Fridays for what future?

– a case study on the collective action framing of the Swedish environmental movement

Lucas McNabb

Fridays for what future? – a case study on the collective action framing of the Swedish environmental movement

Lucas McNabb

Publishing and archiving

Approved students' theses at SLU are published electronically. As a student, you have the copyright to your own work and need to approve the electronic publishing. If you check the box for **YES**, the full text (pdf file) and metadata will be visible and searchable online. If you check the box for **NO**, only the metadata and the abstract will be visible and searchable online. Nevertheless, when the document is uploaded it will still be archived as a digital file.

If you are more than one author you all need to agree on a decision. You can find more information about publishing and archiving here: https://www.slu.se/en/subweb/library/publish-and-analyse/register-and-publish/agreement-for-publishing/

☒ YES, I/we hereby give permission to publish the present thesis in accordance with the SLU agreement regarding the transfer of the right to publish a work.

☐ NO, I/we do not give permission to publish the present work. The work will still be archived and its metadata and abstract will be visible and searchable.

Abstract

Climate protests under the banner Fridays For Future have increased in scale and frequency since they began in August 2018. Protests are in the present research understood as significant discursive arenas that are instrumental in societal knowledge production, prompting the aim of the present research to empirically explore how specific knowledges about climate change are communicated by the movement. A case study methodology was devised informed by collective action framing theory. The analysis drew on multiple data sources, including online and offline observations and activist interviews, to generate a comprehensive interpretation of the Swedish Fridays For Future's collective action frame. This methodology allowed for inductive construction of themes present in the data. The findings detail 10 themes and 13 sub-themes of movement diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. Internal heterogeneity among select diagnostic and prognostic themes is established, inferring possible frame disputes. The movement makes use of Doomsday vocabulary to construct motive for collective action. Responsibility, or even environmental citizenship, is inferred as another means of constructing motive. The findings together make static some of the ongoing and everchanging processes of protest, allowing researchers and practitioners alike to observe and reflect on the movements' collective action frame. Future research on responsibility framing or internal frame disputes may generate further clarity to the movement's knowledges and framing processes.

Keywords: Fridays For Future, collective action frame, framing, climate change, social movement, Sweden

Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

1. Introduction

As the consequences of anthropogenic climate change are increasingly prevalent, engaged citizens turn to the streets to show disappointment in government (in)action (Wahlström *et al.* 2019). The global climate strike on Friday September 20th 2019 was likely the largest climate strike to date, indicating a historically expanding scale of climate strikes. The many independently organized strikes on that day, were largely connected to the Fridays For Future movement, with origins tracing back to Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg (Laville & Watts 2019). Currently in Sweden, most larger cities have recurring climate strikes every Friday, organized under the banner Fridays For Future (Fridaysforfuture.se 2020).

Social movements and protest activities are instrumental processes in societal knowledge production (Lindekilde 2014). The purpose of this study is to empirically explore how specific knowledges and understandings of climate change are communicated by the social movement organization Fridays For Future. Exploring these knowledges may provide novel insights –to both practitioners and researchers– regarding what specific understandings are forwarded by the movement, which in turn also reflect attitudes in society at large toward notions such as justice, responsibility and citizenship.

The aim is pursued by asking the guiding research question*: how is climate change framed by the social movement Fridays For Future?* The study draws on multiple discursive data sources of Fridays For Future, and combines inductive and deductive methods of analysis, to generate a comprehensive interpretation of how climate change is communicated in the social movement.

1.1. Fridays For Future

The social movement Fridays For Future was formed in August 2018, following then 15-year old Greta Thunberg's three consecutive weeks of protest in front of the Swedish Parliament (Fridaysforfuture.org n.d.). Since then, an estimated 83 000 strike events across 7000 cities globally are estimated to have been carried out under the Fridays For Future banner (Fridaysforfuture.org 2020). The climate strikes are independently organized, oftentimes by multiple and various local NGOs, but

adhere to the overall goals and strategy of the movement by registering strikes with the Fridays For Future websites (Fridaysforfuture.org n.d.).

A recent Swedish publication on climate protests refers to Fridays For Future as a case of large mobilization and investigated two specific strikes in Stockholm and Malmö (Moor *et al.* 2019). The investigation looked into, among other things, the motives of protest participants (henceforth 'activists'). The most common motives in both cities were to "pressure politicians to make things change" and "raise public awareness". Another prevalent motivational factor was "expressing one's views". This prompts some of the questions of this study – pressure politicians to make *what* change, raising public awareness about *what*, and expressing *which* views specifically?

1.2. Protests as part of a social world

Social constructionism constitutes a key ontological premise for this study. In short, society is socially constructed. Individual perceptions and knowledges are continuously co-constructed through social processes (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Beyond that, this study acknowledges social movements and protests as significant discursive forces, which are part of macro-level construction and negotiation of meaning, opinion and belief. Activists are thus seen as "signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers" (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 613). Hence, how environmental challenges and solutions are understood and communicated by activists and social movements, inevitably plays a role in constructing and negotiating societal understandings. Writing on social movement outcomes, Garth Massey (2015) argues:

> When they *are* a significant force for social change, social movements do matter. A social movement's perspective on, or articulation of, a social problem can gain the public's attention, helping to focus the discussion on issues, obstacles, and solutions. (p. 153, emphasis in original)

Social movements are thus seen as constitutive of social change and part of societal meaning making processes. Moreover, social movements are not only forces of change, but may also be understood as signifiers that reflect wider societal and cultural change (Benford & Snow 2000). Thus, protests may not only contribute to further change, but also indicate change that is already happening in other segments of society.

1.3. Social movement framing

One of many ways to explore the dynamics of social movements, is to investigate which discursive frames are constructed by the activists. Frame theory and its associated frame analysis is a common and established, yet diverse, theory and method within social movement research (Mooney & Hunt 1996; Massey 2015). In this study, frame theory is first and foremost understood as a theory that emphasizes how frames – understood as explicit discursive constructions – are used to provide a new "definition of the situation" by questioning "not only existing circumstances and accepted practices but may challenge their very legitimacy or morality" (Massey 2015 p. 161). Many scholars highlight the utility of frame analysis to understand individual meaning making, and frames are often defined, or in similar terms, as: "a cognitive map or pattern of interpretation that people use to organize their understanding of reality" (Pezzullo & Cox 2018 p. 362). In this thesis, frames are understood more strategically, as constructions of maps of interpretation to maximize mobilization and chances of success for other social movement goals. A key contribution of frame theory to this study lies in its ability to interpret manifest content of the social movement as reconstructions of frames to promote certain understandings of the situation among recipients. Conceptualizing frames this way transcends the individual and is referred to as *collective action frames*, perhaps most notably developed by sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow (Lindekilde 2014; Massey 2015).

Collective action frames

In the words of Benford & Snow (2000, p. 614), "collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization". These are comprised of two sets of features, firstly a movements' *core framing tasks*, and secondly, the practices, or "the interactive, discursive processes that attend to these core framing tasks and thus are generative of collective action frames" (Benford & Snow 2000 p. 615). For the purposes of the current research, data are extracted from the practices and analyzed with the assistance of the core framing tasks.

Three core framing tasks are explicated by social movement scholars, and together they facilitate issues of mobilization and action consensus, i.e. they garner support and mobilize citizens to join demonstrations. The three core framing tasks, which any collective action frame consists of, are defined in Table 1, building exclusively on the definitions of Benford & Snow (2000).

Table 1. Core framing tasks (adapted from Benford & Snow 2000)

Core framing task	Features
Diagnostic framing	Identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents. Focuses blame or responsibility.

Prognostic framing	Articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, a plan of attack and/or strategies for carrying out the plan. Answers the question of what is to be done, as well as the problems of consensus and action mobilization.
Motivational framing	Provides a "call to arms" or rationale for engaging in collective action, including construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive (severity, urgency, efficacy and propriety). Socially constructed vocabularies for engaging in collective action and sustaining participation. Refers to the "agency" component of collective action frames.

1.4. Visuals in protest

Imagery and symbols, just like text, play a crucial part in frame construction and meaning-making for objects and situations (Philipps 2012). Social movements in particular, make use of imagery to articulate, amplify and extend their messages to broader audiences and conventional media (Luhtakallio 2013; Olesen 2013). This has led scholars to declare that social movements are performative at heart, and that protest images and protest visual material –e.g. protest posters or banners– are part of the collective action frame (Snow & Soule 2009). Images are indexical, meaning that they are – theoretically – direct conveying of reality rather than representation, which means that people generally view them as more truthful. Accordingly, images can 'get away with more' insofar as they may meet less resistance than textual messages (Messaris *et al.* 2001). It has been argued that whereas textual messages in social movement discourse proceed through a rational-logical model of persuasion, visuals proceed through people's emotive pathways (Joffe 2008).

To capture both of these pathways of persuasion, this study includes protest posters and banners for analysis. Moreover, the Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook page includes recurring entries that call for, and present a 'poster of the week' (*FFF FB* n.d.). These entries include pictures of posters or banners and are submitted by activists and thereafter posted on the social media by movement organizers. The *poster of the week* entries are thus strategic artefacts of communication, further contributing to the rationality to include posters for analysis in this study.

1.5. Aim and research questions

Social movements are instrumental in societal negotiation of meaning (Snow & Benford 1988). But what is actually being negotiated? How is the problem understood, what solutions are proposed, and why should we care? *The overall aim*

of this study is to empirically investigate how specific knowledges and understandings of climate change are communicated by the social movement organization Fridays For Future. In so doing, this thesis aims to take the pulse on these contemporary and everchanging processes of protest. The rationale behind this aim is threefold.

