

Climate Crisis, Youth, and Media: A story analysis of Geo-Doc videos as agents for social transformation

By

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Abstract

The last three decades have witnessed paradigmatic transformations in how youth engage in climate crisis advocacy practices. My thesis offers analysis of the United Nations-endorsed policy advocacy project, The Youth Climate Report (YCR). The project comprises short youth documentaries geo-positioned on a virtual map combined with an annual report submitted to United Nations (UN) Council of parties (COP) negotiations. Inspired by the project as an initiative of “Speaking Youth to Power” (Terry, 2024), my thesis seeks to better understand, celebrate, and contribute to this initiative and more broadly to youth climate crisis documentary multimedia.

Recognizing that climate crisis is in part a storytelling crisis and drawing on selected scholarship in media studies (McLuhan, Williams), youth studies (Hall, Castañeda, Foucault), and climate studies (Callison, Hulme, Solnit), I reflect on ways in which climate crisis and youth are framed and formed in stories bound up with social power relations.

I analysed a sample of YCR Geo-Doc media documentaries—20% of those available, n=130—asking two questions: How do Geo-Doc videos story climate crisis? How do Geo-Doc videos story youth? My comparative analysis reveals four influential climate stories (Impacts, Humans, Resources, and Solutions) entangled with four stories of youth (as Witnesses, as Heroes, Inheritors and as Vulnerable).

My conclusion follows a political stance in which I interrogate these eight stories and alternatives and the extent to which they reproduce pre-existing stories with associated power relations thereby supporting the status quo and/or offer new ways that resist and challenge these. These discussions are more normative, seeking to identify youth climate crisis stories that are often underrepresented but now urgently needed.

I end by imploding the YCR Geo-Doc production genre and offer a series of recommendations for Geo-Doc videos and youth-climate-media and research in a world in crisis.

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Finally, to the young people who created Geo-Doc videos, your work has been a profound source of inspiration. The videos you've authored have fueled my passion and commitment to filmmaking and will do for years to come. Thank you for sharing your activism, creativity, and vision.

Positionality

With desires to acknowledge my positionality, Stuart Hall's words come to mind:

We seek, here to open a dialogue, an investigation on the subject of cultural identity and representation. Of course, the "I" who writes here must also be thought of as, itself, "enunciated." We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture—which is specific (Hall, 1990, p. 259).

I speak with/from particular stories, in particular places, spaces and times. As a graduate student, I acknowledge and reflect on my personal and political privileges — how my cultural baggage impacts, restricts and propels my scholarly work. I am a neurodiverse, white-presenting, middle-class, settler youth from a wealthy country in the Global North, speaking primarily English. I was born in the United Kingdom and moved to Canada before the age of one and have been living as a settler in T'karonto ever since. I am struggling to afford rent in this city¹. My parents are academics at academic institutions that I have been privileged enough to attend. My undergraduate background is in Film Studies, where I focused on documentary film, Indigenous filmmaking, and Soviet montage. This thesis represents my longest foray into Media and Environmental studies, and I recognize from the outset that there is much to learn. I am inspired by youth climate justice movements and embark on this project with goals of celebrating and further contributing to these mobilizations through academic research.

¹ The minimum wage has increased steadily by 5.2 percent to 10.4 percent per year (Government of Canada, 2019), but the housing market has jumped by more than 20 percent year after year (Fox, 2023), and national newspapers calling this growth "unhinged" (Stokes, 2021).

Land Acknowledgment

My research was conducted at York University. York U recognizes that many Indigenous Nations have long standing relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been taken care of by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region

The documentarians and documentaries that feature in this thesis are located around the world, covering 5 continents. I acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and the importance of Land and Treaties, where each of us call home.

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Prologue: An ordinary day, a crumbling planet.

On January 1st, 2024, at 8am Eastern Standard Time, off the corner of Dundas and Lansdowne in Toronto, Ontario, nothing extraordinary transpired. A familiar morning light glinted off the central spire of St. Helen's Parish Church. Just like it does every day. A familiar grey Labradoodle walked by sniffing the 505 Streetcar Stop. Just as it does every day. A familiar traffic light shifted from red to yellow to green and back, with monochromatic cars obeying as always. The world was continuing from where it left off in 2023. The fireworks from the night before now a fading memory, and champagne corks rather disappointingly finding themselves in garbage bins across the city. This is a moment where almost nothing extraordinary happened, and nearly everything was to borrow famous words from Talking Heads *"same as it ever was"*.

And yet everything is also different. Toronto had ticked over before my eyes, as it does every day, but not as it does every year. Last year, we experienced deplorable air quality from spontaneous combusting forests and communities in the West, and this year has so far seen no snow, no chill, and no frost. It was a cool one degree above freezing, on what turned out to be the hottest January 1st on record. The Canadian Broadcasting Center decreed "Where's Winter?" (Ryryk, 2024), while scientists at the Copernicus Climate Change Service dutifully watched daily measurement of atmospheric CO₂ tick upwards, now hovering around 419ppm,² contributing to an Earth-wide 1.48C (average) temperature increase since pre-industrial periods (Copernicus, 2024).³ Everything is the same as it always was, and yet everything is different—sa paradox of living in a climate-changed world.

Peering out of my window, confronted by the absence of snow in one of the northernmost mega-cities in the world, I found myself compelled to post a video online. But alas, before I had a chance to sound my megaphone, masses of videos flickered before me. Some discuss devastating earthquakes in Japan, others report on droughts in Ghana in startling, at times, dispassionate tones and, others 'memeing' about excess of wealth in America. With that, I asked myself—and this is the gargantuan 'ask'—how can I

² To contextualise this number, when James Hansen first presented climate change to the US Senate in 1998, there was only 351 ppm in our atmosphere (Mortillaro, 2023). Notably, 350 ppm became a focus for a large number of climate organisations including 350.org.

³ This was Dangerously close to the 1.5C temperature target set at the Paris climate summit in 2015. It is worth mentioning that the record breaking amount of emissions was aided by the "natural climate phenomenon El Niño." (Carrington & editor, 2024) this year (Carrington, 2024).

possibly contribute to these discussions in meaningful ways? What is left to say when Naomi Klein, Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier, and so many others have it covered? Their voices unequivocally deserve spotlighting much more than mine; they offer far more than anything I might assemble. Why would I say something, when whatever I say will most likely be drowned out and unproductive?

With these thoughts flooding my head, and the only wisdom I have ever known being smiles, frowns and scowls, I have measured my life out with sugar spoons.⁴ It seemed clear that my master's thesis needs to emphasise my youth, climate, media and story. I qualify as a youth (according to the UN age criteria), I self-identify as a climate activist, and I am a storyteller and film-maker. I am of a generation that has grown up with climate and biodiversity meltdowns. I attended climate rallies with my parents in elementary school and was photographed next to a protestor dressed in a polar bear costume, carrying a handwritten sign, "dying for climate change". I joined climate justice activist and advocacy groups while in high school and at York University as an undergraduate and graduate. With my friends, I watched climate videos and contemplated my, our, fading future. In addition to questions of whether I will be able to ever afford a place to live, I ask myself will I be able to breathe clean air, will there be any forests left to visit, will bearable summer temperatures exist, will there ever be a Canadian political party that will take the climate crisis seriously, accepting and responding to Canada's deeply implicated role and responsibilities as a leading contemporary capitalist, colonial, petrostate. To write something that ignores all these points seems to miss something important and necessary: the importance and power of stories of mobilisation, belonging and citizenship.



Consider this story as an invitation not to reconsider and dismiss myself and others' "youthful" experiences and desires, but to embrace their profound importance and significance. Perhaps this story is an affectual gesture of possibilities in revisiting youthhood, seeking out the fleeting beauty of the world in such youth-like terms, instead of starting afresh as an adult (and leaving Plato's cave). I offer this preface, the data interlude, and the epilogue as openings for the empirical qualitative inquiry. I hope they grab attention, provoke feelings and bring forth visceral reactions in ways that familiar thesis introductions, middle and endings might not be equipped to do so.

⁴ Homage to "I have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, I have measured out my life with coffee spoons." T.S. Eliot

Chapter One: Youth-Climate-Media

1.1 Setting up the Thesis

Rebecca Solnit (2023) writes that “every crisis is in part a story telling crisis” (p.1). At its heart, my thesis is an exploration of storytelling, the stories that ‘we’ tell ourselves and others about the climate crisis, the most profound existential emergency that humanity and all other earthly species are currently confronting. Youth are increasingly, it seems, caught up in such monstrous planetary affairs. Reflecting on a series of stories propelled in/by a particular media form, I ask what climate stories and stories of youth these media impel, as well as the more pressing and vexing question: what youth climate crisis stories do ‘we’ now urgently need (and not), where, when, why and how?

My thesis, in this regard, follows a popular line of inquiry—a familiar story—that young people and the media are profoundly important in climate crisis. Recent events underscore these connections and for many, this claim will likely come across as a non-statement. After all, the last three decades have witnessed paradigmatic transformations in how children and youth engage in climate advocacy practices with youth climate media, storytelling, and action attracting world-wide attention and bringing about inspiring and powerful changes.

Thomas King (2003) writes, “the stories we tell are all that we are as people” (p.12). King reminds us of the fundamental importance of stories and in particular those Indigenous stories that have been silenced, lost in shadows of tradition and prejudice. Some stories are encouraged and omnipotent, while others are fragile and erased. Stories, write Charlotte Jones and colleagues (2023), bundle assumptions, ideas, and evidence into cohesive interpretations while distilling messages into a shorthand that others can read, interpret and reproduce. Common storylines can be presumed natural without a second thought, thereby masking underpinning assumptions and overwriting other potential more progressive possibilities. Carefully considering how the reciprocity of narratives, actors, institutions, and societal structures shape our understanding of climate change is crucial for shaping different futures. Stories can empower, diminish, and reproduce traditions and solidify natural orders. Stories enable children, youth and grownups to imagine the climate crisis, to see, to feel, and act in both familiar and radically different ways.

In 2018, I read the story of a young Swedish school pupil’s refusal to attend school. I wasn’t alone. Her story (and associated imagery) captured popular imagination and launched a global movement. Here I

acknowledge Greta Thunberg's brilliance, artistry, and tenacity as well as the narrative appeal of a young (15 year old) female neurodivergent student refusing to attend a school failing to cover climate basics. Today, news media outlets around the world cover Thunberg's brave and sustained resistance. Stories of her activism pulse through news networks capturing global media and popular attention.⁵ In global chaos, Greta remains discursively direct: "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words"; "If you choose to fail us, I say: we will never forgive you" (Thunberg, 2019 cited in Untitled News documentary).⁶ More recently, Greta has refused to attend recent UN Climate Summits, describing COP 28 as "Completely ridiculous" and "another betrayal and a stab in the back" (Greta cited in Turak, 2023, p.1 and Aikman & Holligan, 2024, p.3). Greta excoriates world leaders and their false and fake promises as "blah, blah, blah" adding that "this is all we hear from our so-called leaders. Words that sound great but so far have not led to action. Our hopes and ambitions drown in their empty promises" (Greta cited in Carrington 2021, p.5).

Other high-profile female youth climate activists include Indigenous leader Autumn Peltier, known as *the Water Walker*, who confronted Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the age of 12 (ISU, n.d.), and in 1992, Severn Suzuki (also aged 12) made global news with her infamous UN speech, *Listen to the Children*. Standing upright in front of the seated and sombre UN assembly, she confidently exclaims: "I'm only a child, yet I know we are all part of a family," then continues "I know we are all in this together and should act as one single world toward one single goal" (United Nations & Severn, 2017). Severn has now 'aged out' of the youth demographic and is heading up the David Suzuki foundation.

The high-profile presence of young women activists is a relatively new phenomena and has been collectively labelled as 'Girl Rising,' referring to girls who are mobilising for a world in which girls (and others) can "learn, thrive and rise" (see Rising, 2024, para. 5). These famously include Malala and Kailash Satyarthi who were jointly awarded the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize for their fight for all children to have access to education. Malala is still the youngest recipient of the award, aged 17.⁷

⁵ Most recently during a protest at Hague Netherlands where young protestors blocked a major highway (Highway A12), Greta was arrested twice by Dutch police. An associated BBC news article reports youth activists chanting "We are unstoppable, another world is possible" and Greta is interviewed saying: "we are living in a state of planetary emergency. (...) We must do everything to avoid that crisis and to save human lives". I continue to find these actions powerful and inspiring.

⁶ Here Greta uses 'we' to refer to all youth.

⁷ The juxtaposition of Malala and Kailash's fight for girls to attend school and Greta's school strike (leaving school in protest) is revealing of a North-South politic that warrants closer attention.

The Youth Climate Movement has demonstrably changed climate politics. Well-established environmental organisations such as Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and, more recently, Extinction Rebellion, are joined by vast arrays of youth-led, often women-led, social movements and advocacy groups, including Fridays for Future (F4F), Youth-in-action, and Toronto Climate Justice (and so many more). These mobilizations reach millions of young and older people around the globe.⁸

The challenges that these young activists face in representing and communicating a world-in-crisis cannot be overemphasised. In addition to the colossal magnitude, scale, and scope of this crisis, climate change is an abstract, dispersed, and distant statistical phenomena. Even veteran news reporters struggle to sensationalise climate perils, despite their best efforts. Despite these complications and complexities, young children and youth are continuing to respond with sustained innovation and measured impacts.⁹

Youth have played a key role in shifting climate reporting from dry scientific reports (including Keeling Curves) and traditional news media, to social media mobilised by the Internet and various platforms (Facebook, Twitter [X], TikTok, Instagram, Tumblr and others) and via mobile digital devices, thereby empowering new media and political landscapes, and eschewing traditional lobbying practices. Digital platforms when combined with mobile phones offer new ways of representing, producing, and disseminating climate multimedia, arguably with global outreach to cause lasting changes.

Youth power is, however, fragile and episodic. It has far less purchase in, for example, academic research where youth are still predominantly positioned as the focus-of-study rather than collaborators-in-study (Han & Ahn, 2020, Parry et al., 2022). Psychological and behavioural sciences frequently pin youth to generic developmental trajectories and stages of cognitive, affective, and moral development, whereas biological studies explore children-to-adult physical maturations (see Agin & Karlsson, 2021). Youth in these studies are largely framed as ‘incomplete’ and on a ‘pathway’ to adulthood (see discussions in Jones et al., 2022). Similarly, in the field of climate media research, Barraclough and colleagues (2021) write that familiar academic methods (especially survey techniques) seem to play an active role in creating researcher (adult) and researched (youth) hierarchies. They note that despite 50 per cent of the

⁸ For instance: A youth F4F climate march in 2014 in NYC attracted a staggering 400,000 protestors.

⁹ Important to note, George Monbiot (2023) identifies the media as the industry “most responsible for the destruction of life on Earth”.

global population being under 30 years old, youth are often not included explicitly as actors in environmental social sciences and sustainability-related research (Barraclough et al., 2021).

There is a proliferation of psychological and educational studies of youth that measure their relative absence of climate knowledge and political inexperience (Hoffman, 2015). These add to a familiar youth ‘deficit picture’. In many communication and educational circles, the climate crisis becomes framed as a deficit, a gap in scientific reasoning with an associated plea for children (and others) to better understand science and heed scientific advice (see discussions in Norgaard, 2011). These pleas are often accompanied with a need for improved science communication and better science teaching (Yeo, 2013). On one level this is familiar, but on another level, widely out-of-joint in light of the youth climate movement gains. Given the sustained significance of the youth climate movement contemporary stories of ‘youth development’ and stories of ‘youth climate activism’ seem both wholly incompatible and incongruent in so many ways.



In what follows, I want to celebrate the profound political importance of the youth climate movement and the stories that are told and serve to mobilise this movement. I will also stress that actions, agencies, discourses, and needs of youth are still mostly narrated by adults. Incidentally this includes all the media stories that I have used in these opening discussions (Greta’s actions and words were told by adult journalists). When contemplating the achievements of climate youth I have to pinch myself to remember that adults still control the world and youth remain profoundly fragile, marginalised and precarious actors (at best). There are many lessons to be gleaned regarding how youth have risen to such purchase and prominence in the climate crisis, whilst seemingly peripheral in other civic affairs. I am taking nothing away from Greta and other climate activists with these comments, but I am left wondering why some things change and others do not. What is it about Greta’s climate *story* (and other high-profile youth) that is so appealing, transportable and empowering? What are associated narrative politics of youth climate agencies in an adult structured world?

1.2 The Context of Study

My thesis seeks to better understand youth and climate stories in a selected and defined media context. My choice of media is an inspiring UN-backed initiative described as a “new form of documentary called Geo-Docs” (YCR, 2024, np), a database-driven documentary. The YCR Geo-Doc project database contains

three to five minute documentaries covering specific climate change issues from perspectives of a geo-located youth. They are publicly available and rendered in globalised form on Google Maps (see Youth Climate Report GIS Map Project). They span a time period of 12 years (2009-2024) and span the globe, with at least 50 videos on each continent. At the time of writing over 800 documentaries are available. It is important to note that “Geo-Doc” refers to the entire project, a digital map with multiple videos geographically located upon it. Each video is a ‘narrative unit’ (I prefer the term “video”) residing upon it. In what follows I analyse a more manageable sample of 20 percent of individual videos, randomly selected in each year of publication. In this regard, my study places greater emphasis on videos contained in the Geo-Doc project, rather than the overall map.¹⁰

I am energised and inspired by this youth media project, which brings youth voices through their documentaries *directly* to UN policy makers at high-profile international Council Of the Parties (COP) climate negotiations. Mark Terry (2020) persuasively argues that this type of *direct* documentary-based advocacy approach gives voice to “the global community of youth to the environmental policy makers” (p.5). In a recent book, Terry describes this as a process of “Speaking Youth to Power” (Terry, 2024).¹¹ My research seeks to better understand, celebrate, and support this project and in so doing more broadly reflect on youth and the climate crisis, documentaries, and multimedia.

Recognising that climate crisis is, in part, a storytelling crisis and drawing on selected scholarship, I reflect on ways in which the young documentarians’ video stories are framed, formed, assumed, and bound within dominant late modern sensibilities. To achieve this, my thesis is propelled by three research questions.

To begin, I select and analyse a random sample of Geo-Doc media [20% n=130] asking:

- 1) How do selected Geo-Doc videos story climate crisis?
- 2) How do selected Geo-Doc videos story youth?

Guided by qualitative methods (see Chapter 3), I conduct a thematic story analysis of videos, repeatedly watching these media, coding and categorising their content, narratives, and representation, distilling

¹⁰ As I move forward, how each single documentary is differentiated from the overall Geo-Doc becomes important; while each documentary could be referred to as a “Geo-Doc” in the singular, or as a “narrative unit,” the term ‘Geo-Doc’ refers to the overall map, while single documentaries will be referred to as videos.

¹¹ I note at the outset that the instigator of the Geo-Docs initiative, Professor Mark Terry, is a member of my thesis supervisory committee.

them into a series of prominent stories. I am interested in classifying what particular stories bring climate and youth into significance and prominence.

I move towards a more openly political stance, where I critically interrogate the stories emerging from research questions (1) and (2) in order to explore the extent to which the stories reproduce pre-existing and popular stories (identified in my literature review) and associated power relations. What interests me is the extent to which these stories support the status quo and/or offer new ways of resisting and/or challenging dominant assumptions. These reflections are more normative and speculative in nature, seeking to consider the conformist, reformist, and transformative politics and possibilities of the YCR Geo-Doc generally and the stories it contains. These explorations are guided by my third and concluding question:

3) What stories of youth and climate are now urgently needed?

Needless to say, this is a huge question. I have no desire to fall into climate problem solving. My study in this regard, contrasts with more common castings of youth as climate problem solvers or saviours. I am not denying that youth offer a distinctive climate position and necessary critical perspectives. *Far from it.* We—I consider myself as a youth—need to be consulted and listened to far more attentively. I want to better understand how youth-led climate media might be more effective at disrupting and destabilising dominant climate and youth [adult] narrative paradigms, including adultism, sentimental humanism, neoliberal capitalism, and colonialism, and others.

The logic of my study is that understanding how youth and climate crises are represented and narrated in a selected media advocacy context offers insight into climate-and-youth discourses in an adult dominated world. Better understanding these discourses invites reflection on ways that these discourses legitimise and (de)legitimise associated worldviews that empower and marginalise progressive youth and climate politics.

My response to Terry's provocation of "*Speaking Youth to Power*" (2024) takes a Foucaultian inspired *story/power turn*, as I discursively trace the power of youth and climate crisis *stories* when speaking to powerful grownups. I conceive of narrative criticism as an essential part of social change. As Foucault writes:

Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it: showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for

granted. [...] Understood in these terms, criticism (and radical criticism) is utterly indispensable for any transformation. For a transformation that would remain within the same mode of thought, a transformation that would only be a certain way of better adjusting the same thought to the reality of things, would only be a superficial transformation. (Foucault, 2000, p. 457)

To criticise the status quo, it is necessary to uncover thought and attempt to change it. Foucault makes the point that people are not separated into those who critique and those who change; rather both are implicated in each other's work and can be transformative exactly because of it. Key to my inquiry is this blur between those in power and those who hope to act upon power. Climate activists' power can be discursively traced within granted truths, dictated by a regime. Foucault knows and considers the phrase 'regime' of truth is such terms¹²: "truth(s)" are things we *consider to be true*, rather than *are* universally true.

The concept of a "regime of truth" is therefore less a point in and of itself but instead an acknowledgment that the truths we choose to believe are inexorably reflected in regimes, and by extension, the powers subscribed to. Foucault stresses that we are not forced to accept scientific or epistemological truths, and that we are not forced to base our own subjectivities upon them. This definition has wide implications.

Considering YCR Geo-Docs in this way, I suggest, complements the participatory policy thrust of the original Geo-Doc project, in which power is conceived mainly in terms of access to high-level policy makers and leaders. Drawing on this narrative analysis of power invites critical reflection on the YRCR Geo-Doc and its constituent videos, extending what they contain to what they *might* and *ought* to contain.

The final part of my thesis story is to make a series of recommendations for youth media practice and research. I propose a revised protocol for Geo-Doc video production. This part of my story is inspired by Joseph Dumit's (2014) notion of "implosion"—reforming and retelling production stories in the Geo-Doc video process. I also make a series of recommendations for (youth-led) research on youth climate media.

¹² This, I think, is the best way to consider the phrase 'regime' of truth recalling I Wittgensteinian notions of language use, as well as Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist perspective.

1.3 Thesis Overview

My thesis comprises six chapters. This chapter, **Chapter One: *Youth-Climate-Media***, has sought to offer a rationale and overview of the topic of exploration, and articulate the logic of my inquiry. I also raise my research questions and introduce the media context of study, The Youth Climate report Geo-Doc.

Chapter Two: *Storying Crisis, Climate and Youth* is a literature review that unpacks various ways in which climate crisis and youth are represented in circulating stories. I start by dissecting the “climate crisis” and then “youth” and various associated stories and meanings. I then turn my attention to stories of youth in the climate crisis, and conclude with discussion of recent research on the YCR Geo-Doc.

Chapter Three: *Research Methods and Geo-Docs* comprises two parts. It starts with a description of data preparation and narrative research methods. This includes an overview of narrative inquiry and constant comparative analysis. In the second part, I offer Geo-Doc data. I describe this distinctive media genre by turning my attention to its technical details, offering a descriptive statistical analysis of the Geo-Doc metadata including the numbers of active videos, those published in a given year, and the countries of origin.

Chapter Four: *Storying Climate Crisis* presents qualitative data responding to my first research question: how do Geo-Doc videos represent the climate crisis? This chapter illustrates and celebrates the creativity and explanatory power of the YCR Geo-Doc. I identify four prominent themes in the video data sample: impacts, human experiences, resources, and solutions. I explore how each theme offers compelling ways to understand the various meanings associated with the climate crisis.

Chapter Five: *Storying Youth* analyses data, responding to my second research question: how do Geo-Docs videos represent youth? Following a similar format to the previous chapter, I outline four prominent youth stories in the video geo-located dataset: Stories of youth bearing witness, stories of youth heroics, stories of youth Inheritor, and stories of vulnerable and disempowered youth, paying careful attention to how construction and reconstruction of youth identities shapes and strengthens climate crisis argumentation.

Chapter Six: *Conclusion* is my final chapter in which I revisit the thesis’ first two research questions. I then develop the thesis’ third research question as I seek to situate the emergent stories of climate crisis and youth within broader social narrative contexts of power. In these reflections, I explore ways in which emergent youth-climate discourses serve to potentially empower and disempower youth in the

contemporary era of climate breakdown. Here I am drawn to the conformist, reformist and transformist narrative distinctions. I propose a different protocol for Geo-Doc video production and conclude with a series of recommendations for future research.

Chapter Two: Climate and Youth Stories

This chapter acts as a literature review in which I gather contemporary stories about the climate crisis and youth. It is guided by two questions: what ‘is’ the climate crisis? What ‘is/are’ youth? In response, I demarcate a narrative sociocultural and interpretative turn which forms the theoretical basis—the story if you like—of my inquiry. Following tradition, I first offer reflections on stories of climate crisis and then follow these with stories of youth. As these discussions unfold, my argument is that in climate crisis stories youth and climate are deeply imbricated and co-constitutive. The more I reflect on climate politics and media, the more it becomes difficult to separate climate and youth both semiotically and materially. This chapter concludes with further reflections on the YCR Geo-Doc.

2.1 Storying Climate Crisis

What is climate crisis? For far too long, the climate crisis was framed in a public debate between those who believed that it was happening and those who did not. Public disagreements between two sides intent on winning resulted in an emotionally polarised issue and an accompanying oversimplification of complexities, narrowed to a story of acceptance or rejection.¹³ Fortunately, this has changed and there is now wider acceptance that human caused carbon emissions are affecting the climate, with a few high-profile detractors including ex-President and Presidential Candidate Donald Trump. It needs stressing that various forms of media have and continue to be deeply implicated in perpetuating climate misinformation by demonstrably playing down the crisis (thereby appealing to wealthy and influential media owners) and insisting on a “balanced debate” which grossly overplays the reliability and validity of climate denialism (see Monbiot, 2023).

