Lessons about Activism
from a Swedish High School Student

A Rhetorical Analysis of Greta Thunberg’s Public Speeches on Climate Change

Master Thesis, 15 hp
Media and Communication Science with Specialization in International Communication

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Figure 1. Greta Thunberg protesting in front of the Swedish Parliament (Thunberg, 2019, March)

Sign reads:

"It always seems impossible until it has been done"
ABSTRACT

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On the 15th of March 2019, more than 1.6 million students have protested in 125 countries against the climate change effects, as part of the Fridays for Future movement. The manifestations represented the biggest day of global climate action ever taken, according to media outlets. At the core of this movement stands Greta Thunberg, a Swedish 16-year old climate activist and a Nobel Prize nominee, whose actions and speeches serve as inspiration for both students and adults.

With a focus on environmental communication and climate activism, this research aims to find how the teenager addressed climate change topics and how she succeeded in conveying her ideas to audiences. It discusses how the rhetoric was constructed within her speeches, and which of the argumentative elements gave Greta Thunberg the ability to convince the public. The study combines frame and rhetoric analysis with a focus on the text of the speeches that Greta Thunberg delivered in three major international events. The purpose is to observe and understand the nature of Greta Thunberg’s activism by analyzing how the high school student used the linguistic tools and tactics in her public speeches, and to explore a few theories within the text: the issue framing of the climate crisis; the argumentative and discursive techniques that helped her to gain media and public attention.

The thesis concludes that the evolution of Greta Thunberg’s climate activism, from ‘no attention’ to global reputation, is based on grassroots activism, particular personality features, and efficient use of rhetoric devices combined with moral purpose argumentation.

Keywords: environmental communication; Greta Thunberg; climate activism; issue framing; rhetoric analysis; argumentation; moral purpose

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1 The document is written in American English and follows the rules of the American Psychological Association (APA), https://apastyle.apa.org/. The citations within the text are adapted accordingly.
2 The present thesis is 51 pages long, excluding the provided visuals, the figures and tables lists, and the abbreviations and reference lists.
### Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>APA</td>
<td>The American Psychological Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>The British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<td>CNN</td>
<td>The Cable News Network</td>
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<td>CO2</td>
<td>carbon dioxide</td>
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<td>COP21</td>
<td>The 21st edition of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>COP24</td>
<td>The 24th edition of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<td>EEA</td>
<td>The European Environment Agency</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>The European Union</td>
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<td>G8</td>
<td>The Group of Eight, an inter-governmental political forum</td>
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<td>GHG</td>
<td>greenhouse gas emissions</td>
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<td>GSCC</td>
<td>The Global Strategic Communications Council</td>
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<td>IIASA</td>
<td>The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>The International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPCC</td>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP / MEPs</td>
<td>member / members of European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASA</td>
<td>The National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>The Pontifical Academy of Science</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>The United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCHE</td>
<td>The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN COP</td>
<td>The United Nations – The Conference of the Parties</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>The United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEF</td>
<td>The World Economic Forum</td>
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<td>WRI</td>
<td>The World Resources Institute</td>
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Lessons about Activism
from a Swedish High School Student

A Rhetorical Analysis of Greta Thunberg’s
Public Speeches on Climate Change

1. Introduction

Climate change represents one of the biggest societal challenges that humanity faces today, with a huge impact on the future life of planet Earth. The projected scenarios on global climate change and global warming confirm that several serious effects occur unlikely to different regions and places, which influence ecosystems and living beings (Arlt, Hoppe, Schmitt, De Silva-Schmidt, & Brüggemann, 2018; Cox, 2013; Eggleton, 2012; Warlenius, 2017). One of the main causes is represented by the humankind industrial and social activities that have led to a change in the atmosphere’s composition by adding a huge amount of Carbon dioxide (CO2). In the same time, the urban centers become more vulnerable to these effects as a consequence of intense industrialization and expansion (Clémençon, 2016; Eggleton, 2012; Nisbet, 2009).

This study focuses on the empirical case of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, and her international movement against climate change effects, by performing a rhetoric and frame analysis on her public speeches. For reasons related to the limits of this paper, three of Greta Thunberg's public speeches were chosen, respectively the ones she gave during the following international events: the 24th meeting of the United Nations Conference of the Parties (UN COP24) in Poland (Fridays for Future, 2018); the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in the beginning of this year in Switzerland (Fridays for Future, 2019a); and the gathering of the European Union (EU) leaders and Parliament members in Strasbourg (Fridays for Future, 2019b). Greta Thunberg’s school strike and her public speeches gained huge media attention and generated an international reaction: on the 15th of March 2019, 1.6 million students have mobilized in a global environmental protest that took place in 125 countries (350.org). To better understand and illustrate the high school student’s influence on the public opinion and in media, the study investigates how she framed the environmental problems (Burgess, 1970; Nisbet, 2009; Warlenius, 2017), and how she built her arguments by employing rhetorical devices and persuasive tactics (Braet, 1992; Hample, 2003; Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 1999).
There is a consensus in the literature regarding the fact that the success in actively tackling climate change issues, and providing community support and involvement, relies on the companies' and authorities’ ability to adopt valuable communication strategies (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Climate activism and media framing of the environmental topics play a vital role within this process, giving a chance to non-governmental organizations and different activists to advocate for nature and to make their voices heard on a global level, in an attempt to raise the public’s awareness and to make calls for action (Cox, 2013; Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013).

Recent studies regarding global warming caused by a high level of CO2 and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere signaled that humankind might have less time than previously expected to test varying scenarios. Scientists and environmental activists urged the world leaders to act together for a rapid increase in people’s awareness of the requisite joint effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The exigency regards a 10-year window of time to act, meaning the period to remain until Earth starts to pass through irreversible transformations (The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis [IIASA], 2017; Walsh et al., 2017; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2018). Nevertheless, the real effort cannot reach the required level to fight ecological consequences without public engagement, and many scholars highlighted the importance of communicating clearly and persuasively about the causes, impacts, and possible solutions (Arlt et al., 2018; Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 1999; Nisbet, 2009; Wibeck, 2013). On the international stage, the United Nations climate summits represent the most important events where the challenges and concerns related to the environment are legitimized as issues and brought to the public’s attention. The role of these meetings is to understand and define what measures and actions have to be taken by every country. Concerning the steps and actions to reduce the level of CO2 that has already accumulated in the earth’s atmosphere, the reality shows that solutions are still expected. The most recent signals regarding the importance of this topic, with consistent media coverage, came from different parties, such as environmental activists, celebrities, and various citizens (Leas et al., 2016; Clémençon, 2016).

2. Background
This chapter provides useful information for understanding the current global context in which are presented and debated the climate changes issues, and the position of the world’s
nations and different organizations, but also the scientific community’s stance towards the matters presented in the study. A short review of several official reports and policies on the issue of global warming was made to provide a background for the topics approached in Greta Thunberg’s speeches.

2.1. Paris Agreement and the need for a global action

Three years ago, to face global warming challenges, 197 parties representing the majority of the world’s countries reached common ground by setting the Paris Agreement (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change [UNFCCC], 2015; Bodle, Donat & Duwe, 2016). The main target was “to limit future global average temperature increase to well below 2°C Celsius above pre-industrial levels, but also to pursue efforts to limit the temperature rise even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius” (UNFCCC, 2015, p. 8). The plans and deadlines were left yet at each country’s will and the choice because the treaty does not include specific mitigation actions, and relies on voluntary pledges. In a five-year term, all parties have to prepare “nationally determined contributions”, report about the implemented measures and assume their role (Bodle et al., 2016, p. 2). It is important to mention that, with this instrument, the parties abandoned the idea that constituted the foundation of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, respectively to have “an international equitable burden-sharing arrangement to control and reduce carbon emissions based on multilaterally negotiated binding emissions targets”, and, therefore, a clear plan to follow, as Clémençon emphasizes (2016, p. 3). Thus, the nations that produce the most CO2 are exempted from repairing any historical damage they have caused (Clémençon, 2016). The Paris Agreement, as the first universal legal document concerning the biggest environmental issues, brought the majority of nations “into a common cause to undertake ambitious efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects, with enhanced support to assist developing countries to do so” (UNFCCC, 2015, p. 7). Since 2015, 185 states and the European Union, representing more than 88% of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), have ratified the convention, but significant signs of action are still expected (UNFCCC, 2018; Arlt at al., 2018). According to the World Resources Institute (WRI, 2017), the first five countries responsible for most GHG emissions produced at global scale consist of: China (27.51%), United States 14.75%), India (6.41%), Russia (4.86%), and Japan (2.99%). The 28 countries that are part of the European Union together produce 9.33% of the global total level of greenhouse gas (WRI, 2017). The EU member states committed to “the most ambitious climate policy targets among developed countries”, and in October 2014, the EU set an objective to reduce with minimum 40% the GHG
emissions by 2030, compared with 1990 level (Clémençon, 2016, p. 14). Many European countries have adopted national programs to cut down GHG emissions, and implemented the EU policies among are: increased use of renewable energy, as wind, solar, and biomass, and combined heat systems; improved energy efficiency in public sector, industry, and in households; CO2 emissions cutback from cars, especially new models; measures to reduce emissions from landfills and other polluting agents in the manufacturing industry (European Environment Agency, 2016). Among the most advanced member states, which invest in environmental research and development, is Sweden. The country is concerned not only about efficiency, but also about having a fossil-fuel-free vehicle fleet by 2030, and is an innovation leader in the clean energy field using biofuels, electric cars, and carbon capture and storage. (Sweden.se, 2018; OECD, 2014).

Meanwhile, the scientific community has come to an unanimously accepted consensus regarding the causes of the global warming trends over the last century, which are originating in human activity, and negative impacts on the environment (The National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA], 2019; Evans & Timperley, 2018; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). The conclusions are included in the last official document of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018) of the United Nations. The report acknowledges that “scientific evidence for warming of the climate system is unequivocal”, and that the purpose is to present an “objective, scientific view of climate change, its natural, political and economic impacts and risks, and possible response options”, but is not policy-prescriptive (IPCC, 2019). The majority of the leading scientific bodies around the globe endorsed this position by public statements (NASA, 2019).

### 2.2. Why should humans act rapidly against climate change?

During the last three decades, the scientific community and environmental organizations have intensively sought to show that there is indisputable evidence of how biodiversity is affected daily by human exploitation. The effects extend far beyond a warmer climate, with high variations in temperature like becoming drier in some parts of the Earth and wetter in others, mega-storms and floods and contamination or diminution of water and natural resources that make life possible on this planet being affected in different ways (Walsh et al., 2017; McKie, 2017; Eggleton, 2012). Unless the greenhouse gas emissions are acutely reduced, the consequence would be the extinction of a quarter of flora and fauna by the end of this century (McKie, 2017; Morton, 2003; The Pontifical Academy of Science [PAS], 2017). In spite of
this gloomy future, effective policies are either missing, either are not clearly stated and enforced. Scientists warn that the planet will face a global average temperature rise of 2.5° Celsius, thus missing the Paris Agreement target, without substantial negative emissions technologies (Walsh et al., 2017).

Recent articles talk about Hothouse Earth and a 10-year limited time frame to react and rapidly implement effective solutions, like a drastic reduction of fossil fuel consumption (Steffen et al., 2018; Walsh et al., 2017). The Hothouse Earth concept, advanced by a group of scientists, who reviewed previously published theories, describes a foreseeable future in which human activity causes “a much higher global average temperature than any interglacial in the past 1.2 million years and sea levels significantly higher than at any time in the Holocene” (Steffen et al., 2018, p. 8252). Furthermore, the authors inform that even the Paris Agreement target of 1.5° C to 2° C rise in temperature is met, “the risk that a cascade of feedbacks could push the Earth System irreversibly onto a ‘Hothouse Earth’ pathway” (Steffen et al., 2018, p. 8254) cannot be excluded. Hence, they suggest an immediate drawing of more ambitious goals to obtain a “Stabilized Earth” pathway and a concerted action of all nations that must strive for: “decarbonization of the global economy, enhancement of biosphere carbon sinks, behavioral changes, technological innovations, new governance arrangements, and transformed social values” (Steffen et al., 2018, p. 8252).

This bleak scenario is not a new one. Nevertheless, the article drew a lot of attention and its message was taken over in more than 6.200 texts, such as news and science articles but also in social media posts (Altmetric, 2018; Holthaus, 2018; Levenson & Miller, 2018; Saplakoglu, 2018; Sengupta, 2018). The same conclusions are underlined in the latest report of the United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2018, p. 17): “The goal is to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, which may prove nearly impossible unless swift action is taken”. The document explains that the temperature at a global scale already has risen with 1-degree C, and the planet could reach the 1.5° C threshold as early as 2030 (IPCC, 2019). However, it received strong opposition from President Donald Trump’s administration, whom refused to accept the UN’s scientific report and sided with the Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, countries with major interests in the oil and gas industry. The joint effect of the Paris pact and the net gain of scientific clarity on climate issues determined a lot of countries to shift and redirect their strategies striving to reduce carbon footprints. In the same time, investments in Solar and wind energy have
advanced more rapidly (Sengupta, 2018). After COP24 meeting in Poland, the EU’s representatives promised to allocate 1.3 trillion dollars to the cause over the next seven years. Some European media outlets attributed the result to Greta Thunberg’s climate movement and following the reactions that her speech stirred among the delegates and viewers (Jerome, 2019). However, the amount of funds required for the developing countries to implement the UN climate pledges, until 2030, rises to 3.5 trillion dollars according to a financial report released by Carbon Brief (Yeo, 2015).

