considered to be distant. Comparing Western hegemony to a nested set of Russian dolls, we first care for what is close, our 'home' place or locality, our nation, et cetera. However, the potential nature of local politics demands responsibility for those relations with other parts of the world through which the identity of the

local is formed (Ibid., 2004). In other words, if we are to consider place relationally, we must realize a politics that does not deprive meaning of the global connections, relations, and practices that ultimately construct what we call our home, our identity, and what we care for (i.e., 'place'). This argument holds that we carry responsibility because we are who we are *because* of our relations to other places.

Besides this relational argument, Raghuram et al. (2008) focus on another one, namely that of ethical place-making. Places are made through people's everyday actions, and those same people are agents "in and across different places that constitute those places" (Ibid., p. 8). As explained by Young (2003):

Figure 3. The Western hegemonic geography based on Massey (2004) visualized.

> Most of us contribute to a greater or lesser degree to the production and reproduction of structural injustice precisely because we follow the accepted and expected rules and conventions of the communities in which we live (p. 41).

We are thus responsible for other places because of who we are, what we have, and what we do, especially if the relationships on which our geography is built produce structural injustice. The question of responsibility is fundamental within the climate justice debate precisely because the concept of climate justice exposes the disproportionate consequences of climate change on underprivileged places and communities that do not contribute to climate change. Channeling the arguments of ethical place-making and identity-forming through our relations back to the issue of climate justice concludes with a few notions. First, Western states are responsible for dealing with the consequences of climate change in the vulnerable areas of the Earth because these consequences derive from a set of injustices these states created. Second, we[7] are who we are, and we have what we have because of our structurally unjust relations with the Earth's vulnerable areas.

3. Methodology

This research aims to discover the content of a discourse promoting climate justice. In other words: how should we discuss, research, and think about climate change if we are to consider

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[7] I use the term 'we' to refer to Western states, as I am a citizen of a Western state.

the livelihoods of those people and places most vulnerable to climate change? This question aims to discover the characteristics of a climate change discourse that considers these social concerns. Viewing the problem from various angles analyzes what characteristics are essential in reaching climate justice. Therefore, the answer should be formulated through the analysis of qualitative data. The approach to answering the thesis' research question lies in conducting semi-structured (expert) interviews that seek the individual interpretation of the social construct and discourse that is climate justice and the interviewees' expert imagination of positive change. As there is no set of qualitative data yet available to answer this thesis' research question specifically, I collected the primary data by interviewing people from four groups: climate activists, researchers, representatives of NGOs, and people involved in local governance.

The expert interview is a method of qualitative empirical research. As Meuser and Nagel (2009) described, the expert interview is a qualitative interview method based on a topical guide. It is a semi-structured interview focusing on the expert's knowledge, often characterized as specific knowledge in a particular field of action. The academic literature has debated extensively on what criteria should apply to experts. However, most agree that experts are considered knowledgeable because of their specific knowledge, community position, or status (Döringer, 2021). The expert interview aims to gain as much information on a specific topic as possible. By choosing the expert, the information that emerges from the interview often depends on the knowledge of this specific person in particular expertise. This is specifically useful to answering the research question of this thesis because it establishes a guideline as to who is considered an expert in the field of climate change and provides for making valid claims on a climate change discourse that promotes climate justice.

Intensive or qualitative methods are often used in geographical research as these methods are suitable for examining power and knowledge relations and social processes (Longhurst, 2010). The foundation of this thesis lies in the idea that current discourses promote unequal power relations. Taking Foucault's power/knowledge dichotomy into account, the work seeks to lay bare the underlying processes that construct these discourses and, at the same time, establish new content. To do so, the underlying processes that construct the knowledge of the experts should also be subject to research. In other words: how did their interpretation come about? In order to overcome the implications of investigating the implicit dimensions of knowledge, Döringer (2021) introduced the *problem-centered expert interview*. This type of qualitative

research method combines two ways of conducting an interview: the *theory-generating expert interview* by Bogner and Menz (2009) and the *problem-centered interview* by Witzel (2000).

The *theory-generating expert interview* assumes that experts hold specific expertise and status in decision-making processes. This way, the interview information has a socially relevant dimension because it shapes and determines a field of action (Döringer, 2021). Thus, 'their action orientations, knowledge, and assessments decisively structure, or help to structure, conditions of actions of other actors' (Bogner & Menz, 2009, p. 54). Even though the information from experts is considered 'interpretative knowledge', they are not necessarily referred to as private actors but as representatives of a specific group (Döringer, 2021). Viewing the experts as representatives of a group allows for an increased validity of their claims and therefore adds strength to the arguments (Ibid.).

The *problem-centered interview* draws upon central principles of qualitative research, such as openness, flexibility, and process orientation. The method of interviewing is meant to be an open dialogue between the researcher and interviewee, where the interviewee is encouraged to tell stories about their expertise (Döringer, 2021). Because of a deductive strategy of general and specific explorations, this type of information gathering is seen as a semi-structured interview. On the one hand, a structured point of entry with different themes forms its guidelines, and on the other hand, there is room for the co-production of social realities by both the interviewer and the interviewee (Ibid.). This is specifically important for generating the contents of a discourse that promotes climate justice, as it stools on producing a different reality. Therefore, the interviews provided a playground in which both the interviewees and myself could think and imagine freely what problems stand in the way of realizing the production of this new reality.

However, an epistemological challenge lies within this interviewing style as there is still room for interpretation for the researcher. Even by taking an interactive and inductive approach, the knowledge of the interviewee and the construct on which this knowledge is built is never wholly accessible (Witzel & Reiter, 2012). Therefore, a researcher can only interpret the subjective meaning specific issues have for the expert interviewed.

The two types of semi-structured interviews discussed above are combined within the *problem-centered expert interview*, as identified by Döringer (2021). This method is characterized by

elements of both methods, which are the following: exploring and defining what the term 'expert' means, distinguishing different types of expert knowledge, aiming for inductive theory development, highlighting the individual perspective, providing a set of questions or themes as a guideline and using these different themes to enable the comparability of the gathered data (Ibid., p. 269). This interviewing provides a fruitful method in research where the individual agency of the expert is part of the research. The interviews provided the ground on which the interviewee and I explored and produced new insights. For some, climate change is a heartfelt area of discussion and activism, creating much discomfort and anxiety. Therefore, the conversations were based on mutual respect to offer comfort and understanding.

In contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are only sometimes guided by a predetermined set of questions that are always asked in the same order. On the other hand, the semi-structured interview is different from the unstructured interview because the interviewee does not lead the conversation entirely. The tone of the semi-structured interview is relatively informal or conversational, and this type of research method can generally be used as a 'stand-alone' method (Longhurst, 2010). Throughout the interview, I aimed to retain open-ended questions to get as much information from as many angles as possible (Ibid.). This is a strength of the method as it is helpful to understand complex problems, experiences, and opinions (Ibid.). Structured interviews often focus solely on the structure, therefore missing meaningful opportunities to come to the 'real' complexities that might come forward during an interview. Besides the semi-structured interview's ability to empower interviewees by valuing their thoughts and opinions, a drawback can be found in its ability to leave participants feeling betrayed, as the method depends on intersubjectivity. The interview is partly based on how the researcher and the interviewee engage and position themselves against each other (Ibid.). Relationships like these can be either disappointing or rewarding if the interviewer succeeds in ensuring a stable ground of trust.

3.1 Approach to research

The previous sections have clarified that what first needs to be understood is how the ideas, theories, and knowledge on climate justice do not reflect in the social reality. This thesis seeks to find out what problems occur within the current discourse on climate change and what these

discourses should instead contain so that climate justice can be reached. In other words: what does not work? Why does it not work? Furthermore, what should be done instead so climate justice can be reached? This means that a broad view of the problem is necessary to comprehensively describe the characteristics of a new discourse on climate change that promotes climate justice. To gain this broad view, I chose to use four 'sources' of information: interviews with climate activists, researchers, representatives of NGOs, and people active in local governance.

The approach for the interviews was embedded within a (not too strict) framework of questions that consisted of three parts. The interviews always started by asking if the expert could tell more about themselves and their activity within the debate on climate justice. This part was focused on the background of the experts and their motives. The second part of the interview focused on gaining insights as to if and, if so, what problems the experts experienced in current discourses and climate change narratives. The last part was to ask the experts to use their knowledge, imagination, and ideas to formulate what a narrative or discourse should contain. As this part called for the imagination of the interviewee, it often took some follow-up questions to capture their views entirely. Even by doing so, the pitfall of only partially reaching the objective meaning of what the expert says remains present. To overcome this issue, I would repeat what the expert said if they had formulated their answers and ask whether I had understood them correctly. Also, at the end of each interview, I would ask if they had anything to add or any claims they wanted to emphasize.

The interviews allowed space for the individual experiences of all experts while still maintaining a framework through which the interviews could be compared and themes that were brought up could be distinguished. As the conversations often bloomed in ways the interviewee steered, the questions were only sometimes asked in a similar order. However, other than providing structure to the conversation, the questions could be discussed differently to compare them. It helped to know what the interviewees brought up themselves to lift the conversation to higher levels of complexity where possible. To explain: whereas some experts were more aware of technological and scientific approaches, others already drove the conversation to the intersectionality of climate justice themselves. Either way, in both situations, all parts were always covered. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Approach to data collection

The interviews were conducted in August and September 2022. The experts were found either by sending emails to local and national organizations or through contacts of my own. The sampling was by no means random and, therefore, part of a non-probability sampling, as I picked both the organizations and the people who seemed to be able to offer me information on the topic. I picked the organizations and people I imagined to be able to give me answers based on the information on their organizations' websites or personal profiles on the internet. The sampling was thus done by convenience and based on the following criteria: online exposure to climate change topics, place of work, climate justice interest or affiliation, and part of one of four groups (i.e., climate activists, researchers on climate justice, representatives of NGO's and people that are active in local governance). As these criteria were somewhat loose, it happened a few times that after an initial short conversation, I would realize that someone did not meet the criteria above. What also happened sometimes is that the interviewees would suggest other people for an interview. Therefore, part of the sampling was via snowball sampling. Because the research question asks for the imagination and opinion of people already engaged in the discussion on climate change, only people from this group were interviewed.

This qualitative study aimed not to generalize or reach saturation but to explore the research question from different angles. As coined by Malterud et al. (2016), information power can be used to guide toward the proper size interview sample instead of saturation. The more information that can be extracted from an interview, the fewer interviews are needed. For this method, the number of interviews is flexible and, therefore, largely dependent on whether I found enough information to answer the research question, the aims of the study, and the quality of dialogue (Ibid.). The average time of the interviews conducted was around 45 minutes. Along the way, there were multiple moments where I revisited the process and assessed whether I had enough information or should continue recruiting new experts to be able to answer the research question.

Because of the criteria I held, the experts interviewed all had in common that they engage themselves within the discussion on climate change and climate justice, be it on a more personal level through activism or at an organizational level through politics or their choice of workplace. As the aim was to explore a new discourse on climate change from various angles, I chose four specific groups of people as my source of information (see above). Descriptions of

the experts interviewed, and their corresponding place in the Appendix can be found in the table below. More detailed descriptions of the experts can be found in Appendix B.

Expert name:	Additional information:	Appendix number:
1. Ida Simonsen	Activist who has done research on climate justice and the food system. Works at *SDG Nederland* (Sustainable Development Goals the Netherlands), an organization that aims to implement the UN proposed sustainable development goals.	D1
2. Yatou Sallah	Researcher with a focus on conservation of nature and communication of climate change as a social issue.	D2
3. Olivier Markestein	Project leader sustainable development at *Gemeente Winterswijk* (municipality of Winterswijk, the Netherlands).	D3
4. Jens van der Duim	Communication manager at *de Jonge Klimaatbeweging* (youth climate movement) with a focus on provinces outside of cities in the Netherlands.	D4
5. Etske Thie	Activist for Extinction Rebellion and *Klimaatcoalitie* (Climate Coalition).	D5
6. Thijs Bentvelzen	Communication manager at *SDG Nederland*. Former Journalist for *De Groene Amsterdammer, De Correspondent* and *De Volkskrant*.	D6
7. Maarten Frijlink	Member of *Partij voor de Dieren werkgroep Arnhem* (Party for the Animals seminar group Arnhem). Activist for Extinction Rebellion and *Klimaatcoalitie.*	D7

Table 1. Short descriptions of experts interviewed (for more detailed descriptions, see Appendix B).

The group I interviewed comprised people of all ages, be they students or retired, and I spoke to three women, three men, and one non-binary person. Their different backgrounds allowed them to view the problem from various professional and personal perspectives. Six of the interviews were conducted in Dutch in order to minimize any errors resulting from language

barriers. One of the interviews was conducted in English. All interviews were conducted via Zoom or telephone if the interviewee preferred that. They all took place in a one-on-one setting.

