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A Hierarchy of Crises —

Climate, Corona, and
Black Lives Matter

In times of competing crises, on what grounds do agents determine what crisis is more important? More than one hundred different crises were proclaimed in the Swedish parliament over the past 10 years. Of course, only a fraction of these were actually treated as such, but the sheer number points to the rhetorical potential of naming and sustaining something as a crisis as well as the futility of such calls for attention.¹ Competing calls for something to be understood as a crisis bear witness to a complex hierarchy of claims for moral, political, and scientific high ground and are thus rhetorical battlegrounds.

More than one crisis demanded the attention as 2020 unfolded. Covid-19 was quickly established as *the* crisis due to the vast uncertainty concerning its spread, contamination, and deadliness, but others co-existed: The climate, for example, first seemed to benefit from reduced carbon emissions that later was understood to be only a miniscule band-aid solution to a much larger injury. The extent of measures needed in order to stop global warming was thus made clear and highlighted by the fact that 2020 along with 2016 were declared the warmest years ever recorded.² The political debate about this insight and the economic aid packages following the pandemic given to, among others, the aviation industry, substantiate the early-pandemic tragi-comical joke, now almost a cliché: The climate crisis needs coronavirus' PR agent.

Following the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, yet another crisis surfaced. A video showing Floyd being held down by police officers while repeatedly saying "I can't breathe" became the spark that lit a global Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, calling for punitive action against decades of police brutality and for anti-racist awareness and action. On June 3, a demonstration in support of BLM was organized in Stockholm, Sweden, which

attracted thousands of protesters; many more than what the pandemic restrictions allowed. The following day, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven urged the Swedish citizens to carefully consider whether the timing was right: “I understand very well that people want to express themselves. There are a lot of emotions built into this [...] At the same time, we are in the midst of a pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 4.000 people. [...] I think we all have an obligation to think: Is this the right thing to do now?”.³ Accordingly, to Löfven, the crisis of racism is emotionally ridden, and he therefore calls on citizens to *think* which, according to him, means viewing this crisis in the perspective of another and more important crisis, namely the pandemic. Löfven’s statement thus suggests that some crises are emotional and others – because they are universal – are not. Moreover, the statement also evokes perspectives of rhetorical agency and temporality: Why are some crises timely while others seem to be out of time?

What I seek to examine in this study are the foundations of our judgments in times of competing crises: On what grounds do different agents determine what crisis is more important? Since the corona crisis has received a very different amount and type of attention, I do, however, put more effort into showing how the BLM movement and the climate movement with different tactical means handle this asymmetry.

I explore these questions from a combined perspective of the classical rhetorical topics (*topoi*) and Michel de Certeau’s distinction between strategies and tactics.⁴ After presenting this perspective, I turn to a close reading of how different *topoi* are invoked as rhetorical tactics in order to articulate Covid-19, climate change, and racism *as* crises: Time, definition, and scale. I do so primarily within the Swedish debate, with minor digressions into the North

American context. But first a brief overview of how these crises are juxtaposed and connected in the scholarly literature.

Connecting Crises

Löfven is not alone in juxtaposing the pandemic with the BLM protests and implicitly imposing a hierarchy between the two. As historian Binoy Kampmark shows, the risk of infection has generally been judged more important than the right to protest by political and scientific leaders, but some have expressed it more unambiguously than others: “Protesting is a non-essential activity”, the police department in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, tweeted on April 14, 2020.⁵ However, this “epidemiological dogmatism” that characterized the approach to the BLM protests in the beginning of the pandemic gradually changed, and Kampmark finds evidence that measures to ensure public health as well as public protests were reconciled both in the USA and Australia.⁶

In the scholarly literature, we also see an, albeit less comical, counterpart to the PR-joke mentioned above. Political scientists Hamish van der Ven and Yixian Sun asks, “why have there been immediate and far-reaching state responses to Covid-19 but not similar responses to the climate crisis?”⁷ and note that the two crises are distinguished by different characteristics and, as a result, are met by “different types of governance responses”.⁸ It is important to understand what those characteristics are, they argue, because then we will be able to envision “how perceptions of the climate crisis might be shifted to engender a faster and farther-reaching response”.⁹ The eight characteristics of a crisis outlined by van der Ven and Sun are *immediacy* (perceived speed of a crisis to emerge), *transience* (perceived duration), *visibility*, *proximity*, *accountability*

(perceived connection between individual action and impact on crisis), *universality*, *expertise* (degree of trust in the epistemic community), and *legibility* (the straightforwardness of the cause and effect as well as political responses to a crisis).¹⁰ Compared according to these characteristics, the pandemic scores higher than the climate crisis across all parameters, and my assumption is that the same is true with regard to BLM: Crises that are understood to be close to us, easy to understand, affects the majority of the population, is visible, and urgent will most likely receive “faster and farther-reaching governance responses”, and as the authors suggest, we can use this framework pre-emptively when managing future potential crises.¹¹

From a rhetorical perspective, Esben B. Nielsen has, in a similar way, explored the narrative and topical frames of climate change rhetoric.¹² Central to his study is the idea of the apocalypse and how a secular version of the apocalypse permeates much climate change rhetoric. The “lens of immanent crisis”,¹³ of temporal urgency, is central to apocalyptic thinking which entails visions of the future (the near end of it), but also an increased focus on the present. What matters is “the *decisive moment* or ultimate temporal point: tipping points, points of no return, and levels of warming that will trigger/have already triggered irreversible or ‘runaway’ climate change”.¹⁴ Nielsen concludes that the apocalyptic narratives in the debate are characterised by a topos of time and he points instead to a topos of place as a viable alternative to better create presence and rhetorical agency in the crisis.

Exploring the interconnection between the crises, scholars furthermore argue that they are not only co-existing, but also intertwined and mutually dependent. Van der Ven and Sun conclude that “addressing the climate crisis may play a key role in avoiding future pandemics”¹⁵ because a warmer climate and diminishing rainforest will lead to in-

creased disease vectors since contact with wild animals will increase as a result. Information scientist Petar Jandrić et alia likewise write that it “has become crystal clear that Covid-19 cannot be thought of in isolation from wider environmental concerns”,¹⁶ such as its connection to industrial food production, consumption of wildlife, and the use of animals for different purposes (medical testing, eating, etc.). They therefore argue that while scholars have understandably “refocused their work to the immediate threat [...] of Covid-19”, it is now time to pay attention to “its long-term relationships with the environment”.¹⁷

In an opinion piece, marine biologist Ayana E. Johnson articulates another connection, stating that “we can’t solve the climate crisis unless Black Lives Matter”,¹⁸ an argument based on the empirical research of environmental psychologist Matthew Ballew et alia who conclude that people of colour are more affected by climate change and, consequently, also more concerned.¹⁹ Therefore, Johnson argues, the climate movement needs to include a more diverse range of voices.

