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Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Master Thesis

2023 **Rebecca Theresa Herber**

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Climate Justice Discourse in German Quality Newspapers Along the Political Spectrum

A Critical Discourse Analysis of *taz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ* and *Die Welt*

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Climate justice is a concept that puts forward the unequal impacts that climate change has on different group and areas. It is stressed in academia, and activism alike, and has been increasingly used in German newspaper coverage. This emphasises the need to understand how the media might contribute to the formation of public discourse on climate justice, which the present study aims to do. Through critical discourse analysis, 32 articles published in *taz, SZ, FAZ,* and *Die Welt* were examined to identify the following dominant discourses on climate justice in their coverage: the multi-layered imbalance between the Global South and the Global North, the call for a holistic consideration of climate justice, climate justice as part of activists' agenda and the need for a focus on intranational socio-economic injustice. While there are differences to be found between the political alignments, they turn out to be greater between the more pronounced politically affiliated newspapers on both ends and less pronounced between the more moderately aligned newspapers. It should not be left unmentioned, however, that generally, many articles did not play into any particular discourse at all. Frequently, climate justice coverage remains shallow and does not provide nuanced context on the layers of injustice, their intersections and the wider implications.

Keywords

Climate justice – critical discourse analysis – Germany – quality newspapers – political affiliation – injustice – climate change – public discourse

Abstrakt

Klimatická spravedlnost je koncept, který poukazuje na nerovný dopad změny klimatu na různé skupiny a oblasti. Je zdůrazňována jak v akademické obci, tak na poli aktivismu a stále častěji se objevuje v německých novinách. To zdůrazňuje potřebu pochopit, jak mohou média přispět k formování veřejného diskurzu o klimatické spravedlnosti, což je cílem této studie. Prostřednictvím kritické analýzy diskurzu bylo zkoumáno 32 článků publikovaných v taz, SZ, FAZ a Die Welt s cílem identifikovat následující dominantní diskurzy o klimatické spravedlnosti v jejich zpravodajství: vícevrstvou nerovnováhu mezi globálním Jihem a globálním Severem, výzvu k holistickému zohlednění klimatické spravedlnosti, klimatickou spravedlnost jako součást agendy aktivistů a potřebu zaměřit se na vnitrostátní socioekonomickou nespravedlnost. Ačkoli lze mezi politickým zaměřením nalézt rozdíly, ukazuje se, že jsou větší mezi novinami s výraznější politickou příslušností na obou stranách politického spektra a méně výrazné mezi novinami s umírněnějším zaměřením. Je třeba poznamenat, že mnoho článků obecně nespadalo do žádného konkrétního diskurzu. Často zůstává zpravodajství o klimatické spravedlnosti povrchní a neposkytuje nuancovaný kontext o vrstvách nespravedlnosti, jejich vzájemných vazbách a širších důsledcích.

Klíčová slova

klimatická spravedlnost - kritická analýza diskurzu - Německo - kvalitní noviny - politická příslušnost - nespravedlnost - změna klimatu - veřejný diskurz

Range of thesis: 72 pages and 132620 characters

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to my family and for their continuous love and support. Thank you as well to my amazing Mundus friends for making these two years what they were – in it together.

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that she compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.

2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.

3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

4. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

Prague, 28th of July 2023 Rebecca Theresa Herber

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism FSV UK
Research proposal for Erasmus Mundus Journalism Diploma Thesis

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Thesis title in English: Climate justice discourse in German quality newspapers along the political spectrum

Expected date of submission (semester, academic year – example: *SS 2021/2022*)
(Thesis must be submitted according to the Academic Calendar.)

SS 2022/2023

Main research question (max. 250 characters):

- How do German quality newspapers cover climate justice and how might the articles contribute to the public discourse?
- Do findings differ when comparing the newspapers in their political affiliation?

Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):

Climate change and its coverage in the media has been a widely discussed topic – in media itself as well as in research (several works by Boykoff; Roosvall; Kunelius; Dreher & Voyer, 2015; Engesser &

Brüggemann, 2016; Kunelius & Roosvall, 2021; Lück et al., 2018; Sakellari, 2022). While the research has been focused mainly on the importance of climate journalism, the concept of climate justice has not been covered as much. Climate justice is a term that "acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations" (Yale Climate Connections). There is some research on why it is so important to talk about climate justice and postcolonial continuity, but there is little research on how media actually work with that and in how far an acknowledgment of these issues is portrayed.

Germany is a particularly good object of study because it is one of the most influential countries in the EU and has built an international reputation as a role model for climate protection policy. Therefore, it is interesting to observe how the German media adds to the political and public discourse.

Previous research has mostly focused on the areas that are affected by climate change the most while not contributing to the global emissions as much (e.g. India in Das, 2020) or countries considered the Global North heavily contributing to climate change while being very affected by its consequences (e.g. Australia in Dreher & Voyer, 2015). Analyzing the media coverage with its prevalent frames and themes of a country that is among those emitting the most while not being affected as much, will give insights into the representation of power dynamics and if Germany stands by its responsibility towards the most affected countries and their people. There is a need to understand today how the discourse around climate justice is shaped to be able to deduce future implications for the practice in news rooms and for journalists in Germany and other comparable countries in the Global North. This research aims to fill this gap in academia.

Expected theoretical framework (max. 1800 characters)**:**

Theories about effective climate journalism (Gunster, 2017) and previous research about prevalent strategies, frames, and patterns within climate change coverage (Boykoff & Boykoff, 2004; Dreher & Voyer, 2015; Engesser & Brüggemann, 2016; Kunelius & Roosvall, 2021; Lück et al., 2018; Sakellari, 2022) build the framework of this research. It is important to establish the dynamics of climate journalism observed in previous studies. This allows me to embed the findings aiming to contribute to a more detailed understanding of how media have been contributing to the public discourse and thereby also to the peoples' attitudes towards climate policy.

This thesis will also contemplate literature about climate justice and post-colonial continuity to build a theoretical foundation for the qualitative method of critical discourse analysis. The power imbalances connected to climate justice make critical discourse analysis the appropriate method for this study, as within academia it is regarded as a method particularly suited to take power relations into consideration. Therefore, it is crucial to get a general understanding of what achieving climate justice would mean, of current demands, and of colonial responsibility and continuity respectively in the Global North or the Global South.

Context on Germany as a "democratic-corporatist" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) media system is also important to explain particularities and dynamics that might play into the news coverage and framing of climate justice and which might inform the public discourse. The same goes for the selected newspapers and their respective audiences.

Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters)**:**

The methodology planned is a descriptive case study conducted with the method of critical discourse analysis. The CDA's main aim is to consider relations of power, dominance, and inequality produced in discourse, and influencing public discourse. Media discourse is commonly seen as one of the most defining sources for shaping peoples' knowledge, attitudes, and opinions (van Dijk, 2000).
Inspired by Sharif et al.'s (2017) discursive analysis of CNN talk shows, I plan to conduct both a textual as well as a contextual analysis. Within the textual analysis, using an inductive approach, I will identify themes and frames as well as their underlying meanings and also focus on the choice of words and style if there is something to observe. All of these layers will help me identify the primary discourses in the articles.
The contextual analysis focuses more on the surrounding circumstances: Who is writing the article, and who is being heard as sources in them. These findings will give insights into who is given an opportunity to shape the discourse and if there are power imbalances in play.

Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):

Four daily newspapers are selected due to their reputation as quality media in Germany and their connected ability to shape public discourse and public opinion. The chosen newspapers also cover the spectrum of political affiliation within German society:

- Die Tageszeitung (taz): left
- Süddeutsche Zeitung: center-left
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ):center-right
- Die Welt: right

As the topic of climate change (and the connected climate justice) is generally still regarded as a "green" and therefore leftist issue, the comparison of the newspapers is particularly insightful.
The selected timeframe starts in January 2019 and ends in December 2022, thereby covering 4 years of newspaper coverage on climate justice. This timeframe is relevant as it covers the year when the Fridays for Future movement took off worldwide and the first global climate strike happened – with German participation. The Fridays for Future movement has put the issue on the international agenda and consequently, the media started to cover climate issues more frequently and more prominently. Stretching the time frame until the end of the year 2022 ensures that the most current discourse possible is captured. Recently, the topic of climate change has been dominating the public agenda again, with climate activists gaining attention by spilling soup on famous paintings and gluing themselves to the floor of renowned museums. Some of these cases have been happening in Germany too. Moreover, the COP27 taking place in Egypt at the moment, particularly brings the issue of climate justice to the table. The activists' actions are controversially debated in the media and the media also take a close look at the political implications of COP27, therefore the research period will include all articles published on climate justice until the end of 2022.

A preliminary search with the tool Factiva (for TAZ, Süddeutsche & WELT) brought up 751 articles (until the end of October 2022) with the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" (= climate justice). FAZ is not accessible via Factiva, but for the same timeframe the FAZ-archive showed 117 results with the keyword.
After this preliminary sampling it is crucial to create a more purposeful sample filtering out the articles merely reporting on climate protests, mentioning posters with the words 'climate justice' on them, for example. More opinionated and/or longer articles conveying messages are the ones actually relevant for the purpose of this study.

From each newspaper, I will choose 10 to conduct critical discourse analysis on. This means that a total of 32 articles will be analyzed, following Morant's (1998) suggestion that media text studies should generally involve a collection of 15 to 40 texts. As I want to analyze four different newspapers, 40 seems to be the right amount for this research. By this, I ensure to both be broad enough to establish similarities and differences, but also to be specific and detailed enough.

Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):

1. Introduction
- Relevance
- Research Questions
- Outline of the thesis

2. Theoretical Frame and Literature Review
- Definitions: Climate Justice; Global South; Global North
- Media system in Germany and the selected newspapers
- Climate justice in journalism
- Effective climate journalism (Gunster)
- Frame theory and the climate justice frame
- Post-colonialism and colonial continuity (in media representation)
- Audiences of media with certain political affiliations

3. Research Design, Method, Data Collection
- Sampling
- Method: Critical Discourse Analysis
- Explanation of how I will go about it

4. Findings
- Textual analysis:
- Contextual analysis: who speaks for who, who are the sources
- Discussion

5. Conclusion
- Summary of most relevant findings and theoretical implications
- Limitations
- Implications for further research

6. References
7. Potentially appendix

Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):

Callison, C. (2021). "Journalism, Indigenous knowing, and climate futures (and pasts)." In H. Bødker & H. E. Morris (Eds.) Climate Change and Journalism. Routledge (pp. 10-24).
Context about climate justice, focus on indigenous group, but the concepts and thoughts can be transferred to my angle too

Gunster, S. (2017). "Engaging climate communication: Audiences, frames, values and norms." In Curran, J., Hackett, R. A., Forde, S., Gunster, S. & Foxwell-Norton, K. (Eds.) Journalism and Climate Crisis: Public Engagement, Media Alternatives. Routledge.
https://doi.org/12048/10.4324/9781315668734
This paper tackles the efficacy of climate journalism and proposes four strategies for more effective and engaging coverage. One of them is "Make greater use of a climate justice frame which spotlights the ethical, political and normative dimensions of climate change" (Gunster, 2017). As this one is very relevant for justifying my research interest, I will focus on it and take it into consideration when I discuss my findings, while mentioning the others.

Kunelius, R., & Roosvall, A. (2021). Media and the Climate Crisis. *Nordic Journal of Media Studies*, 3(1), 1–19. https://www.doi.org/10.2478/njms-2021-0001
One example of the papers that I will draw on to talk about general framing of the climate crisis. In this case, Kunelius & Roosvall talk about the different wordings around climate change and what the difference between a "climate crisis" frame and a "climate change" frame is.

Kumar, S. (2014). Media, Communication, and Postcolonial Theory. *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*, 380-399. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118591178.ch21
This paper gives background on the connections between media studies and postcolonial theory and offers context for the power dynamics in play.

Methods:

Machin, D. & Mayr, A. (2012). How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis. SAGE.

Sharifi, M., Nafiseh A. and Mina A. (2017). "A critical discourse analytic approach to discursive construction of Islam in Western talk shows: The case of CNN talk shows." *International Communication Gazette*, 79(1), 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048516656301
In this case study, Sharifi et al. conduct a critical discourse analysis by examining a textual analysis as well as a contextual analysis. This strikes me as a great way of going about my own research, which is why I plan on drawing on their work.

Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006
Together with some other works on Critical Discourse Analysis this text is going to help me to focus my analysis and to find the right approach to and focus of Critical Discourse Analysis among the several ones the method offers.

Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):

MCCAULEY, Amina Rhyl. Sources and framing: a comparison of media coverage of climate change across the world. Prague, 2022. Diploma thesis. Charles University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Journalism. Supervisor Neag, Annamária.

TORSELLO, Vittoria. The reproduction of structural power through discourses of delegitimation. The portrayal of the climate crisis in Italian newspapers. Praha, 2022. Diplomová práce. Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky. Vedoucí práce Neag, Annamária.

Date / Signature of the student: 13.11.2022

[redacted]

THIS PART TO BE FILLED BY THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR:

I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.

Neag, Annamária

Surname and name of the supervisor

14.11.2022 [redacted]....

Date / Signature of the supervisor

Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:

Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:

The research proposal has to be printed, signed, and submitted to the FSV UK registry office (podatelna) in two copies, **by November 15, 2022**, addressed to the Program Coordinator. Accepted research proposals have to be picked up at the Program Coordinator's Office, Mgr. Sandra Štefaniková. The accepted research proposal needs to be included in the hard copy version of the submitted thesis.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS NEED TO BE APPROVED BY THE HEAD OF ERASMUS MUNDUS JOURNALISM PROGRAM.

Contents

1. Introduction

In 2022, the 27th Conference of the Parties of the UN (COP27) agreed on the establishment of the so-called *Loss and Damage Fund*. It was designed to compensate for the impacts of climate change that are not preventable by climate mitigation policy, and is particularly targeted towards countries in the Global South. The *Loss and Damage Fund* is one of many examples of how the issue of climate justice was brought to the public tableau in recent years. It exemplifies the trend that saw the concept of climate justice increasingly being stressed by activists, politicians, and scholars alike. Climate justice is a term acknowledging that "climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations" (Yale Climate Connections, 2020). While the present injustices connected to climate change affect all of these sectors listed, they are also caused by a lot of different factors. Some are related to a country's pre-existing geography and climate – some areas are naturally warmer and therefore more prone to droughts, while others innately have a higher chance of tsunamis. But, inequities are also connected to societal dynamics and differences in the amount of emissions countries, areas, and individuals have contributed to the global climate.