2.3. Greta Thunberg: “I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic.”

The climate change protests on the 15th of March 2019, recorded in more than 125 countries, were considered to represent the most powerful movement towards change and call for action against global warming (350.org, 2019). It started with a few school strikes in Sweden, Belgium, and Switzerland, but the spark came last summer following Greta Thunberg’s initiative. The 15-year-old student skipped school and took part in the demonstrations for climate change outside the parliament building in Stockholm. In less than eight months, what seemed to be a minor attempt to add stress on the matter, became a large movement that spread in over 300 cities across continents, being supported by more than 1.6 million young protesters (350.org, 2019; Carrington, 2019; Dash, 2019; Figures 1, 2, 3, & 15; Watts, 2019).

![Figure 2. Global protest of young students against climate change (350.org, 2019, March 15)](image)

During the media interviews, Greta Thunberg stated that she was so concerned about the global warming effects on people and animals, and about the ecological damages she heard about, that she began to make research. She tried to understand the facts exposed by the
media and scientists for 6 years. Greta questioned society’s lack of reaction and scarce interest in the matter (Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019). She even felt too small to make a point, struggling with Asperger’s syndrome and facing difficulties in developing social relations. Last summer Greta decided to act. She was inspired by American students from Parkland high school who demonstrated against the United States (US) gun laws, following the massacre on their campus in Florida.

The decisive moment came after a record heatwave in Northern Europe and forest fires in Sweden. Starting August 20th and for two weeks in a row, Greta Thunberg protested in front of the Swedish Parliament house with a hand-painted banner in Swedish, which read: “Skolstrejk för klimatet”, translated as “School strike for climate” (Watts, 2019; Schreuer, Peltier & Schuetze, 2019; Figures 1 & 3). Seven months later, Greta was seen as a “climate change warrior” and “a model of determination, inspiration and positive action” by The Guardian (Watts, 2019). The New York Times portrayed her as a “modern-day Cassandra for the age of climate change” who succeeded by “her solitary act of civil disobedience” to become “something of a global commodity” (Sengupta, 2019).

![Figure 3. Thunberg on strike last August (The Guardian, 2019)](image)

Every day up until the Swedish national elections, the teenager, with a serious and distinctive look, could be seen in the street, in spite of some politicians and businessmen telling her to go back to school (Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019; Steafel, FitzPatrick & Hope, 2019; Woods, 2019). Greta’s visibility increased after she gave a speech at a People’s Climate March rally, and encouraged the crowds to film the message with their phones, and spread it on social networks. Since then, Greta protests every Friday, and she has become a catalyst of the
movement called “Fridays for the Future”, which was joined by thousands of students across the world. In December 2018, Greta was invited to speak in front of 23,000 delegates and world leaders at the United Nations climate change talks in Katowice, and earlier this year at the World Economic Forum in Davos. Her determination and actions, and her powerful and well-articulated speeches gained huge media attention and inspired children, teenagers, and adults worldwide to stand up and fight against climate change (Carrington, 2019; Dash, 2019; Rice & Stanglin, 2019; Watts, 2019). She called on leaders to implement realistic policies, and the society to take immediate actions: “I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.” (Fridays for Future, 2019a; Rankin, 2019). The same message was brought in April 2019, at the European Parliament meeting in Strasbourg, in front of the MEPs and EU leaders, where the young activist had an emotional oratorical performance. At the end of her speech, Greta urged the leaders not to waste time with Brexit, and to “start panicking about climate change” and to take realistic measures against it (Fridays for Future, 2019b; Rankin, 2019).

This spring, Greta was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by three Norwegian lawmakers (Watts, 2019). Currently, the youngest Nobel laureate is a Pakistani girl named Malala Yousafzai. It was awarded to her 5 years ago, when she was 17 years old, for her efforts to defend human rights and women’s education (The Nobel Prize, 2019). The youth’s power and importance are well-accounted by international organizations, as this category represents a fifth of the world’s population, and defined as young people between 15 and 25 years of age, according to the United Nations. This generation will be made accountable for future decisions and visions on every societal level. Their voice cannot be ignored, or at least not easily: “Young people are vital stakeholders in conflict and in peace-building, and can be agents of change and provide a foundation for rebuilding lives and communities, contributing to a more just and peaceful society” (UN, 2013). Despite that, their influence in the political sphere is weak, because the youth as a category of the population is misrepresented in formal political institutions and processes, such as Parliaments, political parties, and public administrations, or elections. There are a few people under the age of 35 who are found in formal political leadership positions, and in one-third of the countries, the eligibility for the national parliament starts at 25 years of age or higher (UN, 2013).

For a better understanding of the climate issues and latest challenges, the research takes into account several international reports on the risks and consequences of global warming and
movement against climate change, which are referred to in Greta Thunberg’s speeches and in the online articles, and which are able to provide background information, among are: the Paris Agreement document (UNFCCC, 2015); “The Paris Agreement: Analysis, Assessment and Outlook”, a report organized for COP21 meeting (Bodle et al., 2016); the essay “Trajectories of the Earth System in the Anthropocene” (Steffen et al., 2018); the study “Next ten years critical for achieving climate change goals”, which was produced by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA, 2017); the study “What lies beneath. The scientific understatement of climate crisis” (Spratt & Dunlop, 2017); the report of IPCC (2018) on “Global warming of 1.5°C” and the forecasted impacts on a global scale.

3. Aim, purpose and research questions
The overall aim of this thesis is to understand the nature of Greta Thunberg’s activism and what rhetorical devices are employed to gain public and media attention. Therefore, the study focuses on the analysis of Greta Thunberg’s rhetoric, and how the environmental issues are framed in her public speeches. The following research questions are addressed:

1. How are the environmental issues framed in Greta Thunberg’s public speeches?
2. How is the rhetoric constructed, and what social-symbolic perspective of the nature is presented within Greta Thunberg’s speeches?
   The study investigates the rhetorical elements that compose Greta’s speeches and observes the language choices for presenting how climate problems affect humankind. The social-symbolic construction of nature results from a person’s ability to establish that some environmental topics and facts are characterized as problems, and in this way, they become relevant for communication (Cox, 2013).
3. What are the rhetorical elements in Greta Thunberg’s speeches that contributed to her success in conveying her ideas to audiences?
   The construction of the text is observed and analyzed based on the rhetorical devices and argumentative tactics described in Chapters 5 and 6.

4. Literature review
The study comprises an analysis of 31 peer-reviewed articles regarding environmental communication and activism, rhetorical analysis, and framing of climate change issues. Considering the wide coverage of the subject activism, and the recent developments of environmental communication, the academic work from the last three decades related to the thesis aims was selected. The research for the literature review that constitutes the basis for
the current study was conducted by using Jönköping University library’s official webpage Primo, and the Scopus database for retrieving specialized journals on the topic of interest, and by using different combinations of keywords: climate change, environmental crisis, rhetoric analysis, argumentative techniques, climate and youth activism, and issue framing.

4.1. Communicating about climate change
The environmental communication studies focus on communication and human interactions, in relation with the climate, but they are not limited to those because they cross other scientific areas, such as sociology, and frequently intersects with mass-communication, science and risk communication, and journalism studies (Comfort & Park, 2018; Cox, 2013; Milstein, 2009). Environmentalism turned into a global concern in the middle of the 20th century, after a series of big environmental disasters, like the California Oil spill in 1968, and due to numerous debates regarding global nuclear proliferation (Comfort & Park, 2018).

There were two historical events that marked the beginning of the modern environmentalism: the UNESCO Biosphere Conference in 1968, held in Paris as the first intergovernmental meeting on environment and development, which was attended by 60 nations; and the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), in 1972, held in Stockholm, which gathered more than 100 countries. The result was the Stockholm Declaration, an intergovernmental statement asserting “commitments to issues of pollution, natural resource and wildlife protection, and sustainable development for both wealthy and poor nations” (Comfort & Park, 2018, p. 862). Thus, it was acknowledged that the modern approach considered the human-environment relationship as one that affects regular people.

Social scientists became more interested in investigating the communication processes, due to the vast area of environmental issues, the complexity of the topics, and the broad impact on a political, social, and economic level. The first working group was established in 1988, respectively the International Association for Media and Communication Research. An independent status was gained by this field much later, starting in 2007 with the publishing of the first specific journal, Environmental Communication, and with the founding of the International Environmental Communication Association in 2011 (Comfort & Park, 2018; Cox, 2013). Starting from the existing social theories and investigating the human-nature relations, researchers explored an entire range of connections and frameworks, which helped their studies and enriched the environmental communication field. Consequently, the environmental communication theory draws from different conceptualizations that regard
culture, media, rhetoric, pop-culture, social movement, and other areas (Milstein, 2009). Besides, many scholars focused on not only creating new assumptions to examine and understand these connections, but also to improve them.

Mass media play a critical role in framing the specific issues, and first environmental communication articles were focused more on journalistic aspects (Bailey, Giangola & Boykoff, 2014; Comfort & Park, 2018; Milstein, 2009; Nisbet, 2009). Hansen & Cox (2015) wrote that both traditional and digital media and other channels of online communication had an essential role in defining ‘the environment’ as a concept and domain, and also in informing audiences about climate issues and the political stance regarding these problems. The efforts to communicate about climate change were oriented to increase the quality of the news coverage, but as studies showed these stories reached a small number of citizens, mostly already informed, or were shaded by other topics since the consequences were not imminent (Nisbet, 2009). On the other hand, since the IPCC started to publish the reports, and highlighted how human behavior causes changes in the Earth’s climate with negative long-term effects, the media has interpreted these messages with different degrees of accuracy and impartiality (Bailey et al., 2014). The journalistic discourse is influenced by many factors, from the sources that deliver the information, to the organization’s interest and the relationship with different stakeholders, including climate activists. At the same time, it is affected by the language used to produce the content. Therefore, it is important to not only observe what content has been framed and how, but also who or what is not being framed or even is being misrepresented because of editorial stance and political spectrum (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013).

Bailey et al. (2014) gave examples about how media frames climate issues: British journalists are more focused on potential solutions for limiting carbon emissions, while in Germany the press insists on tragic scenarios and climate catastrophe by “translating scientific hypotheses into facts” (p. 199). In the US, the journalistic discourse is fragmented due to many communication channels and media outlets, and so the amount of information is overwhelming, but not always unbiased. In Sweden, mediatized content is seen as a “part of a conscious or unconscious effort to maintain demand for collective climate action” (Bailey et al., 2014, p. 199). The most common challenge for journalists is the fact that many environmental phenomena cannot be seen because it takes time for some problems to develop and affect the climate (Cox, 2013; Hansen, 2011).
In the last decade, the studies of environmental communication have evolved and diversified, and there are numerous issues debated today in the media and communications area regarding science, medicine, and health, environment, and risk (Cox, 2013; Hansen, 2011). The scholars who approached the discipline of science communication concentrated on how is developed and formed a relationship between the scientists and various audiences, and they analyzed the public’s ability to understand this information but also the way specialists, as science producers are influenced by culture and society (Comfort & Park, 2018). In regards to climate risk studies, sociologists were interested in observing the threats originating in humankind’s activities, which can be environmental, technological, social, or related to terrorist attacks. The main topics that are debated within this field are connected to terminal crisis scenarios (Comfort & Park, 2018; Cox, 2013). Currently, the world faces an Anthropocene era, which means that the negative climate transformations originate in people’s activity, in massive industrialization, and urbanization, and ways people use technology and interact with the environment (Steffen et al., 2018; Comfort & Park, 2018). Although there is a broader acceptance among the scientists on the fact that nature and climate transformations are caused by human originated activities, the public opinion is segmented. It ranges from the people who accept the scientific consensus and are willing to comply with the environmental policies, to those who reject the global warming scenarios and are reluctant to the majority of calls for change in behavior (Roser-Renouf, Maibach, Leiserowitz, & Zhao, 2014).

Over the years, the communication about climate change effects included various scenarios, which range from conservative and reserved opinions to dark predictions about the world’s end. It is noticed that it was a tendency to miscommunicate or exaggerate the meaning of those types of messages, either by researchers who opposed publicly the ideas or by different media outlets. However, numerous critics made it more difficult for the public to understand and perceive the differences. In his book “Our Final Century”, British Astrophysicist Sir Martin Rees spoke about species extinction, and about the fact that humanity has only a 50% chance to survive the current century, as a direct effect of self-destruction (Morton, 2003). One of the opponents, who rejected the apocalyptic scenography, and the idea that Earth needs to be saved from exploitation, accused the author that this type of content produces unjustified panic and fear, and called it a new form of proletariat (Bruckner, 2013). Nonetheless, 14 years later, the up to date scenario was discussed with the support of
academia in a workshop about Biological Extinction, hosted by the Vatican. The conclusions are that the world can no longer overlook the serious and alarming effects of climate change (McKie, 2017; PAS, 2017). Many other research papers support the same ideas and observe that scientists have underestimated the magnitude of the environmental impact, and the government officials minimized it as well (Spratt & Dunlop, 2017).

Amidst these debates, as well as the numerous tensions accumulated, the protests against the visible effects of climate change have intensified. It represents the reasons why the Swedish activist Greta Thunberg decided to move from research to action, as she affirmed in media interviews and her public speeches (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2, & 3; Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019).

