Justice, Geopolitics, and Business-As-Usual:

The Role of Narratives in shaping Loss and

Damage Politics and Policy under the UNFCCC

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Declaration of Authorship

I, the undersigned, Ṭatiana Mueller, candidate for the MSc degree in Environmental Sciences and Policy, declare herewith that the present thesis titled "Justice, Geopolitics, and Business-As-Usual: The Role of Narratives in shaping Loss and Damage Politics and Policy under the UNFCCC" is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography.

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Abstract

Loss and Damage (L&D) is becoming an increasingly central pillar of global environmental governance under the UNFCCC, driven by the worsening severity and frequency of climate change induced impacts on vulnerable communities. Loss and Damage has been a contentious and ambiguous topic since its emergence in the 1990s and is still controversial despite major strides within L&D structures in recent years. Shaping much of the discourse surrounding L&D are the submissions made to Subsidiary Body sessions, in which official party groupings, non-governmental organisations, and observer organisations shape and reinforce narratives surrounding various facets of L&D, including historic responsibility and funding mechanisms. Through narrative analysis of 89 submission documents between 2019 and 2024, the shifts in framing of L&D alongside changes across the policy landscape underscore the influential role of narratives within climate change governance spaces. In particular, the prevalence of three key narratives is noted in recent years, including the Justice Narrative, the Geopolitical Narrative, and the Business-As-Usual Narrative.

Key Words Narrative Analysis; Warsaw International Mechanism, Santiago Network, Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage; Climate Governance

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Table of Contents

Contents

List of Tables and Figures

List of Abbreviations

ABU = Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay

AGN = African Group of Negotiators

AILAC = Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean

AOSIS = Alliance of Small Island States (Consists of 39 states, including: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Cook Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Suriname, Timor Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu)

CAN = Climate Action Network

CIEL = Center for International Environmental Law

COP = Conference of the Parties

EIG = Environmental Integrity Group (Consisting of Mexico, Liechtenstein, Monaco, the Republic of Korea, Switzerland and Georgia)

EU = European Union

FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

FRLD = Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage

GRI = The Grantham Research Institute

G77 (+ China) = Group of 77 and China

ICCCAD = International Centre for Climate Change and Development at Independent University

ICRC = International Committee of the Red Cross

IFRC = International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

IIASA = International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis

IOM = International Organization on Migration

L&D = Loss and Damage, in the context of policy and governance. Sometimes also written as "LnD" within official texts.

LDCs = Least Developed Countries (44 countries, including: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Timor-Leste Yemen, Haiti, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Three additional, including Vanuatu, Bhutan, and São Tomé and Príncipe, were part of this grouping during the period of submissions relevant to this research, but have since graduated)

L&DC = Loss and Damage Collaboration

LMDC = Like-Minded Developing Countries

MCII = Munich Climate Insurance Initiative

NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation

NPF = Narrative Policy Framework

OBNEs = Organisations, Bodies, Networks, and Experts

OHCHR = Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

PDD = Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement

REAP = Risk-informed Early Action Partnership Secretariat

SB = Subsidiary Bodies

SIDS = Small Island Developing States

SN = Santiago Network

UNDRR = United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNFCCC = United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UNICEF = United Nations

UNU = United Nations University

WIM = Warsaw International Mechanism

WMO = World Meteorological Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

      As climate change progresses, the developing world will continue to face disproportionate, unavoidable, and worsening climate change impacts, which begs the question: How are these losses to be compensated and remedied? In recent years, the concept of Loss and Damage (L&D) has begun to fill the policy gap beyond mitigation and adaptation, primarily through implementation of the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), the Santiago Network (SN), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Since loss and damage first emerged as a key climate change issue within policy and governance spaces, actors have framed it in vastly different ways. One dominant position, often held by major developing countries, sees L&D merely as a branch of adaptation, and thus something undeserving of dedicated resources and funding streams. On the other hand, developing countries and NGOs often push for more financial and technical support for L&D directly, citing inequitable distribution of unavoidable impacts emerging from climate change. Central to our ability to reckon with L&D within the policy sphere is understanding the role of narratives within this discourse. Namely, who is pushing which narratives, and why? The narratives formed surrounding L&D influence negotiations and ultimately policy outcomes, which are becoming increasingly relevant as climate change progresses. Through narrative analysis of 89 documents submitted regarding L&D under the UNFCCC from 2019 to 2024, this research seeks to better understand the current state and potential future trajectory of L&D within the global climate governance landscape. For clarities' sake (and following common practice within L&D scholarship), I will refer to "Loss and Damage" as "L&D" when using the term in relation to its policy context, whereas "loss and damage" will be used to refer to the impacts of climate change themselves.

Research Questions / Problem Statement

Considering the recent evolutions and contention within Loss and Damage discourse, this research aims to address the primary question of how narratives regarding L&D have played a role in shaping policy and politics under the UNFCCC. It asks what dominant narratives are present within L&D discourse, and how various actors utilise these narratives across recent party submission documents.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this thesis is to identify and analyse the narratives surrounding Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC over time, across various actors, and in relation to global governance surrounding Loss and Damage.

The related objectives of this research are:

1. Identify dominant narratives within the Loss and Damage sphere under the UNFCCC

    A. Identify the key themes and narrative elements which form each overarching narrative.

2. Compare how various actors align with the narratives, and if/how these positions have shifted over time (2019-2024)

3. Understand how these narratives are reflected within the current Loss and Damage structures under the UNFCCC.

Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of seven chapters, beginning with this brief introduction. Chapter 2 covers the background of Loss and Damage, including a roadmap of major developments under the UNFCCC. It further establishes an understanding of the importance of L&D within the ongoing climate crisis, especially considering the disproportionate impact on vulnerable

parties. An understanding of the frameworks under the UNFCCC (WIM, SN, and FRLD) is developed. Alongside discussion of the institutional structure, this chapter outlines the contentious nature of L&D and relevant political contexts throughout recent years.

Chapter 3, the Literature Review, develops an understanding of L&D scholarship across various disciplines. Perspectives from Development Studies, Disaster Risk Reduction, Climate Justice, and Politics are particularly relevant in the context of Loss and Damage. Secondly, the study of narratives is presented, with a focus on environmental and political narratives. Key points of contention within Loss and Damage scholarship and negotiations, which later inform the various narrative elements and content utilised within the submission documents, are outlined. Basic methodological and theoretical concepts are also introduced, though not yet elaborated upon.

Chapter 4 further delves into the relevance and application of key theoretical frameworks, with a focus on Narrative Policy Framework, Institutional Narratives, and the conceptualization of Loss and Damage itself. This chapter enables a working understanding of the processes undertaken to identify results.

Chapter 5 focuses on narrative analysis, the key methodology utilised within this study. The process of selecting submission documents to be used in the narrative analysis is explained and justified, as well as the merits and limitations of narrative analysis more broadly. Grounded Theory Methodology is also introduced, which establishes the assumptions and initial processes which inform this thesis research process.

Chapter 6 discusses the results of the narrative analysis, beginning by outlining the three key narratives identified through the research process: the Justice Narrative, the Business-As-Usual Narrative, and the Geopolitical Narrative. These narratives are explored one-by-one, with relevant thematic codes outlined and elaborated upon. Building on the

research findings, this chapter also discusses the results of this research and develops the importance and relevance of these findings for L&D governance. Considering the qualitative and subjective nature of narrative analysis, the research results and discussions are presented alongside one another throughout this chapter.

Finally, Chapter 7 concludes this thesis, summarizing the recent role of narratives within L&D governance as identified throughout prior chapters.

Chapter 2: Background

The History of Loss and Damage

In order to provide necessary context regarding the situation of L&D under the UNFCCC, a brief history of its institutional evolution will first be established. Navigating issues related to loss and damage can occur through various streams, primarily consisting of technical and financial support under the UNFCCC system. Under the current UNFCCC structure, Loss and Damage consists of three primary branches: the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), the Santiago Network (SN), and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD). The functions of each of these branches are outlined and elaborated on throughout the following section. As demonstrated by Figure 1 below, these strides towards L&D under the UNFCCC are only recently becoming a central point of discussion in the global climate governance space, despite over three decades of calls for action made by specific actors.

Figure 1: Timeline of Key Developments for Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC.
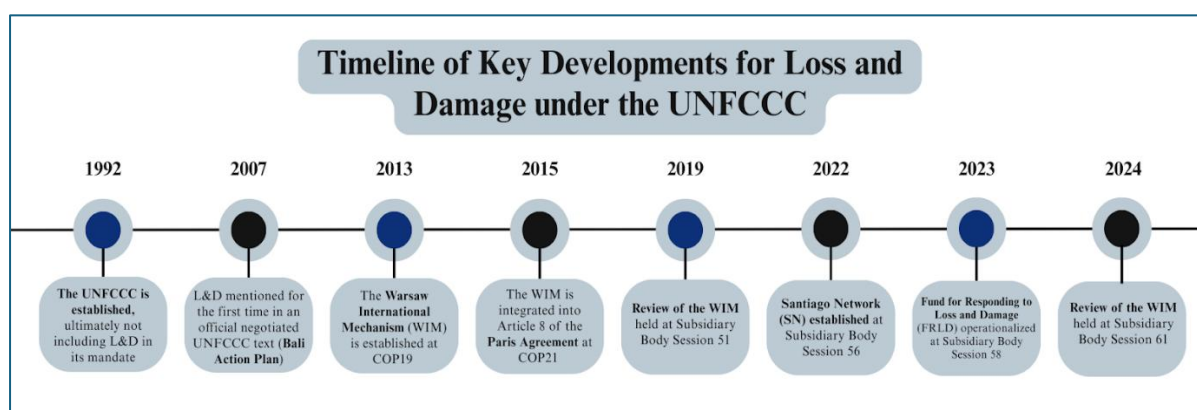

Figure 1 created by author based on information from the UNFCCC Loss and Damage Chronology (United Nations Climate Change, n.d.)

At COP13 in 2007, Loss and Damage was first mentioned in an official negotiated UNFCCC document: the Bali Action Plan, in which it was established as an outcome of climate change, but without any mention of compensation, liability, or any specific next steps

(McNamara, 2014, 243). Despite this mention of L&D in 2007, the first major development in addressing L&D under the UNFCCC would not occur until 2013 at COP19, when the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) was established (United Nations Climate Change, n.d.). The WIM focuses on supporting knowledge building, dialogue, and technical/financial support for L&D, with work primarily undertaken by the Executive Committee. Concretely, the WIM aims to "1) Enhance knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management approaches to address loss and damage; 2) Strengthen dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies among relevant stakeholders; 3) Enhance action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building to address loss and damage" (Decision 2, CP.19/para 5, as cited in United Nations, 2024, 9). The establishment of the WIM was achieved, in part, due to the persistence of the G77 + China, LDC, and AOSIS party groupings (Calliari et al., 2019, 161), who also continued pushing for the establishment of a dedicated funding mechanism for L&D (McNamara, 2014, 244). Two years later at COP21, the UNFCCC's commitment to L&D was solidified through its adoption under Article 8 of the newly formed Paris Agreement. Similarly, this action was heavily influenced by AOSIS, G77, LDC, China, the Africa Group, the Climate Vulnerable Forum, and various Non-Governmental Organisations (Calliari et al., 2019, 161-163).

