

# **HEROES OR VILLAINS?**

A critical discourse analysis of climate change discourses in logging-related editorials  
of Maaseudun Tulevaisuus

Bachelor's thesis

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English

December 2020

# JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistis-yhteiskuntatieteellinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Sofia Rautio	
Työn nimi – Title Heroes or villains? A critical discourse analysis of climate change discourses in logging-related editorials of Maaseudun Tulevaisuus	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatin tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Joulukuu 2020	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 23
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Metsät ovat olennainen osa ilmastonmuutoksen hillintää Suomessa, ja niiden hoitomenetelmät vaikuttavat suuresti hiilinielujen ja -varastojen laajuuteen. Suomen metsät ovat suurimmalta osin yksityisesti omistettuja, joten metsänhoidon sääntely on herättänyt vilkasta julkista keskustelua. Se, miten asioista puhutaan meille, eli mitä diskursseja käytetään, vaikuttaa siihen, miten rakennamme käsityksemme maailmasta. Vastavuoroisesti käsityksemme maailmasta vaikuttaa siihen, mitä diskursseja itse käytämme. Tästä syystä on olennaista tutkia olemassa olevia diskursseja ja niitä asenteita ja ideologioita, joita ne heijastavat, sekä sitä, miten nämä diskurssit vaikuttavat vastaanottajan todellisuuden rakentumiseen.</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoite oli löytää Maaseudun Tulevaisuudessa julkaistuista hakkuuaiheisista pääkirjoituksista ilmastonmuutosdiskursseja ja määritellä minkälaisia ideologioita ne heijastavat. Metodina käytettiin kriittistä diskurssianalyysia ja tarkemmin Faircloughin kolmiulotteista lähestymistapaa siihen. Aineistossa ilmeni viisi vallitsevaa ilmastonmuutosdiskurssia: riippuvuusdiskurssi, uhridiskurssi, poliittinen keskustelu -diskurssi, asiantuntijuusdiskurssi ja epäluotettavat faktat -diskurssi. Diskursseissa ilmenee julkaisun ideologia, jossa korostuu me vastaan muut-asenne, metsäteollisuuden puolelle asettuminen ja alan työntekijöiden ja heidän tekemän työn kannattaminen. Diskurssien sisällöt ovat monilta osin ristiriitaisia ja mielipidepohjaisia sekä tyyliään kärkeviä, ja ne sekä kritisoivat että itse jatkavat julkisessa keskustelussa ilmentyvää kiistelevää tyyliä.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Kriittinen diskurssianalyysi, ilmastonmuutosdiskurssit, ideologia, hakkuut	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information Ohjaaja: Joseph McVeigh	

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The climate crisis, which includes climate change and global warming, can be thought of as the defining crisis of our lifetime. It has become clear that in order for humans to be able to live on planet Earth in the future, we have to decelerate global warming by decreasing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. For this, there have been global initiatives and agreements to climate change mitigation, which require the involved countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The ways to achieve this are, for example, reducing the use of fossil fuels, changing agricultural practices and machinery, favoring renewable energy sources and reforestation and forest preservation. In addition, changes in laws and governments are necessary.

In climate change mitigation efforts of Finland, the role of forests is paramount. The vast majority of the land area of Finland is covered by forests, which function as carbon storages and carbon sinks. Long-term wood products continue to function as carbon storages after the forests are logged, and wood-based raw materials can replace fossil fuel raw materials. To enable the forest utilization to be as ecological as possible, silviculture has to be executed appropriately. The right way to do this, and the fact that there is not one absolute right way, has caused opinionated public discussion, since the forests are for the most part privately owned, and the forest owners, naturally, have a fundamental right to manage their property however they want.

The public discussion around the topic brings together the individual's acts and opinions, the policies and regulations on climate change mitigation, the political discussion, the media, the companies in the forest industry and the field workers of forestry and agriculture. It reflects the complex nature of climate change and the attitudes towards it that are, at least, just as complex. In the middle of this complexity, vagueness and controversy, it matters how climate change is communicated and how it is discussed. The discourses that are used when things are communicated to us constitute the way we perceive those things. Therefore, the producers and users of the discourses hold the power on how they want to contribute to the discourse: will they forward it or pursue changing it. In this study I will identify and analyze the different climate change discourses that appear in the Finnish newspaper *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*, and, thus, what kind of discourses and ideology they are forwarding to their readers.

## 2. BACKGROUND THEORY

### 2.1 Discourse and climate change

#### 2.1.1 Defining discourse

Discourse is often seen as language-in-use, as an action and as a social practice (Blommaert 2005: 2). The definition of the concept is somewhat vague and there have been various approaches to defining what the word refers to, and even, as Johnstone (2017: 2) states, if it should be used as a mass noun or a count noun. According to Johnstone (2017: 2), when discourse is referred to as a mass noun, it can be treated like the word information, as an entity. Johnstone (2017: 2) differentiates language and discourse by stating that discourse is language when it is being used to communicate, rather than just existing as an abstract system. Fairclough (2003: 3) describes discourse as “the particular view of language in use, as an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements”, which supports the perception of discourse as action, a social phenomenon and “meaningful symbolic behavior” (Blommaert 2005: 2).