Hence, there has been a growing awareness that climate change does not *affect* everybody equally and is not *caused* by everybody equally. Countries of the Global South have and will continue to be disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, taking their contribution to global warming into consideration. At the same time, countries such as Germany are contributing to worldwide emissions the most. Because of climatic circumstances in the Global North that favour these areas in terms of climate change effects, the majority of the population in the Global North will be the least affected. The INFORM climate change report comes to the conclusion that "crisis

and disaster risks will increase in all regions, regardless of climate and socio-economic scenarios" (European Commission's Joint Research Centre, 2022). These factors, however, play into an unequal impact of global warming. In both their optimistic and pessimistic scenario, Germany's crisis and disaster risk will remain stable. This is true for many countries of the Global North, of which Norway's crisis risk will even decrease, and none of them reach the level of a large risk increase. Large increases in crisis and disaster risk are particularly expected for several countries of the African continent (European Commission's Joint Research Centre, 2022). This can be defined as "spatial injustice" (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020, p. 2093) and connects to the term MAPA, which means most affected people and areas.

Rising debate around climate justice also led to a changing rhetoric around climate change: While in the past, it has often been focused on a scientific coverage of the issue as well as on a connection between climate change and our nature, increasingly more emphasis is put on the human side of the climate crisis. Scientists and NGOs agree that the consequences of global warming and a loss of biodiversity will, for instance, lead to substantially more migration movements. The UNHCR speaks against an endorsement of the term climate refugee and prefers to label them as "persons displaced in the context of disasters and climate change" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

Besides spatial injustice, there are more inequities, which play into the complex dynamic of the notion of climate justice. For instance, there is intergenerational injustice between the old generations and young generations. The older people who have not started acting against global warming and climate change as soon as scientists have started to warn the broader public and the younger people who will have to face the consequences. There is also inequality between genders, as girls and women tend to

experience greater consequences of climate change than men (UN Women, 2022). And there is socio-economic injustice – within the borders of individual countries or on a more global scale. These different layers of climate injustice will be further examined in the theoretical framework of this study and will be used to discuss the findings.

Previous research on climate change and the media has particularly been focused on print media and on Western countries (Schäfer & Schlichting, 2014). Only in more recent years, a shift of research attention towards the Global South is noticeable – both in terms of research interests or researchers from most affected areas publishing themselves about these matters (e.g., Dreher & Voyer, 2015; Das, 2020; Callison, 2021). This research aims to bring these aspects together by focusing on how a Western country such as Germany has covered climate justice, therefore taking the Global South into consideration. According to a report by several NGOs published in 2022, with 2.8 Million USD per year, Germany is the seventh-biggest funder of international projects for fossil energies (Urgewald, 2022). For the sake of balance, however, it must also be stressed that Germany invested almost as much (2.2 Million USD) into international clean energy projects during the same period. Such discrepancies likely play into Germany's international reputation as a role model for climate protection policy. The dynamics make the country a particularly suitable research object to see how its media adds to the political and public discourse around climate justice.

While there has been considerable attention on climate journalism in legacy media and newspapers (Schäfer & Painter, 2020) in the German context this research focus is very relevant as the selected newspapers, their online presence and their social media are widely consumed, and they continue to shape the media landscape in Germany. This will be elaborated on in the literature review as well as in the section on sampling. Previous research has also mostly focused on the areas that are affected by

climate change the most while also having low emissions per capita (e.g. India in Das, 2020) or countries considered the Global North heavily contributing to climate change while also being very affected by its consequences (e.g. Australia in Dreher & Voyer, 2015). Analysing the media coverage with its prevalent frames and themes of a country that is among those emitting the most while not being impacted as much, will give insights into the representation of power dynamics and if Germany stands by its responsibility towards the most affected areas and their people. There is a need to understand today how the discourse around climate justice is shaped to be able to deduce future implications for the practice in newsrooms and for journalists in Germany and other comparable countries in the Global North.

This research aims to fill this gap in academia and to answer the following research question and its secondary question:

Research Question 1: *How do German quality newspapers cover climate justice, and how might the articles contribute to the public discourse?*

Research Question 1a: *Do findings differ when comparing the newspapers in their political affiliation?*

In the literature review of this study, presenting previous findings on the prevalent dynamics, frames, and patterns within climate change coverage allows embedding this study's findings into a wider context. This supports the contribution to a more detailed understanding of how German quality newspapers have been adding to the public discourse and the people's attitudes toward climate justice and climate policy.

This study's theoretical framework builds on the notion of climate justice and its different layers, as well as on the concept of the event-process-gap, which defines the imbalanced focus on events versus processes connected to climate change according to

Roosvall and Tegelberg (2020). Embedding the matters of climate justice into dynamics of responsibility, agency, and power connected to colonialism and colonial continuity builds a theoretical foundation for the qualitative method of critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is commonly regarded as one of the main methods to take power relations and power imbalances into consideration (van Dijk, 1995; Graham, 2018). This is why CDA is an appropriate and suitable method for this research interest, as matters of climate justice are very closely connected to global and historical power inequality. Therefore, it is crucial to get a general understanding of what achieving climate justice would mean, of current demands, and of colonial responsibility and continuity respectively in the Global North or the Global South.

The sampling of the newspapers *taz, SZ, FAZ* and *Die Welt* as "Leitmedien" and their articles will be justified, and the research design will be presented. "Leitmedien" is a term used for publications that are used as a benchmark for other media in terms of editorial decisions and professionalism (Künzler et al., 2012). In addition, the literature review will contemplate Germany as a "democratic-corporatist" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) media system and its particularities in regard to climate journalism as well as the selected newspapers and their importance. In the methodology chapter, the method of critical discourse analysis will be explained, and its limitations and ethical implications will be discussed.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

I. Literature Review

A. The Notion of Climate Justice in Academic Research

In activism and academia alike, people have increasingly been demanding a stronger focus on climate justice, meaning a focus on the social and human implications of climate change and the injustices that it brings to the table (Gunster, 2017; Callison, 2021).

Shane Gunster argues that in climate journalism, it no longer suffices to give the audience more and more information and context on the causes of and the impacts of climate change to evoke an interest and even an involvement by people (Gunster, 2017). Instead, he proposes four strategies, of which one is most relevant for this research: "[M]ake greater use of a climate justice frame which spotlights the ethical, political and normative dimensions of climate change" (p. 52). Gunster argues that "climate justice defines the root cause of climate change not as emissions but as inequality – a pervasive, structural inequality that systematically divorces responsibility from accountability and thereby violates the core normative principle of distributive justice" (Gunster, 2017, p. 62).

Those who degrade the environment the least, and profit the least from the revenue of heavy fossil fuel use (Gunster, 2017), will often be the ones who suffer the most. Furthermore, people who are most likely to be affected by climate change often have fewer opportunities to have an effect on decision-making processes, while those most accountable for lacking climate justice tend to be in charge of mitigation efforts" (p. 62). Hence, the issue of climate justice is strongly linked to dynamics of

responsibility, agency, and power, which will be part of the theoretical framework presented further below.

Nancy Tuana (2019) calls for an "*ecologically informed intersectionality*" (p. 3, emphasis in original), when it comes to climate change matters. She demands attention to how issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality interplay with matters of environmental changes (Tuana, 2019). To fully grasp climate justice and address it properly, there is a need for a cultivation of "sensibilities that fully recognize the *inextricable entanglements of humans and environments*" (p. 3, emphasis in original). The different layers of climate related injustice and their intersections will be discussed in the theoretical framework of this paper.

Despite very broad consensus among scholars, some voices also stress possible challenges that a strengthened climate justice might pose. The climate justice frame has the potential to polarise people across the political spectrum (Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017). People on the right are particularly resistant to climate justice narratives, especially when they are kept rather abstract and portray injustices that seem far away from readers' lived experience (Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017). Other narratives, however, that are more tailored towards general values of centre-right leaning people, do engage them effectively, while also leading to engagement by people of other political alignments (Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017). This demonstrates that conscious framing around conservative values can lead to less resistance to climate change news by the centre-right (Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017).

B. Colonialism and climate justice journalism

The time of imperialism and colonialism is arguably one of the darkest chapters in history. It is a chapter that still has very severe ramifications. Western powers colonised and exploited the land of indigenous groups. Violence against the people, the suppression of their culture and forced labour are only some aspects of the consequences. Unequal access to resources have created deep economic chasms. Social and economic disparity and global power imbalances and injustice still have a strong presence (Butt, 2013; Crook et al., 2018).

Edward Said is often thought to have laid the foundations for post-colonial theory, when publishing *Orientalism*, which focuses on the representation of the East in constant comparison to the West and as inferior (Said, 1978). He stresses the othering of its people and perspectives (Said, 1978). Postcolonialism can generally be regarded as "mechanisms involving power through direct conquest or through political and economic influence that effectively create a form of domination by one nation over another" (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007, p. 1173). Bhabha's definition deems suitable for the context of climate justice in connection to colonial continuity:

> Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of 'minorities' within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, race, communities, peoples (Bhabha, 1994, p. 171).

Postcolonial theory does not focus solely on the past, but rather calls its exploitative implications in question (Rukundwa & van Aarde, 2007). Climate change has only in more recent years been seen as one of these abusive consequences connected to the

colonial past. Particularly, the "[s]patial injustice is in large part due to colonialism and other historical inequalities" (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020). Colonialism also had consequences on the media coverage of the formerly colonised countries.

Suzanne Franks (2010) demonstrates with the usage of vivid examples how the African continent is neglected in international reporting. Her study of the BBC's coverage of Africa can be seen as a microcosm of the general interplay between the Global South and Western media in its entirety. As long as the colonising countries had stakes in the colonised countries, the reporting was more extensive (Franks, 2010). After Great Britain had lost most of its colonies by 1966, the immediate coverage remained relatively high and the nature of the countries' relevance shifted from former colonies to actors in the Cold War (Franks, 2010). The African continent mattered to the journalists and audiences in the Global North because it accounted for an important strategic location for both the West and the East (Franks, 2010). Since the end of the Cold War, however, the situation has shifted. There is little attention given to African countries and many conflicts are forgotten and overlooked. Moreover, the little coverage that is happening is often coloured by racism, stereotypes, and double standards and is rather episodic (Franks, 2010). "Africa is ignored or misreported and when it is mentioned, then horror and disaster are the regular themes" (Franks, 2010, p. 74). Little emphasis is put on themes such as youth culture, city life, innovation and constructive stories from Africa and the Global South more generally. Franks argues that more comprehensive stories are frequently connected to colonial times, while "stories about African countries and societies which do not have a former colonial or obviously 'white' angle tend to be less comprehensively reported and explained" (Franks, 2010, p. 75). Generally, there is a "lack of rounded and enquiring coverage" (Franks, 2010, p. 82). As climate justice is often connected to spatial injustices and

mostly to the Global South, taking the historical perspective with Africa as an example is vital for this study, as it offers an understanding of imbalance in reporting and power that has been ongoing for decades. This dynamic has been reflected in more recent findings that confirm a South/North divide in news media coverage. The Global South has been widely neglected. "The so-called West and the MENA-region [Middle East and North Africa] are in focus and the Global South is marginalised" (Ludescher, 2020, p. 12). This long-term disinterest in the Global South is the main finding of a longitudinal study (2007-2016) on the coverage of the Global South in Germany's leading news broadcast.

To conclude, "[t]here is an overwhelming need for more depth and understanding in much of the way that we report news about Africa [and the entire Global South], enabling audiences to move beyond the rigid stereotypes" (Franks, 2010, p. 82).

There is a South/North divide perceptible, not only in terms of representation in the Global North, but also in regard to news production. In connection to climate journalism, there are "considerable differences" (Schäfer & Painter, 2020, p. 14) to be found between the Global North and the Global South. In the latter, there are disproportionately fewer specialised reporters and journalists must endure even more strenuous working conditions. It should be stressed "the way people from diverse parts of the world are portrayed by the media, and how they are portrayed as connected or disconnected, matters for climate justice" (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020, p. 293).

More explicitly connected to climate journalism, researchers have found that the coverage of climate related issues often neglects the realities of life already affected by climate change, such as Pacific Islanders (Dreher & Voyer, 2018) or indigenous groups (Callison, 2021). Callison calls for a climate change journalism with an emphasis on a

"past-informed present" (Callison 2021, p.14) instead of solely on a crisis-ridden future. She argues that "the 'how we got here' question falls out of the shocking coverage of what the future-present looks like in the wake of imminent or ongoing disaster, even if climate change is a central explanation" (Callison 2021, p. 13). Callison specifically refers here to the past of settler-colonialism with Indigenous peoples' land loss and suppressed traditions and knowledge that would have been more in line with the needs of nature and climate, such as traditional burning practices to prevent uncontrolled wildfires. But her approach can be applied to different aspects of the colonial past and its continuities, for instance on climate change causation through the Global North's steady development and the Global South's increasing suffering from it. Callison criticises current tendencies of journalism that neglect these uneven distributions of the stakes that people have in terms of the climate crisis (Callison, 2021). She argues that journalists tell climate change stories "as if there is an even sense of history and ecology marching forward equally regardless of geography" (p. 12). This becomes relevant for the present study when taking historical injustice into consideration, as well its intersections with spatial injustice. These different layers of injustice will be further presented and distinguished in the theoretical framework.

Dreher and Voyer's work on climate justice framing is very specifically focused on the Australian media landscape and its coverage of small island developing states (SIDS) that are heavily affected by climate change. Still, their findings on the framing of SIDS in connection to climate justice reporting is applicable to a wider context of most affected people and areas. According to them, these areas are used to let audiences witness climate change, portraying most affected people as victims or as refugees, or presenting most affected areas in connection to their reputation as tourist destinations worth seeing before being destroyed by climate change (Dreher & Voyer, 2015). In

addition to their review of existing literature on media framing of SIDS, they conducted qualitative interviews to establish which kinds of frames would be favoured by affected people. According to their stance, they would welcome a portrayal of their agency for change instead of their victimhood, and an emphasis on their rights as humans instead of an instrumentalisation of their examples to prove climate change. Moreover, they find the framing of climate induced migration as one with dignity more appropriate than the minimisation of migrants as refugees (Dreher & Voyer, 2015). This resonates with Sakellari, who stresses that people affected by climate induced migration tend to be portrayed with a security threat frame and/or a victim frame while also being othered (Sakellari, 2022).