Of course, climate change is fundamentally a story about increasing atmospheric carbon, or Greenhouse Gases emissions. Advances in climate science have unravelled and modelled Climate-Earth systems and cycles with mind-boggling complexities and fragilities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) publishes regular reports bringing together thousands of scientists in powerful statements of consensus: *Scientific evidence unequivocally proves that climate change is happening, and we are in a*

¹³ One tempting way I considered to ‘know’ climate change and biodiversity collapse is through the lure of ‘the solution’. However, when pivoting toward rational problem-solving exercises, I found an ever-present tendency to reduce the world and to name the world in familiar patriarchal, Eurocentric technoscientific figurations. Derrida’s take might be, “When someone suggests to you a solution for escaping an impasse, you can be almost sure that he is ceasing to understand, assuming that he had understood anything up to that point” (Aporias, 1993, p. 32)

planetary crisis. Whereas earlier public debates centred on the (in)stability and (un)certainly of scientific knowledge, more recent history has become a story of scientific advancements and progress. One particular story of our climate crisis starts with doubt and uncertainty and then ends with increasing scientific expertise, authority, and broader public acceptance. Of course, this story varies in different contexts and times.

My thesis, however, takes a different approach. In my analysis, climate change (or my preferred term climate crisis) is not a scientific story of atmospheric facts, but a complex material, cultural, social, personal, and political phenomenon that means very different things to different people in different times, places, and contexts. As Mike Hulme (2009) writes:

Far from simply being a change in physical climates—a change in the sequences of weather experienced in given places—climate change has become an idea that now travels well beyond its origins in the natural sciences. And as this idea meets new cultures on its travels and encounters the worlds of politics, economics, popular culture, commerce, international diplomacy, and religion—often through the interposing role of the media—climate change takes on new meanings and serves new purposes (p. 41).

I study the new meanings and purposes that climate crisis takes in a particular youth UN-linked advocacy context. This includes how youth make sense of the climate crisis in narrative and media form, alongside how they think about themselves, their actions, their futures, and the world that they are part of with all other species on the planet.

Candis Callison (2014, p.3) helpfully considers climate change in terms of a series of “vernaculars” as part of a broader “form of life,” drawing on Wittgenstein’s later work. Callison shifts conversations from “matters of scientific fact” to how climate “comes to matter” in/for selected public and advocacy audiences. Her ethnographic fieldwork explores five “discursive communities”: Arctic indigenous representatives, Corporate social responsibility activists, American Evangelical Christians, Science journalists and Science policy experts (p. 7). My work extends these “discursive communities” to include a selected audience of *youth climate crisis documentarians*.

In this manner, my study attends to climate stories circulating in particular socio-technical contexts. My focus is on stories that youth use and render in media forms to actively make sense of, or make meaning of, climate crisis allied with particular experiences and UN policy advocacy goals.

There is an ocean of circulating media stories and imagery designed to describe the substance and magnitude of the climate crisis. I am reminded of Al Gore's slow rising scissor lift in the documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (dir. Gugenheim), which dramatises the steepness of the red-lined atmospheric carbon concentration curve (the Keeling, or Hockey Stick Curve). Andri Magnason's video-short offers a moving and solemn letter to the future centering on the story of Okjokull, a lost Icelandic glacier. The Hollywood movie *The Day After Tomorrow* (dir. Emmerich) tells the apocalyptic story of a paleoclimatologist making a daring trip to save his son, as the planet plunges into a new ice age. The story and ending are a predictable tale of a white heteronormative American family surviving once more "against all odds"—a Jurassic Park remake if you like, with a planetary climate freezing theme.

These are just three cinematic examples (amongst many) making an abstract scientific fact more appealing and impactful to wider public audiences. Of course, there are many other stories and imagery that seek to represent the climate crisis including familiar iconographies of melting glaciers, forest fires and roasting koalas, tidal waves, polar bears balancing on small pieces of ice, climate protestors and protests (as discussed in Chapter One), and energy renewables, including energy efficient cars and light bulbs (see Wang et al, 2018).

What these and many other examples make abundantly clear is that stories and narratives are central to understanding and communicating climate crisis. Narratives and imagery shape how climate is understood, imagined, sensed, and believed in (and not). In this respect, associated stories are far from passive representations of the world, but active interpretations and performances, motivating and steering *toward* particular climate worldviews, relationships, structures, and actions.

What is so important about climate crisis stories and imagery is that they are dynamic, partial and ultimately incomplete. Particular stories foreground particular interpretations and actions whilst backgrounding others, which are potentially left out, dimmed and obscured. For example, the infamous polar bear has proved to be an extremely powerful and influential climate story, but it has also become a focus of growing criticism calling into question its overly negative, doom-and-gloom image and the ways in which polar bears eclipse other far less-charismatic species, many of which are also declining (see discussions in Greenfield, 2023). The solitary image of a polar bear is also implicated in re-creating a Colonial North devoid of humans (see Callison, 2019). It also suppresses the agencies of the bears themselves, which become oddly reliant on human saviours and protectors (see discussions in Born, 2019).

The story of the vulnerable bear is a tantalising story of a ferocious creature cut down by immense climate powers. This story focuses on the power of the climate, but human responsibilities escape attention including those most and least responsible for the carbon emissions causing changes (and the bear's tragic demise). Stories of Colonialism, Neoliberalism, Gender, and White Privilege are all deeply implicated in planetary meltdown and warrant sustained and close attention. But some stories are more palatable and convenient than others (in particular media contexts). Stories of responsibility, for example, are often overlooked, as Solnit (2022) astutely notes:

A climate story that we urgently need is one that exposes who is actually responsible for climate chaos. It's been popular to say that we are all responsible, but Oxfam reports that over the past 25 years, the carbon impacts of the top 1% of the wealthiest human beings was twice that of the bottom 50%, so responsibility for the impact and capacity to make change is currently distributed very unevenly. (p.2)

My general point is that when considering climate stories, it is important to reflect on what is storied, and thereby rendered visible, and what is not (as well as the broader implications that this holds). As Georgory Bateson (1984) comments, "Zero, the absence of any indicative element, may bear a message" (Bateson, 1984, p 53, cited by Sauve et al. 2007, p. 4).

More recently, climate justice has become a powerful mobilising force. The climate crisis storied through the lens of social justice and human rights, shifts narratives from climate impacts including melting ice and roasting koala bears to civil rights and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts including Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), women, poor communities and youth. In recent UN (2019) discussions of Sustainable Development Goals, for example, Mary Robinson is quoted commenting on school strikes from a climate justice perspective:

The whole idea of the school climate strikes is also an issue of common but differentiated responsibility and respect of capabilities [...] we cannot expect a young person in a developing country to go out of school to strike when the school system protects them from early child marriages, female genital mutilation, and so forth. There are more benefits for the young to stay in school. (UN, 2019, p. 1)

Such investigations underscore different and vastly contrasting cultural, social, economic and political contexts of climate crisis.

The YCR Geo-Doc was created to impact UN Climate Policies. These policies, as Lucie Sauve and colleagues' (2007) powerful critical hermeneutical analysis of 30 years of UN environmental-related policies can be understood as a series of trends that remain *consistent* within UN policies despite accompanying rhetoric of the need for urgent changes and transformations. In UN policies, the "environment [is] reduced to a problem of resources"; change [is] mainly associated with "sustained economic growth"; and education is conceived as an "instrument to support a political and economic agenda" (p. 4).

Sauve et al. (2007) bring attention to what is rarely mentioned, breaking this down in to three dimensions: (i) "defining and fulfilling our human niche on Earth as part of an ecological world"; (ii) "responsibly and creatively using the common resources of our shared house of life"; and (iii) "searching for meaning of our being-in-the world, constructing our cosmologies" (p.50). The authors conclude by encouraging readers to take critical distance from UN policies asking themselves, "what kind of world they open up and close off" (p. 50). This work begs other questions: what types of worlds do Geo-Doc videos open up and close off? What challenges might these worlds offer UN climate negotiations and policy? My analysis turns to these considerations in concluding stages.

2.2 Storying Youth

The YCR Geo-Doc is constituted of youth, however "youth" is defined and used differently in different contexts by governments, organisations, scholars and others. In this section I seek to explore the term and its associated narratives and stories. Why might climate mobilizations use the term "youth", when terms such as young person, adolescents or juveniles are also options? In an era of climate crisis, what is youth? Who are youth? Or more discursively posed, what "youth" does the climate crisis assemble and disassemble? What stories do youth fulfil in monstrous worlds?

The United Nations (2024) offers a popular way of understanding youth in relation to age, education and employment.

Youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That's why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job. (UN, 2024, p. 1)

According to the World Youth Report (2020), persons aged 15 to 24 years are classified as “youth”, while those younger are considered children and those older are adults (UN, 2020, p. 1). The Canadian Government defines youth between ages of 15 to 29 (Heritage, 2021). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2024) defines “adolescents” as those people in the 10-19 years age group and “youth” as the 15-24 year age group.

Entity/Instrument/ Organization	Age	Reference
UN Secretariat/UNESCO/ILO	Youth: 15-24	UN Instruments, Statistics
UN Habitat (Youth Fund)	Youth 15-32	Agenda 21 ⁷
UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA	Adolescent: 10-19, Young People: 10-24, Youth: 15-24	UNFPA ⁸
UNICEF /The Convention on Rights of the Child	Child until 18	UNICEF ⁹
The African Youth Charter	Youth: 15-35	African Union, 2006 ¹⁰

Table 2.1A: Differing Youth Delineations - United Nations (2024 p.2)

Definitions of youth offered by UN organisations are similar but not synonymous, as this helpful table provided by the UN shows (see Figure 2.1).

The object of this thesis, the Youth Climate Report Geo-Doc project, was mandated by the UNFCCC in 2021 to define youth as those between the ages of 18 to 35. Geo-Doc founder Mark Terry (2024) provided an additional definition of youth:

[Y]outh should be regarded as a global community marginalised by ageism and should be acknowledged in the same manner other marginalised global communities like Indigenous peoples are recognized in participatory politics. (p. xvi)

Recognising youth as a “global community marginalised by ageism” is one way of underscoring specific commonalities and experiences (bounded by ageism oppression). I read this as a gesture toward collaborative thinking and inclusivity—a way of exploring experiences and solidarities of age that youth might share in comparison with children and adults.

In general, different organisations seek to support and represent youth in differing age periods differently. In these cases, these organisations formally define youth (in policy), but also significantly perform “youth” in their various practices, such as by allowing members of a certain age to join the organisation and not. These organisations are far from alone in this regard, schools and universities (and

a myriad of other organisations) are all to a greater extent age-driven and defined. For example, educational institutions in North America typically define youth as ranging from ages twelve to eighteen or school Grades six through twelve. Defining youth with reference to compulsory schooling and employment has become normalised, supporting stories of youth as learners and workers-in-making. In this story, school practices and curriculum expectations become readily mapped onto youth “deficits” and future societal and economic needs, such as 21st Century skills and AI innovations.

Other traditional cultural markers can serve to bifurcate age based definitions, including full-time employment, fiscal independence, marriage, having children, and purchasing a home. As I note in my prologue, these all seem a long way off in my case, but serve once more to illustrate considerable contemporary fluidity in these cultural designations, which demonstrably are shifting over time (particularly in large, expensive urban North American cities).

In these contemplations of youth social identities and stories, there is always a danger of being drawn into fictional universality, that is, of oversimplifying and reducing complex imbricated identities. Clearly youth are not all the same: youth are neither a singular nor homogeneous identity, category, group, or community (even with respect to adult hegemony). In considering young people, tensions, ambiguities, and dilemmas obscure complex positionalities and contexts. Differences, contexts and places all matter deeply, of course.

Scholarship in youth studies is particularly critical of prescriptive categories. For instance, Jones et al., (2023) lament that when a young person is described as “youth”, they are “positioned as an unfinished project” (p. 4). In this unfinished story, “youth are neither fully dependent nor independent and are expected to learn, listen, and absorb information from adults” (see Qvortrup, 2009, p. 2). Jones et al. (op. cit.) extend this point, noting ways in which “youth is universally a time of volatility, or wildness, with “entry” into adulthood requiring a social and linear process of preparation, apprenticeship, and even domestication” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 2). These authors push-back on Western assumptions of biological homogeneity and determinism, and associated linear transitions between youthhood and adulthood, instead arguing that “boundaries of youth are blurred, indistinct, porous, and dynamic” (p. 3). These boundaries are often drawn and restricted along biological, cultural, social, temporal and experiential lines.

Youth as a term, writes Foucault (1976, p.80), seeks to *magnify* divergences between children and adults. Youth can be represented to be a romanticised group, inhabited by precocious children facing careless

desire and invincibility. Foucault argues that such age-based representations often situate youth “between corporeal and social maturity” (see Holmes et al., 2006, p. 271) thereby restricting phenomenological development in contexts of adult hegemony. Some scholars argue, from broadly Marxian-inspired vantage points, “youth” form a category readily defined by exclusion and exploitation, allowing young persons to be more easily co-opted into “surplus economic value.”¹⁴

In ecological contexts, it needs asking what is so appealing about youth? One could suppose (for example) an appeal to affectual and political intimacy in the face of looming disasters—an infantilization of the “ontological insecurities” that impregnate stories of adult status quo (see Lakind and Adsit-Morris 2018, p. 32.) Youth historians Holmes et al (2006) write: “It is on the back of those situated in the liminal space between childhood innocence and adult responsibility that modernist sociomoral anxieties have tended to be borne” (p. 280).¹⁵ In the climate crisis youth readily serve a redemptive function, offering adults ways of responding to their sins, errors, and excesses. Culturally devastating stories are projected as existential epitaphs that threaten the “foreclosure of ‘human history’ and ‘human goodness’ itself” (Maclear, 2018, p. 25)¹⁶ which are often affixed to youth.

Holmes and colleagues (2006) expand this point further, arguing that “youth” tend to represent a debilitating anxiety of terrible pasts, combining optimistic prospects of the future and the fearful present. This can be seen in stories such as those of Indigenous youth in Canada who become fused to collective shame ascribed to residential schools combined with Indigenous resurgence, which can be problematically framed as “ecological saviours” from Western historical ecological excesses.

¹⁴ Others argue: “Children represent another natural resource: empty vessels waiting to be filled, resilient yet innocent, like virgin soil yet to be corrupted, polluted, or sexualized. They were no longer smaller versions of adults, but future adults” (Lakind and Adsit-Morris, 2018, p. 33)

¹⁵ Adeline Johns-Putra (2017 Cited by Mclear 2018) writes adolescent’s “status as the ultimate, even primal subject of protection, shelter, and guardianship means that it readily speaks to contemporary anxieties about whether we are doing enough to protect, shelter, and safeguard—whether, in short, we are caring enough” (p. 6). The “we” here refers to adult’s perspectives on the climate crisis as an existential threat without a clear answer.

¹⁶ Judith Butler (2014, p. 426) powerfully surmises that “making persons according to abstract norms that at once condition and exceed the lives they make—and break.” The question then arises how can the young exceed and break their metonymic function? Can we escape “a myopic focus on producing (proper) children and thus a (proper) future for humanity” (Out of the Woods Collective, 2015 cited by Maclear, p. 26)?”

While in many ways, youth can be thought to represent anxious adults, youthhood also borrows infographically from childhood, becoming shaped in [adults] societal hierarchies¹⁷ as the “child” is equated with iconographies of innocence. Stories of “youthful” innocence have long established histories becoming prominent in the 19th century European industrialization period when industrial development outstripped workforce capacity. At this time, youth and children were deployed en masse to fill a gulf in labour. These youth and children were created *in/for industrialised futures* (see discussions in Tuck & Yang, 2014, p.4; Steinberg, 2011, p.268; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015, p.33).¹⁸

Claudia Castañeda (2002) utilises the notion of “figuration” to explore material and narrative practices that bring children and youth into presence and significance in particular moments of time. It is the fluid narrative qualities of children and youth that lend themselves to adults’ narratives, Castañeda argues. Children and youth are seen as ever changing and in flux, defined and conceived in terms of their *potential* rather than their *actuality*. Donna Haraway (2008) theorises that these “figurations” are not “didactic illustrations, but rather material-semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meanings co-shape one another” (p. 4). In other words, ‘child/youth’ stories and representations have a complex interrelated history and a life of their own, exceeding any individual child (see Lakind and Adsit-Morris, 2018 & Castañeda, 2002).

Hall & Jefferson (2006) alongside Paul Gilroy, and others consider youth as a “concealed metaphor for social change” (Hall and Jefferson, p. 10) thereby challenging the idea of youth as simply passive recipients of culture, instead recognizing their fluid narrative qualities as active agents who shape and redefine cultural meanings through their everyday practices. In this view, youth culture becomes a space where identities are negotiated, contested, and transformed through their interaction with stories (Hall & Jefferson, 2006).¹⁹ It is also a fragile space in which youth-led political mobilisations can become challenged as “naive” and “idealised” and thereby dismissed. They lend themselves to the response - they will grow out of it given time.

¹⁷ For instance, within questions inexorably linked to the climate crisis, a child ages only when it serves hegemony.

¹⁸ Such an exercise created a hitherto unrivalled workforce and it was at this point the terms ‘youth’ or ‘adolescent’ gained prominence, with historians arguing that they sidestepped ethical concerns of child labour (Castañeda 2002).

¹⁹ It is important to recognize that young people often found themselves at odds with prevailing norms and values, whether those were imposed by mainstream society, institutions, or even within their own peer groups. This opposition to prevailing norms could take various forms, including artistic expression, fashion, music, and lifestyle choices.

I am reminded of Higonnet's (2008, p.119) powerful photographic explorations of contradictions of the "knowing child" (extended here to "knowing youth"). In urban photographs, racialized, Indigenous, classed, queer, urban, and other marginalised children, Higonnet notes, are often constructed as more experienced and "more knowing" (more savvy and streetwise) and thereby more resilient and less innocent. As a consequence, more "knowing" and "resilient" children can be perceived as needing less support and less attention, in comparison to more "innocent" and "fragile" peers, including their white privileged peers (living in, for example, wealthy, green Toronto suburbs). Stories of innocence and fragility steer inequitable societal and institutional responses in particular ways.

In the era of climate crisis and the growth of the youth climate movement, what it means to be "youth" has clearly taken on new forms; its cultural underpinning and stories have shifted, becoming co-constructed with/in crisis. However, how such stories of youthhood and childhood have (de)stabilised and (re)formed warrants greater scholarly attention.

Perhaps an important point here is that youth are continuously defined and enacted—to use my preferred term, they are 'storied'—in particular ways by adults in an adult dominated world. Understanding youth on their own terms matters deeply of course—this drives my project—although it needs noting that youth are not immune to the same (or similar) socialising forces as adults. It is also important to recognise that youth is not simply an answer to adulthood, which is a popular way of thinking even in some progressive circles. This hints at participatory work as more subtle, nuanced, complex and ambiguous than is sometimes assumed. Listening to youth voices is far more complex than turning on the recorder and asking a range of questions. Youth, of course, are expected and conditioned to recite 'adult' narratives in adult contexts.

Recent work in Youth Studies focuses on temporalized, enacted, embodied, material and affective experiences. As part of my masters, for example, I gave a conference paper (Alsop, 2023) on geographies of my personal ecological childhood, connecting notions of ecological shimmers to my memories, scaffolded by Bachelard's notion of reverie. I wrote

Reveries drift back and forth between remembered spaces, events and feelings without the aid of narrative to scaffold them. Their importance rests upon emotional fluctuations, a form of affective shimmer. My past shimmers between reflective states as I choose to engage with it, my childhood experiences resisting and reshaping my complex, frequently paradoxical, cultural politics of today (Alsop, 2023, p.3).

I argue for the need to recognize ways our embodied childhood experiences of place are significant, and carried with us into youthhood and adulthood where they begin to challenge neat adult/youth/child separation stories by pushing aside the rational, logical, anodyne world of adulthood and pushing emotions and one's childhood to the forefront.

To return to my story theme, 'youth' both as a term and a group, are inexplicably linked with stories, constructed from stories, and destroyed by stories. However such stories are themselves diffuse, filled with representations that challenge how youth, children and, grownups, act on, and are acted upon, by each other. Such stories highlight some assumptions while leaving others behind.

Some stories possess intrinsic emancipatory power, while others justify the limited opportunities provided to youth and children. In broader terms, as the proceeding discussions suggest, "youth" is a fluid and fraught cluster of stories that warrant much closer attention. In the following section, I explore youth more directly in climate stories and consider ways in which youth become narratively and materially swept up in truly terrifying dystopian worlds.

2.3 Stories of Youth and Climate Crisis

A central question of the climate crisis is how best to imagine what and who comes next? And in this regard, narratives of children and youth have considerable explanatory appeal, purchase and power. Adults naturally look to the young for/as the future. I recall watching the final meeting of the COP in Glasgow in which delegates spoke passionately about their children, with many showing family photographs. Children and grandchildren's wellbeing propel climate change, making an abstract concept seem emotionally close and very real (and terrifying).

Charlotte Jones and colleagues (2023) identify seven "entangled storylines" (p. 4) of youth in climate change discourses, through a thematic review of academic literature from the social and behavioural sciences. The storylines identify how young people (youth) are represented by a range of academic literature in geography, psychology, sociology, education, political studies, health studies, media studies, legal studies, and youth studies. The stories serve as counterpoints for my future analysis of youth media, and while I am not directly applying them as a form of methodology, they hopefully form a literary basis. The seven storylines offered are "innocent, vulnerable, heroic, alarmist, inheriting, apathetic or narcissistic" (Jones et al., 2023, p. 1), summarised in Figure 2.2. I have included in depth

descriptions of the innocent, vulnerable, heroic and inheritor youth stories (as these feature as my thesis unfolds). I only briefly describe others.

Storyline	Positioning of young people
Innocent	Have made little or no contribution to climate change and are pure, unaware figures in need of sheltering.
Vulnerable	Uniquely influenced by impacts of climate change through holding positions of precarity, powerlessness, and marginalization, and therefore in need of protection.
Heroic	Protagonists, central figures who are (often individual) saviors or champions, who will enact positive change through their brave and sacrificial actions.
Alarmist	Overreacting to climate change, and irrational in their response and actions.
Inheriting	Living in the shadow of the troubled and chaotic future they are inheriting from older generations.
Apathetic	Indifferent, unaware, or uncaring about climate change, with limited motivation to contribute to collective responses to wider problems.
Narcissistic	Consumed by introverted self-concern and self-absorbed behaviors, which leads to an inability to engage with climate change beyond direct threats to their own lives.

Table 2.3A: Summary of storylines of young people and climate change. Retrieved from Jones et al., 2023, (p. 5)

Each story is explored in terms of its emancipatory or liberatory appeal as well as its capacity for subordination and oppression. The point is that climate stories both propel and restrict climate agencies. As described by Jones et al (2023):

The storyline of the innocent is prominent in late modern society, representing young people as pure and uncorrupted figures that need shelter from the terrifying and alarming climate crisis. Grownups regularly seek to maintain this innocence and protect youth from climate change, using it as a justification to withhold climate change from education curricula, based upon it “being in their best interests” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 5). However, not all versions of this storyline motivate adults to shield young people, some young people are storied as innocent to give them moral authority. These innocent Young people are assumed to be free of the corruption of economic, political, or social interests (Garlen, 2019). In such cases young people's voices have been emphasised to create an intrinsic ethical motivation for climate crisis policy. For example, the involvement of innocent young participants in UN climate negotiations, Thew et al. (2020) found that these individuals are storied as possessing higher moral integrity compared to other attendees.

The storyline of the vulnerable is closely tied to the story of youth as innocent: focusing on ways in which young persons are distinctly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Attempting to identify and represent a young person by drawing on common essentializing tropes of victimhood, precarity, powerlessness, and exploitation. Jones and colleagues (2023) note that these storylines are prominent in

“psychology and cognitive science and its related evidence base” (p. 6). Similarly, within health disciplines young people's bodily and mental health is forefronted in stories of climate disasters (Ribeiro et al., 2019; Zummo et al., 2020). Vulnerability in these endemic fields borrows from cognitive, immunological, physiological differences between young people and adults, emphasising the incompleteness of young people. Such storylines also highlight a young person's vulnerability to exploitation in an attempt to cast young people as unable (due to societal pressures or not) to “fully exercise rational decision making” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 6), opening them up to adult or peer manipulation. Obviously, youth being vulnerable to the environment is nothing new, or exclusive to climate crisis conversations. Consider the paradox that such stories of “vulnerable young persons” intend to identify and protect from climate change harm, yet they might instead inadvertently ignore or suppress their agency as a young person.²⁰

The storyline of the heroic highlights ways in which children become central figures in climate change stories, protagonists or predestined saviours, messiahs, champions and redeemers of climate changes. Jones et al (op. cit) describes this as an inversion of common entrenched representations of young people as those who exist on the periphery of public life. Instead “heroic youth” are constituted, *of, and according to* assumptions of adulthood. The authors write that “through this story, young people, such as the school strikers, are seen to be making a noble and courageous sacrifice in the form of their own education and carefree youthhood, to atone for the sins of older generations” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 6). Rather than the apolitical narratives of vulnerable or innocent youth, heroic youth are defined by and emphasise their political attendance. On top of such stories of the present, these youth are also storied as carrying adult responsibilities into the future, representing an epitaph of present day grownups, as they ascend to roles of decision making, releasing grownups from future responsibilities. However within such heroic stories there exists an isolation or loneliness, as Individualist assumptions dominate. Critical race scholars and postcolonial theorists are critical of these messianic narratives, as they imply the necessity of a singular saviour to liberate oppressed groups who would otherwise be unable to do so

²⁰ Rogers (2020) and Mayes and Hartup (2021) document the endemic framing of young people as victims in newspaper articles, climate fiction, climate litigation, and climate activism, for example. Recognizing that tropes of victimhood can disempower those they ostensibly seek to protect, Bergmann and Ossewaarde's (2020) analysis of how representations of youth vulnerability intersect with gender politics in the figure of the “vulnerable girl” activist is instructive” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 6).