Despite the vagueness of the definition of the term, it is generally agreed on that language consists of different patterns which people tend to follow when engaging in their social life (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 2). These conventions on using the patterns, “typical ways of using language in particular situations” (Paltridge 2012: 2), can be called discourses and be used as count nouns. For example, medical discourse can refer to a typical, medicine related workplace interaction that happens between two doctors. An individual learns how to use these patterns over time, and “discourse is both the source of this knowledge and the result of it” (Johnstone 2017: 2).

Jørgensen and Phillips (2002: 2) set their definition of discourse to be “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”, which suggests that ideas and thoughts are a part of the concept of discourse. This is supported by Johnstone (2017: 3), who, also, introduces the perception of a discourse as a count noun, in addition to the previous mass noun perspective: when thinking of discourses in this sense they can be thought of as “linked ways of talking and thinking.” In this research, I will consider the discourses found in the data according to this principle: as “units” involving “patterns of belief and habitual action as well as patterns of language”, as Johnstone (2017: 3) puts it.

Since discourse involves much more than just the language, it can be seen to hold a significant power. According to Blommaert (2005: 4), discourses are “ways of representing the world”;

therefore, different discourses affect the way we think about things in the world. Blommaert demonstrates this phenomenon with an example: “an event becomes a problem as soon as it is being recognized as such by people, and discursive work is crucial to this: a mountain becomes a beautiful mountain as soon as someone singles it out, identifies it and comments on it to someone else.” Similarly, climate change becomes an issue, a crisis, when it is recognized as one by researchers, media and the public and is represented as one. Before this, it only exists as a harmful environmental phenomenon. Fairclough (2003: 126) calls the representations ideologies, which is the term I will be using in this study to indicate the different viewpoints or stances towards climate change. Blommaert (2005: 158) explains the concept of ideology as I will be using it in this study: “a *specific* set of symbolic representations – discourses, terms, arguments, images, stereotypes – serving a *specific* purpose, and operated by *specific* groups or actors, recognizable precisely by their usage of such ideologies.”

The representations can differ from one another (Blommaert 2005: 4): someone might perceive the concept of climate change differently from someone else, which affects their way of representing it further, resulting in two different discourses on the same matter. Different discourses, indeed, have a significant impact on how we experience the world: how things are communicated to us constitutes the way we think about them. Noteworthy here is the nature of discourse as an active actor taking part in constituting the understanding of the world, rather than just existing as a passive system, which supports the previous claim about discourses being powerful.

### **2.1.3 Climate change discourses**

Climate change discourses are discourses that reflect how people understand and perceive climate change (Leichenko & O’Brien 2019: 62). They have been identified, studied and categorized, and seem to repeat the same themes. Climate change is, also, constructed in discourses differently within different groups of society (Fleming et al 2014), which has to be taken into account when studying the context within which the climate change discourses exist.

Leichenko and O’Brien (2019) introduce four different, relatively broad climate change discourses which reflect the attitudes towards the issue, and state that “in practical terms, discourses influence the way that climate change is addressed”.

- The biophysical discourse – the dominant climate change discourse, which emphasizes the scientific dimension of the issue and considers more information a way to take up action.

- The critical discourse – this discourse questions the dominant discourse for not taking other dimensions of the issue, such as political, economic and cultural, into account.
- The dismissive discourse – this discourse holds considerable political influence; it does not see climate change as a problem affecting humans.
- The integrative discourse – climate change is a process transforming the environment, communities, cities, the way we perceive and relate to nature and each other and the way we engage with the future.

Fleming et al. (2014) pursued challenging these dominant discourses of climate change. They introduce three different discourses that have a specific effect on constraining action on climate change subconsciously. These discourses can be said to reflect implicatory denial (Norgaard 2001), since the acknowledgement of the issue can be seen from them, but reasons for failing to act are emphasized.

- The logical action discourse – the amount of information and instructions about climate change mitigation acts is so vast that an individual has challenges in distinguishing the right way to act.
- The complexity discourse – climate change is such a complex phenomenon that an individual has difficulties in relating it to their daily activities.
- The culture of consumption discourse – the change that the society has to complete for proper climate change mitigation is not possible; our current way of living could not make such a reverse move.

## **2.2 Climate change and society**

### **2.2.1 Climate change and Finnish forests**

In October 2018, The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the United Nations released a report called Global Warming of 1.5°C. The report stated that human activity has caused about 1.0°C of global warming since pre-industrial levels. The report introduces the possibility that if global warming were limited to 1.5°C instead of 2.0°C, the inevitable negative consequences of global warming will decrease significantly. Since it has been proven that the impacts will be less extreme if the increase in temperature were limited, acts in order to do so have been taken up. For example, the Paris Agreement, established by United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, “brings all nations into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate

change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so” (UNFCCC). Finland ratified the agreement on 14 November 2016 (Ympäristöministeriö 2020).