### 4.2. Environmental activism

The activism as a form of manifestation and communication in the name of nature has known an exponential development after 1950, but in terms of global visibility, it became more preeminent after 1980 (Cox, 2013). When it comes to protesting for the protection of nature, the most notable voices in the “green” public sphere belong to citizens, community and environmental groups, but also to scientists, researchers, and specialized media publications. The number of sources that provide free information to the public increased highly since the end of the 1990s, while climate change effects started to produce a lot of media coverage (de Jong et al., 2005; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). Following numerous reports, which showed that scientific evidence of global warming is overwhelming, and the ecological and economic consequences are severe for the planet, the climate change issues came to the public’s attention and concern (Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). A lot of non-governmental organizations and support groups started to tackle the problem of “Carbon footprint” on different levels and used the internet and social media to spread information about the issues, measures, and manifestations to increase public awareness (de Jong et al., 2005; Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). In the last few years, a rise in the power of youth activism can also be seen, as a lot of teenagers have begun to learn about ecological topics and have joined different organizations’ efforts to fight against climate change (Cox, 2013). From a simpler perspective, the term ‘activist’ refers to a certain behavior manifested by an individual to campaign about a social or a political change, and with a definite purpose. Fisher (2016) describes the activist orientation towards climate issues as: “an individual’s developed, relatively stable, yet changeable orientation to engage in various collective, social-political, problem-solving
behaviors spanning a range from low-risk, passive, and institutionalized acts to high-risk, active, and unconventional behaviors” (p. 231). The reason that this movement grows is due to the lack of effective policies and actions from the world leaders and organizations (Fisher, 2016; Ting, 2017).

Another side of the activism is represented by the battle for climate justice, which has roots in the struggles of low-income groups and communities of color during the years of 1970-1980. The activists representing these groups militated for the view of nature as a distinct place from the one where the people lived and worked (Cox, 2013). The term of environmental justice was defined by Cox, (2013) as “the basic right to of all people to be free of poisons and other hazards”, and it refers to a vision of “a democratic inclusion of people and communities in the decisions that affect their health and their well-being” (p. 246), with the purpose to frame global warming concerns as ethical and political issues. Later on, the climate justice gained a clearer and a more influential definition as a result of the effects of humankind activity. According to Warlenius (2017), citing Anne Petermann, this notion meant “the recognition that the historical responsibility for the vast majority of greenhouse gas emissions lies with the industrialized countries of the global north” (p. 132). The notions Global North and Global South refer to the socio-economic and political divide, whereas the countries located in the first part of the globe are considered more developed and more rich; the Global North includes nations who are G8 members, and represent four of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (International Monetary Fund, 2019).

The young generation represents an important force as part of the global movement for climate justice. Most of the teenagers and students proved to be receptive to global concerns, and they hold the great advantage of having wide access to the new digital tools and channels of communication. They can communicate much faster, and to obtain almost instant reactions with no time and geographical boundaries, and also engage in real actions (Carrington, 2019; Crouch, 2018; Watts, 2019). The success of all of the latest social movements is mainly attributed to the fact that people associate themselves more easily with informal and non-institutional manifestations of activism. They are related to grassroots activism, used to express concern and to protest for a cause that the people feel strongly about, and usually to campaign about basic human rights, and the freedom of speech (Cox, 2007; de Jong et al., 2005; Hansen & Cox, 2015). At the same time, the activists’ messages mostly rely on the use of rhetorical elements and tactics for determining the world to turn its eye on environmental
issues and acknowledge the consequences that are already visible and growing (Cox, 2013; Milstein, 2009). From this current research, it is noticed that the international movement that Greta Thunberg has started qualifies as an informal manifestation to support a cause that she believes in, respectively one of global concern, that finds an echo in other people's minds.

4.2.1. Research gap
Youth activism has manifested in multiple ways along throughout history, with it mostly being connected to children’s and teens’ engagement in different educational and social programs, or related to students’ activism, such as fighting to defend different rights, or against injustice, gun control, and violations of different human liberties (de Jong et al., 2005). With respect to youth climate activism, and especially when interconnected with the field of rhetorical analysis, the studies are rather generic and limited. The topics of interest are narrowed down to specific areas, such as media and gender representations, frames of ecological cases, or public engagement and manifestation in social media (Lakoff, 2010; Leas et al., 2016). By comparison, it is assumed that the case of Greta Thunberg’s activism presents several unique features. The differentiation comes from her particular profile and stance, which is quite far from the classic example of a teenager. She is a shy and serious high school student, who suffers from Asperger syndrome, and who is highly concerned about global warming news to the point of a depressive state, according to the media (Sengupta 2019; Watts, 2019). Apart from this, she chose to protest for a cause she truly believes in by standing alone in the street with only a painted piece of cardboard. She declared a school strike for the climate and openly addressed the issues, and talked to politicians. The mass media portrayed her as a “model of determination, inspiration, and positive action” (Watts, 2019), or a “modern-day Cassandra for the age of climate change” who became “something of a global commodity” (Sengupta, 2019). Furthermore, the nature of her activism employs public speaking and powerful rhetoric, with a straightforward approach to issues in front of world leaders. These characteristics helped Greta Thunberg become an international figure, and millions of people found reason in her messages. These aspects together build an interesting profile that will be examined during the current thesis. Last but not least, it must be noticed the major response of the public and Greta’s triumph in mobilizing teenagers all over the world, which gave legitimacy to her initiative. The result of that was that the protests registered on the date of 15th of March 2019 (350.org) were declared as representing the biggest global climate action ever taken (The Guardian, 2019). All these facts constitute sufficient and valid arguments for choosing Greta Thunberg as an
empirical case for this study, in an attempt to bring valuable contributions to the environmental communication area.

5. Theoretical framework
As it is stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research is to analyze the environmental communication and the argumentative techniques within Greta Thunberg’s public speeches, by using a few theoretical conceptualizations from rhetoric and issue framing literature. By conducting the study, it is given the possibility to comprehend the nature of Greta's activism.

5.1. Environmental communication and social-symbolic construction of nature
To perceive the sense and purpose of a speech, a narrative, or a discourse, first of all, it is important to investigate the context in which the text is produced. Robert Cox (2013) defines the environmental communication as a “pragmatic and constitutive vehicle for our understanding of the environment as well as our relationship to the natural world” (p. 19). The pragmatic aspect refers to the fact that it helps to educate, alert, persuade, and find solutions to the problems addressed. The constitutive notion implies that the pragmatic role of the language is embedded in different forms of symbolic action, on a more distinct or subtle level. There is a tight connection between nature, environmental communication, and public sphere (Cox, 2013, p. 21; Figure 4).

![Nature, communication, and the public sphere](Cox, 2013)

*Figure 4. Nature, communication, and the public sphere (Cox, 2013)*
The language and the symbolic meaning of human actions contribute to shaping people’s opinion, to create and produce meaning, and to give purpose. Cox (2013) explains how the discursive construction shapes our views of nature, and that the social-symbolic perspective “focuses on the sources that constitute or construct our perceptions of what we consider to be natural or an environmental problem” (p. 60). The social-symbolic construction of nature results from the human capacity and ability to establish that certain facts or environmental issues are characterized as problems, so they become the subject of communication. Therefore, some scholars regard these situations from a rhetorical perspective and focus on the study of different language choices, and how the nature advocates use them to shape the public opinion (Cox, 2013).

5.2. Framing the climate change

Nisbet (2009) defines framing as a concept met in many social science disciplines, considering frames as “interpretive storylines that set a specific train of thought in motion, communicating why an issue might be a problem, who or what might be responsible for it, and what should be done about it” (p. 15). The author defines eight typologies of frames, which can be frequently met in media content: “social progress; economic development and competitiveness; morality and ethics; scientific and technical uncertainty; Pandora’s box or Frankenstein’s monster”, seen as “runaway science; public accountability and governance; middle way or alternative path; conflict and strategy” (Nisbet, 2009, p. 18).

Regarding environmental communication, it is noticed lately a tendency of many media outlets to overdramatize the effects of climate change by appealing to Pandora’s box or promoting scientific uncertainty. On the other hand, many climate advocates are using public accountability as an additional “call-to-arms on climate change” (Nisbet, 2009, p. 20). In the last years, the public health frame became more visible stressing about the rise of the number of infections, diseases, allergies, heat stroke, and other health problems caused or amplified by climate change, and the journalistic content faced “discursive, interdisciplinary, international, and practical challenges” (Olausson & Berglez, 2014a, p. 261) during the construction process (Hansen, 2011; Nisbet, 2009). The frame, the language, and journalistic ethics play an important role in this process. Media publications have to translate for the public many complex environmental topics, which are often received in a technical language, and this content has to be first filtered and understood by the journalists. Afterward, using the
news criteria, style, and codes, the text is re-constructed and delivered to the audiences (Hansen, 2011; Olausson & Berglez, 2014b). A clear argument to explain why it matters how the environment is framed is offered by Lakoff (2010). He states that frames have different “semantic roles, relations between roles, and relations to other frames” (Lakoff, 2010, p. 71), meaning that people perceive messages through their system of frames, respectively based on individual believes. Furthermore, most of the frames activate the emotional regions of the brain because the normal process of thinking cannot be developed without emotions. Within the area of environmental communication “frames are communicated via language and visual imagery” and “the right language is absolutely necessary for communicating the real crisis”, but all the people have the necessary knowledge or capacity to understand “the real crisis” (Lakoff, 2010, p. 74). However, with the right background and skills, linguistic tools can be cleverly exploited to present reality, how nature was damaged, and what solutions can be implemented to convince the public. Aristotle, cited by Burgess (1970), saw two forms presented as functions of climate rhetoric that help to captivate the public: moral purpose and strategic purpose. They both represent ways to bring the rhetoric in any moral demand system and to use persuasion where the situation requires and is manageable, and achievable (Braet, 1992; Burgess, 1970).

5.3. Rhetorical and argumentative devices
When talking about rhetoric, the discussions go back to Greek and Roman Antiquity, as it is considered the ancient art of using language to persuade the audience. The etymology of the rhetoric comes from the Latin word rhetorice, and the Greek rhetorike techné, which means art of an orator, as art of persuasion, being related with the nouns rhetor, translated as orator, speaker, teacher of rhetoric, and rhesis that means speech (Capps, Page, & House, 1920; Freese, 1926).

Aristotle, a preeminent figure in ancient Greek philosophy, considered that rhetoric has an equal status with philosophy (Braet, 1992; Freese, 1926), as both being accessible to people, and it comprises three steps: invention, by providing arguments to support the discourse or the narrative text topic; arrangement, involving preparation based on logic and choosing the right moment; and style, as the sum of all manifestations for expressing the ideas within the speech. Furthermore, the discourse is conditioned by the ability of the speaker to persuade the audience, and it regards special rhetorical devices, as mentioned in the Greek language: ethos.
- speaker’s personality and ethics; *pathos* – stimulates emotions in an audience; *logos* – appeals to logic and accuracy to provide well-supported arguments for convincing the public (Freese, 1926; Jasinski, 2001). The rhetorical analysis gives the possibility to observe “the faculty of discerning the possible means of persuasion in each particular case” (Freese, 1926, p. 32). Moreover, it gives the opportunity to investigate “the available means of persuasion”, and the production of the message, which involves “the conception, design, and execution of a suasory appeal”, as Aristotle believed, cited by Hample (2003, p. 481); by “suasory appeal” meaning a persuasive attempt to win an argument. Moreover, when observing a speech three things matter: “the sources of proofs”, “the style”, and “the arrangements of the parts of the speech” (Freese, 1926, p. 345).  

On the other hand, the Roman educator and rhetorician Quintilian used a different system: invention, meaning the search for ideas; arrangement, in the sense of organization; expression, as formulating the ideas in an impressive phrasing using style figures; memorization and presentation (Capps et al., 1920). Other studies point up a richer rhetorical tradition and observe Mesopotamian and Egyptian writings, and the art of speech, which existed before the Greeks and give a wider perspective to rhetoric analysis and tools (Lunsford, Wilson, & Eberly, 2009). Nevertheless, when referred to the rhetoric devices, most of the scholars focus on the Aristotelian elements – *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* – as they are considered essential for the composition of an oratorical text, and represent persuasive strategies that make up the rhetorical triangle (Braet, 1992; Figure 5, a; Freese, 1926).

![Diagram of the Rhetorical Triangle](image)

*Figure 5, a.* The rhetorical triangle (Freese, 1926)

In the modern rhetoric, the notions were adapted to represent three dimensions involved in the discursive process: the author, the writer of the text who identifies with the speaker most of the times; the context in which a speech is built and developed; and the audience that is
targeted by the author as defined to be interested or affected by the messages within the text (Jasinski, 2001; Figure 5, b).

Figure 5, b. The rhetorical triangle (Jasinski, 2001)

In the last two decades, researchers focused more on the enlarged scope of the rhetoric, in the sense that language holds not only the power to transmit a message about a certain topic, but it gives ‘voice’ to personal beliefs, and principles, according to the human hypostasis and development, with the emphasis on the liberty of speech (McKerrow, 2010). Lunsford et al. (2009) define the rhetorical theory based on two main strands of thought: the symbolic interactionist rationale and the epistemological rationale. The symbolic interactionist rationale can be summarized according to the following statements: “All persuasive actions are rhetorical. All symbol/language-use is persuasive; therefore, all symbol/language-use is rhetorical” (Lunsford et al., 2009, p. 3). The epistemological rationale is positioned by arguing that “the philosophical criteria used traditionally to separate ‘higher’ ways of knowing, such as ‘science’ (as episteme), from ‘rhetoric’ (as doxa) have been critiqued persuasively” (Lunsford et al., 2009, p. 3). In the contemporary rhetoric, it is established that “everything outside of scientific demonstration and mathematical logic was the province of rhetoric and argumentation” (Lunsford et al., 2009, p. 3), and for supporting an efficient and effective rhetorical activity, it is imperative for the writer to have a broad cultural knowledge.

5.3.1. Ethos, pathos, and logos

The rhetorical devices ethos and pathos are used as tactics to make the language more powerful, and to persuade the reader or the listener, while logos provides the argumentation and clarity of thoughts for supporting the issue brought to public’s attention (Jasinski, 2001; Hample, 2003; McKerrow, 2010; Prasch, 2016). Even if born of philosophy, the contemporary rhetoric has rather a more social character, and focuses on “the manner which
language functions”, and it represents “a unique entity with its internal power to create knowledge” (p. 199), appreciates McKerrow citing Scott (2010).

