



UiO • University of Oslo

Bigger Than Beer?

*How Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Constructs
Sustainability and Growth*

Ellinor Bogen

Master's Thesis in Sociology

Department of Sociology and Human Geography

Faculty of Social Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2022

Bigger Than Beer?

How Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Constructs Sustainability and Growth

Ellinor Bogen

© Ellinor Bogen

2022

Bigger Than Beer?

How Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. Constructs Sustainability and Growth

<http://www.duo.uio.no>

Print: Graphic Center, University of Oslo

Abstract

In this thesis I examine how Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. constructs sustainability and growth. I have done this by conducting a critical discourse analysis of the "About" section of Sierra Nevada's company website. Unlike mediated texts like newspaper articles, the text on Sierra Nevada's website has been constructed by the company. This allows Sierra Nevada to represent itself exactly as it wishes to, which makes it the ideal data material for examining how Sierra Nevada constructs sustainability and growth. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to the knowledge about corporate environmentalism and its discursive and social effects. The research questions are:

1. What meaning does Sierra Nevada give sustainability and how is this discourse constructed?
2. How is growth reconciled with sustainability in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse?
3. How does Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse relate to the dominant corporate environmental discourse?

Corporate environmentalism is a concept that refers to the dominant corporate environmental discourse. This discourse is based on the belief that continued economic growth can be reconciled with sustainability through technology, and that business should lead this effort without strict government regulations. Corporate environmentalism is an obstacle to effective action to mitigate climate change because it obscures alternative representations of and solutions to environmental problems and protects corporate power and resource access. It also stands in the way of a more democratic process surrounding climate change action both at the grassroots level and in international negotiations. The reason for analyzing Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse was to consider whether a company known for its green corporate identity and leadership in sustainable brewing transform corporate environmentalism in a way that makes it a more effective tool for mitigating climate change or if it reproduces it. In this thesis I show how Sierra Nevada reproduces corporate environmentalism and its power relations.

Sierra Nevada constructs a solution-oriented and technocentric sustainability discourse, which is typical of corporate environmentalism. Explicit references to the climate crisis as a whole are

omitted. Instead, Sierra Nevada presents specific problems and corresponding solutions. The appropriateness and substantive impact of the solutions are taken for granted, and the construction of these claims as truths does not encourage consumers to engage reflexively with the information. Additionally, there is an inherent contradiction between the corporate goal of selling products and the provision of neutral information. Sierra Nevada attempts to lend credibility to its claims by referring to external certifications, but the reliability of these certifications is questionable due to difficulties in measuring environmental impact and the lack of trustworthy auditing. This combined with the fact that these certifications are voluntary, which gives companies the option to be unsustainable and greenwash, raises questions about whether self-regulation is an effective tool for regulating business and amending the information asymmetry between companies and consumers. Corporate environmentalism is unable to overcome the information problem due to the difficulties of balancing the goal of profit with full, reliable, and accessible information, and the consumer resources required to engage reflexively with the information. This rules out corporate environmentalism as a solution to the climate crisis as it is built around ethical consumption.

Sierra Nevada reconciles growth and sustainability by reproducing corporate environmentalism. The solution-oriented and technocentric sustainability discourse constructed by Sierra Nevada frames the climate crisis as a problem that can be solved through technological advancement. Within this discourse continued economic growth is good because it contributes to innovation and the development of the technology needed to lower the environmental impact of the company's business activities. Rather than questioning the relationship between continued company growth and sustainability, Sierra Nevada's growth is placed within a classic corporate discourse based on supply and demand. The issue with this is that lowering the per-unit impact of production does not lower the overall impact of company growth. By constructing a leadership role for itself, Sierra Nevada justifies its continued growth by arguing that it will inspire the craft brewing industry to innovate and brew more sustainably. This growth portrayal reproduces the growth paradigm of corporate environmentalism and contributes to the marketization of public sustainability discourse, which stands in the way of effective and democratic action to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my thesis advisor Anne Krogstad, who was excited about this project before I even understood what it was about. She remained excited and interested throughout the process and her comments and questions led me to explore aspects of the data material that I might not have discovered on my own. Writing a master's thesis can be exhausting but being given the freedom to write what I wanted, when I wanted made the writing process enjoyable and rewarding. Thank you for trusting me to navigate the process independently and being there when I needed an outside perspective. I also want to thank Kjell Erling Kjellman and my fellow students in seminar 3 for constructive comments, praise, moral support, and countless cups of coffee.

Thank you to friends and family for always loving and supporting me. At times this thesis has felt all-consuming, but you remind me that I am valuable regardless of my academic achievements. A special thanks to Åshild for listening, feeding me, and proofreading this thesis. Your pupils are so lucky to have you as their teacher.

To my mom, I hope you did not worry too much about me. I always manage.

Ellinor Bogen

Oslo, May 2022

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VII
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTALISM.....	3
1.1.1 <i>Greenwashing or Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism?</i>	5
1.1.2 <i>Corporate Social Responsibility</i>	5
1.1.3 <i>Perspectives on Corporate Environmentalism</i>	7
1.1.4 <i>Ethical Consumption</i>	9
1.2 SIERRA NEVADA BREWING CO.....	12
1.2.1 <i>Why Sierra Nevada?</i>	12
1.3 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS	16
2 METHODOLOGY	18
2.1 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND DISCOURSE	18
2.2 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.....	20
2.2.1 <i>What is Critical Discourse Analysis?</i>	20
2.2.2 <i>Key Concepts</i>	22
2.3 CORPORATE DISCOURSE	25
2.4 WHAT'S THE PROBLEM REPRESENTED TO BE?	26
2.5 DATA SELECTION.....	27
2.6 DATA COLLECTION	29
2.7 ANALYTICAL APPROACH	33
2.7.1 <i>Description</i>	35
2.7.2 <i>Interpretation and Explanation</i>	38
2.8 REFLEXIVITY AS A RESEARCHER.....	40
3 SIERRA NEVADA'S SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE	42
3.1 REPRESENTING THE PROBLEM	43
3.1.1 <i>Where is the Climate Crisis?</i>	43
3.1.2 <i>Solution-Oriented and Technocentric Problem Representations</i>	47
3.1.3 <i>Truth Claims</i>	51
3.1.4 <i>Self-Regulation</i>	53
3.2 THE INFORMATION PROBLEM.....	57

3.2.1	<i>Website Usability and the Information Problem</i>	57
3.2.2	<i>Genre Mixing and the Information Problem</i>	61
3.2.3	<i>Legitimacy, Reputation, and Status – Overcoming the Information Problem?</i>	62
3.3	SUMMARY	68
4	RECONCILING SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH?	70
4.1	THE GROWTH PARADIGM.....	71
4.1.1	<i>The Marketization of Public Discourse</i>	71
4.2	REPRESENTING THE PROBLEM	74
4.2.1	<i>Growth and Sustainability Through a Corporate Environmentalist Lens</i>	74
4.3	FROM HOMEBREW TO EAST COAST EXPANSION – SIERRA NEVADA'S GROWTH PORTRAYAL.....	76
4.3.1	<i>Constructing a Charismatic Leader and Core Values</i>	76
4.3.2	<i>Justifying the East Coast Expansion</i>	79
4.3.3	<i>Taking on the Industry Leader Role</i>	81
4.4	LOCAL FOOD DISCOURSE – INTERDISCURSIVITY	83
4.4.1	<i>How Big is Too Big in Local Food Discourse?</i>	84
4.4.2	<i>Adapting Local Food Discourse</i>	85
4.4.3	<i>Local for Local's Sake?</i>	85
4.5	SUMMARY	87
5	CONCLUDING DISCUSSION	88
5.1	REPRODUCTION OF CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE	89
5.2	SIERRA NEVADA'S SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSE	89
5.3	SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH	93
5.4	GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION.....	95
5.5	CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS	96
	REFERENCES	99

1 Introduction

My world, my Earth is a ruin. A planet spoiled by the human species. We multiplied and fought and gobbled until there was nothing left, and then we died. We controlled neither appetite nor violence; we did not adapt. We destroyed ourselves. But we destroyed the world first. (Le Guin [1974] 2002:286)

The above quote is from Ursula K. Le Guin's science fiction novel *The Dispossessed*, which was first released in 1974. The novel is set in a future where ecological disaster has left the earth in ruin. In a speech following the release of the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on mitigating climate change, secretary-general of the United Nations António Guterres (2022a), warned against a climate disaster that sounds alarmingly similar to the one described by Le Guin. He even emphasized that while the disastrous consequences of inaction spelled out in the report sound like fiction, they are not exaggerated. Despite the bleak descriptions of the potential climate disaster, the report is hopeful. There is evidence that climate action has had a positive impact, and that if substantial action is taken in the next couple of years, we can mitigate the effects of climate change (IPCC 2022). This will require cooperation between governments, organizations, business, and civil society. So far, we have struggled to balance different interests and reach legally binding global agreements, which is why research to identify the obstacles standing in the way of global climate action is needed.

The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to this research by performing a critical discourse analysis of the corporate discursive practices of one company, as the dominant corporate environmental discourse is the result of firm-level discursive practices. I have chosen to analyze the sustainability discourse of Sierra Nevada Brewing Co., henceforth referred to as Sierra Nevada. Sierra Nevada is an American craft brewery known for its sustainable business practices and on its company website it is stated several times that the company's goal is "bigger than beer" because the planet's future is at stake. Later in this chapter I will explain in more detail why I have chosen this specific company¹.

¹ The words company, corporation, firm, and business have slightly different definitions, but are used interchangeably in this thesis to provide linguistic variation. Sierra Nevada can be described using all four words, and accuracy is not essential because the topic of this thesis is business communication in general.

The research questions are:

1. What meaning does Sierra Nevada give sustainability and how is this discourse constructed?
2. How is growth reconciled with sustainability in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse?
3. How does Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse relate to the dominant corporate environmental discourse?

The methodological foundation of this thesis is Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, but it is also inspired by other approaches to discourse including the critical research agenda for research on corporate environmentalism as described by business and management researcher Subhabrata B. Banerjee, theory on corporate discourse, especially linguist Ruth Breeze's work, and Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be" approach. Further methodology and theory will be introduced later in the thesis.

Critical discourse analyses start with a societal level problem that is partially the result of discursive practices (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). The social problem that my critical discourse analysis is centered around is how corporate environmentalism stands in the way of alternative representations of the climate crisis and consequently alternative solutions to the climate crisis. Corporate environmentalism is defined as:

rhetoric concerning the central role of business in achieving both economic growth and ecological rationality and as a guide for management that emphasizes voluntary, proactive control of environmental impacts in ways that exceed or go beyond environmental laws and regulatory compliance. (Jermier et al. 2006:618)

International negotiations are difficult due to the different interests and power struggles between states. This process is further complicated by corporate strategies to block regulations that hinder business activities (Greer and Bruno 1996; Banerjee 2012a). Business has the access, connections, communication and financial resources to control the rhetoric surrounding climate change. In addition to this, their activities are important for national economies, which makes it difficult for governments to challenge them (Banerjee et al. 2021; Breeze 2013). Meanwhile, Pacific Island

countries with limited resources such as Palau and Tuvalu are pleading with the international community for legally binding targets while their countries sink into the ocean. This power imbalance makes public debate and international negotiations about climate change undemocratic and stands in the way of effective action to mitigate the climate crisis. Critical discourse analysis is a tool aimed at deconstructing discourse to reveal the effect they have on social practices and the power relations that maintain them. This makes it the ideal tool for examining corporate environmentalism.

1.1 Corporate Environmentalism

The main theoretical concept used to analyze the data material and answer the research questions in this thesis is corporate environmentalism² as described by Jermier et al. (2006). The concept has been developed further in later articles (Forbes and Jermier 2010; Forbes and Jermier 2012). Jermier et al. (2006) were not the first to identify or describe corporate environmentalism. *Greenwash: The Reality Behind Corporate Environmentalism* by Greer and Bruno (1996) is one of the earliest works on corporate environmentalism. It is still frequently cited today and is referenced and commented on in Jermier et al. (2006). Paul Hawken's book *The Ecology of Commerce*, first released in 1993, is also identified as a foundational work on corporate environmentalism (Forbes and Jermier 2010:465). Paul Hawken is an American environmentalist and entrepreneur and in *The Ecology of Commerce* he argues that business today is ecologically destructive and discusses the potential for restructuring business and the economy to make it sustainable. Although Jermier et al. (2006) were not the first to describe corporate environmentalism, I have chosen to use their conceptualization of corporate environmentalism because it operationalizes corporate environmentalism in a simple way that makes it possible to assess whether Sierra Nevada reproduces or transforms the dominant corporate environmental discourse. The concept will be elaborated on and discussed throughout the thesis. In this section I will introduce the key characteristics of corporate environmentalism.

² Jermier et al. (2006) refer to their conception of corporate environmentalism as new corporate environmentalism to emphasize that it is a break with earlier corporate environmentalism, which was limited to following laws and regulations. In this thesis I refer to it as corporate environmentalism and corporate environmental discourse. Discourses are not static but the sites of discursive struggle, which leads to change. New corporate environmentalism is a transformation of corporate environmentalism and the word new is redundant.

Corporate environmentalism is characterized by three key tenets. First, the growth paradigm where continued economic growth is seen as necessary for societal stability, the main source of prosperity in society, and as the solution to social problems such as the climate crisis. Second, the focus on self-regulation as opposed to government regulation. Third, technocentrism, which is the belief that technological innovation will make it possible to solve the climate crisis without limiting growth creating a win-win situation for business and the environment. The third feature is not explicitly mentioned in the definition above but is described as a typical feature later in the article (Jermier et al. 2006:627).

Jermier et al. (2006) define corporate environmentalism as the rhetoric surrounding corporate greening, i.e., the symbolic component of corporate environmentalism. Some definitions, for example that of Frances Bowen (2014), who specializes in research on corporate environmentalism, include both material and symbolic components of corporate environmentalism and distinguish between the two when writing. The material components of corporate environmentalism are the voluntary green measures and their substantive environmental impact. Green measures include everything from production changes, changed packaging, the construction of sustainable office buildings, changes in the supply chain, and projects with external organizations that are not directly related to a company's business activities. These measures can increase efficiency and/or lower costs for a company and they do not have to be motivated by a genuine wish to lower their environmental impact or have a substantive impact on the environment. Consequently, green measures are only identifiable as corporate environmentalism because a company describes them as being "primarily for reasons connected with the natural environment" (Bowen 2014:39). Any instance of corporate environmentalism consists of both material and symbolic components, and they cannot be separated, a point which is stressed by both Bowen (2014) and Forbes and Jermier (2012). As such, it does not make sense to distinguish between material and symbolic corporate environmentalism in the way that Bowen (2014) does. The term symbolic corporate environmentalism is however still useful as an alternative to greenwashing.

1.1.1 Greenwashing or Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism?

When I tell people about this research project the initial reaction is often "oh, so it's about greenwashing". Although this assumption is not entirely wrong, it does not capture the complexity of the topic. Greenwashing has been defined in many ways but generally refers to companies purposefully misleading consumers through disinformation and/or selective disclosure of information that presents a company or specific products as environmentally friendly without making changes that have a substantive impact on the environment (Bowen 2014:21-22). The issue with using the concept of greenwashing to make sense of corporate environmentalism is that viewing corporate environmentalism through this lens obscures the fact that corporate environmentalism takes on many forms, not all of them negative or deliberate. In order to address this issue, Bowen (2014) introduces the concept of symbolic corporate environmentalism. As mentioned above, I have not applied it in the same way as her, but when thinking about corporate environmentalism and analyzing the data material I have used the concept to avoid vilifying corporate environmentalism. Using the term greenwashing preemptively assumes that Sierra Nevada's corporate environmentalism is all style over substance, which may influence the way I approach and present my data material and findings. Critical research necessitates a healthy skepticism, but distrust is not beneficial for a balanced analysis. The term greenwashing is used in this thesis, but only when referring to companies purposefully misleading consumers. By applying the concept of symbolic corporate environmentalism instead of greenwashing I aim to show some of the nuances in Sierra Nevada's representations of its green measures and to avoid characterizing it purely as the result of cynical self-interest.

1.1.2 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate environmentalism is a subcategory of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and part of a larger debate about the responsibilities and functions of business. In neoclassical economic theory, the responsibility and function of a business is to create profit for its shareholders (Chrun, Dolšak, and Prakash 2016:342; Friedman 1970). Earlier corporate environmentalism, which was based on following laws and regulations (Jermier et al. 2006), belongs to this perspective. Within CSR perspectives, companies are seen as having responsibilities beyond creating profit for shareholders. These responsibilities involve being a socially, economically, and environmentally

responsible business. The topic of this thesis is environmental responsibility, but environmental problems are inextricably tied to social and economic issues. For example, moving production from one place to another may be beneficial for the environment, but detrimental to the local community due to jobs disappearing. Another example is the effects of climate change. Because of the interrelation between environmental problems and social justice, poor and marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. This tendency exists both within countries and between countries (Bowen 2014:47). Ironically, these marginalized groups are those with the least access to the decision-making process surrounding global action against climate change. CSR expands the group of people businesses have responsibilities to. From solely having responsibilities to shareholders, CSR sees business as having responsibilities to anyone affected by a company's business activities. These people are often referred to as stakeholders. While shareholders may be a diverse group, a company's responsibility to shareholders is limited to profit. Stakeholders, on the other hand, are a diverse group of people with different and potentially mutually exclusive preferences and interests. The diverse range of stakeholders and the complex relationship between social, economic, and environmental responsibilities makes CSR a contentious issue.

One of the most famous essays about corporate social responsibility is American economist and winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, Milton Friedman's essay "A Friedman Doctrine: The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits", which was published in the New York Times in 1970. In this essay Friedman argues that companies should not have social responsibilities as their function is to generate profit. His four main arguments against CSR are that generating a profit and social responsibilities may be incompatible goals, corporate executives are not qualified to deal with social issues and the decision process would be undemocratic, CSR may be used as a business strategy to mislead stakeholders, and it violates the fundamental principles of the free market. The discussion about functions and responsibilities is one I will return to in chapter 3, where I will use Robert K. Merton's concept of functions and dysfunctions to clarify the relationship between functions, responsibilities, and regulations. For now, Friedman's doctrine serves as an example of classic arguments against CSR that are still present in current debates about corporate responsibility.

1.1.3 Perspectives on Corporate Environmentalism

Research on corporate environmentalism can be separated into two main perspectives: the conventional perspective and the critical perspective (Bowen 2014). The conventional perspective consists of firm-level research about corporate environmentalism as a business strategy, which includes research about the drivers of green measures and the relationship between green measures and financial performance (Bowen 2014:43). Conventional research is mainly found in the field of business and management studies. Due to its focus on financial performance and corporate environmentalism as a business strategy, the conventional perspective has been criticized for not devoting enough attention to the substantive environmental impact of corporate environmentalism (Bowen 2014:44). The critical perspective is a response to these concerns and critical research asks questions about the substantive environmental impact of corporate environmentalism and the sociocultural effect of corporate environmental discourse (Bowen 2014:45). The main focus of critical research is on power, in terms of who controls the rhetoric and by extension natural resources. My research project belongs to the critical perspective, but all research benefits from considering how other perspectives can shed light on a topic. During this project I found that insights from conventional and critical research were almost equally useful when analyzing the data material because I approached the conventional research with a critical perspective.

Conventional Perspective

A foundational work within the conventional perspective is a 1995 article by American business and management researcher Stuart L. Hart. In this article, he adapts the resource-based view (RBV) into a natural-resource-based view framework (NRBV). In short, RBV argues that a company's competitive advantage can be found in idiosyncratic resources that are difficult to copy (Hart 1995). Hart's NRBV framework is an attempt to use environmental challenges as a competitive advantage by appealing to ethical consumers (1995:992). He identifies three strategies: minimizing pollution, lowering the environmental impact of a product throughout its life cycle, and minimizing the environmental impact of company growth (Hart 1995:992). The point of NRBV is to identify unique company resources, and Hart (1995) is not suggesting that all companies should use the same strategies, but that they identify how these strategies could be implemented in their production. Hart (1995) acknowledges the gravity of the environmental challenges we are facing

and emphasizes that business as usual is not an option. Still, his article is reflective of a conventional perspective where corporate greening is a strategy to gain competitive advantage and increase a company's financial performance, and substantive environmental impact is framed as secondary.

As described above, the conventional perspective consists of firm-level research on the drivers and financial effects of corporate greening. Chrun et al. (2016:433) list three main drivers of corporate environmentalism:

- Rational choice – corporate environmentalism driven by a company's wish to increase its market and thus its profits by appealing to ethical consumers.
- Sociological – corporate environmentalism driven by external social pressure and norms for appropriate corporate behavior.
- Preemption – corporate environmentalism as a strategy to curb strict government regulations by preemptively self-regulating to maintain power over problem representations and the proposed solutions.

The separation of drivers of corporate greening into these three categories is simplistic, but it captures the variety of explanations found in the literature on the drivers of corporate greening. In reality, corporate greening is likely the result of a combination of factors. For example, Banerjee, Iyer, and Kashyap (2003) used stakeholder theory to understand how different stakeholders and the relationships between them affect what greening measures are chosen by a company. They found that the interplay between external public pressure, government regulations, gaining a competitive advantage, and management commitment affect a company's greening efforts (Banerjee et al. 2003). More research about the drivers of corporate greening and how to regulate them will be introduced in the analysis.

Critical Perspective

According to Banerjee (2012b), the goal of critical research on corporate environmentalism should be to identify and deconstruct the dominant corporate environmental rhetoric in order to show how

the framing of environmental challenges limits proposed solutions and to consider how this process can be made more democratic. The dominant corporate environmental discourse has a strong effect on our shared understanding of the world and in addition to shaping proposed solutions, it constructs social roles and relationships that influence how accountability and responsibility are distributed. We are all responsible for the climate crisis but to different extents. In order to deal with the climate crisis in an effective manner the problems must be constructed in a way that distributes responsibility proportionally to the impact different social actors have on the environment. Corporations have a larger effect on the environment and should have more responsibility in the process of solving the climate crisis. Whether this responsibility should come from corporations themselves or be regulated by governments is a highly debated question. Banerjee's research agenda echoes the critical research agenda described by Fairclough, which forms the methodological foundation of this research project, and the methodology chapter provides an in-depth account of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. Critical research is also introduced as it is applied in the analysis and concluding discussion, which is why I have not included examples of critical research in this paragraph.

1.1.4 Ethical Consumption

Corporate environmentalism positions ethical consumption as the solution to the climate crisis. Ethical consumption is built around the idea of "voting with your money", in other words consumers expressing what they want and expect from companies by paying for ethical products (Johnston 2008; Jones 2019). This is a form of consumer activism. Consumer activism has been used as a tool to achieve different objectives throughout history and it has taken on many forms such as boycotts, campaigns, and the development of consumer rights organizations (Johnston 2008:236-237). Johnston (2008) provides an overview of the different phases of consumer activism, and ethical consumption belongs to the 4th phase of consumer activism, making it a relatively new phenomenon. The 4th phase of consumer activism started in the 1980s due to concerns about the sustainability of current consumption patterns (Johnston 2008:238). Johnston (2008) ties the development of the 4th phase of consumer activism to an increasing awareness of environmental problems that began in the 1970s. The increased awareness of environmental problems is often tied to the report *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972). The computer

simulations and conclusions of this report have been criticized (Banerjee et al. 2021:341), but the main conclusion still stands: the planet is finite and there are absolute limits to growth (Meadows et al. 1972). Ethical consumption and reduced consumption were consumer strategies used to address unsustainable consumption patterns. These strategies were positioned as oppositional and reduced consumption was represented as a radical strategy, while ethical consumption became the moderate strategy (Johnston 2008:238). This representation is socially constructed as these solutions are not mutually exclusive. Some consumption will always be necessary, but the absolute limits to growth mean that consumption cannot keep increasing, which is why an effective solution to the environmental problems caused by unsustainable consumption patterns would combine the two strategies. As this thesis looks at corporate environmentalism and the relationship between sustainability and growth, the analysis will include discussions about both ethical consumption and reduced consumption. It should be noted that beer is not like clothing, once it is used it is gone and cannot be reused. Although the alcoholic nature of beer and social problems associated with it should be addressed, a discussion about reduced consumption is not necessarily about consuming less of the product, but other issues related to the environmental impact of company growth.