In the same way that the climate crisis affects communities and countries differently, so too is the corona crisis ridden with unequal dissemination, highlighting structural inequality in various areas of society. This structural inequality is at the heart of the medical research that highlights the interconnection between the Covid-19 pandemic and racism. Psychologist Sandra L. Shullman argues:

We are living in a racism pandemic, which is taking a heavy psychological toll on our African American citizens. The health consequences are dire. Racism is associated with a host of psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety and other serious, sometimes debilitating conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders.²⁰

In this way, racism indirectly causes Blacks to be predisposed to Covid-19, as medical scientists Cato T. Laurencin and Joanne M. Walter argue.²¹ Structural racism places Blacks and ethnic minorities “at the centre of the pandemic”.²² They assert:

The pandemics [racism and Covid-19] find themselves synergized to the detriment of Blacks and their health. The complexity of the combination of these pandemics are evident when examining the interplay between racist policing practices and health.²³

Laurencin and Walter point to “medical mistrust” (mistrust of the medical profession) as a consequence of racist policing and “racial bias (implicit bias and medical mistreatment) in our health-care institutions” as part of the reason for this predisposition and conclude that when tackling the “pandemic on a pandemic” in the USA, racism is “the most virulent of the two”.²⁴

Medical researcher Fiona Godlee also views the two crises as interconnected and states that anti-racist action, therefore, is a collective responsibility.²⁵ There are two layers to their argument. Firstly, “[r]acism is a public health issue because it kills people”;²⁶ racism is itself a pandemic. Secondly, it is “a pandemic on a pandemic for Blacks”,²⁷ as Laurencin and Walter, phrase it. The latter also perceive racism as a public health issue but articulate it as an issue of cause and effect: Racist policing and racial bias, generally, and in health care institutions, particularly, make Blacks predisposed to a general set of medical conditions which in turn make Blacks predisposed to Covid-19.

In this way, the BLM protests are defined not as a series of demonstrations in the wake of a specific murder, as Löfven and

others seem to view them, but as a movement that views racism not only *similar to* a general public health issue, but also *as* a public health issue.

In sum, the scholarly literature study the three crises in conjunction: On the one hand, in order to compare political responses, and, on the other, in order to identify similarities and interconnectedness. From a rhetorical perspective, we can discern various topical patterns used in order to make a crisis seem more or less salient.

Topoi, Tactics, and Strategies

Crisis, then, never implies only a single interpretation or contain only a single narration. As political scientist Colin Hay notes,

[a] given constellation of contradictions and failures within the institutions of the state can sustain a multiplicity of conflicting narratives of crisis. Such narratives compete in terms of their ability to find resonance with individuals’ and groups’ direct, lived experiences, and not in terms of their ‘scientific’ adequacy as explanations for the condition they diagnose.²⁸

The classical rhetorical theory of topics (*topoi*) can help us explore these narratives and their interrelatedness. The rhetorical *topoi* have thoroughly been written about without any one interpretation or description being authoritative,²⁹ but it is often understood in metaphorical terms as the various *places* where you find substance for your argument or as the *seat* of an argument. As Richard Weaver argues, *topoi* can help expose “the presentation of reality” and thus understand “the world as the speaker reads it”.³⁰ One crucial distinction relevant to this study is that between heuristic and herme-

neutic topoi, where the former designates the heuristic function of gathering material for your argument, and the latter designates the analytical function of interpreting the *topoi* in a specific discourse.³¹ It is the latter I refer to in this essay.

Another important distinction is that between *general topoi* (can be applied to any subject matter) and *specific topoi* (specific to one subject matter).³² For example, in relation to a person, a set of specific topoi would be age, gender, nationality, education, work, etc., and in relation to crisis, the list of characteristics collected by van der Ven and Sun referred to earlier (immediacy, transience, visibility, proximity, accountability, universality, expertise, and legibility) is another example: A set of characteristics that can be used both as a heuristic device when making and structuring your argument (as the authors suggest key actors in the climate debate should do) or as a hermeneutical device when analysing the discourse. The general topoi, on the other hand, are relevant to all types of discourse, across genres and subject matter, and can be categorised into (at least) three categories: Those pertaining to *definition* (what is structural racism?), *causality* (who or what are the causes of global warming?), and *comparison* (what is more important, public health or public protest?).³³ According to Weaver, definition pertains to being, to define a subject's nature, and thus it concerns "fundamental and unchanging properties".³⁴ The topos of definition thus pertains to characteristics of stability and persistence that do not seem to fit with neither the definition of crisis nor what is wanted from crisis. Nevertheless, definition interestingly plays a central role in the three crises discourses explored here. The topos of causality can be expressed through processes of cause-and-effect and often constitute the root of a polemic: Are human beings causing global warming? Did global warming, at least partially, cause the pandemic? Whether the answer

is yes or no, plays a crucial role in relation to how we perceive the larger issue of climate change. Finally, the topos of comparison is based on relationships of dis/similarity between two subjects, one of which "we know in fuller detail".³⁵ In this way, comparison is akin to definition, but based on the relation between two subjects. This movement between definition and comparison plays an important role in the crisis rhetoric examined in this study.

Historian and theologian Michel de Certeau's distinction between strategies and tactics could be understood as a set of specific topoi, but my interest in this combined perspective lies elsewhere. According to de Certeau, a strategy is a method of "force-relationships" that emerge when powerful subjects and institutions are set apart from an "environment": "A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it".³⁶ This exterior, then, is the environment from which the subject or institutions set themselves apart, and the relation with this exterior/environment is based on the acquiring of a proper place ('proper' ambiguously denoting something genuine and the quality of being appropriate as well as belonging to a person or a place). De Certeau exemplifies his strategic model with scientific communities that generate relations with an object of study or with political institutions with citizens. Both are based on the idea that a certain field (e.g. philosophy) or a certain place (e.g. a city square) is proper to it.

As a contrast, a tactic is a method that

cannot count on a 'proper' (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place. [...] [B]ecause it does not have a place,

a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.’³⁷

Therefore, the right time, *kairos*, is of greater importance to those not in power, simply because people and institutions with power decide what is proper – be that a specific place, a specific use of a place, or the right time. Cultural theorist Ian Buchanan explains that

[t]he essential difference between the two [strategy and tactic] is the way they relate to the variables that everyday life inevitably throws at us all. Strategy works to limit the sheer number of variables affecting us by creating some kind of protected zone, a place in which the environment can be rendered predictable [...]. Tactics, by contrast, is the approach one takes to everyday life when one is unable to take measures against its variables. Tactics are constantly in the swim of things.³⁸

This does not mean, however, that tactics are simply the lesser good in this conceptual pair; tactics are also ways of re-doing or re-imagining the ‘proper’ structures. It is worth emphasising, then, the dialectics and dynamics of the two categories and not solely their binary tension. As different scholars have argued, de Certeau’s conceptualisation of strategies and tactics is elusive: sometimes the boundary between them seems stable and impenetrable, at other times it is ambiguous,³⁹ allowing for tactical users to become strategists and vice versa.⁴⁰ This vagueness allows for misinterpretations, but also for further conceptual development.⁴¹ Buchanan, for example, argues that strategies and tactics should not be understood as polemological concepts, one “the logical opposite of the

other”, but rather as dialectical.⁴² And building on Buchanan, urban planning scholar Lauren Andres et alia suggest to view tactics and strategies “as a continuum”⁴³ and to explore them in the plural; not solely as a play between *a* strategy and *various* tactics, but to take an interest in the negotiation of “polyvocal strategies” as well.⁴⁴

The movement from one end of the continuum to the other is made easier because the strategies and tactics are of the same matter. And this is where I see the affinity with the topoi of classical rhetoric: In the rhetorical practices examined here, both strategies and tactics often take their starting point in one or several of the general topoi. When the *strategy* of political leaders and epidemiologists is to *define* BLM as pertaining to individual incidents of racism *causing* a risk to public health, the *tactic* of BLM protesters and organizers is to *define* racism as a pandemic that *endangers* the public health of Blacks. What I wish to highlight with this combined theoretical perspective is thus, on the one hand, how the same topoi are used differently by strategists and tactical users, respectively, and, on the other hand, how these two groups intersect. As discourse analysts Ruth Wodak and Jo Angouri assert, crises “allow for ‘liminality’, for transcending the routinised and taken-for-granted ‘betwixt and between’, for instance for new opportunities and options as the status quo obviously cannot be sustained anymore”.⁴⁵ In this view, the productive potential of crisis is brought to the fore.

