

From Development to Economy

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Shift from Sustainable
Development to Green Economy

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Abstract

We are witnessing a paradigm shift in global environmental politics. The aim of this thesis is to understand the focus shift, from Sustainable Development to Green Economy. Both concepts emphasize three dimensions an environmental, an economic and a social dimension. Within the UN-context, Green Economy has been introduced as the leading buzzword. The language change is not only linguistically, but also a focus shift. Green Economy has made economic growth a major point while development issues have received less attention. Through theory and method that derives from Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, this thesis describes how the Sustainable Development discourse in 1992 differ from the Green Economy discourse in 2012, with emphasizes placed on the social dimension. The shift from Sustainable Development to Green Economy is an essential one that originates from industrialized and emerging countries. Emerging countries has more common interest with industrialized countries then ever before. There has been a growing amount of clubs and institutions among rich and emerging countries, demonstrating the new economic structure. This also implies that the poorest countries have less power in 2012 than they had in 1992, and this is evident in the discourses.

Keywords: Green Economy, Sustainable Development, Critical Discourse Analysis, Intertextuality, Development, Economic Growth

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1 Introduction

*"I heard one person starve,
I heard many people laughin'
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter
I heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall"*
(Bob Dylan - A Hard Rain's A Gonna Fall)

We are witnessing a paradigm shift in global environmental governance. This shift has become observable in the change of language in key documents, including the Rio+20 conference. The concept of Green Economy has been given much attention during the last years. Some attention has been drawn from the concept of Sustainable Development because of their similarity. But what does it imply when Green Economy is becoming more dominant? The main difference between the two concepts is in their main focus. Development is the main focus within the Sustainable Development discourse, while economic growth is the main priority within the Green Economy discourse.

Language is Power! How we talk about meaningful concepts and how we define them has an effect on the whole society. Norman Fairclough concludes that when leaders argue over meanings of vital concepts like *democracy*, this is politics (1995, p. 25). It is through languages, that we interpret the world. Therefore it is only natural that language should form our world. This thesis tries to understand a significant shift in language.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (also known as RIO+20) a new concept named Green Economy was popularized. There is no general definition for the concept, but according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), it stands for improved human well-being, social equity and reducing environmental risks (UNEP 2011, p. 16). Exactly twenty years earlier, at the United Nation Conference on Environment and Development at the exact same location, Sustainable Development was popularized. Although separated by twenty years, these two concepts have been spread globally with the help of these UN conferences held in Brazil.

Sustainable Development and Green Economy are similar in several ways. Hopwood et al. write that there are many interpretations of the concept Sustainable Development but it is clear that the concept rests on three pillars, which are an environmental dimension, a social dimension and an economical dimension (Hopwood 2005, p. 40). These are the same dimensions that Green Economy incorporates (UNEP 2011, p. 16-17). Onestini states that the international debate has shifted focus from a Sustainable Development discourse to a Green Economy discourse (2012, p. 33). This shift is not just a language shift;

it affects social equity, human welfare and the environment. It changes what is considered normal.

1.1 Structure

In the following, I am first going to present my research questions and the purpose with this thesis. After that an introduction of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be presented. In a discourse analysis the theory and method is generally intertwined. This discourse analysis will help me understand how language and the social world interrelate. The main tenets will be introduced alongside essential theoretical concepts. After that in 2.2 the analytical framework is described. It gives the reader knowledge of how the analysis is conducted. The analytical framework is primarily focused on the methodological part. A text analysis is the main methodological tool but this will be complemented by an analysis of the discourse as well as the social context. Following this outline of theory and method, an introduction of the discourses is presented. This will give the reader a necessary understanding of the discourses. This introduction of the discourses will also include a short discussion of the relationship between the two discourses. Following this, in part 4, is the analysis conducted. The analysis is formed after Fairclough's analytical framework and presents an analysis of the text, discursive practice and social practice for the two UN meetings. Finally the conclusions and the result will be presented as well as suggestions for future research.

1.2 Problem Definition

This study portrays the discourse shift from Sustainable Development to Green Economy. The concept of Green Economy is a rising star in global environmental politics. This fact can be seen as puzzling since Green Economy emphasizes the same three dimensions as Sustainable Development does. Both concepts want to combine economic and social development with a healthy environment. But what does this shift in focus imply?

This discourse change is essential because, as Fairclough writes, a shift in language has an effect on decision-making (2001, p. 19). Steven Bernstein means that a shift in norms changes which decisions that sounds reasonable (2001, p. 30). This thesis analyzes the discourse shift within an UN context, since it was in the UN, where the two concepts became popularized. The main objective in this paper is to describe and understand the discourse shift.

- How has the discourse shifted from Sustainable Development to Green Economy in a UN- context?

In the research question it is implicit that Sustainable Development and Green Economy have some different meanings. Describing their differences is a part of showing how the discourse has shifted. It is necessary to complement the main question with two smaller questions with the objective to clarify the intention of this study.

- Where does the language shift derive from?
- How does the discourse shift affect the approach to social issues?

There are two main purposes with this thesis; one is to identify the shift from SD to GE, while the other is to show what the shift implies for the social dimension. This analysis is based on critical theory, which means that the analysis wants to reveal unequal power relations and injustices. Power relations refer to the fact that, within the UN, actors have varying degrees of influence both in decision-making, but also in the ability to affect the leading discourse and the agenda. According to Winther Jørgensen & Philips one aim with critical analysis is to achieve a greater number of democratic discourses where everyone has the equal power to influence (2002, p. 63-64).

2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis deals with the idea that language is structured in special ways that matter in our social life (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 1). In this thesis the word discourse will be used to refer to norms, which form how we talk about things. Discourses can for example be global, local, regional or institutional. The leading discourse can be seen as a frame that forms how people use the language.

Discourse analysis differs from other research methods because the theoretical and methodological part is intertwined. The methodological approach in a discourse analysis builds upon several theoretical assumptions. One main assumption is that the world is socially constructed. Fairclough states that language is a part of politics and not an external appearance (2001, p. 19-20). This implies that the “truth” is constructed and that there is a struggle of what the truth shall be. Another key premise is that our language is formed by our history and our culture (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 5). This view of the world as socially constructed and that the discourses shall be given focal attention provides a framework for the methodological part.

