



Environment & Society



White Horse Press

Full citation:

Campagna, Claudio and Teresita Fernandez. "A Comparative Analysis of the Vision and Mission Statements of International Environmental Organisations." *Environmental Values* 16, no. 3, (2007): 369-398.  
<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6010>

Rights:

All rights reserved. © The White Horse Press 2007. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism or review, no part of this article may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means, including photocopying or recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission from the publisher. For further information please see <http://www.whpress.co.uk/>

# A Comparative Analysis of the Vision and Mission Statements of International Environmental Organisations

CLAUDIO CAMPAGNA\*

*Centro Nacional Patagónico  
(Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas de la Argentina)  
Boulevard Brown s/n, 9120 Puerto Madryn, Chubut, Argentina\**  
Email: [ccvz\\_puertomadryn@speedy.com.ar](mailto:ccvz_puertomadryn@speedy.com.ar)

and

*Wildlife Conservation Society  
2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx Zoo  
Bronx, New York, NY 10460-1099 USA*

TERESITA FERNÁNDEZ

*Centro Nacional Patagónico (CONICET)  
Boulevard Brown s/n, 9120 Puerto Madryn, Chubut, Argentina*

## ABSTRACT

The vision and mission statements of 24 environmental organisations were analysed under the premise that the language used in these statements reflects and influences the priorities of their operation. A dominant perspective, hinging on the concept of 'sustainable development', merged the profile of government agencies and non-governmental groups. The language reflected an utilitarian ethics: the environment was more generally portrayed as resources than as nature. Aesthetic remarks were exceptional, even among groups focusing on wildlife. Despite a broadly claimed link between human welfare and habitat viability, environmental issues were not broadly referred to by humanitarian organisations, while conservation groups comply with societal priorities and needs. Organisational statements seem more concerned about political legitimisation by audiences with specific expectations than about articulating purposes with internal structural consequences or goals that advocate change or reflect organisational uniqueness.

## KEYWORDS

Conservation, environmental discourse, environmental rhetoric

---

\* Corresponding author and address

## INTRODUCTION

The scope of this paper is to explore the range of views, values and options of an array of organisations that approach environmental issues preferentially as the natural world (wildlife) or as the context that sustains human wellbeing and economic growth, according to an intrinsic right to benefit from natural resources. The difficulties of comparing groups to yield a comprehensive and representative account of alternatives were tackled by assuming that institutional priorities are expressed in the synthetic statements that are visions and missions.

By definition, visions and missions articulate critical values and goals of an organisation, and therefore are suitable for comparison (Pearce II 1982, David 1989, Cummings and Davies 1994, Raynor 1998, Bart 2000). Visions refer to targets in the future while missions guide resource-allocation processes and define the reason for being of an organisation. The language used in these declarations should then illustrate a range of perspectives by environmentally-oriented groups and agencies. In addition, these statements should serve as indicators of compliance regarding widely accepted principles, such as the relationship between nature viability and quality of life. The analysis of the language of missions has been used in other contexts (e.g., Williams et al. 2005, Morphew and Hartley 2006), even to derive conclusions on ideological-discursive practices (e.g., Ayers 2005).

We test the prediction that the language of organisations directly involved in environmental-conservation issues, and of those expected to operate with an environmental background (humanitarian organisations), is influenced by the expectation of compliance with a utilitarian perspective implicit in the concept of sustainable development. The utilitarian view portrays nature as resources for economic growth, rather than as wildlife and wild places for aesthetic recreation. The environment is approached with pragmatism and arguments based on the intrinsic value of nature beyond any use are overshadowed. The attempt to satisfy the needs of conservation, human wellbeing and economic development results in homogeneous conceptual grounds between wildlife conservation organisations and development agencies.

This paper assumes that language, structured as a discourse, influences the strategic schemes regarding how an endeavour is thought about and represented (van Dijk 1998, 1999, Fairclough 1992, 2002). That is, what cannot be properly referred to with suitable language may not be identified as an issue, or may misguide the course of actions. Extended work by others points at the relevance of discourse in the building of a perspective (Ayers 2005, Burke 1968, 1973 cited in Herndl and Brown 1996, Teymur 1982, Herndl and Brown 1996, Myerson and Rydin 1996, Darier 1999, Harré et al. 1999, Brulle 1996, 2000, 2002, Podeschi 2002, Kaldis 2003, Williams et al. 2005). Many authors have reflected on environmental discourse (e.g., Teymur 1982, Ehrlich and Ehrlich 1996, Herndl and Brown 1996, Myerson and Rydin 1996, Darier 1999, Harré

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

et al.1999, Brulle 1996, 2000, 2002, Podeschi 2002, Kaldis 2003). Among them, Kaldis (2003) points at a 'crisis of discourses', for which disciplinary concept schemes exert hegemonic control over the signification and values of environmental issues; language that serves other spheres of thought (e.g., scientism, managerial-utilitarian) restricts the way practitioners view and understand environmental issues. Kaldis concludes that present perspectives on the environment remain derivative of an archetypal humanistic bias, with low chances of developing an autonomous structure. This paper draws from the latter view and attempts to support it, using visions and missions as conceptual units for the analysis of language.

## METHODS

We conducted a textual analysis of institutional statements to identify conceptual elements incorporated in the language and articulated as an emerging discourse. Visions and missions were considered expressions of the 'culture' of an organisation that reflect its genuine priorities and values. It is a premise that these critical statements, rather than being 'rhetorical pyrotechnics' (an illustrative expression taken from Morphew and Hartley, 2006), integrate principles and goals, guide operative actions and are a critical part of the public image of an organisation/agency. We also assume that the style and length of visions and missions are strategic decisions made by the organisation. Therefore, lack of detail or representativeness of the statements relative to the operational profile of the organisation cannot be accidental or due to syntactic constraints.

Formally, a general rule states that 'visions guide missions' (Raynor 1998). Visions are conceptually different statements than missions and both make complementary points at the level of principles and operation. Visions aim at ideal, future perspectives. Missions reflect tasks, identify focal problems, methods to achieve the goals and core values. This understanding of vision and mission is broadly treated in the specialised literature (e.g., Bryson 1995).

*Selected organisations*

The analysis concerns a heterogeneous assembly of international organisations with a common ground: they are all expected to play a role in the complex scenario of human needs in the context of environmental viability (habitats and biodiversity). These groups represent a range of views and related concepts, policies and contexts (e.g., Brulle 2000) and are illustrative and representative of the institutionalised environmental movement. They include inter-governmental agencies (e.g., Environment Directorates-General-European Commission of the European Union), non-government groups (e.g., WWF, WCS, BirdLife International, etc.) and mixed government and NGOs organisations (IUCN). The

sample includes conservation NGOs mostly working with wildlife and natural habitats (e.g., WWF, WCS, CI, TNC, etc.) and organisations that care about the environment in the context of human wellbeing (IUCN, UNEP). Humanitarian groups (e.g., the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and CARE) were experimentally considered as part of the assembly on the logic that humanitarian and environmental perspectives share common conceptual and practical grounds (see for example: World Conservation Strategy: Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development (1980), Caring for the Earth: Strategy for Sustainable Living (1991), Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992), United Nation Millennium Declaration (2000), World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)). The Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UN 1972 in cited literature) states:

‘...Both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man-made, are essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights the right to life itself.’

The UN Commission on Human Rights (2002) states:

‘These sets of national and international developments indicate the close connection between the protection of human rights and environmental protection, in the context of sustainable development. They reflect the growing interrelationship between approaches to ensuring human rights and environment protection, as well as the synergies that have developed between these previously distinct fields.’