During the interviews, I took notes on essential questions in response to what the interviewee told me. All of the interviews conducted for this thesis were recorded so that they could be transcribed afterward. Even though the goal was to transcribe the interviews immediately afterward, as is often recommended in the literature (see, e.g., McMullin, 2021), this could only sometimes happen due to the overlap of working, interviewing, and writing. However, allowing some time in between lets thoughts sink in and reflect on the interviews (Ibid.). As McMullin (2021) argues, deciding the degree of detail of transcription before the interviews are conducted is suggested because this might influence how the researcher interprets the data obtained. While full verbatim transcriptions include all 'utterances, mistakes, repetitions and all grammatical errors', intelligent verbatim adapts to written norms (Ibid., p. 2). Some argue that emotions and intentions might get lost in translation while transcribing, and verbatim transcription is the way to go. However, Lapadat (2000) argues that: 'Spoken language is structured and accomplished differently than written text, so when the talk is represented as written text, it is not surprising that readers draw on their knowledge of written language to evaluate it' (p.6). It is optional to include all errors to provide a close description of the reality (McMullin, 2021). Therefore, I chose to transcribe according to intelligent verbatim. As McMullin (2021) states, the use of intelligent verbatim allows the researcher to only record in writing what part of talking was intended by the interviewee, without additional errors occurring while speaking.

Another decision regarding transcribing is whether all parts of the interviews should be transcribed or just the parts in which valuable information is shared. Even though the latter is a time-saving method, a disadvantage is that it is subject my interpretation of the interview and information obtained (McMullin, 2021). However, as the interviews were all conducted following the same guide, it made the most sense to focus on the valuable information for answering the research question. First, the information not connected to these themes was only sometimes useful as some interviewees diverted to other topics not related to the research. Second, it provided a clearer dataset to compare the claims made during the interviews without additional information. Last, because of time-saving reasons, because an interview of one hour takes around three to four hours to transcribe.

During the interviews, I made notes. These allowed me to keep up with the conversation and reflect on how I interpreted things and if that interpretation differed from the transcription. The recordings then functioned as a final check as to whether my interpretations were correct and whether the interviewee's meaning was correctly represented (Fasick, 2001 in Halcomb & Davidson, 2006).

3.3 Approach to data analysis

The goal of this research is to explore the perceptions and imaginations of the experts interviewed. The first step to data analysis is ensuring the basis is structured and ready to be analyzed. This step was done by carefully recording and transcribing the interviews and making sure to realize a data set that can be analyzed. The actual analysis of data for this thesis was done by closely examining the data for recurring themes. To do so, I followed an inductive approach, where the interview information determined the themes. In order to come to an answer to the research question, what was needed was to imagine freely a discourse that promotes climate justice. If I were to follow a deductive approach, where the themes were already set up beforehand, the opportunity to imagine without borders would have been lost. However, some of the themes discussed in the theoretical framework were also brought up by the experts. A semantic approach allowed for an analysis of the experts' opinions on the matter.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2008) guidelines for using thematic analysis in social science research, I first familiarized myself with the data set, after which I coded all interviews by highlighting the statements, problems, and ideas the experts brought up. I then translated all this information into seven different themes. The keywords used to formulate these statements, problems, ideas, and the themes they were translated to can be found in the table below.

Keywords and sentences of formulations of statements, problems, and ideas:	Translation into theme:

'Progressive innovation', 'stimulation of actual restauration and regeneration', 'other ways of understanding time', 'development', 'hierarchy of knowledge', 'equality of knowledge', 'equality of experience', 'quick fixes or techno-fixes', 'short term memory', 'economic growth'	Linear-progressive thinking as the only way forward within the innovation narrative
'We have to act *now*', 'now or never', 'the climate crisis is a gigantic crisis', 'urgency vs. reflection', 'hopelessness through stress', 'act before it is too late', 'humans cannot completely understand the demise of nature', 'total cognitive dissonance', 'shutting yourself off', 'nobody feels responsible', 'adapting behavior to knowledge', 'not experiencing consequences yourself', 'justify behavior', 'telling stories to ourselves'	The paradox of cognitive dissonance vs. the urgency to do something now
'Making humans part of the web of life again', 'realizing you are a part of nature', 'more than human nature', 'touching soil, harvesting vegetables', 'food system', interrelatedness/interdependency', 'perception and experiences through senses', 'connecting the understanding biodiversity to our senses', 'learning from our ancestors', 'engage with nature on an individual and community level'	Humankind and nature are intrinsically linked
'Including sustainable development goals (SDG's) in policy', 'citizen participation', 'free choice of spending grants', 'grass roots initiatives', 'local policy that stimulates sustainable choices', 'bottom-up approach', 'acknowledging separated worlds of local vs. global',	Think global, act local
'All parts of society', 'the world system is broken', 'forgetting', 'capitalistic system', 'the system works the way it is supposed to work', 'the free market did	System change, not climate change

not fix our problems', 'profit before anything else', 'the end of the world vs. the end of the week', 'big capital is responsible', 'our system knows no morality', 'the nature of the system does not consider the future', 'the center of the system dictates that it must grow in order to survive'	
'We need stories and connections on emotional and cognitive levels', 'communicating without words', 'sharing and trading as anticapitalistic alternatives', 'regeneration', 'language and narration', 'infographics', 'finding the right person to tell the right story', 'translating science into understandable knowledge', 'storytellers', 'understanding', 'levelling', 'creative ways of informing through history and stories', 'influence and role of the media', 'ways of understanding how issues relate to yourself', 'positivity', 'balance', 'inform, warn, activate', 'listen', 'avoid speaking the language of neoliberalism'	Ways of sharing information
'Changing narratives', 'improvement of education', 'youth input', 'practice what you preach', 'get back in touch with our environment', 'understanding how each individual and community relate to climate issues', 'long-term thinking', 'empathy', 'look beyond borders', 'triad of individual, big business and governments', 'major social change', 'realize interconnectedness of problems', 'looking beyond feasibility'	Conditions to realize a new discourse

Table 2. Keywords and sentences for translation of statements, problems and ideas into themes.

The themes above are highlighted in Appendix C. Their corresponding colors and the number of times they have been brought up, can be found in the table below and in Appendix D.

Theme:	Corresponding color:	The number of times it was brought up:
1. Linear-progressive thinking as the only way forward	Orange	16
2. The paradox of cognitive dissonance vs. the urgency to do something now	Green	16
3. Humankind and nature are intrinsically linked	Yellow	17
4. Think global, act local	Purple	21
5. System change, not climate change	Light green	16
6. Ways of sharing information	Pink	28
7. Conditions to realize a new discourse	Turquoise	19

Table 3. Themes, corresponding colors, and number of times they were brought up in the dataset (see Appendix C & D).