This thesis will draw upon Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis because it emphasizes the role of language and provides a useful analytical framework. CDA is not one specific method with some specific rules but rather a way of performing analyses. My interpretation is that Fairclough wants scientists to evolve and redesign his work so it can continue to contribute in new and fruitful ways. I like to see his method as a tool instead of a limit. As Michel Foucault has written “Discourse in general, and scientific discourse in particular, is so complex a reality that we not only can, but should, approach it at different levels and with different methods” (Foucault 1973, p. XV). This analysis will only involve those theoretical and methodological aspects that are required for the specific purposes of the thesis.

Fairclough’s analysis can be seen as a combination between linguistics and political science. What differs CDA from linguistics is that it also includes discourses and the social context. In this thesis emphasis will be on political issues, and linguistics will be used as a tool. In most discourse analyses, theory and method are intertwined. When one chooses to perform a discourse analysis, some theory and assumptions are included. This section will present some main theoretical features and some useful concepts. In the later part of this section focus will be on how this analysis is conducted.

2.1 Theory and Concepts

CDA is a discourse analysis in the sense that it emphasizes the role of discourses. Although, Fairclough differs from many other discourse analysts on how to view discourses. He differs particularly on what he calls discursive and non-discursive events, and the relationship between discourses and the social world (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 71). Fairclough means that discourses affect the social world but also that the social world affects discourses. This is redundant, because it signifies that the author believes that there is a world outside the discourse in contrast to e.g. Laclau & Mouffe (see Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 24-57). Fairclough emphasizes that the relationship between language and the society is dynamic. In other words, how we talk affects the society but how we talk is also affected by the society (2001, p. 18-19). This relates to the view of actors (or social agents). Actors generate texts (what is said or written) within social frames. The leading norm determines what is legitimate and natural, although actors have power that is not determined by social structures (Fairclough 2003, p. 22-23).

CDA takes position for exploited social groups and is therefore not politically neutral. Inspiration has been gathered from leftist thinkers like Marx, Gramsci, Habermas and Althusser. Winther Jørgensen & Philips write that it aims to reveal the role of discourses in maintaining unequal power relations (2002, p. 64). The fact that the analysis is not politically neutral requires a high demand on transparency in the approach. The point with this thesis is that it will contribute to the social sciences rather than being a statement of any opinion. Therefore, I will be extra clear with what is done and why, and clear evidence is presented when there is any questionable statement.

Power is a significant concept. In this thesis power refers to the ability to affect language and discourses. In an institution like the UN, actors do not have equal influence. Fairclough writes that having equal status also means to have equal influence on the shaping of the concept's meaning (1995, p. 47). Power in this thesis is the ability to form and influence a discourse. There are two concepts that relate to power and changes in the discourse; order of discourse and interdiscursivity. Fairclough means that power is to be able to affect the discourse within a social institution (2001, p. 24f).

The concept order of discourse (coined by Michel Foucault) refers to a specific social institution where the text is formed (Fairclough 2001, p. 23-25). There can be many different types of discourses within an institution (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 67). In this thesis the UN context can be seen as an order of discourse where different discourse types are gathered and positioned. Fairclough concludes that the discourse type that controls the order of discourse has power because the leading discourse type decides what seems natural (2001, p. 25).

Interdiscursivity occurs when different discourses are mentioned in the same situation (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 73). For example, Green Economy is an interdiscursive concept, because it merges an environmental discourse with an economic discourse. A shift in the order of discourse or in

interdiscursivity can be seen as a change in the discourse. If we change the leading norm in the existing discourse or complement the discourse with concepts from other discourses, we automatically change the meaning of that discourse. Shifts in the discourse have effect on what seems natural and that affects decision-making and therefore is discourses important.

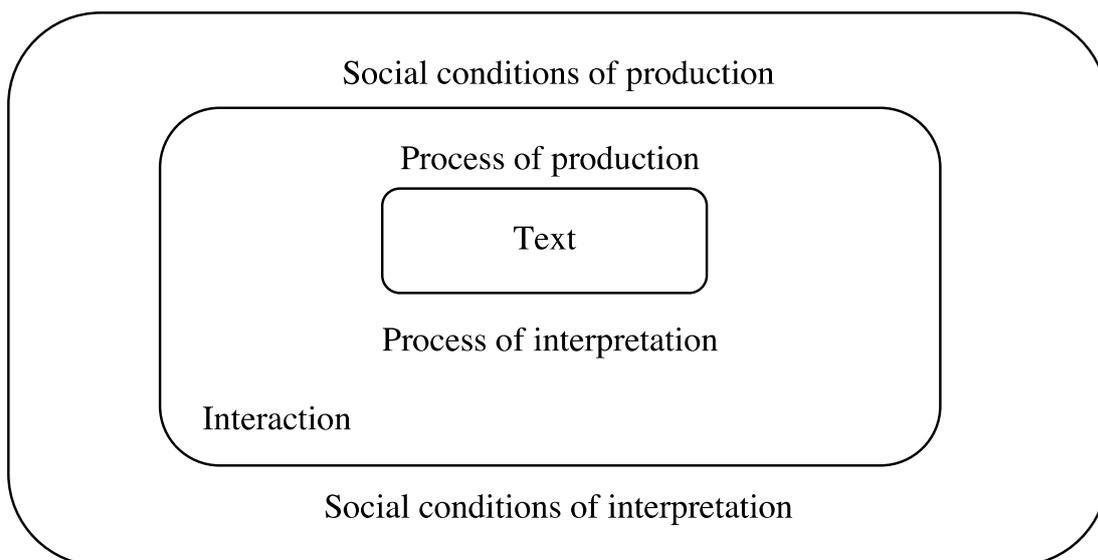
Intertextuality can be seen as a form of interdiscursivity. Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts draw upon earlier texts (Winther Jørgensen & Philips 2002, p. 69-73). This means that no text can be understood divorced from its context and history. Intertextuality is crucial to the analysis of the discourse. A text can clearly draw upon the neoliberal discourse or a socialist discourse. A text cannot be understood in isolation; it builds on earlier texts and discourses. Where do the ideas come from and what agenda do the actors have?

2.2 Analytical Framework

This part focuses on clarifying the methodological part and explains how the analysis is conducted. However, the border between the theoretical part and the methodological part is very vague.