First; how Fridays For Future communicates, or frames, climate change, has an impact on how the world perceives climate change and its associated challenges and opportunities. In other words, the movement has an instrumental role in negotiating current and future perceptions. But what specific perceptions are currently being negotiated? There is a need of a systematically reconstructed snapshot of these current societal meaning making processes.

Second; Fridays For Future's framing indicates societal perceptions of the issue. Understanding the frames from which activists draw provides important insight into what is currently seen to have discursive authority and resonance in society, insofar as frames must draw from a cultural storehouse of established arguments and values (Medearis 2005).

Third; investigating these processes is important for the movement itself and for the societal response to it. The now global social movement organization Fridays For Future was nonexistent two years ago, and currently has activists protesting frequently all over the world and weekly in most larger cities in Sweden (Fridaysforfuture.se 2020). This makes the movement an intriguing and current case for study, with the potential for the findings of this thesis to feed real-time into the movement. Findings might also feed into societal or political responses to the movement or to climate change at large.

The research aim is pursued by asking the following guiding research question:

1. How is climate change framed by the social movement Fridays For Future in Sweden?

The following sub-questions assisted in developing the research methodology and to answer the guiding research question presented above:

1. *What is the problem?* Who or what is culpable for climate change according to Fridays For Future?

2. *What is the solution?* What solutions are advocated by Fridays For Future?

3. *Why should we care?* How does Fridays For Future construct motivation for engagement, including construction of a vocabulary of motive?

2. Methodology

The current research set out with a qualitative interpretivist research approach informed by a constructionist philosophical worldview. The research followed a linear process from literature review and context familiarization, to data collection and preparation of the data for analysis, and ultimately the analysis itself. The analysis iterated between inductive and deductive phases and consolidated multiple data sources to answer the research questions.

Core framing tasks adopted as a heuristic device

While this research set out to explore the Swedish environmental movement primarily inductively, one must acknowledge that there is no point in collecting data without having some clue of what data to collect, or which questions to ask in an interview. Hence, this study employed the three core framing tasks described by Benford & Snow (2000, see Table 1) as a heuristic device for data collection and analysis. Any manifest content of the social movement that responded to any of the three core framing tasks were analyzed. The core framing tasks correspond to the research sub-questions and assist in interpreting the discursive constructs of the movement. Diagnostic framing features provide responses to sub-question 1 (What is the problem?). Prognostic framing features provide responses to sub-question 2 (What is the solution?). Motivational framing features provide responses to sub question 3 (Why should we care?). In the third sub-question, emphasis was placed on the *vocabularies of motive* rather than different explicit *calls to arms*, as the vocabularies used in the movement were believed to contribute to a more latent interpretation of how movement frames were communicated. In other words, less interest was placed in why activists participate, and more interest placed on how communication was performed. In this way, a prior framework was instructive in formulating research questions for inquiry to begin with and to conduct the analysis, but was sufficiently open-ended to provide room for findings to appear inductively.

2.1. Data collection and preparation for analysis

Multiple sources and methods were approached to collect data (see Table 2 for an overview). The rationale behind this broad sampling procedure was to include as

many perspectives as possible within the scope of the study, as well as *data triangulation* (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Broad sampling ensured that different perspectives and different corners of the social movement were reached, which was considered vital for a comprehensive interpretation where the social movement organization was understood as a sum total of their various communication channels. Multiple data sources also contribute to validity of the study by checking for points of divergence and convergence across sources, ensuring that interpretations were not based on for example, a single statement by a passerby, or if something was unclear in a document it might be clarified in an interview. The gist of the data were collected in an observatory manner, e.g. through unobtrusive methods collecting naturally occurring rich data (Creswell & Creswell 2018). The unobtrusive methods were supplemented by short interviews with activists. All data were collected during a two-month period in spring 2020. The heuristic device presented above was employed as a sampling tool for most documents, and to generate a thematic interview guide for interviews. All data were prepared for analysis by copying text from sources and transcribing interviews and posters into workable digital text formats. Specific data collection and preparation procedures are described in detail below.

Table 2. Overview of collected data and sources

Data	Source(s)
Documents	Fridaysforfuture.se
	Fridaysforfuture.org
	Fridays For Future Uppsala handout
Social media	Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook page
Protest chants	Participant observation
Activist interviews	Short interviews
Posters and banners	Participant observation
	Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook page
	Fridays For Future Uppsala handout

2.1.1. Documents, websites and social media

Written or printed data sources included websites, a Facebook page and a handout. The websites *fridaysforfuture.se* and *fridaysforfuture.org* were manually searched for pages that included any information relating to the heuristic device. When such pages were identified, they were copied in their entirety into a word processing software. The Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook page was scanned manually and all entries posted within the sampling period were included for further analysis. During participant observations in Uppsala I came across a handout in A5 format. This was also copied in its entirety into a word processing software.

2.1.2. Protest observations and short interviews

To supplement the data that were directly observable, participant observations of two protests and short interviews with activists, during these protests, were conducted. The data extracted from these methods were *protest chants* as well as *activist interviews*.

Protest chants were observed most notably during a larger act of mobilization, *Nationell Skolstrejk för klimatet* on February 14th (National School Strike for Climate) in Stockholm. During this protest, activists numbered in the thousands, marched from the Swedish parliament to the nearby square Medborgarplatsen. While marching, and upon arrival at the square, activists vocally and loudly expressed multiple and various protest chants, which were noted in a field diary and later transcribed digitally for analysis.

Activist interviews had the rationale to explore a meta observation dimension – in other words, activists' own observations about the communicative aspects of Fridays for Future. Eight interviews were conducted in total. The interview format was brief and semi-structured. Interviews took place outdoors during protest activities and lasted between 2-12 minutes. Short interviews are commonly conducted to supplement questionnaires and to check for respondent response bias (Van Laer 2010; van Stekelenburg *et al.* 2012; Wahlström *et al.* 2013), but were here used to supplement the other unobtrusive data collection methods. Three demographic questions were asked all respondents to ensure a broad sampling (age, gender identification, and previous experience with Fridays For Future protests). The demographic questions were followed by open ended questions corresponding to the research aim, but oftentimes took different turns depending on the responses provided (see Appendix 1 for full interview guide). No names, professions or pictures were taken of respondents to secure their anonymity. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed anonymously in a secure software. Relevant quotes were later translated from Swedish if necessary.

The interviews were conducted on two different protest sites, on two different occasions. The protest sites were Stockholm and Uppsala. Stockholm was selected as a relevant protest site as it is the capital of Sweden and the largest of the recurring national climate strikes. Research suggests that demonstrations near capitals represent the public in a broader way and send sharper signals to authorities (Johnson & Thyne 2018). Uppsala was selected as a protest site to supplement the capital perspective with a local perspective, yet still near the capital and with frequent interchanges with the Stockholm movement. Both protest activities were organized by Fridays For Future.

Respondent sampling at the protest sites strived to reduce researcher sampling bias through a procedure inspired by the methods of Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation (van Stekelenburg *et al.* 2012). However, due to the financial constraints of this thesis, the procedure was simplified and conducted by

a sole researcher. Sampling occurred both selectively and passively – at a few occasions, I was approached for conversation by activists, who perceived me as a passerby or protest participant. These activists were prompted to participate in an interview. Other respondents were approached by me, and I then based my selection on the following factors: physical placement within the protest site, carrying a poster or not, estimated age and presumed gender. The rationale behind these factors was to achieve a diversity in the respondent sampling, e.g. to not only interview respondents of one certain demographic or level of commitment to the movement.

2.1.3. Protest visuals – banners and posters

Banners and posters (henceforth 'posters') were extracted from the Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook page, the Fridays For Future Uppsala handout and from participant observations of the two attended protests.

The Facebook site included numerous entries with images of activists carrying posters. Whenever an entry was posted within the sampling period and a banner or poster was clearly visible, it was included for analysis. The same procedure applied to a Fridays For Future handout, where multiple posters were visible. Participant observations also generated data of protest visuals. Posters were photographed with a smartphone during demonstrations and any photos that clearly showed a banner or poster were included for analysis.

Preparing posters for analysis involved organizing and transcribing. All images were downloaded to a hard drive and transcribed into a worksheet. Most of the posters included only text, and transcription was straightforward. Posters that included visual elements were highlighted in the worksheet for closer analysis (detailed in *2.2.1. Visual interpretations*). A total of 124 posters were prepared for analysis, of which 62 were derived from the Fridays For Future Facebook page, 54 from participant observations, and 8 from the Uppsala handout.

Videos and other photographs found online were excluded from the study and analysis, except for images clearly including text, in which case the text was included for analysis. An example of such images was a Facebook entry that included multiple images of speakers and artists to present at the National School Strike for climate on February 14th, with textual quotes from each speaker or artist edited into the image.

2.2. Data analysis

Once all the data were collected and prepared for analysis, the analysis was conducted in two phases, based on established procedures of qualitative content analysis (Bengtsson 2016; Creswell & Creswell 2018). First, the data were

reviewed independently, searching for any relevant passages for further analysis. This was done by identifying *meaning units* in the text (Bengtsson 2016). Second, all identified meaning units were categorized into three separate work sheets, corresponding to the heuristic device. Within these work sheets, the meaning units were re-organized into themes that recurred in the data. The rationale behind compiling all data sources into the analysis was to facilitate a comprehensive reconstruction of the collective action frame of Fridays For Future, where all the various data sources, or discursive arenas, were understood as a whole.

2.2.1. Phase one – identification of meaning units

The first phase of analysis was to carefully read through all the data, to get a sense of the whole, and to identify which passages or sentences that ought to be included for further analysis and make these passages or sentences workable. To make the data more workable, meaning units were condensed. This phase is here referred to as *identification of meaning units*, but is also commonly referred to as an open coding process (Bengtsson 2016; Creswell & Creswell 2018). Codes, however, are often excessively condensed meaning units, or even interpretations of the meaning unit, into a singular word (Creswell & Creswell 2018). For the purposes of this study, it was acknowledged that the second phase of the analysis required condensed meaning units to be as close as possible to the original expression, and that interpretation during the first phase of analysis ought to be minimized in order to later explore themes in the words and expressions of the activists.