Corporate environmentalism frames growth not only as compatible with sustainability but as necessary to achieve it. This problem representation positions ethical consumption as the solution, which protects companies' access to resources and the consumption necessary to increase profits. Instead of representing business as a part of the problem, they become the solution. Johnston (2008) uses the ideal type of the citizen-consumer to elaborate on ethical consumption and the challenges that come with it. The citizen-consumer consumes in a way that "can satisfy an individual's desire for personal health and happiness while generating sustainability and social harmony for society as a whole" (Johnston 2008:232). However, Johnston (2008) questions whether it is possible to balance citizenship and consumerism as there exists a natural tension between the two. Consumerism is a highly individualistic approach to life centered around personal choice, while citizenship prioritizes the collective over the individual and seeks to protect our shared interests and resources (Johnston 2008:242-243). The risk of representing ethical consumption as the solution to environmental problems is that it may obscure collective solutions and other forms of political action in favor of a representation that protects corporate interests. Ethical consumption has therefore been described as a neoliberal strategy to move the

responsibility of sustainability and social welfare from states to consumers, thus preventing strict government regulations (Johnston and Szabo 2011).

Another issue is the information asymmetry between companies and consumers, referred to as the information problem in this thesis. Reflexivity has been proposed as a solution to this problem. In order to consume ethically, consumers must gather and assess information about products. They must also consider the reliability of the information provided by companies. The argument is that engaging critically with the information provided by companies will enable consumers to consume ethically (Johnston and Szabo 2011:305). There are several issues with reflexivity as a solution to the information problem. First, it is still a highly individual approach that may obscure structural issues and collective solutions (Johnston and Szabo 2011:304). Second, there is limited information available to consumers and its reliability is questionable because companies control most of the information that is disclosed to the public (Johnston and Szabo 2011:305). It is therefore unreasonable to expect consumers to make ethical choices based on the information available to them, as it is generally incomplete and biased (Johnston and Szabo 2011:317). Vetting information is also an extremely time-consuming activity, which may discourage consumers from attempting to consume ethically. Combined these issues raise questions about the viability of ethical consumption as a realistic and effective solution to environmental problems, and consequently corporate environmentalism as it is based on ethical consumption.

The argument that ethical consumption stands in the way of collective action can be challenged. In the same way that ethical consumption and reduced consumption are not mutually exclusive, ethical consumption and other forms of political action are not mutually exclusive. There is limited research on the relationship between ethical consumption and other forms of political engagement, but there are both European and North American studies that show a positive connection between ethical consumption and other forms of activism (Willis and Schor 2012). The problem is that ethical consumption does not have a substantive impact if we are basing our decisions on imperfect information. If the products we are consuming do not have a substantive impact, the only positive effect of ethical consumption is if it inspires people to pursue other forms of political action. This is a spillover effect, where corporate environmentalism, regardless of substantive impact, leads to more environmental awareness and effort (Bowen 2014:7). This is a positive effect, but if ethical

consumption is to be an impactful tool in itself, it needs to overcome the issues identified in the paragraphs above. Because voluntary information disclosure has proved to be lacking, Jones (2019) argues that government regulation and vetting of information disclosure are necessary to overcome the information problem.

1.2 Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.

Sierra Nevada is an American craft brewery that was founded by Ken Grossman and Paul Camusi in 1980 in Chico. Chico is a town located in Butte County, Northern California. The brewery is named after Sierra Nevada, a mountain range close to Chico, and nature features heavily in the brewery's marketing. In this section I will explain why I have chosen Sierra Nevada as the case for this project.

1.2.1 Why Sierra Nevada?

Green Identity

Corporate identity is a central concept in this thesis, and it will be elaborated on in the methodology chapter. For now, it is sufficient to know that corporate identity refers to an identity constructed by a company with the aim of linking specific qualities to the company. A corporate identity consists of a combination of qualities. Sustainability is at the heart of Sierra Nevada's corporate identity and has been from the very beginning. In general, a green corporate identity refers to a company that aims to portray itself as a responsible company whose business activities are as sustainable as possible. Sierra Nevada's green identity is highly visible on its website, and this identity is expressed through references to sustainable brewing practices and other efforts to protect nature that are not directly linked to its brewing activities. On the landing page for the "About" section of the company's corporate website Sierra Nevada states its commitment to "keep pushing boundaries, whether that's in the brewhouse, with sustainability, or in the great outdoors". This statement shows that Sierra Nevada strives to be an industry leader when it comes to sustainability. The potential conflict between this explicitly stated goal and the environmental impact of its business activities makes Sierra Nevada an excellent case for a critical discourse analysis of corporate environmentalism.

Growth

When Sierra Nevada started brewing in 1980, its brewing capacity was about 1500 barrels a year (Brower 2020). Today the company produces more than 1 million barrels a year (Brower 2020). In 2020 Sierra Nevada was the 3rd largest American craft brewery³ and the 10th largest overall American brewery by sales volume (Brewers Association 2021). This makes Sierra Nevada a large American craft brewery and a relatively large American brewery in general but producing about 1 million barrels a year it is nowhere near as large as the major industrial breweries in the United States. In 2015 Sierra Nevada expanded out of Chico and opened a second brewery facility in Mills River, North Carolina. This growth, while not industrial level, puts Sierra Nevada in an in-between position size-wise. Discursively navigating this in-between position is interesting in terms of growth and sustainability.

The constant pursuit of economic growth is the foundation of global capitalism, and this growth imperative is one of the main reasons why we are facing an environmental crisis (Banerjee et al. 2021:339). Despite this, growth is portrayed as natural and necessary to increase prosperity and keep society stable (Banerjee et al. 2021:340). This is a result of the dominance of the growth paradigm throughout society. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, decreased growth can be destabilizing for society, but climate change is also destabilizing for society. It is therefore necessary to question the growth imperative that drives capitalism and to consider alternative ways to develop the economy in a way that is both economically and ecologically sustainable. Doing this involves looking at the growth ideology that permeates society. Sierra Nevada has been described, both by themselves and others, as a groundbreaking brewery that led the American craft beer revolution in the 1980s (Solomon 2014). Since this the company has experienced significant growth and the company's beer is sold worldwide. I for example, live on a different continent, but my apartment in Oslo is only a short walk away from the nearest store that sells Sierra Nevada's beer. It is the journey from a small, local brewery with a strong green identity to a craft beer giant with production facilities in different states that makes Sierra Nevada a perfect fit for a research project about sustainability and growth.

³ A craft brewery is defined by the Brewers Association (2021) as breweries that produce 6 million or barrels of beer or less (approximately 3 percent of annual beer sales in the United States), are independent (less than 25 % is owned or controlled by an industry member that is not a craft brewer), and are licensed by The Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau as a brewery.

Brewing Beer in a State Plagued by Drought and Wildfires

My aunt and uncle own and run a Norwegian craft brewery with a strong green identity named after a local mountain, and there are other breweries in Norway with strong green identities that could have been suitable cases for this project. I chose Sierra Nevada largely because Sierra Nevada brews beer in California, a region that is already strongly affected by climate change. In 2018 the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in California stated that "Climate change has rendered the term 'fire season' obsolete, as wildfires now burn on a year-round basis across the State" (2018:10). Wildfires in California are not a recent development, and they are not caused entirely by climate change. They are a natural phenomenon that has many beneficial effects for the ecosystems in the region, and controlled fires have been used throughout history to support ecosystems and limit the danger of uncontrolled wildfires (California Forest Management Task Force 2021:19). However, in recent years there has been an increase in wildfires in the region and California has experienced some of the largest, deadliest, and most destructive wildfires in state history (California Forest Management Taskforce 2021). The deadliest wildfire in California state history, the 2018 Camp Fire, took the lives of 86 people (California Forest Management Taskforce 2021:64). This fire happened in Paradise, which is the neighboring town of Chico, where Sierra Nevada's headquarter is located. Large parts of Paradise were burnt to the ground and many of Paradise' residents relocated to Chico after the fire (Marandi and Main 2021:470-471). This is an example of domestic climate migration, which we can also see on a global scale as the effects of climate change force people to leave their homes (Marandi and Main 2021). For the residents of California, climate change is not a future threat but something they experience every year as wildfires ravage the state and threaten people's lives and property. Efforts to mitigate climate change are urgently needed in California.

One of the main causes of the increase of wildfires in California is drought and there have been statewide efforts to reduce the water consumption of both institutions and residents. According to California Water Service (2021:16), which supplies Chico with water, the average water usage for residents was 184 gallons per capita per day in 2020. That amounts to less than 70 000 gallons per year per person. In comparison, water conservation measures made to Sierra Nevada's bottling system alone save about 2.5 million gallons per year (Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. n.d.). In the statement made by Sierra Nevada about this water conservation measure, there is no information

about the company's total water consumption, and this information is not available in the "About" section of Sierra Nevada's website. This omission is what inspired this thesis, and water conservation is a central topic in the analysis. The point of including this statement here, is that Sierra Nevada uses significantly more water than a Chico household, and the company's potential for water conservation is much greater. This is not an attempt to undermine the importance of residential efforts to reduce water consumption. In a state plagued by extensive drought every drop counts, and when combined, the water conservation efforts of California residents are significant. However, businesses' water usage has a much larger impact on the environment. Water conservation should be a high priority for Sierra Nevada, and it should be featured heavily in its sustainability discourse. At the same time, Sierra Nevada needs to retain water access in order to continue its business activities. It is therefore interesting to look at how the company manages these competing interests.

A second point when it comes to the legitimacy of Sierra Nevada's water usage is the nature of beer as a product. First, beer is a luxury, not a necessity. Second, beer is an alcoholic beverage. This means that in addition to being a luxury, it is a product associated with social problems. I am not suggesting that alcohol is purely bad, as it is also at the heart of many positive collective experiences. However, when considering the legitimacy of Sierra Nevada's water usage in a state plagued by drought and wildfires, these factors must be part of the debate about water allocation and management. This debate will be explored through the concept of virtual water as conceptualized by geographer J. A. Allan. The concept will be expanded upon in chapter 3, but in short it is a tool developed to assess the total water required to produce a product, and to consider all the water used as part of the product being exported, i.e., when we purchase beer from Sierra Nevada, we are not only exporting the water in the beer itself, but all the water used to produce the beer. The fact that climate change is a highly visible and urgent problem in California combined with the resource management questions raised by Sierra Nevada's water usage makes Sierra Nevada a compelling case to study corporate environmentalism.

1.3 Outline of the Thesis

In chapter 1 I have introduced the topic of this thesis, corporate environmentalism, and associated theory, and Sierra Nevada. Chapter 2 is the methodology chapter. In critical discourse analysis, the methodology and theory are to a large extent the same. Corporate environmentalism is a discursive concept and so are many of the other theoretical tools applied to the data material. Therefore it does not make sense to have a separate theory chapter. Instead, theory is introduced throughout the thesis. In the methodology chapter, I introduce discourse and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, which is the main methodological framework used in this thesis. In addition to this, I describe corporate discourse, Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" approach, and other discursive tools used to analyze the data material. After introducing the methodological literature, I will describe the data selection and collection, the analytical approach, and discuss the challenges when it comes to reflexivity as a researcher.

The first two research questions have each been given their own analysis chapters. Critical discourse analysis involves interpretation and explanation of the discourse being analyzed, so even though the phrasing of research questions 1 and 2 is mainly descriptive, they are in practice not purely descriptive. Research question 3 has been included to better facilitate a normative evaluation of Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse and to lift the analysis from a situational case study to an analysis of the institutional and societal effects of Sierra Nevada's discursive practices. The research question expands upon research questions 1 and 2 and has therefore not been given its own analysis chapter but is discussed and answered in both analysis chapters and the concluding discussion in chapter 5. Chapter 3 is devoted to the analysis of Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse. In this chapter, I look at Sierra Nevada's problem representations by discussing what is included and excluded from the problem representation, the solution-oriented and technocentric representation of environmental problems, the construction of truth claims, and self-regulation. Following this, I explore the effect website usability, genre mixing, and the concepts of legitimacy, reputation, and status have on the information problem. The second analysis chapter, chapter 4, is centered around how Sierra Nevada reconciles growth and sustainability. The chapter begins with an introduction to the growth paradigm. The exposition on the growth paradigm is based on the description in Banerjee et al. (2021) and expanded upon by discussing what Fairclough (1995) terms the marketization of public discourse. This tendency is

exemplified by a brief look at the representation of growth in two UN documents, the *Our Common Future* report from 1987 and the *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* from 2015. This introduction is followed by the analysis of how Sierra Nevada represents growth, how the story of the company's growth is told, and Sierra Nevada's use of local food discourse.

Chapter 5 is the concluding discussion. In the first section of the chapter, I discuss and answer research question 3 about how Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse relates to the dominant corporate environmental discourse. The next two sections provide answers to research questions 1 and 2, respectively. Critical discourse analyses start from a societal level problem that is partially the result of discursive practices and this problem must be analyzed on a situational, institutional, and societal level (Fairclough 1989:163). The problem at the heart of this thesis is how corporate environmentalism discursively creates a barrier to democratic and effective global action to mitigate climate change, and the final section of the concluding discussion considers the impact of Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse and corporate environmentalism on global climate action. I end chapter 5 and the thesis with a short section about the challenges and limitations of this thesis and suggest some areas for further research.

2 Methodology

The methodological framework of this thesis is based on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (CDA). As the topic of this thesis falls within the critical perspective of corporate environmentalism this method is ideal because its goal is to generate critical knowledge. In the introduction chapter I introduced the social problem that forms the foundation of this thesis, which is how corporate environmental discourse upholds unequal power relations between corporations, other institutions, and people, and contributes negatively to the climate crisis by obscuring alternative representations and solutions. In this chapter I will introduce the methodology that will be applied to the data material to describe, interpret, and explain how the discursive practices of Sierra Nevada relates to this problem. I will begin by defining the concept of discourse before moving on to an introduction of critical discourse analysis as a method and essential concepts. This will be followed by a short description of corporate discourse and Carol Bacchi's approach to analyzing problem representations. After this, I will describe the process of selecting and collecting the data material, before presenting the analytical approach. Lastly, I will discuss the importance of reflexivity as a researcher.

2.1 Social Constructionism and Discourse

Discourse analysis does not refer to one method, but to a variety of methods applied in different academic fields. In order to account for the methodological choices made in this research project, it is necessary to clarify my position in the discourse analytical field.

Although discourse analysis refers to a diverse range of methodological approaches, they share a social constructionist foundation (Burr 2015:28). Like discourse analysis, social constructionism is difficult to define due to the variety of research that is based on social constructionism. Burr (2015) identifies four basic assumptions that are common in social constructionist research and argues that any research that is based on one or more of these assumptions can be thought of as social constructionist. These assumptions are: a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, knowledge as socially constructed, knowledge and action being inextricably linked, and knowledge as historically and culturally specific (Burr 2015:2-5). My research project is

especially concerned with the first three of these assumptions. However, it is also based on the fourth assumption even though it is not discussed much in the thesis.

Another central debate in discourse analysis is the relativism-realism debate. This is a complex ontological debate and there is not enough space to address it in any detail in this thesis (for a thorough discussion of relativism-realism see: Edwards, Ashmore, and Potter 1995). My research is based on a moderate relativist stance in the sense that there is a real world, but we as humans can only interact with it through language as a medium (Burr 2015:26-27). The danger of adopting a strong relativist position is that it may make it difficult to make moral judgements (Burr 2015:27; Edwards et al. 1995), which I do in my thesis. The argument in Edwards et al. (1995) is that a relativist position does not equal moral bankruptcy, but simply that nothing can be taken for granted and that everything must be examined and argued for. By using critical discourse analysis, I aim to deconstruct Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse and corporate environmentalism to show what is taken for granted and to present evidence and arguments to support my interpretations, explanations, and claims. Questions about normativity, ethics, and morality are unavoidable in a research project based on a critical analysis of the construction of knowledge and the power of language, and as I will discuss later in this chapter moral judgements are a central part of CDA. A concern for me is that I do not know enough about the environment to make any strong normative claims about how the climate crisis should be solved. However, the goal of this thesis is not to provide solutions to the climate crisis, but to show how corporate environmentalism stands in the way of the substantive changes needed to mitigate the effects of climate change.

There are countless ways to define discourse and the most important aspect of any definition is that it is operational in terms of answering the research questions of a project. In this thesis, I have two definitions in mind. Burr (2015) defines discourse as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (2015:74- 75). Her definition is analytically useful as it focuses on the different elements and tools that are used to construct a discourse, which encourages thinking about discourse through a constructive lens. The problem with her definition for this project is that the methodology is based on a critical perspective centered around power and a definition should ideally include this. For this reason, I have also found Canadian sociologist Josée Johnston's

definition useful when thinking about discourse. She defines discourse as "a shared way of understanding the world that is unavoidably connected to political power; as such, discourse shapes how social agents do and do not respond to social and ecological issues and constructs normative boundaries of accountability and responsibility" (Johnston 2008:234). In addition to explicitly referring to the power relations behind discourses, her definition also points to the connection between discourse and action when it comes to ecological issues specifically, which is at the heart of this project. Together, these definitions make it possible to think about discourse in a manner that facilitates the goals of this project.

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

2.2.1 What is Critical Discourse Analysis?

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a branch of discourse analysis that aims to analyze the relationship between language and power by showing how ideology and power relations are created and reproduced through discourse (Burr 2015:194). One of the central figures within CDA is the English linguist, Norman Fairclough. His definition of discourse and discourse analysis is as follows: "'discourse' is the use of language seen as a form of social practice, and discourse analysis is analysis of how texts work within sociocultural practice" (Fairclough 1995:7). In other words, discourse analysis is about understanding the connection between discursive practices and social action. His framework, which was developed in partnership with other researchers, is the foundation of my analysis. It is supplemented by the inclusion of other discourse analytical tools.

Michel Foucault is one of the main contributors to the development of discourse analysis, and Fairclough's CDA is inspired by Foucauldian discourse analysis. Foucault (1981) understands discourse as socially constructed ways of thinking and acting in a society and the effects of this, which can be identified by looking for patterns in the way people express themselves and act in particular contexts at a particular time. Discourse is formed by the relationship between knowledge, truth, and power, and these are not independent entities that exist in society outside humans, but socially constructed (Foucault 1981). Because Foucault sees truth as socially constructed, he is not interested in what is true or false, but in the process that constructs something as true. The goal of Foucauldian discourse analysis is to analyze the work required to construct

and sustain a discourse, or as he describes it himself: "I want to try to discover how this choice of truth, inside which we are caught but which we ceaselessly renew, was made – but also how it was repeated, renewed and displaced" (Foucault 1981:70). The power used to do this is not something that people or institutions have and exert over others, but the result of discursive practices (Foucault 1980:119). This means that power is not inherent to an institution or role but is created through discourse and can never be a case of total dominance, but something that exists and is negotiated in all social relations (Foucault 1980:119). Foucault justifies this conception of power by arguing that if power was only a negative force that limited our latitude, we would resist, but we accept power because it is also a productive force that allows us to act (Foucault 1980:119).

A problem with Foucault's understanding of power according to Fairclough (1995:17) is that it does not adequately express how discourses are used to create and sustain power relations, and how power inequalities in society are tied to different social groups. Power is not *always* used to dominate, but it is used to dominate, and certain groups have access to more power resources than others. This includes corporations that can channel money and resources into controlling a discourse. To amend this perceived weakness in Foucault's conception of power, Fairclough introduces the concept of ideology to critical discourse analysis. Ideology can be understood in a neutral sense to refer to any representation of an aspect of the world, that could be represented differently, but Fairclough (1995:17) rejects any understanding of ideology that does not apply it critically.

A common conception of ideology is ideology as false consciousness, where there is a true representation of reality that is being obscured by ideology (Burr 2015:96). This understanding has been criticized because it suggests that analysts are in a position to judge what is true and false (Fairclough 1995:18-19). Another issue with this understanding of ideology is that it may come across as a deterministic force that makes change impossible due to its opacity (Fairclough 1995:18). However, an ideology being powerful and difficult to identify and/or challenge does not make it impervious to change. Ethical consumption has been described as false consciousness as it distracts from collective power and solutions (Jones 2019), but many people are critical of the potential of ethical consumption as a solution to climate change, showing that awareness and change are possible even when an ideology is backed by powerful institutions. Fairclough states

that he has "faith in the capacity of human beings to change what human beings have created" (1989:4). This is not just an unfounded belief in the human capacity to create change but can be interpreted as an admittance that systems created by humans have flaws in them that can be utilized to deconstruct and challenge them. Doing so requires a critical awareness of ideology, which is why Fairclough (1995) argues that ideology understood as false consciousness can be useful.

Another common understanding of ideology is "ideology in the service of power" (Burr 2015:98). This definition does not require the analyst to address questions about what is true or false, as the goal is to show how ideology is being used by powerful individuals and groups to maintain unequal power relations regardless of whether their representation of reality is true or false (Burr 2015:98). Foucault purposefully avoids the use of ideology because it implicitly suggests that there is a truth that is being obscured, which goes against his understanding of truth as discursively created (Foucault 1980:118). Fairclough takes a more political approach. His goal is not simply to describe and explain how language is used to create and reproduce ideology and power relations but to solve problems by revealing and changing discourses (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:65). In other words, CDA is both explanatory and normative and an analysis can benefit from seeing ideology as both a case of false consciousness and in the service of power. Foucault's work has clearly influenced CDA, but because CDA aims to reveal and change power relations his theory has been adapted to better suit this goal. As this is also the goal of my thesis, I find it useful to follow Fairclough's example and combine these understandings of ideology.

2.2.2 Key Concepts

Truth

All discourses claim to be the truth. While Foucault was not interested in what is true, Fairclough (1995) insists that it is necessary for critical analysts to consider the truth of statements. Without such judgements it is not possible to create social change, so even though truth claims and judgements are a minefield, normative evaluations are necessary. In addition to truth claims, discourse analysis involves looking for what is missing in a text. The omission of information is a central topic in my thesis. A weakness in my analysis is that I am not able to judge the validity of all the claims made by Sierra Nevada due to my limited knowledge about the brewing process and

green technology. I can also only make assumptions about the intent behind the company's claims. However, through close textual analysis, I can discover gaps in the information provided by Sierra Nevada. Whether or not omitting information should be considered lying is an age-old debate. A comprehensive discussion about the ethics of omitting information is not possible, but Fairclough considers the omission of information a question of truth and falsity (1995:18). Because discourse and social action are closely connected, judgement on this topic may revolve around the practical consequences of omitting information. If omission of information affects how people act, then its effect is the same as a false statement. For example, if Sierra Nevada omits information about the negative environmental impact of its business activities, purposefully or not, and consumers act without this knowledge, then the result is the same as if Sierra Nevada lied and said that its business activities have a positive impact on the environment. In this thesis, the question of truth is addressed through discussions about the information problem created by the information asymmetry between companies and consumers.

Orders of Discourse, Interdiscursivity, and Genre

One of the key concepts in Fairclough's CDA is orders of discourse, which he has adapted from Foucault. Fairclough (1995:12) defines orders of discourse as "the ordered set of discursive practices associated with a particular social domain or institution ... and boundaries and relationships between them". These boundaries and relationships are not static but characterized by struggle and change (Fairclough 1995:12-13). I do not use the term orders of discourse in the analysis but refer to the concept by mentioning different spheres and institutions such as the political sphere and business as an institution. Texts have no choice but to position themselves in relation to other texts and draw on conventions from the order of discourse it belongs to, but they can use these conventions creatively and combine them with elements from other orders of discourse (Fairclough 1995:10-11). This allows texts to reproduce or transform conventions. The freedom to use conventions creatively does not mean that our efforts to transform orders of discourse are equal, as those with more power and resources have a stronger effect on orders of discourse.

Interdiscursivity is closely related to orders of discourse and can be used as a tool by analysts to show how a text is either reproducing conventions or transforming them by drawing upon resources from different discourses and genres (Fairclough 1995:135). The term recontextualization is useful when analyzing instances of interdiscursivity. Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:93-94) distinguish between recontextualization through colonization, where one field takes over another, and recontextualization as appropriation, where an external discourse is appropriated and incorporated into a new discourse. According to them, these processes always occur together, as colonization involves appropriation and vice versa (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999:94). The point is that interdiscursivity is not simply a creative tool, but a way to exercise power. An example of recontextualization is the marketization of public discourse, where market discourse colonizes other discourses. I will discuss this tendency in chapter 4. Interdiscursivity is an important tool for those constructing texts, but it can also be a double-edged sword. A company may have full control over the construction of a text, but how a text is interpreted depends on the resources of the people interpreting the text. We all have different experiences and repertoires of texts that we have interacted with in the past that affect how we understand the texts we encounter, and resistant readings are possible. Producers, especially the ones with a lot of power and resources, may attempt to construct the text in a way that suits the different audiences that will consume the text (Fairclough 1992:79), but there are no guarantees that the use of interdiscursivity will have the desired outcome. This complicates the strategic use of interdiscursivity as a discursive tool for corporations.