(Woodson, 2016; Spivak et al., 2022; Hall, 2006). Greta Thunberg, of course, might be considered a heroic youth.²¹

The storyline of the Inheritor differs from the biological/psychological basis of stories Innocent, vulnerable, heroic. Instead, Youth Inheriting stories feature young people inheriting a future imagined by those who have lived before them, described by Jones et al (2023) as tasked with “deploy[ing] a generational imagination.” (p. 8). The storyline reinforces a linear timeline, sidestepping tensions *within* generations, and focusing instead on tensions *between* generations. Various young person categories (Youth, children, teenagers and adolescent) are amalgamated by the inheritor storyline, as they occupy the same space in such stories (investments in the future). Whether it is an adult responsibility to protect inheritance, or youth who are themselves empowered to protect their own inheritance, studies have highlighted how young people are anxious and frustrated with the future they inherit (Lyon & Carabelli, 2016; Threadgold, 2019). Youth being physical manifestations of the future is common enough that its fingerprints are evident in the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Target 53: “53. The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today’s younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations” (United Nations, 2015).

Other stories mentioned by Jones and colleagues (2023) but are less relevant to this thesis are: **The storyline of the Alarmist**. In this story young people are presumed to be hysterical or controlled by emotions, unable to fully engage in rational decision making associated with adulthood. **The storyline of the Apathetic**, frames youth as having no motivation, or being too busy growing up to engage in climate crisis discourse. **The storyline of the Narcissistic**, features a youth who is disinterested in climate change for magnanimous reasons, instead participating in climate action for self-interested reasons. Scholars Mayes and Hartup (2022) and Rogers (2020) identify six further categories “ignorant zealots, anxious pawns, rebellious truants,” (p. 1) And “as litigant, as activist and as messiah” (p. 103), all of which overlap with Jones et al’s (2023) categories.

²¹ Moriarty (2021) demonstrates how Thunberg is represented as a hero in popular literature as a way of inviting readers into critical engagement with the climate crisis (see also Laakso et al., 2019). Murphy’s (2021, p. 196) media studies analysis of English media representations describes how Thunberg is the “celebrity who wasn’t,” with her celebrity status rooted in strong conviction, humility, and unwavering focus on climate science.” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 7)

Rather than considering such stories as defined categories, I instead consider how they overlap and co-create with each other. Categorization of ‘young people’ changes across social, cultural and political stages, and so do *told* stories. These storylines are a form of short-hand, so common that they could be presumed fact automatically without a second thought, masking assumptions that underpin such stories and overwriting other potential stories (Hajer, 1993):

As the case of climate change makes compellingly clear, storylines are not simply discursive structures that influence actions in a one-way line of causality. Rather, storylines are multidirectional, both shaping and shaped by actors, institutions, practices, and concerns. Similarly, social and behavioural research interacts with wider social structures to both produce and critique storylines. (Jones et al., 2023, p. 10)

Jones and colleagues suggest when narratives align with those in power, they can create exclusive systems, reinforcing existing social hierarchies. The storylines described are predominantly produced for grownups by grownups through powerful political and cultural media channels, writes Jones et al. Youth in these stories are “predominantly position[ed] as passive and marginal actors” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 12)²² through hidden assumptions of neoliberalism, and thus emerges a complex interplay between narratives, actors, power, and societal structures in shaping and critiquing understandings of climate change. Identifying said storylines is an important first step in interrupting and questioning their power and concealed assumptions (Hajer 1993).

Foucault (2000) might consider these youth narrative assumptions as a force in and of themselves, the stories from a certain ‘Truth’ thereby enforcing a certain governmental, educational, scientific or social order. This brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s (1997) famous quotation that “storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it” (Arendt cited in Wilkinson, 2004, p. 77). However in a broad Foucauldian sense, whose definition of ‘meaning’ remains a dialectic of one’s personal paradoxical assumption of truth/power and sociocultural heritage, complicated by the unwavering reality that truth isn’t outside of power, or deprived from power, but truth induces power (Lorenzini, 2015).

²² “The storylines we identify are predominantly produced by and for adults, through dominant political, policy, media, education, and research institutions, often contributing to the long-standing marginalisation of young people in late modern Western societies” (Jones et al., 2023, p. 12).

2.4 Stories of the YCR Geo-Doc

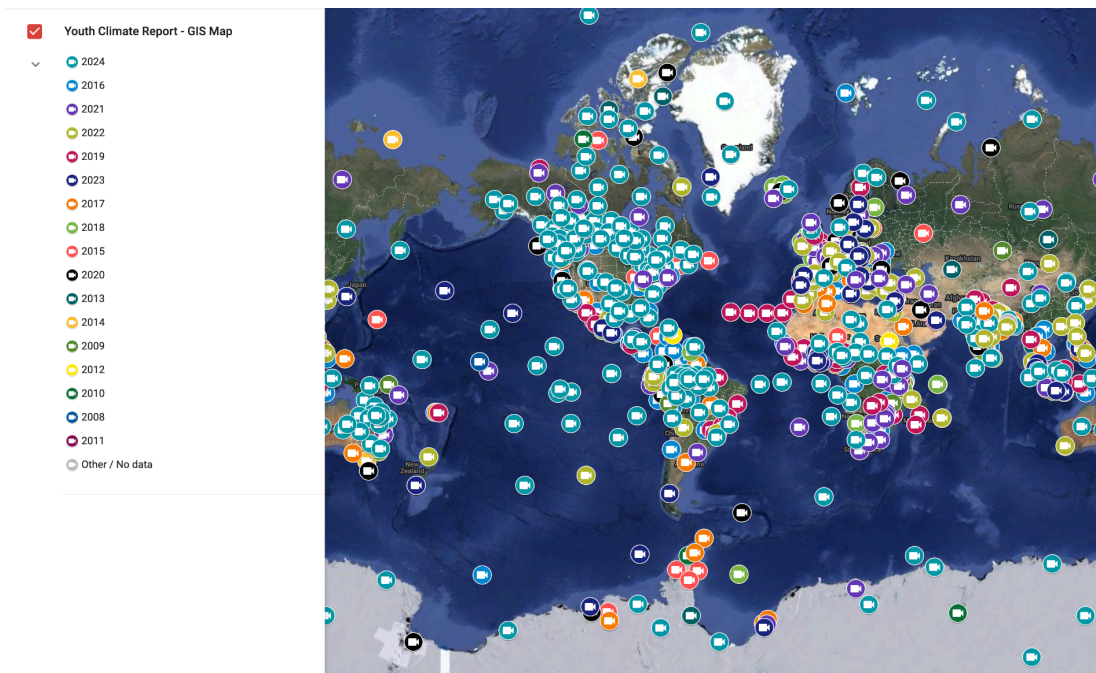


Figure 2.4A: Geo-Doc Map,(Retrieved April 26th 2024.)

The YCR Geo-Doc differs from contemporary hour and a half climate documentaries, having no or limited budget, no famous actors, no overwhelming cinematography, and are freely available, not behind paywalls. Individual Geo-Doc videos are on average under five minutes. They are created by youth, supported by various workshops, constructed as part of a broader report seeking to influence policy decisions at COP negotiations. They are also GeoLocated, grounded in a place. Terry, in his *Speaking Youth to Power: Influencing Climate policy at the United Nations* (2023), defines Geo-Docs:

This form of a documentary film project showcases several film units on a similar topic with a consistent narrative all in one interactive, digital space. The idea is to have several films, all variations on a theme, available to the viewer according to their selection. This multilinear approach effectively makes the viewer the editor and, to some degree, the director, as the database of film units is viewed not in the order prescribed by a linear documentary film's director and editor, but by the viewer, or in this case, the "user", themselves. Once this form of documentary was selected, a representative platform was needed to house the films. For this, I turned to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology. Using an experimental prototype of GIS software introduced by Google called Fusion Tables (Terry, 2023, p. 185)

YRC Geo-Doc is designed with contextualising space and time within subjects/objects²³ and affords new narratives within the field of documentary filmmaking.²⁴ It is a database-driven documentary map that scaffolds viewers, who, in choosing among multiple videos on a topic or from a region, become the curator of their own non-linear narrative experience.. Unlike traditional documentary projects, Geo-Docs' storytelling qualities offer "an opportunity for rethinking the notion of narrative, rather than shutting it out," writes Matt Soar (2014) in his discussion of database genres (p. 5). These documentaries are built from smaller, discrete components known as "single narrative units" (SNU) (Soar, 2014, Cited by Terry 2020, p 185) Assembled and connected through metadata tags such as location, year, age, and theme rather than a fixed sequence, Geo-Docs' "story elements are not triggered based on a fixed 'master' sequence, but by hidden, iterative, keyword searches" (Soar, p. 5) that enable a dynamic retooling of viewing experiences. Storytelling has traditionally been a dynamic exchange between editors and creatives. However, a SNU rethinks the classical definition of editing, introducing new novel roles for both the creative, editor, and viewer in shaping the narrative.

We can see now that creating a [database-driven documentary] film involves at least three different kinds of 'editing': first, the most familiar kind [...] second, algorithmic editing, or, the process of what we call 'SNUifying' [...] third, editing involving the viewer, who chooses the next SNU. [...] The viewer will quite possibly see some new SNUs with each viewing of the film, and miss others they had previously encountered. (Terry 2020, p. 162-163)

Soar (2014) outlines three key types of story editing required for such projects: traditional video editing, algorithmic editing (termed 'SNUifying'), and the interactive editing done by the viewer.²⁵ Such a layered approach redefines story editing and the database-driven documentaries flexibility as user-centric media. Database-driven stories are not predetermined but emerge through interaction. Each viewing

²³ Terry writes about the genre's "cross-disciplinary understanding of geography as a cognitive system in the widest sense of the phrase, which deals with the connections between subject and location. This not only re-evaluates the discursive positioning of the subject, but also integrates view points, difference strategies, contextualization in space and time, and intelligible articulations " (Terry, 2020, p. 164 quoting Thielmann, 2007, p. 73).

²⁴ This is achieved through a combination of means which include being featured on a map above, displayed in 2015 on a series of touch screen monitors at the COB21 climate summit. Both cases, UN COP delegates were invited to participate in this multimodal experience. You were able to click on a video and learn how it understands climate change manifests in this part of the world.

²⁵ Traditional editing is the familiar process of selecting and cutting to craft individual narrative stories. Algorithmic editing involves assigning metadata to these units, which determines their connections and sequence within the broader narrative structure. The third type, viewer editing, is particularly relevant, as it empowers the audience to shape their own viewing experience by selecting which SNUs to watch next.

session is complex, different, and engaging. The Geo-Docs project is rooted in articulation theory, which suggests that narratives are constructed through the contingent connections between SNUs. Each SNU contains its own narrative, meaning filmmakers can co-create intricate stories through the combination of narratives, notably mirroring cultural studies' approaches to meaning-making that similarly stress the dynamic and contextual nature of storytelling.

When creating an individual video for the Geo-Doc map, youth are allowed considerable flexibility about what stories they tell. Youth Climate Report and UN organisers recommend that youth include a scientist, elder and policymaker but, if youth documentarians choose not to, their videos are still included. Youth tell their story in any means they deem fit, and consequently a huge diversity of videos are included on the map. Important to note, while the majority of Geo-Docs are made with assistance from the Young Climate report organisation, there are other videos featured on the map not made by the YCR. Such videos were created by other United Nations youth climate videos initiatives and posthumously added. These associated initiatives include The Global Youth Video Competition, The Earthbeat Challenge, The Worldwide Youth Multimedia Competition, Young Reporters for the Environment, The #NextGen Video Challenge.

Geo-Doc Mission Statement

Terry (2023) argues that the Geo-Doc's goal is to "enable young storytellers to share their stories and actions for a greener and more sustainable world." (Terry, 2023, p. 190). Geo-Doc supporter and Ecocinema documentary film theorist Helen Hughes contends that the Geo-Docs project

has created an opportunity for young people and scientists all over the world to express their activities with respect to caring for the environment. [The Geo-Doc project] has opened a window on the many ways in which people have been thinking about the issues (Terry, 2020, p. 186, citing "Analysis of the United Nations Youth Climate Report GIS Project, 2017).

Terry (2020, 2023) suggests YRC's Geo-Doc can provide a spatial and temporal analysis of climate change afforded through the inclusion of metadata, written reports and Geo-positioning data for UN officials. Delivering a fuller understanding of global climate change, Geo-Doc combines arts-based research with academic thought, ratifying youth discourse on a planetary scale, and "providing a new way for the film genre of the documentary to inform and influence the changemaker who is charged with creating policy that results in positive social change on issues that impact all of us" (Terry, 2020, p. 187). The project

received admiration from the academy and UN officials, who as Terry (2020) notes, found the data a great assist in the climate change fight.

History of YCR Geo-Doc

In the later stages of my thesis, I deconstruct the power relationships between youth contributors and UN policy officials, theorising how the YCR Geo-Doc project creates power and occludes it. To properly situate these later discussions, I first offer a careful review of the history or story of the Geo-Doc that will help contextualise where and how policy officials interact with Geo-Doc media.

The Geo-Doc project is described in two books: *The Geo-Doc: Geomedia, Documentary Film, and Social Change* (Terry, 2020), *Speaking Youth to Power: Influencing Climate policy at the United Nations* (Terry, 2023) written by Professor Mark Terry and others at York University. A few other articles including The Planetary Health Film Lab Evaluation Report (Tilleczek & MacDonald, 2020) further explore the background of Geo-Docs.

In 2009, writes Terry in his book *The Geo-Doc: Geomedia, Documentary Film, and Social Change*, Geo-Docs were a UN pilot project inspired a following press release (responding to Terry's films *The Antarctica Challenge: A Global Warning* (2009) and *The Polar Explorer* (2010)). The UN press release described a positive reaction to Terry's film, specifically, being able to "see" climate change on videos, as it brought previously existential possibilities to material reality. Terry among others recognized both the crisis facing narrative and storytelling and its power to "raise the alarm" convincing the UN public of severe climate impacts facing the vulnerable. The quoted UN press release and Terry's history in documentary film allowed him to receive funding from the UN and spearhead the Geo-Doc project.²⁶

In 2011, the YCR Geo-Doc as a UN-commissioned project was launched. Back then, production and qualifications for what constituted the "genre" was decidedly different than today. In the Geo-Doc videos created between 2011 and 2015, the parent organisation *Youth Climate Report* would closely watch production, identifying scientific organisations for youth to report upon and help organise meetings. The youth produced six medium length documentaries each year, running forty five minutes from title to tail. These videos were presented at conferences COP17 to COP21. The six medium length videos' content was concerned with Youth positionality, emphasising youths' emotional responses to the scientists and

²⁶ The United Nations was founded, and continues to be, primarily operated by White Western politicians in the global North. Overtime UN has gradually evolved, with its presence growing in the global South.

land. At this point, as Terry (2020) writes, “The primary audience of UN climate conference delegates was also kept along with a secondary audience of the global public” (p. 173).

In 2015, the Geo-Doc format was redefined to reflect its current state. A major difference was that the individual videos were placed on a GIS Map incorporating the multilinear interactive database to presentation of information, and were shortened from 45 minutes to 3-5 minutes. The GIS mapping model, promised advocates, allowed for spatial and temporal analyses and increased the amount of metadata associated with each video. Key to the success of this form of documentary was the associated request that viewers traverse the map on their own, discovering stories rather than being presented with them outright (Terry, 2020). At the 2015 Paris COP Summit where the new format was debuted, engagement increased and with it UN funding increased too, Geo-Doc production took a quantum leap forward from ~50 videos in 2015 to 181 videos the following year. The Geo-Docs format has remained virtually the same since.

In 2020 the York University Planetary Health Film Lab (PHFL) published a paper an evaluation on a recent Geo-Doc workshop. The report outlines the production process of Geo-Doc videos, reflecting with Youth upon their experiences.²⁷ The PHFL’s report identified climate change, inequality, and mass migration as prevalent stories youth gravitated towards. Reportedly, youth in the program were captivated by the Geo-Doc, with one participant writing “With documentaries and geo-docs there is a lot of information we can teach youth and adults back at home. If we all tell our story surely that’s going to turn heads” (Tilleczek and MacDonald, 2020, p. 13).

Geo-Doc videos create spaces where youth can be heard, effecting meaningful change. This was succinctly expressed by one youth participant: “That’s what we’re looking for” the participant explained, “to be listened to, to be seen by policy makers and to make a change, that’s the main goal” (Tilleczek and MacDonald, 2020, p. 14). Finally, the YCR organization recommended that in the future an “increased effort should be made to recruit participants from parts of the world where they may not otherwise have opportunity to participate in an experience such as the Film Lab (Tilleczek and MacDonald, 2020, p. 19), a point that will be further discussed in my conclusion.

²⁷ It is important to note that the YCR Geo-Doc workshop differs slightly from those mentioned above; participants were required to come in person, meaning youth from around the world flew in, congregating at York University before returning home and filming their videos.

In 2024, over 1000 videos populated the Geo-Doc GIS Map. Each year, new videos are created by youth across the globe as the story of Geo-Doc continues to evolve.

Geo-Doc presentations at United Nations Conference of Parties conference (2015–Present)

Each year from 2015 onwards the YCR Geo-Doc has been presented at the COP conferences to their “primary audience of UN climate conference delegates” (Terry, 2020, p. 173). To properly understand how Geo-doc videos are presented, I have opted to include a detailed description of the Geo-Doc presentation at Cop27. The following description can be extrapolated over the previous and subsequent presentations as they are structurally identical.

On November 9th 2022, at noon Magnus Mfoafo-M’Carthy (professor of social work at Wilfrid Laurier University) and Mark Terry (the executive director of *Youth Climate Report* and a professor of documentary filmmaking at York University) presented a one hour conference on the “Ghana Youth Video Program,” a subsection of the United Nation Youth Climate Report and the Planetary Health film Laboratory, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Eleven videos from Ghana were screened for UN officials. The videos were created by youth filmmakers Abdul-haqq Mahama, Gideon Ansong, Jeff Obutey Tawiah, Wisdom Wemegah, Miracle Damgare Wisdom, Etornam Ahiator, Najilau Dramundu, Atta Abdul Karim, Patrick Owusu Anakwa, Emmanuel Ennin, Manacy Sarfo Nyamekye and Ofori Anka Kofi. Each video explored a different aspect of the climate crisis including drought, flooding, rising sea levels, women’s rights, urban policy and agricultural adaptation. Notably, these are the first youth created documentaries from Ghana presented at any UN affiliated conference ever.

The presentation outlined particular impacts facing youth from Ghana. Mark Terry announced to the crowd that water related stories were the most common Ghanaian video theme, adding it gives you a really good idea of how climate change is impacting this particular African nation (Terry, 2022, UN COP27). He stressed the importance of responding to these youth videos, answering their pleas and the power held by delegates in the room to do so.²⁸

²⁸ Mfoafo-M’Carthy followed Terry’s words with a discussion of native African languages, stressing their importance in UN conversations, saying, “As you know when you watch most of the videos were conducted in local languages but translated into English so we [UN delegates] have the English language written underneath it so you really understand what is happening” (Mfoafo-M’Carthy, 2022, UN COP27). African languages continue to be excluded from major conferences like the UN, so this act of asking participants to respond in their native dialect added a further level of commentary in the UN environment, “The rationale being,” as he put it, “so youth can really

The Overall Geo-Doc

The YCR GIS Geo-Doc project presents opportunities for youth with or without prior film experience to create documentary videos for United Nations officials to watch and learn from, possibly informing policy.

Although tempting to consider each video as a different creation in isolation, I consider them simultaneously as individual entities, and as a narrative all together. Both self-contained stories and overall narratives require careful nonlinear, temporal and spatial story considerations. Geo-Doc videos in their capacity as a decentralised collection of video fragments and democratised narrative can be read as counter-hegemonic, as they push against monolithic western story structures and embrace complexities of place. The obvious point here is that Geo-Doc media is not a tool of dissemination, but rather a central part of the dynamic processes of activism and social space.

Geo-Doc videos provide impetus, offering information, news, underpinning and scaffolding politicalized agencies and actions. They assemble and energise communities, but also border them insofar as a community simultaneously includes and excludes.

Understanding activist media in such terms is important for this thesis, as all activist media is implicated in both inclusionary and exclusionary practices. Their empowering voices are both something to celebrate and something to question and be cautious of. As It has been widely acknowledged that digital social media is implicated in amplifying and polarising opinion, and the ways in which activist media becomes embroiled in sensationalist self-serving and referencing polemics is another topic for critical reflection.

The YCR Geo-Doc's purpose as a function or 'tool' for the United Nations quietly raises questions of how they might intrinsically position youth in relation to politicians and possibly alter youth forms of self-representation. My thesis will next unpack the YCR Geo-Doc's individual documentary stories, asking how they consider, support or challenge sociocultural mega trends such as, Humanism, liberalism, capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism.

interact with their culture and engage what was going on around them without being tied to English" (Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2022, UN COP27); language, translation and erasure became themes the YCR Geo-Doc that year brought into starker significance.

Chapter Three: Methodology and the YCR Geo-Doc

In this chapter, I explore my research methods and further elaborate the media context of my study. I start outlining my study which comprises two stages, the first is preparatory and an overview which supports the second more substantive stage. The chapter then concludes with an YCR Geo-Doc statistical overview.

3.1 The Study

My study consists of two empirical stages summarised in Figure 3.1. The first stage is dedicated to preparing Geo-Doc data and performing descriptive statistics and graphics (reported later in this chapter). This stage provides a background for the more extensive second stage, which presents a comparative narrative study that forms the bulk of the thesis.

Stage One	Data Preparation	• Converting Geo-Doc details into a Google spreadsheet format. • Development and use of an Apps Script program code to extract data. • Identifying and removing inoperable Links.
	Descriptive Statistical Overview	• Generate statistical data: • Average length of Geo-Doc videos • Graphs of Population and Sample Size and Continent Distribution.
Stage Two	Qualitative Analysis Narrative story analysis (130 Geo-Doc videos)	• 20 percent Sample. • Watch and take notes on identified Geo-Doc videos using a prompt sheet. • Constant Comparison of Geo-Doc video stories. • Identification Prominent Stories subdivided into stories of Climate Crisis and Stories of Youth. • Identification of exemplar docs for illustration and write up.

Table 3.1A: Two Stages of the Study

3.2 Stage One: data preparation and presentation

Geo-Doc digital data needed to be manipulated for analysis. The Geo-Doc Google Map enables users to download all associated data and compile it into a KML file. KML's files, however, are not compatible with Excel or Google Sheets, necessitating a conversion into XML format. To achieve this conversion, the website "anyconv.com" was used. Unfortunately, during this conversion, data became scrambled. Subsequently, the same website was employed to convert the scrambled data into a CSV file, resulting in clean and readable data, which was then converted back into XML format. The organised data, displayed in Figure 3.1B, consists of 11 categories: X, Y, Name, Title___Category, X_Coordinate, Y_Coordinate, Category, Climate_Researcher_Profile, Video, Country, Year, and gx_media_links. At this stage, any duplicated fields such as X, Y, gx_media_links/video, and Title_Category/category/title were removed.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
1	X	Y	Name	Title___Category	X_Coordinate	Y_Coordinate	Category	Climate_Researcher_Profile	Video	Country	Year	gx_media_links
2		3.3958	6.4531	Ray Kocur	Engineering Solution	6.4531	3.3958	An examination of ci	https://youtu.be/vzTz	NIGERIA	2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
3		-86.460612	80.143976	Various	Pollutants in the Atm	80.143976	-86.460612	Pollutants in the Atm	<iframe width="560"	CANADA (Ellesemere)	2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
4		120.9667	14.5833	Engineering Solution	Various	14.5833	120.9667	An examination of ci	<iframe width="560"	PHILIPPINES	2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
5		-87.6847	41.8369	Ray Kocur	Let's Go Chicago	41.8369	-87.6847	Environmental Solut	<iframe width="560"	USA (Chicago)	2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
6		-79.5036	43.7731	Youth Climate Repo	An Invitation	43.7731	-79.5036	Invitation fro Mark Tr	<iframe width="560"	CANADA (York Unive	2011	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
7		-58.01918	-67.739988	Ted Makym	The Weddell Sea	-67.739988	-58.01918	http://www.antarctica	<iframe width="560"	UK and ANTARCTIC	2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
8		-100	-75.1667	Andy M. Smith	Pine Island Glacier	-75.1667	-100	http://www.antarctica	<iframe width="560"	UK and ANTARCTIC	2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
9		-1.555087	53.806882	Anna Hogg, British A	Radacut	53.806882	-1.555087	http://www.sea.leeds	<iframe width="560"	UK and ANTARCTIC	2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz
10		-68.127411	-67.56784	Anna Hogg	Radacut	-67.56784	-68.127411	http://www.sea.leeds	<iframe width="560"	UK and ANTARCTIC	2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzTz

Figure 3.2A: Initial Categories

Geo-Doc data categories are as follows:

- 1) X/X_Coordinate: Longitude of the documentary creation location.
- 2) Y/Y_Coordinate: Latitude of the documentary creation location.
- 3) Name: Name(s) of the documentarians who created the video.
- 4) Title___Category: Title of the video and category of the video separated by a '/'. The title and category are selected by the documentarian.
- 5) Climate_Researcher_Profile: Link to social media or public information regarding the
- 6) Documentarians (not widely used).
- 7) Video/gx_media_links: Link to the YouTube video.
- 8) Year: Declared year of video publication.

9) Country: Declared country of video publication.