These themes ensure that the information retrieved from the interviews can be translated into a precise analysis. Overall, the analysis section is built up the following way: first, it discusses the statements made by the experts on climate change. Afterward, it discusses the problems that they recognize within the debate, and at last, their preferred solutions and the conditions that are needed to realize these solutions.

3.4 Limitations and ethics of this approach

This method of doing research has its limitations. The most important one is that I had to interpret the information from the interviews to create a data set that works for a thematic approach to the interviews. However, this is subject to my interpretation and might leave out valuable information. What happened during some of the interviews was that the interviewees would elaborate on matters that were important to them and very interesting indeed but just not needed to answer my research question. I could, therefore, only sometimes use these elaborations. I have experienced that talking about climate change with people who, one way or another, truly dedicate their lives to the cause can fuel heartfelt emotions. I tried to do the interviewees justice by providing a safe space in which they could speak and imagine freely

and by ensuring that the context in which they told their stories was understood in translation in the conversations' written transcripts.

The goal of this research was not to generalize or reach any trend or saturation. In order to answer the research question, this was not necessary. However, by using just one method of research, there is little change to no chance of detecting any trend or generalization. Furthermore, even though the group of interviewees was diverse in gender and age, I interviewed primarily white, highly educated people who were born and active in the Netherlands' climate conversation. While many interviewees mentioned the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices to reach climate justice, I did not interview people that are part of an indigenous community. However, I tried to make up for this limitation by incorporating the literature on indigenous knowledge mentioned by some interviewees. Still, this did not mean that what the experts had to say had less value; their knowledge is still a crucial source of information.

At last, as the interviews were conducted in Dutch, I had to translate all information into English to incorporate them in the analysis section. This practice could mean that some context gets lost in translation or that some words might be interpreted differently in a different language. To overcome this issue, I stuck to the literal translation of sentences where possible and mentioned any disparities in translation where needed.

Besides moral arguments to behave ethically as human beings, as a researcher, some other practical considerations should be taken into account, which is all based on the presumption that one has to take responsibility for the decisions one makes (Hay, 2010). First, if requested, interviews should be conducted in confidentiality (Longhurst, 2010). Second, when the research goal is to explore or solve a problem and therefore 'make the world a better place, Hay (2010) suggests that the least that can be done is making sure it does not harm in any way. Questions that could therefore be considered while conducting research are: is this appropriate and just? Am I doing harm? Am I doing good? Furthermore, am I showing respect? (Ibid., p. 38).

The topic of climate change can be emotionally draining because of its intense nature. During the interviews, I always tried to create a space where interviewees could freely speak, feel and imagine. At last, besides doing this, there is also a need to be reflexive and position oneself to avoid thinking that an interview is neutral and without any situated knowledge (Rose, 1997).

A big part of reimagining is also accepting new ways of knowing. The most important part of the ethics of doing research is to realize my positionality within the debate and acknowledge the power/knowledge construct that led to this position. Taking quotes and formulating arguments based on the interviewees' words is always a decision regarding how the interviewee is represented. These decisions have to be taken into consideration (McMullin, 2021). In order to overcome the potential issue of misinterpreting what the interviewee has said, I took all previously mentioned considerations into account (i.e., comparing notes to transcripts, being careful not to miss context where needed, allowing for a safe space, etcetera). Even though these limitations were taken into account, some of them are still unavoidable.

4. Analysis

The research sets out to analyze the problems within narratives and discourse on climate change through the eyes of experts that engage themselves in the climate justice debate. Their solutions to these problems translate to climate change discourse characteristics that contribute to reaching climate justice. In order to realize a structured analysis, the following section is divided into seven sections, each focusing on a theme within current climate change discourses mentioned by the experts interviewed. Both the problems experienced by the experts are discussed as their imagination for solutions. While gathering the data, I realized that some themes discussed in the theoretical framework overlap within the interviews. These parts are still included within the analysis section to present a logical and structured narration based on the information gained from the interviews.

4.1 Linear-progressive thinking as the only way forward

A problem mentioned sixteen times by multiple experts lies in the prevailing idea in the current discourse on climate change that in order to move forward, there must be some progression (i.e., linear progressive thinking). This 'innovation narrative' can be found in the concept of a technological fix, the constant need for improvement or development, and the characteristics attributed to innovation. Frijlink explained the example of the "clash between the prophets and the wizards," a narrative that tries to explain both sides of the climate change debate. 'Prophets' focus on sustainable solutions to include the 'more than human world', while the 'wizards' think everything can be solved with fast 'techno-fixes' (C7)[8] This narrative can also be found in (green) politicians' rhetoric that voice that "[…] we need growth so we can divide [the profits] fairly. [And] … we need growth to become more just"[9](Ibid.). However, as Frijlink questioned out loud, "… this is an ideological story, and I wish it were true, but we are forty years later, and we have seen no results from unregulated capitalism[10], … so, what is going to be different this time?" Simonsen added:

> I am not saying we should go back to living as if we were in the Stone Age. However, eighty
> percent of the Earth's biodiversity is protected by twenty percent of the Earth's surface, between
> three and five percent of the world's population, which you can encompass under the indigenous

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[8] The experts are referred to by their last names and the appendix where the transcriptions of their interviews are located. E.g., Ida Simonsen is referred to as 'Simonsen, C1'.

[9] Interviews C1 and C3-7 were conducted in Dutch. I, therefore, translated quotes from these interviews to English by hand.

[10] This idea follows the train of thought that barely regulated markets with profit motives, competition, and minimal government intervention (i.e., the characteristics of capitalism) facilitate economic growth and are, therefore, desirable within systems.

peoples. So, we forget that ways of living and thinking already exist, mainly in the majority world[11]. Mainly among people of color and indigenous people, also mainly women and non-binary people; all the people that we constantly forget when we again set priority to that innovation and progressive thinking and fail to acknowledge the ways that climate and nature adoption and mitigation strategies are influenced and affected by different people in different ways. So, that bit of justice, the 'forgetting' and not being guided by diversity and culture and knowledge, stands in the way of reaching justice (C1).

Most experts recognized the innovation narrative as a core part of scientific knowledge. Because of the hierarchy of knowledge, the narrative of the innovative 'quick fix' prevails within the debate:

> […] there is a hierarchy when you enter spaces, especially political spaces, where you talk about climate change. There is a hierarchy of knowledge where experience, culture, and relationships to the environment are held at one level. Then the knowledge about scientific, or earth systems processes, are held at another, […] higher level. So that the only […] quick fixes that we have, are not fixes that actually engage with the majority of the population. They are fixes that engage with private businesses, with very complex language and complex mechanisms (Sallah, C2).