Identifying meaning units involved multiple and careful readings of all data with the heuristic device in mind. Any sentence or passage that related to any of the three core framing tasks was highlighted and ascribed a summarizing comment in the margins, henceforth referred to as the *condensed meaning unit*. Condensed meaning units were also ascribed a category in the form of a letter, corresponding to the three core framing tasks: D for Diagnostic, P for Prognostic and M for Motivational. This was done to facilitate the next phase of analysis. The condensed meaning units were primarily phrased in the same words as the highlighted passage or sentence – with the aim of capturing the meaning and expression of the highlighted text in a briefer and more manageable manner. If the highlighted text could not be summarized in a sentence or less, or if it corresponded to multiple core framing tasks, it was divided into multiple highlighted sections with their respective condensed meaning units. However, Motivational framing was considered to overlap with the other two core framing tasks, as a single sentence might articulate a solution, or indicate responsibility, while phrased using a vocabulary of motive. In other words, Diagnostic and Prognostic framing were seen as mutually exclusive categories, but any meaning unit, regardless if previously identified or not, could be condensed and categorized as Motivational.

Visual interpretations

Of the total 124 posters prepared for analysis, 107 remained of interest after the analytical employment of the heuristic device. These 107 posters generated 122 meaning units. A majority (89 of 107) of collected protest visuals included only text, or visual symbols that contributed with a *decorative* or *message reinforcing* feature. Examples of such features include bolded and highlighted text or painted plants, flames, flowers, etc. on the posters. Meaning units extracted from posters that included no visual elements, or only decorative or message reinforcing visual features, followed the same procedure as analyzed text with the exemption that they were already brief and did not need condensation. However, 18 of the posters included visual features that significantly contributed to or altered the message of the poster or banner itself. The forthcoming section details how these were interpreted and meaning units extracted.

To interpret meaning units from posters with significant visual features or little or no text, the analysis followed an iconographic interpretative approach (Philipps 2012). The aim of the procedure was to extract meaning units from the posters to enable inclusion of these for analysis. The approach followed two steps; the first to transcribe the content of the poster into text, and the second to summarize the text into a condensed meaning unit. Two examples are presented here to illustrate this process.

Figure 1. Examples of posters for meaning unit interpretation

Poster A: Time is running out (Stockholm observations)

Poster B: Our house is on fire (Uppsala observations)

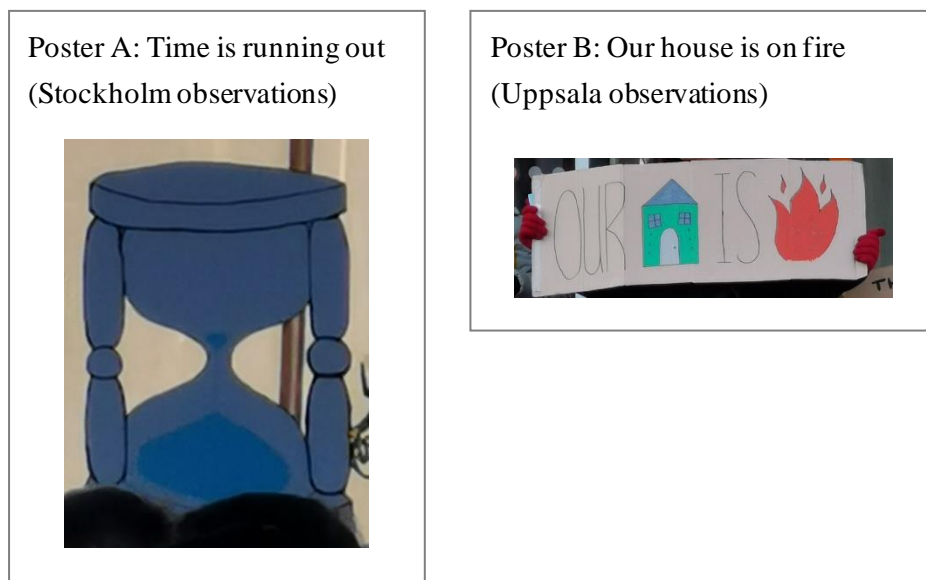Figure 1 shows two posters photographed during protest observations. Poster A includes no text, depicts an hourglass, with the top container nearly empty. This poster was ascribed the meaning unit 'Time is running out', based on the intuitive interpretation that the hourglass reflects time, and most of the matter being in the bottom container indicates that the time is almost up. Poster B contains a rebus with

two words and two symbols. The word 'our' is followed by a symbol of a house, followed by the word 'is' and ultimately a symbol of a fire or flame. The symbols were interpreted on an intuitive level to depict the words 'house' and 'fire', generating the meaning unit 'Our house is on fire'. Deeper interpretation might infer that the house represents home or even planet in this context, and the flame could infer other synonyms, such as heat, hot, burning etc. For the purposes of this analysis, meaning units were always interpreted on the most intuitive level (e.g. a symbol of a house would be transcribed as 'house') and the choice of synonym was not considered to have a large impact on the results. Notwithstanding this, Poster A illustrates an example where a meaningful meaning unit could not have been extracted without interpreting meaning into the symbols. Taken together, the aim of this section is to provide some transparency to the somewhat arbitrary process of iconographical interpretation.

2.2.2. Phase two – construction of themes

In the second phase of analysis all condensed meaning units were transferred into three separate worksheets, corresponding to the three pre-established categories: Diagnostic, Prognostic and Motivational. Within these categories, themes were inductively identified through an iterative process of re-organization, searching for recurring themes in the data. Themes were derived from the manifest content of the condensed meaning units. The process was iterative, as condensed meaning units often were transferred between multiple themes, and themes collapsed or removed. The aim was to reduce the data into as few themes as possible, without reducing diversity. Some themes were supported by dozens of condensed meaning units, while others were supported by only a pair. If a *single* meaning unit would not fit into any other theme, and thus would provide cause for forming a new theme, it was considered an anomaly and was excluded from the results. In other words, a minimum of two meaning units were required to form a theme. This rule of exclusion was applied to make the results more valid and manageable.

2.3. Methodological discussion

This section presents a discussion on the epistemology, validity and reliability of the present research approach. Epistemology is here detailed in how the ontological understanding relates to the research process. Validity refers to the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings, whereas reliability refers to the dependability and consistency of the research approach (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

Key to the epistemological understanding of this study, which also relates to the forthcoming discussion on validity and truthfulness, is the simple notion that there is no one truth. Multiple perspectives, or 'truths', are constantly present and ever

changing in society. In addition, activists within the same movement may have entirely different perceptions about the movement, and so there is no *singularity*, only autonomous structures (Mertes *et al.* 2004). Hence, this study does not assume to discover or identify a *correct* or *right* way to view the matter, but rather strives to provide one way of interpreting the social movement, informed by the theoretical conceptualization of collective action frames. Building on the assumption that knowledges are socially constructed, e.g. through discursive interaction, it appears feasible to learn about perspectives by closely studying the discursive products of others.

"In a qualitative study, validity means that the results truthfully reflect the phenomena studied" (Bengtsson 2016). To ensure valid findings, this study employed various *validity strategies* (Creswell & Creswell 2018) to the research approach as well as to the written report. The study *triangulated* multiple data sources and compiled them into a synthesizing analysis, which arguably provided a rather complete picture of the studied phenomenon, and ensured that multiple perspectives and voices were considered. In the written report, the key strategy was to precisely describe all research procedures, interpretations as well as provide rich, thick descriptions of the results, plentiful of direct quotations from the data sources to exemplify how interpretations were made and themes constructed. The latter strategy also relates to the notion of reliability, in the sense that a transparent and well documented research process allows for some degree of replication. It should be noted, however, that a replication of this study is likely to yield different findings, even if employing the same approach, because the empirical data are ever unfolding and contextual. Moreover, different interpretations are ensured to occur, as interpretations are manually conducted by a human. This takes us to a final strategy of research validity: the clarification of researcher bias.

My position on the matter is ambivalent. Before commencing the study I was, and to date I am, highly concerned about anthropogenic climate change and the consequences that are unfolding. I believe that social movements can contribute to, and indicate, significant social change. Although, when it comes to specific solutions or means of presenting these, I have limited ideas of preferable pathways. Thus, my position in this study was mainly that of a curious researcher. I want to explore how climate change is understood and communicated, both when it comes to causality, culpable agents and ways forward. My personal experience with protests was very limited before commencing the study, and I do not affiliate with any political parties. The aim of this brief reflexive note is to clarify for the reader that I had no hidden agenda in highlighting my own perspectives of the situation, but rather the single aim of forwarding a transparent and theory informed interpretation of a contemporary global movement.

3. Results

The findings of this study are presented below under sub-headings corresponding to the research sub-questions, in the shape of constructed themes that together form the reconstructed collective action frame of Fridays For Future in Sweden during spring 2020. A table overview of the fully reconstructed collective action frame is presented in Appendix 2.

3.1. What is the problem? Diagnostic framing of Fridays For Future

Fridays For Future performs diagnostic framing by articulating and indicating sources of causality, blame or responsibility. The movement's diagnostic framing answers research sub-question 1) What is the problem? Who or what is culpable for climate change according to Fridays For Future?

