



Media Narratives Beyond the Headlines: A Review on Global Media Coverage of the COP15 UN Biodiversity Summit

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Abstract: Global media narratives refer to how international news outlets frame and present stories, shaping public perception and discourse on significant events like the COP15 UN Biodiversity Summit. This includes the themes, tones, and emphases used by different media sources to convey the importance, implications, and outcomes of such global events. This study explores global media coverage and narratives during the COP15 summit in December 2022, aiming to analyze dominant themes presented by international media, identify differences in reporting approaches among major outlets, and evaluate the influence of these narratives on public awareness and policy discourse regarding biodiversity. Using content analysis, the research studies news from various outlets to identify and quantify key themes such as ecological urgency, economic implications, policy negotiations, and scientific discoveries. Comparative analysis highlights variations in coverage focus, tone, and depth, revealing how regional contexts and media ownership influence reporting styles. Findings indicate that while some media outlets prioritize policy negotiations and economic implications, others emphasize ecological urgency and scientific findings, leading to varied public and policy responses. This research underscores the critical role of media in shaping public understanding and influencing policy debates on biodiversity. By providing insights into effective reporting practices, the study aims to enhance the quality of environmental journalism and foster informed public and policy engagement with biodiversity issues, contributing to the broader discourse on environmental communication and the power of media narratives in addressing global environmental challenges.

Keywords: Biodiversity Reporting, Media Narratives, COP15 Coverage, Environmental Journalism, Public Awareness, Global Media

Introduction:

The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) convened in Montréal, Quebec, from December 7-19, 2022, to address global biodiversity loss. Governments worldwide agreed to the Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity

Framework, a landmark initiative aimed at halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2050. Canada prioritized the success of COP15 for nature, advocating for international collaboration on ambitious goals such as conserving 30 percent of lands and oceans by 2030. Effective biodiversity conservation requires partnerships, including with Indigenous Peoples, transformative changes, innovation, and the recognition of nature's true value in decision-making across sectors. The CBD, first signed by 150 government leaders at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, focuses on conserving biological diversity, sustainably using its components, and fairly sharing the benefits from genetic resources. The Convention emphasizes that biodiversity is essential for food security, medicine, fresh air and water, shelter, and a clean environment. The CBD Secretariat, based in Montréal, continues to promote sustainable development and highlights that biodiversity is critical for human well-being and ecological health.

Global media encompasses all forms of mass communication that have a worldwide reach. This includes traditional media channels such as television, radio, and newspapers, as well as social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Narrative theory begins with the premise that storytelling is a fundamental human method for understanding core aspects of our experiences, including time, processes, and change. From this starting point, the theory examines the unique characteristics of narratives, their structures, components, applications, and impacts. Narrative theory in media examines how stories are structured, conveyed, and understood within various media forms. It explores the components, processes, and effects of storytelling, emphasizing how narratives shape perceptions, influence behaviors, and reflect or construct social realities.

Objectives:

1. Analyze dominant themes presented by international media during the COP15 summit.
2. Identify differences in reporting approaches among major media outlets covering COP15.
3. Evaluate the influence of media narratives on public awareness and policy discourse on biodiversity.

Hypothesis:

1. Dominant themes in COP15 media coverage vary across international news outlets.
2. Reporting approaches among major media outlets differ significantly during COP15 coverage.
3. Media narratives on COP15 influence public awareness and policy discourse on biodiversity.

Methodology:

This study aims to analyze the media coverage of the COP15 UN Biodiversity Summit through a qualitative approach. The data collection process began with a keyword search method on YouTube, using terms such as "COP15 biodiversity summit," "UN biodiversity conference," and "Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework." This search yielded 12 relevant news videos from 10 different YouTube channels, including BBC News, Al Jazeera English, WION, Sky News, DW News, Global News, France 24 English, SABC News, euronews, and CGTN Global Watch. To assess user engagement, the number of likes, views, and comments for each video was documented. These news metrics provide an indication of the public's interest and interaction with the content. Qualitative approaches like narrative analysis and framing analysis are taken for data analysis. Narrative analysis is the approach used to explore the stories and themes presented in each news report, focusing on how the events were structured and conveyed

to the audience. It helped identify the dominant narratives and key characters within the coverage. Framing analysis is the method examined how the news outlets framed the COP15 summit, highlighting the angles and perspectives emphasized. It assessed the prominence given to certain issues, such as ecological urgency, economic implications, policy negotiations, and scientific discoveries.