Ethos – the character or personality of the orator – is the representation of the “ethical proof” for the audience. The key of being successful relies on the individual’s ability to give a speech or a discourse in a manner that has to be both persuasive and credible, and that results “when the audience attributes three qualities to the speaker because of what is said; these virtues are good sense, virtue, and goodwill” (Braet, 1992, p. 311).

For convincing the public, the speaker has to appeal at emotions and to put the listeners into a “a certain frame of mind”, which is the role of pathos, considered by the scholars as representing the “pathetic proof”; the origin of the word being pathe from Greek, which refers to emotions (Braet, 1992, p. 314). Nevertheless, the speaker has to know the context and the public that will be addressed, how the society is organized, on a national and international level, which role belongs to non- and governmental institutions, and which are the responsibilities of its representatives (Hample, 2003). Moreover, the audience has to be capable of being influenced by the speaker, which means the public must have “a certain basic level of attention, and an openness to the speaker or writer’s arguments” (Jasinski, 2001, p. 69).

Logos takes into account the legitimacy of claims within the discourse, or the speech, which is based on the clarity and logic of the argumentation, but also on the way ideas are organized, and if they are built one upon another (Braet, 1992; McKerrow, 2010).

Citing Aristotle, Braet (1992) explains that it is essential for the author to provide “logical proof” through argumentation within the text, “and to answer the questions: What does it prove? What is it for?” (p. 310), and thus add to the discursive language information that supports logic, like facts, statistics, and reasons (Jasinski, 2001). Therefore, argumentation is considered as a complex structure that may need to be planned before the production of the speech and the interaction with the public (Hample, 2003).

There are many different types of rhetorical tools that can be used in texts by the writers or authors of speeches in order to produce and achieve specific effects, some common and often used, and others not so frequently utilized in the texts: alliteration, allusion, amplification, analogy, anaphora, antanagoge, antithesis, appositive, enumeration, epithet, hyperbole,
metaphor, metonymy, parallelism, simile, and so on (Jasinski, 2001; Lunsford et al., 2009). Another observation is that some of these rhetorical tools can be characterized as a figurative language due to usage of certain words, or construction of phrases, that deviate from the general accepted definitions. This non-literal language can embed a more profound meaning or an intensive effect (Lunsford et al., 2009; Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 1999).

In the pathos dimension, an important aspect is posed by the relation between culture, ideology, and moral character that can be noticed in the speech (Balthrop, 1984). These elements can be presented and used as discursive arguments, or they can be identified from the contextual background, either presented in a text, either related to the author’s knowledge and professional profile. Most of the authors and orators appeal to societal moral principles in argumentation and refer to a particular ideology that they embrace (Burgess, 1970; Lakoff, 2010), but highlighting issues or conflicts that concern everyone. Since the climate is a shared perspective by multiple actors that coexist in a definite environment, the issues related to it interest them all, even not in an equal measure (Cox, 2013). An effective and efficient rhetoric can motivate different group of interests to unite and pursue a common goal, that is why argumentative devices as ethos and logos and the way climate issues are framed, exploring the wide universe of pathos, hold a great importance for the environmental communication (Hample, 2003; Lakoff, 2010; Lunsford et al., 2009). In contemporary discussions about rhetoric, the scholars focus on three aspects: the timeline, the cultural domain, and the frame of analysis; all being factors that influence the form and structure of a rhetorical text (Cox, 2013; Lakoff, 2010; Lunsford et al., 2009).

5.4. The argumentative theory and Toulmin’s model
The term argument has diversified interpretations in the literature, and each suggests a different angle to approach the analysis. An eloquent definition is that it represents “the communication process through which the reasons that inform our statements are explored”, consider Underberg & Norton (2018, p. 3).

This study examines the argumentative theory as a way to identify the tactics and strategies used in the construction of Greta Thunberg’s public speeches to win audiences. According to Richardson (2001), who cites Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the theory of argumentation represents “the study of discursive techniques allowing us to induce or deduce or to increase the mind’s adherence to the theses presented for its assent” (p. 144). Thus, it is important to
observe how the text is structured and built to persuade the public. For argumentation techniques analysis, it is applied Stephen Toulmin’s model (Braet, 1992, p. 308; Figure 6; Hample, 2003, p. 467), considered one of the most used for observing how an argumentative speech is constructed (Jasinski, 2001; Underberg & Norton, 2018; Warlenius, 2017). The model unfolds six dimensions of an argument: the claims, data, and warrants, which are the central components; and completed by the backing, when the warrant is justified by data; the qualifier that expresses the power and probability of the claim; and the reservation, which means that there are situations in which the claim cannot be supported (Hample, 2003; Lunsford et al., 2009; Underberg & Norton, 2018; Warlenius, 2017). A skilled orator has a large variety of elements to appeal to within a speech, but not all of them may be effective or suitable “due to the specifics of the given cases” (Hample, 2003, p. 481).

Figure 6. Toulmin’s argumentation model (Hample, 2003)

When constructing a text, the author is concerned about how to build a connection with the targeted audience, so the argumentation techniques are organized according to the strategy of discourse (Jasinski, 2001; Lunsford et al., 2009). When someone expresses disagreement with the present or the past conditions existing in the world, that person makes a claim that is considered a “factual statement”, according to Jasinski (2001, p. 27). The claim becomes valuable or a “claim of value” when it can be proved and sustained with arguments and evidence, and also by the way the language is used to motivate it (Jasinski, 2001, p. 27). Within the context of environmental communication, Cox (2013) underlines that rhetoric offers a powerful perspective and support “to influence public and society’s attitude and behavior through communication, including public debates, protest, advertising, and other models of symbolic action” (p. 63). In the process of communicating about risks, it is
important to define how and what are the chances for the negative factor or event to happen, and usually, it requires quantitative details that appeal mostly to technical science-backed data.

In the empirical case of the current research, Greta Thunberg’s rhetoric about the environment, ecological issues, and climate justice addresses large and heterogeneous publics, from the world leaders, economists, politicians, scientists, authorities and organizations to media and civil society. Greta announces in her speeches what is her intention, respectively to mobilize the government and authority representatives, together with researchers and civil society, under a common goal: to fight rapidly against climate change, with the emphasis on now-action (Fridays for Future, 2018; Fridays for Future, 2019a, 2019b).

6. Methods and material

In order to observe how the Swedish high school student approached the climate crisis problem, and which elements from her speeches appealed to the public and media attention, the study combines qualitative methods of rhetoric and issue framing analysis (Burgess, 1970; Cox, 2013; Lakoff, 2010; Nisbet, 2009; Olausson & Berglez, 2014a). It explores strategies and tools used in rhetoric analysis (Cox, 2013; Hample, 2003; Lunsford et al., 2009; Lunsford & Ruszkiewicz, 1999; Prasch, 2016) to investigate how Greta Thunberg illustrated the climate issues in her public speeches during three major international events, what key elements were used to build the argumentation and how could those support her to shape public opinion (Bailey et al., 2014; Braet, 1992; Cox, 2013; Wibeck, 2013).

6.1. The selection of the young activist’s speeches

Three speeches were selected for the rhetorical and frame analysis given the importance of the events where Greta Thunberg was invited to address publicly, respectively: the 24th global meeting of the UN on climate change talks, held in Katowice, Poland, attended by 23,000 delegates and world leaders (Appendix, Transcript 1; Fridays for Future, 2018); the World Economic Forum that took place in Davos, Switzerland, with 3,000 international participants (Appendix, Transcript 2; Fridays for Future, 2019a); and the meeting of the EU Parliament members at Strasbourg, with over 1,000 participants (Appendix, Transcript 3; Fridays for Future, 2019a). The importance of the events was determined based on their historical significance in the global environmental chronology, and audience participation and reach
Greta Thunberg’s speeches were collected from Fridays for Future’s official page (2018, 2019). The platform is dedicated to the climate strike movement that was initiated by Greta Thunberg in August 2018. It unites members from all over the world, joined under the goal to fight against the climate crisis. Also, it provides the contacts of the protests' organizers from 25 countries. The sample of speeches consist of three audio-video recordings, with a total duration of 21 minutes and 17 seconds, which were initially published on different YouTube channels (Table 1). There are transcripts made after the video recordings for further analysis of the texts, and for operational purposes, they are numbered according to the chronological order of the events: Speech 1, Speech 2, and Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2, & 3). The reason for choosing audio-video recordings is to have complete and unaltered access to Greta’s public speeches. The source is selected based on free online access and full coverage of her public interventions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample of Greta Thunberg’s speeches</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source of the audio-video speeches</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event and location</th>
<th>Speech duration (h/m/s*)</th>
<th>Transcript (word count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greta Thunberg’s speech during the UN COP24 climate talks</td>
<td>Fridays for Future, <a href="http://www.fridaysforfuture.org">www.fridaysforfuture.org</a></td>
<td>2018/12/12</td>
<td>UN COP24, Katowice, Poland</td>
<td>00:03:17</td>
<td>428</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greta Thunberg “Our house is on fire”</td>
<td>Fridays for Future, <a href="http://www.fridaysforfuture.org">www.fridaysforfuture.org</a></td>
<td>2019/01/25</td>
<td>WEF, Davos, Switzerland</td>
<td>00:05:47</td>
<td>717</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Greta Thunberg's emotional speech to EU leaders</td>
<td>Fridays for Future, <a href="http://www.fridaysforfuture.org">www.fridaysforfuture.org</a></td>
<td>2019/04/16</td>
<td>EU Parliament, Strasbourg, France</td>
<td>00:12:13</td>
<td>1.382</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>00:21:17</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.527</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *hours, minutes, seconds

Table 1. Sample of Greta Thunberg’s speeches

In her public speeches, the Swedish teenager highlights important details that are missing from the official policies and documents. She underlines that the Paris Agreement's parties are not determined to assume and take concrete actions for changing people’s behavior, and also to limit and prevent the climate crisis effects (Fridays for Future, 2018; Fridays for Future 2019a, 2019b; Thunberg, 2019). The gaps were illustrated before by many
researchers, analysts, activists, and journalists (Bodle et al., 2016; Harvey, 2018; Rice & Stanglin, 2018; Walsh at al., 2017; Weyler, 2018). However, they did not succeed in stirring the crowds like Greta Thunberg did, or made the world and government leaders to admit that crucial measures must be taken (Carrington, 2019; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019).

6.2. Climate issues framed in Greta Thunberg’s speeches
The frame analysis offers the opportunity to observe what attention has Greta Thunberg given to climate topics, what examples and sources were chosen, how she justifies her choices and plead to win the audience. Based on the argumentative theory, the study investigates the discursive techniques employed by Greta and how those contributed to her rhetoric. On first assessment, it is established that Greta Thunberg’s public speeches are connected with three frames further investigated: the political frame and the economic dimension, which were emphasized during the three events where she spoke, respectively the UN COP24 summit held in December 2018, the WEF and UE Parliament meetings (Fridays for Future, 2019a, 2019b); and the issue frame that highlights the climate change and the environmental crisis, which goes beyond the political game (Cox, 2013; Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013).

Furthermore, it is performed a framing analysis based on environmental communication, rhetoric and argumentative theories, including Stephen Toulmin’s model, to discover how the Swedish activist has presented the environmental problems and has motivated her initiative (Cox, 2013; Hample, 2003; Warlenius, 2017). During the research, several discursive challenges and techniques are investigated within Greta’s public speeches (Olausson & Berglez, 2014b; Richardson, 2001) to understand how she relates to the audience.

6.3. Connections between language and message in the social context
The methods imply rhetoric analysis, with a closer look at the elements that compose Greta Thunberg’s public speeches and get through audiences. Each of the three speeches, selected as part of the empirical case, are investigated by taking into account the rhetorical devices – ethos, pathos, and logos – and the argumentative tactics that Greta used to make the language more powerful and memorable and to win the public.

6.3.1. Rhetorical tools and persuasion techniques
There are dozens of terms that are part of the rhetorical devices, and which can help an orator to make and deliver an impressive, powerful, and emotional speech. The current study
focuses only on a few tools that are identified as most used in the Swedish activist’s public speeches, and which are significant and relevant for the issues framed within:

1. Amplification: by repeating a word or an expression for emphasis, and sometimes the writer appeals to adjectives to highlight the significance of the text;
2. Analogy: explaining one thing in terms of another to underline means in which they are alike; some known analogies are named figures of speech or idioms;
3. Anaphora: repeating a word or a phrase in successive structure to produce rhythm and parallelism;
4. Antanagoge: making a criticism but at the same time offering a compliment to dilute the effect;
5. Enumeration: giving details related to a certain topic for making a point;
6. Metaphor: by making a comparison that correlates two things by stating one is the other; it is one of the most used tools in environmental communication, an example often met in public texts is “Mother Nature”;
7. Simile: by comparing one object to another, using “like” and “as” in contrast with the metaphor that presents the similarity between two entities (Braet, 1992; Cox, 2013; Freese, 1926; Lunsford et al., 2009).

These tools are exploited within the ethos, pathos, and logos dimensions, where persuasion techniques are employed. During her rhetoric, Greta appeals to moral, ethical purpose, and strategic purpose to conveying ideas to audiences, and to convince people to react (Cox, 2013; Jasinski, 2001; Hample, 2003; Warlenius, 2017).