Further justification is provided by the Brundtland Report (UNCED 1989), Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992), the UN Millennium Declaration (UN 2000), and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (UN 2002). Moreover, the organisations themselves accept the link between the main focus of their missions and the environment:

‘CARE helps families produce more food and increase their income while managing their natural resources and preserving the environment for future generations’ ([www.care.org/careswork/whatwedo/index.asp](http://www.care.org/careswork/whatwedo/index.asp))

‘Insufficient national and global efforts to combat environmental degradation may lead to more frequent and severe disasters with an ever-greater impact on society...’ (*International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Mid-term review Strategy 2010* [http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/s2010/index.asp?navid=09\\_07](http://www.ifrc.org/publicat/s2010/index.asp?navid=09_07))

UNESCO was included on the grounds that cultural and biological diversity are often linked as part of the same environmental concern. For instance, the following statements were from UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Program (MAB):

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

1. 'The Biosphere Reserve concept was a key component for achieving MAB's objective to strike a balance between the apparently conflicting goals of conserving biodiversity, promoting economic and social development and maintaining associated cultural values.'

(UNESCO 2001; <http://www.mabnetamericas.org/brprogram/origin.html>)

2. 'By adopting the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, UNESCO Member States reaffirmed their conviction that cultural diversity is one of the roots of development 'as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature' and categorically rejected the idea that conflicts between cultures and civilisation are inevitable.'

(UNESCO 2003; <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001315/131585e.pdf>)

The rest of the organisations were included in the analysis under the following rationale:

- *Conservation organisations.* These are classic groups identified with environmental concerns: Greenpeace, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, Audubon International, Conservation International, Fauna and Flora International, Friends of the Earth International, The Nature Conservancy, The Society for Conservation Biology, Wetlands International, The Natural Resources Defense Council, BirdLife International, Oceana, The Ocean Project. Their bias is towards the conservation of species, biodiversity and habitats-ecosystems. Some of these organisations are confederations (e.g. BirdLife International). The International Fund for Animal Welfare is an organisation mostly concerned with animal rights, including domestic species. Their inclusion in the analysis is based on their declared interest in protecting wildlife habitats.
- *Groups that include Governments, NGOs and individual experts.* The largest and most relevant is the World Conservation Union (IUCN):  

'The World Conservation Union is the world's largest and most important conservation network. The Union brings together 82 States, 111 government agencies, more than 800 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership.'  
 (IUCN, 2005).
- *Organisations that have governments as their major stakeholder.* Environment Directorates-General European Commission, UNDP, UNEP, WB, GEF. These organisations belong to the political and economic institutions that shape the international environmental agenda and support it financially (Sanderson 2002). They are basically responsible for international policy and exert their influence via official government delegations in contexts such as the Sustainable Development Summits. Their main purpose is not

nature conservation, even when the environment can be their main reason for being, but economic development, financial stabilisation, administration of the global commons.

### *Textual corpus*

Statements analysed were those found on the web page of the selected organisations (Table 1; last review in November 2005). Visions and missions are expected to reflect evolving perspectives, thus they may vary through time. Changes in the statements were tracked for a sampling period from June 2003 to November 2005. We considered changes in language as adaptation adjustments in a dynamic process. For example, UNESCO's mission changed on (30/05/04) and a sentence was committed to the frontline issue of terrorism: 'UNESCO is working to create the conditions for genuine dialogue based upon respect for shared values and the dignity of each civilisation and culture. This role is critical, particularly in the face of terrorism, which constitutes an attack against humanity...' On the basis of capturing relevant short-term transformations in the approaches we included in the results the analysis of some changes. The adjustment and modification of statements suggest that organisations do consider them important for their public image and profile.

When visions and missions were introduced by the organisation under an unequivocal title or sentence (e.g., 'our vision is...'), the statement is cited by us with a normal font. When key sentences or paragraphs were identified from a text that did not have the title vision-mission, the citation of them appears in parentheses and italics.

### *Categorisation of statements*

A rhetorical model for the environmental discourse, described in Herndl and Brown (1996), was applied to the visions and missions. The framework, a 'rhetorical triangle' (after Ogden and Richards, 1923), allows to categorise motives and purposes of a given text according to three perspectives of nature. On the top vertex of the triangle, nature is understood as a resource. The corresponding language is that of the institutions making decisions on the environment and setting policy (regulatory-ethnocentric discourse). The rhetorical power of this perspective is withdrawn from the notion of ethos (culturally constructed authority). The two vertices at the bottom of the triangle represent the Scientific and the Poetic discourse. The former is the perspective of the specialised environmental sciences for which nature is seen as an object of scrutiny via the scientific method. The rhetorical power of this perspective is derived from the notion of logos, or the faith and trust in reason and facts. The language of the poetic discourse by contrast describes nature as beauty and stresses its emotional

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

values. The power of this language comes from the notion of pathos addressing the aesthetic and spiritual responses elicited in the audience.

Following the above structure, we attempted to answer three questions regarding each statement:

- Does it reflect nature as natural resources to be managed for the greater benefit of present and future generations?
- Does it address the environment in the context of the inspiring beauty of nature, wildlife or wild places?
- Does it depict nature as a source of knowledge relevant to sustain technological progress that impacts on quality of life?

As statements were not expected to be 'pure', we assigned a relative value to each of them for the three alternatives (Ethos, Pathos and Logos; see caption in Table 2 for further details).

## RESULTS

Most organisations (18 of 24) stated only their mission (Table 1), two presented only a vision (OC, BLI) and four expressed a vision and a mission (AI, FOEI, SCB, WI). The extension of the statements varied widely, with a range of 14 (AI) to 216 (OC) words.

General messages conveyed by these statements were: (a) people have an integral place in the environment, the future of the environment is in the hands of people, and keeping the environment viable is good for humans (e.g., AI, CI, FOEI, NRDC, OC), (b) the accomplishment of conservation cannot be detached from improving people's livelihoods/welfare/quality of life, for present and future generations (e.g., BLI, NRDC, OC, UNEP, WI), (c) a long-term viable environment must be accompanied by an equitable use of natural resources (e.g., FOEI, IUCN), (d) sustainable development offers a solution to conflicting interests over the environment (e.g., DGsEU, UNEP, IUCN, WB, WWF), (e) an environment diverse and abundant in species, healthy and productive is a desirable wish. Harmony is possible between humans, wildlife and wildplaces (e.g., OC, FOEI, CI, GP, WCS, WWF).

Four sets of messages were different in style and contents (Table 1): (a) BLI was the only group with a focus in the beauty and inspirational powers of nature. OC conveyed the message of the majestic powers of abundant and diverse life. (b) GP asserted a strong determination to achieve its purpose by referring to 'creative confrontation' and the forcing of solutions. (c) IFAW was the only organisation to refer to the issue of cruelty concerning animals and to include domestic species as a target, (d) FOEI and UNDP used political notions:



- ...It will be [*a society*] founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice and free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalisation, neo-colonialism and militarism.' (FOEI)
- 'Our focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of Democratic Governance.' (UNDP)

### *Targets*

Humanity, people, societies, communities, individuals, families and generations were referred to by organisations biased towards nature and humanitarian issues:

- 'To foster more sustainable human and natural communities...' (AI)
- '... to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world.' (CARE)
- '... to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.' (CI)
- 'Protecting, preserving and improving the environment for present and future generations...' (DGs.EU)
- 'Our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature.' (FOEI)
- 'We are an unprecedented initiative that intends to create in people a lasting, measurable, top-of-mind awareness of the importance, value, and sensitivity of the oceans'. (OP)
- 'A world where people understand, value, and conserve the diversity of life on Earth.' (SCB)
- 'Our Mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature.' (IUCN)

Conversely, wildlife and wild places were never addressed as such by either: government-related agencies (WB, UNEP, UNDP, GEF, EDsEU), mixed government-NGO organisations (IUCN) and humanitarian group-confederations (IFRD, CARE). The closest to the above terminology was IUCN's '... the integrity and diversity of nature.'