It shows that what was forgotten along the way are the ways of knowing that value experience, culture, and relationships to the environment (Simonsen, C1 & Sallah, C2). These exist within the periphery, namely within indigenous communities (Ibid.). Sallah further voiced another problem of the knowledge hierarchy: the 'scientific higher level' is presumed to be a goal rather than a means (C2). It follows the idea that as long as the solution is sought within scientific knowledge, problems will be solved. However, as Sallah argued:

> Those are not solutions that address the root causes of climate change. They are issues that will safeguard us for the next twenty years or twenty extra years. However, it does not necessarily prevent the issue from starting all over again (C2).

While speaking about her research experience within the conservation of nature at the Dutch *Zuid Kennemerland* national park, Sallah mentioned solutions that might aid in altering the ways problems are viewed and how they should be solved. She stated that:

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[11] Majority world is used to describe the places where most of the world's population lives. The term is used to counter traditional terms like 'developing world' or 'Third World'.

There are so many discourses within conservation [of nature], […] there is conservation as development, there is conservation as economic growth, conservation as tourism. Essentially all of these discourses render the issue of the loss of green space and diversity loss as issues that not only will improve people's access to green space but also will improve the country's GDP [12], a country's tourism sector, and will all make these systems way more developed. [By talking about] the problems of biodiversity loss and broader climate change, […] you are therefore defining first of all, what the problem is, [...] how the problem can be solved, how it should not be solved, […] what instruments need use to measure your success of solving the problem and which instruments you should not use. That is part of building up a discourse where you favor certain knowledge over others and certain ideas about the actual problem over others. When it can be all of those things at once, and if there was some equality of knowledge and experience, then you could be addressing all of these things at one time without placing a hierarchy or prioritizing what needs to be done first (C2).

In order to come to this solution, to equality of knowledge, culture, and experience, Sallah added that it is important to "[understand] how we as humans and as individuals with unique backgrounds, cultural identities […] relate to the issues" (C2). Simonsen also stated that: "[…] recognizing ways that are different and that still exist, that is really a core part, […] that is the foundation of healthy and restorative resistance and a healthy response to the climate and nature crisis" (C1). In order to overcome linear thinking as the basis of finding paths forward, there is thus a need to accept other ways of knowing as equal to Western or scientific knowledge.

4.2 The paradox of cognitive dissonance vs. the urgency to do something now

"We humans are storytellers; we tell ourselves stories to justify our own behavior, even when we know that this behavior has negative consequences" (Frijlink, C7). Another problem perceived by multiple experts from different fields was the paradox that is felt between cognitive dissonance within the climate change discourse and the so-called urgency narrative. When talking about the climate change debate, Simonsen mentioned that it often feels like a conversation about a complete cognitive dissonance:

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[12] Gross Domestic Product

> [...] about concepts that cannot really be verbalized and can only be internalized up to a certain level. For human beings, the demise of nature and the impact of the Anthropocene are hardly comprehendible if they are not experiencing the consequences of these crises daily (C1).

And:

> Every human being is different, and while some find inspiration in the message that we have to do something now, the urgency-narrative also creates a tunnel vision in which the exact solutions and the same ways of expressing the issue are repeated (Ibid.).

Frijlink (C7) mentioned that to justify our behavior, we act as storytellers to ourselves. For example, he explained how most people in his surroundings understand climate change consequences but often downplay this urgency by saying things like: "life should still be fun". Frijlink argued that "this way of dealing with the issue adds a nuance to it to avoid having to cope with the stress that the truth might cause" (C7). Besides, it leads to a state of mind in which cognitive dissonance removes any feelings of responsibility (Ibid.). The distance these urgency narratives create is, on the one hand, needed because it allows for space to take action without being too involved on an emotional and cognitive level. However, on the other hand, it could lead to anxiety and stress in which nothing happens (Simonsen, C1).

The experts provided various solutions to the issue of urgency vs. distancing because of cognitive dissonance. First, "the thin line between an urgency-narrative and cognitive dissociation can be overcome by asking questions and especially the 'why-question' of behavior" (Frijlink, C7). He stated that we should measure our behavior and the stories we tell ourselves against a moral standard instead of constantly nuance the choices we make (e.g., by saying "life should still be fun" and "we should still be able to ride a motorbike or lit up the barbeque whenever we want to" without taking into account the consequences of doing so) (Ibid.). To overcome shaming and pointing fingers, he added that "to lift conversations to a 'higher', more abstract level, conversing should be inquisitive and curious, rather than accusatory" (Ibid.). Second, Simonsen mentioned that "we need to create a sense of connection, a balance, [...but] we should not forget the data and stay conscious of the reality that we are facing a crisis that is already visible within many areas of the Earth" (C1). Furthermore, Bentvelzen added that in order to take responsibility, we should search for a balance between

simply discussing climate justice questions and clearly stating: "this is an emergency, we can see it, we know it, and we stand for it, something has to happen" (C6).

4.3 Humankind and nature are intrinsically linked

The third problem mentioned was a loss of connection that distances people from nature and practices that harm that nature. To further explain this notion, Simonsen stated that "everything within the current system is designed to separate humankind and nature" (C1). Besides the loss of connection to nature, there was also a perceived loss of connection between human beings among themselves.

A solution that was provided for this loss of connection is the idea coined by both Simonsen and Sallah that connections do not necessarily have to be formed through words (C1 & C2). Simonsen mentioned that:

> […] getting people back to the roots of our food system, back onto the land, showing how plants grow, touching the soil with their hands and eating the fruits and vegetables that they saw grow [is a] way of literally making the interrelation between human beings and nature palatable (C1).

It is about taking people back into the 'more than human' nature, creating space for feelings, hearing birds sing or tasting an apple that was just harvested, "because that is where you can show concrete alternatives and bring people back into contact immediately, [so that they can realize that] they were already in contact [...] simply because everyone eats" (C1). How sensory experiences relate to regaining a connection to nature, Sallah narrated:

> […] people can understand data, that there is biodiversity loss, and that affects other ecosystem services that people rely on to live their lives, for cities to function, and for food systems to function. But then, just because you can understand the data and you can understand the scientific earth systems and earth processes does not necessarily make you inclined to engage with it on a deeper personal level. […] people will understand […] what the numbers are trying to say. […] [But] the roots of the issue are that people are so far removed from that data. And that data does not affect who they are; how they perceive of their identity in the environment, it does not influence how they perceive of their heritage, of their family, of their culture, […] or even on a somatic level, how they perceive of their space. […] So, you can understand biodiversity like 'this percentage of pollinators is missing from this environment', but you can

also understand it from the aspect of 'I went on a walk through this park a year ago, and I smelled these flowers and […] I walked barefoot through this patch of grass and felt these textures; therefore, these plants existed in this environment. But a year later, I walked in here, and I do not smell those same smells. That means that my relationship with nature and my experience on a sensory level have changed in that environment. And therefore, who I am and how I relate to that has changed' […] there are so many levels where people are expressing that relationship that they have to nature and to a changing environment, that I think acts upon people in a way deeper level than quantitative numerical data can ever can (C2).