For Finland, a crucial part of climate change mitigation is forests. More than 70 percent of the land area of Finland is covered by them, and they function as carbon sinks, which means that they store more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than they release (Metsä Group). Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that contributes to the rise of global temperature when it is in the atmosphere instead of stored in plants and trees. When wood decomposes, carbon dioxide is released back to the atmosphere. Wood construction and wood products are a sustainable option to fossil raw materials, since wood continues to store the carbon even after being logged, if long-term products are made of it. Short-term products, such as paper or firewood, store carbon only until they are being burned or disposed in some other way (Metsä Group).

To ensure the best conditions for carbon sequestration, silviculture (forest management) and, thus, the regeneration of the forests have to be executed appropriately, since younger and growing forests are more effective in carbon sequestration (Ilmasto-opas 2015). This is why forests are managed, including logged systematically to an appropriate extent, even though this turns the forests temporarily into a carbon source (Ilmasto-opas 2015). On the other hand, the amount of carbon that can be stored in older forests’ soil and culture is significant (FAO 2013: 8), which means that increasing the amount of logging decreases the carbon sink capacity of a forest.

In addition to being crucial in climate change mitigation, the economic value of Finnish forests is significant: “Forest sector accounts for about 20 percent of Finland’s export revenue”, states the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest of Finland (n.d.). In order for this export business to run profitably, forest utilization must be executed well, a process which naturally involved silviculture. Clear cutting is a traditional (although controversial) method of silviculture, which refers to the removal of all the trees in an area of forest. It can be seen as economically the most profitable option, but it negatively affects biodiversity and ecosystem services, which are essential in the global carbon cycle (Eyvindson 2018).

The goal seems to be that the forests should be managed so that these two different and contradictory aspects come true. The definition of appropriate forest management varies depending on the site characteristics, which is why the same silvicultural techniques cannot be applied everywhere, and why regulations on silviculture might be problematic. Additionally, the intention of the forest owner, naturally, has an effect on how they choose to perform the silviculture: clear

cutting can seem like the best option for a forest owner who wants to sell the wood to be processed further into wood products, and is not worried about the biodiversity of their own land area. Mutually, an avid birdwatcher can consider clear cuttings a nightmare that destroys the living circumstances of a certain species and decides to harvest their forest area according to the continuous growth method. Additionally, the majority of Finnish forests are owned privately (Ministry of Agriculture and Forest of Finland), which means that the owners can decide themselves how they want their own property to be managed. This multi-branched and incoherent nature of silviculture and carbon sequestration is noteworthy, since one right way of silviculture that would suit every forest owner does not exist.

### **2.2.2 Climate change attitudes**

Climate change cannot be considered only as an environmental issue, like it has been in the past, since it also has fundamental economic, social and cultural dimensions (Sairanen 2010: 30). The instability and unpredictability that climate change brings affects our whole society and economic system (Leichenko & O'Brien 2019: 25). There has been a continuous theme on research conducted on climate change attitudes, which was reflected in the American Geophysical Union and Public Agenda's study from 1998: the public feels that climate change is a real issue but also feels frustrated and powerless about the fact that something has to be done, although not quite sure what.

Norgaard (2011: 3) introduces the concept of implicatory denial, which refers to the situation where "evidence for climate change pours in, and as predictions become more and more alarming and scientific consensus increases, interest in the issue in Norway and elsewhere is declining." People can process and understand the information on climate change but fail to act according to it. The amount of information and instructions has, indeed, increased, which has provoked both negative and positive attitudes towards climate change. According to the results of a questionnaire from 2019 by Helsingin Sanomat, one of the major newspapers in Finland, the third most important theme for the voters in the Finnish Parliament election of 2019 was climate, energy and environmental matters (Sutinen 2019). The negative attitudes often get marked as denial or ignorance, but skepticism is vital for scientific research (Leichenko & O'Brien 2019: 69), since it helps the scientists identify the weaknesses of their study and makes them prove themselves further.

Since forests hold such importance in Finland, both economically and ecologically, the public discussion on the topic has been heated and aggravated. Recently, there have been significant, widely supported suggestions for prohibiting clear cuttings in all forest areas owned by the Finnish

government, and the initiative, which gathered over 50,000 signatures during six months, was forwarded to be processed by the Parliament in October 2019. This roused discussion about clear cutting and logging altogether. Another significant cause for public discussion was a piece of news (Sandell 2018) that the Finnish national news media, Yle, published, where it was stated and later confirmed (Frilander 2019) that the estimates of the magnitude of the carbon sinks of Finland by the Natural Resources Institute were calculated to be in favor for the forest industry rather than to be realistic.