Four prominent themes constitute the movements' diagnostic framing: *Business & profit*, *Politicians & decisionmakers*, *The system* and *Humans*. The fourth theme is in turn constituted of three sub-themes: *People in general*, *We are the problem* and *Adults*. An illustration of the constructed themes and their relationships are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Diagnostic framing themes
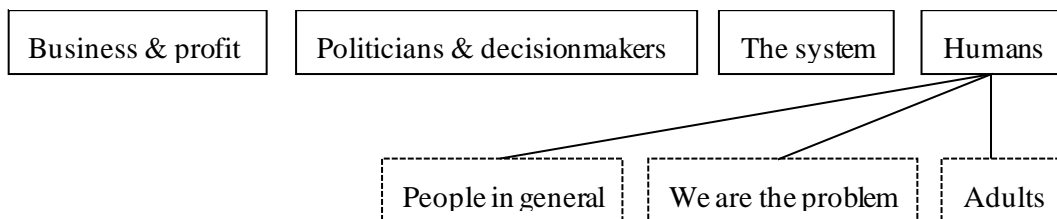
3.1.1. Business & profit

Numerous statements ascribe blame and causality to companies and capitalism. Companies are attributed blame in general terms, in statements such as "big companies don't care about the climate, only money and stuff" (activist interview, respondent #7) or "companies know what needs to be done, but still far from enough

is being done" (fridaysforfuture.se). Specific corporations are also charged with blame and responsibility, in statements such as "Shell is destroying our planet" and "Google AI makes new oil 10^{12} cheaper" (posters). Statements that hold profit and capitalism responsible are plentiful: "capitalism is the problem" (activist interview, respondent #3), "right-wing policy, the market and the capital does not want to change" (activist interview, respondent #1) and "there is no profit on a dead planet" (poster) are examples of a few. Moreover, multiple references of *greenwashing* are present: "greenwashing is common among companies" (social media), "greenwashing doesn't clean the planet" (poster). Mentionings of greenwashing reinforces the theme *Business and profit,* as the concept relates to organizations' efforts to make themselves appear more sustainable than they are, often for reasons of profit. Together these statements indicate business and profit as a theme of diagnostic framing within the collective action frame.

3.1.2. Politicians & decisionmakers

Statements indicating politicians and decisionmakers as culpable abound: "politicians ignore their call" (fridaysforfuture.org), "we can't trust that decisionmakers and politicians act to provide a secure future" (fridaysforfuture.se), "rulers and politicians are the problem" (activist interview, respondent #3), and "what are you politicians doing?" (poster) are examples of such statements, clearly indicating both causality and responsibility.

3.1.3. The system

Additional blame is placed on an abstract and general level, referring to the issues of the movement as complex or systemic. Throughout activist interviews, statements such as "it's a deeply rooted systematic problem" (respondent #3) recurred. A more defined example specifies the system as political and its relationship with media as part of the problem; "media and the political system is incapable of dealing with climate change due to its complexity" (activist interview, respondent #4). Although there is a linkage between the political system and politicians, as placed in a separate theme, the reference to the political system indicates a different kind of causation, notably that the challenges of climate change are so complex that our ordinary political systems are insufficient.

3.1.4. Humans

The final theme of the movement's diagnostic framing is made up of three distinct sub-themes. The sub-themes have in common references to humans in more general terms, that is regardless of imaginable political employment or business. The causation is here directed to all the people of the world, rather than specifically those involved in politics or business.

People in general

This sub-theme represents the gist of the *Humans* theme. Numerous statements indicate humans as responsible, on general, specific and even cognitive levels. On a general level, statements such as "the society's unwillingness to understand the climate crisis, as a crisis" (fridaysforfuture.se) and "the problem is complex and individuals gladly put it to the side for someone else to solve" (activist interview, respondent #6) refer to people in general as responsible. On a more specific level people in general are implicated, through statements such as "plastic bag found on the bottom of the Mariana trench" (poster). This quote is interpreted to indicate that human waste has spread to even the most remote areas of our planet, holding humans culpable as part of the issue. On a cognitive level, multiple statements identify climate denialism as problematic: "climate denial is a problem" (poster) and "climate deniers are one of many counterforces" (activist interview, respondent #5) are examples of such statements. However, not only climate denialism operates on the cognitive level, as explained in an activist interview; "individuals' psyche is a problem, people think we can bury the climate crisis further down without societal transformation" (respondent #6). What all these quotes have in common is the reference to *people*, *humans* or *individuals* in general terms – thus holding all of society's members culpable.

We are the problem

The sub-theme *We are the problem* takes the notion of holding all of society's members culpable to the next level, by including the sender of the message in the causation. These statements also range from general to specific and with cognitive discussions. The comment "we are using up a lot of resources and emitting greenhouse gases" (social media), shows a linear causation process from human→resource usage→emissions, ultimately holding humans responsible, but not in third or second person, but by using the pronoun "we". Similar quotes are abundant. Another example makes explicit that you and I are responsible: "the biggest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it" (poster). Cognitive problematization is also present within this sub-theme; "the problem is that climate change is a slow process that doesn't hit our reality particularly forcefully" (activist interview, respondent #6). The latter quote relates to some of the comments in the previous sub-theme, with the notable difference of pronoun. This sub-theme clearly holds *us* as responsible.

Adults

Distinctly different from people in general or you and I as responsible, is the notion of adults being responsible. Multiple statements articulate blame toward the elder generation. One example connects adults with ignorance; "adults ignore facts" (fridaysforfuture.org), whereas another example indicates passivity of adults;

"adults say that we should deal with the climate later, but there won't be any later" (poster). The sub-theme *Adults* is placed within the theme *Humans* as it implicates humans more generally than the other themes, yet is clearly distinguishable from the other sub-themes.

3.2. What is the solution? Prognostic framing of Fridays For Future

Fridays For Future performs prognostic framing by expressing solutions to the problems, as well as plans of attack and strategies to carry out the plans. The movement's prognostic framing answers research sub-question 2) What is the solution? What solutions are advocated by Fridays For Future?

Three salient themes constitute the movements prognostic framing; *System change*, *Reform* and *Individual & collective change*. Some of these are constituted of – or reinforced by – multiple sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes are divided into two categories, *Structures and objects* and *Humans,* depending on the characteristics of the theme. The category *Structures and objects* is comprised of themes that call for solutions on a structural level or strategies that are reformist in their character, e.g. calling for alternative taxation or technical divestments or investments. The second category collects themes that see human behavior change as a key solution and/or strategy to pursue solutions. The categories were added as an additional layer of abstraction to present the results more comprehendingly. The fully reconstructed prognostic framing of Fridays For Future and the relationships of the themes and sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Prognostic framing themes
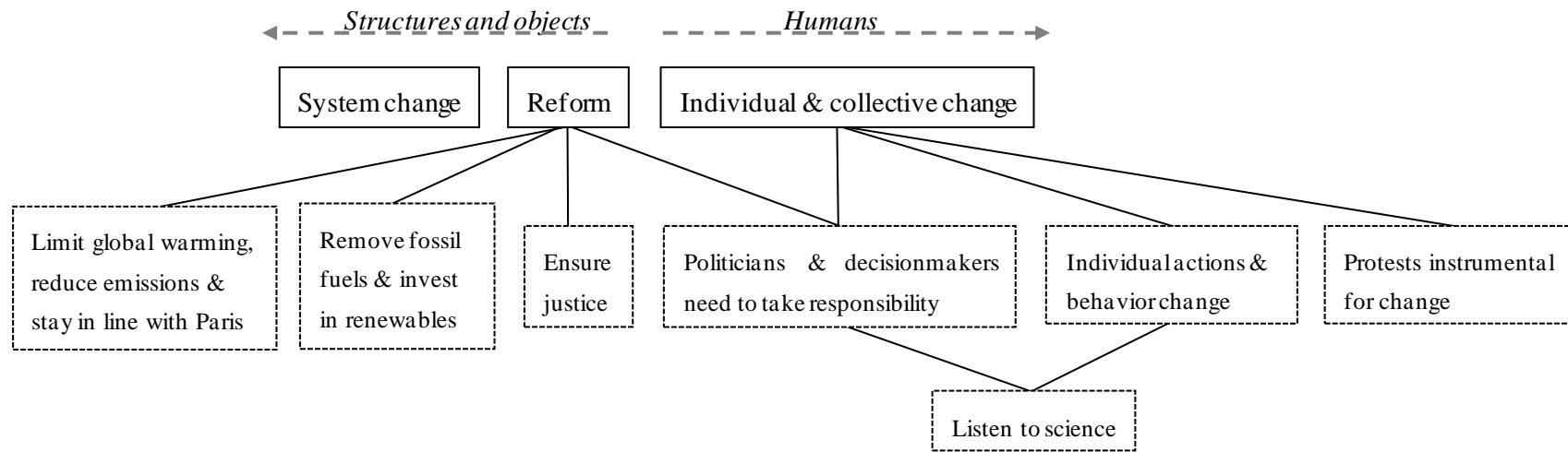
3.2.1. System change

System change or change of economic system are expressions of proposed solutions. System change expressions are made as demands and suggestions, in quite general or abstract terms; "system change, not climate change" (social media), "we cannot recycle coal power, the climate needs a system change" (poster), "we demand a radical transformation for a sustainable future" (Uppsala handout). Articulations of global or transformative change are also included in this theme: "measures need to be taken immediately and globally" (social media) and "we need to transform the whole [society], we cannot go back to normal again" (activist interview, respondent #6 referring to ongoing societal changes due to COVID-19). *Economic system change* is also articulated as either a separate demand or more specified system change, and appears in statements such as; "stop economic growth and such" (activist interview, respondent #1), "planet over profit" (poster), "we need to abolish capitalism" (activist interview, respondent #3), "move to a circular economy" (Uppsala handout). Taken together, this theme presents the solution as somewhat abstract, yet clearly transformative and global.