To facilitate these relationships, Sallah mentioned Foucault's concept of governmentality. The concept explains how the governance of people's relationships to their surroundings can change how they perceive others and nature within that environment:

> […] it is the idea that when you are governing a population or some social entity, or even governing some object, then you are governing the people who engage with each other or that thing, just as much as you are governing people's relationships. So, it is almost like this middle space. [We should] forget about making rules and guidelines for how people use a park, but instead, focus on how people relate to nature in the park. If you can change how people perceive their relationship to nature, then all that rule-making [...] about how people should be in the park naturally follows because people have it engrained in their minds. They know how they should interact [and] be considerate of that nature, how they should be considerate of the different species living on the ground they are walking on. […] it moves us away from thinking about environmental factors as scientific, technical things […] But instead, it looks at how that environment holds a social interaction, how our social systems are embedded within that environment (C2).

4.4 Think global, act local

Some experts mentioned the dichotomy between climate change as a global issue that should also seek solutions on a local level (Simonsen, C1 & Markestein, C3). However, the problem is that 'the local' does not always have as much agency as 'the global'.

The experts mentioned examples of tangible ideas and examples that, according to them, provided ways of connecting 'the local' to global problems. An example of local agency mentioned by Olivier Markestein, the sustainability project leader and policy officer at the

municipality of Winterswijk[13], was that of the center they have set up (C3). 'Centre Sustainable Winterswijk' (*Centrum Duurzaam Winterswijk*) is a space where the municipality's citizens can come up with questions and ideas regarding sustainability and the environment (Ibid.). The center is also where people get together, share ideas and stories, and get advice from the municipality and each other. Part of the municipality's policy amplifies its cultural history that tells the story of the area's monuments, streams, street patterns, old trees, and landscape elements (Ibid.).

Another story that sparked the imagination was that of Simonsen, who explained how locality could play an essential role in our food systems (C1). She stated that:

> […] the moment you can show people what a healthy food system can look like on a local level, and you can activate that fantasy again. […] the 'capacity to imagine an alternative future' […] that is when you can communicate on a different level. (Ibid.).

Another example of a solution that focuses more on citizen influence, activism, and participation, is Thie's example of her influence at the Municipality museum in Arnhem (*Gemeentemuseum Arnhem*) (C5). She visited their latest exhibition on climate change called 'Best Before' (*Tenminste Houdbaar Tot*), which displayed the climate crisis from artists' perspectives on the question: 'how much longer can human beings keep living on our planet?' Even though the idea for the exposition was valued, Thie missed a few things. First, she felt like the story told through the art reminded her of disaster tourism. Second, there needed to be a clear call to action for those who had visited the exposition. Moreover, it missed the point of the interconnectedness of all on Earth: it was a story about how the vulnerable areas of the Earth would experience climate change consequences, without mentioning any causes nor pointing out those who carry responsibility (C5).

However, inspired by previous activist projects, she wrote the museum these criticisms, which they then took into account. Soon, the exposition will be accompanied by clear calls for action in the form of QR codes that people can scan to determine their role in taking action and

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[13] The European Commission awarded the municipality of Winterswijk in the Netherlands the European Green Leaf Award 2022 as a recognition and reward for their efforts and achievements in environmental and climate matters.

changing the narratives (C5). Therefore, museums can provide local spaces that connect, inspire, and call for action.

4.5 System change, not climate change

Narratives and discourse prevail within 'the system'. The neoliberal focus on markets and profit has led many experts to believe that the system the world operates in does not work. The word 'system' is often used in narratives on climate justice and accordingly mentioned more than once during the interviews for this research. To specify, a sampling of how 'the system' was spoken about during the interviews: as an "ecocidal, white superiority, capitalistic, colonial patriarchy" (Simonsen, C1), as "something that simply does not work" (Van der Duim, C4), that "climate change consequences ask for systematical change" (Bentvelzen, C6) and that "we should let go of the language of the neoliberal movement and its system" (Frijlink, C7). In short, the experts agreed that the system in itself is guilty of creating problems of injustice.

Frijlink described how the current system is based on a way of living that can no longer hold because "[…] its center dictates that we must grow in order to move forward and reach climate justice"[14] (C7). Frijlink mentioned how even the 'green' parties of the Netherlands have adopted ways of using neoliberalist language that presumes that a possible green future is based on the assumption that the free market is the means of going forward (C7). While in his opinion, the neoliberal system of the free market does not carry the assumption that the choices made are in the best interest of human life and nature (Ibid.). He coined the option of a system with a strong government that does not constantly narrate that climate change solutions should be "feasible and affordable"[15] because this language decreases the playing field for taking action (Ibid.). Ways of narrating climate change issues like this decide beforehand which solutions are worth considering and thus take away creativity and imagination (Ibid.).

According to Frijlink, the current system treats societal issues as separate rather than related problems (C7). He mentioned how some people say: "you worry about the end of the world, while I worry about the end of the month" (Ibid.). "National measures such as higher fuel taxes, that aim to tax environmentally polluting practices, mainly affect those who are not capable of spending the extra money on taxes and might polarize populations in which wealth is already

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[14] This is related to the argument of linear progressive thinking discussed in section 4.1.
[15] Like the current Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte does (Frijlink, C7).

unevenly distributed" (Ibid.). Places that constitute the system, such as governmental institutions and schools, should actively carry out narratives that decrease linear thinking and inequality and promote climate justice (Simonsen, C1 & Frijlink, C7).

For example, Thie named the Dutch primary school system (C5). An important place of origin of knowledge in the system is the school. Therefore, these spaces are essential for altering discourse and narratives, but their operating methods do not always provide an easy stage to teach climate change (Ibid.). Thie mentioned that, because of budgets, schools often use books that have been the same for up to fifteen to twenty years. However, the view on the world is inherent to change, and mainstream views on various societal issues, such as climate justice, have been up for debate within the last two decades (Ibid.). If books do not adapt accordingly, transferring this knowledge is delayed (Ibid.).

4.6 Ways of sharing information

Sallah stated ways of narrating and communicating as a means to reach climate justice and who is responsible for it:

> […] storytellers play a crucial role, because, again, what does that data mean unless it is translated to a human context, a social context, or a social story to connect upon people […so that] people can remember [it] in a better way (C2).

