Seeing and (Dis)Believing:

An Ecofeminist Perspective on Discourse

In Climate Change Documentaries

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Abstract

Climate change is one of the biggest global security threats we face today. However, climate change is also a feminist issue. This thesis supports this statement by looking at climate change documentaries through an ecofeminist lens. The aesthetic turn in International Relations has taught us that popular culture, including documentary films, can influence both audiences and international politics. How could we undo the environmental damage we have already caused if we do not try to challenge and dismantle the patriarchal, capitalist system of thought that created it? Ecofeminism can help us uncover the gendered, binary discourses that are communicated to us in our daily lives and provide an alternative way of thinking about the world we share. This thesis looks at two documentaries: *An Inconvenient Truth* by Davis Guggenheim and *Women are the Answer* by Fiona Cochrane. I aim to analyze these films through an ecofeminist lens, in order to make sense of the messages that are consciously or subconsciously communicated to their audiences.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction:

All the freedoms we have obtained in the West—all the fine capacities for voice and leadership—will mean little if feminists stand by and watch the world warm, the seas rise, the climate change, the refugees struggle, and the world we share disappear.[1]

Laurie Zoloth

While human and non-human animals might go extinct as a result of climate change, I do not personally believe that the world will 'disappear' in a literal sense. I do, however, agree with the rest of the sentiments mentioned above by Laurie Zoloth. Climate change is a global security threat, and looking at the discourse surrounding it can teach us more about (in)action in the light of this threat. As opposed to traditional, positivist international relations (IR) scholarship, Bleiker's post-positivist 'aesthetic turn'[2] proposes that popular culture, including documentaries, can influence people, general discourse, and political decision-making which makes it valuable for the discipline. This is strongly linked to the politics of representation, knowledge production, and their influence on audiences. Using a critical theoretical lens that has not been in the mainstream of IR, such as ecofeminism, can help fill this gap in the existing literature.

Ecofeminist thinking has been controversial, and it remains mainly on the academic periphery because of humanity's privileged position as a species over other living beings.[3] Ecofeminism and posthumanism share close ties as they both question human superiority; however, the latter does not explicitly look at the issues of gender, which I believe to be extremely important.[4] Giving up our superior position as humans would require a radical rethinking of the world we live in, and it could shake our identities to the core.[5] I believe there

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[1] Laurie Zoloth, "At the Last Well on Earth: Climate Change Is a Feminist Issue," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 33, no. 2 (2017): 141. http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=7cea762f-4d0d-4dd1-a00a-111f0e9cb4bb%40pdc-v-sessmgr01.

[2] Roland Bleiker, "The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory," *Millenium* 30, no. 3 (2001): 510, https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298010300031001.

[3] Chaone Mallory, "What's In A Name ? In Defense of Ecofeminism (Not Ecological Feminisms , Feminist Ecology , or Gender and the Environment)," *Ethics and the Environment* 23, no. 2 (2018): 11–35, https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.23.2.03.

[4] Greta Gaard, "Posthumanism, Ecofeminism, and Inter-Species Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment*, ed. Sherilyn MacGregor (London: Routledge, 2017), 115–29, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315886572.

[5] Mallory, "What's In A Name ? In Defense of Ecofeminism (Not Ecological Feminisms , Feminist Ecology , or Gender and the Environment)."

would be value in that. Being aware of our own privileges and their consequences is never futile. Patriarchal, capitalist thinking has caused so much damage to our planet and has not managed to eliminate the threat posed by climate change in decades; how could we expect the same pattern of thought to save us and the future generations? Contemporary political actors often see climate change as a security issue.[6] In this thesis, I will look at climate change as not only a security issue but also a feminist one, because 'something is a feminist issue if an understanding of it helps one understand the oppression or subordination of women.'[7]

In many countries, women and girls are responsible for collecting drinking water, which is becoming less accessible and can lead to infections, mass migration, and social unrest, which can have a significant effect on people's lives, including that of women.[8] If feminists care about the bodies and rights of women, as the first victims of climate change will be women and children, they cannot overlook the issue of climate change.[9] Estévez-Saá and Lorenzo-Modia also point out, that this depends somewhat on the context, but agree it is often women and children who are the first to be affected by climate change.[10] Zoloth argues that climate change has a more significant effect on women because their life and work have a different value than that of men, and if we want to solve the issue of climate change, we have to revise this value system.[11] Climate change has gender-specific elements to it as it can affect people who have different assigned gender roles in different cultures based on their sex.[12] The real-life consequences of climate change on women make ecofeminism a relevant theoretical framework.

In taking a closer look at ecofeminism, especially from its' d'Eaubonnean origins to its' evolution over the decades through the work of thinkers such as Karen J. Warren and Greta Gaard, Chapter One will show how it can function as a source of inspiration as it shows the

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[6] Matt McDonald, "Discourses of Climate Security," *Political Geography* 33, no. 1 (2013): 42–51, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2013.01.002.
[7] Karen Warren, "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective," in *Ecofeminism : Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karen Warren and Nisvan Erkal (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 4. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000tww&AN=612&site=eds-live.
[8] Zoloth, "At the Last Well on Earth: Climate Change Is a Feminist Issue."
[9] Zoloth.
[10] Margarita Estévez-Saá and María Jesús Lorenzo-Modia, "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Eco-Caring: Contemporary Debates on Ecofeminism(S)," *Women's Studies* 47, no. 2 (2018): 123–46, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2018.1425509.
[11] Zoloth, "At the Last Well on Earth: Climate Change Is a Feminist Issue."
[12] Sadegh Salehi et al., "Gender, Responsible Citizenship and Global Climate Change," *Women's Studies International Forum* 50 (2015): 30–36, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.015.

ability to address and confront past weaknesses and improve. According to Estévez-Saá and Lorenzo-Modia, those reluctant to identify as ecofeminists often do so because of the essentialist nature of early ecofeminist thinking.[13] However, ecofeminism has evolved over the decades. In conjunction with this exploration of ecofeminist thought, Chapter One will also situate the thesis within IR scholarship, drawing connections between the two to indicate the compatibility of ecofeminist thought with broader IR practice. A more thorough overview of ecofeminism will be followed by highlighting why documentary films have political relevance and a brief look at my methodological approach of discourse analysis.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the two documentary films using themes that have been associated with ecofeminist thinking: gender; population control; and socialism, neoliberalism and the West. Following van Munster and Sylvest, I will focus on 'arrangements of perceptibility'[14] on these three categories and their political implications. I have chosen two films, *An Inconvenient Truth (AIT)* by Davis Guggenheim[15] from 2006 and *Women are the Answer (WATA)* by Fiona Cochrane[16] from 2015.

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[13] Estévez-Saá and Lorenzo-Modia, "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Eco-Caring: Contemporary Debates on Ecofeminism(S)."