3.2.2. Reform

The *reform* theme is comprised of multiple sub-themes; *Limit global warming, reduce emissions & stay in line with Paris*, *Remove fossil fuels & invest in renewables* and *Ensure justice*. The sub-themes share a reformist character, e.g. are presented in a way that does not indicate significant transformations of our political systems, but rather are to be performed or implemented within existing systems. Hence, this theme links to the sub-theme *Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility*, a sub-theme that makes explicit the idea that those influential in our system are the ones who need to perform the solutions. In other words, this theme and sub-themes present reform and various specific reforms as a solution, and the sub-theme *Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility* defines a strategy for implementation of the solutions.

Beyond the sub-themes presented in the following sections, *Reform* is made up of multiple specific reformational recommendations. These recommendations did not recur sufficiently to constitute their own sub-themes but share the characteristics of the theme. Demands such as "stop palm oil" (poster), "car free city center" (poster), "no tax money to Midlanda [airport]" (poster) and "support bicycling and public transport" (Uppsala handout) are examples of specific reformational recommendations. This type of recommendation is abundant, calling for specific measures within an industrial sector, geographical area, consumer market or other area.

Limit global warming, reduce emissions & stay in line with Paris

Calls to *stay in line with the Paris Agreement* and *limit global warming* recur in the data. The Fridays For Future websites both make explicit these goals of the movement.

> On the 8th of September, Greta decided to continue striking every Friday until the Swedish policies provided a safe pathway well under 2-degree C, i.e. in line with the Paris agreement. (fridaysforfuture.org)

This quote shows how global warming relates to the Paris Agreement, while also being a goal in itself. The quote also illustrates the instrumental understanding of strikes as a strategy to reach movement goals (further elaborated in sub-theme *Protests instrumental for change*). The Swedish website also expresses these movement goals and indicates priority, in presenting them as two of four demands of the movement; "Fridays For Future Sweden has four demands. 1. Keep the global temperature increase below 1,5°C compared to pre-industrial levels. 2. Follow the Paris Agreement" (fridaysforfuture.se). The other two demands are to ensure climate justice and listen to science, here presented as separate themes.

Reducing emissions is articulated as a solution in both general and specific ways. General statements such as "emissions must decrease" (social media) or "stop carbon dioxide emissions" (poster) are plentiful. More specific statements that relate to reducing emissions also abound, adding various details to the statement; "we want emissions to be reduced by 2030" (activist interview, respondent #7), "decrease emissions from travel and transport" (Uppsala handout), "examine the Swedish Armed Forces' climate footprint" (poster).

Remove fossil fuels & invest in renewables

Statements demanding the stop of fossil fuel usage or extraction are ample and vary in their level of abstraction. From the most abstract "leave it in the ground" (protest chant) and "the coal belongs in the ground" (poster) to "Fossil free 2030! Rapid phase-out of coal, gas and oil" (poster) or even "demonstration against the expansion of Preemraff" (social media). The latter quote details the solution, or part of it, as preventing the intended expansion of a specific gasoline refinery. Moreover, calls to divest from fossil fuels and remove subsidies are found; "the message is clear, […] we cannot keep investing in fossil fuels" (social media), "remove all fossil investments and subsidies" (Uppsala handout). One comment, referring to the COVID-19 crisis liquidity injections proposes "steer crisis packages away from the fossil economy" (poster). This sub-theme makes it clear that fossil fuels are tightly connected to our economy, and that fossil fuel use needs to be disconnected from the economy or even stopped entirely.

Solutions are also called for in a positive language. Rather than calling for a stop of something or the other, multiple comments suggest that we need to look forward

and develop sustainable means of energy production. One document explains; "we have the solutions – renewable energy is cheaper than fossil fuels across much of the world" (fridaysforfuture.org). Other examples include "Rapidly expand renewable energy" (Uppsala handout) and "solar power? Yes please" (social media). Ultimately, this sub-theme includes both positive and negative demands calling for a transformation of fossil fuel usage.

Ensure justice

Justice, or *climate justice*, is referred to in multiple ways and articulated as a way forward. It is interpreted as a sub-theme to *Reform*, as it ultimately appears as a call for reformational change, e.g. is presented in a manner that indicates that politicians and decisionmakers are the ones that need to ensure a just transition. Climate justice is called for in general terms; "ensure climate justice" (fridaysforfuture.se), "What do we want? Climate justice!" (protest chant) and "climate justice now" (poster). These statements all appear as encouragements or demands for others to solve or ensure. Justice is also referred to as social and global, calling for global equality and highlighting differences between socioeconomic groups or counties:

> *Climate justice* means that Sweden and other rich countries with historically large emissions should take a just part of the global responsibility. Even within the country emissions today are very unequally distributed. (Uppsala handout, emphasis in original)

Climate justice is also paired with indigenous rights, "indigenous rights = climate justice" (social media) and presented as a way forward, "indigenous knowledge into the future" (social media). The former quote supports the interpretation that climate justice refers to justice between socioeconomic groups and the latter quote articulates the prognostic feature of indigenous knowledge in climate justice.

3.2.3. Individual & collective change

This theme comprises statements suggesting individual and/or collective change as a solution in itself, or instrumental to achieve solutions. The theme includes multiple sub-themes: *Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility*, *Individual actions & behavior change*, *Listen to science* and *Protests instrumental for change*.

Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility

This individual change sub-theme establishes the key strategy of Fridays For Future to call for political change. Articulations of which types of political change is detailed in the *Reform* theme. This sub-theme makes explicit the agency of politicians and decisionmakers to actually *implement* change. In other words,

individuals need to change, but not just any individuals; politicians and decisionmakers are the ones who need to step up and assume their responsibilities.

Statements constituting this sub-theme are found in demands and calls to action, and in comments justifying collective action. Demands such as "it is time for politicians to act!" (social media) and "Our message is clear, we demand a future. We demand that politicians take their responsibility and stop the environmental degradation they have closed their eyes to during the past 40 years" (fridaysforfuture.se) make it clear that further political responsibility is a way forward. In mobilizing sentences, the movement calls for citizens to join as a means to put pressure on politicians "by striking you show where you stand on the climate issue and contribute to pressuring politicians to act now" (fridaysforfuture.se). Similar comments are present in activist interviews, one of which stated:

> Decisionmakers are not doing enough. By organizing oneself and showing support we hope they can do more. […] I believe that, if we are a large mass [of people] who pressure from below, and say 'this, this is what you have to do', then they can take braver decisions than they are currently doing. And that is what we want to achieve. (respondent #5)

The excerpt above makes explicit two features for interpretation. First, it clarifies the goal as being political change implemented by decisionmakers, and second, it makes transparent the instrumental character of the protests. The latter feature is explained in more detail in the sub-theme *Protests instrumental for change*.

Individual actions & behavior change

Comments and statements that clarify individual change as a necessary, or suggests specific individual actions to take, make up the sub-theme *Individual actions & behavior change*. Statements are both general and specific in their formulation. General examples include comments such as; "changed lifestyle or changed climate" (poster), "the climate is changing, so can we" (poster) and "politicians obviously must assume their responsibility. But so must the individual. Everyone has to do what they can, within their own circumstances" (activist interview, respondent #2). Specific individual actions to take are also plentiful, and range from advising on means of transport; "take the train, not the plane" (poster), to dietary habits; "go vegan for the climate and all life on Earth" (poster) and political engagement; "write to a politician or a letter to the editor" (Uppsala handout).

Listen to science

Calls for others to listen to science are abundant. Many occurrences of such statements are unspecified regarding *who* should listen to science, indicating that the demand is general – i.e. everyone needs to consider science to a greater degree than currently. Statements that highlight politicians and decisionmakers as the ones who need to further consider science also recur, and are specified in the demands

of the movement; "Politicians and decisionmakers need to start making real change! Listen to the research that thousands of youth demonstrating globally are referring to!" (social media). One activist connects the demand to listen to science with developing solutions in general. When asked which measures or solutions the respondent believed the movement advocates for, she replied:

> I don't think everybody can be involved in which specific measures should be taken. I believe that we should consult those who've spent their career involving themselves in the matter, the scientists, that is. (activist interview, respondent #8)

Taken together, there is a recurring articulation of 'listening to science' as a plan of attack toward the solutions, in stating that politicians need to consider science, but also people in general.

Protests instrumental for change

Reappearing throughout other themes and sub-themes, but sufficiently substantive to make up its own sub-theme, are statements and claims that see *protests as instrumental for change*. Protests are instrumental to achieve political change, but also societal change through processes of increased awareness.

On an abstract level, statements such as "school strike for climate" (poster) or the movement's name 'Fridays For Future', where 'Fridays' refers to the protests, indicate instrumentality between protests and change. Thus, participation in a protest, is part of the strategy to achieve other proposed solutions of the movement. Political change as the end outcome of protests is sometimes articulated. When asked about the purpose of larger, nationally or globally coordinated demonstrations, one activist said:

> It is to show that there is a huge support among the population for drastic political measures when it comes to environmental adaptation, environmental efforts, and climate measures specifically. I think that is my primary goal with having a large amount [of protesters]. (activist interview, respondent #8)

Support for the understanding that protests are instrumental is also found in countless comments and encouragements to support or join the movement in various ways; "talk to your schoolmates and teachers - tell them why you care about climate change and ask them to join you on Friday's #ClimateStrike" (fridaysforfuture.org), "donations are welcomed to the strike" (social media), "together we make a difference" (social media) and "I'm here every Friday to demonstrate for the climate. We are here to show motivation and influence other people to join [us]" (activist interview, respondent #7).