Demands for alternative frames are especially worthwhile noting, as they would give voice to those people impacted and take their preferences into consideration. Acknowledging affected people as sources is as important in academic research as in journalistic content. It is vital to recognize that not only the prevalence of climate justice framing and stories should be considered. The ways it is being covered within the surrounding academic discourse, and who is being heard in this discourse, are also worthy of attention. Representation and the depiction of agency are crucial. It is therefore very relevant to look into the distribution of sources and their background to understand how this access to the discourse might influence it. This is why this paper will also consider contextual aspects in the critical discourse analysis, such as which sources are being heard in the sampled articles. More details on this will be presented in the methodology chapter of this paper.

In connection to underprivileged groups and prevalent refugee narratives, Engesser and Brüggemann have identified a “blame game between industrialized and emerging countries” (Engesser & Brüggemann, 2016, p. 838). Hence, journalists from

the Global South hesitate to tackle how their countries contribute to climate change, while journalists from the Global North tend to not fully question "Western consumerist culture" (p. 838), which is responsible for a huge part of worldwide emissions (Engesser & Brüggemann, 2016).

This is also being reflected in a study published in 2021 looking into the framing of responsibility in climate change coverage in the USA, India, Australia, and Nigeria (Murali et al., 2021). These countries represent different levels of emissions as well as different exposure to climate change impacts. Two are considered part of the Global South and two belong to the Global North. The researchers noted "disparate messaging" (Murali et al., 2021, p. 51) in the ascription of responsibility for climate change: India, being a big global emitter, pushed the responsibility mainly to the Global North, while Nigeria as a very low emitter, accepted some responsibility for climate change. US-American media have been attributing a big level of responsibility onto their own country. In Australia, two main narratives compete against each other: The first "shifted the blame of climate change emissions from the country, to the rapidly growing economies, China and India", while the other one "accepts Australia's responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions" (Murali et al., 2021, p. 51). These findings are indicators of the politicisation of climate change.

C. The German Media Landscape

Germany has a "democratic-corporatist" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 143) media system, characterised by a high newspaper circulation and "a desire to limit state power in order to avoid the recurrence of totalitarianism" (p. 161) combined with an urge to strengthen press freedom. The print media market in Germany is mainly liberal, while

the public service broadcasting is still shaped by the state to ensure it serves the "general interest" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 165).

In its most recent report, the *Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom* ranked Germany as the highest country in the European Union in terms of media plurality for the year 2021 (Holznagel & Kalbhenn, 2022). The report considers "transparency, the concentration of media ownership and the exposure of media to commercial interests" (Holznagel & Kalbhenn, 2022, p. 12). It is the only country in the comparison that has a low risk of threats to media plurality. However, RSF sees Germany's media pluralism on the decline due to economic reasons that affect local newspapers the strongest (Reporters without Borders).

Germany is generally "seen as being free of commercial influence" (Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, 2022, p. 72), has a strong political and editorial independence and does fairly well in terms of news media concentration (Holznagel & Kalbhenn, 2022). Climate journalism is typically not reduced to one beat in Germany, climate journalists rather "work across beats" (Schäfer & Painter, 2020, p. 6), which potentially leads to both a lacking specialisation but also to an engagement throughout diverse beats and media sections.

There are a handful of newspapers in Germany that can be considered so-called "Leitmedien" (= leading media). This notion is deeply connected to the theory of intermedia agenda setting, which describes the ability of certain media to shape other media outlets' agendas (Künzler et al., 2012). At the same time, the notion can be taken into consideration with a lens of quality assessment. The term "Leitmedien" also refers to media that meet professional standards and are therefore used as a benchmark for other media (Künzler et al., 2012).

In Germany, the major opinion-leading newspapers follow a clear political line. Even though they do not campaign for specific parties, political affiliation is recognisable in their respective coverage (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This attribute of German newspapers makes it interesting to look into the differences in the coverage of issues and controversies – in the case of this research, climate justice.

The newspapers sampled for this research (*taz, Süddeutsche Zeitung, FAZ, Die Welt*), fulfil these attributes. They can be assigned to the category of "Leitmedien". They follow differing lines across the political spectrum, while still being moderate, reputable and credible news outlets. The selected newspapers will be discussed further in the section on research design and sampling.

D. Climate Change and Climate Justice in the Media

This section aims at giving an overview of the most relevant insights into the dynamics of climate journalism, with special focus on climate justice and findings concerning Germany. Climate change reporting is a rapidly changing beat of journalism, as it is coloured and influenced by societal dynamics such as growing activism, more and more scientific evidence or increased lobbying and policymaking. It can generally be defined as the "segment of journalism concerned with climate change, specifically with its characteristics, causes, and impacts in various societal fields, as well as ways of mitigating or adapting to it" (Schäfer & Painter, 2020, p. 2). Some academic sources depicting trends in climate journalism stem from years ago, and their perspectives must therefore be taken with a grain of salt. However, the following section will present findings of research from across the globe that give insights into the dynamics of climate journalism.

Since the turn of the millennium, there has been growing coverage of climate change issues, demonstrating a "gradual strengthening of a global climate change culture" (Broadbent et al., 2016, p. 7). The 2020 Reuters digital news report shows that news media are a primary source for people across the globe to get information on climate change matters (Newman, 2020). A large comparative study published in 2016 establishes a correlation between a balanced discourse on climate policy and decreased emissions in Germany (Broadbent et al., 2016). Even though a causation is difficult to confirm, it still gives a hint to what media attention and journalism might be able to contribute to the public discourse and therefore, potentially, also to climate protection policy.

Interestingly, neither the impact climate change has on the country nor the prevalence of policies impacting climate issues determine the level of media attention (Barkemeyer et al., 2017). The same study also demonstrates that if people are preoccupied with other societal issues such as unemployment, the media attention for climate change decreases. Even though this research was published in 2017, the results refer to an analysis of data from the year 2008. Since then, the world has changed a lot in terms of the awareness of climate change issues, so it would be crucial to see if these findings have changed over time or if they still depict a range of ongoing factors influencing media attention for climate change. But keeping this in mind, it is still interesting to note that the research showed that "climate change has emerged as a truly global problem that is not merely confined to affluent or well-educated regions of the global North" (Barkemeyer et al., 2017, p. 1046) even as soon as 2008. Moreover, there is a relationship between media coverage in a country and its success rate in policy regulation. This goes for all policy issues and is not directly linked to climate policy action (Barkemeyer et al., 2017).

Another highly relevant finding is that there is no "relationship between a country's exposure to climate change-related risk and levels of climate change-related media coverage" (p. 1047). This resonates with findings of a longitudinal study by Hase et al. (2021): With regard to the South/North divide, there tended to be more coverage of climate issues in the Global North, coverage in the Global South focused "more on the societal dimension of climate change, in particular its impacts on humans" (p. 8).

Kunelius and Roosvall point out the evolution of prevalent language in the discourse around rising emissions: from the greenhouse effect, to global warming, to climate change (Kunelius & Roosvall, 2021). The term "climate crisis", which is stressing the urgency of the matters, has been on the rise, even though it has not caught up to the dominant term of "climate change". Comparing it to the rhetoric during the Covid-19 pandemic, when officials and media alike were also using the term "crisis", the researchers stress the potential for "how the state can facilitate exceptionally dramatic disruptions of everyday routines and usher in new rules by naming the situation as 'exceptional' or an 'emergency'" (p. 9). But, they also raise the issues of the usage of the crisis frame being a "gambit" (p. 9), as it has the potential "to lead to volatile acts" (p. 9). This leads to a warning from Maxwell Boykoff, published in an interview with him as one of the leading scholars for climate communication. He argues that a productive journalism needs to differentiate between alarming and alarmist rhetoric (Kunelius, 2021).

In research on climate change and climate journalism, the number of studies focusing on framing in climate journalism is particularly striking. This present research aims at taking different findings on climate change and climate justice frames as a stepping stone to dive into a closer textual analysis. Therefore, an overview of the

identified dominating frames in climate change and climate justice coverage will be presented in the following section.

The way climate change is framed matters for public engagement and public acceptance for climate protection policies, especially when these frames are disseminated by reputable media and other kinds of opinion leading people (Nisbet, 2009). On the other hand, certain framing can also play "into the hands of climate skeptics" (Nisbet, 2009, p. 19). Nisbet (2009) has identified several frames within US-American climate communication: the public accountability frame, the morality and ethics frame, the uncertainty frame, the economic development frame as well as the public health frame.

Wessler et al. (2016) have identified several frames that have been dominant in climate change coverage in Germany and four other democratic countries worldwide. Their research was focused on the coverage of the United National Climate Conferences in the years 2010-2013. These frames are: the global warming victims frame, the civil society demands frame, the political negotiations frame, and the sustainable energy frame (Wessler et al., 2016). Surprising for the authors of the studies, the political negotiations frame was the least salient.

According to research on media effects, how people perceive climate change may have an impact on their attitudes and climate-friendly behaviour, which can be influenced by differences in framing (Wessler et al., 2016). It is only logical that similar dynamics apply to the framing and discourse of climate justice – to German media consumers, a climate justice discourse might lead to more empathy towards the Global South and to an acceptance of postcolonial responsibility.

Building on research by Schäfer and Schmidt published in 2015 that identified five main climate justice frames in mainstream newspapers in Germany, this paper aims

to contribute to a further understanding of the discourse that is formed by German media around climate justice. Also, it aims to connect to it by offering insights into a more recent time frame. Following a similar approach as the present study, the newspapers analysed in Schäfer and Schmidt's study are Süddeutsche Zeitung (*SZ*) and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (*FAZ*), thereby covering different sides of the political spectrum. The dominant frames identified are "the freedom and resilience of peoples; the fairness and effectiveness of market mechanisms; visionary global governance for people and the planet; international solidarity in an unequal world; and economic growth and social justice" (Schmidt & Schäfer, 2015, pp. 540–541). Climate justice was, for instance, framed as "a moral responsibility to prevent the deterioration of planetary living conditions and protect those least able to cope with the problem" (Schäfer & Schmidt, 2015, p. 542) or as "a moral obligation of those historically responsible for causing the problem" (p. 543). In terms of the ascription of responsibility, "just climate governance is mainly an issue of the Global North's historic responsibility and the South's development rights" (p. 544).

II. Theoretical Framework

The following section will outline several theoretical aspects that build the theoretical framework of this study and will serve to focus the discussion of the findings. The different layers of (climate) injustice and theories on responsibility and accountability and the ascription thereof will be discussed as well as dynamics of power and agency. Moreover, the event-process-gap as defined by Kunelius and Roosvall (2021) will be presented, on which grounds the respective articles will be assessed.

A. Layers of (Climate) Injustice

The notion of climate justice in general has been presented further above. To understand the prevalent discourses in the articles to be analysed, a deeper knowledge of different aspects of climate justice needs to be achieved.

Fraser (2008) breaks down different categories of justice more generally: She distinguishes between political, cultural and economic justice/injustice (cited in Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020, p. 294). Subcategories specifically linked to climate justice are intranational, international and transnational (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020) justice. All of these categories are met in the discourse of climate change and climate justice. For the present study, I want to introduce several other aspects of climate justice that will become relevant in the course of the analysis.

Drawing on Roosvall and Tegelberg (2020), who argue that climate justice discourse needs "to consider both time and space" (p. 293), two decisive layers of injustice are historical injustice and spatial injustice. These two are very commonly stressed aspects of climate justice. While spatial injustice terms the present injustice in affectedness of different areas and people (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020), historical injustice can be connected to emissions of the past leading to both intergenerational injustice as well as spatial injustice (Meyer & Sanklecha, 2017).

In regard to spatial injustice, the emissions refer particularly to the time of industrialization as well as colonialism. It focuses on the differing amounts of emissions caused by countries and areas over time. Another aspect is also that the Global North was able to develop unchecked, which was accompanied by high emissions during industrialization (Meyer & Sanklecha, 2017). To now demand that countries of the Global South limit emissions as much as those of the Global North fails to recognize that this also limits their development and prosperity.

As demonstrated, historical injustice cannot be sharply distinguished from spatial injustice, as it has similar implications for the present. Spatial injustice, however, is expressed more by emphasising the differing impacts of climate change to areas and people in present day, while historical injustice stresses the imbalance of emissions in the past, caused by the heavy industrialization and the connected and consequent colonisation of the Global South.

Additionally, there is also socio-economic inequity connected to climate change (Heyward, 2014). Specifically, this approach tackles the injustice between the wealthy and the less wealthy. This has different dimensions again: On one hand, it can mean the inequality in emissions caused by the consumption and lifestyle of the rich and poor. On the other hand, it can also refer to the inequity in the consequences of adaptation measures, for example increased flight costs or food prices. Moreover, socio-economic injustice can be targeted towards intranational or international inequity.

None of these layers of injustice typically stands on its own, but rather they are very connected and interdependent. Still, they serve as a framework to analyse which aspect of climate justice is stressed over others in the media texts or if the media tackle them as nuanced as they are in reality. Because being aware of different layers of injustice in connection to the climate, means adding "social, historical and ethical perspectives . . . in order to illuminate patterns of inequality and facilitate deeper understanding of questions of responsibility" (Gunster, 2017, p. 63), which connects to the next section.

B. Accountability and the Ascription of Responsibility

The question of responsibility and accountability in regard to the climate crisis is very complex due to the "conflicting public rhetoric on who (or what) is responsible for mitigating the impacts of climate change on local and distant people and places" (Rickard et al., 2014). Not only is the responsibility for the causes of climate change controversial, as laid out before by presenting different layers of injustice, but also the responsibility for mitigation efforts, plays into this tension field as well.

Jogesh (2012) identified a trend of the ascription of responsibility that goes beyond the typical polarisation between the Global North and the Global South; instead she sees a new ascription of responsibility towards developing countries since they are "catching up on emissions" (Jogesh, 2012, p. 280). This resonates with the "blame game between industrialized and emerging countries" identified by Engesser and Brüggemann (2016, p. 838) and findings from Murali (2021). The present study aims to look into these dynamics more closely, and to find out, among other things, what kind of responsibility ascriptions can be found in German newspaper discourse of climate justice.

C. Involvement of Power and Agency

These dynamics of injustice and responsibility have been leading up to questions of power and agency. The complexity of the many facets presented above already touched upon power imbalance. "Power relations are . . . central to both the stories that need to be told and the ethical calculus involved in how to tell climate stories" (Callison, 2021 p. 14). Therefore, they need to be taken into consideration when looking into the discourse shaped by the news media in Germany.

Candis Callison, a leading researcher for Indigenous communities in connection to climate and herself an Indigenous woman, stresses the importance of "understanding how power relations, systems, and social orders predicated on capitalism and colonialism shape the present" (2021, p. 11). Positions at the "decision-making table" should not be "secondary or tertiary questions" (p. 11).