In the following, I trace the topoi of definition, comparison, and causality and the interaction between strategies and tactics in sections focusing on interdependence, time, and scale. Each section explores first the crisis of racism and then the climate crisis, both in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interdependence and Similarity as Tactic

The broader contexts outlined briefly above shows that the enthy-meme “racism is a pandemic” is widespread in the USA, not only among activists, but also in the (activist) scientific community. This argument claims a similarity between structural racism and Covid-19 in terms of subject matter but also temporality: Both are defined as pandemics, and, as a result, both are defined as urgent. Highlighting these different interdependences – viewing both pandemics as public health issues as well as exposing the cause-and-effect relation between racism and public health – can thus be seen as tactics to increase responsiveness: Since public health during the pandemic has been made the ultimate and overarching concern to governments all over the world, racism is articulated as a public health issue as a tactic to gain rhetorical agency and a response from governments and other relevant institutions.

The Swedish iterations of “racism as pandemic” are less pervasive than in the US context, but they do exist. Isatou Aysha Jones, founder of Black Lives Matter Sweden, states that racism against Blacks is “its own global epidemic [...] but no one will dedicate an editorial to that theme”,⁴⁶ and Swedish musician Jason Diakite (Timbuktu) explains in the podcast *This Moment*, in which Jones is interviewed, that “racism is a pandemic that’s been going on since way before we were born, so, in a sense, Black lives are in a constant state of crisis”.⁴⁷

Mina Swärd and Hanna Bergwall, both lawyers, argue that it is ‘self-evident’ that people should be allowed to demonstrate against racism, even during a pandemic, and then directs their argument explicitly to the reader: “To you who now mutters that the demonstrators are irresponsible, that we are in fact in the midst of a pandemic,

we can only say that racism is a pandemic that harvests countless of lives every year. A pandemic that cannot be fought with quarantines or vaccines”.⁴⁸ The two lawyers point to the strategies available to the government in terms of keeping infection rates down and to the fact that such strategies are neither available nor effective in the fight against racism. Protesting, on the other hand, is one of the few available tactics for the BLM movement to make their voices heard.

Lawyer and civil rights professor Mårten Schultz also compared the BLM protest in Stockholm and the Covid-19 pandemic through analogy, though from a different perspective. He sarcastically tweeted: “the sign ‘I can’t breath’ [sic] in a gathering of several thousand people, risking to contaminate each other with a plague that suffocates people to death...”.⁴⁹ Several of his followers picked up on this comparison, saying “insanely ironic in a cynical way”, “they [the demonstrators] will probably need their signs a bit further ahead, so to speak. In intensive care...”, and “sorry, too soon and everything, and not even a joke, but how many of these people will be saying the exact same sentence within a couple of weeks for very different reasons?” This tweet and the comments it gathered make an analogy between the pandemic and the BLM protests, but exemplify a perspective that regards BLM *in contrast to* public health issues: The demonstration, not racism, will lead to a declining public health, according to the debaters.

While the Swedish iterations of racism as pandemic first and foremost highlight the general temporality of racism and more specifically of the protests and only implicitly compare and contrast the subject matter of racism and the Covid-19 pandemic, the scientific literature reviewed earlier (primarily North American) resolutely define the two crises as being about *the same* issue: public health. But such a perspective requires that “we can see racism for

what it is”, as Godlee writes.⁵⁰ We can understand this argument as a metaphor – pandemic as a metaphor for a sickness’ uncontrolled global spread – but it also has a literal meaning based on a topos of definition: Although the root cause of racism and Covid-19 are different, they are both issues of public health. The argument is also based on a topos of *causality*, though, namely *consequence*: Both have consequences for public health which, in turn, are understood to relate to each other as *cause* and *effect*: The negative consequences for public health due to structural racism make Blacks predisposed to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this way, the definition of racism as a pandemic is crucial to the articulation of interdependence and similarity in terms of consequences of the two crises. To compare racism with and define it as a pandemic is not to argue that racism is ‘just’ a pandemic, that it too will pass, but that racism is as important as a pandemic and as devastating to public health as a pandemic. If we return to the eight characteristics of a crisis outlined by van der Ven and Sun,⁵¹ the definition of racism as pandemic does not function to define the fundamental properties of racism or a pandemic, as one might expect, thereby stabilizing our understanding of these two concepts, but should rather be viewed as a tactic to increase the visibility, proximity, universality, and legibility of structural racism.

Interdependence is also a key topos in the argumentation of the climate movement #FridaysForFuture (FFF), initiated by the Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg in August 2018. On December 5, 2020, she addressed the interrelation between the pandemic and the climate crisis in an extensive interview in Sweden’s second-largest morning newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*,⁵² and on December 6, 2020, as guest editor of that day’s issue of the largest morning newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*.⁵³ One crucial concern for Thunberg and FFF is to

make people – the global population as well as politicians and the industry – recognise and *define*, climate change as a crisis. Thunberg stated this in her speech at the UN’s COP24 in 2018: “We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis”.⁵⁴ Two years later, this is still one of the main tasks of the movement. Throughout the issue of *Dagens Nyheter*, she argues that “we do not treat the crisis as a crisis”,⁵⁵ most poignantly in her opening statement:

Handing over the responsibility of Sweden’s largest daily newspaper to a minor, uneducated activist is completely incomprehensible. It’s crazy. If it were not for the absurd fact that we are in an existential crisis that is still being ignored by our society. We cannot solve a crisis without treating it as a crisis.⁵⁶

The same phrase appears in the interview with *Svenska Dagbladet*, specifically about the climate crisis but also its relation to the pandemic. Thunberg says that she remembers the beginning of the pandemic:

People advised us not to cancel, it was not forbidden to demonstrate yet. But in a crisis, everyone must take responsibility, take a step back and act in solidarity with their fellow human beings. And that’s what we did. [...] We have always said that the crisis should be treated as a crisis and that research should be listened to. And that applies to the corona crisis as well. [...] When it comes to a global crisis that affects the whole of society, all other issues must take a step back. That’s how you act during a crisis.⁵⁷

According to Thunberg, FFF shows responsibility in response to the Covid-19 pandemic by treating it as a crisis, in the same way

the movement treats the climate crisis. In this way, her and FFF's response to the pandemic becomes a didactical *exemplum*: Look, this is the proper way to treat a crisis. The same should apply to other crises.

Another aspect of the topos of definition concerns the issue of science. Thunberg continuously argue that the FFF movement works on the back of science, that we need to listen to science. In *Dagens Nyheter*, the front page reads: "These are facts, not opinions", and on the first page, Thunberg states that "[t]oday's paper will focus on basic research. On facts, not opinions"⁵⁸ which is reiterated by Martin Jönsson, editorial chief of development,⁵⁹ and Sir David Attenborough, also in the same issue:

Look at the research! Look at the facts. You cannot expect that you should be able to understand this complex problem within the framework of your own personal experience. Walk around and feel a little this or feel a little that. You must look at the science. It takes a large number of facts and experiences and it extracts principles, that's what science does.⁶⁰

In this way, facts – understood as based on science and research – form the foundation of the definition of climate change as a crisis. We may see this as a tactic to be recognised as a real crisis: By referring to the scientific paradigms of knowledge and rationality, the argument is based on the same strategic model as the one recognised in most other areas of politics and society.