Additionally, the new pulp mills have raised questions about their ability to contribute to climate change mitigation. The contemporary pulp mills, bioproduct mills, produce pulp, bioenergy and other bioproducts and do not use fossil fuels (Metsä Fibre). While the productiveness has been maximized, the raw material for pulp, which is wood, has to be harvested from somewhere to meet the new, higher capacity of the mills. People have questioned if the forests of Finland can afford logging to this extent, and if the carbon sinks will suffer significantly since mainly products that function as a short-term carbon storage are made of pulp (Hartikainen, 2019). The new pulp mills, as well, provoked the public discussion around the whole forestry and climate change topic significantly.

### **3. THE PRESENT STUDY**

#### **3.1 Aim of the study**

As stated previously, discourses hold significant power. Therefore, I am arguing that the people who are using the discourses hold the power as well. Climate change and loggings are both complicated matters, and public discussion around both of them can be exaggerated, opinionated and contradictory, which reflects how important forests and silviculture are to Finnish people, as well as Finns' dedication to these areas. The ways in which important matters are communicated to us is significant, and the ideologies of the people that communicate these matters are often visible in the discourses. This can be problematic, if it distorts the truth to the reader or listener.

My hypothesis for this study is that due to the recent attention on climate crisis in the media and everywhere else, it would undoubtedly be a topic in this publication as well, since the main themes of MT, agriculture and forestry, are closely interconnected with climate change mitigation acts. My assumption was that the ideology found in the texts would reiterate the values of the reader base of MT, and that the arguments to promote this ideology might be opinionated. Additionally, since

attitudes towards loggings and climate change depend largely on the individual's position in the society, i.e. their field of occupation, their background and their education, it can be expected that *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*, as a newspaper targeted to the rural areas of Finland, could have attitude-based content that reflects the ideology of the publication. I am interested in if and how this ideology appears. This leads to my research questions:

- What climate change discourses can be found in the forestry and climate change related editorials published in *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*?
- What kind of ideology towards climate change management can be interpreted from these discourses?

### 3.2 Data

The data for this study consists of 10 climate change and forestry related editorials published in the publication *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus* (MT) during 2019. MT is a Finnish newspaper, which, according to their website, “covers news on agriculture and forestry as well as related businesses, and on rural enterprises and country life in general.” The report for media about the reader base of MT from 2018 states that 41% of MT's readers consist of people living in rural municipalities of Finland, and 30% of the readers have an occupation related to agriculture, forestry or livestock farming (Mediafakta 2018). 57% of the reader households own forest. It can be thus assumed that the attitudes towards climate change of these readers differ from people living in urban areas of Finland: owning a car is necessary in order to be able to go anywhere and beef production or logging might be a source of income. These attitudes, and the editorial staff acknowledging them, can have an effect on the climate change discourses that appear in MT.

The forestry related data has been selected from amongst other editorials and texts according to the following procedure: the key word *hakkuut*, ‘loggings’, was applied to MT's website's search tool through which archives can be browsed, and then a filter was applied to abstract all other texts except for the ones that have been published as editorials. This resulted in 10 texts dated in the year 2019. The reason for forestry being the main theme in the data is that it offers a precise perspective for the issue of climate change and climate change mitigation and binds the data together in terms of the content. They are all about forestry and climate change, but about different issues concerning those two: loggings, wood construction, the political discussion. Some of the editorials involve Finnish agriculture, which concerns climate change, as well. The data was limited to editorials that were published in 2019 because of the topical nature of the discussion and recent rapid and

fundamental turns of events that have affected it, such as the IPCC report from 2018 and coverage on the climate crisis in media.

As Haapala et al. (2016) state, editorials, or leading articles, typically contemplate current events reflecting the position of the newspaper. This is a holdover from the time when newspapers were often committed to a political party or an ideology. Editorials are usually written by the editors or editorial writers of the newspaper, which is why the names of the writers are rarely published, and they function as the official opinion or perspective of the newspaper. In this study I will refer to “the writers” of the editorials, by which I mean the journalists in charge of the editorials.

Noteworthy in terms of this study is that opinionated, and even biased texts can be published as editorials, and these texts, and the discourses in them, can affect the reader’s perception on the matter.

### 3.3 Method

Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to determine what kind of climate change discourses appear in *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus* editorials. CDA is method of qualitative analysis, and it takes particular interest in the relation between language and power, considering using language to be a social practice. When discourse analysis focuses on language patterns, CDA brings a critical point of view to the research, which means, as Wodak (2001: 9) puts it, “having distance to the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and a focus on self-reflecting as scholars doing research.” This means that the social dimensions around the text have to be understood and acknowledged as a part of the text, rather than separated or ignored. Additionally, staying impartial is crucial when conducting any kind of critical research.