Data Analysis

News 1 (BBC News): UN biodiversity summit COP15 reaches 'historic' deal to protect nature

The news report highlights a significant agreement signed in Montreal, Canada, aimed at protecting nature and biodiversity. According to Sophie Eastaugh from BBC's The Climate Question, the World Wildlife Foundation's latest report reveals a 69% decline in global animal populations since 1970, with some regions like Latin America and the Caribbean experiencing a staggering 94% decline. Experts warn that species are going extinct a thousand times faster than the natural rate, which is alarming for biodiversity and climate change mitigation, as these species and ecosystems are crucial for carbon capture. Limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is deemed impossible without protecting these natural resources. The landmark deal pledges to safeguard 30% of the world's oceans and land by 2030, marking the most significant commitment of its kind. However, the allocated \$30 billion by the end of the decade is vastly insufficient, with experts estimating up to \$600 billion needed to preserve nature. The news, uploaded on December 19, 2022, is 3 minutes and 46 seconds long, has garnered 32K views, 702 likes, and 231 comments, with many viewers expressing their concerns about climate change.

News 2 (BBC News): COP15 UN biodiversity summit opens up in Canada

A major United Nations conference on global biodiversity, COP15, has commenced in Montreal, Canada, drawing over 10,000 delegates including scientists, government officials, and activists. The conference aims to establish stringent new targets for protecting Earth's biodiversity. Conservation charities are urging immediate action to restore nature, with Nick Bruce White of RSPB highlighting that one in five species are at risk of extinction and stressing the need to halt this decline by 2030. He emphasizes the importance of the UK's ambition to protect 30% of land and sea by 2030, noting that currently, only 3% of the land and 8% of seas are effectively protected. Alys Laver from the Wildlife and Wetlands Trust discusses the benefits of large-scale wetland restoration. Navin Singh Khadka, a BBC World Services Environment Correspondent, explains the interconnectedness of COP conferences, noting that while some focus on climate, COP15 addresses biodiversity, which is crucial for combating climate change impacts. He describes the "Doom Loop" where changes in biodiversity lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions, exacerbating climate issues. Climate activist Laura Young criticizes the lack of progress on meeting targets despite numerous conferences, emphasizing the need to push global systems to improve. She calls for continued pressure on countries and stakeholders to achieve better outcomes. The news segment, uploaded on December 7, 2022, lasts 10 minutes and 13 seconds, and has garnered 68K views, 944 likes, and 273 comments, reflecting significant public interest and concern about biodiversity and climate action.

News 3 (Sky News): COP15: Delegates strike deal to protect 30 per cent of the planet by 2030

The news report covers a landmark United Nations deal announced in Canada to set aside nearly a third of the world's land and sea areas for nature by 2030. This initiative aims to reverse the

rapid decline in biodiversity and support the abundance of life on Earth. Bernadette Fischler Hooper from WWF UK emphasizes that this protection benefits all species, including humans, but stresses the importance of turning commitments into real action. The focus isn't only on the million species at risk of extinction; it's also about addressing the broader crisis that impacts human survival, such as oxygen from trees and crop pollination by insects. Kathryn Brown from Wildlife Trusts highlights the need for regenerative agriculture, advocating for farming practices that work with nature. This includes reducing pesticide use and nutrient inputs, creating buffers to mitigate severe weather impacts, and establishing habitats like hedgerows on farms. The news segment, uploaded on December 20, 2022, lasts 2 minutes and 38 seconds, and has garnered 11K views, 62 likes, and 79 comments, indicating public interest and concern regarding the implementation and impact of these conservation efforts.