Most interviewees came to the same conclusion: we need stories and story-telling. Stories are a way of communicating issues that usually not everyone would understand (Ibid.). They can translate data on complex subjects into ways of sharing information with a broader public (Ibid.).

However, a problem experienced within the debate is the myriad of stories that are not inspirational, nor do they speak to the imagination (Ibid.). So, according to Sallah, it matters who tells the story (Ibid.). She, therefore, mentioned the importance of recognizing and amplifying those best capable of story-telling (Ibid.). In the case of telling the stories that halt climate change and reach climate justice, Sallah explained:

It depends on you as an individual; it depends on what you think you are good at, your professional career, and what kinds of expertise you hold. […] I think that people working in communication are essential because the language we use is really important. I think it also translates scientific knowledge into knowledge that individuals can use and understand on their own ground. If you can translate a scientific text into something anyone can understand, that already makes a big change (C2).

Besides books and movies in popular culture, many people in the West read the world's stories via media outlets, such as newspapers, magazines, and daily journals on television (Bentvelzen, C6). However, according to Bentvelzen, while there lays an essential role for these media, within mainstream journalism, objectivity is no longer a value but a limitation (C6). He mentioned the paradox of the media's ambition to be as objective as possible while, at the same time, the climate crisis is not always objective. It is a conversation in which emotions and the stories behind the news do matter (Ibid.). Placing issues relating to climate change in a human or social context opens ways of reconnecting and realizing that all on Earth are intertwined (Ibid.). According to Bentvelzen, the role of the media in facilitating this realization should be to inform, warn and activate without being afraid of losing impartiality (C6).

What relates to the narration of climate justice is 'the double narrative' that was mentioned by Thie (C5). She stated that in order to reach climate justice, a solution could be the use of multiple narratives to adopt a collective approach to climate change as well as to collectively connect and realize the world's interdependence (Ibid.):

The majority of people, in principle, only take action when it concerns their own skin. When you say 'lungs of the Earth', you think, will that affect me? Does that concern me? Is it in my influence or involvement circle? […] There is this kind of mathematical formula where they say: in your own house, it is horrible if only half an accident happens. It feels about as bad if two accidents happened in your neighbor's house. At the end of the street, there must be twenty accidents before you find that as bad as that half accident at home. So, [the experienced severity] decreases the further away it is. That is why we think those Ukrainians are pathetic and the Palestinians and Pakistanis are not. We do not care […] It is too far away. […] This is why I think that narratives are convenient to bring issues closer to the people, to show: this is also your problem, you are also affected by this, [therefore you carry responsibility] (Thie, C5).

The last problem mentioned in the context of sharing information was that ways of communication are generally expressed through words. However, as both Simonsen and Sallah voiced, communication does not necessarily only have to be through words but could also be through experiencing nature, as was discussed in section 4.3.

4.7 Remaining conditions to realize a new discourse

During the interviews, the experts emphasized some other conditions under which a new discourse might arise. In order to come to a just transition, 'we need a major social change' was a prevailing phrase during most of the interviews. However, all experts emphasized different aspects of that social change. For example, Simonsen (C1) emphasized the importance of embodying words. She stated: "[…] it is very important that people really dare to translate their words into deeds. You can call it translating, but actually, a word is only something if you also put action behind it" (Ibid.). The second condition that Simonsen mentioned was that to realize a new discourse, "we should not focus that much on looking forward so that we can no longer look around us, or to ourselves. […] investing time and energy into our surroundings is very healing and very important to build connection" (Ibid.). Concerning this aspect of connection, Sallah mentioned that "the root to all of our steps forward is understanding how we as humans and as individuals with unique backgrounds and cultural identities relate to the issues" (C2). In order to do so, Sallah emphasized the importance of language:

> To reach as many people as possible, we must use language that can relate to people on a more personal level, that does not contribute to stratifying by separating different groups but by identifying similarities between all of those groups and seeing how there are certain things that people can all relate to, regardless of how they use nature or regardless of how they perceive of the vulnerability of nature (C2).

Van der Duim (C4) mentioned the need for a space where people can speak freely and where empathy prevails. This space could, e.g., be within schools, as Thie opted for the need to incorporate other narratives within school systems, in which countries within the majority world are spoken about with respect and empathy rather than ranked as a 'Third World Country' or 'developing country' (C5).

All of these aspects recognize the social aspect of climate justice. Frijlink, therefore, emphasized the intersectionality of the issue: "we only look at one element of the whole […] but look at all these other crises that we have" (C7). At last, Frijlink mentioned the importance of looking beyond feasibility to create new discourses (Ibid.). He stated that "[…] the moment you only allow yourself to be framed by what is achievable or realistic within the current framework, the outcomes will always be the same (Ibid.)." At last, he asked: "Should [the expected feasibility according to current frameworks] stop you from imagining pathways forward?" (Ibid.).

5. Discussion & Conclusion

Climate change has led to a dire injustice that does not take into consideration all life on Earth. In response, social justice has found a voice within the conversation on science and earth systems. To counter the shortcomings within the scientific debate and include climate justice within discourse on climate change, this work argues that what is needed is a better understanding of how current discourses contribute to climate injustice. To come to this better understanding, it answers the following sub-questions. First: *What problems are experienced in discourse on climate change by those experts who engage themselves within the climate justice debate?* And second: *What are the experts' suggested solutions to the problems experienced?*

The work placed significant importance on the imagination of experts engaging in the climate justice debate. The empirical research aimed to provide an overview of how the experts experienced the problems within current discourses, how they imagined these discourses should change to reach climate justice and what the content of a new discourse should contain. This chapter discusses the problems, the means to fix these problems, and how these solutions translate into new discourses. It ultimately aims to answer the research question of this thesis, i.e., *What should discourse on climate change contain if it is to contribute to reaching climate justice?*

During the analysis of the information from the interviews, seven themes emerged. Some of the themes highlighted specific characteristics of a discourse promoting climate justice, while others highlighted the conditions under which this discourse change must take place. Following the themes, this chapter discusses the means to reach a discourse that promotes climate justice and its characteristics. The mentioned problems focused on various aspects, such as considerations of time, our space, vulnerabilities, progression, and development. Even though the experts focused on different aspects of the debate, what they all had in common was their recognition of the interrelatedness of climate change and issues regarding social justice. What did come forward was that they perceived that the current discourse on climate change does not necessarily focus on the social aspect of the issue. The experts' imagination described the pathways that lead to a discourse that includes climate justice and set up a range of interpretations of what that discourse should contain to overcome the perceived problems.