A genre is the typical way language is used in a specific context (Breeze 2013:36). Society is structured around patterned social interaction, which leads to patterned use of language (Breeze 2013:36). The patterned use of language leads to the creation of genre conventions. The data material belongs to the genre of corporate communication, specifically corporate website. Because corporations communicate with different audiences and with different purposes, corporate discourse is not actually one discourse, but a collection of discourses and genres used by businesses to communicate (Breeze 2013:23). In theory it is possible to think of strict and clear genre conventions for every type of social interaction, and it can be useful to think of genres as ideal types (Fairclough 1995:14). In reality, texts mix genres, and corporate discourse is characterized by genre mixing (Breeze 2013:189), but identifying how texts follow and break with genre

conventions is made easier by comparing the text to the ideal type of the specific genre, and doing this makes genre mixing as a feature visible. Genres make it easier to communicate both for the producer of a text and the people interpreting it (Breeze 2013:36). In this way, genres are essential for society to function effectively, and we all benefit from their existence. On the other hand, genres are another tool that can be used by people and institutions to serve their interests, which does not have to benefit society as a collective (Breeze 2013:38). In chapter 3 I look at how genre mixing affects the information problem.

2.3 Corporate Discourse

We interact with businesses every day, and analysis of corporate discourse looks at how businesses communicate with different audiences. The approach to corporate discourse in this thesis is inspired by linguist Ruth Breeze, who has written extensively about CDA, corporate discourse, and legitimation strategies used by businesses. She describes the goal when analyzing corporate discourse as showing "how language is being used to inform, persuade or manipulate in the ongoing creation, maintenance and reshaping social roles and relations" (Breeze 2013:1). Companies interact with audiences such as customers, shareholders, investors, media, and employees. My focus is on Sierra Nevada's corporate website whose content, based on the repeated mentions of Sierra Nevada's products and how to purchase them, is largely aimed at consumers. Still, the website can be accessed by anyone, which means that Sierra Nevada is aware that the content should cater to a wider audience. The purpose of thinking about corporate representation of green measures as symbolic corporate environmentalism instead of greenwashing was to avoid misrepresenting all corporate greening as calculated and misleading. Still, it is important to consider how discursive tools can be used to manipulate readers. I have done this by leaning on Teun van Dijk's (2006) theory of manipulation, which was developed with critical discourse analysis in mind.

Breeze (2013) makes an important distinction between corporate identity, which is constructed by the corporation, and corporate image, which is how the corporation is perceived by the public. The focus of this thesis is Sierra Nevada's corporate identity, but because corporate identity and corporate image are intertwined, an analysis of corporate identity cannot ignore corporate image.

The section in chapter 3 about legitimacy, reputation, and status, considers how companies can use legitimacy, reputation, and status as strategic tools, but also how consumers use these concepts to make quick judgements about companies. In this section Breeze's perspective on corporate discourse and legitimacy is supplemented with other literature about legitimacy, reputation, and status. The concepts of corporate identity and corporate image tell us that businesses being described as green is not a result of inherent qualities, but that they are discursively created. Aspects to consider when analyzing corporate identity are company history, ethos, values, goals, and plans (Breeze 2013:10). Sierra Nevada's corporate identity is being a green business and using critical discourse analysis and tools from corporate discourse, I will show how this identity is created.

2.4 What's the Problem Represented to be?

Carol Bacchi's "What's the Problem Represented to be?" (WPR) approach was developed to analyze policy but the approach is useful when analyzing problem representations in general. The foundation of WPR is that problems do not exist a priori but are socially constructed, and by looking at the proposed solution to a problem it is possible to identify how the problem was represented (Bacchi 2009). Problem representations are central to my thesis as the social problem I aim to explore in this thesis is how corporate environmentalism represents the climate crisis and obscures alternative problem representations. This is why I have borrowed tools from Bacchi's approach to analyze my data material. Bacchi (2009) presents six questions to analyze how a problem is represented. I have not applied Bacchi's full framework but used it as a guide to question how corporate environmentalism and Sierra Nevada represents problems. Keeping Bacchi's (2009) six questions in mind, I have considered aspects such as: what problems are represented to be, assumptions behind the representations, what is missing from the representations, the effects of the representations, and alternative problem representations. Bacchi has on several occasions discussed the relationship between WPR and CDA and drawn clear distinctions between them (see: Bacchi 2015; Bacchi 2018). Bacchi's (2009) WPR approach, like Fairclough's CDA, is inspired by Foucauldian discourse analysis aims, but like Foucault, Bacchi's intent is not to judge problem representations but to reveal them (Bacchi 2012). Problem representations are not necessarily manipulation and there can be no solutions without a represented problem (Bacchi

2012). For example, this thesis is only possible because I have represented a problem and the thesis is shaped by the problem representation. Although problem representations are not always a case of manipulation, they can be used to manipulate, and as my thesis is based on Fairclough's CDA my evaluations of Sierra Nevada's problem representations are normative. The information gained from deconstructing problem representation in the data material makes WPR a fruitful tool in my analysis when adapted to suit CDA and the normative goals of this thesis.

2.5 Data Selection

Sierra Nevada's green identity is one of the reasons I have chosen them as a case for this project, but because Sierra Nevada has a strong green corporate identity and features sustainability heavily in its communication it is necessary to limit the data material. Corporate communication takes on different forms depending on the intended audience and purpose. There are different approaches to the topic of this thesis, and they involve different kinds of data. I have chosen to focus on the "About" section of Sierra Nevada's corporate website. Based on the research questions I have chosen to focus only on the sections/subsections that deal with the company's business activities and history. Sierra Nevada has customers in the United States and abroad. Most of these do not live near one of the two brewery locations, which means that the website functions as a virtual shop front (Breeze 2013:18). This makes the "About" section an important source of information for most consumers. The website can be accessed by anyone, and the material is aimed at a wide audience. This makes it possible to analyze how Sierra Nevada constructs a sustainability discourse for stakeholders with different interests.

Breeze (2013:155) points out that there are few studies that analyze corporate websites using discourse analysis, which is surprising considering that corporate websites offer unmediated corporate discourse and can show exactly how companies construct their identity. Sierra Nevada has full control over the construction of the sustainability discourse on its website, which would not be the case if I had chosen to analyze media texts or other sources of mediated information (Breeze 2013:18). This does not mean that Sierra Nevada has full control over the interpretation of the discourse, but it gives the company control over how information is portrayed and what information is included and excluded. The information included in the "About" section of the

corporate website is not all the information available about Sierra Nevada and sustainability, but it is some of the most accessible information and the information that Sierra Nevada chose to emphasize. The information missing from Sierra Nevada's website may exist elsewhere, but what is missing from the "About" section is interesting in itself from a discursive perspective. All texts are the result of considerations about what information to include and exclude, and we all communicate through discourses. The omission of information is therefore not suspicious in itself but looking at information through a critical perspective it is necessary to consider why some information may have been purposefully excluded.

Websites are multimodal, and Sierra Nevada's corporate website makes use of a combination of written text, images, interactive maps and timelines, and hyperlinks to communicate with the readers. The data material for this thesis is the written text, but it cannot be fully separated from the other elements of Sierra Nevada's website as they interact to create meaning (Fairclough 1995:4). In his framework for textual analysis, Fairclough (1989) encourages asking questions about a text's larger-scale structure, which in my data material involves considering the multimodality of Sierra Nevada's "About" section. I have included references to the larger-scale structure and multimodality where appropriate and screenshots of website elements to illustrate points in my analysis. There is also a section devoted to website usability as the organization of information affects the interpretation process and whether the information is accessible or not. In that section, which can be found in chapter 3, I use theory about website usability from professor in corporate communication Irene Pollach (2005) and linguist Emilia Djonov (2007) to explore how website usability affects the information problem. To show the importance of website usability, I compare Sierra Nevada's website with the website of the outdoor clothing and gear retailer Patagonia, which is another company known for its green corporate identity. This comparison allows me to discuss the different ways information can be presented, the effect of the presentation, and how it affects the information problem. The research questions would have benefitted from a more thorough multimodal analysis, but this was not possible due to the limited scale of the project.

2.6 Data Collection

The data material was collected from the “About” section of Sierra Nevada's company website. The "About" section is made up of seven webpages. Only five of them have been included in the data material for this thesis. The two sections that have been excluded are about Sierra Nevada's *Take Back Our Trails* program. The goal of this program is to protect and maintain hiking trails. Promotional activities such as collaborating with environmental organizations or initiatives like the *Take Back Our Trails* program can be categorized as symbolic corporate environmentalism and are part of a company's sustainability discourse (Breeze 2013). These two webpages have been excluded from the data material because they are not directly related to Sierra Nevada's business activities. An overview of the five sections that make up the data material and their URLs can be found in table 1. There are direct quotes from these webpages throughout this thesis. Including full in-text citations for these quotes became difficult due to the interactivity of Sierra Nevada's website. Each information box has a separate URL and the information is not dated. This made the citations confusing and unhelpful, which defeats the purpose of citations. I have therefore chosen to forgo full citations for quotes from Sierra Nevada's website, both in-text and in the reference list. Direct quotes are marked either with quotation marks or as indented blockquotes, and it is described which section/subsection a quote is from. The text from the webpages will change and the most important thing is that it is clear where the quotes came from, which is why I have made this decision.

Table 1: Overview of the data material

Webpage	URL
Landing page for “About” section	https://sierranevada.com/about/
Landing page for “Our Story” subsection	https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/
Landing page for “Sustainability” subsection	https://sierranevada.com/about/sustainability/
Interactive map of Chico, CA	https://sierranevada.com/map/chico-sustainability-map/
Interactive map of Mills River, NC	https://sierranevada.com/map/mills-river-sustainability-map/

The data collection process consisted of screenshotting and saving the elements that make up these webpages in case Sierra Nevada chose to delete or make changes to its website. The data collection was done on the 11th of January 2022. After screenshotting the data material, I transcribed all the written text from the webpages and gathered it into one document. The content of Sierra Nevada's website, both the text and visual elements, is copyrighted, but the fair use doctrine of United States' copyright law allows for the use of copyrighted content without permission for research purposes (U.S. Copyright Office 2022). This thesis is nonprofit research in the public interest and the purpose of copyright is to protect intellectual property, not to protect a work against commentary or criticism, which is why I have not sought permission to use the data material. Below are short descriptions of the five webpages that make up the data material.

The first webpage is the landing page for the "About" section. This is the page one accesses when pressing the "About" hyperlink in the top menu on the homepage of Sierra Nevada's website. It consists of a short introduction, photos and illustrations, and hyperlinks to other pages. Most of these hyperlinks lead to other parts of the "About" section, but some of them take users to other sections of Sierra Nevada's website.

The second webpage is the company history subsection entitled "Our Story". This page has a short introduction, but the main element is an interactive timeline. The interactive timeline is vertical and placed on top of a selection of photos. The photo changes as you scroll down. Some points on the timeline are visible when opening the webpage, other points must be clicked to reveal more information. Figure 1 is a screenshot showing part of the timeline.



Figure 1: The timeline of Sierra Nevada's company history. Retrieved January 11, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/>)

The "Sustainability" subsection is made up of three webpages. The first webpage is the landing page, which has a short introduction and hyperlinks to two interactive maps, one for the Chico brewery and one for the Mills River brewery. The interactive maps of the two brewery facilities allow users to click on different areas of the maps to reveal information boxes with photos and descriptions of the different measures taken to make the brewery more sustainable. There is also the option to click a button that opens a list view of all the clickable parts of the map instead of moving through the map. On the next page there are two screenshots from Sierra Nevada's website. Figure 2 is a screenshot of the interactive map of Chico, the green map pins are clickable areas that open information boxes. Figure 3 shows what the information boxes look like.



Figure 2: Map of the Chico brewery. Retrieved January 11, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/map/chico-sustainability-map/>)

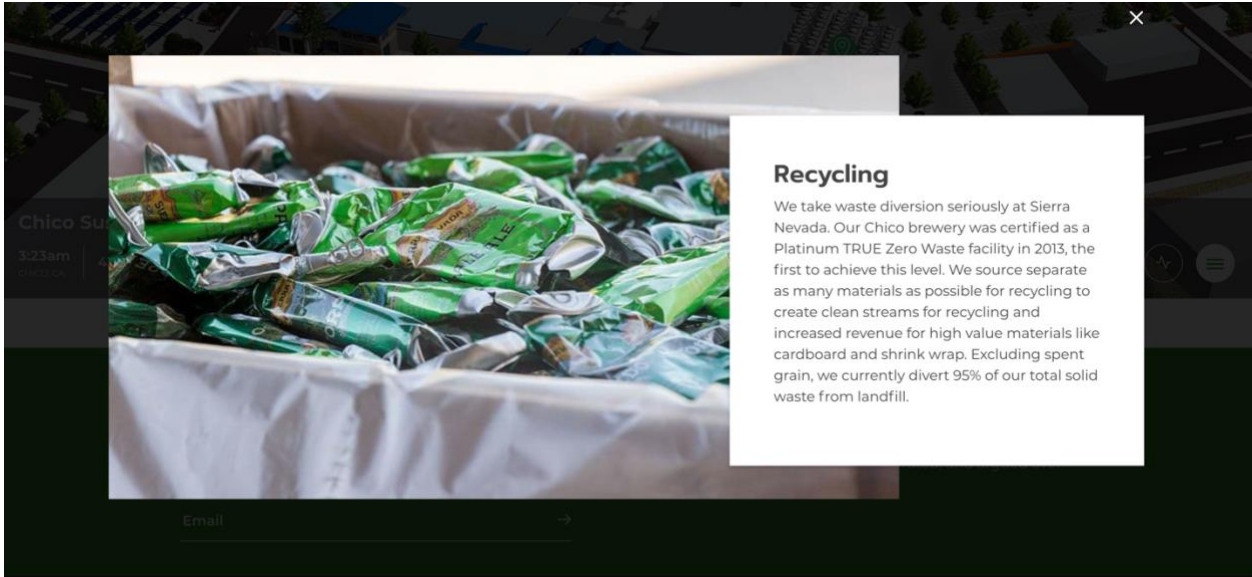


Figure 3: Information box about recycling. Retrieved January 11, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/map/chico-sustainability-map/#map-modal-recycling>)

The internet is a fickle thing. This makes replicability difficult and raises questions about how to deal with changes made to the website after the data collection (Pollach 2005:291). Constantly monitoring the website for changes and adapting the analysis accordingly is a massive undertaking. The website will also change after the project is over. Due to this it is not feasible or necessarily beneficial to do this. My plan was to stick with the original data material but monitor the website regularly in case substantial changes were made that should be addressed. Towards the end of my project, Sierra Nevada made several updates to the "About" section of its website. When I gathered the data material for this thesis, the timeline in the "Our Story" subsection ended in 2018. Sierra Nevada has now added points for 2020 and 2021. The information in these points is not directly linked to sustainability or growth and is therefore not relevant to the research topic. In the "Sustainability" subsection, Sierra Nevada has added some text to the introduction and an infographic about some of the company's green measures. The information that has been added is a reiteration of information available through the interactive maps and including it would not have changed my findings. In chapter 3 I include a reference to the new infographic because it illustrates a tendency that is present in the original data material well, but other than this I have stuck to the original data material. In addition to methodological concerns, the constantly changing nature of the internet affects consumers as true reflexivity requires continuous monitoring of the information provided by businesses, which is something I will discuss in the analysis.

2.7 Analytical Approach

According to Fairclough (1995), all communicative events consist of three dimensions that must be analyzed in order to understand the relationship between a discursive practice and social action. Fairclough has visualized this in a simple model that can be seen in figure 4. The inner square is the text, which is described through close textual analysis. The middle square is the discursive practice, which includes the production and interpretation of the text. The outer square is the social practice the discourse is part of and the effect the discursive practice has on the social practice (Fairclough 1995:97). The social practice must be analyzed on a situational, institutional, and societal level. In my thesis this is Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse and how it relates to corporate environmental discourse and the societal effect of corporate environmentalism. Corporate environmentalism has been identified as having a negative impact on climate change

action, and the question is whether Sierra Nevada contributes to this by reproducing corporate environmental discourse or if the company transforms it in a way that can have a positive impact on climate change action.

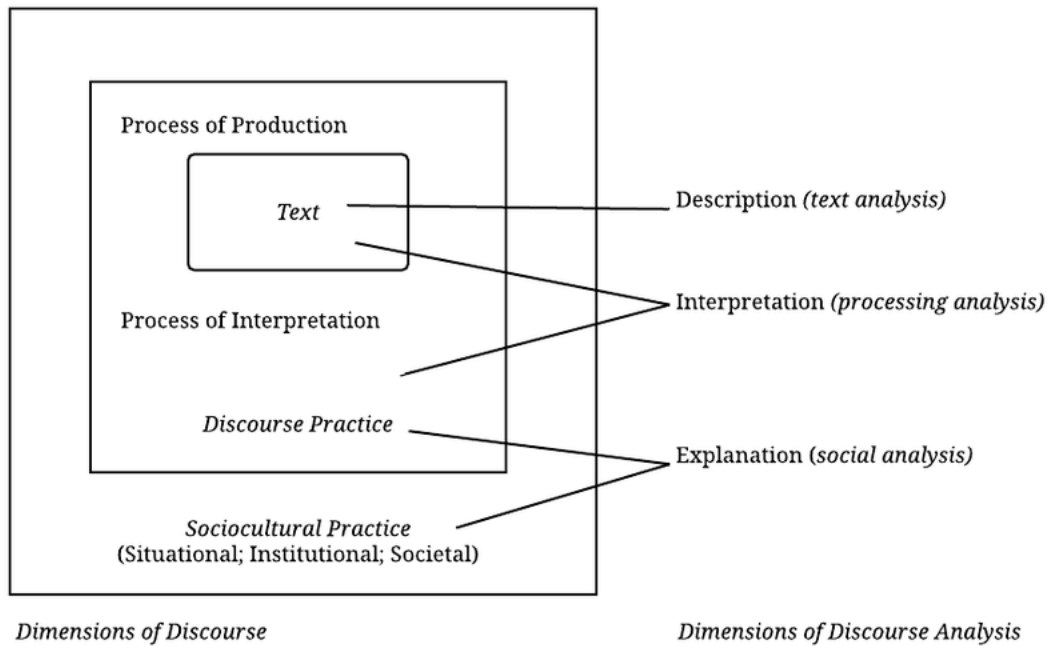


Figure 4: Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Fairclough 1995:98)

I began the analysis process by reading the data material and highlighting interesting points. Following this, I coded and categorized the data material. After coding and categorizing the data material, I utilized Fairclough's CDA framework for analysis, which is described below, to conduct a close textual analysis of the data material. When writing the analysis, I moved between the document with my initial thoughts, codes, and categorizations, the document with the close textual analysis, and the data transcription with no comments. By moving back and forth like this I aimed to conduct a systematic analysis without locking myself to my initial analysis or removing myself too far from the raw data material. Fairclough (1989) splits the process of critical discourse analysis into description, interpretation, and explanation, and provides resources for the different stages of the process. Fairclough's framework is the main tool used in the close textual analysis of the data material, but I have also borrowed tools from linguist M.A.K. Halliday, whom Fairclough was

inspired by. Below is an overview of Fairclough's framework as described in his book *Language and Power* (1989).

2.7.1 Description

Fairclough (1989:112-139) presents ten questions about vocabulary, grammar, and textual structure to ask about the text in order to describe it. This step is the inner square in his three-dimensional model.

Vocabulary

The first four questions in the framework are about vocabulary (Fairclough 1989:112-120).

1. What experiential value do words have?

This involves looking at which words are grouped together in categories and if there are words whose meaning are contested due to ideological conflict. Ideologically contested words are usually the most important words in a discourse. Sustainability is an example of an ideologically contested word, and this entire thesis is centered around the ideological conflict surrounding it. To answer this question, it can be useful to look for overwording, which is when a text uses a lot of words that have the same or similar meanings in order to emphasize one understanding of these words or rewording where the dominant meaning of words is challenged by systematically replacing them with words that have the opposite meaning. Fairclough also suggests looking at how words are ideologically connected to other words through synonymy (words that have the same or similar meanings), hyponymy (the meaning of one word being encapsulated in another word), and antonymy (words being positioned as opposites). Relationships between words are not natural, and they can be connected in different ways. This makes it possible to construct relationships between words that contribute to an ideology, which is what this question is used to reveal.

2. What relational values do words have?

The aim of this question is to understand how words are used to create a relationship between the writer and the audience. This can be done through means such as the use of formal or informal

language or euphemisms (replacing potentially offensive words with innocuous words). This is part of what Halliday (2007) refers to as the interpersonal function of language.

3. What expressive values do words have?

The question is how the writer is utilizing expressive words to express a positive or negative view of a topic, and how different readers may have different reactions to the same words. The expressive value of a word is ideological, and not inherent to the word. Corporate discourse aims to frame business activities in a positive light and to reach a wide audience, which is why Fairclough considers the analysis of expressive words especially important in the analysis of persuasive language such as corporate discourse.

4. What metaphors are used?

Different metaphors can be used to describe the same phenomenon, which is why it is important to consider the effect of using one metaphor as opposed to another.

Grammar

Questions 5 to 8 cover grammatical features (Fairclough 1989:120-132).

5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?

This question is used as a tool to identify how grammar is used to portray events or relationships in terms of how it happens, when it happens, where it happens, and who or what is participating. It is also interesting if any of this information is absent and if grammatical features are used to make participants active or passive, or even completely erase agency from the portrayal of something.

6. What relational values do grammatical features have?

Like question 3, this is part of the interpersonal function of language (Halliday 2007). The grammatical mood of a statement can be imperative, declarative, or a grammatical question, and the mood chosen shapes the relationship between the writer and the audience. Another grammatical feature is modality, which can be used to construct a power relation between the

writer and the audience, but also to express the writer's authority with respect to specific statements. This is done through modal auxiliary verbs. For example, the modal auxiliary verb *must* expresses a different level of authority than *should*. Looking for modality in a text can reveal what social action a text is proposing and what kind of authority is being used to encourage it. Personal pronouns are another relational grammatical feature. Both the inclusive "we" and directly addressing the audience through the use of "you" are common in corporate discourse (Breeze 2013:159). The use of this grammatical feature is therefore an important feature I looked for in my data material.

7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?

The use of modality to construct the level of authority behind a statement as described above is an example of the expressive value of a grammatical feature. This can be done through the use of modal auxiliary verbs as well as other parts of speech. Categorical truth claims are one form of modality, but the truth of a statement can also be presented as less certain by constructing a statement differently.

8. How are sentences linked together?

This includes both how sentences are connected within a text and how sentences refer to things outside the text. Some connectors are used to suggest that one thing naturally follows another as though it must be that way or to state something in a way that implies it is common and widely accepted knowledge. Looking for connectors is useful when looking for taken for granted knowledge and presuppositions.

Textual structure

The last two questions look at the structure of a text (Fairclough 1989: 133-139).

9. What interactional conventions are used?

This is not relevant for my analysis as it is not a conversation analysis.

10. What larger-scale structures does the text have?

The interpretation process does not start after reading a text, but as we are reading it. This makes the structure of the text important. Texts can have a predictable structure that creates expectations in the audience. Genre is an example of this. The placement of features and statements can also be used to suggest what is important and what is secondary. Van Dijk (2006) argues that this can be used not just to lead the audience through the material, but to manipulate the audience by influencing the way the text is read and interpreted. My data material consists of multimodal texts, which use a variety of features to emphasize certain points and connections such as headlines, hyperlinks, colors, images, etc. All of these are designed and placed in a way that leads the eye through the text in a particular manner and potentially manipulate our interpretation of the text.

2.7.2 Interpretation and Explanation

The interpretation of text is not a straightforward process where the meaning of a statement is inherent to it, but a subjective process where we draw on the knowledge and resources we possess. Fairclough (1989) uses the term members resources (MR) to refer to the resources we make use of in the interpretation process. The interpretation and explanation of data material done by researchers is a result of the researcher's MR (Fairclough 1989:141). Discourse analysis should therefore not be thought of as separate from the interpretation we do in our daily lives, but it should involve more reflexivity than we generally use in our day-to-day lives. The fact that researchers utilize their MR when interpreting and explaining discourse is one of the reasons why reflexivity as a researcher is essential.