Most conservation organisations (BLI, CI, GP, IFAW, NC, WI, WCS, WWF) expressed their statements either including humans, but not having them at the centre of their concerns, or referring only to a natural world:

- 'Our vision is that all wetlands and their dependent biodiversity will be fully conserved, and that where wetlands are managed or used that this be done wisely.' (WI)
- 'The Nature Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.'

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

Some organisations addressed critical environmental problems and identified their origin in unsustainable use or mismanagement. GEF listed six critical threats to the global environment: biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, ozone depletion, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants. WWF and OC mentioned the need to reduce pollution, WWF pointed at wasteful consumption, and OC talked about the collapse of fish populations. The term 'extinction' in the context of species extinction, was mentioned only by one organisation (BLI). FFI referred to 'threatened species or ecosystems'. A few statements were built around ambiguous generalisations:

'Protecting, preserving and improving the environment for present and future generations, and promoting sustainable development.' (DGsEU)

*Sustainable development*

Sustainability as a concept appeared in 13 statements (AI, BLI, DGsEU, FFI, FOEI, OC, NRDC, IUCN, UNESCO, WB, WI, WCS, WWF). Some groups used the term several times (e.g., AI, FOEI, NRDC, FFI). The context in which the terms were used varied according to at least four dominant meanings:

## (a) Long-term ecological viability

'...sustainable human and natural communities...' (AI)

'...sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources...' (AI)

'...We work to restore the integrity of the elements that sustain life, air, land and water...' (NRDC)

'...To sustain and restore wetlands.' (WI)

'... help people imagine wildlife and humans living in sustainable interaction on both a local and a global scale...' (WCS)

## (b) Human-social wellbeing

'... integrate bird conservation into sustaining people's livelihoods.' (BLI)

'... (To) secure sustainable societies... secure sustainable livelihoods....' (FOEI)

'...To bring about transformation towards sustainability and equity between and within societies.' (FOEI)

'... We can restore ocean ecosystems that will sustain us.' (OC)

'.. to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.' (IUCN)

## (c) Economic growth or development

'... promoting sustainable development...' (DGsEU)

'... The world urgently requires global visions of sustainable development based upon observance of human rights.' (UNESCO)

‘... building the climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth, so that economies will grow...’ (WB)

(d) Continuity and stability of proposed solutions

‘... choosing solutions that are sustainable,’ ( FFI)

‘... a peaceful and sustainable world...’ (FOEI)

‘... We seek to establish sustainability and good stewardship of the Earth as central ethical imperatives of human society.’ (NRDC)

‘... create a new way of life for humankind, one that can be sustained indefinitely...’ (NRDC)

‘... guiding stakeholders that influence or depend upon wetlands to maximise the sustainability of their actions...’ (WI)

‘... Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable.’ (WWF)

*References to aesthetics and values*

Aesthetic remarks were exceptional and limited to BLI stating: ‘*Birds are beautiful, inspirational....*’ More common were ethical statements referring to social/environmental justice (FOEI), peace (GP, FOEI), harmony (CI, FOEI, WWF), quality of life/wellbeing/a better life (BLI, IFAW, UNDP), human rights (UNESCO, FOEI), alleviate poverty (UNESCO, WB), global responsibility (CARE), assisting animals in distress (IFAW), welfare of present and future generations (NRDC), dignity (UNESCO), equity (FOEI). For example:

‘We seek to establish sustainability and good stewardship of the Earth as central ethical imperatives of human society’ (NRDC)

Three organisations expressed their mission-vision as ‘beliefs’: WCS stated its commitment to the conservation of wildlife and wild places ‘because we believe it essential to the integrity of life on Earth’. OP states: ‘We believe that the single greatest impediment to healthy and productive marine and coastal areas is the public's low level of ocean awareness.’ FOEI stated ‘We believe that our children's future will be better because of what we do’.

*Environmental language in humanitarian organisations*

Ethical notions were shared by organisations whose approaches and views ranged from conservation of wildlife to environmental policy and humanitarian aspects. The following examples were drawn from organisations with a different dominant perspective:

‘... to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature,’ (WWF)

‘... human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.’ (CI)

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

‘... a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature.’ (FOEI)

‘... to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.’ (IUCN)

Likewise, the wellbeing of future generations concerned groups with different orientations:

‘...We strive to protect nature in ways that advance the long-term welfare of present and future generations. (NRDN)

‘... enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.’ (UNEP)

‘... To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity for future generations...’ (WI)

‘...Protecting, preserving and improving the environment for present and future generations,’ (DGsEU)

None of the organisations focusing on humanitarian/cultural/development aspects (e.g., IFRC, CARE, WB, UNDP, DGsEU, UNESCO) used language akin to the conservation of wildlife. Human rights and charitable groups aimed at alleviating human suffering or poverty did not rely on concepts that refer to the environment from an ecological perspective. Environmental viability and habitat degradation as a cause of social vulnerability, economic insecurity and lack of dignity was not a component of their organisational statement. Likewise, no link was stated between providing economic opportunity for the poorest communities of this world and environmental viability from an ecological perspective.

#### *Non-confrontational approaches*

Science/research and education/awareness/strengthening capacity were key focal frameworks to address environmental issues by most conservation groups. Education was central to at least five organisations (AI, FOEI, CARE, OP, WCS) and science/research to six (FFI, OC, SCB, WI, WCS, AI). Influencing policy was a central objective of at least two organisations (CARE, Oceana). By contrast, government agencies and human assistant groups identified poverty as central and poverty alleviation as a critical path to accomplish their vision (WB, UNDP, UNESCO, CARE). No reference was made to the link between environmental degradation and poverty.

#### *Changes in organisational statements*

Organisations updated their visions and mission, suggesting they considered these statements relevant for their public image. Changes were detected in at least 8 of the 24 groups. Modifications consisted in adding or removing state-

ments, rephrasing ideas (style) or making changes in concepts or contents. We here report only on a few examples.

- a. *Adding or removing statements.* The World Conservation Union (IUCN) removed its vision: '*A just world that values and conserves nature*' (26/06/03), while the SCB and FOEI incorporated one (Table 1).
- b. *Semantic rephrasing.* The SCB and the DGs.EU shortened their missions but kept the focus in science and sustainable development. The older mission of the DGs.EU referred to the ambiguous idea of 'promoting environmental efficiency', apparently replaced in the new version by 'promoting sustainable development'.

June 2003	November 2005
'To promote Sustainable Development, preserving the rights of future generations to a viable environment. To work towards a high level of environmental and health protection and improvement of the quality of life. To promote environmental efficiency. To encourage the equitable use, as well as the sound and effective management, of common environmental resources'.	Protecting, preserving and improving the environment for present and future generations, and promoting sustainable development.

- c. *Changed profile or contents.* AI rephrased its vision and mission. The vision focused on sustainable human communities, leaving out concepts such as 'biological diversity' and 'ecosystem management'. The mission incorporated some of the latter concepts in the line of protecting land, water, wildlife and natural resources.