The results showed that discourse on climate change should contain a few things to reach climate justice. First, it should abandon the 'hierarchy of knowledge' and include equality of knowledge, culture, and experience. This notion finds resemblance within the scientific debate,

specifically within Massey's argument on turning space and time (see section 2.2). In order to solve this problem, the experts voiced ways of including equality within the debate also opens up ways of including different voices, such as people of color, indigenous people, women, non-binary people, and others constantly forgotten when discussing justice within the climate change debate. Climate change discourses should, therefore, actively include spaces for these unheard voices, to address problems that may otherwise not reach the surface.

The second problem voiced follows the train of thought that to do something about climate change and the injustices the issue causes, the urgency narrative is, on the one hand, needed because it activates people. But on the other hand, this same narrative can cause a freeze of action in which nothing happens, and responsibility is dismissed. However, what became evident in the theoretical framework, is that taking responsibility is needed on individual, community, and country levels. So, to find a balance within this conflict, discourse on climate change should contain communication methods that foster connection and are based on empathy. This can be achieved through ways of talking that are balanced and interrogatory rather than accusatory.

Furthermore, sensory experiences within nature can provide a means of sensing its constant changes and regaining inspiration and connection, altering how climate change issues are experienced and dealt with. This is a means of changing a discourse that follows the train of thought that to reconnect, there is a need to have a better understanding of the constant changes in nature and the perceptions of one's own identity within these spaces. Embedding our environment within a collective social imaginary may set boundaries as to how we behave and perceive others with whom we share that space. Actively fostering interaction and a relationship with nature is of value within a new discourse because these aspects ensure that people have nature's vulnerabilities, their dependence on nature, and their responsibility toward others engraved in their minds.

Furthermore, local power should be considered while imagining a discourse that promotes climate justice. The assumption that global spaces are made up of local places fosters taking responsibility for the outcomes of actions that might harm these global spaces. Even though most experts did not emphasize the global within a discourse that promotes climate justice, some did mention how 'the local' is essential in providing spaces where people can get together,

voice ideas, and share stories. Therefore, what should be actively favored and shared within the climate change discourse are the voices, initiatives, and knowledge of the local.

The content of a discourse on climate change that views climate justice as its core value is to be created within our current neoliberal system. However, as many experts voiced, that system is at the heart of the problems that created a climate change discourse that neglects questions of justice in the first place. The paradox within this theme is that governance is needed to reduce inequalities and increase social security. At the same time, that same governance has created the system that produces inequality. Both the experts and the theories discussed mentioned system change as an essential means of reaching a discourse that promotes climate justice. This idea entails that the places that constitute that system, such as governmental institutions and schools, should adapt and actively carry out narratives that enhance climate justice and equality so that they can become embedded within mainstream beliefs and thoughts, and embedded within our social systems.

As discourse inherently involves sharing information, the last theme that the experts emphasized focused on ways of doing so. According to them, it is vital to recognize those best capable of telling the stories that spark the imagination. To do so, space must be made on the stage of climate conversation. Discourse could, e.g., be made up of narratives that showcase the stories behind crises and foster connections by emphasizing the interdependence of places around the world. The table below summarizes these results.

Perceived problem:	Suggested solution:	Means/conditions towards a discourse that promotes climate justice:	Characteristics of that discourse:
1. Linear progressive thinking that evokes a hierarchy of knowledge	Equality of knowledge through recognizing ways of knowing that are different	Actively create space for other diverse voices within the debate and promotion of equality of knowledge, experience, and culture	Discourse promotes equality of knowledge, experience, and culture

2. Urgency narrative facilitates cognitive dissonance, which leads to a dismissal of responsibility	Finding a balance through lifting communications to higher levels according to a moral standard	Talking about climate change should focus on 'why-' and responsibility questions of our behavior	Discourse focusses on moral questions regarding behavior and responsibility
3. People have lost touch with their surroundings, therefore, with other people within that environment	Sensory experiences within nature	Provide for ways of regaining contact with surroundings	Non-verbal ways of interacting, such as exchange and tangible contact with our environment should be actively pursued
4. Climate change as a global issue neglects the power of the local	Citizen participation, local initiatives	Active encouragement of local initiatives and ideas	Discussing and favoring of local agency, knowledge and experience
5. The system does not allow for imagination and forgets the intersectionality of climate change	Alternative narratives should be accepted more broadly	Places that constitute the system should actively carry out alternative narratives	Actively discuss, voice, and point out imaginations that highlight social issues within the system
6. Ways of sharing information do not establish a perceived connection and interdependency	Recognizing who is best capable of the roles within the climate movement and using double narratives to enhance feeling of connection	Leave the stage to those best capable of telling climate change stories, implement other ways of sharing information	Allow, share and actively pursue emotions and stories behind climate change consequences

| 7. Various other problems relating to current conditions | - | Embodying words, focus on the present and our surroundings. Allow for spaces in which empathy prevails. Recognizing ways of nullifying others and improving these narratives so that they include a just description | Adopt language that people can relate to on an individual level. Creating standards of respect within public discourse |

Table 4: Summary of results that showcase the problems, solutions, means of reaching another discourse, and the characteristics of that discourse.

In light of the goal of this thesis, the method used provided for the exploration of ideas, thoughts, and imaginations because of its ability to determine and shape a field of action, in this case climate change discourse. The outcomes of these imaginations form the answer to the research question of thesis and emphasize that a discourse that promotes climate justice would benefit from actively expressing and allowing feelings, emotions, the local within the global, diversity, social relations, culture, and experience into the debate. Just as the organization of a protest is in our repertory, these characteristics and attributions should become part of climate change discourse so that it ultimately contributes to reaching climate justice. Letting go of narratives that foster differences and alienation, these characteristics open the path toward climate justice because they focus on the social constructs that shape our understanding of climate change. The results show that there is a need to get off the beaten track, as imagining change within the current framework fosters the same solutions and the same outcomes.

These results provide the practical tools and solutions that showcase how to include climate justice within the climate change discourse and are, therefore, of prime societal and scientific relevance. However, what remains unanswered is whether the means and characteristics proposed in this exploration can be generalized to larger research groups that include voices from other groups (e.g., indigenous people). Future research should include these alternative voices to better understand the results' implications. Accordingly, what should be recognized, is that to lift conversations to higher levels of connection, they should take place on broader

scales and within a more diverse group of people. Furthermore, future research could combine methods, e.g., interviews and discourse analysis, to relate expert imaginations to discourses expressed in, e.g., popular media and policy documents. Hopefully, the findings of this research provide for hope and will be taken into consideration in the future.

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