Throughout the 94 pages of the newspaper (main and culture section), 19 fact boxes appear, all with the headline "Facts" in combination with a particular theme. These range from "Facts. Emissions" and "Facts. Rewilding" to "Facts. Sunday's competitions in

Kontiolax". In this way, "facts" are not just invoked as a description of issues related to the climate crisis, but also the Swedish football league and the biathlon World Cup. In a global fake news and post-truth environment, where the appeal to facts in some areas of society are perceived as more suspicious than in other areas, facts on climate issues are (re)normalised by juxtaposing facts on the Paris Agreement with facts on the Swedish football league.

In sum, appeals to facts, research, and science form the basis of the definition of climate change as a crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic functions as an object of comparison: it is correct to treat the pandemic as a crisis, and the same treatment should be given to climate change. Like the argument 'racism is a pandemic', these arguments of definition can be viewed as tactics to increase the visibility, proximity, universality, and legibility of the climate crisis.⁶¹

A Timely Crisis

As already noted, the BLM protests were criticized, in Sweden and elsewhere, primarily due to its interference with governmental measures to tackle Covid-19.⁶² Understandably, many – medical scientists, politicians, and citizens alike – feared that the spread of Covid-19 would increase dramatically. This fear was articulated in different ways, one of which was based on the idea of timeliness. As Löfven said, "I think we all have an obligation to think: Is this the right thing to do now?"⁶³ Swedish Minister for Finance, then for Home Affairs, Mikael Damberg, likewise said that it is an important democratic right to demonstrate, "but at this moment, we are in the midst of a pandemic", and he therefore urged people to protest online instead.⁶⁴ Emma Frans, epidemiologist, also focused on the importance of the present moment when she tweeted: "My

full support to #blacklivesmatter, of course. But in pandemic times, this support has to be manifested in a way that does not increase the risk of spreading the virus. People has to stop dying now”.⁶⁵ Finally, Björn Olsen, professor in infectious diseases, directed his criticism at the organisers of the protests and the police for giving them permission. While maintaining that he generally advocates freedom of speech, he stated that “[i]t is important to protest but we are in a unique situation, we are talking about a biological exception, we are in the middle of a pandemic and this will have consequences”.⁶⁶ These critical voices base their arguments on the uniqueness of the situation, the urgency of ‘this moment’, the exceptionality of the virus, and thus the state of exception caused by the pandemic. In such a state, the idea of the *right* time is a question of *kairos*, the right time to speak, but also a question of *decorum*: The *morally right* time to speak.

This argument too is based on *topoi* of definition, comparison, and causality. The two crises are defined as two different matters: One is a matter of public health, the other of freedom of assembly and speech. In terms of causality, one leads to death, the other to a temporary loss of certain civil liberties. These effects are then compared in terms of degree: Death is forever and therefore more acute than a temporary loss of liberties that, although recognised as essential, are possible to suspend for a short period of time.

The voices defending the protest in Stockholm also argued from a temporal perspective and they did so in two different but interconnected ways. On the one hand, the murder of George Floyd is understood as one moment (in a row of many) that had to be seized: “If we do not take a stand now, then maybe the situation will escalate here [in Sweden] as well. It is important to take a stand at the right time”, said one of the three organizers, Ibbi Chune.⁶⁷ The two

lawyers, Swärd and Bergwall, on the other hand, articulate racism as pandemic in order to underline not the momentary, but the deeply rooted and long-term character of racism when they write that “racism is a pandemic that harvests countless of lives every year. A pandemic that cannot be fought with quarantines or vaccines”.⁶⁸ An argument very similar to the one made by Timbuktu: “Racism is a pandemic that’s been going on since way before we were born, so, in a sense, Black lives are in a constant state of crisis”.⁶⁹

Jones argues that understanding racism as pandemic is key to understanding *why* people are willing to go against Sweden’s corona restrictions. She asserts that those who criticize the activists have double standards, since they have no problem with people eating in restaurants or crowding at beaches, “but with people fighting for their lives we do”.⁷⁰ One of the activists makes a similar argument: “This is how I think: People are outdoors, restaurants and bars are open, everyone is hanging out in the parks, it is the same amount of people. To use corona as an excuse for not coming here, would seem very strange to me”.⁷¹

What Jones and the protester point to is thus the fact that the urgency of the moment seems to be used as an argument against some types of behaviour but not others, an argument based both on definition (what is defined as urgent?) and comparison (one is favoured over the other).

Throughout, we see a general argument about this kind of moral *kairos* – the idea that the right time is contingent on ethics or decorum – which is used by both sides: It is morally correct to respect governmental restrictions regarding pandemic containment, because people should not die in vain and because these restrictions are only momentarily. The timing of the demonstrations was, therefore, according to the critics, the worst possible time. But it

is also morally correct to voice support for BLM by demonstrating and thus disregarding government restrictions, because Blacks are already dying in vain; Floyd is just one example out of many and represents a moment to seize. Occupying the streets during the worst possible time – or, as the protesters argue, the only possible time – is the sole available tactic.

In this way, the protesters find tactics to work within the strategies put forward by the government. They are poking the rules, abiding them to the extent possible when demonstrating (seeking permission, wearing masks, keeping a distance), but also disregarding them by being disproportionate: Too many people, being in, dwelling in, moving through a place that is, in fact, intended for being, dwelling, and moving – but they do so in a time and to an extent determined improper.

We see very similar mechanisms at play when it comes to the FFF movement. Then still a child, Greta protested by refusing to go to school every day for three weeks up until the Swedish parliamentary election on September 9, 2018. After the election, the protests continued every Friday and became the global movement today known as #FridaysForFuture. Time is essential to the movement at large, but Thunberg herself is an example of being untimely and out of place. She uses the proper parliamentary mode (political debate) and the proper institutions (the Swedish parliament, the UN, the EU), but, being underage, she is, firstly, not regarded as a proper speaker, and secondly, since school is compulsory in Sweden, she is practicing a form of civil disobedience. She has, however, moved from sitting outside the Swedish parliament during school hours to being invited into the proper forums at proper times. Similar to the BLM protesters, Thunberg and FFF have found tactics to

work within the strategies put forward by the established institutions. Being in the right place, however, does necessarily indicate agency, as is evident by the continuous framing of Thunberg as an emotional child.⁷²

Furthermore, time is itself a central apocalyptic topos in the argumentation of the FFF movement and climate change rhetoric more generally, as Nielsen shows. Immanent crisis and temporal urgency are central to apocalyptic thinking that highlights “the *decisive moment*”.⁷³ Acting *now* is paramount. In the interview with *Svenska Dagbladet*, Thunberg is clearly not interested in discussing the different goals of zero emission set by the Swedish government, the EU, or China; according to her, these goals send a signal of action being taken, but often action fails to appear or appears too late:

You can talk about this for ages. But the most important thing is to understand that we must reduce emissions here and now, not in 2025, 2030 or whatever it is. It is the emissions we cause now that will determine our future.⁷⁴