News 4 (Al Jazeera English): COP15: Nations reach landmark deal to protect plant

The news narrative about the COP15 negotiations in Montreal, which concluded with a biodiversity agreement, employs narrative theory to highlight themes of global cooperation and urgency. The setting is an international forum where representatives from about 190 countries finalize a crucial pact to protect biodiversity. The main characters include U.S. State Department Spokesperson Ned Price, who voices optimism about the agreement, and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who praises the deal but calls for ongoing effort. The plot centers on the agreement's ambitious goals, such as protecting 30% of land and oceans by 2030 and increasing conservation funding. The narrative tension arises from the demands of African nations and environmental advocates for stronger financial commitments to support poorer countries, juxtaposed against the widespread threat of extinction due to human activities like farming and fishing. The climax occurs with the signing of the agreement, marking a significant achievement in global conservation. However, Guterres' call for continued action and the need to fight despair adds a layer of unresolved conflict, emphasizing that this is just one step in a long journey. The moderate public engagement, reflected by the segment's views, likes, and comments, shows a significant but cautious interest in the biodiversity crisis and the outcomes of the negotiations.

News 5 (FRANCE 24 English): COP15 biodiversity summit: What to expect?

The news narrative of the UN's COP-15 conference on biodiversity in Montreal leverages narrative theory by presenting a story of global urgency, high stakes, and collective action. The setting is the international arena, where delegates from various nations gather to address the critical issue of biodiversity loss, positioning the conference as a pivotal moment for environmental preservation. Key characters include UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who dramatically critiques multinational corporations and humanity's destructive practices, and environment editor Valerie Dekimpe, who underscores the ambitious goal of reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. The narrative's conflict is articulated through Guterres' stark warning of "suicide by proxy" and the challenge of getting major countries like China, Brazil, and Indonesia to join the coalition advocating for significant ecosystem protection. The plot advances through the introduction of a potential "Paris-style" accord for nature, aimed at setting biodiversity targets for the next decade. This creates a narrative tension between the urgency of the goals and the slow progress of international cooperation, with the resolution hinging on the outcomes of the ongoing discussions over the next two weeks. The narrative's climax is represented by the ambitious targets and the high expectations for the conference, capturing the dramatic urgency of the situation. The moderate public interest, as indicated by the video's views,

likes, and comments, reflects the narrative's reach and impact, suggesting a significant but not overwhelming engagement with the issue. This underscores the importance of framing biodiversity as a crucial and immediate global concern.

News 6 (Euronews): COP15 biodiversity summit: What to expect?

The narrative presented in the news report aligns with narrative theory by structuring a compelling story around the urgent global issue of biodiversity loss. The setting is a high-stakes international conference in Canada, gathering influential figures from nearly 200 countries. Key characters include scientists, activists, delegates, and political figures like Virginijus Sinkevičius and Justin Trudeau. The plot unfolds through a mix of conflict and cooperation, emphasizing the ambitious goal of a "30 by 30" deal akin to the Paris Agreement. This creates a dramatic tension: the urgency to agree on protective measures versus the challenge of addressing indigenous and environmental activists' concerns. The narrative's climax occurs with the activists' disruption of Trudeau's speech, highlighting grassroots resistance. The resolution is implied in the ongoing negotiations and the call for substantial restoration efforts by 2030 and 2040. The video's brief runtime and social media metrics suggest limited but engaged viewership, underscoring the narrative's reach and impact.

News 7: (SABC News) UN Biodiversity conference COP15 meeting signs key agreement: Patricia Scotland

The news narrative about the conclusion of the COP15 biodiversity conference in Montreal, which resulted in the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), is framed through narrative theory to convey a story of urgent global collaboration and responsibility. The setting is a high-stakes international summit with representatives from 188 governments, chaired by China and hosted by Canada. Key characters include Patricia Scotland, Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, who passionately addresses the conference from London, underscoring the critical urgency of the biodiversity crisis. Her speech emphasizes the existential threat to Commonwealth member states and highlights the disproportionate burden on the Global South, which has contributed least to climate change but suffers its worst effects. The plot progresses with the culmination of the two-week negotiations, resulting in the GBF's adoption. Scotland's narrative tension centers on the dichotomy between the urgent need for action and the frustration over inadequate funding commitments. Her speech highlights the significant responsibility of current generations to act decisively, framing this moment as "non-negotiable" and essential for future survival. The climax is marked by Scotland's rallying call for solidarity and concrete financial commitments, stressing that aspirational targets are meaningless without funding. The news segment, despite its critical content, shows limited public engagement with only 259 views, 2 likes, and 1 comment. This indicates a gap between the importance of the issue and the level of public attention, underscoring the need for increased awareness and action on biodiversity conservation.