Beyond political change, protests are also instrumental for increased awareness among the population, as indicated in the following excerpts; "Greta Thunberg and the youth movement does everything in their power to open decisionmakers and

our eyes to the climate crisis, and to save our world" (social media) and "everyone needs to understand that we must reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases now" (social media). The former quote clarifies how opening the eyes of the decisionmakers is one aspect of the movement, and 'our eyes' another aspect. The latter quote further supports the notion that *everyone* is target of the strategy of increased awareness. This is additionally supported in multiple quotes of activists, when asked what they were doing or wanted to achieve at the protests: "I want to talk to people that I otherwise wouldn't have reached" (respondent #5), "we must communicate our message about the climate" (respondent #7) and "today I do what I always do, I hand out flyers. That is sort of my role. To hand out flyers and attempt to establish a dialogue [with passersby]" (respondent #6). When the latter respondent was asked what the purpose of dialogues was, he responded "it is to forward a deeper understanding of the severity and reality of the crisis" (respondent #6). In sum, the instrumental character of protests emerge as a sub-theme with explicit statements highlighting how protests operate to secure the future and achieve political and individual change.

3.3. Why should we care? Motivational framing and beyond

The third research sub-question explores *how* communication is performed in Fridays For Future, in contrast to the previous sub-questions that deal with questions relating to *what* is being communicated. The question is answered by constructing motivational framing themes, which provide a rationale for demands or movement engagement, with emphasis on vocabularies of motive. Three prominent themes are constructed from the data: *United we are strong*, *Responsibility* and *Seriousness of the situation & Doomsday vocabulary*. Figure 4 illustrates the motivational themes and sub-themes.

Figure 4. Motivational framing themes
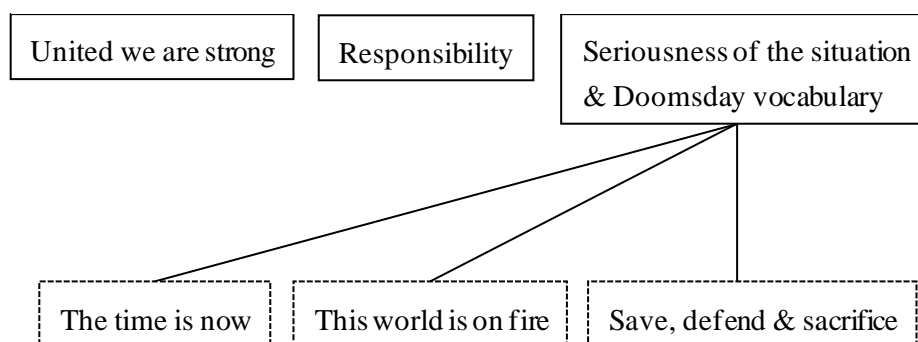
3.3.1. United we are strong

The efficacy of collective action is reinforced in Fridays For Future by a vocabulary of *togetherness*, *the role of the individual in the collective* and *power in numbers*. These vocabularies all share a feature of explaining or supporting the efficacy of the movement at large or the efficacy of engaging in collective action and are collapsed into the motivational theme *United we are strong*.

Togetherness, present in statements such as "together we are strong" (social media), "together we make a difference" (social media) and "our oceans are rising and so are we!" (poster), emphasizes how you and I can make a difference. The pronoun 'we' is used to articulate inclusiveness, and some statements clarify the need of additional support using this rhetoric: "we youth urge all adults to strike with us again" (social media), "everybody is welcome and everybody is needed" (fridaysforfuture.se) and "You are not alone in your worry. Together we are strong!" (Uppsala handout). Togetherness is further supported by elaborating social dimensions of the social movement, as inferred in the latter quote where emotional worry can be alleviated in social togetherness. Activist interviews also explain the value of social dimension: "it is good to feel that you have participated" (respondent #5), "you can share the worry and get a anxiolytic effect" (respondent #6) and "I'm here to meet others who care as much about the climate issue as I do" (respondent #8).

The role of the individual in the collective is further detailed in statements such as "every person who joins a strike means a lot and makes a big difference" (fridaysforfuture.se), "we need your help to be able to conduct this manifestation" (social media) and "not a lot of commitment is required to give back to society and the environment" (social media). The latter quote illustrates an idea that it is not particularly demanding of the individual to protest, which enforces the efficiency of protests as means of societal change. The former quotes show how each individual plays a role in being part of the collective.

Power in numbers are statements that speak to the efficacy of the growing social movement in achieving change and reaching goals – the larger the movement, the greater the opportunities. The reasoning begins with the individual, as observed in the excerpts above and culminates in comments that point out the current scale of the movement: "thousands of us marched through the streets of Stockholm" (social media) and "Greta Thunberg's school strike has grown to a global mass movement. Four to five times a year a global manifestation is called for. Those days several million people around Earth have participated" (Uppsala handout).

3.3.2. Responsibility

A sense of duty and responsibility is indicated through expressions of self-responsibility, mobilizing appeals and demands of others to assume their responsibilities.

Self-responsibility is prominent with activists, who claim in various ways that they have a responsibility to protest: "To do all that I can, is the least I can do" (social media), "I have a responsibility to ensure that future generations have a chance of survival" (social media), "politicians obviously must assume their responsibility. But so must the individual. Everyone has to do what they can, within their own circumstances" (activist interview, respondent #2), "big companies don't care about the climate, only money and stuff. We have to take the climate and environment [into our own hands] and do something" (activist interview, respondent #7). As shown in these excerpts, many activists feel a strong sense of duty due to the severity of the situation or inadequacy of political and entrepreneurial actions.

Mobilizing appeals make use of the notion of responsibility to provoke or promote action and participation in the movement. Examples of such appeals include; "all adults must take climate responsibility now" (social media), "if not you, who? If not now, when?" (poster) and "climate change is here, what will you do?" (poster). Demanding others to assume their responsibilities is frequent, as detailed in the prognostic sub-theme *Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility*. In sum, *responsibility* is constructed as a key motivational feature, both as motivation for movement participation and as reason for others to adhere to movement goals. Responsibility is here interpreted to relate primarily to the movement's vocabulary of propriety, that is, suitability, rightness or justness. By claiming that others should 'assume responsibility', it is inferred that they ought to do what is right or that they are not currently acting suitably or properly.

3.3.3. Seriousness of the situation & Doomsday vocabulary

Comments referring to the seriousness of the situation and use of Doomsday vocabulary make up the final motivational theme. This theme operates to communicate the urgency and severity of anthropogenic climate change and its consequences. What I refer to as Doomsday vocabulary recurs in three sub-themes, two of which establish severity (*Save, defend & sacrifice* and *This world is on fire*) whereas the third (*The time is now*) establishes temporal urgency. Moreover, the words *serious* and *important* recur within the data explicitly to construct severity and promote engagement. When an activist was asked about the purpose of reaching out to passersby at protests, he replied: "it is to forward a deeper understanding of the severity and reality of the crisis" (activist interview, respondent #6). Another activist explains the difference between Fridays For Future and what the respondent refers to as 'the traditional environmental movement':

> An adequate level of seriousness in the messages, that is what counts. […] What separates [us] from the traditional environmental movement, the [Swedish] Green Party, and other channels where people have been active previously, is the degree of seriousness. You see the developments with larger seriousness. (respondent #4)

The interview excerpts illustrate not only how activists consider the situation highly important, but also that they hold a deeper understanding of the seriousness of the situation than others, and that this understanding must be communicated or transferred.

Save, defend & sacrifice

Further contributing to the severity of the movements' diagnosis, are claims that humans carry the ultimate burden to solve the issues of climate change. This sub-theme especially relates to the agency component of the movements' severity framing, e.g. individual (in)action carries consequences that matter for all future life. Expressions that call for *saving* the future, climate or planet, such as the following excerpts; "what should we do? Save the climate!" (protest chant) and "save the climate if you are smart" (poster), infer that the future, climate or planet needs rescuing. This is further supported in claims to defend or protect, such as the following: "strike to make a stand for climate action to *protect our future*" (fridaysforfuture.org, emphasis added). Additionally, the notion of individual sacrifice supports the interpretation that humans carry the burden to solve the issues. This is most salient in detailing the costs of protest participation, "we sacrifice our education to fight for our future" (fridaysforfuture.se), but might also be inferred in terms of loss of future and opportunities, from statements such as "I want my future back" (poster) and "Hilda Flavia Nakabuye missed three months of school due to the drought" (social media).

This world is on fire

This sub-theme paints a dark and apocalyptic picture of the current state of affairs and establishes severity beyond *seriousness* through statements relating to fire, death and the finality of climate change consequences. Comments such as "this world is on fire" (poster), "the 6 hottest years on record have all been since 2010" (fridaysforfuture.org) and "the planet is burning, strike for the climate" (poster) present a grim picture regarding temperature, although a *burning fire* might connote destruction as much as high temperatures. Comments articulating the finality of climate change consequences are plentiful, such as: "there is no planet B" (poster), "we only have one planet and must start acting like it" (social media), "we strike because our future is on the line" (fridaysforfuture.se) and "the climate crisis is the most vital question for all future human life" (activist interview, respondent #6). The latter quote also introduces human life at stake, something which recurs throughout the data: "don't let our people die, climate change is not a lie" (protest chant) and "Heat waves, floods, and hurricanes are killing hundreds […] Climate change is already a deadly reality" (fridaysforfuture.org). In sum, this sub-theme illustrates a world *beyond* severe consequences and threats and constitutes part of what I refer to as Doomsday vocabulary.

The time is now

Urgency is constructed through both dramatic vocabulary and less dramatic vocabulary. Primarily, urgency is constructed by referring to ongoing effects of climate change as acute, immediate or critical, such as in the following excerpt:

> Already today, with a temperature increase of about 1-degree, we see an immediate increase of heatwaves, fires, melting polar ice, thawing permafrost, drought […] (Uppsala handout)

In addition, others connect the acuteness of the situation with a mobilizing component: "we are currently in an acute crisis that is still being ignored" (social media), "stop climate breakdown! Now! Paris climate agreement" (poster).