Fairclough's analytical framework is based on a three dimensional view of discourses. He divides the discourse analysis into description, interpretation and explanation. These three levels centers around the text. Fairclough means that the text is a part of the society and a result of a social process and that the process is affected by social conditions outside the discourse (2001, p. 18-22). This means that the text is interesting but also why the text is formed the way it is and how it is consumed.

Fairclough means that a discourse can be analyzed through the text (spoken or written), the discourse practice and the social practice (1995, p. 97-99). These three levels can be analyzed separately although they depend greatly upon each other. This thesis will present them separately to avoid any unnecessary confusion. Fairclough also concludes that it is essential to analyze the relationship between text, discursive practice and social practice (2001, p. 21). It is also necessary to understand that a text is a part of a discourse, which is a part of a social structure. The framework modeled below describes the relationship between the three dimensions.



(Fairclough 2001, p. 21)

2.2.1 Analysis of the Text

A text is a result of a production that has occurred within a social condition (Fairclough 2001, p. 92-93). The main focus is to solidify which concepts are attached to Sustainable Development and Green Economy and where these concepts derive from. Fairclough means that by describing the text it is possible to find what ideological background that is represented (1995, p. 28). Broad discourses usually contain many smaller and contesting discourses. Fairclough argues that “meaning relations between words and longer expressions” is essential for the text analysis (2003, p. 63). Both Green Economy and Sustainable Development put emphasize on the environment, the economy and they both have a social aspect. The purpose of this text analysis is to describe how Green Economy and Sustainable Development connect to these three dimensions. In this thesis the text will be different UN documents.

Fairclough concludes that a text-analysis can be separated into three parts, which are vocabulary, grammar and textual structure. This thesis will mainly focus on the vocabulary (2001, p. 92-93). In many CDA’s a rather complex linguistic method is used. That will not be the case in this study since it is not needed for the purpose of this study. As concluded, this text analysis will focus on concretize which concepts are connected to each other and which values do different words inhabit. By analyzing how much Sustainable Development and Green Economy emphasizes on the social aspect, on the environment and on the economy we can describe how the discourse at that time looked like.

2.2.2 Analysis of the Discursive Practice

The discursive practice is mainly focusing on how the text is produced and consumed. Fairclough means that the interpretative part should focus on the relationship between the text and interactions (2001, p. 21). A significant text, like UN documents, is not produced out of the blue, the ideas derives from somewhere. A text's production and consumption is always made through interpretation. The reader can understand a text differently from what the writer meant to convey. The main point is to look deeper or behind the text and see how it was created and why. How the text draws upon earlier texts and ideas (intertextuality) is essential in the analysis of the discursive practice. By looking at the texts intertextuality we can understand why the text is formed the way it is. The main approach: is to look at the intertextuality, interdiscursivity, order of discourse of the text.

- **Intertextuality** – Intertextuality is significant because where the text originates from, tells us a lot about what it says. In this thesis intertextuality will refer to which other texts and ideas that the text is drawing upon (see Fairclough 1995, p. 14-15). Intertextuality also includes how precise they are about the meaning of the content. This affects how other texts will interpret the text.
- **Interdiscursivity** – Interdiscursivity is related to the concept of intertextuality. Interdiscursivity describes which different discourse types that are valid within the text (see Fairclough 1995, p. 133-134). Interdiscursivity helps me solidify different discourses within the text.
- **Order of discourse** – How do the text emphasize different discourses within a forum or institution. There are different levels of order of discourses (it is possible to talk about a global order of discourse) but this thesis will only focus on the order of discourse within the UN context and the order of discourse within SD and GE. The smaller discourses are structured in different levels within the institution (see Fairclough 2001, p. 24-26). In what order are the discourses emphasized?

By mainly using these three analytical tools we can understand why the discourse is formed as it is.

2.2.3 Analysis of the Social Practice

As stated earlier, the text is produced in a social context that affects the actors and thereby also the text. This should not be a questionable statement because it should be obvious that a text depends on its context. In this part of the analysis we try to find explanations outside the immediate discourse. The most essential social

condition is probably the economic and the political system. For example before 1990s we lived in a bipolar world that of course affected many aspects in the society. If we choose not to include the social conditions in the analysis we probably will receive a biased result. The discursive practice is perceived as a part of the social practice (Fairclough 2001, p. 14f). This is only natural because the social practice incorporates everything and can be seen as the social context. The social practice is not constant but is rather constantly changing and can also be affected by the discursive practice. The analysis of the social practice wants to explain the shift with factors that figures outside the discourse. Main focus will be on the economic and political system and how they have changed.

2.3 Analytical limitations

All analyzes has its limitations and no one can explain everything. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, meaning that it wants to show hidden structures (Titscher et al 2000, p. 146). This analysis focuses on understanding the discourse shift and is trying to explain why it shifted. This thesis does not try to explain every aspect that might have affected the discourse because there might be to many and it is impossible to uncover them all.

In Fairclough's CDA the text analysis is sometimes very complex in a linguistic sense but that is not the case in this study. However that is not perceived as a problem because complicated linguistic methods are not necessary for the purpose of this thesis. This study is not suited for complicated linguistic analyzes because the material consists of documents that have been produced by hundreds of people and it is therefore not meaningful to look after grammar or semantics. It is also a limitation to only look at the discourse within an UN context because the discourse is valid in other forums and these of course also matter. The problem with looking at several institutions would be that the discourse would be harder to describe because the findings might be very broad and inconsistent.

3 Introduction of the Discourses

The goal for this part of the thesis is to provide the reader with some conceptual background. First, a short background will be clarified. After that, the two discourses will be presented and lastly a short discussion of their relationship is held.

Before the 1970s, the relationship between the environment and economic growth was hardly ever discussed. Steven Bernstein writes that the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972 was predominantly an environmental conference. He also concludes that the relationship between economic growth and the environment mostly was seen as a tradeoff. It means that the general belief was that economic growth was harmful for the environment. Developing countries were scared that a limit to growth would obstruct their path to prosperity (2002, p. 31-45).

These events must of course be understood in their own context. The Cold War and the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism were affecting the world. Bernstein writes that the UNEP continued the work that was done in Stockholm and tried to combine the environment with growth. UNEP discussed sustainable growth and “eco-growth” in the 70s and that led to the language transformation towards what became Sustainable Development (2002, p. 56-57).