I	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
	Working	X	Y	Name	Title_Category	Category	Climate_Re	Video	Country	Year	gv_media_link	YT ID	Time(S)	Time (MM:SS)	DATE	View count	Video Title	
334	Working	-6.7924	39.2083	Kudra	"THERE'S GOLD IN YOUR TRASH"			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	TANZANIA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	178	02:58	7/23/2022	915	GYVC 2018 Ku		
335	Working	10.651	-61.3881	Keron	"AGRI RECOVERY KIT" / Green ar			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	TRINIDAD AND TO	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	137	02:17	7/24/2022	674	GYVC 2018 Ke		
336	Working	0.3476	32.5825	Kavuma	"PLASTIC BOTTLE HOUSE" / Gre			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	UGANDA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	87	01:27	7/25/2022	2129	GYVC 2018 Ka		
337	Working	39.9612	-82.9988	Asnika	"WHAT DOES A HYDRAULIC ENG			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	USA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	164	02:44	7/26/2022	1820	GYVC 2018 As		
338	Working	40.7128	-74.006	Saad	"FOR THE PLANET" / Responsible			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	USA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	167	02:47	7/27/2022	1537	GYVC 2018 Sa		
339	Working	40.6782	-73.9442	Ryan	"PEACE BOAT" / Green and Climat			https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	USA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	181	03:01	7/28/2022	1620	GYVC 2018 Ry		
340	Not working	-74	-108.5	Cody Williams, University of C	Thwaites Glacier	Rising Sea Level	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	ANTARCTICA	2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	Error fetching vic	#VALUE!	7/29/2022	Error fetching vic	Error fetching vic		
341	Working	-32.2376351	115.6285153	ABC Australia	Drain Socks: Pollution Solution	Plastic Waste	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	AUSTRALIA	2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	110	01:50	7/30/2022	29764	Meet the drain s		
342	Working	6.9077	2.4538	Imelda Jacqueline Tobossou	Integrated Web-being	Nature-based sc	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	BENIN	2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	179	02:59	7/31/2022	1148	Imelda Jacqueli		
343	Working	-1.4557	-48.4902	Mariana Vieira	Paradox of water in the Amazon	Nature-based sc	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	BRAZIL	2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	94	01:34	8/1/2022	918	Mariana Vieira, I		
344	Working	-25.4809	-49.3044	Gabriele Bonat Michtal	Urban Gardens	Nature-based sc	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	Brazil	2019	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RV0CCKT0U	181	03:01	8/2/2022	2371	Gabriele Bonat f		

Figure 3.2B: Expanded Categories

The initial nine categories were then expanded with an additional seven categories, as depicted in Figure 3.1B to enrich the scope of the quantitative research. The newly incorporated categories are:

- 1) Video is Working/Not Working: this category is self-explanatory and crucial. It serves to determine the existence status of a video, as numerous videos have either been privatised or removed from YouTube altogether.
- 2) YouTube ID: each YouTube video possesses a unique identification string composed of numbers and letters which facilitates the retrieval of the video from the YouTube API through custom code (found in appendix).
- 3) Time (S) / Time (MM:SS): this displays the video duration in seconds and minutes.
- 4) Date of Publication: distinguishable from the prior date field, this category represents the date of video publication on YouTube. The previous date field denotes the date of entry into the Geo-doc/Youth Climate Change Report dataset.
- 5) View Count: this records the number of views on YouTube, offering insights into the popularity and reach of each video.
- 6) YouTube Video Title: addressing potential discrepancies, this category captures the actual title of the video on YouTube. This correction is particularly relevant when the video title in the Geo-Doc dataset differs from the YouTube video title.
- 7) Video Description: while not visible in the screenshot due to size constraints, this category encompasses the description provided for the YouTube video on the platform.

The data within each of these categories was scraped from youtube through Google’s API and custom Apps Script software code, written by myself with assistance from ChatGPT. This code, which can be found in *Appendix One*, is 227 lines in length and contains nine functions. Each function interacts with YouTube's API (Application Programming Interface) imputing the YouTube ID and fetching Youtube video metadata information as output. Through this custom code, video metadata extraction and processing was automated, streamlining the research process. Generating Descriptive Statistics and charts is then straightforward in Google Sheets. A series of charts and graphs were produced and a selection of these are included later in this chapter in the description of the Geo-Doc section.

Year	Not working	Working	Grand Total
2008		1	1
2009		5	5
2010		3	3
2011		1	1
2012		4	4
2013		10	10
2014		8	8
2015		37	37
2016	117	46	163
2017	1	51	52
2018	1	53	54
2019	4	87	91
2020		31	31
2021	5	114	119
2022	1	93	94
2023		59	59
Grand Total	129	603	732

Table 3.2C describes the population of working and not working videos per year.

Prior to the completion of stage one, an assessment revealed that out of 732 Geo-doc videos featured on the map, 603 were linked to operational YouTube videos, while 129 Youtube links were linked to inoperational videos (seen in Figure 3.1C). This could be because a user deleted/privated the video, or it has been flagged for copyright reasons. Consequently, the data set has been curated, with non-functioning links being removed from the population. This curation, while reducing the overall video

count, ensures the fidelity and reliability of the dataset, hopefully leading to a more accurate and representative exploration.

3.3 Stage Two: narrative or story analysis.

Year	Population	20%	-	-	-
2008	1	1	2016	46	10
2009	5	1	2017	51	11
2010	3	1	2018	53	11
2011	1	1	2019	87	18
2012	4	1	2020	31	7
2013	10	2	2021	114	24
2014	8	2	2022	93	19
2015	37	8	2023	59	12
-	-	-	Total	603	130 (rounded up)

Table 3.3A: Geo-Doc video sample analysed

This stage starts by selecting a sample of Geo-Doc videos. Since a significant number of videos are inactive, with links that lead to empty pages, using my computer program, I was able to isolate just the videos which are operational. There are around 600 active documentaries as of 2023 which is still far too many to handle in any depth in a narrative analysis of this nature. I wanted to balance the number and diversity of these documentaries with a structure that enables in-depth analysis of a selected sample. I opted for a computer-generated randomised sample of approximately 20 percent of operational videos in each year of publication, a count provided in Figure 3.3A.

My analysis of the documentary sample was guided by thematic story analysis incorporating constant comparative analysis. Earthy and Cronin (2008) offer an overview of narrative analysis [NA] methods noting its popularity in social research as well as its diversity; NA has become associated with different data collection methods and analysis (including autoethnography, life history, and story-telling). Acknowledging differences, the authors highlight a common aim “to explore different ways in which both the production and analysis of qualitative data can be understood as processes whereby different groups of people engage in storytelling” (p. 2). Creswell (2013) provides defining features of narrative research, which collects “stories” from “individuals (and documents, and group conversations) about individuals’ lived and told experiences” (p. 71). In these methods, stories are developed collaboratively between researchers and storytellers.

Those involved in NA mostly use the terms “narrative” or “story” thereby recognising sociocultural constructions and contingencies. In this respect, narratives or stories are not simply representing phenomena; they are ways in which meanings of phenomena are constructed and formed. While stories and narratives are used synonymously and interchangeably, I prefer to use the term stories in this research.

Seeking to reveal the stories and strategies employed by selected Geo-Doc media, Saputra and Loisa (2021) describe four advantages with narrative methods when analysing short videos that I borrow from:

First, narrative analysis helps understand how knowledge, meaning, and values are produced and disseminated in society. Second, narrative analysis understands how the social and political condition is told in a particular way, helping us to identify the dominant social strengths and values in society. Third, narrative analysis allows us to examine the hidden and latent aspects of a media text. Fourth, narrative analysis reflects continuity and change in communication (p. 867).

These features seemed to fit closely with my study and were used as a methodological guide. Narrative research allows careful reflection on underpinning values and ideology. Both Czarniawska (2004) and Creswell (2013, p. 70) extend this point by underscoring chronology as key, since research is organised primarily in linear temporality. This can be described through a variety of terminology, for instance, beginning/middle/end, past/present/future, equilibrium/disequilibrium/new-equilibrium and condition/outcome/solution-term, all of which resemble, on one hand, the Greek monomyth, and on the other “life course stages” (Creswell, 2013, p. 70).

It needs stressing that individual Geo-Doc videos are short documentaries (often around four minutes in duration). In comparison, film analysis focuses on videos often several hours long. Georgakopoulou (2007, p.3) introduces “small story research” as a significant feature of NA’s compatibility with short stories in everyday life and social media. Social media environments such as social media platforms and Geo-Docs offer opportunities “for sharing life in miniaturised form” and as “micro-perspectives” (p.3) which Georgakoulou argues lend themselves particularly well to narrative analysis.

Primary Questions	Complementary Questions
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How does the documentary tell the climate crisis story?	How does the video situate the climate crisis? How is the climate crisis represented in narrative and visual forms?
How does the documentary story youth?	How does the video situate youth? What roles do youth have? How are youth represented in narrative and visual forms?

Table 3.3B: Guiding questions and subquestions

My narrative analysis systematically views, compares, and reviews a selection of Geo-Doc videos seeking to isolate and record dominant stories. This analysis was guided by a series of questions (see Table 3.3B). I made copious notes about the climate crisis context, imagery, and stories of each video, which included documenting quotations and video segments that I saw as appealing and/or illustrative. I then moved to the next documentary and the next in a given year. This eventually took form in an iterative process, shuffling back and forth between groups of documentaries. During this process, the goal was to isolate and compare prominent stories which were ultimately gathered together. In this regard my analysis was thematically inductive and deductive, that is, deductively guided by selected questions and contemporary work on youth climate media, whilst also seeking to allow the data to emerge, inductively, during analysis and shape and extend these early orientations.

3.4 Descriptive statistical analysis of Geo-Doc website data

In the first stage of research, I undertook a broad quantitative analysis of Geo-Doc website data. This enables counts and comparisons of the average length of Geo-Doc videos per-annum, country distribution of videos from 2008-2023, per-annum distribution of videos across continents and categorising Geo-Docs trends from the years 2019-2023. This data are represented in graphic form here:

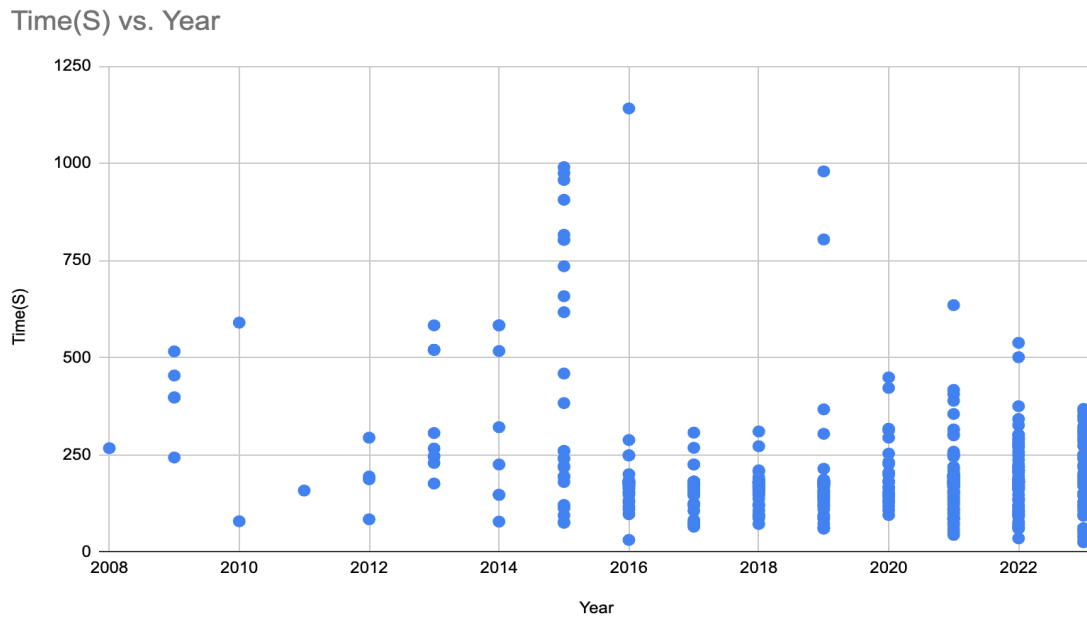
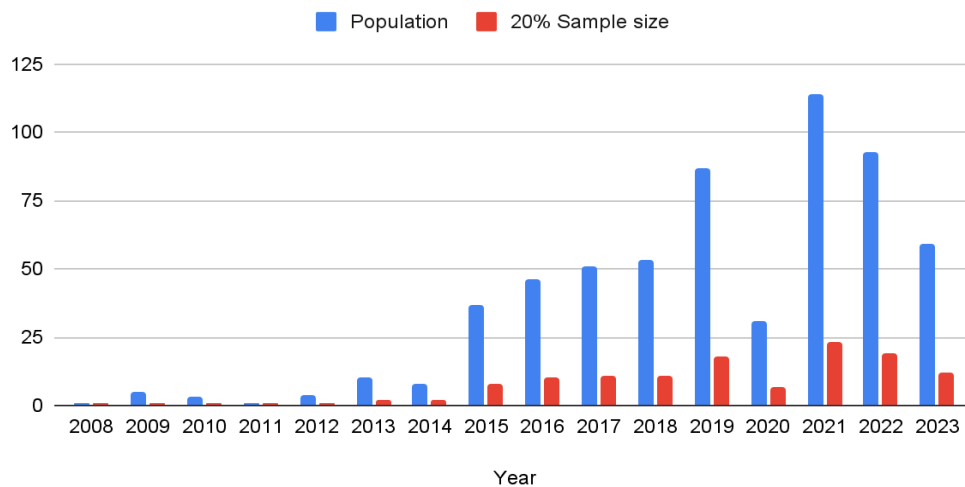


Figure 3.4A - Video length in seconds charted against year (June, 2024) (Videos over 1250 seconds, 20m:50s, were omitted from this figure)

The graph above charts Geo-Doc video length against year. Averaging the length of all videos prior to 2024 reveals they are on average 4:18 minutes in length, with some videos reaching the one hour mark and others, as small as seven seconds (cf. TIKTOK length). Greater variations in documentary length are found in 2015 (and before 2008-2015). After 2015, documentary lengths are more consistent (under 500 seconds).

Population and Sample Size



Video Population Per year (N.603)

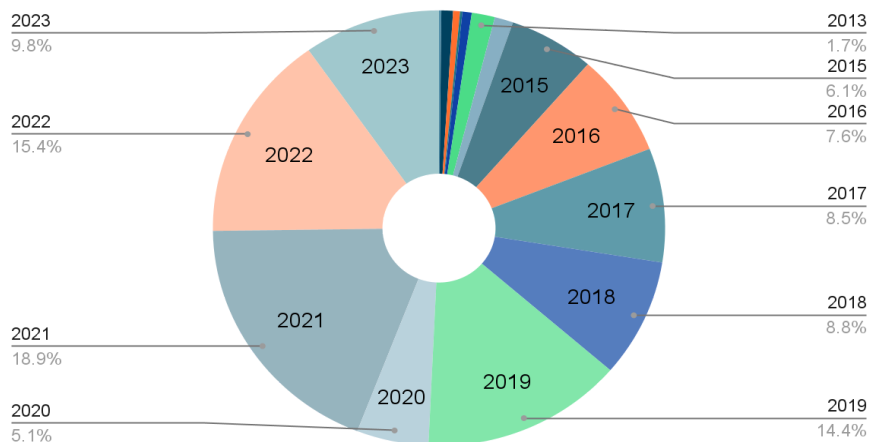


Figure (3.4B and C), graphs of the distribution of Geo-Doc videos across nine continents

Figures (3.4A and B) represents the number of videos produced per year, spanning the 2008 to 2023 time periods. These data are represented in bar and pie chart formats. The data showcases variations in video production counts over time with a steady increase from 2015, a peak number in 2021, and a significant drop in the number of videos produced in 2020 (only 31 videos), attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting Geo-Doc video production.

GeoDoc Distribution Across Countries

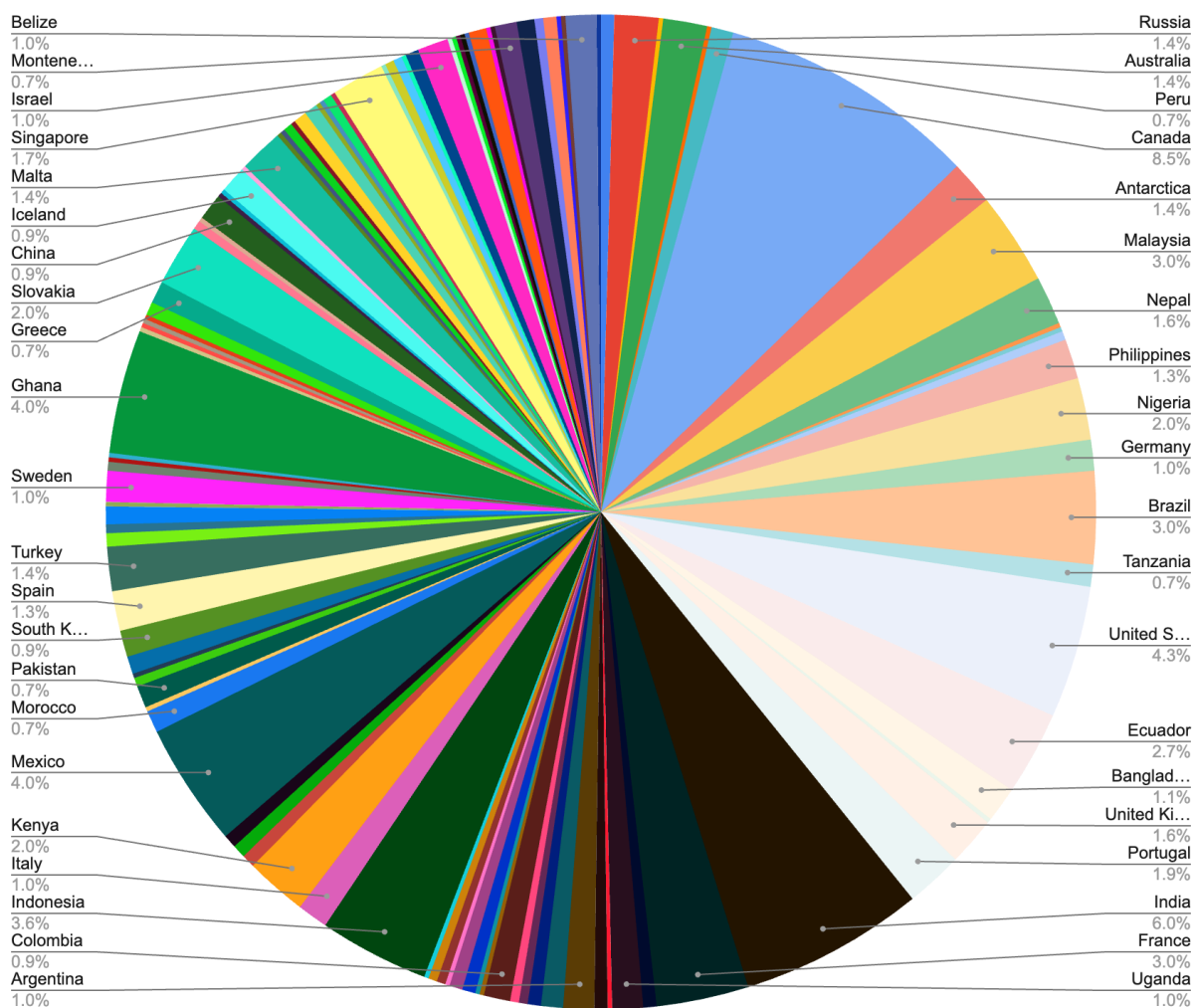


Figure (3.4D): Country distribution of Geo-Doc videos over 2008-2023 (generated, 2024).

Figure 3.4D offers a pie chart of the country distribution of videos from 2008 to 2023. The chart reveals that Canada has the most significant share, contributing 8.5 percent of the total distribution (which might be expected as this project started in Toronto, Canada). Following Canada, India has a notable 6.0 percent share, and the United States contributes 4.3 percent. Other significant contributors include Mexico and Ghana, each with 4.0 percent, as well as France, Brazil, and Malaysia, each accounting for 3.0 percent. Ecuador also makes a notable contribution with 2.7 percent. Several countries including Portugal (1.9 percent), Nigeria and Kenya (both at 2.0 percent), and Slovakia and Greece (both at 0.7

percent) have lower counts. Other countries, including Israel, Belize, Sweden, and South Korea each contribute around 1.0 percent or less to the total count. Figure 3.4D illustrates the global outreach of the Geo-Doc initiative, which has now spread around the globe. Various Geo-Doc initiatives and partnerships have been effective at diversifying representation, such as the Ghana initiative in 2023. Videos that do not fall within country borders are excluded from this figure (Eg Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Arctic and Antarctica).

Continent Distribution of 20% Population Sample

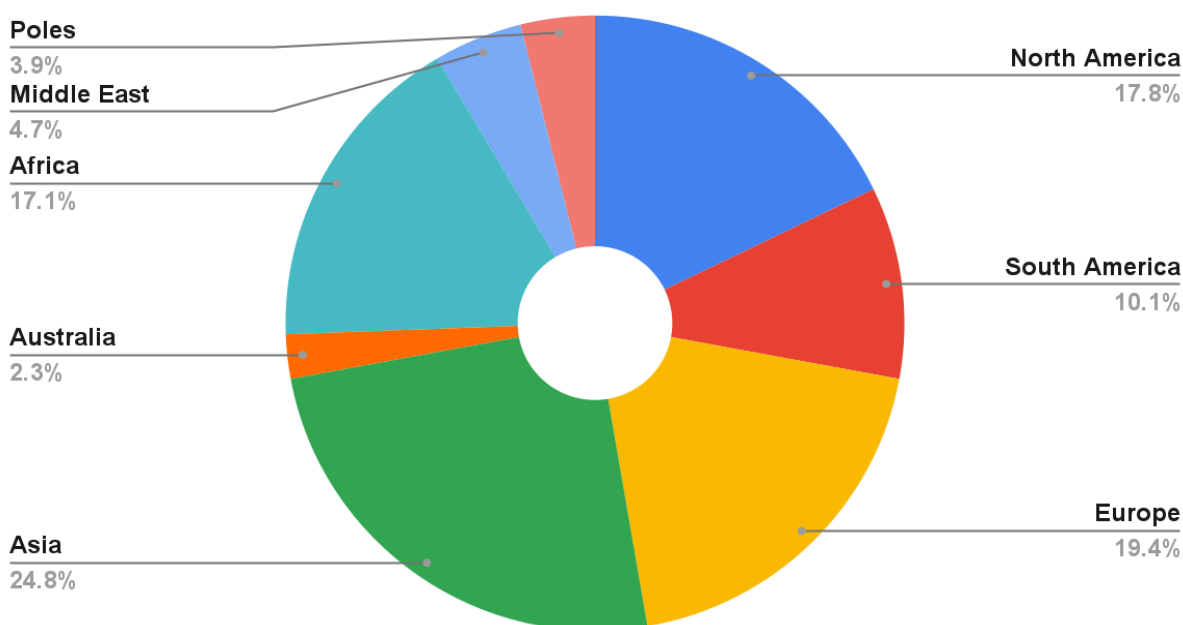


Figure (3.4E): graphs continent distribution of Geo-Doc videos within the 20% sample (generated, 2024).

For my narrative analysis, I selected a 20 percent sample of Geo-Doc videos per year. This was achieved using computer generated random numbers. Figure 3.4E represents the continental distribution of my 20 percent random sample. This is spread relatively evenly, with Asia containing the largest percentage of videos (24.8 percent). Clusters of Geo-Doc videos are found within North America and Europe. Surprisingly, South America's total count and density was low. Africa is represented, with most videos clumped in particular regions including Ghana. There was a notable absence of videos from Refugee Camps, which warrants further inquiry.



WordCloud 1: Generated from 2019 (title and Category)



WordCloud 2: Generated from 2020 (title and Category)



WordCloud 3: Generated from 2021 (title and Category)



WordCloud 4: Generated from 2022 (title and Category)



WordCloud 5: Generated from 2023 (title and Category)

Figure (3.4F-J): Word clouds generated from Geo-Doc media from 2019-2023

To create Word Clouds 1-6, I inputted the Geo-Doc video titles and categories (2019-2023) provided by youth documentarians with the frequency of any word in either the title or category affecting the scaled-size of the words; more frequent words appear larger, and less frequent words smaller. These clouds offer depictions of dominant themes in each year. Videos released prior to 2019 are unfortunately

not accompanied by categories and have therefore been excluded. The total videos included is 384, representing 63 percent of the overall map.

The 2019 WC highlights terms related to climate change and environmental action. "Climate" stands out as the central theme, surrounded by words like "Naturebased," "Change," "Combat," and "Balancing". The tightly clustered WCs suggest a dispersed set of video categories without any single issue being represented. Specific references such as "Thunberg," "Greta" and "activism" point to notable events in climate crisis politics and media coverage.

In 2020, Geo-Doc climate documentaries focused on "human health", "pollution", "conservation", "water," and global environmental impacts. Words including "plastic pollution", "water", and "sustainable energy solutions" are significant in the WC. The rather unexpected word "magnetic" appears, which references Geo-Doc videos concerned with arctic changes in the magnetic field of the Earth. The pandemic substantially reduced the total number of videos produced in 2020 (see figure 3.2C), videos from the Arctic gain greater prominence due to the small number of videos.

In 2021, "Climate" remains a dominant term, but there is notable inclusion of words like "Restoring" and "Balance." One might presume that there was an importance placed upon pollution control that year as frequent appearances of "Pollution" and "Waste," are alongside more common words "Nature," "Protecting," and "Land" are displayed.

In 2022, focus notably shifts to include "Indigenous Rights", "Biodiversity Loss", and the diverse impacts of climate change. "Pollution", "Sustainability", and "Agriculture" also remain key themes. There is also a significant focus on the persistent challenge of plastic pollution and the importance of sustainable agriculture.

In 2023, practical solutions such as "Recycling" and "Reforestation" emerge, with words like "Sustainability", and "Pollution" continuing to be critical themes, with additional emphasis on "Tree Planting" and other forms of global environmental stewardship.



Word Cloud 6: Top 25 Words from GeoDocTitles and categories 2019-2023

Figure (3.4K): Top 25 Words from GeoDocTitles and categories 2019-2023

3.4 Summary of website data

Manipulated *Geo-Doc* media data provides a helpful starting point to illuminate complex qualitative attributes of videos, such as their number, distribution and focus. Generalised counts and comparisons undertaken of factors (average length of Geo-Doc videos, per-annum quantification of Geo-Doc videos, country distribution of videos from 2008-2023, per-annum distribution of videos across continents in the 20 percent dataset and, categorising the YCR Geo-Doc video trends from the years 2019-2023) showcase the growth and consolidation of the Geo-Doc media form, with most videos hovering around four and a half minutes. Canada, United States and India contain the most videos, by a relatively small margin and are notably changing over time. Geo-Doc videos are increasingly diverse in terms of country and region of origin. My randomly selected 20 percent subsection offers a relatively even distribution of videos across global continents.