A secondary way urgency is constructed is through statements that refer to *time* (for action) more plainly, without implying or connecting the demand with dramatic articulations. Examples of comments that deal with urgency in this way include; "change has to happen! Now!" (social media), "if not now, when?" (poster), "time to get going" (poster) and this excerpt from an activist interview:

> But what we communicate is that the question is alive. Stop walking around here, stop ignoring the question – engage yourself, participate in this! That at least is what we want to communicate. (respondent #6)

Taken together, the sub-theme *The time is now* details the urgency of the matter primarily in Doomsday vocabulary but also in plain temporal terms, urging for action in the present.

4. Discussion

The present research empirically investigated how specific knowledges of climate change are communicated, or framed, by the social movement organization Fridays For Future in Sweden. Causality, blame or responsibility, i.e. diagnostic framing, is ascribed to *Business & profit*, *Politicians & decisionmakers*, *The system* and *Humans*. Potential solutions to anthropogenic climate change, expressed as prognostic framing tasks, are conceptualized as *System change*, *Reform* and *Individual & collective change*. Through motivational framing and a vocabulary of motive, the movement frame is communicated using constructions as *United we are strong*, *Responsibility* and *Seriousness of the situation & Doomsday vocabulary*.

The findings of this study yield multiple points of departure for discussion, of which the most prominent ones are discussed here. However, the discussion presented here ought not be considered exhaustive of the empirical findings, as they could be further interpreted by politicians or activists to enhance their understanding of the movement framing, and by researchers who wish to employ other theoretical frameworks to further explain or interpret the themes identified in this thesis. Two key points are discussed here, relating to the diversity and breadth of the reconstructed collective action frame and implications of the movements' motivational framing.

4.1. Frame heterogeneity and frame disputes

The breadth of the reconstructed collective action frame becomes apparent when looking at the themes and sub-themes presented in this study. But within this apparent width of scope, one finds points of divergence and discord across both the substantive content of frames and its presentation. Two considerable disputes are discussed; *us versus them* and *change who, and what?*

Us versus them
Multiple diagnostic themes identify *structures and others* as culpable or responsible for climate change and its related consequences (e.g. *Business & profit*, *Politicians & decisionmakers*, *The system*, *People in general*). At the same time, the sub-theme

We are the problem identifies *ourselves* as responsible. This distinction is pivotal, as some activists internalize blame and responsibility whereas others externalize it. This tension brings forth questions about responsibility – who is responsible here? Are all of us responsible, or only those in charge, those who profit, or something larger beyond individuality? Moreover, does blame and culpability always transfer to responsibility?

Those responsible for anthropogenic climate change may not always be capable of, or willing to, bear the responsibilities of enacting solutions, such as past generations or the impoverished (Caney 2005). The most prominent example of this dichotomy in the present findings is perhaps the diagnostic framing theme *The system*, which is held culpable – but what capacity does the system have to enact change? One might be responsible for contributing to anthropogenic climate change, but at the same time incapable of being held responsible to solve it. Changing the system may be a solution, but the system will not change itself, other agents within the system will do the work and are thus responsible.

Blaming others or oneself indicates different directions of blame and operates to provide either a *we/they* distinction or works against such a distinction, respectively. A we/they distinction helps to construct a movements' collective identity and assists in sustaining mobilization (Benford & Snow 2000; Klatch 2004). Klatch (2004), however, emphasizes that while guilt –which may be a consequence of extended internalized blame– may be a strong motivational factor for movement participation, it can also be detrimental for activists when negative emotions overshadow positive emotions and bonds of participation. When negative emotions spread among activists, the social movement organization risks deterioration. Ultimately, this fragmentation of responsibility is likely to result from disagreements over allocation of blame and norms regarding culpability and accountability. Research has observed that epistemic uncertainty over culpability complicates responsibility-taking (Caney 2005). In addition, morality prompts questions as to who or what can be held accountable, and where change should be enacted. To sum up, there is a dispute within the diagnostic framing about who is responsible; all of us, or all but us?

Change who, and what?

The prognostic themes suggest distinctively different ways forward (e.g. *System change*, *Reform* and *Individual & collective change*). Who or what needs to change? Individual behavior and attitudes, politicians or big businesses? All of the above? While it is possible that all the prognostic themes are advocated simultaneously, perhaps through the more abstract and general *System change*, there are definite differences between themes, for example in expressing technical solutions versus individual change. When taking into consideration the nature of social construction, where there is always a competition about dominant meanings and understandings

(Creswell & Creswell 2018), these disputing themes may very well compete with each other for resonance with the audience, or reflect disputing knowledges in society.

Frame disputes or a complete definition of the situation

Frame disputes are common within social movements (Benford 1993). Research investigating disputes is ambiguous, suggesting that they can be both detrimental (Benford 1993; Powell 2011) as well as beneficial (Snow & Benford 1988; Benford & Snow 2000) for movement mobilization and success. A recent Swedish study investigated Fridays For Future activists' individual support for three pre-established frames; *environmental*, *economic growth* and *welfare,* and explored activists' prioritization of these. They found that "beyond doubt, movement participants put the environment first when contrasted to economic growth" (Emilsson *et al.* 2020, p. 16), but could not establish priority between welfare and environmental frames. The article further concludes:

> […] there is a widespread argument that these spheres or domains need to be integrated in order to promote the societal change necessary to handle current pressures on the planet and to provide welfare and wellbeing within planetary boundaries. (Emilsson *et al.* 2020, p. 17)

This conclusion supports a beneficial interpretation of the heterogenous themes constructed in this study. However, the themes inductively constructed here may not be comparable to the pre-established frames used in the study by Emilsson et al., prompting further research into the matter. Internal frame disputes might further be understood by exploring power relations within or across the social movement (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen 2011), and may provide insight into questions about which frames gain discursive authority and how? These questions are here left unanswered but left as additional suggestions for future research.

Ultimately, the question remains whether the disputing themes should be understood as disputing. Surely, they propose or diagnose opposites, and these compete for resonance – but could it be that *all* these steps or knowledges are necessary, and that they should simply be understood as a whole? The potential dispute further raises a question about integrity versus outcome. It may be that disputing frames lead to greater factionalism (Klatch, 2004), but if this is ultimately in the service of promoting movement aims for visibility and change – heterogeneity and even fragmentation may not necessarily be negative developments. Future research may provide clarity to these questions and generate further interpretations about movement disputes.

4.2. Implications of motivational framing

The reconstructed motivational framing of Fridays For Future suggests that the movement constructs motivation for engagement by referring to togetherness, responsibility and the seriousness of the situation, notably by using Doomsday vocabulary. The latter two points are especially interesting with regard to the broader literature.

Doomsday vocabulary

Portraying the situation as fatal and finite may have adverse effects in terms of mobilization and reaching movement goals. Psychologist Per Espen Stoknes defines 'Doom' as one of five psychological barriers to increased action on climate change, reasoning that hopelessness may be the consequence of many when climate change is framed as an imminent disaster (Stoknes 2015). Similarly, communication scholars write that apocalyptic framing, which presents the situation as forthcoming and unstoppable, reduces recipients' perceived agency to make a difference (Foust & O'Shannon Murphy 2009). This type of apocalyptic framing is referred to as *tragic,* in contrast to *comic* apocalyptic framing that opens a window to prevent the apocalypse, and "suggests that human beings have *agency* at different points within the global warming narrative" (Foust & O'Shannon Murphy 2009, p. 159, emphasis added). Comic apocalyptic framing, emphasizing agency, is considered substantially more effective than the tragic version, although apocalyptic tendencies are generally ill-advised (Foust & O'Shannon Murphy 2009).

I would argue that the constructed themes of Fridays For Future quite extensively promote agency in at least three ways. First, ascribing both blame and paths toward sustainability in individuals (diagnostic theme *Humans*, prognostic theme *Individual & collective change*) indicates human responsibility and possibility, respectively. Second, the efficacy and instrumentality of collective action is established (prognostic sub-theme *Protests instrumental for change*, motivational theme *United we are strong*), promoting agency in the collective and inferring opportunities to prevent disaster. Third, Doomsday vocabulary is often paired with actions, contrary to hopelessness or finality, such as in this example from motivational sub-theme *This world is on fire*: "don't *let* our people die, climate change is not a lie" (protest chant, emphasis added). The appeal to 'not *let*' infers that there is space for prevention, and perhaps even that the recipient has a role to play in this prevention.

In the end, while I would argue that the Doomsday vocabulary closer relates to a comic apocalyptic frame than a tragic one as conceptualized by Foust & O'Shannon Murphy (2009), it may be advisable for activists to reconsider using apocalyptical or Doomsday articulations at all to establish motive.

Responsibility

Closely related to the preceding discussion on agency, is the notion of responsibility. The motivational theme *Responsibility* establishes a sense of duty as a prominent factor in self-motivating, mobilizing appeals and in demands of others to make certain actions. Yet whereas agency implies a more practical conceptualization regarding capacities of individuals, responsibility introduces morals to the equation. A recent quantitative study on Fridays For Future Sweden found that moral obligations were strong factors for protest participation (Moor *et al.* 2019), which is in line with the findings of this thesis. Many questions remain regarding the directions and levels of responsibility; what responsibilities, to whom, or to what degree? Only limited answers to these questions are hinted in the preceding analysis, and future research on movement responsibility framing is warranted. Nonetheless, I argue that there is some empirical support in this study for attempts to construct *environmental citizenship* as a moral imperative.