The power imbalance also shows in news coverage within prevalent "victim/hero narratives" (Callison, 2021, p. 13). This victimisation of most affected people and areas leads to questions of autonomy and agency, and in how far there are spaces being created for self-determined participation (Callison, 2021). The media has responsibility by "creating more constraints or opportunities for addressing the injustices and colonialism central to the past centuries of infrastructure development and systems building." (Callison, 2021, p. 14).

D. Event-process-gap

The term event-process-gap was coined by Kunelius and Roosvall (2021) and refers to the phenomenon that journalistic coverage tends to focus on weather events and often fail to relate it back sufficiently to ongoing processes of climate change. Even though they specifically relate it to natural disasters, I argue that the event-process-gap can be transferred to other events as well that are connected to climate change, for instance, climate conferences such as COP27, protests by climate activists or political decisions in dealing with climate change. This resonates with academic findings that see a growing attention and strengthened coverage across the world when big events occur (Broadbent et al., 2016; Hase et al., 2021). Broadbent et al. (2016) argue that this indicates "the gradual strengthening of a global climate change culture" (p. 7). However, the focus on events does not suffice, can only capture the audience's attention

for so long and might not lead to an extensive understanding of different nuances in the climate crisis and in regard to climate justice.

For the present study, this concept is relevant since it adds to the understanding of the media discourse if the articles focus on events or dive deeper into processes related to climate change and climate justice more specifically.

3. Methodology

The following chapter will outline the research design and the methodology applied to this paper. The method of choice is critical discourse analysis (CDA) of articles from four different German newspapers along the political spectrum. The aim of this research is to contribute to the academic understanding of how news media construct discourses around the issue of climate justice.

I. Critical Discourse Analysis

Media discourse is commonly regarded as one of the sources that influence and define people's attitudes, knowledge, and opinions the most (van Dijk, 1993). CDA's main aim is to consider "relations of *power, dominance*, and *inequality* and the way these are *reproduced* or *resisted*" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18, emphasis in original). Common focus points of research are *class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, language, religion, age, nationality* or *world-region* (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18, emphasis in original). Matters of climate justice combine several of these social relationships, for instance world-region, ethnicity or and class. This is why CDA is particularly suitable to collect insights into the media discourse and its potential influences.

A common object of study for CDA is news media discourse, but the method is also suitable for other texts and for the spoken word, for instance speeches by political actors. The underlying assumption of CDA is that "language both *shapes* and *is shaped by* society" (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4, emphasis in original). Therefore, it is a "means of social construction" (p. 4).

As laid out in this paper's literature review, the whole existence of the climate justice discourse is connected to questions of power and inequality, which makes CDA a very suitable method to apply to this topic. CDA is also known as a method that is deeply moralistic and includes explicit judgements (Graham, 2018). "Its aim is to transform action and values such that the social scene becomes increasingly equal, more democratic, less victimising" (Graham, 2018, p. 202). This aim suggests "a stance against *the powerful and the elites*" and in "*solidarity* with dominated groups" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18, emphasis in original). Journalists and the news media can be regarded as part of the elite, as they have access to and influence the mass media discourse (van Dijk, 1995). This proves to be particularly true for the selected newspapers, as they are considered leading and quality media in Germany. What this means, and why the respective publications were chosen, will be elaborated on in the next section of this chapter.

II. Media Sampling

Four daily newspapers are selected due to their standing as quality media in Germany, also among elites in politics and business, and their subsequent ability to shape public discourse and people's opinions (Wessler et al., 2016). The chosen newspapers also cover the spectrum of political affiliation within German society, building up on the

potential of the tackling of climate justice to polarise people across the political spectrum (Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017).

- Die Tageszeitung (*taz*): left-alternative
- Süddeutsche Zeitung (*SZ*): left-liberal, centre-left
- Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (*FAZ*): civic conservative, centre-right
- *Die Welt*: civic conservative, right

Analysing and comparing *FAZ* and *SZ* is a very common approach to research on the German media market, as they are two of the most widely distributed daily newspapers in Germany and are moderately leaning towards political sides. Studies have shown that there are differences in how media covers climate change according to their editorial lines (e.g. Carvalho and Burgess, 2006; Painter and Ashe, 2012). *SZ* and *FAZ* have also been taken into consideration in climate journalism research before (e.g., Schäfer & Schmidt, 2015; Wessler et al., 2016; Lück et al., 2018; Hase et al., 2021).

Following this established approach but also analysing the articles on climate justice by the more obviously politically affiliated newspaper *taz* (left leaning) and *Die Welt* (right leaning), this research aims to add another layer of comparison. All four newspapers are comparable in their relevance for the German media system, even though their print circulation does differ significantly, with *SZ* (298.066) and *FAZ* (189.948) having the highest circulation and *Die Welt* (88.780) and *taz* (45.374) following (Statista, 2023). The online versions of *SZ* and *FAZ* have been enjoying increasing popularity (Reporters without Borders). Their respective news coverages are commonly regarded as high-quality journalism.

The sample does not include the newspaper with the highest, though decreasing (Reporters without Borders) circulation in Germany, which is *Bild*. But *Bild, as a* tabloid newspaper, stands out among the newspapers, so it is excluded from the sample for the sake of comparability. *Bild* is regarded very controversially among journalists and the general public alike (Niggemeier, 2021; Rücker, 2023). In the past, *Bild* has repeatedly attracted attention for missteps that were reprimanded by the German Press Council – of almost 900 violations of the press code reprimanded since 1991, 29 per cent are attributable to *Bild* (Statista 2022).

Due to this controversial standing and the lack of comparability with the other publications, I chose to include *Die Welt* instead. With this newspaper, the sample entails another publication of the Axel Springer SE, Europe's biggest publishing house. This newspaper is more moderate and less controversial, and therefore more suitable for a comparison with other news media. Adding *Die Welt* as a Springer publication to the sample, plays into the representation of the breadth of the German media landscape while not relying on media with tabloid characteristics that limit the comparability of the publication sample.

III. Article Sampling

The selected timeframe starts in January 2019 and ends in December 2022, thereby covering four years of newspaper coverage on climate justice. This timeframe is relevant as it covers the year when the Fridays for Future movement took off worldwide and the first global climate strike happened – with German participation. The Fridays for Future movement has put the issue of climate change on the agenda – globally and within broad societal strata. Consequently, the media started to cover climate issues more frequently and more prominently.

Stretching the time frame until the end of the year 2022 ensures that the most current discourse possible is captured. In the second half of 2022, the topic of climate change dominated the public agenda in Germany again, with climate activists gaining attention by spilling soup on famous paintings or glueing themselves to the streets. Moreover, COP27 in Egypt in November 2022, particularly brought the issue of climate justice to the table. The activists' actions and the boundaries of activism more generally were being controversially debated in the media, and the media had a close look at the political implications of COP27. Therefore, the research period will include all articles published on climate justice until the end of 2022.

For all the publications, the print issue and, if separate, the weekend issue, have been included. The digital content of the newspapers was also included, as the importance of online media grows and grows (Schäfer & Painter, 2020). Identical duplicate articles were excluded. Using Dow Jones' research tool Factiva and *FAZ*'s own archive, a search for the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" (= climate justice) in the time frame from 1st of January 2019 until 31st of December 2022 was conducted. At the time of the present analysis, Dow Jones did not have the necessary licence for *FAZ,* which is why the articles could only be accessed in the newspaper's own digital archive that includes print and online articles as well as the weekend issue.

There are a total of 820 hits on Factiva and a total of 111 for *FAZ*. The distribution among the different newspapers and their several outlets is as follows:

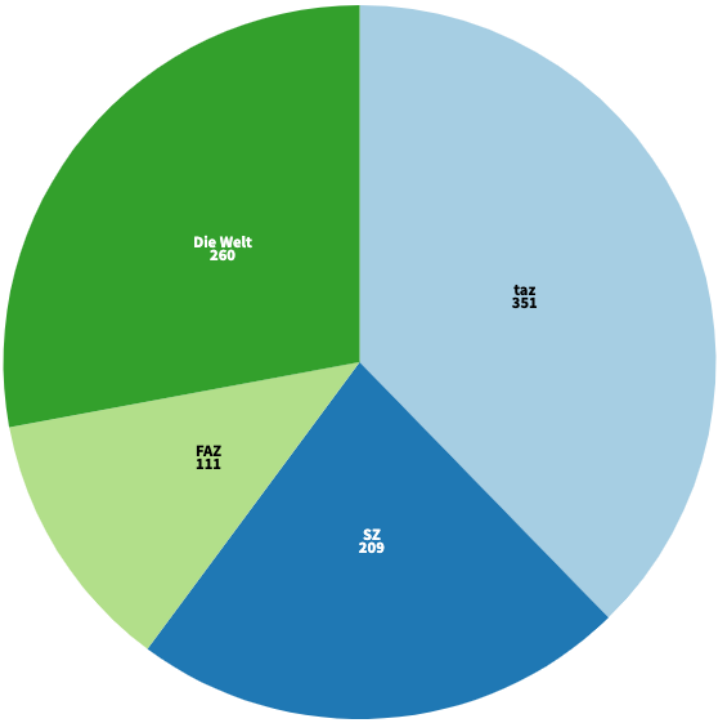

Figure 1: The distribution of articles with the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" among the sampled newspapers

It is striking that there are notable differences between the numbers of articles of each newspaper. The fact that *Die Welt* and *taz* as the more polarised media outlets in this research mention the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" more often than the others, might emphasise the potential to divide society that the climate justice discourse entails. This stresses that the approach of taking newspapers of differing political affiliations into consideration, will be particularly insightful.

The search results on Factiva include a list of keywords being connected to the search word. It is striking that the most used words in combination with "climate justice" are *Fridays for Future, Letzte Generation* ("last generation"), *Ende Gelände* (literally translating to "end of terrains"; German saying for "here and no further") and *Extinction Rebellion*. All of them refer to different groups of activists that are

prominent actors in Germany in regard to the climate crisis discourse. This might suggest that the analysed media put a focus on climate justice in connection to activism, giving a lot of space to the activists' stances and their behaviour.

The distribution throughout the years is:

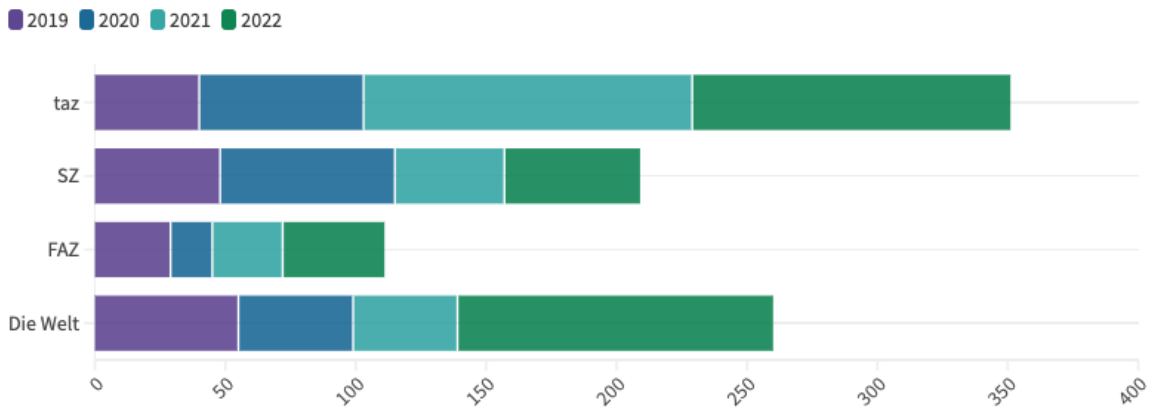

Figure 1: The distribution of articles with the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" throughout the years

It is noteworthy that even though the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, the general usage of the keyword increased. The first impression is therefore that the concept of climate justice still got quite the attention, while other topics were neglected due to the global relevance and importance of the pandemic coverage. Still, it is worthwhile looking into the respective usage of the keyword for each newspaper. *Taz* includes the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" the most in 2021 and 2022 (solely a difference of four articles) and has a steady increase of the keyword, also in 2020. *SZ*'s usage of the word increased from 2019 to 2020, then dropped a bit again in 2021, to then rise again in 2022 to the highest number of articles with the keyword in *SZ*. *FAZ*'s inclusion of the keyword drops in 2020, but then increases again to its best value in 2022. It is interesting to note that also *Die Welt*'s usage of the word decreases by 2020. Generally, it should also be mentioned that *Die Welt*'s mentions of climate justice rise very

distinctly only in 2022, while it seems to not have been a big focus of the newspaper's in the previous years.

The comparison of the results year by year is fundamental to guarantee on a first level that the data collection has density and gives room for critical discourse analysis. The differences are also relevant data for the research, as they demonstrate that media coverage around climate justice has been increasing in recent years. Evidence for this is for instance that while the term "Klimagerechtigkeit" (= climate justice) was used 143 times in 2019, in the following years the usage of the term kept increasing, until it more than doubled in 2022. This emphasises the growing coverage and might suggest an increasing awareness of the issue of climate justice in the media. It also stresses the relevance of this research interest. I also cross-checked the term "climate justice" in English, since German news media frequently use Anglicisms and I wanted to make sure that all fitting articles made it into the sample. However, no distinct difference was perceived, the articles with the English keyword were mostly reports of protests, enumerating what protesters wrote on signs.

Another interesting side-finding: from the beginning of the year 2000 till the day before the start of the sample's time frame, the term "Klimagerechtigkeit" only comes up 230 times in total. So, within 19 years, the sampled newspapers together only tackle the issue of climate justice that many times, while they tackle it more than three times that much in a span of four years from 2019 to the end of 2022. The search on Factiva shows that the first mention of climate justice in said newspapers happened in 2004 by *taz*.

For qualitative research purposes, there are no fixed rules when it comes to samples sizes (Patton, 1990). Eight articles from each newspaper will be added to the sample, hence, 32 articles will be analysed in total. This ensures the analysis to be

broad enough to establish patterns and differences, but also to give space to noteworthy details and specifics. With this approach, an in-depth analysis is possible that allows to elaborate on discursive elements and power dynamics properly. Time constraints and the scope of this research paper also plays into the decision of limiting it to 32 articles. The size of the sample was both manageable while also presenting sufficient informative value on patterns and strategies adding to the public discourse on climate justice.

For the selection of the articles, this study relies on purposeful sampling. For the present research interest, it is crucial to filter out articles that for instance only mention climate protests with posters with the keyword climate justice. These articles do not portray discourse properly. Instead, more opinionated and longer articles conveying underlying messages on climate justice, are deemed relevant for the purpose of this study – the aim is therefore to collect "*information-rich cases*" (Patton, 1990, p. 169, emphasis in original).