[14] Rens van Munster and Casper Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility," *International Studies Perspectives* 16, no. 3 (2015): 233, https://doi.org/10.1111/insp.12062.

[15] Davis Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth* (USA: Paramount Classics and Participant Productions, 2006), https://play.google.com/store/movies/details/An_Inconvenient_Truth?id=Cz2u2HeaSiY.

[16] Fiona Cochrane, *Women Are the Answer* (Australia, India: f-reel film+television, 2015), https://vimeo.com/ondemand/womenaretheanswer?autoplay=1.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The two main theoretical cornerstones for this thesis are the 'aesthetic turn'[17] in international relations and ecofeminism. Traditional canonical Western thinking, which is reliant on rationalism, especially on the notion that human beings are rational, the importance of objectivity, dualistic thinking, the idea that there are universal truths and the separation of humans from non-human animals.[18] Humanism is a core element of our industrial capitalist system that has led to environmental degradation and excessive consumption.[19]

I have chosen an ecofeminist lens because it is so different from canonical Western thinking. Ecofeminist thinkers are often critical of the patriarchy, the capitalist economic system, and dualistic thinking inherent in Western thought.[20] As Kings puts it, 'ecofeminism has always concerned itself with understanding the unique experiences of those who face discrimination.'[21]

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[17] Roland Bleiker, "The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory," *Millenium* 30, no. 3 (2001): 510, https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298010300031001.

[18] Karen J. Warren, *Feminist Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-environmental/#WesEnv.

[19] Greta Gaard, "Posthumanism, Ecofeminism, and Inter-Species Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of Gender and Environment*, ed. Sherilyn MacGregor (London: Routledge, 2017), 115–29, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315886572.

[20] Simon Irving and Jenny Helin, "A World for Sale? An Ecofeminist Reading of Sustainable Development Discourse," *Gender, Work and Organization* 25, no. 3 (2018): 264–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12196.

[21] A.E. Kings, "Intersectionality and the Changing Face of Ecofeminism," *Ethics and the Environment* 22, no. 1 (2017): 63.

1.1: The Aesthetic Turn and the Politics of Representation

IR scholarship needs to keep up with the 21st century and accept that popular culture has the power to shape politics, even though the two are 'potentially interconnected but ultimately separate domains.'[22] This view sees international relations as a complex milieu of interactions, not only focused on decision making in higher political circles.[23] Roland Bleiker argues that looking at aesthetics is the opposite of looking at 'mimetic forms of representation,'[24] which has been the more common approach in IR scholarship. The aesthetic approach does not claim to look at the world as it is, but accepts 'that there is always a gap between a form of representation and what is represented therewith.'[25] He points out that political reality is the result of representation, and people, including social scientists, make a wide range of choices when they decide to interpret a given topic.[26]

Bleiker makes a post-positivist stance and points out that one of the key reasons for seeing certain forms of knowledge as objective is simply history and convention.[27] Shiva points out that objective results, the universality of knowledge, and neutrality are critical components of modern science.[28] However, according to her, this is a 'Western, male-oriented and patriarchal projection.'[29] Walsh claims that science itself is a 'social activity'[30] and, therefore, subjectivity plays a role in what is researched, published, or ignored. These all influence what knowledge we accept to be reliable, which automatically creates a binary way of thinking.

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[22] Kyle Grayson, Matt Davies, and Simon Philpott, "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum," *Politics* 29, no. 3 (2009): 155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9256.2009.01351.x.

[23] Grayson, Davies, and Philpott.

[24] Bleiker, "The Aesthetic Turn in International Political Theory.", 510.

[25] Bleiker, 510.

[26] Bleiker.

[27] Bleiker.

[28] Vandana Shiva, "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science," in *Ecofeminism*, ed. Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, and Ariel Salleh, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Zed Books, 2014), 22–35, http://ezproxy.viu.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/.

[29] Shiva, 22.

[30] Reubs J. Walsh, "XI. 'Objectivity' and Intersectionality: How Intersectional Feminism Could Utilise Identity and Experience as a Dialectical Weapon of Liberation within Academia," *Feminism and Psychology* 25, no. 1 (2015): 63, https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353514562807.

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Therefore, some sources and voices will inevitably be seen as 'less than' others. It is essential to look at who defines the reality projected to us and who benefits from this representation?[31]

The aesthetic turn in IR accepts that different interpretations can lead to different political understandings and that any piece of artistic expression can be open to political and critical reflection.[32] Narratives offered by cinema should be seen as essential sources as many people get informed from them as they reach broad audiences.[33] This characteristic might even make them more influential than mainstream academic sources.[34] Furman and Musgrave point out that none of us knows everything in the world; therefore, many of us will be 'susceptible to accepting claims presented in fiction as factual.'[35] This might be true to actors on all levels, from masses to elites.[36] Gregg argues that films, even if they are not entirely accurate, can 'constitute a window on the world.'[37] Cinematic narratives have the power to make us connect to specific issues more and can lead to a wider discussion on certain topics.[38] When it comes to films about climate change, the message we take away from what we have seen can have long term consequences. Will we get nervous for a while but forget about it later? Will we come to see the issue as somebody else's responsibility to fix? Will we blame it on the people of countries? What is the message that stays with us? Visuals such as films and photos can have political ramifications as they affect our way of thinking and, as a consequence, our ability to see ourselves as agents who can play a role in social, political, and environmental change.[39]

An advantage that visual images possess is that they can reach broad audiences in a relatively short amount of time.[40] However, if these images are distorted, this might be a disadvantage. As Bleiker argues, 'representation is inevitably a process of interpretation and

[31] Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, and Paul Marris, "Introduction: The Politics of Representation," in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, and Paul Marris, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 251–54, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004.

[32] Lola Frost, "Aesthetics and Politics," *Global Society* 24, no. 3 (2010): 433–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/13600826.2010.485560.

[33] III Daniel, J. Furman and Paul Musgrave, "Synthetic Experiences: How Popular Culture Matters for Images of International Relations," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (2017): 503–16, https://doi.org/10.1093/ISQ/SQX053.

[34] Daniel, J. Furman and Musgrave.

[35] Daniel, J. Furman and Musgrave.

[36] Daniel, J. Furman and Musgrave.

[37] Robert W. Gregg, "The Ten Best Films about International Relations," *World Policy Journal* 16, no. 2 (1999): 129, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsjsr&AN=edsjsr.40209632&site=eds-live.

[38] Gregg.

[39] Dipti Desai, "Imaging Difference: The Politics of Representation in Multicultural Art Education," *Studies in Art Education* 41, no. 2 (2000): 114–29, https://doi.org/10.2307/1320658.