MR are made up of both linguistic and cultural knowledge and play a central role in both the production and interpretation of a text. For example, I am fluent in English, which enabled me to analyze the data material. At the same time, I have limited knowledge of technical terms and specialized terminology related to brewing. This could have been a disadvantage, but because one of the goals of this thesis is to evaluate the accessibility of the information for readers, many of whom will have a similar amount of knowledge as me, the analysis benefits from my knowledge gap. How a text is interpreted depends on what MR the reader has, which leads to a variety of interpretations of the same text. This in turn results in a variety of actions, as our interpretation of a discourse affects how we act. The goal of a text is to draw upon MR to lead the audience to the

desired interpretation of the text. Texts can actively appeal to our MR through means such as genre, structure, and visual aspects, which create expectations and shape our interpretation process. Fairclough emphasizes that MR are not natural but socially constructed and maintained by powerful people and institutions that benefit way from a particular representation (Fairclough 1989:165). This is done through ideology. Whether this representation of reality is a case of ideology as false consciousness does not matter. The point is that power is being used to forward a particular representation of reality. Despite the power behind corporate ideology, MR can be used creatively by readers in the interpretation process, which is what makes change possible. Fairclough (1989:165) argues that creative use of MR is often seen in problematic and unfamiliar situations where power relations have been revealed as a form of resistance. The increasing awareness of environmental problems and the negative impact business has on the environment can lead to creative use of MR as corporate power becomes more visible. Deconstructing corporate environmentalism to reveal how it functions and the power behind it can contribute to more creative use of MR, which is what I aim to do in this thesis.

The process of interpretation in CDA is split into six domains of interpretation that are used to interpret the text and the context. The first of these is surface of utterance, which in my case involves my ability to read and understand the English language. The second domain of interpretation, meaning of utterance, is understanding the meaning of sentences in a text, i.e., how words are combined to create meaning. The third domain is local coherence, which is understanding how sections of the text are connected to each other. The goal of this step is not to look at how the entire text is connected, but how sentences in a section are linked together to construct meaning. These connections are not natural but constructed to convey meaning. Sometimes the sentences are not explicitly connected, but implicitly connected, for example when one sentence follows another in a way that suggests logical implication between statements. The fourth domain is interpreting how the text is structured as a whole to convey a particular meaning. Identifying what type of text it is and the characteristic features that come with this form is part of step four. The fifth and sixth domain is the interpretation of situational context and intertextual context. The former refers to what kind of social practice the text is part of and elements of this practice such as who is participating, what roles are available and the relationship between them, and the role of language in the activity. The latter has to do with intertextuality and what is

presupposed in the text by connecting it to other texts. Interpreting the text on different levels makes it possible for the analyst to combine the different levels to understand how the text as a whole is constructed to do something (Fairclough 1989:142-155).

The goal of the explanation is to show how the discourse is part of a social practice, and this part of the process requires the use of social theory to make sense of the social practice beyond the discursive elements (Fairclough 1989:163). The main concept used to explain the data material, corporate environmentalism, was presented in the introduction chapter, and more social theory will be introduced in the analysis.

2.8 Reflexivity as a Researcher

Objectivity and value-freedom are strong norms within academic discourse, but through a social constructionist lens total objectivity is impossible as we all access the world through a particular perspective (Burr 2015:172). Fairclough goes as far as to describe a lack of value-judgements from researchers as an ethical failure (1995:19), as assuming a strong relativist position and full objectivity and value-freedom can lead to an undesirable moral free-for-all. I take this stance. However it is not because I believe that there are ultimate norms for ethics and morals that exist a priori and that any resistance against these should be avoided. Morals and ethics come from somewhere, which should be acknowledged. They should also not be static, but constantly questioned and discussed as societies change. However, although my judgements are not superior or perfect, the urgency of the climate crisis calls for normative judgements about how to address it in the best way. Corporate environmentalism stands in the way of effective global climate action, which is why I am making judgements based on how Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse relates to corporate environmentalism.

Objectivity and value-freedom as a researcher are both desirable and undesirable at the same time. It is desirable as an ideal type because the self-interest of researchers should not sway or shape the results of their research (Burr 2015:171), but it becomes undesirable when language is used to create a neutral or invisible voice that ignores the researcher's effect on the research. Ignoring one's position as a researcher does not lead to objectivity but hides problems. Transparency is the

key to balancing objectivity and value-freedom as an ideal type with the reality of being human. I sought out this project out of personal interest and I have thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to it. Both my MR and the critical perspective I have applied has shaped the thesis, and another methodological approach or a researcher with different MR would have changed the thesis to some extent. My goal is therefore not to remove myself from my research, but to look for my own biases and for others to do the same.

The self-interest of corporations is a topic this thesis keeps coming back to, but my self-interest is also of interest to those wishing to evaluate my research. My relationship to Sierra Nevada and corporate environmentalism kept changing throughout the entire process. I chose Sierra Nevada because it is a company whose work and corporate identity I like, particularly the strong green profile. Like many others, I am skeptical of corporate messages, and this is also the case when it comes to Sierra Nevada's green identity. I initially went into the project with a largely positive mindset. The further I went into the literature on corporate environmentalism the more cynical I became. This allowed me to become more critical when analyzing the sustainability discourse but could also have led to me ignoring positive aspects of the discourse. One of the criticisms launched at CDA is its tendency to be overly negative and cynical (Breeze 2011). This knowledge made me aware of my attitude and I became more attuned to positive aspects of the data material and corporate environmentalism in general in order to strike a balance between skepticism and openness.

3 Sierra Nevada's Sustainability Discourse

The construction of a discourse is a question of what information to include, what information to exclude, and how to represent the included information. Companies have more information about their business activities than consumers and the knowledge required to evaluate the information. Companies benefit from the information problem because it puts them in a position of power in relation to the consumers. This does not mean that companies necessarily wish to perpetuate the information problem, but that they benefit from it regardless. Corporate environmentalism frames ethical consumption as the solution to unsustainable consumption patterns, but for ethical consumption to be possible, consumers need access to valid and reliable information about the sustainability of companies' business activities. Balancing the need for profit and resource access with transparent information is a difficult task for companies because negative information may jeopardize their sales and resource access. This affects what information companies provide and how it is represented. Ethical consumption requires consumers to engage reflexively with the information provided by companies, but reflexivity is pointless if the information is unreliable. Even if the information disclosed is reliable, it may be difficult for consumers to evaluate it due to a lack of time and knowledge (Johnston 2008:254). For ethical consumption to be a viable solution to our unsustainable consumption patterns, corporate environmentalism must overcome the information problem.

In this chapter, I look at how Sierra Nevada constructs its sustainability discourse and how it relates to corporate environmentalism and the information problem. The first part of the chapter is dedicated to examining how Sierra Nevada represents the climate crisis and the environmental impact of the company's business activities. The second part of the chapter looks at the information problem and what effect website usability, genre mixing, and social judgements have on the information problem. By doing this I will show how Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse reproduces corporate environmentalism, and how the company's sustainability discourse, regardless of intention, contributes to the information problem. I will also use the flaws identified in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse to show how corporate environmentalism may be unable to overcome the information problem and argue for government regulation as a solution to the identified problems.

3.1 Representing the Problem

3.1.1 Where is the Climate Crisis?

One would expect to find the terms climate change or climate crisis in a sustainability discourse, but they are absent from Sierra Nevada's "About" section. In the "Our Story" subsection, Sierra Nevada states that "The goal was simple when we started: make incredible beer. But there's more at stake, so we brew and do business like the planet's future depends on it, because it does". This is the most explicit reference to the climate crisis in the "About" section. The statement is reminiscent of catchphrases from environmental activism discourse like "there is no planet B" and an example of interdiscursivity in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse. It is an anthropocentric representation of the climate crisis. The planet has seen species come and go, and its future does not depend on action to mitigate climate change. Humans and other current species on the planet depend on action to mitigate climate change in order to avoid extinction. The statement is catchy, emotional, and connects Sierra Nevada to environmental activism. At the same time, it is a vague, and arguably inaccurate euphemism, which is interesting considering it is the most explicit mention of the climate crisis in Sierra Nevada's "About" section. The question is if the omission of explicit references to the climate crisis is an avoidance strategy, or if it is motivated by something else.

According to Fairclough (1995:5): "Textual analysis can often give excellent insights about what is 'in' a text, but what is absent from a text is often just as significant". He does however make an important distinction between what is absent and what is implicit. Excluding explicit references to something can be done to hide something, but it can also be done to represent something as taken for granted. Representing something as taken for granted is a powerful ideological tool that excludes alternative representations to the point where one representation is seen as the only possible representation. The lack of explicit references to climate change can be interpreted as an attempt to represent the climate crisis and the necessity of green measures as taken for granted. In the statement above, brewing sustainably is represented as following naturally from the fact that the planet's future depends on it, i.e., because A is the case we do B, and no other response is considered. This is a logical implication, which takes for granted that B must follow A. By doing this Sierra Nevada is representing the climate crisis and the necessity of action to mitigate it as

taken for granted. There is also no denying that the climate crisis is implicitly present throughout Sierra Nevada's "About" section, which is a strong argument for the climate crisis being represented as taken for granted, not absent. Even so, there are some features of the text that raise questions about other potential reasons for excluding more explicit references to the climate crisis.



Figure 5: *Bigger Than Beer?* Spot the climate change reference. Retrieved January 11, 2022

[\(https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/\)](https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/)

The interpretation of all texts, but especially multimodal texts like websites, are affected by the larger-scale structure of the text. Elements such as text placement, font choices, and headlines can be used to organize information and increase website usability, but also to manipulate readers by influencing how we read and interpret the information (van Dijk 2006:365). Figure 5 is a screenshot of the statement discussed in the paragraphs above. In terms of the larger-scale structure, the statement is placed at the very bottom of the "Our Story" subsection, which means that readers have to scroll all the way down the page to see it. This makes the statement less accessible than the content at the top of the page. The statement functions as a short description of a video about Sierra Nevada's *Take Back Our Trails* program. The video itself has not been included in the data material because it is not directly related to the environmental impact of Sierra Nevada's business activities. The reason why the video description has been included is because it is written text that is part of the "Our Story" subsection. The video description is in a small, white, minimalistic font and is followed by a big, white play button that stands out against the

nature photo it is layered over. Above the video description, there is a title and a subtitle in larger, bold, eye-catching fonts. This makes the video description one of the least visually stimulating elements, and it is clear that the statement is not intended to be a focal point. This is a reasonable decision considering the video is not directly related to the content of the subsection, but it is noteworthy that the most explicit reference to the climate crisis is so inconspicuous. This is why it is necessary to consider other reasons why explicit references to climate change may have been omitted.

The lack of explicit references to climate change can be an attempt to avoid using ideologically charged vocabulary. Terms like climate crisis and climate change are ideologically charged and have different expressive values for different readers. Using the euphemism of the planet's future being at stake could be what Fairclough (1989:117) describes as a strategy of avoidance for relational reasons. This allows Sierra Nevada to talk about the environment and climate change without using words with expressive values that may instantly alienate a group of readers. Climate skepticism and climate denial exist, and there are many that believe CSR is negative for the free market and that businesses should not devote resources to green measures. Butte County, where Sierra Nevada's headquarter is located, is a Republican leaning county, and Pew Research Center (2020:35-36) found that Republicans are less concerned about climate change than Democrats. There is also more support for free market principles among Republicans (Pew Research Center 2020:21). By constructing a sustainability discourse without explicitly mentioning climate change or the cause of it, Sierra Nevada avoids using ideologically charged vocabulary that is associated with political divisions in the United States, regardless of whether this is a conscious choice or not.

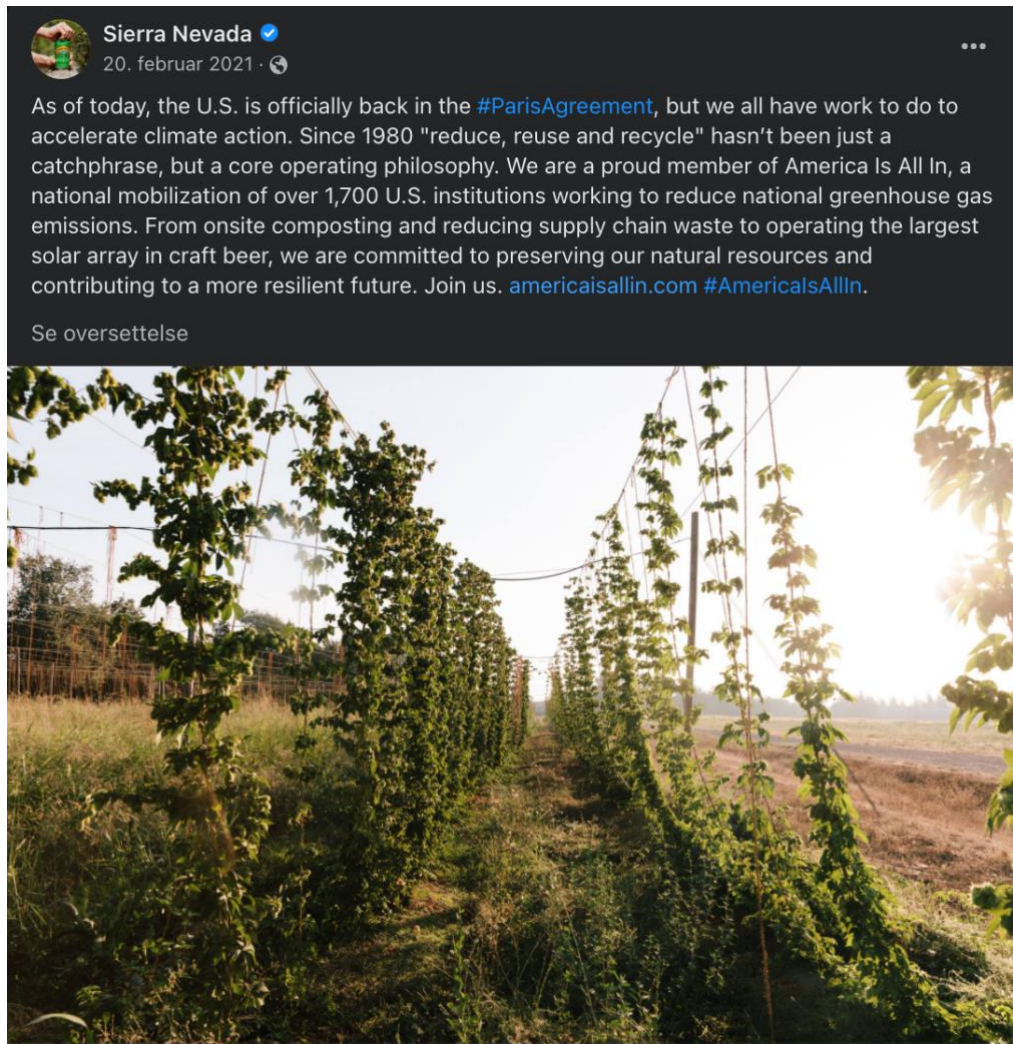


Figure 6: Sierra Nevada's Facebook post about the Paris Agreement⁴

When the United States rejoined the Paris Agreement on climate change in early 2021, Sierra Nevada posted the Facebook post shown above in figure 6. This post celebrated this development and encouraged more action to counteract climate change. The response in the comment section is highly divided. There is support for Sierra Nevada's opinion and its socially and environmentally responsible business activities, but there are also a significant number of negative comments. I have not included screenshots or transcriptions of the comment section due to data privacy, but the negative comments include anti-CSR sentiments, arguments against government intervention, climate change skepticism and denial, and comments encouraging Sierra Nevada to stick to brewing beer and not force its political opinions on others. The post shows that Sierra Nevada is

⁴ Sierra Nevada's Facebook page, retrieved February 17, 2022 from: <https://www.facebook.com/sierranevadabeer/posts/10160907491192516>

willing to make explicit references to climate change that use ideologically charged vocabulary, but it also demonstrates why Sierra Nevada would want to avoid doing this on its website. I can only speculate on what the intention behind Sierra Nevada's omission of explicit references to climate change and its causes, but it is a double-edged sword. Different readers will draw upon different MR when interpreting the text and even those who are opposed to CSR and corporate environmentalism will notice the implicit presence of climate change. By avoiding explicit references to it, the risk is that climate change becomes the elephant in the room instead of taken for granted, and in a thesis about discourse it goes without saying that the language we use to represent problems matters. The lack of explicit references to the climate crisis obscures the big picture, and as we shall see in the next section, this is a recurring problem in Sierra Nevada's problem representations.

3.1.2 Solution-Oriented and Technocentric Problem Representations

Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse is characterized by a solution-oriented rhetoric, which is typical of corporate environmentalism. By deconstructing Sierra Nevada's green measures, it is possible to identify the problem representations (Bacchi 2009). Sierra Nevada represents environmental problems connected to its business activities by introducing green measures aimed at dealing with the environmental impact of specific parts of the business activities. This creates a sustainability discourse where there are no problems without solutions. I have gathered examples of how Sierra Nevada does this in table 2 on the next page. The left column contains direct quotes from different parts of the "Sustainability" subsection of Sierra Nevada's website, and the right column consists of my summaries of the problems and solutions identified in the quotes.

Table 2: Examples of Sierra Nevada’s problem representations

Problem representation	Summary of problems and corresponding solutions
"Rail transportation is cost effective and incredibly efficient, using less fuel, eliminating trucks from the road, and reducing packaging waste"	Problem: emissions and waste
	Solution: rail transportation
"In the bottleshop, we have eliminated water-based lubricants on the bottling and kegging lines which reduces water consumption but also wastewater heading to our onsite treatment plant"	Problem: water consumption
	Solution: removing water-based lubricants
"We recover waste heat throughout the brewing process and use it to generate hot water and steam for the next batch of beer. Building a new brewery also gave us the opportunity to design a closed loop system we’d been dreaming about for years – recovering heat from our air compressors! This thermal energy is used to preheat incoming water to 120F, reducing energy consumption overall"	Problem: energy consumption
	Solution: recovering waste heat
"This impressive machine turns discarded food from the restaurant, food scraps from break rooms, and a portion of our spent brewing ingredients into compost that is then incorporated back into our agricultural activities. Composting is a simple yet powerful solution to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions"	Problem: emissions and waste
	Solution: composting
"Recognizing the severity of droughts in California, we converted landscaping from water-thirsty lawns to drought resistant, native plants and replaced ground cover with xeriscapes"	Problem: drought
	Solution: drought resistant landscaping

In addition to being solution-oriented, Sierra Nevada's problem representations are mainly based around technological solutions. This is reflective of the technocentrism of corporate environmentalism (Jermier et al. 2006). Modern, efficient, sophisticated, automated, machines, systems, innovations, upgrades - the text is littered with words describing how technological solutions are used to lower the environmental impact of Sierra Nevada's business activities. Even daylighting, which is constructing a room in a way that makes efficient use of daylight for lighting instead of electrical lights, is placed within a technocentric frame by describing it as a sophisticated and automated system controlled by sensors. The problem with representing environmental problems in the way Sierra Nevada does is that it obscures non-technological solutions, contributes to the growth paradigm, and fails to show the big picture. In the following section, I will use Sierra Nevada's representation of drought and water conservation to further explore the company's problem representations.

Water Conservation

Water conservation measures are necessary to ameliorate the persistent drought in California, a fact Sierra Nevada stresses in the "Sustainability" subsection of their website: "The importance of water conservation and efficiency cannot be overstated, especially in drought-stricken California". The necessity and urgency of water conservation is crystal clear, and Sierra Nevada implicitly acknowledges that its business activities have a negative environmental impact due to its water usage. There are, however, several problems with Sierra Nevada's representation of the drought problem.

One of the problems is that it does not include proportional responsibility. Drought-stricken is a common way to describe areas affected by drought, but it is also an adjective that removes some agency and causality. To be struck by something suggests that it is sudden and unexpected like lightning or a natural disaster. In another section, Sierra Nevada writes that drought conditions are becoming the new normal in Chico, which normalizes the effects of climate change. The drought in California is partially a natural phenomenon, but it is exacerbated by climate change caused by human activities, including Sierra Nevada's brewing activities. This is missing from Sierra Nevada's problem representation. Additionally, Sierra Nevada's problem representation is not

targeted directly at its business activities but suggests that we should all contribute to water conservation and efficiency. That is true, but as mentioned in the introduction we are not equally responsible, and we do not have equal ability to conserve water. Sierra Nevada uses significantly more water than households and although there is unnecessary water usage in households, some of it is necessary. The same cannot be said for Sierra Nevada, as it produces a luxury product that could be produced in an area with better water access. Sierra Nevada's problem representation encourages collective efforts to conserve water, which is good, but that could have been done in a way that recognizes proportional responsibility. Water access is crucial to Sierra Nevada's business activities, and the lack of proportional responsibility in its problem representation raises some red flags concerning the company's representation of drought and water conservation.

Sierra Nevada's problem representations do not include representations of the underlying problem the green measures are a response to, which is climate change. The problem representation in the bottom row of table 1 is about drought and water conservation. Drought is represented as the main problem, unsuited landscaping is identified as a contributing factor, and the solution is changing the landscaping. This addresses the symptoms of climate change, but the role of climate change and the big picture is missing. As emissions and global warming contributes to drought and wildfires in California, sustainability measures aimed at lowering the environmental impact of other aspects of Sierra Nevada's business activities will also have a positive impact on the drought and wildfire situation. Still, drought and wildfires are at no point mentioned in connection to other sustainability measures. In fact, the reason for reducing emissions is missing from the sustainability discourse altogether. This could be part of a strategy to portray climate change and the need for action as taken for granted, but this strategy overlooks the big picture and fails to portray the interconnectedness between environmental problems. This contributes to the information problem and as mentioned above, the omission of explicit references to climate change can be motivated by Sierra Nevada's need to retain access to natural resources.

Overcoming the information problem requires complete and trustworthy information. Sierra Nevada fails to do this in the examples above, and the tendency to provide vague and incomplete information about water conservation is consistent throughout Sierra Nevada's "About" section. As mentioned in the introduction, Sierra Nevada does not provide information about the company's

total water consumption, which is information readers need to evaluate the company's sustainability efforts. With water being a scarce resource in California, it is also important to ask where the water comes from and who is affected by Sierra Nevada's access to water. The question of water allocation and management is central in corporate discourse, as one of the main goals of corporate discourse is to retain access to the resources necessary to continue business activities (Bitektine 2011; Bowen 2014; Breeze 2013). Even if businesses are willing to implement water conservation measures, they need to retain access to water. The way Sierra Nevada represents the problem of drought does not encourage a debate about water allocation and management and fails to provide consumers with the information necessary to evaluate the company's water conservation efforts. This does not mean that Sierra Nevada's water conservation measures do not have a substantive effect and that the company is greenwashing, but because this problem representation avoids creating a situation where readers question the legitimacy of Sierra Nevada's business activities it makes the information come across as incomplete at best, biased and unreliable at worst. I will return to the issue of water conservation in chapter 4, but I want to note that Sierra Nevada's representation of drought raises questions about the rest of the information provided by the company, because it is an example of Sierra Nevada providing flawed information and because the other problem representations have the same issues as the representation of drought and water conservation.

3.1.3 Truth Claims

Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse is mainly made up of truth claims that have been constructed using the declarative mood. Halliday (2007:51) describes grammatical moods as "sociological grammar" because they provide us with potential roles and expectations in social interactions. This is part of what Halliday (2007) refers to as the interpersonal function of language. The declarative mood is used to state something as a fact and provides two roles: provider of information and receiver of information (Fairclough 1989:125-126). By primarily using the declarative mood, Sierra Nevada is positioning itself as the provider of information and the reader as the receiver of information. Being the provider of information can be a position of power because the provider can control what information is included and how it is represented (van Dijk 2006; Fairclough 1989:126). However, the declarative mood can also be used to deal with the

information problem and empower readers by providing them with full and reliable information. The question is whether it is possible to balance the two, or if there will always be an internal contradiction in corporate environmentalism. Companies may genuinely wish to limit the environmental impact of their business activities and provide accurate information about their environmental impact to consumers, but they also need to create profit and retain access to resources. This contradiction makes the credibility of the information provided by companies questionable, which is one of the reasons why people are generally skeptical of corporate communication (Fairclough 1995:139; Pollach 2005:287). Some green measures have a substantive impact on the environmental impact of a company, others are purely symbolic. The use of the declarative mood in Sierra Nevada's "About" section presents its green measures in a manner that presumes substantive impact. There are no alternative solutions presented and few hedges. As the example of water conservation exemplifies, there is not sufficient information about the total environmental impact of Sierra Nevada's business activities to evaluate the substantive impact of its green measures or if its green measures are the most suitable ones. If one were to rely exclusively on the information provided by Sierra Nevada it would not be possible to be a reflexive consumer due to its shortcomings.