Moving forward to COP22 in 2016, the first review of the WIM was held, with a second review occurring at COP25 in 2019 (United Nations Climate Change, n.d.). Emerging from these reviews were criticisms regarding the WIM's ability (or lack thereof) to deliver sufficient financial and technical support, especially concerning the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). As a result of this discourse, the Santiago Network (SN) was established at COP19, and finalized at COP27 in 2022. The function of the Santiago Network is to "catalyze technical assistance to implement relevant approaches to avert, minimize, and address L&D for developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to

6

climate change" (Wenger, 2022, 4), including efforts to more effectively implement the WIM. Still, calls for dedicated financial assistance for loss and damage persisted, with actors facing disproportionate climate change impacts (such as the LDCs, G77 + China, and AOSIS) at the center of these demands (Falzon et al., 2023, 104). At COP26 in 2021, the Glasgow Dialogue began, intended to serve as a space for discussions surrounding the next steps in governance, policy, and financing surrounding L&D until 2024 (Wenger, 2022, 5). After years of tense negotiations, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) was finally operationalized at COP28 in 2023. Although the establishment of the FRLD represents a major milestone in meeting decades of demands from AOSIS and other key actors in the L&D landscape, the issue of finance (particularly regarding the funding sources and access) was still very much at the center of L&D contentions. At COP29 in 2024, a third review of the WIM occurred, providing parties and observer organisations with an opportunity to voice their perceptions regarding the effectiveness and potential future of the WIM (United Nations Climate Change, n.d.). Once again, the issues of financing and responsibility for Loss and Damage remained prominent across party submission documents and negotiations.

Throughout the ongoing discourse surrounding L&D under the UNFCCC, Subsidiary Body Sessions are held to address specific issues in tandem with the COP negotiations. Prior to these sessions, party groupings and observer organisations are invited to submit documents outlining their positions, which provide insights into the various perspectives and priorities held by various actors. As will be further discussed within the Methodology chapter, these submissions serve as a key data source in terms of understanding the evolution of L&D.

The Political Discourse Surrounding L&D

Loss and Damage, considering its conceptual intersections with climate change responsibility, financial accountability, and institutional power dynamics, is (and always has been) "fundamentally political" (Vanhala et al., 2023, 3). Although the bulk of institutional

progress on L&D has occurred within the past two decades, Loss and Damage has long been a point of contention within global environmental governance spaces. In fact, AOSIS (and in particular, Vanuatu) even pushed for its integration into the very foundation of the UNFCCC in 1991/1992, although this ultimately did not come to fruition due to lack of unanimous support across parties (Jackson et al., 2023, 37; Vanhala et al., 2023, 2; Mechler et al., 2018, ix; Calliari et al., 2020, 158; McNamara, 2014, 243; Calliari, 2018, 3; Uri et al., 2024). These early calls for loss and damage compensation marked AOSIS as a trailblazer in L&D and began to foster collaboration between many other developing nation party groupings and NGOs (Calliari et al., 2020, 5). A major division regarding L&D across the developed and developing party groupings was clear from the onset of L&D negotiations and has arguably become even more contentious as the issue moves to the forefront. Two broad narratives regarding perspectives on L&D have been apparent since early discussions of the concept: Firstly, developing (former non-Annex 1) nations pushing for L&D as its own issue beyond adaptation, which requires specific compensation, technical support, and policy mechanisms; and secondly, the developed (former Annex-1) nations viewing L&D as an extension of adaptation, and firmly rejecting suggestions of compensation on the basis of historic emissions. These two perspectives are a generalization of the diverse positions under the UNFCCC; however, they provide a useful starting point for positioning further exploration of current narratives in the L&D space.

Referencing Calliari et al. (2020), there are five key points of contention relating to L&D discourse, including: (1) disagreement regarding the financial aspects of L&D; (2) differing perspectives on whether or not L&D constitutes its own pillar of climate action; (3) technical and political facets of L&D; (4) tensions surrounding the responsibility and accountability regarding losses and damages; and (5) L&D in relation to further unresolved points of concern under the UNFCCC (Calliari et al., 2020, 1). In order to better understand

the political nature of each debated topic of L&D, context surrounding each point of contention will next be elaborated upon.

The Five Points of Contention Surrounding Loss and Damage

Firstly, the role of financial mechanisms surrounding L&D are particularly debated and discussed within both academic and governance spaces (Calliari et al., 2020; Calliari et al., 2019, 161-162; Falzon, 2023, 95). Generally, the trend has been identified as developing nations pushing for dedicated L&D funding mechanisms, while major developed nations have long refused financial commitments until the establishment of the FRLD (Jackson et al., 2023; Calliari, 2018). Although there was technically funding available to put towards loss and damage prior to the FRLD, it was all housed within other branches of climate governance, such as the Adaptation Fund or the Special Climate Change Fund (Wenger, 2022, 6). This lack of dedicated funding for L&D forced nations to stretch resources across efforts towards adaptation, disaster risk and reduction, and mitigation – all of which are largely funded through loans which contribute to rising national debts (Uri et al., 2024, 35).

The political discourse surrounding L&D stretches far beyond financial concerns, as its existence as its own branch of climate action is, in itself, a contested idea. Loss and Damage is sometimes framed as a subset of adaptation, and therefore something not deserving of its own funds, policy mechanisms, and/or negotiation time (as apparent within the interviews discussed in Boyd et al., 2017). Technical facets are also an ongoing challenge, especially considering the lack of conceptual agreement regarding L&D across UNFCCC parties. For instance, Wenger (2022) highlights several technical challenges related to the National Adaptation Plan process, which "is the primary tool for managing climate risk and its effects on society and the environment" (14). While not explicitly stated, the climate risk facet of this process encompasses losses and damages, yet there is little clarity surrounding if/how to define and include L&D. To further complicate the L&D

debates, there are also points of contention surrounding other unresolved issues under the UNFCCC, which subsequently influence L&D. Firstly, the scope of the UNFCCC mandate has been criticized as being insufficient in addressing climate risk assessment, management, and losses and damages within a world increasingly impacted by climate change (Wenger, 2022, 14). There are also institutional and policy gaps across the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, particularly in terms of collaboration across existing bodies (particularly the WIM ExCom, the Santiago Network, and FRLD) and the integration of L&D within broader climate governance (Wenger, 2022, 16).

Responsibility for the historic emissions causing climate change coupled with the uneven distribution of losses and damages lies at the center of the fourth point of contention identified within Calliari et al (2020). This contentious aspect of L&D is linked to the issue of finance, as establishing some actors as liable for climate change losses and damages would open the door for financial obligations for historic emitters. For instance, Saleemul Huq (the director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development in Bangladesh), referred to Loss and Damage as a "euphemism for terms we are not allowed to use", specifically citing terms such as liability, compensation, and reparations (quoted in Sengupta, 2021, para. 5). This statement, although not included within an official UNFCCC submission, demonstrates one narrative surrounding the issue of responsibility related to loss and damage. This contributes to further disagreement as it triggers hostility among many major developed nations, such as the United States, who have stated that "there's one thing we [the United States] don't accept… which is the notion that there should be liability and compensation for loss and damage. Virtually all developed countries agree" (quoted in Falzon et al., 2023, 95).

The institutional makeup of L&D under the UNFCCC is presently evolving, though not without tensions throughout the policy and negotiation processes. Notions of

responsibility, justice, and financing remain central throughout the debates, often highlighting the differing stances between parties and party groupings. In addition to governmental bodies and NGOs engaged in the L&D discourse, academics across a variety of disciplines have engaged meaningfully with the topic, as further discussed in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Overview

This literature review covers the conceptualization of Loss and Damage as a distinct facet of climate governance which is growing in relevance as climate change impacts increase in frequency and severity. Additionally, the political landscape surrounding L&D under the UNFCCC is established, forming the backdrop for understanding the implications of narratives formed and perpetuated by various parties in the L&D space. Although L&D has a scientific basis rooted in the measurable impacts of climate change, the concept itself is much more commonly used within politics and governance, and thus, this literature review will center more closely on related fields such as International Relations, Legal Studies, Political Science, and Development Studies. Climate science establishes the fact that some current and future losses and damages are, to a certain extent, unavoidable – both because of the long-term impacts of past and present greenhouse gas emissions, as well as due to the physical limitations of adaptation (see Mechler et al. 2019; Calvin et al., 2023). The question then becomes how we are to deal with the implications of losses and damages, especially considering that L&D is an inherently global issue. This combination of factors creates an academic landscape which approaches the topic of Loss and Damage from multiple angles. The heart of the debates surrounding L&D do not occur within academia; rather, they play out in the political sphere. Nevertheless, it is important to establish the state of scholarship on Loss and Damage considering the ways in which academia and politics/governance coincide and influence each other.

Loss and Damage was conceptualized and brought forward as a concern ahead of the establishment of the UNFCCC; however, academic focus surrounding the subject did not surge in popularity until recently (Garcia-Portela, 2025, 3). This increase in academic interest surrounding L&D is tied to the concept's resurgence in the governance space over the

past decade, largely triggered by the negotiations resulting in the WIM, SN, and FRLD. Much of the academic literature surrounding L&D utilises inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary approaches, creating a diverse academic landscape.   Balzter et al (2023) and Vanhala et al., (2023) emphasizes the importance of cross-pollination across academic disciplines relating to Loss and Damage, especially regarding the respective roles of climate science, legal approaches, and fields concerned with societal change and wellbeing. In addition to highlighting the value stemming from interdisciplinarity, Balzter et al. (2023) also calls attention to existing gaps in the Loss and Damage field; Primarily, the need for further development in quantifying and understanding losses and damages. Thus, this literature review touches on contributions to L&D discourse from a variety of relevant academic disciplines. Methodologies within this field are also widely varied, and thus this literature review by no means aims to represent the entirety of research regarding Loss and Damage scholarship; Rather, it provides an overview of L&D specifically in relation to its political contention and narrative elements.

Development and Disaster Risk Reduction

Loss and Damage overlaps in many capacities with both Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and development efforts. Considering the role of extreme weather and disasters in causing losses and damages, as well as the impacts of L&D on development progress and potential, it is no surprise that these fields of study have long been engaged in L&D discourse. Within recent academia, Liu et al. (2024) serves as a prime example of the perspectives on Loss and Damage stemming from Development and DRR scholars. Disaster Risk Reduction is an important facet in minimizing losses and damages through increasing resilience and planning (*ex-ante* action), though it does not focus on remedying or compensating for losses and damages after the fact (*ex-post* response). The differentiation between mitigation (reducing climate change-related emissions), adaptation (adjustments to

avoid/reduce climate change-related impacts), and loss and damage (the impacts which are unavoidable or already existing due to climate change) highlights the key distinctions between L&D and DRR. While DRR aims to reduce the negative impacts of disasters, often through adaptation, L&D is more concerned with what occurs after mitigation and adaptation efforts are no longer sufficient. Furthermore, both DRR and L&D operate in association with the UN ecosystem, and face similar political and financial obstacles, meaning longstanding DRR efforts provide reference points for recent L&D discourse.

DRR is linked with efforts towards development, often operating in tandem with one another. Development is tied to key L&D concepts including vulnerability and resilience, which arise often throughout L&D discourse. Considering many developing countries are also vulnerable to natural disasters and other climate-induced obstacles, development and DRR scholars play an important role in the foundations of L&D scholarship. For instance, Saleemul Huq was a prominent player in the L&D landscape throughout his career as a climate and development scholar. Huq contributed to work produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as numerous articles focused on L&D from the perspective of developing nations. Through this work, scholars such as Huq position climate change related losses and damages as a major inhibitor of development efforts, and thus an issue in need of addressing within politics and governance.