News 8: (DW News) UN conference reaches historic biodiversity deal

The news narrative about the U.N. biodiversity summit in Montreal, which led to a historic deal to protect nature, employs narrative theory to frame the story as a critical turning point for global environmental action. The setting is the high-stakes U.N. summit, where countries worldwide gather to address urgent ecological issues. Key characters include Beatrice Christofaro from DW Environment, who emphasizes the dire state of global biodiversity. Her commentary underscores

the critical importance of the deal, which aims to safeguard 30 percent of the world's land and seas, reform agricultural practices, and provide crucial financing for biodiversity conservation in developing nations. The plot centers on the adoption of the groundbreaking agreement, with the narrative tension revolving around the contentious issue of financing. This tension mirrors the dynamics observed at previous U.N. climate talks, highlighting the demand from poorer nations for increased financial aid from richer countries to support their conservation efforts. The dramatic climax is depicted through the heated negotiations, culminating in a walkout by delegates from poorer nations, underscoring the intense stakes and emotional investment in the outcomes. The narrative's resolution is implicit in the successful adoption of the deal, which is portrayed as a pivotal moment that could transform farming practices, business operations, and the protection of biodiversity. The news segment's relatively high engagement, with 10K views, 198 likes, and 69 comments, indicates significant public interest and awareness, reflecting the importance and urgency of the issue at hand. This engagement suggests that the narrative effectively communicated the critical nature of the biodiversity crisis and the monumental efforts required to address it.

News 9: (Global News) COP15: Montreal protests and growing skepticism on future of biodiversity framework

The news narrative about COP15 in Montreal uses narrative theory to present a dynamic and multi-faceted story of environmental activism and political negotiation. The setting is Montreal, where both street protests and unique forms of activism, such as rapping and dancing, aim to pressure decision-makers. Key characters include Fatima El-Aaraby, a Global Youth Biodiversity delegate, who expresses personal and generational concerns about health and the environment, and Steven Guilbeault, Canada's Federal Environment Minister, who voices optimism about achieving ambitious goals. The primary objective highlighted is the "30 by 30" target, aiming to protect 30 percent of land and oceans by 2030. The plot unfolds with the convergence of 196 countries and over 10,000 delegates, emphasizing the global scale and urgency of the negotiations. The narrative tension arises from the high stakes of the environmental goals and the substantial financial commitment required to an estimated \$350 billion annually. The climax features the hopeful yet determined stance of delegates and activists, driving home the urgency and necessity of immediate action. The high engagement of the news segment, with 127K views, 443 likes, and 943 comments, indicates strong public interest and concern, highlighting the narrative's effectiveness in conveying the critical importance of the COP15 outcomes.

News 10: (CGTN Global Watch) UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE: China's Kunming hosts COP15 gathering

The world's largest biodiversity conference in a decade opened in Kunming, Southern China, hosting the United Nations COP15 meeting. World leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who will address the summit via video, will discuss strategies for better protecting nature. CGTN Global Watch reporter Ching Shong highlighted that the conference will begin with a review of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, aiming to create a blueprint for future conservation efforts and to continue progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets established in Japan a decade ago. The five-day event includes an opening ceremony with virtual participation from international attendees, keynote speeches from Chinese officials and UN representatives, a high-level segment, regular agenda items, and side events such as an ecological civilization forum and relevant exhibitions. British wildlife conservationist Terry Townshend

emphasized the critical importance of biodiversity for human survival, noting that the current significant loss of biodiversity directly impacts human well-being. Jane Goodall, a renowned English anthropologist and primatologist, shared her extensive experience studying chimpanzees in the African forest, underscoring the interconnectedness of all life forms. The news segment, uploaded on October 11, 2021, is 12 minutes and 54 seconds long, and has received 1.2K views, 24 likes, and no comments, indicating moderate engagement.