3.1 Sustainable Development

Hopwood et al write that SD is a result of growing awareness about the environment and social issues (2005, p. 39). The term was popularized in 1987 in the report *Our Common Future* (often referred to as the Brundtland Report). In the Brundtland Report, SD receives its most famous definition: “Sustainable Development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987, para¹. 2:1). Although this definition is quoted recurrently, are the interpretations of what SD stands for numerous.

The concept has three dimensions, economic growth, social development and environmental protection. Hopwood et al write that Brundtland wasn’t precise with the meaning of the concept and that the concept is offering all parts

¹ Paragraph

something, more growth, social equity and a healthy environment (2005, p. 40). Carter concludes that SD made a big expression at the Earth Summit meeting, in RIO in 1992. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) was introduced to help implement Agenda 21, which is a document that present guidance on how to implement SD (Carter 2007, p. 208-209).

As Hopwood et al show in their well-known paper *Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches* are there many varied views of what SD stands for (2005). There is a struggle within the discourse of SD of the general meaning of the concept. Victor argues that there are many actors and interest groups who have attached their own meaning to the concept so it has lost its original meaning (2006). Victor shows that there has been a discourse change within the concept and SD doesn't mean the same thing today as it did in 1987 or in 1992.

3.2 Green Economy

Green Economy is used in numerous ways in different forums and institution. The World Bank and OECD uses similar concepts (OECD is discussing green growth), but they are excluded from this thesis. This thesis will analyze Green Economy in a UN context and puts focus on its meaning out of this perspective. Even though, this thesis focuses on the discourse within a UN context, it is meaningful to introduce the discourse in a more general context.

UNEP launched the Green Economy Initiative in 2008 where the concept was discussed. UNEP discussed Green Economy in a context of Sustainable Development (UNEP 2011, p. 13-15). Green Economy does not have one general definition but the UNEP defines the concept as “improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” (2011, p. 16). Green Economy emphasizes they same three dimensions as SD, an economic, an environmental and a social dimension. Bär et al. concludes that Green Economy has meet critique by developing countries, this because some argue that Green Economy is an excuse for developed countries to act protectionist (2011, p. 13). Ulrich Brand writes that similar to SD, GE tries to group together different interests, putting them into one concept and satisfying many parties at the same time. He also concludes that GE might be the next leading strategy in the international agenda (2012, p. 28-29). In the lead up to Rio+20 the concept of Green Economy became the leading buzzword (Bär 2011, p. 5; Onestini 2012, p. 32-33).

3.3 Overlaps

GE is a part of the SD discourse but the two discourses are at the same time competing. Onestini concludes that there has been a shift in focus from a SD

discourse, to a GE discourse (2012, p. 32-33). SD and GE are two similar concepts and when institutions are focused on GE there will be less focus on SD.

Both concepts focus on the same three discourses, which are environmental, social and economic discourses. But how SD has emphasized these three dimensions has changed over time and how SD prioritizes differs from how GE does. The analysis focuses on these three dimensions and uses them as measurement tools because they allow us to sort statements among these three discourses. As Victor argues, SD has lost its meaning due to many different interpretations of the concepts (2006). Disagreement on the meaning of SD has probably open up for GE to enter as an essential concept.

3.4 Material

This analysis is based upon two major UN meetings The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro 1992 and The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro 2012. The choice of the UN context as material is because the UN is a leader in setting the agenda. Another reason is that the UN popularized both concepts and it is therefore natural to focus on this institution. Why just these two meetings? Mainly because 1992 was when SD was popularized within the UN and 2012 was when they popularized GE. The main purpose is to understand a shift and for that analyzing these two events is sufficient. As concluded earlier, the material will be analyzed through Fairclough's analytical framework. This means that I will look at the text, discourse and social context of the two meetings in Rio de Janeiro.

4 Analysis

The structure of the analysis is based on Fairclough's analytical framework. Initially a text analysis will be presented. After that I will conduct an analysis of the discursive practice, and finally an analysis of the social practice. The line between the three different dimensions of analysis is very thin but there is a point in analyzing the connection between them. Even if the analysis of the text, the discursive practice and the social practice will intervene the division helps me understand and conduct the analysis. The documents associated with the meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 will be analyzed first. After that, will the documents that are related to the meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, be analyzed through the same procedure.

4.1 RIO 1992

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development is often referred to as Earth Summit. The meeting in Rio de Janeiro brought 150 states and many NGOs together. The most significant outcomes from this meeting were The Rio Declaration of Environment and Development and the plan for implementing SD, Agenda 21 (Chasek et al 2010, p. 35-37). This analysis will focus on these two but also on the Brundtland Report because it provided a background for the ideas at the RIO 1992 meeting.

4.1.1 Text

Sustainable Development is the central discourse in the text and is presented as a global solution to environmental and developmental problems (UNCED 1992(b), para. 1:1). The economic and social dimensions are often merged into the concept of development. The main idea with SD is to combine environmental issues with development issues. It is declared that, "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature" (UNCED 1992(a), prin². 1). This is the first principle in the Rio Declaration and it tells us that SD is an anthropogenic

² Principle

concept but also that we need a healthy environment if we want to be able to continue to develop and prosper.

The SD discourse views the environment as limited, implying that mankind cannot take more than the environment can handle. Attached to the environmental discourse are concepts drawn from a conservational discourse. In principles 4 and 23 in the Rio Declaration it is declared that we need to protect the environment. In Principle 15 it is stated that the precautionary approach should be applied if possible (UNCED 1992(a)). The Brundtland Commission concludes that resources of the earth must be conserved and enhanced. They also declare that we need to prevent pollution from harming our water resources and our atmosphere (WCED 1987, para. 2:55-2:64). The second chapter in Agenda 21 is mainly focused on conservation and development strategies to achieve a sustainable society (UNCED 1992(b), para 2:1-2:4). The environment is seen as a resource that belongs to human beings, but this resource is limited and therefore in need of protection.