[40] Roland Bleiker, "Mapping Visual Global Politics," in *Visual Global Politics*, ed. Roland Bleiker (London: Routledge, 2018), 1–29, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315856506.

abstraction.'[41] Narratives in popular culture can be linked to material gains, such as making a profit.[42] People might choose profit instead of criticizing the system that allows them to earn more money. As Kuhn puts it, 'politics and knowledge are interdependent.'[43] Already back in 2001, Bleiker called 'the domain of television; perhaps the most crucial source of collective consciousness today.'[44] The rise of streaming services allows us to watch content if we can afford it whenever we are free and without interruption. Popular culture can be a source of different ideologies and influence one's identity.[45]

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[41] Bleiker, 532.

[42] Grayson, Davies, and Philpott, "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum."

[43] Annette Kuhn, "The Power of the Image," in *Media Studies: A Reader*, ed. Sue Thornham, Caroline Bassett, and Paul Marris, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 39, https://doi.org/10.3366/j.ctvxcrv1h.8.

[44] Bleiker, 525.

[45] Grayson, Davies, and Philpott, "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum."

1.2: Ecofeminism

One key characteristic of feminism in IR is to 'make the invisible visible,'[46] and it has helped in the rethinking of knowledge production while showing that international power relations can be observed in everyday lives.[47] For example, who do we see as experts in documentaries? Who is represented as 'worthy' of attention? What issues are discussed, and who benefits from that? This is going to be part of my analysis later on. While feminists have their differences, we all believe that sexism exists, and it needs to be challenged and eradicated from our societies.[48] If "there is no single 'feminist theory'"[49] then it is fair to claim that there is no single ecofeminist theory either. According to Tickner and True, IR as a 'discipline has come late to feminism'[50] and that feminist IR is more or less on the periphery of the discipline to this day.[51] The reason behind this is that feminism deals 'only' with women as an oppressed group 'rather than a significant tradition and contribution to solving major problems of international peace and insecurity.'[52] This paper aims to show that (eco)feminism can be an important analytical tool when it comes to climate change-related security issues.

Generally, ecofeminist thinking claims that gender-based discrimination and the destruction of the environment both stem from systematic patriarchal oppression.[53] According to the patriarchal worldview, 'the ideal human self does not include features associated with nature, but is defined as separate from and in opposition to it.'[54] A vital element of the patriarchal system, in line with the Western canonical thinking, is the existence of dualisms

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[46] Sophie Harman, "Making the Invisible Visible in International Relations: Film, Co-Produced Research and Transnational Feminism," *European Journal of International Relations* 24, no. 4 (2018): 791. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066117741353.

[47] Harman.

[48] Warren, "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective." Karen J. Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism," *Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 2 (1990): 125–46.

[49] V. Spike Peterson, "Feminist Theories Within, Invisible To, and Beyond IR," *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 10, no. 2 (2004): 36.

[50] J. Ann Tickner and Jacqui True, "A Century of International Relations Feminism: From World War I Women's Peace Pragmatism to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (2018): 222. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx091.

[51] Ann Tickner and True.

[52] Ann Tickner and True, 231.

[53] Lissy Goralnik, "Ecofeminism," *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Salem Press, 2018), http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=89474114&site=eds-live.

[54] Mary Phillips, "Re-Writing Corporate Environmentalism: Ecofeminism, Corporeality and the Language of Feeling," *Gender, Work and Organization* 21, no. 5 (2014): 445-46, https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12047.

(women/men, nature/culture) in which one category is always superior to the other.[55] This importance of gender will be key for the first section of my analysis. The binary/dualistic thinking is further explored by Karen Warren, who argues that the three main characteristics of an oppressive conceptual framework are: '(1) value-hierarchical thinking,'[56] where something that is 'Up' is considered to have more value than what is 'Down.' '(2) value dualisms'[57] certain pairings that are considered to be in opposition where one side is seen as more valuable (e.g., male-female). '(3) logic of domination'[58] that helps to justify the domination of one group over the other. This binary, categorical Up-Down thinking will be present in all three subsections partially inspired and enriched by Warren's work.

Françoise d'Eaubonne was the first to coin the term *éco-féminisme* (ecofeminism) in her 1974 book *Le Féminisme ou la mort (Feminism or Death)*.[59] I want to highlight two elements from d'Eaubonne's work: overpopulation and anti-capitalist sentiment. In her article, *What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?*, D'Eaubonne argues that women need to reclaim their bodies by having access to contraception to stop population growth.[60] Her thoughts on population control are crucial for my research as *WATA* portrays population growth to be the leading cause of climate change.[61] D'Eaubonne also claims that another critical reason for ecological degradation is our capitalist, profit-oriented world.[62] This point is important to this thesis because *WATA* and *AIT* have different approaches towards capitalism, which I will discuss more in-depth discussion later.

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[55] Karen Hurley, "Is That a Future We Want?: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Images of the Future in Contemporary Film," *Futures* 40, no. 4 (2008): 346–59, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2007.08.007; Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto," in *Manifestly Haraway*, ed. Donna J. Haraway and Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 3–90, https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816650477.003.0001.; Irene Sanz Alonso, "Ecofeminism and Science Fiction: Human-Alien Literary Intersections," *Women's Studies* 47, no. 2 (2018): 216–31, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497878.2018.1430408.

[56] Warren, "The Power and the Promise of Ecological Feminism.",128.

[57] Warren, 128.

[58] Warren, 128.

[59] Sheila Golburgh Johnson, "D'Eaubonne Coins the Term Ecofeminism," *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Salem Press, 2019), http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=3&sid=1d2ed2b6-2895-463b-9006-56244f22cddd%40pdc-v-sessmgr04&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3D#AN=89314314&db=ers. , Estévez-Saá and Lorenzo-Modia, "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Eco-Caring: Contemporary Debates on Ecofeminism(S)."

[60] Françoise D'Eaubonne and Jacob (translation) Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?," *Ethics and the Environment* 4, no. 2 (1999): 179–84, https://doi.org/10.1016/s1085-6633(00)88419-3.

[61] Cochrane, *Women Are the Answer*.

[62] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?"

D'Eaubonne's work, just like ecofeminism itself, while it offers interesting insights, is not without certain shortcomings. D'Eaubonne argues that 'women are all the more concerned with the outcome of future generations, while this concerns only the most highly aware among men,'[63] which is an overly essentialist reinforcement of the gender script of woman as a caregiver. Seeing women as inherently more caring is a departure from the feminist notion that rejects that her biology determines a woman's destiny.[64] Self-reflection is a crucial component of any feminist theory.[65] In line with this characteristic, ecofeminist thinking has been evolving over the past decades, and it has become clear that it needs to eliminate any essentialist thinking about how women are closer to nature than men if it wants to be taken seriously in academic circles.[66] Parts of ecofeminist scholarship have also been criticized for universalistic thinking and overt spirituality.[67] These are limitations to ecofeminism, and I will try to avoid similar mistakes. One critique that seems to be missing from the narrative often is that men do not maintain the patriarchal system alone, 'women also participate in patriarchy and its oppressive practices.'[68] As ecofeminism 'grows out of a plurality of social contexts, it will have many complections,'[69] and its complexity, and at times self-controversy should not deter us from seeing the value it has to offer. There are many strands of ecofeminism, such as 'liberal, socialist, anarchist, radical feminist, womanist and cultural feminist; the latter is the branch most often charged with essentialism.'[70]

Feminists are often engaged with the importance of images and representation.[71] Using ecofeminism as a theoretical framework for analyzing films is not unprecedented. Belmont uses an ecofeminist lens to analyze seven natural disaster movies made in Hollywood.[72] In these fiction films, nature poses a grave danger to humans, and it 'must be subdued by authoritative

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[63] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, 181.