Additionally, there are challenges connected to the knowledge needed to understand the information provided by Sierra Nevada. The language used by Sierra Nevada is generally informal, but the content makes use of technical terms that are not accessible to all customers. When I coded the data material, I highlighted all the terms I did not understand, which turned out to be a substantial portion of the data material. Admittedly, I have limited knowledge about the brewing process, natural sciences, and green technology, but this will be the case for many if not most of the people accessing Sierra Nevada's website. This could be an example of Sierra Nevada catering to different audiences, both those with more knowledge and those with less. It can also be a way of asserting authority and claiming the powerful position as the knowledgeable giver of information and positioning readers as the unknowledgeable receivers of information with limited ability to question the information they are given (van Dijk 2006). The difficulty of balancing adequate information with accessible information complicates ethical consumption and creates room for corporate manipulation. As a result, it may not be possible to overcome the information

problem. This is a point I will return to later in this chapter in the section about website usability where I compare Sierra Nevada and Patagonia's websites.

3.1.4 Self-Regulation

There are no references to government regulations in Sierra Nevada's "About" section. Instead, Sierra Nevada makes references to six different voluntary certification programs. This includes certifications from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), Oregon Tilth Certified Organic, Salmon-Safe, TRUE Zero Waste, Audubon International, and Bicycle Friendly Businesses. Mentions of government regulations can be part of corporate environmental discourse, for example to emphasize how a business' green measures go beyond what is mandated by government regulations or collaborations with government agencies (Dauvergne and Lister 2012), but a strong focus on self-regulation without references to government regulation is characteristic of corporate environmentalism. Sierra Nevada excluding references to government regulations and repeated mentions of voluntary programs is another way Sierra Nevada reproduces corporate environmentalism.

The Mills River brewery's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification is repeatedly highlighted by Sierra Nevada. The brewing facility in Mills River was designed with the goal of being LEED certified, and it became the first production brewery to receive a Platinum certification. This sounds impressive, but as Sierra Nevada points out, LEED certifications only consider the buildings themselves, not the business activities that the buildings contain. In theory, you could design an oil platform that met LEED standards and be certified regardless of the environmental impact of the petroleum extraction and processing. This is because it is a certification program used to certify all types of buildings, not just production facilities. Due to this, Sierra Nevada emphasizes that the company chose to include the brewing equipment in its application, and that this makes the certification more impressive. That is true, but it mainly reveals that the LEED certification is largely symbolic when used to certify production facilities. The use of LEED certifications for production facilities can be misleading as the certification is not developed to assess the environmental impact of business activities. Sierra Nevada has chosen to include the environmental impact of the brewing equipment, which is

admirable, but because it is an unsuitable tool for certifying businesses and potentially misleading the certification does not amend the information problem.

Voluntary green programs, such as the LEED green building certification, set standards for the reporting and auditing of information and have been suggested as a solution to the information problem. Boiral and Gendron (2010) applied a critical perspective to study whether voluntary green programs provide consumers with transparent and accurate information. Due to the difficulty of measuring the substantive effect of green measures and the lack of independent and trustworthy auditing, they concluded that voluntary programs are not a good solution to the information problem (Boiral and Gendron 2010). Boiral and Gendron (2010) therefore called for more government regulation and argued that sustainability is a public good and as such the responsibility of governments. A conclusion that is supported by other critical research on corporate environmentalism (Banerjee et al. 2003; Banerjee et al. 2021; Delmas and Burbano 2011; Jermier et al. 2006; Johnston 2003; Jones 2019; Laufer 2003; Lydenberg 2002).

Many are skeptical of voluntary reporting; others are skeptical of government intervention. This includes both proponents of corporate environmentalism and those who are against CSR and corporate environmentalism. Friedman (1970), being an advocate of free market principles, believes that the market will solve social ills and is opposed to both CSR and government intervention because they interfere with free market principles. He argues that corporations are not qualified to make decisions about how to solve social issues, that it would be undemocratic, and that businesses may deceive customers about their efforts to create more profit (Friedman 1970). The risk of relying on free market principles to resolve the climate crisis is that it could result in a tragedy of the commons situation, where natural resources are depleted due to everyone acting according to their own self-interest. Interestingly, the problems Friedman identifies with CSR can be addressed through government regulation. Ideally, governments should be democratically elected, qualified to assess how to best deal with social issues, and prioritize the social welfare of citizens over profit. Friedman (1970) even acknowledges the social responsibility of governments but argues that it should be limited to situations where it is absolutely necessary. This conclusion comes across as somewhat inconsistent with his previous reasoning that decisions about how to

achieve social ends should be made by experts in a democratic manner, so inadvertently, Friedman seems to have constructed an argument for government regulation.

I have used the term function without discussing it so far, but it needs to be unpacked. I am leaning on American sociologist Robert K. Merton's conceptualization of functions and dysfunctions. He defines functions as the positive effects social phenomena have on society and dysfunctions as the negative effects (Merton 1968a:105). For example, business as an institution generates profits, which has many positive effects on society and provides goods and services that increase human well-being. These are some of the functions of business. Business also contributes to environmental degradation and the climate crisis. This is a dysfunction. One institution can have several functions and dysfunctions. Some forms of functionalism assume that all social phenomena are functional for society as a whole and indispensable. Merton (1968a) rejects these assumptions and contends that social phenomena can be dysfunctional and persist, they can be functional to some groups in society and dysfunctional to others, and they can be replaced by functional alternatives. This is a useful way of thinking about business as an institution because it allows us to acknowledge that business is partially functional, but more functional to some groups than others, and simultaneously dysfunctional. Social phenomena having both functions and dysfunctions calls for an evaluation of the net balance of functions and dysfunctions (Merton 1968a:105). Despite the argument that restructuring the current global economic system could cause societal collapse, climate reports like the 2022 IPCC report about mitigating climate change show that climate change *will* cause societal collapse and potentially render the planet inhospitable to humans. This is a simplification, and a controversial one at that, but the urgency of action to mitigate climate change requires substantial changes to be made in the next couple of years and business as usual is not an option. Corporate environmentalism is the dominant corporate response to these challenges, but in addition to proving inefficient so far, it also stands in the way of the imagining and development of functional alternatives.

Merton's rejection of functions being indispensable and irreplaceable opens for a debate about economic growth as indispensable and the possibility of functional alternatives that are not environmentally destructive. As mentioned earlier, entrepreneur Paul Hawken's writings about corporate environmentalism have been central to the development of corporate environmentalism

as it is understood today (Forbes and Jermier 2010). He admits that business today is built around profit but argues that the purpose of business should be to increase well-being (Hawken 2010:2). Within the growth paradigm, which is expanded upon in the next chapter, increasing well-being is done through continued growth and increased profit. This is also the foundation of free market solutions, but unlike free market solutions, corporate environmentalism believes that companies must interfere with the free market in order to lower environmental impact. Hawken (2010) breaks with the growth paradigm and states that business in its current form is incompatible with sustainability. He goes on to argue that just because we have not imagined a more functional system than free market capitalism that does not mean that there are not more functional systems but discovering more functional systems will involve trying systems that fail (Hawken 2010:88, 186). Hawken (2010) is a proponent for business playing a central role in this process but also argues for government regulation. He repeatedly utilizes the fall of the Soviet Union as a warning against too much government regulation (Hawken 2010), but there is a lot of middle ground between free market capitalism and Soviet communism that we have yet to explore. A more functional system may also lie outside the spectrum we are used to thinking within.

There are alternatives between government regulation and self-regulation. Laufer (2003) argues for a system based on a form of tripartism as put forward by Ayres and Braithwaite (1991). This system is meant to address the issues with voluntary green programs as they are organized today. In this system, NGOs or a public interest group would become an official third-party in the auditing process, which would then consist of the company being audited, the agency responsible for the auditing, and an independent third-party group (Ayres and Braithwaite 1991:439). The independent third-party group would be given access to the same information as the auditor, participate in the negotiations between the company and the auditor, and have the power to punish both the auditor and the firm (Ayres and Braithwaite 1991:441). The idea is that monitoring the auditing process will prevent auditors from being influenced by the companies. This system exists somewhere between government regulation and self-regulation and does address some of the problems with voluntary green programs. There are still questions about how to ensure that companies are performing consistently also when they are not being audited and that the information provided by them is reliable. In the end, the fact that these programs are voluntary is the main issue. It gives companies the option to be environmentally destructive and lie about it. A

system based on tripartism does not solve this issue and is therefore not an adequate solution to the problems with self-regulation. Governments can legally require sustainable practices and enforce these regulations, taking away the option of being environmentally destructive, which is why government regulation should be favored over self-regulation.

Banerjee et al. (2003) and Delmas and Burbano (2011) identify government regulation as the best predictor for the environmental performance of companies. Government regulations would force companies, not just those who wish to lower their environmental impact, to implement substantive green measures and solve the information problem by ensuring valid and reliable information. This means that consumers would not have to spend time piecing together incomplete information to consume ethically. Business would still play a central role in the action to mitigate the effects of climate change, but not lead the process. In an ideal world this would be a straightforward solution. Unfortunately, government regulation creates a host of new issues. First, governments should be democratic and qualified to address social issues, but that is not always the case. Second, green measures are not a one-size-fits-all solution. Different business activities require different measures. This makes it difficult to regulate in an effective manner. Third, business activities and environmental problems are global and require international cooperation. As the UN Climate Change Conferences have shown, this is not an easy process (Banerjee 2012a). It is not within the scope of this thesis to delve deeper into the complex topic of government regulation of business and environmental problems, but it is important to acknowledge that although government regulation of business activities may be the ideal solution, it is not a perfect solution.

3.2 The Information Problem

3.2.1 Website Usability and the Information Problem

"The foundation of almost all good information architectures is a well-designed hierarchy" (Rosenfeld and Morville 1998). Website hierarchy is a vague term but refers to the organization of a website, which includes how many sections and subsections there are, how these are connected, how many clicks are required to access the different pages, hyperlinks etc. (Djonov 2007). Corporate websites allow companies to choose how much information to provide and the completeness of the information, but the usability of the website is almost equally as important as

the content. There is no point in providing information if it is not accessible. Users can, within the perimeters set by the website design, choose how to navigate websites. This allows readers to seek out specific information, which is convenient, but it can also make it difficult to navigate and connect the available information. The challenge is to organize the information in a cohesive manner that allows users to understand the structure of the website (Djonov 2007). Companies can encourage a path through the information through its design, but the most important thing is that the website hierarchy is comprehensible, allowing users to navigate in different manners without "getting lost".

Comparing Sierra Nevada and Patagonia

Like Sierra Nevada, Patagonia, an American retailer of outdoor clothing and gear, is known for being a socially and ecologically responsible company (Banerjee et al. 2021; Delmas and Burbano 2011). There are differences between the two companies that should be noted before the comparison begins. Unlike beer, the products Patagonia produces can be reused and fixed, which creates different opportunities and challenges when it comes to sustainability. Furthermore, Patagonia is a much larger company than Sierra Nevada, with offices and production facilities outside the United States. Due to this, Patagonia's supply chain is larger and more challenging to oversee. This means that more information must be provided because consumers need information about the different supply chains around the world. Despite these differences, Patagonia and its corporate website⁵ are useful for comparison to illustrate the impact of website usability on the information problem. Like the material from Sierra Nevada's website, Patagonia's website is copyrighted, but because this thesis is nonprofit research, the fair use doctrine of U.S. copyright law applies here too (U.S. Copyright Office 2022).

Sierra Nevada's "About" section is accessible from the top menu on the home page, and one click is required to access it. The section is intuitively named, which is recommended for usability (Pollach 2005:291). The "About" section has three horizontal subsections, "Our Story", "Sustainability", and "Take Back Our Trails". These can all be accessed through hyperlinks found on the landing page of the "About" section. The "Our Story" subsection consists of one page, while

⁵ Listed as Patagonia (2022) in the literature.

the "Sustainability" subsection has another level below it that contains the two interactive maps. This makes the click depth low as it only takes three clicks from the homepage to reach the lowest level of the "About" section. In addition to hyperlinks to these subsections, there is one hyperlink that leads you away from the "About" section. Allowing users to skip to a different section without moving through the top menu or the main page of a section can be disorienting (Djonov 2007:148). Having few hyperlinks that lead out of the section increases Sierra Nevada's website usability. The hyperlinks are highly visible as they are either text that is green and in bold font or green buttons with white text on them. This clearly distinguishes them from the rest of the text. The names of the hyperlinks differ in their intuitiveness, but their placement and the surrounding text makes it clear what information they lead to. In summary, it is easy to locate Sierra Nevada's "About" section and the low number of subsections makes it easy to navigate between them and access the desired information.

Reading information on a website is cognitively complex because you are reading and interpreting information while simultaneously making choices about how to move through the elements of a webpage and the website as a whole (Pollach 2005). Sierra Nevada's website hierarchy is simple, but there are still many paths through the information. The timeline in the "Our Story" subsection encourages chronological movement by scrolling down the timeline and clicking as you go. The movement through the interactive maps is less structured, but there is a list view option that allows you to click through the information by following a list instead of navigating the map. This decreases the complexity of moving through the information, but because the information is separated into different information boxes it is still cognitively difficult to connect different pieces of information. At the same time, providing the information in smaller chunks makes the information more accessible than a long text. This means that there is a trade-off between readability and overall cohesiveness, which complicates the information problem.

I accessed Patagonia's website in search of information that corresponds to the information found in Sierra Nevada's "About" section. This was complicated by Patagonia's website usability. The first challenge was locating the "About" section, as there was no section explicitly named "About". The home page has both a top menu and a dropdown menu. The dropdown menu is split into two columns: one called company and one called customer service. The entire company column could

be defined as the "About" section. In this column, there is a hyperlink to a section called "Business Unusual", which contains information and hyperlinks to pages about Patagonia's values, CSR, and company history. This could also be defined as the "About" section. The difficulty I had identifying Patagonia's "About" section exemplifies why using the label "About" is recommended and the importance of a clear website hierarchy. The subsection about Patagonia's company history looks similar to and is navigated in the same way as Sierra Nevada's "Our Story" subsection. It is not in the form of a timeline, but it is chronological and as you scroll down new paragraphs and photos are revealed. This makes the navigation easy, and the organization of the information is logical. The hyperlink to the subsection is labeled "See our History" and the subsection is titled "Company History", which makes it easy to predict what information will be available in the subsection. In other words, once located, the information about Patagonia's company history is accessible and structured.

The information about sustainability is more fragmented than the information about Patagonia's company history. Because sustainability is one of Patagonia's core values, there is a vast amount of information about sustainability on the company's website. Instead of gathering this into one themed section, which would help create cohesion and aid website usability (Djonov 2007), the information is spread throughout different sections of the website. Hyperlinks are used to lead you between different sections of the website that deal with sustainability, but the relationship between the sections and the website hierarchy is not transparent. This makes it hard for readers to move between the sections and piece together the information. Without a holistic understanding of Patagonia's sustainability discourse, consumers are unable to locate gaps and question the completeness and reliability of the information provided. This limits consumers' ability to be reflexive consumers that engage critically with the information available to them.

To summarize, Patagonia's website is characterized by detailed and plentiful information that is disjointed and difficult to locate, while Sierra Nevada provides less information split into smaller, more accessible chunks that are easy to move between. Both of these approaches contribute to the information problem, but in different ways. This illustrates the difficulty of organizing and presenting the information required for ethical consumption in an accessible manner. There is a trade-off between making the information accessible to a wide audience and providing complete

and accurate information. This is another reason why the information problem is difficult to overcome through corporate environmentalism, which undermines corporate environmentalism as a whole.

3.2.2 Genre Mixing and the Information Problem

Sierra Nevada constructs itself as one of the breweries that led what has been described as a craft beer revolution in the 1980s. Sustainability is at the core of Sierra Nevada's corporate identity, but it is first and foremost a brewery and one of the main functions of Sierra Nevada's corporate website is to market products. This is especially evident in the "Our Story" subsection, where some of the company's beers are given separate points on the timeline. Doing this shows the development of the brewing, highlights innovation, and how the selection of beer has grown from the iconic Pale Ale to a variety of beer styles. It also helps tell the story of Sierra Nevada's growth from homebrew to industry leader, which I will describe in the next chapter. This is an example of genre mixing, which is a form of interdiscursivity where a text is reworking genre conventions by borrowing from other genres (Fairclough 1995:10-11). Corporate websites are used to construct a corporate identity, build a relationship with the readers, and functions as a virtual shop front among other things. Because corporate websites serve different purposes interdiscursivity is expected (Breeze 2013; Pollach 2005). This can be confusing for readers and lead to distrust as it is difficult to understand when the text is being informative and when it is marketing (Fairclough 1995:139).

The marketing aspect of the information provided by Sierra Nevada is not hidden. Some of the beers mentioned in the timeline are marked with the circle R symbol (®), which shows that these are officially trademarked names. This symbol signals to readers that a product is being marketed. The beers included on the timeline are also described. In addition to mentions of aroma and flavor, the description of the beer Bigfoot contains information about the alcohol by volume percentage and international bitterness units, which is a scale used to indicate the bitterness of a beer. These are terms used to guide consumers and indicate to the reader that this is marketing. Though the marketing is not completely disguised as information, this does create ambiguity for the reader in a text that contains a multitude of genres. Genre is part of the larger-scale structure of a text, and it creates expectations in the readers (Fairclough 1989). In an "About" section one expects to find

detailed information about a company. At the same time, the reader is aware that the fundamental purpose of a company is to sell a product or service. I cannot say whether Sierra Nevada is purposefully manipulating its audience as genre mixing can be used for other purposes than manipulation (van Dijk 2006), but it does complicate the interpretation of the text. The conflicting purposes and roles of a company contributes to the information problem.

3.2.3 Legitimacy, Reputation, and Status – Overcoming the Information Problem?

Legitimacy, reputation, and status are central concepts in organizational theory that are useful when exploring corporate environmentalism. Companies will pursue and seek to communicate legitimacy, reputation, and status because they can protect their access to resources and increase financial performance, thus ensuring their survival (Deephouse and Carter 2005:335; Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Within conventional research, the concepts are used to identify how legitimacy, reputation, and status can be used as strategic resources to benefit a company. However, the concepts can however also be applied in critical research to explore how legitimacy, reputation, and status are constructed and their effect. For consumers, legitimacy, reputation, and status judgements are responses to the information problem. As established, consumers do not have the resources, in the form of complete information, knowledge, and time, necessary to conduct thorough evaluations of companies. Heuristic techniques such as judging a company based on its past actions or comparing it to similar companies make it possible to form quick judgements (Bitektine 2011; Rao 1994). The concept that is most relevant for this thesis is legitimacy and that will receive the most attention in the discussion below, but because the concepts are intertwined, I will include short introductions to reputation and status as well.

Reputation

Reputation is an evaluation of an organization and an attempt to predict future behavior based on past actions (Bitektine 2011; Deephouse and Suchman 2008; Devers et al. 2009; Lange, Lee, and Dai 2011). These evaluations can be used to rank organizations. Reputations can be based on an evaluation of the entire business, or more specific characteristics such as sustainability (Lange et al. 2011:157-158). For example, Sierra Nevada appeals to different stakeholder priorities by highlighting both the quality of its products and its sustainable business practices.

An important part of Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse is the company's historical record, consistency, and continued effort. The mentions of external certifications serve to bolster these claims. On the landing page for the "Sustainability" subsection Sierra Nevada emphasizes that sustainability was not an afterthought, but part of the business model from the beginning and that the company has consistently chosen to prioritize the environment over changes that would allow it to brew in a cheaper and more efficient way. Both in the "Our Story" subsection and the "Sustainability" subsection there are repeated references to the importance of innovation and upgrades as sustainability is not a one-time thing, but a continued effort. By doing this Sierra Nevada is signaling to readers that it has a good reputation based on past behavior and that it does not take this reputation for granted but strives to do better.

Status

Status is based on an organization's relative position to other organizations that belong to the same category (Bitektine 2011:161). Like reputation, status evaluations can be based on a variety of factors, including historical legacy, financial performance, sustainability, and quality of products. High status can lead to organizations gaining privileges that are not necessarily based on merit (Deephouse and Suchman 2008:11). Merton (1968b) has referred to this as "the Matthew Effect". The name is based on a biblical quote from Matthew 25:29: "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath" (in Merton 1968b:3). The idea is that those with high-status will be rewarded more than those with lower status for the same or a similar amount of work (Merton 1968b:2). Deephouse and Carter (2005:333) note that high-status organizations are more likely to get away with or even benefit from breaking norms. Laufer (2003:256) argues that high-status may lead to less commitment to sustainability as companies may choose to rely on their high-status to protect them from close scrutiny. At the same time, this is a risky approach as the consequences of being exposed could be more serious for a business that represents itself as environmentally responsible (Lyon and Maxwell 2011:4). For Sierra Nevada, positioning itself as an industry leader may strengthen the credibility of the information provided by the company but the strategy can also be

a pitfall if discrepancies are revealed. In chapter 4 I will show how Sierra Nevada constructs an industry leader role for itself and discuss its potential effects further.

Legitimacy

Suchman (1995:574) defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions". Legitimacy conceptualized this way is not so much to do with specific organizations, but the category an organization belongs to (Bitektine 2011; Devers et al. 2009). Gaining and maintaining legitimacy is generally done by conforming to the norms of an industry (Deephouse and Carter 2005:333), but as mentioned above, this may not be the case for high-status organizations. Breeze (2012) utilizes the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the subsequent use of legitimation strategies by British Petroleum and other oil companies to discuss organizational legitimacy. However, the use of legitimation strategies is not restricted to reactive use but can be used preemptively as a form of discursive self-defense (Breeze 2012:4). Legitimation is an ideological practice in the sense that it is constructing a discourse where the institution and business activities in question are legitimate in order to retain access to resources and continue operations as usual (Breeze 2012:4). Oil companies need to legitimize their activities in a way that acknowledges that their industry is "dirty", while emphasizing their importance in society. Breweries belong to a less obviously environmentally problematic industry, and their use of legitimation strategies will be different. Legitimation can involve discussing a company's responsibilities, contributions to society, and potential solutions to problems. As with most discursive tools, the discursive tools used to legitimize a company's activities can be used for other purposes than legitimation. I am therefore not suggesting that Sierra Nevada is actively legitimizing its business activities, but that the use of certain discursive tools affect the company's legitimacy.

Sierra Nevada can be placed within the general category of alcohol production or more specific categories such as brewery or craft brewery. During Prohibition in the United States, which lasted from 1920 to 1933, all production and sale of alcohol were illegal (Tvedt 2018). This would have made Sierra Nevada's business activities undesirable, and legitimacy as an organization

unachievable. Today, there is still a temperance movement that promotes teetotalism, but alcohol production and sale are legal and generally socially acceptable. In the first point on the timeline in the “Our Story” subsection of Sierra Nevada’s website, it is mentioned that Grossman bought a homebrewing kit as a teenager and that he hid it from his mother. This statement implicitly refers to the alcoholic nature of beer, and the illegality of brewing and consuming alcohol before a certain age. The legalization of homebrewing is also given a point on the timeline because homebrewing was the foundation of what eventually became Sierra Nevada. This happened in 1977, and because it is not mentioned earlier in the timeline it can come as a surprise to the reader that homebrewing was illegal before that. While the alcoholic nature of beer is acknowledged by Sierra Nevada, it is not problematized and because alcohol production is legal these references do not come across as a legitimization strategy, but rather a nod to homebrewing as the foundation of the craft brewery industry.

If legitimacy is conceptualized as a dichotomous category based on legality, the discussion would end here, but there is some discussion about whether legitimacy should be seen as dichotomous or as a continuum where organizations can be more or less legitimate (Deephouse and Suchman 2008). Deephouse and Suchman (2008:12) argue that legitimacy is a dichotomous category, but that it can appear continuous. Concepts are simplified representations of social phenomena, and it is not a given that legitimacy has to be conceptualized as dichotomous. If it appears continuous it is worth considering how a continuous conception of legitimacy can benefit the purpose of a research project. There are several reasons why it is most fruitful to operationalize legitimacy as a continuum both for the purposes of this thesis and for consumers.