One purpose implied in the Sustainable Development discourse is to change the quality of growth. One aspect of this implies that, economic growth must be more equally distributed. Growth that is unevenly distributed may be less sustainable than lower growth that is (WCED 1987, para. 2:37). To the economic discourse within the SD discourse is the significance of getting rid of unsustainable consumption and production patterns (UNCED 1992(a), prin. 8: UNCED 1992(b), para. 4:1: WCED 1987, para. 2:42). This refers to the idea that our environment is limited. In the Brundtland Report the authors emphasizes on economic growth for developing countries with the purpose of lifting them out of poverty. Economic growth for developing countries is treated as vital. This because it alleviates poverty and a less degree of poverty is good for the environment (WCED 1987, para. 2:29 – 2:32). In the Agenda 21 it is stated that the global system is interdependent and that developing countries needs to trade with industrialized countries. It is also argued for further trade liberalization, to enhance growth in developing countries (UNCED,1992(b), para. 2:1-2:10).

There is also an economic language that derives from a purely economic discourse. Efficiency is a commonly used concept as well as free trade and interdependence (UNCED 1992(b), para. 1:1). In the Rio Declaration, it is declared that a polluter pays principle shall be emphasized (UNCED 1992 (a), prin. 16). This language aims to include the environment in economics. This language is used alongside more social concepts, like need and poverty. In Agenda 21 it is phrased that combining environment and development will succeed to meet our basic needs (UNCED 1992(b), para 1:1). In the famous Brundtland definition, the author's put emphasizes on needs of present as well as future generations (WCED 1987, para. 2:2). The SD discourse in these texts contains a broad set of views, everything from a pure economic discourse to a pure social discourse.

Environment	Economy	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation • Protection • Resource • Anthropogenic • Limited • Threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free trade • Fair trade • Efficiency • Growth • Equity • Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty • Development • Equity • Women's right • Oppressed groups • Need

(Essential concepts that are attached to the discourses within the text. Based on: UNCED, 1992a – UNCED, 1992b: ch1-ch8, ch25 – WCED, 1987: Intro-ch4)

As stated earlier is alleviating poverty one of the main tasks with SD. The Brundtland Commission stated that the needs of the poor must be given an “overriding priority” (WCED 1987, para. 2:1). Development refers to both an economic discourse as well as a social discourse. Economic progress will favorably imply that social circumstances improve in developing countries. In the Rio Declaration it is underlined that women’s role in a sustainable world is vital, “Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development” (1992(a), prin. 20). The development discourse also includes emphasis on the needs of exposed and disadvantaged groups.

4.1.2 Discursive Practice

The relationship between the text and the social practice is mediated through the discursive practice. Production and consumption of a text is interpreted and formed within a social context. (Fairclough 2001, p. 117-118). There has not only been a struggle in the production of these texts, but also a struggle on how to interpret them. A text draws upon existing discourses and older texts, and cannot be understood without knowing its origin.

The SD discourse draws upon two major discourses, which are a conservation discourse, and a development discourse. Bernstein writes that the Report by the Brundtland Commission is based on the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) and UN commissioned reports on development (Brandt). The WCS provided conservational guidance to policymakers, industries and others. The report is probably mostly famous because it coined the concept of SD. Even so, their ideas struggled on the international level due to conflicting with economical and political interests. In the Brundtland Report the authors merged conservation ideas with more liberal development ideas and succeeded in making SD a frequently used concept (Bernstein 2002, p. 58-60). Conservation and development are main features in the Earth Summit documents (see section 4.1.1). The text analysis demonstrated that the environmental discourse mainly builds on

a conservational thinking while the social and the economic discourse is rather focusing on development.

The idea of SD in the WCS was to integrate conservation with development (WCS 1980, p. VI). The WCS was primarily an environmental report, however the need to merge with development thinking, in order to prosper, was recognized. When the WCS Report incorporated development in the conservation discourse it changed the conservation discourse and formed Sustainable Development. Fairclough calls this phenomenon, when one merges two different discourses; interdiscursivity (Fairclough 1995, p. 133). The discourse of Sustainable Development is also based on Willy Brandt's development studies. He divided the world in North and South (developed and developing countries) and argued that the northern countries should transfer more money to the southern countries (Potter et al 2008, p. 28).

Bernstein argues that the Brundtland Report took the ideas one step further and used SD in a broader development context (2002, p. 61). In the WCS, the main focus was the environment including development. But in the Brundtland Report, Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 it is the other way around. Development was seen as the main issue, which lacked the inclusion of the environment. Principle four in the Rio Declaration states, "in order to achieve Sustainable Development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process" (UNCED 1992(a), prin. 4).

The Brundtland Report merges two separated *orders of discourses*, the environmental discourse and the development discourse. The environmental discourse was led by conservational thinking, while the development discourse focused on poverty alleviation and the North – South division. When the two discourses were merged the order of discourses or the norm was also changed. Discussing development without including the environment or vice-verse was no longer standard practice after Earth Summit 92. With the concept of SD a new order of discourse was created that set the standard for discussions. The order within the Sustainable Development discourse shifted between The World Conservation Strategy and the Brundtland Report. The conservation discourse was primary in the WCS while the development discourse became most important in the Brundtland Report.

There was a disagreement between North and South within the UN that affected the Brundtland Report and the Earth Summit meeting. The North worried about the environment and the impact the global growth has while the South worried that environmental protection would intervene with their development abilities and their right to grow. Clapp and Dauvergne write that the split between North and South basically concerned the question about who should pay for the Sustainable Development. They also conclude that the Rio Declaration focused more on developing countries right to develop than earlier declaration had done (2005, p. 64-65). The result of this conflict is also shown in the text analysis, where economic and social issues foremost concern developing countries.

The definition of SD was left quite open and that's probably one explanation for its success. Institutions and leaders who consumed this concept were able to exploit Sustainable Development so it fitted their own agendas. Sustainable

Development was popularized within an UN context where compliance between actors is critical. SD needed to be pleasing all significant actors otherwise the concept wouldn't pass through. In the Brundtland Report the authors write that every country is free to make their own policy implementation and that there is not one particular blueprint for SD (WCED 1987, para. 1:51).

4.1.3 Social Practice

Outside the Sustainable Development discourse there are factors that affect the discourse. One recurrent example is an economic crisis that happens outside the immediate discourse but still affects it. This relationship is dynamic. How the SD discourse is formed will affect the world outside the discourse. The two most essential outside events are the leading political and economic systems. It can be argued that they are a part of the discourse or more logically that SD is a part of the broader economic and political discourse. However this thesis focuses on the discourses within an UN context. Economic and political structures will be treated as being outside the immediate discourse but as a significant context. The world economic system has of course strong connections to the economic discourse within the UN context but they are not identical.