[64] Mary Mellor, "Green Politics: Ecofeminist, Ecofeminine or Ecomasculine?," *Environmental Politics* 1, no. 2 (1992): 229–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644019208414022.

[65] Peterson, "Feminist Theories Within, Invisible To, and Beyond IR."

[66] Mallory, "What's In A Name ? In Defense of Ecofeminism (Not Ecological Feminisms , Feminist Ecology , or Gender and the Environment)."

[67] Kings, "Intersectionality and the Changing Face of Ecofeminism."; Mallory, "What's In A Name ? In Defense of Ecofeminism (Not Ecological Feminisms , Feminist Ecology , or Gender and the Environment)."

[68] Trish Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism," *Ethics & the Environment* 7, no. 2 (2002): 14.

[69] Ariel Salleh, "Second Thoughts on " Rethinking Ecofeminist Politics ": A Dialectical Critique," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 1, no. 2 (1993): 94, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44087768.

[70] Greta Gaard, "From 'Cli-Fi' to Critical Ecofeminism: Narratives of Climate Change and Climate Justice," in *Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism*, ed. Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 188, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315778686.

[71] Kuhn, "The Power of the Image."

[72] Cynthia Belmont, "Ecofeminism and the Natural Disaster Heroine," *Women's Studies* 36, no. 5 (2007): 349–72, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870701420230.

male figures and masculinist institutions'[73] that can be seen, from an ecofeminist perspective, to be at the root of environmental degradation and climate change to begin with. In these films, nature is seen as an active, gendered agent: 'Mother Nature.'[74] This gendered thinking about nature 'has shaped our view of the environment for centuries.'[75] Belmont concludes that these films suggest that 'women with authority—including the construct of Mother Nature—are dangerous and must be contained.'[76] Partially inspired by this piece, I have decided to analyze films, but instead of the fiction genre, I want to focus on documentaries, and in the next section, I explain why.

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[73] Belmont, 351.
[74] Belmont, 352.
[75] Belmont, 352.
[76] Belmont, 370.

1.3: Documentary Films

Films, music, poems, and other cultural expressions all fall under the umbrella of popular culture.[77] As Munster and Sylvest point out, IR scholars are more often concerned with fiction films than with documentaries.[78] Films have the ability to spark a debate regardless if they are fictional or not.[79] According to Furman and Musgrave, fiction can make unlikely narratives seem plausible, and this is why the fiction genre can 'persuade people of wrong, or even fantastical, associations.'[80] I argue that this is also the case in documentaries, as even though they are labeled as non-fiction, we need to keep in mind that documentary is not necessarily the opposite of fiction.[81] The non-fiction genre needs to be even more careful with the truth claims it makes, as documentaries often possess 'an aura of credibility,'[82] however, while they may pose as objective, the genre can be rather manipulative.[83] It is possible that a documentary appears authentic, but it is not the same as being objective.[84] Even John Grierson, who came up with the term 'documentary' in 1926, carefully described it as 'the creative treatment of actuality.'[85] The genre claims to show what is 'real,' but it is crucial to note that people are working on these films, which can and does affect the narratives.[86] Every time something is documented, there is a prior assumption of knowledge and a selection that takes

[77] Grayson, Davies, and Philpott, "Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture-World Politics Continuum.", Marie V. Gibert, "Using Elements of Popular Culture to Teach Africa's International Relations," *Politics* 36, no. 4 (2016): 495–507, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.12105.

[78] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

[79] Ron von Burg, "Decades Away or The Day After Tomorrow?: Rhetoric, Film, and the Global Warming Debate," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29, no. 1 (2012): 7–26, https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2011.637221.

[80] Daniel, J. Furman and Musgrave, "Synthetic Experiences: How Popular Culture Matters for Images of International Relations."

[81] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

[82] Scott Krzych, "The Price of Knowledge: Hysterical Discourse in Anti-Michael Moore Documentaries," *The Comparatist* 39, no. 1 (2015): 81, https://doi.org/10.1353/com.2015.0001.

[83] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

[84] Richard M. Blumenberg, "Documentary Films and the Problem of 'Truth,'" *Journal of the University Film Association* 29, no. 4 (1977): 19–22, https://doi.org/10.2307/20687386.

[85] Purdy, Elizabeth Rholetter, PhD "Documentary Film," *Salem Press Encyclopedia*, 2020, http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=333ce0cb-1414-438e-8e65-8052728b52d0%40sessionmgr4006&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWRzLWxpdmU%3D#AN=87321842&db=ers.

[86] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

place.[87] When selection takes place in any medium, full objectivity becomes impossible.[88] Documenting is always 'a subjective expression'[89] as one can decide what to record or not to record. Some scholars do look at documentary as a lucrative field to study in connection with politics. Aitken analyzes documentary films of Anglo-American filmmakers from the 1920s-1940s and argues for the recovery of stories that are representative of the 'other' as well as less universalized narratives.[90] Documentary consumption is thought to be more characteristic of the upper classes.[91] This gives political importance to documentaries if we accept that when it comes to climate change, the rich and influential people in the wealthiest and most powerful countries are the best equipped to change the economic and sociopolitical systems that fuel environmental degradation.[92] Climate change is a common topic in visual narratives, including campaigns and various forms of artwork, such as films.[93] Climate change might be a popular topic for documentary films, but we have to keep in mind that 'science popularization may promote awareness, but not necessarily understanding.'[94]

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[87] Imamura Taihei and Michael Baskett, "A Theory of Film Documentary," *Review of Japanese Culture and Society* 22 (2010): 52–59.

[88] Blumenberg, "Documentary Films and the Problem of 'Truth.'"

[89] Taihei and Baskett, 54.

[90] Rob Aitken, "Provincialising Embedded Liberalism : Film , Orientalism and the Reconstruction of World Order," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4 (2011): 1695–1720.

[91] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

[92] Jon Barnett, "The Geopolitics of Climate Change," *Geography Compass* 1, no. 6 (2007): 1361–75, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2007.00066.x The.

[93] Saffron J. O'Neill and Nicholas Smith, "Climate Change and Visual Imagery," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 5, no. 1 (2014): 73–87, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.249.