Politics and Governance

Loss and Damage is an inherently political topic – both due to its situation within the global governance landscape, as well as the variety of stances fuelling the debate. Wenger (2022) serves as an important text regarding the governance systems related to L&D in *The Institutional Ecosystem for Loss and Damage,* especially in terms of situating L&D in relation to the UNFCCC, Paris Agreement, and other international bodies (Wenger, 2022). Within the scope of L&D politics under the UNFCCC, Calliari et al. (2019) and Calliari et al.

(2020) serve as central resources. Calliari (2019), entitled *The Politics of (and Behind) the UNFCCC's Loss and Damage Mechanism* utilises an international relations framework to dissect the power dynamics present within the negotiation landscape. Building on this theoretical understanding, Calliari et al., (2020) conducted interviews with L&D professionals to "bring[...] an analysis of 'the political' into the picture by identifying the complex and underlying issues that fuel contention within UNFCCC L&D negotiations" (1). Together, the work of these scholars provides an understanding of the state of knowledge regarding L&D politics as viewed through international relations, in addition to establishing a 5-point list of key areas of contention. The financial considerations (the first point of contention) and discussions surrounding responsibility related to L&D (the fourth point of contention) established in Calliari et al., (2020) have garnered significant academic attention as well, especially by legal, climate justice, and development scholars. These contributions lay the groundwork for understanding the historical context and ongoing tensions surrounding L&D, especially when considering the highly political nature of the concept.

Key Loss and Damage Debates

The losses and damages experienced by developing countries are disproportionate in relation to historic emissions related to climate change, sparking interest in L&D as a justice issue. Legal scholars have taken interest in L&D largely due to the concern of liability, calls for reparations, and human rights violations. Salimi Turkamani (2024) describes the legal landscape surrounding L&D, especially in relation to the newly established FRLD. This text explores the legal debates surrounding liability and compensation related to L&D, emphasizing the contrasting perceptions of L&D through the developed/developing nation dichotomy. Salimi Turkamani (2024, 329-330) outlines the logic behind these differing perspectives on L&D, stating that European countries embrace environmental protection as the central motivator for action on L&D, whereas other developed nations such as the United

States center economics as the driving force for L&D action (or lack thereof). On the other hand, developing nations are largely motivated by moral arguments tied to historic emissions responsibility for climate change. Thus, the disagreements preventing significant legal milestones surrounding L&D (and climate change, more broadly) largely stem from these contrasting perspectives. Essentially, these differing priorities and understandings regarding the importance and origins of losses and damages shape how, if, and why actors engage in discourse regarding L&D governance.

In line with the dominant stance of developing countries, Environmental Justice scholars have similarly pulled on notions of responsibility in relation to the historic causes of climate change alongside the current L&D experience. Tied to common notions in Environmental Justice scholarship, Dorkenoo et al., (2022) explores L&D through the lens of disproportionality, which refers to an imbalance or injustice (2). Disproportionality encompasses interconnected factors such as risk, impacts, and burdens (Dorkenoo et al., 2021, 3) – all of which reflect the concerns central to L&D debates. Establishing the role of disproportionality within L&D discourse enables a deeper understanding of the perspectives shaping climate governance more broadly, which is especially important considering the recent relevance of L&D under the UNFCCC. In Vanhala (2021), L&D is explored through the roles of knowledge and power in perpetuating injustices. This text highlights how L&D's conceptual and political ambiguity continues to foster conflict across the global governance landscape, which subsequently raises issues for addressing the issue at the national level (Vanhala, 2021, 146-147). By understanding the practical implications of injustice in L&D governance, it allows for a deeper understanding of the perspectives which dominate negotiations under the UNFCCC. Kamboh et al. (2024) similarly discusses justice, particularly emphasizing the fact that "carbon emissions of the Global North of High-Income Countries (HICs) account for approximately 92%, while the Global South […] have borne the

greatest impacts to date" (Kamboh et al., 2024, 1-2). Building from this understanding, Kamboh et al. (2024) focuses on the importance of agency and leadership by the Global South, while also underscoring the necessity of rectifying the historic injustices perpetuated by the Global North and High-Income Countries.

Considering the financial burdens associated with losses and damages from climate change, financial mechanisms have long represented a focal point of L&D debates. Page and Heyward (2017) link the justice and financing concerns of L&D through the concept of climatic compensation, which aims to address L&D in a manner which allows those affected to live lives of a similar quality as they would have without said losses and damages (Page & Heyward, 2017, 359). Thus, this approach does not stem notions of punishment or reward; rather, it simply aims to rectify imbalances in climate change impacts which carry considerable concerns for human rights and wellbeing. This approach differs slightly from other Environmental Justice positions, such as Garcia-Portela, who advocates for reparations to address losses and damages, echoing the longtime calls made by AOSIS. Garcia-Portela's work in *Rectifying Climate Injustice: Reparations for Loss and Damage* (2025) exemplifies the more radical approach to scholarship surrounding L&D finances, centering human rights and calls for justice well beyond existing measures. L&D financing has been of particular interest as it is historically made up largely of loans and insurance mechanisms, which can further entrench developing countries in debt, thus limiting their developing potential. It is for this reason that many justice-focused scholars (see Calliari et al., 2020; Uri et al., 2024), call for L&D funds to shift in the direction of grants and compensatory schemes. Further, McDonnell (2023) identifies additional gaps in L&D finance in response to the establishment of the FRLD at COP27 in 2022. For instance, the phrasing of financing being dedicated for "particularly vulnerable developing countries" (McDonnell, 2023, 423) leaves room for interpretation, considering the lack of criteria surrounding the terminology. In addition, those

17

who need assistance most may have limited access to funds due to infrastructural and institutional barriers, highlighting another facet of the FRLD in need of address (McDonnell, 2023, 425). Falzon et al. (2023) underscores the role of finance in regard to L&D, stating that opposition to finance for losses and damages is the greatest barrier to addressing climate injustice (Falzon et al., 2023, 96). While L&D finance is crucial, it is also controversial and has long served as a source of "contestation and inaction", following a general pattern of compensation as an obstacle across global governance efforts (Falzon et al., 2023, 96).

Beyond the financial points of contention within the L&D discourse, the language and framing present within L&D policy submissions and negotiations provide ample opportunity for analysis. Namely, Boyd et al. (2017) and Falzon et al. (2023) have respectively explored aspects of narratives related to L&D. Boyd et al. (2017) utilised interviews with L&D professionals to create a "typology of loss and damage perspectives". This provides meaningful insights into the parallels between L&D scholarship and L&D governance in practice, as well as providing an opportunity to observe the narratives at play among individual professionals in the L&D sphere, rather than focusing solely on the institutional-level narratives. Boyd et al. (2017) describes four key typologies: the adaptation and mitigation perspective, the risk management perspective, the limits to adaptation perspective, and the existential perspective (5-7). These typologies are not narratives perse, though they do provide "consistent viewpoints about what L&D means and how to address it" (Boyd et al., 2017, 5) through the eyes of stakeholders. Falzon et al. (2023) compliments these viewpoints by providing a framework for understanding various negotiation tactics related to Loss and Damage financing. These tactics similarly employ narrative strategies, serving as an example of how states act as actors capable of establishing, perpetuating, and diminishing narratives in the global governance space. While Boyd et al., (2017) delves into the perspectives surrounding L&D itself, Falzon et al., (2023) builds on the ways in which these

perspectives are harnessed in order to influence (or inhibit) changes within the L&D
governance space.

Narratives in Climate Politics

Within the world of politics, language serves as a powerful tool of influence and
change. The discourse surrounding L&D has long been of particular interest within this
research area, as elaborated upon in McNamara (2014), Calliari (2018), and Uri et al., (2024).
Focusing specifically on a justice-based approach to L&D finance, Uri et al. (2024) echoes
the long-time demands of climate justice advocates through a narrative review. Ten years
before Uri et al. (2024), and long before the establishment of the FRLD, McNamara (2014)
raises the question of how finance fits into the L&D landscape, especially considering the
roles of power within L&D negotiations. Similarly, Calliari (2018) traces the discourse and
party positions surrounding L&D under the UNFCCC from 2011 up the establishment and
operationalisation of the WIM, serving as a vital source for the content surrounding more
recent L&D evolutions. Differing from Boyd et al.'s (2017) four typologies, this text
positions L&D as an issue framed in just two contrasting (and often conflicting) ways, with
developing nations viewing L&D as "something beyond adaptation and thus requiring
additional and distinct instruments" (Calliari, 2018, 10) and developed nations positioning it
within the scope of adaptation. While this critical discourse analysis is highly relevant
considering its assertion of two dominant perspectives across the L&D landscape, it does not
focus specifically on the narrative elements at play. To better understand the components of
narratives and how they can influence environmental governance landscapes, we can look to
scholars focused more specifically on the interactions between narratives and policy.

The Narrative Policy Framework (Jones et al, 2022; Shanahan et al., 2018; Schlaufer
et al., 2022) serves as a branch of research focusing on the interactions between narratives
and policy in a broad sense. This framework emerged from environmental scholarship in the

United States in the 2010s and aims to systematically identify and analyse narratives at play within a given policy landscape (Schlaufer et al., 2022, 250). Since then, it has been employed to systematically study the role of narratives in policy across a plethora of academic disciplines and governance landscapes. The NPF assumes that narratives serve as a tool that enables actors to situate their own positions on issues, in addition to fostering communication among actors (McGovern & Jones, 2024, 2). This assumption emerges from "*Homo Narrans* model of the individual, which assumes that humans prefer to think, reason, communicate, and process information in narrative form" (McGovern & Jones, 2024, 4) and pulls on the four facets of narrative structure to allow for systematic analysis of narratives. By identifying these four elements (setting, characters, moral, and plot) in tandem with the content itself, it is possible to use the NPF to analyse narratives at various levels. Moving forward based on this assumption of narratives as influential tools, the NPF can be used to study policy and governance issues, especially regarding particularly contentious topics. While no existing scholarship, to the best of my knowledge, utilises the NPF to analyse L&D under the UNFCCC specifically, it has been used in relation to climate change related policy, among other similar topics.

Although not following the NPF approach in particular, narratives have also been explored in relation to both environmentalism and institutions by Linde (2001) and Koch et al., (2021). Linde establishes a conceptual understanding of narratives in an institutional context, especially regarding the formation and shifting of narratives, as discussed further in the subsequent Theoretical Framing chapter. Koch et al. (2021) utilises some facets of the NPF while also pulling on strands of Social Network Analysis, which focuses on the group dynamics at play within environmental governance spaces. This text underscores the relevance of this area of studying, stating that "understanding the emergence of narratives in environmental governance processes is crucial, because they have significant influence on

what is formally allowed or not in society, what is right and wrong and what one ought to do, and what is thinkable or unthinkable" (Koch et al., 2021, 9).