At the same time, the current research considers the social background and beliefs of the young activist, which is depicted by several media publications, as presented in the background, in Chapter 2. The purpose is to find which connections are between the life vision of Greta Thunberg, her language, and her behavior. The relation between language and her personal beliefs gives an important perspective regarding the nature of activism and the aim of the speech and provides useful conclusions about how the public opinion is shaped (Jasinski, 2001; Lunsford et al., 2009; Underberg & Norton, 2018). The qualitative research pays attention to the influences that the social context may have over Greta Thunberg’s actions. By the social context, it is understood that it is referred to as a social arena where micro and macro problems are discussed, including environmental issues and policies. Thus, the discussions are not limited to it because the climate change topics are debated in political
and economic arenas at the same time; and they involve diverse actors, such as authorities, politicians, scientists, analysts, journalists, organizations, companies, opinion leaders, and citizens. During the study, it is observed how the young activist and these actors connect in a broader contextual reality, and how multiple perspectives are created through her speeches.

7. Analysis
The analysis shows how climate issues are formulated as problems while Greta Thunberg employs different rhetorical tools and tactics for creating a persuasive story about the climate, with actors, facts, evidence, and responsibilities, intrigue and tension points, and with short and forceful conclusions. The analytical criteria used within the current thesis are mainly limited to text analysis (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2 & 3) employing framing theory, Aristotle’s rhetoric devices, and the argumentative techniques based on Toulmin’s model.

7.1. Climate crisis stage: actors, issues and calls for action
For understanding the social construction of nature within Greta’s speeches, the study observes the employment of several linguistic terms and their meanings. The Swedish teenager appeals to the environmental communication terminology, by adding notions in different lexical combinations and comparisons, which help her to draw the public’s attention on the issue, but also to set responsibilities and solutions (Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009; Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013; Underberg & Norton, 2018), such as: “crisis”, “climate justice”, “tipping points”, “carbon footprint”, “unspoken sufferings”, “irreversible chain reaction”, “transformational action”, “moral duty”, “sacrificed”, “stealing”, “failing”, “panic”, “to act”, “to vote”, “to unite”, and so on (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2 & 3).

7.1.1. Climate crisis frames
Starting from the acknowledgment that the environment’s protection is a global concern, it is stated that, through her speeches, Greta Thunberg’s target is to address a broad international audience for her cause to be heard. During the UN COP24, the most important international event regarding climate talks, organized under the UNFCCC, the high school student was invited to speak in front of over 23,000 delegates and world leaders (Fridays for Future, 2018). The conference is a political forum, but among the participants are professional representatives of national governments, and it is “subject to the diplomatic processes of negotiation, trade-offs, and deals” (Spratt & Dunlop, 2017, p. 21). It was the first major political event for the Swedish teenager, with a vast and relevant audience, on-site and online.
The topic is framed clearly and definitively in Speech 1. Greta Thunberg announces who she is, what organization she represents, and who she addresses to, respectively who are actors and their roles. She declares her position from the beginning, and the context she is acting in: “I speak on behalf of Climate Justice Now”, the entity mentioned being a global coalition of networks and organizations campaigning for climate justice, founded in 2007 at the UNFCCC meeting (Climate Justice Now, 2019). In her rhetorical statement, the Swedish teenager uses the personal pronouns “you” for defining an audience, mainly represented by the participants standing in front of her, respectively the people empowered to make the decisions, and on the other side being “us, children”, thus emphasizing on her status and the social group she belongs to.

After the brief introduction, Greta goes straight to the subject. The issue is placed in the economic arena by naming whose interested in making huge profits no matter the costs. The responsibility for this scenario is attributed to nations’ leaders (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013). The gravity of the topic is highlighted by using the environmental communication terminology such as “climate justice”, “greenhouse gases”, “fossil fuels”, “biosphere, supported by the extensive use of nouns, verbs, epithets with particular connotations that help the Swedish high school student to define the size of the activity, or the phenomenon: “crisis”, “emergency break”, “disaster”, “bad ideas”, “sacrificed”, “stealing”, or etc. (Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2013; Underberg & Norton, 2018). The repetition of the personal pronoun “you” aims to draw attention to targeted public, as the receiver of the message, and to amplify the roles of the ones addressed in the facts exposed (Hample, 2003).

“You only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular. You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake. You are not mature enough to tell it like is. Even that burden you leave to us, children. Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money. Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury.” - Extras from Transcript 1 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the UN COP24 climate talks (Appendix)
Then, it is made the switch from the ones responsible for the decisions - “you”, to the ones affected by them, by issue framing the climate change as a public concern - “our civilization” and “our biosphere”, and using the verb “sacrificed” to announce the effect, but also the reason she addresses the problem. The complexity of the issue is emphasized by the repetitive use of the term “crisis”, also implying seriousness and gravity. The cause is indirectly revealed when Greta Thunberg talks about the emergency of keeping “the fossil fuels in the ground”, being pointed out as a cause for pollution. At the same time, she assesses the responsibility of finding solutions to the crisis to all the people, emphasizing it with the repetition of the personal pronoun “we”:

“We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground, and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find, maybe we should change the system itself. “

- Extras from Transcript 1 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the UN COP24 climate talks (Appendix)

In the texts of Speech 2 and Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcripts 2 & 3), while Greta Thunberg addresses the WEF and EU Parliament participants, the framing of environmental problems starts to be well-argued and the dimension of climate crisis clearly defined, by appealing to specific notions, and different lexical choices and combinations: “climate change”, “tipping points”, “feedback loops”, “Arctic permafrost”, “greenhouse gases”, “carbon budget”, “carbon footprint”, “ecological breakdown”, “disaster”, “on fire”, “unprecedented changes”, “unspoken sufferings”, “catastrophes”, “panic”. The blame is attributed directly by using verbs with strong connotation at present continuous tense: “you are stealing”, and “failing”, or “is falling”, which define an action that is still taking place. This time, Greta names the sources of the crisis, and the ones responsible for it, and she attributes the blame directly and clearly: “the bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty” (Appendix, Transcripts 2).

Another observation is that the speeches are longer (Appendix, Transcripts 2 & 3), and the manner she is exposing the arguments is more confident, and her position much stronger. The confidence can also be explained by the fact that her motivation appears to be stronger based on the public’s feedback (Jasinski, 2001).
Furthermore, the climate change causes are detailed and supported by concrete examples, scientific data, and official documents as sources for her claims. At the same time, the discursive tone is more firm, determined, and sharp.

“According to the IPCC, we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes. In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%. And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris Agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points, or feedback loops, like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost.” - *Extras from Transcript 2 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the WEF (Appendix)*

### 7.1.2. Human crisis framing: “the end of our civilization”

As the rhetoric of Greta’s public speeches evolves, it is noticed that the frame of the climate crisis is connected with the human crisis, as she addresses everyone and includes them in the scenario she depicts. Greta appeals to scientific arguments, by using specialized terms and data, which give her the possibility to illustrate several climate risks (Cox, 2013). She categorizes the hazard and the human exposure to these risks as being very high to unacceptable: “the end” of the civilizations. The message is constructed to send a clear warning and aims to shape the public’s opinion: “We are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes” (Appendix, Transcript 2). Also, in Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcript 3), the dark scenario is described by using rational unit durations to build the frame for a future that the public can relate to, and that is a probable reality unless multi-level actions are initiated:

“Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days, and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where it will be a set of a chain reaction that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization, as we know it.” - *Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)*

The gloomy vision is amplified by motivating that the desired solution is also difficult to find, and there is no middle way to avoid the climate crisis, being framed in this part as a terminal crisis for humanity:
“Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced. You say nothing in life is black or white, but that is a lie, a very dangerous lie. Either we prevent 1.5 C degree of warming, or we don’t. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction beyond human control, or we don’t. Either we choose to go on as a civilization, or we don’t. That is as black or white as it gets.” - Extras from Transcript 2 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the WEF (Appendix)

The imminent reality of terminal crisis is accentuated by using terms like “mass extinction”, data and numeric comparisons, accompanied by adverbs of frequency — “up to 2,000 species becoming extinct every single day” (Appendix, Transcript 3), and enumerating several ecological damages, which adds more drama to the speech, and amplify the effect. The audience gets an accurate vision of the immediate future of the humankind.

“We are in the mid of the 6th mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to ten thousand times faster than what it is considered normal, with up to 2,000 species becoming extinct every single day. Erosion of fertile topsoil… deforestation of our great forests, toxic air pollution, loss of insects and wild life, the acidification of our oceans, these are disastrous trends have been accelerated by a way of life that we, here in the financially fortunate part of the world, see it as a way to carry on.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

The linguistic tools and data are used not only to compose a documented argument but, the way issues are framed, the message is created as a story (Lakoff, 2010) to help the public perceive the message and its value more effectively. In the second part of Speech 2 (Appendix, Transcript 2), Greta talks about the responsibility of those whose actions contributed in a direct way to increase air pollution, and she appeals to morality. She calls for prompt action by naming directly the persons who are to be blamed, using the personal pronoun “you”:

“The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.
I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is.” – *Extras from Transcript 2 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the WEF* (Appendix)

The message is repeated even with a more imperative and higher tone in Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcript 3) by using verbs with a negative connotation, and especially “falling” to amplify the effect on the public’s perception over reality, and to make it memorable. Moreover, Greta puts the words “children” and “grandchildren” in the positive construction, in an attempt to access the audience’s affective side (Lakoff, 2010) and create an emotional connection:

“You need to listen to us, we who cannot vote. You need to vote for us, for your children and grandchildren. What we are doing now can soon no longer be undone. [...] I ask you to please wake up and make the changes required possible. To do your best is no longer good enough, we must all do the seemingly possible.” – *Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting* (Appendix)

Using “you” and “we” in the same phrasal design, the teenager is highlighting that even the world leaders are accountable for the decision-making process, the responsibility for the consequences and actions must be shared. The moral register, where she frames the obligations of those considered responsible for harming the environment, is evoked by using verbs that paint the negative side, such as “stealing”, “failing”, “arguing”, “falling”, “tumbling down”, “affected”, and verbs like “to listen”, “to unite”, “to vote”, “to collaborate”, “to act”, “to shape”, “want”, “ask”, “beg” for creating a positive perspective. At the same time, these frames show that Greta is playing a role on the public stage, as the defender of nature, or as media described her a “climate warrior” (Watts, 2019). She sends clear messages to politicians, businessmen, and other parties empowered to find solutions to the environmental crisis (Hample, 2003; Hansen & Cox, 2015).

7.2. **Rhetoric construction and social-symbolic perspective**

Analyzing Greta Thunberg’s rhetoric, it is noticed that she appeals to the language functions to make a fast connection between nature and public, by framing the climate issues in tight relation with people’s existence. Furthermore, the study focuses on rhetorical devices to
examine how they contributed to building the social-symbolic perspective of the environment for her audience.

### 7.2.1. Ethos

In the rhetoric construction of environmental communication, the link between the author and audiences is based on multiple concepts that refer to culture, ideology, social structure, profession, morality, and life values. The author, identified as the speaker, has to take into account the social context and to try to connect with the audience’s values, interests, and motivations (Braet, 1992; Freese, 1926; Milstein, 2009).

In the empirical case studied, it is observed that Greta’s social status is placed outside the economic or political arenas. She is presented as a young citizen, a high school student from Sweden preoccupied with global climate issues. Concerning the particularities of her life and personality and Greta’s beliefs, there is a piece of specific information about the 16-year old girl that must be known. From the media interviews she had, the public found out that Greta suffers from Asperger’s, a condition that gives her quite a different perspective over life and facts. Her perception is more serious, and somehow a “special” one, as she felt more affected by the climate news than other teenagers, a position that made her social relations difficult (Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019). The Swedish activist told The Guardian (Figure 7; Watts, 2019) that she was in an advanced stage of depression after learning in school about the tragic effects of climate change:

> “Some people can just let things go, but I can’t, especially if there’s something that worries me or makes me sad. I remember when I was younger, and in school, our teachers showed us films of plastic in the ocean, starving polar bears and so on. I cried through all the movies. My classmates were concerned when they watched the film, but when it stopped, they started thinking about other things. I couldn’t do that. Those pictures were stuck in my head.” (Watts, 2019, March 11)
She started to read and document the environmental issues, and while she struggled to understand them and the reasons adults remained indifferent to consequences, she tried to make her parents aware of the gravity of the facts discovered.

“...after a while, they started listening to what I actually said. That’s when I kind of realized I could make a difference. And how I got out of that depression was that I thought: it is just a waste of time feeling this way because I can do so much good with my life. I am trying to do that still now.” (Watts, 2019, March 11)

In a short time, she convinced her parents to adopt sustainable habits: her father Svante Thunberg became a vegetarian, and her mother Malena Ernman, a famous Swedish opera singer, gave up flying, a fact that affected her international career.

“I have always been that girl in the back who doesn’t say anything. I thought I couldn’t make a difference because I was too small.” (Watts, 2019, March 11)

Greta found inspiration to act, according to her new-formed beliefs, in the history of Rosa Parks, the famous American activist who fought for civil rights and against racial segregation. Additionally, she felt encouraged and found motivation (Jasinski, 2001) when
she read about the protests against US gun laws initiated by the Parkland school students (Watts, 2019). Therefore, it is presumed that the Swedish teenager acted on a system of beliefs and principles basis that was built time through family and school education, self-learning, and filtering the information according to the societal values and moral norms. To the same extent, her decisions were made based on her mindset and personality features. Thus, Greta's value system and beliefs can be considered a start point that allowed her to find common ground to connect with the public (Balthrop, 1984).

Her strike in front of the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm for two weeks in a row received soon media attention, the cartoon message “Skolstrejk för klimatet” – “School strike for climate” – being taken over by thousands of teens and translated in multiple languages (Figure 2; Schreuer et al., 2019; The Guardian, 2019; Watts, 2019). Greta’s popularity increased as she started to give voice to her protest, and her candid and straightforward speeches gained not only the students’ attention but also the support and sympathy from adults, such as opinion leaders, vary organizations’ representatives and environmental NGOs, and even from politicians (Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019).