As stated, CDA is not primarily interested in the study of language, but the societal phenomena which have to be studied multidisciplinary. It begins with the assumption that certain powers of dominance exist and explores and reveals the patterns and conventions that maintain and empower these relationships, which can sometimes be difficult to distinguish or hidden altogether (Jokinen et al. 1999: 86, cited in Niemelä 2016: 31). In this study, I will primarily apply Fairclough’s vision on CDA: it is driven by “the aim of changing existing societies for the better” (Fairclough 2015: 6). He describes CDA as a combination of critique, explanation and action, which will be reflected in my study: I will study both what the discourses are like and why they are like that. Considering the controversial nature of climate change discourses, a critical approach is essential in order for the results to be credible. The data includes exaggerations and heavy opinions, which can be far from

impartial. These aspects have to be recognized and their causes identified. In order to be able to understand the societal aspects of the discourses, one has to be aware of the societal phenomena behind the discourses, which is why the background theory draws heavily on how the matters have been discussed.

The practical methodology for this critical discourse analysis will follow Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, introduced by Blommaert (2005: 28). This method presents analyzing discourse in three different stages. The first stage is *description*, meaning charting the linguistic features of discourse; or what kinds of words and expressions are used. The second stage is *interpretation*, considering these linguistic features in use: how the discourses are produced, distributed and consumed. This stage begins connecting the language to the social context. Finally, the found interpretations need to be *explained*: the ideologies interpreted in the text are acknowledged and critically studied. In this study, this means first distinguishing the different discourses from each other by coding them mainly based on the topic and viewpoint, then finding out if there are linguistic features to support the discourses and distinguish them from each other even further. Next, the language-use discovered in the first stage is interpreted: why climate change is represented in this particular way. Finally, the interpretations are explained: what the newspaper is trying to achieve by using these discourses and why, and how their ideology is reflected in this activity.

#### **4. ANALYSIS**

Five predominant climate change discourses in the editorials were distinguished. These five discourses are the *dependency discourse*, *the victim discourse*, *the public discussion discourse*, *the expertise discourse* and *the unreliable facts discourse*. The ideology of the newspaper – promoting the Finnish countryside, securing the livelihood of agricultural workers and forest owners and taking the side of country life in general – is present in all of them. Common for all of the discourses is the us versus them-positioning: us, the people of the countryside, trying to survive with them, the decision makers, politicians and people with different priorities. The “us” refers to the readers of MT who have similar rural living conditions in Finnish municipalities, work in the same field of agriculture and forestry, and have shared values and beliefs. The “them” refers to people outside these criteria; for example, politicians and decision-makers deciding about the state of their livelihood and people criticizing their work in the media. This juxtaposition is essential in understanding the social context in which these discourses exist: as mentioned previously, the

attitudes towards climate change divide people into like-minded groups who might confront each other.

#### **4.1. The dependency discourse**

The most dominant of the climate change discourses found in the data is the dependency discourse. This discourse presents the Finnish society and economy as dependent on its forests, the products that can be processed of wood and the carbon storage that exists in the forests and contributes to climate change mitigation. The fact that wood products and loggings are essential in disposing fossil raw materials is focused on, and the facts are expressed in a declarative manner, using simple clauses to stress the statements (Examples 2 and 3). Rhetorical questions are utilized to question the opposing or criticizing argument, which underlines the writer's argument to be the right one (Example 1). The discourse emphasizes the positive environmental aspects of logging, including silviculture, producing wood products and carbon sinks (Example 2), and can, thus, be claimed to fall under Leichenko and O'Brien's (2019) biophysical discourse, since the scientific dimension of climate change is stressed, and humans are seen as responsible for inventing solutions for mitigation.

1. How can plastic be replaced with wood-based products if the wood should not be harvested? (MT 6.3.2019)
2. Forests are a solution for both carbon sequestration and replacing fossil fuel materials. (MT 23.1.2019)
3. The cement used in concrete is globally a larger emission source than air traffic. (MT 15.4.2019)

The argumentation style of the discourse is straightforward, since, as mentioned, it relies on facts through which the increased amount of wood harvesting is justified. The factual statements form the argument against the public discussion that has brought up trying to decrease the amount of harvesting to preserve biodiversity and carbon storage. Explaining the complex matter of the role of forests in climate change mitigation and the "right" amount of wood that can be harvested sustainably is, as mentioned before, a challenging task, and there are many different, contradictory dimensions to be taken into account. Focusing on the positive aspects and simplifying the sentences, and, at the same time, the topic, as the writer has done in the dependency discourse, can make the issue more comprehensible to the reader but, also, dismiss important aspects (Examples 4 and 5).

4. It is important to remember at all times that forest owners are continuously, with their own assets, storing carbon that all of us are releasing to the atmosphere. (MT 12.8.2019)

5. Decreasing the emissions of fossil fuel raw materials is more important in climate change prevention than carbon sinks. (MT 18.12.2019)

The dependency discourse largely relies on facts and research, but presents them in a simplified, undisputed way, which is why it appears biased: biodiversity, which is suffering from loggings (Eydvinson 2018), and the large amount of carbon stored in the soil of old forests, which is being released back into the atmosphere when loggings take place (FAO 2013), are not mentioned. Because the emphasized positive aspects are unarguably facts and can be backed up with scientific research, the arguments can seem very legitimate, even if being one-sided. This reflects both the previously mentioned contradictory and biased nature of silviculture, as forest owners have their personal aims and priorities, and discussion around it. Emphasizing the importance of forests and their spinoffs represents the ideology of the newspaper: the benefits are seen and presented as greater than the collateral damage that takes place when the benefits are being achieved.