Patton distinguishes between 15 different strategies to purposefully sampling these "information-rich cases" (1990, p. 181), which are "worthy of in-depth study" and tell researchers "a great deal about matters of importance" (p. 181). Due to the nature of the sampled media and the research question that aims at examining differences in media discourse, the strategy of "maximum variation sampling" (Patton, 1990, p. 172) is chosen. Hereby, the focus is not on extreme cases, nor on a particular subgroup like in the category of homogeneous sampling (Patton, 1990). Instead, a heterogeneous sample wants to identify central themes despite variation in the sample, because "[a]ny common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts of a program" (Patton, 1990, p. 172). The sampled media in themselves already display a certain level

of heterogeneity in terms of the editorial lines followed, which makes the maximum variation sampling the appropriate strategy for purposeful sampling in this study. More concretely, in connection to the present sample, the following factors guided purposeful sampling:

- the keyword climate justice being embedded in enough context and not just being used in enumerations or short quotes
- articles being explicitly opinionated and/or long enough to convey underlying meaning
- articles including several sources that could be assessed in terms of diversity and of their origin (Global South/Global North)

Even though I tried to sample at least one or ideally two of the eight articles for the respective newspapers from each year, this has not worked in every case. As the development of the climate justice discourse in German media over time is more of a secondary interest of this research paper, the meaningfulness of the insights into climate justice discourse was prioritised over temporal relevance. A list with the final 32 articles with designated numbers as well as the respective newspaper and date of publication is provided in the appendix.

IV. Research Design

The following section will lay out in more detail how the actual critical discourse analysis will be conducted.

Inspired by Sharifi et al.'s (2017) discursive analysis of talk shows on CNN, the present critical discourse analysis consists of a textual and a contextual part. Within the textual analysis, using an inductive approach, I will identify themes and frames as well

as their underlying meanings and also focus on the choice of words, the tone and on the style. All of these layers will help to identify the primary discourses in the articles, as CDA attempts to "*uncover, reveal* or *disclose* what is hidden or otherwise not immediately obvious in relations of discursively enacted dominance or their underlying ideologies" (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18, emphasis in original).

The contextual analysis, on the other hand, focuses more on issues of *access* and *participation*. For instance, it is analysed who is writing the article, and which sources are used, thereby showing who is being heard in the discourse (Sharifi et al., 2017). These findings will give insights into who is given an opportunity to shape the discourse and if there are power imbalances in play. Regarding the present study, access and participation will particularly be assessed on the grounds of the North/South divide. It will be taken into consideration if voices from the Global South are being heard when the issue of climate justice is being tackled.

For the textual analysis, the respective articles were read one time unsystematically to note first impressions. Afterwards, they were read several times again, this time focussing more on every sentence itself. Important quotations, underlying meaning, and distinct rhetorical strategies were highlighted. A table was then systematically filled with brief summaries, the inherent discourses identified and any other conspicuities of the articles. More general information, such as the month and year of publication, information on the articles' authors and on sources consulted, was added. These aspects will become crucial in the second step of this analysis, the contextual analysis.

For the textual analysis, the following questions supported the process of understanding the respective articles' arguments and characteristics and to draw conclusions from that:

- What is the general tone of the article?
- What aspects of climate justice are being stressed?
- Is there background information for context and for a deeper understanding of climate justice provided?
- Does the article ascribe responsibility? If yes, to whom?
- Does the article offer explicit suggestions on how to deal with matters of climate justice in the future?
- What sorts of assumptions appear to underpin what is being said and how it is being said?

The questions guided the analysis and helped to identify the main strategies and discourses of the articles. The section on this study's findings will follow the structure of presenting general observations and will subsequently be grouped into sections for each newspaper, followed by a section on the contextual level of the analysis. Particularly expressive excerpts[1] from the articles will be added to illustrate the findings. The discussion chapter will draw conclusions on overall tendencies in the newspapers and the most dominant discourses, which will then be connected back to the theoretical framework.

[1] It is to be noted that the excerpts from the articles were translated by me from German to English.

V. Limitations

As laid out before, the method of critical discourse analysis is particularly appropriate for research on matters of climate justice due to its relation to power. Still, it certainly has its weaknesses, challenges, and limitations. This section will discuss them and also give insights into reflexivity and ethical implications.

Firstly, CDA does not offer adequate evidence on how the media discourse might impact people's attitudes and opinions on certain topics, nor a society's stance on them more generally (Schneider, 2013). I want to state explicitly that I do not intend to raise claims of generalisability, one of the main challenges for researchers using critical discourse analysis. The collected data in the analysis offers exemplary insights into the construction of discourse around climate justice within different newspapers and media. It does not constitute a representative sample. This is also due to the size of the sample, which is relatively small, even though it is common for qualitative media text studies to focus on fifteen to 40 texts (Morant, 1998).

Moreover, a limitation of critical discourse analysis is that researchers cannot be certain of having found every noteworthy aspect in a text, no matter how carefully and systematically they have proceeded. It is also challenging to convey the peculiarities of the German language, which contribute to the expression of the respective discourse in the articles in the original, in such a way that it comes across correctly in the work. The grammatical mode of the subjunctive is an example of this, which will come up several times in the analysis and, which simply does not exist in the English language in the same way. By providing the necessary context on these peculiarities of the German language and by explaining how this adds to the messages conveyed, it will still become clear how they can add to the public discourse.

Also, a large part of critical discourse analysis is a textual analysis that is very open to interpretation and relies on the researcher's subjective assessment. CDA has been criticised for that "unscientific" approach (van Dijk, 1995, p. 19). But, scholars such as van Dijk have been negating this criticism, arguing that no scholarship is fully free of (latent) positioning and that CDA is at least open and transparent about its stances and subjectivity (van Dijk, 1995). Consciously, CDA takes a political stance by adopting the perspective of people who lack agency and power and elaborating on societal issues from that point of view (Wodak, 2001). Graham (2018), moreover, argues that CDA is a reasonable method with a certain amount of "critical self awareness" (p. 202).

However, this is where the question of ethics comes into play. I am not able to fully free myself from personal views and predispositions influencing the findings and wider implications. For researchers, it is very important to "make the basis of [their] judgements explicit" (Graham, 2018, p. 186). It is therefore to be noted that I am from Germany and have been consuming the media chosen for this study my entire life to differing extents. I am very much interested in the societal and political discourse around climate change, and hereby particularly invested in issues of justice. I generally favour climate protection measures, particularly those unburdening the Global South, and would classify myself as politically leaning towards the left.

Despite these limitations and with the appropriate transparency and reflexivity on the grounds of the researcher's judgement, critical discourse analysis is a suitable method to uncover underlying dynamics in media discourse on climate justice in German quality newspapers. The following chapter is dedicated to this research's finding and an analysis and discussion thereof.

4. Findings and Analysis

Before the dominant discourses will be discussed in light of power imbalances, questions of responsibility and the different layers of injustice, general observations for the sample will be tackled. First, findings from the textual analysis will be presented, followed by observations on the contextual level. The findings will be in order of discourses identified. It is to be noted that excerpts from the articles analysed in the critical discourse analysis were translated by me.

I. Textual analysis

Before getting into a more detailed description of the findings on dominant discourses, it is noteworthy how the process of sampling gave different first impressions of the depth and quality of the discourse surrounding climate justice. Generally, the sheer amount of articles found when searching for the keyword was deceptive, and did not align with the number of texts with a proper engagement with the concept of climate justice and its implications. It was more challenging than expected to find *"information-rich cases"* (Patton, 1990, p. 169, emphasis in original). Many articles merely used climate justice as a buzzword without engaging with it on a deeper and more nuanced level. This might suggest that the media are adopting the buzzword to show their participation in the public discourse on climate justice, without always demonstrating a detailed understanding and engagement with the concept and its implications. This is evident from the large number of mentions without the articles offering any real discussion of the topic. *Taz*, with the most results for the keyword by far, also seems to provide the most detailed coverage. Taking this into consideration, it can almost be stated that the most prevalent discourse was no discourse at all, but merely a superficial inclusion of the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit".

Generally, it also became obvious how much emphasis is put on protests and a discussion of activism and its boundaries in all the newspapers. Articles with the keyword climate justice typically included announcements of or retrospective reports on climate protests. This confirms the initial impression on this after using Factiva to filter the articles. It showed a list of words connected to the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit". The most used ones were several groups of climate activists. This finding plays into the event-process-gap, was particularly salient in the sample for *SZ*, and will further be elaborated on in the discussion section of this paper.

While it was quite easy to find *taz*-articles that tackle the concept of climate justice in detail and discuss its different layers and wider implications, it was, on the other hand, most challenging to find appropriate articles from *SZ* that convey a certain depth of messages contributing to the climate justice discourse. When it comes to *FAZ*, the sample had slightly more potential than *SZ*, but it was also more difficult to find suitable articles than it was for *Die Welt*. This might already hint towards differences in the political lines and its more moderate or more pronounced manifestation, although the differences in the number of articles per sample has to be kept in mind as well. It is noteworthy that the articles in the big sample, as well as in the small sample designated for CDA, cut across various beats and newspaper sections.

A local focus of reporting and climate discourse was particularly salient in *SZ* and in earlier years within the timeframe, which might play into its weaker focus on wider nuances of climate justice. Instead, there was a particularly strong emphasis on activism to be found, even though this was the case for all sampled newspapers to differing extents.

Despite these challenges that arose from a lack of properly discursive articles with the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit", eight texts were chosen for every newspaper,

which give insight into dominant discourses in the tackling of the concept climate justice by the respective newspapers. The sample therefore consists of 32 articles of very differing lengths. The longest article, an extensive opinion piece published in *Die Welt* contains 2,977 words, while the shortest is comprised of 208 words, a short opinion piece in *SZ*.

A. Imbalance Between the Global South and the Global North

This discourse can be regarded as very ambiguous within the samples and can be connected to many different kinds of imbalance. For instance, imbalance in power and agency, in the causation of emissions or in tangible impacts of climate change. The ambiguity is created by the newspaper either reproducing these imbalances by playing into dominant narratives that have fostered them, or by addressing these dynamics to advocate for a remastered handling of the inequities. Sometimes the articles even play into both these tendencies at the same time, creating juxtapositions both by explicitly voiced opinions or by latent meaning. This discourse can particularly be connected to the "blame-game" identified by Engesser and Brüggemann (2016), something that I will further look into in the discussion section of this paper. While the most left-leaning newspaper *taz* plays into this discourse only by stressing the power imbalance as something that has to be acted against, all other three newspapers fall short into giving a coherent picture in their stance towards this discourse. Their rhetoric and discursive conspicuities are marked by ambivalence.

To engage further with the different sides of the discourse, I will begin with focusing on some examples where articles play into this imbalance. In an article in *SZ* for instance, Pakistan's agency as a most affected area is stressed, while there is also blame put onto the country at the same time. In the author's assessment, the money

from the aid funds is not being used in a way that is specifically aimed toward increased climate resilience in Pakistan. Even though this is a valid point to stress, the text falls short in presenting the historically grown responsibilities of the Global North and the potential support that goes beyond financial resources. The parts that do tackle climate justice more explicitly are quotations or phrased in the subjunctive to stress that this information stems from a point of view that is not the authors. In German, the grammatical mode of subjunctive carries the implication that the information conveyed has an element of fantasy, impossibility, or doubt to it. The subjunctive is used in journalism in such a way that it hedges the last doubt about this information, so that authors are detached from claims of subjectivity. This is the most common approach in journalistic writing in German in texts that are not explicitly opinionated. Still, the chosen headline is striking in this context. It says: "Why is Pakistan hardly responding to the climate crisis?" (*SZ,* 9[2]*)*, a wording that puts the blame directly onto the country and can be considered a judgement with an opinionated undertone. This is particularly influential as the headline is the first rhetoric the readership encounters, which will likely influence their assessment of the matters presented in the following article. Climate change is depicted as an equal problem to be solved in equal collaboration, by emphasising the need for Pakistan to move further in their climate protection measures. By not engaging with the question of historical responsibility and the inequality in present political agency, it reproduces power imbalances.

Another article on the G20 summit in Indonesia in 2022 (*SZ*, 11) plays into a similar pattern. On the one hand, by juxtaposing the emissions of every mentioned country, it makes it easy for the readership to grasp the differences in emissions.

[2] See appendix for a list with the final 32 articles with designated numbers and respective date of publication.

It therefore alludes to historical and spatial injustice. But it does that without explicitly acknowledging the injustices in play and without ascribing responsibility. Mentioning how "achieving growth without increased CO2 emissions" is a "pressing problem" for "dynamically growing" countries such as Indonesia or India, fails to acknowledge historical emissions and the injustice of allowing growth with limitations for countries in the global South while countries in the global North have been profiting from their unlimited growth in the past and still emit way more per capita.

The questioning of the responsibility of the Global North and its ascription to the Global South is also particularly perceptible in *Die Welt.* Germany's responsibility for climate change and climate injustice is renounced by stressing that only two percent of global emissions stem from the country. With this rhetoric, per capita emissions are neglected that put total emissions in relation to population size. The text thereby fails to acknowledge historical injustice by not pointing out past emissions that lead to Germany's economic and political significance today. This resonates with another text in the *Die Welt*-sample: Article 31 again stresses Germany's contribution to the global emissions ("only two percent") as not grave enough to justify the focus on Germany as accountable for climate change. At the same time, it acknowledges that a "climate-just transformation . . . will probably be the largest and most expensive undertaking in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany".

The imbalance in tangible impacts of climate change on people and land is something that is not acknowledged by all the newspapers equally and appropriately. An article published in *SZ* just one month before the general elections in Germany in 2021, aims at demonstrating the readership to decide between voting for a path towards more climate protection or for a continuation of the lifestyle and policy of the past. The author calls for an acceptance of necessary cutbacks in everyday life. The keyword

climate justice appears here in connection to the so-called *Mahnwache Klimagerechtigkeit* (= Climate Justice Vigil), a group of activists in Bavaria. Still, the article does give insight into the climate justice discourse when looking at its rhetoric apart from the keyword. It starts with listing current climate events: "Heat records in Southern Europe, floods in Germany and Belgium, the collapse of the Gulf Stream" (*SZ,* 16). Apart from the Gulf Stream, which impacts more or less the whole world, a focus on Europe is very much perceptible, even though there would have been many other events with the same or even higher gravity worth mentioning. This emphasises the Eurocentrism that many media in Germany still convey, and reflects back to the discussion of the under-representation of the Global South in German media. While this follows common characteristics of media logic to a certain extent, this does not mean it is not worthwhile noting and should be dealt with consciously in the news media as well as academics. The article can therefore serve as an example of how the media continue to foster dynamics of imbalance between the Global South and the Global North.