Research Gap

Existing scholarship sufficiently highlights the contentious and ever evolving nature of Loss and Damage politics under the UNFCCC. In essence, L&D is an issue driven largely by the narratives cultivated and maintained by actors under the UNFCCC umbrella, which is visible through official submissions and negotiation processes. Although scholarship on L&D discourse is varied in terms of scope and focus, existing literature emphasizes the politically charged nature of the issue which acts as a driving force in L&D governance. At the same time, researchers interested in the influence of narratives have established the importance of language as it relates to environmental policy and decision making. Considering the global nature of L&D, the power of narratives within governance processes, and the recently evolving landscape of L&D under the UNFCCC, it is important to further develop understandings regarding the interplay of these factors. The intersection of narrative analysis and recent L&D policy evolutions under the UNFCCC is under researched, especially in the context of the policy evolutions and debates since 2019. Understanding the narratives at play within politics and governance provides us with a more comprehensive picture of the factors which influence policy outcomes, ultimately supporting better-informed insights. This justifies not only the relevance of this thesis but also highlights further opportunities within a growing body of literature.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framing

The Conceptualization of "Loss and Damage"

Language is at the heart of the Loss and Damage discourse, exemplified by how the term "Loss and Damage" itself is understood and portrayed by various actors (Boyd et al., 2017, 4). Loss and damage itself is a term with no singular definition but is often described as the unavoidable impacts brought on by climate change despite efforts towards mitigation and adaptation (McNamara & Jackson, 2019; Calliari et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2023; Dorkenoo et al., 2022). These impacts can be slow onset, such as sea level rise, and also encompass extreme weather events which increase in frequency and severity as climate change progresses (Jackson et al., 2023). Furthermore, losses and damages include both economic and non-economic impacts, with the latter proving to be especially challenging to address within policy and governance processes.

Loss and Damage is a highly interdisciplinary topic of study, with involvement across fields including law, political science, international relations, geography, and economics (Vanhala et al., 2023, 3). For this reason, the theoretical concepts used within L&D scholarship can vary significantly; however, the concepts relevant to the narrative aspect of this research are most central, considering the chosen methodology of narrative analysis. Because the concept of L&D is ill-defined across academic and governance circles, narratives can be especially powerful in helping or hindering progress.

Narrative Policy Framework

The term "narrative", much like "Loss and Damage" lacks a singular cohesive definition; However, it is often understood as stories told from particular perspectives, often with the purpose of conveying a meaningful framing or idea (Reissman, 2008, 14-16). Narratives as a form of communication have long played a central role in human society,

acting as "the glue that binds the members in a collaborative governance process" (Koch et al., 2021, 2). The influence of narratives is vast; they can be seen as "do[ing] political work" and "being connected to the flow of power in the wider world" (Reissman, 2008, 21). This is visible within the L&D sphere, as the narratives surrounding L&D have implications for the policy and governance outcomes aimed at addressing these issues.

Building upon the understanding of language as a political tool, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) assists in providing a structure within which to analyse party submissions related to L&D. Importantly, the NPF states that "narrative is the primary means by which people process information, communicate, and reason" (Jones et al., 2022, para 3, pt 5). In the context of L&D governance, the narratives at play present themselves through the framing, tone, word choice, and omissions across party submissions and negotiations. The Narrative Policy Framework assumes that perceptions of reality matter within a policy context, thus pulling from a social constructivist perspective (Jones et al., 2022, para 3, pt 1).

Within Narrative Policy scholarship, four identifiable narrative form elements are typically considered: characters, setting, plot, and moral (Jones et al., 2022). Characters simply refer to the actors at play within a given narrative, which, in this case, is largely made up of parties and party groupings under the UNFCCC. In line with NPF practice, these characters are often categorized as "heroes", "villains", or "victims". The setting situates the narrative within a given time, place, and broader societal context. For the purposes of this research, the setting largely refers to the focal time period (2019 - 2024), the various geographic regions of relevance, and the institutional systems under which L&D governance occurs (i.e.. the UNFCCC). Next, the plot connects the characters and setting, which is where the "story" itself becomes apparent. This element emerges throughout the coding process and is best understood retroactively. Finally, the moral is the focus of the narrative,

23

often represented by a call to action. This is especially relevant within the scope of this research, considering the fact that the party submissions for each Subsidiary Body Session essentially function as a platform for feedback, negotiations, and next steps regarding L&D. The four key structural elements outlined within the NPF will serve as guidance in developing specific codes, as further elaborated upon within the Methodology chapter.

In addition to the four narrative elements focused on form, narrative content is also of interest within the Narrative Policy Framework, although the latter is considered more difficult to generalise (Jones et al., 2022, para 7). The issue of narrative relativity comes up in relation to analysis of narrative content, which highlights the fact that narratives are influenced by the surrounding contexts (the when, where, and how any given narrative is presented) and thus must be understood through the lens of bounded relativity. To address this potential limitation, NPF pulls on belief systems and strategies as methods of situating narrative understandings. In the words of Koch et al., (2021, 3), narratives can serve "as a linguistic materialization of [...] hidden traits" such as ideologies, beliefs, and worldviews. For instance, belief systems can pull on various other theories (i.e.. political ideology, cultural theory, moral politics theory as mentioned in Jones et al., 2022) to assist in establishing the bounds within which narratives emerge and are perceived. Understanding strategies can also assist in dealing with narrative relativity within the NPF. Narratives are a means to an end, a tool in influencing cultural and policy change. Thus, it is logical that "we strategically construct narrative to persuade, to elicit sympathy, to entertain, and so on" (Jones et al., 2022, para 9). For instance, in the context of L&D, strategies may include emotional appeals from vulnerable parties, the framing of L&D as a justice issue, and other tactics useful in taking or avoiding accountability.

The NPF operates on three scopes: (1) the micro-level, aimed at understanding policy narratives of individuals; (2) the meso-level, which analyses the narratives of groups; and (3)

24

the macro-level, which views narratives on the level of entire cultures (Jones et al., 2022, para 3). These three scales interact with one another; however, it is also possible to conduct analyses focused on a specific scale alone. Within this research, the meso-level serves as the primary focus, considering the focus on narratives of parties and party groupings. Macro-level findings may also emerge, dependent on emergent trends within the research findings.

Institutional Narratives

While the Narrative Policy Framework provides the core building blocks for understanding the narratives across L&D broadly, it is important to further elaborate upon narratives in an institutional context specifically. In terms of the governance landscape, narratives both shape and are shaped by institutional contexts (Linde, 2001, 518). Linde's (2001) concept of institutional narratives aids in further developing the relationship between narratives and L&D under the UNFCCC. Linde also raises several other facets of institutional narratives which are relevant to this study. Firstly, the fact that institutions are made up of many actors with varying perspectives, and yet only a selected narrative is presented as representative of entire nations/party groupings.   voices this question of "who speaks for the institution" (2001, 531) in order to highlight the role of hierarchies within institutions, and how these hierarchies contribute to the narratives that ultimately take hold. On a similar note, Linde highlights the importance of understanding silences as active components of narratives. That is, omissions can occur intentionally or unintentionally within narratives, and sometimes a *lack* of discussion can tell you just as much as what is mentioned explicitly. Falzon et al. (2023) explores this in further detail within the context of L&D negotiations under the UNFCCC, dubbing these methods of avoiding L&D finance as "obstructionist tactics" (96). In particular, Falzon highlights the manipulation of language as a key form of influencing L&D narratives and outcomes throughout the negotiation process. For instance, strategic ambiguity allows parties to avoid specific commitments through broad

and interpretable phrasing. These tactics hearken back to the importance of considering

narrative strategies as key aspects of content under the Narrative Policy Framework, as will

be further explored within the Methodology section.

Chapter 5: Methodology

Research Ethics

While no research is ever entirely free of ethical concerns, the absence of participant involvement and reliance on publicly available data limits the risks faced throughout this thesis. A CEU Checklist on Ethical Issues in Research was completed and approved by my supervisor, Alexios Antypas, prior to the research process. This research was undertaken without the assistance of any funding.

Positionality Statement

As a woman born-and-raised in Canada to well-educated parents, I recognize that my identity and privilege influence my perspectives and understandings within (and beyond) the scope of this work. To mitigate these potential biases as best as possible, I aim to embed reflexivity and transparency throughout my research processes.

Introduction to Grounded Theory Method

Grounded Theory emerged in the late 1960s through the work of sociologists Glaser and Strauss and is now one of the most widely used methodology used within qualitative research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, 1). Despite its widespread popularity, this methodology comes in various forms and can follow various frameworks, though all are rooted in the practice of allowing theory to emerge from the data, contrary to hypothesis-driven research methodologies (Bryant & Charmaz, 200, 32). It is primarily seen as an inductive method; however, abduction also plays an important role in constructivist streams of Grounded Theory, in which both forms of reasoning are combined (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, 16).

Grounded Theory necessitates an iterative coding process, which allows for new themes to emerge and evolve throughout the research process. Two or three forms of coding are typically utilised within Grounded Theory Method, depending on which school is being

followed. First, open coding is conducted, followed by axial coding, and finishing with selective coding. Typically, axial coding follows the framework set out by Corbin & Strauss (1990, cited in Kelle, 2007, 201), which organises the initial codes into the following predefined categories: Phenomenon, Causal Conditions, Context, Intervening Conditions, Strategies, and Consequences. Selective coding is often the final step of Straussian Grounded Theory, which aims to combine findings from the earlier coding rounds to establish a refined theory. Constructivist Grounded Theory, as practiced by GT scholars such as Kathy Chamaz (Bryant & Chamaz, 2007), often favors a more interpretive final process over the selective coding process. The Constructivist Grounded Theory closely aligns with the principles of narrative analysis and the Narrative Policy Framework and thus will serve as the chosen approach for this research.

Integration of Narrative Analysis and Grounded Theory

Following tradition in Grounded Theory, the inductive process was undertaken early on in the research process. This phase of inquiry typically involves open coding to identify emergent themes, which, in this case, led to the development of thematic codes (or "narrative content"). This exploratory approach enables this research to be guided by the dominant themes, rather than analysing the documents with preconceived notions of what trends may exist. Considering the iterative nature of this research, documents were coded and revised several times. Two forms of coding were utilised within this research: (1) Inductive open coding of selected submission documents, leading to the creation of thematic codes (narrative content); and (2) Axial coding of narrative elements, following the Narrative Policy Framework. The coding process utilises Grounded Theory Method, with the Narrative Analysis factor coming into play during the second form of coding.

Narrative Analysis is a multi-disciplinary qualitative research approach primarily used to understand and interpret stories. The Narrative Policy Framework provided broad

guidelines which structured the narrative element codes utilised during the axial coding process (see Table 1). The NPF was selected as opposed to the typical Grounded Theory Framework used by Corbin & Strauss (1990, cited in Kelle, 2007, 201) in order to bring the narrative elements into focus. The two-stranded approach to coding allows for a more holistic representation of the narratives at play by looking at not only what is said (narrative content), but also how it is said (narrative elements) – two factors which ultimately contribute to the broader discourse surrounding L&D governance. The Narrative elements provide a lens through which to understand and organise the first phase of codes. For instance, framing of historic responsibility and financial obligations related to L&D can paint developed countries as the "villains" and developing nations as the "victims", with calls for a dedicated Loss and Damage financial scheme as the "moral". The codes identified in the open coding process, when combined with the narrative elements, begin to shape the overarching narratives at play within the L&D policy landscape, as further described in Figure 2.