Water is one of the most important natural resources for Sierra Nevada's business activities as it is not possible to brew beer without water. More water goes into the brewing process than what we see in the final product, but it is obvious to consumers that a significant amount of water goes into the product. That is not necessarily the case with other products, where the water required for the production is hidden. The concept of virtual water was introduced by the British Geographer J.A. Allan (2003) and refers to all the water that goes into the production of a product. The concept of virtual water is useful in discussions about drought and water scarcity as it draws attention to all the water we do not see. It also highlights the fact that not all water is the same. In Butte County,

there is both rice and almond production, which requires irrigation. Rice production in the United States is fully reliant on irrigation, which uses ground- or surface water (Chapagain and Hoekstra 2011:753). Countries that experience wet seasons are not as reliant on irrigation as rainwater reduces the need for it (Chapagain and Hoekstra 2011:753). Due to this, the environmental impact of rice production, per unit of product, will be lower in regions that experience wet seasons than in arid regions such as California (Chapagain and Hoekstra 2011:758). One can therefore argue that rice production, even though food is a necessity, should be moved to a more suitable area. The concept of virtual water encourages a discussion about the relationship between water, food, and trade, as exporting a product from a region experiencing drought also involves the indirect export of large amounts of water (Allan 2003:108). As the rice example shows, beer is not necessarily more water intensive than other products due to the virtual water involved in the production of other products. However, beer is a luxury item, which is an aspect that should be considered when discussing legitimacy and water management.

One of the main reasons why Sierra Nevada chose Mills River, North Carolina as the location for the second brewery facility was the access to water (The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina n.d.), and on the interactive map of the Mills River brewery, the year-round rain in Mills River is contrasted with the drought in California. This shows an awareness of the need to adapt business activities and green measures to the local climate but does not problematize beer production in a dry region. Here, I will break with my original plan to stick with the original data material and include a reference to an infographic that has been added to the "Sustainability" subsection of Sierra Nevada's website because it illustrates how Sierra Nevada's information about water conservation is unclear. On this infographic, which can be seen on the next page in figure 7, there is a drawing of a cistern with text that informs readers that cisterns collect 500 000 gallons of rainwater that is used for irrigation and to flush toilets. Other parts of the infographic specify which brewery a piece of information refers to, but this is not specified for the cisterns. This is yet another example of missing information about Sierra Nevada's water usage. Because of how essential water is to Sierra Nevada's production, these omissions raise red flags about the reliability of the information provided and why information is missing.

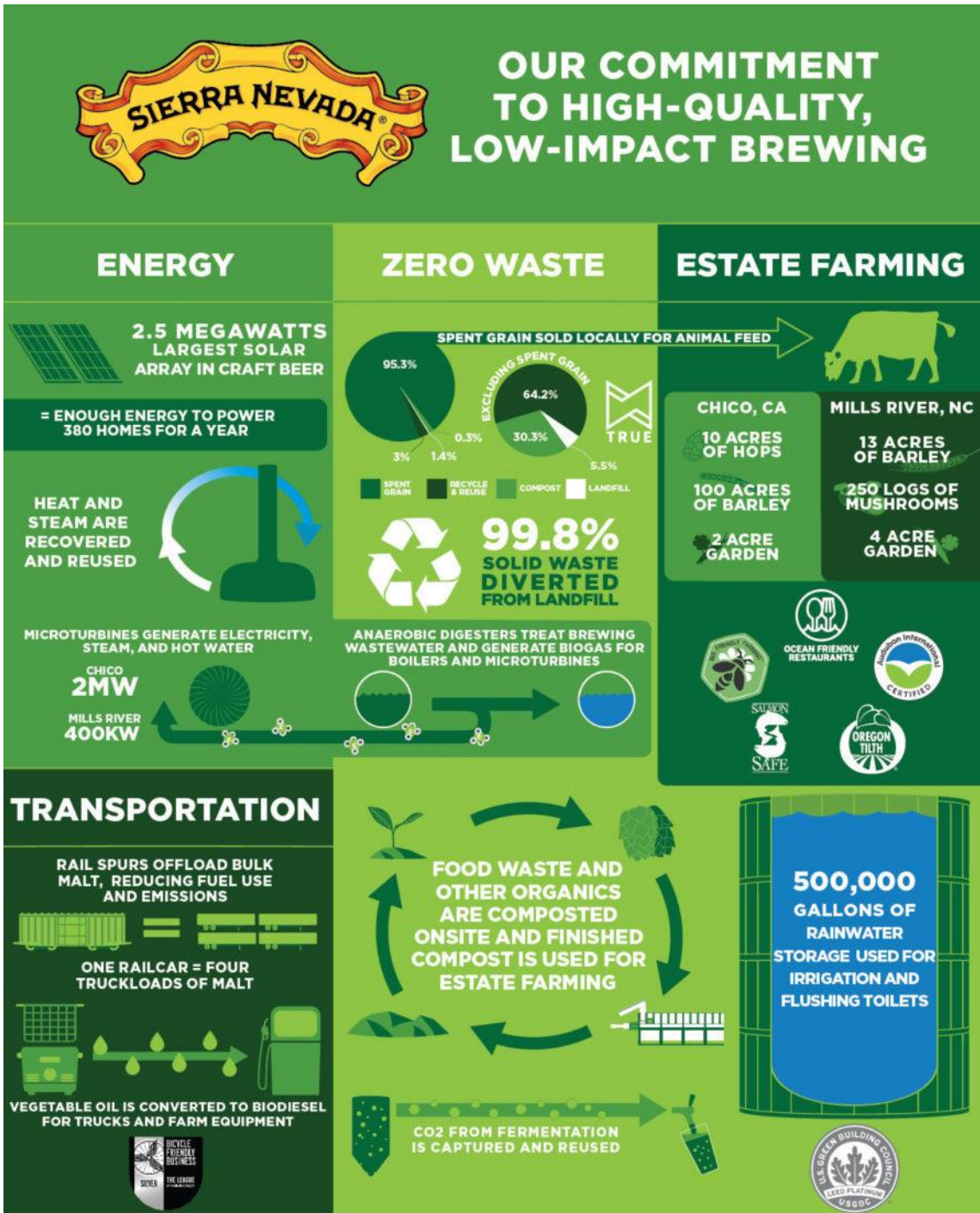


Figure 7: Note how energy and estate farming has separate information for the two breweries while water conservation does not.

Retrieved April 30, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/about/sustainability/>)

Whereas many agricultural products require sun and hot weather, beer production does not. This combined with the fact that beer is a luxury item should be part of a discussion about the legitimacy of beer production and water allocation in Chico. Sierra Nevada does not construct the problem of water conservation in a manner that encourages discussions about legitimacy and water management. The strongest form of legitimacy is taken-for-granted legitimacy (Deephouse and Suchman 2008), which would stand in the way of any debate about water allocation. For both consumers and researchers, thinking about legitimacy as an evaluation of different aspects of a business in the same way that reputation and status are conceptualized would be beneficial in discussions about sustainability because it allows us to question taken-for-granted legitimacy and evaluate the legitimacy of different aspects of a business. Legitimacy, reputation, and status are useful tools for ethical consumers because they allow them to make fast judgements, but this is complicated by the fact that companies can use legitimacy, reputation, and status strategically to protect their access to resources and reach an ethical consumer segment. Additionally, the fact that heuristic techniques are necessary because consumers do not have the resources to perform a full evaluation of companies is in itself an argument against corporate environmentalism and industry self-regulation. Overcoming the information problem might be impossible even with complete and reliable information because of the knowledge and time needed to continuously evaluate a vast amount of information about all the products they consume (Johnston 2008:254). Government regulation could solve this problem by removing the need for such consumer efforts by ensuring responsible business practices.

3.3 Summary

By constructing a solution-oriented, technocentric sustainability discourse based on voluntary green measures and self-regulation, Sierra Nevada are reproducing corporate environmentalism. Corporate environmentalism positions sustainable business activities and ethical consumption as the solution to the climate crisis, but this is only possible if companies implement green measures that have a substantive environmental impact and overcome the information problem. If companies cannot overcome the information problem, consumers cannot be reflexive, ethical consumers, which would rule out corporate environmentalism as a viable solution to the climate crisis. I cannot say anything about the intentions behind Sierra Nevada's choices, but the data material shows that

the information provided by the company contributes to the information problem regardless of intention. On a firm-level, this raises concerns about the legitimacy of Sierra Nevada's business activities and its sustainability discourse. The main issue is the questions it raises about corporate environmentalism as a solution to the climate crisis as some of the problems identified in the analysis of Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse suggest that it is not possible to overcome the information problem through corporate environmentalism and that government regulation is necessary to overcome the information problem and ensure sustainable business practices.

4 Reconciling Sustainability and Growth?

The foundation of corporate environmentalism is the growth paradigm. Within the growth paradigm, sustainability and growth can be reconciled without limiting growth and continued growth is seen as having a positive impact on the environment. This is an unsustainable paradigm because there is an absolute limit to how much growth the planet can take. Corporate environmentalism must break with the growth paradigm if it is to become an effective tool to combat climate change. For a company that produces reusable products, challenging the growth paradigm would involve encouraging reduced consumption of a product in favor of fixing and reusing the product. As mentioned earlier, beer is not a reusable product, which means that for Sierra Nevada challenging the growth paradigm does not have to entail encouraging reduced consumption. This chapter will consider two other important aspects of growth in order to answer research questions 2 and 3 about reconciling sustainability and growth, and how Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal relates to the growth portrayal in corporate environmentalism. The first is to do with how Sierra Nevada portrays its growth and the environmental impact of company growth. The second is whether Sierra Nevada transforms or reproduces the growth paradigm.

In this chapter I will describe, interpret, and explain Sierra Nevada's portrayal of growth and how it relates to corporate environmentalism and the growth paradigm. I will begin this chapter by introducing the growth paradigm and the marketization of public discourse. After presenting the growth paradigm I examine how Sierra Nevada reconciles sustainability and growth before looking at how Sierra Nevada tells the story of its company growth. Finally, I will look at how Sierra Nevada uses local food discourse and adapts it to accommodate company growth. The main finding in this chapter is that Sierra Nevada reconciles growth and sustainability by not problematizing the relationship between the two. Through this, Sierra Nevada protects its legitimacy and status, and as a result its access to resources. By representing growth as a natural response to demand and not addressing its effect on the environment, Sierra Nevada reproduces the growth paradigm of corporate environmentalism. This contributes to the continued degradation of the environment and maintains power relations that stand in the way of effective and democratic action to mitigate climate change.

4.1 The Growth Paradigm

The growth paradigm is based on the idea that continued economic growth will solve social and environmental problems and lead to prosperity for all (Banerjee et al. 2021:340). Within this paradigm, the necessity of growth is taken for granted, which leaves no room for alternative social imaginaries (Banerjee et al. 2021:340). This means that within corporate environmentalism solutions to the climate crisis must fit into the growth paradigm. If societal progress, prosperity, and stability depends on continued growth, then a solution to the climate crisis that limits growth will be framed as a threat to society. Technocentrism is what makes it possible for corporate environmentalism to acknowledge the threat of climate change without having to position limiting growth as the solution.

According to Fairclough (1995:18), one of the central functions of an ideology, such as the growth paradigm, is reproducing power relations. Corporate environmentalism and the growth paradigm give corporations a leading role in the effort to mitigate climate change and corporations benefit the most from its reproduction as it allows them to maintain their powerful position and frames their growth as natural and beneficial to all. The growth paradigm can therefore be described as ideology in the service of power (Burr 2015:98). However, in order for it to have the desired effect, it must be naturalized beyond the corporate world.

4.1.1 The Marketization of Public Discourse

Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits - not absolute limits but limitations imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987:24)

The above quote is from *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report, which was an early and influential document on sustainable development released by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. Its definition of sustainable development as meeting

present needs without compromising the needs of future generations is still frequently used today. The understanding of sustainability presented in this report is technocentric and growth-oriented. The definition acknowledges that technology and social issues must be considered when assessing how much growth the planet can handle but ignores the fact that there are absolute limits to growth. Instead, the report portrays the environment as something that can be managed through technology to ensure further economic growth, which is in line with corporate environmentalism and the growth paradigm.

In 2015, the United Nations released *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. This agenda is constructed around 17 sustainable development goals, which the member states aim to achieve by 2030. Several of the goals address economic growth and the 17 sustainable development goals are described as integrated in the sense that they affect each other (United Nations 2015:3). In other words, economic growth is seen as necessary to achieve social justice and ecological sustainability, which is how growth is framed within the growth paradigm. Goal number 8 is to "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (United Nations 2015:21). The role of technology and innovation in achieving this goal is highlighted in the description of the goal (United Nations 2015:21). Goal number 8 also mentions efforts to amend the information problem by encouraging businesses to provide information about their environmental impact (United Nations 2015:21). By using the word encourage in their formulation of this goal they are promoting industry self-regulation instead of government regulation. The presence of the growth paradigm, technocentrism, and the promotion of self-regulation in both the 1987 Brundtland Report and the sustainable development goals from 2015 make the sustainability discourse in these documents reproductions of corporate environmentalism. This exemplifies the marketization of public discourse.

Solving the climate crisis necessitates cooperation between countries, companies, organizations, and civil society, but the parties are not equal in the process. As the UN sustainability discourse shows, the growth paradigm is not just backed by companies but naturalized to the extent where it is taken for granted throughout society (Banerjee et al. 2021). This means that most of us are likely contributing to the reproduction of corporate power and the growth paradigm. Fairclough

(1995:138) described contemporary culture as consumer culture characterized by a widespread marketization of public discourse. A potential negative effect of this is that it may lower trust throughout society as people become unsure of when communication is motivated by strategic promotion as this is no longer limited to corporate discourse (Fairclough 1995:139). He exemplified this interdiscursive development by analyzing the marketization of higher education discourse in Great Britain (Fairclough 1995). The UN sustainability discourse is a marketization of the sustainability discourse used by intergovernmental organizations and governments. One of the reasons why higher education discourse in Great Britain has been marketized according to Fairclough (1995:140) is due to funding. This reasoning can also be applied to governments when discussing sustainability. The largest transnational corporations in the world are some of the largest economic entities in the world, which makes them more powerful than many countries (Breeze 2013). This means that they can put money and other resources towards lobbying and controlling the rhetoric and that they are in a position of power when negotiating with governments. If one accepts Fairclough's argument that this is negative for trust, an opinion that is supported by Pollach (2005), then this is worrying as public trust is the foundation of effective, democratic governance. It is also worrying because powerful intergovernmental organizations and governments are protecting corporate interests at the expense of the welfare of citizens and the environment.

Banerjee et al. (2021) argue that the growth paradigm and the notion that economic growth leads to prosperity for all must be problematized and challenged in favor of a post-growth conception of society. The article presents several alternatives to the dominant growth paradigm, but the main point the article is making is that critical research must imagine and formulate alternatives to the dominant social imaginary (Banerjee et al. 2021). We are deeply entrenched in the dominant social imaginary and those with power wield it in a manner that dismisses and obscures alternatives to the growth paradigm. For Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse to transform corporate environmentalism in a way that makes it a more effective tool for mitigating climate change, it would have to question the growth paradigm and consider alternatives to a growth-oriented business model. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to exploring Sierra Nevada's portrayal of growth and how it reproduces or transforms the growth paradigm of corporate environmentalism.

4.2 Representing the Problem

4.2.1 Growth and Sustainability Through a Corporate Environmentalist Lens

The main finding in this chapter is that the relationship between growth and sustainability is at no point problematized by Sierra Nevada in the "About" section of its corporate website. Instead, the company expresses a technocentric optimism based on belief in the ability of technology to reconcile growth and sustainability, which is a reproduction of the growth paradigm and corporate environmentalism. This stance is not expressed explicitly, but apparent in the lack of references to alternatives to growth, and the repeated references to technology. The lack of explicit references to the climate crisis, as described in the previous chapter, can be justified by arguing that it is implicitly present. That is not the case when it comes to problematizations of growth and sustainability. It is simply absent from the texts.

The absence of references to the environmental impact of growth is especially conspicuous in the "Our Story" subsection. The "Our Story" subsection tells the story of Sierra Nevada's growth from homebrew to craft brewing industry leader, which is why it is surprising that the environmental impact of growth is not addressed. Sierra Nevada chooses to address growth through classic corporate discourse based on supply and demand. Even when describing the time before Sierra Nevada was founded, a supply-and-demand logic is applied by mentioning how the increasing local demand for Grossman's homebrewing contributed to the decision to start a brewery. This supply-and-demand approach to growth is found throughout the "Our Story" subsection. When the original brewery "hits max capacity with demand still rising" in 1986 the solution is opening a new and larger brewery facility in 1987. In 1994 growth is addressed again as it is stated that "The brewery's production grows 50 percent several years in a row" and that "Ken [Grossman] starts making plans to keep up". In 1997 Sierra Nevada adds a larger brewhouse to keep up with this growth. After this expansion it is stated that "Ken figures it's the last one [expansion]". The use of the word "figures" suggests that this is not due to a decision to stop expanding the business but based on an assumption that demand has peaked. That is not the case, and in 2010 the Chico brewery reaches maximum capacity again, and thus "a big decision looms" according to Sierra Nevada. This could be a decision to stop growing, but as before it is a question of how to meet demand. In 2012 the construction of the brewery facility in Mills River begins, and the facility

opens in 2015. As the quotes above show, the solution when the brewery reaches maximum capacity is always to expand. No alternatives are considered, and the environmental impact of these expansions are not addressed. By placing growth within a corporate discourse centered around supply and demand, Sierra Nevada avoids addressing questions about the sustainability of company growth.

In other parts of the data material, growth is placed within Sierra Nevada's technocentric and solution-oriented sustainability discourse and framed as an opportunity for innovation. Sierra Nevada writes that designing the Mills River brewery from scratch gave them the opportunity to construct systems that reduce the overall energy consumption. The use of the word opportunity in the text gives the word growth a positive expressive value (Fairclough 1989:118). However, Slawinski et al. (2017) argue that the reduction of emissions should always be thought of in absolute terms, not relative terms, as increased production equals increased emissions if a green measure only reduces the relative emissions. The same goes for any green measure. Sierra Nevada's portfolio of green measures lowers the environmental impact per unit, which is good, but the absolute environmental impact will still increase due to the company's growth, which is unsustainable. The fact that the expressive value of growth changes from discourse to discourse shows that Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal is ideological and a reproduction of corporate environmentalism's growth paradigm.

In an interview from 2014, Grossman addressed alternatives to growth:

It's a grow or die mentality," says Grossman in his low, unflappable voice. "If our brand isn't growing, somebody else's will. You can have a business model where you put the brakes on and only sell 30 cases of this really exotic, really expensive beer. But we've grown way past that. (Solomon 2014).

Admittedly, this interview is 8 years old at the time of writing, but the Mills River location was opened after this and based on the way growth is framed on the corporate website in 2022 it is reasonable to assume that this is still Grossman's view. What Grossman is expressing is an example of the growth imperative of capitalism on firm-level, i.e., without growth the business will fail. Grossman acknowledges that there are alternative business models that are not centered around growth, but he argues that this is not an option for Sierra Nevada as the company has become too

big to switch to an alternative model. This statement ignores the fact that Sierra Nevada could have chosen alternative paths at several points in the company's history. Sierra Nevada did not have to meet demand in 1986 or 1994, it was a choice. As Grossman points out, an alternative business model might have increased the price of the beer, which would make it less accessible to people with lower incomes. Community is an important part of Sierra Nevada's corporate identity, and it makes sense that Grossman would reject a business model that creates social barriers between people. However, these are not the only possible business models and even if they were, it does not change the fact that continued growth is unsustainable and increases strain on the local environment. The growth imperative of capitalism, or what Grossman refers to as a grow or die mentality, takes the necessity of continued growth for granted. The problem with this is that unlimited growth is unsustainable and framing growth this way limits the potential for coming up with more sustainable business models and ways of organizing the economy.

4.3 From Homebrew to East Coast Expansion – Sierra Nevada's Growth Portrayal

4.3.1 Constructing a Charismatic Leader and Core Values

Most of the choices described in this section are to do with the interpersonal function of language and are used by Sierra Nevada to build the desired relationship with its audience (Halliday 2007). Sierra Nevada's "Our Story" subsection is a chronological timeline of a selection of key points in the company's history. The subtitle for the section is "From restless youth to craft beer pioneer" and founder Grossman's name is in bold font over the introduction to this subsection, which positions Grossman as the protagonist of the story. Giving the company a face is a common strategy used to humanize a company and construct a friendly, informal relationship to consumers (Breeze 2013:159; Pollach 2005:294). As you scroll down the timeline, the background photo changes. The first two photos are of Grossman, which is an example of multimodality being used to complement the text. This can be seen in figure 8.

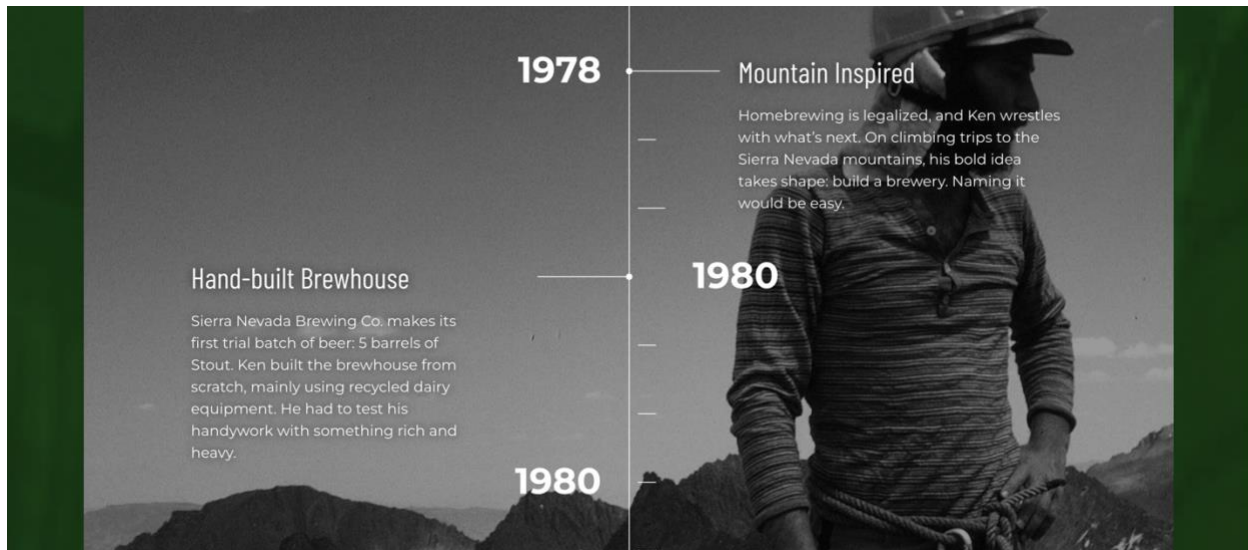


Figure 8: Grossman in the Sierra Nevada mountains, Retrieved January 11, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/>)

The choice to refer to Grossman by his first name, as can be seen in figure 8 contributes to the construction of a friendly, informal relationship with the readers. Note how my use of his last name, which is more appropriate in an academic text, creates a more formal, distant tone. Another strategy would be to remove agents from the narrative and use a passive voice. This is often done to present information as objective and reliable (Pollach 2005:294). The risk of choosing Sierra Nevada's approach is that the information can be perceived as biased, but it may also lend credibility to the information by constructing a passionate and trustworthy protagonist. Below I will show how Sierra Nevada constructs a charismatic leader and how they adapt this portrayal as the company grows. It is worth noting that Sierra Nevada's other founder, Paul Camusi, has been completely erased from the narrative. There was a conflict between Grossman and Camusi, and Grossman bought out Camusi in 1998 (Solomon 2014). In an article where this conflict is mentioned, Camusi is described as "less hands-on" (Solomon 2014). With this knowledge, the strong focus on Grossman and his hands-on role in the building of Sierra Nevada comes across as very intentional.

Grossman's hands-on approach to building the brewery is repeatedly mentioned early in the timeline using words and phrases like from scratch, handywork, hand-built, and patchwork. This is an example of overwording, where a large number of words with similar meanings are used to promote a particular representation of reality, often due to ideological struggle (Fairclough 1995:115). Although Grossman's hands-on approach might be emphasized to justify the erasure of

Camusi to readers who are aware of the conflict, Grossman's active role in the building of Sierra Nevada is not the site of ideological struggle. This means that the purpose of the overwording must be something else. As will be discussed more later in the chapter, Sierra Nevada makes an effort to represent the company as an independent craft brewery and distance themselves from large, industrial breweries. The preoccupation with Grossman's hands-on approach can be understood as part of this effort.