Word Cloud analysis displays a variety of generalised and shifting title and label themes per-year, with the most common words between 2019 and 2023 (384 videos) being: “Climate Change”, “Pollution”, “Health”, “Action” and “Restoring” (see in Word Cloud 6). The titles videos have clearly changed over time, influenced by high profile world events including Greta Thunberg’s rise to prominence in 2019, the pandemic in 2020 and the more recent growing Indigenous sovereignty movement. This reaffirms the

ongoing contemporary nature of Geo-Doc videos, and youth documentaries ability to comment and represent *recent* developments.

The following sections seek to tease apart the documentary content, imploding and re-storying common expositions and temporal predispositions in more theoretical ways. This quantitative deconstruction has laid the groundwork for upcoming discussions.

Chapter Four: Storying Climate Crisis

This chapter responds to my first research question: how do YCR Geo-Doc videos story climate crisis? By viewing and reviewing videos and constant comparisons, I have identified four climate crisis stories, which are elaborated and illustrated in what follows. These are: [4.1] Stories of Impacts, [4.2] Stories of Humans, [4.3] Stories of Resources, and [4.4] Stories of Solutions. For each story, I include a discussion of associated narratives, and share selected examples of videos including a screenshot. My argument is that these stories feature most prominently in the Geo-Doc video sample but not in a singular corresponding sense (a video covers a single story) but mostly in combination. For example, stories of Impacts are frequently combined with stories of Humans, although not always. Similarly, stories of Resources combine with stories of Solutions.²⁹

4.1 Stories of Impacts

YCR Geo-Doc videos commonly address the climate crisis by focusing on its impacts. The focus here is on visible, climate-related environmental changes that are typically localised, contemporary, episodic (short-term), spectacular, severe and disastrous. Two different types of stories are popular, focusing on Weather Impacts and Plastic and Chemical Waste Pollution.³⁰

Stories of weather-related climate impacts are frequent in the analysed sample (and in broader popular media and film). Young documentarians represent the climate crisis through imagery and stories of weather's unpredictable, herculean powers, and destructive capacity. Extreme weather events include: flooding, tornadoes, hurricanes, heatwaves, heavy rainfall, Arctic Sea ice melt, coastal erosion, desertification, snowpack decline, storm surges and disruption of ocean currents. Impacts of rising sea levels and ocean surges feature heavily in the data set often geographically located in coastal communities. Here are some examples:

²⁹ The YCR Geo-Doc videos curate these four stories in media form and in doing so actively make meaning of the climate crisis.

³⁰ The latest round of Geo-Doc videos (2024) extend these to include fires, predominantly located in forests in the Pacific Northwest. I note these as a significant emerging trend, however my focus is on Geo-Doc videos released before 2023 and so they do not feature in my sample and analysis.



Figure 4.1A: *Jamaica and Climate Change* by Claudja Barry's. Jamaica (2015)

Claudja Barry's 2015 video *Jamaica and Climate Change* is a powerful weather-focused documentary. Claudja asks local climatologist Ellenor Jones: "What do you believe the greatest climate change crisis facing the world is?" Jones answers, "weather patterns, they are climate change." Rather than CO_2 emissions per-se, weather is climate change. After this statement, Barry and Jones continue their conversation, situating climate change as a global issue. They discuss how the Caribbean is disproportionately affected by weather variability and rising sea levels, articulating a climate justice perspective in which precarious ocean communities, such as Small Island States, disproportionately bear the brunt of climate changes while being least responsible for global carbon emissions.



Figure 4.1B: *Marcos Villacís - Climate Change* by Andrés Reinoso. Ecuador, (2015)

Andrés Reinoso's video from 2015 entitled *Marcos Villacís—Climate Change* revealingly resembles an actual weather broadcast (Figure 4.1B). In numerous YCR Geo-Doc videos, climate crisis is synonymous with weather as a harbinger or warning, a metaphorical stick to the ecological carrot.

Scientifically, climate and weather differ significantly. Climate refers to long-term atmospheric changes based on statistical averages, which occur relatively slowly over large areas. In contrast, weather is commonly described as shorter-term and volatile, involving rapid changes in specific locations and typically reported as a forecast. Although a 1.5C change in weather is usually an uneventful everyday occurrence, in contrast, a 1.5 C change in climate is, of course, disastrous.

Despite key differences, aberrant weather events are familiar and powerful ways of representing climate crises. They connect to everyday narratives and magnified experiences of weather. The story of 'weather' brings a visual form of immediacy to the crisis that clearly lends itself to the Geo-Doc medium.

Stories of plastic and chemical waste Impacts are abundant in the Geo-Doc dataset. These stories explore the environmental devastation caused by the mismanagement and pollution of plastic and chemical waste. Water, particularly rivers, is a popular setting. Some examples include:



Figure: 4.1C-D - *The Subachoque River* by Planetary Health Film Lab. Colombia, (2020)

The Subachoque River is a Geo-Doc video produced by Planetary Health Film Lab in 2020 (see Figures 4.1C-D). It features the Subachoque River in Colombia, which has been polluted and rendered uninhabitable by garbage and toxic agricultural run-off, mainly by fertiliser. Clearcutting in nearby farmland has left large patches of stagnant water, which serve as virulent breeding grounds for mosquitoes, spreading deadly Dengue Fever. In this video, the climate crisis is equated to a local story of

industrial environmental impacts and destruction. These impacts are intercut with images of youth at F4F global strikes, who are filmed holding signs saying, “Save our home” and “There is no PLANet B!” They protest against rising atmospheric contaminants.

In this case, youth documentarians interpret the climate crisis through the lens of local aquatic environmental contamination. The video’s narrative blends the issues of toxic waste pollution with global climate protests. The narrative suggests that local ecological devastation is wrong, and that youth protests by raising public awareness will hopefully lead to lasting environmental changes.



Figure 4.1E – *Alpedrete Quarries* by Javier Torrado & Aitor Iglesias. Spain, (2019)

Another appealing example is the video *Alpedrete Quarries* by Javier Torrado and Aitor Iglesias (2019). Javier is pictured above (Figure 4.1E) standing in front of an unused granite quarry in Spain, a backdrop for an ecological decline and restoration story. The video compassionately follows Javier as he investigates a local quarry that was abandoned after a mining company ceased production. His parents remember swimming in the quarry, a luxury Javier has been unable to enjoy since the water was deemed too toxic for recreational activities. Refusing to accept this, Javier organises a clean-up of the polluted quarry and by extension his “future” (which has already begun). He hopes to see the return of animal life, including species like the gallipato (Iberian newt), sapillo pintojo (painted frog), and the frog of San Antonio.

Again, a connection between local pollution and the climate crisis serves as a narrative vehicle, an arresting story, to convey human negligence regarding environmental actions. In this respect, water contamination, sickness, and pollution come to represent the health of our planet. Javier encourages

others to “know the quarries” in the hopes that they might act and fight for the environment. There is a tangible sense-making process, where the evocative medium of water represents life itself, the purity of the natural world, and a natural order. This has been compromised, and needs, nay requires, obligatory protection.

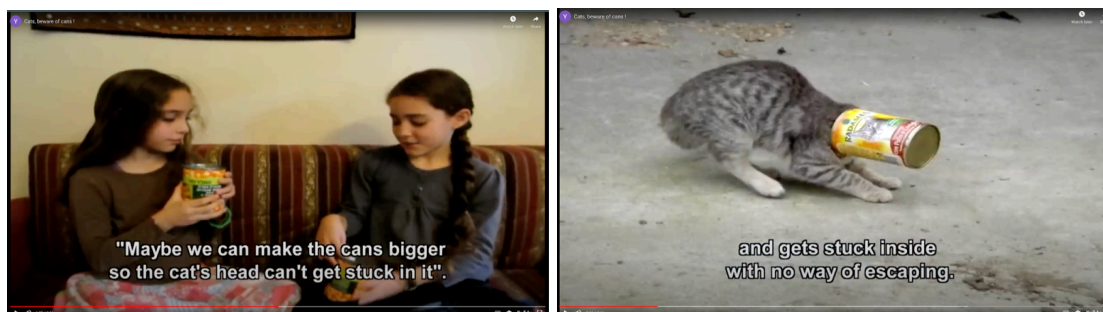


Figure 5.1F-G – *Cats, Beware of Cans* unauthored, Israel (2015)

Efforts to clean communities are a common video topic. The video *Cats, Beware of Cans* (Israel, 2015) takes the form of a dialogue between two children regarding the pressing issue of felines trapped in tin cans. Local cats frequently get their heads trapped in discarded tin cans while searching for food scraps. Young documentarians emotively urge manufacturers to make larger cans as an urgent solution. It is an unorthodox, yet adorable and affectively powerful story. In these and many other examples, climate crisis is a story of material changes: weather and waste mismanagement. The focus here is on anthropogenic destructive environmental impacts. The crisis manifests in visible ecological changes.



Technically, plastic and chemical pollution are not straightforward examples of climate issues. Single-use plastic is produced from fossil fuels, and the production process emits significant greenhouse gases, thereby contributing to climate change. Mike Burners-Lee's (2024) recent analysis notes, however, that while plastic bags (heavily featured in Geo-Docs database) have become a focus of sustained high-profile environmental campaigning and noteworthy gains (and now banned in some countries including Kenya and Canada), their carbon production are negligible in global carbon economies. In fact, paper bags often have even larger carbon impacts, which is often misunderstood and overlooked.

My point is that the impact of plastic and chemical waste as a climate issue is more nuanced than these videos suggest. As a solid pollutant, plastic enters ecosystems largely from waste mismanagement (most

famously depicted in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch). Plastic waste is harmful to terrestrial and aquatic life through entanglement and ingestion. However, while plastic production directly contributes to atmospheric GHGs and climate change, the impacts of plastic waste are demonstrably different.

In general terms, the YCR climate crisis story seems to act as a “catch-all,” provoking youth documentarians to share visible, local environmental impacts that concern them, which relate to weather, toxic waste, clean water, soil, and caring for non-human others. This generalising trend seems to connect with Mike Hulme’s (2024) recent assertion that climate change has become “the mother of all issues,” a central, overriding story in which all environmental concerns, ethics, and politics become drawn into. In this context—the selected Geo-Doc database sample—the story of the climate crisis takes form and meaning in narratives of human-induced environmental impacts, with a heavy focus on weather and waste impacts.

4.2 Stories of Humans

For the most part, Geo-Doc videos focus on human experiences and actions. These are stories in which humans are affected by climate changes and respond by taking various actions. The stories, in this regard, are mainly anthropocentric or (sentimental) humanistic. Indeed, non-human entities are often peripheral or ignored altogether, with some noteworthy exceptions, such as those infamous cats trapped in food cans as mentioned above. Some examples of human-centric narratives include:



Figure 4.2A – *Treading Tides* by Hannah Nichol, Canada (2020)

Hannah Nichol's beautifully shot and edited local video *Treading Tides* bears witness to changing weather patterns in Windsor on Lake Ontario. Dr Robert McLeman, a local climate expert, is interviewed offering complex insight into rising water levels:

You get a sudden thawing event where the temperatures go way up and so you get a lot of water pouring into rivers but there's still ice in the rivers and that hasn't melted yet so the ice actually forms dams and so the water that's rushing into the river backs up behind these ice dams and start to cause floods so the dynamics of our river. (McLeman, 1:53, Nichol's video *Treading Tides*.)

Nichols responds by urging the audience to heed her warning as she watches the world slip through her fingers. Although fluctuations in water levels in Lake Ontario create a shifting ecological context, this remains very much a human story about Hannah and other cottagers affected by these local changes. The emerging human climate story is relatable and powerful, connecting the climate crisis to a local (human) community reacting to changes.



Figure 4.2B – *The Surge* by Etornam Ahiator, Ghana (2020)

*The Surge*³¹ is a powerful documentary directed by Etornam Ahiator and set in the coastal town of Keta, Ghana. It describes a storm and flooding event that took place on the 7th November 2021 around

³¹ This video was presented at the 2022 Council of Parties (COP) meeting the Youth Climate Report, which focused on a series of videos from Ghana. These were the first Ghana videos ever included in the COP climate negotiations.

3:30am. Local residents recount the tragic devastation caused by the tidal wave. Ms Agbenato is filmed sitting and reflecting “the sea came for all my belongings, so I have nowhere else to sleep now.” Now, Ms. Agbenato sleeps in a local church, having lost her home to the flood. Ms. Akutor Sunana explains that she was unaware that the sea would come to her house but that day “the impact of the flood was huge. If it was not for the grace of God I would not have survived.” The sea washed local houses and livelihoods away (including fishing boats and nets). Extremely moving interviews with displaced residents are intercut with images of the sea and its impacts. Ms Borica Daryo acknowledges the local support that she has received, looking into the distance she says, “where I am at the moment, I owe a lot of people” and concludes “I am worried.” The video beautifully and powerfully captures human stories about the localised climate crisis. The video concludes with a plea to the Ghanaian government for urgent storm protection resources.

One distinctive power of the Geo-Doc database format is its ability to showcase different places around the world and compare the effects of the climate crisis on local residents. Yet there is a difference in scale from the cottages in the affluent global north and the villages in the Global South, a contrast that is not easily addressed in these and other stories. It is important to keep these differences in scale in mind, acknowledging the ambivalence in these videos, where youth present the current moment in isolation, magnifying some stories while leaving others unexplored.



Figure 4.2C – *Rethinking Nature, Thinking with Nature*, no author, France (2017)

The video depicted in Figure 4.2C is titled *Rethinking Nature, Thinking with Nature* (France, 2017). There is a cause-and-effect story structure: bugs are eating our gardens, with increasing bug levels being

blamed on the climate crisis. This leads to the youth encouraging and protecting the hedgehog community to eat the harmful slugs. Young people are shown saying “animals are just as important as people,” and “It was good to get out of the classroom.” The young people's solution is to create and distribute “protect nature” and “hedgehog crossing” road signs, hoping that drivers will be more careful. Here, the climate crisis is represented through a story of shifting ecosystems, where hedgehogs offer a natural solution (an ecosystem services model). The story suggests that humans are assisting nature in self-correcting. While this is a story about hedgehogs, it is deeply intertwined with a narrative of human involvement and agency. Once again, the Geo-Doc database narrative gravitates toward an anthropocentric mindset placing humans in the centre of ecosystems, with other plants and animal life—lacking agency—being dependent on human interventions. The underlying story is ultimately one of human dominance.



Personally, I find the highlighted videos powerful and heartwarming documentaries exploring complex global issues of shifting ecosystems set within contexts of those living within compounding impacts of poverty, colonialism, capitalism and climate. I discuss the absence of these historical factors in my concluding chapter. For now, note that in these inspiring conservation projects, humans still take centre stage. Mangroves, hedgehogs, floods, coastal erosion, and other related concerns are conserved as natural barriers for human protection and welfare (a climate adaptation initiative), rather than for their intrinsic eco-centered values. Geo-Doc videos draw boundaries between what is human and what is not, often depicting weather as a force in opposition to humanity—a final frontier to be tamed or quelled. This counterforce is defined by its difference; weather is considered 'natural' when humanity deems it to be so, and 'unnatural' when it does not conform. The point I seek to convey in this section is that human stories take centre stage in the Geo-Doc video sample. Sentimental humanism serves as a common underpinning philosophy throughout these videos.

4.3 Stories of Resources

Geo-Doc videos often tell a resource-focused story, where the climate crisis is framed as a problem of material and economic resources. This is a familiar, popular, and successful contemporary environmental

trope, in which the environment is equated to natural resources and largely framed in terms of economic and social development and growth. Such an approach has limitations, as it potentially simplifies complex ecological issues. Portraying environmental stewardship as simply a matter of more effectively managing and exploiting resources for human benefit, rather than addressing broader ecological and sustainability relationships and concerns. The resource narrative hinges on the tension between environmental conservation and economic progress. This narrative has been extremely successful in bringing about short-term changes. For example, carbon taxation has demonstrably worked, and the Reduce-Reuse-Recycle movement has increased resource awareness and reduction in schools and various other contexts. However, critics argue that resource focused environmentalism can sideline intrinsic values of ecosystems and balanced need for holistic, deep-rooted solutions.

There are lots of resource story examples:



Figure 4.3A – People and Mangroves Together by Anne Wanjiru, Kenya (2017)

Anne Wanjiru's video *People and Mangroves Together* documents a mangrove conservation project emblematic of an ecological perspective. The project is a response to clear-cutting in Kenya: in the last 20 years, one-third of wetland mangroves have been harvested for lumber. A local youth tells the audience, "I have been cutting mangroves for five years, but not anymore." In the video and its video kin, Youth are represented as 'grateful' for the money and resources this project is bringing into the community, and children are shown attending high school. This project generates funds through the sale of biocarbon credits to countries (including Canada, Italy, Ireland, France) as a blue forest planting project. Some of these funds are used in education projects.

Ezann Kuai and Yi Zhung (age 15) from Nanyang Girls' Secondary School, Singapore curate a video titled *The Impact of Climate Change on Urban Environments* (2021). This powerful short video, lasting under three minutes, highlights how the climate crisis has damaged 'urban infrastructure' both locally and globally. The video asks viewers to reduce their resource-use by reducing household electricity consumption and bringing reusable bags to grocery stores. The focus is firmly placed on resources—specifically urban infrastructure and waste management. These resources include plastic bags and household appliances, which Kuai and Zhung explain are often mismanaged within existing societal systems.



Figure 4.3B – *One Meal, A Lot of Garbage!* By Gili Dorfman, Noam Elbaz And Roni, Omer, Yontan.B, Ofer, Rotem, Yonatan.T, Yael, Inbar, Ori, Ilay, Maor and Amir. Israel, (2019)

Food is a recurring theme in this Geo-Doc database story sample. For example, *One Meal, A Lot of Garbage!* (2019) by Gili Dorfman, Noam Elbaz, and others (Figure 4.3B), follows a class of students as they reflect on their 'wasteful school meals. Students criticise "Hafsakat Ochel" (premade lunches) that contain plastic bins and wrappers. It is a story of a food-focused garbage reduction project. Students present facts to the camera such as "every one of us creates 1.7 kilograms of garbage a day" and others. Although agriculture contributes extensively to carbon emissions, these videos tend to focus on food waste reduction rather than food production itself. The focus is on environmental decline as a result of human misuse of food resources.



Figure 4.3C – *Make City Dwellers Green Farmers* By Gnim Mignake. Togo, (2019)

Another food example is Gnim Mignake’s 2019 video from Togo titled *Make City Dwellers Green Farmers* (see Figure 4.3C). This is a powerful and engaging video that grapples with the ‘growing’ food needs of humanity. The video begins with the words “Global agriculture must expand by 70 percent to meet the needs of the people by 2040,” setting up a resource problem for the future of humanity.



Figure 4.3D – *Handmade Haven Soap* By Aaron Good. United Kingdom, (2019)

Aaron Good’s 2019 video takes resource stories in an innovative direction by focusing on *Handmade Haven Soaps* from the United Kingdom. The video advertises ‘*Vegan bath goodies*’ for climate change, as part of a vegan climate first organisation. As the documentarian emphasises, shifting to a vegan diet is an effective way to reduce personal carbon emissions.

These stories convey the climate crisis message through various resources, which need to be managed in more efficient and creative ways. A resource-based view of the environment is a widespread worldview

and has been successful in raising ecological consciousness and changing behaviour. By describing something as a resource consumers are prompted to conserve and protect it. It is a powerful agent of change.

However, the focus tends to be on the world that humans *live off*—energy, food, water, and minerals—rather than the world humans *live in*. Reducing nature to resources whilst empowering, arguably masks consideration of the interconnectedness of all life, reducing the crisis to a resource crisis resulting in an economization in which nature becomes a form of capital.

4.4 Stories of Solutions

Many videos include a problem-solving narrative, outlining a variety of creative climate responses and solutions. These often highlight ‘making better decisions’ and ‘changing personal consumption habits,’ as well as advances in science and technological innovations (including improvements in e-transport and renewables). Education is also presented as a way of becoming more aware, knowledgeable, and changing behaviours. There are numerous examples to draw upon:



Figure 4.4A – *Engineering solutions* by Kayla Leitch and The Youth Climate Report. Thailand, (2013)

For instance, Kayla Leitch’s 2013 video from Thailand, titled *Engineering Solutions*, positions our climate crisis as something to be ‘solved’, shifting the problem from, “we are destroying the world” to “we are not doing enough to fix it.” This clever redirection, paired with the bundling of climate change, pollution, and human excess into a single issue, exemplifies the technological sleights of hand often seen in such

narratives. These approaches are frequently combined with an oversimplification of the climate crisis, presented as common rationalisation.

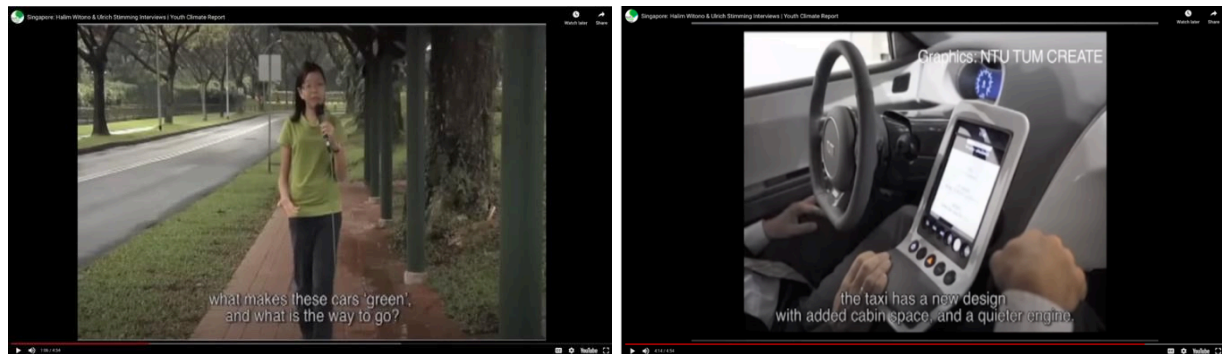


Figure 4.4B – *Singapore Interviews* by Grace Chew. Singapore, (2012)

In Grace Chew's 2012 short documentary *Singapore Interviews*, the documentarian explores the climate crisis through the promotion of technological solutions like 'Green' (electric) taxis. Chew highlights the environmental benefits of electric cars, including fuel efficiency, zero emissions, quicker acceleration, quieter engines, additional cabin space, comfortable leather seats, and ergonomic design.



Figure 4.4C – *The Dark Side of Clothes* by Minnat Allah Alyyan, Shahd Taweel, Tuleen Nassir Al-Din, Hadeel Abedieh, Malak Abu Tair, Rana Abu Tair and Nada Jubran. Israel, (2023)

The Dark Side of Clothes (2023) by Minnat Allah Alyyan, Shahd Taweel, Tuleen Nassir Al-Din, Hadeel Abedieh, Malak Abu Tair, Rana Abu Tair, and Nada Jubran from Israel. The documentary explores how clothing production significantly contributes to climate change. Through a scripted conversation among

students, it sheds light on various ecological drawbacks of textile production, such as the staggering global requirement of 93 million m³ of water for manufacturing clothing. The video concludes with young participants collectively agreeing to exchange clothing annually, aiming to maintain fresh wardrobes without perpetuating the cycle of purchasing new items. This is a story of the power of localized reduce, reuse, and recycle (RRR) practices.



Figure 4.4D – *Think About It* by Signe Höglund, Nils Engberg, Joline Östman, and Celina Sidmark. Sweden, (2023)

Consumer choices are implicated in the climate crisis, such as opting to buy local products over imported ones. The Swedish video *Think About It* features a gin factory that has reduced emissions by sealing its bottles with wax instead of plastic. While this represents a positive local step toward sustainability, detractors might note associated complexities—such as whether wax is truly less impactful than plastic—and question the emphasis on eco-conscious consumerism.

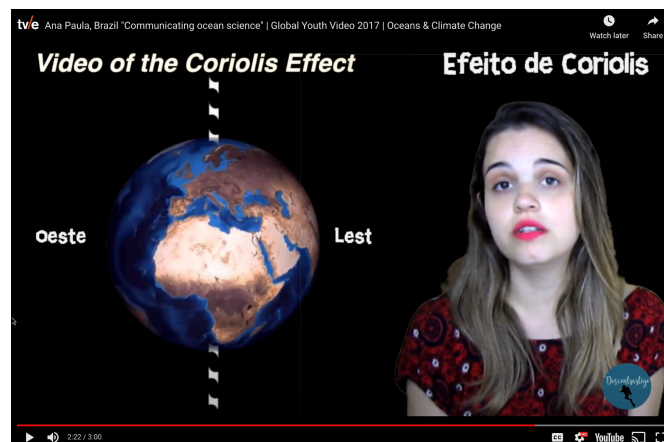


Figure 4.4E – Communicating Ocean Science by Ana Paula de Martini de Souza, Brazil, (2017)

In her 2017 video *Communicating Ocean Science* from Brazil, Ana Paula de Martini de Souza presents education as a pivotal solution to the climate crisis. Aimed at educating youth about critical issues such as arctic ice melting, coral bleaching, ocean acidity, and rising temperatures, de Martini de Souza presents from in front of a green screen, explaining the greenhouse effect in detail and emphasising that “Sitting down and talking about our oceans is a real priority.” Her proposed response to the climate crisis is a fascinating YouTube channel called 'Descontantigo,' designed to share information globally. This channel seeks to communicate climate crisis in easily digestible video content. The implicit narrative suggests that educating others about the climate crisis is a form of activism, a theme echoed throughout the channel's videos. The documentary concludes with a powerful quotation: “In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught” (Baba Dioum, cited by Martini de Souza. 2017).



Transitioning from fossil fuels is a central climate challenge. These Geo-Doc videos exemplify sustainable practices and aim to normalise the transition from less environmentally conscious products to more sustainable alternatives. These stories highlight practical steps toward a greener world, including for example electric vehicles as the future of transportation and advocating for local businesses to minimise carbon footprints. By emphasising education, technological innovation, and consumer behaviour, these narratives centre and contribute to climate actions. The focus on individual choices and consumer solutions, such as purchasing eco-friendly products or supporting local enterprises, offers tangible and immediate actions.