Table 1: Brief Summary of Narrative Element Code Types and Descriptions

Primary Code	Description	Example
Character (hero)	Positioning of a given actor or group of actors as a saviour / positive driver of change	AOSIS as a leader in L&D, NGOs as allies, etc.
Character (villain)	Positioning of a given actor or group of actors as the perpetrator of losses and damages	"Historic emitters", "insufficient support from developed nations" etc.
Character (victim)	Positioning of a given actor or group of actors as disproportionately impacted by climate change	Highlighting the "most vulnerable" groups; Specific attention focused on developing countries, low-lying regions, vulnerable demographics, etc.
Plot	Overarching storylines present within the document	

| Moral | Calls for specific action related to L&D | Calls for dedicated L&D finance, new or improved policy mechanisms, increased technical support, etc. |
| Setting | Linked to the document's SB session | Time, place, policy landscape, SB session parameters, etc. |

Figure 2: Conceptual Map of relationship between Narrative Elements and Thematic Codes.
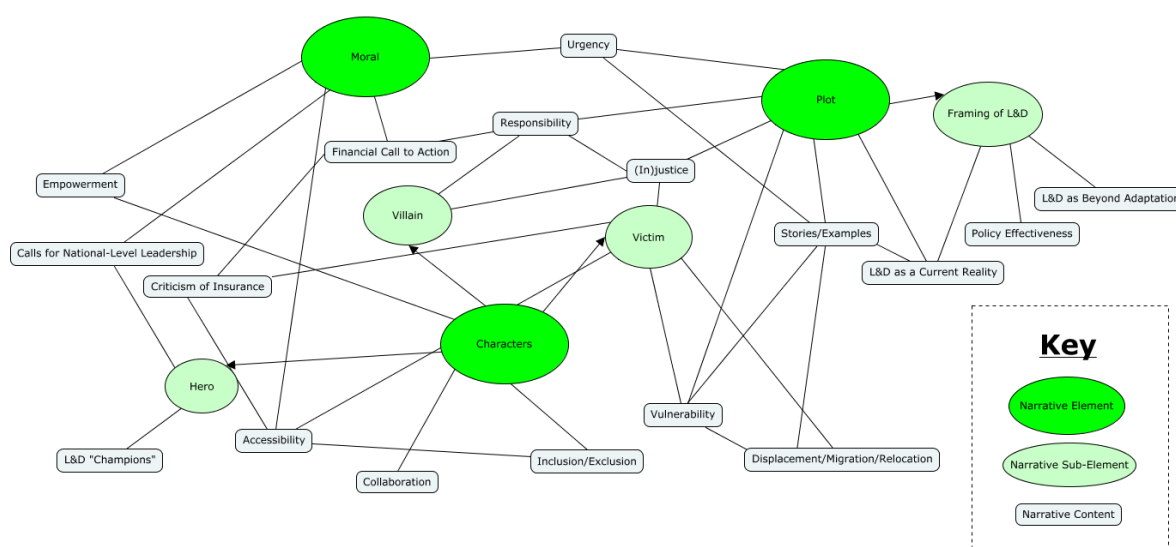
Figure 2 made by author using CMapTools.

Data Selection

To select documents for the narrative discourse analysis, I retrieved results including the phrase "loss and damage" from the UNFCCC submission portal, which is the primary hub for NGOs, UN bodies, parties, and observers to submit official statements. These results included Subsidiary Body (SB) sessions of interest spanning from 2019 to 2024, which are detailed in Table 2 below. This research, taking an iterative approach, initially began with analysis of the SB 61 party submissions as they represent the most recent evolutions within L&D governance under the UNFCCC. From here, the scope expanded to include SB 58, SB 56, and SB 51 to chart a better understanding of the evolution of perspectives surrounding

L&D policy in recent years. Although the submissions being considered within this narrative analysis are limited to the past 7 years, the work of Calliari (2018) details the L&D discourse among parties up until 2015, which provides some context for situating an understanding of the evolution of L&D narratives. In total, there are 89 documents across SB 51, SB 56, SB, 58, and SB 61 which will serve as the focus of this narrative analysis. Submissions to SB 57, which also took place between 2019 and 2024, was not included in analysis as there are no party submissions included and therefore lacks the scope of actors necessary to meaningfully contribute to a holistic understanding of the narratives present within this time frame.

Table 2: Details regarding Subsidiary Body Sessions related to L&D under the UNFCCC from 2019-2024.

Information sourced from the *UN Submission Staging Page.*

Session Number	Issue	Title	Mandate	Deadline for Submission	Number of Submissions
SB 51	"Loss and Damage"	"Review of the Warsaw International Mechanism"	"The SBI and the SBSTA invited Parties and other stakeholders to submit via the submission portal by 16 October their views on the review of the Warsaw International Mechanism on the basis of the terms of reference for consideration at SB 51."	16/10/2019	12
SB 56	"Santiago network for averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change"	"Parties and relevant organizations to submit their views on the following aspects of the Santiago network: -Operational modalities; -Structure; -The role of the Ex Com and its expert groups, task force and technical expert group; -The role of L&D contact points and other relevant stakeholders -Possible elements for the terms of	"Decision 19/CMA.3, para. 10(a)"	15/03/2022	34

		reference of a potential convening or coordinating body that may provide secretarial services to facilitate work under the Santiago network."			
SB 58	"Funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage"	"Parties and relevant organizations to submit views on topics for and the structure of the 2nd Glasgow Dialogue and the workshops referred to in paragraph 7(a) of FCCC/CP/2022/L.18–FCCC/PA/CMA/2022/L.20"	"FCCC/CP/2022/L.18–FCCC/PA/CMA/2022/L.20, para. 7 c)"	15/02/2023	29
SB 61	"The 2024 review of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts"	"Views and inputs to the 2024 review of the WIM Information from Parties and non-Party stakeholder"	"FCCCC/SBSTA/2024/7, para. 78 and FCCC/SBI/2024/13, para. 140"	30/09/2024	14

Methodological Limitations

Grounded Theory Method has some limitations, including the issue of theoretical

sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity is an ability that is developed over time as researchers

become increasingly capable and comfortable working with Grounded Theory Method

(Bryan & Charmaz, 2007, 17). Specifically, it refers to one's ability to interpret and

categorize data in ways which emerge from the data, rather than through preconceived

notions. In this case, the limitation lies in the fact that I am a relatively inexperienced

researcher and thus may not produce the same level of results as someone with significant experience using Grounded Theory. This limitation is present across different methodologies and does not delegitimize the chosen methods overall; rather, it provides opportunity for growth and reflection throughout the research process.

Within the scope of the document selection and L&D landscape, it is important to consider the fact that party groupings are not entirely cohesive groups, and therefore some nuance in perspective is lost when singular submissions represent multiple actors (Linde, 2001). For instance, the G77 + China party grouping grapples with varying perspectives regarding compensation behind closed doors, considering the fact that the group includes some major emitters (Calliari et al, 2020, 7). Despite the nuance regarding group perspectives surrounding L&D, only the final submission is considered within this narrative analysis. While this does create some limitations of study, the final submissions are ultimately what influence the L&D policy sphere and therefore are still central in understanding the narratives at play. Additionally, narrative analysis requires significant interpretation by the researcher, thereby raising concerns of personal bias influencing research findings. While this is a legitimate concern, the power of narratives is partly linked to the role of perception, which enables this methodology to be suitable regardless. Furthermore, the scope of documents selected for analysis inherently limit the findings, showing only the narratives present across particular groups, within a set time, and in the context of specific calls for submissions. These combinations of factors means that the results of this study cannot be universalized; however, the narratives revealed provide valuable context for understanding the L&D landscape both within governance and academic spaces.

Chapter 6: Results and Discussion

Key Themes

The thematic codes developed within the initial stage of open coding provide the bones of the narrative content utilised within each key narrative. The codes below were identified across the 89 SB session documents in question, as visible within the code table (Table 3) below, which is organized alphabetically.   The use of "L&D" in the descriptions below refers to any/all relevant L&D mechanisms (SN, FRLD, WIM), though the submissions vary in terms of which elements are focused on according to the associated SB sessions.

Table 3: Narrative Content Codebook

CODE NAME	SUB-CODES	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE	NOTES
Accessibility	• Language (non-academic) • Language (content available in all UN official languages) • Realistic participation for nations with low institutional capacity • User-friendly (website/resources)	Discussion of the importance of accessibility regarding financial and technical support to address L&D.	"Knowledge products from the ExCom should be communicated in a clear and accessible manner for the intended audience. It is crucial that the work of the expert groups and task forces goes beyond academic analysis to offer practical and actionable solutions for those addressing loss and damage at the national level." (LDC, 2024, para 13)	Ties to the Vulnerability, Inclusion and Exclusion, and Perceived Effectiveness codes.
Calls to Action	• Increased finance • Reparations	Explicit calls for development or improvement to specific facets of	"We call for reparations for frontline communities and tangible progress	Tied to the "moral" narrative element. Often

	• Non-debt-based finance • Private sector investment • Public Sector Investment • Developed / High-Income nation funding	L&D under the UNFCCC.	on loss and damage finance, not only as a matter of humanitarian priority, but of justice." (IBON International, 2022, para 1)	reflective of the SB session mandate.
Collaboration	• Between the various branches of L&D action under the UNFCCC (WIM, SN, FRLD) • Between parties • With the private sector • Involving Indigenous communities • Involving frontline communities • Across other UN bodies	Highlighting the importance of partnerships, inclusion, and cooperation in order to improve action on L&D.	"Coherence in loss and damage work between the WIM and those engaged in humanitarian, migration, health, biodiversity, WMO platforms, among others, will facilitate synergistic efforts to bring about better coping capacities and enhance coping range to current and future climate change-related hazards." (Christian Aid, 2019, para 18).	Tied to the Inclusion and Exclusion and Empowerment codes.
Human Mobility	• Displacement • Relocation • Migration	Mention of migration, relocation, and/or displacement of individuals and/or communities due to losses and damages brought on by climate change.	"Loss and damage financial sources and mechanisms should take a comprehensive view to address i) prevention and risk reduction measures for climate change-induced displacement, both internal and cross-border, ii) protection, assistance and social protection strengthening and iii) durable solutions and governance to manage displacement."	Ties to the Vulnerability, (In)justice, Inclusion and Exclusion, and Urgency codes.

			(International Organization for Migration, 2023, para 21)	
Empowerment	• Capacity building • Centering the most impacted communities		"Empower communities to address loss and damage themselves, through facilitating the exchange of knowledge, skills and resources they require to do so." (Oxfam, 2022, para 11)	Ties to the "hero" narrative element, as well as the Inclusion and Exclusion code.
Examples of L&D	• Recent disasters • Projected future disasters • Food concerns • Security concerns	Inclusion of current and/or projected impacts of losses and damages.	"Senegal's fishing sector provides livelihoods to 17% of the workforce, with most production by small-scale artisanal fisherfolk; fish is one of the main sources of protein in the Senegalese diet. With 2 °C of warming, fish populations across the west coast of Africa are expected to decline by up to 50%, with 50% job losses in the sector also anticipated. Food security impacts will likely be enormous." (Least Developed Countries Group, 2019, para 6)	Underscores the Urgency code, and can utilise emotional appeal. Can relate to the Human Mobility code.
Framing of L&D	• L&D as beyond adaptation • L&D as an ambiguous concept • L&D as a current reality	Definitions or implied understandings of what "L&D" refers to.	"Losses and damages are happening today, and will continue even with limited warming and best efforts to adapt." (International Federation of Red	Ties to the Examples of L&D, Calls to Action, and Technical Solutions codes.

			Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2022, para 1)	
Inclusion and Exclusion	• Regional representation • Involvement of marginalized demographics • Involvement of academia • Involvement of the private sector		"It is saddeningly typical that the most vulnerable social groups are denied their agency to take part and thus decisions are made without their knowledge. This issue holds particularly true for persons with disabilities." (ACT Alliance, 2022, para 16)	Ties to the (In)justice, Collaboration, and Accessibility codes.
(In)justice	• Disproportionality	Explicit mention of the unequal distribution of impacts of losses and damages, alongside the vast differences in historic emissions across regions and demographics.	"Every fraction of a degree of further warming increases the risk of dangerous climate impacts, and it is often those who have least contributed to, and benefited from, emissions who face the worst of these impacts." (Oxfam, 2022, para 2)	Ties to Responsibility, Vulnerability, Urgency, Human Mobility, Inclusion and Exclusion, Perceived Effectiveness, Accessibility, and Calls to Action codes. Ties to the "victim" and "villain" narrative elements.
Levels of Leadership	• Local-Level initiatives (bottom-up action) • Funding sourced from the state • National-Level policies	Mention of which level(s) of government and society should be involved in L&D.	"National-level funds, supported by international finance, can help countries to rebuild quickly after such devastating events." (Byrnes & Surminski, 2019, 6)	Ties to the Empowerment and Collaboration codes, as well as the "hero" narrative element.

Perceived Effectiveness of existing L&D architecture	• Perceived as ineffective and insufficient • Perceived as effective and sufficient	Framing of how the WIM, SN, and FRLD are functioning.	"The current structure is insufficient to address needs for financial, technical and capacity building support as articulated by developing country Parties, nor is it adequate to the tasks outlined in its functions." (Least Developed Countries Group, 2019,4)	Ties to the Calls to Action, Urgency, and Framing of L&D codes.

Responsibility	• Blame placed on high-emitting industries
	
	• Blame placed on Developing Nations / High-Income Countries
	
	    ○ Liability
	
	    ○ Reparations (see Calls to Action code)
	
	• Blame placed on greenhouse gas emissions generally (i.e.. L&D is due to lack of emissions reductions)
		Framing of who is most at fault for loss and damage.	"Our nation is also unashamed to call out those directly responsible for this crisis, those nations and their subsidized fossil fuel companies which years have, for decades, treated our atmosphere as a giant dumpsite for greenhouse gas pollutants." (Vanuatu, 2022, 1)	Ties to the "villain" narrative element. Ties to Calls to Action and (In)justice codes.

Technical Solutions	• Disaster risk warning systems • Adaptation methods	Discussion of technology as a source of addressing L&D.	"To reduce damages and losses over the medium to long term, FAO has innovated in modelling systems (such as the MOSAICC/Modelling System for Agricultural Impacts of Climate Change), conducted multidisciplinary	Ties to the "hero" narrative element.

			analysis and mapping of impacts upon agriculture, supported countries in designing coherent National Adaptation Plans and addressing climate change adaptation (CCA), mitigation and resilience as part of their Nationally Determined Contributions, as well as agriculture sector specific disaster risk reduction (DRR) plans, and developed guidance and worked with governments and communities to introduce climate-smart agricultural adaptation measures to strengthen resilience." (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2020, 2)	
Urgency	• Prompt roll-out of L&D funding • Immediate emissions reductions	Framing of the scale and severity of L&D	"The impacts of the climate crisis are already severe and we need to address climate-induced losses and damages now." (Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, 2022, para 3)	Ties to Calls to Action code.
Vulnerability	• Geographic vulnerability • Vulnerability of certain demographics (low-income, women, children,	Specifically highlighting who is most impacted by L&D.	"Enhance the understanding of how loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change affect particularly vulnerable developing countries, segments of	Ties to the "victim" narrative element, as well as the (In)justice and Human Mobility codes.

39

		Black Indigenous People of Colour)		the population that are already vulnerable owing to geography, socioeconomic status, livelihoods, gender, age, indigenous or minority status or disability, and the ecosystems that they depend on, and of how the implementation of approaches to address loss and damage can benefit them" (AOSIS, 2019, 14)	

Overview of Key Narratives

The thematic trends outlined in Table 3 tie into the narrative elements highlighted within the Narrative Policy Framework. In tandem, the narrative elements and thematic trends (narrative content) form overarching narratives which emerged during analysis of the SB documents. These overarching narratives are the Justice Narrative, the Business-As-Usual Narrative, and the Geopolitical Narrative, which are further elaborated upon in subsequent sections. These overarching narratives have shifted over time, as the "setting" has changed across the L&D landscape. The setting consists of factors such as the SB session mandate, the current state of L&D during the time of document submission, and the location and local contexts of the region. The setting of each SB session is important to consider, as it provides context regarding the narratives at play and their evolutions over time.

The SB 51 session centered around gathering feedback on the functions of the WIM prior to COP25 in 2019. Parties were called to evaluate WIM's delivery on its three core functions: "(1) enhancing knowledge and understanding of comprehensive risk management

approaches; (2) strengthening dialogue, coordination, coherence and synergies among relevant stakeholders, and (3) enhancing action and support, including finance, technology and capacity-building" ,(Decision 2, CP.19/para 5, as cited in United Nations, 2024, 9). Thus, many of the submissions brought up narrative content related to content such as collaboration, financing, and technical solutions. Despite the parameters set prior to the submission, the narratives across parties and party groupings are still apparent. In terms of narratives present in SB session 51, it is important to consider the fact that only twelve parties/party groupings submitted documents. While only one submission represents the Business-As-Usual Narrative (the European Union), absence of a call for change aligns the parties without submission documents as in line with the Business-As-Usual Narrative. Six submissions to SB session 51 reflect the Geopolitical Narrative, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Least Developed Countries, the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, the United Nations University, Byrnes & Surminski on behalf of the Grantham Research Institute, and Guatemala on behalf of AILAC. Finally, 5 parties/party groupings utilise the Justice Narrative, including AOSIS, the African Group of Negotiators, New Zealand, Christian Aid, and the Climate Action Network International.

SB session 56, held in 2022, called on parties and party groupings to respond to the four aspects of the newly-operationalized Santiago Network, which include: "operational modalities; structure; the role of the Ex Com and its expert groups, task force and technical expert group; and the role of L&D contact points and other relevant stakeholders -Possible elements for the terms of reference of a potential convening or coordinating body that may provide secretarial services to facilitate work under the Santiago network", as outlined in Table 2 (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, n.d.). This call for submissions received 34 documents, consisting of 4 submissions aligned with the Business-

As-Usual Narrative (Chile on behalf of AILAC, the United States of America, Norway, and the Anticipatory Action Task Force), 13 representing the Geopolitical Narrative (the International Committee of the Red Cross, the World Meteorological Organization, France on behalf of the European Union, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Risk Informed Early Action Partnership, ACT Alliance, the Loss and Damage Network, Indonesia, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia on behalf of the African Group of Negotiators, and the World Meteorological Organization on behalf of the Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems Secretariat), and 17 in line with the Justice Narrative (Practical Action, the Loss and Damage Collaboration, Oxfam, Vanuatu, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development, the Munich Climate Insurance Initiative, Canada, Australia, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ecuador on behalf of the Like-Minded Developing Countries, Senegal on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of AOSIS, IBON International, and Bangladesh).

SB session 58, which occurred in 2023 and received twenty-nine submissions, focused on the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) as a continuation of previous negotiations. Within these SB session submissions, the Business-As-Usual Narrative and Geopolitical Narrative each had seven submissions in line with their respective narrative. The Business-As-Usual Narrative included submissions from Oxford Climate, Switzerland, Sweden on behalf of the European Union, Norway, Brazil on behalf of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, whereas the Geopolitical Narrative submissions consist of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the

World Food Programme, the Maldives, the International Organization on Migration, Senegal on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, and Saudi Arabia on behalf of the Arab Group. The Justice Narrative represents the majority of submissions made to SB 58, with 15 submissions (The Home of Sibuyan Island Peoples, Bangladesh, the Center for Environmental Law and Amnesty International, the Climate Action Network International, the Climate Heritage Network, the World Wildlife Fund, Allied for Climate Transformation by 2025 Consortium, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, Ecuador and Bolivia on behalf of the Like-Minded Developing Countries, the Loss and Damage Collaboration, Canada, Australia, Samoa on behalf of AOSIS, New Zealand, and the Climate Action Network Latin America).

SB session 61, held in 2024, served as a recent review for the Warsaw International Mechanism, with similar terms of reference as discussed at SB session 51 five years earlier. Fourteen submissions were made, with only the United States portraying the Business-As-Usual Narrative. 5 actors, (including Uganda on behalf of the G77 + China, Iraq, Mexico on behalf of the EIG, the International Organization on Migration / the Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, and the Philippines) emphasized the Geopolitical Narrative, while the remaining 8 parties/party groupings (Hungary on behalf of the European Union, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, Australia, Vanuatu, Canada, Malawi on behalf of the Least Developed Countries, and Samoa on behalf of AOSIS) represented the Justice Narrative.

The setting, although often not explicitly stated like the other narrative elements, contributes to the narrative content and overall narrative presented within each submission document. For instance, AOSIS' narrative has shifted to be increasingly radical as insufficient action on the other two pillars of climate change have led to an increased focus on L&D. The narratives utilised by each party/party grouping exist across a spectrum, and thus each

submission may not contain *every* trait of the said narrative archetype, and/or may utilise some aspects of several overarching narratives. Additionally, there are instances of actors shifting across narratives overtime. That being said, some parties/party groupings do serve as exemplary cases of the narrative type across the four SB sessions, such as AOSIS embodying the Justice Narrative, the United States as the Business-As-Usual Narrative, and the International Organization on Migration (IOM) as the Geopolitical Narrative. Each narrative type is defined by emergent trends along the Narrative Policy Framework categories, with the content derived through the narrative content coding process. Specifically, trends across the stances, framing, and calls to action present within SB submissions alongside the characters give rise to each narrative type.

Figure 3 below provides a brief breakdown of the frequency of each narrative across submissions from SB 51, 56, 58, and 61. As visible within Figure 3, the Justice Narrative gradually increased in prevalence from 41.7% of submissions ahead of SB 51 to 57.1% of submissions for SB 61. The Justice Narratives' gaining of traction is reflected within the submission documents themselves, as well as in the policy outcomes for L&D in this time period. Namely, the establishment of the Santiago Network and the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, which have long been central to the calls for action among proponents of the Justice Narrative.

Figure 3: Frequency of Narratives for each Subsidiary Body Session Call for Submissions.