The collapse of the Soviet Union occurred in 1991 and signified an end to a bipolar world. Absence of the Eastern Bloc entailed a higher pace of globalization (Clapp & Dauvergne 2005, p. 64-65). Newell and Paterson write that several crises during the 1970s led to a more neoliberal economical thinking. Thatcher and Reagan argued that the problems occurred because the state was too big and that this interfered with the market. Neoliberalism became the leading global economic order and promoted free trade and economic growth to reach a healthy global economy (2010, p. 18-19). This neoliberal thinking was exposed in the texts, and it explains the use of economic concepts like efficiency and free trade. This was combined with ideas that derive from the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which promotes more equitable trade that benefits developing countries and which was popular during the 1970s. These ideas were still valid during the 80:s and had an impact on the SD discourse (Bernstein 2002, p. 65-67). The end of the Soviet Union was just another step toward a hegemonic order that focuses on liberalization and globalization. These changes affect what seems normal, therefore affecting the SD discourse within the UN context.

There has been an ongoing debt crisis in developing countries that has influenced the agenda of the Earth Summit (Clapp & Dauvergne 2005, p. 64). This together with drought and other factors mean starvation and death for many people in African countries. Protectionism in the world market has also made it harder for countries in poverty and may be one explanation to the promotion of free trade in the Earth Summit documents. These events provide some explanation to why The Earth Summit was largely focused on need and poverty alleviation.

4.2 RIO 2012

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 is often referred to as Rio+20. At the meeting, the concept of Green Economy was one of the major subjects. Participants argued that Green Economy would lead to less poverty, economic growth, improved human welfare, healthier ecosystems and enhance social inclusion (UNCSD 2012, p. 10). Green Economy is also seen as a way out of the current economic crises.

The analysis of the GE discourse will focus on two major texts. The first text is the UNEP's Green Economy report, entitled *Towards a Green Economy*. This report laid the foundation for the use of the Green Economy concept in the RIO+20 meeting. The second text is the outcome document from the Earth Summit meeting; *The Future We Want*. The two texts differ in character but this only gain this analysis because the concept is described in different ways. The concept of Sustainable Development is included in the texts, but this analysis will only focus on the discourse of Green Economy. GE is introduced as a part of the SD discourse but as concluded earlier, their relationship is complex.

4.2.1 Text

The Green Economy concept rests on the same three dimensions as SD, these dimensions are economic, social and environmental in nature. All three are included in UNEP definition "improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" (UNEP 2011, p. 16). One of the two main agendas at the Rio+20 was "Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication" with the ambition to establish GE on an international level (UNEP 2011, p. 17).

The economic discourse is the predominant one within the GE discourse. In the *Towards a Green Economy Report*, GE is framed as a possible solution to the current economic crisis (UNEP 2011: p.14). Since it is believed that GE will result in less poverty and more economic growth (UNCSD 2012, p. 10). In the *Towards a Green Economy Report* the authors state that there is not an inescapable trade-off between economic growth and the environment. It is also stated that GE is not intended as a replacement for SD but that "achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy right" (UNEP 2011. p. 16-17). In the outcome document it is declared that GE shall "promote sustained and inclusive economic growth" (UNCSD 2012, p. 12). The focus on economic growth is dominant within the GE discourse.

The most significant idea with Green Economy is to put a price on the environment. In the *Towards a Green Economy Report*, it is indicated that a substitution between human, physical and natural capital is possible. In the same paragraph, it is argued that developing countries possess a large amount of natural capital while they are short on physical and human capital (UNEP 2011, p. 17). It is also argued that including the environment into the market will create

incentives for businesses to care for the environment and nature (UNEP 2011, p. 497).

The environmental discourse is also a significant part of the Green Economy discourse. The environment is seen as an anthropogenic resource (natural capital) that human beings need for continuing the economic growth (UNEP 2011, p. 504). In *The Future We Want*, it is stated that “Green Economy... will enhance our ability to manage natural resources and with lower negative environmental impacts, increase resource efficiency...” (UNCSD 2012, p. 12). In this statement one can see the desire to use natural resources in a more controlled and efficient way. The UNEP report emphasizes on investments in “ecological infrastructure” because the it is believed that we need a healthy environment in order to enhance human well-being (2011, p. 505). The environment is first and foremost seen as a resource that needs to be controlled.

In the *Towards a Green Economy Report*, it is pointed out that GE will also benefit developing countries. It is concluded that GE can contribute to eradicating poverty and create jobs and opportunities for developing countries (UNEP 2011, p. 20). It is stated that Green Economy should “take into account the needs of developing countries” (UNCSD 2012, p. 11). This statement shows that poverty alleviation and the social discourse do not naturally apply to Green Economy. In the *Towards a Green Economy Report* the authors say that “Green Economy will not automatically address all poverty issues”, stating that a pro-poor agenda must be added on top of GE (UNEP 2011, p. 20).

There are numerous concepts that derive from an economic discourse; these concepts include growth, efficiency, investment, synergies, stock, intensity, GDP, economic model, key drivers and many more. The economic discourse is the dominant one in these texts. The environment is seen as a resource we have to take care of while the social aspect is in third place. Both the environmental and the social discourse are merged with the economic discourses and concepts.

Environment	Economy	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green • Natural • Capital • Resource • Ecosystem • Anthropogenic • Footprint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth • Efficiency • Investments • Model • Synergies • Mechanism • Risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor • Poverty • Jobs • Opportunities • Vulnerable • Hunger • Urbanization

(Essential concepts that are attached to the discourses within the text. Based on: UNEP 2011, p. 14-24, 504-536; UNCSD 2012, p. 10-14)

4.2.2 Discursive Practice

In the *Towards a Green Economy Report*, the authors reassure that GE will not replace SD (UNEP 2011, p. 7, 17). The introduction of GE inevitably changes the meaning of SD. GE is seen as the tool for achieving SD (UNCSD 2012, p. 10). It means that SD has become a goal rather than a measure. What GE does is to

change or restate the order of discourse within the UN. The UN inhabits several competing discourses. GE puts the economic discourse and interests at the top of UN priorities for reaching a better tomorrow. At RIO+20 GE was the key concept even though it was framed as a part of the Sustainable Development discourse.