[94] Ron von Burg, "Decades Away or The Day After Tomorrow?: Rhetoric, Film, and the Global Warming Debate," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 29, no. 1 (2012): 8, https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2011.637221.

1.4: Methodology

Discourses provide

> philosophical anchoring for claims about how we should subsequently respond to climate change, and who is responsible for (or capable of) acting as agents of climate security.[95]

Hence discourse analysis is essential because different interpretations of climate change can lead to a diverse social and political response.[96] This is why I have decided to use this method for my present research. The rhetoric surrounding climate change should not be overlooked because it can have real-life political consequences.[97] States can get away with not acting on the issue of climate change if their electorates are not interested and vocal about their support for climate action.[98]

I am going to incorporate the term 'arrangements of perceptibility'[99] by van Munster and Sylvest, which 'refers to the creative arrangement of sensorial perceptions (saying and showing) in documentary film'[100] and can be a helpful analytical tool. This helps us to think about a documentary film less as something inherently true or false and emphasizes 'how we perceive and how we are able, allowed, or made to perceive.'[101] I am going to look at these arrangements and analyze and see what sorts of worlds they are constructing. What is the political significance of how the 'truth' is constructed? Would either one of these worlds be more ethical to subscribe to?

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[95] McDonald, "Discourses of Climate Security.", 44.
[96] McDonald.
[97] Lynda Walsh, "The Visual Rhetoric of Climate Change," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 6, no. 4 (2015): 361–68, https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.342.
[98] Barnett, "The Geopolitics of Climate Change."
[99] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility.":233.
[100] van Munster and Sylvest, 229.
[101] van Munster and Sylvest, 233.

14

Chapter 2: Analysis

An Inconvenient Truth by Guggenheim is partly built on the recording of a lecture given by Al Gore, former Vice-President and democratic presidential candidate of the United States.[102] The film and its' impact have been analyzed by various academic sources from different backgrounds.[103] Gaard briefly looks at AIT through an ecofeminist lens and concludes that Gore's

> message offers no images of either the global elites and economics responsible for global warming, the ground-zero victims of global climate change, or the activist citizens who are leading the battles for climate justice; he makes no connections between a meat-based diet and its environmental consequences. Thus the film avoids invoking oppressor guilt, though still encouraging action.[104]

In light of this insight, it does not come as a surprise that influential politicians and Hollywood embraced a film that does not want to change the status quo too much. In 2007, the film won the Oscar for Best Documentary, and Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work to raise awareness of climate change.[105] As Rutherford puts it, Gore can be categorized as a 'climate celebrity.'[106] The film has been a hit amongst most of its' audiences and critics.[107]

Gaard argues that the reason behind AIT winning over wider audiences stems from its' combination of rationality and empathy.[108] Rutherford points out that 'the film is about both

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[102] Guggenheim, An Inconvenient Truth.

[103] e.g.: Felicity Mellor, "The Politics of Accuracy in Judging Global Warming Films," Environmental Communication 3, no. 2 (2009): 134–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/17524030902916574; Sue Jen Lin, "Perceived Impact of a Documentary Film: An Investigation of the First-Person Effect and Its Implications for Environmental Issues," Science Communication 35, no. 6 (2013): 708–33, https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547013478204.; James Lyons, "'Gore Is the World': Embodying Environmental Risk in An Inconvenient Truth," Journal of Risk Research 22, no. 9 (2019): 1156–70, https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2019.1569103.

[104] Greta Gaard, "From 'Cli-Fi' to Critical Ecofeminism: Narratives of Climate Change and Climate Justice," in Contemporary Perspectives on Ecofeminism, ed. Mary Phillips and Nick Rumens, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2016), 175–76, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315778686.

[105] Mellor, "The Politics of Accuracy in Judging Global Warming Films."

[106] Stephanie Rutherford, "Science and Storytelling: Al Gore and the Climate Debate," in Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 145, https://doi.org/10.1093/nq/7-4-122a.

[107] van Munster and Sylvest, "Documenting International Relations: Documentary Film and the Creative Arrangement of Perceptibility."

[108] Gaard, "From 'Cli-Fi' to Critical Ecofeminism: Narratives of Climate Change and Climate Justice."

knowledge and affect, the capacity to know, but also the capacity to feel.'[109] I argue that part of Gore's appeal is that he is advocating for climate change in a manner that is not that 'inconvenient' for many of us. We do not need to stop eating meat, flying, or overthrow the capitalist system. We just need to spend our money smarter and elect better representatives.

Women are the Answer by Cochrane has not reached similar levels of fame as that of *AIT* even though the film won several awards in independent film festivals.[110] Made by an Australian female filmmaker, the film shifts attention from green energy to the importance of population control.[111] This film chose a local perspective instead of a global one. It is set in Kerala, a state in Southern India where literacy rates are high, and the number of children per family is low in comparison to the rest of the country. The main message of the film is that educating young girls leads to them having fewer babies. Feminist works are mostly considered to be activist if they focus on some critical feminist issues such as reproductive rights or gender equality.[112] Based on these criteria, *WATA* can be viewed as an activist documentary as it campaigns for women's education. While this film is more inclusive of the voices of women and local perspectives, it also does not take into account the impact of meat-eating or flying even though it is more critical of capitalist consumption and neoliberalism. It is also 'comfortable' to watch in the sense that it does not send me the message that I have to significantly change my lifestyle if I want to fight climate change.

I would like to look at the arrangements of perceptibility in the films thematically, starting with gender, followed by population control and finishing up with socialism, neoliberalism, and the West. I will reflect on the Up-Down binary at the end of the sections when applicable.

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[109] Stephanie Rutherford, "Science and Storytelling: Al Gore and the Climate Debate," in *Governing the Wild: Ecotours of Power* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 147, https://doi.org/10.1093/nq/7-4-122a.

[110] f-reel film+television, "WOMEN ARE THE ANSWER," f-reel film+television, 2019, http://www.f-reel.com/women_are_the_answer.html.

[111] Madeleine Keck, "This Filmmaker Wants to Prove That Educated Women Are the Answer to Climate Change," *Global Citizen*, September 13, 2018, https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/women-are-the-answer-documentary/.

[112] Kelly Hankin, "And Introducing... The Female Director: Documentaries about Women Filmmakers as Feminist Activism," *NWSA Journal* 19, no. 1 (2007): 59–88, https://doi.org/10.2979/nws.2007.19.1.59.