The way the newspapers play into the prevalent narratives fostering imbalance, is often very subtle and strongly connected to a conspicuity of the grammatical mode of subjunctive explained above.

> The Global North lives at the expense of the Global South, which was first plundered by colonialism and now suffers the most from the heat. (*SZ*, 13)

The context information on climate justice remains superficial and is limited by the subjunctive. As this specific grammatical form does not exist in English, it does not properly translate in the quote how the language restricts the giving message. Even though this grammatical mode is a typical way of phrasing indirect quotes, in this

context, it is worth noting. With this strategy, the author does not ascribe responsibility to anyone. Not to the Global North nor to the industry, for instance.

Shifting the attention to articles in the sample that tackle imbalance between Global South and Global North to challenge it, it is striking that many articles that follow this perspective of the discourse often feature sources that can be considered most affected people. The tension field of access and participation will be particularly discussed in the contextual part of this analysis further below, but it should not be left unmentioned now. In an article in *SZ*, for instance, that tackles climate protests surrounding COP27 in Egypt, activists from the Global South and an expert source from a think tank in Kenya are being heard. In connection to the research interest, the most relevant part of the text, is when the latter criticises how African activists and organisations struggled with getting accredited for the conference and how pricey accommodation led to them being excluded from the discussions about the climate crisis. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of the conference's edition being focused on loss and damage compensation.

> African organisations complain about problems when trying to obtain accreditation. In addition, the extremely high prices for hotel rooms are virtually tantamount to an invitation to attend. Any discussion of the climate crisis in Africa is incomplete without the participation of the continent's severely disadvantaged population, explains Bhekumuzi Dean Bhebhe of the climate and energy think tank Power Shift Africa in Kenya. "Where are their voices?" he asks. (*SZ*, 12)

It is interesting that this article brings in the point of structures in global politics and diplomacy that makes participation and agency more challenging for many countries in the Global South. This adds a layer of injustice into this discourse of imbalance that is not often tackled in the sample for this study. Similarly, politicians are called upon to

accept responsibility for climate injustice and to step up their game. The concept of "historical debt" is stressed that connects historical injustice to spatial injustice. By calling Western democracies to act on that debt, explicit ascriptions of responsibility to the Global North and to the historical implications of colonialism can be found, particularly strong and frequently in *taz.*

> And what about global climate justice, the *debts accumulated by colonialism* that Western democracies must finally pay? (*taz*, 4, emphasis added)

In this article, the author brings in the ideas of eco-patriotism and planetary-patriotism as possible intrinsic drivers for more acceptance of climate protection measures and the discernment that a complex mix of layers of injustice has to be regarded.

Besides this example from *SZ*, in the bigger sample the imbalance of agency is particularly clearly voiced in *taz.* Especially article 5 stresses this injustice in agency and self-determination of the Global South. Three German women talk about their attitudes and let three women from the Global South speak about their activism and their needs in the climate crisis.

> The climate crisis affects us all. But we don't all contribute to it equally, we're not all affected by its impacts more equally, and we're not all equally involved in making decisions about solutions. (*taz*, 5)

It is only logical that three voices from the global South should have their say in this article.

> Their experiences highlight the importance of equal participation in decisions about how to solve the climate crisis: 'Nothing about us without us!' (*taz*, 5)

It is particularly striking that another article (*taz*, 7) was published on the same day (as part of a takeover of the pages by activists for one day), that can be seen as a juxtaposition to the approach of "giving voice" to the Global South. The second article calls for white privileged activists not to take interpretive sovereignty and agency away from activists from the Global South. The author argues that the rhetoric around climate justice often reproduces "historically grown stereotypes of a passive and helpless 'third world'" and specifically criticises most widely known climate activist Greta Thunberg for her "colonial benevolence" towards activists from the Global South. This is also linked explicitly to predominant power imbalances around the world:

> The eternal story of "voice lending" emphasises one thing in particular: *power* (emphasis added). You only ever lend something for a certain amount of time. Control over what is said and how, and when it becomes too much, always rests with the person lending their voice. But it doesn't take a blessing from white people to emphasise that the concerns of people in the Global South are important. Likewise, it does no good to try to give marginalised groups a voice. They already have a voice, they've been talking for decades – it's about listening and really changing structures. We can only achieve a climate-just world and a good life for all if we fight decolonially. (*taz*, 7)

The question of access and participation, in particular connected to the usage of sources and guest authors, will be discussed further in the section on the contextual level of this analysis.

In terms of ambiguities within the same newspaper and even article, an article in *FAZ* exemplifies how the media can mix aspects of discourses. While it features solely sources from the Global South and showing different ways how most affected people are working towards more climate protection and climate justice, the chosen headline stands in stark contrast to this depiction of agency. In the text itself, there is little

victimisation, rather the protagonists act as professionals and agents of change. For instance, it tackles how the island of Vanuatu is pushing for a decision by the UN General Assembly to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice assessing whether man-made climate change can be considered a violation of human rights. However, this is countered by titling the text: "Hilferuf von den Inseln" (= call for help from the islands). This is an ambiguous dynamic that moves between emphasising the agency of MAPA while simultaneously degrading their efforts to asking for help from the Global North. The title reproduces historically grown power dynamics, which has the potential to heavily influence the readers' engagement with the text, as it is the first thing they receive.

B. Call for a Holistic Consideration of Climate Justice

This is an interesting discourse as it is the only one that is covered by only one of the sampled newspapers. *Taz,* the most left-leaning newspaper and the one with the lowest circulation, is the only one that takes the stance to focus on a more holistic consideration to matters of climate justice. It argues that this could contribute to the solution of the climate crisis, as it would present approaches to every aspect of injustice connected to it. This holistic approach includes, for instance, taking into account feminism, anti-racism or anti-capitalism and their intersections with each other and with wider questions of climate justice. Moreover, that holistic approach also means focusing on many if not all the layers of injustice presented in the theoretical framework. Generally, these are historical, spatial, intergenerational and gender injustice as well as socio-economic injustice, partly with an intranational focus on Germany or with a focus on the bigger picture and unjust socio-economic dynamics

worldwide that are fostered further by climate change and mitigation efforts. In connection to the intersections of the injustices connected to climate change, *taz* is also the newspaper that ascribes responsibility towards Germany and/or the entire Global North most explicitly. In some texts this is more latent, while frequently they voice their answer to the question very explicitly. After explaining different principles to assess a country's accountability for climate change, for instance this sentence ends one of the articles in *taz:*

> For a country like Germany, it almost doesn't matter which of the three principles one applies. In any case, the Federal Republic is one of the main culprits. (*taz,* 1)

It is particularly noteworthy that *taz* is not only the only newspaper tackling this discourse in the sample, but that some articles in the *Die Welt* sample can be read as antitheses to exactly this discourse.

In one of them, the author for instance wonders why German discourse rarely discusses the state of climate measures in other countries, such as "India and Pakistan, Indonesia and South Korea, or France, Italy and Spain".

> A diffuse concept of guilt is at the centre of this strangely apolitical, but very strict and symbol-laden as-if policy: the guilt of others, of society, of the German past, ultimately the guilt of all those who have not yet reached the moral heights of unwavering soul-searching and merciless self-questioning with regard to mindfulness, sustainability, climate justice, and freedom from discrimination. Only a bad conscience can be the starting point for a good, i.e. prescriptive, consciousness of the future. (*Die Welt,* 27)

While *taz*-articles play strongly into the discourse of a holistic, nuanced approach to climate justice, in *Die Welt* there are tendencies identifiable that condemn efforts of an intersectional consideration of injustices and the concept of guilt that this intersectional approach might bring to the public discussion. This plays into a critique of woke culture and activism and presents it as hindering climate policy. The conspicuities and wider implications of this discourse will be discussed in the following section.

C. Climate Justice as Part of Activists' Agenda

This discourse is another focus of all the newspapers throughout the sample. Similarly to the first discourse elaborated on, different sides of this discourse are emphasised among different newspapers. With the exception of *taz*, there has on one hand been a dynamic detectable that can be regarded as the instrumentalisation of the concept of climate justice to partly ridicule, but certainly criticise the climate movement and its activists. Climate justice is portrayed as an audacious demand and activists as having lost touch to reality. While criticism of activism and movement and a discussion of boundaries are certainly topics of relevance, the arguments and the rhetoric are often exaggerated. A side effect of this exaggeration and overall criticism is also that the raison d'être and the rationality behind advocating for climate justice is downsized and negated.

The other side of the discourse portrays the climate movement's agenda and its emphasis on climate justice in a more rational and neutral, if not more positive, light. This is particularly identifiable in *taz,* but can also be detected in *SZ.*

The criticism and ridicule of the climate movement's emphasis on climate justice, however, is particularly strong in *Die Welt*. The growing emphasis on climate

justice in the movement is for instance connected to anti-Semitism within Fridays for Future:

> In addition to the central goal of stopping climate change, the aim of eliminating global injustices – often *perceived* as racist – was established . . . Many activists want to apply this logic to the Middle East conflict"
> (*Die Welt,* 28, emphasis added).

Even though suspicion for any discrimination such as anti-Semitism in this case is of course an important concern that should not be left unsettled, the connection to wider considerations of climate justice can in this case be seen as an instrumentalisation of the concept to criticise the climate movement. Making the choice to use the word "perceived" limits everything connected to it – in this case the intersection between global climate injustices and racism.

In a *FAZ* article, the author calls North and South as well as East and West "geopolitical antagonists" and welcomes the readers to the "21st century climate colonialism debate". While this also plays into the discourse elaborated on above, the author goes a step further and criticises these dynamics and those who advocate for it. Instead, he calls for a climate pragmatism.

> In fact, the fatal thing about this new climate logic, which follows a peace and justice logic, is that it obviously considers climate protection to be a geopolitical no-brainer. The interests of some must be balanced against the interests of others; guilt, atonement, and old values are at the top of the list. The common, forward-looking interest of humanity, on the other hand, namely the radical slowing down of the overheating of the earth, is moving further and further behind the horizon. (*FAZ*, 17)

A rhetorical peculiarity of the text is the intense usage of metaphors linked to the desert: Fata Morgana, desolate peace, as swept away by a sandstorm, not fertile ground,

the desert is alive etc. This seems almost silly and takes away from the seriousness of the situation, which strengthens the impression of ridicule.

Generally, this discourse and dynamics of ridicule and criticism can be found very strongly among *FAZ* as well as *Die Welt*, which demonstrates the tendency that the more right-leaning media put more focus on this discourse. Connected to this finding, two articles from *Die Welt* (27 & 30) should be presented in more detail due to their strong expression of the newspaper's political leaning and their provoking nature. They seem to be aimed at either entertaining the opinions and attitudes of a readership that is also right-leaning, or to provoke readers who do not agree with him.

In one of the opinion pieces (*Die Welt*, 27), the author throws together various aspects that shape German public discourse. Climate justice is only one concept among many. He criticises the German ostensible worldliness and open-mindedness, while there is in fact an "inverted ethnocentrism of a guilt-ridden self-reflection". The author shoots against the discourse around old white men, their privilege, and their power that was very salient in the year 2019 in Germany. The article can be ascribed to a tackling of intergenerational injustice, but the author does not acknowledge this injustice. In a condescending tone, one can almost say he is making fun of the concept and depicts climate justice as an audacious demand of climate activists and as a symptom of the woke culture more generally.

Even though more left-leaning, there are also some dynamics detectable in *SZ,* albeit more subtle. Article 10 stems from two climate experts and is therefore a guest contribution to *SZ*. Again, it tackles the climate movement itself, its internal dynamics and its demands. The piece's sole focus is surely not climate justice and therefore does not offer a lot of context on climate justice, nor does it explicitly stress one aspect of it

over others. It is implied, however, that the climate movement tends to forget socio-economic justice within Germany:

> Activists have to ask themselves: What kind of climate justice is being demanded, when poorer social classes do not feel represented at all? (*SZ*, 10)

Even though calling for a shift of attention towards an additional layer of injustice is a valid point, criticising climate activists for a specific flaw like that, does not acknowledge the general need for climate justice and instead focuses too much on specifics and boundaries of the climate movement. Climate justice is instrumentalised, without providing a lot of context on the concept, to criticise the movement. It is simply used in the midst of a discussion on the boundaries and radicalisation of the protests to give another example of how the activists make wrong decisions in the eyes of the authors.

The same discourse is played into by article 13. In this article, the author criticises the climate movement for throwing together different, in his opinion, unrelated concepts with climate activism. He traces back the struggles that activists encounter in conveying their messages effectively to the entire public to the shift from the scientifically coloured climate movement to its focus on climate justice. With this, the movement allegedly slid into different areas of left-leaning rhetoric – anti-capitalism, colonial past etc. He calls for the activists to open their space to a more conservative direction of their movement to make room for people who are not on board with changing the entire system. The author depicts the climate movement's emphasis on climate justice as an obstacle on the way towards more climate protection measures: "The sad truth: The climate justice movement has now become an obstacle on the road to greater climate action" (*SZ*, 13). The article also lines up with those that

have not been deemed suitable for CDA. Those articles, which tend to focus on the activists per se in the climate discourse and discuss their actions, rather than really looking at the different levels that climate justice encompasses as a concept. It is particularly striking that here the newspaper publishes an article that calls explicitly for values that are not aligned with the general political affiliation of *SZ.* This demonstrates that the political alignment of newspapers is certainly not set in stone, and positions taken can vary according to individual authors and the concrete topics and angles covered.

This discourse is another example of how the sampled newspapers tackle similar parts of the climate justice discourse by taking different and ambivalent stances. On one hand, the focus on climate activist and their demands for climate justice are met with approval and can be connected to one part of the holistic approach called for in the other discourse mentioned above. On the other hand, there is an instrumentalisation of the concept detectable that serves the media to criticise the climate movement in its nature and approach.

D. Need for a Focus on Intranational Socio-economic Injustice

Even though less pronounced across the sample, this discourse should not be left unmentioned, as it explicitly tackles one of the layers of injustice contributing to this study's theoretical framework. Similarly to the discourse that criticises and ridicules the young generation and their activism with emphasis on climate justice, this is an angle that is primarily found within newspapers more aligned towards the right of the political spectrum. However, as depicted above, *SZ* also calls for a strengthened focus on socio-economic injustice within Germany.