November 2003	November 2005
Vision: 'To be recognised as the most effective, pro-active and respected environmental organization promoting, fostering, and advancing sustainability; biological diversity, ecosystem management, and ecological restoration.'	To foster more sustainable human and natural communities through research, education, and conservation assistance.
Mission: 'To improve the quality of life and the environment through research, education and conservation assistance.'	To educate, assist, and inspire millions of people from all walks of life to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them.

FOEI's most recent mission became a restructured version of the old one, maintaining most goals and principles. The original version referred once to environmentally sustainable development, while the new mentioned the concept of sustainability three times, in the context of sustainable societies, sustainable livelihoods and sustainability and equity (italics in the citations below). The sentence 'repair damage inflicted upon the environment by human activity and negligence' was deleted.

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

July 2003	November 2005
<p>‘This federation aims to: protect the earth against further deterioration and repair damage inflicted upon the environment by human activities and negligence; preserve the earth’s ecological, cultural and ethnic diversity; increase public participation and democratic decision-making. Greater democracy is both an end in itself and is vital to the protection of the environment and the sound management of natural resources; achieve social, economic and political justice and equal access to resources and opportunities for men and women on the local, national, regional and international levels; promote environmentally <i>sustainable development</i> on the local, national, regional and global levels.’</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To collectively ensure environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights and peoples’ rights so as to secure <i>sustainable societies</i>.</li> <li>2. To halt and reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, nurture the earth’s ecological and cultural diversity, and secure <i>sustainable livelihoods</i>.</li> <li>3. To secure the empowerment of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, groups and individuals, and to ensure public participation in decision making.</li> <li>4. To bring about transformation towards <i>sustainability and equity</i> between and within societies with creative approaches and solutions.</li> <li>5. To engage in vibrant campaigns, raise awareness, mobilise people and build alliances with diverse movements, linking grassroots, national and global struggles.</li> <li>6. To inspire one another and to harness, strengthen and complement each other’s capacities, living the change we wish to see and working together in solidarity.</li> </ol>

*The rhetorical triangle*

All statements reflected mixed perspectives, although Ethos and Logos approaches dominated over Pathos in both nature and development-biased organisations. Some statements did not pertain to any of our *a priori* categories (+ in Table 2, e.g., IFAW, IUCN, CI), or could not be categorised (GP, IFRC, TNC). The Ethos and Pathos components were dominant (+++ or ++) in 16 of the 21 organisations. BI had a strong Pathos component.

## DISCUSSION

The language of the vision and mission statements of a core group of organisations active or expected to be active in environmental issues has a common denominator in the presentation of nature serving human needs according to the ethics of use and consumption. Language on the conservation of nature based on intrinsic values or on non-consumptive use (e.g., aesthetic, cultural, spiritual), is rare or does not occur. These results are congruent with Kaldis’s (2003) ‘social-constructionist’ paradigm that standardises the discourse towards

a uniform viewpoint: make conservation compatible with human interests in the context of development and market-based social practices. In fact, the only integrating and cross-cutting principle seems to be sustainability, particularly in the context of sustainable development.

Other generalisations are:

1. The language of the NGOs (civil society) is conceptually congruent with that of government agencies.
2. Critical issues and concepts related to the biodiversity crisis, such as species extinctions, are almost absent from the language of both government and non-government groups.
3. The link between economic approaches and the environment is suggested in the sense of the beneficial social and economic effects of a healthy environment. This is despite the undisputable link between environmental degradation and unsustainable economic and policy models (e.g., Goudie 2000 and reference therein).
4. Wildlife spectacles are undoubtedly a crucial motivation behind the efforts of many conservation organisations, yet aesthetic language is exceptionally used by these same groups.
5. Controversial issues, such as birth control policies or corruption, are not addressed as such, despite their direct relationship with unsustainable management and environmental viability (e.g.: Smith et al 2003).
6. The most evident concept structuring the conservation discourse is sustainability used in a broad array of alternative, often ambiguous, meanings.
7. There is an asymmetry in the environmental-humanitarian connection. The message of the conservation organisations tries to be sensitive to human needs but humanitarian organisations do not address the nature side of their perspective.

With respect to the formulation of vision and mission statements, we found compelling similarities with the study of Morpew and Hartley (2006) on missions of higher education institutions in the US (colleges and universities). They concluded that:

- Missions reflect present realities of the institutions rather than driving them.
- Statements signal external constituencies that the institution shares its goals.
- Statements reflect what benefactors value.
- Institutions use their mission statements to legitimate themselves by communicating strategically designed messages to target audiences.

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

- There is a consistent lack of aspirational language that would differentiate the institutions through elements of prestige.

Our sample of visions and missions also suggest that organisations have learned to recognise appropriate messages targeted to their consumers, and that conservation organisations may have environmental agencies as prospective consumers. The need to legitimise roles in the political, economic and social arena, is reflected in an effort to show usefulness and satisfy expectations. At the core of the statement, we found a cluster of elements coherent with the message that the welfare of all nature is subordinated to human needs.

The results from the rhetorical triangle analysis are consistent with the above generalisations. The model is designed to '*identify dominating tendencies or orientation of a piece of environmental discourse*' (Herndl and Brown 1996). In a continuum of perspectives on nature, the discourse of the institutions that set the international environmental policy is loud and clear, and dominates the rhetorical notions of pathos.

## ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE DISCOURSE

The urgent need for solutions to conservation and environmental problems encourages pragmatic, solution-seeking, rather than theoretical approaches. Consequently, it may be that the community of conservation practitioners, particularly conservation biologists, may be reluctant to spend time on the ways concepts are articulated in language. The fact is that the way ideas are expressed has strategic relevance in their practice, as well as in formulating policy. An example is the cornerstone of modern environmentalism, sustainability, a notion with strong representational effects on the environmental endeavour.

Since it was first generally defined (Stockholm 1972), it has been arguably the most influential term shaping the conservation movement. One component of sustainability 'sustainable development' is cited in 11 of the 27 'principles' of the Río Declaration on Environment and Development: Agenda 21 (Meadowcroft 2000). Sustainability as a concept elicited debates (e.g., Robinson 1993, Robinson 2004, Ludwing 1993, Prug 1995, Constanza et al. 1998, Hediger 2000, Meadowcroft 2000, Wapner 2003, Shi 2004), but gained overwhelming support by the international community that thinks and decides on environmental strategy:

'We, the representatives of the peoples of the world, assembled at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2 to 4 September 2002, reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development.... (and) assume a collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development, economic development, social development and environmental protection, at the local, national, regional



and global levels'. (The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, *From our Origins to the Future*; 4 September 2002; [http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit\\_docs/1009wssd\\_pol\\_declaration.doc](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaration.doc)).

Declarations such as the above, as well as the United Nations Millennium Declaration (Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on September 2000; <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/millennium.htm>), set the framework for international policy and funding strategies, affecting the practice of conservation. For example, one of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals is to ensure environmental sustainability and one way of doing so is by:

'Integrat(ing) the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes...'

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are two of the partners helping to achieve the Millennium Goals, both influential organisations in the economic growth of countries that treasure most of the remaining biodiversity and the best preserved environments, and both designed for purposes that are not necessarily in line with the conservation agenda (Sanderson 2002).