7.2.2. Logos and pathos
Perhaps, the most important rhetorical tools are the ones exploited within the dimension of the logos. These have a significant contribution to the effectiveness of the speech, if skillfully operated. Additionally, in this section, the pathos appeals are investigated; these tactics are considered to work very well with those from the logos sphere. Usually, all three rhetorical devices are combined all the time in a speech as they work well together as modes of persuasion (Freese, 1926; Jasinski, 2001).

The logic of the arguments presented, proving a good command of the linguistic tools and their role within a phrase, and the ability to provide discursive clarity are essential qualities for an orator. Simultaneously, it must be acknowledged the author’s social status - Greta is a high school student, not a consecrated speaker; and the context she acted within - she initiated a protest based on her own will, beliefs, and concerns. Since she spoke on behalf of the Climate Justice Now, and she was introduced in the public agenda of the most important events related to global climate debates, it is presumed that she must have benefited of professional support in this regard, though it is not known to what extent (Fridays for Future, 2018; Fridays for Future, 2019a, 2019b).
For illustrating the meaning of the rhetorical devices employed, the analysis follows the next structure: the typology and role or the linguistic utility of the terms, and their importance in a phrasal construction. Comparing all three texts, the first observation is that the figurative style is predominant in Speech 1, and the other two are more argumentative. The second observation is that the author explored the pathos tactics in the third speech (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2, & 3). Thirdly, in all three texts are frequently used the following literary tools: analogies; amplifications and metaphors, with highly use of epithets to describe better the notions that are presented; parallelism; antanagoge; enumerations; and repetitions such as anaphora, and negative-positive restatement for increasing the effect of the messages on the public’s perception, and to make the speeches more memorable (Hample, 2003; Jasinski, 2001).

A. Speech 1

The figurative style is well-illustrated by the two analogies utilized in the first paragraph of the text (Appendix, Transcript 1) with the purpose to prove better the point (Jasinski, 2001): “you are never too small to make a difference”, meaning that not a person’s physical characteristic are important, but rather the beliefs and actions, when Greta Thunberg referred to the fact that people view Sweden as a “small country”, and the phrase that was taken over extensively by the traditional and online media; and she continued with “if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school, then imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to”, suggesting that people hold a great power when they are united and act together for a common purpose. The metaphors identified in the text give Greta Thunberg enough material to paint the realities and the importance given to the climate change issues in the current global context: “green eternal economic growth”, by comparison she makes an ironic reference to the leaders’ interest as not in the “green” nature but in the “green” profit; and with the construction “the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency break”, as an obvious measure to be taken, Greta asks that the damage over the environment to be stopped and managed (Nerlich & Koteyko, 2009). The persuasive strategy (Hample, 2003) is supported also by using two “negative-positive restatement for increasing the effect of the messages on the public’s perception: “You are not mature enough to tell it like is. Even that burden you leave to your children”; “You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes”, which put the responsibility of those empowered in the moral setting (Appendix, Transcript 1).
B. Speech 2

In the second text examined (Appendix, Transcript 2), the rhetorical tools are used with high frequency. The climate issues are framed by Greta Thunberg with powerful metaphor “our house is on fire”, amplified by repeating the phrase in different parts of the speech (Braet, 1992), and also introducing the metaphoric compounds: “carbon footprint” and “carbon budget” (Nerlich, & Koteyko, 2009). Moreover, as it is affirmed in the previous chapter, there are several lexical choices that help placing the rhetoric construction in the area of environmental communication, such as: “climate change”, “tipping points”, “feedback loops”, “Arctic permafrost”, “greenhouse gases”, “carbon budget”, “carbon footprint”, “ecological breakdown” etc. The magnitude of the climate crisis is characterized by nouns and adjectives meant to produce a high impact on public’s opinion, exploring the pathos zone and aiming to create a certain emotional state for the audience: “unprecedented changes”, “unspoken sufferings”, “catastrophes”, “powerful methane”, “disaster”, “complex challenge”. Again, the Swedish activist uses analogies to make her point clear: “At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag”; “Here in Davos – just like everywhere else – everyone is talking about money. It seems money and growth are our only main concerns” (Appendix, Transcript 2). To offer a valid argument for emphasizing on the responsibility hold by the nations and organizations that contributed to the rise of CO2 level in the atmosphere, Greta makes a parallelism (Jasinski, 2001) between a quantifiable action and a conceptual reasoning by using comparable adjectives: “The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty” (Appendix, Transcript 2).

In contrast with the first text (Appendix, Transcript 1), the rhetoric in Speech 2 is supported with references to scientific data included in the IPCC report (2018), forecasting a gloomy future for the life on Earth, and so appealing to ethos support in the linguistic design:

“According to the IPCC, we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes. In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%.” – Extras from Transcript 2 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the WEF (Appendix)
C. Speech 3

In the construction of the third speech (Appendix, Transcript 3), another two figures of style are noted: the simile – “Our civilization is so fragile. It is almost like a castle built in the sand” – usually expressed as an analogy or a comparison, by using “like” or “as” to compare one object with another; and an antanagoge – “The façade is so beautiful but the foundations are far from solid”, “I hope that our foundations are even stronger, but I fear they are not” – that includes in the same sentence both compliment and a critique to lessen the impact and is considered a literary flattery (Jasinski, 2001). Using additional arguments, Greta Thunberg exploits the opportunity to respond to critiques (Steafel et al., 2019): “when your house is on fire, and you want to keep your house from burning to the ground, then that does require some level of panic” (Fridays for Future, 2019a). The argumentation is supported by numeric examples that contribute to the creation of a dramatic image of the future (Lakoff, 2010), as framing the climate change consequences due to the high level of CO2 emissions:

> “Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days, and 10 hours away from now we’ll be in a position where it will be set of a chain reaction that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

Consequently, Greta Thunberg points out to the significant task that all the nations have to fulfill, task highlighted as an obvious and common-sense solution but also as a condition for preserving the life on Earth:

> “That is, unless in that time, permanent and unpresented changes in all aspects of society have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50 per cent. And please note, that these calculations are depending on inventions that have not been yet invented, inventions that are supposed to clear our atmosphere of astronomical amount of CO2.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

Pointing out a credible source is another way of justifying the legitimacy of the arguments presented (Braet, 1992; Jasinski, 2001), and in this case, Greta is pointing out to the official document of IPCC, the body under control of the United Nations, which implies a consensus over the facts:
“These projections are backed-up by scientific facts concluded by all nations through the IPCC. Merely every national scientific body around the world more certainly supports the work and findings of IPCC.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

She continues to describe the gloomy foreseen future, based on scientific sources, and using numeric comparisons, comparable adjectives and words with a negative connotation:

“We are in the mid of the 6th mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to ten thousand times faster than what it is considered normal, with up to 2,000 species becoming extinct every single day. - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

The repetition is again present under negative-positive restatements, and by using the figure of style anaphora at the beginning of successive clauses and inside the text, which makes a parallelism between the situations that are described and gives rhythm to the speech: “If your house was falling apart” and “you wouldn’t”. Thus, the intention is to underline the opposite behavior of the world leaders and media outlets:

“If your house was falling apart, our leaders wouldn’t go on like you do today. You would change almost every part of your behavior, as you do in an emergency. [...] If your house was falling apart, you wouldn’t hold 3 emergency Brexit summits and no emergency summit regarding the breakdown of the climate. You wouldn’t argue about phasing out coal only in 15 or 11 years. [...] If your house was falling apart, the media wouldn’t be writing about anything else. The ongoing climate and ecological crisis will make out all the headlines.”
- Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

To amplify the effect of the speech on the audience and to connect with their emotional side she uses nouns like “extinction”, “catastrophes”, “disaster”, “panic”, “despair”, or the lexical choices “mass extinction”, “ecological breakdown”, “terrible idea”, “unforeseen tipping points”, “enormous sorrow”, and negative verbs in contrast with positive epithets – “erosion” versus “fertile topsoil”, “deforestation” versus “great forests”, which contribute in
emphasizing the size and gravity of the human actions consequences. In this way, the public receives a dramatic visual projection of the future:

“Erosion of fertile topsoil… deforestation of our great forests, toxic air pollution, loss of insects and wild life, the acidification of our oceans, these are disastrous trends have been accelerated by a way of life that we, here in the financially fortunate part of the world, see it as a way to carry on.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

Regarding the style, it is noted that Greta maintains a serious posture and note, a good rhythm, and a logical thread. Based on the fact that a style is defined by linguistic choices, it is observed that the metaphors are cleverly used such as the speech gains perspicuity and is pleasant for the public (Freese, 1926). Her language is specialized and adapted to environmental terminology, an approach that requires the audience to have a minimum level of education and knowledge about climate change to perceive certain notions (Cox, 2013). However, she appeals to lots of descriptions instead of using just the name of the things, and metaphors and analogies help to illustrate better her ideas and the reality that is depicted. The Swedish teenager’s speeches follow also a certain rhythm, well-balanced, underlined also by the appeal to anaphors (Freese, 1926). Considering the arrangements of the arguments, the main ideas are structured in paragraphs, almost equally sized, and follow a certain rhythm that gives consistency to the text. The arguments provided within the speeches follow a rational thread, are well-organized and are delivered with clarity so as the speech to perform its function (Freese, 1926).

There must be mentioned that, during Speech 3, is a short break of rhythm: Greta's emotions have surfaced and her eyes teared, and for a few brief seconds the discourse was disrupted. The public’s reaction was instant and strong manifested through loud applauses. Even this study does not approach the sound or image rhetoric, it is important to explain the disruption in the text and what is the significance. The scene is strong evidence of the immense power of pathos, as a rhetorical device, in gaining the audience’s sympathy. The scene is strong evidence of the immense power that is held by pathos, as a rhetorical device in gaining the audience’s sympathy. Thus, it is assumed that Greta’s success in initiating the global climate movement is based on the artful connection between the Aristotle’s devices – ethos, pathos, and logos (Freese, 1926): a serious and perseverant figure backed by a coherent
environmental message and a clear purpose, which succeeds to relate with the public’s views and beliefs by appealing to common sense and moral duty.

7.3. Claims and arguments

The role of an argument is to present things clearly and without any doubt, whether it is used in a statement or tested in a discussion (Cox, 2013; Richardson, 2001). By applying Toulmin’s model on Greta Thunberg’s public speeches, it can be examined the logic and clarity of the text construction, and also it can be presumed how valuable are the claims presented (Braet, 1992; Cox, 2013; Hample, 2003; Warlenius, 2017). In Speech 1, Greta Thunberg makes two important claims meant to avoid the climate crisis: the nations and people must unite and work together, claim 1; keep the fossil fuels in the ground and focus on equity, claim 2 (Appendix, Transcript 1; Figures 8 & 9).

![Figure 8. Claim 1, Speech 1. Adaptation according to Toulmin’s model (Hample, 2003)](image)

The claims are interconnected to support the main idea advanced, presented as a warrant, respectively saving the planet and securing the people’s future, by finding solutions to the crisis whose existence is unanimously admitted by all the nations. She is backing her statements with two arguments: people need to speak clearly about climate issues, even they do not like it, and if there is no political or economic solution to support the change, then the system must be changed (Figures 8 & 9).
In Speech 2, the Swedish high school student follows two directions through the claims she makes: the decrease of the CO2 emissions with at least 50%, and stop pollution, claim 1; and increasing people’s awareness about the realities of the global warming, claim 2 (Appendix, Transcript 2; Figures 10 & 11).

She supports her affirmations with the next warrants: avoid the disaster and safeguard the future living conditions of humankind, and by the fact that everyone must be responsible for
decision-making (Cox, 2013; Warlenius, 2017). The evidence for backing the claims is taken from the forecasts made by IPCC (2018): only 12 years remain until it will be too late to make a difference; the people are not aware of the gravity of scientific predictions and how the climate change will impact their lives.

Furthermore, Greta emphasizes again that the decision and solutions are in people’s hands, as a backing to the warrants given, and those responsible have a moral duty to act (Cox, 2013; Warlenius, 2017). However, the solutions claimed are not guaranteed entirely, due to impediments like difficulty to estimate how nature will manifest or what will happen on the political stage and how the powers will deal with the situation (Appendix, Transcript 2; Figures 10 & 11).

**Figure 11.** Claim 2, Speech 2. Adaptation according to Toulmin’s model (Hample, 2003)

In Speech 3, the teenager’s claims are more imperative. They sound like directives given to the political and economic actors: “I want you to panic”, and she explains that the leaders need to worry because the situation is a human crisis - “our house is on fire”, and it requires “some level of panic” (Appendix, Transcript 3; Figure 12).
The second claim, built on the first argument, is a stronger call for action (Figure 13, Appendix, Transcript 3) by highlighting the responsibility the “leaders” of the humankind bear. Greta argues using scientific data as evidence and emphasizes on the fact that the information describes a reality already known, and a scenario already exposed in official documents (IPCC, 2018; 2019). She asks for leaders “to start acting accordingly” under the reservation that the situation could be worst since the forecasts are “depending on inventions that have not been made” (Appendix, Transcript 3).
Figure 13. Claim 2, Speech 3. Adaptation according to Toulmin’s model (Hample, 2003)

The warrants presented are undeniable, starting from the point that climate system is a global common and therefore is not a questionable fact, to the precise data presented as evidence about the consequences of the global warming, and about the changes that take place here-and-now: “mid of 6th mass extinction”. Therefore, these warrants (Figure 13) account for historical and moral responsibility (Cox, 2013; Warlenius, 2017). Using additional arguments, Greta Thunberg responds to some previous critiques (Steafel et al., 2019) that she received: “when your house is on fire, and you want to keep your house from burning to the ground, then that does require some level of panic.” (Fridays for Future, 2019a).