Most prominently, this discourse is played into by *FAZ*. For instance, they are covering the life reality of workers in a coal region in Germany. The text contemplates what would happen to the region after the energy transition, and tackles implications on culture, life, economy, and traditions. The opinions of people in the region directly affected by the energy transition are juxtaposed with those of an activist with an urban background. Her call for spatial climate justice is contradicted with the affected people's and implicitly the author's call for intranational, socio-economic justice. While the article is not an opinion-piece, the subjective perception of the author still resonates through. The demand for spatial justice is subtly framed as something that threatens people impacted by climate change and mitigation efforts in Germany. The text pits these different layers of climate injustice against each other.

Moving away from the life reality of the under-privileged and most affected by climate mitigation policy in Germany, *FAZ* also tackles the socio-economic injustice that comes into play as a result of the lifestyle of the rich. It tackles new findings on socio-economic injustice that leads to a turn away from inequality between countries and toward inequalities in lifestyles between the poor and the rich. The author does not negate that there is strong spatial injustice but calls for a climate policy that regards this gap between the emissions of rich and poor people more.

> While per capita emissions in Europe and North America used to consistently exceed those in developing countries regardless of income, today lower and middle income and wealth groups in Europe emit significantly less than the top 10 percent in Asia, Russia or Latin America.
>
> Inequality within countries inhibits the implementation of climate protection measures, while the consequences of climate change are likely to increase inequality between countries. Justice and sustainability would then be in a mutually enabling relationship and could not exist without each other. (*FAZ*, 19)

The reason is also less the individual consumption of goods and the lifestyle choices, and rather the investment in businesses that are responsible for high emissions. While the article does not explicitly deny the Global North's responsibility for climate injustice, it does, however, push the discourse into the direction of a call for a strengthened attention of policy and the public around intranational socio-economic injustice.

II. Contextual Analysis

Drawing on Sharifi et al.'s (2017) study, additionally to the textual analysis, it is important to consider contextual aspects of the text to see how *access* and *participation* play into the media discourse. It is noteworthy that the most diversity among authors was found in the *taz*-sample. There are numerous authors who can be considered BIPoC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) or even most affected people (e.g. in Article 2). These authors are impacted by the debated layers of climate injustice, or can at least connect more because of experiences with examples of issues of structural injustice.

In terms of access, it is also particularly relevant to take the selection of guest authors into consideration, since guest articles give insight into their attitudes very transparently. This elevates their potential to form the public discourse. There are guest contributions to be found across all subsamples, and it is interesting to look into the editorial choices of who is granted access to the newspaper and its discourse.

It is particularly striking that for the *taz*-sample five articles that were written by guest authors, were deemed information-rich cases after purposeful sampling. Three of these guest opinion pieces stem from one day – 25th of September 2020. Under the

slogan “Klimabewegung kapert die *taz*” (= Climate movement hijacks *taz*) the editorial team gave the newspaper into the hands of climate activists, who could place their opinions and insights. Not surprisingly, these articles are particularly clear about how these people see the issue of climate justice and its larger implications. Certainly, this constitutes a special case that has to be taken into wider consideration with a grain of salt. Still, it does add to this analysis that it is *taz* and not any of the other newspapers that introduced such a project. Even though guest articles do not explicitly give insight into the discursive potential of the newspaper’s journalists, it does reveal insights into editorial decisions on who is given access to the audience.

But *taz* does not only give their platform to activists, they also put climate justice deliberately into focus by inviting Yamide Dagnet, Director for Climate Justice at the *Open Society Foundations*, to publish a guest article. She speaks of the climate-induced precarious circumstances in poor countries and calls out the failure of the world's largest emitting countries. She explicitly ascribes responsibility to the Global North and brings in the questions of justice in solidarity by asking if climate refugees of the future will be welcomed as much as Ukrainian refugees now.

Giving access to her is giving a platform to a woman of colour, who is an expert for climate justice from Guadeloupe in the Caribbean, a region that can be considered a most affected area. Her life reality encompasses many layers of injustice that are touched by climate change. Moreover, with her guest article, she is an example of how an affected person is not simply used to underline the misery caused by climate change. She is also not given limited and curated attention, with short quotes in a longer article written by a German journalist. Rather, she is allowed to express what she has to say in her own text, self-evidently limited by the usual editorial interference in newspapers.

This article serves as an example for how the agency of most affected people can be fostered by the media.

In *FAZ*, the most noteworthy article in terms of access is number 23. The guest author in this case is the climate policy spokesman for *Die Linke* parliamentary group in the German Bundestag. It is interesting that a civic conservative, centre-right-leaning newspaper features a guest contribution of the most left party in the German parliament. The text engages with the question of why climate justice is a fitting approach to follow and strengthen in political discourse for a left-wing party, and climate justice is depicted as a strategy to gain more significance in German politics for *Die Linke*.

On the participation side, it looks a bit different: Among all newspapers, there is an over-representation of sources from the Global North perceptible, but all of them also feature sources from the Global South from time to time. While the balancing of participation is similar in *taz, SZ* and *FAZ,* there are notably fewer sources from the Global South featured in the *Die Welt*-sample.

It should be noted that the order of sources as well as the length of their participation can also strongly play into the formation of discourse. In article 25 in *Die Welt*, for instance, the author features two expert sources from the Global South: Pakistani minister for climate change Sherry Rheman in the name of an alliance of poor countries and Molwyn Joseph from Antigua and Barbuda, Chairman of the *Organization of Small Island States*. Both can be considered representatives of most affected areas and people. Including their insights depicts a high degree of agency, since they are organised in movements and lobbyist groups who act for climate justice. Nevertheless, the majority of the sources featured are still from the Global North. The voices from MAPA are only covered after prominent Western players (Frans

Timmermans, Annalena Baerbock) and in the course of the text more Western voices are included in details. Sources from the Global South are framed by voices from the Global Noth, embedding their insights into their moderation and contextualisation. This is also perceptible in *FAZ.* In article 18, a climate researcher from Bangladesh is featured, which plays into the depiction of agency for MAPA. He is the only dialogue source. However, the article concludes by elaborating on how prominent political actors in Germany will get active to promote the aims of the Global South at COP27. Again, a voice from the Global South does not stand on its own, but is contextualised and legitimated by the insights of people from the Global North.

III. Comparison between the newspapers

I will now put the findings into comparative context to answer research question 1a *Do findings differ when comparing the newspapers in their political affiliation?* To remind the readers, *taz* is considered the most left-leaning newspaper in the sample for this study. It is also the newspaper with the lowest circulation of 45.374. In the *taz*-sample, no article that only tackles one aspect of climate justice was found. At least two if not more layers of climate justice are being discussed by the authors of the texts.

Taz also manages to go into depth with how these different aspects of global injustice related to climate change overlap and are interdependent. For instance, the two most tackled injustices are spatial injustice as well as historical injustice. Even though this is rather consistent among the other newspapers as well, *taz* tends to connect these two injustices and demonstrates more nuanced how spatial injustice is rooted in historical implications. Also, it is notable that more attention is paid to countries in the Global South (Senegal, India, Bangladesh) and to sources from there, which can be

considered MAPA. The ways they are already affected by climate change are tackled without pressing them into the role of victims; instead, their agency is stressed. On another note, the texts apply popular topics to the Global South. Hence, the *taz*-sample offers insights apart from the ethnocentric attention bubble, for instance on worldwide activism.

Taz also stresses aspects of climate injustice that the other newspapers neglect in their coverage. Several times, the newspaper puts emphasis on gender injustice in relation to climate change. Another focus that the other newspapers do not have, and that particularly plays into the question of colonial continuity and power imbalance, is the injustice in agency between global actors. This is closely connected to spatial injustice between the Global South and the Global North, but should still be considered discourse as it does not include the impacts of climate change on the areas, but in how far they are capable of being active agents of change on a global scale.

It is generally interesting to observe that taz brings different aspects of climate injustice into their articles, while the other media typically give less of a holistic narrative and are more narrowly focused on one aspect or none in depth at all. This means, they often also play into several discourses that are dominant among the articles in the sample. *Taz* also manages to deepen the engagement between historical and spatial injustice better than the other newspapers.

An additional finding on *taz* is that the newspaper tends to call things the way they are explicitly (colonialism, responsibility, accountability, blame, debt, etc.). This explicit language can at the same time be regarded rather elitist as they use many words that might be common in an academic context (cis-male, intersectional, patriarchal, etc.) but very unfamiliar and challenging to understand for less educated people. However, this can also be considered a symptom of a language that targets a specific

educated and left-leaning readership for whom these terms are nothing unusual. On Factiva, *taz* is described as a newspaper with an audience that is predominantly intellectual and interested in environmental issues.

Taz tends to ascribe responsibility very explicitly to Germany and/or the Global North in its entirety. In none of the analysed articles is any kind of relativization of that responsibility stated explicitly or implicitly. While the other newspapers mainly focus on the debate around climate justice within the German public, *taz* manages to give insights into the events and processes in the Global South, give voice to people while also not neglecting the bigger questions of responsibility and agency.

For *SZ,* the centre-left newspaper and the one with the highest circulation, it was particularly challenging to find articles giving proper insight into the media discourse around climate justice, according to the deciding factors for sampling presented in the methodology chapter. It seems like the newspaper is especially interested in party politics and activism when it comes to climate change, rather than in a nuanced discourse around the layers of climate injustice and in responsibility in the climate crisis. Also, the coverage is strikingly regional and local, especially in early years of the timeframe. This led to the *SZ*-sample being the least balanced in terms of the year of publications and priority had to be given to articles 2022 (six out of eight), as well as from 2021 (two out of eight). None of the articles published in 2019 and 2020 with the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" turned out to be an "information-rich case" according to Patton (1990). They were not insightful enough, used climate justice merely as a buzzword or were not long enough and did neither offer evidence on explicit opinions nor on underlying meanings that provide information on the discourse.

Generally, there was little explicit mentioning of the Global South found in the larger sample, let alone the inclusion of voices from most affected areas. Instead, *SZ*

features many, rather short articles on demonstrations and protests or on political events. It is particularly notable that the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" only comes up as often as 209 times because they mention one group of activists (rather local and small compared to other big movements such as Fridays for Future or Letzte Generation) that is called "Mahnwache Klimagerechtigkeit" (= Climate Justice Vigil). This demonstrates the newspaper's focus on activism and event-coverage, where the keyword climate justice is often used as merely a buzzword that does not contribute to a proper engagement with the climate justice discourse. For instance, it is used to underline the demands of activists or political actors, but there is little or no context provided on different layers of injustice, the question of responsibility and accountability or further implications.

The trend of pure use of buzzwords continues to prevail in *FAZ* as well. *FAZ* is the centre-right newspaper in the sample and has the second-highest print circulation. In the larger sample before purposeful sampling, there are many articles in which no real discourse could be identified. Often, the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" is used as an example of modern identity politics or issues on the political agenda, without engaging with it more nuanced. Again, it is also typically used to discuss activism and its boundaries and is solely discussed in the context of it being the activists' argument for climate protection measures. Several times it becomes obvious that journalists do not distinct it properly from climate change itself and use the words more interchangeably as part of the public agenda.

Generally speaking, *Die Welt* portrays the widest range of discourses and opinions, going from empowerment and agency of the Global North to borderline denying climate change. The findings for each article differ the most and give less of a conclusive image of the dominant discourse in *Die Welt*. The newspaper is the one that

is aligned the most towards the right and has the second-lowest circulation after *taz*. *Die Welt* puts a strong emphasis on climate justice as part of activists' demands and agenda, similarly strong as the other newspapers. This is particularly true for the larger sample of 260 articles, but the tendency is also found in the sample of eight articles for CDA. Again, there is no nuanced engagement with the concept detectable, it is rather used to discuss boundaries and flaws of the climate movement. *Die Welt* is also the only newspaper that relativises and limits climate change and the need for climate mitigation. It does not explicitly deny Anthropocene climate change, but it does question responsibility, historical linkages, and potential impacts that, at least in part, enjoy great scientific consensus. This partly happens rather subtly, for example with an increased use of the subjunctive mode, which implies that the information conveyed has an element of fantasy, impossibility, or doubt to it, for instance in this quote:

> Behind this is the *assumption* that highly industrialised Western countries in particular bear responsibility for climate change – and that it is primarily people in countries of the global South who suffer from it. (*FAZ*, 28, emphasis added)

In this context, a quote from article 32 is also particularly worth looking at in detail, as it serves as an example of how rhetoric and small choices in style can play into the formation of discourse.

> In Annalena Baerbock's case, of course, it's not about a mistake, it's about *a "narrative," her narrative*. It can be summed up in one sentence. Climate change is to blame for everything. It drives people from their homes, it causes droughts, floods, it cements the economic divide between the North and the South, it makes the poor poorer and the rich richer. The demand for distributive justice automatically leads to demands for climate justice.
> (*Die Welt*, 32, emphasis added)

The rhetorical choice to call something a narrative that has been scientific consensus for quite a while, is something that adds particularly strong to the formation of discourse. This is even strengthened by putting the word narrative in quotation marks and then repeating it again, stressing that it is in fact only Annalena Baerbock's narrative. That the narrative of a female Minister of Foreign Affairs from the German green party is limited, is particularly interesting when considering that *Die Welt* is the most conservative newspaper in the sample.

Partly, the relativisation of climate change also happens more openly and explicitly. In article 30, the columnist (a prominent figure of *Die Welt*), speaks of "the alleged climate change about which alleged climate popes fabulate" and "alleged climate refugees". With his text, he generally feeds into several prevalent rhetorical strategies of right-wing circles, for instance the condemnation of the German broadcasting fee for public service offers. Generally, *Die Welt* tends to throw together several concepts that are only marginally related. They like to add some side comments on "illegal mass immigration" or the "mistake" of letting refugees into the country in 2015 to articles, which are actually tackling other matters.

To conclude, *SZ*, *FAZ* and *Die Welt* all portray a relatively wide range of discourses and stances connected to climate justice, while *taz* seems to follow a more coherent approach to the concept. It is also interesting to note that both the newspapers leaning towards political alignments more moderately, *SZ* and *FAZ*, also prove to be express stances more diversified and with a less explicit, provoking or expressive rhetoric as the more clearly affiliated newspapers *taz* and *Die Welt.*

5. Discussion

Moving on from the more descriptive analysis, I will now reflect on the findings in light of the previously discussed literature and the theoretical framework. This paper set out to identify the central discourses around climate justice in German quality newspapers. The following discourses were found:

- *Imbalance between the Global South and the Global North*
- *Call for a Holistic Consideration of Climate Justice*
- *Climate Justice as Part of Activists' Agenda*
- *Need for a Focus on Intranational Socio-economic Injustice*

While these discourses have been dominant in the articles in the analysis sample, it is important to point out again that another discourse found is: no proper discourse. As emphasised many times over the course of this paper, the newspapers often use the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit" as a buzzword, potentially to demonstrate the participation in the growing public discourse and to meet growing public interest in the topic. Looking behind the several hundreds of results for the keyword over the years, which this study aimed to do, sheds light on the lack of a nuanced engagement with the concept itself, different layers of injustice and their intersections, as well as with further implications on power and agency. While the sole use of buzzwords is strong among all newspapers, *taz* tends to offer a more detailed engagement than the others. What lacks in depth with *FAZ, Die Welt* and *SZ*, it partly goes into the opposite direction with *taz*. They do not explain a lot of things but rather throw many words around (cis-male, intersectional, patriarchal) that might exclude audiences from the discourse. It is obvious that *taz* targets a specific intellectual and left-leaning readership.