#### **4.2. The victim discourse**

The victim discourse is an answer to the public discussion in the Finnish media, which forest owners and agriculture workers have experienced as being accusatory (Kinnunen Mohr et al 2019). When in the dependency discourse the downsides are not mentioned, in the victim discourse it is seen as unfair that the public discussion acknowledges solely them. The outline is that the farmers and foresters do contribute to the climate change mitigation, but this is not recognized, and can even be dismissed completely in the public discussion (Example 6). Topics in the discussion have been, for example, the carbon emissions of agriculture, the limitations of private car ownership, which people from rural areas, naturally, do not espouse, and the biodiversity which suffers from clear cuttings.

The discourse takes form in the previously mentioned us versus them-positioning. Juxtapositions between the field workers and the accusing public discussion are created by using sentences that first present the public discussion's views on the matter, and then, by using subordinating conjunctions, presenting it as wrong and stating the writer's own, correct view. These writer's own views often overlap with dependency discourse, since the same facts about the positive dimensions of harvesting are being used to support the argument (Examples 7 and 8). Additionally, to emphasize the unfairness and the distress of the victims, strong words and phrases are used (Examples 9 and 10).

6. In many ways Finland is on the right path, even though the domestic discussion provoked by the report did not deliver this message properly. (MT 12.8.2019)
7. Pulp was mentioned a lot when talked about forest harvesting, but what was not mentioned was that of wood can be produced not only pulp, but almost all the same products as of fossil raw materials. (MT 15.4.2019)
8. The fact that beef production based on grass is relatively ecological was not paid much attention to. (MT 15.4.2019)

The discourse rests on the point that in the public discussion the advantages and reasons of agriculture and forestry – for example, food production and replacing plastic products – are not mentioned and only the downsides are taken into account. Agricultural workers have given statements about feeling anxious and accused when following the discussion in the media (Kinnunen, Mohr et al. 2019), which is well articulated in the editorials, and reflected in the style of writing (Examples 9, 10 and 11), which can be explained by the ideology of the publication: supported by the dependency discourse, the people of the countryside are presented as victims of this attack from the media and the public, as they are just doing their jobs to provide food and sustainable raw materials. This can be seen as promoting them above the public discussion, since they are, indeed, contributing to climate change mitigation and claimed to be doing so more than the average person. In the discourse the arguments for the victims are, again, based on facts about the dependency, as mentioned before; therefore, the victimization can seem justified and something that the readers of MT can relate to.

9. In the discussion, agricultural workers have unjustifiably been claimed as guilty. And it's no wonder that the farmers have been following the argument baffled. In the accusing discussion it has been forgotten, among other things, that the Finnish agriculture is world class in responsibility. (MT 9.12.2019)
10. The producers are questioning justifiably why they are being blamed for the situation, even though agriculture and forestry are not the problem but the solution. (MT 9.12.2019)
11. Instead of looking for others to blame everyone should think about what they can do for environment and climate themselves. Concrete acts are needed instead of just talk. The kind of acts that actually matter. In agriculture and forestry these acts are performed every day. (MT 9.12.2019)

A prominent point that rises from the interpretation of this discourse is that of incongruence: the writers blame the public discussion for presenting a unilateral, accusing representation of the field of agriculture and forestry, but, at the same time, present a similarly unilateral representation of the role of forests in climate change mitigation. The temperamental, defensive reaction for the accusing and blaming is understandable but inconsistent with their own search for civil conversation on the matter. Attacking and accusing the public discussion that is a sharp-tempered solution which repeats

the style of the opponent, while a collected, explaining approach to the matter might bring the interaction closer to the targeted civil conversation.

### **4.3. The political discussion discourse**

The political discussion discourse is partly similar to the victim discourse, but the focus is on the claimed impossibility of civil conversation about climate change and forestry between the policymakers of the matter. The discourse is reflected primarily in the opinionated choices of words and phrases, and the criticism of the policymakers and decision makers on the matter of climate change. The discourse reflects frustration and upset towards the “them”, politicians, and states they are not competent to negotiate the matters and provide with solutions (Examples 12 and 13). The contentious nature of the discussion on the matter is brought up often, and the arguments are supported with the dependency discourse (Examples 14 and 15).

