Resource Extraction in the Automobile Industry: Communication Analysis of the Discourse Participants

Participants: Sophie Fedler, Lilly Schäfer, Nina Schmitt, Fiona Winz, Katharina Wierig, Emilia Witzel

- Mid-November 2023: High arsenic levels near the Bou Azzer mine,
 operated by the Moroccan raw materials group Managem
- Managem is a direct supplier of cobalt for BMW, cobalt is needed especially for batteries in the e-mobility production

Background:

- The increasing demand of critical resource extraction in line with a changing automobile industry towards e-mobility is antagonistic to sustainability
- The supply chain law in Germany mandates corporate responsibility for respecting human and environmental rights in the global supply chain (covering protection against child labor, fair wages and environmental conservation)
- A linguistic discourse analysis about (critical) raw material extraction for the German automobile industry helps to analyse language patterns, rhetorical strategies, and provides insights into stakeholder communication and their impact on public opinion

Methods:

- Agonistic analysis conducted within the framework of linguistic discourse analysis
- German sources in German language from November 2022 to November
 2023 because the German supply chain law entered into force: 01.01.2023
- Discourse actors considered: public media, BMW representing the German automobile industry, activist organizations and political statements from the current government's coalition agreement
- Examination of the most frequently used keywords and topics within each interest group with a visualisation of the results
- Correlation of keywords with the arguments presented in the discourse

Conclusion:

- ➤ Main focus: economy (BMW, government, public media) → protection of human rights and environment is not the main topic and remains in the background → contradicts purpose of the Supply Chain Act
- ➤ Proximity and distance of the stakeholders emphasised through language, style and content: BMW and government close to each other, activists distance through different framing (e.g. framing of the words "responsibility" and "duty of care")
- Differences in explicity (specific demands vs. vague aims, modal words as form of expression)



Media

· Implementation of the Supply Chain Act with a focus on possible

· E-mobility in Germany as an industry for job creation and as a "key

· Calculation of risks and benefits of electric mobility for

Main focus was particularly the economy and politics in the media

The focus on the social and ecological consequences, especially in the

public media. The frequency of media articles correlates with events

global south, remains in the background as well as activists as actors in

Raw material security and resource competition

"Verband der deutschen Automobilindustrie"

environmental protection

· Federal Government

German car manufacturers

Main actors:

Politicians

around the topic.

Aims:

The main goal of the analysis is questioning e-mobility as a sustainable technology of the future especially regarding the planned energy transition in Germany. This study investigates the language of different stakeholders within their respective mediums.

How do the stakeholders use different communication strategies and key aspects regarding the topic of the raw material extraction in the automobile industry?



Seminar: Linguistic Discourse Analysis in the Environmental Humanities Supervisor: Dr Carolin Schwegler



Results:

Current Government

Main topics in the coalition agreement:

- Transformation of the automobile industry away from the combustion engine towards e-mobility
- Extraction of raw materials in the automobile industry is not addressed
 Focus on domestic problems and how to increase the long-term strategical
- sovereignty of Germany and/or the EU
- Supply chain law is not related to large corporations -> however, the law is to be implemented unchanged and improved where necessary

Important keywords used in this context: (electric) mobility, sustainability, transformation, sustainable raw material supply, domestic raw material extraction, circular economy, primary and secondary raw materials, strategic sovereignty, corporate due diligence, sustainable development

own chapter for the "transformation of the automobile sectors support of the transformation by the creation of the appropr framework conditions and state support measures

reference in the BMW group report to the supply chain law and other (EU) statutes

BMW

Main topics on the website and in the group report:

- Difference in content focus depending on the text
- Difference in language stile between website (proactive, engaged) and official documents like the "Group report 2022", "Supplier Code of Conduct" or "Erklärung zu Menschenrechten" (Compliance of Human Rights) (fulfilling the legal basics)

 | Jabila supply shair | resegnized for critical resumptorials.
- "Labile supply chain" recognized for critical raw materials
 Claiming well working complaint and control system --> do incidents like this happen?

Important key words: responsibility, risk management, risk analysis, diligence ("Sorgfalt"), processes, challenges, engage, impairments, obligate

Activist groups and NGO's

in arguments:

- The majority of arguments are based on the compliance with human rights and the supply chain act -> car companies are held accountable
- Appealing to the morals and emotions of the readership, e.g. by
- emphasizing...
- A) the **extreme** situation
- B) the **urgency** for change C) the ethical **reprehensibility** of the ecological and social

conditions in the extraction of raw materials

- Aiming to expose the car industry by...
- A) calling their **credibility** into question
- B) acting as if their (activists) arguments are **common sense**

Important key words: human rights (violations), due diligence, valueadded chain, responsibility, climate (-justice/-catastrophy/-damaging), liveable, suffering, Greenwashing, supply chain law

Activist groups and NGOs Current Government political language expressive and emotional style + wording (Verantwortung, stylistic devices (metephors, Technical terms, legally Compromise formulations Sorgfaltspflicht,... imperatives & personifications) but different relevant terms and concrete demands political terminology subjunctive distancing modal particles unemotional, factual, expressions (should, could, must,...) (vermeintlich, augenscheinlich) formal and functional legal and technical metaphors typical journalistic inexplicit terms elaborated delagating (suppliers): expect, structures objective language guidelines, regulations business-like direct quotations **BMW** Media miro