2.1: Arrangements of Perceptibility on Gender

From an ecofeminist perspective, the lack of women in *AIT* becomes glaringly obvious. All experts cited in *AIT* are men, just like the 'protagonist' Gore. In *AIT,* the film focuses on the expert knowledge of Al Gore, who is lecturing the audience (both in-person and through the screen). Women are mostly portrayed as spectators in Gore's audience. The women he briefly mentions are all related to him except when he is trying to convince the audience that change is possible, where he lists several achievements, including 'women earned the right to vote.' We only learn more in-depth about his sister, who passed away because of lung cancer that made their father change and give up tobacco farming. Not adding women's voices and only mentioning male experts can reinforce existing power relations. He is in the center of the film, seen as both having the 'privileged knowledge,' [113] due to his education, and 'privileged experience,'[114] as he travels around the world to learn first-hand about the issue. Belmont argues that in certain Hollywood movies "male protagonists battle toward victory over an antagonistic, vindictive nature that threatens to annihilate 'the American way of life.'"[115] In *AIT,* the perceptibility is organized in a way that makes Gore seem like such a man, fighting the good fight, despite his critics verbally attacking and ridiculing him. He talks about his childhood, his family, his political career. He claims that he ran for president partly to raise awareness of climate change. He lost, but he decided to make the most of it and started giving talks on the issue. The part about his idyllic childhood combined with the threatening image of climate change proves how the filmmakers 'rely on nostalgia and fear to induce action on their climate agenda.'[116]

The approach of *AIT* to climate change is what Birkeland would probably call "Masculinist or 'Manstream'"[117] because of its gender-blind approach. In *AIT*, the scenes discussing Hurricane Katrina are moving parts of the film. It is emitted from the film that in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, black women, the poorest demographic fraction in the region, were

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[113] Carolyn D. Baker, "Knowing Things and Saying Things: How a Natural World in Discursively Fabricated on a Documentary Film Set," *Journal of Pragmatics* 13, no. 3 (1989): 383, https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(89)90061-1.

[114] Baker, 383.

[115] Cynthia Belmont, "Ecofeminism and the Natural Disaster Heroine," *Women's Studies* 36, no. 5 (2007): 349–50, https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870701420230.

[116] Rutherford, "Science and Storytelling: Al Gore and the Climate Debate."

[117] Janis Birkeland, "Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 15.

the most severely affected.[118] This ties to not only the role gender plays when it comes to climate change but also to race and the downside of the neoliberal capitalist system, which keeps many people in poverty. As Crenshaw highlights, looking at intersectionality is crucial as people's lived experiences and identities are affected by class, race, and gender.[119] Ecofeminism has come to embrace intersectionality even though early scholarship did not pay sufficient attention to it.[120] Intersectionality can help us better understand the different forms of discrimination faced by different groups, and ecofeminist thinking should continue to embrace it.[121]

In comparison, in *WATA,* Cochrane was careful to choose not only mothers, female students and schoolteachers to interview, but also a woman politician (Brinda Karat), a woman academic (Dr K. Saradamoni) and a woman researcher and writer (Leela Gulati). This way, the film gives a voice to women as experts. Harman supports co-produced research, especially films, by academics and non-academic women together because a film can offer visibility to things previously unseen and a platform for different sources of knowledge.[122] In *WATA*, we see something similar; the interviewees are a diverse group from different ages, sexes, educational backgrounds, and ways of life. Women are often seen as sources of the 'local' knowledge.[123] But we need to keep in mind that 'the recognition of local actors is different from their inclusion.'[124] We do not know to what extent they were able to influence the film. Were their inputs implemented? Or did they simply answer the questions of the interviewer (that we never hear)? Knowing these answers would make us better understand what was going on behind the scenes. Documentary filmmakers should be reflexive; they need to be aware of what to reveal to the audiences on purpose.[125]

Of course, many interviewees in *WATA* are men from the world of academia and

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[118] Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change," *Women's Studies International Forum* 49 (2015): 20–33, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.004; Barbara Ransby, "State of the Discourse: Katrina, Black Women, and the Deadly Discourse," *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 3, no. 1 (2006): 215–22.

[119] Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99.

[120] Kings, "Intersectionality and the Changing Face of Ecofeminism."

[121] Kings.

[122] Harman, "Making the Invisible Visible in International Relations: Film, Co-Produced Research and Transnational Feminism."

[123] Rachel Julian, Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, and Robin Redhead, "From Expert to Experiential Knowledge: Exploring the Inclusion of Local Experiences in Understanding Violence in Conflict," *Peacebuilding* 7, no. 2 (2019): 210–25, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2019.1594572.

[124] Julian, Bliesemann de Guevara, and Redhead, 213.

[125] Jay Ruby, "The Image Mirrored : Reflexivity and the Documentary Film," *Journal of the University Film Association* 29, no. 4 (1977): 3–11, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20687384.

economics such as K.P Kannan, Robin Jeffrey, and Nobel-prize winner Amartya Sen. In the end credits, not only the experts are listed but also 'the fighting ladies of Kerala.' Interestingly the women experts interviewed are not in the 'expert' column but the latter alongside the other women. This can be read as women fighting side by side against patriarchal oppression regardless of their social status and academic background. It can also be seen in a negative light as women are often less accepted by society as experts than men.[126] Ecofeminist thinking can help us rethink the 'objective' knowledge of experts and the lived experiences of people who are often seen as secondary.[127] The film's characters can be put in two broad categories that are not mutually exclusive and can overlap here: the experts, the people with 'privileged knowledge,'[128] and the people who live in Kerala who possess 'privileged experience.'[129] The former is seen as valuable while the latter is not.[130]

D'Eaubonne makes claims such as 'women are all the more concerned with the outcome of future generations, while this concerns only the most highly aware among men'[131] or 'it is up to women,' now, to reclaim the voice of humanity.' [132] Similar overgeneralization can be observed in *WATA* as well when one of the interviewees M.A Baby claimes that 'women always share their knowledge.' This can be seen as ecofeminine following Davion's work, who differentiates between ecofeminist and ecofeminine, and argues that writers who understand the feminine to be inherently better are not feminists and belong to the latter category.[133] If ecofeminists reject Up-Down categorization and hierarchies, they need to reject the idea of female supremacy unequivocally.

When the voice of women as experts or the importance of their lived experiences is obscured from popular narratives, it can affect how wider audiences perceive them. Socially,

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[126] Lis Howell and Jane B. Singer, "Pushy or a Princess? Women Experts and UK Broadcast News*," *Journalism Practice* 13, no. 8 (2019): 1018–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1643252.
[127] Lori Gruen, "Reflecting Back , Looking Forward : Ethics and the Environment at 25," *Ethics and the Environment* 25, no. 1 (2020): 3–6, https://doi.org/10.2979/ethicsenviro.25.1.02.
[128] Carolyn D. Baker, "Knowing Things and Saying Things: How a Natural World in Discursively Fabricated on a Documentary Film Set," *Journal of Pragmatics* 13, no. 3 (1989): 383, https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(89)90061-1.
[129] Baker, 383.
[130] Shiva, "Reductionism and Regeneration: A Crisis in Science."
[131] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?", 181.
[132] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, 184.
[133] Victoria Davion, "Is Ecofeminism Feminist," in *Ecological Feminism*, ed. Karen Warren (New York:NY: Routledge, 1994), 9–28. as cited in Mallory, "What's In A Name ? In Defense of Ecofeminism (Not Ecological Feminisms , Feminist Ecology , or Gender and the Environment)."

women as experts are often less accepted than men.[134] This could lead to fewer women in running for office or expressing political sentiments, which will inevitably affect political decision making. Gender and population control are linked; therefore, in the next section, I would like to continue with the latter.