Relating the findings back to the previously highlighted theories and aspects of injustice, shows that the prominent layers of spatial and intergenerational injustice are very prevalent among the sampled articles as well. While *taz* manages to include many aspects of injustice in their articles and does well in pointing out intersections and further implications, the other newspapers tend to focus the articles' angles on singular aspects of injustice or to place one aspect over the others. They often fail to "consider both time and space" (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2020, p. 293), which is what is needed for climate justice discourse according to the scholars. Often, either intergenerational injustice is stressed over spatial injustice or the other way around.

It also shows that when intergenerational injustice is tackled, little emphasis is put on international, let alone transnational injustice. The focus of discourses around intergenerational justice lies on the German young generations, explicitly or implicitly and can therefore be attributed to intranational justice. This is also commonly a focus of the newspapers' engagement with socio-economic injustice: When it is explicitly tackled, it is usually connected to varying impacts climate change and climate mitigation policy have on different groups within Germany and less to a more global picture. This perspective, however, is often included in the focus on spatial injustice, when spatial climate injustice is not only connected to the danger and threats MAPA will encounter, but also to the economic side of destruction caused by climate events and of climate adaptation efforts. Generally, historical injustice is not stressed as often and if it is, it usually stands in connection with spatial or intergenerational injustice as it is not separable.

The lack of clarity and separability between these layers of injustice demonstrates why a nuanced and intersectional consideration of climate justice is necessary to properly and extensively map out the climate justice discourse.

In terms of responsibility and accountability, it was found that within the sample, articles were often constructed to pit two sides against each other: Global South against Global North, poor against rich, activists against politicians or against ordinary citizens. This dynamic is particularly strong in the more right-leaning newspapers *FAZ* and *Die Welt* and can be connected to the blame-game examined in the theoretical framework (Engesser & Brüggemann, 2016). While the scholars connect it to tensions between the Global South and the Global North, these blame-games can be found across the sample between many different actors, individuals, and movements. Responsibility is not only put on political actors from both Global North and Global South, but also ascribed towards activists and the climate movement in its entirety. Questions of responsibility and accountability lead to a tension field, to which the analysed media seem to be contributing by stressing differing discourses. Few articles, however, negate the prevalent ascription of responsibility to the Global North. It is just different in how much detail they engage with its implications and if certain limitations of responsibility are voiced. Moreover, some articles portray climate justice as an equal problem that should be dealt with in equal collaboration, which neglects the inequality in political power, financial means as well as historical causation of the climate injustice dynamics.

The findings presented in the previous chapter highlight that there certainly are conservative values being conveyed in the *Die Welt*-sample and the *FAZ*-sample and being connected to climate change and climate justice. The emphasis of socio-economic injustice within Germany, for example, or the criticism and ridicule towards idealistic attitudes of young activists. This can be connected back to the notion that climate change news embedded within conservative values can lead to less opposition from the centre-right (Whitmarsch & Corner, 2017) to climate change

measures. For further research, this could be a good starting point with the aim of looking into the audience's acceptance of the need for climate justice if centred around opposing political values and differing aspects of injustice being emphasised.

The underlying basic messages are often in agreement throughout the sample. Very few articles do not fully acknowledge the need for climate justice. However, the emphasised aspects of injustice, the ascription of responsibility and if solutions are put forward, can differ. And, especially in the case of *Die Welt* and also, if less explicit, in the case of *FAZ,* there are certain tendencies detectable that go past the consensus for the necessity for climate justice.

It is also often rather the strategies and approaches of the individual authors that vary and form different discourses. This became particularly obvious in *taz,* in the articles discussing different sides of the "giving voice" controversy (*taz,* 5 and 7), while at the same time calling for more participation and agency in the climate justice discourse from actors in the Global South.

Connecting the findings back to questions of power and agency, In terms of the access to the decision-making table, both the victimisation of most affected people and areas and political actors from the Global North coloured within hero narratives (Callison, 2021) can be detected. This is particularly prevalent in *SZ* and *FAZ,* when their articles stress calls for help from the Global North over depictions of agency.

To conclude the discussion of the findings, the theory of the event-process-gap should find mention. When not excluded out of reasons of mere buzzwording around climate justice, another rationale to exclude articles from the sample of eight for each newspaper, was their focus on events. It was striking that most articles that were deemed appropriate for CDA, were more process-focused, which shows that these are adding more to the discourse than those merely covering events. Still, the media

attention across all newspapers also focused strongly on global and local events, such as the Conferences of the Parties (COP), political decrees or climate protests. Especially the latter, is a big focus all across the entire large sample. The fact that many of the articles that are proved insightful enough for CDA, are more process-focused and the ones that use an event as a hook still offer a more nuanced engagement with processes.

6. Conclusion

This paper set out to answer the following research questions:

> Research Question 1: *How do German quality newspapers cover climate justice, and how might the articles contribute to the public discourse?*
>
> Research Question 1a: *Do findings differ when comparing the newspapers in their political affiliation?*

The method of choice was critical discourse analysis, and the sample included 32 articles from four German newspapers with different political affiliations. Overall, it can be said that an overwhelming number of the articles in the large samples were not suitable for CDA, as they could not be regarded as "information-rich cases" (Patton, 1990). This can already be considered a main finding, as it constitutes that the German newspapers sampled do not contribute strongly to the public discourse on climate

justice. The use of buzzwords and a rather superficial engagement with the concept without elaborating on its nuances are very common.

The present critical discourse analysis was divided into two sections: First, a textual analysis was conducted that identified several common discourses. While the *imbalance between the Global South and the Global North* was a particularly prevalent discourse, it was played into in ambivalent ways by the newspapers, by either fostering narratives promoting imbalance or by challenging these. The connection between climate justice and the climate movement was also particularly strong. While the emphasis on *climate justice as part of activists' agenda* frequently led to an exclusion of articles from the purposeful sample, when they mentioned climate justice solely as a buzzword, in some articles the discourse either legitimised or criticised the climate movement. It was also interesting to note that the more right-leaning newspapers tended to emphasise the n*eed for a focus on intranational socio-economic climate justice* and were occasionally steering away from a global and intersectional consideration of injustices connected to climate change.

Moreover, it is also particularly noteworthy that the discourse of the *call for a holistic approach to climate justice* was only found in *taz*, the only discourse that is restricted to solely one newspaper. It relates back to the theory and scholars' call to focus on the intersections of climate justice (see literature review and theoretical framework).

Throughout the different discourses, it was also insightful which layers of climate injustice are emphasised over others. *Taz* tends to tackle different aspects in each article and often brings up the injustice in agency between players from the Global South in comparison to the Global North and puts a strong emphasis on intersection, which legitimates their call for a holistic approach.

FAZ and *Die Welt,* on the other hand, frequently stress (intranational) socio-economic injustice. Generally, spatial and intergenerational injustice are tackled very often as well, even though the ways these overlap are often not discussed in a very nuanced way. *SZ* is the newspaper that focuses the most on local injustice and local examples, as well as on activism and a discussion of its boundaries. Throughout the sample and especially in *FAZ* and *Die Welt* there is generally an instrumentalisation of the concept of climate justice detectable that contributes to criticism of the climate movement.

The contextual analysis followed the textual analysis and particularly focused on *access* and *participation*. It was found that there is little diversity among sources and few journalists or experts that can be considered most affected people are granted access to the audiences by the newspapers, for instance in the form of guest contributions. The *taz*-sample is the one including BIPoC authors and young activists from the Global South, both being impacted or being able to relate to layers of spatial and intergenerational injustice.

While the nature of German media self-evidently contributes to an over-representation of German journalists covering issues such as climate justice, in editorial decisions it can more easily be paid attention to questions of participation. Therefore, it is striking that, when it comes to dialogue sources, the vast majority has also been identified as sources from the Global North. The over-representation of these sources is given in every sampled newspaper to different extent. Nonetheless, there are also counter examples to be found in all newspapers, where people from the Global South and MAPA are able to express their views. Several times there were contradictions found, for instance when the participation and therefore depiction of agency of MAPA was high in the general text, while then being countered by a

victimising title. Another prevalent dynamic was also the inclusion of some voices from the Global South that were then contextualised, legitimised and framed by sources from the Global North. This tendency leads to an ultimate weakening of participation.

It remains open if the newspapers are engaging with the topic in more articles, but are simply not using the keyword "Klimagerechtigkeit". This is rather questionable, though, as the word enjoys increasing popularity and consensus in journalism, in activism and in academia. To make sure, however, a similar research could be conducted looking into combinations of keywords such as "climate change" and "Global South" or "generation", for instance.

This research was focused on the content of highly established German legacy media. In a further step, it would give additional insights into the media system in Germany and its tackling of the climate crisis and its aspects of global justice, to conduct a similar analysis on alternative media such as the digital media *Krautreporter, Riffreporter* or *Perspective Daily.* These media follow a community financed approach and aim at a more constructive journalism that is mostly independent of corporate influences such as advertisement. It would be interesting to compare legacy media to digital-born media to analyse if there are differences in the way the discourse around climate justice is constructed and how frequently it is being covered. This enables a research insight into the different layers of discourse that potential audiences of different media types might encounter. It is supported by Roosvall & Tegelberg's (2020) finding that "different types of media are more suited for different forms of expression and that sometimes silencing by mainstream media is overcome through self-representation in alternative and social media channels" (p. 302).

The findings demonstrate that all the sampled newspapers put a strong focus on the climate movement, different groups of activists and a discussion of their demands,

their rhetoric and generally boundaries of activism. Therefore, it could be interesting to look into these matters more closely and examine how the movement and its subgroups are framed in mainstream media, and how this might contribute to the public's acceptance of activism and climate action.

For the journalistic practice in German newsrooms, the following implications can be derived from the findings. It became obvious that there is still a lack of diverse sources, for instance those immediately affected by the climate crisis. Even though the representation of the misery caused by climate change should be stressed, MAPA should not be cast in a victim role. Rather, to emphasise the agency of people in the Global South, a coverage focused on them as agents of change would be more constructive (e.g. activists, political actors, scientists). Journalists should not only talk about them, but should give enough space for an unmoderated participation by including long quotes or even by giving access to them in guest contributions or long-form interviews.

Journalists should also start engaging with different layers of injustice connected to the climate crisis with more nuance and demonstrate their intersections better. This would contribute to a holistic discourse around the concept and its global implications, which is already fostered strongly by *taz.*

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Appendix

List of Articles

Article number	Name of the article	Newspaper	Month and year
1	Klima-Reparationszahlungen auf der COP – Wer soll das bezahlen?	taz	November, 2022
2	Wir sind nicht vorbereitet	taz	July, 2022
3	Petersberger Dialog – Deals mit dem schlechten Gewissen	taz	July, 2022
4	Globale Klimagerechtigkeit – Braucht es Ökopatriotismus?	taz	January, 2022
5	Über Klimagerechtigkeit, Antirassismus und Queerfeminismus – Eine total intersektionale Bewegung? Da geht noch was	taz	September, 2020
6	Klimagerechtigkeit und Feminismus? One struggle, one fight!	taz	September, 2020
7	Warum weiße Aktivist*innen niemandem eine Stimme geben müssen	taz	September, 2020
8	Der unbemerkte Denkfehler	taz	July, 2019
9	Warum reagiert Pakistan kaum auf die Klimakrise?	SZ	December, 2022
10	Protest auf Abwegen – Aus Forschungssicht tun „Extinction Rebellion“ und „Letzte Generation“ der Klimabewegung keinen Gefallen	SZ	December, 2022
11	Jokowi und sein Avatar - Indonesiens Staatschef erweist sich beim G-20-Gipfel als äußerst umtriebiger Gastgeber	SZ	November, 2022
12	Ägypten macht es Klimaaktivisten schwer – Proteste bei der Weltklimakonferenz in Scharm el-Scheich sind erlaubt. Doch viele Demonstranten kommen gar nicht erst an.	SZ	November, 2022
13	Klimaschutz ist nicht links – Was hat Nachhaltigkeit mit dem Genderstern zu tun? Zu den Fehlern der Öko-Bewegung	SZ	October, 2022
14	Ein Schritt nach vorne, der die Sicht auf die	SZ	July, 2022

	Welt verändern kann		
15	Wind of Change – FDP und Grüne sind bei den Erstwählern die stärksten Kräfte. Wie kommt das?	SZ	October, 2021
16	Einschnitte für jeden von uns	SZ	August, 2021
17	Wüster Frieden – Warum der Klimagipfel bitter gescheitert ist	FAZ	November, 2022
18	Ziel ist eine automatische Entschädigung – Die Entwicklungsländer und die Weltklimakonferenz	FAZ	November, 2022
19	CO_2-Ausstoß so ungleich wie Vermögen verteilt	FAZ	October, 2022
20	Zwischen Büffeln und Bettlern	FAZ	September, 2022
21	Hilferuf von den Inseln	FAZ	May, 2022
22	Abraum	FAZ	February, 2020
23	Sozialismus geht nur grün	FAZ	February, 2020
24	Generation Klimaprotest?	FAZ	December, 2019
25	Baerbock frustriert über "Blockade großer Emittenten und ölproduzierender Staaten"	WELT	November, 2022
26	Wie Grüne sprechen und warum – Jeder Satz ein Selfie	WELT	July, 2022
27	Die große deutsche Nabelschau	WELT	July, 2021
28	Der beunruhigende Einfluss der Israel-Feinde bei Fridays for Future	WELT	May, 2021
29	Aktivismus der Generation Z – "Selbst wenn es Menschen beunruhigt, ihr müsst das Wort ergreifen"	WELT	July, 2020
30	Mach Platz, Jugend! Die ganz normale Härte der alten weißen Männer	WELT	October, 2019
31	Zeit für eine Klimapolitik mit kühlem Kopf	WELT	August, 2019
32	Baerbocks Fehlerkultur	WELT	July, 2019