The same argument runs as a red thread throughout the issue of *Dagens Nyheter* guest-edited by Greta Thunberg. In a joined interview with Attenborough, Thunberg states:

If you exclude the aspect of time and the aspect of rights, we can continue as it is and maybe there will be a magical solution in the future. But unfortunately, we do not have that time, we cannot wait for some magical solution. We do not know if it will come and therefore we must act now.⁷⁵

In the newspaper, this increased focus on the present moment is paralleled with time lines (for instance, of CO₂ emissions over the last 700 000 years) and other graphic aides to show development over time and how little time is left.⁷⁶ The purpose in the article at hand is not to analyse how time is used as a political tool in climate change rhetoric,⁷⁷ but rather to show how the rhetorical act of positioning this moment as ripe for action can be understood as a tactical response to institutional strategies of postponement. In contrast to BLM, Thunberg and FFF are not in the same way fighting to be recognized as being substantially similar to the pandemic. Rather, the seriousness of the pandemic is used as an argument to show the seriousness of the climate crisis, both by arguing that the climate crisis needs to be treated as a crisis in order to motivate action, but also in arguments that connects the corona crisis with the climate crisis. In Thunberg's issue of *Dagens Nyheter*, Josef Settele, researcher in conservation biology and social-ecological systems, says:

It's not the bats' fault. The only guilty species is mankind. As we continue to cause climate change and reduce biodiversity by cutting down rainforests, through intensive farming and wildlife trade, we are also paving the way for new pandemics, perhaps even more deadly than Covid-19. The pandemic is an indicator of the crisis for the climate and biodiversity. So, it is a symptom of the problems we face. And it's more obvious and more relevant to humans than many other symptoms, at least at first glance.⁷⁸

Settele is not only arguing that the two crises are interrelated, he is also arguing that the climate crisis is the original crisis, the cause of other crises, and that the corona crisis is simply a symptom. In other words, we need the rainforests and biodiversity in order to

reduce the risk of other future pandemics. Furthermore, he argues, in comparison with the costs of developing vaccines and locking down almost the entire global society, it would most probably have been cheaper to prevent the pandemic in the first place.⁷⁹

Scale: Global/Local, Structural/Individual, Rational/Emotional

Scale is another recurring issue and it pertains to the topos of definition and comparison. Then governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo, argued that the inequality in health care, an issue exposed by the corona crisis, and the inequality in the justice system, an issue exposed by the killing of George Floyd and racial policing more generally, are connected although they pertain to different institutions or areas of society. The reason why we do not see how they are interconnected, he implies, is because we tend to view examples of racial injustice as "individual incidents": "But when you have 10 episodes, 15 episodes, you are blind or in denial if you are still treating each one like a unique situation [...]. The names change, but the color doesn't".⁸⁰ Cuomo argues from a topos of comparison, namely difference of degree: The problem is, he argues, that people see unconnected incidents and thus do not see the real extent of the problem.

In the Swedish context, scale is articulated in three different mechanisms: the global vs. the local, the structural vs. the individual, and the rational/neutral vs. the emotional.⁸¹ The mechanisms of individualization and localization are brought up by Jones who highlights two reasons for these mechanisms. Firstly, Sweden is characterized by "a hyper-individualised mindset", meaning that other people's life situations are not perceived as being within your

own sphere of responsibility. Secondly, “Sweden is obsessed with maintaining its image of being the perfect country”,⁸² a point made by Swärd and Bergwall as well: “It is painstaking to realise [that racism flows just as freely in Sweden as anywhere else], as Swedes we have a self-image of being a people that does not discriminate. But it is time we revise that image.”⁸³ What Jones and Swärd and Bergwall rebuke is the argument that the BLM protests in Stockholm were pointless, because the murder of George Floyd was an individual incident, and racism in general is restricted primarily to a North American context. As Michael McEachrane states, “[n]ews coverage of Black Lives Matter in Sweden has fallen into the same damaging patterns often seen in discussions of race and racism in the country [...]; the fallacy that racism is something belonging either to other countries or to the past”.⁸⁴

According to Jones, individualizing incidents (such as her own: She grew up in small-town Örebro where children would throw burned meat balls after her in school, meant to resemble her skin colour) is a strategy to maintain the benevolent image of Sweden and the allocation of racism to the USA primarily.⁸⁵ Marcus Samuelsson, Timbuktu’s co-host in the podcast *This Moment*, comments on Jones’ story and says that this is why it is important to ‘localize’ the issue of racism – not in the sense of turning it into a local issue, but to view it in its different local contexts, since it takes different forms from place to place and thus is a global issue that needs to be understood in its proper situational context. Accordingly, Elvira, one of the BLM protesters in Stockholm, says that she finds it very important that “Swedes do not stay passive. Demonstrating shows solidarity and that we in Sweden have the same problems as in other countries. All whites have a responsibility to decrease structural racism. Racism is everywhere.”⁸⁶ Demonstrating is thus a

way to connect the dots of racism, to move away from a perspective that understands racism as a local and individual problem.

Moving from the issues of global/local and structural/individual to emotional/rational, we return to then Prime Minister Löfven’s statement quoted in the introduction:

I understand very well that people want to express themselves. There are a lot of emotions built into this [...] At the same time, we are in the midst of a pandemic that has claimed the lives of over 4 000 people. [...] I think we all have an obligation to think: Is this the right thing to do now?⁸⁷

Although Löfven says he understands the need to express oneself through emotions, he stresses that it is not the right time for this type of expression. Pandemic trumps emotional expression, because it has “claimed the lives of over 4 000 people”. Löfven does not specify what he interprets the demonstrations to be about, but since he mentions the number of deaths in Sweden, the pandemic seems to be about people dying whereas the demonstrations are about something else – or about the same, but in a different scale: One person, perhaps more, but not 4 000. By characterising the BLM protests as emotional, delimited, and untimely, it is turned into a primarily private matter.

Aforementioned Björn Olsen, professor in infectious diseases, directs his accusation against the organisers and the police: “Are they complete idiots? They must understand that 50 people quickly becomes a thousand? They must have understood what they were starting”.⁸⁸ This “behavior [unclear whether he refers to the demonstrations or the police authorization] is awful and ignorant”.⁸⁹ He continues to argue that many of the protesters are

young and “probably won’t be hit especially hard [by Covid-19], but when they are dispersed and go home, they potentially take the virus with them. It goes against all reason, despite how important this demonstration might seem”.⁹⁰ However, Mats Eriksson, the press spokesperson of Stockholm police, argued against this position throughout his media appearances, stating that granting the permission to demonstrate was the right thing to do despite the pandemic.⁹¹

Finally, Annika Strandhäll, Minister for Climate and the Environment, then the Social Democrats’ equal opportunities spokesperson, says that she was shocked by how the police was treated. She witnessed an encounter between the police and a group of demonstrators at a metro station in Stockholm and tweeted that “what the police was subjected to was not okay” and specifies in an interview that the demonstrators were pressing their mobile phones in the policemen’s faces and thus hindered them in doing their job, which was to disperse the crowd. This, in turn, made the police use pepper spray: “she [Strandhäll] understands people’s need to protest but calls for responsibility during the current pandemic. – ‘We are talking about a deadly virus, we all have to take responsibility in this situation’”.⁹²

From the perspective of BLM supporters such as Jones, Elvira, and Timbuktu, such calls for reason and responsibility in light of a deadly virus, would probably make little sense, though: Racism has claimed the lives of Blacks for centuries and is anything but reasonable and responsible. These arguments are meaningful only insofar one views BLM as an isolated, local movement protesting against individual incidents of racism.