In the last part of Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcript 3), Greta Thunberg makes definite calls for attention and action: “you need to listen”, “you need to vote”, “wake up”, “I beg you”, and “do not fail” (Figure 14). The claims are built on a logical criterion and constitute a thread of evidence in her argumentation, like the children’s impossibility to vote or to make decisions based on the society's norms that offer a rational motive why adults are the ones responsible for acting.

Figure 14. Claim 3, Speech 3. Adaptation according to Toulmin’s model (Hample, 2003)
The Swedish teenager appeals to their political and social responsibility by exploiting the moral obligation towards society, their children, and grandchildren, and appeals to their feelings by concluding: “I beg you, do not fail... on this!” (Appendix, Transcript 3; Cox, 2013; Hample, 2003; Warlenius, 2017).

8. Discussions

8.1. Powerful rhetorical elements in Greta Thunberg’s speeches

This thesis focuses foremost on the rhetorical devices - ethos, pathos, and logos - while analyzing the Greta Thunberg’s public speeches, and particular on several language choices, on Toulmin’s argumentation model, but also observing the problematization of the climate change as human crisis within different frames (Braet, 1992; Hample, 2003; Jasinski, 2001; Warlenius, 2017), with the purpose to understand how her activism manifested and grew.

During the public speeches Greta gave to audiences (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2 & 3), it is observed the employment of a skillful oratory. The Swedish high school student draws attention to her concerns by appealing to Aristotle’s triangle - ethos, pathos, and logos - in constructing the connections between people and nature, the past and present of the humankind, and between the cumulus of the global society’s actions and their consequences on the near future. Through these connections, she succeeds in constructing the social-symbolic perspective for the public, a vision that has its roots in symbols of nature, enumerated in Speech 3 (Appendix, Transcript 3; Cox, 2013). Among the most effective and extensively used rhetorical tools to build up the speeches are metaphors, analogies, parallelisms, and anaphoras. Greta builds sentences based on a logical structure, from the introduction of her motives to the phase of building up the case, explaining, and reasoning, and to concluding in the end. The efficiency of her strategy is based on the logical and clear way in which Greta combines scientific examples with stylistic choices. Thus, the image depicting the environment’s destruction symbolizes the end of civilization and life on Earth:

“Erosion of fertile topsoil... deforestation of our great forests, toxic air pollution, loss of insects and wild life, the acidification of our oceans, these are disastrous trends have been accelerated by a way of life that we, here in the financially fortunate part of the world, see it as a way to carry on.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)
By applying Toulmin’s model, it is observed that Greta appealed to scientific data and official sources for the majority of the claims she made, with the emphasis on the consensus that exists about human-induced climate change. One of the best examples of using rational and objective data in linguistic composition, to create a dramatic effect on the audience, can be found in the next phrase:

“We are in the mid of the 6th mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to ten thousand times faster than what it is considered normal, with up to 2,000 species becoming extinct every single day!” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

Another observation is that she constantly compares the negative and positive sides of humankind's reality for constructing nature (Lakoff, 2010), and she highlights how global society contributed to the current situation (Cox, 2013).

“Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days, and 10 hours away from now we’ll be in a position where it will be set of a chain reaction that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it. That is, unless in that time, permanent and unpresented changes in all aspects of society have taken place, including a reduction of our C02 emissions by at least 50 per cent.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

Overviewing the analysis on the argumentative rhetoric that Greta Thunberg performed to justify her activism, the next findings can be drawn up from her claims: climate emergency is a human crisis, as it is already affecting humankind and poses immediate threats to entire life on Earth; the time to make changes and to prevent is short; the tools to provide solutions are limited; the ones responsible for tackling the global warming are not only the big polluters but also the political leaders and society, meaning each individual has to start the change.

**8.2. Moral purpose, main vehicle of the persuasive strategy**

The connection between the strategic and the moral dimensions within Greta’s speeches is emphasized by the way she addresses the problem. Notions like morality – “moral duty “, and climate debt – “climate budget” are becoming claims within the Swedish activist’s discursive
text. Climate debt is noted by Warlenius (2017) as “a component of a larger ecological debt” that is owed by the industrialized nations to the emerging countries and the environment.

At the same time, there are references to the third arena, the political one. Greta Thunberg blames the world’s leaders for their lack of reactions towards the environment and argues that their concerns are more oriented to now-issues like Brexit and making profits, rather than critical climate changes that threaten the very existence of life on Earth. By addressing in different spheres and contexts - the public arena, as including both the social and environmental dimensions, where the majority of the audience is found, and where the effects are more meaningful, political and economic arenas, as representing places dominated by rulers, decision-makers and those responsible for the situation - it is concluded that the issue framing produces multiple meanings and opens a door for other frame processes. Nevertheless, they are all influenced by the moral purpose that is embedded in Greta Thunberg’s speeches (Hample, 2003; Jasinski, 2001).

Toulmin’s model (Hample, 2003) helps to identify how she has used the relation between logic and morality, how the claims were formulated, and how the responsibility for action was placed to find solutions to the climate crisis.

“The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.” - Extras from Transcript 3 of Greta Thunberg’s speech during the EU Parliament meeting (Appendix)

She points out directly to the companies and nations that carried on with their activities regardless of the environmental damage. Greta emphasizes that they are not only responsible but obliged by the “moral duty” to address and reduce the global warming effects. In this approach of the rhetoric, it is observed how the moral purpose serves the strategic purpose, with the final goal to initiate real action (Burgess, 1970). Additionally, the way she uses rhetoric to appeal to moral attributes that need to be assumed by the guilty parties, Greta performs the role of “the moral hero” and stands up for the nature, as a representation on an entity that can’t speak or ask for help but that is endangered and requires support (Hample, 2003; Hansen & Cox, 2015).

The effectiveness of Greta Thunberg’s rhetoric can also be assessed through the feedback that she has received from the biggest media outlets, which published her speeches (Thunberg,
2019). The journalists have framed her observations and discussed the issues both from the environmental and political perspectives. Publications like The Guardian, The Telegraph, and The New York Times and broadcast media, such as the CNN, and the BBC, gave particular attention to the UN climate talks and underlined their failure in achieving a clear goal (Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; The Guardian, 2019; Watts, 2019).

“That mammoth UN climate conference in Poland may have opened with an apocalyptic warning by Sir David Attenborough that, unless we “act now” on global warming, we face “the collapse of our civilizations and the extinction of much of the natural world”. But what followed over the next two weeks, despite the best efforts of the BBC and others to pretend otherwise, was that the 22,000 delegates gathered in Katowice achieved nothing at all.” (Booker, 2018, December 23, para. 2)

The journalists emphasized that as long as the world keeps following its normal pace, without pressure from the “developed nations” to adopt restrictions and a timetable to reduce the CO2 emissions, some other countries, considered as emerging ones, will continue to pollute the atmosphere: “to the point where China and India are now not only the world’s first and third-highest emitters of CO2 but intend, as they made clear in Paris, to carry on building hundreds more coal-fired power stations” (Booker, 2018, para. 8).

8.3. New lessons for activism: from ‘no attention’ to global reputation

Based on de Jong et al. (2005) vision of the social movement power, that comes from the informal and non-institutional activism, such as grassroots activism as the foundation of this type of engagement, it can be argued that Greta Thunberg’s influence on public opinion formed from the very act of protesting alone in the public sphere for something she truly believes in. The next stage was connecting with the public through the issues she addressed and the claims she made: global warming is a proven scientific fact, and climate change is everyone’s concern as it affects humankind; there is a short time to act and find solutions.

Furthermore, by appealing to effective rhetoric about the ecological disaster and the human crisis (Braet, 1992; Hample, 2003; Jasinski, 2001), which allowed her to expose her own story and personality to the world, she gained ample attention and sympathy (Figure 15). Her perseverance and resilience in the boycott of classes and in increasing awareness about the
environment, scientifically backed-up and argued, contributed to gaining public and media attention (Carrington, 2019; Crouch, 2018; Sengupta, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Schreuer et al., 2019; Watts, 2019). Her serious pose and clear and straightforward rhetoric resulted in 1.6 million students from 125 countries answering her calls. The multi-city protest had a big echo at many organizational levels and gained large media coverage. The result forced many governments and world organizations to prioritize climate talks regardless of their political vision and agenda (350.org, 2019; Carrington, 2019; Fridays for Future, 2019a; Watts, 2019).

Looking into the steps she took in her evolution as a climate activist, three types of hypostases are identified and defined for which Greta found herself into: the 15-year old student, who used her right to strike in the public sphere, in August 2018, to manifest her concern and fear about the future of humankind; the young activist, who makes politicians and businessmen accountable for the ecological crisis, and asks the world to pay attention to the dramatic effects caused by global warming, and to act accordingly; the climate warrior (Watts, 2019), a grown-to-be hero who draws out severe directives for the world leaders. Additionally, as a secondary remark, the negative feedback received from various public figures and framed by the media had also a certain contribution to Greta’s fame. When politicians and businessmen who opposed Greta’s actions advised her to go back to school, or criticized her behavior by manipulating her words and images on social media, the public’s attention increased even more (Crouch, 2018; Grant, 2019; Sengupta, 2019; Steafel et al., 2019; Woods, 2019). The reactions came from different directions and showed support on multiple levels: different citizens who reacted to politicians for picking up on children’s right

Figure 15. Becoming Greta [Caption] (Sengupta, 2019, February 18)
to protest, instead of assuming responsibility; journalists from international publications who support Greta’s cause and arguments, and who took the opportunity to ridicule the world leaders for their helplessness and inability to answer Greta’s claims; students and children, but also other protesters, and NGOs representatives who identified their beliefs in the Swedish teenager’s message, and joined her initiative; other opinion leaders, influencers, and politicians who validated her speeches as being truthful, and realistic (350.org, 2019; Carrington, 2019; Sengupta, 2019; Steafel et al., 2019; Watts, 2019). Consequently, it is presumed that by giving voice to the global concern and by connecting with the audiences, Greta Thunberg benefited from a multi-level stage evolution. And, in nearly eight months, she stepped from ‘no attention’ to global reputation.

The international organizations are aware of the youth’s importance and power of influence on the global scene because it is a significant category in the societal structure, even though it is poorly sustained in the political sphere. With wide access to digital communication and media and power and the ability to influence and mobilize masses in real-time, and being a fifth of the world's population (UN, 2013), the youth is a force that cannot be ignored. The way Greta Thunberg exposed the climate issues challenges, by highlighting that there is a high probability for those generations to have no future if the countries and people are not acting now, it offered the strongest motivation any person would need to stand up and speak for the right to preserve life and nature. This goal is also supported by the argument that the young generation has few means to act because the majority is under the voting age. Greta Thunberg points it out several times during the third speech, held in front of the EU’s political leaders: “European elections are coming soon and many like me who are affected most by this crisis, are not allowed to vote. That is why millions of children are taking to the street to draw attention to the climate crisis” (Appendix, Transcript 3; Fridays for Future, 2019a). Thus, she tells straightforward that the biggest responsibly for finding viable solutions belongs to those empowered to do so (Appendix, Transcript 3). Thereby, the young teenager justifies her actions and the global protests as the only form to express their will, by using the only powerful tool they have in the mission to protect the environment: the freedom of speech (de Jong et al., 2005; Fisher, 2016; Ting, 2017).

In the last years, the problematization of global warming has grown in importance given the visible effects and undeniable evidence: extreme weather phenomena with tragic consequences in human and nature existence, pollution effects being accounted by different
non-governmental organizations, protests in different parts of the world for protecting the local climate and claiming politicians to act and offer sustainable solutions. More organizations began to address loudly the consequences and to ask for joint debates to tackle urgent environmental issues. Their efforts were supported by world-renown opinion leaders, celebrities, and by young activists who took the matter in their own hands by protesting in public places and iconic locations, such as forests and museums, or by online advocacy about climate concerns (350.org, 2018; Holthaus, 2018; Weyler, 2018). Also, the media started to consistently address global warming in an attempt to inform and engage the public and put pressure at a political and economic level for setting ambitious and realistic goals (Harvey, 2018; Levenson & Miller, 2018; Sengupta, 2019; Watts, 2019). On top of that, the debates about the climate crisis issue are just about to get more intense with new increased awareness and the undeniable scientific evidence, that is: the environment in which humankind lives is changing, and not for the best.

8.4. Limitations of the study
The research has two main limitations that refer to the size of the paper, and the nature of the content analyzed. The first limitation is the reason why only three speeches were chosen for the analysis, and the selection process is described in Chapter 6. Secondly, the qualitative analysis is limited to the text extracted from Greta Thunberg’s public speeches and by the information found online in media and on official pages of different institutions and organizations quoted in the research. Also, the references concerning the social background of the Swedish student are taken from interviews and media articles and can be a matter of subjective or scarce interpretation.

Due to numerous obligations, Greta Thunberg could not be questioned or interviewed, according to Daniel Donner, from GSCC Network, who represents the young student in media and public relations. The Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC) is an international network of communications professionals in the field of climate and energy (Gsccnetwork.org, 2019). Therefore, it was not possible to obtain insights from Greta Thunberg, to find out a direct view on the way her speeches were constructed, or to what extent she benefited from professional support during her public appearances. Consequently, the discussions and conclusions are related only to the empirical case and media content references, as presented in the thesis chapters.
9. Conclusions

9.1. Conclusions

With the acknowledgment of the study limitations, the value of this research consists of offering a multi-faced interpretation to Greta Thunberg’s case of climate activism while answering the questions addressed. By giving a close look at her initiative, both from the rhetorical perspective and the social-symbolic meaning of her actions, and exploiting different theories and argumentative techniques, this thesis brings additional knowledge to the environmental communication field.

From the analysis and comparison of the transcripts of Greta Thunberg’s public speeches, firstly it is concluded that, acting in the public sphere as a young climate activist made her pass through a transformational process. She evolved from the timid and quiet high school student hypostasis to that what media defined as a ‘climate warrior’, which represents a model of inspiration both for youth and adults.