12. As they are keeping busy with constricting emission decrease objectives more and more, the previous objectives have been left not achieved. (MT 18.12.2019)
13. The climate change conference in Madrid that ended on Monday proved once again how hard it is to build shared climate politics. (MT 18.12.2019)
14. If change is truly wanted, fact-based climate discussion searching for a fair solution is needed instead of climate arguments. Constrained juxtaposition and accusing lead nowhere. (MT 9.12.2019)
15. The discussion about different methods of silviculture is not new, as arguing about superiority of clear cutting and continuous growth methods has continued decades. (MT 23.1.2019)

The responsibility of climate change mitigation seems to be put on the politicians who, supposedly, cannot seem to be able to make the right decisions and policies or execute them. This discourse can be considered critical, since it questions the policymakers and their methods (Leichenko and O’Brien 2019). It is essential in a democracy that the acts of the decision makers are questioned and examined, which is why this discourse is an important member of climate change discourses. However, the writers find the politics solely negative and unsuccessful, which can be interpreted from the absence of mentions of successful acts, as only the failed objectives and inconclusive negotiations are mentioned. This resembles the concept of implicatory denial, introduced by Norgaard (2011), and logical action discourse by Fleming et al. (2014), since the writers acknowledge the issue and seem to be informed about the correct ways of action, but relocate the responsibility on the politicians and decision makers. This discourse could, also, derive from the frustration of others not contributing to the same extent as oneself is, and targeting this frustration to the policymakers, who have failed to ensure that everyone has the same rules.

Two of the editorials focus solely on criticizing the Greens political party, who are known for trying to decrease the amounts of wood harvested and for promoting environmental values, such as protecting biodiversity, altogether. The values and priorities of the Greens are certainly different from the ideology of MT, and the party is presented as belonging to “them” (Examples 16 and 17). Focusing on one political party in the editorials and sharply criticizing it and individual politicians does not contribute to their pursuit of climate discussion that does not include arguing (Example 14).

16. The Greens should recognize the sustainably increased amount of wood utilization as a victory from fossil economy in order to make it to the government. (MT 6.5.2019)
17. This should wake up the party lead of the Greens and representative candidates. Their following includes a remarkable number of people who consider the economical use of forests necessary for enabling jobs, tax income and the wellbeing of Finns. (MT 6.3.2019)

#### **4.4. The expertise discourse**

The expertise discourse reflects the confidence about the professional knowledge of the writers. The main attribute of this discourse is the condescending style of the utterances that can be connected to this discourse. These condescending utterances appear in short fragments throughout the data, rather than directly in the subject matter of the text. Examples of these utterances are phrases such as “This, of course, is not correct”, “It is self-explanatory that...”, “It is strange that...”, “It is worth remembering that...”. The condescending style is, also, reflected in the use of conditional mood, specifically in a declarative manner (Examples 18 and 19). This grammatical mood suggests that the writer is confident that the proposition will be true if the condition is met, which, in turn, reflects the writer’s self-confidence.

18. If the emissions of construction are wanted to be laid down rapidly, concrete should quickly be replaced with wood. The emissions would decrease, and the carbon would be stored in the wood. (MT 15.4.2019)
19. If the market and the consumers replaced import meat with domestic meat, it would raise the price of domestic meat a bit. At the same time consumption could drop, but the distress of the domestic farmer would ease. (MT 12.8.2019)

It is suggested in the discourse that the writers consider themselves experts on the subjects that they cover in the editorials. The declarative style of stating the views of the writers is straightforward and can be interpreted as bold and assertive. This style of writing reflects the previously mentioned us versus them -positioning, especially stressing the claim that the community of MT represent the professionals on the subjects, since they are the ones who do the agricultural and forestry work in

practice. This can be an effective way of strengthening both the team spirit among the reader base and the position of the newspaper as their ally. The ideology of the writer is highly present in this discourse.

The declarative sentence structure is easily comprehensible and, therefore, effective in delivering the message. However, the style of stating claimed facts in this direct, simplified manner (which can be seen in the dependency discourse as well) can be problematic. The complexity of the issue addressed in the editorials requires a multi-dimensional explanation, which is why, for example, “Finnish forests will continue to be a strong carbon sink” (Example 20) might not be an accurate statement. The expertise discourse is strongly based on the ideology and opinions, and presenting them as absolute facts can be misleading.

20. It is important to acknowledge that theoretical calculations do not change the fact that Finnish forests will continue to be a strong carbon sink, and the carbon storage is growing continuously. (MT 18.12.2019)

#### **4.5. The unreliable facts discourse**

The unreliable facts discourse questions the information about climate change that is released and published and the coherence of it. This was intensified when the calculations of the Natural Resources Institute on the capacity of the forest sinks were incorrect. The discourse resembles the logical action discourse by Fleming et al. (2014), since the forest owners and agricultural workers are in need of straight-forward, clear information about climate change mitigation. They claim that it is hard to separate the correct facts from the vast, continuous flow of climate change mitigation communication. Additionally, this discourse falls under Leichenko & O’Brien’s (2019) critical discourse, since the sources of the facts and the reliability of them is questioned: if the scientists release incorrect calculations, how are ordinary people to know how to act.