The intertextuality, or where the ideas derive from, is based on the ideas by David Pearce et al. presented in the 1989 book *Blueprint for a Green Economy*. In the book the authors conclude that there is a need to value the environment and to integrate it into economics (1989, p. 4-7). Pearce et al. also argue that turning the economy green will create jobs and lead to economic growth (1989, p. 21). These are also the main ideas in the Towards a Green Economy Report. In this report the main ideas referred to are Pearce et al.'s (see UNEP 2011, p. 17,18, 159). The idea that GE is the tool for reaching a SD is also present in the book *Blueprint for a Green Economy* (Pearce et al 1989). The ideas derive from environmental economics, which aims to integrate the environment into economic models (Pearce et al 1989, p. 4-5). This view fully envisions the environment as a resource that belongs to people. It is also noteworthy, that these ideas have been present in over twenty years, but first now are the ideas starting to take of.

In the Rio+20 meeting is economic growth emphasized as the most important subject. This implies that in the order of discourse is the economic discourse at the top. The environment is still an essential discourse in Rio+20 but is treated as a resource. The idea with Green Economy derives from environmental economics where a social discourse has no defined role. As shown in the text analysis, GE moves poverty issues outside of the immediate discourse. In the Towards a Green Economy Report it is stated that a pro-poor issue needs to be added to the GE discourse (UNEP 2011, p. 20). This signifies a diminishing of the social agenda within the GE discourse.

Green Economy is also an interdiscursive concept, meaning that it combines different discourses. A development discourse inhabits both social and economic values. Green Economy does not address the social dimension in a natural way. In the UN documents they often add that GE will benefit social equity last in a paragraph or a statement. One example is “In its simplest expression, a green economy is low-carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive” (UNEP 2011, p. 16). It is clear that being low-carbon and resource efficient will help turning the economy green while the social inclusiveness is rather imposed. Green Economy primarily draws from the economic and environmental discourses.

In the newspaper *Earth Negotiation Bulletin* the authors state that the G77 (coalition of developing countries) and China worked for more social inclusiveness and a less regulatory definition of Green Economy. It is also concluded that this has led to a more flexible definition of Green Economy (ENB 2012, p. 8). Bauer et al. say that GE derives from developed countries. The authors also conclude that the idea of GE has been incorporated by emerging countries while G77 (group of developing countries) remains critical (2012, p. 2).

4.2.3 Social Practice

Our world has changed dramatically over the previous 20-year period. Between 1992 and 2012 there were, among other things, changes in the economic and political order. The world has also experienced more interdependence, new technology and climate change threats. As previously stated, this analysis does not include everything that influences the discourse, but rather those events that is most essential to the discourse.

The global economic system changes constantly and can explain some of the changes in the discourse. Newell and Peterson say that since the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC agreement to reduce Green House Gases) was signed in 1997, focus has not been on decreasing emissions but rather on creating markets. They also say that Neoliberalism has affected the discourse making it more market-oriented (2010, p. 34-35). This is also seen in the Green Economy discourse, which focuses on functioning markets rather on reducing emissions or dealing with other environmental problems. Fairclough says that Capitalism expands the concept of commodity and that more and more things are treated as commodities (2001, p. 29). In the discourse of Green Economy, the environment is treated as a commodity that can be purchased and traded with. Levy and Newell argue that businesses today play a significant role in the international environmental agenda (2005, p. 1).

Neoliberalism is constantly being affected by recurrent economic crises (Newell and Paterson 2010, p. 34). The economic crisis that struck mainly industrialized countries in 2008 highly affected the Green Economy discourse. As concluded in the text analysis, Green Economy was framed as a solution to the current economic crisis (UNEP 2011, p. 14). The reason for attaching Green Economy to the economic crisis can also be explained by understanding that that UNEP wants to sell the concept and needs support for their idea. In the international arena, the economic crisis is the dominant issue and Green Economy can be seen as a way to incorporate the environment into that agenda.

Since 1992 coalitions within global politics have changed. Today emerging economies (BRICS) highly influence world politics. Newell and Paterson conclude that China and India are now primarily pro-growth and are opposed to limitations (2010, p. 34-35). Currently, more countries are interested in actions that add to their economies and their trade. Bär et al, conclude that emerging countries within the G77 look at GE as a positive development, while the poorest countries remains skeptical (2011, p. 13). There has been an increasing amount of institutions and clubs where emerging countries take part but where developing countries are not welcome. For example, the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate that consist of Australia, Canada, India, Japan, China and the United States excludes developing countries (see e.g. Newell & Patersson 2010, p. 189). The International Partnership on Hydrogen Economy is another institution that consists of developed countries and the BRICS countries (FCB 2004, p. 6). These kinds of institutions together with G20 and G8+5 describe emerging countries as having an increasing amount of influence.

5 Conclusion & Results

Focus has shifted from SD to GE. This is an ongoing paradigm shift within global environmental governance. Many reasons for the shift can be found within the social practice. A world with emerging economies, an economic crisis and a stronger belief in the “market” have all affected the order of discourse within the UN and formed the Green Economy discourse. Even though SD still is present, GE has taken place as the new buzzword. This phenomenon has implications since SD and GE differs in some significant aspects. While the main focus in SD is development, is economic growth the main focus in GE. The relationship between languages and their social context is dynamic. The language shift itself has an effect on decision-making (see Fairclough 2001, p. 18-19). For example if a meeting is centered on GE instead of SD, will that affect the outcome of that meeting.

SD derives from a merging of a development discourse and an environmental discourse, in which the North - South debate occurred as well as the main focus was placed on conservation. The main ideas behind SD in 1992 were to alleviate poverty and to preserve a healthy environment. Although SD in 1992 was market friendly, this was partly because the authors knew that they had to attract many leaders and businesses to support SD. They also left the interpretation open, which enhanced its popularity (WCED 1987, para. 1:51). GE’s origins stem from the ideas by David Pearce et al., that are in line with environmental economics. The main idea is to “green” the economy by putting a price on nature with the purpose of incorporating the environment into economics.