Concluding thoughts

The goal of this chapter has been to describe and illustrate prominent stories in the YCR Geo-Doc video sample. There are of course many other stories, but these four stand out because of their frequency of use. Geo-Doc videos propel these narratives in creative ways using media and audio-visual techniques. This chapter has aimed to illustrate and celebrate the creativity and explanatory power of the videos. Through climate crisis narratives, my analysis identifies four prominent themes in the data sample:

impacts, human experiences, resources, and solutions. Each theme offers compelling ways to understand the various meanings associated with the climate crisis.

In stories of impacts, viewers, including UN policymakers, are confronted with the tangible and dramatic consequences of climate change through weather events and pollution. Stories of human experiences bring the climate crisis to life, framing it in terms of personal and communal struggles while highlighting resilience and adaptation. Resource stories focus on conserving the natural assets we depend on, while solution stories showcase innovative approaches to mitigating the crisis.

These identified stories offer diverse perspectives on the crisis by emphasising certain aspects while downplaying others. It is important to note that my focus here is on stories (narratives and discourse in media). I do not intend to pass judgement upon the youth or Geo-Doc media's validity. My interest lies in the stories, that is, in the underpinning narratives that bring the climate crisis into prominence and significance.

Data Interlude: A Dance of Death

I also do studies, but I find, and know, that copying from nature is meaningless to me, because I paint better pictures from memory, as a vision of the landscape—now, I mainly observe the physical movement of mountains, water, trees, and flowers. Everywhere one is reminded of similar movements made by human bodies, similar stirrings of pleasure and pain in plants. Painting is not enough for me; I am aware that one can use colours to establish qualities.—Most deeply and with one's whole being and heart one senses an autumn tree in summer; should I paint that sadness. (Klougart, 2023 citing Egon Schiele pg. 39)



Figure Interlude 1; *Small Tree in Late Autumn*, Egon Schiele, 1911.

*Egon Schiele's letter (1913) to a friend is published in Josefine Klougart's book *After Nature*³².*

Earlier this year, Sitting on a bench in the Glyptotek art gallery Copenhagen, Denmark, I was captivated by Schiele's work. *He rather occupied me.* Schiele evokes his penchant for painting trees infused with human qualities. This was a time when climate changes were less significant and yet even then, a sadness that silhouettes tangled branches and brings a tree, person, or book into significance, through glowing, temporalized, enacted, embodied, material and affective experiences. It spoke to me.

On one hand, this is because the Western Canadian forest continues to be reduced to ash and on the other, because occasionally, I come across a tree that resembles a person more than a "tree". I like the challenge of seeing people who resemble trees more than they do people. Madness. Yet, there's a face, carved in a dead oak tree, at the top of a hill in peterborough, that visits my dreams, *I see it, it sees me, I fear it, It doesn't fear me.*

Schiele realises that one cannot simply depict nature, as to do so would fail to recognize the story such art is imbued with. Instead, one must replace nature as 'subject' with the feeling of sadness itself. It's the

³² This particular conversation was sparked by Van Gogh and Gauguin's infamous conversations in Arles, concerned with 'fidelity to nature' (Klougart, 2024).

existential helplessness of an impending apocalypse, the poignant sight of an autumn tree in the heat of summer, or simply the profound sadness of a young man grappling with mortality and a futile quest to save a damaged world. Schiele names and knows the 'recapture' of 'nature' as an artist seeking to (dis)place material with immaterial. Thus, his memories, or more aptly put 'stories' of nature, become artwork, instead of nature itself.

Storylines are not mere passive reflections of reality; rather, they are constituted of representations that open and actively shape our understanding of the world around us. Representations arise from the fundamental nature of connected human consciousness. For example, Schiele's painting *Small Tree in Late Autumn* (1911), seen at the outset of this section, represents and refers to the limbs of a solitary young person, waltzing atop a hill. Schiele is quoted, calling this, a "dance of death".

Moving beyond Schiele and his 'penchant for painting trees' my next chapter returns to Geo-Doc data and attends to youth stories, representations and definitions. Such stories are not a "dance of death"³³ or anything so grotesque, rather they seek to celebrate youth and our experiences of life itself.

³³ This quotation is not satisfactorily substantiated. Any information regarding its authenticity is appreciated.

Chapter Five: Representing Climate-Youth

In the prior chapter, I sought to understand how Geo-Doc videos narrate the climate crisis. In this chapter, I investigate how youth Geo-Documentarians explicitly and implicitly represent and story themselves, as well as other youth. I seek to answer the second of my central questions, How does Geo-Doc video story youth?

In my analysis, I identified four central youth stories in the selected Geo-Doc dataset. These are: [5.1] Stories of youth bearing witness, [5.2] Stories of youth heroics, [5.3] Stories of youth as inheritors, and [5.4] Stories of vulnerable and disempowered youth. For each youth story thematic, I included a discussion of associated narratives, and shared selected examples.

Much like the previous discussions of climate, these four stories feature most prominently in the YCR Geo-Doc media sample, not in a singular corresponding sense but mostly in combination. For example, in popular culture, stories of youth bearing witness are often paired with stories of vulnerable and disempowered youth, although not always. Similarly, stories of youth as inheritors and heroes often fluidly move between categories as the narrative and tradition require.

As these discussions unfold, I invite readers to reflect on two points. Firstly, how youth identity construction is made and remade to strengthen the argumentation of the story, as youth are so often cast as the vulnerable victim and/or an adaptable inheritor depending on what aspect of the climate crisis the Geo-Doc forefronts. Second, the overwhelming responsibility placed on youth to create the 'new,' such as developing new educational frameworks and launching new entrepreneurial ventures.

5.1 Stories of Youth Bearing Witness

In the Geo-Doc dataset, youth and children are frequently portrayed as witnesses to the events and impacts of crises, observing changes in the weather (sometimes alongside scientists) and the actions or inactions of politicians. This narrative positions young individuals as key observers of environmental and socio-political issues, documenting climate changes, scrutinising political responses, and witnessing the erosion of communities. This framing is used to invoke change and motivate grownups to act. It is a compelling narrative that videos use to great effect. For example:



Figure 5.1A – Why Not Now? by The Youth of climate reality. Brazil, (2014)

The video entitled 'Why Not Now?' (see Figure 5.1A) is a passionate call to action addressing the urgent need to combat climate change. In the video, youth discuss drought, deforestation and the Great Barrier Reef's degradation, stressing that climate crises affect both present and future generations. It features a series of young people who directly address the audience, asking, "Why won't anyone act?" The video portrays youth as earthly witnesses to the failures of previous generations, demanding accountability and change, while assuming the role of advocates for the planet's increasingly precarious future.



Figure 5.1B – Rebuilding a Nation by Ron Tremblay. Canada, (2015)

In figure (5.1B), Ron Tremblay in his video Entitled *Rebuilding a Nation* interviews a local Indigenous elder who is threatened by a multi-million dollar pipeline project. The elder proposes that green energy jobs are brought to the community, rather than relying on oil and other harmful toxins. Tremblay reports on climate crises, witnessing harmful practices firsthand. He hopes to motivate politicians to act.



Figure 5.1C – *Sinking Paradise, Carteret Islands*, no author. Papua New Guinea, (2009)

The 2009 video titled *Sinking Paradise, Carteret Islands* evocatively depicts the systematic sinking of the Carteret Islands into the Pacific Ocean. In the video, activists provide voice-over narration over footage of toxic island ponds and coastal erosion, stating, “In the future, there will be no island and no children.” Youth and children are shown watching as their island gradually vanishes into the distance, becoming uninhabitable due to rising sea levels. In stark contrast, adults are filmed sitting in circles, calmly discussing the future. Youth in this video bear witness to the end of their community, whereas adults are depicted as unaware and unable to embrace the urgency of these changes.



Figure 5.1D – Impacts of Rising Temperatures and Decreasing Precipitation by Sophia Aduko. Ghana, (2023)

Sophia Aduko's video *Impacts of Rising Temperatures and Decreasing Precipitation* tells a story of droughts in Ghana and the increasing danger facing local farmers. Desolate environments are intercut with videos of youth watching or describing the danger posed to their community, with the explicit narrative being: youth watch the world fall apart and something has to be done urgently.



These and many other Geo-Doc videos portray youth as primary observers of climate impacts—'witnesses' to planetary breakdown. Youth are often depicted as noticing things that adults cannot, distinctively positioned to gaze into terrifying and alarming realities. Young people are depicted as being free from the economic, political, and social veils that often obscure adults' perspectives. Young people are portrayed as anxious, alarmed, and frustrated with the futures they are set to inherit from adults. Bearing 'witness' seems to foreground moral implications of inaction and positions the younger generation as centre in driving societal and policy shifts. Youth's observations and voices cut through adult's white noise with clarity and resolve to create a different future.

5.2 Stories of Youth Heroics

In the selected Geo-Doc sample, stories of youth heroics (in an adult world) are not uncommon, as one might suppose given their prominence in popular literature. Stories of youth heroics centre on acts of salvation and protection from imminent harm, often responding to urgent local crises or threats. These

stories often take the form of local, community-based narratives, highlighting the selfless commitments of youth fighting to effect positive change and protect their communities. Geo-Doc videos follow and describe youth who save others from the dangers surrounding them. There are many examples, including Edmund Assafuah (Ghana, 2020) in the video *Entrepreneurs Fighting Climate Change*.



Figure 5.2 A-B – *Entrepreneurs Fighting Climate Change* by Edmund Assafuah. Ghana, (2020)

Assafuah has recovered approximately 40 million tons of plastic and created art and clothing, like the flip-flop painting (depicted in figure 5.2H). Assafuah is presented as a local hero whose actions are recognized as shaping the future by recycling plastics and fabrics into sellable products, creating income from waste.

Assafuah powerfully decrees “If you generate a waste you cannot make money from, that you cannot recycle, that has no recycling value, then it is not worth creating that particular waste.” This powerful video follows an activist from the Global South, cleaning and saving his community from excess plastic pollution. The sense of gratitude shown from others in the community is conveyed, celebrating someone who is selflessly taking time to make the world a better place.



Figure 5.2C – *Anya, Citizen Scientist in Siberia* by Anya and YCR Russia, (2013)

In the YCR Geo-Doc video *Anya, Citizen Scientist in Siberia*, Anya and the YCR tells the inspiring story of Anya, daughter of a Russian boat captain, who helps American scientists complete Ice core sampling in the Arctic. The video describes American scientists who return for a second sampling trip but to their surprise Anya has been collecting ice cores since the trip a year earlier. Anya, an extraordinary citizen scientist, has monitored Arctic rivers and oceans, taking samples every two weeks. Anya is thanked for her ongoing scientific research. She is portrayed as a 'young hero,' selflessly donating her time to document the dangers affecting her community. As a special citizen scientist, the narrative reinforces classical themes of youth heroism in a problematised adult world.

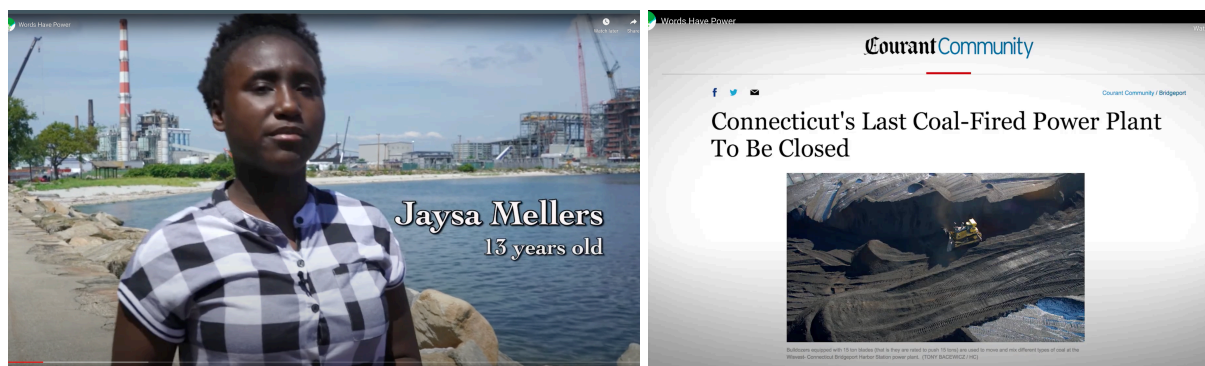


Figure 5.2D-E – *Words Have Power* by Lynne Cherry. US, (2019)

The video *Words Have Power* by Lynne Cherry (USA, 2019) documents Jaysa Mellers lobbying governments to shut down a coal fire plant run by PSEG in Bridgeport Connecticut USA. The video focuses on the poisoning of the children who live there. It celebrates an activist who confronts a coal power plant. Jaysa's determination and successful advocacy demonstrate how young individuals can cause significant change as a role model for other youth activists.



Figure 5.2F-G – *Fishing for Plastic* by Lefteris Arapakis. Greece, (2020)

Lefteris Arapakis's video *Fishing for Plastic* (2020) is set in Greece. The video follows an inspiring organisation hauling plastic out of the Mediterranean and upcycling it into clothing. The organisation “fishing for Plastic” are working with around 700 fishermen and have collected and recycled more than 70,000 kilos of plastic. The video's narrative presents Arapakis as a forward thinker who dutifully cleans up the waste of others. He calls himself a “problem solver” and urges other youth to “start solving problems.” His activism is framed to inspire and empower other young people to take initiatives and drive changes in their communities.



Figure 5.2H-I – *A Fish's New Life* by Mustapha Benghernaout. Algeria (2017)

Similarly, Mustapha Benghernaout's video *A Fish's New Life* follows a small group of youth activists who react to aquatic destruction by building metal structures for fish and other marine life to inhabit. This video follows the development and marine repopulation over a series of months. In the video, the youth are represented as heroes of the ocean, dedicated to the restoration and protection of life under the sea.

There are many more inspiring examples of youth working to bring about change in their communities. Some examples include the videos *The Nature of Farming* (2019, Scotland), *Our Grazing Bank* (2019, Tanzania); *Make City Dwellers Green Farmers* (2019, Togo), *Handmade Haven Soaps* (2019, UK) *Singapore Interviews* (2012, Singapore) and many more.



My argument here is that these Geo-Doc videos draw from narratives of youth heroes, documenting the impactful and selfless actions of young individuals dedicated to their communities. These stories, often rooted in local contexts, highlight the proactive efforts of selected youth in addressing urgent crises and threats, embodying a modern archetype of heroism in an era of climate crisis.

The narrative focus is on how young people are effecting positive change, whether through artistic recycling, scientific monitoring, or environmental advocacy, with an emphasis on their actions, initiatives, dedication, and impact. The global scope of these examples—from Greece to Tanzania, Scotland to Togo—showcase youth actions which transcends cultural and geographical boundaries—collectively, they present a universal call to action for young people everywhere to engage in problem-solving and community care. The stories are inspiring and impactful, demonstrating the power of youth as agents of change.

5.3 Stories of Youth Inheritors

The "Youth Inheritor" storyline typically involves a youth who inherits a significant responsibility from their predecessor. The storyline reinforces a linear timeline, while sidestepping tensions *within* generations, focusing instead on tensions *between* generations. In these stories the future is presented as youths' responsibility, and thus, are recognized as powerful change agents in the struggle to combat climate crises.

Whether it is adults' responsibility to protect inheritance, or youth who are themselves empowered to protect their own inheritance differs story to story. Various young person categories (youth, children, teenagers, and adolescents) are amalgamated by the inheritor storyline, as they occupy the same space in such stories: investments in the future. Examples of youth Inheritors include:



Figure 5.3A – *Mangrove Education* by Erlita Indah Savitri. Indonesia, (2017)

Youth Erlita Indah Savitri (2017) in her video *Mangrove Education*, developed a climate crisis awareness conservation project, because, as she says, “we want the children to preserve the Mangrove forest, for a more sustainable future.” Erlita sacrifices her own future to help protect the forest because those before her have failed, thus Erlita has inherited the significant responsibility of addressing the climate crisis, particularly forest conservation, a task that ideally should have been managed better by previous generations. She inherits the responsibility of addressing past failures, educates the next generation, and sacrifices part of her own future for the sake of a sustainable environment.



Figure 5.3B – *The Páramo* by Jacquelin Montoya. Ecuador, (2020)

Jacquelin Montoya’s video *The Páramo* stands as a poignant example of an inheritor. By dedicating part of her life to studying and protecting the vital Páramo ecosystem in Ecuador, Montoya safeguards her city and friends who depend on this key carbon sink and barrier for fog and rain. Jacquelin sacrifices time to

the environmental movement. Montoya's focus on youth observing, transforming, and healing the troubled world, she describes the video as being her call to action, her inherited destiny to shift her communities collective values.



Figure 5.3C – *Let Mangroves Recover* by Adarsh Prathap. India, (2017)

In Adarsh Prathap's video *Let Mangroves Recover* (India, 2017), Prathap argues "most people do not read scientific reports or websites," and therefore he has created short videos to clarify the science through social media, educating the public on their responsibility to protect the Indian Mangroves. In this video, rather than youth being credited with inheriting the planet, it is 'education' itself that has that ability. This storyline reinforces a linear timeline and focuses on intergenerational tensions, where youth like Prathap occupy the space of future investments. Prathap dedicates his time and resources to creating these educational videos, sacrificing personal pursuits for the greater good. This aligns with the "Youth Inheritor" stories theme of young individuals stepping up to address inherited challenges.



Figure 5.3D; *Dyanna Jaye, Brower* by Ray Kocur – USA (2019)

Ray Kocur's video *Dyanna Jaye, Brower* (Virginia, USA) focuses on climate change as the central issue, with youth activist Dyanna Jaye as the subject, fighting for climate change reform. But Jaye herself becomes the story as the video follows her journey to enact change, rather than the change itself. In this narrative, Ray Kocur presents the concept of the inheritor as an educator. Many young Geo-Documentarians are drawn to narratives that promise a better future through education, often sacrificing their time and resources for others to succeed. Dyanna Jaye, as a young person who has inherited responsibility, is fighting for climate change reform, addressing an issue largely neglected by previous generations.

Inheritors like Jaye have proven instrumental in bringing climate change into the mainstream. Although I have only discussed a few videos in this description, others that contain youth inheritors are: *Zero Waste* (2018, Ireland); *Green Soil* (2018, India); *Sail to Cop* (2019, England); *Manjeeta Gurung* (2019, Nepal); *Steady Plant Food* (2019, Nigeria); *Action projects* (2016, France); *Towards a More Sustainable Future* (Nepal,, 2016); *Let Mangroves Recover* (2017, India); *A Fish's New Life* (2017, Algeria); *I Will Be the Change* (2016, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines); and many more.



Overall, narratives of Youth Inheritors highlight the significant influence young individuals can wield in driving societal transformation. The examples discussed—such as Erlita Indah Savitri's mangrove conservation efforts in Indonesia, Jacquelin Montoya's commitment to the Páramo ecosystem in Ecuador, Adarsh Prathap's educational initiatives in India, and Dyanna Jaye's climate reform activism in the USA—underscore the belief that education is a powerful tool in combating climate change. These stories highlight youth's faith in education as a means of creating change. Youth Inheriting stories feature young people inheriting a future imagined by those who have lived before them.

However, these stories all rest on the fundamental belief that 'awareness,' whether scientific or otherwise, is pivotal for youth and serves as a conduit for change. The underlying narrative assumption is that education or other forms of awareness campaigns, *are* in fact able to address structural climate issues. While awareness might foster empowerment and catalyze change over time, there is a need for a more nuanced exploration of the systemic issues at play.

5.4 Stories of Vulnerable, Disempowered, and Disproportionately impacted Youth

Stories featuring youth and children as disempowered, vulnerable, and disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis are common in the YCR Geo-Doc database sample. These stories can be identified as those that explore youth's bodily and mental health in a climate disaster. These stories feature representations of youth precariously and disproportionately feeling the effects of climate change. This narrative employs common tropes of victimhood, precarity, powerlessness, and exploitation to portray youth as distinctly vulnerable. For example:



Figure 5.4A – *Fading Harvest* by Zakaria Azara. Ghana, (2023)

In Zakaria Azara's video "*Fading Harvest*" (See Figure 5.4B) from Ghana 2023, images of sick children are scattered throughout the video in between images of local farms. The video documents the severe impact of climate change on the region, particularly in the Saboba district. With a population of approximately 120,000 the district's primary livelihood is farming, focusing on crops such as maize, shea nuts, and soybeans. However, over recent years, droughts exacerbated by bush burning, deforestation, and soil degradation have significantly reduced crop yields, making life increasingly challenging for the inhabitants. Such instances of Climate crises have also heightened the incidence of diseases among children and youth. In response, the video's narrator requests help in protecting its young people. Since their proposed "best" solution is "Planting of more seedlings like the sahel agricultural services in Libga"—a stop gap measure that the narrator says will not last long. The Youth and children featured are portrayed as victims of circumstances beyond their control, their vulnerability heightens emotional pleas for assistance and underscores the urgent need for intervention.



Figure 5.4B – *Amarok Society Mothers Turning the Tide* by Gabriel Munro. Bangladesh, (2015)

Gabriel Munro's 2015 video *Amarok Society Mothers Turning the Tide in Bangladesh*. In this video, the climate crisis is not represented visually, but narratively alluded to as “the dangerous future” that “mothers are preparing their children for a *tomorrow* other people will deny them.” Young people are framed as an innocent counterpoint to the dangerous climate crisis.



Figure 5.4C – *Waste: A Source of Resource* by Sadia Jafrin. Bangladesh, (2017)

Sadia Jafrin's video *Waste: A Source of Resource*, describes the hazardous environmental conditions affecting children in Bangladesh from littering and waste mismanagement. In Figure 5.4D, a child describes littering that clogs drains and floods her school during the rainy season. It points out the higher risk exposure for people in low-income communities who have few resources to manage waste effectively. To address this issue, workshops on waste management, recycling, and sustainability are

organised. These workshops aim to educate young people about the interconnectedness of waste, disease and environmental sustainability.

Jafrin's *Waste* provides an example of youth from marginalised socio-economic backgrounds being empowered through education and action to tackle waste management issues. It traces their transformations from victims of their environment to active change agents, showcasing the potential of youth or children to overcome systemic vulnerabilities. This narrative aligns with a familiar 'disempowered' storyline, positioning 'vulnerability' as an obstacle to be overcome.



Geo-Doc videos like *Sinking Paradise*, *Engineering Solutions*, *Amarok Society Mothers Turning the Tide*, and *Waste: A Source of Resource* illustrate the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on young people. From children suffering from diseases in the Carteret Islands to the increased rates of cancer and infant mortality in Thailand, these representations of youth employ common tropes of vulnerability, precarity, and powerlessness. By portraying young people as disproportionate victims of circumstances beyond their control, these stories underscore the consequences of climate crises on younger generations.

However, while these stories often depict youth as disempowered and helpless, they also highlight resilience and empowerment. These Geo-Doc video stories reinforce the undeniable reality that the climate crisis disproportionately burdens the younger generation. This narrative shift from passive victimhood to active agency suggests that, despite the daunting challenges ahead, there is hope for overcoming systemic obstacles through collective effort and knowledge.

Thus, the stories not only serve as a stark reminder of the disproportionate impacts on youth but also inspire change and the crucial role of young people in the fight against the climate crisis.

5.5 Concluding Thoughts

Chapter Five explores how youth Geo-Documentarians represent themselves and other young individuals within the YCR Geo-Doc climate crisis storytelling, addressing the question, "How do Geo-Doc videos story youth?"

The analysis identifies four central youth stories in the Geo-Doc dataset: *Stories of youth bearing witness*, *stories of youth heroics*, *stories of youth inheritors*, and *stories of vulnerable and disempowered youth*. *Stories of youth bearing witness* position young individuals as key observers of climate crises, holding adults accountable and urging action. *Stories of youth heroics* depict young individuals as proactive agents of change, dedicated to protecting their communities and solving immediate environmental problems. *The stories of youth inheritors* portray young people as working toward systemic changes, addressing the root causes of societal issues, and inspiring collective value shifts. *Stories of vulnerable and disempowered youth* foreground the disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis on young individuals, depicting them as victims of circumstances beyond their control.

Overall, Chapter Five sought to understand the complexity and diversity of youth representations in Geo-Doc videos. Finding youth stories are not isolated but often intertwined, I argue that there exists a complexity of youth identity construction in the face of environmental challenges. Youth are portrayed as both witnesses and saviours, heroes and inheritors, active and passive agents, but ubiquitous is their ability to represent a more sustainable future.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This thesis offers an analysis of youth climate media in an era when these media seem increasingly necessary and significant. I embarked on this study inspired by the YCR Geo-Doc and the prospects of youth from around the globe using novel documentary media to impact global changes. As my research has developed, my admiration for the YCR Geo-Doc project and all its participants has only grown. The collective creative energies and commitments devoted to addressing the climate crisis are truly uplifting.

As of 2023, there are over 800 videos from five continents, and the numbers are steadily increasing. The outreach is globally rich and diverse. Canada, India, and the US have slightly more Geo-Docs, but recent increases in contributions from Mexico, Ghana, France, Brazil, and Malaysia (see Section 3.1) have expanded the project's reach to a host of other countries in both the Global North and South. Geo-Doc videos are now present on all continents; my 20% sample includes videos from the Poles, the Middle East, the Americas, Australasia, Asia, and Europe (see Figure 3.4E). Additionally, Word Clouds over several years illustrate the dynamic and contemporary nature of associated youth videos, which respond to shifting local and global climate events (see Section 3.1). The Youth Climate Report is leading a growing, era-defining, Youth Climate Movement with energy, outreach, bravery, and resolve to bring about change. This initiative gives youth direct access to high-level UN Climate Policymakers, with demonstrable impact (see Terry, 2024). The overwhelming breadth and relevance of this global project propel my research.

6.1 How do Geo-Doc videos story climate crisis and youth?

My qualitative research sought to identify a series of prominent stories propelling Geo-Doc climate videos. The preceding data chapters document these with examples. My first research question is: **How do Geo-Doc videos story climate crises?** I identify 4 prominent stories.