Sustainable development is a concept compatible with a belief in economic growth guided by markets, scientific knowledge and the possibility of planning and managing social reality towards a gentle improvement (Escobar 1998). Concepts such as 'natural capital' or 'ecosystem services' (Allen and Thomas 1992) are companions in essence to sustainable development. This model is often incompatible with long-term environmental viability (Meadowcroft 2000, Robinson 2004). As a consequence, the conservation agenda seems to be more about documenting and measuring the costs of growth and development for nature than about protecting wildlife and wild places (Sanderson 2002).

We conclude that while practitioners work out the operational strategy, to achieve viable environments to sustain biodiversity, they should be aware of the conceptual framework that guides international funding and policy. They should understand and contribute not just to the technical language of their discipline but also to the precepts and ethical systems that affect management decisions. Ethical systems and beliefs determine how local communities approach nature and resources and are equally crucial to how the international community decides policy. The global institutionalised effort regarding the environment in the hands of governments, the UN and the WB has an organised agenda with clear goals and effective paths. Their language supports and guides political action, economy and education, and influences creative thought, from the science to the administration. But if guiding principles are flawed or are alien to the conservation-environmental agenda, if they can be equally linked to the causes of the problem as to the origin of solutions, no effort may be enough to attain success.

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

## COSTS OF HOMOGENEITY AND THE EXTINCTION CRISES

The 'biodiversity crisis', the extinction of species, originating in human impact, is a most pressing global problem (e.g., see Release of the 2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species; [http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2006/05/02\\_pr\\_red\\_list\\_en.htm](http://www.iucn.org/en/news/archive/2006/05/02_pr_red_list_en.htm)). It mobilises the conservation movement more than any other issue, is addressed by international leaders (e.g., Johannesburg 2002 and NY 2005 World Summit on Sustainable Development), inspired UNEP's Convention of Biological Diversity and receives broad and sustained attention from the media. As stated by Sanderson (2002):

'Global losses in biodiversity and wild places are not the stuff of environmental alarmism; they describe our world today, as detailed in volumes of hard scientific evidence'

The existing institutional framework of environmental organisations should play an indisputable role in alleviating the biodiversity crisis in a world of use. Perspectives and attitudes will have to be modified or replaced with new ways of thinking on human demography, consumption habits, use of resources, trade, development and growth. But the ability to successfully promote transformation will partially depend on the capacity to create alternative visions.

Many have argued about the detrimental effects of the hegemony of one idea/paradigm/ideology over alternative ways of thinking, seeing and expressing visions (e.g., Ayers 2005 and cited references). Dominant perspectives may receive tacit endorsement and may thwart critical notions and alternative positions. Our analysis suggests that the language of environmental groups is more prone to satisfy the human perspective in a context of development, as understood by the dominant neoliberal paradigm, than with the viability of ecosystems, the integrity of ecological processes and the maintenance of biological diversity. 'No human-caused extinctions' would be a possible vision for the conservation agenda. Yet, only one of the 24 surveyed organisations refers to the issue directly: 'BirdLife's aims are to: prevent the extinction of any bird species, ...' GEF lists 'biodiversity loss' as one of the six critical threats to the global environment and the problem of extinctions and populations declines may be indirectly addressed by others, but it does not appear as a central component of the statements.

Neglecting such an important notion cannot be explained by accident or by stylistic constrains; indeed, the concept was addressed at least by one group with a statement of average size (109 words). Mentioning extinctions may be perceived as discouraging to the public imagination that is more used to language that tries to persuade by presenting very positive images. As the crisis is linked to overexploitation, excessive trade, habitat destruction, pollution and, most recently, climate change, focusing on extinctions may place 'some humans' on the spot for a problem that is broadly condemned by 'other humans'. Therefore, concentrating on what remains of the wild may be a more satisfactory goal than

working against the end of the wild. However, the former objective is broader and accommodates more lines of action than just focusing on counteracting the causes of extinction due to human action. If visions set future targets and missions set the framework of behaviours to achieve them (Cummings and Davies 1994), the example on extinctions illustrates a way in which the phrasing of goals and means may encourage or discourage strategies and investment of human and financial resources.

#### THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF NATURE

The value of nature that emerged from a sample of environmental and humanitarian organisations, including the world's most important conservation groups, is utilitarian and presents a context of consumptive use and a human valuer. A few organisations refer to non-consumptive values, such as the aesthetic, and none address value beyond any use. The word 'nature' or references to the natural world were associated with resources, interaction with people, development, human heritage and future generations. It seems to us that this portrayal of the natural world contrasts with the perception of individuals active in conservation. In fact, a study on the acceptance of the intrinsic (non-use) values of nature reported that a majority of interviewed individuals working for conservation and non-conservation, organisations with responsibility for land believed that nature has subjective and objective intrinsic (non-use) value (Butler and Acott, 2007). They also perceived that their intrinsic value views were not reflected in organisational policy. The general perspective was that persuasive policies for the public domain require human-centred arguments.

A persuasive policy or public statement that requires an approach to nature that justifies its value via consumption or use is in accordance with the guiding precept of sustainable development. This may however drift from what individuals feel and believe, thus weakening the representational power of the institutionalised environmental movement.

#### SYNERGIC IDEAS (CONSERVATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS)

The conservation movement is rooted in philosophical principles shared with humanitarian and developmental approaches. Agenda 21 openly links the environment with human rights:

'To recognise the environmental dimension in the effective enjoyment of human rights protection and promotion, and the human rights dimension in environmental protection and promotion, in part by developing rights-based approaches to environmental protection and promotion of sustainable development' (UNHCHR 2002).

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

We then believe it is justified to ask how evident the association is between conservation and human rights. The revised statements suggest a certain imbalance of interests. Conservation of wildlife and wild habitats are not explicitly stated as a priority concern of human rights initiatives. A two-sided interaction would see wild environments as valuable to the present economic development for the benefit of a growing human population. One challenge ahead is to find an unbiased conceptual structure for the humanitarian organisations that reflects a philosophy of human-nature compatibility beyond the human development–nature exploitation alternative.

## A CIRCLE OF STAGNATION

Are conservation practitioners and organisations aware of the societal model that they encourage when implementing their missions? A critical analysis of some of the language that expresses these missions suggests that there is no clear attempt to make a fundamental shift in the grand course of actions that dominates societal attitudes. It is therefore possible that succeeding in the objectives may mean contributing towards a world that departs from the foreseen visions. Even if the environmental perspectives evolve into a priority for governments, the resulting societal schemes would still fit the dominant utilitarian paradigm. It seems to us that a debate on the conceptual structure of the environmental agenda is as urgent as the efforts to save the remnants of biodiversity. The final aim of this paper is to demonstrate that we need a new environmental politics that is not legitimised by the values of the utilitarian perspective but is, rather, capable of offering alternative views of human wellbeing that don't see nature as only a resource to provide that wellbeing.

## TABLES

TABLE 1. Vision and mission statements of 24 international organisations with broadly defined environmental concerns. Statements were obtained from the web pages listed under the name of each organisation. As web pages are updated from time to time, dates under the web address indicate last time the page was visited and the statement confirmed. Statements in normal font were those found in the page under the title 'Mission' or 'Vision', or introduced by these words (i.e., ...our mission is...). Paragraphs in parentheses and italics were also extracted from the web page of each organisation but did not have

any title or identification; these statements were selected by the authors as equivalent to a vision or a mission (see Methods). A vision is defined as a foreseen goal, an inspiring and ideal world that guides the actions. A mission states the purpose of the organisation, the focal problem, the methods to achieve the desired ends and the core values.