SB 51 Submission Narrative Breakdown

Business as Usual
8.3%

Justice
41.7%

Geopolitical
50%

SB 56 Submissions Narrative Breakdown

Business as Usual
11.8%

Justice
50%

Geopolitical
38.2%

SB 58 Submissions Narrative Breakdown

Business as Usual
24.1%

Justice
51.7%

Geopolitical
24.1%

SB 61 Submissions Narrative Breakdown

Business as Usual
7.1%
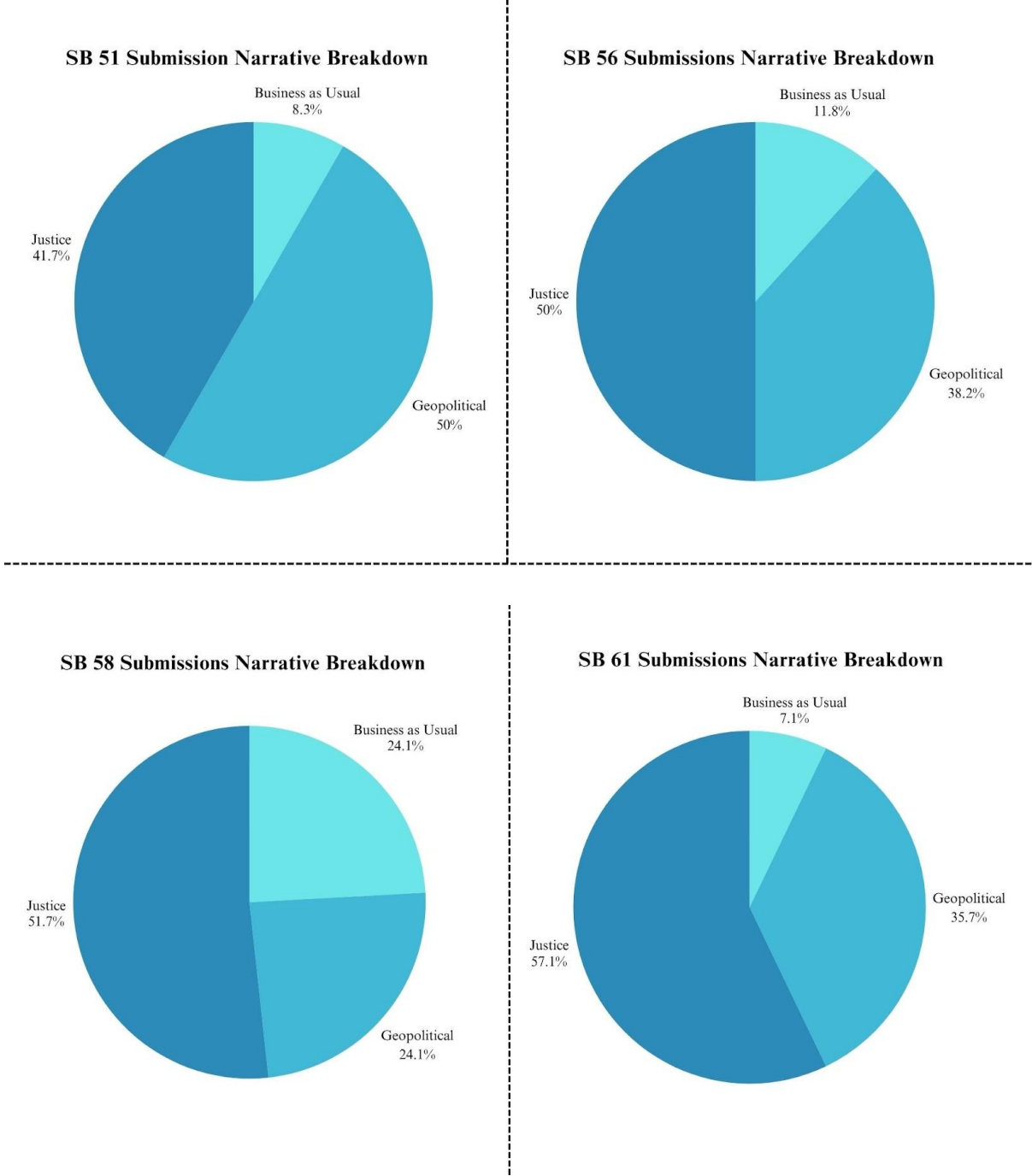
Justice
57.1%

Geopolitical
35.7%

Figure 3 made by the author based on research findings using Canva software.

Narrative 1: The Business-As-Usual Narrative

Although L&D is an inherently politically charged topic, some party submissions use

narrative elements in an attempt to de-politicize the issue. Namely, shaping the various

characters in such a way that frames L&D as a global issue (the "victims") without specified blame on particular parties (the "villain"), and with united action as representing the solution to the issue (i.e.. the "hero"). Submissions guided by this overarching narrative typically emphasize L&D efforts as something which should be voluntary and avoid exploration of legal/financial obligations related to climate change. On the topic of funding, these submissions often call on private and public sector participation, further deflecting any calls for obligatory financial contributions from Developed nations. It is important to understand that the Business-As-Usual Narrative is not *against* efforts to address Loss and Damage altogether; rather, it simply resists the obligatory actions. This narrative is defined by a lack of ambitious and 'politically charged' language, alongside a general support for continuation of existing efforts. For instance, the United States of America opens their submission to SB 61 stating that the WIM "has made significant progress in implementing its functions" (United States of America, 2024, para 1), indicating that the mechanisms in place for addressing Loss and Damage are, at the very least, functioning as they should. This ties to the code related to perceived effectiveness of existing L&D mechanisms, wherein the Business-As-Usual Narrative typically applauds previous efforts. This contrasts with the Justice Narrative, which typically views existing mechanisms as wildly inefficient, insufficient, and delayed, though still a step in the right direction. The Geopolitical Narrative, on the other hand, is not as critical of past efforts on L&D, instead focusing more heavily on the need for a rapid increase in efforts to address worsening losses and damages.

Several veins of the Business-As-Usual Narrative are visible across the SB session submissions. For instance, the EU typically takes a more progressive stance than the United States, though the focus remains on the *environmental* consequences rather than the moral qualms raised within the Justice Narrative. In other words, the priority for proponents of this Business-As-Usual narrative prioritizes mitigation efforts over Loss and Damage specifically,

often through the justification that L&D should fall under existing adaptation structures. This reflects the findings discussed in Salimi Turkamani (2024) in which the author posits that European countries typically value environmental protection over any "political, economic, and moral dimensions" (329).

Further, this narrative does not carry the same urgency and calls for L&D funding as visible within both the Geopolitical and Justice Narratives. The Business-As-Usual Narrative often utilises venue shifting (Falzon et al., 2023, 107) to blur the distinction between climate action (primarily mitigation and adaptation efforts already addressed in other facets of the UN ecosystem) and Loss and Damage. For instance, the EU submission from SB 51 states that "all economies, and in particular the world's largest emitters, must first and foremost continue to work together to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions" (Finland on behalf of the European Union, 2019, 2), thus shifting the attention and obligation towards mitigation efforts rather than L&D. In some cases, the length of submissions can also be telling, such as in the case of Norway's typically brief submissions across all SB sessions related to L&D. The caveat to this trend is that a lack of institutional capacity can also play a role in submission presence and/or length, such as in the case of Iraq.

Although the Business-As-Usual narrative is less prevalent within the SB session submissions, this does not entirely reflect its power within the UNFCCC landscape. Firstly, many of the more influential global players embody this narrative, such as the United States and, for several submissions, the European Union. Secondly, this analysis only accounts for actors which wrote submissions, meaning that the actors who view L&D as less important are underrepresented here in comparison to the sessions and negotiations themselves. Actors do not necessarily have to provide SB submission documents to obstruct or slow efforts towards more ambitious action on L&D, meaning some parties/party groupings are essentially representing the Business-As-Usual Narrative by omission. This reflects Linde's (2001)

stance on the power of silence in perpetuating dominant narratives in an institutional context. Broadly, this narrative is content with a lack of change – it can be an active or passive approach.

Narrative 2: The Justice Narrative

Scholarship focused on Loss and Damage tends to assume L&D is distinct from the mitigation and adaptation pillars of climate action. Thus, much of the relevant academic literature across various fields of study positions L&D as an issue in need of addressing, often through lenses of climate justice, liability, and debates surrounding reparations. Consequently, the submissions which utilise the Justice Narrative often mirror the positions displayed across prominent L&D literature (see Garcia-Portela, 2025; Page & Heyward, 2017; Uri et al., 2024; Kamboh, 2024; Dorkenoo et al., 2022; Huq et al, 2013; Calliari, 2018). In line with justice-focused L&D scholarship, actors using the Justice Narrative position have long positioned L&D as a pillar of climate action in its own right. The Climate Action Network Latin America, in their 2023 submission for SB58, highlighted the fact that "for more than 30 years, Latin American civil society has put on the table the urgency of recognizing Loss and Damage as the third pillar of the Paris agreement, demanding the establishment of additional, predictable and predictable funding arrangements" (Climate Action Network Latin America, 2023, para 1), echoing Canada's succinct statement that "the current global GHG emissions trajectory will inevitably result in loss and damage despite mitigation and adaptation efforts" (Canada, 2022, para 1).

This overarching narrative is largely utilised by those facing the greatest losses and damages despite contributing very little to historic greenhouse gas emissions, as well as their allies. The Justice Narrative utilises narrative tools to emphasise past 'wrongs' that need to be addressed urgently. To underscore this urgency, L&D is positioned as a current reality rather than a hypothetical future. As stated by Oxfam in their SB 56 submission, "climate

48

change is already a reality for the poorest and most vulnerable, and without urgent action will cripple the economies of developing countries, increase hunger, and put the Sustainable Development Goals out of reach." (Oxfam International, 2022, para 2).

In terms of vulnerability, proponents of the Justice Narrative often cite specific demographics, rather than allowing the term to remain ambiguous. For instance, the Loss and Damage Youth Coalition emphasizes the current impacts of L&D on youth, stating that "The climate crisis is real in all parts of the world, and those on the frontlines are the most affected, even though they contributed the least to it. Youth are being exposed to the effects of climate change, and the situation will only worsen in the future if serious actions are not taken now" (Loss and Damage Youth Coalition, 2022, para 3). This statement not only highlights the disproportionality inherent in L&D and the climate crisis more broadly but also serves as a call for urgent action.

In addition to the aforementioned strategies, the Justice Narrative calls on examples of current losses and damages, often alongside emotional appeals to emphasize the gravity of the issue from their perspective. A prime example of this is visible within Vanuatu's submission to SB session, in which they highlight how "the intangible impacts of climate change on Vanuatu's people and ecosystems are debilitating and often irreversible, including loss of land, cultural sites, burial grounds, traditional knowledge, village displacement, psychological trauma from recurrent disasters, failing human health, coral reef degradation and more. These non-economic losses and damages, which defy quantification or monetisation yet are deemed extremely valuable by people experiencing the loss, continue to undermine cultural, linguistic and spiritual practices of the Ni-Vanuatu people, and violate our fundamental human rights." (Vanuatu, 2024, 4).

In terms of characters, this narrative starkly contrasts developed and developing nations as the villains and victims, respectively. For instance, in their submission to SB56

regarding the Santiago Network, Vanuatu clearly identifies the villain as "those directly responsible for this crisis, those nations and their subsidized fossil fuel companies which [..] have, for decades, treated our atmosphere as a giant dumpsite for greenhouse gas pollutants. Knowing the effects of global warming, they actively suppressed this info and invested millions of dollars in misinformation campaigns so they could keep earning billions of dollars from fossil fuels. This is a crime, and has led to climate injustice and Ecocide on a global scale" (Vanuatu, 2022, para 5). In addition to historic emitting nations, the Justice Narrative also positions the fossil fuel industry as the villain, with calls to action reflecting this.

Based on notions of responsibility, the call to action often centers around financial obligations; particularly, the moral responsibility of developed nations (and high-emitting industry) to provide reparations and other dedicated financial support for the nations experiencing the brunt of losses and damages. The Justice Narrative is also critical of insurance schemes related to Loss and Damage, as demonstrated in the Climate Action Networks' submission ahead of SB session 58, in which they state: "these must be non-debt inducing instruments and must be grant-based. Innovative sources can and must be equitable, placing the highest burden on those most responsible and most able to pay" (Climate Action Network, 2023, para 12). In the same submission period for the 58th Subsidiary Body session, the World Wildlife Fund also highlighted the need for grant-based funding, as "communities affected by climate disasters will rarely be able to repay […] loans" (World Wildlife Fund, 2023, 5). This explicit mention of equity across the Justice Narrative submissions underlines the perception of losses and damages as a matter of climate justice, rather than merely an offshoot of adaptation.