Another observation is that the process Greta went through also influenced the way she approached the language and explored the argumentative devices. By comparison, the ethos, logos, and pathos dimensions are more largely and confidently exploited in the last two public speeches than in the first one (Appendix, Transcripts 1, 2, & 3). This progress is attributed to the fact that, at first appearance, Greta’s interest was to communicate about the cause she believes in and to be heard. Another reason is that she gained more experience in public speaking, due to the numerous public appearances, and the interviews she gave to media, as a result of her growing fame. Thus, she found more efficient means to use the ethos and pathos devices in her speeches. She added scientific data and rational arguments and used the language stylistic to appeal to audiences' emotional side.

Other than that, it is very probable that she received professional support from the NGOs’ representatives acting in the environmental field, given the feedback and the amplitude of reactions her strike produced and the number of invitations for her to attend events. When contacting Greta Thunberg via e-mail for more insights, a response was received from a GSCC Network member and stated that he supports the young activist in media and third party relations.
On the other hand, the cognitive and self-development process through which the high school student went through cannot be neglected. It is an important part of her journey, and it represents an evolution from the worried teenager stage to that of an outspoken activist. By continuously documenting and learning the topic, the 16-year old student succeeded in standing up for a cause that she believes in. Greta Thunberg managed to provide a coherent and clear message that echoed in the minds and hearts of millions of people and put a higher moral pressure on the world leaders to act related to climate change issues.

Based on the evolution process, a fourth observation relates to the nature of Greta Thunberg’s activism. It evolved from a personal belief, and concern, and it was inspired by historical figures and other stringent realities. Moreover, it is connected with grassroots manifestations, which proved efficient in giving birth to a forceful social movement.

Perhaps, the most important ideas that strike out from her message regarding human crisis are: climate change occurs regardless of the region and place, and affects ecosystems and life on Earth; each country and each individual must take action giving the 10-year window left until the planet will face irreversible changes. Thereby, based on the empirical case of Greta Thunberg, the research purposes are mostly addressed by giving useful insights on youth activism, and how the power of rhetoric manifests within environmental communication.

### 9.2. Recommendations

Considering that Greta Thunberg’s case is an active one, in the sense that is related to ongoing international environmental protests and other social, economic and political events, the first recommendation is to monitor the global climate change phenomenon. Furthermore, the developments can be scrutinized from the youth perspective, as school strikes continue to happen in many cities all over the world, and each has different settings and frames. Also, the problem can be investigated to find out to what extent the strikes employ other social categories, and how the social movement progresses as a collective action.

Secondly, it may be interesting to expand the research over the new features posed by the informal activism from the perspective of the terminal crisis and human crisis, with the focus on how the young generation remakes the activism movement regarding climate issues, and study some of the young activists’ profiles and their influence in shaping the public opinion.
Also, given the development of the global communication and the almost exclusive daily use of the digital media by the public, it will be interesting to analyze the young activists’ blog content and see how she addresses and communicates with the audiences, and to analyze the discursive methods and rhetoric.

Last but not least, and probably one of the most important subjects of study, is to investigate further the Fridays for Future social movement, the outcome of climate strikes and how they impact global policies, and economic and social structures. At the same time, as the process becomes more consistent in terms of policies and regulations, the demand for a change of behavior and concrete results will create the opportunity to observe and evaluate the impact of these changes on a macro and micro-level in tight connection with the environmental dimension.
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Appendix

Transcripts of Greta Thunberg’s public speeches

Transcript 1

Speech 1. Greta Thunberg’s speech during the UN COP24 climate talks, in Katowice, Poland (Fridays for Future, 2018, December 12), [YouTube movie: 03:16 minutes]:

“My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 15 years old. I am from Sweden. I speak on behalf of Climate Justice Now.

Many people say that Sweden is just a small country and it doesn't matter what we do. But I've learned you are never too small to make a difference. And if a few children can get headlines all over the world just by not going to school, then imagine what we could all do together if we really wanted to.

But to do that, we have to speak clearly, no matter how uncomfortable that may be. You only speak of green eternal economic growth because you are too scared of being unpopular. You only talk about moving forward with the same bad ideas that got us into this mess, even when the only sensible thing to do is pull the emergency brake.

You are not mature enough to tell it like is. Even that burden you leave to your children. But I don't care about being popular, I care about climate justice and the living planet.

Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making enormous amounts of money. Our biosphere is being sacrificed so that rich people in countries like mine can live in luxury. It is the sufferings of the many which pay for the luxuries of the few.

The year 2078, I will celebrate my 75th birthday. If I have children maybe they will spend that day with me. Maybe they will ask me about you. Maybe they will ask why you didn't do anything while there still was time to act? You say you love your children above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.
Until you start focusing on what needs to be done rather than what is politically possible there is no hope. We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis. We need to keep the fossil fuels in the ground and we need to focus on equity. And if solutions within the system are so impossible to find than maybe we should change the system itself.

We have not come here to beg world leaders to care. You have ignored us in the past and you will ignore us again. We have run out of excuses and we are running out of time. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not. The real power belongs to the people. Thank you!"

Transcript 2
Speech 2. Greta Thunberg “Our house is on fire”, 2019 World Economic Forum (WEF), in Davos, Switzerland (Fridays for Future, 2019, January 25), [Movie duration: 05:47 minutes]:

“Our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire. According to the IPCC, we are less than 12 years away from not being able to undo our mistakes.

In that time, unprecedented changes in all aspects of society need to have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%. And please note that those numbers do not include the aspect of equity, which is absolutely necessary to make the Paris agreement work on a global scale. Nor does it include tipping points, or feedback loops, like the extremely powerful methane gas released from the thawing Arctic permafrost.

At places like Davos, people like to tell success stories. But their financial success has come with an unthinkable price tag. And on climate change, we have to acknowledge we have failed. All political movements in their present form have done so, and the media has failed to create broad public awareness. But Homo sapiens have not yet failed. Yes, we are failing, but there is still time to turn everything around. We can still fix this. We still have everything in our own hands. But unless we recognize the overall failures of our current systems, we most probably don’t stand a chance.

We are facing a disaster of unspoken sufferings for enormous amounts of people. And now is not the time for speaking politely or focusing on what we can or cannot say. Now is the time
to speak clearly. Solving the climate crisis is the greatest and most complex challenge that Homo sapiens have ever faced.

The main solution, however, is so simple that even a small child can understand it. We have to stop our emissions of greenhouse gases. Either we do that or we don’t. You say nothing in life is black or white, but that is a lie, a very dangerous lie. Either we prevent 1.5 C degree of warming, or we don’t. Either we avoid setting off that irreversible chain reaction beyond human control, or we don’t. Either we choose to go on as a civilization, or we don’t. That is as black or white as it gets.

There are no grey areas when it comes to survival. Now, we all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the future living conditions for future humankind, or we can continue with our business as usual and fail. That is up to you and me.

Some say we should not engage in activism, instead we should leave everything to our politicians and just vote for a change instead. But what do we do when there is no political will? What do we do when the politics needed are nowhere in sight?

Here in Davos – just like everywhere else – everyone is talking about money. It seems money and growth are our only main concerns. And since the climate crisis has never once been treated as a crisis, people are simply not aware of the full consequences on our everyday life.

People are not aware that there is such a thing as a carbon budget, and just how incredibly small that remaining carbon budget is. That needs to change today. No other current challenge can match the importance of establishing a wide, public awareness and understanding of our rapidly disappearing carbon budget, that should and must become our new global currency and the very heart of our future and present economics.

We are at a time in history where everyone with any insight of the climate crisis that threatens our civilization – and the entire biosphere – must speak out in clear language, no matter how uncomfortable and unprofitable that may be. We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.
Adults keep saying: ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope.’ But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if our house is on fire. Because it is!”

**Transcript 3**

**Speech 3. Greta Thunberg’s emotional speech to the EU leaders,** in the EU Parliament, in Strasbourg, France (Fridays for Future, 2019, April 16), [Movie duration: 12:13 minutes]:

“My name is Greta Thunberg. I am 16 years old, I come from Sweden, and I want you to panic. I want you to act as our house is on fire.

I have said these words before and a lot of people have explained why that is a bad idea. A great number of politicians have explained that panic never leads to anything good. And I agree, to panic unless you have to is a terrible idea. But when your house is on fire, and you want to keep your house from burning to the ground, then that does require some level of panic.

Our civilization is so fragile. It is almost like a castle built in the sand. The facade is so beautiful but the foundations are far from solid. We have been cutting so many corners.

Yesterday, the world watched with despair and enormous sorrow how the Notre Dame. Some buildings are more than just some buildings. But the Notre Dame will be rebuilt. I hope that its foundations are strong. I hope that our foundations are even stronger, but I fear they are not.

Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days, and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where it will be a set of a chain reaction that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization, as we know it. That is, unless in that time, permanent and unpresented changes in all aspects of society have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50%. And, please note, that these calculations are depending on inventions that have not been yet invented, inventions that are supposed to clear our atmosphere of astronomical amount of CO2.
Furthermore, these calculations do not include unforeseen tipping points and feedback loops like the extremely powerful methane gas escaping from rapidly flowing artic permafrost. Nor they include all the reluctant warming hidden by air pollution, nor the aspect of equity or climate justice clearly stated throughout the Paris Agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a global scale.

We must also bear in mind that there are just calculations, estimations, that miss that these points of no return might occur sooner or later than that. None can know for sure. We can however be certain that they will occur approximately in these time frames, because these calculations are not opinions or wild guesses. These projections are backed-up by scientific facts concluded by all nations through the IPCC. Merely every national scientific body around the world more certainly supports the work and findings of IPCC.

We are in the mid of the 6th mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to ten thousand times faster than what it is considered normal, with up to 2,000 species becoming extinct every single day.

[02:56 – respiration breaks, Greta Thunberg’s voice is stifled by emotions and tears]

Erosion of fertile topsoil… deforestation of our great forests, toxic air pollution, loss of insects and wild life, the acidification of our oceans, these are disastrous trends have been accelerated by a way of life that we, here in the financially fortunate part of the world, see it as a way to carry on.

[04:52 – 04:57 – loud applauses from the audience]

But hardly anyone knows about these catastrophes or understands how they are just a few symptoms of climate ecological breakdown. And how could they? They haven’t been told or, more importantly, they haven’t been told by the right people and in the right way.

Our house is falling apart and our leaders need to start acting accordingly because at the moment they are not. If your house was falling apart, our leaders wouldn’t go on like you do today. You would change almost every part of your behavior, as you do in an emergency.
If your house was falling apart, you wouldn’t fly around the world in business class talking about how the market will solve everything with clever small solutions to the specific isolated problems. You wouldn’t talk about buying a building away out of the crisis that has been created by “buy and build new things”.

If your house was falling apart, you wouldn’t hold 3 emergency Brexit summits and no emergency summit regarding the breakdown of the climate...

[06:35 – 06:51 – loud applauses from the audience]

You wouldn’t argue about phasing out coal only in 15 or 11 years.

If your house was falling apart, you wouldn’t celebrate that one single nation, like Island, may soon diverse from fossil fuels. You wouldn’t celebrate that Norway has decided to stop drilling for oil outside the scenic resort of Lofoten Island, but will continue to drill for oil everywhere else for decades. It’s 30 years too late for that kind of celebration.

If your house was falling apart, the media wouldn’t be writing about anything else. The ongoing climate and ecological crisis will make out all the headlines.

If your house was falling apart, you wouldn’t say that you have the situation under control and place the future living conditions for all species in the hands of inventions that are yet to be invented. And you would not spend all your time as politicians arguing about taxes or Brexit.

European elections are coming soon and many like me, who are affected most by this crisis, are not allowed to vote. That is why millions of children are taking it to the street to draw attention to the climate crisis.

If the roof of our house truly came tumbling down, surely you would set your differences aside and start cooperating.

[08:10 – 08:21 – loud applauses from the audience]
Well, our house is falling apart and we are rapidly running out of time and yet basically nothing is happening. Everyone and everything has to change so why waste precious time arguing about what and who needs to be changed first? Everyone and everything has to change, but the bigger your platform the bigger the responsibility. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty.

When I tell politicians to act now, the most common answer is that they cannot do anything drastic cause that would be too unpopular among the voters. And they are right of course since the most people aren’t aware of why those changes are required. That is why I keep telling you to unite behind the science, make the best available science the heart of politics and democracy.

The EU elections are coming up soon and many of us who would be affected the most by the crisis, people like me, are not allowed to vote. Nor are we in the position to shape the decisions of business, politics, engineering, media, education or science because the time that takes for us to educate ourselves to do that simply does no longer exists. And that is why millions of children are taking it to the streets, school striking for the climate to create attention for the climate crisis.

You need to listen to us, we who cannot vote. You need to vote for us, for your children and grandchildren. What we are doing now can soon no longer be undone. In these elections you’ll vote for the future living conditions of the humankind. And though the politics needed do not exist today some alternatives are certainly worse than others. And I have read that some parties do not even want me standing here today because they desperately do not want to talk about the climate breakdown.

[10:45 – 11:00 – loud applauses from the audience]

Our house is falling apart, the future as well as what we have achieved in the past is literally in your hands now but it is still not too late to act. It will take a far reach in vision, it will take courage, it will take fears, determination to act now, to lay the foundations where we may not know details on how to shape the ceiling. In other words, it will take cathedral thinking. I ask you to please wake up and make the changes required possible. To do your best is no longer good enough, we must all do the seemingly possible. And it’s ok if you refuse to listen to me.
I am after all just a 16-year-old school girl from Sweden, but you cannot ignore the scientists, or the science, or the millions of school striking children who are striking for the right to a future. I beg you: please, do not fail… on this!”