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[134] Howell and Singer, "Pushy or a Princess? Women Experts and UK Broadcast News."

2.2: Arrangements of Perceptibility on Population Control

Both *WATA* and *AIT* point out that population growth is a crucial contributor to climate change. While the former revolves around this topic by arguing that educated women will have fewer children, the latter mentions it as one key factor out of three. Already in 1992, Gore argued that 'no goal is more crucial to healing the global environment than stabilizing human population.'[135] In *AIT*, Al Gore also talks about population growth as a significant issue as the number of people living on our planet might reach 9.1 billion by 2050.

According to Gore,

> We're putting more pressure on the Earth. Most of it's in the poorer nations of the world. This puts pressure on food demand. It puts pressure on water demand. It puts pressure on vulnerable natural resources, and this pressure is one of the reasons we have seen all the devastation of the forest, not only tropical but elsewhere. It is a political issue.[136]

Gore suggests that population control is essential. This resonates with D'Eaubonne's argument that claims access to contraception could mean that the collective ecological footprint of humankind starts shrinking.

It is important to remember that

> most environmental problems (global warming, pollution, deforestation, etc.) are the direct consequence of industrialization, over-consumption, and capitalist territorialization, and not simply the over-abundance of people.[137]

Capitalist greed for profit regardless of the consequences has a more significant derogatory effect on our surroundings than population size alone.[138] If population growth is a global issue, why are we trying to find local solutions to it? Not all countries emit the same amount of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere however, all countries are expected to feel the effects of climate change to some degree, which makes it a global issue.[139]

In *WATA* the first interviewee William Ryerson the Chairman and CEO of Population Institute (USA) starts by claiming that

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[135] Al Gore, "Senator Al Gore on Stabilizing World Population," *Population and Development Review* 18, no. 2 (1992): 380.

[136] Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

[137] Gosine, 74.

[138] Heather Alberro, "Why We Should Be Wary of Blaming 'overpopulation' for the Climate Crisis," *The Conversation Online*, January 28, 2020, https://theconversation.com/why-we-should-be-wary-of-blaming-overpopulation-for-the-climate-crisis-130709?fbclid=IwAR1CBd7E_Ze-3FqZAo68dEF91d9zmOMsxVEfblhozlwIcjYI1xt9pWtr-Aw.

[139] Barnett, "The Geopolitics of Climate Change."

In the climate negotiations that have gone on around the world there has been almost no discussion of population as a factor.[140]

This statement is debatable. While the population growth-climate change link can lead to controversy it has been made on multiple occasions. Paul Ehrlich's already voiced his concerns in 1968 in his controversial book *The Population Bomb* over overpopulation that could lead to food shortages and harm the planet.[141] The same issue has been brought up by Gore on more than one occasion.[142]

In *WATA*, the main message is that women should be educated, which could lead them to have fewer children, ideally, only one or two. This also raises the question of why women are made seen as if they were the sole responsible for having children. Why not create a curriculum that teaches women's rights and feminism to boys as well? Maybe because audiences in the West have accepted the education of girls as normal, but not the explicitly feminist education of boys? Men play a part in having a baby too, not just women, and putting this responsibility solely on the shoulders of women reiterates the essentialist notion of women as a caregiver.

Both films are compliant with the status quo according to which the West is Up, and the rest of the world is down. This also highlights the importance of an intersectional approach that I have mentioned in the previous section. Both films are concerned about people in developing nations as they need to have fewer babies, not western audiences.[143] It is missing from the narrative of *AIT* that Al Gore is a father of four.[144] If there are too many people in some regions, an alternative could be facilitating their migration to countries with aging populations, for example, to the West. Besides upsetting local voters, billions of people relocating to other parts of the world would probably not solve overpopulation that contributes to climate change. But if we insist that our narrative is that we worry about the well-being of people in 'poorer' regions, should we not try to let as many of them relocate as possible? Even to 'our' countries of residence?

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[140] Cochrane, *Women Are the Answer*.

[141] Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968). as cited in Gosine, "Dying Planet, Deadly People: 'Race'-Sex Anxieties and Alternative Globalizations."

[142] Gore, "Senator Al Gore on Stabilizing World Population."Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

[143] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?"

[144] Patrick Healy, "The End of the Line," *The New York Times Online*, August 25, 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/26/fashion/the-end-of-the-line.html.

Arguments highlighting the danger of overpopulation can be a slippery slope with negative social and political consequences. Blaming climate change on the growing number of the world's population can lead to an upsurge in racism.[145] The discourse around this matter can heighten negative feelings towards the 'Other.'[146] If audiences come to the conclusion that climate change is the fault of the 'Other' that can lead to potentially dangerous policies and racist ideologies.

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[145] Alberro, "Why We Should Be Wary of Blaming 'overpopulation' for the Climate Crisis."
[146] Gosine, "Dying Planet, Deadly People: 'Race'-Sex Anxieties and Alternative Globalizations."

2.3: Arrangements of Perceptibility on Socialism, Neoliberalism and the West

The two films offer different narratives on the capitalist, neoliberal system they operate in. In the context of climate change, *AIT* makes capitalism appear as the solution and socialism as 'evil,' while *WATA* suggests the exact opposite.

In *AIT*, when Al Gore talks about how people can change, he gives historical examples, including the victory over communism. He points out that there is no political will to change things, but people can change that. He argues that technological innovation, combined with a political will, could be a solution for climate change. He even has a formula for that: 'Old Habits + New Technology = Dramatically Altered Consequences.' Gaard argues that masculinist ideology has lead to climate change and excess consumption and 'and will not be solved by masculinist techno-science approaches.'[147] The general mindset that allowed environmental to get to this level needs to be confronted too. Gore also suggests changing shopping habits, the kind of electricity we use, the type of cars we buy. He does not take into consideration that

> while it is important to work for electoral success, environmental consciousness, better policies, and more scientific research, these cannot change the deeply rooted behavior patterns and structural relationships that led to the environmental crisis in the first place.[148]

Because of the existing social and economic structures, many people might not be able to afford to shop in a way that is good for the environment because of their limited financial resources. Gore does not suggest that we change the system fundamentally; instead, we should alter our habits. While Gore condemns those, who are greedy and choose profits over saving the planet, he does not condemn the neoliberal capitalist system, which makes this possible. Gore suggests that people need to put pressure on their political representatives to fight climate change.