Sustainable Development and Green Economy are broad discourses that contain many views. The crucial shift is in the leading discourse (in the order of discourse), which has shifted from development to economy. In the 1992 SD discourse the main focus was to generate economic growth for developing countries, to alleviate poverty and create a better life for people (see UNCED, 1992(a)). Economic growth was first and foremost something that developing countries should benefit from. Brundtland concludes that increasing demand from already prosperous people may even be harmful for the environment (WCED, 1987, para. 2:42). In the 2012 GE discourse focus has shifted to primarily concern economic growth. Green Economy is framed as a solution to the current economic crisis because investing “green” will create jobs and boost the economy (see UNEP 2011, p. 14). There was a large focus on economic growth in the 1992 SD discourse, however this focus has increased up until the 2012 GE discourse.

Order of Discourse Within the Concepts

Sustainable Development	Green Economy
1. Development 2. Conservation	1. Economy 2. Environment 3. Social

(Within the development discourse, the social discourse is ranked above the economic discourse. This is based on the extent to which they emphasize different subjects and what they frame as the main purpose, this table is only based on: UNCED 1992a: UNCED 1992b, ch1-ch8, ch25: UNCSD 2012, p. 10-14: UNEP 2011, p. 14-24, 504-536: WCED 1987, Intro-ch4)

Both concepts promote growth but the difference is that GE does this in general while SD promotes growth primarily for developing countries. The view of economic growth is of course affected by the social context. During the 70s there was a leading discourse that believed that economic growth would harm the environment and that there would be a tradeoff between growth and the environment (Bernstein 2002, p. 31ff). These ideas were not leading but were still considered valid when the Brundtland Report was created. In the 2012 context economic growth is seen as a natural entity in almost every country and there is of course powerful interest vested in economic growth. As Jackson writes, anyone who questions the idea of economic growth today is seen as either a fundamentalist or a nutcase (2009, p. 3-7).

5.1.1 Comparing SD and GE

This comparison will of course only focus on the 1992 SD discourse and the 2012 GE discourse. The comparison is interesting because it compares SD with GE at the respective times when they were quite new within the UN context. Since 1992, SD has been given several definitions and many scientists believe that the same will happen to GE (see Brand 2012). 1992 and 2012 must be seen as the starting points within the UN. Comparing their meanings at their starting points tells us much about their general ideas. This table below is based on the analysis. It describes in a straightforward way the main differences between SD and GE in a UN context.

	Sustainable Development	Green Economy
Leading order of discourse (main focus)	Development	Economy
View of the Environment	Anthropogenic resource	Anthropogenic resource
Derives from	Conservation + Development	Environmental economics
View of relationship between economic growth and environment	Unnecessary economic growth might harm the environment	No inescapable trade-off between environment and economic growth
Focus on pro poor growth	Yes	Growth in general
Natural focus on gender	Yes	No
Inter and Intra generational focus	Yes (mainly focusing on leaving the environment as good as we found it)	Yes (mainly focusing on leaving as much capital – natural, physical or economic)
Main promoters of the concept	Developed countries	Developed countries + Emerging economies

(This table is only based on: UNCED 1992a: UNCED 1992b, ch1-ch8, ch25: UNCSD 2012, p. 10-14: UNEP 2011, p. 14-24, 504-536: WCED 1987, Intro-ch4)

5.1.2 Where Does the Shift Derive From?

As stated earlier, the power relationship within the UN is skewed. To have power is not just to have equal votes, but also to be able to affect what is put on the agenda. This means that one can have the power to steer the language and to set the framework in which decisions are made (Fairclough 2001, p. 134-135). Our world is no longer divided into North and South, as shown in the social practice analysis (see section 4.2.3); BRICS have emerged as an essential actor on the international arena. Back in 1992 they were mainly a part of the developing countries agenda. Today they have strong economies and more common interest with industrialized countries than ever before. The emerging countries have begun to create and join institutions and clubs together with developed countries leaving the poorest countries outside (see Newell & Paterson 2010, p. 189).

This shift in global politics affects the discourse. Fairclough underlines that power is to control the order of discourse (2001, p. 25). In Rio in 1992 there was a strong coalition of countries that supported development ideas. Even though SD derived from developed countries, the strong coalition of developing countries

succeeded in implementing strong development aspects into the discourse. Within the SD discourse development and social issues were given main attention. Concepts like need, poverty and equity were central in the development discourse (see section 4.1.1). Within the Green Economy discourse social issues is not a natural part. They argue that social issues must be added to the GE agenda (UNEP 2011, p. 20). The emerging countries are supporting economic growth stronger than they did in 1992. The coalition of developing countries has become weaker and more conflicting, which means that their power to influence has decreased (see Bär et al 2011, p. 13). Issues that concern need and poverty cannot be raised with the same naturalness in a GE-meeting as in a SD-meeting. The poorest countries do not have the same power to influence today, as they had in 1992, and that is one essential explanation to the shift in discourse.

5.2 Limitations & Future Research

The core subject is a very vital one. This analysis has succeeded in answering to the chosen research questions. However, it would be very interesting to do a deeper analysis, which would demand more time and material. With a deeper analysis it would be possible to more precisely determine where the discourse comes from and what has caused it to change. One limitation with this analysis is that it just focuses on two events. It was necessary to limit the analysis to two events because otherwise it would not have been possible to present a reasonable analysis in a limited space. A bigger study would be able to include several UN meetings (e.g. Rio+5, Rio+10 and Rio+15) then it would be achievable to chart the discourse change within SD within the UN.

It is also a limitation to only look at the discourse within the UN. This is because the discourses are valid outside this context and how SD and GE are discussed in other institutions matters. In this thesis, this problem was partially solved by including the social practice but a bigger study that made use of other institutions like the World Bank would be preferable. A larger study would also be able to include a bigger part of Fairclough's theory and method. Yet, according to Fairclough, it is advisable to limit his ideas so that they fit one's purpose.

Another interesting aspect is the contesting discourses. For example there are several scientists who believe that sustainability cannot be reached in a society that demands constant growth (see e.g. Barry 2008: Brand 2012: Eckersley 2004: Jackson 2009). Demanding limited growth is not a part of either SD discourse or GE discourse. It would be fruitful to look at discourses that do not fit in within an UN-context. What is not said is often as interesting as what is said.

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