21. It is clear that more correct information is needed to the climate discussion, and more broadly the whole environmental discussion. (MT 9.12.2019)
22. At this moment the problem is that the amount of carbon stored in ground cannot be calculated. (MT 17.6.2019)

Calculating the amounts of carbon stored in forests or the effectivity of carbon sinks is complex. The numbers have been variable and differing depending on the method of calculation, which have been developing as well (Natural Resources Institute). In the discourse the numbers, the calculation methods and the ones publishing them are questioned for being unfair or incorrect in some other way (Examples 21 and 22). The discourse takes form in this theme of the discourse: the numbers

are so vague that it is impossible to perform discussion and negotiation on the subject. The writers also question whether the numbers and regulations in reports from the EU and global organizations can be applied to the context of Finland, since the forest situation in, for example, South America is radically different from the one in Finland (Example 23). This global context promotes the idea that Finland is world class in silviculture and in both carbon sink and storage amounts. It can seem like the accountability is, again, thrown to someone else, and the actions of the forest owners are seen as justified and fair. However, this critical approach on global regulations is fundamental.

23. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge where IPCC directs its critique's point. The main target is by no means in Finland. The attention is focused to the South American countries where the loss of rain forests is a serious threat to the climate. (MT 12.8.2019)

The origins and explanations for this discourse are apparent: the amount of wood harvested in Finland is regulated according to a calculated number by the Natural Resources Institute of maximum wood that can be harvested with the forests still remaining as carbon sinks. This number was, as stated previously, calculated incorrectly and found to be in favor of the forest industry. The new, more correct, number is, nonetheless, questioned in the editorials, and alternative views on the accurate number are presented. Direct statements, such as “of the real carbon sinks of Finnish forests only less than ten percent is taken into account” (Example 24) are not supported by any sources, which is contradictory to the previous criticism of vague information.

24. An example of the oddities of the calculation formula is that of the real carbon sinks of Finnish forests only less than ten percent is taken into account. Biology and research facts in forest carbon sink calculation have been badly superseded by politics. (MT 17.6.2019)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to find out what climate change discourses exist in the forestry-related editorials of the publication *Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*, a newspaper targeted at the people of rural municipalities of Finland, and what kind of ideology towards climate change can be interpreted from these discourses. My hypotheses proved to be correct, as I identified these discourses and described how they reflect the ideology of the newspaper. Five different climate change discourses were found in the data by applying Fairclough's principle on critical discourse analysis, and these five discourses reflect the ideology of the newspaper towards climate change. The ideology, which can be interpreted from the background information on the publication and the discourses, rests on promoting the Finnish countryside and its lines of business and conserving the rights and livelihood

of the people of the countryside. This is reflected in the discourses: wood harvesting is presented as a way to increase carbon sinks, since growing forests are more effective in that; the wood products that are made of harvested wood function as a carbon storage, which is emphasized; and the Finnish agriculture is claimed to be world class in sustainability. The discourses are actualized in the text with the choices of words and phrases, some grammatical features and, most importantly, what is stressed and what is not. The discourses can be related to the previous research of Leichenko and O'Brien (2019) and Fleming et al. (2014).

It is natural, considering the theme of the publication and the nature of their reader base, that the ideology is promoted vigorously. Their critical questioning of the public discussion and the policies about climate change is relevant, and the point of view of a field worker is crucial. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that a researcher always has their own ideologies, as well, even though they must abstain from letting them affect the research. Nevertheless, a major limitation of critical discourse analysis is this possibility of different interpretations, which must be taken into account here. However, as MT is considered to be a trustworthy and professional source of information and its reader-base is vast both geographically and demographically (Mediafakta 2018), the question of biased communication can be brought up, especially when MT has themselves brought it up in the unreliable facts and victim discourses. The following conclusions of this study support this suggestion. The positive effects of wood harvesting in climate change mitigation are promoted in the texts while dismissing the negatives. The research calculations are being used to support arguments but, at the same time, these same numbers are questioned for being vague or not correct enough. The exaggerated public discussion is criticized, but the style of the editorials reiterates the same opinionated and sharp-tempered manner. These contradictions are noteworthy and reflect the complexity of the communication on climate crisis and the discussion around the issue.

The analysis I have conducted in this study led me to contemplate a few prominent questions: since discourses around us affect the way we see the world, is it appropriate to publish editorials that present Finnish people as wrongly accused and innocent on a world scale, if this might then lead the readers to think that they need not change their ways? As climate change is an issue affecting all of us and the situation is deteriorating continuously, are these the discourses that should appear, considering the situation? Is all this a symptom of implicatory denial? An interesting point for future research would be the development of climate change discourses: how are they different now from what they were 10 or 20 years ago, and how will they develop as the battle against the climate crisis continues? As the situation is uncertain in its nature, the attitudes and the discourses will, most likely, follow the same pattern, which is an intriguing and useful subject for investigation.

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