The positioning of the "hero characters" often positions empowerment and historic leaders in L&D as the heroes. For instance, Australia's SB 58 session submission "recognises and commends the long-standing leadership and advocacy of Pacific Island countries on

climate change and their ongoing efforts to raise the profile of loss and damage" (Australia, 2023, para 4). This narrative is often utilised by developing nations, especially those with significant vulnerabilities to climate change such as small island developing states. Additionally, human rights-driven organisations such as the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice and the Center for International Environmental Law

Narrative 3: The Geopolitical Narrative

This narrative positions L&D as an urgent issue not for primarily moral reasons (as is the case in the Justice Narrative), but rather, because of geopolitical concerns. Specifically, attention is paid to the rising likelihood of increased migration and displacement (represented by the Human Mobility code), as well as the instability which goes hand in hand. This approach calls on technical solutions to address the issue, alongside continued mitigation and adaptation efforts. Thus, the "hero" is represented as something technical rather than the role of any one particular group, with L&D framed as something which can be addressed through proper planning, risk management, adaptation, and resources. This perspective positions early warning systems and national/regional level capacity building as major tools in addressing L&D. Further, it views L&D as a global issue in need of collaborative solutions, including contributions from academia, non-governmental organizations, and state actors.

While advocating for increased action, this narrative does not necessarily position developed nations as the "villain" nor developing nations as the "victims", though it does call on developed nations to play an active role in addressing L&D through financial and technical support (one aspect of the "hero"). Instead, it aims to underscore the urgency of addressing L&D for humanity as a whole, though special emphasis is placed on people and regions with existing or heightened susceptibility to geopolitical instability.

Considering its techno-centric approach, this narrative calls on scientific reports and examples of L&D to illustrate the issue. For instance, the ACT's submission ahead of SB 56

states that "the recent IPCC Sixth Assessment Report on impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability, showed that loss and damage is an area of increasing significance in both climate policy and science. Moreover, it states that with "increasing global warming, losses and damages will increase, and additional human and natural systems will reach adaptation limits." (ACT Alliance, 2022, para 2). This centering of science rather than equity-driven statements is the primary factor which separates the Geopolitical Narrative from the Justice Narrative. The G77 + China submission for SB 61 calls for improved L&D finance, though the focus is on funds as a path forward in addressing climate change rather than something 'owed' due to historic injustices. Within this submission document, they state that within L&D finance thus far, "the emphasis has been on insurance (which is currently not working even in developing countries), showing a lack of innovative approaches to address loss and damage and a lack of emphasis on the identification of needs of developing countries related to loss and damage and how these needs can be addressed through action and support (including financing)." (G77 + China, 2024, para 9).

This call for innovative approaches is visible across multiple of the Geopolitical Narrative submissions within the time period in question. Ahead of SB 56, the UNDRR highlights how "the Santiago Network offers a critical opportunity to bring much needed technical support and capacity building to countries that are already experiencing extreme events and slow onset processes" (UNDRR, 2022, para 2), further underscoring the emphasis on implementing tangible change through technical solutions. The Geopolitical Narrative takes a forward-looking approach, whereas the Justice Narrative typically emphasizes the importance of L&D as a method of rectifying past injustices.

Shifts in Narratives

Though the Justice Narrative appears dominant across the SB session submissions with over 50% of documents in alignment with this narrative, there are several considerations important in understanding the significance of this. Firstly, the number of submissions for any given narrative does not necessarily reflect influence held within the negotiation process. For instance, many of the proponents of the Justice Narrative are small nations and non-governmental organisations which may hold somewhat limited negotiation power, despite their proportion of SB submissions. Additionally, the Business-As-Usual narrative is reflected in many parties/party groupings without SB session submissions, as it serves as a 'default' positioning considering its less radical approach on addressing Loss and Damage.

Until recent L&D discussions, the Business-As-Usual and Geopolitical Narratives dominated the L&D landscape, as visible through the policy outcomes (particularly the decades of delay on establishing the FRLD since AOSIS first raised the issue in the late 1990s). Since SB session 58, the Justice Narrative has represented over half of all SB submissions, indicating a shift in dominant narrative. Major actors have shifted positioning as well, such as the European Union which was resistant to several of the demands within the Justice narrative (i.e. obligatory financial contributions and blame positioned squarely on developed nations and historic emitters) until their SB 61 submission.

The shifts in results must also be understood taking into account the relevant mandates for each SB session of interest. Parties and party groupings are given some parameters in terms of what to discuss within each submission, and thus the overarching narratives must be situated within this broader context. Still, the findings contain nuances which hint at potential for further academic inquiry within the subject of narratives in the L&D landscape within the UNFCCC. For instance, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand consistently align with the Justice Narrative, seemingly unaligned with the usual

Developed/Developing dichotomy across L&D narratives. In the context of both Canada and Australia, one possible hypothesis for their positioning within the Justice narrative may involve leadership from their respective Indigenous communities. The Justice Narrative highlights the disproportionality inherent in the impacts of climate change, and Indigenous communities are one demographic facing unequal burdens from losses and damages. Pulling on Linde's (2001) idea of who speaks for an institution, it is possible that Canada, Australia, and New Zealand hold these positionings not merely because of their respective Indigenous communities; but rather, because these communities hold more influence in L&D governance than Indigenous communities in other parties/party groupings. While Indigenous communities are by no means a monolith, there is a notable trend of Indigenous communities advocating for climate justice, including related to Loss and Damage specifically. Vulnerability may also come into play, as each of their respective regions are geographically vulnerable to climate change and thus have more vested interest in addressing Loss and Damage. This is exemplified by Australia's recognition of their region being "at the frontline of the adverse impacts of climate change and already experiencing profound and irreversible impacts, including from extreme weather events, cyclones, drought, flooding, sea level rise and ocean acidification" (Australia, 2023, para 4). All three countries utilise examples of L&D to underscore the relevance of this segment of environmental governance, alongside the need for increased action.

Relevance of Findings

This research highlights the prevalence of narratives within the Loss and Damage policy landscape, particularly within the Subsidiary Body Session submission documents. While the submissions themselves are meant to simply serve as a response to the UNFCCC's call for submissions regarding each respective L&D-related SB session, the stories at play within these submissions are visible and play a role in the subsequent discussions and policy

outcomes. Analysis of narrative content and narrative structure allows us to better understand the positioning of various parties and party groupings, as well as the likely calls to action which result from these narratives. Loss and Damage is a particularly politicised facet of global climate governance, and understanding the narratives at play provides deeper understanding regarding the sources of contention, and potentially future strategies to mitigate some of the conflict which prevents action. Politics is often a game of compromise, and while understanding key narratives utilised by parties and party groupings does not eliminate the sources of conflict themselves, it may assist in adjusting the framing and language used in order to better facilitate finding common ground. This research confirms the existence of the two dominant narratives often identified within the L&D debate, which largely align with the developed/developing nation divide. In addition to these two perspectives, a third overarching narrative emerged through the document analysis.

Research Limitations & Further Research Potential

Although the findings of this research are extremely relevant and valuable given the ongoing developments for L&D under the UNFCCC, it is important to highlight key limitations. Firstly, the scope of narrative analysis is limited in terms of documents selected (89), actors involved, and time frame of six years (2019-2024). Additionally, the number of submissions for each SB session range from 12 total (SB 51) to 34 (SB 56), meaning it is challenging to chart continuous trends across actors when they do not all submit documents for each session. Further, this analysis is narrowly focused on Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC, which excludes much of the efforts and narratives occurring in other spaces. Indeed, much of the more obvious narrative work takes place in avenues beyond policy submission documents, such as speeches, videos, and social media content. The aim of this analysis is not to assess the entirety of the narrative landscape surrounding Loss and Damage, but rather, to identify what narratives are at play within the SB session submissions,

and to what extent they are visible. Some challenges emerged within the session submissions themselves as well, particularly in identifying overarching narratives in brief and ambiguous submissions. Secondly, as is the case in many qualitative research methods, the methodology of narrative analysis necessitates subjective interpretation. Broadly, these limitations mean that the findings of this research are not universal and should be understood only within the context of the stated scope.

Although Loss and Damage is gaining traction within global governance discussions, the recent developments within the institutional and political spheres leave significant space for further research regarding L&D narratives and discourse. In particular, the recent evolution of L&D policy hints to a high likelihood of continued changes, meaning further narrative development is likely. Due to this continued development, new narratives will potentially emerge and existing ones will shift over time; therefore, future research regarding narratives in relation to Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC is a promising area.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Loss and Damage is a concept with growing international relevance as the impacts of climate change become increasingly frequent and severe. Considering the concept's ties to demands for climate justice and financial obligations, its position as a contentious issue within the UNFCCC landscape is understandable. Stakeholders within the Loss and Damage governance space utilise numerous tactics and strategies in order to enable or prevent change to relevant mechanisms. Among these strategies are the narratives which are present across Subsidiary Body Session submissions, negotiation processes, and the broader world of L&D discourse as a whole.

Human beings resonate with stories, and thus, narrative elements exist across politics and governance spaces such as the UNFCCC. Through a combination of Grounded Theory methodology and the Narrative Policy Framework, texts can be understood on an inductive yet transferable manner. As a result, three key narratives in recent Loss and Damage UNFCCC Subsidiary Body session submissions became apparent: the Business-As-Usual Narrative, the Geopolitical Narrative, and the Justice Narrative. By identifying and analysing the narratives at play within the submissions regarding Loss and Damage, patterns emerge which speak to the positions of various parties/party groupings, alongside the overall L&D landscape over the past five years.

The Business-As-Usual Narrative, although seemingly underrepresented in terms of number of submissions prior to each Subsidiary Body Session of interest, long served as the dominant driver of progress (or rather, lack thereof) in the sphere of Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC. This is reflected by the fact that the FRLD took several decades to come to fruition, despite the emergence of the Justice narrative in the 1990s due to the outspoken calls for action by AOSIS. Although early proponents of the Justice Narrative stood firm in their demands surrounding Loss and Damage, this narrative took a back seat in negotiations and

policy outcomes until recent years. As indicated by the name, the Justice Narrative is deeply rooted in moral arguments relating to historic responsibility for climate change alongside the disproportionate impacts being felt by the world's most vulnerable populations. While the Geopolitical Narrative often reflects similar calls to action as proponents of the Justice Narrative, this perspective focuses on Loss and Damage as a driver of instability, rather than a matter of equity.

The evolution of Loss and Damage mechanisms under the UNFCCC demonstrate how shifts in narratives, even by a few key actors, can result in vastly different outcomes. Considering the central role of narratives in society, increasing understanding of the narratives at play within the world of Loss and Damage can provide actors with important insights ahead of Subsidiary Body sessions and other UNFCCC deliberations. Narratives, through the harnessing of plots, settings, characters, and morals, serve as an influential method of communication and control across climate governance systems. In highly contentious contexts, such as that of Loss and Damage under the UNFCCC, identifying the narratives at play can serve as a powerful method of deepening our understandings of the world and the systems within it.

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