1. Audubon Internacional – AI
<p>Vision To foster more sustainable human and natural communities through research, education, and conservation assistance.</p> <p>Mission To educate, assist, and inspire millions of people from all walks of life to protect and sustain the land, water, wildlife, and natural resources around them. <a href="http://www.audubonintl.org/aboutus/vision.htm">www.audubonintl.org/aboutus/vision.htm</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
2. BirdLife International – BLI
<p>Vision Birds are beautiful, inspirational and international. Birds are excellent flagships and vital environmental indicators. By focusing on birds, and the sites and habitats on which they depend, the BirdLife Partnership is working to improve the quality of life for birds, for other wildlife (biodiversity), and for people.</p> <p>BirdLife's aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevent the extinction of any bird species,</li> <li>• maintain and where possible improve the conservation status of all bird species,</li> <li>• conserve and where appropriate improve and enlarge sites and habitats important for birds,</li> <li>• help, through birds, to conserve biodiversity and to improve the quality of people's lives,</li> <li>• integrate bird conservation into sustaining people's livelihoods.</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.birdlife.net/vision/index.html">www.birdlife.net/vision/index.html</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
3. CARE
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission CARE's mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We facilitate lasting change by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening capacity for self-help</li> <li>• Providing economic opportunity</li> <li>• Delivering relief in emergencies</li> <li>• Influencing policy decisions at all levels</li> <li>• Addressing discrimination in all its forms</li> </ul> <p>Guided by the aspirations of local communities, we pursue our mission with both excellence and compassion because the people whom we serve deserve nothing less. <a href="http://www.careusa.org/about/mission.asp">www.careusa.org/about/mission.asp</a> (10/11/2005)</p>

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

4. Conservation International – CI
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>Conservation International's (CI) mission is to conserve the Earth's living natural heritage, our global biodiversity, and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature.</p> <p><a href="http://www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/home">www.conservation.org/xp/CIWEB/home</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
5. Environment Directorates General – European Commission (European Union) DGs.EU
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>Protecting, preserving and improving the environment for present and future generations, and promoting sustainable development</p> <p><a href="http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/environment/index_en.htm">http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/environment/index_en.htm</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
6. Fauna and Flora International – FFI
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>(Fauna and Flora International acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and compatible with human needs).</p> <p><a href="http://www.fauna-flora.org">www.fauna-flora.org</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
7. Friends of the Earth International – FOEI
<p>Vision</p> <p>Our vision is of a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature. We envision a society of interdependent people living in dignity, wholeness and fulfilment in which equity and human and peoples' rights are realized. This will be a society built upon peoples' sovereignty and participation. It will be founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice and free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalization, neo-colonialism and militarism.</p> <p>We believe that our children's future will be better because of what we do.</p> <p>Mission</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. To collectively ensure environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights and peoples' rights so as to secure sustainable societies.</li> <li>8. To halt and reverse environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources, nurture the earth's ecological and cultural diversity, and secure sustainable livelihoods.</li> <li>9. To secure the empowerment of indigenous peoples, local communities, women, groups and individuals, and to ensure public participation in decision making.</li> <li>10. To bring about transformation towards sustainability and equity between and within societies with creative approaches and solutions.</li> <li>11. To engage in vibrant campaigns, raise awareness, mobilize people and build alliances with diverse movements, linking grassroots, national and global struggles.</li> <li>12. To inspire one another and to harness, strengthen and complement each other's capacities, living the change we wish to see and working together in solidarity.</li> </ol> <p><a href="http://www.foei.org/about/mission_statement.html">http://www.foei.org/about/mission_statement.html</a> (10/11/2005)</p>

8. Greenpeace – GP
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>Greenpeace is an independent, campaigning organisation that uses non-violent, creative confrontation to expose global environmental problems, and force solutions for a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace's goal is to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity.</p> <p><a href="http://www.greenpeace.org/international/about/our-mission">http://www.greenpeace.org/international/about/our-mission</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
9. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies – IFRC
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ifrc.org/who/">www.ifrc.org/who/</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
10. International Fund for Animal Welfare – IFAW
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>IFAW's mission is to improve the welfare of wild and domestic animals throughout the world by reducing commercial exploitation of animals, protecting wildlife habitat, and assisting animals in distress. We seek to motivate the public to prevent cruelty to animals and to promote animal welfare and conservation policies that advance the wellbeing of both animals and people.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ifaw.org/ifaw/dimages/custom/media_center/overviewus.pdf">www.ifaw.org/ifaw/dimages/custom/media_center/overviewus.pdf</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
11. Oceana – OC
<p>Vision</p> <p>WE LIVE ON A WATER PLANET. Oceans cover 71 percent of the globe, and they are as important to us as they are vast. Not only do they control our climate; they are the primary source of protein for 1 billion people around the world. They drive our economies. For millions of sailors, swimmers, and vacationers of all stripes, they offer a refuge from the metal and concrete that encase our working lives.</p> <p>Oceana seeks to make our oceans as rich, healthy and abundant as they were in our grandparents' youth. We look to a future in which dolphin sightings are common along any temperate coast; in which the mighty swordfish, marlin and tuna are abundant once again; in which whales and sea turtles thrive, cod are plentiful on both sides of the Atlantic, local fishing cultures evolve rather than decline and in which fish are a safe, growing and plentiful source of food around the world.</p> <p>In the last few decades we have seen the benefits of restored rivers and lakes - for ecological and economic health -in many parts of the world. We can reap the same benefits from healthy oceans. We can restore ocean ecosystems that will sustain us, entertain us, amaze us and generate jobs around the world for centuries to come.</p> <p><a href="http://www.oceana.org/index.php?id=175">http://www.oceana.org/index.php?id=175</a> (10/11/2005)</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>(OCEANA CAMPAIGNS TO PROTECT AND RESTORE THE WORLD'S OCEANS. Our teams of marine scientists, economists, lawyers and advocates win specific and concrete policy changes to reduce pollution and to prevent the irreversible collapse of fish populations, marine mammals and other sea life).</p> <p><a href="http://www.oceana.org/index.cfm?sectionID=5">www.oceana.org/index.cfm?sectionID=5</a> (10/11/2005)</p>

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

12. The Global Environment Facility – GEF
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>(The Global Environment Facility (GEF) helps developing countries fund projects and programs that protect the global environment. Established in 1991, GEF is the designated financial mechanism for international agreements on biodiversity, climate change, and persistent organic pollutants. GEF also supports projects that combat desertification and protect international waters and the ozone layer. The GEF forges international cooperation and finances actions to address six critical threats to the global environment: biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation of international waters, ozone depletion, land degradation, and persistent organic pollutants).</p> <p><a href="http://www.gefweb.org/">www.gefweb.org/</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
13. The Nature Conservancy – NC
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy's mission is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.</p> <p><a href="http://nature.org/aboutus/howwework">http://nature.org/aboutus/howwework</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
14. The Natural Resources Defense Council – NRDC
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>The Natural Resources Defense Council's purpose is to safeguard the earth: its people, its plants and animals, and the natural systems on which all life depends.</p> <p>We work to restore the integrity of the elements that sustain life – air, land and water – and to defend endangered natural places.</p> <p>We seek to establish sustainability and good stewardship of the Earth as central ethical imperatives of human society. NRDC affirms the integral place of human beings in the environment.</p> <p>We strive to protect nature in ways that advance the long-term welfare of present and future generations.</p> <p>We work to foster the fundamental right of all people to have a voice in decisions that affect their environment. We seek to break down the pattern of disproportionate environmental burdens borne by people of color and others who face social or economic inequities. Ultimately, NRDC strives to help create a new way of life for humankind, one that can be sustained indefinitely without fouling or depleting the resources that support all life on Earth.</p> <p><a href="http://www.savebiogems.org/about/mission.asp">www.savebiogems.org /about/mission.asp</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
15. The Ocean Project – OP
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>We are an unprecedented initiative that intends to create in people a lasting, measurable, top-of-mind awareness of the importance, value, and sensitivity of the oceans. We believe that the single greatest impediment to healthy and productive marine and coastal areas is the public's low level of ocean awareness.</p> <p><a href="http://www.theoceanproject.org/about/mission.html">www.theoceanproject.org/about/mission.html</a> (10/11/2005)</p>