News 11: (WION) UN Biodiversity Conference kicks-off in Montreal

The world's largest biodiversity conference in a decade opened in Kunming, Southern China, hosting the United Nations COP15 meeting. World leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who will address the summit via video, will discuss strategies for better protecting nature. CGTN Global Watch reporter Ching Shong highlighted that the conference will begin with a review of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, aiming to create a blueprint for future conservation efforts and to continue progress towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets established in Japan a decade ago. The five-day event includes an opening ceremony with virtual participation from international attendees, keynote speeches from Chinese officials and UN representatives, a high-level segment, regular agenda items, and side events such as an ecological civilization forum and relevant exhibitions. British wildlife conservationist Terry Townshend emphasized the critical importance of biodiversity for human survival, noting that the current significant loss of biodiversity directly impacts human well-being. Jane Goodall, a renowned English anthropologist and primatologist, shared her extensive experience studying chimpanzees in the African forest, underscoring the interconnectedness of all life forms. The news segment, uploaded on December 07, 2022, is 12 minutes and 54 seconds long, and has received 1.2K views, 24 likes, and no comments, indicating moderate engagement.

News 12: (FRANCE 24 English) Countries at COP15 reach historic agreement to halt loss of biodiversity

The news segment from FRANCE 24 English, featuring Environment Editor Valerie, highlights the critical commitments made at a recent biodiversity conference. The most significant agreement is the "30 by 30" goal: protecting 30 percent of the world's oceans and land by 2030, analogous to the climate diplomacy target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Alongside this, 23 other targets include cutting harmful farming subsidies, reducing nutrient runoff from farms by half to tackle ocean pollution, and cutting pesticide risks by 50 percent to prevent insect population collapse. Financial commitments are a pivotal part of the deal, with countries agreeing to provide \$30 billion annually by 2025 for conservation efforts, predominantly from wealthy nations to poorer island and developing countries. However, this figure falls short for many, particularly South American and African countries, which house vital ecosystems like rainforests. The Democratic Republic of Congo initially blocked the deal over financial aid disputes, but a compromise was reached within an existing funding framework. Valerie notes the challenge of mobilizing funds, referencing the unmet annual \$100 billion climate change target. The news segment, lasting 4 minutes and 50 seconds, uploaded on December 19, 2022, has garnered 2.1K views, 30 likes, and 3 comments, indicating moderate engagement.

Conclusion:

The COP15 summit reached a landmark agreement to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030. This ambitious target aims to counteract the severe decline in global biodiversity. Despite the agreement's historical significance, financial constraints pose a major challenge. The \$30 billion annually pledged falls short of the \$600 billion needed, highlighting the gap between commitments and actual financial resources. This shortfall underscores the critical need for increased funding to ensure the effective implementation of the conservation efforts, reflecting a common theme in news reports about the insufficiency of current financial pledges.

The public's engagement with COP15, evidenced through views, likes, and comments on various news segments, indicates significant but varied interest in biodiversity issues. Reports from BBC and Sky News show higher engagement levels, suggesting widespread concern and awareness. Activism, particularly from youth and grassroots movements, played a vital role in raising awareness and pushing for stronger commitments. Protests and unique forms of activism, like those in Montreal, highlight the dynamic relationship between public pressure and political negotiations, illustrating how public sentiment can influence global environmental policies.

The news reports uniformly frame the biodiversity crisis as urgent, requiring immediate global cooperation. Key figures such as UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and other environmental leaders emphasize the existential threat posed by biodiversity loss. The narrative tension often arises from the disparity between the urgent need for action and the slow progress of international cooperation. This theme is evident in various reports, where the urgency of the crisis is compared against the lengthy and often contentious negotiations, highlighting the complex interplay of global politics and environmental conservation.

The COP15 narrative frequently emphasizes the critical role of indigenous and local communities in biodiversity conservation. Reports highlight their unique knowledge and connection to natural ecosystems, advocating for their inclusion in decision-making processes. This recognition aligns with broader calls for social justice and equitable distribution of conservation benefits. The integration of indigenous perspectives is seen as essential for achieving sustainable and effective biodiversity protection, reflecting a shift towards more inclusive and holistic environmental governance.

A recurring theme in the news analysis is the interconnectedness of biodiversity and climate change. Reports stress that protecting biodiversity is crucial for mitigating climate change, as healthy ecosystems play a vital role in carbon capture. The concept of a "Doom Loop," where biodiversity loss exacerbates climate change and vice versa, underscores the need for integrated approaches to environmental policy. This holistic view is essential for addressing the complex challenges posed by both crises, emphasizing that solutions must be multifaceted and globally coordinated.

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