Theorizations on *environmental citizenship* suggest that each individual has a responsibility, or moral obligation, toward the environment, or common good, over individual goods. Responsibilities and obligations reflect attitudes rather than actions, which are argued to be more sustainable and efficient in driving change than action appeals or appeals for behavior change (Dobson & Bell 2006). Responsibilities and duties toward the environment are explicitly presented in the motivational theme *Responsibility*. Additionally;

> A further characteristic of environmental citizenship is the recognition that rights and responsibilities transcend national boundaries. […] so it follows that my responsibilities as an environmental citizen are *international* (and almost certainly *intergenerational*) responsibilities. (Dobson 2007, p. 282, emphasis in original)

Statements that support these characteristics are found in the prognostic sub-theme *Ensure justice* and the motivational theme *Responsibility*. The comment "I have a responsibility to ensure that future generations have a chance of survival" (social media) explicitly connects the responsibility of the writer with an intergenerational right to life, whereas the passage *"Climate justice means that Sweden and other rich countries with historically large emissions should take a just part of the global responsibility"* (Uppsala handout) explicitly links responsibility with the concept of climate justice and international rights. Hence, I argue that the findings of this study moderately support a movement construction of environmental citizenship as a moral imperative, even though the words 'citizen' or 'citizenship' never materialized in the investigated data. However, not all statements referring to a sense of duty or responsibility can clearly be connected to the ideas of environmental citizenship, and future research digging deeper into the what's and how's of responsibility framing in the Swedish environmental movement is needed.

4.3. Conclusions

The present research provides an interpretation of how climate change is framed by the social movement Fridays For Future in Sweden, and in so doing generates a snapshot of a growing societal phenomenon and the specific knowledges and understandings expressed. The findings in a sense make static something that is fluid and processual in its nature, generating opportunities for practitioners and researchers alike to observe and reflect on the contemporary themes of climate change diagnoses, prognoses and movement motivational framing. Future research may compare the findings of this study to track changes in movement framing over time. Activists may gain the opportunity to pause and reflect over the themes in this study, and draw upon these findings in their future actions. In the end, protests are part of the social world. Regardless of whether the strategies suggested by the movement are performed, or whether those ascribed culpability are converted, the acts of communication conducted in the movement play a part in constructing the future.

References

Benford, R.D. (1993). Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement. *Social Forces*, vol. 71 (3), pp. 677–701 Oxford University Press.

Benford, R.D. & Snow, D.A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26, pp. 611–639 Annual Reviews.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open*, vol. 2, pp. 8–14

Caney, S. (2005). Cosmopolitan Justice, Responsibility, and Global Climate Change. *Leiden Journal of International Law*, vol. 18 (4), pp. 747–775 Cambridge University Press.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. 5th edition, international student edition. London: SAGE Publications.

Dobson, A. (2007). Environmental citizenship: towards sustainable development. *Sustainable Development*, vol. 15 (5), pp. 276–285

Dobson, A. & Bell, D. (2006). *Environmental Citizenship*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Emilsson, K., Johansson, H. & Wennerhag, M. (2020). Frame Disputes or Frame Consensus? "Environment" or "Welfare" First Amongst Climate Strike Protesters. *Sustainability*, vol. 12 (3), p. 882 Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute.

FFF FB (n.d.). *Fridays For Future Sweden Facebook*. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/fridaysforfuture.swe [2020-05-19]

Foust, C.R. & O'Shannon Murphy, W. (2009). Revealing and Reframing Apocalyptic Tragedy in Global Warming Discourse. *Environmental Communication*, vol. 3 (2), pp. 151–167

Fridaysforfuture.org (n.d.). *About #FridaysForFuture. About - Fridays For Future*. Available at: https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/about [2020-02-13]

Fridaysforfuture.org (2020). *Statistics / Graph. Graph - Fridays For Future*. Available at: https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/statistics/graph [2020-02-13]

Fridaysforfuture.se (2020). *Karta över strejker. Fridays for future - Karta över pågående och kommande strejker*. Available at: https://fridaysforfuture.se/karta-over-strejker/ [2020-02-13]

Joffe, H. (2008). The Power of Visual Material: Persuasion, Emotion and Identification. *Diogenes*, vol. 55 (1), pp. 84–93 SAGE Publications Ltd.

Johnson, J. & Thyne, C.L. (2018). Squeaky Wheels and Troop Loyalty: How Domestic Protests Influence Coups d'état, 1951–2005. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 62 (3), pp. 597–625

Klatch, R.E. (2004). The Underside of Social Movements: The Effects of Destructive Affective Ties. *Qualitative Sociology*, vol. 27 (4), pp. 487–509

Laville, S. & Watts, J. (2019). Across the globe, millions join biggest climate protest ever. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/21/across-the-globe-millions-join-biggest-climate-protest-ever [2020-03-02]

Lindekilde, L. (2014). *Discourse and Frame Analysis: In-Depth Analysis of Qualitative Data in Social Movement Research. Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research* Oxford University Press. Available at: https://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198719571.001.0001/acprof-9780198719571-chapter-9 [2020-03-20]

Luhtakallio, E. (2013). Bodies Keying Politics: A Visual Frame Analysis of Gendered Local Activism in France and Finland. In: Doerr, N., Mattoni, A., & Teune, S. (eds.) *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 27–54.

Massey, G. (2015). *Ways of Social Change; Making Sense of Modern Times*. SAGE Publications.

Medearis, J. (2005). Social Movements and Deliberative Democratic Theory. *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 35, pp. 53–75

Mertes, T., Bello, W.F., Cassen, B. & Bove, J. (2004). *A Movement of Movements: Is Another World Really Possible?* First Edition edition. London ; New York: Verso.

Messaris, P., Abraham, L. & Abraham, L. (2001-06-01). *The Role of Images in Framing News Stories. Framing Public Life*. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410605689-22

Mooney, P.H. & Hunt, S.A. (1996). A Repertoire of Interpretations: *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 37 (1), pp. 177–197

Moor, J. de, Uba, K., Wahlström, M., Wennerhag, M., Emilsson, K. & Johansson, H. (2019). Sweden. In: Wahlström, M., Kocyba, P., De Vydt, M., & Moor, J. de (eds.) *Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays For Future climate protests on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities*. pp. 19–31.

Olesen, T. (2013). "We are all Khaled Said": Visual Injustice Symbols in the Egyptian Revolution, 2010–2011. In: Doerr, N., Mattoni, A., & Teune, S. (eds.) *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp. 3–25.

Pezzullo, P.C. & Cox, J.R. (2018). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Fifth Edition. Los Angeles, California: SAGE Publications.

Philipps, A. (2012). Visual protest material as empirical data. *Visual Communication*, vol. 11 (1), pp. 3–21

Powell, R. (2011). Frames and Narratives as Tools for Recruiting and Sustaining Group Members: The Soulforce Equality Ride as a Social Movement Organization*: THE SOULFORCE EQUALITY RIDE AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION. *Sociological Inquiry*, vol. 81 (4), pp. 454–476

Snow, D. & Benford, R. (1988). Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization. In: Klandermans, B., Kriesi, H., & Tarrow, S.G. (eds.) *From structure to action: comparing social movement research across cultures*. Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, pp. 197–217.

Snow, D.A. & Soule, S.A. (2009). *A Primer on Social Movements*. 50469th edition. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

van Stekelenburg, J., Walgrave, S., Klandermans, B. & Verhulst, J. (2012). Contextualizing Contestation: Framework, Design, and Data. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, vol. 17 (3), pp. 249–262 Allen Press.

Stoknes, P. (2015). *What We Think About When We Try Not To Think About Global Warming: toward a new psychology of climate action*. White River Junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing.

Van Laer, J. (2010). Activists Online and Offline: The Internet as an Information Channel for Protest Demonstrations. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, vol. 15 (3), pp. 347–366 Allen Press.

Vliegenthart, R. & van Zoonen, L. (2011). Power to the frame: Bringing sociology back to frame analysis. *European Journal of Communication*, vol. 26 (2), pp. 101–115

Wahlström, M., Kocyba, P., De Vydt, M. & Moor, J. de (2019). *Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays For Future climate protests on 15 March, 2019 in 13 European cities* Available at: https://protestinstitut.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/20190709_Protest-for-a-future_GCS-Descriptive-Report.pdf [2020-02-13]

Wahlström, M., Wennerhag, M. & Rootes, C. (2013). Framing "The Climate Issue": Patterns of Participation and Prognostic Frames among Climate Summit Protesters. *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 13 (4), pp. 101–122

Acknowledgements

Appendix 1 Interview guide

This guide functions as researcher support in outlining the questions and themes to consider during interviews. Note that the interviews always must be relaxed and with informed consent of respondents. Furthermore, the purpose of the interviews is not to provide quantitative or necessarily comparative data, but on the contrary, a deeper perspective of the respondents. The ultimate aim of the interviews is to pursue a meta observation dimension – what are the respondent's observations about Fridays For Future's environmental communication?

To ask and/or inform about before the interview

- The interview is entirely voluntary and may be abandoned at any time.

- The respondent may choose not to reply to any or all questions.

- The respondent will be anonymous. Limited demographical data will be collected to ensure a sampling diversity.

- The interview will be recorded, solely for the ears of the researcher and for the purpose of transcription and later analysis.

Demographical questions

- What age are you?

- Which gender do you identify mostly with?

- How many times have you previously attended Fridays For Future manifestations?

Questions or themes to steer toward

- Why are you here today?

- What do you see as the core message of Fridays For Future?

- How do you think this message is communicated?

Appendix 2 Overview of the reconstructed collective action frame

Core framing task	Theme	Sub-theme
Diagnostic framing	Business & profit	
	Politicians & decisionmakers	
	The system	
	Humans	People in general
		We are the problem
		Adults
Prognostic framing	System change	
	Reform	Limit global warming, reduce emissions & stay in line with Paris
		Remove fossil fuels & invest in renewables
		Ensure justice
		Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility*
	Individual & collective change	Politicians & decisionmakers need to take responsibility*
		Individual actions & behavior change
		Protests instrumental for change
		Listen to science
Motivational framing	United we are strong	
	Responsibility	
	Seriousness of the situation & Doomsday vocabulary	The time is now
		This world is on fire
		Save, defend & sacrifice

* The sub-theme Politicians & decisionmakers fall under two themes.