16. The Society for Conservation Biology – SCB
<p>Vision</p> <p>Our vision for the future takes a global perspective both in how we want the world to be and how we, as a Society want to be. In these visions we see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A world where people understand, value, and conserve the diversity of life on Earth.</li> <li>• SCB as an effective, internationally respected organization of conservation professionals that is the leading voice for the study and conservation of the Earth's biodiversity.</li> </ul> <p>Mission</p> <p>To advance the science and practice of conserving the Earth's biological diversity  <a href="http://www.conbio.org/SCB/Information/Mission/">www.conbio.org/SCB/Information/Mission/</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
17. The World Conservation Union – IUCN
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>Our Mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.  <a href="http://www.iucn.org/about/index.htm">www.iucn.org/about/index.htm</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
18. United Nations Development Programme – UNDP
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>(UNDP...an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life... UNDP's network links and coordinates global and national efforts to reach these Goals. Our focus is helping countries build and share solutions to the challenges of Democratic Governance, Poverty Reduction, Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Energy and Environment and HIV/AIDS.)  <a href="http://www.undp.org/about/">http://www.undp.org/about/</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
19. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>UNESCO is working to create the conditions for genuine dialogue based upon respect for shared values and the dignity of each civilization and culture.  This role is critical, particularly in the face of terrorism, which constitutes an attack against humanity. The world urgently requires global visions of sustainable development based upon observance of human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which lie at the heart of UNESCO's mission and activities.  <a href="http://www.portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3328&amp;URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&amp;URL_SECTION=201.html">www.portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3328&amp;URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&amp;URL_SECTION=201.html</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
20. United Nations Environment Programme – UNEP
<p>Vision</p> <p>Mission</p> <p>To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.  <a href="http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=43">www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=43</a> (10/11/2005)</p>

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

21. Wetlands International – WI
<p><b>Vision</b>  Our vision is that all wetlands and their dependent biodiversity will be fully conserved, and that where wetlands are managed or used that this be done wisely. This must be achieved through guiding stakeholders that influence or depend upon wetlands to maximise the sustainability of their actions. In addition, through the provision of scientifically and culturally appropriate knowledge and guidance, conservation and wise use can be achieved.</p> <p><a href="http://www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/docs/WIvitalstats.pdf">www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/docs/WIvitalstats.pdf</a> (10/11/2005)</p> <p><b>Mission</b>  To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources, and biodiversity for future generations through research, information exchange, and conservation activities world-wide.</p> <p><a href="http://www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/docs/WIvitalstats.pdf">www.wetlands.org/aboutWI/docs/WIvitalstats.pdf</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
22. Wildlife Conservation Society – WCS
<p><b>Vision</b>  <b>Mission</b>  The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild lands. We do so through careful science, international conservation, education, and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the flagship Bronx Zoo. Together, these activities change individual attitudes toward nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in sustainable interaction on both a local and a global scale.</p> <p>WCS is committed to this work because we believe it essential to the integrity of life on Earth.</p> <p><a href="http://wcs.org/sw-our_mission">wcs.org/sw-our_mission</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
23. World Bank – WB
<p><b>Vision</b>  <b>Mission</b>  Our mission is to help developing countries and their people reach the goals by working with our partner to alleviate poverty. To do that we concentrate on building the climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth, so that economies will grow, and by investing in and empowering poor people to participate in development.</p> <p><a href="http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040565~menuPK:34563~pagePK:34542~piPK:36600~theSitePK:29708,00.html">http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/0,,contentMDK:20040565~menuPK:34563~pagePK:34542~piPK:36600~theSitePK:29708,00.html</a> (10/11/2005)</p>
24. World Wildlife Fund – WWF
<p><b>Vision</b>  <b>Mission</b>  WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserving the world's biological diversity</li> <li>• Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable</li> <li>• Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/index.cfm">www.panda.org/about_wwf/index.cfm</a> (10/11/2005)</p>

TABLE 2. Each organisation was categorised by the authors following the model of Herndl and Brown (1996). We asked of each vision-mission declaration three questions: (a) do statements reflect nature as natural resources to be managed for the greater benefit of present and future generations? (ETHOS), (b) do they depict nature as a source of knowledge relevant to sustain technological progress that impact quality of life? (LOGOS), or (c) do they address the environment in the context of the inspiring beauty of nature, wildlife or wild places? (PATHOS). Some statements have components of each alternative and were categorized according a degree of priority (from less relevant (+) to most relevant (+++)). The statements of GP, IFRC and TNC (shaded grey) were less suitable to be categorised according to the above questions and therefore were not included in the analysis.

Organization	Ethos	Logos	Pathos
Audubon International	++	++	
BirdLife	+	+	+++
CARE	++		
Conservation International	+		
Environment DG EU	+++		
Fauna and Flora International	++	++	
Friends of the Earth International	++	++	
Greenpeace			
IF of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies			
International Fund for Animal Welfare			+
Oceana	++	+	+
The Nature Conservancy			
The Natural Resources Defense Council	+++		
The Ocean Project	+		+
The Society for Conservation Biology		++	
IUCN	+		
UNDP	+++		
UNESCO	+++		+
UNEP	+++		
Wetlands International	++	++	
Wildlife Conservation Society	++	++	
World Bank	+++		
GEF	++	++	
World Wildlife Fund	++		

Our analysis concerns organisations that together carry the task to find viable options to the complex equation involving humans, natural habitats and biodiversity. Admittedly, they represent a heterogeneous range of perspectives, concepts, policies and contexts (e.g., Brulle 2000) but there are reasons to expect common grounds among them. One is the broadly claimed link between preserving nature, quality of life, economic growth and human rights (e.g., 1980 World Conservation Strategy. Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development, 1991 Caring for the Earth: Strategy for Sustainable Living, 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 2000 United Nation Millennium Declaration, 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development).