In other words, in Sweden the BLM protests are articulated as emotional, local, and springing from an individual incident of racial policing. But the same can be said about the pandemic crisis:

Contamination is higher among minority groups, Covid-19 is more fatal to men, and class affiliation cannot be ignored: Discouraging the use of public transportation and encouraging self-isolation are recommendations much easier to follow if you own a car and a summer house – or, simply, a house with a garden. And working from home is more often an option in higher paying jobs with more flexibility. The pandemic too, then, is demographically unequal. We often tend to focus on extraordinary individual cases – this very old person who survived, or this very young person who died – but governments, universities, health institutions, and the media work hard to see the larger demographical structures and patterns. The main claim of BLM is that they do the same when it comes to racism; that they apply the same strategic measures in other types of crises.

The issue of scale is important in the rhetoric of the FFF movement as well, not least during the pandemic. The topical pairs local/global and personal/collective are especially salient and interrelated. As mentioned above, Thunberg shows an explicit disinterest in various national goals of zero emissions in 2045, 2050, 2060, etc., because they become a stand-in for real action, but also because these zero emission goals “have loopholes”, as she phrases it. The fact that zero emission goals focus on national emissions means that the emissions caused outside national borders (flying, buying, and producing outside national borders, etc.) are not included.⁹³ In other words, a global perspective is needed in order for us to be able to see cross-national interconnections and effects.

The same scale is invoked in terms of the personal/collective perspective. As quoted earlier, we need to look at the research, according to Attenborough, because “[y]ou cannot expect that you should be able to understand this complex problem within the framework of your own personal experience”.⁹⁴ Asked whether the experience

of time running out is more pressing in younger generations than in older ones, Attenborough says that the fact that he probably will not be alive in ten years does not diminish his concern: “To see this issue from a personal perspective is really to diminish its nature and seriousness. It is a global problem and a universal problem and we must tell the truth about it.”⁹⁵ Thunberg adds that the climate crisis should not be a personal question, but nevertheless it is treated as such – focus rests on concrete, specific effects on our personal lives.

As a way to create presence and salience in people’s personal lives and thus motivate action and agency, Nielsen suggests a change from a topos of time to a topos of place – to a move from abstract time to a more concrete place.⁹⁶ Although people of colour, as mentioned, are more affected by climate change and, therefore, more concerned,⁹⁷ Attenborough and Thunberg both argue that attending to place instead of time is not necessarily the solution it imagined to be. Discussing the excessive fires in California and Australia in 2020, Attenborough says: “The strange thing is that [...] [t]he people there do not seem to have taken much notice of the crisis. There seems to be a very weak link between being affected and realizing and acting on the crisis”.⁹⁸ And Thunberg adds: “there is no natural, inevitable connection [between personal experience with climate change and changed behaviour]. It is something else that is required. [...] I think it is about the way we treat and see the crisis”.⁹⁹ We can only guess as to why we see this attitudinal difference between groups affected by climate change, and one may be a dissimilarity in general living conditions (if your living conditions are generally secure, you perhaps worry less about these fires, since they might appear as singular events).

In sum, according to Thunberg and Attenborough climate change is perceived to be singular geological events, local incidents, a per-

spective that scales down and allocates action to individuals, or, at best, nation states. In this way, we are back to the topos of definition: If people – citizens, politicians, the industry – is to treat climate change as a crisis, they need to first perceive and define it as a crisis on the same level of importance as, for example, the corona crisis.

Concluding remarks

So, in times of competing crises, on what grounds do agents judge what crisis is more important? How is the complex hierarchy of claims for moral, political, and scientific high ground navigated rhetorically?

As I have tried to show, the responses to corona, climate change, and structural racism relate to one another as institutional strategies and activist tactics, respectively. Activist and institutional rhetorical agents alike invoke the *topoi* of definition, comparison, and causality but with different purposes and from different positions since the tactics of the two latter are constrained by the strategies of the former: Defining racism as pandemic explicitly articulates this relationship by pointing out the institutional framework within which the movement has to work: if you want politicians to act, a pandemic is needed. Similar mechanisms are at play with FFF. The climate movement and Thunberg do not in the same way as BLM argue against an explicit pandemic opponent, instead they articulate their response to the pandemic as one of responsibility (by abiding by pandemic restrictions) and thus as a didactical *exemplum* for their politicians to follow: A crisis has to be recognised as such in order for people to respond to it as a crisis – the same should apply in the climate crisis.

In much the same way, we see how time, both a specific apocalyptic topos and a topos of definition and comparison, invoked

by politicians and governments in the idea of a moral kairos, a timeliness contingent on ethics and decorum, constrains the BLM movement during the pandemic: When accused of untimeliness, the BLM movement invokes both the agency of the present moment (we need to seize the moment that has arisen due to the recent murder of George Floyd) and the deeply rooted and long-term character of racism and thus underscores both the importance of kairos and the perpetual untimeliness of the movement. The FFF movement and Thunberg, on the other hand, use the pandemic situation to show how a complete lock down of everything we think we cannot live without is actually possible: We *can* act now, we *can* live without global travelling if it is the only viable solution presented. Moreover, the movement highlights a reversed order of perceived importance: The original, first crisis was climate change; the pandemic is simply a symptom, and thus responding to the climate crisis is not only responsible in this present moment but also to prevent future pandemics. Seeking out the right time, then, is of greater importance to the BLM and FFF movement than to people and institutions in power since the latter decide when the proper time has arrived.

Scale, an issue of definition and comparison, is also invoked by both institutional and activist agents. While Covid-19 is easily recognised as a universal threat demanding rational and collective responses, both the BLM and the FFF movement struggle to be recognised as global and structural matters; rather, racism and climate change are often perceived as individual or local incidents and responded to with interpersonal measures (punishing a specific police officer) or national solutions (goals of zero emissions). The argument, then, is that citizens and politicians alike need to understand how local incidents in differing situational contexts are interrelated and thus have global consequences.

In sum, the BLM and FFF movements are struggling to increase the immediacy, transience, visibility, proximity, accountability, universality, expertise, and legibility¹⁰⁰ of the crisis of racism and the climate crisis, respectively, since these are the crisis characteristics recognised by governments and institutions as demanding immediate action. They do so by turning to the general topoi of definition, comparison, and causality in order to go beyond the specificities of the concrete subject matter and make visible what commonalities might exist between different subject matters.

In this way, then, there is movement on the tactic-strategy continuum, and the question is how we should understand this movement. What does this distinction tell us when Thunberg is appointed guest editor of Sweden's largest morning newspaper and invited into the UN quarters or when BLM is supported by influential people in the political and scientific spheres who make use of the same arguments? These are muddy waters, and drawing a strict line between the two positions is not necessarily fruitful. Although de Certeau's conceptualization does have the distinction drawn somewhat unambiguously, he is, as outlined above, also vague and allows for other interpretations as well. As Buchanan and Andres et alia note, tactics and scale should not be understood as predetermined categories. It is possible to hold institutional power and not being able to set the strategic agenda, but the institutional position may very well grant you control in other issues. Likewise, tactical users *may* gain institutional power and thus become strategists with the power to define a proper place and environment, but being in the right place, does not necessarily result in agency to act.