Stories of Impacts are heavily featured in the Geo-Doc video sample and focus mostly on localised, short-term events related to weather and pollution. Documentaries serve as narrative vehicles to convey humanity's negligent environmental actions and demonstrable consequences. Stories of impacts are divided into weather impacts and plastic and waste pollution impacts:

- ***Weather Impact*** stories highlight local weather-related damage to human populations and predicted climate changes, portraying weather as dangerous and humans as vulnerable.
- ***Pollution Stories*** depict local pollution from plastic and waste mismanagement, again emphasising humanity's environmentally negligent actions.

These stories represent climate crisis through visually impactful, arresting climate related material changes. Youth documentarians share narrative and imagery of changing weather, pollution, clean water, soil, and other human related changes. Climate change in this manner is a story of environmental changes, taken up as more of an umbrella term standing in for all human caused planetary environmental impacts (some more easily associated with increased GHGs and others with human waste (see also Hulme, 2024).

Stories of Humans focus on human agencies and human experiences in/of climate crisis. These stories often stress human emotions, agencies, actions, and impacts, underscoring the centrality of “humanness” in/of the climate crisis. In other words, climate crisis is predominantly narrated as a human phenomena—a story of human causations and human impacts. I further breakdown the story of humans into four youth categories summarised below.

Stories of Resources are common. These narratives view climate change in a broad environmental sense in terms of resources, focusing on better management of materials for human wealth, health and wellbeing. Resources include items like urban infrastructure, cars and transport, housing, clothing, plastic bags and straws, food, and various chemical pollutants. In this manner, focus is placed on the world we “live-off” rather than the world we “live-in” (Latour & Schulz, 2022). Documentarians underscore the importance of wisely using material resources.

Stories of Solutions are also common, and sometimes in combination with other stories. These stories focus on problem-solving approaches to climate change, featuring a range of solutions such as reduce-reuse-recycle (3Rs), technological innovations (e-transport and renewables), political engagement, and changes in personal consumption habits. These stories highlight particular sustainable practices, aiming to narrate transitions to more eco-friendly, carbon reduced life styles. These stories inspire optimism and empower viewers by demonstrating strategies for addressing climate change, and making a difference.

I now turn to my second research question: **How do Geo-Doc videos story youth?** In my analysis I also identified four prominent stories:

Stories of Youth Bearing Witness: this storyline portrays young individuals as insightful, distinctively positioned observers of environmental destruction and climate breakdown. Youth are narrated as chronicling climate changes, scrutinising political responses, and watching as communities are impacted. This narrative emphasises the moral and ethical act of “witnessing.” It also underscores fallacies of inaction, positioning the younger generation as witnesses of change and (in)action.

Stories of Young Heroes centre on youth protagonists rescuing (multispecies) others from perilous futures, often through acts of self-sacrifice that impact their lives. This storyline typically features young individuals striving to liberate, or rescue, adults from harmful ways, or to enlighten them with actions, scientific knowledge and education. This narrative underscores the possibilities of youth agencies, the selfless commitments of youth fighting to effect positive changes and protect precarious futures (see Jones et al., 2022).

Stories of Youth as Inheritors centre on youth set to inherit a diminished and unstable environmental and social futurities. These stories feature young people inheriting a future diminished by acts of adults, who have lived before them. Stressing a linear progression of time and the role of youth as powerful agents of change, and thereby bridging a gap between generations by addressing past failures and educating the future (see Jones et al., 2022).

Stories of Vulnerability and Disempowerment focus on the precarious natures of young individuals in climate justice. The focus is on victimhood, precarity, powerlessness, and exploitation powerfully representing young persons as fragilly positioned and disproportionately impacted in adult dominated climate worlds. This story underscores cognitive, immunological, and physiological differences between youth and adults, emphasising heightened vulnerabilities. Videos contain stories of youth disempowered and disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, serving as emotional levers to underscore the urgency of climate action and the profound seriousness and moral imperative for addressing climate change.



Geo-Documentarians turn to these and other stories to make sense and meaning of the climate crisis, bringing certain aspects of the crisis into significance and others not. I propose that examining these eight climate related stories offers insight into the YCR Geo-Doc project and more broadly climate and youth storytelling and media. The persuasive power of these media resides in part in the familiarity of these narratives which convey the potentially cataclysmic nature of the crisis, calling for immediate, progressive, and sustained responses. Terry (2020) describes the force of the Geo-Doc initiative as maximising the “influences of documentary film as an agent of social change” (p77). These media are purposefully designed for high-level policy contexts, shown at UN Council of Party (COP) negotiations and empowering youth by providing a ‘seat at the table’ in these crucial global negotiations.

In my terms, these media invite UN high-level policy makers to encounter stories of debilitating and localised climate *Impacts*; stories of *Humans* implicated in climate crisis and responding to crisis; stories of *Resources* and the necessity of more carefully and thoughtfully managing these resources; and stories of the moral and ethical imperatives of climate *Solutions*. In these media, youth are storied as *bearing witness* and *heroically* acting for change, responding as distinctively positioned *inheritors* of adults’ worlds, worlds in which often they lack agency and presence, *vulnerable, precarious and disproportionately impacted* by the climate crisis.

In their production, Geo-Doc videos are positioned as offering contributions to UN climate policy analysis rather than disrupting or resisting associated processes. In this regard, they seek transformation within constraints accepted by UN policy practices and negotiations. They are not meant to be overtly “political” but more “informational” (see Terry, 2020). Evidence suggests that these documentary media are extremely well-received and are informing UN policy changes (Terry, 2024). I suggest that in part, the success of these Geo-Doc media are ways in which youth compellingly convey these eight stories creatively, aesthetically, conceptually, and emotionally.

6.2 Stories and Shadows of Climate Crisis

In early discussions, I sought to highlight complexities. Climate crisis is much more than a single scientific story of atmospheric carbon concentrations, however important and central this story clearly is. Rather than a single story, the climate crisis needs to be considered as a wickedly complex nest of overlapping, interacting, and reconstituting stories meaning different things to different people in different times, contexts and places. Drawing on selected theorists (including Hulme, Callison, Sauve et al), I argue that

when considering climate stories, it is important to reflect on what is storied, and thereby rendered visible, imaginable, knowable, actionable, and what is not and thereby shadowed. In what follows I explore some broader implications that this *selective* process holds.

As previously mentioned, the ways that we talk about a topic influences ways in which we might react and conceive of ourselves in connection and relation with this topic. One story cannot hope to convey or capture all aspects of Earth's climate calamities. In this regard I read stories as less representational, but more performative and discerning, actively steering and shaping *particular* climate openings, imaginaries, agencies, and actions.

In their analysis of 30 years of UN environmental policies, Sauve and colleagues (2007) seek to shed light on what UN policies say as well as what they leave out—their policy “shadows” if you like. I now return to my eight emerging stories with this mindset, asking: what shadows do these stories leave? What climate and youth stories are *left untold* by those being told?

Stories of *Impacts* often focus on localised, short-term, and sensational events related to weather and pollution. In these stories, climate crisis is represented through immediate, dramatic, harmful, often debilitating changes (changes in weather, oceans, soil and water). These stories trend toward present-futurist orientations and in so doing they leave shadows of cultural-historical causations. They focus on climate changes and impacts (caused by GHGs) rather than sociopolitical, historical origins of these emissions and responsibilities. For example, in my sample there is a noteworthy absence of stories of carbon capitalism, carbon imperialism, carbon colonialism, and carbon patriarchy. This seems an oversight. Naomi Klein (2015) in contrast, stresses the inseparable nature of climate change and capitalism. Humans + carbon don't produce the climate crisis, but a specific set of capitalist values and social industrial arrangements are responsible. In my graduate studies, I have been connected with extensive scholarly literature demonstrating the inseparability of the climate crisis and social-cultural-economic megatrends constituting late modern society (including neoliberalism, white privilege, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and ableism).

In a recent conference paper, I offered reflections on the relative absence of stories of colonialism (Alsop, 2022) in recent Geo-Doc videos from Ghana (2021), writing:

[The sample of] Geo-Doc videos from Ghana tend to present climate change as an environmental problem to be locally overcome, rather than redefining the problem as colonial and

discriminatory in origin. For instance, when cash crops are mentioned it is only in terms of their ecological vulnerabilities and not in terms of economic dependencies and exploitations. Colonial histories of monocropping and land grabbing by Northern nations are effectively hidden when stressing present day climate impacts. This act of 'ecological occlusion' raises questions of Geo-Docs as a form of anti-imperial, postcolonial activism. (p. 18)

In climate representations of *vulnerability and resilience* it is important to be equally mindful of climate histories and *responsibilities*. Those least responsible for carbon emissions are often those most heavily impacted by climate related impacts. Stories of youth as vulnerable and innocent can be employed (by empowered adults) to divert attention away from their actions and responsibilities, the youth climate redeemer is a story which can absolve others of their crimes and responsibilities.

There is an abundance of scholarly work which equates patriarchal values and structures to ecological dominance and destruction (see for example, ecofeminist authors, including Vandana Shiva and Val Plumwood). A particular feature of the videos is the presence and power of diverse young women's voices. The sustained presence of feminist and ecofeminist perspectives could further extend and support these voices and the powerful political messages that they convey.

Stories of *Impacts* tend to be about the immediate and spectacular. Consequently, they shadow stories of climate crisis as "slow violence" (Nixon, 2013). Rob Nixon writes about the sustained inattention paid to the "attritional lethality of many environmental crises, in contrast with the sensational, spectacle-driven messaging that impels public activism today" (p5). Slow violence, Nixon argues, disproportionately affects people who are poor, marginalised and displaced. It likely disproportionately impacts the young. Immediate and spectacular impacts that are more readily "visible" and thereby more readily representable in Geo-Doc media form. Understandably they dominate the sample of videos that I analysed.

Videos mostly focus on environmental hazards and in doing so they present nature as fragile, tarnished, damaged and dangerous. In contrast, Sauvé et al. (2007) underscore the importance of understanding the environment in "totality—natural and man-made, ecological, political, economic, technological, social, legislative, cultural and aesthetic" (p. 40). This points, amongst other things, to extending videos to include more celebrations of the beauty and abundance of nature, in addition to ecologies under threat and in decline.

Videos focus on stories of *Humans*, and there is a relative absence of non-human (multispecies) perspectives. A central story is one of “sentimental humanism” with associated discourses highlighting the lives and agencies of humans. This invites questioning the relative anthropocentric and anthroparchial natures of the stories conveyed. In particular, I am reminded here of the video “*Rethinking Nature, Thinking with Nature*” (see Section 4.2). Videos might feature stories with more critical humanistic and post-humanistic orientations. After all, the climate crisis is human caused but it is *far* from a narrow story about humans.

Stories of *Resources* propel climate crisis as a resource issue and management problem (which, of course in part it is). These focus on advocating better management of materials for human benefit rather than ecological damage. Reducing the climate crisis to a ‘resource crisis,’ however, fuels a consumerist mindset in which the environment is valued in economic, materialistic terms. This approach has been successful at impacting behavioural changes in the short term, but has been fundamentally questioned as a longer term approach. After all, ecology is much more than economics.

Lucie Sauve and colleagues (2007) demonstrate ways in which UN policy (over 30 years) consistently sustains an economic “resourcist” view of nature. Latour & Schulz (2022) distinguish the planet we “live off” and the planet we “live in”. These authors are far from alone in speaking of the importance of recognising the planet as a shared mutually supported home (not a human resource) which can so easily slip attention in many, popular circulating climate stories and in videos I observed.

Stories of *Solutions* inspire optimism and empower youth (and others) to address climate crises on individual, community, and global levels. However, this focus on problem-solving can propel familiar stories of individuals acting for change (often by changing their personal consumptive habits). This situates climate crisis as an individual issue or problem, and thereby potentially distracts attention away from various corporations and industries whose practices are *deeply* implicated in climate breakdown. Bill McKibben (2007) for example, points out that if your finances are tied to banks that fund fossil fuels—such as RBC, Wells Fargo, Chase, Citi, and Bank of America in the US—your retirement funds or savings account could significantly exceed your personal carbon footprint. Rebecca Solnit (2023) argues that this skewed ecological narrative of carbon distribution is far from incidental but intentional:

The fossil fuel industry likes the narrative of personal solutions as a way to keep us scrutinising ourselves and one another, rather than them. They’ve promoted the concept of climate

footprints as a way to keep the focus on us and not them, and it's worked. Usually if I ask people what they're doing about the climate emergency, most will talk about what they're not consuming or doing – but these will never add up to the speed and scale of change needed to change the system (Para 9, 2023).

I offer these alternative stories as offerings for further extending the Youth Planetary Report videos. In a similar way, I now return to stories of youth.

Stories of *Youth Bearing Witness* can portray youth as neutral witnesses. Such a portrayal can support common assumptions of an uncorrupted and innocent viewpoint. Youth's role can be restricted to a passive role as witnesses of an adult world. This can marginalise youth by positioning them as needing or waiting for adult's approval, rather than being capable of driving change themselves. There exists more than a hint of tokenism here, where the voices of youth are highlighted for their honest observations rather than their substantive, groundbreaking insights.

Stories of *Youth Heroics* can idealise and/or romanticise youth activism by placing responsibility on *individual* youth actors and leaders. Youth can be storied as entrepreneurs, educators or scientists who seek to repatriate youth or adults through knowledge. These stories contain a hidden 'repression' that rewards individuals for converting themselves into resources, which philosopher Byung-Chul Han (2010) refers to as an "achievement society." In this society, the 'quality' of an activist is measured by relentless efforts to make a difference, a process designed to lead to burnout. Han (2010) states "The violence of positivity does not deprive; it saturates. It does not exclude; it exhausts" (np), the 'violence of positivity.' Similarly, I argue that, the positive outlook provided by youth featured in Geo-Doc videos seems to exhaust and distract youth from other larger sociocultural issues.

Greta Thunberg is frequently described in *stories of heroics*, that is, as somebody who is challenging dominant narratives and asserting young people's central role in addressing climate change. This places considerable burden on her and other young climate heroes to save the planet. However, even when young people's intentions are recognized as noble, these narratives can be framed as naive or idealistic in some ways. Consequently, young heroes are often positioned in preparatory or educational roles, expected to engage in climate action only when they reach maturity and adulthood, when they grow up. The story of young heroes fighting evil in an adult world is a tried-and-tested story (I instantly think of

Harry Potter). But this narrative often attaches greater importance to individual saviours as opposed to collective responsibility and actions.

Stories of *Youth as Inheritors* place emphasis on adults and the intergenerational causes of climate change. It builds on a logic of intergenerational justice, but in so doing potentially distracts attention from the *intra-generational* injustices—the contemporary inequalities and inequities associated with climate change (see Jones et al, 2023).

Stories of *vulnerable and disempowered youth* can present youth as victims of circumstances rather than agents of change. I found that this was quite common when viewing my sample of videos (see Section 5.4), where narrators describe youth's predicament while youth are visually shown suffering. Youth vulnerability is closely tied to youth witnesses as both can justify including and excluding young people from public participation and decision-making. And both frame youth as potentially passive, needing protection rather than capable of contributing to solutions, thus reinforcing their marginalisation in climate debates.

In revisiting the eight emergent stories that predominate in the Geo-Doc video sample, my goal has been to pose alternatives, recognising that climate stories both reveal and distract. Stories can serve dual functions empowering and marginalising particular youth *and* climate worldviews. I have presented the stories of youth and climate as separate, I also want to stress their complex interactions. Stories of youth can act to (dis)empower progressive climate politics and stories of climate can (dis)empower youth politics, thereby reproducing manifestations of adult dominance and Western worldviews.

I am now left with my third research question: **which climate stories matter more, when, where, how and why?**

6.3 Speaking Youth to Power

My opening assumption is that the climate crisis is, in part, a storytelling crisis. In response I sought to understand and document climate stories to better understand the possibilities of these stories and associated youth media. Terry's (2024) provocation is "speaking youth to power." Power in Geo-Doc media is to enable youth (through these media) to gain *direct* contact with powerful UN climate policy makers and negotiators. In this manner, power is conceived (mainly) in terms of *access* to high-level policy makers and leaders.

My analysis has sought to be complementary and supportive. I have focused on narratives. A key distinction to be drawn here is between power residing in structures and sovereign actors (state representatives, leaders and the United Nation's policy officials) and power within circulating discourses, which Foucault (1991) links to "regimes of truth." (p. 133) For Foucault and his followers power is diffuse, discursive, embodied, and performed rather than possessed and wielded—power creates agencies, rather than being used by agents. Power in this sense is not negative or prohibiting, but positive in terms of (re)producing *truth* and *reality*. Stuart Hall (1990) writes about the fatal power/knowledge couplet:

Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet "power/knowledge." But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that "knowledge," not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective conformation to the norm (p. 260)

Clearly power exists in different forms and in different contexts. Those in/with power are able to act in ways that those marginalised and excluded are clearly not. Bringing marginalised actors, such as youth, into circles of UN power matters deeply and can be profoundly influential (as the YCR Geo-Doc project clearly demonstrates). But understanding power in a discursive, story sense is also important and can be easily overlooked. I invite paying closer attention to discourses and stories as circulating regimes of truth about the climate crisis in contexts of power, which constitute particular agents and social structures. As Jones and colleagues (2022) astutely note:

To the extent that storylines justify or question dominant ways of life—the ideas, practices, and institutions that support them—they are bound up with how social power accumulates, circulates and is challenged. (p.3)

Understanding and examining youth narratives now becomes crucial. Speaking "Youth to Power" necessitates consideration of stories/narrative *as* power (that fatal story/power couplet), rather than stories being solely external to and propelled by power. A critical question here is how do Geo-Doc videos (and by extension other youth climate media) reproduce and *exceed* associated climate and youth stories *and* in so doing challenge dominant adult-climate social orders?

What is abundantly clear In the context of the new planetary crisis, stories about climate crisis and stories of youth are interacting in new ways that both empower and marginalise young peoples and

nature in social transformation. New forms of media such as Geo-Docs are both implicated in and offer a hope of challenging these stories.



The premise of my analysis has been better understanding how climate and youth are storied in a particular, progressive media form, Geo-Docs. To that end, I have isolated eight stories that predominate in a selected sample, and discussed a number of alternatives—shadows—that each of these stories leave untold. Understanding these mix of stories, both told and untold, is a necessary antecedent to better understanding, resisting and challenging climate epistemic and social orders.

In given contexts, climate and youth storylines serve to propel and resist particular climate agencies and actions. Entrenched stories through their naturalised and seemingly irrefutable and non-controversial functioning are bound-up with supporting particular interests and power. Youth are bound to adult dominated worlds through a variety of roles and functions (supported by particular stories). Stories circulating in adult controlled media and policy are for a variety of reasons.

In a given contexts, whether forms of youth climate media are conformist, reformist or transformist hinges, in part, on stories which they propel and their potential to reproduce, divert, resist and challenge the marginalised status of young people and associated worldviews that dominate contemporary western anthropocentric, capitalist, patriarchal, racist, imperial, adult society. As my opening reflections stress, the world is now undergoing sustained and unavoidable changes. We are living on a damaged planet and even those of us sheltered by privilege, history and wealth are becoming aware of ruptures in our lives and worldviews that are propelled by western stories of exceptionalism; stories of scientific and technological progress, consumerism, liberalism, humanism, adulthood, and endless planetary resources and stability. With each climate event, these stories are increasingly becoming destabilised and brought into question. Progressive youth media can explore these ruptures.

Progressive youth climate crisis media needs to continue to play a key role in resisting and challenging stories that propel western, patriarchal, capitalist, adult-human exceptionalism.

In this regard, the shadow stories that I previously outlined call out for greater, sustained attention in Geo-Doc videos and other youth climate media. However, context matters deeply, of course, and circulating stories find expression, direction and purchase in specific contexts.

6.4 Restorying Climate Crisis - offering a new addition to the Geo-Doc initiative.

I have to some degree discussed my third and final question: **what stories of youth and climate are now urgently needed?** However, I am simultaneously conscious that posing such a question risks slipping into a climate problem solving approach, which is not my desire nor intent. Indeed, previous discussions have purposefully pushed back on this stance to a greater or lesser extent. My proceeding analysis has sought to bring attention to narrative powers of documentary media in conveying climate and youth stories. Rather than present this as a choice between these narratives and counter narratives, I wish to explore the documentary possibilities of climate media in raising (new) stories rather than answering questions. I want to try to avoid conceiving of media in purely instrumental terms as a vehicle to propel and deliver a story.

My proposal for re-storying climate crisis seeks an opening rather than a closed story. As a documentary filmmaker, I celebrate the powers of the media to provoke, invite, resist, and incite. I believe that youth climate media is ideally positioned and suited to support opportunities to reflect on youth and climate *stories* and the ways in which in particular contexts these stories support meaning and consolidate power as well as challenge particular regimes of truth and associated social orders. Through story, I want to release the climate and policy imagination.

This critical process includes challenging the status quo by exposing the underlying assumptions and power dynamics embedded in prevailing youth and climate narratives. It encourages rethinking and reframing understanding of key stories such as western progress, success, maturation and development, and our relationship with the natural world. Actively engaging in re-storying, can dismantle harmful myths perpetuated by powerful others including industries and institutions.

As a young youth climate documentarian, my first recommendation is for (my) youth climate media to more carefully and reflexively attend to youth and climate stories. In given contexts, climate videos might articulate what stories solidify power and what stories can challenge and change power? How can climate media challenge and escape those entrenched and dominant adult stories and release new stories that youth are uniquely positioned to tell.

6.5 Recommendations for Geo-Docs

With this in mind, I wanted to make a video contribution to the Geo-Doc project drawing on my research. I screened my “Geo-Doc on Geo-Docs” with story themes at the start of my thesis defence and will submit this video to the Geo-Doc video set.

In this video, try to actualize some recommendations that I have theorised will improve upon individual Geo-Doc videos. I scaffold these recommendations and my video with Joseph Dumit’s (2014) implosion project. Dumit proposes a framework for imploding and re-writing the social landscape by reconsidering “all material-semiotic actors” (Dumit, 2014, p. 349) as dynamic scenes for implosions. Such implosions stress that “world histories are not just found inside objects, and objects do not “point” to them; in important ways each object is made of imploded histories” (Dumit, 2014, p. 349). Implosion serves as a connecting force, highlighting the significance of cultural dimensions such as labour, technoscience, and economy. Haraway (1997) succinctly encapsulates this idea:

The point is simple: the technical, textual, organic, historical, formal, mythic, economic, and political dimensions of entities, actions, and worlds implode in the gravity well of technoscience—or perhaps of any world massive enough to bend our attention, warp our certainties, and sustain our lives. (1997, p. 68)

Thus, implosion acts as a postmodern deconstruction of objects, processes, beings, and affects, challenging their traditional conceptions alongside their technoscientific definitions and emphasising non-obvious connections. By applying this to climate crisis and youth stories, I propose that young Geo-Documentarians are able to deconstruct and re-story local climate events critically examining their cultural, political, economic, organic and historical stories. This approach offers youth documentarian creative openings into universal, regional and personal climate stories and how they manifest themselves locally in particular climate impacted Geo-locations.

As a thought experiment, I list some guidelines for an alternate Geo-Doc pedagogy centering stories that I followed when creating my own video contribution.

1. Conversations start with discussion of climate crisis stories and youth stories. What are more common climate crisis stories and youth stories in popular culture? How do these overlap and combine? In what ways do these stories support and resist/challenge social traditions and

associated powers? How do these stories empower and marginalise youth? (this is broadly similar to my questions #1 and #2). A key question here is how might youth be centred in this context?

2. Next, documentarians propose, discuss and explore the focus/topic of their Geo-Doc video (such as chemical pollution in a local quarry, or rising water levels in a local lake, or cats in cans). The discussion then turns to what stories are common and less common about the climate crisis and youth in this—Geo-locatable—context. Dumit proposes a wide range of dimensions including professional/epistemological, material, technological, contextual/situated, political, economic, textual, bodily/organic, historical, particle, educational, mythological, and symbolic dimensions. Each dimension potentially opens up different stories, revealing climate complexity and youth interconnectedness within the world.
3. Next, youth documentarians create mind maps of existing knowledge about their topic, identifying stories, plots, and connections that are already known. For example, their notion of a 'story' might be commonly understood as a simple narrative meant for entertainment or moral instruction, if this is the case, what are other ways of storying the same idea. By investigating its other dimensions, one can reveal the complexities and influences that shape storytelling. As well as, identifying gaps in knowledge and reflecting on why these gaps exist. Furthermore, consider the personal, political, economic, institutional, historical, and cultural reasons for these gaps. Once identified, repeat the research to fill those gaps. Identify sources, archives, experts, and other means to gather more information about the story, questioning those in turn.
4. Next, youth documentarians reflect on the new information and its implications. Consider how the new connections and knowledge change the understanding of the story you began with and its significance. Create a second story, besides the original, stressing the interconnectedness and embeddedness of the story in broader historical, social, and political contexts. This is meant to challenge and reconfigure common sense, encouraging a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the original story.

This process of implosion is exhaustive, requiring a commitment to understanding the complexities and contradictions inherent in complex climate change. By means of challenging common sense stories and reconfiguring common sense storytelling.

The ultimate goal is to question and transform the ingrained, taken-for-granted assumptions and understandings that shape our perception of the world. As the vast majority of common sense stories are formed by societal norms, cultural narratives, and historical contexts that simplify and normalise complex phenomena. By imploding a story, youth aim to uncover specifically the hidden connections, power dynamics, and histories that constitute these everyday understandings.

I hope this process of exploring who tells stories, whose stories are told, and who controls the means of storytelling can refresh and release youth climate storytelling, forming a new lexicon outside of common automatic entrenched stories. Even if this does not transpire, whatever is created, I am sure, will at least be distinctive and, as far as I am concerned, magnificent.



There are a series of recommendations for future research that might build on this study. I have identified a series of stories in a specific Geo-Doc initiative, and this invites extending this approach to other Geo-Doc videos and youth (and adult) climate crisis media. I have sought to explore the various ways in which stories might act to support and challenge discursive powers. The specific processes and impacts of these stories in particular contexts is beyond the scope of this analysis. Future work, might for example, follow a particular story and document the ways in which this is used to consolidate and transform knowledge/power. For example, how do stories of “climate heroes” function in a particular discursive media context to (dis)empower adult and youth climate agencies and actions?