In *AIT*, critical dramatic moments in the film are the footage in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The viewer gets to see destruction, people in shelters, people waving to get help, dead

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[147] Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change," *Women's Studies International Forum* 49 (2015): 20, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.004.
[148] Janis Birkeland, "Ecofeminism: Linking Theory and Practice," in *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 14.

or injured bodies. Followed by Gore's question, 'But how in God's name could that happen here?'[149] It subtly suggests that while such unforeseeable catastrophes might happen in other parts of the world, they should not occur in the US. This simple rhetoric question implies this is expected to occur in other, less developed parts of the world but not in the US. This puts the US up and the rest of the world Down. This is in line with the political theory of American exceptionalism, which see the US as 'unique among all other nations in its devotion to democracy, liberty, and self-government.'[150]

According to D'Eaubonne,

> it is impossible, within Patriarchy, to suppress a market economy. And it is impossible, in a market system, to not devastate the planet.[151]

She is critical of the capitalist system, which is in line with what *WATA* suggests. Overall, especially by the end, the narrative of *WATA* is highly critical of Western consumerism, the idea of endless economic growth, and neoliberalism. The film points out how popular Marxist ideas are prevalent in Kerala, and there are several scenes with images of Marx (Statue, poster, pamphlets). Interviewee, Professor Sunil Mani, points out that Kerala has the 'First elected socialist government in the world.'[152] The film suggests that there is a link between the socialist governments of the past and the progressive mindset of the people of Kerala. There are elements in *WATA* critical of the neoliberal system. Those trying to resist neoliberalism are often 'discredited as ''failed'' and ''unrealistic'' and thus marginalized as legitimate voices of opposition in the public sphere.' [153] The (former) politicians interviewed for the film are all from the Politburo Communist Party of India (Marxist). We do not know if Cochrane asked right-wing politicians or not; therefore, we could assume that choosing leftist politicians was intentional. This can be linked to the points that were made in Chapter 1.3 about the choice/selection element that is crucial in every documentary. By only giving voice to leftist politicians, Cochrane influenced the narrative of the film even before she gets to ask any questions or begin the editing process.

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[149] Guggenheim, *An Inconvenient Truth*.
[150] Michael Ruth, "American Exceptionalism," *Salem Press Encyclopedia* (Salem Press, 2020).
[151] D'Eaubonne and Paisain, "What Could an Ecofeminist Society Be?":184.
[152] Cochrane, *Women Are the Answer*.
[153] Yiannis Mylonas, "Reinventing Political Subjectivities: Studying Critical Documentaries on the War on Terror," *Social Semiotics* 22, no. 4 (2012): 354, https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2012.665263.

In *WATA* to signal how well Kerala is doing such as its' low infant mortality it 'is quite equivalent to that of Western Europe or the United States, not having the same kind of per capita income,' or 'Today Kerala is probably as close to being a 100% literate as Australia is.' References like this show a hierarchy. It subtly sends the message that Kerala is 'as good as' the West and implies that the rest of India is not. As Mies points out, there is a general assumption that 'the good life' can be achieved if countries catch up to the prosperous states of Europe, Japan, or the US.[154]

Such divisive narrative, however subtle, is not productive, and we should always keep in mind that "global ecological collapse brings new urgency to the claim that 'we are all in this together' – humans, animals, ecologies, biosphere."[155] *WATA* does not merely focus on women's education and population control for the sake of women and girls only, but also the sake of the rest of the world, including the West.

Both *AIT*'s lack of substantive criticism towards the capitalist system and *WATA*'s leftist perspective without giving room to right-wing voices are choices that can have political ramifications because they might influence both the masses and the decisionmakers. Both films categorize the US/Western nations as Up and the rest as Down, which can shape identities and ideology and, therefore, politics.

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[154] Maria Mies, "The Myth of Catching-up Development," in *Ecofeminism*, ed. Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, and Ariel Salleh, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Zed Books, 2014), 55–69.

[155] Anthony Burke et al., "Planet Politics: A Manifesto from the End of IR," *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 44, no. 3 (2016): 500, https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1400253.

Conclusion

This thesis highlighted that while climate change is a mainstream topic in security studies and IR, there is value in looking at it through a non-mainstream, critical lens. Climate change is a security issue, a feminist issue, and a political issue. It needs to be addressed as often as possible. If we want to eliminate the threat posed by it, we need to rethink not only the political- but also the intellectual frameworks we are accustomed to. I also highlighted that popular culture could have political ramifications, especially when content is even easier to access if one can afford it. The analysis of documentary films is often neglected by IR scholarship that mostly focuses on the fiction genre, but because of the (false) general assumption that documentaries depict the reality and truth, they might even be a more exciting object for research.

It is crucial to find better ways to spread information about climate change to the general public and to make climate change more understandable from local perspectives.[156] While *AIT* complied with the information spreading and *WATA* helped people understand local views more. Looking at these two documentaries, that at first seem very different, I have found that they share four key characteristics: 1.) they both help to raise awareness about the issue of climate change which is an admirable pursuit; 2.) they are not trying to change the status quo too much. Maybe they are a reflection of the filmmakers' real views; 3.) they are relatively easy to consumed by Western audiences as they do not generate too much guilt about the everyday activities of higher classes such as meat consumption or flying; 4.) they often place the responsibility for climate change on others like the women in the developing countries or politicians.

This thesis supported the notion that an ecofeminist perspective could broaden our horizons, as we learn more about the internalized binary thinking many of us have and have learned to see as 'normal.' Ecofeminism offers a culturally and ecologically more diverse alternative pathway towards a less hierarchical future as it is trying to build a bridge between

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[156] David Anaafo, "Between Science and Local Knowledge: Improving the Communication of Climate Change to Rural Agriculturists in the Bolgatanga Municipality, Ghana," *Local Environment* 24, no. 3 (2019): 201–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2018.1557126.

nature and culture.[157] This lens helped me take a closer look at how the perceptibility on gender can be arranged to elevate (certain) women's voices or to silence them altogether. Maybe these two documentary films are the way they are because they were meant to serve some sort of political ambition. Perhaps the filmmakers were careful on purpose not to scare away viewers because they wanted to gain more prestige and/or profit. It is hard, maybe even impossible to say. Their intentions were likely good, but because every project, just like mine, requires sorting our priorities and trying to make the best possible choices, none of us will ever be able to produce anything completely objective.

The scope of this thesis did not allow me to reflect on our treatment of non-human animals, which is one key characteristic of ecofeminist thinking and one of the leading causes of climate change (industrialized farming). Non-human animals are also one of the primary victims of our collective (in)actions regarding environmental degradation. I believe further research on this topic would benefit ecofeminism, security studies, and IR alike, not to mention nature itself.

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[157] Hurley, "Is That a Future We Want?: An Ecofeminist Exploration of Images of the Future in Contemporary Film."

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