So, how does the distinction between strategies and tactics help us understand how rhetorical agents navigate the hierarchy of crises exemplified in this study? What this analysis has shown is

that this distinction brings an awareness of different agencies to the rhetorical analysis and how such agencies are interrelated and contingent on one another. Responding to a crisis is a complex rhetorical act that encompasses a range of rhetorical agents in different spheres and invokes a range of other neglected crises and/or crises that are carefully attended to. The theory of the rhetorical topoi, on the other hand, helps us see that the grounds on which tactical and strategizing rhetors stand, the seats of their argument, are not fundamentally different. It could be argued that we do not need the theory of topoi for that; the basic tenant of de Certeau's argument is that the tactics grow out of the strategies laid out. But the topoi adds a level of precision in highlighting the rhetorical means and practices in various crisis discourses.

The analysis presented here of the three crises and their interrelated rhetorical practices is by no means exhaustive, but I hope to have lifted some key issues. The interrelated character of the pandemic, climate change, and structural racism is gaining more and more attention: how the pandemic is related to deforestation and decreasing biodiversity; how people of colour are more affected by climate change; how colonialism and climate change is connected, and many more connections that I have only briefly touched upon in this article but will demand cross-disciplinary scholarly attention in the nearest future.

Another issue not discussed in this article is the complexity involved when making comparisons across geographical regions. The conclusions I have drawn here are founded on an analysis of different situations and spheres in a primarily Swedish context. They cannot, then, stand for the climate movement or the anti-racist movement as such. Importantly, racialization in health care institutions is not as deeply rooted in the European welfare systems than in the US health

care system, and the consequences of global warming have, until recently, largely spared European citizens. To be sure, such structural differences complicates comparative analysis, but this complication only makes it all the more important to identify different strategies and tactics in their local environment and, consequently, to highlight how groups in different regions have different opportunities to connect different crises. And, on the other hand, to connect the dots of the local crises and movements in order to create global awareness. This complex assignment – the need to understand each crisis in its local environment while simultaneously grasping how crises interrelate and attach to larger global structures – demands our attention. It is in this liminal crisis position, when it becomes clear that “the status quo obviously cannot be sustained anymore”,¹⁰¹ that crisis turns out to be productive.

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Noter

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3 Johan Wicklén and Victor Munther, 'Löfven: hitta ett sätt som inte leder till ökad smittspridning', *SVT*, 4 June 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/stefan-lofven-om-demonstrationen-i-stockholm-hitta-ett-satt-som-inte-leder-till-okad-smittspridning>. All translations are mine.

4 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984).

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6 Kampmark, 'Protesting in Pandemic Times', 15–16.

7 Hamish van der Ven and Yixian Sun, 'Varieties of Crises: Comparing the Politics of COVID-19 and Climate Change', *Global Environmental Politics* 21, no. 1 (2021): 1; see also Jason Bordoff, 'Sorry, but the Virus Shows Why There Won't Be Global Action on Climate Change', *Foreign Policy*, 27 March 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/27/coronavirus-pandemic-shows-why-no-global-progress-on-climate-change/>; Nives Dolsak and Aseem Prakash, 'Here's Why Coronavirus and Climate Change Are Different Sorts of Policy Problems', *Forbes*, 15 March 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/prakashdolsak/2020/03/15/heres-why-coronavirus-and-climate-change-are-different-sorts-of-policy-problems/#391895d39e6f>; Eric Galbraith and Ross Otto, 'Why We're Seeing a Unified Global Response to Coronavirus but Not Climate Change', *The Narwhal* (blog), 20 March 2020, <https://thenarwhal.ca/why-were-seeing-a-unified-global-response-to-coronavirus-but-not-climate-change/>.

8 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 2.

9 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 1.

10 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 3–6.

11 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 6.

12 Esben B. Nielsen, 'A Rhetoric of Secular Apocalypse: Narratives of Catastrophe and Hope in the Climate Change Debate' (Aarhus, Aarhus University, 2013); Esben B. Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place', in *Topic-Driven Environmental Rhetoric*, ed. Derek G. Ross, Routledge Studies in Technical Communication, Rhetoric, and Culture (London & New York: Routledge, 2017), 87–105.

13 Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place', 90.

14 Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place', 90; quotes Stefan Skrimshire 2010, 3.

15 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 7.

16 Petar Jandrić et al., 'Philosophy of Education in a New Key: Who Remembers Greta Thunberg? Education and Environment after the Coronavirus', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* (2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1811678>.

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18 Ayana E. Johnson, 'We Can't Solve the Climate Crisis Unless Black Lives Matter', *Time*, 9 July 2020, <https://time.com/5864705/climate-change-black-lives-matter/>.

19 Matthew Ballew et al., 'Which Racial/Ethnic Groups Care Most about Climate Change?', *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication* (blog), 16 April 2020, <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/race-and-climate-change/>.

20 Ballew et al., 'Which Racial/Ethnic Groups Care Most about Climate Change?'.

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americans/; Cato T. Laurencin and Aneesah McClinton, 'The COVID-19 Pandemic: A Call to Action to Identify and Address Racial and Ethnic Disparities', *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-020-00756-0>.

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23 Cato T. Laurencin and Joanne M. Walker, 'A Pandemic on a Pandemic: Racism and COVID-19 in Blacks', *Cell Systems* 11, no. 1 (2020): 9–10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cels.2020.07.002>.

24 Laurencin and Walker, 'A Pandemic on a Pandemic'.

25 Godlee, 'Racism'.

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27 Laurencin and Walker, 'A Pandemic on a Pandemic'.

28 Colin Hay, 'Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of The Winter of Discontent', *Sociology* 30, no. 2 (1996): 255.

29 For an overview, see James Jasinski, *Sourcebook on Rhetoric* (Thousand Oakes, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001), 578 ff.

30 Richard M. Weaver, 'Language is Sermonic', in *The Rhetorical Tradition. Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston & New York: Bedford/St. Martins, 2001), 1354.

31 Jonas Gabrielsen identifies four different functions, see Jonas Gabrielsen, *Topik: Ekskursioner i Den Retoriske Toposlære* (Åstorp: Retorik-förlaget, 2008). Lindqvist, however, focuses primarily on the heuristic and hermeneutic, see Janne Lindqvist, *Klassisk retorik för vår tid*, 2nd ed. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2016), 133 ff.

32 This distinction can be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* I.2.20-22. The specific topoi are treated mainly in the first book (for instance, for the epideictic genre: I.9, for the forensic genre: I.10-15, for the deliberative genre: I.4-7) and the general topoi mainly in the second book (II.18 and II.23). See Aristoteles, *Retorik*, trans. Thure Hastrup, (København: Københavns universitet, Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2002).

33 In this study, I make use of Richard Weaver's three main categories and thus leave aside his fourth and slightly different category, *testimony/authority*. Weaver, 'Language is Sermonic', 1354.

34 Weaver, 'Language is Sermonic', 1354.

35 Weaver, 'Language is Sermonic', 1354.

36 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix. Emphasis in the original.

37 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

38 Ian Buchanan, *Michel de Certeau: Cultural Theorist* (London: Sage, 2000), 89.

39 Buchanan, *Michel de Certeau*; Lauren Andres et al., 'Negotiating Polyvocal Strategies: Re-Reading de Certeau through the Lens of Urban Planning in South Africa', *Urban Studies* 57, no. 12 (2020): 2440–55.