My study has focused on narratives and this is just *one* way of understanding—one story of—media. There are many other stories that might, for example, attend more closely to aesthetics, cinematography, imagery and sound. Following particular scholarship, my analysis is discursively focused, future research might attend more closely to embodied sense, sensations, emotions and affects.

Epilogue: An ordinary day, with extraordinary thoughts

In the prologue to this thesis, I mentioned a Talking Heads song “Once In A Lifetime” and the lyrics “*same as it ever was.*” In doing so, I sought to capture the slow breakneck world under my feet. Since then, nearly two years have been eclipsed with sun, snow, rain, and spring. Now, another Talking Heads song seems rather fitting: “Well, we know where we're goin', but we don't know where we've been” ... “And we're not little children. And we know what we want. And the future is uncertain. Give us time to work it out” (song title: “*Road to Nowhere*”). This song is commentary on the fallacy of conceiving of a future but without a past. It might also be taken as a revealing commentary on adulthood without childhood.

Encapsulating a profound sense of existential wandering and uncertainty, this Talking Heads song, imbued with a mixture of hope and resignation, reminds me of Earthly crises and the schoolyards who inherit them. Its lyrics provoke renewed frustration and betrayal, as I become more aware of the scientific realities and the looming threats posed by climate crises, yet the historical disconnections remain baffling. Previous generations and their actions, or lack thereof, have led to precarious situations where the consequences of industrialization and general environmental neglect are continuing unabated.

"And we're not little children. And we know what we want" also speaks of the growing voices and power of young people. Current generation of young activists, epitomised by figures like Greta Thunberg are insightful firecrackers, smashing their demands for urgent climate action over thick skulls. They are not merely passive recipients of the world shaped by their predecessors, but rather active young people striving for better, just futures.

On a personal note, the song lyrics reflect my journey to finish this thesis filled with its uncertainties, drawbacks and shortcomings yet they highlight my conscious renewed capacity to confront such issues head-on. Because, as the song suggests, while the destination may be unclear, my resolve to shape a better future remains strong even if sometimes it feels like “a road to nowhere”.

Dylan 27th June 2024.

Who knows what tall tales tomorrow demands, for only time will unveil them. Yet, I am certain of one thing: whatever stories may be, each of us will contemplate them deeply, with yearning, and dedication.

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Appendix 1

Year	Name	Title__Category	Country	Year	Video
2008					
1	No name	Small Islands and Their Interactions with Oceans	SEYCHELLES	2008	https://www.youtube.com/embed/qc8SCA6n-tM
2009					

	1	Sinking Paradise, Carteret Islands	Sinking Paradise, Carteret Islands	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	2009	https://youtu.be/Hgw4HTtokgk
2010						
	1	The Polar Explorer	The Polar Explorer	CANADA	2010	https://youtu.be/QMecrUrGwrc
2011						
	1	Youth Climate Report	An Invitation	CANADA (York University)	2011	https://www.youtube.com/embed/w1dZIX5-bLg
2012						
	1	Grace Chew	Singapore Interviews	SINGAPORE	2012	https://youtu.be/8Qzfg3NEna4
2013						
	1	Citizen Scientist in Siberia	Anya	RUSSIA	2013	https://youtu.be/KcpfCCX4Dsl
	2	Kayla Leitch	Engineering Solutions	THAILAND	2013	https://www.youtube.com/embed/wzTc1JHXcmQ
2014						
	1	The Youth of Climate Reality	Why Not Now?	BRAZIL	2014	https://www.youtube.com/embed/WtQyg1l3p9g
	2	Various	Pollutants in the Atmosphere	CANADA (Ellesmere Island)	2014	https://www.youtube.com/embed/ZTvOFOoXPtY
2015						
	1	Gabriel Munro	Amarok Society Mothers Turning the Tide in Bangladesh	BANGLADESH (Khulna)	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/ifaxmyP53ORk
	2	Cats, Beware of Cans	Cats, Beware of Cans	ISRAEL	2015	https://youtu.be/SLwyPpP9j0A
	3	Claudja Barry	Jamaica and Climate Change	JAMAICA	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/ju3TIYhRUPY
	4	The Youth of UNEP Communications	Achim Steiner's message to the CCAC at the Working Group in Kathmandu, Nepal	NEPAL	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/QUTs0vZLCmY
	5	Ray Kocur	Brower Youth Awards	Virginia, USA	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/r_BagUaGsTo
	6	Andrés Reinoso	Marcos Villacís - Climate Change	ECUADOR (Quito)	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/zkJIte5CFxs
	7	Ron Tremblay	Rebuilding a Nation	CANADA	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/5RZ2j5hsroE
	8	Ray Kocur, York University, Toronto, Canada	Cultural Evolution	CANADA	2015	https://www.youtube.com/embed/14PeKAGCBA4
2016						

1	Jayson Villagomez	Green Your Choice, Green Your Lifestyle	THE PHILIPPINES	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/iBh2_7ETmrQ
2	Faouzia Bahloul	**WINNER** Think Renewable	TUNISIA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/0ZKf1d2670w
3	Sadam Kiwanuka Yiga	Building a Future for Uganda	UGANDA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/9_WB-0xK-pk
4	Jacob Lebel	Waking Up to the Future	USA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/LiwNQvZU4gE
5	Kayla Soren	Things Began to Change	USA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/Nzl4aAmUZ9E
6	Tommy Tang and Audrey Seda	Barefoot Legacy	USA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/vptwc2kA324
7	Laura Hutchinson	Unless	USA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/XiUhKroa-Xs
8	Valentyna Kyrychenko	The Bicycle Routes of Sarny	UKRAINE	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/BWOWp0rBfEQ
9	Jacob Lebel	Waking Up to the Future	USA	2016	https://www.youtube.com/embed/LiwNQvZU4gE
10					
2017					
1	Mustapha Bengheraout	A Fish's New Life	ALGERIA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/6YNyFeH0u3Q
2	Mark Terry	Antarctica in Decline (VR Experience)	ANTARCTICA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/Siaqtkxatv8
3	Sadia Jafrin	Waste: A Source of Resource	BANGLADESH	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/HG2NiH5HsaY
4	Yulin Sun	Distance	CHINA / AUSTRALIA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/YAUoNHfQcPo
5	Adarsh Prathap	**WINNER** Let Mangroves Recover	INDIA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/eu0QtImgRCc
6	Erlita Indah Savitri	Youth Action in Mangrove Education	INDONESIA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/CZVZFIW9XsU
7	Rethinking Nature, Thinking with Nature	Rethinking Nature, Thinking with Nature	FRANCE	2017	https://youtu.be/nixhmPI-EEg
8	Olivia Abtahi	Washington Can!	USA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/5k-Y7wSjgkw
9	UNFCCC	Climate Change & Fiji: The Devastating Reality	FIJI	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/k6TgPUg32pU
10	Ana Paula de Martini de Souza	Communicating Ocean Science	BRAZIL	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/avQTzZy1C6s

11	Anne Wanjiru	People and Mangroves Together	KENYA	2017	https://www.youtube.com/embed/kHxqceBg0Ww
2018					
1	The Death of a Waste Bin	The Death of a Waste Bin by Denise Brignani and Frederica Scinetti	MALTA	2018	https://youtu.be/Jl2yWin3gi8
2	Mark Dalio	The Deepest Dive	ANTARCTICA	2018	https://youtu.be/C6cX0wQP5NA
3	Sadia	"BRINGING WORTH TO WASTER" / Green and Climate Friendly Jobs	BANGLADESH	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/VoGCSX2Hidg
4	Sofia	"ECO URBAN" / Responsible Production and Consumption -- **WINNER**	MEXICO	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/SQUaJt_HNC0
5	Anna	"ZERO WASTE" / Responsible Production and Consumption	IRELAND	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/p_Zmrh0iBxo
6	Keerthi	Green Soil	INDIA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/l_7Zw-OZCis
7	Sachin	"TILONIAN MANIFESTO" / Green and Climate Friendly Jobs	INDIA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/e1t7gsXvLxE
8	Gloria	"UNTITLED" / Green and Climate Friendly Jos	BENIN	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/c34_3X8O0p8
9	Fabrice	"SUSTAINABLE BRIQUETTES" / Responsible Production and Consumption	RWANDA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/8B2k3ucR8ho
10	Asnika	"WHAT DOES A HYDRAULIC ENGINEER DO?" / Green and Climate Friendly Jobs	USA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/4ADgY3GillEQ
11	Vikas Yadav	STEP FORWARD, BE ECO-FRIENDLY, GO GREEN" / Green and Climate Friendly Jobs **WINNER**	INDIA	2018	https://www.youtube.com/embed/beXO_Nst-MQ
2019					
1	Vivek Kumar Sahu	No Title	INDIA	2019	https://youtu.be/wM3R3XpuZBM
2	Alpedrete Quarries	Alpedrete Quarries by Javier Torrado & Aitor Iglesias	SPAIN	2019	https://youtu.be/kHxgcWsl9cg
3	AntiHuman	Vinamra Pancharia & Monika Sharma	INDIA	2019	https://youtu.be/44MmsED7l0A

4	Belem Angulo Perez	The Biodigester	MEXICO	2019	https://youtu.be/TQIYwP5F9uQ
5	Ihevueme Clifford	Steady Plant Food	NIGERIA	2019	https://youtu.be/UBSLok2EP-4
6	María Luzuriaga	Green Action for the Planet	Ecuador	2019	https://youtu.be/QSs8g9yv65A
7	Jacinta Hamley	Sail to the COP	UK (Northern Ireland)	2019	https://youtu.be/uUA0ZFwt0QI
8	Manjeeta Gurung	No Title	NEPAL	2019	https://youtu.be/bQ3nTWVQIHg
9	Gregory Vaux	The Nature of Farming	SCOTLAND	2019	https://youtu.be/FpM-p0QUawI
10	Where Did the Darkness Go?	Where Did the Darkness Go?	SLOVAKIA	2019	https://youtu.be/85s_hDRb9gc
11	Nash	Sustainable and Healthy Food	Madagascar	2019	https://youtu.be/v0pw_JxuhnY
12	Jamal Fadhili	Our Grazing Bank	TANZANIA	2019	https://youtu.be/hNVGCwVfyM
13	Gnim Mignake	Make City Dwellers Green Farmers	TOGO	2019	https://youtu.be/AX5p3HcAi6M
14	Aaron Good	Handmade Haven Soaps	UK	2019	https://youtu.be/IIFxsTsLYlw
15	Words Have Power	Lynne Cherry	USA	2019	https://youtu.be/5MYRNMHFUec
16	Gili Dorfman, Noam Elbaz And- Roni, Omer, Yontan.B, Ofer, Rotem, Yonatan.T, Yael, Inbar, Ori, Ilay, Maor, Amir.	One Meal, A Lot of Garbage!	ISRAEL	2019	https://youtu.be/0EWaUmbc1wq
17	Scream	Gonzague Legout & Christina Vieira	FRANCE	2019	https://youtu.be/2pWl6z1i6Js
18	Thanchanok Thamjaraswong	Watcher of the Wild	THAILAND	2019	https://youtu.be/BF7iw-XJahY
2020					
1	Planetary Health Film Lab - Colombia	The Subachoque River	COLOMBIA	2020	https://youtu.be/A7P980nO0yI
2	Fishing for Plastic	Fishing for Plastic by Lefteris Arapakis	GREECE	2020	https://youtu.be/rc8PA8uMPcg
3	Plastic Bricks in Kenya	Plastic Bricks by Nzambi Matee	KENYA	2020	https://youtu.be/QbZKP4UAtL8
4	Laura Taylor and Rachel Clark UH in the Antarctic	UH in the Antarctic	ANTARCTICA	2020	https://youtu.be/DP7ItjI2YpU
5	Linda Capper	A-68a Iceberg	ANTARCTICA	2020	https://youtu.be/TOgcNLtXOf8

6	The Páramo	Jacquelin Montoya	Ecuador	2020	https://youtu.be/VKrp8Z2wyEk
7	Selfish and Hotdog	Directed by Joonsung Kim	SOUTH KOREA	2020	https://youtu.be/qC3B6hWOZdE
2021					
1	The Land Business	The Land Business	ARGENTINA	2021	https://youtu.be/9oTPvI9pRXA
2	Erica	The quest for a green world	CAMAROOON	2021	https://youtu.be/k_n-4BKMt8k
3	Emily McCallum	Will There Be Another Rainy Day?	CANADA	2021	https://youtu.be/Fue9Qy0ao3c
4	Hannah Nichols	Treading Tides	CANADA	2021	https://youtu.be/MGPPXmHKs6Q
5	Hoi Lam	The Sea and Me	CHINA	2021	https://youtu.be/oz0bqIgfABY
6	Fátima Morán	Video Proplays	ECUADOR	2021	https://youtu.be/gTXQyOSUv8w
7	Inès BERNARD, Lucie AROT, Sidonie SEGURA, Marjane TAGRI	Open-Hearted to the Oceans	FRANCE	2021	https://youtu.be/ejwVgJcSU-U
8	How to Consume More Responsibly	How to Consume More Responsibly	FRANCE	2021	https://youtu.be/VxlyagIYIs8
9	Pragya	Resilience in the Himalayas	INDIA	2021	https://youtu.be/JzKNZDcKzq8
10	Sneha Shahi	Keep It Glassy!	INDIA	2021	https://youtu.be/nfXBUlvvchg
11	Teymour Ghaderi	The Father of Trees	IRAN	2021	https://youtu.be/o57HeKilnkA
12	Tshepo	Herale Mushrooms	LESOTHO	2021	https://youtu.be/kvoJWuOS0GQ
13	Marthaline	Forest Conservation	LIBERIA	2021	https://youtu.be/P9gPpm5vCaY
14	Il-Qabru	Il-Qabru	MALTA	2021	https://youtu.be/9HpfloDvtgQ
15	Rafael Franco	Close the Tap	PERU	2021	https://youtu.be/AdmraaImjQ8
16	Odete Melo	Footbridges	PORTUGAL	2021	https://youtu.be/PbL33IEAryw
17	The Wild Side of Singapore: Coastal Protectors	David Adam James Lee	SINGAPORE	2021	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mldFCx1Kg9o
18	The Impact of Climate Change on Urban Environments	Ezann Kuai Yi Zhuang	SINGAPORE	2021	https://youtu.be/_lfpWOWKo1I
19	The Master Waster Chris	Celest Tan	SINGAPORE	2021	https://youtu.be/1A2brDCNjUc
20	Liza Komar et al	Where Does Your Snack Come From?	SLOVENIA	2021	https://youtu.be/OVkv99eSGpA
21	Asavela and Sandile	Listening to the Land	SOUTH AFRICA	2021	https://youtu.be/6ZVf9sLUAOU

22	Balungile	Our Sacred Land	SOUTH AFRICA	2021	https://youtu.be/z81Fmt0XyWU
23	Trinity Fields	Don't Bin the Bag	WALES	2021	https://youtu.be/prasRMmUSkc
24	Emmanuel	Tears of the dry land	ZIMBABWE	2021	https://youtu.be/T5416DzjBoU
2022					
1	Adieel, Caleb, Isaiah	Earth's Future	CANADA	2022	https://youtu.be/D9X40-K702o
2	Grace Hood	Climate Change Tick Borne Illness	CANADA	2022	https://youtu.be/FluL4Qz4G-E
3	Aubrey Urbshott, Ruth Duncan	Land-Based Learning with Indigenous Youth	CANADA	2022	https://youtu.be/X1o2ugC8Ca8
4	Kristyn Cole	The Coffee Controversy	CHILE	2022	https://youtu.be/RKBSsOrnsfo
5	Zakaria Mohamed	Water Pollution in the Island of COMOROS	COMOROS	2022	https://youtu.be/1kNO4go3dP4
6	Sisa Flor Cacuanga	The Life of Nature	ECUADOR	2022	https://youtu.be/3L2e1TI-CO8
7	Saywa Masaquiza	La Ceguerra de la Existencia	ECUADOR	2022	https://youtu.be/LgYNnc1ZjxQ
8	Planetary Health Film Lab 2022	PHFL Ecuador Edition	ECUADOR	2022	https://youtu.be/zXf3f-ckJi0
9	Enzo Perret, Titouan Pottier	57,4 Millions	FRANCE	2022	https://youtu.be/AZZQWzUIZnE
10	Γιώργος Παπακώτης et al	Act Green	GREECE	2022	https://youtu.be/0NjK-HKs6O0
11	Chetna Bhardwaj	Let's Manage Plastic	INDIA	2022	https://youtu.be/CsShYjvA1Ac
12	Yael Binder et al	What do you do with your expired medicine?	ISRAEL	2022	https://youtu.be/TU0N74uH0_k
13	Sara Kovačević, Matija Fatić	Mimesis	MONTENEGRO	2022	https://youtu.be/S3ldJ0IY0wk
14	Aaron Reed	How Game Consoles Can Harm the Environment	SCOTLAND	2022	https://youtu.be/DuLNCQh32uY
15	Veronika Jenčová, Alexandra Dzurillová	Don't Be Afraid to Ask If you Don't Know	SLOVAKIA	2022	https://youtu.be/Dddc0-6V0gl
16	Lara Rak Jezernik, Vito	Save Soil	SLOVENIA	2022	https://youtu.be/pDC5I2l_-xs
17	Dahyun Kim et al	W-Log: Climate Crisis Solved with 'Tap Water'	SOUTH KOREA	2022	https://youtu.be/eZWLGJ8YJUM
18	Julia Cho et al	Digital Pollution	SOUTH KOREA	2022	https://youtu.be/oon70aMafoE

19	İlkim Bilge İdem et al	If we are silent, everyone will be thirsty	TURKEY	2022	https://youtu.be/Y1NTP9cp2r8
2023					
1	Think About It	Signe Höglund, Nils Engberg, Joline Östman, and Celina Sidmark	SWEDEN	2023	https://youtu.be/CriOU_N4Dn8
2	Entrepreneurs Fighting Climate Change	Edmund Assafuah	GHANA	2023	https://youtu.be/cDK-0UKRALc
3	Fading Harvest	Zakaria Azara	GHANA	2023	https://youtu.be/-pTOKpFS2BE
4	Impacts of Rising Temperatures and Decreasing Precipitation	Sophia Aduko	GHANA	2023	https://youtu.be/MpjiLCST_lw
5	Food Waste Cafe	Sharee Ineson	NEW ZEALAND	2023	https://youtu.be/QizkRy1cGms
6	Planting a Dogwood Tree	UNESCO Chair	CANADA	2023	https://youtu.be/HWO7pidLuNc
7	The Dark Side of Clothes	Minnat Allah Alyyan, Shahd Taweel, Tuleen Nassir Al-Din, Hadeel .Abedieh, Malak Abu Tair, Rana Abu Tair, Nada Jubran	ISRAEL	2023	https://youtu.be/05bj_vD7mKA
8	My Plastic Pandemic Story	Hamshini Pathmaruben	MALAYSIA	2023	https://youtu.be/j5UGBo1mayg
9	Climate Change and Action in Na Luum Ca, Belize	Ernesto Pau	BELIZE	2023	https://youtu.be/MTTWwz924JU
10	Entrepreneurs Fighting Climate Change	Edmund Assafuah	GHANA	2023	https://youtu.be/cDK-0UKRALc
11	Bali - A Poisoned Paradise	Akshita Jain	INDONESIA	2023	https://youtu.be/M1ZvO3_u-tE
12	Sustainable Urban Living in in Our Hands	YRE Collaboration	JAPAN	2023	https://youtu.be/IIl5H-Turm0

Appendix 2

Code used to scrape youtube video metadata (Generated with help from ChatGPT & Google/YoutubeAPI)

```

function getVideoLength(inputCell) {
    var apiKey = '*****';
    var videoId = inputCell;

    var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=contentDetails&id=' +
videoId + '&key=' + apiKey;

    try {
        var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
        var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());
        if (result.items.length === 0) {
            return 'Video not found';
        }

        var videoDuration = result.items[0].contentDetails.duration;
        var videoLength = parseISO8601Duration(videoDuration);
        return videoLength;
    } catch (error) {
        return 'Error fetching video length';
    }
}

function parseISO8601Duration(duration) {
    var regex =
/P(?:\d+)Y?(?:\d+)M?(?:\d+)D?T(?:\d+)H?(?:\d+)M?(?:\d+)S?/;
    var matches = regex.exec(duration);
    var years = parseInt(matches[1] || 0);
    var months = parseInt(matches[2] || 0);
    var days = parseInt(matches[3] || 0);
    var hours = parseInt(matches[4] || 0);

```

```

var minutes = parseInt(matches[5] || 0);
var seconds = parseInt(matches[6] || 0);

var totalSeconds = years * 31536000 + months * 2592000 + days * 86400 +
hours * 3600 + minutes * 60 + seconds;

return totalSeconds;
}

function getVideoPublicationDate(inputCell) {
var videoId = inputCell;

var apiKey = '*****';

var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=snippet&id=' + videoId
+ '&key=' + apiKey;

try {
var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());

if (result.items.length === 0) {
return 'Video not found';
}

var publishedAt = result.items[0].snippet.publishedAt;
var publicationDate = new Date(publishedAt);

return publicationDate;
} catch (error) {
console.log('YouTube API Error:', error);
return 'Error fetching publication date';
}
}

function getVideoViewCount(inputCell) {
var videoId = inputCell;

```

```

var apiKey = '*****';

var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=statistics&id=' +
videoId + '&key=' + apiKey;

try {
    var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
    var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());
    if (result.items.length === 0) {
        return 'Video not found';
    }
    var viewCount = result.items[0].statistics.viewCount;
    return viewCount;
} catch (error) {
    console.log('YouTube API Error:', error);
    return 'Error fetching view count';
}
}

function getVideoTitle(inputCell) {
    var videoId = inputCell;
    var apiKey = '*****';
    var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=snippet&id=' + videoId
+ '&key=' + apiKey;
    try {
        var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
        var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());
        if (result.items.length === 0) {
            return 'Video not found';

```



```
    }

    var videoTitle = result.items[0].snippet.title;
    return videoTitle;
} catch (error) {
    console.log('YouTube API Error:', error);
    return 'Error fetching video title';
}
}

function getVideoDescription(inputCell) {
    var videoId = inputCell;

    var apiKey = '*****';

    var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=snippet&id=' + videoId
+ '&key=' + apiKey;

    try {
        var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
        var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());

        if (result.items.length === 0) {
            return 'Video not found';
        }

        var videoDescription = result.items[0].snippet.description;
        return videoDescription;
    } catch (error) {
        console.log('YouTube API Error:', error);
        return 'Error fetching video description';
    }
}
```

```

function checkHyperlinkValidity(sheetName, row, column) {
    var sheet =
SpreadsheetApp.getActiveSpreadsheet().getSheetByName(sheetName);

    var cell = sheet.getRange(row, column);
    var hyperlink = cell.getValue();

    if (hyperlink === '') {
        return 'Not working';
    }

    var videoId = extractYouTubeVideoId(hyperlink);
    if (videoId === null) {
        return 'Not working';
    }

    var apiKey = '*****';

    var apiUrl =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/videos?part=status&id=' + videoId
+ '&key=' + apiKey;

    try {
        var youtubeResponse = UrlFetchApp.fetch(apiUrl);
        var youtubeResult = JSON.parse(youtubeResponse.getContentText());
        if (youtubeResult.items.length === 0) {
            return 'Not working';
        }

        var videoStatus = youtubeResult.items[0].status;
        if (videoStatus.uploadStatus === 'processed') {
            return 'Working';
        }
    } catch (youtubeError) {
        console.log('YouTube API Error:', youtubeError);
    }
}

```

```

    }

    return 'Not working';
}

function extractYouTubeVideoId(hyperlink) {
    var videoId = null;

    // Extract the video ID from the different formats of YouTube links
    if (hyperlink.indexOf('youtu.be.com') !== -1) {
        videoId = hyperlink.split('youtu.be.com/embed/')[1];
    } else if (hyperlink.indexOf('youtu.be') !== -1) {
        videoId = hyperlink.split('youtu.be/')[1];
    } else if (hyperlink.indexOf('youtube.com/watch?v=') !== -1) {
        videoId = hyperlink.split('youtube.com/watch?v=')[1];
    } else if (hyperlink.indexOf('youtube.com/embed/') !== -1) {
        videoId = hyperlink.split('youtube.com/embed/')[1];
    }

    return videoId;
}

function addToPlaylist() {
    var sheet = SpreadsheetApp.getActiveSpreadsheet().getActiveSheet();

    // Get the playlist ID from a specific cell (change A1 to the cell
    // reference)
    var playlistId = sheet.getRange("A1").getValue();

    // Get the range of cells containing YouTube links
    var linkRange = sheet.getRange("A2:A10"); // Change to the appropriate
    range

    // Fetch YouTube API key
    var apiKey = '*****';

```

```
// Loop through each cell in the link range
var links = linkRange.getValues();
for (var i = 0; i < links.length; i++) {
    var link = links[i][0];

    // Extract video ID from the link
    var videoId = extractYouTubeVideoId(link);

    if (videoId) {
        // Create request to add video to playlist

        var url =
'https://www.googleapis.com/youtube/v3/playlistItems?part=snippet';

        var payload = {
            snippet: {
                playlistId: playlistId,
                resourceId: {
                    kind: 'youtube#video',
                    videoId: videoId
                }
            }
        };

        var params = {
            method: 'post',
            contentType: 'application/json',
            payload: JSON.stringify(payload),
            muteHttpExceptions: true,
            headers: {
                Authorization: 'Bearer ' + ScriptApp.getOAuthToken()
            }
        };
    }
}
```

```
};  
  
// Make API request  
var response = UrlFetchApp.fetch(url + '&key=' + apiKey, params);  
var result = JSON.parse(response.getContentText());  
  
if (result.error) {  
    console.log('Error adding video:', result.error.message);  
} else {  
    console.log('Video added to playlist:', link);  
}  
}  
}  
}
```