Figure 9: The Mills River Brewery. Retrieved January 11, 2022 (<https://sierranevada.com/about/our-story/>)

Further down the timeline, Grossman is to a lesser extent framed as constructing things from scratch, presumably because the expansions and changes are larger and require more technical competence. He is still positioned as actively involved in the changes happening, and up until 2004 Grossman is mentioned by name in almost every point on the timeline. After that the words "we" and "our" are used instead and the background photos are of the company's products and the brewery buildings such as the photo that can be seen in figure 9. In corporate discourse, the words "we" and "our" are often used to represent an organization as a unified whole (Breeze 2013:159). The language used in the "About" section of Sierra Nevada's corporate website suggests that the message comes from higher up in the company, for example, in the "Sustainability" subsection, Sierra Nevada writes that "creating a culture of awareness with our coworkers have built a foundation for ensuring overall energy efficiency". The creator of the message is positioned as a teacher or a leader but using the word coworkers avoids creating a strong sense of hierarchy within

the organization. Through this statement, Sierra Nevada is communicating that its core values are not superficial or limited to top management but permeate the organization. As Sierra Nevada grows it makes sense to move away from references to Grossman alone and refer to the organization as a whole. At the same time, Sierra Nevada wishes to be consistent and maintain the personal relationship that has been constructed with the reader earlier in the text, which is why a move to "we" and "our" may have been preferred over the construction of a passive voice.

Apart from the move from "Ken" to "we", the language remains the same, which makes this change subtle and creates consistency when it comes to the portrayal of the organization and its core values. Where "*Ken* [italics added] breaks ground on a new brewery" in 1987, "*We* [italics added] break ground on an East Coast brewery" in 2012. This consistency can contribute to Sierra Nevada's reputation by showing that its core values have remained the same from the beginning and not changed even though the company has grown. Later in the timeline, when writing about the opening of a taproom in Berkeley, California, which is an example of the company expanding both sizewise and geographically, Sierra Nevada mentions "our brewery spirit" and describes the taproom as a "neighborhood hangout". These phrases portray Sierra Nevada and its "spirit" as something that can be moved without changing. The same is done when describing the East Coast expansion. Sierra Nevada's slogan is "We are 100% family owned, operated, and argued over", which is visible in the footer of every page on Sierra Nevada's website. The East Coast expansion is the largest expansion of Sierra Nevada to date and one that involved a big physical move away from its roots in California. One way that Sierra Nevada connects Grossman and Chico to the new brewery facility in Mills River is by mentioning that his son Brian Grossman stepped up to manage it. This creates continuity between the two breweries and by keeping it in the family Sierra Nevada stays true to its slogan and core values.

4.3.2 Justifying the East Coast Expansion

Sierra Nevada is named after the Sierra Nevada mountains and there is no question that local connection is a central part of Sierra Nevada's corporate identity. In the "Our Story" subsection Chico is given an important role in the early days of Sierra Nevada and Sierra Nevada celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2020 by releasing an anniversary West Coast IPA, which shows that its

California roots are still an important part of the company's corporate identity. It is therefore interesting to examine how Sierra Nevada frames its East Coast expansion, which is a physical move away from these roots and the company's local identity.

In the "Our Story" subsection, Sierra Nevada justifies its East Coast expansion by stating that: "Making beer on both coasts helps us ensure fresh beer gets everywhere faster". Within this statement, there are two assumptions. First, that the beer should get everywhere and second, that it should get everywhere fast. This is reflective of capitalism's focus on efficiency and the global food system where everything is available everywhere, all the time. Sierra Nevada could have used this as an opportunity to point out that expanding away from California means that the company is distributing the environmental impact of its brewing activities and not putting more strain on the local environment and resources in Chico. They do not do this, and there are good arguments for excluding this information from a corporate standpoint. One of these being that the expansion away from Chico makes Sierra Nevada's supply chain more complex and less transparent. Another reason for excluding this information is because it could raise questions about the legitimacy of the brewing activities in Chico and the company's water access. I will return to both of these points later in the chapter. Here, these points are included to show why Sierra Nevada might have chosen to frame its East Coast expansion as a way to reach consumers faster and ensure the quality of the products as opposed to emphasizing the distribution of environmental impact.

In other parts of the data material, Sierra Nevada breaks with classic capitalism centered around efficiency above all in favor of a CSR perspective. In the "Sustainability" subsection the word efficient/efficiency is used repeatedly, but to describe the effect of the green measures, not cost or production efficiency. Sierra Nevada is not afraid to mention when a green measure increases cost/production efficiency, but these statements are always phrased in ways that make it clear that this is secondary to environmental impact. This is characteristic of corporate environmental discourse, where corporate greening is framed as a win-win situation where both business and the environment can thrive. Sierra Nevada also promotes a CSR perspective by constructing meaning relationships between words through what Fairclough (1995) refers to as the experiential value of words. For example, in the following sentence from the "Sustainability" subsection: "There's cost-benefit, and there's doing the right thing", cost-benefit and the right thing are constructed as

antonyms. This meaning relationship is not inherent but constructed by Sierra Nevada. A similar construction happens later in the introductory paragraph of the "Sustainability" subsection when easy and cheap are placed in opposition to values and the environment. Both cost-benefit and easy and cheap are associated with classical capitalism, while doing the right thing, values, and the environment belong to a CSR perspective. The combination of CSR sentiments with the taken-for-granted nature of company growth expressed when describing why it is beneficial and more efficient to produce beer on both coasts makes this a reproduction of corporate environmentalism and the growth paradigm.

Corporate environmentalism is built on the assumption that capitalism and environmentalism can be combined. Sierra Nevada's combination of corporate discourse and environmentalism in their growth portrayal is therefore not contradictory within corporate environmentalism. However, when seen through another lens, Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal can come across as contradictory. The marketization of public discourse facilitates the readers' acceptance of Sierra Nevada's portrayal, but as Fairclough (1989) points out readers can use their members resources creatively and resistant readings are possible. This is more common in situations where problematic power relations are becoming more visible. Increased environmental awareness and skepticism towards corporate environmentalism due to the prevalence of greenwashing can lead to creative use of members resources and reveal the contradictions in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse and corporate environmentalism in general.

4.3.3 Taking on the Industry Leader Role

In the "Our Story" subsection Sierra Nevada is represented as an underdog, but as the company grows, this representation must be changed to correspond with its new position in the craft beer industry. The challenge for a company like Sierra Nevada, which markets itself as a company with strong roots and values, is to do this without seeming as though it is abandoning its foundation. I addressed how Sierra Nevada creates continuity earlier in the chapter. In this section, I will look at how it constructs itself as an industry leader. Adopting an industry leader role is a common strategy in corporate environmental discourse (Breeze 2012; Laufer 2003). The most obvious way Sierra Nevada constructs this role is by simply referring to itself as a leader and pioneer. These

bold statements are bolstered by using language throughout the "About" section that supports this portrayal. One of the main ways Sierra Nevada does this is by highlighting when it was first or early to develop or adopt a sustainable practice or beer style. By doing this Sierra Nevada is describing itself as literally leading the industry, which substantiates the claim that it is a craft beer pioneer.

Sierra Nevada is a high-status craft brewery with a good reputation for its sustainability practices, and as mentioned in the last chapter, a risk for consumers, is that companies may become complacent due to the protection that a high status and good reputation offers (Laufer 2003). In order to avoid coming across as complacent, Sierra Nevada emphasizes that it is continuously thinking about and working towards doing better and sustainability is constructed as something that requires continuous effort. A risk for Sierra Nevada is that its sustainability efforts can be interpreted as greenwashing. According to Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse, sustainability in business is not the norm, but it is the right thing to do. In the introduction to the "Sustainability" subsection, Sierra Nevada writes "Back then [when Sierra Nevada was starting out], 'reduce, reuse, recycle' wasn't a catchphrase but a business model". The catchphrase reduce, reuse, recycle is associated with environmental activism, but Sierra Nevada connects it to corporate discourse by describing it as a business model. This is an example of interdiscursivity. Through this statement, Sierra Nevada is attempting to separate itself from greenwashing companies that jumped on the bandwagon, by making it clear that sustainability was not an afterthought but a core value from the beginning. This constructs Sierra Nevada as a company that lead the industry even before it came an industry leader.

Twice, Sierra Nevada uses the word revolution to describe its impact on the American craft beer industry. A revolution suggests a drastic change and a collective effort that spreads. Thus, Sierra Nevada did not just create room for itself, but also for other craft breweries. Having sparked a craft beer revolution, one option would be to limit its own growth and leave more space in the market for other craft breweries. This would distribute the environmental impact of brewing activities. Sierra Nevada chooses to justify its continued growth by taking on the role of the industry leader that continues to push boundaries. The reasoning becomes that because Sierra Nevada brews unique, innovative beer in a more sustainable manner than other breweries it must continue to

grow and inspire other craft breweries. This justification reproduces the growth paradigm, ignores the environmental impact of growth, and obscures alternative business models and ways to organize the market that are not centered around growth.

4.4 Local Food Discourse – Interdiscursivity

Sierra Nevada's environmental impact is likely to be lower than that of breweries of the same size with no sustainability measures, and people will continue to buy beer even if Sierra Nevada decides to limit company growth. Is it then not better if Sierra Nevada grows so that people can purchase its more sustainably produced beer? I cannot provide a satisfactory answer to this, but there are a number of factors to consider, such as the problem of water scarcity in California. As Allan's (2003) concept of virtual water reminds us, purchasing beer produced in California involves the export of water out of an area that struggles with persistent drought. Expanding production by opening a second brewery facility in a more water-rich state solves part of this issue, but the water scarcity in California is still a problem. The fact that expanding to a different state complicates the supply chain is another concern. Sierra Nevada's East Coast expansion brings the production closer to some consumers, but it makes Sierra Nevada as a company, more complex and difficult to oversee. Mentioning that Grossman's son leads the second brewery is a way to reassure consumers that Sierra Nevada's core values and responsible management will be protected. The question then becomes what are Sierra Nevada's plans for growth? How large does the company plan on becoming?

Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse borrows language from local food discourse, which is not uncommon in sustainability discourse as the goal behind local food systems is to provide an alternative to the environmentally destructive global food system (Kloppenburger, Hendrickson, and Stevenson 1996). Proponents of local food see it as part of the solution to both environmental problems and the information problem as consumers are given the chance to safeguard the process because it is happening close to them. The use of local food discourse is an example of interdiscursivity in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse. Borrowing from local food discourse serves two purposes in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse by simultaneously connecting the company to the perceived sustainability of local food and distancing it from large, industrial

breweries. These are the potential benefits of using local food discourse. At the same time, the use of local food discourse can come across as a contradiction to readers as Sierra Nevada's sales area and production expands away from the company headquarter in Chico. This section will look at how Sierra Nevada uses local food discourse and the potential contradiction between the use of local food discourse and company growth.

4.4.1 How Big is Too Big in Local Food Discourse?

There is ample information about Sierra Nevada's growth on the company website, but only certain aspects of it. One of the missing pieces of information is information about Sierra Nevada's size in relation to other breweries. This information is available online, but it is striking that it is only vaguely referenced on Sierra Nevada's own website. The descriptions "a brewery of our size" and "a standard brewery of the same size" can be found in the "Sustainability" subsection. In context, these statements make sense as Sierra Nevada is stating that the green measures are efficient in relation to the brewery size, which is an accessible way to present information about the substantive impact of green measures. This information is, however, not sufficient if looking for information about Sierra Nevada's relative size. In local food discourse, there is no clear definition of local in terms of business size or what can be considered local, but the idea is that food should be consumed close to where it was produced in order to make the process from production to plate more transparent (Kloppenburger et al. 1996). This also means that the size of the production must be limited to the amount needed to supply the local area. Sierra Nevada started out as a small, local business but having outgrown California it is obvious that it cannot be considered local anymore. It is possible to argue that by having the Chico brewery supply beer in the western part of the United States and the Mills River brewery supply the eastern part, the expansion makes Sierra Nevada's production more local, but this is a stretch. The United States is a massive country, so with both national and international distribution the consumption is still happening far away from the production. Sierra Nevada's ambiguous descriptions of its relative size can alert consumers to the contradiction between the company's use of local food discourse and the growth the company has experienced. This is good for consumers, but something Sierra Nevada would want to avoid, which may be why they have adapted local food discourse to suit its purpose.

4.4.2 Adapting Local Food Discourse

Sierra Nevada adapts local food discourse to accommodate company growth by constructing local as customizing green measures to the locations of the two breweries. Sierra Nevada chose Mills River as the location for the second brewery facility and put a lot of thought into this decision. Mills River is referred to as a second home and Sierra Nevada did not simply replicate the Chico brewery but took time to get to know the local area and adapt its practices to it. Several of the sustainability measures are the same or similar in both locations, but the nature and climate in Chico and Mills River are dissimilar and require different green measures. In Chico, Sierra Nevada capitalizes on the sun through solar panels, and deal with drought through water conservation and drought resistant landscaping. In Mills River, the year-round rain is managed through cisterns, permeable pavers, and bioswales, and the landscaping is designed to contribute to the native species and wildlife found in the forest. Focusing on the fact that sustainability is not a one-size-fits-all situation, but something that must be designed to suit the area is a way to show local awareness. This use of local food discourse focuses on taking care of the local area, and not on consuming locally and limiting growth, which would interfere with a growth-oriented business model.

4.4.3 Local for Local's Sake?

Below are two examples of Sierra Nevada borrowing from local food discourse. The examples are from the "Sustainability" subsection and are to do with the production of fresh produce for Sierra Nevada's on-site restaurants and the reuse of wood that had to be removed to build the Mills River brewery:

The best way to have the freshest, most local produce is to grow it yourself

Many of our visitor areas showcase the beautiful wood that came from these trees and are a great example of reuse, local sourcing, and innovative construction practices

In both examples local is used in a way that suggest it is a positive feature in itself. Reducing local to proximity and assuming that local sourcing is inherently more ecologically sustainable than global sourcing is a common problem in local food discourse (Born and Purcell 2006; Cleveland,

Carruth, and Mazaroli 2015). The environmental impact of a product depends on several factors, not just whether it is consumed close to where it was produced. Beyond freshness, growing produce on-site is positive not because it is local, but because this makes the process more transparent to consumers and allows Sierra Nevada to oversee it instead of trusting suppliers. This is an important distinction. The point of local food is not to consume local for the sake of the food being local, but to consume local food that is more ecologically sustainable. Sierra Nevada emphasizes that sustainability is a choice that requires continuous effort. As such, it does not make sense to portray local food as inherently more sustainable than other food systems.

Using local food discourse where it is convenient without regard for how it fits in with the rest of the growth portrayal, which is the case in both of the above examples, creates contradictions. Yes, the reuse of the trees removed in order to build the Mills River brewery *is* a great example of reuse and local sourcing, but it is the result of business expansion. Sierra Nevada describes the trees as being "in the way of construction", portraying nature as secondary to business growth. At the same time, when describing the removal of the trees the term "carefully harvested" is used as opposed to felling, logging, or deforestation. Terms like felling, logging, and deforestation can have a negative expressive value for ethical consumers, and the choice to use the term carefully harvested could be a relational strategy of avoidance (Fairclough 1989). The reuse of the timber is described as innovative and frames the logging as making the best out of a negative, but necessary situation. This portrayal ignores the fact that Sierra Nevada's growth is not a necessity, but a choice.

As thoroughly established, local food is not inherently more sustainable than global food. There are many features of local food systems that could be used to address environmental issues. This includes control over the process, transparency, and transportation. At the same time, there are other factors to consider such as whether an area is suitable for producing a product or if it will cause unnecessary strain on the local area. If we assume that other craft breweries are willing to brew sustainably, would it not follow logically from Sierra Nevada's comments about the benefits of local production and bringing the production closer to consumers that we should consume local craft beer instead of beer imported from California? Positioning itself as an industry leader suggests that Sierra Nevada wants the rest of the craft beer industry to thrive and follow its lead when it comes to sustainability. A possibility if Sierra Nevada was to limit its growth would be to

encourage people to consume local craft beer. This would distribute the environmental impact more and take some of the pressure off the areas Sierra Nevada produces in. Additionally, we would be exporting less water out of California and as Sierra Nevada points out, trucks contribute to emissions, and purchasing locally produced beer would remove the need for long-haul trucks. Determining what would be the most sustainable way to consume beer would require a complex analysis. This is not something I am capable of, nor is it the goal of this thesis. The point is that consistency in Sierra Nevada's use of local food discourse would involve a discussion about the environmental impact of company growth and alternatives. Instead, Sierra Nevada uses local food discourse selectively and obscures alternatives to growth by exclusively promoting a growth-oriented business model. It would be highly surprising if Sierra Nevada did not promote its own beer, but this is still an example of how corporate environmentalism does not make room for alternatives to growth.

4.5 Summary

Within corporate environmentalism sustainability and growth are reconciled by constructing a discourse where technology makes it possible to grow in a sustainable manner and where growth is framed as good and an opportunity for innovation. Sierra Nevada reproduces corporate environmentalism's approach to sustainability and growth. In addition to protecting its legitimacy and access to resources, Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal contributes to the naturalization of the growth paradigm throughout society. This stands in the way of discussions about alternative business models and alternative ways of organizing production and the economy that are not oriented around growth. Continued growth is unsustainable, and discussions about alternatives to growth are crucial to mitigating climate change, which is why Sierra Nevada's reproduction of the growth paradigm is problematic.

5 Concluding Discussion

The objective of this thesis was to explore and address issues with corporate environmentalism by analyzing the sustainability discourse of Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. as it is represented in the "About" section of the company's website. Corporate environmentalism has been identified as one of the main obstacles to binding international agreements and the international cooperation needed to mitigate the climate crisis (Banerjee 2012a; Greer and Bruno 1996). This is partially the result of discursive practices that construct the climate problem in a way that only leaves room for solutions that do not stand in the way of continued growth and increased profit. The power and resources of corporations enable them to marketize public discourse to the extent of naturalizing their representation of the climate problem and their proposed solutions. This makes the process surrounding action to mitigate climate change highly undemocratic, which is why it is essential to shed light on the obstacles standing in the way of effective and democratic action to mitigate climate change. The research questions I have explored in this thesis are:

1. What meaning does Sierra Nevada give sustainability and how is this discourse constructed?
2. How is growth reconciled with sustainability in Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse?
3. How does Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse relate to the dominant corporate environmental discourse?

In this chapter, I will summarize and discuss the findings. I will begin with research question 3, as problems with corporate environmentalism is what the thesis is constructed around. I will then move on to research questions 1 and 2. The point of critical discourse analysis is to deconstruct discourses to show how discursive practices affect social action and contribute to social problems. A discourse must therefore be analyzed on a situational, institutional, and societal level. The final part of the discussion will look at how Sierra Nevada's firm-level reproduction of corporate environmentalism contributes to the marketization of public discourse and how this affects global climate action.

5.1 Reproduction of Corporate Environmental Discourse

One of the points of choosing a high-status company with a good reputation for its sustainability efforts as the case for this project was to consider whether what is perceived as a responsible business can transform corporate environmental discourse in a way that rectifies the problems with corporate environmentalism and challenges the unequal power relations behind it.

My analysis shows that Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse is a reproduction of the dominant corporate environmental discourse. For corporate environmentalism to become a viable solution to the climate crisis, it must overcome the information problem and challenge the growth paradigm. Sierra Nevada does not manage to do either. This means that Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse maintains the unequal power relations between Sierra Nevada and consumers. On an institutional and societal level, Sierra Nevada's reproduction of corporate environmentalism contributes to the perpetuation of unequal power relations between consumers and companies in general and between the different parties involved in global climate action. I have avoided the term greenwashing in this thesis because it is negatively charged and assumes that all corporate sustainability efforts are calculated attempts at deceiving consumers. This is not a useful generalization as it invalidates real effort and dedication, and the goal of my research is not to alienate companies as they must play a crucial role in our joint efforts to mitigate climate change. There are companies making genuine efforts to lower their environmental impact and Sierra Nevada may be one of them. However, Sierra Nevada's reproduction of corporate environmental discourse is problematic, because it strengthens corporate power and contributes to a societal level problem that stands in the way of effective action to combat climate change.

5.2 Sierra Nevada's Sustainability Discourse

Corporate environmentalism is built around the belief that economic growth and sustainability can be reconciled through the development and use of technology. It is a solution-oriented and technocentric discourse that proposes ethical consumption and continued growth as the solution to environmental problems. This problem representation positions business as the leaders of action against climate change, and voluntary corporate greening and self-regulation are preferred to government regulation. On a material level, corporate greening must have a substantive impact for

corporate environmentalism to be a viable solution to the climate crisis. On a symbolic level, which is the topic of this thesis, business must overcome the information problem. Corporate environmentalism is reliant on ethical consumption and ethical consumption is only possible if consumers have the information needed to make reflexive decisions. If business cannot overcome the information problem, corporate environmentalism becomes an ineffective tool for mitigating climate change.

Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse is a reproduction of corporate environmentalism and does not manage to transform the discourse in a way that solves the information problem. Sierra Nevada reproduces corporate environmental discourse by constructing a technocentric and solution-oriented sustainability discourse. The sustainability discourse is solution-oriented in the sense that all the problem representations are connected to a corresponding green measure and no problems without solutions are introduced. The problems are seen through a technocentric lens, where the climate crisis is something that can be solved through technology instead of limiting growth. Sierra Nevada does not include explicit references to the climate crisis, which is the underlying problem that the green measures are addressing. This contributes to the solution-oriented rhetoric by obscuring the big picture and problems Sierra Nevada does not have solutions to. Sierra Nevada implicitly acknowledges that there are problems it has not solved by constructing sustainability as a continuous effort, not a one-time thing, but not including unsolved problems, and the big picture, makes it difficult for readers to question whether the company's approach to sustainability is the most suitable one. Sierra Nevada's use of the declarative mood to construct truth claims frames the impact of its green measures as substantive. That may be the case, but sometimes green measures do not have the intended effect. Regardless of the substantive impact, the use of the declarative mood puts Sierra Nevada in a position of power because readers do not have the information or knowledge needed to verify the claims. This means that despite all the information provided by Sierra Nevada, there are gaps in the information that maintain the information problem.

I used Sierra Nevada's representation of drought and water conservation as the main example of the issues with Sierra Nevada's problem representations. The limited and incomplete information about water conservation is especially striking because water conservation is essential in arid California. One of the main aims of corporate discourse is to control rhetoric in order to retain

access to resources (Bitektine 2011; Bowen 2014; Breeze 2013). Water is one of the most important natural resources for Sierra Nevada, as there can be no beer without water. As such, it is understandable that Sierra Nevada would want to avoid a debate about the legitimacy of its water consumption. The company chose to open a second brewery facility in Mills River, North Carolina, and water access was one of the reasons why Sierra Nevada chose Mills River, a fact which is not mentioned in the "About" section of the company's website. Expanding its production out of California is good as it avoids putting further pressure on California's water resources, but it does not change the water usage of the Chico brewery. Including this information could alert readers to the problems with Sierra Nevada's water usage in California. This may be why water access is not used as a justification for the East Coast expansion in the "About" section of Sierra Nevada's website. Producing beer, a luxury product associated with social problems, in a state plagued by drought and wildfires is problematic and there should be a public discussion about the legitimacy of this water usage. Sierra Nevada includes water conservation in its sustainability discourse, but the information is incomplete and fails to facilitate a discussion about water management and allocation.

In addition to the impact Sierra Nevada's water usage has on the local environment, one also needs to consider whether others are losing access to water due to Sierra Nevada and if there are more legitimate uses of the water used by Sierra Nevada. Moreover, Sierra Nevada are exporting a scarce resource out of California. The production of some products requires a certain climate. That is not the case with beer. An extreme stance would be that we should not produce a luxury product like beer in a state where water is a scarce resource. A milder position is that it may be better to produce and consume certain products locally and limit production size to avoid exporting water out of regions where it is a scarce resource. What is obvious is that a debate about resource allocation and management is necessary for the sustainable use of resources. Water should be a public good, because it is a fundamental human need, and as argued in this thesis, governments are better suited to ensuring social welfare than business. The issues with Sierra Nevada's representation of drought and water conservation are representative of the issues with Sierra Nevada's representations of environmental problems. I can only speculate about Sierra Nevada's intentions, but on a situational and institutional level, it raises questions about Sierra Nevada's and other companies' willingness to voluntarily disclose potentially compromising information. On a societal level it puts in to

question corporate environmentalism's ability to overcome the information problem, ensure social welfare, and manage our shared resources.