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

## REFERENCES

- Allen, Tim and Alan Thomas (eds). 1992. *Poverty and Development*. Oxford University Press.
- Ayers, F. D. 2005. 'Neoliberal ideology in community college mission statements: a critical discourse analysis', *The Review of Higher Education*, **28**: 527–549.
- Bart, C.K. 2000. 'Building mission statements that matter'. *Provider Magazine*, 41–44.
- Brulle, R.J. 1996. 'Environmental discourse and social movement organization: a historical and rhetorical perspective on the development of U.S. environmental organizations', *Sociological Inquiry*, **66**: 58–83.
- Brulle, Robert J. 2000. *Agency, Democracy, and Nature. The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.
- Brulle, R.J. 2002. 'Habermas and green political thought: two roads converging', *Environmental Politics*, **11**: 1–20.
- Bryson, J.M. 1995. *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations. A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*. Jossey Bass Publishers.
- Butler, W.F. and T.G. Acott. 2007. 'An inquiry concerning the acceptance of intrinsic value theories of nature', *Environmental Values*, **16**: 149–168.
- Constanza, R., F. Andrade, P. Antunes, M. van den Belt, D. Boersma, D.F. Boesch, F. Catarino, S.Hanna, K. Limburg, B. Low, M. Molitor, J.G. Pereira, S. Rayner, R.Santos, J. Wilson and M. Younget. 1998. 'Principles for sustainable governance of the oceans', *Science*, **281**:198–199.
- Cummings, S. and Davies, J. 1994. 'Mission, vision, fusion', *Long Range Planning*, **27**: 145–150.
- Darier, Eric (ed.). 1999. *Discourses of the Environment*. Blackwell.
- David, F.R.1989. 'How companies define their mission', *Long Range Planning*, **22**: 90–97.
- Ehrlich, Paul R. and Anne H.Ehrlich. 1996. *Betrayal of Science and Reason. How Anti-Environmental Rhetoric Threatens our Future*. A Shearwater Book. Island Press.
- Escobar, A.1998. 'Whose knowledge, whose nature? Biodiversity, conservation, and the political ecology of social movements', *Journal of Political Ecology*, **5**: 53–82.
- Fairclough, N. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press.
- Fairclough, N. 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. 2002. 'Language in new capitalism'. *Discourse and Society* **13**: 163–166.
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 1995. 'Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries'. <http://www.fao.org/fi/agreem/codecond/codecon.asp> (accessed September 2005).
- Goudie, A. 2000. *The Human Impact on the Natural Environment*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press.

- Harré, Rom, Jens Brockmeir and Peter Mühlhäusler. 1999. *Greenspeak: A Study of Environmental Discourse*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Hediger, W. 2000. 'Sustainable development and social welfare', *Ecological Economics*, **32**: 481–492.
- Herndl, Carl G. and Stuart C. Brown. 1996. 'Rhetorical criticism and the environment', in C.G. Herndl and S.C. Brown (eds), *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (The University of Wisconsin Press), pp.10, 12.
- Kaldis, B. 2003. 'Could the environment acquire its own discourse?', *History of the Human Sciences*, **16**: 73–103.
- Ludwig, D., R. Hilborn and C. Walters. 1993. 'Uncertainty, resource exploitation, and conservation: lesson from history', *Science*, **260**: 17–36.
- Meadowcroft, J. 2000. 'Sustainable development: a new(ish) idea for a new century?', *Political Studies*, **48**: 370–387.
- Morphew, C.C. and Hartley, M. 2006. 'Mission statements: a thematic analysis of rhetoric across institutional type', *The Journal of Higher Education*, **77**: 456–471.
- Myerson, George and Yvonne Rydin. 1996. *The Language of Environment. A New Rhetoric*. Routledge.
- Ogden, C.K., and I.A. Richards. 1923. *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism*. New York: Harcourt.
- Pearce II, J.A. 1982. 'The company mission as a strategic tool', *Sloan Management Review*, **23**: 15–24.
- Podeschi, Ch. W. 2002. 'The nature of future myths: environmental discourse in science fiction film, 1950–1999', *Sociological Spectrum*, **22**: 251–297.
- Prug, Thomas (ed.). 1995. *Natural Capital and Human Economic Survival*. International Society for Ecological Economics. ISEE Press.
- Raynor, M.E. 1998. 'That vision thing: do we need it?', *Long Range Planning*, **31**: 368–376.
- Robinson, J.R. 1993. 'The limits of caring: sustainable living and the loss of biodiversity', *Conservation Biology*, **7**: 20–29.
- Robinson, J. 2004. 'Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development', *Ecological Economics*, **48**: 369–384.
- Sanderson, S. 2002. 'The future of conservation', *Foreign Affairs*, **81**: 162–173.
- Shi, T. 2004. 'Ecological economics as a policy science: rhetoric or commitment towards and improved decision-making process on sustainability', *Ecological Economics*, **48**: 23–36.
- Smith, R.J., R.D.J. Muir, M.J. Walpole, A. Balmford and N. Leader-Williams. 2003. 'Governance and the loss of biodiversity', *Nature*, **426**: 67–70.
- The World Conservation Union (IUCN). 2003. 'The precautionary principle and environmental governance: sustainable development, natural resource management and biodiversity conservation'. <http://www.pprinciple.net/index.html> (accessed September 2005).
- The World Conservation Union (IUCN). 2005. 'What is the World Conservation Union?'. <http://www.iucn.org/en/about/> (accessed September 2005).

## VISIONS, MISSIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSE

- The World Conservation Union (IUCN), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF). 1980. 'World conservation strategy: living resource conservation for sustainable development'. International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Gland, Switzerland. <http://www.nssd.net/references/KeyDocs/IIEDa24.htm> (accessed September 2005).
- The World Conservation Union (IUCN), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF). 1991. 'Caring for the Earth. A strategy for sustainable living'. Gland, Switzerland. <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/caring/care-earth1.txt> (accessed September 2005)
- Teymur, Necdet. 1982. *Environmental Discourse*. Question Press, London.
- United Nations. 2000. 'The Millennium Assembly of the United Nations'. New York. <http://www.un.org/millennium/> (accessed September 2005).
- United Nations. 2002. 'Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development'. Johannesburg. South Africa. [http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit\\_docs/131302\\_wssd\\_report\\_reissued.pdf#search=Report%20of%20the%20World%20Summit%20on%20Sustainable%20Development.%20Johannesburg](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/131302_wssd_report_reissued.pdf#search=Report%20of%20the%20World%20Summit%20on%20Sustainable%20Development.%20Johannesburg) (accessed September 2005).
- United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. 1972. 'Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment', Stockholm. <http://www.unep.org/Documents/Default.asp?DocumentID=97&ArticleID=1503> (accessed September 2005).
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, General Assembly, 1989. '87th plenary meeting'. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/ares44-228.htm> (accessed April 2004).
- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. 1992. 'Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. Agenda 21'. Chapter 1 Preamble. Chapter 7. Human Settlements. Chapter 17 Protection of the oceans. <http://www.unep.org/Documents.multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=52&ArticleID=65&l=en> (accessed September 2005).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2000. 'The MAB Programme'. About MAB. <http://www.unesco.org/mab/about.htm#TOP> (accessed November 2005).
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2001. 'The Man and the Biosphere Program' (MAB). <http://www.mabnetamericas.org/main.html> (accessed August 2005) <http://www.mabnetamericas.org/brprogram/origin.html> (accessed August 2005)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2003. 'What it is what it does'. Paris. 9 pp. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001315/131585e.pdf> (accessed November 2005).
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR). 2002. 'Expert Seminar on Human Rights and the Environment Final Text Meeting of Experts on Human Rights and the Environment'. Geneva. <http://www.unhchr.ch/environment/conclusions.html>. (accessed November 2005).
- van Dijk, T.A. 1998. 'Discourse and ideology', *Discourse & Society*, **9**: 307–308.

- van Dijk, T.A. 1999. 'Critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis', *Discourse & Society*, **10**: 459-460
- Wapner, P. 2003. 'World Summit on Sustainable Development: toward a post- Jo'burg environmentalism', *Global Environmental Politics*, **3**: 1-10
- Williams, J., Smythe, W., Hadjistavropoulos, T., Malloy, D.C. and Martin, R. 2005. 'A study of thematic content in hospital mission statements: a question of values'. *Health Care Management Review*, **30**: 304-314.