40 For instance, the power at the disposition of the strategist can decrease, and the performativity of tactics is likened to that of speech acts capable of transforming "speech situations", creating an "oral fabric [...] that belongs to no one". de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xxii, 37.

41 Andres et al., 'Negotiating Polyvocal Strategies', 5.

42 Buchanan, *Michel de Certeau*, 86.

43 Andres et al., 'Negotiating Polyvocal Strategies', 5.

44 Andres et al., 'Negotiating Polyvocal Strategies'.

45 Ruth Wodak and Jo Angouri, 'From Grexit to Grecovery: Euro/Crisis Discourse', *Discourse & Society* 25, no. 4 (2014): 419. In this quote, the authors refer to Victor Turner's concept of liminality. See Victor Turner, 'Betwixt and between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage', in *Betwixt & Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, ed. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster, and Meredith Little (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1987), 3–22.

46 Andreas Ekström, "De kastade brända köttbullar på mig", *Expressen*, 6 September 2020, <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/de-kastade-branda-kottbullarpa-mig/>.

47 Jason Diakite and Marcus Samuelsson, '#31 The Evolution of Protest With Aysha Jones', *This Moment* (podcast.nu, 2020), <https://podcasts.nu/avsnitt/this-moment/31-the-evolution-of-protest-with-aysha-jones-YCbcBHRWo>.

48 Mia Swärd and Hanna Bergwall, 'Därför måste man få demonstrera mot rasismen', *Göteborgs-Posten*, 11 June 2020, 5.

49 Mårten Schultz (@martenschultz), 'Skylten "I can't breath" i en folksamling av tusentals personer som riskerar att smitta varandra med en pest som kväver människor till döds ...', *Twitter*, 3 June 2020, <https://twitter.com/martenschultz/status/1268223669865779200>. The tweet and its comments are public, but I have left out the names of the commentators. They are, however, visible in the thread.

50 Fiona Godlee, 'Racism'.

51 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 3–6.

52 Peter Alestig, 'Jag vill inte att folk ska få panik', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 5 December 2020.

53 Greta Thunberg, ed., *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm, 2020).

54 Greta Thunberg, 'Speech at the UN Climate Change COP24 Conference' (Katowice, Poland, December 2015).

55 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 10.

56 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 2.

57 Alestig, 'Jag vill inte att folk ska få panik', 17.

58 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 2.

59 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 2. He says: "Because the climate crisis is not an opinion, it is a fact".

60 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12, culture section.

61 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 3–6.

62 Simon Krona, 'Starka reaktioner på demonstrationen: "Folk måste sluta dö"', *SVT Nyheter*, 4 June 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/starka-reaktioner-pa-demonstrationen-ge-fan-i-att-dreva>.

63 Wicklén and Munther, 'Löfven: hitta ett sätt som inte leder till ökad smittspridning'.

64 Rikard Lann, 'Damberg uppmanar till digitala demonstrationer', *SVT Nyheter*, 4 June 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/damberg-uppmanar-till-digitala-demonstrationer>.

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66 Matilda Aprea Malmqvist, 'Professorn om demonstrationen:

Som att säga "fuck you" till alla som kämpar', *Aftonbladet*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/a/gvR5vq>.

67 The interview with Chune is in the video at the bottom of the article (in Swedish): Malmqvist, 'Professorn om demonstrationen'.

68 Swärd and Bergwall, 'Därför måste man få demonstrera mot rasismen'.

69 Diakite and Samuelsson, '#31 The Evolution of Protest With Aysha Jones'.

70 Ekström, "De kastade brända köttbullar på mig".

71 Clas Svahn and Mia Holmgren, 'Stora protester i Stockholm city efter demonstration på Sergels torg', *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.dn.se/sthlm/demonstration-mot-polisvald-far-inte-samla-fler-an-50/>.

72 These aspects are also bought up in research on girlhood and the figure of the (female, white) child as a driving force in political activism. See, for instance, the research project Growing up in a Warming World at Linköping University: <https://liu.se/en/research/growing-up-in-a-warming-world>.

73 Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place', 90; quotes Stefan Skrimshire 2010, 3.

74 Alestig, 'Jag vill inte att folk ska få panik', 17.

75 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12.

76 This is a common perspective shared by the climate movement more broadly, often visualized with a clock ticking, indicating that time is running out, as for instance here: <https://climateclock.world>.

77 Since, as mentioned, this has already been done extensively by Nielsen. See Nielsen, 'A Rhetoric of Secular Apocalypse: Narratives of Catastrophe and Hope in the Climate Change Debate'; Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place'.

78 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16.

79 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 16.

80 Ben Westcott et al., 'May 30 George Floyd Protests News', *CNN*, 30 May 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/us/live-news/george-floyd-protests-05-30-20/index.html>.

81 Although all three mechanisms appear in most other national contexts, I would hypothesise that the global/local scale is particularly visible in Sweden and other countries where colonialism is less debated in public than in, for instance, the USA.

82 Diakite and Samuelsson, '#31 The Evolution of Protest With Aysha Jones'.

83 Swärd and Bergwall, 'Därför måste man få demonstrera mot rasismen', 5.

84 The Local Sweden, 'INTERVIEW: Sweden's Anti-Racism Protests Aren't Just about What's Happening in Other Countries', *The Local Sweden* (blog), 23 June 2020, <https://www.thelocal.se/20200623/analysis-swedens-anti-racism-protests-arent-just-about-the-past-or-other-countries/>. This argument flourishes on social media, however. For instance, to Emma Frans' tweet mentioned earlier it is commented: "To protest in Stockholm hardly helps the demonstrators in the USA, but it increases the spread of the virus here" and "how is a criminal act in the USA connected to Sweden? Why no demonstrations against inhumane punishments in the Middle East?" See Schultz (@martenschultz), 'Skytten "I can't breath" i en folksamling av tusentals personer som riskerar att smitta varandra med en pest som kväver människor till döds ...'

85 Diakite and Samuelsson, '#31 The Evolution of Protest With Aysha Jones'. See also Ekström, "'De kastade brända köttbullar på mig'".

86 In the article it is stated that Elvira did not want to state her last name. See Svahn and Holmgren, 'Stora protester i Stockholm city efter demonstration på Sergels torg'.

87 Wicklén and Munther, 'Löfven: hitta ett sätt som inte leder till ökad smittspridning'.

88 Malmqvist, 'Professorn om demonstrationen'.

89 Victor Munther, 'Polisen såg inga skäl att neka demonstrationstillstånd', *SVT Nyheter*, 3 June 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/polisen-slar-tillbaka-vi-kan-inte-neka-folk>.

90 Munther, 'Polisen såg inga skäl att neka demonstrationstillstånd'.

91 Malmqvist, 'Professorn om demonstrationen'.

92 Rikard Lann, 'Strandhäll upprörd över behandlingen av polisen', *SVT Nyheter*, 4 June 2020, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/strandhall-upprord-pa-behandlingen-av-polisen>.

93 Alestig, 'Jag vill inte att folk ska få panik', 17.

94 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12.

95 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12.

96 Nielsen, 'Climate Crisis Made Manifest: The Shift from a Topos of Time to a Topos of Place', 91.

97 Ballew et al., 'Which Racial/Ethnic Groups Care Most about Climate Change?'

98 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12.

99 Thunberg, *Dagens Nyheter*, 12.

100 van der Ven and Sun, 'Varieties of Crises', 3–6.

101 Wodak and Angouri, 'From Grexit to Grecovery: Euro/Crisis Discourse', 419.