Corporate environmentalism promotes ethical consumption as the solution to the climate crisis, but in order for this to work, we must overcome the information problem, which seems unattainable through corporate environmentalism. Civil society has a role to play in the efforts to combat climate change, but the information problem stands in the way of effective civil action. Consuming ethically is not feasible due to the lack of and quality of information provided by companies. As Patagonia's website illustrates, even when sufficient information is provided it is difficult for consumers to gather and synthesize it. As this thesis has shown, many of us do not have the knowledge to understand and judge the validity of the information provided. Sierra Nevada attempts to overcome the information problem by disclosing information but is unsuccessful. Due to the problems identified with reflexive, ethical consumption, it might not be possible to fully overcome the information problem through corporate environmentalism.

In Sierra Nevada's sustainability discourse sustainability practices are initiated and implemented by the company itself, and either self-regulated or regulated through voluntary certification programs. The problems mentioned in the paragraphs above are partially the result of industry self-regulation. Due to difficulties measuring the substantive environmental impact and ensuring an independent and reliable auditing process, self-regulation and voluntary green programs are not a good solution to the information problem (Boiral and Gendron 2010; Laufer 2003). As the LEED certification shows, these programs can be more symbolic than substantive and misleading if they are not measuring the full environmental impact of a company's business activities. Ultimately, the main issue with voluntary corporate greening and self-regulation is that these programs are voluntary, giving companies the option to be unsustainable and greenwash.

I am not here to propagate the idea that "the pursuits of profits is wicked and immoral" as Friedman (1970) puts it. Companies fulfil important functions in society and profits are part of this, but the ideological foundation of business today is not centered around social welfare and is as such not a suitable institution for addressing climate change. This is not to say that business cannot be centered around environmental sustainability and social welfare, but for this to happen the

economy and business must be restructured. Due to the problems with self-regulation, external regulation is needed. One of governments' fundamental functions is to ensure the social welfare of its citizens, which makes them a more suitable institution for combating climate change. Government regulation has also been identified as one of the best predictors for companies' environmental performance (Banerjee et al. 2003; Delmas and Burbano 2011). If governments set the standard for production and information disclosure, and monitors and validates this information, they could force companies to produce sustainably and make it possible for consumers to consistently make ethical choices. A challenge with government regulation is that every business is specialized and that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to sustainability problems. Due to this, cooperation between governments and business is essential. Government regulation does not mean full government control, but that governments set standards that business must meet. For this to work business should not attempt to control the environmental rhetoric as that is not its role (Hawken 2010). Public sustainability discourse should be democratic and reflective of public interests, not just corporate interests. In terms of environmental impact, business is, despite corporate environmental belief in the ability to reconcile sustainability and growth, dysfunctional. Corporate interests should therefore not dominate political discourse about sustainability and allowing them to do so is a dysfunction of political institutions. Separating these institutions and the discourses would allow both business and government to fulfil their functions and amend some of their dysfunctions.

5.3 Sustainability and Growth

There are absolute limits to growth and framing ethical consumption as the solution to the climate crisis obscures the necessity of limiting growth and avoiding overexploitation of natural resources to mitigate the effects of climate change. The foundation of corporate environmentalism is the growth paradigm, which asserts that economic growth is a source of good and can solve problems like social inequality and the climate crisis. Within this paradigm limiting growth becomes a threat, not just to corporations, but to society in general. The growth paradigm is not limited to the corporate sphere but has been naturalized throughout society and portrayed as beneficial to all, a tendency Fairclough (1995) describes as a marketization of public discourse. This tendency affects international climate negotiations because the corporate environmental portrayal of growth ends

up shaping the problem representations and proposed solutions in international agreements. This makes corporate environmentalism an obstacle to effective and democratic action to mitigate climate change. For corporate environmentalism to be transformed into an effective tool for mitigating climate change the growth paradigm would have to be abandoned in favor of alternative business and economic models that are not growth-oriented.

Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal is in line with corporate environmentalism and does not challenge the growth paradigm. Instead, Sierra Nevada reconciles sustainability and growth by not problematizing the relationship between them. When Sierra Nevada constructs its sustainability discourse, growth and profit are framed as secondary to sustainability, but the company's growth-based business model says otherwise. The company's growth is justified by applying a growth-oriented supply-and-demand logic where growth is a response to demand, and the only option is to grow to meet demand. No alternative business models are entertained. Sierra Nevada does address growth in the "About" section of its company website, but it is seen through a technocentric corporate environmental lens where sustainability and growth can be reconciled through the development and use of technology. When growth is mentioned in relation to sustainability, it is framed as an opportunity for green innovation, not as a threat to sustainability. This ignores the absolute limits to growth that are set by our planet. Representing the problem in this way positions Sierra Nevada as part of the solution, which protects the company's legitimacy and access to resources. On an institutional and societal level, Sierra Nevada's growth portrayal contributes to the naturalization of the growth paradigm in society.

The story of Sierra Nevada as told in the "Our Story" subsection of its website, begins by constructing Sierra Nevada as a small, local, underdog with a passionate leader. By constructing Grossman as a charismatic and passionate leader, Sierra Nevada humanizes the company. This is a common corporate strategy to construct a friendly relationship with consumers. It also separates Sierra Nevada from large, impersonal, industrial breweries. As Sierra Nevada grows, subtle linguistic changes are made such as the move from "Ken" to "we". The surrounding language and tone do not change, and the content remains the same. This makes the company's growth seem natural and its core values are represented as consistent and unchanged by growth. Sierra Nevada's role gradually changes from small, local, underdog to industry leader. The construction of the

industry leader role justifies the company's continued growth by suggesting that Sierra Nevada leads other craft breweries towards more sustainable brewing practices and that the company's growth is therefore beneficial to the environment. Although Sierra Nevada is no longer a small, local brewery, the discourse borrows from local food discourse. This creates continuity by connecting early Sierra Nevada and Sierra Nevada today. It also links the company to the perceived sustainability of local food and is another way for Sierra Nevada to distance itself from large, industrial breweries. However, there is a contradiction between the use of local food discourse and Sierra Nevada's growth. Sierra Nevada adapt local food discourse to create room for company growth, but this contradiction is still detectable if readers use their members resources creatively. This gap can be used challenge Sierra Nevada's portrayal of growth and sustainability.

People will still drink beer if Sierra Nevada stops growing, so the company's growth is less likely to be questioned, especially because it is a high-status brewery with a good reputation for sustainable brewing practices. Still, as this thesis has shown, there are a number of factors that need to be considered in order to assess the environmental impact of Sierra Nevada's growth. Discussions about resource allocation and management could threaten Sierra Nevada's production and there are strategic reasons for Sierra Nevada to reproduce corporate environmentalism and protect the company's resource access. Alternative business and economic models not centered around growth, such as local food systems, would limit Sierra Nevada's growth and potentially its profits. This could also motivate the company's reproduction of corporate environmentalism. Whether the purpose of reproducing corporate environmentalism is to control the rhetoric and retain access to resources or not, the effect is the same. It obscures alternatives to growth and reproduces corporate power, which stands in the way of the action needed to mitigate the climate crisis.

5.4 Global Climate Action

The climate crisis is a global crisis that requires global action. Global climate negotiations are dominated by corporate lobbying, which blocks fruitful discussions about alternative solutions to the climate crisis (Banerjee et al. 2021). The result is the protection of corporate interests, not the interests of the citizens governments represent. In an op-ed in the Washington Post, the secretary-

general of the United Nations, António Guterres (2022b), urged people to "Make your voice heard, wherever decisions are taken — in political debates, local authorities, boardrooms and at the ballot box". The problem is if these decisions are being made by corporate lobbyists in spaces to which most people do not have access. Because corporate environmentalism is undemocratic and protects corporate interests, not social welfare, I argue that governments should lead the efforts to address the climate crisis. However, government regulation comes with a host of new issues. Faced with the facts, it is easy to feel resignation and see the climate crisis as beyond remedy, but if the COVID-19 pandemic taught us one thing, it is that fast, action to address a global crisis is possible. Admittedly, the efforts were imperfect and characterized by powerful countries and companies wielding their power and resources in a socially unjust way. The goal should be to create a more democratic and socially just process, but global efforts to mitigate the climate crisis will be imperfect. What we must do, is find the best solutions, not the perfect solution. This involves looking beyond the dominant social imaginaries.

I opened this thesis with a quote from Ursula K. Le Guin's science fiction novel *The Dispossessed* and so I will end with a reflection on science fiction and alternative social imaginaries. Science fiction as a genre is known for imagining dystopian and utopian futures and exploring the effects of science and technology on society. Some imagine the great potential of technology, others the dangers of it. The subtitle of *The Dispossessed* is "An Ambiguous Utopia", and in the novel Le Guin does not represent a perfect utopia but explores the flaws of the utopian society she has imagined. The dystopian future of the earth described in *The Dispossessed* has become a little too realistic, but maybe we can take a leaf out of Le Guin's book and attempt to imagine what a different society could look like, not in search of a perfect utopia, but a less dysfunctional system than the current one.

5.5 Challenges and Limitations

In this thesis I have explored how Sierra Nevada constructs sustainability and growth, and how its sustainability discourse relates to the dominant corporate environmental discourse. What my thesis shows is therefore how corporate environmental discourse can be done, not how it is always done, a point which the comparison with Patagonia illustrates.

When we interpret discourse in our everyday lives we utilize our members resources, and that is also the case when researchers interpret discourse (Fairclough 1989:141). My analysis of the data material is shaped by my members resources and if a different researcher, with different members resources analyzed the same data material it would affect the interpretation. This is unavoidable, which is why reflexivity as a researcher is essential (Bacchi 2009; Fairclough 1989). In order to address this challenge, I have included external information to support my interpretations, alternative interpretations, and attempted to be open about my biases and the gaps in my knowledge.

I have mentioned the tendency to become overly cynical in critical discourse analysis and when interpreting corporate discourse (Breeze 2011; Pollach 2005). Due to the prevalence of greenwashing, corporate environmentalism should be approached with a "healthy and necessary skepticism" (Greer and Bruno 1996:242). At the same time, being overly cynical is not beneficial as it can lead to a biased interpretation and a sense of powerlessness in the face of climate action. I wish to emphasize that I am not suggesting that Sierra Nevada is guilty of greenwashing. The point of this thesis and using Sierra Nevada as a case is to illustrate a larger tendency, which when aggregated has a negative effect on climate action. My goal has been to provide a realistic portrayal of corporate environmentalism and the potentially disastrous effects of it, while also providing hope by showing that change is possible. This is a difficult balancing act, and the thesis may fall into the trap of being overly cynical or deterministic at times.

Conventional research on corporate environmentalism is generally on a firm-level and orientated towards corporate environmentalism as a business strategy, whereas critical research aims to move beyond the firm-level to the social system level (Bowen 2014). The aim of my research was to examine a societal level problem through a firm-level analysis as conducting a critical discourse analysis of the corporate environmental discourse of several companies would require a larger scale project than this master's thesis. Because corporate environmentalism is not one thing, but the result of the discursive practices of companies, my research contributes to the body of knowledge on this topic. Further research is necessary to provide a fuller picture of corporate environmentalism as a social phenomenon. Additionally, as identified in this thesis, one of the main issues with corporate environmentalism is the effect it has on public discourse. Another area

that requires further research is therefore the marketization of public discourse such as that of governments, which also stands in the way of global climate action.

References

- Allan, J. A. 2003. "Virtual Water - the Water, Food, and Trade Nexus. Useful Concept or Misleading Metaphor?" *Water International* 28(1):106-113.
- Ayres, Ian and John Braithwaite. 1991. "Tripartism: Regulatory Capture and Empowerment." *Law & Social Inquiry* 16(3):435-496.
- Bacchi, Carol. 2009. *Analysing Policy: What's the problem represented to be*. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Australia
- Bacchi, Carol. 2012. "Why Study Problematizations? Making Politics Visible." *Open Journal of Political Science* 2(1):1-8.
- Bacchi, Carol. 2015. "The Turn to Problematization: Political Implications of Contrasting Interpretive and Poststructural Adaptations." *Open Journal of Political Science* 5(1):1-12.
- Bacchi, Carol. 2018. "Comparing WPR and critical discourse analysis." Retrieved April 9, 2022 from: <https://carolbacchi.com/2018/05/14/comparing-wpr-and-critical-discourse-analysis/>
- Banerjee, Subhabrata B., Easwar S. Iyer, and Rajiv K. Kashyap. 2003. "Corporate Environmentalism: Antecedents and Influence of Industry Type." *Journal of Marketing* 67(2):106-122.
- Banerjee, Subhabrata B. 2012a. "A Climate for Change? Critical Reflections on the Durban United Nations Climate Change Conference." *Organization Studies* 33(12):1761-1786.
- Banerjee, Subhabrata B. 2012b. "Critical Perspectives on Business and the Natural Environment." Pp. 572-590 in *The Oxford Handbook of Business and the Natural Environment*, edited by Pratima Bansal and Andrew J. Hoffman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199584451.003.0031>

- Banerjee, Subhabrata B., John M. Jermier, Ana Maria Peredo, Robert Perey, and André Reichel. 2021. "Theoretical perspectives on organizations and organizing in a post-growth era." *Organization* 28(3):337-357.
- Bitektine, Alex. 2011. "Toward a Theory of Social Judgements of Organizations: The Case of Legitimacy, Reputation, and Status." *The Academy of Management Review* 36(1):151-179.
- Boiral, Olivier and Yves Gendron. 2010. "Sustainable Development and Certification Practices: Lessons Learned and Prospects." *Business Strategy and the Environment* 20(5):331-347.
- Born, Branden and Mark Purcell. 2006. "Avoiding the Local Trap: Scale and Food Systems in Planning Research." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 26(2):195-207.
- Bowen, Frances. 2014. *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breeze, Ruth. 2011. "Critical Discourse Analysis and Its Critics." *Pragmatics* 21(4):493-525.
- Breeze, Ruth. 2012. "Legitimation in Corporate Discourse: Oil corporations after Deepwater Horizon." *Discourse & Society* 23(1):3-18.
- Breeze, Ruth. 2013. *Corporate Discourse*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Brewers Association. 2021. "Brewers Association Releases Annual Craft Brewing Industry Production Report for 2020." Retrieved January 3, 2022 from: <https://www.brewersassociation.org/press-releases/2020-craft-brewing-industry-production-report/>
- Brower, Ryan. 2020. "How to Run an Iconic Craft Brewery for 40 Years." *Gear Patrol*. Retrieved April 6, 2022 from: <https://www.gearpatrol.com/food/drinks/a692463/ken-grossman-sierra-nevada-brewing-40-years/>

- Burr, Vivien. 2015. *Social Constructionism*. 3rd ed. London: Routledge.
- California Forest Management Task Force. 2021. "California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan." Retrieved November 26, 2021 from:
<https://fmtf.fire.ca.gov/media/cjwfpckz/californiawildfireandforestresilienceactionplan.pdf>
- California Water Service. 2021. "2020 Urban Water Management Plan." Retrieved November 26, 2021 from:
https://www.calwater.com/docs/uwmp2020/CH_2020_UWMP_FINAL.pdf
- Chapagain, A.K. and A.Y. Hoekstra. 2011. "The blue, green and grey water footprint of rice from production and consumption perspectives." *Ecological Economics* 70(4):749-758.
- Chouliaraki, Lilie and Norman Fairclough. 1999. *Discourse in late modernity : Rethinking critical discourse analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Chrun, Elizabeth, Nives Dolšak, and Aseem Prakash. 2016. "Corporate Environmentalism: Motivations and Mechanisms." *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 41(1):341-362.
- Cleveland, David A., Allison Carruth and Danielle Niki Mazaroli. 2015. "Operationalizing local food: Goals, actions, and indicators for alternative food systems." *Agriculture and Human Values* 32(2):281-297.
- Dauvergne, Peter and Jane Lister. 2012. "Big brand sustainability: Governance prospects and environmental limits." *Global Environmental Change* 22(1):36-45.
- Delmas, Magali A. and Vanessa C. Burbano. 2011. "The Drivers of Greenwashing." *California Management Review* 54(1):64-87.

- Deephouse, David L. and Suzanne M. Carter. 2005. "An Examination of Differences Between Organizational Legitimacy and Organizational Reputation." *Journal of Management Studies* 42(2):329-360.
- Deephouse, David L. and Mark Suchman. 2008. "Legitimacy in Organizational Institutionalism." In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by Royston Greenwood, Christine Oliver, Roy Suddaby, and Kerstin Sahlin. London: SAGE Publications. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849200387.n2>
- Devers, Cynthia E., Todd Dewett, Yuri Mishina, and Carrie E. Belsito. 2009. "A General Theory of Organizational Stigma." *Organization Science* 20(1):154-171.
- Van Dijk, Teun. 2006. "Discourse and manipulation." *Discourse & Society* 17(3):359-383.
- Djonov, Emilia. 2007. "Website hierarchy and the interaction between content organization, webpage and navigation design: A systemic functional hypermedia discourse analysis perspective." *Information Design Journal* 15(2):144–162.
- The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina. N.d. "Sierra Nevada's Hunt for Eastern HQ led to North Carolina." Retrieved January 3, 2022 from: <https://edpnc.com/success-stories/sierra-nevadas-hunt-eastern-hq-led-north-carolina/>
- Edwards, Derek, Malcolm Ashmore, and Jonathan Potter. 1995. "Death and furniture: the rhetoric, politics, and theology of bottom line arguments against relativism." *History of the Human Sciences* 8(2):25–49.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1989. *Language and power*. Harlow: Longman.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1995. *Critical discourse analysis : The critical study of language*. Harlow: Longman.

- Forbes, Linda C. and John M. Jermier. 2010. "The New Corporate Environmentalism and The Ecology of Commerce." *Organization & Environment* 23(4):465–481.
- Forbes, Linda C. and John M. Jermier. 2012. "The New Corporate Environmentalism and the Symbolic Management of Organizational Culture." Pp. 556-571 in *The Oxford Handbook of Business and the Natural Environment*, edited by Pratima Bansal and Andrew J. Hoffman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199584451.003.0030>
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, edited by Colin Gordon. Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1981. "The Order of Discourse". Pp. 48-78 in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, edited by Robert Young. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Friedman, Milton. 1970. "A Friedman doctrine: The Social Responsibility Of Business Is to Increase Its Profits." *The New York Times*. Retrieved December 20, 2021 from: <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/09/13/archives/a-friedman-doctrine-the-social-responsibility-of-business-is-to.html>
- Greer, Jed and Kenny Bruno. 1996. *Greenwash : The reality behind corporate environmentalism*. Penang, Malaysia: Third World Network.
- Guterres, António. 2022a. "Secretary-General's video message on the launch of the third IPCC report" [Speech transcript]. Retrieved April 19, 2022 from: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2022-04-04/secretary-generals-video-message-the-launch-of-the-third-ipcc-report-scroll-down-for-languages>
- Guterres, António. 2022b. "Amid backsliding on climate, the renewables effort now must be tripled." *The Washington Post*. Retrieved April 15, 2022 from:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/04/04/new-ipcc-climate-report-on-averting-catastrophe/>

Halliday, M. A. K. 2007. *Language and Society*. London: Continuum.

Hart, Stuart L. 1995. "A Natural-Resource-Based View of the Firm." *The Academy of Management Review* 20(4):986-1014.

Hawken, Paul. 2010. *The Ecology of Commerce : A Declaration of Sustainability* (Revised Edition). New York: Harper Business.

IPCC. 2022. "Summary for Policymakers" [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, M. Tignor, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösche, V. Möller, A. Okem (eds.)]. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegría, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lösche, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jermier, John M., Linda C. Forbes, Suzanne Behn, and Renato J. Orsato. 2006. "The New Corporate Environmentalism and Green Politics." Pp. 618-650 in *The SAGE Handbook of Organization Studies*, edited by Stewart R. Clegg, Cynthia Hardy, Thomas B. Lawrence and Walter R. Nord. London: SAGE Publications.

Johnston, Josée. 2008. "The citizen-consumer hybrid: Ideological tensions and the case of Whole Foods Market." *Theory and Society* 37(3):229-270.

Johnston, Josée and Michelle Szabo. 2011. "Reflexivity and the Whole Foods Market consumer: The lived experience of shopping for change." *Agriculture and Human Values* 28(3):303-319.

- Jones, Ellis. 2019. "Rethinking Greenwashing: Corporate Discourse, Unethical Practice, and the Unmet Potential of Ethical Consumerism." *Sociological Perspectives* 62(5):728-754.
- Kloppenborg, Jack, Jr., John Hendrickson and G. W. Stevenson. 1996. "Coming in to the Foodshed." *Agriculture and Human Values* 13(3):33-42 .
- Lange, Donald, Peggy M. Lee, and Ye Dai. 2011. "Organizational Reputation: A Review." *Journal of Management* 37(1):153-184.
- Laufer, William S. 2003. "Social Accountability and Corporate Greenwashing." *Journal of Business Ethics* 43(3):253-261.
- Le Guin, Ursula K. [1974] 2002. *The Dispossessed*. Reprint, London: Gollancz.
- Lyon, Thomas P. and John W. Maxwell. 2011. "Greenwash: Corporate Environmental Disclosure under Threat of Audit." *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy* 20(1):3-41.
- Lydenberg, Steven D. 2002. "Envisioning Socially Responsible Investing." *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* 7(7):57-77.
- Marandi, Anna and Kelly Leilani Main. 2021. "Vulnerable City, recipient city, or climate destination? Towards a typology of domestic climate migration impacts in US cities." *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 11(3):465-480.
- Meadows, Donella H., Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III. 1972. *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*. New York: Universe Books.
- Merton, Robert K. 1968a. *Social theory and social structure*. New York: The Free Press.
- Merton, Robert K. 1968b. "The Matthew Effect in Science." *Science* 159(3810):56-63.

- Morville, Peter and Louis Rosenfeld. 1998. *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web*. [E-reader version]. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly Media, Inc. Retrieved March 18, 2022 from: <https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/information-architecture-for/1565922824/>
- Patagonia. 2022. "Business Unusual." *Patagonia*. Retrieved March 16, 2022 from: <https://www.patagonia.com/business-unusual/>
- Pew Research Center. 2020. "As Voting Begins, Democrats Are Upbeat about the 2020 Field, Divided in Their Preferences." Retrieved March 1, 2022 from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2020/01/30/as-voting-begins-democrats-are-upbeat-about-the-2020-field-divided-in-their-preferences/>
- Pollach, Irene. 2005. "Corporate self-presentation on the WWW: Strategies for enhancing usability, credibility and utility." *Corporate Communications* 10(4):285-301.
- Slawinski, Natalie, Jonatan Pinkse, Timo Busch, and Subhabrata B. Banerjee. 2017. "The Role of Short-Termism and Uncertainty Avoidance in Organizational Inaction on Climate Change: A Multi-Level Framework." *Business & Society* 56(2): 253–282.
- Solomon, Brian. 2014. "King Of Craft Beer: How Sierra Nevada Rules The Hops World." *Forbes*. Retrieved May 24, 2021 from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/briansolomon/2014/02/12/king-of-craft-beer-how-sierra-nevada-is-winning-the-hops-war/?sh=421e17d56727>
- State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. 2018. "2018 Strategic Fireplan for California." Retrieved June 4, 2021 from: https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/5590/2018-strategic-fire-plan-approved-08_22_18.pdf
- Suchman, Mark. 1995. "Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches." *The Academy of Management Review* 20(3): 571-610.

- Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. N.d.. "About Us." *Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.*. Retrieved January 11, 2022 from: <https://sierranevada.com/about/>
- Tvedt, Knut Are. 2018. "Brennevinsforbudet i Store norske leksikon." Retrieved January 26, 2022 from: <https://snl.no/Brennevinsforbudet>
- United Nations. 2015. "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." Retrieved March 14, 2022 from: <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/transforming-our-world-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-17981>
- U.S. Copyright Office. 2022. "U.S. Copyright Office Fair Use Index". Retrieved May 5, 2022 from: <https://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/index.html>
- Willis, Margaret and Juliet B. Schor. 2012. "Does Changing a Light Bulb Lead to Changing the World? Political Action and the Conscious Consumer." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 644(1):160-190.
- World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

All references used in this paper are listed.

Number of words: 35 078